**Josh Cunningham Interview Transcript Episode 23**

**Jonesy** [00:00:00] Welcome to Power Up Your Business podcast, I'm your host, Matthew Jones, owner of Cube Performance, where we help tradie business owners implement systems, structure, processes, culture into their organisation to ensure that they build a business that serves them. Ultimately, as a business owner, it's tough, it's hard. You're investing a lot of blood, sweat and tears and you need to be rewarded financially and with more quality time. In this episode, we're super stoked to be talking to Josh Cunningham. He's one of our long-term clients. Josh owns and operates with his wife, [00:00:37]Lyndall, [0.0s] All Outside Landscaping based in West Wyalong, which is a western regional town, New South Wales. Josh has got a great story similar to most tradie businesses starting small, going through major growing pains, a lot of pressure on the financials, a lot of pressure on the home front. It's all work, work, work and no fun. Josh really doubled down on his team. Josh is all about building a culture. Josh is all about building a team that's thriving, a team that want to come to work. And it's a great inspiration, especially for those people out there and businesses out there who are struggling to recruit people. Well, Josh is in a small town and he's done a great job of attracting great talent. So really listen to some of the key things that Josh has done and implemented into his organisation to really set him apart from other organisations within that region, great story as always, heaps of good tips, write things down. But more importantly, when you hear something that's applicable, try and act on it straight away. And that's one of the great things we hear from listeners and we really appreciate our loyal listeners out there. We're getting a lot of great feedback from people who have been taking away lots of tools, tips and inspiration from our guests and putting into their business. And hearing about positive change gets us excited, gets us really pumped, and please subscribe, like and share our podcast, greatly appreciated. So let's get into it, let's speak to Josh, cheers. Josh, welcome to the Power Up podcast, mate, great to have you on board.

**Josh** [00:02:20] Thanks for having me, yes, pretty exciting.

**Jonesy** [00:02:23] Oh, it's good and you've got a great story and I'm really keen for you to share with our listeners how you really built the team and how you really positioned yourself over the last four years. You've got a great journey and a great story to share so really keen to listen to that and understand and how you unpack that. But before we get into that, into the now and all the good stuff, just give us a bit of an insight to some of the background and the journey today with obviously yourself and [00:02:49]Lyndall [0.0s] starting the business back around that 2013, 2014.

**Josh** [00:02:54] We worked for a telecommunications company, both of us.

**Jonesy** [00:03:01] Is that Telstra?

**Josh** [00:03:02] I don't want a bad name them. We worked for them for a long time. I was in management there and we just had enough of it stress-wise. And so I changed, retrained and started in landscaping and horticulture. We moved towns and so that was a big change for us. Everything sort of had to happen. But yes, we moved here, we weren't sure where we're going to go, so we kicked the business back off again. I was just a sole trader and yes, and then essentially we were offered another little business in town and so we took that on and it felt like it came when we bought it actually came in a 4x carton box like an old one that's how we got all the paperwork for it. So yes, it was great little business.

**Jonesy** [00:03:48] Were there beers still in the box?

**Josh** [00:03:52] But yes that was pretty much what we picked up, it was a good business, had great rapport with the customers being a small town, but that was sort of where it was at.

**Jonesy** [00:03:59] And that's West Wyalong, right?

**Josh** [00:04:00] It is West Wyalong, yes, so we took this business on like that and from there, you know, we just had to bring systems and processes into place because as we slowly grew, we had put staff on and we just realised we didn't, we weren't set up for it. So essentially my wife said to me, look, we've got to get someone to help us do this. And, you know, obviously being in management in a Telstra management position, I felt like I should be able to do this. But when it came to trades and you know, we talk about the tradie mindset and all those things, I've kind of got myself into that because I've been a sole trader for three years already. So I was sort of, yes, my wife was the one that pushed it.

**Jonesy** [00:04:40] So starting and around that 2014, 2015, couple of years as sole trader then rolling into a proprietary company.

**Josh** [00:04:49] Yes, so once we took this business off and had a couple of people on staff just casuals so you know, then it was sort of suggested we need to get into a more of a company set up. Then we rolled into that and now obviously we're sort of into our 14th staff member. It's been a big journey for us, to be able to put, you know, put us into that position, get us into this position, we had to make some decisions as to who was going to help us get there, which is why we've got you.

**Jonesy** [00:05:20] It's been good and been great to have you on board and especially seeing the results now coming into the end of the financial year coming in the end of June 2023. It's really, really exciting. But just rolling it back into that, like around that 2018, 2019 period where, yes, you're in a new region, it's not a big pocket and pretty much West Wyalong, close to Young isn't it?

**Josh** [00:05:46] Yes, it's close to Young, sort of Forbes, probably an hour from Forbes. It is on a few highways, but it's sort of in the middle of nowhere, really.

**Jonesy** [00:05:54] Central Western New South Wales.

**Josh** [00:05:55] Central Western New South Wales, it's probably six and a half thousand people in town. But a good little, you know, mining, agriculture community, it's a great little town. But from a point of view that you want to have constant work, you kind of have to go out of town a little bit too. So in that regard, we had to be set up to be able to do that.

**Jonesy** [00:06:16] And is a great pocket, it's a great part of New South Wales. It really is a good region there.

**Josh** [00:06:20] It's dusty, when we moved here, there was a drought and it was dusty.

**Jonesy** [00:06:25] And then you got flooded.

**Josh** [00:06:26] Then we got floods.

**Jonesy** [00:06:29] Then with that coming into that period of that growth you are starting to get more on. I think you sort of got built that before you jumped on board with us. You built a business around that 500k turnover.

**Josh** [00:06:41] So we're around about 500k turnover. But you know, our net profit wasn't great. And you know, there are a few things that we sort of looked at, but that were, you know, because we were growing, we were buying and so that made it hard to sort of get a real good indication of how the business was sort of working because we had to buy a lot of assets and things to kind of keep our business rolling through.

**Jonesy** [00:07:02] But cash flow was tight.

**Josh** [00:07:04] Cash flow was tight, yes, it certainly was. And you know, we started a family in 2019, so we have, you know, our own personal goals and our own personal life and that was another reason why we had to make changes because we just were getting into a bit of a rot where work could come home with us. We were working late and we'd be talking about it at the dinner table. It just wasn't very nice.

**Jonesy** [00:07:29] You got into that classic, which we referred to the tradie mindset where you just become enslaved to the job and unfortunately around the dinner table it's all about work.

**Josh** [00:07:37] Yes and because [00:07:37]Lyndall [0.0s] obviously worked in the business, we both, you know, shot back and forth and then we'd end up fighting because, it's just not conducive to your relationship. It doesn't that didn't work and it shouldn't work like that, and it doesn't work like that now so that's a good thing.

**Jonesy** [00:07:52] It's hard when it's in that state where both partners are fully invested in the business and it's not so much the hard work, but it's just the lack of reward. There's nothing worse than you're putting a lot on the line. Young family, stress, pressures, and then the cash is going south. Effort is going up, cash is going south.

**Josh** [00:08:14] Yes that's exactly right, putting all the time and the energy into it and not seeing the reward, but that energy and time that we put in back then, although probably not ideal that has set us up from here.

**Jonesy** [00:08:27] 100% and we talk about the latent potential all the time in our community as you're aware of, which is the latent potential, just because you're not getting the results, it doesn't mean it's wasted efforts, it's actually stored energy. But it's about playing the long game and being persistent and disciplined as you are, and that's what's led you to here, right?

**Josh** [00:08:46] Correct, yes.

**Jonesy** [00:08:48] Nothing goes in a straight line but I love that coming back to one of the first conversations we had and obviously [00:08:56]Lyndall, [0.0s] I love how you sort of put it down, [00:08:58]Lyndall [0.0s] pretty much put the foot down and said Josh, we need help, we need someone to help us. Now you are very, very, very.

**Josh** [00:09:05] I'm pretty stubborn.

**Jonesy** [00:09:08] Yes, you are stubborn. You aren't really warm and fuzzy.

**Josh** [00:09:10] I wasn't, probably, I think back to that first phone call we had, I think, man, I was probably a jerk. You probably thought, who is this bloke?

**Jonesy** [00:09:21] Maybe a lit bit that was back in 2020 now, too that was just before COVID.

**Josh** [00:09:29] Yes and look, it was, you know, and that was just trying to get rid of that old business mindset too, you know, things are different in every industry and things don't just translate across every industry. So what I had was stored knowledge and when obviously being part of a large company, we had been to coaches and, you know, action coaches and all sorts of things that, you know, and it felt like it was a very blurred industry for me. So I sort of felt like, I don't know if I want to go down that path. But, you know, we were recommended to you guys from a family member and yes, it was perfect.

**Jonesy** [00:10:02] No, it was great. I'm glad that you persisted, right, I'm really glad that [00:10:05]Lyndall [0.0s] pretty much went, dragged you into that to get started. And now here we are, nearly 3 and a bit nearly 4 years down the track.

**Josh** [00:10:14] I think, how long has it been since she's been on a phone call or whatever else, it's just been me.

**Jonesy** [00:10:19] You're the main man, look at you. Well, [00:10:21]Lyndall [0.0s] is loving life, right? She is working one day a week?

**Josh** [00:10:25] One day a week and from home. She's not in the office, and we've got a good little admin office staff now and an office manager and, you know, there are members of the team that we've kind of created that have really taken us to another level so that's been really helpful.

**Jonesy** [00:10:43] Let's talk about that, how we sort of got there to that result because now again from say three or so years ago, those 500k turnover, you're enslaved to the business, no time, lack of cash to now been able to set the business up. You're able to go away for four weeks in the caravan with a young family, which is always a challenge and credit to you, four weeks, how good is that?

**Josh** [00:11:06] Yes, it was a worry but you know we probably could have gone away for longer and that's testament to the team we've built. They're great team and look, I've always, it's always been a thing for me when I've been in business that like I didn't love my old job and I wanted to create an environment that I hope that people loved. And, you know, there are things that will pop up that will not always be great. But, you know, I really wanted to make it a culture in this company. And, you know, the people that work here loved it, you know and maybe they don't love the work, but they love the team. They love being in, you know, we have really good camaraderie, you know, and there's a lot to look forward to when you come to work. And it's not always fun and games, but they work hard. But, you know, it's a really good environment and I'm pretty proud of that because I think that's one of my main goals in being in business is to really create that culture.

**Jonesy** [00:11:59] And that's definitely a credit to you, mate and that's one thing early on that I really admired you that it was all about the team and from the get go and some first conversations, it's about, you know, I want to have a good environment. It's not about just getting people on just to work. You really want to build that culture and bringing in that learnings and experiences from the corporate world where again, from my perspective as well, like in I've been in corporate for ten years, there are some pretty toxic environments and it really does suck the life out of you.

**Josh** [00:12:28] It does and you know, the churn for staff is just incredible. You know, and I've we've got guys that have been with us for three or four coming on, you know, our very first employees, they're still with us and when we bought the company, we had a girl that came with us. She was a casual, she would come along and her husband's now, you know, one of our project managers and so if you create an environment, yes, she's not with us any more, but that's because she started a family. But, you know, she's willing to put it out there and say, hey, it's a good place to work.

**Jonesy** [00:13:02] Great, you really believe in that family nurturing environment.

**Josh** [00:13:06] And being in a small town like, you know, our talent pool isn't, you know, incredibly deep. And there are plenty of other companies in town and other trades and being a mining community, there's big money in certain areas. So, you know, we've got to create a culture and a work environment that people want to come to because we can't compete otherwise.

**Jonesy** [00:13:25] I love it. I just love it and I want people, who are listening to this now, especially those around Australia, in big cities or little cities that are saying, oh, it's tough to get people or I'm in a small town and you know, it's tough to get people in a small town as opposed to a big town and everyone's got an excuse. You're the classic example, shining light, small town, not a big pocket, but you've really built up that culture. And what we talk about winning the war on talent, where you really build that brand that attracts good people. They are looked after you showing that compassionate leadership.

**Josh** [00:13:58] We have to look after them and yes, I think like I've said before, things change and things will go wrong and, you know, and creating culture it's not just to create a culture and let it, you know, let it become, you know, that's it. It's more about creating a culture and working on the culture every single day. Like these things have to be worked on because little things creep in, personalities will clash, all of that stuff. And if they fester, they corrupt. And you know, it's a matter of constantly working on it and it is a big thing. But, you know, one of your, you know, big pushes is for us to do at the start was The Way We Do It Here and The Way We Do It here really set the standard for our business. And we did focus on how wanted our team and like our culture was the pinnacle part of that because I feel like if, you know, we have a really good working culture, a really good team, our clients are going to see that, our clients are going to respect that, our clients are going to come to us and we're going to create an environment where they're going to be happy with the work we do rather than sort of really relying on the skill set of our team. We kind of create this company that's just going to come in and blow them away and I think that's important. Often we go, you know, oh, my client was, you know, my client is the most important part of a business. But I think your team, your culture is the most important part of your business.

**Jonesy** [00:15:20] Yes, I agree there, because your team look after your client. If your teams are not happy, your clients are not going to be happy.

**Josh** [00:15:26] For sure, they're your face for everything.

**Jonesy** [00:15:28] I love that mantra that you've put down where again the team is the most important asset and we're only as good as the people. And if you're the team are thriving, then the business is going to thrive.

**Josh** [00:15:38] Correct, we have to have a good team. And again, in a small town, you know, you don't get a lot of chances, you got a lot of repeat customers. So if your culture is, you know, cancerous, you're going to have trouble because you're not going to win it, you know, and I've seen it in other sections of town in certain businesses that, you know, you think that's not a great name, you know, in some things. We come up against things like that all the time. So yes, it's such an important thing for us.

**Jonesy** [00:16:08] And unpacking no The Way We Do It Here process, as we discussed that's really the cornerstone and the foundation of everything we do as far as how we recruit, how we train people, how we assess people, how we develop people, how we then go to our clients, part of our business development and educating client process that's how we go to suppliers and talk about our expectations. It's every day, right, it just The Way We Do It Here is literally every day. Just unpack and this is where again, I really admire how you from that tentative start you really bought into The Way We Do It Here even when again, at those early stages, business was tough. You're still busy. The results still wasn't there both from a top line revenue or profit point of view. But you had the, you know, that unwavering focus on you. You believe that The Way We Do It Here was going to be critical for the team. Just talk to me about the process and just to clarify everyone with The Way We Do It Here is a really clear, succinct framework of our vision, aspiration of where we want to go as a team. Our promise, what do we promise our customer every time we turn up? And then our values which basically our desired behaviours and this is pretty much how our team make the choices every day, every choice they make, they got to align it to the values. Just unpack that process that you went through and the different iterations to that you've gone through in getting the team buy in as well. It's all about, it's not about you just directing, it's about the team owning it.

**Josh** [00:17:35] Yes so when we created it, obviously we weren't sure what we're going to do. So, you know, we had some help from family members that are in the trade business. And so we kind of just set these ideals out and said, well, that's what we want to do. And then we presented that to the team and we sort of set said set them down and said this is The Way We Do It Here, this is our expectations, you know, the teamwork, how that's going to work. And I think after a while, I think it was about 12, 18 months of running it that way. It went through everything. So our marketing web page, you know, our quoting documents that get sent out to our customers, it's on all of those things. So they know it's almost like our mantra that that's what you can expect from the company. But then obviously moving forward, the team hadn't created it. So what we wanted to do when we had a mid-year meeting and just said, you guys are going to rebuild this for us. We don't want to change it completely, but we want you to put this into your own words. So we had a meeting and we sat down and everyone just spitball back and forth, you know, what are our expectations and from the apprentice through to the project managers, office managers, everyone had input. Everyone had a chance to talk. And eventually, you know, we come out with a new and now we're just in the process of putting that out to the world. But, you know, I think it's important that even the apprentices get an opportunity because they are the future of your business. They are future tradies that are going to come through, they are your tradesmen and really that if they embedded it in their life now, they'll come out a better tradesman.

**Jonesy** [00:19:07] And that's the thing we're coming back to it, it creates that, the leadership creates a framework that everyone, it doesn't matter whether you're an apprentice or a 50-year-old tradesman, you can still own it. And I talk about leadership. Leadership, it's not about a title, nor tenure. It's about your actions and your choices. And often what we find within the community and you would have heard it when we talk about our community wins and other people say that sometimes the best people who lead by example is actually the apprentices. They're the ones that often have the best feedback or best input. And generally it's because of that generation too where they and this is why I want everyone to understand generationally right now, the new kids coming through. They want empowerment, they want ownership, they want to contribute, and they want to be part of something bigger than just a job. Like you said before, we're doing landscaping. You know, some of the stuff that you're doing is tedious, but if you create this environment where they're empowered and they're making choices, hey, I'm growing, I've got a say in this so I'm accountable. And how have you seen it now? Fast tracking it now, the team that you've built has enabled you to, you know, 13 people, 14 people on board. It's really and credit to you, now we're going from 500k to pushing through to, you know, close to 2 million, which is fantastic. But more importantly, the bottom line, profit is up over that 15%, you know, pushing over 200k profit, which is unbelievable. It's great but it's all on the back of the team. It's massive. It's all on the back of the team. The teams are in it. You've got confidence in the team now. Just talk about the difference, what have you really noticed from the team members once you've given them that input that opportunity to have a say, that opportunity to own what gets created in this framework so they again, they believe in the vision because they've been part of it. They believe in the promise because they've been part of it. They believe in the values because they've been part of it. So they really own it.

**Josh** [00:21:05] Yes.

**Jonesy** [00:21:06] So what are some of the key?

**Josh** [00:21:08] You just start to see it come out in them in their daily work. So you'll see them, you know, start to make decisions. And apprentices particularly like they make mistakes and probably they are the most common ones to make mistakes and how they take ownership of that mistake for example, which is one of our values. But then how the other team members respond to that so they also say, oh, that's not the Way We Do It Here. It's a little bit of jest, but at the same time, they understand that that doesn't reflect the Way We Do It Here. And even if I say certain things, oh, that's not the Way We Do It Here and you know, there's, you know, it's in jest in some ways, but it's ingrained. And so when they actually do make a mistake, that is or, you know, we have come up against something that is really difficult, it's an ingrained decision. They kind of default to it without even thinking about that, they don't have to verbalise it, but they default to that kind of mentality and that's probably what we're pushing for. We don't want to have to verbally bring this up all the time. We use the language and it kind of creates the patterns in the brain for everybody to go, hang on, yes, that's not the Way We Do It Here, but we want them to just mentally get to that state where they just say, that's not the way, that's not good enough, that's not the Way We Do It Here, you know, that sort of thing. And it's been a journey to get there and the more people we put on, like, obviously, the more risk you have and some people that you put on obviously that are already tradesmen or that are older, they've got, you know, ideas of their own that come into play. And so they have to fit into the culture of the company and if they can't or then they fall away. And the same goes for any apprentices that have come on and we've had guys that have come in, but it's just they fall away. And the beauty of it is, you know, we have had people that have started and joined the team and it's been within a week. It's collectively the teams going, this isn't going to work and it's not a matter of, you know, being mean or anything like that. It's just this isn't going to work. I don't have to make the decision. They make the decision and if it just doesn't work and they say no, we have to, it's not we're not going to be able to perform to the level we need to perform to with this person on board and nothing's changing. So, you know, so you get that hire slow, fire fast kind of mentality from your team, which is really helpful because, you know, I don't want to have to be monitoring these guys all the time, particularly as you know, we start to grow.

**Jonesy** [00:23:30] And that's what I love, I love hearing that just gets me fired up and excited, right, as you know, I get very excited about things like that where because we're talking about that leadership, you know, from within. We call it inside out leadership where the team straight away if someone's coming in, the team are actually owning the culture The team are actually owning the way we do it here. And if someone's coming in and they know they're not going to be a team member, see you later.

**Josh** [00:23:56] Doesn't suit, yes.

**Jonesy** [00:23:57] We're going, north.

**Josh** [00:23:58] It's going to happen quickly too.

**Jonesy** [00:24:00] It has to happen quick.

**Josh** [00:24:00] Because it can really be cancerous, so for them to pick it up and say and they feel empowered to do that, like that's not going to suit so, you know, and I feel like, one of my things is I really want to be open. And, you know, my leadership has changed a lot probably from ten years ago.

**Jonesy** [00:24:20] Changed a lot in the last three years, since we've been onboard.

**Josh** [00:24:23] Yes, for sure, and just being really focused on culture means that, you know, my empathy changes, my, you know, the way I manage, the way I deal with people, you know, the way I deal with myself so that, you know, self-growth that I have to do myself so yes that has changed. And you know, our team, like they make it like you don't want to have to fire people and you don't want to have to fire people without really good in this is why it's happening. You want to have a good reason to be getting rid of someone, particularly when you put them on because it's, you know, it sucks to go through the hiring process and then they are the wrong fit. You feel like you failed but if your team turns around says no, this isn't going to work, well, then you've really in the end, you've won.

**Jonesy** [00:25:07] Well, the Way We Do It Here is used first and foremost when we talk about the hire slow, it's used in that recruitment process, which we try and flesh out then if it is going to be if they buy into it or they don't. So in the initial stages, we get a glimmer of light, hang on, do you buy into our vision? This is our promise and these are our values. So we're very clear on the expectations and you're very clear on the expectations but you're right, some do sort of slip through there.

**Josh** [00:25:34] Well, they do and yes, some people are good at just being different in their interview to how they are and that's just the way it is.

**Jonesy** [00:25:42] They're quite good actors. They're in the wrong field.

**Josh** [00:25:46] We're all able to act, I guess. But yes, so that for us, culture has been just the biggest growth. I think for us that's been our focus and we've just let the rest of, you know, not let it go. But we sort of think, well, if we manage the team to the point where, you know, they're an amazing team, things around it will happen and they'll go and search for work. They will increase the business.

**Jonesy** [00:26:12] They're brand advocates.

**Josh** [00:26:13] Exactly.

**Jonesy** [00:26:15] They can say, both as attracting new people, this is a great place to work as well as attracting new clients because you're going to be talking to their network. Oh we do great, we do great work like the current project you're on, right, you're that in your space, in your scope of works, you're really driving that project to go forward because all the other tradies around are pretty much unprofessional.

**Josh** [00:26:33] Correct, yes and it's been really good to see that the team really trying to push it forward. I don't have to even be there and our project manager, he, you know, he's fantastic. You know, as a group, collectively they just want to see it get done. And, you know, we've got jump fatigue with that now and that's something that can really be cancerous to your team culture and so we want to get rid of it. You know, we want it to finish. It's got to move on. We've got to go to the things that give us joy and, you know, go back to the work that, you know, makes us happy.

**Jonesy** [00:27:04] And the key thing there is identifying, which is really good as part of your leadership, identifying that fatigue coming in, identifying that you've got to unplug, you've got to unplug. And as part of the operating rhythm, you know that we really we put in place and as part of that, our annual operating rhythm. And for our listeners who have got an operating rhythm at different months of the year, certain things have to get done. And we're now coming into that phase where we're doing the one-on-one performance.

**Josh** [00:27:28] One-on-ones, yes, we've got conversations to have around performance. You know, we're going to come back to the way we do it here and look at the where we're sitting, you know, personally and because that's a part of the way we do it, we like to see that kind of stretch across their personal life as well and the decisions that they make in their personal life. I mean, we can't tell people what to do personally. But, you know, if you create an environment where every day they're coming to work with a certain standard, it's going to represent in their personal life as well. And that's sometimes where we've seen people drop away, where they can't keep their personal life to the standard that it needs to be. And they go I can't live like is basically can't do it. So we've seen people drop off because of that, particularly young apprentices.

**Jonesy** [00:28:11] Yes, it's very hard, as we always say, you've got to have balanced habits, you can't have great habits at home and or bad habits at home and the good habits at work. It just doesn't work, it crosses over. I think what you're talking about too, and this is what we're really passionate about and you know, we talk about in the community all the time and I want people to understand who listen to the podcast is that when you get someone come into your organisation, they're bright-eyed often they're looking for mentorship, they're looking for guidance, they're looking for an opportunity to grow. Often they've come from an environment where they've never been sort of patted on the back, they've always been criticised. Whereas what we want, and I know you do when people leave the organisation, your business, because they're going to, they're going to grow and they go the next step and good luck to them. But they're going to be a better tradesman, but more importantly they're going to be a better person because of the confidence and the skills and the principles and the values and how they can go about things, how they can own things, their position in life is going to be on a different trajectory for the next decades, correct?

**Josh** [00:29:16] Yes and look, it's you know, we've had people come on from our other businesses that we've sort of taken on, like our office manager, for example, and she comes from an environment that was probably pretty tough to work in, by the sound of it. And from a management team perspective, pretty tough to work in, comes here and we still have moments where the way we react, the way we respond because it's the way we do it here, it's like foreign to her. It's like it doesn't that's not how I expected something different. I expected anger and I expected frustration and all these things in your life. It's not what we do here. Like it's not, you know, this is a problem, sure but we're going to have to overcome it in the way we do it here.

**Jonesy** [00:29:54] We're not trying to follow anyone else. We don't care what they're doing. They're fine but this is the way we do it here. We got confidence in the way we do it here. One thing now we want to touch on with the way we do here because we mentioned the team members, which is great. They pick up on the way we do it here if things go wrong. But as you know, we're all about intentionally seeking out the good and how we can use the way we do it here again to appraise people to pat people on the back to give them recognition, how good is that again, that framework that we can really put people up on the pedestal and acknowledge great work?

**Josh** [00:30:28] Well, we do it in our meetings and we talk about that, you know, we talk about situations where or you get an email from a client that says, you know, great job doing this, this and this. And, you can say, well, this is where this you know, this is ownership, this is teamwork. These things that we talk relates back to this.

**Jonesy** [00:30:44] Relates back to your values.

**Josh** [00:30:45] So you actually have a KPI that you can work to and you know, KPIs for team-related things are actually quite hard to manage, whereas but if it's a value that you can relate back to in the things they do, it becomes something that you can reward and say, look, this is a great job because KPIs often are about, you know, figures or benchmarks and you still think, well, that's hard to benchmark a personality. So you see that and you go, well, you know, having the Way We Do It Here, it's the benchmark. It's a personality benchmark or it's a you know, how you turn out to work that's you know, and you can reflect back to that and say, look, you've done a fantastic job in these things.

**Jonesy** [00:31:26] And it's all about choices, right, it's the choices that are made like with the kids, right? It's all about choices and that's a great thing where and I think, you know, we talk about a lot by having the Way We Do It Here and it's all about choices. When you're having a tough conversation with someone that may be not living and breathing the Way We Do It Here, you can remove that personality and the emotion out of it because it's very much about choice. It's about the choices that you're making are not aligned with the way you're leading. So and the great thing, it's no grey, it's black or white. So the question is, Josh, should you, do you believe in the Way We Do It Here because your choices are not showing that. Yes or no? How do you find that again, just removing that emotion, that personality and it's all about choice. So it comes back to ownership.

**Josh** [00:32:15] Again, yes, 100% and it comes back to also, like me having to I'm accountable to those things too, because it's a company thing, me in a management role, I'm accountable to those things. So I go into these meetings where I'm, you know, I'm praising the stuff because realigned the choice they've made to what we've done in our Way We Do It Here. I am actually, if I'm working to that as well, I'm finding these things and I'm looking for these things and I actually want to make a decision to go and support them and say done a great job there, if I'm not leading to it and I'm in the role of being a tradie and I don't have my head up, or have my head out of the sand or have my head in the clouds, I'm not seeing this stuff. So it's a big thing for me as well and our management team to actually be living it and looking for it as well because again, it comes back to information and you know, we're armed with information to say, yes, we've done a great job and this is, you know, this is the way you've done it.

**Jonesy** [00:33:11] Well, yes, and that's right because you can easily if you don't stop and have a better, say a follow up with a client and or dig for more details and really get an understanding of where the client's at then you can't share that with a team and there's no learning. You've lost an opportunity there.

**Josh** [00:33:24] If everyone's not aligned to the culture and The Way We Do It Here, then that's a gap. There's an area there, there's a whole basically in the bucket that's just going to fall out there. You have lead lost opportunity in that section.

**Jonesy** [00:33:38] I love the way you phrase that, 100%, the hole in the bucket.

**Josh** [00:33:40] Yes, you'll lose opportunity out of that hole every time. And if that's the manager that's the top of your bucket. It's just going to spill out of sides. So for me if you know that's, it's just going to, you know, losing opportunities if I don't live to it, but if you know your apprentices are not into it, it's going to come out the bottom. It's going to not that, you know, we're talking hierarchies in that way, but that's the way, you know, that's the way it works. You're going to lose opportunities and lose momentum. And, you know, there are going to become problems that probably we were able to be dealt with if everyone's aligned.

**Jonesy** [00:34:11] And that's what we're talking about, they're getting rid of that hierarchy because it's a flat line, because everyone's got to be accountable to The Way We Do It Here. Everyone needs to live and breathe The Way We Do It Here and obviously it starts with you as the owner all eyes are on you. They're looking at every choice you make. You've got to be aware of your choices.

**Josh** [00:34:27] And how you respond, how you react and all those things.

**Jonesy** [00:34:31] And as we have those conversations, I don't care about, don't tell me you're busy, don't tell me you're tired, everyone's tired or busy that's irrelevant. We're going to make sure that you're making the right choices because you're going to set the example and that's where a lot of people and I've come across over a long period of time when we talk about the values and people go, oh, great, I've got this The Way We Do It Here, and I can use this like a big stick. People think it's like a big stick, no, it's not a big stick.

**Josh** [00:34:59] It's a road map, really.

**Jonesy** [00:35:01] It's a road map for everyone to follow. It's a framework that actually gives people confidence to make choices. It removes that, you don't have to micromanage. It gives people that empowerment that you know what, thank God. Josh, give me some breathing space, mate, I just want, don't micromanage me. Let me make a choice. Give me the framework. Cool, got it, let me go. And as you know, if people are making choices, I want everyone to understand, too. And I know you 100% believe in it, But if you're making the right choice or you're making choices aligned to the values, so in other words, aligned honestly or own it or A-game or safety first, if you're making choices along there and even if you get the wrong result so in other words, we don't get the outcome that we want, you can't be unhappy because the choices are right. Maybe we go to look at the solution or the implementation but mate, you've done everything right there. You've absolutely done everything right. You made the right choices but let's just have a look at some of the implementation or how you've gone about. You look at training them as well that obviously highlights potential training issues. So it's just a totally different way to look at it.

**Josh** [00:36:05] It's a massive mindset shift to look at things like that and, you know, our boys, our very first reiteration of The Way We Do It Here document it didn't have learning environment and that is now one of our, you know, creating a learning environment. And because learning and training is one thing that is a downfall because of where we live and because of the talent pool. So we got guys coming in that are trained in certain aspects and they have to learn. And so how do we create this learning environment? And that wasn't even something that, I wanted, I mean, it was something that I wanted, but I didn't really articulate that to the team. They sort of said, well, hey, no, let's make this part of our business. It's got to be part of our business.

**Jonesy** [00:36:47] Yes, that's great they're picking up and identifying that.

**Josh** [00:36:51] Yes, so, yes, it's a huge mind shift on so many levels to get yourself into that situation where it just becomes something that you live and breathe in your company.

**Jonesy** [00:37:02] And what about that piece of mind, again, like being able to go away in a caravan for four weeks and like you say, you could have gone away a lot longer, just having that peace of mind, knowing that you've got confidence in the team that they can take it and own it.

**Josh** [00:37:15] Yes, look, and particularly when your managers are aligned to it, you know, you can you can once you've kind of got it in place, it will keep you, it will keep your company going. You know, there are things that you've got to keep your eye on and keep your mind around. But, you know, we had the best break a whole month for me, it's all first time for, I can't even tell you, ten years probably and it was amazing. And family now, we've got family, we've got kids, we've got so much going on personally, you don't want your business to run your life. It can't. It's just not, it's not good for your family, it's not good for your kids. They suffer and, you know, it's a tough one because I know there's probably a lot of people out there that do let their businesses run their life because I was one of them. But now I've got to that stage and it's just been you know, there have been ups and downs to get there, but and there's still work to do. But, you know, I think having that framework in place, having a team culture that is just, you know, humming and having, you know, your assets, which are your staff happy and wanting to turn up to work and wanting to better the company. I think that's what creates the ability to go on holidays and have a break, switch off because you come back. But I came back refreshed and probably more done when I got back than if I'd stayed at work for the month.

**Jonesy** [00:38:36] 100%, like that's the thing where people just keep on, I can't go away, I can't go out. Some people think they're too important to go away as well but you're not productive.

**Josh** [00:38:44] No, you're just there, you're just a body and in some ways, you kind of enable your team to step up and say, right, okay, this is now me, it's on me. And if you are there, you're like this looming shadow across everything. And sometimes in management styles you find that certain management styles are just this constant like cloud over the business and you don't kind of let people come out into the sun and show their skills.

**Jonesy** [00:39:07] As a business owner, you do cast a big shadow. You don't realise how big a shadow you cast. So some people are hesitant to step out of that shadow. You know, if you just, you know, unplug entirely, remove yourself from the situation, then people go, all right, here we go.

**Josh** [00:39:21] I got to make this choice.

**Jonesy** [00:39:22] I'm going to make the choice but the key thing as well, you prime them right before you went away. It's not just like abdicating responsibility and walking away.

**Josh** [00:39:31] We have to work to that. We had to work to that. There was no like. right. I'm just going, see you and it was, you know, we had to work to that and things change when we are away and there were decisions made, like I said. We had to move the team member on and that was the team did that. I had nothing to do with it. The management team just made that happen. And again, it just come back to that Way We Do It Here.

**Jonesy** [00:39:53] That's fantastic that's really good because I want to just touch on that scenario where for most tradie business owners in the tradie mindset, where it's busy all the time, often it's always they either if they don't like their life, it's their clients' fault or their team members' fault or their, you know, and what happens is they'll go away for two weeks. Basically run away and they come back and it's a shit fight when they come back. And what do they say, mostly, they go that's it. I'm never going on holidays again. I'm not doing that again. I'm not going on holidays again. So for the next x amount of years, you're not going to go in holidays, you're not going to refresh, but that's that tradie mindset talk, it's just short-term. But, mate, what you've just sort of touched on there you sort of nailed it in terms of what you built as a team, but more importantly, the position now for the new financial year, which we're coming into July 2023, it's so exciting, right?

**Josh** [00:40:49] Yes, well, our pipelines, you know, what we've got coming up is just really exciting and the kind of work that we're doing now, you know, we're moving into a commercial space in pre-schools and things like that, which is it's really fun. And I am, we probably haven't touched on it yet, but we talk about our personalities and personal management styles and the kind of people you are. And we've talked about it before, too, with, you know, we need tenacious people in management. I'm not that person. I'm a dreamer and that's just the way it works. And so when we have these things like this is what keeps me buzzing, like, you know, we're getting work and jobs like preschools and if I get to create, like that's my big thing. And I've got guys that are in the management level, the project management level that are tenacious, they see that thing come to fruition and it's like this is awesome so, you know, that's exciting.

**Jonesy** [00:41:43] We can do another podcast on that and what Josh is referring to there is a methodology called the working genius that we've been using, which identifies the personality of everyone and whether you're tenacious or a wanderer, definitely a test, so getting Josh to sort of sit down and work through some of the things and some of our work is definitely hard at times. You're not that tenacious.

**Josh** [00:42:08] I'm not a tenacious person. I'm understanding that.

**Jonesy** [00:42:11] You've got ants in your pants but again that's an important part of having a balanced team around that the right sort of personalities that some can just get in, let's get it done. Others are more like, hey, let's just sit back and just assess, is this the right thing to get done and then you get others and actually then come up with the whole idea.

**Josh** [00:42:31] And when you're a building team culture, like we talked about the Way We Do It Here and those things that's your framework. You want people with the right personalities that will just nail that every day and yes like I know that's not being tenacious has never been something that I've been great at.

**Jonesy** [00:42:45] But it's good, right, like you put your hand up, you got to identify that, everyone in life should be trying to work in their this sweet spot or their working genius spot that they really like.

**Josh** [00:42:54] Well that's how you, that's the only way you hum, the only way that you enjoy coming to work is if you're doing things you want to do and you're successful too.

**Jonesy** [00:43:03] Too bloody hard, business is bloody hard, right, it's just like there is no fantasy but mate, just wrapping up, really awesome and great to be part of that journey and great to see that journey as it evolves and great to see the results now really starting to come to fruition on the back of that latent potential that's good stored energy. Just before we go, what's the one takeaway any aspiring business owner or even a business owner that's really in the midst of struggling, what's the sort of piece of advice you'll give them to try and sort of move forward or get them out of the rut that they are at the moment?

**Josh** [00:43:36] Well, I just think really, you've just got to be really honest with yourself and really look at and I think that's where I struggle because obviously it was my wife that was really honest with me and said, no, this isn't going to work the way we're doing this right now. It's not going to work moving forward. So I think you just got to be really honest with where you're sitting and say if you're run by your business then it's not the right thing for you. It's not doing the right thing for you. So I think the biggest takeaway is to find, you know, the processes and the habits and the things you can put in place and that's what we've got from you. I think that's been the biggest takeaway from this is and you latch on to what speaks to you within what you offer, I think to, like the Way We Do It Here was what we latched on to because that was part of, I think, culture. But there are so much more in the processes and habits that business owners can latch on to from that they can get from you guys. So I think just being really open and honest with yourself I think is the biggest thing because I was in a rut and I was pigheaded. There's no doubt about it.

**Jonesy** [00:44:35] Oh yes, maybe a little bit.

**Josh** [00:44:38] I knew, you know that whole, I know, I know how to fix this. I know how to get out of this. But what I didn't know is how to actually make it happen. And the things that you've brought up, I love a lot of that the business things that we sort of talk about our sales pipeline, our profit plans and our profit loss and all those things. I have an understanding of those things. I had an understanding of those things, but actually making them actionable things that we can work on in a tradie business that's different. I think you need help and also someone to drive you particularly when you're like me, just being honest with yourself, really that's the biggest thing.

**Jonesy** [00:45:11] Just tell you everything now and then you get told to get over yourself.

**Josh** [00:45:16] Come on, pull your finger out, let's go.

**Jonesy** [00:45:17] You're kidding yourself.

**Josh** [00:45:20] Stop dreaming.

**Jonesy** [00:45:23] I need a bit of a tenacity, please. Great stuff, Josh, I know plenty of awesome stuff there and for those listening, especially around the team and trying to mobilise a team, heaps of good takeaways there mate. But I really look forward to seeing where the journey continues.

**Josh** [00:45:39] Yes, same, I'm so excited to go outside of where we are and you know, where we want to see it to continue to grow and not stopping here for now.

**Jonesy** [00:45:48] Definitely don't stop and keep on chipping away, cheers, mate.

**Josh** [00:45:51] Thank you, thank you very much, yes, awesome.