

Ethan:

Hey, and welcome everyone to Startup Savants, a podcast dedicated to helping aspiring entrepreneurs and startup enthusiasts by bringing you news, insights, and stories about the startups and founders that are currently, right now, in the arena fighting for their right to party. I'm your host, Ethan.

Annaka:

And I'm your other host, Annaka.

Ethan:

Hey, our guest today is Steve Edwards of Premier Virtual, a SaaS startup that offers HR and recruiting technology for businesses, school boards, and even the US military, streamlining internal processes through virtual functionality. Founder and CEO, Steve Edwards is a small-town Wisconsin guy who joined the Army right out of high school. Steve was in the 82nd Airborne jumping out of airplanes and realized that was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. And with that intro, hey, Steve. How are you doing today?

Steve Edwards:

Oh, what an intro. Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Ethan:

Absolutely. We're glad to have you. So let's jump right in. Tell us a little bit about the history behind Premier Virtual and its mission.

Steve Edwards:

Premier Virtual starts a long, long time ago in a land far away. I got out of the Army, came to college in Florida. I was always in sales, but I worked for a company that did outside sales, and I lived out of a suitcase for four years, pre-wife, pre-kids. My markets were in New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Texas. And, I would go in and I would build a sales team for the organizations that we had. Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile were our clients, so we would go in ... and, how do you build a sales team? Job boards and job fairs. So I attended job fairs on a weekly basis and I was like, "Okay, some of them are good. Some of them were really bad." But fast forward four years later, the company shut down the division I was in, and I didn't want to knock doors, and I didn't want to be in retail sales.

That wasn't really what I wanted. So I came back here to Florida where I was at, and I went to my buddy and I said, "Man, I got an idea. Let's put on job fairs." He said, "Job fairs? You mean like the college?" I'm like, "No." There was a company that I knew based out of New Jersey that they do a really efficient type of job fair. It's in the evening, it's geared towards sales companies and you do a presentation format. So, I would speak in front of all the candidates before the job fair so it drove the right candidates to me, and I loved it. I go, "We can do this. We'll reach out to the guy up there and we'll partner with him." So, that's essentially what we did. We bought a license agreement from the Southeast all the way out to Texas and Arizona.

And, we ran in-person job fairs. I did this for about nine years. 2017, started to see a huge decline in job fairs. People would rather apply online than wait in line. So, when people stopped coming to job fairs, companies didn't want to pay me anymore. At this point in my life, I got a young son, newly married, and I'm like, "I got to do something to make money." Found out about virtual career fairs, started doing virtual career fairs. The company up in Jersey wanted nothing to do with virtual job fairs. They were not ... wasn't for them. We parted ways in a good way. I said, "I'm going 100% virtual." December of 2018, I announced I'm going all virtual, no more in-person job fairs. People laughed at me. They said, "You're crazy. It'll never work." Me, being a little cocky saying, "Hold my beer."

I just didn't really realize that beer was going to be a Corona, but all through 2019, I was developing the software. And, I sat down with my clients and found out what they wanted to do, because ... Back up just a little bit, I was using another platform out there, and it wasn't good, because there wasn't really a lot of platforms out there, and my clients wanted more. So, I built my own platform. Now I'm not a software developer. I'm not a tech guy. I'm a sales guy. I look like, talk like, smell like a sales guy. You know I'm trying to you something when I get on the phone with you. So, I had to get a development team to come in and build a software for myself and my business partner.

So just like any good salesperson out there, we're getting the software. It's almost complete, and I have a client say, "Can you do this, this, and this?" "Yeah, of course we can do that." Then I had to call my development team and say, "Yeah, I just told somebody we can do this. We need to change our software." So, we had to add all these things on. So get to August of 2019, and I said, "I don't want to put on job fairs anymore. I don't want to host a job fair anymore. I want to now license my software so that organizations can do their own events." National events and regional events. So then, we had to change our software even more. We launched, we took our first client January of 2020, getting ready for that, getting everything ... finalizing the software, getting everything ready. March 2020, we all know what happens.

Annaka:
Yeah.

Steve Edwards:
COVID hit.

Steve Edwards:
COVID hits, the world shuts down. Job fair companies couldn't run their businesses, couldn't do anything. Schools, everything came out there and it shut everything down. But guess what? They had a solution. Myself and the other platforms that were out there were ready for that. We went from still ready to launch there to ... COVID was a catalyst, and it showed everybody how efficient virtual events were from a trade show aspect to a career fair aspect. And, mainly 90% of our business are career fairs because that's really what we knew and that's our advertising, the trade show, the virtual stuff, but I like to say our platform is the Three E's: easy to use,

effective, and efficient. And, that's what the world really saw and that's how we got to where we're at, rated as one of the top virtual platforms out there.

One magazine actually even gave me Innovator of the Year. So I was very fortunate with where we were at with the vision. People said you got lucky, and I'm like, "Listen, the harder I worked, the luckier I seemed to get." It was really going after ... I looked at trends. Everything changes because the trends that are out there, and when you look at my four year old that learned how to be on the iPad from my seven year old ... we go back to when they were two, everybody has a phone in their hand. As you're listening to this podcast today, how close is your laptop, your phone, and your tablets to you right now that you can count?

Ethan:

I can count lots of devices.

Steve Edwards:

It's right there. This is where the world is going, and this is what COVID really did is it showed the world's effectiveness and the efficiency of virtual. People don't want to wait in lines. So, that's how we got to where we're at.

Ethan:

Well, that's a heck of a story there and it sounds like you've really taken this pandemic that's hit us all and really turned it into an opportunity. And, we'll cover that more in a little bit, but first I want to ask a little bit more about the software. Can you walk us through the software and how it works for listeners who might be looking for a recruiting tool, and how does this differ from just using Zoom or any other video platform?

Steve Edwards:

Gosh, that's my favorite question out there. I get a lot of good questions, but you know when some people say you got a softball? I love that question. Because I don't care where it is, I can be out at a bar, a restaurant and somebody says, "What do you do?" They said, "So you're like Zoom?" I am nothing like Zoom. So, here's what I tell everybody when you start ... You want to know what my software does, close your eyes. Imagine back in the day you used to have to go into a conference room or a hotel and you would be standing there. You got your resume. You got your suit on or your dress on, you just spent time in traffic to get there, and you go and you wait line to talk to a recruiter.

Now you don't know what jobs they have. You don't know what their company really does. You see a logo. Some of them have a bunch of stuff, some of them have a little. And, you just waited 15 minutes. You hand them your resume, "Hi, my name is Steve. I'm so excited to be here."

"What kind of jobs are you looking for?" "I'm a salesperson." "Sorry, I'm looking for an accountant." My head goes down, I walk to the next one, the next one. Here's what virtual does for you. You get out of bed, you maybe throw a shirt on ... I'm going to have some fun with this a little bit. You come here, you log into your computer. You created your profile. In your profile,

you created a video resume of yourself. You asked some basic questions; who are you? What do you do? Why should people hire you? You create your profile. You put all of your experiences in there.

So now, an organization just doesn't see one resume or two resumes. They see an experience. Some of the companies put questions in there, and they log into a lobby. Now, what does a lobby of a job fair look like? Think of a job board. When you go to a job board, you click on here's my industry that I want. I want a sales job in south Florida. And, it pulls up the companies. Same thing is what this does, but you log in and you look in the lobby. You can look at an industry, a location.

We have a worldwide event going on next week on our platform that it says, "Here's the region of the world." They click on the region of the world and all of the companies that are hiring in there ... So, now you see the logo of the company and the name. You click on that. The first thing you do is you click About Us and you see what does the company do. If I'm not excited about that company, guess what? I go back to the next company. But if I'm excited about that company, now I can see their jobs. These are some good jobs. I like this job. I'm going to submit my resume to this company. This is a really good company with a really good background. Maybe I want to tailor my resume specifically for that. I can do that through my platform. Where most job fairs, here's one generic resume that you have. Here, you can tailor it specifically for that. Then, what is the next thing a candidate wants to do after they see what a company does and what jobs they have?

They maybe want to research that company. Is it the right culture for them? Is it the right fit? Are they in the news? All of that is in our platform. So they can look at their social media, they can look at their website, they can look at it all right in the platform. And then, they can chat with them and go right into a video interview in a matter of seconds. There's no in line. There's no long queue that says, "In 45 minutes, you can talk to somebody." No, you can go right in, see what they do, submit your resume, talk to that company immediately, and get into a video interview.

Then, let's just say you like that company and that company says, "I'm talking to another candidate. I'll be right with you." You could schedule a one-on-one time right through our platform to meet with that recruiter. So, now you get an open job fair that you can come in and talk, or you can schedule a one-on-one appointment. And the good thing is is that recruiter can set their schedule and say, "I want to meet somebody every 15 minutes from 10:00 to 2:00." And guess what? If somebody doesn't show up to their interview, you still got the open job fair so people can still come and talk to you.

So, you're getting the scheduled interview and then you're getting the platform. Now, another thing that we have within our platform is we have a group video platform. So let's just say a company wants to do a group interview or they have a bunch of people in their booth, and they only want to say the same thing one time. Here's who we are, here's what we do, here's what

we're hiring for. They can have a group presentation to show all the candidates. They could do a webinar.

Like Zoom, Zoom is one tiny little thing of what our platform does. We have one-on-one video, we have group interview, we have schedulers. And the best thing about it is we have all of the analytics that you could ask for. The host of the event gets all of the analytics. Each company gets their analytics, and the best thing that not anybody else really has, we have a thing called The My Journey. When you go to a job fair, how many candidates out there submit their resume and then write down and say, "Here are the companies that I submitted my resume. Here's who I talked to. Here's who I said I liked. I want to leave some notes."

We built all that into the platform, so the candidates don't have to remember anything. They could look at it and say, "Here are the 10 companies I talked to. Here are the three that I'm interested in, and here are the four jobs that I submitted my resume to." We built all that in. So, you got easy connections with each other and then analytics that are out of this world.

Annaka:

That's so cool. I thought it was a great question. What's the difference between you and Zoom, but clearly a lot. Yeah, I specifically like that you can tailor your resume for different things depending on what you're looking at. How did you establish your user experience or how did you go about deciding if it was good, or reforming that as you're going through?

Steve Edwards:

So what we did is when we built our first version of our software, a lot of my clients then were sales clients because that's really the industry that we were targeting on the job fairs. They wanted things a little bit more basic. So, what we did is we wanted what's the easiest way for me to connect with you? Without waiting in lines, without anything, we want to be able to have it where the candidate can come in and immediately start a conversation. But the organization, as soon as that candidate comes in, can see that candidate. They can click on that candidate's name and see all the information. Now in our first version of our software, we didn't have all that, but we took a lot of feedback. We built our platform and then almost at the end of 2020, we started developing our second version already.

So we had focus groups with all of our clients and said, "What do you like?" Because now, we had people from different industries, we had colleges, chamber of commerce's, military, veteran organizations, workforce development boards. We had a lot of clients and a lot of people have been on our platform, so we said, "What do you want to see?" So, then we had our focus groups. We had 10 different focus groups with clients that came in and then we did mockups. We said, "Here's what we want to do, but what do you want to see?" And then we did all the mockups. And then, we did the focus groups again and said, "Here's what we have." And, the best thing is we're never done. Every month, we're launching new technology within our platform to always be better and create that user experience.

Every organization that's on our platform now gets a survey afterwards. So, they can now say what they like, if there's something that maybe could be improved, and this is how we look at our roadmap to say, "What are something ..." I'll tell you, on my roadmap, the number one thing is if I lose a deal to a competitor, why? Is it something they have that I don't have? That's the number one thing that goes on my roadmap. Number two is what our clients, if there's any confusion or anything like that, and number three is just enhancements that are out there. So that's where we take the user experience from both the organizations, the attendees, and the host of the events. We get feedback from everybody so that we can continue to stay ahead of the game.

Annaka:

I am such a nerd for user experience. So, you just made me very, very happy because the user journey through any kind of platform can make or break success. So it really sounds like you're doing the right stuff.

Steve Edwards:

On the new platform, we actually created the setup wizard that says step one, step two, step three, step four. So you can't mess it up, and that's from a host to an attendee to an organization. It's like, "Put your logo here." In our first version of our software, we were always voted as one of the most easy platforms to use. And our clients said, "There's no way you can make this easier to use." And I go, "Just wait. Just wait and see." This setup wizard that we have for everybody, everybody just loves it because it makes it easy, because anybody that has it out there ... And the way that I looked at it always is ... I have clients that are from 18 to 80. Now granted, we've had some other events on our platforms as well but figures not everybody's tech savvy. Not everybody grew up with a tablet or a smartphone in their hand, so some of these people don't have it.

So we had to make it, and when I went to my developers, I said, "I need two things. I need it easy, and I need it sexy." And, that's what we built it based on that, because we have it. Now, one of my clients, one time, she was an organization that attended our event. They were looking at her company now getting a license of our platform. And she goes, "Steve, it was easy for me. I loved it, but I wanted to see how easy it was, so I had my 72-year-old mother ... I sent her the link and I said register for this event and come in and chat with me." Her 72-year-old mother came in and did it. And I was like, "That is amazing." But that shows that you can still have something that's very tech savvy that doesn't have to be difficult for people to register, log-in, and interact with somebody else.

Ethan:

Absolutely. Hey, so I want to go back to something that you mentioned. You said you're a sales guy. You're not an engineer. You're not a coder. I assume you've picked up some of the lingo over time after work with a dev team for so long. But let's talk about that initial dev team. This is something that I feel like a lot of founders run into is that they're non-technical, they have this idea, but they don't even know the path or how to go about finding someone to help them take

action on this path. So, did you get a partner? Did you go out and hire a team on your own? How did you hire this dev team?

Steve Edwards:

I knew where you were going with this question. So I'm going to tell you, I made a ton of mistakes. I had the idea, went to my business partner, and he was not really involved as much on the in-person job fair world, because it was smaller. It wasn't there. He's also a full-time firefighter, so he didn't need to work as much on that. And when I came to him and said, "Hey, here's an idea." Okay, let's go with it. But we didn't know, even though his degree is in computer science, I think ... Yeah. Graduated a long time ago and never really used anything. We weren't developers, so I went out and I started looking at development companies. So I started interviewing a few different. I narrowed it down to two organizations, and prices were pretty similar.

One was going to do a little bit more on the marketing side of it. One was just the development side of it. So, I went with the first one. I went with the first one. Okay, now remember I'm not a tech guy. At this point in time, I couldn't tell you what Laravel, Reacts ... I couldn't tell you what any of that stuff was. I get on a call with the one company and they're showing me all the backend stuff, and I looked at him and I said, "Bro, you're talking Chinese to me. I don't understand a thing that you're saying to me. Just tell me, what's it going to cost me? And how long is it going to take?" Walked into the next one. It was a husband and wife team, and they were like, "Listen, you're a sales guy. I'm not going to tell you on this. Here's what it's going to cost. Here's how long it's going to take, and here's what we're going to do. We'll see you in four months."

I'm like, "I love you guys." Let's fast forward now. They were terrible. They built the software. They kinda didn't do what we wanted. It was still there, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted. Oh, I forgot. There was one of the other companies that I talked to first that weren't into the final two ... because I walked in and they told me what it was going to cost me and I was like, "You're nuts." Now, I look at what they charged me and I spent 10 times what that original one was going to be, what they said, but we put a lot more into it.

But, I went with the first company and then it started to be where they weren't as good. They were outsourcing it. I won't say to where they were outsourcing it, but most of the development firms are outsourced somewhere, and it wasn't that good. So, then what did I do? I went back to the firm that talked to me like I did know ... they talked to me in the development terms. And I said, "I'm going to use you guys. You guys seem to know your stuff. I'm going to go with you guys."

So, they got to a point. They were really good and then we're going live and there were just a couple things that they couldn't fix. They couldn't figure out what to do, and I'd like to say this is, they would put a bandaid on one side to fix one thing and something else would break. Think of a car. You would fix the right tire, and then the rear bumper would break. You'd fix the rear bumper and then the horn wouldn't work. They just kept putting band aids on all this stuff, so I

brought in a third firm ... and I'm telling you this all because I think startup companies, this is challenges that they have out there.

I brought in a third firm and they were phenomenal. They fixed everything, and they were really good. They put some new stuff in there. But, they were really expensive, and I couldn't afford them. But they got me to where we were ready, we had a lot of really good things. But, I couldn't afford them. So, then I went to a fourth company and they were phenomenal. Absolutely amazing. We've still been with them. Now we've been with them almost two years. Actually, over two years now because it's 2022. We've been with them and they came in and then when I started going to the first one, I said, "I don't want you just to enhance our legacy platform. I want you to build it from scratch."

So then we went in and we started building it from scratch and just built it all the way up. Much better platform, phenomenal teams. I was talking with a fellow business owner last week that he has an app that he's getting ready to launch, and there was one little thing, I said, "Here's a bug that I think you need to fix." He goes, "They can't figure that out." I go, "Sometimes you got to switch APIs or you go to switch development teams. If that team can't get this, and to me, that's a major issue within that app," but his development team can't figure out one little piece. To me, you either switch an API to go after something else or you find another team.

But, it took me a long time interviewing, the finding it out. I was at a conference, and I had a guy tell me every new company now, one of the partners should be a software engineer. If you're starting as a startup, have that. You're going to give up, yes, maybe a little percentage. A guy like me that comes in and you have an idea, if you don't have the right people around you, people could take advantage of you. And, I'm not going to say people took advantage of us, but we didn't know what we didn't know. And, it took us a little bit of time, it took us a little bit longer to get to where we wanted to be, but I'm there.

And, it took that. Sometimes you don't worry about finding somebody else. If that development team or that software engineer, you bring somebody in and give them a little percentage of the biz and say, "Hey, here's what it is." Because somebody who has a little more skin in the game is going to help you more. And, I went to the firms originally and said, "Hey, I'll make you my CTO. I'll give you a percentage of the business." Because I wanted them to have more skin in the game, but when you're a startup and you go to these development companies and you say, "Hey, we got this great idea," they're like, "Yeah, so did the last 10 people and their businesses, they don't have it."

The company that we're with, our development firm, we have a phenomenal relationship with them. We have internal now. So, that's where we're at now with them is they didn't take startup companies. We were one of the first ones because he knew it in his previous life, he had seen so many companies fail, and he didn't do it. Luckily, he saw where our software was and what we were doing, but it's really hard to try to partner sometimes with organizations like that.

Ethan:

So, you're saying technical co-founder, definitely yes?

Steve Edwards:

Yes.

Ethan:

Okay, good. I think that's really great advice because just like what you said, there's so many potholes in the road, and I think having someone there who knows how to drive ... taking that a little too far ... knows how to drive that road-

Steve Edwards:

My director of IT, on a daily basis, we'll have calls and there'll be stuff that is good, but he doesn't understand my brain. The guy who runs our QA team that's here, he is phenomenal. I will come in here, I'll say, "This is what I want. Here's how it is." He'll then go in, take it, put it in ... we'll call it developer language of what they want to see and what they have, and it's amazing.

My business partner, as well, they work so well together because now he's learning all this stuff, so they can take here's the idea, make it look pretty and put it into the words so the developers can go in and code.

Ethan:

So have you brought this development team in-house at this point?

Steve Edwards:

Half of our development team is in-house.

Ethan:

That's awesome. That's awesome. I want to go back to the beginning a little bit. You don't need to give me the exact numbers, but just in roundabout, it sounds like you went through four different outsourced tech companies to make your MVP happen, you're number one. How much did that cost? Was it \$10,000? Was it a million? Was it somewhere in there?

Steve Edwards:

Our first platform, our legacy-

Ethan:

Just to get your MVP out

Steve Edwards:

... was a little over \$250 grand.

Ethan:

Wow. And that was through four developers. If you either would've gotten luckier and found the first developer, or the first developer would have succeeded and/or if you would've brought a technical founder on right at the beginning, how much do you think that would've saved you in time and in money?

Steve Edwards:

It would've saved me more in time. I don't know if it would've saved me more in money, and the reason I say that is because again, I wasn't a VC-backed guy. I was my pocketbook. This is where the money came from. So we went with a lower-end company. So, time wise, I would've saved a ton, but when you're looking at some of these firms that are based overseas, they're \$25 an hour where then you get to the European ones, you're going to pay a little bit more, and then you get the people that are here in the US, substantially more. But a lot of people go first to India because of the cost. And, when you're looking at some of these organizations ... and I'll tell you know, the second organization I went with, it was a big organization. A software development firm that did \$60 million a year in business.

But then, when they started messing with things and then you started doing research and found out that they did what they were doing to everybody and they had 90 lawsuits against them for this, but they're charging \$25 an hour for a developer. If they're paying \$25 an hour for a developer, plus your project manager, plus all this, what are they actually paying the developers over there? So, what kind of talent are you really getting? Not saying there's not talent. There's phenomenal talent in Europe, in India, in the US. There's phenomenal talent everywhere, but it's just when you are paying for it, it's a little bit slower, when you have one developer on it.

And, this is what we learned is we went from one developer to two to now we have a lot more than that. So, it's not the money that it would've saved, but it was the time. I probably could have launched six months earlier. But also, again, I made some changes in my business. I pivoted, and that was a big change going from how we built everything so that I could do a job fair in a city or a region to licensing it and to have the subscription model and having that ... There was a lot of different aspects to that.

And I didn't understand a lot of that stuff in the beginning. I'm like, "Okay, I want to add this one feature." And they're like, "Okay, that's going to take you two months." "Two months? What do you mean it's going to take me two months? You're adding a couple buttons and a little thing over here." And they're like, "No." And then, you start to learn on the technical side. Now we have roadmap calls and then we have enhancement calls. So, it's every week we have a call so we're looking three to six months out of what we have to add into the platform.

Annaka:

Yeah. I think working with developers when you don't have a technical background, those guys could tell you the sky is purple and you have no background to argue with them. It is fun to learn, though.

Steve Edwards:

It is, and I will say this for everybody listening, I'm going to give you the biggest hint out there. Write this down. This is the number one thing that I can tell you. You can't talk to a developer like you can a salesperson. They're a little more sensitive, and you have to be a little nicer to them. I might have found that out a few times. I can yell at a salesperson, "Why aren't you doing your job? Get out there, do this," in a little bit more of a tone. I learned ... It took me a little while to learn, but I talk to a developer like that and the next thing you know, a day goes by and they get a little slower ... they get a little slower because you talked to them too tough.

Ethan:

Crushed the spirit.

Steve Edwards:

Crushed the spirit. Be sensitive. Thank them. They don't get the fact, they don't get that stuff. A lot of them don't want it, but they love it. Now, with our development team, I'm appreciative, telling them thank you all the time and giving them props. They love that stuff. Salespeople love it, too, but they're just a little bit more sensitive when it comes to conversations.

Annaka:

Yeah. And, I want to loop back, you said that you're not a VC guy. This is funded out of your pocket. What gave you the confidence to go all in, put all your chips in on this?

Steve Edwards:

A little bit of cockiness, a little bit of loving to prove people wrong. I sat down with my wife and said, "We're going to develop a software. I may not make money for a year." And she was like, "I believe in you." That's a huge thing. I say a lot I didn't grow up with a silver spoon in my mouth, but I grew up with love and encouragement. My wife is like that as well, so it's very encouraging. Is it stressful for her? Absolutely. And I told her when we first dated, I said, "Listen, I'm a sales guy. I'm going to have huge years, and I'm going to have bad years. If we're going to continue to go, you're going to have to ride a roller coaster with me."

I'm not going to say we didn't talk to private equity firms and VC firms, and this is one thing for startups I think is very important is to get a mentor group. Find that. A lot of the local colleges have mentor groups. Here in south Florida, they have two phenomenal mentoring groups. One is called The Venture Mentoring Team. Those guys are amazing. And another one is Tech Runway that's out at FAU. So, having a mentor group is amazing, and there's a lot of them that are out there, but they're going to help you. And I'll tell you, they're going to be tough on you at first. When I pitched in front of all of them, and then I pitched in front of them a second time because they were going to see if they wanted to even help you. So you had to go in and you had to show your pitch deck to them and talk to them.

You're selling yourself. So when people say, "Well, I'm not a salesperson, but I got an idea," listen, you're going to sell your idea and yourself to these people out there. So this mentor group, I went there and they accepted me, but I had to do a pitch scrub with them. So now it was a group of, I think, eight of them, eight or nine of them, and I'm sitting in a room and I'm

pitching them. I couldn't say anything right in front of them, and I'm usually pretty good in front of a room. And, I left there. I'm not a huge drinker. I called my business partner, I said, "Meet me at the bar. I just went 12 rounds with Tyson. I need to have a beer."

And they were like, "We do this on purpose because we want to see are you coachable? Are you trainable? Are you willing to listen to us?" It was so brutal, the one person said to me, "I don't even like the name of your company." I was like, "Wow, that was interesting." But, that was there. But then, Tech Runway here at FAU has been great because what you do is you get these mentors, and they're people from all over that volunteer their time to help you. You have the SBA. There's all different kinds of help that you can get out there, and I'm going to tell you to do it. At FAU down here, and I know there's different ones throughout the country, too, but they also had a veteran entrepreneurship class.

It was taught. You were a veteran. You got in. You didn't have to pay for anything. But then, you had mentors that went with you as well. And then, you had a pitch competition at the end. I love pitch competitions. I ended up winning for FAU, and then I went to state for Florida, so Veterans Florida. I won that. I was actually the first one ever from FAU to win the Veterans Florida pitch competition.

But, seek help out there. This is free. It's like having a board of directors without anything. But one of the first things ... and, I know it was a long answer to this, but one of the things that they told me is every dollar you make is a dollar you don't have to raise. And, a lot of people right now, we hear it in the news, "This company raised \$100 million. This company raised \$10 million."

And, in all the startup groups ... I'm in a lot of peer groups down here in south Florida, and it's a badge of honor to say, "We just raised \$250 grand. We raised it." What a lot of people don't realize is you raise this money, and let's say you raised \$250 grand and you had to ... Let's say you raised \$2 million. You raised \$2 million for 20% of your business. I sold my business for \$20 million. I'm great. "Oh, let me go back and look at your contract that said that that \$2 million, they had to make 10X of their money," and that's the number one thing in there. So, you sold your business for \$20 million but guess what you walked out with? Zero.

Because the VC's are there to make money. Love them, God bless them. They're there, there's a reason. A lot of people need help, and a lot of people do very, very well because of those. But a lot of people in the startup world don't understand that. There's some really good books out there by Feldman that talks about VCs and to really understand that because people think, "Oh, I'm going to raise all this money," but they don't realize they're raising money, and yeah, if they only care about their idea and they don't care about Willie, they don't know, having this mentor team is going to help you through that stuff, help you through going through. Because there's contracts and stuff that are in there, and they're going to try to confuse you. We talked to angel investment groups and we talked to some VC firms, and it just wasn't the right fit for what we wanted.

And, what did they want to give up? As an early stage, you've got to give up a huge portion of it, and you can turn around if you're going to sell your company, you're not going to get anything out of it. Yes, there's the legacy ... And I always looked at there's three things with the business. You're either going to build it and go out of business, build it and sell or partner with somebody, or build it so your kids can take on. This is another thing that my mentor team, my head mentor, Roger said to me, he goes, "Build your business like your kids are going to take it over. Every decision you want to make is so that in 20 years, when your kids take over your business, it is that successful." Don't build ... because so many people are like, "Hey, I'm going to build my business and I'm going to sell it." Build it for the long term. If the short term happens, great, but build it, and every decision you need to make today is for the long term.

Ethan:

That's really great advice.

Annaka:

And, you had mentioned working with mentor groups down in Florida. In particular, I'm interested in any other resources or advice you might have specifically for military veterans. Just to see if there's anything specific.

Steve Edwards:

When you're getting out of the military now, with all of them, they have different things from franchises to stuff like that, but I'm going to say it. I live in the greatest state for veterans in Florida. They do a ton for veterans. Veterans Florida's here, they just had a webinar last week about all of the great things for veterans. Texas is number two that's out there that are so military and veteran friendly. All you have to look for is mentor groups. Look for veteran organizations there. They can help you with everything, and there's a lot of resources for veterans that are out there, as well.

Steve Edwards:

Now, I've been out for a long time so I don't qualify for some of those resources that are there. Some of them I do. But make sure as a veteran that you're looking at these resources. You're finding, you're getting the bids, getting with the local SBA as well because they just give so much wealth of knowledge that they can help you with to build your business.

Annaka:

Yeah, Florida and Texas. I'm going to have to do some looking up here in Michigan too just so I can be aware.

Steve Edwards:

I'm sure there is. They're definitely in Michigan. You might have to shovel out to find them ... I'm sorry. I'm from Wisconsin. I can talk about the snow.

Annaka:

I'm looking. We might have two inches right now.

Steve Edwards:

Two inches is better than 10.

Annaka:

We might still get there.

Ethan:

I don't know. I was disappointed when I looked out the window this morning and saw the ground. I was like, "Hey, everything should be white here. What's going on?" I don't know. I'm just mad. I'm just mad about it.

Steve Edwards:

Now, I will say if I like to ski or I like to snow mobile, that would be amazing. Growing up, I loved it. When I got out of the Army, it came down to Colorado State or FAU. So, it was either mountains and snow or beach and sun, and I ended up going beach and sun, but I loved snow back then. Now it's just, like we talked about before, too cold.

Annaka:

Not fun as an adult.

Ethan:

All right, you're probably going to disagree with me on this question and I'll word it just like it's written here right in front of my face, and then we'll give it some flavor. So here's how it's written. What was it like becoming an overnight success? And, let me give that a little flavor. I see some facial expressions over there. So, you had put this platform together and people were saying online is not the way to go. People were laughing at you. And then the world turned upside down, and online was everything, and it seems like your growth trajectory really took the hockey stick right there. So, I don't know if extremely quick growth was your plan the entire time, but if it wasn't and you had it handed to you anyway ... I mean, it sounds like you handled it well. How do you do that? How do you take something that you think is going to go at one rate and it just exponentially explodes?

Steve Edwards:

Lot of craziness. Actually, in 2020, I used to actually have a head of hair. It was crazy, because as Gary and I were putting this all together, we had this ramp up. We knew it was going to take three to five years to really change people's minds and get this, and we had that planned just because of what we've seen and people's reaction and not really understanding it. It was crazy. There was a lot of late nights. When COVID first hit, we had just hired somebody to come in and just help with the phones to really help our client that came in that they were trying to get into their event, and we were trying to help them a little bit. We had an admin and me and Gary, and I'll tell you, 2019, I probably worked 25-30 hours a week, shorts and flip flops in the office.

There was two of us in the office really on a daily basis. COVID hit, I was doing demos Australia in the middle of the night, and it was my calendar went from 8:00 in the morning til 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 at night doing demos, and I couldn't handle it. I reached out to a couple buddies I was in the Army with that one of them was a company for 19 years and got laid off. One company, 19 years, got laid off. He called me and I go ... I won't say the name of the company but, "How's your company?" And he goes, "You know why I'm calling you." I go, "Yeah, I figured it happened." So we brought on and we instantly started hiring. I got a phone call from a guy that said to me, I'd met him at a networking event like five years ago, he said, "You said you wanted to change the world. You said that this was going to be there. I couldn't get my boss at the time."

He goes, "I'm supposed to start a new job. They pushed it off. Are you hiring?" Yes, I am. So we had to hire a team, and the thing is I've always believed this. It's not just about a sales team. And if you look at my team right now, one of the smallest divisions within our company is our sales team, and our client success team is probably one of the most important parts of our company. Obviously, I'm the face of the company that's out there, but I say my client success team is really the face of our company because a lot of organizations say ... and, they did this. I won't say that my competition, as soon as COVID hit, skyrocketed its prices to try to hit home runs, and they did that, right?

It was unbelievable. We didn't. We stayed ... here's where it was ... because I looked at the long term. This was not a "Hey, let's get rich quick" scheme like a lot of these other companies did, unfortunately. But we grew, and we grew at a normal pace and we'd bring in somebody on the sales side to handle the demos because I couldn't handle all the demos anymore. I had to have other people doing the demos for these clients.

But, the client success team is every client that gets onboarded with Premier Virtual has a client success manager. So they then do all of the training, because guess what? We do virtual on a daily basis, they don't. We train all the hosts. We train all of the organizations that are on the platform. I've done Instagram Live for students. I've done webinars for students. So, we really take the "Hey we're a veteran-owned, US based company ..." that we're going to have support for you. We have live support during every event. None of my clients, none of my competition does that.

We have a worldwide event next week. From 1:00 am to midnight, we have this, and we have staff on, and who's the last staff in the middle of the night? Me. Because it's not just "Hey, my team go out there and do this." I took the last shift, and that's why we've been voted one of the top places to work in Florida by multiple magazines out there because I care for my people. But growing people, I believe, and this is a huge thing with startups is your culture is everything within the company. Everything, right? And we grew, and when we had to move to a new office, because we hired so many people, and I know a lot of people work from remote, but we wanted to give them the option.

First thing I did when we went to a new office, I ripped out the conference room and I put a beautiful gym in there. So now the people can come in, they can work out, they can do whatever they want. Yesterday we were out playing two-on-two football outside to have some fun, because culture is important. And we built up so fast and we had people that were remote building that culture, so going from an overnight success, it was stressful. It was hard. Looking at those number of, "Oh my gosh, this is payroll. These are our costs." And, we looked at what was going to happen in the three years suddenly is happening in a couple months. It was stressful, and it's hard. It was more stressful doing that than it was not making money while we were developing the platform.

Ethan:

Yeah, and it sounds like with all that hiring, it sounds like you've done it well, so congratulations. You've got magazines singing your praises. So, great work. Let's dig into that just a little bit. You've been in the jobs and hiring game for what — 12 years now? And, you've helped tons of companies hire good people. And I know that you're not a hiring company. You're more of an events company, or at least that's what most of your experience is in, but when you went to hire, what are some of the best practices that you followed? Obviously, you mentioned culture but when you're going to hire either junior people or even senior people, what are some of the processes that you follow to make sure that you're not getting the wrong people in there?

Steve Edwards:

I've made a lot of mistakes on hiring. I've made a ton of mistakes on hiring. I'm not going to say I haven't. Over the years, even with this organization, I've made some mistakes where I came in ... I always believe sometimes you can hire somebody for attitude and teach them the skill. I always said, especially on the sales side, you're giving me a positive attitude, a great work ethic and a student mentality, I can teach you the product and how to sell the product. And that's what I believe a lot is it's the people you bring in, do they fit your culture? Do they fit what you believe in? Are they a team player? We have people that come in and ... I had a guy that came in that wanted a certain job and I'm like, "I don't have that job for you, but I like you and I think you're going to fit in the company. Let's get you in the company. We'll go here ..."

This was not even a sales role, "And, we'll move you into the role that you want to move in once that starts." To me, attitude is everything. When these people are going to come in ... I'm not saying you crack the whip or you do anything like that and they're going to be like, "Yeah, whatever." It comes down to hiring the right people, and what we talk about a lot now is there's a huge thing out there. People are quitting their job and going somewhere else. Why are they going somewhere else?

A little bit is money. A little bit is culture. Can they work from home? People wanting to get out of ... How do I say this? We'll say it the politically correct way ... some of the crazier states. They want to go out there. People want to leave the northeast. They want to leave the Midwest because of the snow, but they never left before because their job was there. Well now, they can work anywhere else. So, why is Florida, we're getting an influx from the Northeast right now. An

influx, because people want to get out of the Northeast and move down here because of whatever reason they want to. Say it's whatever.

But, going back, people are leaving for different reasons and you got to find the ... and, I like to call it a gem. Finding that gem that's going to work for you. I listened to a speaker one time tell me, he said, "What is the difference between a cow and a buffalo in a storm?"

Annaka:
In a storm?

Steve Edwards:
In a storm, what's the difference between a cow and buffalo?

Ethan:
You got me.

Steve Edwards:
And this is where I look at employees as well. When a storm hits, a cow runs away. The buffalo runs towards the storm. In adversity, are your team members going to run towards it or are they going to run away from it? When somebody comes in, they have a bad month, the salesperson has a bad month, are they going to quit and say, "Pastures greener."

Recruiters. "Oh, I can't recruit for this company. I had this. I got to go to another company." The team that you build around you should know I don't care if it's ups, downs, wherever it is. Are they there for you? And that's what makes me love the best places to work ... That's not me saying, "I've got a best place to work." They survey your team members and they ask all kinds of questions on there, so to be ranked that, it's your team members. It's not, "Hey, I got a little badge because I put in for it." It's your team members.

And, I'll tell you, the first time we got one, you get a survey back. Not who said what, but it was very interesting with some of the things that were said in there and that's a coaching thing for me and Gary. At first, I looked at it and I was like, "It doesn't make sense." But, then I looked at it and said what could we have done better? How do we continue ... still ranked in the Florida Trend magazine number 13th small business to work for. Me? I want number one. So, did this one question, could that have been something that we as a leadership team could have done better? So you always got to learn, and you're learning from your team. I don't know everything. But, I hired people around me that do.

And, this goes back to what you were saying earlier about the technical founder. There's people that are smarter than you and better than you in other aspects, and that's who you need to hire. I don't want to hire somebody that's going to say, "Yes, Steve. Yes, Steve. Yes, Steve." That sounds great, but I want people that are going to challenge me. My team is like, "Why don't we do it this way?" I'm like, "I like this way."

"Well, let me show you how this way works." And there's sometimes that I'm like, "Woo, you guys did a great job. I love that." And there's other times where I'm like, "That's terrible. You need to do it my way." And then once they see it my way, they're like, "Oh. Okay, that makes more sense." Because sometimes, right, and this is the one thing going back with the developers and somebody who's not a founder is ... or not a technical founder ... is sometimes you're going to have the idea and you know what your clients want and the developers are going to have something else, because they're looking at it from just the technical side and we're looking at from the UX side.

You said how important that is. Sometimes they don't see it. You've got to have a good UX person on staff to be able to really have that, because you could build a platform that's out there, and I've been on a lot of them ... I've been on a ton of them with conferences that are virtual platforms, and I'm like, "I will never ..." and I actually said this to a company when they said, "Hey, are you coming back this year?" Which, is this year in 2022? I said, "No." They're like, "Why not?" And I'm like, "Because you're only going virtual." She's like, "Oh, you want us to use your platform?" And I'm like, "No, the platform you used was terrible, first of all, and your event was terrible."

Because when people are looking at that out there, it's not what I tell you is the greatest thing, it's what you as an organization, how you're going to use that platform that's out there. And there's just some that are out there that aren't user friendly, but people don't see that. They see here's what I like as a host, and they only see that. They don't look beyond what do your attendees see? What do your organizations see? How easy is it for them? Take cost out of it. You have to look at it, and we didn't build it for the host first. We build it for the attendee and organization first because that is who's using it. That's who's going to give you the "Hey, this is great," or not.

When they give you the positives, when the attendees and the organizations are sending and giving us testimonials because of how great the platform was, that means the host made the right decision on the platform.

Annaka:
Right.

Steve Edwards:
And that's what any platform out there.

Annaka:
And, you started going down the culture road here, which is another one of my favorite things to talk about. And I remember looking through your questionnaire, you had mentioned something called servant leadership. I keep getting hints of it, like taking the late shift and all that stuff, but can you tell us a little bit more about what that means to you?

Steve Edwards:

I like to say I serve my team. I've got a phenomenal team, and I can't say that enough, and they all know it. They all laugh at me. They make jokes. When we did our office opening, they all had bets on when I was going to cry, because I talk about them and I talk about this, so they all had it. So what did I do? I was smart because the first time they had it, I wore glasses. So, I had my sunglasses on and I had it, but I have fun with my team and I listen to my team. Am I tough on my team sometimes? Absolutely. But, why? Because we want to be better.

I'll tell you, I've had some people that were friends of mine that worked for me, and they couldn't draw the line between friendship and business, and it was very difficult for them. They couldn't take it. They were like, "We used to happy hours together," and I was like, "I still want to have the happy hours. It's you. You couldn't say hey, 'he's holding me accountable.'"

I'm going to hold them accountable just like I let them hold me accountable. If I'm not doing my job, they're going to tell me, "Steve, you're not doing your job. You need to be focused on this." I haven't always made the right ... I've made some bad decisions where I focused on the wrong thing within the organization. But having my team and letting them make decisions and do stuff is a big thing.

I'll tell you one of the biggest things that we had ... and this happened about a year ago ... was I always the face of it. Every training video, everything was me. And I decided, I'm like, "Not everybody wants to listen to me." I talk fast. Everybody's like, "Slow down a little bit." But, I was the guy that was on all the training videos. I was on everything, the webinars, everything we have. I started letting other people do that.

Our training videos, now we have Glenn, handles all of our training videos because he talks a little slower. He's a lot more detailed than I am on there. But, getting those people, those little things that's going to be out there ... I let my director of marketing run a webinar one time. Sending these guys to events and girls to the events, and doing different things for them empowers them to want to work harder because they know that you're giving everything that you have for them to be successful. Because, I've worked in a lot of organizations where it was all about sales. Sales was everything. If you weren't in sales, you were at the bottom of the barrel.

My team knows this. There's not one division in my company that is more important than the other. Yes, sales is the one who brings in the money, but marketing is the one that's getting our branding and our name out there, and the development team, they're the ones that are building a platform that's going to be there, and our client success team is making the people happy. I tell everybody this. My job really as a CEO is really a very easy job. My job is to build a platform that you can be excited to sell and that takes people and changes people's lives. You will never hear me ever talk about revenue. You hear me talk about on a daily basis how many people are we helping?

In our first 16 months of business, we had over 50,000 organizations on our platform. We did over 5,000 events on our platform. And, two of the best that I love talking about, the state of

Massachusetts did a statewide job fair on my platform that had 1,696 companies on there, 17,000 job seekers, over 1.3 million company booth views. Record setting job fair that's out there. We change people's lives. We help people. Looking for a job sucks.

Annaka:

Yes.

Steve Edwards:

We help people find a job. The biggest accomplishment I can say last year is all the events, all the happiness, all the awards, everything ... The coolest thing that happened to me last year though, was when the US Army, I had a call with them and demoed our platform. They chose our platform ... was to think when I went into the Army after high school, I watched a big laser disc, and they said, "Here's this thing that was there." That's how you got to see the videos. Now, the Army used my platform to help people make the same kind of decision that I made 20 years ago. That was a cool feeling. The big circle of everything ... Out of everything, it's one of my most proud moments.

Ethan:

That's absolutely amazing. Full circle. So what does scale look like? You said you don't talk about revenue. I know you've mentioned employee count, number of partners, number of jobs placed. What's the number that you follow, and what is the scale that you're looking to achieve in the next few years or infinitum?

Steve Edwards:

My goal has always been the same. I want to take this organization to ... this is the one for place I'll say revenue ... I want to take it to \$100 million a year virtual platform. That's what I want. I want this to be just like when I walk out somewhere and I tell somebody what I do and they say, "Oh, like Zoom?" they're going to say, "Oh, like Premier Virtual?" That's what I want.

I went into a furniture store one day. I had a shirt on, the lady goes, "You're Steve?" I'm like, "How'd you know that?" She's like, "Oh, my boyfriend works here and he's part of Tech Runway and he talks about you all the time." That's what I want everybody ... I want everybody when I wear a shirt, that's there. This weekend we had birthday parties for my kids, and they were in Premier Virtual shirts. They love the shirt. They love Daddy's office shirts. We're there and the people were laughing. They were like, "You've got walking billboards for you." 99% of the time, if you look at my wardrobe besides the majority of pink dress shirts, it's Premier Virtual tee-shirts and polos, and I love it.

Why? Because it's branding. Everywhere I go, I want people to see who it is, who we are and what we do. I want that be P to look like when you look at the little apple or the G, I want you to see the P and that's it. That's my goal. The numbers will be there, but it's people to know who we are by just seeing that brand. If we do that, there's no obscurity, people know who you are. And if people know who you are, that's exciting.

I had a guy walk up to me at a conference one time and goes, "I loved your toilet paper poll on LinkedIn." And I go, "Really?" He goes, "That was probably the best poll." He goes, "I'm stealing it." Because, I put a poll on LinkedIn that said toilet paper, over, under, or whatever way it comes? It went crazy. And, a guy saw me at a conference, and I had met this guy through a LinkedIn connection. We had one email back and forth six months ago and he remembered. That's what I want everything to be at Premier Virtual.

So, when that's there, my scale is good.

Annaka:

Yeah, the brand recognition is worth its weight in gold. I know we're bouncing a little bit, and I have to preface this by telling you that one of my good friends also served in the Army. And I was like, "Hey, I'm talking to Steve. He was 82nd Airborne." And he was like, "Oh my God." He was very excited. But-

Ethan:

From what I heard, those weren't his exact words but I don't know if we can repeat-

Annaka:

No, I can't repeat them. But, he was awestruck. But as far as your previous service, did you bring any experiences with you or any of that background, did it assist you in where you are today?

Steve Edwards:

I think I'm going to go off a tangent just for a second here. I think you probably noticed I do that a lot, but I think everybody should do two years in the military. I think it would change our country. I think it's a huge thing. I was 18 years old ... Actually, I was 17 years old. I hated school. I went to school, and I'll be very frank about this, I took cooking classes. Why? Because that's where all the girls were at. I knew at 17 if I went to college, I would join a fraternity and fail out of school. I knew that. And again, it would've been me taking out the loans. My parents weren't there sitting there, "Hey, we have tons of money for you to go to school," where I was from in a small town.

But, I knew it. I knew I wanted to go to the military, and I believe it gave me the discipline that I needed. I really needed that. That was something that I needed in my life. I needed some structure in my life, as well, and I think the military gave me that. I think the military gives people the camaraderie like no other. I was in a fraternity, and I can say the camaraderie that I learned in the military only for a short period of time with people, you don't get that anywhere else. And, that's why there's so many challenges when people get out of the military, because you don't get that camaraderie. This year when they had Wreaths Across America, and we took our kids out to ... this is the first year that we did it, and we're trying to teach our kids about me and the military.

We've talked about it, because my wife's dad was in the Army as well in Vietnam. And, we're getting them now, they're old enough to really understand these things. But, we went out to Wreaths Across America and we talked about what we were doing and why we were doing it. But you saw people there that ... I saw a group of guys and they all had their motorcycle vests on. You look at these people that go back years ... they were in Vietnam together, and maybe they went to basic training together. Maybe they went to AIT. They were not together long, and unfortunately, we lost a lot of lives in Vietnam, but those people still go to the graves of those people because of the camaraderie that they built. So again, you can never duplicate that, but building a culture around is building that camaraderie.

If I want to go out, I have people that have challenges in life. We can talk to them. They can walk into my office. I had a guy, I won't say ... he had a thing. He was like, "I have a dilemma," and he could walk into my office and ask me that. I want to build that camaraderie like I had in the Army where people can say, "Hey, I love you. I want to be here and I want to do everything." It's like going into a foxhole with somebody. It's the same thing, and I think that's probably the biggest thing that I built is took the discipline out of there ... The work ethic is there, but I don't believe that's because of the military. I believe people, they either want to work hard or they're lazy. That's a choice they make on a daily basis. The military can't change that in you, but bringing that kind of camaraderie to the culture, it's very similar.

Annaka:

That was the perfect answer for me. I'm so, so happy. And so, what's next for Premier Virtual? What have you got on the plate?

Steve Edwards:

I mean, we've always got stuff on the plate. You know what I mean? Like I said, my number one goal out there, when people ask me what's next, is I want to be where people talk about ... Like an Indeed or Zoom or a Google. Right? That's high. People always told me I was crazy. I never said I wanted to compete against Indeed, because Indeed is a job board. They've done a great job, but if you look at this industry as a whole, per se, and even though I'm not a recruiting firm ... we're a software that does recruiting. If you look all the way back to 1995, you used to have to go to the newspaper and that's where people would post their jobs, and people would then do this thing for all the younger people. You'd actually have to write out on a piece of paper and you'd have to maybe print out your resume.

And, you'd have to send it in an envelope at the post office to this company, and they would look at the resumes. '96 Monster changed the world. And, a lot of people knew Monster. That's monster.com. It's not the energy drink. It's not the monster trucks. It's monster.com. You ask a millennial or Gen Z that today, they're like, "It's the energy drink." They just unfortunately didn't keep up with the times, and the energy changed. But at their peak, they were valued at \$5.5 billion dollars. So, they went up and somebody else, CareerBuilder, changed the mousetrap a little bit. ZipRecruiter changed it. Indeed changed the mousetrap completely. Glassdoor changed it completely. And there's all of these things that are out there that have changed the mousetrap a little bit.

Even if you look back to calling cards. Who now even knows what a calling card is? I still have my cellphone number still as a 404 area code from when I lived there. People are like, "Oh, are you from Atlanta?" I'm like "No, but I lived there." And I haven't lived in Atlanta for 12 years. Actually, probably longer than that.

Technology changes things and it's going to continue to change. And, what's next? There's going to be times where in the future, in the virtual world, it's going to be there might be an in-person thing with a hologram there. Who knows what's there. Everybody talks about the Metaverse, people buying yachts and houses and stuff like that in the Metaverse. It blows my mind. There's going to be a time where there's somebody who never leaves their house, their food is delivered to them, and all they are all day is on the Metaverse, and that's where they're living 100% of their world. Technology is changing the world that's there.

Do I think it's all good? No, I think it's amazing that if I have a question today, and you don't know the answer, or I don't know the answer, I can find that answer in about seven seconds by saying either Siri, Alexa, or Google. We can find that. Technology is great. Not all technology's great, but it's changing the world.

Ethan:

Absolutely. Yep. I could probably go for a long time on Metaverse because it's something that I'm super excited about, but I'm just going to keep my mouth shut. So, is there anything you'd like to share with listeners before we end the conversation?

Steve Edwards:

I got a lot to help as that was coming up, and I talked about mentor groups and stuff like that. If there's a startup that has a question or you're looking to hire and you're looking to hire at scale, my email is steve@premiervirtual.com, or you can go to our website, premiervirtual.com. You can get some information about what we do. But like I said, you ever just have a quick question about something on the startup side of it, shoot me an email. I'll be happy to pass on my knowledge that I got from other people. I'm not the smartest person out there, but I have people around me that can answer those questions, or gave me the knowledge to help me get to where I'm at today.

Annaka:

Beautiful, beautiful. Any other social media handles or anything like that we can throw out to listeners?

Steve Edwards:

Pretty much anything, you can type in Premier Virtual. You can find us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram. The only one we're not on right now is TikTok, but eventually I think we're going to have to go there. And here's the thing, if you look at social media like that, as well, this is how the world changed. Myspace. That was the big one in the beginning. I remember in Atlanta it

was Myspace and people were, "Why am I not on your Top 8?" Because, I don't like you that much. Right?

Ethan:
Right.

Steve Edwards:
But you had that and it's like, "Who's going to be on the Top 8?" And the girl you're dating, "So, we've been talking for a week now and I haven't moved up to your Top 8?"

Annaka:
Oh my God.

Ethan:
Not a good sign.

Steve Edwards:
Maybe take the hint? But not, that was that and then Facebook came out and now you had what? Snapchat came out and then there's all these new ... And, there's going to continue to be new ones because you look at it like this ... You look at Facebook when it came out. It was just there and it was younger. Now, that's the older. That's the people my age are more on the Facebook side. Where, it's the Instagram is the younger one. And guess what? Eventually, all those people that are on Instagram that are, let's say, 10 years younger than me, eventually they're going to stay on Instagram. And then, the TikTok'ers are going to move up so eventually the TikTok'ers ... I don't even know if that's what they call them, but I joke with you because one of my team members said to his girlfriend about being a Tiktoker ...

They're going to have, and eventually they're going to be teenagers and then 20, and then 30 and they're going to have this. And then, the next generation is going to come in. My four year old is going to be on a complete different social media platform because technology changed the world. And that's why I always say ideas, mentors, and stuff like that. So, have an idea? Go with it.

Annaka:
I'm really looking forward to the studies in a couple years, the generational habits of different social media platforms.

Steve Edwards:
It's going to come out. It's crazy how-

Annaka:
It's going to happen.

Steve Edwards:

... how it's there. Right?

Annaka:

Yeah. Cool. Well, we'll put all of these links to social media and how to get in touch with you, we'll put those in the show notes, but that is a wrap for this episode of the Startup Savants podcast. We want to thank you for stopping by and listening in. Folks, we'd like to ask for your help. If you like this podcast, it would be awesome if you could give us a five-star review on either Apple Podcast or on Spotify. Reviews help us reach a larger audience and share these awesome founders and startups like Steve with more people just like you. For tools, guides, videos, startup stories, and so much more, head over to truic.com. That's truic.com, T-R-U-I-C.com. See you, folks.

Ethan:

Bye-bye everybody.