

[00:00:02.200] - Aileen Day

Welcome to The Value Driven Brand podcast, where you'll learn insights on how to communicate with authenticity, deliver genuine value, and create a memorable experience across your entire customer journey, helping your business become the sought after leader in your industry. I'm your host, Aileen Day. Now onto the show.

[00:00:29.480] - Aileen Day

G'day, everybody, and welcome to The Value Driven Brand podcast you're here with Aileen Day and my very special guest for Episode Two. It is Mike Croudace from Croudace Constructs over in Adelaide, South Australia. Welcome, Mick. Thank you for joining us today.

[00:00:52.040] - Mick Croudace

Thank you for the opportunity to come along.

[00:00:54.170] - Aileen Day

I'm very excited to get to chat to Mick. Mick has been in business for himself now for six years and before going into business for himself, was a site supervisor for a leading shopfitter out in Sydney ye' olde Sydney Town. And then you decided to trip it on back home to South Australia and talk to me about what happened after that.

[00:01:24.150] - Mick Croudace

Yes, so after living in Sydney for I think I was there a couple of years, we were doing a lot of national shop fitting for a national brand dusk, and I decided that I'd just always want to start my own business. And I was, you know, I wanted to get back to the Adelaide life and come back to Adelaide and yeah, just begun setting up started off with just, you know, one man and a van style subcontracting and reel in the team from there.

[00:01:58.020] - Aileen Day

So I understand after six years, you have a team of 18, is that correct?

[00:02:06.270] - Mick Croudace

Yes, I think 18 is big enough. Yeah.

[00:02:10.080] - Aileen Day

That is a phenomenal growth and scaling story if I've ever heard one. And, and so what's the difference between your one-man van subcontracting and a team of 18? What are some of the things that you've had to learn along the way that have got you where you are now?

[00:02:29.460] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, so they, I think the main difference now from then is when, becoming a leader in the first place is a journey in itself.

[00:02:43.330] - Mick Croudace

But now we've got sort of multiple facets to the company. It's now I've had to become a leader of leaders and it's, it's a bit of a different strategy. You know, being a leader, I'll say three or four tradesmen is one thing, but it's all very operational. What's happening day to day or week by week? Whereas now we've like I said got a lot of different people. And so we've got a marketing and estimate as we've got in the office. So we've got all different teams. And yeah, we have to sort of play a longer game and, you know, actually be a leader of, of each leader of the business.

[00:03:35.850] - Aileen Day

That is a really good point that you make, is that I come across quite often business owners who have only ever kind of lead maybe themselves and their apprentice or themselves and a couple of other people on the, on the shop floor or work on the work-site, whatever the case might be. But when they get to that point, scaling that concept of leading leaders becomes a real limiting stop for them. To be honest, it scares the shit out of them to the point where they start doing it. They don't believe in themselves and they start doing it so badly that they have the problems that they start coming up

with, with team members revolting against the job and stuff like that. So I find it fascinating to learn from business owners, especially ones who've experienced what you've experienced. How did you go about learning how to lead a leader?

[00:04:43.730] - Mick Croudace

How did I go about that, that's good. Just read a shit ton of books on leadership strategies and I guess

[00:04:51.420] - Aileen Day

Who's your favorite leadership strategist?

[00:04:55.260] - Mick Croudace

So I've just read 'Turn The Ship Around' and here is the guy. Ok, what is his name? I can't remember. I might have to come back to you on the name of the guy who wrote it, but it's about a submarine captain in the US Naval Force, and he gets given control of this submarine with the intention of completely turning it from the worst-performing sub in pretty much every field to the most efficient. And, you know, battle-ready I think they say, a submarine in the fleet so as a...

[00:05:35.400] - Aileen Day

Google tells me. It's by...

[00:05:37.800] - Mick Croudace

David Marquet?

[00:05:38.530] - Aileen Day

David Marquet

[00:05:41.570] - Mick Croudace

Oh, Marquet. Ok, yeah, yeah, alright yeah. There you go, Google thank you again.

[00:05:45.670] - Aileen Day

Thanks, Google.

[00:05:47.400] - Mick Croudace

Yes. I think defining what type of leader you want to be is, is the first step and then gaining knowledge and testing your theories around that area. And another great book was the is it The Pursuit of... The Pursuit of Happiness, something about happiness what's that one. And it's all about Zappos.

[00:06:09.990] - Aileen Day

That's a Will Smith movie isn't it

[00:06:12.360] - Mick Croudace

Oh, The Pursuit of Happiness, is it? Oh, okay, that's what I was reading about.

[00:06:17.160] - Aileen Day

I think it was a book to start with though.

[00:06:20.130] - Mick Croudace

Was it.

[00:06:21.030] - Aileen Day

Yeah

[00:06:21.510] - Mick Croudace

It's, it's called, so I'm just looking at my bookshelf now to see if I see it stand out

[00:06:27.570] - Aileen Day

Was it about a man and his son.

[00:06:29.790] - Mick Croudace  
No, no

[00:06:32.340] - Aileen Day  
Not that one then,

[00:06:34.560] - Mick Croudace  
No, not that one, wait I've lost ya for a sec.

[00:06:41.970] - Aileen Day  
Got me?

[00:06:45.870] - Mick Croudace  
There you go.

[00:06:46.890] - Aileen Day  
Those long, long pauses.

[00:06:49.650] - Mick Croudace  
Yeah.

[00:06:51.330] - Aileen Day  
Everyone just thinks probably like what's going on?

[00:06:54.470] - Mick Croudace  
What is going on? I've just been plugging in there we go just said running low, so just had to...

[00:07:04.890] - Aileen Day  
I am the master of my energy. And also my laptop.

[00:07:10.890] - Mick Croudace  
Yeah, so it was it was about Zappos basically, and had this guy, very similar scale and story. It went from a startup, it was and they started off as a shoe company, and then right up through they buy out for over I think it's like one and a half billion, buy out from Amazon. So like huge scaling, and it was the journey in which he's defining what type of leader he wants to be, what type of culture they want to be running.

[00:07:39.740] - Mick Croudace  
And so pretty, again a real cool, cool story on leadership.

[00:07:46.460] - Aileen Day  
Is that Zig Zigar.

[00:07:48.220] - Mick Croudace  
No, it's called; something in happiness...

[00:07:53.290] - Aileen Day  
I think I've got that book

[00:07:54.940] - Mick Croudace  
It's only shades, but I just can't remember the name.

[00:07:59.340] - Aileen Day  
I'm just looking at my bookshelf, but I think it's behind me so, but. So as far as strategy goes, I think that is a really helpful start to developing a leadership style. And I would certainly say that for, for the

people that I come across, especially when they have to trial and error some of their leadership moments, that transparency is the key. And just being a little bit vulnerable in the sense of, you know, as your business grows, when your team understands that you're kind of this new to this, as you know as you are, that, you know, they give you a bit more of an allowance to trial and error some things. But again, it kind of comes down to whether you are also, as a leader, willing to take that constructive feedback and ask for that feedback, because how else then do you know that those leadership traits are working out the best they can work out?

[00:09:06.190] - Aileen Day

So how do you, you know as you, as you learn and educate yourself on different leadership styles, how do you make sure that your team are on board with what you're trying out?

[00:09:20.560] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, that's a, that's actually a great question, and I think it comes from having a supportive culture in the business of ensuring that everyone is on the same page when it comes to the direction of the company and where it's going. And I mentioned the culture is, it's you know, we want to create a company full of leaders and people who like getting feedback and like in return giving feedback. And I think that comes from the top. And the the, the, the pace that you set as a leader, I think should, should be. So if I'm saying it's alright to give me feedback, they're going in return like accepting feedback themselves.

[00:10:14.200] - Aileen Day

Yeah. And look, that as feedback is my gig, that makes me so happy to hear. And I think, you know, giving feedback is there's a little bit of skill in that and, and teaching, teaching that, teaching your talent and your team members that when they do give it and they give it constructively, that there's no recourse for that feedback, I think is what you're saying is creating a really supportive culture.

[00:10:46.330] - Aileen Day

You know, there's been a few times where I've seen people say, yeah, I'm open to feedback and they get it and they don't like it and their ego gets in the way. And we talked about this earlier. People get defensive and they get a little bit hurt and don't quite know how to comprehend or do anything about what they've been told. So they start to become quite resentful. So I think a lot of great leaders let their team practice giving good feedback or giving feedback in a manner that's effective, but also getting feedback and then helping them understand what to do about it. Because if we don't help them understand what to do about it, then nothing's going to change, really.

[00:11:33.910] - Mick Croudace

And then it just makes the feedback pretty useless, really, because unless we're doing something with it, but also setting aside a time for feedback to be given rather than just sort of off the cuff feedback, I think is quite, quite good, but like more in-depth feedback where you can actually go into detail on how you can overcome certain issues, or what you're doing well and making that person understand why they're doing it well so they can continue to do, do that.

[00:12:08.710] - Aileen Day

Yeah, the why is so important. You know we, we know even dealing with in our own in our lives that if someone was to say you know, can you go do this at the likelihood of them going and doing that is low. Unless you were to say, can you go do this because, and then when you add in that because people comprehend there's a reason behind this, I understand the part I play in the outcome, whereas before I didn't understand the part I played in the outcome.

[00:12:43.360] - Aileen Day

Therefore I was inclined to be a part of the outcome. So, the why so important. And the same goes for if it's constructive feedback. Why asking why it's occurring. I was talking to some business owners yesterday and they were saying, one of them was saying that he had some team members who had had a bit of an altercation in front of the rest of the team on the floor, and he needed to understand what was going on and deal with it.

[00:13:17.800] - Aileen Day

And I said, that's great. But also remember that maybe there's more behind that altercation, and to ask them why? Because sometimes people know and it's human nature, we have things going on in our lives, and especially at the moment, people are dealing with things maybe at a heightened emotion and a little bit more anxiety, a little bit more stress. Unusual and it really wouldn't take too much for the average person to be tipped over the edge.

[00:13:52.290] - Aileen Day

So I think it's important as a leader when you are giving feedback to, to also give the why as well. So that's a really great process that you have, so this is The Value Driven Brand podcast. And I would love to know from Croudace Constructs the man leading the team. What is it that your business does to tactically deliver a value driven brand? What is it that the people listening on can take in and implement in their own business processes and operations and strategies to help them become their own value-driven brand?

[00:14:40.570] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, Ok, can you prompt me what I said last time, **full of some crackers yesterday and I should have printed it out but I did not.**

[00:14:55.150] - Aileen Day

For those listening, I get everybody to send me their their their points before this.

[00:15:02.510] - Mick Croudace

Is this getting edited this one?

[00:15:04.210] - Aileen Day

No, this is it, yeah. This is the human experience.

[00:15:09.730] - Mick Croudace

In that case...**this is the bit where Aileen prompts me.**

[00:15:14.410] - Aileen Day

**This is the bit where Aileen prompts you.** So you told me that one of your tactics is to know who you are. What does that mean?

[00:15:22.150] - Mick Croudace

Oh exactly. OK, so yeah, this is what I wanted you to prompt me instead of me making up new ones, because I really put some thought into this. OK, if you know who you are as a company, what your strengths are, why you are who you are, what your reason for being a business is, and I don't want to say what your purpose is and make it kind of like that. But if you know who you are as a company, you can much easier identify what clients that suit you and the clients, that suit you will be able to deliver so much more value for them than you will for a client that doesn't suit your needs so much. Let me give a quick example ok.

[00:16:14.530] - Mick Croudace

So we are, we are a commercial building company, but we specialise in interior commercial building. So if someone was to say, come to us and say, hey I've got this project that we'd like a price on, it's a single story extension of a school, for example, I would quite happily turn that down because I know that's not who we are. That is not where we deliver the best value. And, you know, and I feel that that is so important to deliver value is knowing what your strengths are as a company and really sticking to them.

[00:16:53.590] - Aileen Day

Yeah, that is a really good point. I recently contacted a videographer who I love their work, they are amazing. And we met up and I had explained to them what type of, you know, video capturing I was looking for. And initially, they were like, that's, that's really different. That's exciting. But they must have gone away and gone, you know what that's not who we are. So they actually, they called me back

and they said, you know what we, we would love to work with you, but we know that's not who we are. We know what we're here for and that's where we bring the gold nuggets.

[00:17:41.950] - Aileen Day

So instead of pretending to be someone they're not, they have organised for me to be connected with somebody who is more aligned to what I'm trying to produce instead of trying to be something for everybody. So I think that's a really fantastic thing to take into account as a business owner and an entrepreneur or even a leader in business, know who you are.

[00:18:09.700] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, awesome.

[00:18:10.960] - Aileen Day

The other one that you talked about was what can you be the best in the world at?

[00:18:19.570] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, OK, so this is actually from the book Good to Great by Jim Collins, and they I think he calls it the Hedgehog Strategy, which is what is the hedgehog good at? OK, so it's quite a small little animal, but it's number one, go to it shrinks into a ball whenever it feels attacked, right. And so it is that is the, the thing it does best in the world at. So what can we do that will be the best in the world at? And if you focus on that, solely put all your efforts into that, then you will be able to do that better than if you're spreading yourself to filling across multiple different types of, types of business or different services you offer them.

[00:19:06.660] - Aileen Day

So that really goes hand in hand with the first one, doesn't it, once you've started to learn who you are and what, what you're here for, you, can then take that and, become the best in the world at it.

[00:19:21.970] - Mick Croudace

Or aim to be, you know, obviously we're not all going to become the best at selling shoes, for example, we're not going to be the best

[00:19:31.390] - Aileen Day

I could be the best at wearing shoes

[00:19:34.570] - Mick Croudace

or buying them.

[00:19:35.680] - Aileen Day

Or buying them.

[00:19:39.370] - Mick Croudace

But it's not necessarily to become the best in the world, but if that's what you're aiming for, we're constantly thinking, how can we offer more value to our clients? Because at the end of the day, it's our clients that are allowing us the opportunity to stay in business.

[00:19:58.800] - Aileen Day

Absolutely.

[00:19:59.440] - Mick Croudace

To serve them. If we serve them to the highest possible way, then then we can become better. And we're constantly, you know, thinking of ways to develop our customer service or customer satisfaction. And yeah, I think if we do everything right for the customer, we are always aiming to be the best in the world.

[00:20:26.890] - Aileen Day

Oh, my heart. My heart is singing. Just if you need help with your customer experience, feel free to

shout out. I'm your lady, so I absolutely love that. And the third one you gave me was a concise list of values that are actually relatable.

[00:20:51.290] - Mick Croudace

Oh, OK, yeah, and so this is something we review every three months with, what we call our leadership team, and we just ensure that everyone is still aligned. And I think the last, the last but one **needs that**. We dropped I think we went from, say, 12 values to like six or seven. We want to be able to have them on the wall. And every one of them make a big statement. And again, this all relates back, I think, to who we are as a company, you know, who we are with, what we do day to day, and who we are when it comes to certain scenarios unfolding. And we have to deal with them.

[00:21:35.210] - Mick Croudace

So if we have a list of values that everyone can relate to, it's who they, who they show up to be in the morning. Or if we have a difficult, you know, a problem arises or we're just generally having a difficult day, then we can think back to go. OK, well, this has happened, OK, what are our values and how should we deal with this problem?

[00:22:00.830] - Aileen Day

I love that, and can I throw in there that just because you have taken. Gone from 12 down to six. That doesn't mean that you, live less value, so you value less things, that just means that ultimately those, as I explain to my clients, those are the core non-negotiable every single day, every single moment values that I leave day in day out, is that how you see it as well?

[00:22:39.700] - Mick Croudace

Yes. So one hundred percent and so a couple we thought we're crossing over that didn't need to cross over. And a couple we just thought, you know what? Is that a core? You know, I think some companies call it the core principles, but we call it our values and it's about being. It's just do we need that every single time and the answer is yes, it'll stage, you know, and if it was well in some cases, that might not happen. And, you know, or and sometimes we might not need to use that. So it really was to condense the list into a set of values that everyone needs to know and everyone needs to use in their day to day operations.

[00:23:28.280] - Aileen Day

Yeah, I love that. And I do values and purpose and vision workshops with customers regularly and, and same as, same as you they'll start off with this list of 12, sometimes even more, and I'm like are they the like, the live or die, I call them the live or die values, like I have six in my business and, you know I, I would die without them. I will not live through this business without those values. But that doesn't mean that that's all I value. Just means, and for me, back to your initial point of know who you are. That's what also helps me figure out who I want to work with, you know, so my values are things like integrity and fun, and passion. I'm highly passionate, sometimes, some might say too passionate, but they can get fucked and...

[00:24:39.050] - Mick Croudace

They're wrong.

[00:24:39.920] - Aileen Day

They're wrong, I'm passionate about how wrong they are, but, you know, it has absolutely given me a compass using my business values to learn who I want to do business with. So it has helped me pick and choose. Ok, well, the money is great, but they're are a bunch of pricks, right? So there's no passion. There's no fun. There's no integrity. Then it's a no, you know, so they are the guiding principles of who I decide to work with these days. And it also then goes back to helping me know who I am as a business so I fricken' love that. And so far, I'm loving that, all of your tactics so far, just neatly, come back to each other like they all just work in this, you know, circular model of helping you create a value-driven brand. But there is one more.

[00:25:47.950] - Mick Croudace

One more thing?

[00:25:48.990] - Aileen Day

Give me one more. How do you go the extra mile for your clients?

[00:25:56.770] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, OK, so this is one of our values, and it's we go the extra mile and it's about delivering that above and beyond sort of, you know, on our projects or, you know, just with, a with a thank you note or something at the end. And it's just yeah, I think that is something that relates to me a lot. And because they could have the customer could have gone and use someone else, but they didn't, they chose us. And we thank that by doing something a little bit extra, not every single time this doesn't happen. But if we can, we will, you know, can we, can we get other variation without charging, or can we deliver a project a little bit early? Can we give them a slight upgrade on something? And that I think is, is what sets us apart, that, that's what if we fully customer focus and that goes for all businesses. I if we are a customer-focused, the profits and the revenue will come.

[00:27:07.090] - Aileen Day

Yeah.

[00:27:08.410] - Mick Croudace

First focus, first on customer satisfaction, on your jobs, obviously you can't create customer satisfaction if you don't have a job in the first place. But if, if we do. Fully focus on how you can go the extra mile for the customer and that in turn will lead to, you know, the revenue.

[00:27:31.040] - Aileen Day

Yeah, I couldn't agree more and it actually reminds me of a post I saw your company put up after building a bar and you posted a picture of the finished bar, which looked amazing to the owners and said you'd shout them a beer at the new bar, I'm like, shouldn't they shout you a beer, you just built this amazing bar for them. But that's what it means to be a customer-centric business is like I want to show you the business that chose us how grateful and appreciative we are that you made that decision and you trusted us with your project that we want to shout you a beer mate, because that's how thankful we are. And I thought about it after a few minutes, actually no that's bloody genius I love it.

[00:28:33.690] - Mick Croudace

It's definitely about customer relationships and how you can build on them. And hopefully we'll work together again in the future.

[00:28:40.820] - Aileen Day

Yeah, absolutely, now, one thing, as I get a little bit more practice doing these podcasts is to ask a couple of extra questions. So one of the questions I would like to ask you is in your career, that is a very bright green drink bottle you have there.

[00:29:01.370] - Mick Croudace

No, fluro.

[00:29:04.580] - Aileen Day

We'll find that the dark, for those listening, feel free to tune in on YouTube as well, you'll be able to see Mick's very bright green drink bottle, but back to business. So talk to me about the best advice you've been given in your career.

[00:29:24.580] - Mick Croudace

Ok, um. So this is, this is a piece of advice that stands out for me, and I heard this advice probably around six years ago when I was starting out and someone said to me, if you keep throwing darts, you'll start to hit the bull's eye.

[00:29:46.960] - Aileen Day

Say that again, nice and loud.

[00:29:49.270] - Mick Croudace

Nice and loud, is that if you keep throwing darts soon, you'll start hitting the bull's eye.

[00:29:57.030] - Aileen Day

I love that.

[00:29:58.170] - Mick Croudace

Yeah, yeah, just a bit of context, this is about when I was starting out and it was just me by myself and so I was working through the day and then I was coming home at night and I was working on tender's and quotes at night, sometimes past five o'clock quite often, quite often. And, you know, and then on the weekend I'd go and see my friends and they say, how are you going? And it seemed a lot that we were just weren't getting anywhere. And, and that's when I heard that advice. And it's just stuck with me and really resonated ever since that anything we're **breaking into new or we're doing**. Eventually, we will see progress, and sometimes it may not feel like we're progressing very far or very quick, but if we keep at it just keep, keep at it we'll, we'll see some change.

[00:30:50.730] - Aileen Day

What a fantastic metaphor. I love that. I can't believe I'm 40 and I've not heard it. Since before, before, before today anyway.

[00:31:05.220] - Mick Croudace

Maybe, maybe we can copyright that one.

[00:31:07.710] - Aileen Day

Yeah, well, you know, we'll give credit to the strange person that gave it to you, but they obviously knew a thing or two. So hats off to them.

[00:31:19.510] - Mick Croudace

Or maybe they just like darts.

[00:31:21.200] - Aileen Day

Maybe they like darts. I'm terrible at darts, thank God it's not a literal. Well, you know, even if it's a literal **change** based on that theory, I'd get a bull's eye eventually if I didn't quit.

[00:31:33.640] - Mick Croudace

Maybe I was playing darts at the time that's just not...

[00:31:38.550] - Aileen Day

Very nice. But it is stuck and it has stuck. And I think, you know, as you said before, it's certainly as you were grinding away and doing the hard yards, you keep that in the back of your mind and you're like, OK, we're going to get there eventually. And I think this day and age where, you know, we could sit there and generation bash that, millennials want everything yesterday. But I remember as a child, you know, people saying the same thing about Gen Y and then Gen Z. And so everybody wants everything yesterday, we do believe in a world of instant gratification where if I try something once that I expect to be a master at it. And therefore, if I'm not, I have no persistence no resilience and I give up and I move on to the next thing. And I think that that career advice really kind of does is it helps you understand that, you know what?

[00:32:42.340] - Aileen Day

You can't just give up after throwing the first dart. You have to keep throwing darts to get the bulls-eye, you have to keep going. You can't just do it once and expect to be the dart champion of the pub. Like you've got to give it a crack a little bit longer than that.

[00:33:02.850] - Mick Croudace

That's exactly it.

[00:33:04.000] - Aileen Day

Yeah, I love it, makes my heart sing again, so many, so many things to make my heart happy, in this podcast, I'm very excited. Now, that is just about all we have time for today, and I wanted to let everybody know, I forgot to mention it in the first podcast that we had with Aimee Hair, the Holistic Healing Coach that I get all of my guests to fill out a profile, I guess for me before they come onto the podcast. And one of the questions that I ask them is, what is the song that gets you pumped? Like, what is that song that just gets you ready for anything? And do you remember the song that you put down?

[00:33:57.320] - Mick Croudace

Think so, this is my, this is my morning ritual song.

[00:34:03.090] - Aileen Day

Is it?

[00:34:03.660] - Mick Croudace

And I'll pretty much switch this on every morning before I get in the shower. Was it lovely, Lovely Day?

[00:34:09.690] - Aileen Day

Lovely Day by Bill Withers, that is super, I love that, that's part of your morning habit.

[00:34:16.830] - Mick Croudace

Well, if you listen to that song every morning, I'm going to put a smile on your face. It's yeah. It just leaves you feeling good. And if you could do that at the start of the day, then the rest of the day is a bit easier

[00:34:29.760] - Aileen Day

What great advice, so for everybody listening, with the podcast, you will also find access to the Spotify playlist that all of the guests and their song choices are going to be getting added to so I'm really excited, the more guests that we have, the bigger that playlist is going to get and start playing that every day and you are going to be rocking and rolling and delivering value in no time. I have no doubt whatsoever, Mick Croudace from Croudace Constructs. Thank you so much for your time today and your nuggets of gold on how we in business can deliver a value driven brand in our own businesses and our own lives. And I want to say thank you for everything and your time today, and I can't wait for this to be shared and see the reaction from everybody listening in.

[00:35:32.550] - Mick Croudace

Thank you very much.

[00:35:34.620] - Aileen Day

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