

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 117

Sam Foreman

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Don Sherman: [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 [00:01:00] in house Foreman Law.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's what's up my best homie.

Don Sherman: Oh, good Lord. Not everybody's your friend.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: he is for certain.

Don Sherman: Oh ~God,~ Sam.

Sam Foreman: Yeah,

Don Sherman: Oh, Sam, you

Sam Foreman: I still don't understand it myself, she has decided to be friends with me and I count that a high honor.

Don Sherman: No, I think you, you need to look at that differently. Don't you flip that. Oh my gosh,

Sam Foreman: politely decline.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Oh my God. Well, welcome to the show, Sam Foreman.

Sam Foreman: Thank you.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Welcome. We are excited to have you here.

Could you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.



Sam Foreman: Yeah so my name's Sam Foreman grew up in Topeka. Was fortunate enough to land down here in Wichita.

Love this place. Well, I just love being here. My, my wife and I have been married just a little bit over 10 years. Meg is what makes everything about my life awesome. She's just amazing. We have two wonderful. The oldest is five. Crazy. [00:02:00] He, yeah, I know. Like, I've got a really interesting alternative energy idea for Evergy.

We'll talk about it offline. I'm still

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: has a lot of energy

Sam Foreman: still unclear on like the ethics and definitely the legalities of it, but it involves like toddlers bouncing off of walls.

Oh, okay.

Don Sherman: Nice.

Sam Foreman: Jump ahead for that one. Yeah. And and then we've got an almost 17 month old who just recently started saying Mommy which I would like to note.

It took him longer to say, mommy, did for him to say Go Cats.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: In. I know. Meg is gonna be.

Don Sherman: Yeah. You in trouble on that one.

Sam Foreman: No I know,

Don Sherman: we need to edit that cause

Sam Foreman: There's, yeah, there's just, yeah. When he said, go Cats, before he said, mommy. Like, I knew I was

Don Sherman: I love cats. Like K State.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's right. You heard it.

Oh He's raising good kids.

Sam Foreman: Well, ~the ~I'm doing my best. I missed on the first one. He's all ou all the time. He's team mommy. So, the other one's also team mommy now. So

know which one's worse actually,

it's over.

something

Don Sherman: Yeah, [00:03:00] they might be equal. I mean, .

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: So Sam, you have, he and I have known each other for a number of years, and we were both part of YPW let's talk about your move to Wichita. Why Wichita?

Sam Foreman: Ooh.

Yeah, so for me it was all about a job. When I graduated from law school. It was 2011. And this was on the tail end of the 2009 recession, which flooded the law job market with lots of.

Talented folks from larger law firms and they were getting gobbled up by a lot of the regional mid-sized folks. And so there just weren't a lot of opportunities. And by the grace of God, something opened up here in Wichita, a great firm, and they're like, Hey, this is what we're looking for.

And their job description read like my resume, and it was just, wonderful opportunity. So very blessed and fortunate to be here.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That is awesome. So you let's go back to that. Just for those who don't what type of law do you. you

Sam Foreman: Only the good kind only good. Yeah, I know.

Business, law, business. Yep. Yep. So we [00:04:00] work with a variety of businesses from formation through a full life cycle of needs. Our big focus these days is on working with folks who are buying and selling businesses. Really enjoy, helping people unpack the chaos and the complexity and make it simple and actionable for

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: I love that because it can seem overwhelming buying a business or if you're selling a business .

Sam Foreman: Yeah.

No, ab absolutely. You've got the relationship dynamics. You've got, if you're the buyer, you've got a lot to learn about that business to make it work for you. You've got, new relationships to create with your new team members and customers.

And it's a lot. It's like working, we tell folks it's like working a second job when you're in that deal process and but we love working with folks through that process.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Have you always done business law?

Sam Foreman: . Yep.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: So outta law school first law firm you worked with, you did contracts.

Sam Foreman: Yep.

A lot of contracts, a lot of business law stuff, helping people set up their businesses. Got my first exposure to mergers and acquisitions or m and a work, working with buyers and sellers. Got [00:05:00] amazing mentorship there. Just learned. Learned a ton of stuff. Gotta work with a lot of entrepreneurs. It was just a ton of fun.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: And then what made you decide, you know what? I think now's the. I wanna . Have something with my name on it.

Sam Foreman: Yeah. It was ego.

No, .

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That was nice. I knew it.

Sam Foreman: I prided myself on being a very humble person and so for me the. Thing that drove us to start the firm was my wife Meg and I, we went on vacation, which is a great place to get enough space to think about the things that matter most. And it was at a time where we were very fortunate.

Our client base, my client base at work was growing rapidly. But it was creating a lot of pain points cause I wasn't able to keep up with it. And we just needed help. We needed a way to do things differently and I was just working all the time. . And you, if you're working all the time, what is it for?

On my personal scorecard, if you're working all the time and you don't have margin for [00:06:00] anything else, not really calendar Foreman

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: from me during that time, and I was not happy about it.

Sam Foreman: Yeah.

I would like to personally apologize for that. Send a

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: pass. Okay. But I think I was the reason he started this firm, but let's go to that.

Sam Foreman: Oh no,

That's how I came

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: around the next,

Sam Foreman: Yeah. Yeah.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Nice. No that's really awesome. Yeah. And so you decided to open up your own firm and you decided to locate.

Sam Foreman: Well, as with all good startup stories, it started above a sushi restaurant, Uhhuh downtown. Yeah. Our first office was it was a small office, one room above wasabi down on Douglas, which if anybody's looking for great sushi, reach out, I would love to join you, because I love sushi.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Yeah. It's delicious.

Don Sherman: I'm down with that.

Really talented

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: and then,

Sam Foreman: Yeah. And then we moved to the farm Credit Bank building up street. Yep. That's where we are currently. Just up the street from here. Yep. Got a great view of the river or the keeper. Couldn't ask for a better spot. [00:07:00] It's a love it. Yeah.

Don Sherman: How many square feet?

Sam Foreman: Oh. I don't have any square feet myself. They're normal shape, but yeah. Sorry.

Don Sherman: What

Sam Foreman: Like dad jokes. Yeah, know. Can cut that? Can we edit that part out? Like, oh man,

Don Sherman: That was good. Actually. Took

Sam Foreman: giving me too credit. I appreciate you. Thank you. It's about 2,800 square feet.

Yeah.

Yeah. So we were real smart. We decided to sign a lease for much larger, more expensive space in March of 2020, for those who are keeping home, that's like we, it was like a week after we signed the lease that the lockdown started. Yeah. Which, in retrospect actually was a perfect time for us to sign.

Because there was all kind of build out that needed to occur, and so we were able to work from home for a couple of months while that was going on.

Don Sherman: Oh, okay.

Sam Foreman: So the timing ended up better than it may have sounded like initially, but yeah. That was a weird season to go through for sure.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Well, you've made it out of that season.[00:08:00]

Sam Foreman: we're not dead yet.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Yeah. So you successfully made it from out of that. Can you tell us during that time, you were working with businesses who were really being affected by that period of time, so you talk to us a little bit about.

Sam Foreman: Yeah, no, it definitely created some new dynamics.

We had, a lot of clients that were more hesitant to start stuff, but you know, the pandemic was a weird season because there were some folks where their businesses never performed better than they did during the pandemic. Just because of the nature of what they did and how they responded to those pressures.

It really reinforced for me the observation that, whenever there's people that are in any kind of difficult situation, there's always an opportunity to help. And if you can figure out how to help people really well your business is always gonna do just fine.

And that was hard. That was hard to really allow that to sink in during that time when it felt like the sky was falling and Rome was on fire. And yeah, everything else. But I'd love to mix more metaphors if you'd like to join me for the after cast.

Don Sherman: After [00:09:00] cast. Nice. So how many folks you got over there at Foreman Law?

Sam Foreman: Yeah, so we've got four total team members, including myself three attorneys, and then the person who does all the hard work, that's Alina. She takes care of all the important

stuff.

Don Sherman: Okay, excellent. And now that you're rolling, what kind of culture you.

Sam Foreman: Oh man. I think we've got an awesome culture.

We've got really amazing team members couldn't ask for a better group of people. We really wanna prioritize wellness at the center of our experience for folks. That's a critical component, especially in our industry. I mean, all industries, but the legal industry is notorious for creating toxic work cultures, idolizing being a workaholic as the pinnacle of our career, and we reject.

Fundamentally and part of doing that is creating wellness at the center of the experience, as well as designing a business model that reinforces our culture. Cuz at the end of the day, the culture's gonna respond to the strongest incentives and those are most often centered in the business model.

And so for folks that really wanna have a [00:10:00] culture that thrives on wellness, that really prioritizes people at the center of the experience. If you're not willing to rethink your business model and how it harmonizes with your culture you're not gonna be as successful as you need to be in that endeavor.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: You just said a lot

Yeah. Yeah. You really did. And I mean, it's, that is so critical, and I know it's still Don's, coming up with questions, but can we just , unpack that a little bit.

Yep.

Because,

You said something about a culture of, idolizing being a workaholic and you rejecting that, that's critical. Because when you think about mental health,

How do you how can you talk about that and that's important? just personally, I that if you don't pack that it can almost take you over the

Sam Foreman: Yeah. And in my case, it almost did take me over the edge.

I never thought of myself as somebody who was gonna struggle with my mental health. I mean, that was always for other people. And then not during the recess, not during the [00:11:00] pandemic, but at the very tail end of it, everything caught up with me the years of. Overworking and burning myself out and I would say robbing from Peter to pay Paul, but it was really robbing from Peter and then robbing to Paul and then lying to them both

Don Sherman: Wow.

Sam Foreman: about, how much I was working.

The realization hit me I'm, giving my family leftovers. That's really how it was. But the stress and the pressure of those years of overworking. Myself, which a lot of it was driven by my choices within, the traditional law system. Coupled with starting a business, coupled with, the pressures and the drains of going through a business, starting a business during a pandemic.

We started six months before the pandemic started. All of that caught up with and I just, I almost didn't recognize myself. My wife was like I don't really know that I know this version of you and I got into therapy. and I worked that really hard for a year. And it just it was such a formative experience in my life.

It's given me a much deeper appreciation for the central role [00:12:00] that mental health plays in being a really good human. And the empathy that we need to have for others when we're interacting with them and they're behaving in a way that we don't like or we don't understand, should give us pause to under, to try to ask the question, what happened to you?

What's going on? think deeper below the surface so that we can, act with more empathy. But then as we design our businesses in a way that. Best reflects who we are as people and our core values to really think about how we help model this as leaders. I've tried to be very transparent with our team about my personal struggles and what I've done to do it.

And when I have, times come up where I'm feel like I'm reaching an edge of burnout or where I feel like somebody else is, we just have a very transparent culture around it. We want to normal. Discussions around people making healthy choices and remove the stigma that so often accompanies things like mental health.

You wouldn't treat somebody as lesser because they needed to go see a doctor cuz they had some physical ailment. Why would [00:13:00] it be any different with mental health? That's just one other dimension of our overall health and wellness as human beings.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: It's very, I appreciate you sharing that story.

Don Sherman: Yeah. It's very interesting how many folks talk about mental health on this podcast. It's, real. We truly appreciate you sharing that story. I think it's, we need to pay some bills up in here.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: No. Well, it's probably time to hear a word from our sponsor, . We'll be back friends. from Sam Foreman and Foreman Law.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Welcome back [00:14:00] friends. We are here with Sam Foreman

and Foreman Law. We're talking a little bit about his business and what he has going on at the law firm, but as you might remember at the beginning of the podcast, he shared that he moved here from Topeka.

Really smart guy, like one of the smartest guys that I know, which I thought when I first met him that he must have attended Southeast High School because of that. But, He did not . Thank God.

Sam Foreman: Yeah.

Don Sherman: Oh my God.

Sam Foreman: If I had been in Wichita, I would've been fortunate to have attended Southeast High

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Let's see that. Don't do that.

He's so wonderful. But no Sam and I, we've talked about Wichita and being in the city and how we can impact the city, and he's done a wonderful job impacting the city. I, yep. I'm curious from your standpoint, as an entrepreneur. And young-ish professional you.

Sam Foreman: Thank you. Yes. I concur. Yes.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: What do you think is missing from the Wichita business ecosystem. Or what can we do to help it evolve?

Sam Foreman: Good [00:15:00] question. Yeah, that is such a great question. Some of the things that I've spent the most time thinking about on my own business, and I think that they extend to a community level is the importance of.

For us as a business culture is a critical component because it's gonna sustain the values and the outcomes that we're trying to create in our business and in our industry and to the future much better than just simply incentives could do.

And I think that we've got so many positive building blocks in our local business culture already, but what I'd like to see added to those is a little bit more resiliency. And I think in certain sectors a higher appetite for local risk Yeah. There's a real critical need to develop the learning assets. That are critical to producing the next big ideas. Our community is built around, people taking big risks. We see them flying overhead all the [00:16:00] time.

That wouldn't have happened without people having the vision and being willing to take the risks, but they didn't, it wasn't just the first risk takers, but we wouldn't have had the second and the third. And the people that built. Spirit AeroSystems. If we didn't have the first folks that were

willing to crash a plane out in a, in a farm and then go take their engineering skills that they develop working on tractors and, turn it into, flying machines.

We've gotta think about, the tree that we're gonna plant that we may not sit under the shade of, but maybe we. And we've gotta continue to have that mindset that we're part of a long arc story. And we gotta keep putting in our piece because we're benefiting from the piece that somebody else put in before us.

But that's critical. We've gotta get there. We've gotta do it more consistently.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Well said. Well said. Very x. So you, this is not the first podcast you've been on, on, and in fact you have one of your own.

Sam Foreman: Indeed. I do

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: You do. So, tell us what that one is. Tell. [00:17:00]

Sam Foreman: Yeah.

So I've got a podcast with Jacob Wayman. That's the How to Buy or Sell a Business Successfully Podcast.

We really want to help educate folks about, how deals work. Whether they're on the buy side or the sell side there's a lot of first time buyers and first time sellers, and we really want to help empower them with information so that they can have a great experience with their deal.

For me, a lot of where my heart is at is wanna do good things for the community and whether people wanna hire us or not to help on their deal. If they have a better experience, they're gonna create more value, they're gonna do better deals. And that's good for our community in the long run.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: I love that you're so selfless. And then, so anything else coming up with podcasts?

Sam Foreman: Well, I'm glad you asked yeah. We're gonna start another podcast called Breaking the Law.

Ooh. I'm all about branding first and substance second, I guess but.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's so great.

Sam Foreman: But that's really where a lot of my heart is at with our [00:18:00] business is we want to have a successful business.

But we really want to change, be part of changing our industry. There's a lot that's wrong with the law and the practice of law, the industry of the law. And there's a lot of folks working to change it, and we want to be a real active part of that movement, especially here locally. What that podcast is really going to focus on is how the law often breaks people.

It breaks the people that work in the law. If you look at the data, the incidence of mental health challenges, of substance abuse, of, so many, depression, anxiety, so many negative outcomes is much higher in the legal industry than it is in so many other professions, so many other fields ranks very high among all professions.

And those outcomes and those aren't. , those aren't good outcomes. And then you have law firms walking around saying, Hey, we're good for family, we're good for health, we're good for wellness. But at the same time they're saying that outta one side of their mouth, they're also talking outta the other side of their mouth with, hey, but we still need you to, work, 2000 billable hours this year, or 1800 billable hours this year [00:19:00] while, taking care of your kids at home and.

Checking all these other boxes in order to advance your career. And that's just a recipe for poor outcomes. And when you have, good people that are working hard, you design your incentive structure around things that create pressure points for them personally. , yeah. That creates worse outcomes for the people they interact with.

And then, you put unhealthy people, unwell people in the law, and you create bad results with the law. And so we want to talk about, how the law breaks people, how it's broken. And then what we really want to wanna do is bring a message of hope about how we want to break the.

We want to break away from how the traditional practice of law is really executed on because there's a better way. We don't want to be about big law, which is kind of the standard of success for a lot of people. We wanna be about better law.

Don Sherman: Excellent. Just one question before we get into a couple of fun things we're going to do.

Five years from now, what's Foreman Law gonna be looking like?

Sam Foreman: Well, like all good law firms, we're gonna exist [00:20:00] entirely in the, and exclusively in the Metaverse.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: She's,

Sam Foreman: No I, well, I'm so glad you asked. Let me stall while I think about a good answer. What I would really love to see us be in five years is first and foremost have sustained our current culture and we've got a really healthy culture that I think creates a lot of opportunities for

our team in the right ways.

And I really want to see that at the core of the experience that we deliver for our team and for our clients. And then I'd really love to see us have. Figured out the the growth model to take what we're doing and be able to scale it to a point where we can create enough pressure on the market to drive the changes that we want to see from an industry perspective.

Cuz a lot of where my heart is at, aside from just building a, successful business is to do it in a way that creates a virtuous cycle where our business succeeds by creating good in the communities that we. By creating good for the [00:21:00] clients that we serve. And by doing things in a way that transforms our industry and our industry is so driven by talent and the availability of talent that my theory is that if we can create scarcity and talent, By growing to a size where the best talent wants to choose an experience with Foreman law or others that are like us that we will create enough pressure on folks who currently don't have pain points, not meaningful pain points to change what they're doing in ways that at least I believe, are for the betterment of our industry and our communities and our families and the people that we serve.

So that's, I know that's not a very specific answer. But that's, that's how I think about evaluating success into the future.

Don Sherman: Excellent. And it's your answer. So that's what we're here for. So, gonna get into a couple of things. , we got a box here. That he brought Sam brought in, and I'm gonna give you a play by play.

Ooh. About whether Ebony likes it or not.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: I already like it. It says Booya. Yeah. Foreman Law. [00:22:00] So that's step one.

Don Sherman: Yep. She's opening up the box.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Oh, look at this. There's a lot of branded material. There's a. Not branded material.

with legos, , and there's ideas included. I need those. And lots of jelly beans, which I love.

Sam Foreman: Why use packing peanuts when you can have jelly beans,

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: use peanuts, packing peanuts, and here's some Reverie Roaster's coffee, which is my favorite, so I appreciate that. This is a win.

Don Sherman: She has her own booth at Reverie, I believe, and Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: here's some stress toys, Don Sherman: ~ge.~ You don't need that. Especially your job stresses

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Stresses me out.

My gosh.

Being here is, . Thank you. Sam Foreman. Thank you. Sam Foreman, law firm. Wow. Shout out to the other associates at the firm.

Sam Foreman: Yeah. Mike McFee. Nicole Fank really grateful to work with them. And Alina Blevins just, makes everything work really well. [00:23:00] So we're lucky

yay,

have awesome team.

Don Sherman: All right, well you got that.

Apparently you passed the test. So I've seen her receive not gifts here, but I've seen her receive bad gifts and it's not a good day.

Sam Foreman: oh, man. Yeah.

Don Sherman: know her. Yeah.

Sam Foreman: thank you for playing along.

Don Sherman: Her facial expression was good on this one, so, yay. Yay. Gonna do some word association. I'll give you one word to gimme one word back.

That's not wrong, it's your word. ready? Of course you are. You Sam Foreman. Leader.

Sam Foreman: Culture.

Don Sherman: Success.

Sam Foreman: People.

Don Sherman: College.

Sam Foreman: doesn't help that I'm a perfectionist on certain things.

College, uh, work.

Don Sherman: Okay. Failure .

Sam Foreman: Hope.

Don Sherman: Entrepreneur.

Sam Foreman: Learning.

Don Sherman: Wichita.

Sam Foreman: Home.

Don Sherman: Vacation.

Sam Foreman: Cancun.

Don Sherman: Hero.

Sam Foreman: Meg [00:24:00] Foreman.

Don Sherman: Oh, boom. Meg. Wichita chamber. I know that's two words, but you get to drill.

Sam Foreman: Ooh. Progress.

Don Sherman: Family.

Sam Foreman: Love.

Don Sherman: Fun.

Sam Foreman: Booya.

Don Sherman: Okay. It's your word. Last but not least, you gotta tell truth. Beverage.

Sam Foreman: Kombucha.

Don Sherman: Ooh, that sounded bougie. What? What's that?

Sam Foreman: Well, if it's been properly aged fermented with the finest local fermentation.

Don Sherman: Is that beer?

Sam Foreman: Kombucha is a fermented tea based drink. Has a lot of probiotics in it. We have some on tap at the office. You'll have to come by and try some.

He he does tap. Yeah.

We also have local craft brew on tap,

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's the reason I

Sam Foreman: got, that's the reason you

Yeah. We can. Yeah. Come on by. Yeah, please do. Standing invitation. Y'all. Y'all

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: We will billed.

Sam Foreman: Yeah. [00:25:00] Ebony, that is in the fine print

Don Sherman: Wow.

Sam Foreman: That is below the confidentiality disclaimer.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: is cool. No, he has a pretty cool, are you serious? Oh my God, I love it. I

Sam Foreman: love it. Okay, let

Legos in the conference rooms.

Don Sherman: Legos

Sam Foreman: We also have Nerf gun cabinet,

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: It's true.

Sam Foreman: been a while since anybody's broken into that.

Don Sherman: Wow. That's very cool. Thank you for coming through.

Sam Foreman: Thanks for having me.

Don Sherman: Oh my God, that is, I can't get over that.

Sam Foreman: Yeah, sorry.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: That's Sam Foreman for you.

Don Sherman: Wrap it up. Good lord.

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Well, thanks for being here, Sam. It's really been wonderful to catch up.

Sam Foreman: Hey, thank you so much for having me, and thanks for all y'all are doing. Appreciate it

Ebony Clemons Ajibolade: Guys, you can catch Sam Foreman at goforemanlaw.com or on any of his social media platforms. If you would, please make certain you'd like today's podcast to share it with your friends or circle of influence, or someone who may need his assistance.

Till next time.

Don Sherman: Peace. [00:26:00]