

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 69

Stu Lungwitz

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Don and Ebony: [00:00:00] Welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA powered, of course, by Evergy. First, thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us, love us, share us. We truly appreciate you checking us out today. Excited to have The Print Source in the house. They're going to tell us about their small business story.

Yes, I'm really excited. Hi Stu, how are

Stu Lungwitz: Good morning. I'm doing really well.



Don and Ebony: You doin really well. Well, I'm excited to hear your story. You know, I've seen your name. I I've seen the company's name all over the place and I mean, it's a well-known brand or well-known name and a well-known, community, giver. So tell us who you are.

Stu Lungwitz: I was born in Wichita, was raised out in Northwest Wichita, when it was out in the country.

My father was an entrepreneur. And I I recently learned how much my grandfather was an entrepreneur. In that I had my father come in and speak to a peer group that I had and he wrote his story of how he became an entrepreneur. And I'd never heard those, things. My dad's, you know, getting up there in age and it was really interesting learn these things that my grandfather owned a grocery store right after the dust bowl, in Clearwater, Kansas. Clearwater, and he went bankrupt and because the dust bowl, and he had people coming in farmers, and things that didn't have any money and they couldn't pay for the groceries. And he let them have the groceries. Well, that plan didn't work so well.

Stu Lungwitz: His humanitarian side of him, got him when he was in business, but at an early age, I always was working beside my father. He was in another business before the printing business, with some specialty food business, with some partners. And at a very young age, I ran the copy machine on Saturday mornings.

That was one of the first things and I was reflecting on some of these things. And then had some family that then owned a bicycle shop here in town. And there were several investors in

that and of course I was working in the backroom long before I was of age to do those types of things. they were paying me by a piece wage to patch inner tubes. And pretty soon they decided they need to pay me by the hour because I could patch multiple tubes at the same time. And they, it wasn't working out well for them.

Don and Ebony: What was the name of the bicycle shop?

Stu Lungwitz: Scott's Bicycle shop. And it was on a North Ridge Road. So come along. Things change. My father sold his interest in the specialty food business, and he was looking for a business to buy and he wanted a business that was going to be a zone. And at the time the company, they ended up buying what was called Skats Decals. And they were a small screen printing shop with three employees and another part-time employee.

When he bought that there was a lot of growth very quickly at that time. You know, we, we bill in a day today what we used to bill in a month there's times in a week, that we bill what we used to bill in a year. And so we've grown a lot. You come along. There's been expansion of the product that we offer, but we changed the name and rebranded to The Print Source because of, decals really limited what people thought of us for. Back in those days, there were a lot of bumper stickers on cars and we printed a lot of bumper stickers. and I challenge you to find a bumper sticker today. It is very difficult to do that. So things have changed. So you fast forward. we were in that a little 3000 square foot building, for a number of months after dad had purchased that and then we moved out. when. On bear street and started growing at that point and we had 6,000 square feet added onto that building a few times added more services of things that we were doing. We were landlocked and fast forward. we bought the old target west building by town, west square and moved into there.

And we've been in there now. about 17, 18 years.

Don and Ebony: That is so awesome. So let's rewind. Okay. So, well, first, if you would, what is your title

Stu Lungwitz: I'm CEO

Don and Ebony: CEO now? It's interesting. You started off shadowing your father only getting paid in cinnamon rolls.

Stu Lungwitz: That's correct. that was the copy, that was the copy machine [00:05:00] job. You know, I can't tell you how old I was. You hear those stories about family businesses. where somebody pushed the broom? Well, mine was around the copy machine on Saturday mornings.

And I would do that. That was long before you could email anything. We had to have a copy of everything for these orders that were being turned in that were going to be mailed in for Christmas.

And this was in June, and July that we were mailing the merchandise orders in. And so for every store that there was, I had to keep that separate. And put those, and that was at the time where, where the downtown Y is today was the, the old building. Also, they had an office building at third and market, which has since been torn down.

Okay. there's the courthouse, There's the YMCAs. And what used to be the YWCA and now there's a parking lot, but the Y had a cafeteria in it and they had a wonderful cinnamon roll. So on Saturday morning I would get a cinnamon roll. That was my pay.

Don and Ebony: .Very nice from backroom copying and, payments in cinnamon roll to CEO.

Stu Lungwitz: And lot of hard roads traveled in.

Don and Ebony: I, I can only imagine, I can only imagine. So how many employees do you all have now/

we're right around 80

Don and Ebony: That is beautiful. And how many total years of business.

Stu Lungwitz: Well, the corporation actually goes back to 1947.

Don and Ebony: Wow.

Stu Lungwitz: Now the Lungwitz family has been associated with that since 1980. Okay. But the 1947 is, goes back to a corporation that was named screen process, printing company. it was the Fishback family and they had been around for many, many years. And we, there were some mergers and acquisitions that took place.

Don and Ebony: Let me ask you this, if you don't mind,

Stu Lungwitz: Do I

Don and Ebony: I mean, you're here. So tell us something people might not know about your business.

Stu Lungwitz: Well, there's a lot of people that would know, not know a lot of things about our business, cause we're so diversified. we just don't put ink on paper. That's a very small piece of, our business. I would say most people in Wichita, Kansas don't know that we imprint on a lot of Coleman coolers, tents, kayaks, And these types of things that are sold into the promotional products industry. And those are sold natinowide. that's one piece of our business that most people don't know.

Don and Ebony: I did not know that. Well, thank you for sharing that. Yeah, that's actually pretty cool. Give me an idea how your company felt when the world, everybody. The world progressed and everybody could become basically a desktop publisher and that software started coming out and we started thinking we could publish stuff.

And I know that cuts into your wheelhouse. So how did, how did your business react?

Stu Lungwitz: Well, when it really started and everybody thought they could be a publisher, if they could print that out on their desktop inkjet that they had, they thought they had a file that was ready to go. It looked acceptable. to them Because they had done it, but when they gave that file to us, they expected it to be upgraded quite a bit.

And so there was a a period of time there where people really had to learn how to produce files that can be produced the. It was something that they could give to us and that they would want to buy it. That was the roughest road of that, but that's so true. And a lot of that's what I refer to is, you know, ink on paper, And that was really never a big Focus of ours. We, We do do some of that, but it's a compliment to our customers.

We do a lot of work in original equipment manufacturers. A lot of durable products It could be an airplane, it could be a lawnmower, It could be a weed-eater. And those types of things back in those days, there were dot matrix printers and forms that they used in the plant. And so we were selling them forms and paper that they would use out on the line.

Don and Ebony: Now, if you live long enough, like me, you remember back in the day when this new software came out and people could start doing things on their computer, like they were publishing things. And I always wondered what happened to folks that are in that business. Just like I wonder, like when, you could take your pictures on your phone, what did that happen?

What did that do to the, like the Lawrence photos and things like that. How did that affect companies like that? How did that affect when we started evolving where we could do stuff on PCs?

Stu Lungwitz: Everybody thought that they were professional artists and yet they couldn't give us a file usually that would work. And so we had to do a lot of work with educating our customers on how to grade that file, and it changed. And we thought that a lot of the printing that we were doing would go away quickly, but it really didn't. And the one thing that seemed to be the tipping point was the downturn in the economy [00:10:00] in 2008, 2009, everybody was cutting back on their expenses and trying to figure out how to save. And so they quit using paper or paying printers to put together professional presentations and decided that their own copiers or office copiers were good enough. And that's really what was the. turning point with paper.

Don and Ebony: If somebody asked you like I am today, what problem does your business solve

for a customer?

we solve a lot of problems. What we pride ourselves on is solving those problems.

Stu Lungwitz: What people a major part of our business is what we call pressure sensitives, which means it has adhesive on it. to stick on something with all the different plastics and substrates that we have to stick. to today, there's many, many adhesives and technology and chemistry has come a long ways in the last 30. years. But, the one that I remember very vividly, is when powder coating, first started to come out and everybody's switching from paint to powder coat and the last person they bothered to tell is the people making their decals. They go on their lawn and power equipment. Exactly. Hey, we put these decals on and they're falling off today. Did you by chance change your paint system. Yes, we did. then we would have to go in and work with them on, and at that point that was an upgrade in the adhesive ,but what's really happened today is because powder code has become so mainstream. is the adhesive has evolved that the standard adhesive works pretty well with powder-coat. the one story. I can tell is I did not experience this, but a friend of mine in the business, did they had business with a candle company and they were having problems with some labels coming off the outside of the glass jar. And it took him quite a while to figure it out, that they were only coming off a particular scent. and whatever the scent was that was in that candle was attacking the adhesive. But the other scents or flavors were not. Yeah. so those are the types of things we get involved with. Sometimes we get involved with temperature. People want to put on a say in a packing house, that it's very, very cold and a packing house, and they want to put that label on that box of hampered.

And they want it to stick. Well, think of trying to stick that label on your bumper of your car. in December, when it's 20 or 30 degrees. outside, you won't stick very well. The adhesive kind of froze right? While there are adhesives that we have that we can work with them that will work in those cold temps.

so there's a lot of specialty things. that go into. There's a lot of layers There's adhesive. We have different liners that people want to perform differently, to go through automatic application equipment. sometimes they want a laminate on it for abrasion. Sometimes they don't. So we do everything from , as I said, we still print bumper stickers today, which are fairly simple for us to do up to very sophisticated constructions. One that I remember was, if the yellow mask ever falls down in a commercial aircraft behind that is a composite box and we have a label that's on most of those boxes. There's a cylinder in there that burns because of friction at a very high temperature. And we needed a decal that was going to last a 15 minute burn.

Stu Lungwitz: If those oxygen masks came down. And the interesting thing was, is we went to bat on it, and the adhesive that basically held the tiles on the space shuttle. What's called Denzel, and it didn't even feel sticky. if you touched it with your fingers, but once you put that stuff on a day later, you couldn't get it off and we use something very similar to that. And we did some testing because we had to prove this burn test that the label would still be there. And

adhered. And what ended up happening is it was still there, but I stuck my finger through the composite box. The composite box has become a brittle, almost ash-like. And so we were passing, and the box that it was stuck to, it's still stuck to, but it'd become brittle.

Don and Ebony: Wow.

So you do your testing here?we have some vendors that help us some simple tests We'll do ourselves, our partners, one of them in Michigan is, has a lab. That's just disbelief. And a lot of times we'll send it to them and have them do it because they have a full set of scientists that do those things.

Stu Lungwitz: That's good.

Don and Ebony: I, you know, I was imagining you putting on a white coat like,

Stu Lungwitz: no, I don't have white coats.

Don and Ebony: okay, well, thank you for helping me with that,

Stu Lungwitz: You're welcome.

Don and Ebony: but I believe in your abilities to do so.

you have to know who the team members are sometimes internal and sometimes external.

Don and Ebony: Agreed.

Yeah, [00:15:00]

Sorry. I just had to ask that you were talking about testing. so what has surprised you the most about your entrepreneurship journey?

Stu Lungwitz: Wow. that's day to day. I would tell you that I continue to learn about myself. I continue to learn about the teammates that you're working with it. when you're an entrepreneur, it's not just a job.

You don't punch the clock, you come to work and you never know what might happen. There could be an issue. There could be a person thing taking place and one of the families in your facility that you never imagined you were going to have to deal with today. And those are some of the toughest times sometimes is just to deal.

You're wearing all the different hats. And in our, case where it's a family business, I have three hats I have the business hat, I have the family hat and you're bouncing those back and forth. If

you have family members working in the business, I worked along with my father, and my mother still comes to work each day and is a part of our team. I have a sister-in-law that works for me and a cousin that still works for me. And so there are those times where you're going to go to Thanksgiving dinner and you're not going to talk about business. And that's that's sometimes hard.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. How do you find that balance?

it's a juggling act. and sometimes you drop the balls. to be honest, I've had a. very unique relationship when it came to my father is we could be in disagreement at five o'clock and at five 30 be at the shocker game and forget about it until eight in the morning. And so you have to learn to be able to shut it off when you leave work.

Don and Ebony: That's nice. And so before we go to break question for you for this is a family business, second generation. Will there be a third.

currently there is no third generation members in the business. It could happen. I hear those stories from other family businesses. how There were no family members involved in the business and all of a sudden, somebody has been out in the world and working for somebody else And most unexpectedly decides they want to go to work for the family. business. And That may not be my children. It could be one of my it could be a niece or a nephew, those types of things. And So right now, there, there is not a third generation involved in the business.

Don and Ebony: Gotcha. Well, thank you for sharing

Stu Lungwitz: You're welcome.

Don and Ebony: Well friends, we're going to hear a word from our sponsors and then we'll be back with the Print Source.

Welcome back friends. We're here with Stu and The Print Source. And we're hearing a little bit about their story. Now you still, you guys have been here for a number of years. You've expanded here in Wichita. Why Wichita?

Stu Lungwitz: Well, Wichita has been good to us. When we moved into our current facility, we were needing more square footage. we did look around at the time and some of the suburbs, Regionally these types of things. They all have programs that they had in place where we could have, left Wichita, but there were too many when you put the features, advantages and benefits of being in Wichita versus the small town for us. The city got behind us. There were some programs that they had in place at the time the building that we bought had been vacant for three years. And so they were able to help us on the tax rolls for awhile, which is some of the things the smaller towns were willing to do. If you would come build in the smaller towns.

We also have vendors in town that it's more convenient to be located in Wichita, being a lifetime Wichitan, it just didn't feel right. to leave Wichita either. It's a great town. I tell people, you know, we don't realize what we have here, until you travel in business. Right. Or You don't realize what we have when you're on a, in a phone conversation with somebody. And you're like, wait a minute. Now I know, wait a minute. This isn't their culture. if you're talking to somebody in new Jersey or New York, it's a different conversation than you're having with somebody in Hesston, Kansas.

Okay. It's a difference in the way that people are brought up the raised and how [00:20:00] they act in business. we have a lot of good basic. ethics in Wichita.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. And, and, you know, sometimes we take that for granted.

Stu Lungwitz: You don't realize it would be the way that I would put it until you try to compare it to other areas of the country sometimes.

Don and Ebony: Great. So you've been a member of the Chamber for a number of years and a very strong supporter, and I believe you've won an award or two

well we won the small business awards a few years ago. We really tried hard to win that. It took us three times. During that the first time you did it.

Stu Lungwitz: and you're like, that was a lot of work. And the second time, I don't know why we didn't win because we worked really hard at it.

And we thought we had it perfectly. but I'll tell you the story of what really enabled us to win. The third time was, as an entrepreneur, you try and do everything yourself and steer the ship. and my marketing department got a lot more involved the third time around, and we had a team effort and when the team effort took place, all these ideas, came together, ways to answer questions, way to do things. And that was the year that we won it. And so we're, we're really, really proud of that. Several years ago now. And I've been involved on that committee ever since. I don't know if you can ever get off the committee once you get on the committee.

but

Don and Ebony: They won't let you off.

Stu Lungwitz: there are some people, I'll be honest. It doesn't take a whole lot of my time.

Now I do try to make all the meetings and things. We remember the things, but you know, there's transition there too. There's transition in our business, but there's also transition in all those other businesses. And we've had to take a look here at the chamber on That committee with how. we had to change.

We had to change from two tiers, to three tiers to allow those people that were single entrepreneurs that have one or two employees, to compete with the person that had 10 employees. There's a big difference there. I've learned a lot from that, from that. And being on that committee also developed a lot of relationships. you know, with people when All of a sudden something comes up one day, you say, yeah, I know that person.

They're on the committee with me. Let, let, let me make a phone call through. So the Chamber has been good. It's good networking.

Don and Ebony: Perfect. And I mean, they have an amazing podcast, so

Stu Lungwitz: Well, that's what I understand. and I would have to agree with it with the ones that I've listened to. I'm really kind of fired up about them to be honest.

And, I I plan to go back through the whole library and catch every one of them

Don and Ebony: I love that. Now we're approaching 70, right

Stu Lungwitz: What's that now? Yes, I do know that. Yeah. Th the thing that was interesting to me was when I was kind of looking at some other people had done these things is one of my people that worked with me way back when in 1986, I'm going to say, Milton Mounts with a photography company. Milt worked for us in prepress or worked with us in and him and I were about the same age. And so we go a long ways back. He he's one of those people that, you know, from back then and but every time you run into. it's like, you just saw him yesterday.

Don and Ebony: Yeah. Yeah. He's so cool. Yeah, he is cool. So.

Did you ever think about expanding beyond Wichita? I know staying in Wichita, but growing the business beyond Wichita,

Stu Lungwitz: I am too much hands on for that.

that is a fear of mine. I have to walk in the building and see what's going on. It just doesn't fit my personality. So, no, we really never looked at that. We've had the opportunity and I've always, no, I don't want to have to drive to Tulsa to take care of your problem, today.

Don and Ebony: So no expanding outside, but my question is so, and you have a diversified line, so this may be difficult to answer, but who's your customer who, who uses you? I, I know

Stu Lungwitz: Well, there there's many business in the city of Wichita and we refer to those as customers, which means we have salespeople that are taking care of those people that are on the streets, on the telephone with them and taking care of them.

And those are a lot of the people that I talked about, where we were making, solving their problems with construction. So labels and decals, those types of things. Then another of our business that I talked about before we refer to a special markets which is the printing on these tents and Coleman items and even appliances from coffee pots to things that we might, could put a corporate logo on those. and that's especially piece of the business. Those customers go all over the. United States. I'm sometimes amazed where you'll see an order come through that was sold by somebody in Kansas city. And it's coming right back to Wichita, to a business that something Kansas City sold them, that product, all of that business is sold through distributors. We don't actually deal with the end user at that point. There's distributors that are involved in those things. Our product may have touched you. If you, if You have a rewards program through a credit card. There is a piece of business that we touch there with fulfilling. where if you're looking on there and I'm going to say, if it's a Coleman item a cath lawn [00:25:00] pan, or one of 17 different appliances. there's a good chance that We've done value added to those, which means we've taken multiple products and package them together in a box, And you could be ordering that product online, with points . and we're going to ship it right out of Wichita, right to your house.

Don and Ebony: That is so amazing to me. I mean, because I don't think a lot of times we don't know that the wonderful businesses that we have here in that, we're every day we're seeing them and we don't even know it.

Stu Lungwitz: Yeah. and a lot of those things aren't printed. but we also have a relationship with the people that make those products and we do print on a lot of their products. And so that's how they came together, that there was a little niche there. They needed somebody to help fill. And so that's another piece of our business.

It's a little different. So We're really kind of a three headed monster is what I would say.

Don and Ebony: And that's a word I've been hearing a lot, probably over the last five to 10 years is fulfillment is what spurred that on this fulfillment.

Stu Lungwitz: Right? It's a buzzword.

Don and Ebony: it's a buzz

Stu Lungwitz: It's, it's kinda like the word, logistics.

Don and Ebony: Okay.

Fulfillment could be anything from where we're adding value to things and putting them together into a package to people actually warehousing items for their customer.

Stu Lungwitz: And instead of them buying a thousand of these and you shipping their

warehouse and then they use them over time, they actually send you orders to send a hundred of them here And next week. you get an order that says, send 50 of them here. that that's a major part of. fulfillment.

Don and Ebony: And help me understand how long has that, has that been going on since the beginning of time?

Or is this an Amazon thing or now?

Stu Lungwitz: It's before Amazon, I would say, but I'm going to tell you it's 20 years or so. Yeah, it really didn't exist that much back in the in the eighties, maybe in the nineties. that came around.

Don and Ebony: Wow. Interesting. Interesting. Is there anything that. I know. Yeah, I know you don't want to expand because that's not the

Stu Lungwitz: No, I didn't say I didn't want to expand. We want, we want to grow.

Don and Ebony: You want growth, but not to another location,

Stu Lungwitz: Yeah,

Don and Ebony: What's next then?

Stu Lungwitz: Well, the biggest thing is, to, as we get older and mature and wiser is, you know, we gotta take care of our employees. And So that's not really a next thing but we're always evolving with that there's new needs that are. out there. You know, we don't all know what's around the corner after coming out of this pandemic.

Don and Ebony: it's true.

Stu Lungwitz: And there's some rough roads ahead there. I believe we're looking at our core values. We're looking at our pillars of, of products the the pandemic, did teach us some things, what we taught, referred to as role labels, those are disposable product in that it's a label on the water bottle, like setting here on the table, once it's been used once, they got to replace it if they're going to sell it again. So it's not a long-term thing. There were a lot of labels used during the pandemic and we that was one piece of business that helped us to survive in the second quarter of that first year of the pandemic when we were off 40%, is that business group. And so you never know what you're doing. And so what's next is I really don't know what's next.

What's the next change that's going to take place, to force our business, or how are we going to pivot? I don't know.

Don and Ebony: I think it's time for some something really exciting. Are you ready? Yeah. Yeah. You've dealt with Ebony long enough. Your reward is word association.

Stu Lungwitz: Okay.

Don and Ebony: I give you one word. You gave me one word back. It's not wrong because it's your word.

Stu Lungwitz: Correct.

Don and Ebony: Okay. Here we go. Leader.

Stu Lungwitz: Jesus Christ.

Don and Ebony: College.

Stu Lungwitz: Butler County.

Don and Ebony: Entrepreneur.

Stu Lungwitz: Charles Koch.

Don and Ebony: Hero. fire and police.

Fun.

Stu Lungwitz: Ooh, wine tasting

Don and Ebony: Family.

Stu Lungwitz: Love them.

Don and Ebony: The Chamber.

diverse.

Don and Ebony: Wichita.

love this city.

Don and Ebony: Vacation.

Sonoma county, California.

Don and Ebony: Specific.

Failure.

Stu Lungwitz: It changes day to day

Don and Ebony: Last, but not least. And you to tell truth about this beverage.

Stu Lungwitz: Wine.

Don and Ebony: Nice. Excellent. Thank you for coming in Stu, do it's been a pleasure, wonderful and lovely conversation. Thank you for sharing your story.

Stu Lungwitz: Well, I appreciate the opportunity. And wish the best to you.

Don and Ebony: Well, thank you so much. Well, friends we're at the end of our segment, please make certain that you like it make certain that you shared this segment with your, your circle of friends who may find value from this story till next time.[00:30:00]