Matt Wagner:

Welcome to the Main Street Business Inside podcast. I'm your host, Matt Wagner, Chief Program Officer at Main Street America, a nonprofit leading a collaborative movement dedicated to strengthening communities through place-based economic development and community preservation. Each week, join me as I travel the country and take a deep dive into the personal journeys of downtown and neighborhood entrepreneurs. The stories that far too often go unnoticed and unheard, whether you're a small business owner who wants to learn from your peers or community leader looking to better support your local business base, Main Street Business Insights is here to provide you with the tools, strategies, and personal stories to help you and all of your main street businesses thrive. So subscribe now and tune in every Wednesday to get inspired by the individuals driving our communities forward.

Welcome everyone, to another episode of the Main Street Business Inside Podcast, where I'm actually back in the field, which is great. I love it. And in the absolutely beautiful Bozeman, Montana. So I got to do a quick commercial. I feel like I'm a representative of the tourist board or something like that, but I got to do some hiking yesterday. This place is amazing. I don't want to contribute to the hyper growth that I know is present here, but oh my God, if you're out on a tour or thinking about a vacation spot, come here. Incredible. And not only is it incredible, with amazing views from the main street, but I'm actually in one of the coolest stores I've been in called Heyday. I'm with the owner, Mallory Dabney, and I'm just actually blown away. I walked into this place not knowing what to expect outside of seeing her amazing e-commerce site, but I think they have done one of the best jobs I've seen in really creating brand identity within the store.

I'm really building up Mallory here so, and seeing how that transitions to her e-commerce site as well. But it's amazingly inventoried, meticulously curated with Montana inspired gifts and jewelry and home decor items. It's absolutely just lovely. And I will say I am a Yellowstone fan, and so I quickly noticed the Yellowstone branding with the Beth Dutton collection, which I was like, yeah. So Yellowstone fan, come to the website as well, or come to the store hopefully. We've got a lot to cover off on this week's show. So I'm really excited to have Mallory, although I'm in her place but,-

Mallory Dabney:

Excited to have you.

Matt Wagner:

That's right, that's right. And so welcome to the show, Mallory.

Mallory Dabney:

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Matt Wagner:

So wonderful to have you. As the audience knows if you've been a listener or a watcher on the YouTube channel, we'd like to start with sort of a journey, and one of the things that I highlighted in sort of my intro here is that the amazing growth of Bozeman in some ways you've been part of that, your husband's from the area, and about five years ago, you all made the decision to kind of move back. And I wonder if you could sort of interweave that decision and then what you were doing before and then how did that lead into, oh, I'm going to buy a business.

Mallory Dabney:

I never thought I'd be a business owner, which is actually really interesting to have landed where I have, and I'm very grateful that you're here to help us tell our story a little bit more. But yeah, my husband grew up here in Gallatin Gateway, which is at the mouth of the canyon before you go to Big Sky. Born and raised. We met out in college in California, which is where I'm from. And in 2014 he looked at me and was done living in San Francisco, and I was shocked and I thought we were going to raise our babies there. So we made the hard decision to move. And at the time we were both working in corporate America. He was in actually the solar industry.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

And I was working in corporate retail marketing for a beauty company. I love my job. I had amazing opportunities, but for our future, I knew that maybe living in San Francisco was not for us. So we moved in 2014 and the job market as we landed here was very different than it is today. It was hard. I was a California kid, I didn't hunt, I didn't fish. So finding a marketing job,-

Matt Wagner:

It is big here, folks.

Mallory Dabney:

It's grown a lot. It has grown a lot. And so now the marketing jobs are certainly maybe a little bit more, but for me at the time it was hard. And so my husband knew this place, he had friends, and so I kind of had to integrate into the community, which felt hard. I'd never really left home. And so I've never been pushed to do that.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, that's a whole new experience.

Mallory Dabney:

It is. It is. And I guess, how old were we? Around mid-20s. That's new. So it was,-

Matt Wagner:

Now I'm feeling old folks.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah. So it was an amazing experience. We landed here, he started his job, and I went on the job hunt and couldn't really find much, but I became a wedding planner. And in hindsight, it's how I met some really great people. I mean, you made so many connections that way. However, you also give up all your Saturdays and Sundays in the best time of the year in Montana, the summer to weddings. And so I was again, found myself struggling to integrate into the community, make friends, spend time with these new friends. So after that, I found a job downtown, just down the street at a store called Meridian for the previous owner as her assistant buyer. And again, I came from corporate marketing, so I was working on big campaign, not really boots on the ground in the stores. So started the job and really learned, I mean, she taught me so much about buying process, procedures, just like the rigor of retail, which is amazing.

And I was hungry for it. I was looking to really just learn something new. And then how I landed here was I was there for about two years. I had had a baby, our first kiddo, and Lisa, the previous owner and founder of Heyday was hiring for a store manager. And I'd always loved the store. I just, whenever we come visit, I'd always come in here and just spend hours, just I loved it. And so when the opportunity came to potentially join this team, I had to jump on it. And I remember meeting with her I think twice and yeah, I started here, I want to say in October of 2017.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

So you had a little bit of a ramp. Walk through then the process of now you're the owner. You went from assistant buyer, store manager, working your career through retail. Now what's,-

Mallory Dabney:

Like the buying process?

Matt Wagner:

No, but more so the buying process, yes, of purchasing the business, the decision making that went in, especially with your family and the impacts that small business ownership can have on sort of work-life balance.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

I knew I was really lucky to have Lisa who was incredibly honest about how hard it is to be a business owner.

Matt Wagner:

That's the truth.

Mallory Dabney:

It is hard. It's still hard, but it comes with great reward and especially as an owner who I am here five days a week, so I'm a very involved owner. But that process, I mean, I remember when she approached us about the opportunity. There's a little self-doubt, right, of someone who start, a founder who started it, like am I filling her shoes? What do those shoes look like? What are the expectations of me? Can I even afford it? I mean, that was the big thing. Can we even make this pencil? And so I think, again, having Lisa here to facilitate those conversations, she was very transparent about the financials of the company. My husband's in finance, so he had some great connections to get valuations done. And the big piece is I had to do it at SBA loan, which is an incredibly rigorous process and for good reason.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

They really do,-

Matt Wagner:

[inaudible 00:08:25] for you.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah. You have to go pitch yourself to these banks. And then they also have to pitch it to the SBA to make sure they're backed and they're betting on you basically, you and your ideas and also the current business. And we, Scott knows from a few local banks who for different reasons probably, I'm not really sure, but we found one and through the SBA and we got creative with seller financing. So kind of the combo of the two really allowed the deal to go through. And we closed February of 2019, which is actually really interesting. If you remember, January of 2019, government shut down. So we were supposed to close on January 1st, second, whatever that day was. There was no money from the SBA was being released. So we had this month gap of basically Lisa still paying her bills, but I was like, but I'll pay you back.

Matt Wagner:

Oh, wow.

Mallory Dabney:

Until my money comes in from the SBA.

Matt Wagner:

Oh, wow. Yes.

Mallory Dabney:

So it's always been, I think having to be well nimble in that process. And again, as she was there to ask questions about. We had one kiddo at the time, we really wanted to start thinking about expanding our family. Can I do that as a young mom with now two kids? Can I run a business?

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

It feels like, what does a travel look like? Just so many considerations that she was able to be there for, which was really helpful.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, there's a lot bundled up in that. There's the mentorship of it, of having existing owner willing to just share ideas and give guidance even throughout that whole process and in some ways post process. There's the financial side. I'm really glad that you mentioned sort of owner financing. I think a lot of small business owners or prospective entrepreneurs think that there's kind of like one pathway to ownership or financing or that kind of thing. And I guess the importance here for everyone out there is that there are a lot of different pathways. It's just sometimes you got to be creative,-

Mallory Dabney:

You have to be creative.

Matt Wagner:

About it. The other thing I'm sort of wonder tied to that, you talk about going through the SBA process. Did you have sort of a circle of supporters, agencies, organizations that you also turned to? Or was this more of a solo effort? You built out the business plan and the strategy, you went to the bank. What was that like?

Mallory Dabney:

I know. In hindsight, I probably could have tapped into more resources. I actually got my MBA in college right after I graduated very young, and I wouldn't necessarily recommend that, but could've gotten a better MBA running a business. So I had an acumen, I had an idea of how to do it. We'd written many of them in school, many of them in school. So I kind of knew what I thought was the way to do it. And then the bank certainly helped us through it for sure. Right. They wanted us to do, they wanted us after they'd kind of approved us, they wanted us to get through.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

So they helped us a ton. Accountants, lawyers, making sure all of that is ticked and tied was a big piece of it. So there is that upfront cost.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

That's not something to look over. It's like there's going to be those costs of just doing the due diligence, paying for valuation.

Matt Wagner:

Exactly. Yeah. But it's the smart approach.

Mallory Dabney:

It is.

Matt Wagner:

And all of your professors back at school are applauding right now. Yay. Go Mallory. You took this knowledge and put it to play.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

I want to talk a little bit about brand. I think brand is something that from a corporate perspective, there's a lot of dialogue, but small businesses have to think about their brand identity, and that can be in lots of different forms. It can be sort of in a physical sense, it can be in the name itself. I wonder how you think about brand and the experience of the store and e-commerce and sort of the sensory elements of the store because I do think that, like as a newcomer coming into your business, that does seem to embody some of your brand, but I want, like what you think about that.

Mallory Dabney:

Well, I love branding, and I always have. I think coming from corporate marketing, you're exposed to so much conversation around brand and the importance of it and that every little detail matters in a brand. And so how I think of our brand being Heyday, and a lot of this, again, it was interesting to buy a part of that, right? You're buying a brand. And then we did do a rebrand five years later. But I think of it as a person, like a brand as a person. Who is the Heyday, who is Heyday? And I call her her, but it could be just, it's that very joyful, lighthearted kind, and if you can almost think of them as a person, as a friend, you can really and there's a persona. Right. And how does it look and feel, and what are the senses around it? How do they speak?

And that has always helped guide a little bit of how we buy. When we're buying, is this on brand? Is this Heyday? And where we push and where do we push those limits a little bit, certainly in every marketing. I think where we've been very successful is being very thoughtful about our branding. And where we put it, that it is done right and it's done to the standards that we paid for in our guidelines from photography, social copy, like what does that voice look like? So really just taking good care of it.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Yeah, owning it and protecting it.

Mallory Dabney:

Is important.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, it certainly drives how consumers are responding to the store. And so from that standpoint, it's foundational to the business. One of the things that I picked up on that I just loved so much is on your website you have a publication, it's called Heyday R.E.P.O.R.T.S.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

And folks, I was in awe of this. It was so beautifully done and curated and thoughtful, and I felt connected to it. And so I just want to say what it stands for, and you can go online and see this, but it stands for reading, eating, playing, obsessing over. So what are you obsessing over? What are you recommending and treating ourselves to? Okay. And I'm just wondering how did you come up with it? And then I just want to do a special call out, one of your staff members, Lisa, who was talking about Oktoberfest in Munich. I was just there two weeks ago. Lisa, maybe I saw you. I don't know. And the millions of people, but I thought that was so cool. Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

That's awesome.

Matt Wagner:

Tell me about R.E.P.O.R.T.S. How does that fit into brand?

Mallory Dabney:

So that's new for us.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

And it actually was originated, I actually don't know if, I don't think we're the originators of it, but it's from our team. So Tessa,-

Matt Wagner:

I'm going to claim it.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah, we can claim it. Tessa is our operations and marketing manager, and she is one of the hippest like gals I know. And our team has always brought us great ideas. And that's kind of what we foster, is an environment where if you have an idea, like we may not say yes to them all, but let's throw it out there. Everything's on the table. And this is one, a great idea. We've always known that beyond the product, like beyond the store, what you see upstairs in the store, it is the people. It's the human experience that you feel when you walk in, how you're greeted, how you feel when you leave and you feel full and filled up, you feel seen. And so the best way for us to connect those two from a digital and in-store person experience is really connecting our people to our audience.

And so we've always seen that in social when we post photos of our team behind the scenes of what our team's doing at an outing for a report. That value of, I really love what you have to say, and I want your personal opinion. I mean, we always, on the sales floor, we have a lot of tourists in Bozeman and they come in and it's a great conversation and they're like, "Well, where should I go hike? Where should I go eat? What about lunch? How's this place?" And we love that. And that's exactly what R.E.P.O.R.T says. It's that opportunity for our team to share what they love. And maybe someone starts watching a new show because Emma recommended it.

Matt Wagner:

Exactly. I instantly felt connected to the store and looking through that, and I felt like you were in essence creating community within the store. The other thing that I find interesting about what you were saying is that I think oftentimes if you have a staff or what have you, that maybe there's the expectation as the owner, the entrepreneur, to have to in essence own all decision making and all ideas. And it seems like you've created in some ways sort of an entrepreneurial mindset culture and an innovation culture here where people percolate ideas and we test things. Does that resonate with you as an owner?

Mallory Dabney:

It does. I mean, that's a place where I would want to work. As an owner, but also as an employee, it's how I would want to be invited into a company. I always say, when you're hired, that trust is granted there, and with that comes ideas and openness, and that's what we want from you. That's why we are bringing you onto this team, for your new ideas, fresh approach. That's only way forward for us to evolve. So yeah, I mean I think I love that you say that, that that's the feeling because that's certainly what I hope, is that our department heads and then for them, their teams are encouraged to make decisions. And we may talk about them and we may have a different way forward next time, but I love that there is that autonomy and that confidence to make decisions.

Matt Wagner:

I've always thought that sort of innovation occurs at the crossroads of different people's backgrounds and experiences. And it seems like you've established a team kind of concept here that allows for that. I think that's critical from a small business ownership standpoint. One of the other things that struck me, and I kind of knew it coming into our discussion, but visually I was blown away by it. And it really is what I think a lot of small businesses are desiring to do. Some are at different stages of their journey relative to a bricks and clicks strategy and how digital and e-commerce can work with a physical store, as well as how do you sort of curate an experience that is much easier to do in store because the sensory elements than in a digital.

But I just think you've done an outstanding job. And I wonder if you could get into a little bit of the, maybe as they say, the X's and O's, the blocking and tackling kind of thing, the football, but how do you manage especially inventory, some of the differences between what you've got on your e-commerce, your website and what you have in store? How do you manage that process? Could you just talk a little bit about how all that works?

Mallory Dabney:

So our e-commerce store is much younger. They certainly did not start at the same time. And so in some sense it's still a startup. And so we're still navigating a lot of those plans and strategies, but we have had it since about 2015.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

So we've had it for some time. Certainly so grateful we had it well-established going into the pandemic.

Matt Wagner:

Huge. Huge.

Mallory Dabney:

It just obviously went through the roof, but that has evolved. Managing inventory, it's something we're actively looking at of like, do we need an online buyer to really manage it? Right now, the buyers manage almost the online store like it was another brick and mortar shop.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

So allocating goods, if we have one candle, how many are going online and how many are going in the store? Now, sometimes as many people know, everything can't go online of what we have in the store, right?

Matt Wagner:

You've got to keep some exclusivity kind of thing.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

We can't ship everything. It's just too hard. It's not worth the potential damage.

Matt Wagner:

That was my duh moment but.

Mallory Dabney:

And so there's a little bit of that, of like is this need to be smelled or seen or can we even ship it? So I would say right now we maybe have about 10 to 15% of our inventory online that is also carried in the store. Of the total amount in store, about 10 to 15% is online. So it's quite a small portion. What we've seen online is we kind of get these one hit wonders, is what I like to call them. They just take off mostly because of content creation. It's a great product obviously, and we put the marketing dollars behind it in social advertising and email marketing to push it so we can really focus in on our efforts and our marketing efforts and then almost buying can follow it. We can just replenish and feed that beast.

So that's very different where the store experience with traffic rising in Bozeman and foot traffic, it's been an easy like, not easy, but it's a little bit easier to move things around, right, and re-merchandise things, tell a different story. You kind of have photography, copywriting, and then the marketing piece on the digital side. So your levers to me are a little bit fewer. So it's a different tactic almost for each channel.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

But we are still figuring out the best way to manage that inventory, what should go online, what shouldn't go online. There's a little subjectivity in there, which is hard I think.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

But we're still trying to optimize that process.

Matt Wagner:

Is it just sort of out of curiosity, how have you seen sort of the percent sales differences between the two? And then I wonder if you could also just comment on sort of the viral nature it sounds like, of how certain products, like is that predictive or how do you just, okay, we're going to, like yeah, I think you said feed it.

Mallory Dabney:

Right. It's hard. I think that is what, as a buyer is really frustrating. It's like, great. Right. This is selling so fast. Amazing. If we could predict it, we could buy it and buy more of it and have it on the ready. So I would say in my opinion, and the numbers would show, again, I think this also speaks to the online store just being younger.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

It is more volatile and it also has gone through a pandemic. Right. So we have seen these big peaks. I would say right now it's starting to kind of level out for us.

Matt Wagner:

Like a new norm almost setting in.

Mallory Dabney:

A new norm for online.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

And then the store kind of had that too after an expansion. It had some big peaks and then that one has also, but I kind of feel like we're at that place where we have some decisions to make of, what processes, what structures need to be in place to then if scale-ups is what we want.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

But the viral nature that you mentioned about debt [inaudible 00:23:39], there's a lot of things that are very lucky. It's just like the structural, the timing is, the show was very popular. The earring is a local vendor. She's a friend of mine who made these earrings. They got picked up by the actress and she wore them on the show. And there's these images that are incredibly valuable and it's just, and then we have the money to put marketing dollars behind it. We have put money into the content creation. And so there's a lot of things. We can get the inventory, we can get it fast, we don't have to wait and we get it in a week tops and we kind of know exactly what to push and pull. However, about maybe I would say when the show took a little hiatus,-

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

We feel that, right? So I think that part is predictable, but you don't know what is going to get picked up.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

So you don't know until you're really have to hustle and chase it.

Matt Wagner:

That's so fascinating to think about, just the huge swings on the digital side and then kind of steady as she goes to say on the other side. Speaking of which, on the sort of bricks and mortar,-

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

And one of the things that we commonly talk about are the intersections between community and store. It's something that in many ways sets main street businesses apart from maybe the big sort of behemoths out there is that intense kind of connection to community. Here in Bozeman you have fundamentally two large markets, a vested local market, and then this what's growing, this huge tourism market. What does community mean to you in terms of how you think about Heyday?

Mallory Dabney:

I mean it's everything. I mean, I think Heyday's is one of the longest standing retailers in our downtown corridor. And to me, I always looked at it as a cornerstone of the community,-

Matt Wagner:

Like an anchor.

Mallory Dabney:

Like an anchor. And really when you talk community, I think of that as Heyday. I mean, Lisa was always the first to say yes to a new project, a new nonprofit needing a platform to share ideas and get that out into the community. And so I think that was established long before my time. But continuing it is important. And I mean it's not beyond anyone at this organization that we could not do what we do without the community, both here and all the tourists that do come and visit here. I mean, it is amazing for this business, that we do have that type of tourism.

And so I mean from a community standpoint, I think it is top of mind. It's one of our core values, is to be at the front of that. And so that looks like a lot of different things and not necessarily have to be big and splashy. We host a reading corner for little kiddos on Friday.

Matt Wagner:

That's cool.

Mallory Dabney:

Where one of our staff members, which was her idea, she dresses up as a storybook fairy.

Matt Wagner:

No way.

Mallory Dabney:

And reads a few book to kids. And so that's seasonal, but it's again, it's like bringing people in where it's not about the shopping. We know you may find something, but really it's about making you feel really comfortable here, making you feel like you have a place here that is beyond a retail experience. So it could be that. It could be bigger things. Downtown Business Association, and I'm a big proponent of doing those because I think it's important when there's solidarity and participation.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

So art walks, ladies night, crazy days, like we're all in on those because I also know because of our platform, if we're going to go big on it, the other businesses will do it too. And it's just best for everyone.

Matt Wagner:

That's the strength of being an anchor, is you can also help out your other sort of small business colleagues. It helps to present a sort of unified front for the entire downtown.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

One of the big things that through our conversations you probably gathered, I love trends, I love understanding sort of where things are going or whatever. Could you talk a little bit about what you're seeing on the horizon when it comes to a business like yours? What are you tracking? What do you look at in order to make maybe pivots or shifts in how you're adapting the business? What role does societal or technology or economic trends play on your business?

Mallory Dabney:

Sure. I mean, we are actually thinking about that a lot. I'm a little embarrassed to even admit this, but we've never had a traffic counter in our store until,-

Matt Wagner:

I'm sure you are not the only one.

Mallory Dabney:

I don't know. I guess just as we didn't even think about it, but it's been amazing. Again, data is so powerful and I think it's really helped us. We are astounded by how many people come in our doors and really tracking that conversion rate. It's a great number for the sales team, but what it informs is staffing moving forward.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

Right. So we have always thought we had these shoulder seasons. We've always been like, okay, October, it'll slow down. Early November it'll probably be a little quieter. But then obviously our go time is mid-November through December, and then also on the front end. And what we're seeing is that there's not a big slowdown. Traffic is there. So our staffing needs have definitely need to adjust. The other thing that I think about a lot is as a retail shop that has four walls, we have slat wall, just about every nook and cranny of that store up there. So many displays as you saw, is that that will start to get, I mean there's just no more room. So we're going to have to get smarter about how fast we turn it, how quickly we move inventory in and out of there. And so with that though is there's an opportunity to really understand what the strategy is for us online because sure, that's untapped. You don't really have to put a ceiling on it, but we have to build the structure underneath it,-

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, exactly.

Mallory Dabney:

To make sure it can support it.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

And we've been a little, maybe we probably have cold feet about we're slow to hire, I would say probably more on that on the online side only because we're still learning what is it going to be. Those trends haven't, we're starting to see them, but it was incredibly valuable for a while. So it's hard to know as an owner and certainly as an e-comm manager, how to staff it.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Do you see that play out, just out of curiosity, given the volume that you're doing on the digital side, and I get it, that it's sort of new, but one of the bigger trend lines seems to be sort of like web-brooming where maybe you can carry lower inventory levels at the physical place knowing that maybe people are doing sort of mobile shopping or will come in and if you don't have it, maybe ship it to them. Does that play out or people talk about that at all or are you seeing any of that?

Mallory Dabney:

Not really. I mean, we haven't seen that yet for us. There's a lot of ways that we're trying to connect the two. One of them is in-store pickups for,-

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

Just making that easy-peasy for people who are at work and need to get a quick gift, do it online, and then they just run in and grab it. So that's an easy way, but not,-

Matt Wagner:

Not where it helps control on the inventory side.

Mallory Dabney:

Not.

Matt Wagner:

Not so lucky there.

Mallory Dabney:

No. No.

Matt Wagner:

What about just in terms of like, you alluded to tracking, thinking about metrics and goals that you all track, are there forms of data that you leverage either through vendor markets or whatever to kind of better understand where the markets that you're in are heading?

Mallory Dabney:

Interesting question. So we work with an inventory, I say advisor, consultant, and he's worked with Heyday since day one.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

I actually worked with him also at Meridian. And so in that conversation we meet monthly and we go department by department, e-comm and the brick and mortar store and really see, what we can see trends in those departments. It's for open to buy mostly. So it tells us, okay, you got to go buy X amount of candles. But the value in that is he does also work with a lot of other businesses.

Matt Wagner:

Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

And the company also is much bigger where they have a national perspective. They're seeing what gift stores are doing, they're seeing what, I mean here, there's a lot of businesses here that work with them. And so I love that because you can feel a little siloed,-

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Exactly.

Mallory Dabney:

Beyond what you see on the broader news channels, which is like retail is X. It's like, well, that's not quite right for, is that small business?

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

And so I love that conversation with him, which is like, tell me what's in the big Gallatin valley, Big Sky area, are people hitting plan? Are they pumping last year? Are they struggling to get inventory? I mean, those conversations are incredibly valuable.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. I love that you say that because I think one of the biggest things for a lot of small business owners is just that gap between what's happening on a much more macro, which tends to be nationalized or even globalized these days.

Mallory Dabney:

For sure.

Matt Wagner:

And it's not very sort of sector.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

So you're hearing about sort of the economy and very broad swaths, and then you might be able to pick up some very local just by talking to your peers. But then there's this sort of missing middle. And it sounds like maybe through suppliers or whatever, you can get things in aggregate, but I think that's a lot what other small businesses struggle with. So I appreciate you sort of picking that out as maybe a tactic that other small businesses can leverage. I want to talk a little bit about the future.

Mallory Dabney:

Okay.

Matt Wagner:

We've been in the here now. What's the vision? Where would you like to go in the future with the store?

Mallory Dabney:

It's a big question.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, it is.

Mallory Dabney:

Yeah. This is a little bit of a sidebar, but our team does a crowded table conversation where we put an employee, a team member on the spot and they tell their story and this is going somewhere,-

Matt Wagner:

This is great. Okay.

Mallory Dabney:

But they tell their story to the entire team and their background, kind of what we did today in the beginning. And then the team can just fire questions away. It can be professional development, it can be personal, it can be how did you balance being a new mom and going back to work? Anything is on the table. And it's been incredibly valuable because we are a team of 40 people. And so things, sometimes you don't see people at work every day and I think we have a lot of people with some amazing backgrounds. But my point is that question was asked of Alex, so what's next? What's the future? And I think right now we, I think I mentioned this a little bit earlier, we're at another point where it's time to kind of re-strategize vision, do that again. I did that obviously when I purchased the business, what I wanted to do when I came in, when was it going to be a good time for a rebrand? I think now it's almost like our structure is still trailing a little bit of the growth.

So it's time to look at, like really getting nitty-gritty at, and I'm excited about this. I think it'll offer amazing opportunities to our team, our current team. And obviously the business, is what is actually just not working and we're only doing it because we've always done it. And so that could be roles, it could be different ways of processing inventory, it could be a lot of things. I think just that deep dive and I feel like we're there, and that is not a glamorous answer.

It's not five more stores or anything, but to me that would offer so much value to this business and the longevity of it, is to do that type of work. And I like we're there and the online store is part of that. Right. So the online store needs that real strategic exercise to get into like do we want? I think that's a big question for business owners to ask themselves. I've always had this a little like go, go, go. We need to comp those numbers. We need to increase. They got to keep up. And I think it's an interesting question to ask yourself of like, what do I want to grow this? Does it have to be 20%? That comes with a lot of other things.

Matt Wagner:

Right.

Mallory Dabney:

Right. So sustainable,-

Matt Wagner:

It could change your entire dynamic of the,-

Mallory Dabney:

Oh, it can mature pretty quickly. And so what is that? And so those are kind of the big questions that I think our team and we have a senior team is excited to dive into. But I would say what's in the future is really honing what we have, really sharpening the edges to make sure we're doing things super efficient. And you've walked around here and it's an amazing, well-oiled machine, but I don't know, I love that idea of just where are the little opportunities that will make us look that much more efficient?

Matt Wagner:

Exactly.

Mallory Dabney:

Maybe we'll actually have more work-life, working towards more work-life balance. Where can we find those spots for people where they don't feel overwhelmed when we get back from market? So I think there's lots of opportunity and coming our way and it just feels like that time.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

For sure.

Matt Wagner:

I'm smiling a little bit. I smiled throughout the whole thing, of course. But that hits home because even in the nonprofit space, we've had incredible growth. And you start thinking a little bit about how the infrastructure of the entity, the organization or the business, is a key pace. And it's probably the last thing because you're so focused on sort of the growth and achieving things with your customers and your employees, but oftentimes it's just the last thing that gets taken care of. But without it, like the foundation, it can sort of crumble without it, so.

Mallory Dabney:

For sure.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. So glad that you mentioned that. I always like to close out, there's sort of the beginning and the end of the show, but we're always interested in the advice because obviously, of course Mallory wrote it down.

Mallory Dabney:

[inaudible 00:37:58]. Yes.

Matt Wagner:

Is to really speak to your peers out there and sort of curious about what advice you'd get to either aspiring entrepreneurs or those that are knee-deep right now. What's your thoughts?

Mallory Dabney:

So I think I have a few, I have three. The first, and you heard me probably talk a lot about our team is cultivating a team dynamic that is resourced. And I think for a long time, that is the thing that I know for me as a business owner, it's scary to, you feel like you're going to get, are we going to hire too many people? And then is this a payroll issue? But I've always found that when a team is a resource, they feel supported in, whether that's support of more people, more hands, your time as much as you can. And an empowered team is the key to success. And again, a team that feels empowered, happy to show up to work. Again, it goes beyond the items on the shelf, it's the feeling that a customer gets when they walk in. And so it's all very entwined in the success of a business and the customer experience.

So that's the first thing, is cultivating a team, offering opportunities for them to do some professional development, personal development. We oftentimes have our team go through insights discovery, which is like a personality test I guess, but it's far more in depth. And then we take time to talk about it and it creates a vulnerability amongst our team that then we can learn and really strive to be better communicators. So that's a big one for me. The second one is this too shall pass. And it's something that my business coach says to me all the time, because I get it, like there are so many stumbling blocks along the way and things that you're like, oh my gosh, should I just, should I sell?

Matt Wagner:

Yeah. Yeah.

Mallory Dabney:

I mean we've all been there. If you're a small business owner would I'm curious if you're not, if you haven't been there, but it's just that there's silver linings in everything. I mean, we took a warehouse space that we tried for two years and it didn't work. And I think many could look at that as a huge failure and waste of money, but it taught us a ton about what we value. And so this too shall pass is a great just breather reminder,-

Matt Wagner:

I love it.

Mallory Dabney:

When you're in the thick of it. And this last one goes along, very closely alongside that is just remembering to be kind to yourself and offering yourself grace because you're doing a great job. You truly are. If you have the courage to show up and do this type of work every day, that is brave. And so remembering that you deserve that grace when you do mess up, right, where you miss something, that you're doing a great job and you're offering your team and your community something really amazing and beautiful.

Matt Wagner:

Wow, I came into this inspired and I'm leaving more inspired. Mallory, thank you so much for all your insights and thanks for allowing me to come out and,-

Mallory Dabney:

Yes, thanks for,-

Matt Wagner:

Sharing your store.

Mallory Dabney:

Thank you.

Matt Wagner:

Wow. What amazing interview and gained insights from Mallory Dabney about her business Heyday in Bozeman. One of the most impressive aspects of my visit with Mallory was actually a part you didn't even get to see. We often talk about the value of so many main street businesses, this incredible in-store experience that you get that's the sort of differentiator or the competitive advantage of main street businesses, but also the ability to carry that experience into a digital presence. And I think that's really the next evolution as we continue to grow and scale main street businesses as part of the retail sector. And as you give a sense of the in-store experience that strikes the senses or even incredible back office functions like in the case of Heyday, the back office operations covering marketing and e-commerce fulfillment with inventory and shipping were just absolutely amazing. And I think going forward, I so wish I had a recording of the physical setup of some of these places that I visit to sort of make that visual connection for the listener or anyone watching on the video on YouTube.

So maybe food for thought is we continue to grow out the show. I just want to say a special shout out to Ellie from downtown Bozeman and Mickey from Montana Main Street. Such incredible people, a wonderful conference out in Bozeman and Livingston and just for making all of this happen. I am so appreciative and of course to Mallory and her team at Heyday. They're just truly innovators in main street retailing and people to follow going forward. So stay in touch, get in touch with them, follow their website as you continue to sort of learn as part of your own journey. So as always, if you're a business owner, and likewise to my place, professional colleagues, I hope this episode has provided plenty of new insights, solutions, and of course inspiration. And as consumers, please continue to support your local small businesses and tell their stories. They're so important to our local and national economies.

And most importantly, they promote and provide quality living to the places we all call home. That's going to do it for this week's episode. Remember to check out our growing library podcast recordings and other related films of the podcast on our Main Street America YouTube channel. Thanks for listening. And if you don't mind my continued soapbox, if you'd rather hear these stories and not the constant singular drumbeat of stories of only global business leaders, please hit the subscribe button. Rate and review us, add a comment, send me a note, and always be sure to tell your friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues so you can all catch the next episode. When this time I'll be in Livingston, Montana, chatting with Dale Sexton, owner of Dan Bailey's Outdoor Company, exploring the trends in outdoor recreation retailing and what it's really like to sustain and continue growing an iconic store brand that symbolizes both the community and the heritage of fly-fishing. Don't miss it. We'll see you then and thanks for all the support.