

Janette Afsharian: 0:00

Hi Rachel. We just got off that interview with the person, the publisher behind our local magazine that we get called Montclair Neighbors. Yes, Michael Stefanelli, right, okay, so Michael Stefanelli, he is the publisher of this, but he's also the New Jersey division leader for a bunch of these magazines.

Rachel Martens: 0:21

He's the New Jersey leader of it's over 40 titles.

Janette Afsharian: 0:24

Over 40 towns have this beautiful local magazine that comes and highlights these wonderful stories kind of like we do, of people in your neighborhood. Telling nice stories about your community and we talk about how it is a very successful business model and people really love getting it because and I think you know if you get one, why you love it and the stories within are all local based and it's supported by the advertising that's in it. He tells us about this and this is a big company called Best Version Media that owns it. It's it.

Rachel Martens: 1:01

They have 1400 publications and they started in Wisconsin, right, I thought that was a good tidbit.

Janette Afsharian: 1:09

I think they're Canadian, us owned. Now they keep growing, growing, growing growing, growing and they've been acquired recently and they're going to grow even bigger and take it to the next level. So he comes on and tells us about it. He's a local New Jersey, from Nutley, and he takes us on the story about the back end of what's going on. Enjoy, Michael. Welcome to Lost in Jersey. It's nice to have you.

Mike Stefanelli: 1:35

It's great. It's great to be on, and you know I haven't been on too many things like this before, and so you know getting invited is certainly something that I'm humbled about. You know that you want to talk to me, so that's great.

Janette Afsharian: 1:48

Well, I have your magazine right here. The latest edition came out and I was like, oh, I'm so glad I got the latest edition, because I was like it's perfect, because we're about to talk Perfect timing. And you know, the reason I reached out to you was because I'm always curious about things that are around our lives and like how they're, who they are and what's going on behind them. And I was like what's going on with this magazine? Nobody's publishing magazines anymore, but this is still coming out. What's the backstory?

Janette Afsharian: 2:17

And then it led me to you.

Rachel Martens: 2:19

And also it's something that we I always loved. When we moved here, I thought how cool we have our own magazine and I always look forward to getting it and seeing who's on the cover and reading about our neighbors. It, I love it. I look forward to it. Yeah, yeah, Um well, you know.

Mike Stefanelli: 2:36

First, like you know, it's something you said that was interesting. There was about nobody's publishing magazines anymore and, to be honest, I got to tell you that's actually not the reality, right.

Janette Afsharian: 2:47

We're learning that, yeah.

Mike Stefanelli: 2:49

So it's pretty interesting because when we meet with, you know, maybe a business owner for advertising, whether it be in Montclair or one of our other markets in New Jersey, you know, one of the things we hear is, oh is imprint dead? And it really couldn't be any further from the truth, because not only with our company doing these magazines in New Jersey and around North America, but they're popping up everywhere, this niche neighborhood print media is thriving. County, for instance, where we have 10 publications. There are hosts of other companies doing kind of the same thing. They teeter on, you know, a couple of different philosophies in terms of their content and their distribution, but they're still looking to give neighborhoods their voice, you know, and a break from online media. So it's actually a thriving industry right now.

Mike Stefanelli: 3:47

Now look, there's some aspects of print media that are certainly fallen by the wayside. You know more of a, you know a commodity product. You know news because of a 24-7 news cycle, but for, like what we do, it really works well because it's not about news, it's about just, you know, bringing out the best of what's in the community.

Rachel Martens: 4:04

Yeah, I used to work at Time Inc. I have a huge soft spot for magazines because I just remember even the excitement I would get when you'd know that in the lobby, like people in style, all the magazines would come out that week and you'd go downstairs and get a copy of the titles that you were either working on or not working on. I still even think that my kids will open that Montclair magazine that comes and take a look through it. It's nice to have something in your hands. I don't think that is going to completely go away and I like to see that it's just becoming more hyperlocal and niche, like you're saying. Yeah, listen.

Mike Stefanelli: 4:43

I mean we'll get into more of the nuts and bolts of it, but I did want to say something. You know for having me on, obviously, and congratulations on doing 100 episodes.

Mike Stefanelli: 4:51

Thank you, you know, I'm always interested, you know, especially when you know we're independent and I deal with independent contractors and a lot of people who are, you know, very entrepreneurial, and so when I see people that are doing something, you know from entrepreneurial, and so when I see people that are doing something, you know from a creative standpoint and a production standpoint, I know the type of work that goes into it. How, long before your first episode, did you kick around the idea and like, you know, before you cause, like we're always talking about, like taking action, and sometimes you have these ideas and you sit on them for a while, but like, or did you take action and like put this into into motion?

Rachel Martens: 5:31

And we're just like brainstorming about ideas of wanting to do a podcast and then, once Jeanette and I said we should, we should just do this, it probably took us what?

Janette Afsharian: 5:36

Two months three months for me. I for me, I don't. I don't think it took very long at all because I it wasn't on my radar at all to do a podcast until I was talking to Rachel and she was wanting to do something in voice and I said why don't we do a podcast? And it was like within, I think, two months of that. Yeah, kicked it off because I'm I'm a project.

Rachel Martens: 5:58

And that's a doer. So she's like Rachel. You know you can't keep thinking about it, you need to actually do it.

Mike Stefanelli: 6:05

So let's just do it.

Rachel Martens: 6:06

So it was great that she did that, because she lit the fire and I was ruminating, which I'm really good at.

Mike Stefanelli: 6:14

And I'm a big like, I take in a lot of podcasts, you know, for sales and personal development and leadership and so and I'm always sharing them with my team. But is there any particular podcast that you guys have listened to that inspired you to do this?

Janette Afsharian: 6:30

Well, yeah, Rachel listens to a lot of podcasts. Why don't you tell what a couple of yours were?

Rachel Martens: 6:36

Um, so it's an Australian podcast and it's um this woman, mia Friedman um, my friend, I'll give her a shout out Daniela Minz. She lives in Sydney, australia, and she recommended a podcast by Mia Friedman. She has her own media company now called Mama Mia Media and they have a ton of podcasts. But she started with no Filter, where it was an interview format and she's a great interviewer. No Filter, where it was an interview format, and she's a great interviewer. She used to be in magazines in Australia, like all the top magazines, women's magazines, so she has that kind of conversational interview style but it's rigorous. She'll do a lot of research.

Rachel Martens: 7:17

And then she started this Mamma Mia Out Loud podcast. That also is about what they say is what women are talking about this week. So it's niche and that is what women are talking about this week, but it's about current topics and they do two episodes a week now where it's three of them and it's conversational, but it's about hot topics of the week and I just I love it also probably because I love the Australian accent, to be fair, and it makes me feel like I'm somewhere else a little bit. But it just is that it sort of had a similar format and idea of what I thought Jeanette and I could bring with our own friendship to a podcast format. I'd say that is probably one of the top ones, but I listened to a lot, Jeanette. What about you?

Janette Afsharian: 8:08

Well, I'm, I'm not a I'm not a big podcast listener. I I basically um, I had those listening to like snap judgment and I listened to like a smart list and, every once in a while, listen to the news, podcasts and stuff, but I, you know, I'm not as much into it, so I do think we come about it a little bit differently. We have, you know, different strengths, different kinds of things. Which I think compliments us a lot is that we have different yes, coming at it from different angles.

Rachel Martens: 8:34

Yeah, for sure, what about you? What are your? What are your podcasts?

Mike Stefanelli: 8:38

I mean, I, I listened to everything from um, you know, like kind of hardcore sales podcast, sales training podcast. Also like kind of like you know, motivational personal development, like like my favorite motivational guys that do podcasts are like Ed Milet and Lewis Howes. I listen to Gary Vee a lot. I listen to golf. I'm a big golfer so I listen to golf podcasts a lot. You know, just, I got into a new podcast recently just about the mental game of golf. Uh-huh, not like totally, not about like fixing your swing or anything like that, but just more about how you think about the game out there, because it's a

very mental game. So, um, and then I'll listen to, I'll occasionally listen to some new. I try to avoid news. Um, yeah, I, I do listen to like um, I'll listen to Pivot, scott Galloway, kara Swisher, a little bit, you know, for a little bit of a news fill.

Mike Stefanelli: 9:29

And then Mark Manson. I listen to him.

Janette Afsharian: 9:33

I'll drop one that I've gotten a little bit of addicted to, but more on the video. It's become very video based. Is that is the diary of a CEO?

Rachel Martens: 9:41

That is yeah, you do love that and that is very cool.

Janette Afsharian: 9:45

It's very in depth and they get really impressive people on to tell you some stuff. So you know there's so much out there when it comes to that. That area of of you know media now. But I love how you were saying something about the difference in publishing, how it's changed that it's not news anymore, it's more about storytelling, and you definitely I mean I was looking at your background and you've been in this for a while I'd like for you to tell us a little bit about. You probably have seen this evolution come about with you being in it, so tell us a little bit.

Janette Afsharian: 10:20

You went to Nutley high school from what I could see.

Mike Stefanelli: 10:23

Yeah, so as far as, like you know, being lost in Jersey, I don't feel lost in Jersey ever because I've been here my whole life. I've been in Essex County the majority of my life. The only time I actually felt lost in Jersey was when I wasn't in New Jersey last week because I was in Orlando with my son playing golf for his spring break and we, you know, we just took a golf trip and, um, sometimes, when I'm in the in that environment, I love golf so much that, um, I'm like why do I live in New Jersey where I, you know, five months off from playing golf?

Mike Stefanelli: 10:59

Yeah, I need it year round and that's the only time. But I I soon bring myself back because I go to some of these other places and they just don't have the character of New Jersey, I mean. Orlando is. I'm not trying to rip on it, but it's like nothing but big box franchises I mean any chain franchise you want you can find in Orlando and it's like it kind of lacks that like neighborhood character, like New Jersey has.

Mike Stefanelli: 11:25

So, um, so that's the only time I ever feel lost in Jersey. But yeah, I am originally from Nutley. I went to Nutley High School and I lived in Nutley all the way up to about two and a half years ago and I now live in Morristown. But I've always been pretty much an Essex County guy.

Janette Afsharian: 11:41

How did you get yourself into the publishing game?

Mike Stefanelli: 11:45

So I think when you talk about an evolution my age, my age, you know, graduating college late 90s, early 2000s you know the way of going about it was. You know, you go to college, you get a job, you try to work your way up and that was it and that, like that, was kind of like the way right. Nobody talked about being independent. And now what you're seeing now is like kind of this shift towards independence and I think by 2027, they're going to be saying something like 52% of all like earned income is going to be from an independent or a freelance basis, and that's kind of the way it's gone. But what led me to that is kind of what leads a lot of people into like our company, which is, you know, they had a corporate America job and they were either let go, which I was.

Mike Stefanelli: 12:31

I worked for two Fortune 500 companies and I, you know, in financial services and I was let go from the company and at that moment I just said I'm done, I don't want to do this anymore, I don't want to be a number in a company, I don't want to be let go. I didn't know what I was going to do next. I kind of knew, like what I wanted and when I saw BVM and BVM was sort of early stages when I came to them in late 2014,. They hit the scene in 2007, but they took a while in an incubation period to really get going, but I was pretty early in in in 2014,. But when I saw it and I saw the concept and and and living in Nutley I mean Nutley's a very prideful town about the you know, they, you know they'll, they'll defend Nutley till no end.

Mike Stefanelli: 13:22

And I'm like, and they love their town and you know it's plant, we call it planet, planet Nutley and I'm like, wow, this concept could really work in Nutley.

Mike Stefanelli: 13:32

And I went and I went and started with BVM and then I brought the concept to Nutley and and I got it off the ground and running and launched our first publication in New Jersey was in Nutley and I you know shortly- after I became the you know I was the first one and I, you know, shortly after I became the, you know I was the first one here so I became for BVM, at least, I became the leader of New Jersey and then since then I've grown our New Jersey territory to 42 of these publications Montclair, bergen County. You know 42, actually we're

about to launch two more, um in Kinnelon and one in Lincroft in the next month. So we're growing.

Mike Stefanelli: 14:14

But yeah, 10 years ago that was my foray into kind of independent work because I just I didn't want that lifestyle anymore. So when people come to us they come to us because, you know, I'm done with corporate America or I need a change. I want to work for myself, I want to have more time for my family and, you know, friends and leisure and things like that. So you work for yourself. I mean it's not easy, but you work for yourself.

Rachel Martens: 14:37

How did you determine how to put a team together and what the vision would be for the first issue? I mean, I know just, you know from my own experience in publishing. You know just you know from my own experience in publishing, you know, having the publisher, the editor, the writers, the graphic designers, the ad sales, there's so much that goes into putting.

Mike Stefanelli: 14:57

So why you know, and we don't need like born and bred publishers to do well at this, because it's really like a turnkey model. So it's basically you know, as publisher you're really the chief revenue officer. Your job is to kind of go out and generate the revenue to support the magazine, to put it out. But you know BVM as your partner. That's why I liked it when I was looking for what I wanted next.

Mike Stefanelli: 15:17

You know, instead of launching your own business by yourself with no support behind you, you're sort of like an entrepreneur with BVM because they're doing the production, the design, the layout, the distribution, your collections, your accounting.

Mike Stefanelli: 15:30

You know all those things going on so you can concentrate on the business development in your community. And then, as far as your team building it out, you know you do have a local writer who's generally in the community. A local photographer designer could be local, but we have a team of designers that are freelance. You know that live around the country. Our designer of Montclair happens to be a montclair woman and, um uh, she came to us a long time ago when, you know, she picked up the magazine. She was a fan of it and she wanted to. She wanted to design it. But but most of our designers are freelance from around the country.

Mike Stefanelli: 16:04

So it's really a turnkey model, someone that wants to come in and bring this to their community. Our thing is that is, that we bring the community together through the, through the high quality content and

the family, family nature of it the baseball team that went to the Little League World Series, the crossing guard that's been in town for 30 years, the restaurant owner that's down the block from you. So it's really a magazine of the people, by the people and for the people. We encourage people to write into us and bring the content to us, so we don't need this big editorial team on the ground covering events Cause again not news Right. But at the end of the day, we've become so disconnected in society by being connected that our mission is to bring neighbors closer together. We don't know our next door neighbors anymore when a magazine comes in your mailbox with people that might walk their dog in front of your house. You want to know who they are and that's why it becomes so yeah, that's why we are that's why we all love it.

Mike Stefanelli: 17:10

Yeah, yeah so, so and that's and that's what I can't take the credit for that. Yeah, ppm created this thing in 2007 in wisconsin and they saw that opportunity gap right as social media online was starting. They said, well, we're going to kind of create a social media, but in print form, and people thought they were crazy at the time. But it's turned into such a such a great success that when I started with the company, we had 200 publications around the country. Now we have 1400. Right, wow.

Rachel Martens: 17:42

Yeah, just in 10 years. What's the hardest thing that you find when you're launching a new town? Just getting the advertising commitments.

Mike Stefanelli: 17:50

Yeah, Like people love it. They think the idea is great but like putting the dollars down to because it's a free magazine.

Rachel Martens: 17:57

Right, so is it a door to door kind of thing? You know door to door sales like hey, do you want to be in this? This is how many eyeballs you're going to get.

Mike Stefanelli: 18:07

It's sort of door to door. There is a door to door aspect of it, but a lot of our prototypical advertising clients are service-based businesses that you might not be able to walk into. On the main app.

Rachel Martens: 18:18

Like offices.

Mike Stefanelli: 18:19

It's it's landscapers and insurance agents and roofing companies and uh, you know plastic surgeons and um, you know realtors, you know things like that dentists. So you can't always walk into those businesses. So, to be honest with you, a lot of it is, you know,

reaching out by email or cold calling and doing it the old fashioned way. So that's always the hardest part, because some business owners think, you know, I don't need to advertise, Everybody knows me.

Mike Stefanelli: 18:48

But what we, our approach, is branding. We think that every small business really should think of themselves as a brand. Even if you're the local plumber, you should think of yourself as a brand. And so we try to take the same approach that the big global brands use put themselves out there all the time in front of their target audience and give that to the small business owner. And we do that through frequency and consistency being in front of your target audience all the time and being in something that people are viewing. Because you could advertise your business in a million places, yeah, right, but are you going to reach a relevant audience to your business and is there attention on that? And we know our magazines get attention because they're about the people that get them Right. Yeah, that's why it works.

Janette Afsharian: 19:36

Are you asked by your potential advertisers what is the return on investment?

Rachel Martens: 19:40

You know what I was going to ask that what?

Mike Stefanelli: 19:43

is your.

Janette Afsharian: 19:44

What is your response on that?

Mike Stefanelli: 19:46

If you're reading the magazine every month for the content and you see the local plumber in the magazine when your water heater breaks right, you don't run to the magazine to see who to use. You know who to use because you've recognized the local plumber each and every time. So the trust and awareness is getting built up all the time with the repetition each and every month. Getting built up all the time, with a repetition each and every month. So when people are asking about ROI, they don't quite understand how consumer behavior actually works, because 95% of consumer behavior and purchase intent comes from the subconscious. So someone might have finally purchased your goods and services from you, but they might have been thinking about it for a while and now they're ready and guess what they do. Next. They go to Google, find the phone number and then call the business and then guess who gets the credit for it. Right, google. But that doesn't mean the magazine didn't have an impact on that, because it built up the awareness and trust.

Janette Afsharian: 20:43

It's like a billboard. How do you know what the return on investment is on a billboard?

Mike Stefanelli: 20:53

We have a number of households that it goes to and you can kind of assume probably one and a half readers per copy per household. So you can come up with a number by that. But it's more about and I'm not trying to be anecdotal about it, but it's more about like hey, listen, is this a market that you want to reach with your business? Because this goes here? And you know, if you got a magazine like this in the mail and it was about your neighborhood, you would read it right. So when people understand the concept of the content, they understand why people's attention is going to be there. And that's all you want with marketing I have to put my business where there's attention and so when you have that attention, you're putting your business there. People are going to find it more trustworthy. And then when you're paired with the type of content the feel-good, positive, family-friendly content it makes people feel good about the businesses that they're seeing the connections are all positive.

Mike Stefanelli: 21:43

They want to reciprocate with that and they want to kind of support that business. That's why it works so well for businesses. Not every business owner gets. People you know have been led to believe, hey, I gotta put a dollar in and I gotta get a dollar out. And they want to kind of measure that and and, like you, know that at the end of the day that that might not be our prototypical advertising client because they're looking for that, but for the person that gets, building trust and awareness, you know what we do.

Rachel Martens: 22:08

Especially consistency over time. You know to see a brand name over time in the magazine, so that's what we try to do best and listen.

Mike Stefanelli: 22:16

We do digital advertising too. We've gotten into meta ads and Instagram ads and Google ads, and you know Google listing service, you know services for business, and so we do a full array of digital advertising along with our print advertising. But the print is what really builds the awareness first. They both work better together than separate on their own.

Janette Afsharian: 22:39

Do you have someone that's out there looking for a story?

Mike Stefanelli: 22:43

So our content coordinator, our current content coordinator, grace, she, you know, curates a lot of the stories, whether she finds them or, you know, people write into us. I mean, they generally come about

a couple of ways. Grace will find them and you know, she knows, you know she's a local woman and she knows stories. But, like you know, other residents will recommend hey, I have a great neighbor, neighbor, you should feature in this. Some people write in themselves hey, I'd like to be featured, I'd like to put my story out there. It's a memento for them to keep their family, you know, forever. So and then you know some business owners hey, I have a great client that I think you should feature. So that's the way it comes about.

Janette Afsharian: 23:22

What this magazine and I think this type of podcast really thrives on is telling people's stories instead of telling news. It's like ever it's somewhat evergreen you know, and it is, it's that same mission.

Mike Stefanelli: 23:34

It's funny when we we ask some people to to be on it and some people are like, well, I don't, there's nothing unique about me. And I often say, like, listen, whether you landed on the moon or whether you, you know, just graduated college and married your high school sweetheart and you work a normal nine to five job, it doesn't matter Again, it's just about people getting to know each other.

Rachel Martens: 23:55

There's a story that was our whole thing is there's always. Everybody has a story worth telling, and that's interesting.

Mike Stefanelli: 24:00

I mean, I want to ask you about that Are there any memorable stories that stick out for you, that you know where? When you reflect on your work it kind of brings you back to the one story.

Janette Afsharian: 24:11

I'll tell you an overarching theme that. I think actually was possibly the impetus for me or my thinking of what the whole premise of the podcast was, besides being lost in Jersey, is that it was resilience and life.

Janette Afsharian: 24:26

It's just realizing that we go through ups and downs and hearing people's stories of how what is their trajectory to getting to New Jersey and what happened and where are you? You know, and almost inevitably I knew that people would say they had a hard time somewhere or they had a difficult you know arc but have either are still in it or going through it or whatever. But sharing that kind of arc of life was really important to me because I felt like it was. It was an honest story that everyone has.

Rachel Martens: 24:55

I don't know, but perfectly, perfectly, said Jeanette, both of us are always inspired by who we meet and I think that was for sure. Like

cats have nine lives, and I felt like, okay, everybody has nine lives. Like I've lived I don't know how many lives already, a lot.

Mike Stefanelli: 25:11

Yeah, I mean and that's what we love to bring out in the publication to see, you know, some of the challenges people have gone through and how they overcame it. Lift up the community.

Janette Afsharian: 25:20

And you get those testimonials all the time.

Mike Stefanelli: 25:23

Well, just for this one, you know you have a popular local resident.

Janette Afsharian: 25:25

You have a popular local resident. He talks about his autism and how he functions with society and how he feels really blessed in his life. You are the publisher, and the content coordinator for this magazine is Grace L Williams, and the designer is Marty Golan. And then Neil Grabowski is a photographer who he's been on this podcast.

Rachel Martens: 25:46

We've interviewed him.

Janette Afsharian: 25:47

Yeah.

Mike Stefanelli: 25:48

And he talked about taking excellent photographer.

Rachel Martens: 25:51

I know so good.

Janette Afsharian: 25:52

Well, I want to ask you about something about bvm. Best version media is that it recently was acquired by hig. Is that correct? Okay and um, and I read that it's aiming to expand the range of products and services by enhancing the ability to serve clients and publishers more effectively. What does that mean? What does that look like for you?

Mike Stefanelli: 26:15

Well, you know it's a private company. I obviously wasn't in the boardroom when these decisions?

Mike Stefanelli: 26:20

were being made. But it's not the first time BVM was actually acquired. We were acquired by another private equity firm a couple of years back and that private equity firm took us to one level that they kind of specialize in and taking companies to, and we outgrew it and so HIG Capital has the capabilities of taking BVM to a whole other

level, and that's what it's really about. I can tell you that, you know, from like kind of like an outsider perspective, or you know kind of just from a, you know, independent publisher perspective. We have people that come from the newspaper industry and you know different industries that have been taken over by private equity before, and there was some nervousness about it when they hear things like this, because they think, oh, private equity is going to come in and tear this and cut everybody out, and sell it off as a shell.

Mike Stefanelli: 27:10

They're going to get rid of the print and you know our whole thing is going to go down here, and that's not how this would have ever worked, because the founders of our company are still very involved with the board and the executives that have been here for a long time.

Mike Stefanelli: 27:25

What they do is going to afford us the opportunity, like you said, to expand the products and services.

Mike Stefanelli: 27:30

Now we've already been expanding. Since I started, we were just print magazines and now we've gone into digital advertising and online services and we're getting into more things as we go forward here, where we, you know, like for me on the ground we're a publisher on the ground in New Jersey. Like for me on the ground, we're a publisher on the ground in New Jersey we will sort of be a local marketing, full suite, full service marketing agency for a small business, where not only can we offer them you know the, the, the Cadillac of it, which is the print magazine, the luxury magazine because we can. That's what differentiates us from a, from just a digital marketing agency, because digital marketing agency can offer all the things that we can offer as well, and they might do some different things from a performance marketing standpoint online, but they can't offer the luxury magazine that hits the mailboxes every month for each of these towns. We will be able, in not so distant future, be able to offer things like SEO and website development for businesses and really generate a lot of business services where we can become a one-stop shop for them, and that will be due to the resources that will be afforded to us by having this partner.

Mike Stefanelli: 28:42

Our entire editorial philosophy is based on positivity. There's so much negativity and noise out there, so we, like you said, we want to be that refresher for people right and highlighting the good people and the uplifting stories and families and the businesses. And that doesn't mean we ignore real life, you know, but we choose to focus on politics and controversy and hot button issues and the divisiveness.

Mike Stefanelli: 29:13

And you know, our goal is not to provoke, it's really to connect

people.

Rachel Martens: 29:19

And that's really what you're doing it.

Mike Stefanelli: 29:21

I'll give a shout out to one of our sponsors, American Roofing Insider. Yes, it seems like they do every roof in Montclair, but they've been in the publication and they've had billboards in the area and they've been in the publication for a long time. But you know, that's what. That's what awareness and trust looks like when you're, when you're embedded, when you're embedded somewhere for a long time, you become a household name like a Nike or a Verizon or a Geico or a Rolex. You become a household name like a Nike or a Verizon or a Geico or a Rolex. You become a household name. And I'm telling you, I see their Instagram all the time. They're always on a roof in Montclair.

Janette Afsharian: 29:57

Yep, shout out to American roofing and siding. Well, I'm curious also, as we wrap up, two things that I wanted to quickly ask you is that is there a particular like trend or something stories that you get really positive feedback on? Like in the in the? You kind of like food like. I remember we spoke to Montclair local and they were saying that their food stories get a lot of traction.

Mike Stefanelli: 30:21

I mean, I'm just speaking, you know, from. You know some of our other publications and some of them are, you know, bigger uh, and have more pages than Montclair neighbors. But I think you know some of the eat local stuff uh, the home and garden section, some of the sections that people create in their magazines. I think those get a lot of fanfare. Uh, the positive feedback that we always get is uh, you know, just you know, oh, wow, that was such an interesting story about so-and-so on the cover. That's you know we.

Rachel Martens: 30:52

We get those a lot Um. I love how you feature local families. How should people um get involved? So if they want to like, submit a story to their local town. They have a BBM magazine.

Mike Stefanelli: 31:01

Oh yeah, simply simply go and uh, right on page three, you'll have the publisher email there. You'll have a content coordinator email there. So if you're listening to this and you have a BBM magazine in your community, you can simply reach out that way. Generally there's a phone number in there. You have Grace or myself. Okay, we have contact information in there. And if any business owners are listening to this and, yes, they want, they want us. You know, not even in Montclair, but elsewhere.

Rachel Martens: 31:25
Anywhere yeah.

Mike Stefanelli: 31:31
They want a second set of eyes on how they're reaching their market more effectively. I'd be happy to talk with them. I'll talk all day with business owners about what effective marketing is and what it isn't, and whether they do a partnership with us or not, I always like meeting business owners and being able to help them market their business better. Excellent, thank you, great. We have a final question that we ask everyone and you know being able to help them, you know, market their business better Excellent.

Janette Afsharian: 31:50
Thank you Great. We have a final question that we ask everyone that comes on is tell us something that you love about New Jersey. A person, place, thing or, you know, concept.

Mike Stefanelli: 32:04
Yeah, I'll give you, I'll give you a place and I'll give you a concept. So the thing I probably love the most about New Jersey is Long Beach Island.

Rachel Martens: 32:13
Oh awesome.

Mike Stefanelli: 32:14
The Jersey shore there's just. I grew up going there, you know, we had a house there as as, as you know, up until I was about 27,. There's just a vibe there where it's like kind of like time stops, yeah, so and and some of the best sunsets I've ever seen in the country, that's nice.

Mike Stefanelli: 32:33
And so my favorite place would be there. But the thing I love the most about New Jersey is, you know, although I don't enjoy winter that much, because I'm a golfer, I do enjoy having the true four seasons here. But when I think about New Jersey, you really do have everything in one place. You have, you know, your suburbs and your metropolitan area, you have your mountains, you have farms, you have forests and you have your Jersey Shore, and it's hard to really get all that in one place in this country. California probably has it, but it's hard to really get that, that all that in one place, and New Jersey, for how small it is, is able to boast that.

Janette Afsharian: 33:13
And you have New York City, and you have New York City like the biggest city across.

Rachel Martens: 33:17

I mean I guess if we have to talk about New York City it could throw it in there.

Janette Afsharian: 33:21

That's what makes it so incredible. I was trying to keep it to just New.

Mike Stefanelli: 33:25

Jersey. Of course, living up in North Jersey, like we do, being able to access that, is certainly a huge advantage.

Rachel Martens: 33:33

It's great to access it and come home yeah exactly, exactly it, it.

Janette Afsharian: 33:38

I mean I think that you know people who live here completely agree with what you're saying and well it's, it's great to meet you and it's great to have you know, got the backstory on this magazine that we've been getting in our mailbox for years and understand, because you know you just don't know.

Rachel Martens: 33:54

It's so impressive that you grew it from Nutley to all those other towns. It's really impressive, Michael.

Janette Afsharian: 34:01

Wow, just one. Do you? Are you in charge of all of these other 40? Are you the publisher for all 40?

Mike Stefanelli: 34:08

I'm not the publisher for any of these other 40? Are you the publisher for all 40? I'm not the publisher for any of the other ones. I'm more of the leader, the sales leader, so to speak, of them. So each individual that is listed in their publication some of them do more than one publication they would be in charge of their editorial and their staff and their advertising and I'm just kind of oversee them as a support liaison where, you know, for training and coaching and mentorship, and you know, part of my role as leader is doing that and being more of a sales coach to people.

Mike Stefanelli: 34:44

So I'm always looking for people that want to kind of break free from, you know, maybe that corporate rat race and they want to kind of build something for themselves and not be tied to, you know, kind of a nine to fives and no day is ever the same. So I'm always looking for people that have that entrepreneurial spirit. We can probably be in at least 100 markets total in New Jersey and and that's what I'm looking to do is bring people in for the additional areas that don't have one of these.

Mike Stefanelli: 35:12

But, we've had publishers come to us with zero sales experience, nurses and teachers and restaurant servers and just people that I have a vision for it and if people don't get my vision, that's okay, I'll move on to the next one and they just follow the program and they become successful here.

Janette Afsharian: 35:29

So we don't need born and bred salespeople. That's very cool, that's cool. Well, Michael, thank you so much for taking the time to tell us about the magazine and all you do and the backstory and everything. It's been a pleasure to talk with you and learn and see you around.

Mike Stefanelli: 35:46

Yeah, I thank you for having me on and it's been a very nice conversation to have and a refresher, I hope, for the audience and let's have you featured in the magazine oh gosh.

Rachel Martens: 35:59

Thank you, I guess.

Mike Stefanelli: 36:00

Thank you though.

Janette Afsharian: 36:01

So much Thank you, that's an honor also. Yeah, it would be an honor, appreciate it. Thanks, michael. Yeah, it would be an honor, appreciate it, thanks.

Rachel Martens: 36:09

Michael, this podcast was produced by Rachel Martens and Jeanette Afsharian. You can find us on Spotify, iTunes and Buzzsprout. Thanks for listening. See you next week.