Matt Wagner:

Welcome to the Main Street Business Insight 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. 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 Insights Podcast. In our latest Main Street America survey of Main Street small businesses from this past spring 2024, with nearly 1000 participating businesses, we learned that nearly one third of those businesses actually make a product. Extrapolating that across the Main Street America network of small businesses, that suggests that there are more than 55,000 small scale manufacturers, artisans, and makers operating along our main streets.

The variety is just staggering, raging from we found custom jewelry and apparel, baked goods, beer, of course, distilleries, bath and skincare products, roasted coffee, candles, art, and a whole slew of other goods, like furniture, for example. We started this podcast in April, 2023 with Maine Grains, a growing small scale producer of Organic Heritage Grains located in Skowhegan, Maine. Hopefully you heard that, remember that story. If not, go back. It is truly terrific.

It's important to note that the profound impact Amber Lambke's business has had on that community, serving as an employment anchor, a pipeline spawning so many new ventures, and really providing vision for a strategy built around the food industry. It's only fitting that as we near the completion of our first year, that we celebrate by featuring another small scale producer, this time in the apparel industry.

In many ways, like Maine Grains, disposing stereotype's a place that you must be in order to compete in these often very large scale markets and highly competitive markets. Today's podcast features Joshua and Jared Ravenscraft, founders of New Frontier, one of the most environmentally friendly producers of jeans and outdoor apparel. As you'll hear Joshua indicate, the fashion industry is one of the most wasteful polluting industries in the world, causing 10% of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions.

Their new circular jean use recycled jean material and rainwater for production, making them one of the leaders in America sustainable fashion. Now, one might suspect they would be in one of the leading fashion districts like New York City or LA, and yet their story and brand are grounded in a storefront on Main Street in Morehead, Kentucky, the heart of Eastern Kentucky's coal country. I'm sure you're catching the irony right now.

This isn't lost, of course, on Jared and Joshua, and we cover this as we often do around the intersections of community and small business, in addition to what it's like to grow a new brand nationally and internationally from a rural Main Street. Really excited for you to hear this conversation. Hope you enjoy, and of course, we'll see you on the other side.

Well, welcome, everyone, to the Main Street Business Insight Podcast. As you can see, I'm here in the New Frontier Outfitters building with Jared and Josh, the brothers, the awesome brothers, we should say, right?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Right. That's right.

Matt Wagner:

The co-founders of this wonderful small scale production outfitter in Morehead, Kentucky. So good to be with all of you. I know you're going to enjoy the show. As you all know, you've been part of this in the past, we always like to start out with the story. The story is really important, the journey of the small business owners as they launch their operations. That's kind of where we'll get started. I'd love to hear between the two of you, what led up to the creation of New Frontier. Yeah,

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah, I think it's important to start with when we were kids, we grew up in our grandparents' floor shop, and what's cool about that is our grandparents moved to Morehead in the late forties after my grandfather got out of World War II, he was in the Navy. Started a floor shop here in this community, built a small business. We grew up in a small business, and it was cool for us to interact with community as kids growing up. That's where the foundation, I feel like, was laid, and...

Josh Ravenscraft:

It was, yeah, that's a good point. Like Jared said, growing up, we spent thousands of hours in that floor shop and it was a small business. My papaw and mamaw, doing everything by hand, all the paperwork, no computers, and got to see him talking to the customers...

Matt Wagner:

It's still not that way, right?

Josh Ravenscraft:

No, it's definitely shifted-

Matt Wagner:

... Changed a little bit.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Seeing them just give back to the community, and seeing them smile and laugh. At the time, we were young, didn't know, but I think that really shaped us when we were younger.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah. Then fast forward a little bit, Josh was a senior in high school, I was a senior in college, growing up here in Appalachia, eastern Kentucky, there were really no brands making things, creating things at that time. We felt like that spoke to us. We loved being outside, we loved to travel, and we were looking for gear that would speak to us.

Before we set out and started other jobs, we wanted to give this a try, New Frontier a try, starting our own business. We had just started with a few hats and a few stickers really. I was selling them on college campus, Josh was selling at his high school-

Matt Wagner:

Really?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Hustling out of our backpacks. Yeah.

Josh Ravenscraft:

It's very boots on the ground. Like Jared mentioned-

Matt Wagner:

Very minimal.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Backing up a bit, I was in high school. We started the brand. He was a senior in college. I would sell hats out of my backpack to students, and stickers in the student parking lot for a couple bucks. Literally started just like that, and in the cafeteria, just selling to students. Like Jared said, we didn't want to, I was out of high school, he was out of college, we didn't want to move to a big city, so to speak.

A lot of our friends went to other towns, went and did good cool stuff, but for us, we're so prideful of our hometown in Morehead and the beauty that's here in the region. We said, "Man, we should really give this brand a shot, because we want to offer something that not only for us, we could stay here, but we could give back to the community, we can give back to the region. It doesn't exist." Man, it seems like a lifetime ago, but that's why we're here today.

Matt Wagner:

That's a really good jumping off point. Folks will know that are listening to the podcast and watching the video that you all are located in Morehead, Kentucky, and certainly in Appalachia, eastern Kentucky. For those that aren't necessarily familiar with the area, most would think of this as coal country and the history of the mining community. It's not exactly, when we think of clothing, it's not exactly LA or New York and their fashion districts, or anything along those lines, or certainly the global clothing market.

I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what makes this area and growing New Frontier so important to you. Then also, I think, it's also would be important to understand, what do people get wrong about rural Appalachia? Sort of the intersection of those two points.

Jared Ravenscraft:

YA, To start on that last point, there's plenty of stereotypes that we fight. As a small business what you know from abroad, I think the general thing is people think of this area is like hillbillies, or coal country, and those things are real. We hear those, and-

Josh Ravenscraft:

We are hillbillies.

Jared Ravenscraft:

You hear people say-

Matt Wagner:

That's another T-shirt, proud hillbilly.

Jared Ravenscraft:

It's the accent. You hear those things, and you think on the outside, some people might think less of this area, you can't be creative here, or you definitely wouldn't think of this area for textiles or clothing. There is a very rich community here of art, culture, and music. In the country music world, some of the best artists arguably come from our area. There's rich storytelling, and it's beautiful.

The mountains here are gorgeous. The Rocky Mountains are cool out west, but the Appalachian Mountains are just as pretty. There's so much to offer here, and that's part of the inspiration, there are really no brands speaking to or making things about Appalachia or represented that. In music, it's represented, whether it's Tyler Childers, Sturgill Simpson, Chris Stapleton, they're all from within a stone's throw of here, and you can speak more to...

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, it ties in music, heritage, culture, their storytelling. For us, it's more about just selling things and more about representing a region, representing community, and all the cool storytelling you get to do. Since we have this brand, New Frontier, we get to go do marketing and tell stories that we want to tell about the region how we see the region, not how people from the outside looking in see it, how we see it.

It's always from a good place, from the beauty of Appalachia. You live in Virginia, it's like, you know that it's beautiful out here, a similar country. I think that's a cool opportunity as a storyteller.

Jared Ravenscraft:

It's a cool opportunity. We feel like that's what we're doing. We're just advocating for our neck of the woods.

Josh Ravenscraft:

To your point, textiles and clothing really, now, way back, a hundred years ago, Appalachian region, North Carolina in particular, used to be very, and I think it is, the narrative's changing, it used to be very rich in the cotton industry and things like that, in textile production, but not so much here in eastern Kentucky. Like we were mentioning, it's primarily coal. From when we first started New Frontier, an ultimate goal would be to do USA manufacturing, do Kentucky manufacturing here.

Those are aspirations down the line. I do think it's changing in our favor. I think more people are demanding that and wanting that. I think we could get there at some point for sure. Right now, we're really building a market for still going on the street, telling people about what we're doing, building a market for a sustainable apparel brand from Appalachia, and letting people know, "Hey, you can build something from off the grid too. You don't have to be in a necessarily big city."

Jared Ravenscraft:

To talk about the people quickly, we think of this area as people being functional. People can do a lot of different things. Through the products that we make, we want to make things for our folks, our people around here. That also applies to people all across the country.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Well, [inaudible 00:11:46] we were talking earlier, you can mention who are they for? We're talking about the loggers, people, our warehouse is on a log yard. We look out every day, they're wearing our jeans and flannels that we make, functional apparel for people in the region, not necessarily city or street style, but that blue collar style.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Blue collar style. This is a blue collar area.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, yeah. It represents the people as well as the place.

Josh Ravenscraft:

We try to, we try to. We can't cover, it's hard to do, but just from our lens it's like, we try to.

Matt Wagner:

Given where the predominant markets are, especially on the design and production side, is there any challenge that you face in terms of your location here, logistically-wise, operation? A good part of our listeners are small business owners themselves, and they're having to think about those kinds of things based on location. Any sort of, or is it just a matter of having the internet, and everything is good?

Jared Ravenscraft:

I think there's two sides to that front. Obviously, having a local shop is awesome for our local community. We also have an online store we ship from in Kentucky where we're situated. It's within a day's drive to, what is it, 80% of the US or something like that? Shipping-wise, it's not logistically awful to ship from and be in. Our online store helps us reach other customers. Word of mouth-wise though, it's obviously not Nashville, Austin, Texas. We do struggle on that front.

Matt Wagner:

More on the marketing, media side? Yeah.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Marketing, media side, getting the word out, and we're making great things here in this community. Sometimes that is a challenge for us, being off the grid, so to speak, in a rural area.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah.

Josh Ravenscraft:

That is a challenge, but I'll just tell you that I was just in here for our 4th of July event this past week, and I don't spend too much time in the storefront anymore, but I was in here getting to see old teachers, old friends from high school, family and friends, people who I ain't seen in years that I got to see come through the door. Just, man, it was beyond buying or selling anything, it's so great to be able to see and meet people, and there's no better feeling. That's the whole part of community.

Why do you have a small business on Main Street? It's for the connection, it's for the community. It doesn't necessarily matter if you're in a, I don't know if you could get that same feeling in a big city, that if you're in a corporate place, but to wrap that up, love it. I love being from a small town, having a Main Street presence. That's for listeners watching in their hometowns, man, it was so great. I was in here, hugging people, laughing. I was knocking drinks over.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah. I think there are challenges, but we try so hard. We just try to block them out and try to just keep working and focus on the positives.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, that sense of community, man, it's so strong. I felt it. If we didn't have this store and just did online, we would kind of-

Jared Ravenscraft:

It'd be very hard to connect with customers.

Josh Ravenscraft:

You'd feel very distant from your customer.

Matt Wagner:

In many respects, it's sort of like the best of both worlds. You can have that really, and I think that's what small businesses, certainly from a Main Street perspective really appreciate is that connection to community, connection to people, which you have in the store, but you can still operate globally. You guys sell all over the world, in terms of where New Frontier products go. I want to talk a little bit about, for the audience, New Frontier is what we, in the place, professional field, we'll call it, is you're a small scale producer, small scale manufacturer, some refer to as artisans and those kinds of things.

Many people, I think, on the outside can relate to this industry if we use examples, like a coffee roaster, your micro breweries, like the craft brewing industry has absolutely taken off in the last decade or so. Folks may not be aware that there's also a growing craft apparel market, for sure. While we've lost a lot of the mass production here in the US to foreign markets, and I found an interesting stat that where we lost most of the apparel production was in the 1970s, then we had this huge jobs crash in the 1990s with about 750,000 apparel manufacturer jobs were lost.

There is this opportunity in the craft space for lots of sectors, including apparel, but there's still some big giants out there, especially in the outdoor space. I think most people would be familiar with Patagonia and North Face, of course. How have you thought about brand identity of New Frontier in positioning it in what is really a highly competitive outdoor apparel market? Could you talk a little bit about that?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah, I think we really just, for starters, we lean into our authenticity. We lean into where we're from. Some of those brands are out west and places, and they lean into their culture of rock climbing, or the Rocky Mountains, or wherever it may be. We obviously really lean into Appalachia. We lean into our community, and those activities, and our authentic voice here. We don't try to run away from our core audience or crowd.

We lean into that for starters. It is a competitive market, and whether you're a coffee roaster or a brewer, a micro brewery, you're competing against these big giant brands and entities. We get that from a clothing and apparel space, but we lean into our authenticity, lean into our audience, and...

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, I can't stop thinking about, and it's true what you said, the jobs moving away from the US. Being from Eastern Kentucky, we're very proud about when we can use USA products, and obviously provide more jobs, not just locally, but those are American jobs. That's an ambition that Jared and I have, being from Eastern Kentucky is, it's no secret in coal production.

A lot of jobs left the area, and a lot of people from around here think that, "Oh, there's never going to be high-tech jobs come to Eastern Kentucky, or there's never going to be apparel jobs," but that's a chip that we got on our shoulder as we take New Frontier forward is to, how can we not just bring marketing and design jobs to New Frontier, but one day, bring textile manufacturing? It can be done.

That's an ambition that we have is to do all of our own manufacturing here. Like I said earlier, that narrative is changing. You're starting to see craft breweries do it. You're starting to see a lot of other folks do it and build the market for it, and they're able to get investment and get interest from the people to do that.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah, and just speaking back to the competitiveness in those markets with us, and talking to micro breweries and those types of people, I think leaning into what makes you different. The big companies are all doing a lot of the same things.

Matt Wagner:

Competitive positioning.

Jared Ravenscraft:

That's what's cool on all of our levels creatively, where it forces you to be creative, it forces you to be innovative. That's where a lot of good ideas are coming from that you can't find if you're in a big city or in a big market.

You might go to a craft brewery near Asheville, you're like, "Man, love what they're doing here. It's just so unique," or you might come to New Frontier and say, "Man, these jeans are awesome." It forces you to be innovative and grow, and it's business, it's competitive.

Matt Wagner:

One of the things that we had talked about previously on that line, besides the story, is sort of a competitive position. Even in the outdoor rec space, if we take it outside of apparel, it's not monolithic. There is the extreme folks out there, bungee jumping off of whatever, and people are like-

Josh Ravenscraft:

That's you, right?

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, that's Jared.

Jared Ravenscraft:

That's me.

Matt Wagner:

Then you've got the hunting and fishing markets, and the kayakers, and the bikers, and hikers, and there's so many different segments. One of the things that I learned in talking with the both of you prior to our conversation today was about the jeans. The jeans, and the way, the materials, and even how they're being manufactured, that seems to be a point of differentiation.

I'm wondering if you could talk about that. It seems like from a brand perspective, along with the story, it's something you're really honing in on to sort of craft out that story.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah.

Jared Ravenscraft:

I'll let Josh speak on it, but it was just to say this first, to lead up to it, for us to be different to us to make it in this space, we've reached an inflection point. How can we grow as a brand and be different for the future, and not just make the same things as a Levi's or a Wrangler or somebody? How can we be different? We set out on this journey two years ago, and I'll let Josh speak on the denim front.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, we're no strangers taking a big risk on something. Starting a brand from rural county in Eastern Kentucky as compared to Patagonia people, when we were presented, between Jared and I, where we're going to take New Frontier, as we mature as a brand, we want to be more ethical and transparent about our products. We started seeing the headline news of fast fashion, how landfills are filling up. Not even 1% of clothing is recycled, and we're in the textile space.

At some point, we're like, "We have to be responsible for what we're doing as well." We saw the dirty sides of the industry, and we saw that jeans were one of the largest polluters in the world when it comes to textiles that require a lot of water to produce, a lot of energy consumption, CO2 emissions [inaudible 00:21:30] for manufacturing. We're like, "Wait a second, we can clean up. We can innovate and make a clean pair of jeans through New Frontier. They fit great the way we want them, but they can also be really good for the environment."

If we can make a great product and they're a revolutionary circular jean, we're like, "We can really do something really big here." What makes the jeans so different is they're recycled and they're circular, which means they're made from old denim. The jeans you have on could be recycled and put into new jeans. Jared and I both have New Frontier jeans on and they're made with old recycled denim, but they fit great and they fit like a good pair of jeans.

Jared Ravenscraft:

It's not just what they're made of, it's the process as well, how we make them. We use 94% less water. We save 75-

Matt Wagner:

94%?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yes, because the facility we make our jeans in runs off recycled rainwater. It's just about being responsible, and it uses 75% less CO2 emissions, and it's a female-led facility. It's family owned.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, it's a family owned facility. It's a decision. Like I was talking earlier, we didn't go to China or Bangladesh to just make quick jeans to sell. These are truly sustainable, and deemed and penned some of the most sustainable genes in the world because we have the supply chain to back it up. Why? Because they're transparent and we're transparent. That's what gives us the ability to talk about how clean they are is doing things the right way.

I think as a small business, we would never have dreamed when we first started that we could ever poke the market with the product that's so clean and revolutionary, and turn heads to some pretty big people. I know we probably can't say it now, maybe it's a part two, but turning people's heads all across the world, some prominent investors that are just like, "Wow, you guys are doing that from coal country. Wow," but hopefully that's part two.

Matt Wagner:

That's going to be a part two for us. There's more on the way.

Josh Ravenscraft:

That could get a lot of clicks. No, it's just a start, by the way. We release the jeans, and it's something that we'll look to do on all of our products, but we started with jeans because they require the most resources.

Jared Ravenscraft:

I think it's important too, this is something that might've intimidated us a few years back. It's the quote, you don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great. We just needed to start.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah.

Jared Ravenscraft:

I think that's something everybody can relate with, no matter if you're a coffee shop, brewery, or a quilt shop, you just got to start.

Matt Wagner:

What could communities and regions do better to support business? I mentioned before, we've a cross sector market for the podcast and for our videos of people out in the field that work in community, and economic development, and downtown revitalization and with our Main Streets. Then obviously, we have small business owners. I'm always curious, from the business side, especially in small scale production, what could we all be doing better to support you all?

I feel sometimes in economic development, and even in politics, we miss the opportunity to grow from within. We did a survey a couple of years back to really try to understand the local economy, and where does it come from? What we discovered was that about 82% of the local economy was based on small business ownership from people that were already here. They weren't recruited, they weren't incentivized to move in.

We didn't have to spend millions of dollars to bring it in and put in all this infrastructure. They were here, and we just kind of needed to support that local human capital.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Exactly.

Matt Wagner:

I'm wondering from your perspective, what could we be doing to do that better, to do better by you all that have a dream, are starting and growing that process, what could we be doing better?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Just to speak from our level here in our community, I think it is just about some of the infrastructure that's here in local communities, having a space, whether you have a few local businesses in your town, using them as cornerstones, and just whether it's through community events or awareness, just really nourishing an environment locally for those businesses to flourish.

I know all the events that happen in our town, everybody teams up, everybody comes out and helps. What's good for one's good for all. That might not be the case in every community, but I feel like just collaboration within the community of other businesses is important.

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, for sure.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Then from the outside, spreading awareness. We don't have a ton of tourists that come to our town, but you just mentioned that stat, 80 some percent comes from within. I believe that we see that on a day-to-day basis, but it's because there's a good foundation here, and that's foundation supported by events in our community, people teaming up, and collaboration.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, I think like you said, it's educational. Just letting, like this podcast, letting people know that, "Hey, just a reminder that," and there's a stat that people smarter than me probably know the stat better, but it's so much of every dollar spent in a small town or on Main Street, so much of that dollar stays in the community. I think that's something, just through education that might, once I knew that, I was like, "Well, why am I going an hour later to the mall when I could just go down the street and support this person, and probably find a better quality product too?"

I'll just say owning and starting a small business with my brother, Jared, it's really made me rethink, like, "Hey, I need to also support others too." I know how hard it is to even, and you, to get a business off the ground. Anybody who has a small business on Main Street or anywhere, just being aware that, hey, it's cool to go support others and to lift others up.

Matt Wagner:

As you all were getting started, and obviously, there was a long sort of runway. You talked about selling things out out of-

Josh Ravenscraft:

Real long.

Matt Wagner:

... Of the backpack, right?

Josh Ravenscraft:

Too long. If you're on the airport, man, you can just keep going, or still are.

Matt Wagner:

Not a Cessna runway, but like a 747 runway, right?

Josh Ravenscraft:

We're just rolling. Yeah.

Matt Wagner:

Obviously, you grew up in an entrepreneurial family, as you mentioned, with your grandparents, but I'm wondering, who did you leverage along the way? Were there sort of mentors? Were there groups that you turned to, industry professional? How have you sort of put together, besides having each other, of course, but what did you put together as your team externally?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah, that's a great question. I'm going to say my answer, Josh might have a different answer, but I think a lot of times, if you live in a small town or small community, you might not have the resources to lean on an Elon Musk, or a Jeff Bezos, or somebody not that big, but a big tycoon or somebody, or even somebody big in business. A lot of times, it's self-education, and just thinking of if you look up to somebody, listen to podcasts, reading a book, thinking of...

Matt Wagner:

Was that an endorsement, Jared?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah. Yes, sir. For us-

Josh Ravenscraft:

He's trying to get his clips in here.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah, for us, it was, for me, if we look up to Chris Stapleton, how would he treat his community? He's from eastern Kentucky, but that's somebody we look up to here, thinking of how would he handle this? How would they word this? I don't know. Looking up to people like that. Sometimes you might not have the access to speak to somebody like that, but also to just local community, local business owners, like The Fuzzy Duck Coffee shop that's here, great cornerstone in our community.

Always helpful with advice on, "Hey, you guys should be open for this many hours on this holiday, because that's what we do." It doesn't hurt to ask. I'm kind of shy. In those days, going and just talking to other local business owners that have been here and been a staple, it doesn't hurt to ask. Yeah,

Matt Wagner:

Yeah, wonderful.

Josh Ravenscraft:

That's my point too. Self-education, lot of podcasts. Just podcasts and books. Yeah, being from a region like this, you might not have, can't just pull out your phone and text somebody like Jeff Bezos or somebody. I understand that part. Jared said it, I won't say any more, yeah, educating yourself and leaning into that.

Jared Ravenscraft:

That might not be the case to everybody, but we didn't go to design school, we didn't go to fashion school. A lot of those things we had to learn on our own, through reading, or a podcast, or somebody to look up to, looking up all the interviews they've done and podcasts. Things like this are great avenues to...

Matt Wagner:

Absolutely amazing.

Jared Ravenscraft:

... Educate.

Matt Wagner:

Absolutely amazing. We should put in a plug, what is the name of the bookstore here in Morehead?

Jared Ravenscraft:

The Fuzzy Duck Coffee Shop and Coffee Tree Books.

Matt Wagner:

Just a quick endorsement. If you're in Morehead, you have to see this bookstore. I'm going to post the photo of the coffee shop and the bookstore in there. It's in a theater. It is amazing. Just a little quick side note here-

Jared Ravenscraft:

Quick plug.

Matt Wagner:

... In the podcast, that's right, we got to get them in there. For any tourists coming through or visitors, they've got to go there. Where does New Frontier go from here, and how do you think you get there?

Jared Ravenscraft:

Yeah. Our goal is to continue to grow as a transparent brand, as a brand of tomorrow. Obviously, we're focused on how we make things, how we do things. Like the blue jeans we make, that's what we're focused on is cleaning up our supply chain. Though our jeans are some of the cleanest in the world, but our other products...

Becoming that brand that doesn't matter that we're in coal country, it doesn't matter that we're off the grid. We want to be responsible, so that's our focus, to continue to be a responsible brand in our community.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah, and from a... Go ahead.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Thinking globally, but acting locally is a great way to put it.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yep. From a business standpoint, where are we going in the next five, what do we think? It's really a nationwide distribution for us, like stores across the US, getting in those large wholesale POs are always nice.

Matt Wagner:

Okay, so having some retail presence in other places.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Right, and that's a good way without fully committing to a storefront, that's a good way to enter and meet new people, if it's in Arkansas, if it's in Texas, or somewhere in one of those stores.

Matt Wagner:

Not have to control the real estate. That's a big capital infusion.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Wholesale distribution is an easy, low hanging fruit for us. Then also too, I think that opening a storefront in a more high traffic area that's within the region, I think, is on our radar as well.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Finding a place within Appalachia we can put another shop, another kind of community hub, we would love to do that within the next five years.

Matt Wagner:

That's great.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Just continue to, we're hungry. We have great staff, and keep building and growing our products.

Matt Wagner:

That's wonderful. I always like to end the show with some advice. There's always learnings, teachings along the way. I think just like we do in the sort of place, professional field, we learn from each other. Having that network is so critical. I wonder if you all have some advice that you've learned along the way you want to share with some other small business owners. Maybe they're getting started in that small scale space and trying to grow their business.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Yeah. I think my best advice, and just being fully transparent, a lot of these, you get on a podcast or talk about how good things are, don't get me wrong, it's real hard. It's real hard. We talked about the runway, runway's long, but it's like choose your heart. It's hard to do a lot of things, but if you're really, I know this is cliche and you hear a lot, but if you're really passionate and determined about what you want to do, that hard, you will beat those odds. You'll make it happen.

There's good and bad days, but it's all about keeping things steady, knowing it will be hard, there will be obstacles. My biggest advice is to turn those obstacles into opportunities. It's really came apparent to me. I used to be kind of bad about, "Oh, man, this happened. We're just, man, we're bad on our luck, aren't we?" Now I see it as like, "Wait, we have to go through those things." Often, when one door closes, another opens. That's been something that's kind of been revealed to me after almost 10 years now.

I'm like, "Okay, this happens for everybody, not just us two." Everybody has those speed bumps, and that makes for the good times.

Jared Ravenscraft:

For sure.

Josh Ravenscraft:

When you land those big accounts, or you get a good win, you have a good event, you're like, "Man, that's really enjoyable."

Jared Ravenscraft:

I'll piggyback off what Josh just said, just we've been in business for seven years now, we've been in this shop for five years. I think it's a cliche, but being consistent, showing up, that's half the battle. Showing up here, putting out your best every day, those days stack up, those bricks add up if you're a small business owner in a community.

There will be hard days, but if you're consistent and you just keep showing up, you keep putting your best effort out there, those add up, whether you see it sooner or later. Us being consistent, we still have a long way to go, but we're so thankful for where we're at because we've been consistent.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Being also, third day, so one, two, three, being, and Jared mentioned it earlier, being authentic. Be yourself.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Be yourself.

Josh Ravenscraft:

No matter if you're a baking shop, if you're a brewery, if you're a coffee shop, no matter what you're doing, that's what makes you different. You with this podcast, doing it your style, your way, and owning that, and you blend that with consistency and don't try to be something else, man, it'll pay off.

Jared Ravenscraft:

That's probably the biggest one. I'm glad you said that. Us being from Eastern Kentucky, we have accents, and those things that people joke about it from California or wherever, but be authentic. Use your voice no matter what community you're in. That's what makes you different. Sounds cliche, but it's so true. That's what separates you from the big Starbucks, or the big brewery brand, or whatever may be. Use your voice.

Matt Wagner:

Exactly. You be you, people are looking for authentic.

Jared Ravenscraft:

Y'all be y'all.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Y'all be y'all, man.

Matt Wagner:

That's a great way to close it. I got new friends here in Morehead.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Heck yeah.

Matt Wagner:

Jared, Josh, thanks, guys. Really appreciate it. Now, it's time for me to do some shopping in the store.

Jared Ravenscraft:

See y'all.

Josh Ravenscraft:

Peace.

Matt Wagner:

There you have it. I hope you enjoyed the conversation with Joshua and Jared Ravenscraft of New Frontier in Morehead, Kentucky. With every episode of this podcast, I become more inspired by our small businesses and Main Street leaders truly making a difference in their communities, by supporting employment, innovating, providing identity to place, of course, demonstrating entrepreneurial and civic pathways, and really anchoring their local economies.

With the loss of local and regional journalism, we at Main Street America are ever more committed to ensuring that Main Street businesses and their communities have a forum for these voices. Your support by subscribing and sharing are so important and truly make a difference. We promise to keep chatting and presenting these important stories like that of Joshua and Jared in New Frontier. They're making a difference in their community, changing perceptions of place, and demonstrating what can be accomplished on our Main Streets through creativity and innovation.

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 inspiration. As consumers, please continue to support your local small businesses, and of course, tell their stories. They're so important to our local and national economies, and most importantly, they promote and provide quality of 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 of podcast recordings and other related films of the podcast on our Main Street America YouTube channel. Thanks for listening. If you don't mind my continued soapbox, if you'd rather hear these stories and not the constant and singular drumbeat of stories of only global business leaders, please hit the subscribe button, rate and review us, and as always, be sure to subscribe and tell your friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues.

You all can catch the next episode. This time, I'll be in Corbin, Kentucky, sitting down with Kristen Smith, the world-class chef and founder of The Wrigley, an Appalachian eatery. From Time Magazine, Food and Wine, Forbes, and many others, and now the Main Street Business Insights Podcast, okay, okay, don't laugh, we're moving in that direction. Make sure to join the show.

It's a wonderful conversation about both personal and business identity at the intersection of one's rural community. Places that are far too often generalized and misunderstood is monolithic. Don't miss it. We'll see you then, and thanks for all the support.