

For. Or. Welcome to the Life podcast or Creative Problem Solvers, entrepreneurs talk about squeezing more out and finding meaning in this crazy thing we call life. Let's dove in. What's up, guys? Welcome back to another episode of the Maldive podcast. I'm your host part. And this week we do have a special guest in the building if you're listening to this. This is season four. You've made it all of the way. James Adam is the CEO, founder of Visual Media Church.

That feedback correctly, you did often locally right now might be moving later. We'll talk about that a little bit later. James, they went up to everybody.

Man What's up, everybody? I'm James Adams. I am the president and founder of a church. I find it always a little weird when you give yourself a title president, CEO, champion and ruler of the mall and a company of like five or six people. Just it's not so grandiose, but there's no other way. There's no other way to describe it. Yeah. Somebody has to be in charge. I know that to be the case. One hundred percent give people a bit of a glimpse of what it is your company does and exactly like, well, maybe a bit of insight and then we'll dove a little bit deeper about all the other stuff.

But it might be good to start there.

There's a church makes cinematic church media. That is our line. That is our driving force. That is our mission statement. So the idea being that you we want to make church media more cinematic. When I got started doing this, there was just a lot of really dated looking stuff and not a lot of people pushing to bring quality in church media to what goes on like in the secular world, like when you go to the movies, you go see a Marvel movie or star.

You see this amazing technology in 3D graphics at work. And I found like the church world was lacking. And so our primary thing that most people come to us for is worship backgrounds. What really defines us in worship backgrounds is we really were the first to kind of go all in with doing work like nature based outdoor landscaping backgrounds. There's a few people doing it. I mean, there was only a couple big churches at the time that were even kind of dabbling in it.

But no one in among us call my peers were making it really, really well and leading into it and like putting the effort into it. And so that was kind of the niche that we got carved out was like, wow, if you want nature backgrounds, if you want mountains and time lapses in slow motion waterfalls, be a church is the place to go and we still are the place to go. But since then, we've branched out to kind of encompass more than just worship backgrounds.

But really all church media in one kind of centralized hub, one single membership to kind of get access to basically everything you would need. As far as media content goes, that's really, really cool for those that don't know because it is somewhat of a niche demographic. A church media specifically have come a long way. So I think I've mentioned the free time in the podcast. I used to work in a church for about ten years or multiple churches for over the course of ten years.

And I got my start working in church media and our church media in 2012 was very different than what it is today. And we didn't have resources and tools like what you are doing now. James is kind of like a pipe dream that would be like, oh my gosh, could you imagine we'd actually have the resources in the know how and abilities to produce, have or even purchase this type of content that can be produced. So in many ways, church media graphics have catapulted over the last decade.

I would even say fifteen years specifically in terms of the production quality. And long gone are the days that you're picturing like a church like this, like maybe a choir robe and stuff like that, and maybe a pamphlet or a bulletin I've called in church. Long gone are the days of like really bad clipart, poorly folded fliers, all these different things where the word is like a Google image. I was put on printed on three hundred DPI. So it's all pixilated and all that kind of stuff.

What church you have to think of church now also in terms of the production value that you prevent because you're competing with so many different other pieces of media or distractions or even like things to do. Right. You not competing just with, hey, should I go to church this weekend? It's like, hey,

the Blue Jays are playing hey or the Raptor they're playing or I can go see a movie, I can go see a show. And we're kind of used to this level of stimulus in our brains.

And so church media have catapulted to kind of be like, hey, we're going to engage you of. Well, not just spiritually, but also mentally and with your eyes, what you see to make it interesting and just tell a story. So I wanted to kind of give a bit of a preface to that whole to that whole industry, because it's such a unique industry. And I've I've literally seen it grown from nothing to like huge. And even now, James, I don't know, you know, more than I do.

Still not that many players in what you're doing in terms of church, cinema, cinema, stenographic media type stuff. How many big players would that be like? You're a little bigger, I would say total worldwide on the same level. They'd be five to eight of us.

That's what I mean, which is really small. And I mean, people don't get into the church media because it's so niche unless you go to church. Right. Like the person who doesn't go to church would never think to or have the cultural understanding on how to enter into that market. Right. And like you're saying, a church media has grown so much to the point where, like I get asked all the time, I have even non Christian friends, like, oh, there's like a market for that.

And when I tell them, as some of these churches and like even smaller churches are doing production on the level of what you would see at the Air Canada Center, like a big Taylor Swift concert, like the same people that put on those concerts, work at churches and put on the media side of things like there are church conferences that rent out the Mercedes Dome for an entire weekend in New Orleans. And and the quality of work around what is the core message by these professionals is on like it's the top of the top in the United States or Canada of quality.

And so even smaller churches like I go to a larger church here in outside of Toronto and the production quality is fantastic from there, understanding around media and music and imagery and lighting like it's it's people who all actually do it professionally out in the real world. And they bring that knowledge. Some of them actually paid and some of them contract or volunteer into the church world. So it's not a it's not a joke. It's not a small matter like it is like it is production on like the tenth degree, like is quality quality stuff.

And so what I say to people like they're like, oh, how did your stuff end up with, like, secular artists like like what's your name. Tori. Tori Kelly was using this will be a church stuff. It's because one of our members works for a big church out in California, but he's also a sound guy for her tour. And so he brought our voice to be a church stuff to Tori Kelly, to her concerts. Right.

So, like, it's really cool. Like, it's it is really big because these these churches, whereas concerts and like maybe conferences go like month to month or every few months. Churches are doing it week in, week out, some of them five, six times a week. And so, yeah, these people are really talented. And we and we provide basically what we're our goal is always just to save those people time and energy instead of having to hire a contractor to go out and film this stuff, like to hire a contractor, a cinematographer to fly to Iceland, shoot you some nice slowmo waterfalls and come back, it's going to cost you ten to fifteen thousand dollars.

And you get access to a church with all that content for two hundred dollars a year. So it's it's a no brainer on the content side. Yeah.

The, the there's so many like applications. If you're working inside of a church nowadays, you get a lot of our audience might not know, but some of you understand, like there are things that happen during the week and there are certain things that happen in the weekend. And all this stuff is now hyper produced where I mean, the look good, feel good, be mobile friendly, be on a website, be in person. All these different instances are variations of the same thing.

You know, I remember the first time I was working at a larger church in Toronto in Scarborough, and we had the idea that, hey, we can do like a Leidy's wall. And at this point now, like five, six years ago

and they said, yes, the budget was approved for us to get it. And we got a I believe it was a twenty eight foot by ten foot hleb one. I didn't even know what Hleb Wall was.

I was used to like a projector screen when I was new to this church working there. So when I saw this thing come in and how many light flight cases had to be unpacked from a truck and then be fed up and rigged, I couldn't believe it. Like we had to run the entire this was for Easter. We had like seven services and we had to run the because there were so many panels in this large auditorium, we had to run the of the panels at five percent brightness because they were so bright.

So of course what we do is sort of church of like over. We got the the latest James Bond trailer and we were. Much of that on their third to live to 100 and like Freyja Retina, just a little bit with the back of the auditorium, this ginormous room, and it's like better than a movie, but it was like cutting edge technology just to kind of see that type of stuff done. And even I was impressed and I had been in the industry working in church marketing and church media.

I want to ask you, like, where we know each other only on the Internet, we've never actually met. So where did you start? Were you like a tech person, production person, film person? Like, I'm assuming, you know, you start a volunteer. That's how everyone starts in the church. They rope you in somehow. And then somehow you maybe you bring skills, talents, education, all that type of stuff.

So I got into the church media game really late, like basically just before I started at church. So the church is about to turn five years in June, it's going to turn five years old. So really, my background, though, was I went to school out in the prairies and I end up working originally for a hockey team. I work for the Manitoba Moose, which then became the Winnipeg Jets. So I was their video in-house video graphics go down to the locker room and interview the players, do all the green screen filming pre-season and do all those cheesy graphics, you know, on the players are answering questions and all that kind of stuff.

And so that got me into the world of media to start cause I had just gone to a two year diploma program. So I did that. And then I worked for a fashion guy for a few years doing video for him, doing stuff on his personal side and then doing more like the model shoots and all that kind of stuff basically around the world. And then when I moved back to Toronto, I just started volunteering with my church and then end up doing some contract gigs for them.

And my church was really open to like doing video, like cinematic video intros. There was myself and another guy who were doing them at the time. He was just kind of offloading from being full time and going to contracts so that we were both kind of doing contract projects. He went on to be a YouTube. He's got a million plus followers. And I started DMC at the same time that he started going to YouTube. And so that got me into the church world and then ended up happening was I was sitting in a creative meeting and they were talking about like our Easter plans, like, what's the theme going to be?

We'd like to make a cool video. And we ended up like landing on this smoke idea, like having this guy walk through like smoke bombs in slow motion with this epic music. Right. And so as they were filming that and then what end up happening was a guy who was kind of helping out on the side, ended up saying, hey, I kind of do worship media. I don't know if you ever heard of it, but would you be able to like with your slo mo camera, bieler like, make me like worship backgrounds in slo mo and smoke.

And so I ended up filming this pack for what is now my biggest competitor. And so afterwards I. Yeah, afterwards. And so it was great. And it was his most successful piece ever. Like he was blown away by the response. It was in churches around the world. It was being used all over the place. So I ended up having this meeting with the guy and just said to him, hey, I got this idea. Like I know is that all your stuff is just like motion graphics and stuff like that.

No one is doing what I'm seeing on, like, Instagram these days, which is like epic, like Iceland, waterfall slowmo, all this kind of stuff. Like I would love to work for you, like I'm looking for a job to

get out what I'm doing. At the time I was doing contract for the church and I was working at Ryerson University as a media guy there as well. And so I basically approached him with this idea like, hey, hire me and let's like bring nature backgrounds to churches.

And the of that was basically he didn't believe in the idea. It was it's kind of like, no, I don't think people are ready for Bubba. And so I said, hey, you know what? I'm going to do it then. So I launched out on my own to do it. The origin story that I always tell people, which is one hundred percent true, is I've been married for, I think ten months, nine months at the time.

And I convinced my wife to let me spend our vacation money to go to Iceland by myself. I didn't have enough money to like rent, but to stay in hotels. So I rented a Suzuki Grand Vitara and then I brought a tent with me and I slept in the car mixed with tent. And then I was there for seven days and I just fell with your wife or.

No, no, I left I spent the money to do this business idea. She was like she like, really reluctantly let me do it. She's like, OK, fine. She will even tell you to this day she's like, I thought it was the dumbest idea. You were just like like it was just it was just a dumb idea. And so I just spent seven days filming like crazy. And then I came home, I made the website, launched the company to to nobody because no one knew who I was or what I was doing.

And that's how I started it. And it started to pick up steam. And that's how that that's the origin story. It was like I risked whatever money we had, which was supposed to go to Mexico and I spent it to go to Iceland without her even. I'm like, this is an opportunity. No one's doing this as a gap in the market. It was all kind of classic things you hear from a founder like I have. I have a unique advantage in that.

Like I come from a film and media background. I know how to build web. I know how to get the servers up and running. I can do all that on my own so I don't need to pay for it. So it was this bootstrapped, small little thing that I just needed to invest the time to get the content, to kind of get it going. And so that's how it all started, happened within like three or four months.

Me just be like, I'm going to do it. Still doing my full time job, by the way. My yeah. That's my full time. I said, listen, I got this thing, I just take a week off and luckily the people who I work for at Ryerson were amazing and they gave me a lot of freedom to kind of do this kind of stuff when I first and you don't even know it, but you're filling in a lot of the gaps of a story.

I didn't know. I knew in the sense like the video you're talking about with the smoke. Yeah. So I didn't know I didn't know that with you. I knew the other person you were filming with, or at least that would have been mean that I brought to my art director and said, look what they're doing. They are like we need to up the level to X, Y and Z, and I'm not the media pastor or anything like that.

The church I was just the communications director and we were doing a lot of planning. But I said this is the inspiration. This this is what's up. So I think we might have message Mattie and said something. And I think he probably never thought because there was no way to get the information on video. I think it was on video. Yeah. So we probably messaged him on Vimeo or something like that. Never heard back. And I know we were talking about the other person, but again, it's such a small community and even though I wasn't specifically in that industry, I was like that.

I was in the media adjacent industry at this point and no longer doing church media but communications. But, you know, the people, especially in Canada, the that many people. So you just feel like, oh, this is how all of this is coming together. And I never knew that you took like you just said, hey, I really believe that there's not enough actual landscape nature imagery out there. And I'm just going to go and start filming it like.

So you took the money and you went overseas to Iceland and I said, you have a camera?

Yeah, I had my own camera and stuff. Yeah, I because I come from the media world and was doing the Dracula side, I had the gear, but I always kind of held back from my doing my own business

because I'd always believe I didn't go to school for business. You can't run a business. And what happened was I started listening to a few podcasts that really got me inspired to be like, no, like you don't need to be having gone to four years university to start a business.

Like, you just need to do this, especially if you are an expert in a certain area that, you know, is the market. Right. And I knew that one. I've grown up in the church my entire life, so I know what kind of works culturally. I know how to produce content at a high standard, but then also make it affordable, like I understand how to build a budget. Right. So like me going to Iceland, I think I had twenty five hundred bucks all in for the entire thing.

That's flights, food, car, everything. And I spent every last cent of it, but I didn't have money to go over. And that's why I like I literally slept in the car a few nights like with my sleeping bag because it was too cold. It was like minus ten. I was up in the highlands of Iceland and in my winter sleeping bag in the back of the car, and then I'd stop at gas stations when I ate breakfast to charge the batteries for my camera, because in the car you can't really know what to charge for a bigger camera.

Right. So this is like but this is like the world that I love. Like, it's it's like roughing it, but like, you know, that you're producing something of such high quality, but you're not seeing a lot. And me seeing what my competitors were doing, which are just big, more like bigger organizations, I was able to kind of just run around like a chicken with my cut my head cut off and make all these quick moves and adapt really fast, especially in the early days.

And that's what kind of really got the thing going is one. And like, truth be told, like my own church, when I came back with the footage, my own church, like the guys who are running the screens at the time, said, no, we're not going to use your stuff. It's not like the right feel for our church, like it was still feeling very early. And after the first year, like I still know the church, the first my first customer that signed up.

And so, like, it's wild to think of, but like it took three months for me to get my first customer. And then once that ball ball got rolling, I kind of figured out what people wanted. And we kept on upping the quality and the time and money was spent on everything. So, yeah, that's how it kind of got started. So, yeah, like and as you're saying, like, this is like it's funny, but the three of those eight players that I told you about all live on the east, the north and the west of the GTA.

So it's just funny that this city worldwide, I would say, has three of the eight and then the other five are US based. But then the three of us are all like the GTA, which is just it's mind blowing. Right. That's so concentrated.

Yeah. So concentrated. And notoriously Canadians are just late in Canadian churches are even more late to any party that's happening. So if so, if you have three of the eight of these people out of in the entire world, we really have this type of level. And most churches probably have never even heard about you like here. I'm sure a lot of your market is America, so ninety five percent of this market exists in the US. The US as a culture are have more churches per capita, especially when we're talking about the the Carolinas and the south, like into Texas, like everyone goes to church down there, like it's more of a cultural thing.

Even if they were if they're not necessarily Christians, per say, it's culturally built into the fabric, which is why you see every president who ever comes along goes to attend a service down there, regardless if they are part of the religion, feel that was still going to go to church. And so the biggest advantage in this is something for all creatives to know, especially as Canadians, is when working with the US, especially with digital only products.

We have a massive advantage over our American neighbors to the south because one, you don't pay sales tax on digital only goods. So that's huge. And then you have I mean, it's getting a little bit worse now, but you have a dollar advantage for every dollar you make in the States it turns into. When I got started, it turned it into a dollar thirty. So that's a 30 cent advantage over your American counterparts, right? You get to profitability way faster for every American dollar that you make.

And so that's why you see this charge. Everything in Canadian dollars. No US dollars because. Because the market advantage. Right. Like you want to have that market advantage. You also want to make sure that when you if you know your customer base is going to be in the US, you make sure that you're charging them in their native currency so that they aren't behaving like why is there a currency exchange on my credit card? You'd rather explain that to your small majaw, your small minority of customers rather than to your majority right now?

That makes perfect sense. And there are so many churches who are looking for that type of content. I feel like a lot of times when you hear about businesses that are geared for churches in the tech world or the media world, it's usually an American dollar. And if that's just like the standard for especially for digital products, it's what people just expect us to like. Like especially when you think of all that is involved of like getting all your offense in organized and all that kind of stuff.

Like so many expect this can get out of hand very fast. But it seems like you put kind of a lid on it and like, OK, I know my budget really well and I know what I'm going to need to do to keep producing these assets. Now, here's the inherent business flaw in this model, which I know you've you've overcome already, but let's talk about it in terms of you can only go so many places and you can only afford to go so many places to get so many types of content.

So how do you multiply yourself and go to like every country in the world and get the rated fourth in the water from the glaciers and the mountaintops? How did how did you how did you like sort of come that big obstacle of like. Well, twenty five hundred in one location, we got a lot more places that I believe to go to. How do we do it?

Well, honestly, it has been me the whole time and it's the economies of scale. Right. Like it's at the start. I couldn't afford to do that. I could afford to do that as much as I really wanted to know if there wasn't a global pandemic happening. So once once like charging what I charge. So it's two hundred dollars US per customer, which is not a lot. So for people that are like graphic designers or are listening to you or videographers or just anyone that does contract creative work, this is this is one of the hardest things to do when you build a business like this.

That's a sad business. That's a reoccurring revenue model is you have to eat your profits. You have to say goodbye to them for the first bit. And that's the hardest thing. When I talk to creators who are like, yeah, I want to build a business, I want to build a subscription business. And I have to say to them like that, you have to get off that contract high and low the ups and downs and be prepared to just not make a lot of money at the start, because this is a long tail game.

This is a work hard, a lot up front, get nothing for it, eat a lot of macaroni. But then when the flywheel gets going, when it starts ramping up into the right is when you when you're in when it's so much better financial, it's exponential. You're no longer dealing with having to fight hard and hustle for that next contract for that next three three K gig, the next 10K gig and building a budget for each time you're doing that right.

Like once you get off that cycle, it is huge. And it took it took DMC probably a year and a half, two years to get off that cycle like it wasn't making a ton of money. But if you keep things really affordable and are really strong as a on the business side, then you're set up for success to the point where, like what DMC does today, I would never, ever in a million years have been able to do building a contract business, even with employees like.

There's just too much up and down, right, like especially when you see what happened to a lot of contract businesses during the pandemic, we rode through that wave like it was nothing. Right. I was I was fearful at first, but I remember saying to my to my wife, like, I'm glad I'm not doing video contracting anymore, because obviously that would have dried up. And I think what I've done and what even my competitors have done is the future for creatives is to learning how to monetize, monetize your skill and the product you create rather than just your time.

And that's most creators are just always taught, like here's your hourly here's your daily wage. Here's what you should charge. And then as you as you evolve and get smarter, you learn to charge per project and you try to kind of gauge the client even that is starting to get outdated because every person that lives that world has had feast and famine where you're just like, oh, I'm doing great. This is going to be an awesome year. And then March 20, 20 hit Syria like, oh, no, never mind.

And so I have a very similar story that I've felt like I had. The biggest contract I ever had to date at that time was March. And I just like normally I don't tell my wife of a deal unless it's like for sure she might get me more emotionally attached to the idea of, like, wow, you're going to be working for this person, are doing this type of project. So I let it slip like, hey, we're about to find a deal that would be worth about twenty.

K is going to be really good for the business and they just haven't signed. And the everything got shut down, at least in Canada. And they said, hey, we're just going to hold off. And I'm like, we're right there. Yeah.

Yeah. We prioritize over what they really mean. We're going to see if we can afford not to do this unless we actually have to. Then we'll move with that. But it's true. There's so many ways inside of a business like this and, you know, you can find yourself where you're you're now under a lot of pressure. But what I'm understanding about, Jane, because, like, you're you're really good at seeing the bigger picture like you saw when nobody saw.

And you thought so clearly that you were you were able to convince your wife to give you your honeymoon money and travel money to go and do it. But I think if you're the person in charge, like we talked about title at the beginning of this relief, you're the president. The president is the buck stops at you. But also you need to kind of carry the founder vision. Therefore, where are we going to be in six months, where we're going to be in five years?

And there's something to be said in terms of like the longevity of your business and how you guys have continued to grow. You know, you say you get around five people now working in the business and how how do you find hiring? How do you get the right people? Like, you know, I feel like in the last maybe eight months I've been in that zone where I'm like finding the right person who feels having the right systems in place.

Is Keith almost more important than what you're actually doing and what you're actually feeling? You know, you need to have the right people around. You have the right system to get the job done over and over again. How are you going to overcome that?

It's really hard and it's absolutely an adjustment. Like, I have three full time people that work for me and then six contractors. So it's just I try not to say, oh, there's ten people because the contractors aren't full time, but that's kind of the team who I'm in communication and communication with every single day. And yeah, it's really hard because no one really trains you, especially as a creative me working inside of some bigger businesses. I never got to sit in on hiring.

I never got to sit down in that part. If there was someone that was hiring for either my boss or up here, they would maybe tell me the last bit. Hey, we've hired someone right. Like the management. So that was something that I really had to learn. And I've even made some mistakes. Like the first person I hired, I had to let go because it ended up being not the right fit for that person as far as their stage of life and what they are prepared to do and like work inside of a startup.

And so it's been a lot of kind of like falling on your face. But now the three people that I have working for me full time are fantastic. And because I had to just learn how to ask one the right questions, to come up with the kind of philosophy on like what what kind of people you want to work with. Like, are you are you trying to build a family or are you trying to build a sports team where it's just the best?

Only what kind of information are you going to set as far as expectations or about to start? So what I learned from that first mistake is when I was hiring, before I was hiring, I set the expectations really

high as far as when you show up to work, what I'm expecting, as far as quality of work, what you're going to hear from me if I find a mistake like. Saying, like, I'm going to be direct, like setting that expectation right off the hop, but then also learning to really value those people and if they're going to go on the ride with you, then reward them for being on that road down that ride with you as well.

And it's not just that these people are expendable. And so I've kind of always taken a bit of a hybrid approach where we're not a family, even though I have a family member working for me. But but but I'm also like I demand good quality. And we've had things that have happened on our site where mistakes have happened, where it's kind of like you have to bring the hammer down sometimes because for our customers, I demand better. I demand that of myself.

When I make mistakes, I do my best to just get out and own it and learn from it. And so then I also set that expectation for my employees. So, yeah, it's really hard, especially in today's world where everyone is working in some way, shape or form remote, where we're not in the same room always now. It's really, really hard. Obviously, you just have to do a lot of work. It's a lot of diligence.

It's a lot of doing, Zoomer calls it. And when I've hired people now, I hired a few people recently, contractors, and it took multiple. Zoomer calls for me to get a feel of people like you have to find out if you're going to connect. How much do they know about you, how much research they bring into what you're hiring for? All that really, really matters. And so that's that's one area that I know that I'm still maybe like a five out of 10, like I'm still learning how to do that same thing.

Do you consider yourself a startup still?

Yes, because I love startup culture, like I like when I started DMC, I had I had wanted to do something for five years, but I knew I didn't have the idea to invest. And which is why I convinced my wife to spend the money, because I have been listening to these startup podcasts for years. And just like getting so excited by everything I heard. Right. And like the idea of the startup land and Silicon Valley was always something that just was fascinating to me.

Like, I love every moment of it. I probably consume right now while I'm working probably 15 to 20 hours a week of startup related podcasting, because that's what keeps me inspired. It pushes me like to hear to hear people I consider myself like I'm like I'm like in the league. Right. And it's and it's awesome to look at the people like the LeBron James of the world in the doing it way better than I know I can ever be.

But it inspires me to push higher. And so when I listen to what some of these companies are doing, and I've never wanted to raise money or anything that would be hearing like their drive, and they're willing to adapt and like face hard realities and pivot. These are all things that we've done here at VMC. And so I never want to lose the startup mentality because a startup mentality, especially as a small business, like what we would be considered in that world, if you if you start kind of coasting is when you run into problems, right?

Yeah, I would say some of my competitors coasted for a while and which allowed us to gain market share because we were hustling and like adapting and pushing the envelope like we were the first people to do for K and then six K and, you know, I bought DJI inspire drones so that we could just do awesome, like constantly doing something that no one else was doing it. That only happens when you have a startup mentality, when you have a if we don't pay the bills next month, we're getting locked out.

It was never like that. But you have to remain with that mentality to constantly push and strive to be better. And I don't I don't ever want to stop that. So I will always tell people, yeah, we're a startup, we're a startup because we're never going to take investment. And I don't know what the future of the business is, but I know that for me, when I'm in startup mode is when I'm working my hardest. And that's a good thing because I love this.

This is this a work for me. This is passion. So if I tell people like I, I work my jobs. I had before I

worked 60 to 80 hours a week. I don't do that for this anymore because I have three little kids now. But I do have time, like I'm all in like I love this. Like it is not it is not draining for me. Right. Like I'm an extrovert and an introvert. And so the introvert side of me is the artist that creates the content.

And the extrovert is the guy you're talking to right now, building the business. And so this is not draining for me. This is like this is energizes, right? So I'm all about it.

So many people, they they they only think of themselves as artists and they think of themselves as a creative or a creator. And, you know, I think a very unique aspect is when you take the artistry and you apply it to certain business practices, you know, and you say, OK, so like like yourself, we're very similar this way where I'm introverted, extrovert, I'm obsessed with business marketing and how to run a business and all these different things, because I feel that that's the differentiator.

You can be super skilled. It can be an amazing sculptor. You can be a great painter. You can be the best car salesman or whatever. But if you don't have the business acumen to grow whatever idea you have into something else, you'll only reach a certain point. You know, you have the person you have to become to become successful. It's way more important than actually the thing you're doing to become successful.

And I think I think that is something that you can learn and grow into as an artist like. So I'll speak to what you just said to like I started more on the artist side because I didn't believe in myself, because I had this false narrative that I needed to go to school to become a business person. But the truth be told is over the past five years, the more that I engage this business side of things, the more I realize I actually enjoy the business side more than the artistry side now.

And like you just said, I've told this to every person I've ever talked to is if you're going to be successful, you have to learn to run the business and be just as good because, yes, there are artists out there who make a great living from just being artists and let someone else handle it. But that is the one percent of the one percent those people can get by on talent alone. The for the rest of us, I don't know about you, but I count myself in the ninety nine percent, you know, the rest of us.

You have to be great. Your craft and you have to run a smart business as well to be successful, and if you're not doing that, is you are probably that person that's stuck in a job right now that kind of does what you want to do and you have no idea how to get out because you're just doing the one side and you're allowing someone else to run the business side of things, whether it's on a big company and we all know it to be true is that if you're on the artistry side, the doors close and if you're on the business side, the doors open and Syphax and that is just facts.

You're not going to be in those meetings. You're not going to the there is a ceiling and it's really short. Like for the artist, the artist stays. There's very few places to go up unless you are out of a big graphic studio. And those are far, few and far between only if you want to get through. So that's either out of business or if you're running your own business. I think plenty of people who do freelance who pull, you know, under the national average for salary, well under the national average for salary.

And they are talented. It's because they don't know how to hustle. They don't know how to conserve their finances. They on a save. They don't know how to invest their time and energy into the right things. They buy all the brand new gear but have no clients to use them on. It's things like that. Right. And so like you were saying, once you engage that business side and you learn how to build yourself a spreadsheet and come up with an action plan is when you when you actually allow your creative work to then reach more people.

And so that is the biggest challenge, I think, for people that has been brought on by the pandemic actually has accelerated. This is you need to figure out how to build your own website, like you should be learning those things and start learning the business side of things. Right. Like don't be afraid. Don't be ashamed to say that you're a newbie. Get start start down that road on how to learn that, because that will just save you time, money, energy, headaches, it sets you up for the future.

And what really drove it for me was I remember saying to my wife, like, what do I want to be when I'm 60? Like, do I want to be the guy that's just contract video guy at the church when there's 17 year olds running around with new gear and I'm the old guy who will never do anything, it just kind of does the same thing over and over. Or do I want to be the guy who's hiring those young guys to work for me and then passing the mantle on to them?

And that's where I'm headed, as opposed to being that old guy who just works at the same job for thirty years. And really his skills stop twenty years ago. Right. Because we've all seen those people push yourself.

I, I used to be so proud to feel that I was a designer. I went to to design course, the high school and college, all that kind of stuff. And I was so proud of it. And I had somebody asked me literally like two days ago confirming what they'd do. I said, are you a designer or a brand specialist with. But you're a designer doctor for real design. I said, I don't tell people that anymore.

I'm a business owner of a manager. I don't do the artistry the same way that I do, but I like I do now. Right. Like, it's just different when I was younger and therefore more like a freelance and I didn't know the difference between freelance and business. I, I was just the guy. I did some tax paper that I did the design stuff and I kind of just made it work. And the more, you know, our agency started to grow and the client started to grow and there were more onboarding processes and different things that had to be taken care of to manage.

OK, so we hire a junior designer. OK, so we'll hire a project manager for my the I'm I'm like I'm the art director, I'll cast vision, I'll help steer the ship, but I'm no longer like the designer. And I think that in the type of work that I do, that's more necessary in the sense like we we still are a contract based business where we're constantly drumming up new business. We have some recurring stuff. We have some digital products, but most of our stuff is contract stuff.

And so there's a lot of closing deals, getting paperwork, having a few meetings with bookkeeper's and project managers that just have to be maintained underneath my purview. I don't know. I feel like we're very different. I like you, too, but I also am like a serial entrepreneur where the multiple idea that different stages. So we're we're getting that agency is kind of on this trajectory right now. We're really happy with it. So finally, I've been sitting on this next idea that we've been OK, let's cut it, bring this one out and kind of start to format it and kind of get all these things shaped up together.

So I can't be the person who's got a designer logo, but I can be the person who can give the direction and get you the thing that you want. And I think the higher up you get in the game, especially in my world, in marketing and branding and stuff like that, and web design executives, people who are at the top, who I speak with, they only care about the transformation of the. Care that you actually built the logo or that you actually coded their website.

They just want the end product when you're speaking with somebody at that level of of Executive A. They only care about the end result. And if you're going to produce something that's going to be stress free and be able to assure them what you see, what you think you're going to do, you're going to do it on time and all those things, that's what matters more than the price will matter more than the knowing that you are a designer. So I don't go around saying that I'm the designer, even though I love the by every once in a while, you know, somebody think I've got a fix for the baby.

But all I have to kind of get at this year, I still got this. But yeah. Like to your point man, I don't want to be 50, 60, 70 years old, still needing to design logos to to to retire and to put food on the table. All these different things there is once you start to activate that business side of your brain, you'll see the business and everything. So it's kind of like I had a friend who took me out on a bunch of filming projects.

You probably know him. Gotra pazzo we with a bunch of film projects, we would film all these different places. He taught me some of the things that he knew about creative work and about filming and about cameras. Once you know that information, you see it everywhere. Oh, that's how they do

that shot. And they pulled that for a commercial. Oh, I can see how they cheated that in that movie. I can see all these different things.

But the same thing with that business side of your brain, once you activate and you believe that little idea, that would just kind of flow past my head before I can see how that can be a digital product. And it won't take me long to set that up and it could be on recurring and all that kind of stuff, and it could be digital and set it up in a couple of days of just a simple Shopify website. And you start to you start to see the world through a different type of lens.

And it opens the door to so many things because I feel like a lot of people have the idea that I'm going to do this business about it forever. And I think the moment you start to really start ramping and doing the work of an entrepreneur or a business or any sort of idea, you'll start to get the itch for another idea. But if you don't have the business skills, it'll be hard for you to start to do all these other things.

I don't know. Are you a little bit like that to where you got different things in your brain all at the same time?

Yeah, I've got to stop myself from starting something new all the time. And so what's actually changed over the past year for me is I've decided that I'll start investing my time and energy and resources into other entrepreneurs so like invest and partner with another entrepreneur. So I had an entrepreneur come to me last January and say with an adjacent idea to what I'm doing and so I can invest in long term investing in this startup. And now my role is more just as an advisor.

We talk once a week and that's how I'm getting to play in those other sandboxes without totally distracting myself from what is my core business. Right. And so I found I had a couple of Leather's ideas I started playing around with. And what I learned was it was actually just sucking all my time. And I really wanted to make those ideas work. I had to dove into them like I did with visual media church, which was easy to dove in for three months and just pour my time and energy.

But I don't want to sacrifice this amazing thing that I've got going. I love what I'm doing with a church. And so this was a way for me to start dabbling in those other things and planting seeds in other spaces. They still get that fulfillment and I still get to have these kinds of conversations and I get to help another business grow. And then again, long tail, like I've put time, money and energy into that business and have seen zero reward from it yet.

But I know that three years down the line is when it starts paying me back. And I'm excited to be on that journey and watching this business grow steadily and surely, like it's exciting to be around that person. The person I'm partner with, he's leading it, but I'm just the partner in the background that might be there. And that is awesome. They're going to be more of an investor advisor. And I want to do more of that because now I discovered like, I love that.

And this is like that's what I listen to in podcasting as I listen to people, investors and seed and investors talk. And like, I love that aspect of your business. Oh, it's awesome. I love it. Like, it makes me so excited. Like when that person messaged me, they were just looking for advice. I'm like, I got to like, see like their deck and I got to see their website build and they're content they were making.

And so the more we talked, the more I said to like I was just saying to the guy like sounds like you are looking for like an investor and adviser and he's like, oh one hundred percent I think I am. I said, what about me? And he's like, oh I was scared to ask you. So it's like great let's let's talk then. Let's go, let's go. Let's get into the nitty gritty here. And so that's where I get to kind of use that energy.

But with visual megachurch, we're constantly adding new content. Right now we are stepping out and investing about. Much more time and money that I've always held back from, we've kept everything internal and now, like I said, you have hired these six graphic designers to work for me. And so we have we're starting to like hit the content game harder than we've ever hit in areas in that I'm not an expert, I'm not a Photoshop graphic designer, which is why I've hired six people to do it.

And then we're also leaning in heavily into our Espanol, our Spanish friends in the South, because that's one of the things we constantly get from churches, especially in Florida and Texas. Do you have Spanish graphics? There's a huge Latino population down there. And so we're leaning and heavy into making graphics and content specifically for that community, which already kind of exists in our membership. We just haven't been servicing that minority well. And so we were like, OK, well, no one else is doing this well right now.

Let's how do we do that? So, like two of those graphic designers are bilingual speakers, two guys, a guy in Arizona, guy in Maryland. And like, I'm super pumped to like because they just have a different design. Stay there. They are of Mexican descent, like they're coming with like different like fresh perspectives on I would never do the designs that they are doing. And so I'm starting to see, like, great diversity in our content, like, I'm loving it.

So I'm super pumped. That's all just started in the past three weeks. And so it's a big investment on our side. But it's also really cool to start seeing some unique content that I never would have created.

Yeah, and you mentioned something so good there. You know, understanding your core business also means you never are willing to sacrifice the main thing for something else. But, you know, I mean, I feel like you could have another side project, but there's no way that, you know, like this this show, this podcast can knock something off of the core business class a lot. What I'm most passionate about, I love agency. The building of it, the running of it.

I love the scrum of the agile, all of the friends, all these different things that have happened inside of an agency of how we all work together as a team and everything is all happening together. I can never sacrifice that for a podcast show or for marketing for the podcast. And that's where you always have to select that first. And it's like kind of like a state of mind where you're like, OK, I know what is most important to me and I'm willing to make sure that I protect that at all costs.

You know, like I know we spoke briefly. You are you live right now just outside the GTA in Toronto, but you're planning on moving and stuff like that, right? Like you're you're also like doing the same thing. But in your personal life, I'm protecting the theme that I want the most. So I wonder, like, how is that working for you specifically? How's that working for the business? Like, I know people I don't know if you used to have an office, but what does that mean for your staff?

Know, are they doing everyone's remote now? Are they all forced to move with you, like in your basement or what's going to be a huge adjustment man? So like basically last September, we moved through in the pandemic, we end up getting what would be my dream office space. Like any designer out there, if you find me on social, you can you can see are the office space. It was 15 foot ceilings, warehouse building, top floor, old elevator up, painted white brick walls, big giant picture windows, all on the one wall.

I had a filming studio set up in there. We all had office space. We had a living area, a little kitchen, the dream, a meeting room at the front, the dream. But what ended up happening was my parents ended up deciding they were going to move. So all my family is kind of in the same area. So my parents had said like, hey, you know, your dad's getting closer to retirement. He's a pastor.

And so he's going to take his last job. He's leading the big giant church. He's an accepted this position out Nova Scotia. And now four years like I'm very adventuresome, as you know, someone who is willing to risk the wrath of his wife by spending their vacation money. And so for years, I've always said to my wife, like, I would love to go live abroad. And she's always said, absolutely not. We have no family.

Like I said, I did a trip to New Zealand for VMC. And I was like, I fell in love with New Zealand. I said, we should like with our kids, just go move there for a couple of years. But it doesn't make sense. Like we own a house here in Toronto. There's so many things tying us down. My dad's originally from Ireland, so I suggested to her, like, I get my British passport and let's go live and work in Ireland for a couple of years again.

She said, I would love it. We have no family. All of our friends are here. It doesn't make sense. And so then when my parents decide moving to Scotia, I was like, well, like Nova Scotia meets a lot of the things that we're looking for, like get away from the big city. We in the housing market, we could afford a bigger house. Like there's just a lot of advantages, a slower pace of life.

But what really helped me back is like I've always been very vocal that. I don't want my employees to work remote, remote stinks, it's horrible now through the pandemic, as you know, in the GTA, we've gone through three lockdowns, lockdowns, all forced my guys to go work from home. And I had this big, beautiful office space that I was occupying. It was six hundred square feet and just me. And so the more I sat in there alone, the more I said, I'm paying I'm paying close to two grand a month, which is actually really affordable.

Yeah, it's cheaper to tobacco than to get you a closet.

Yes, literally.

But still, it was just like it's just money going down the drain. And the more we got comfortable with remote learning, I remember about learning remote working you got it became more feasible. It's still not the ideal. Like, I still 100 percent believe the best way for my team to operate would be to all sit in the same room, the camaraderie, the, you know, the water cooler conversations, the ability in the first 30 minutes we talk about sports and then we deal with a customer together.

We deal the problem together. We all huddle around a computer and look at the code and figure out what the issue is like. It's that kind of mentality. But now that the business has grown, it is still a startup mentality. I also just think about what's best for my family and lifestyle wise, moving out there made the world of sense to us. And so, yeah, it's a huge lifestyle change. It's moving to remote. So wound up happening was because we were able to move remote.

I was able to give my full time people a raise because of the money that we're saving on rent. So I was able to kind of give them a raise. We're able to put that money to work in other areas. And it's just going to it also opened up what I discovered, a secondary effect that I hadn't really thought of, but then ended up making sense afterwards is I actually just gave them freedom. So both guys that both all three guys that worked for me all are renters in the GTA.

Someone lives in Scarbro, one's in Whippy and the other ones in Ajax. And so as soon as I announced to them, all three of them said, oh, like, this opens up for me and my spouse. Two of them are married. One is getting married this summer. We can now think outside the box on what to buy at home and where. So it actually it opened up a ton of opportunity for them to say, like, oh, I'm not now tied to where I am.

I can now think so. One of my guys has explored, like, moving ours away from the city because now the opportunity is open to being like instead of having to try to buy in this crazy housing market, the GTA. What if I went three hours north? What if I moved out of Provence? So I know him and his wife are are discussing like, hey, maybe we should move out of province, maybe we should move to Halifax like they're talking about it.

So it actually opened up opportunities that build into the quality of life for my employees and actually doesn't affect the business at all because the more I thought about, the more I was actually still kind of operating under my original, like do contract video business, which was an older mentality. But we are a we are an online company. Like we've never physically interacted with more than a couple of customers. Everything is online. Our entire existence is online. Half of our customers don't know that we're outside of the US.

So what does it matter if I'm in Nova Scotia? And so that's where with these six graphic designers that I hired, I was always only hiring people locally here and all six of them are now spread out. So the six designers I hired, one of them is in Australia, one of them is in London, UK and then Arizona, Michigan,

Maryland. And I'm forgetting the last one is but spread out around the world. Right. And so that actually is going to make the company stronger by me kind of taking those chains off.

It's now opened up opportunity for the business to get stronger, where I was probably holding it back with this mentality that everyone has to be in the same room. So there's definitely some pros and cons, but one, it's going to save the business some money to release those chains of what I was holding the business back with hiring to now truly be like a global company where we can think outside the box. We're starting to talk about like, OK, what does it look like to offer twenty four hour customer support?

OK, well, we have these connections now in Australia. Then we need to hire someone else in Australia to when we go offline at five or six, that person is coming online. We're now a global twenty four hour company able to help anyone around the world. We do have lots of customers in New Zealand and Australia, a few in the Philippines and Indonesia, one in Japan. And so we're able to now really think on a different scale than just like our little company in.

Unveiling our little office that spreads out, we're just kind of existing out in the world now and yeah, that is huge. And so then, yeah, like a part of this movie to Nova Scotia is where they'll find a house with a basement apartment that can then be my office. And so off of work work life balance is better financially. It makes sense for the company. It makes sense for all the employees. And we've built a system now where we are just constantly on message or chat in the background with any questions if they need to fire them at me.

It's just up on a separate screen and we communicate all day long through that and just we're firing files back and forth. We've come up with a whole system on how to share our files and it's working. We've got the pandemic forced us to practice it three times where I was kind of like beating my head against the wall. And I finally, after the third time, just got into it just fine. I'm leaving. I'm gone.

Mike, thanks for your thanks for our politicians and the work, the great work that they've been doing to lock up both with the frustrations they have abroad, have forced us to adapt, which that's a good thing. That's get through. The business is actually growing because of it, like it's continued this uptick of growth that we've had. And it just actually makes it like our growth was still going up. To the right, I'm in reverse, but up to the right and then.

But what not what we've done now is despite the growth, we've actually cut expenses. So expenses are tailing off. So that's for more profit. Right. So and with more profit means that then you can invest that money into more people, more content, more media. Because of the three of eight competitors that I told you about, I'm I don't know. It's really hard, but I'm like, No. Five or six, I would say.

There are a few who I know are much bigger, who have been around for 20 years, who have a stat like one of those big competitors who we work with. And we're actually really close with them. And we ship when we share our content on their site. They're a company of 10, 15, 20 people right down in the state. So they are much bigger, but allows us to start producing content on the same level because we're using the market advantages and saving money and all kinds of places to be able to invest back into the business.

Exactly. Investing back in the business, I think like an accelerant. You're pouring gas from the fire because if you're doing something good that people are giving you money, you might as well pour more gas on it and make the fire bigger and multiply. And if you do that like simple math, you know, if I do this and I got this result, well, let me do a whole bunch of this and so I can get a bigger of the result of the five and, you know, they go ahead.

Yeah, yeah. And because we're a membership model for every dollar that we invest, even if you don't make it back in the first month, it lives forever. Right. And so if I produce a piece of content today that goes on visually achurch, it spikes its popularity, but then it just lives for like ever in a tails off. But we're talking five, ten years. It remains, and it holds a certain percentage of value. So when you're dealing with a contract, you just you get your hit, you get your money and you walk away and then you

hope for a repeat and repeat.

With this, you invest a dollar and you let a tail off and there's Alucard and membership value that has a tail life to it. So for every dollar you put in, it lives and continues to produce dollars back for you over time, which is what is the mind blowing, which is the exponential growth that you're talking about. So content and value does not die the minute that you create it, it actually lives forever. Theoretically, obviously, content ten years from now is going to look terrible.

But I'm noticing that content I made four years ago if makes money for me today. Right. I see the value of it continues to grow over time. And so that's where you're investing dollars back into what is just a giant pool of assets that continually grows. The longer this company goes, the more value it has, the more our pricing has never increased. So the more we grow, the more valuable we come to our our customers. So, yes, we're comfortable, says Warbelow.

You're forty five thousand pieces of content like that is nuts for only two hundred bucks. And I get to download it all like, are you kidding me? It's a no brainer, right? And so that's. But in the start when you're so small, it's really hard. But as you start growing, that's where. Yes, investing time and money and dollars back into the content that you're providing for them, just your business becomes more valuable to the customer the longer you go.

James, I've learned so much from this conversation, not just what you just said, but all throughout your business acumen have been, you know, on display right now. And I'm super stoked that you are here today. Where can people find you? Where can people find the VMC and kind of get to know more? What you guys are doing there?

Well, you can go visual media, church, dot com, you can find there. You're going to see my lovely face on the very top of the homepage when you load it up. So you'll see me there. You can always reach out there. We have a Facebook group. If you are a church creative, we have a Facebook group of I think it's about to hit forty two thousand people that is more than doubled in size in the past year.

So you can join church creatives. You can find that on our website too. There's links to it there. Join that Facebook group and is killer. It's growing. It's got a lot of stuff going on there right now. People from around the world talking church media and just media and cameras and tech there. That's our group that we started just a couple of years ago. And it's huge. It's one of the biggest of its kind in the church media space.

And then you can find me on Instagram, either at a church or just the letter J. J. I'm sorry. Actually, it's James Alexander Adams on Instagram. Find me there. I'm I'm super accessible. If you messaged me, I will message you back. I'm not shy, so I'm not that popular so that it's not like I'm getting millions of messages. I got like five thousand followers if you want to be one of them. A message me.

I'm there. What we can chit chat. I can set up a convo, a zoo meeting, new virtual coffee, because I will be in Nova Scotia in a couple of weeks. So, yeah, I'm accessible. I'm there. Let's do it from the more like podcast. I'll catch you guys on the next one. Peafowl, guys.