

EPISODE 5

Special Guest Brendan O'Keeffe - The Consulting Curve...

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Introduction: Welcome to another episode of the Consulting Curve, the community approach to clients and consulting brought to you each week by Biz Drivers.biz founded by Peter Selby, a trusted profit and growth advisory to companies and consultants around the world. Tune in each week, and learn how you can take that journey from corporate to consulting.

Kevin: This is Kevin Pruitt with another episode of the consulting curve. And we have a very special guest with us Brendan O'Keeffe is going to join Peter Selby and myself this week. But before we get started, just a quick recap of where we've come so far in this series. And Peter, we've we talked about just really tried to introduce the idea of what it's like to advise in the new economy, that's kind of been the overarching umbrella that all the conversations we've had to date have kind of nested under. And we've really gone through the first of I guess, the key drivers around sales conversion. And each week, we've kind of focused on a different area that the first week we talked about company brand. The week after that we kind of dipped into the sales closure code. And we kind of finished last time with branding and growth operating systems. And that was such a great conversation really talked about, you know, just really talking around the difference between warm networks and cold networks and the Pareto principle and you know, the 80-20 rule and see so many things as that when we could have talked about we could have had an hour and a half an episode. But Brandon, we just wanted to kind of close this first, I guess, quarter of the of the podcast here with just bringing somebody on and really talking about just what's the practicality behind the things that Peter has shared in the first three or four episodes we talked, the first episode really was just kind of laying the groundwork for for what we were going to talk about in this series. But Brendon, we'd love for you to introduce yourself and just tell tell our audience a little bit about you. Right, well,

Brandon: Right, well. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Kevin. And thank you, Peter. So as some may pick up, there's a bit of an accent hidden in there. So I'm marlind originally, but I've probably spent now half my life in Australia and been blessed to do so. I guess my career started off very much on a typical bias with industrial chemistry and master's degrees and so on. But I realised two opportunities and so on. I drifted from the technical into the, let's say, the hedge or recruitment space, not long afterwards, pretty much when I arrived to Australia, the land of opportunity, really. So that's taken me on a journey really over 20 years of being embedded in the recruitment industry, with a very strong profile that's been carved out in supply chain in particular. to various

associate Business and Industry Association, some I was lucky enough to connect with Peter some time ago when it was actually in the forum. I think like this actually, Peter, where we connected and we we had a podcast, or two. Oh, yeah. Yeah, so funny. We were doing this again. But I suppose for me, I was at a juncture, maybe it's the midlife crisis, I'm not sure where all I knew I wanted to do more with myself my brand. But I also knew that I wanted to be connected with an organisation where, you know, I could find that was true partnership and value alignment. And I suppose the opportunity, you know, did arise to be become part of business drivers advisory support, in effect. So the but that was a journey in itself. Because it wasn't a case of just, it was a mindset, I had to be prepared for a journey I had to be prepared for but you know, the ups and downs and so forth, or consulting, self-employment would look like. And I think that the beauty of that was to give me time to reflect about what I really wanted. And you had to be very clear in your mind, about what expectations you had of yourself and what you wanted to achieve. And then I suppose it was about the plan. Peter and I spoke about the plan in detail, you know, over a number of weeks to months, ultimately, and I had to commit to a plan. So for me it was you know, it started off being simple, but it expanded to being a more broader plan. and which which we had a nickname for Peter, which, which is a great analogy to this. But for me, it was really about thinking about what can I offer work? Where's my value? What am I recognised for? What else can I do, that can create value, be it for clients that I work with, or had a history with, but also into the future. So, I think, you know, we went through that process, it was probably in effect, three or four months, longer, probably to be fair, but there was a hiatus with some personal factors that we I was working through with my family. And ultimately, you know, timing, good fortune, things like that come into play. But I was able to, then my plan started to evolve in real practical terms. And the journey, you know, six months later, it's been a hell of a ride. It's, I wouldn't have anticipated the opportunities that I've been afforded in the last six months. But I think there's an element backing yourself. There's also an element being open to opportunities. And I think also stretching yourself. And I've, I've probably had the opportunity to grow in ways that I never thought were me before. Take on further education, which I had, I hadn't gone back to, let's say formal education, it was 25 years or more later. And that was awesome. But I think it was a mindset change, really, that underpins all of that. And, you know, I'm very grateful, you know, for the opportunity, I guess that in working with Peter, that it's afforded me to be here today,

Kevin: Brandan, and I'm telling you, you, you just you stick around Peter for long enough. And that testimony is contagious, because I love the way you framed just in a pretty quick order there. The whole idea of kind of being on your own, but part of a community. And if there's any, there's no other message that we convey in this entire series. It's just what is the beauty and that it's really the tagline of this of this podcast, it's the community approach to clients and consulting. I mean, you literally condensed that. I'm Peter, I think we're done. I think we can just hit stop recording. And I think he's covered everything you want to getting, but now what a what a way to frame that. And I've seen that not just with you but with others that you know, Peter has has come in contact with and and it is it is repeated over and over and over again. And there's a there's a real you can you can be grateful, because things work out business wise. But there's a deeper level of appreciation that I mean, it's there's a real heart felt appreciation for somebody that that Peters gonna blush here. He's on the on the podcast with us, but that you can tell that he cares, too. I mean, he really does. He cares about the people that he works with, and, and that shines through and

everything that I've seen. So, Peter, we'd love for you to jump in because Brendan and I are just having our own conversation here. So.

Peter: So yeah, look, I mean, it's interesting, some of the things you said there, Brian, and especially a bit you mentioned at the end about reeducation. And we talked in depth last week about developing your own brand. And one of the things that we talked about if you remember, Kevin was the fact that people are often not clear about what their brand is until they trip across something that ignites them. And, you know, Brandon has really grabbed you know, he has come across from his deep roots into supply chain methodology into this whole idea of a circular supply chain. And circular industry, there's a lot of people talking about circular economy, but not many people actually doing too much because nobody knows what to do next. And the rubber hits the road in the supply chain, really. And so, Brendan has developed his own brand of being an expert in this circular supply chain space, which is quite a unique but certainly cutting edge place doing that and has taken that by the horns, you know and gone back and gone back to to educate himself further on that topic and be able to add that sort of value to customers. And again, that comes back to this whole concept of embracing opportunity when you see it. And I think for me, you know we talked about community and we've talked about our process. And I think it's a mixture of those two things. If you're there is a whole learning curve to consulting, there's no doubt about that. And it's a lot steeper than people give it credit for. You know, people quite often fall into consulting from other things, and expect it to sort of take care of itself in some ways, and it just doesn't. And I think if you've got supportive a community, from a customer, from a client and consulting, space, that really helps us do that curve. But similarly, having good process around the stuff you do, especially in the areas, we've been talking about cabling growth, really reduces the amount of time required, and puts a lot more systems and reliability behind that whole thing. And I think it's those two things. And I guess my message is, really, for anyone out there, whether you're part of a group, bikers or not, those levers are still critical, and that learning curve will be very steep. It's a bit like a ski jump, I think.

Brandon: I can attest, I can attest absolutely to that, Peter. And Peter knows exactly what I'm referring to here, Kevin. So one of my goals was to enable and win a supply chain consulting project, it hadn't been something I'd done previously, not not typically in the sense of a full scale, optimization. And it was based on I suppose relationship with a client who had trusted my advice, and in previous engagement, sought some advice from me. And it ended up being in engaging business drivers. And I mean that as a team, not me as an individual, it was very much about the team, and the calibre of other consultants that collectively, were at the pinnacle point now of delivering at the end of a very intense period, supply chain optimization process. The conversation started, though, interesting, and Peter has mentioned earlier with discussion about circular supply chain. Now the business is on a journey, to evolve into a circular supply chain and to take take opportunities, but before they went anywhere, and knew that they needed to optimise their existing linear supply chain. So you know, it's really interesting, where it's fueled by some of the things I've said earlier about hashing that needs to come from within. I wouldn't say I'm a greeny by any stretch. But I think I've seen the opportunities that exist, or let's say the ways that are created, which is now really a resource, it's a matter of how you look at it, and how organisations no longer should be, but they need to be optimising their resources. And it is the collaboration is the key here, you know, in so many different sort of multifaceted areas. And I think it's

exciting, because we are at a point now where, you know, globally, it's going to become more and more and more critical, to the point of mandatory that every organisation even down to individual households, we're doing more to make better choices. But it's sort of this, you know, I didn't realise this six months ago, maybe even four months ago, until, you know, maybe I stumbled across it, my network aligned, I was being involved in sustainability discussions. And it's sort of, you know, culminating, it's exciting from where it sits today. And hence, I undertook a sustainable supply chain management programme, which is very intense to University of Cambridge, for nine weeks straight. And, you know, the learning of that is just awesome. But I think it's what I'm able now, you know, in many ways to advocate others, and, you know, make more businesses aware of the opportunities, even if I'm not the organisation, or the individual, who may capture them for them, but at least to create the awareness. So if that can be my legacy, I'd even be happy with that.

Kevin: Just about the community, like adding to the just the depth of ability and skills and experience that you could bring to bear on a project. But one thing that we talked about, as far as you know, joining in the community is that it did not As exponentially expand your abilities to deliver, and it expands your resources that you can bring to bear and just the learning curve. But one thing we haven't really talked about is that, in my mind, it would also bring accountability to you, as a solo operator, you're once you're joining community and you have, you know, high achievers that you're working with on a project, you know, all boats rise in a rising tide. So the whole idea of when you're working in a team, you know, everybody has got to raise their efforts to, you know, to fit the, the effort of the group. And, and I mean, I see that as a huge benefit as well, because it's so easy to, you know, to wake up one morning on your own and just say, I'm just not feeling it today, you know, and, you know, dive in and just, but if you've got to, you've got a lot of people counting on you to deliver. I think that really is another benefit that, you know, to this this community approach. It does.

Peter: There's something else that we see, you're right, it does lift the bar for everybody. But also people end up doing things that have never dreamt of doing not that long before, you know, their own belief in their own capability goes up as a result. And they end up doing things that they would have built up or certainly would not have been comfortable with doing. Before that before that time.

Brendan: Absolutely. You know, if I reflect on the last six months, about what I have delivered, achieved, conquered many ways. The previous, you know, if I take a rear view mirror look versus, you know, looking forward from in the six months past, it's the two different stories, I wouldn't have envisaged what was possible, what I could do, myself belief, but squarely I would say that it was felt empowered by Peter in particular. So thank you, Peter, but also with the community that I worked with. So I couldn't have done this on my own. I needed the skills and resources of people within business drivers, bad from moral support, technical subject matter experts, right through to, you know, when times are getting a bit tougher, you know, they don't back you.

Kevin: They rely on you too, though, Brendan, I mean, it's, it's you talk about a circular supply chain, there's also a circular benefit to being in community, so

Peter: Oh, totally. Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, it does become very interdependent. But interesting to hear that journey, Brian, and, you know, I've been obviously personal quite involved

in, in your journey over the last six months, we've seen some of the things that you've done recently that I'm sure if I told you, you'd be doing those six months ago, you'd have laughed at me, I know. But

Brendan: I would have never believed you. I don't think I did believe you.

Peter: And interestingly, we see this pattern in business genuinely, you know, even if you go in, to accompany and assist a company to do something they couldn't do before. That lifts their capability as well. And, and as a consultant, no matter how many times you've done it, you learn something yourself in the process. It's always it's always a, a mutual benefit from taking people or companies to new spaces. And, you know, everybody games, I think.

Kevin: What are some things that, that when you think about kind of the whole idea behind sales, conversion drivers, and I know it's pretty early days, still for you, Brendon, but I promise you, if you've been around Peter, you've had those drilled into your head, and you're seeing those in your sleep, you know, so to speak, but tell me how those have kind of come into play, you know, in the early projects that you've been involved with?

Brendan: It's great question, so I probably had naturally I'm a relationship engagement style. And I think for me, what it's been a badgers maintaining focus, and staying true to your plan. So you know, Peter and I, we talked about playing a focus strategy with clients that you felt there was an alignment or relationship. And I think what what's transpired is exactly that with a few major clients who trusted me, you know, there was some long term history Three there, which back there, but they trusted me with things that I might not have trusted myself with, which is a strange thing to say. But I was afforded opportunities to undertake projects that wouldn't have been in my normal wheelhouse. But I think, you know, I've trusted my process, my experience, and I probably underestimated my, the value of my network. You know, I have an expensive network over 25 years now, a fairly extensive LinkedIn repertoire, a good reach professional network, you know, which, but I think if I look at the fundamentals of sales, for me, we're, it's really about the relationship connection, you know, being able to add value. You know, it wasn't always about I needed something from an organisation. You know, in many ways, with some of the other work I had done with an organisation or supply chain industry community, I had been a volunteer for four or five years, you know, literally contributing to a to a community. And I think somehow people remember that you, you were there to support the advisory, add some value, and be available. And I think people remember you for that to a degree. And for me, it wasn't sales. It's funny, sales has never been about the selling, it's more been about driving value for the customer.

Peter: Yeah, that's very interesting, rather than its appointment tends to get lost quite a lot. If you think about the successful companies, they're successful when they're not selling, and they're adding value, or they're helping solve a problem, or they're the focus isn't the sale, the focus is the customer. And, you know, you talk about drilling process into people's minds. Kevin Lee, I mean, Brendan is naturally aligned to that sort of thinking, but our processes all around that at the end of the day, we're successful, because we don't sell anything to anybody.

Kevin: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

Brendan: That's, it seems like a very odd statement. But it's true. Because I think if you, it's not a thing, I know that if you're authentic, that's how you will be perceived. And that's the value that you offer, because of the integrity of what you can offer.

Peter: So three rules of business, be honest, be honourable, and don't be greedy. Yeah.

Kevin: Well, I know that Peter wanted Brendan to come on the podcast, because I mean, where you are in the stage of your of your progress, but also the fact that you you're doing it and doing it well. And so as we wrap up, because I know we've caught him between sales calls, so we want to, we want to honour his time. And I know he's got to run to another...

Peter: Interesting, he's got to close a project out for a client. So

Kevin: Exactly.

Kevin: Brendan, as we close today, man, we just wanted to tell you, thank you for joining us. But I, I would just love for you to just take a moment and just talk to someone that may be a little further behind you on the journey that may be thinking about stepping into this space, what would you tell them about, you know, your journey in the last six months?

Brendan: Yeah, I think I needed to learn about myself is don't underestimate yourself. Believe in what you're capable of, you know, put put married to dreams in a way, but have a focus. And I think it's really around. You need to have a discipline around what you do, and stick to the plan. But then I think it's also about where I've, things have come at me come to me, I would say rather than come at me, which I never would have perceived, and I was brave enough to take the opportunities.

Kevin: So, to wrap up, why don't we wrap up today, I appreciate you taking the time and just reiterating once again, the value of you know, not only being encouraged and pushed, you know, beyond your own limits, but the value of doing that in community. And that's the whole idea behind this podcast is the consulting curve, the community approach to clients and consulting. Brendan, thanks for joining Peter and I this week, and we really appreciate you taking the time. It's been a great episode. Peter. Thanks again.

Peter: Always fun looking forward to the next one.

Brendan: Thank you. That was awesome.