

Veteran Voices: SITREP - Episode #26 - Chris Celeste, OVF

[Chris Celeste]

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[Tom Faust]

Welcome to Veteran Voices SITREP with your hosts, Tom and Chris Faust. Welcome to Veteran Voices. I am your host, Tom Faust.

My cohost and son is having computer problems. He may join us as we go. And today on our podcast, we have Chris Celeste of Operation Veteran Freedom, OVF Academy, and we're going to talk about his experience in the military, his transition issues that he's had and how he overcame them and then about OVF and how that's working.

So welcome, Chris. Good to have you here.

[Chris Celeste]

Thank you, Tom, appreciate it. Really an honor to be on the podcast with you. And a bummer your son wasn't able to make it right now, but hopefully he does get the pop on and get to chat with him a little bit too.

But it's really an honor to be here and get to share a little bit.

[Tom Faust]

Awesome. Yeah, it's great to have you. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience?

I know you've told some of it before that I've heard, but our listeners probably haven't. So, yeah, go ahead and give us an introduction to yourself and how you got things rolling.

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah, so I don't want to go too far back and take up too much time, but a quick recap. So I am currently 37 years old. I live in Arizona.

I am a father of three and a husband of an amazing woman, Ms. Erin Miller, and didn't always have the life I do today. Right. Currently, I make my own schedule.

My office is in my best friend's house, who is also my business partner, which is five minutes from me. Hey, Chris made it. Good to see you.

You know, like I was saying, it wasn't always this way and the life I get to live today with my own schedule being made, having my office just five minutes from the house, being able to pick up, drop off my kids from school every single day, be at every single sporting event, make sure that they know that I'm there for them. Wasn't exactly where this all started. And so, you know, if you rewind back until, you know, when I was actually in the military, I was 17 years old.

I just graduated from a high school and I actually went into the debt program. So I joined a little bit early. You guys probably familiar with the debt program being yourselves.

And so when I was officially 18 graduated, I was able to deploy, went to Afghanistan. I was a 19 Delta Calvary Scout with a 371 cab out of Fort Drum, New York. And back in 06, we deployed overseas.

I made it eight months. I had a lot of crazy things happen. We can dive into that if you choose.

But I'm going to skim over it just to make this a shorter story. And ultimately, I flatlined and was almost I was dead for a while, brought back to life on life support in August 14th of 2006. Did rehabilitation in Walter Reed Army Medical Facility, ultimately was discharged from the military.

And that's kind of when the real struggle for me started. Lost my identity. Lost my purpose.

Lost my people. Didn't really know where to go. Had about 14 different pills a day being prescribed to me.

So that wasn't necessarily helping either. And for the better part of a decade, just was a self this self-destructing spiral. So ultimately, one day just decided I needed to get off the pills that wasn't helping me.

My wife, who was my girlfriend back then, my wife now was a huge piece of that being like, you know, I can't take that. You don't even remember what I said to you yesterday. Like there's whole months that you don't remember.

They had me on Xanax at the time. So I was like a walking zombie. And so she was just like, we got to figure something else out.

And we did. We were able to get me all the way down to one pill a day for my seizure disorder, for my TBI, so I can keep my license. Everything else was replaced with medical cannabis.

And that's when I started getting clear and started figuring some things out for myself and actually like functioning again. My wife ended up getting pregnant with our first child. And I realized sitting there that when he was officially born, I was sitting there and I realized that I did not want my child to grow up.

And the only thing you could think of is that, oh, feel sorry for my dad because he served our country and he got hurt. And so I wanted to do something more. I wanted to be able to create more of a legacy, be more of a predominant part, not just in their lives, but a part of the actual producing of the life that they had.

And so I started a mobile auto glass business with a really good friend of mine. He was a tech. He was hating the industry.

They just they were just giving him barely anything for being the tech that amazing tech that he was giving a lot of hell for actually being the going out and installing in 110 degrees here in Arizona. And ultimately he came to me and he said, I want to start a business. And I think us together would do a really good job.

And I have no college education. I joined the military right out of high school. I have never owned a business before.

And so I told him, no, like I'm like, no, I'm not going to do that. My wife, again, she's my wife at this time, said to me, you need to do this. You know, I believe in you.

You could do this. You could do something really well here. Why don't you give it a shot?

That business was called Easy Peasy Auto Glass here in Arizona. And we very quickly took it to, you know, multiple six figures for the first two years we had it. I basically learned it from Google as I was going.

It was difficult as hell. But what what happened for me in that business is that I went from a guy who was scared to pick up a phone like I would be drenched in sweat, just picking up a phone to talk to one of the vendors. That's how much anxiety I had for my PTSD.

I couldn't go to Walmart and shop for myself. But what I did through the process of putting myself on the line like that and putting my family's livelihood on stake was I pushed myself past anything I'd ever felt before. And even though I would go off those calls, white as a ghost, drenched in sweat, need to go change my shirt, I did it and I did it over and over again until it wasn't so scary and it wasn't so bad.

But ultimately, what I realized is that and this is kind of my line in the sand moment, if you will. It was in October 2017. My son, he was two at the time, walks in the office and he says, Daddy, why don't you ever play with me?

My office is at home. And so, you know, you talk about having your heart ripped out and looking at it, beating in your face like I just didn't know, like, whoa, what do you mean? Like, I'm doing all of this because I want you to know that I could be more than I was more than I can show you the way that no obstacle or TBI or any diagnosis is going to stop you from being what you want to be and being successful.

But yet he doesn't even think I want to be a part of his life. And so I started bawling my eyes out, I just started crying. Luckily, he had already walked out, you know, a kid of two years old, unfazed, just says the thing and walks out.

Right. And so I'm bawling my eyes out, trying to figure out, like, where did I go wrong? I own my own home.

I'm married. I have two healthy kids at this point. I own my own business.

You know, we're making really good money. Things are good, but I feel hollow inside. I feel broken.

Like, what is wrong here? I don't know what you gentlemen believe in, and I don't want to ever push belief on anybody, but I believe that when you listen, there's a higher power kind of answering some things for you. And in that moment, I was given an answer.

You know, usually when I'm hustling and bustling through the business that I have music or something, podcasts on and YouTube in the background. And what ended up happening was that, you know, before I before premium YouTube even existed, commercials would come on and this ad popped on and it was introducing me to the ideas of digital marketing. How you could take an idea and promote it online where the attention actually was, but also how you could use technology to do the work for you.

Instead of being the guy stuck at the computer 24-7 and obviously being that guy at that moment, it really sang to me. It really spoke to me. And I brought it right to my wife.

And I was like, hey, I have the answer. And she was like, that sounds too good to be true. Like, that just sounds like a pipe dream.

Can you prove to me that this actually works? And so I did. I went out and I started researching it.

I found a couple of people who had already gone through the program that I was looking at. They were doing really well. They were willing to talk to me.

They were going to talk to my wife. And she said, OK, let's do it now. Tom, you may be familiar with this, but a lot of these programs, you know, they're like ten thousand, thirty thousand dollars a piece.

They're not cheap. They're pretty expensive programs to get involved in. The one I was

doing was ten thousand dollars a year.

And so I had to take out a loan. I didn't you know, I didn't have that kind of money sitting around just to invest. I have kids, have all this stuff going on.

So I actually borrowed two thousand dollars from my sister for the down payment and I put the rest on a loan that gave me six months interest free. And so I had six and a six month deadline just looming over me to get this thing paid off and done before I was paying astronomical 20 percent interest on this thing. And I don't know if it was that or because I finally had figured out like, hey, I'm already spending a lot of time at this computer mapping out logistics for my tax, booking new appointments for the following week, dealing with vendors for glass, dealing with vendors for moldings.

I was already doing all this stuff. Why could I not actually use that time and then have that hard work keep working for me? That was like the main thing that stood out to me.

I'm already working hard. I'm already getting paid really well. Like, what if I didn't have to always do that and I could actually keep paying me?

And so I was just driven. I had this debt looming. I had this idea sitting and I just dove in.

And for four months, I didn't go to dinner. I didn't go to barbecues. I didn't do anything.

I had one screen like this. I have two monitors now. I didn't have that then.

I had a laptop and I just split the windows and three hundred dollar laptop from Walmart. Guys did not have anything fancy to do this, split the screens. And as the person was telling me what to do, I would just do it step by step by step.

And before I knew it, I had what's called a lead magnet built. And I was able to build some quick Facebook ads and put that out into the world. And I started generating leads.

And then I had the sales funnel in place that the leads were going through and they were being curated and taken on this buying journey. And all of a sudden I was making sales and I was doing it was I still remember I was at a little sip and paints like the sip wine and drink and paint with my wife. And then I was sitting there.

My phone kept going off and I usually try to like be present, be in the moment, but I just kept going off and I'm like, all right, somebody really needs me. But no, it was actually sales just popping off. Boom, boom, boom on my phone.

And that was the first time I realized to myself, like, oh, wait a second, I can do this without like actually living my life. I can do this without actually being there. Like one sales, great.

But when they're just going on autopilot like that, that's when I started to realize there's

some real value inside of what I was learning and what I was benefiting from. And so, again, I joined and I learned this because I wanted time with my family and I wanted to be able to earn a really good living for them. And I wanted to leave a legacy, really.

I didn't want to be known for the broken bet. I didn't want to be the guy with the brain injury. I didn't want to be that guy.

And so I changed that narrative for myself. And because I went so hard and I changed that narrative so drastically, I ended up becoming a top earner in that company that I applied for and learned that through. And for two years, I earned more money for that company than anybody else.

And they asked me to speak on stage. Well, they didn't ask me. I volunteered myself and they said yes to speak on stage for the very first time.

And when I did, I was sharing just my journey and how I did it and kind of the steps like I just did here with you guys. And what naturally came up to me while I was sitting there talking to them is, wait a second, I'm a vet with a TBI and PTSD. If you would have talked to me just a few years ago, I couldn't even go to Walmart and buy my own groceries.

But here I am standing on stage. And at this time, I was making thirty thousand dollars a month inside that affiliate offer. I'm not promising any any, you know, income claims or anything like that, just sharing my story.

And I'm like, if I can go from that, from a guy who thought I was going to be stuck on a disability for the rest of my life and, you know, just being a good dad to actually changing my whole narrative and being able to go out and impact other people's lives. And at this point, because I was sharing myself on Facebook, the people that were coming to me were naturally vets because of the story I was sharing. And so I was helping them or my best friends.

A lot of my best friends, my business partner all came from ads I had placed talking about my own story. Right. And so I'm on stage and I had this epiphany, I'm like, oh, wait a second.

If I can do it, other vets can do it. And this needs to be something that all veterans know about. And so I kind of went on this sprint where I started figuring out what does that look like?

And I created a company called the Digital Veterinaries Initiative. At the time, I had not been all the way through personal growth and development, I had not known the mentors and the people that I had known today. And so I believe that I had to do it all myself and that if I asked for help, it was a sign of weakness and that no one would want to listen to me because I didn't have the answers.

So I failed, I drove that thing into the ground because I wasn't willing to ask for help. And then I had to go back to affiliate marketing. And when I say I drove it into the ground, I mean, I had a car, my Suburban, my family's vehicle repossessed.

We went over seventy five thousand dollars in credit card debt. Like, I mean, I drove it into the ground with pride. And I had to look at my wife after our car was no longer in our driveway and look at her and say, hey, I am sorry I failed us.

I did my best, but I didn't have enough. And that's one of my programs. I'm not enough, but that's kind of where I was coming from.

And she looked at me and she goes, Chris, just do what you're good at. Stop trying to do this other thing for a minute and just do what you're good at. Go back to affiliate marketing, go back to the thing that's made you all the money.

And so I did. I switched it up. I went back to a health and wellness offer.

It was a CBD thing. That's how I met Leah, my business partner. And I made all that money back, got our car back, got us out of debt, bought a new house, like did all the things we needed to do.

And then I kind of looked at it and I was like, there's no way that I can do this and other vets can't. There has to be a way we can bring this to the veteran community. There has to be a way this thing works.

And so I put a post out inside of my current group of people that I was working with in that health and wellness offer. And I was like, hey, do any of you, because there are a lot more vets or a spouse of a vet. And I said, hey, do any of you want to make a difference in the vet community?

Any of you feel driven to bring this what we do and how we do it to more people? And Liam wrote my business partner, Liam Weiser, rose his hand. He was like, hey, I do.

And so we linked up and we started Operation Veteran Freedom. That was right before the pandemic. Luckily, luckily for us, we are not limited by brick and mortar or where people are locked or not locked.

We are on the Internet. So it's very easy to still grow and scale. And with having the knowledge now and the wherewithal to not need all the answers, but be able to surround myself with those who maybe do.

I was able to, with Liam's help, very quickly scale Operation Veteran Freedom to over three thousand members. And then in the last, we're going on five years now in business together. You know, we've, again, grown it over to over three thousand members.

We have hundreds of people who have started a business. And as I mentioned earlier,

we have several who have made over a million. And then our one unicorn, as we call him, Mr. Chris Wilson, who does basically wholesale foreclosure restorations, ended up getting locked in with the government. So now he has large government contracts that he does. He most recently, two years ago, just redid all the barracks at Leavenworth. And so he's actually made over a billion dollars using a Facebook ad to get himself started, our frameworks, and just rolled out from there.

So that's, if I could put it in the briefest amount of time, 15 years of my life, that would be it. That's from military service to where I stand today. That's that's it.

[Tom Faust]

I'm curious how do you think that something in your military experience helped you in your ability to concentrate your attention and actually do something that created this other business? Those relate, do you think?

[Chris Celeste]

One thousand percent. One of the main reasons that I love working with veterans over any other community that we've worked with in all of we've worked with many different communities other than Vets, but the one reason I love working with veterans more than anybody is because the pure like personality characteristics that are inbred into us in the military directly translate to success in the business world. Right.

Having integrity with your word, being disciplined and accountable with your actions, being actually driven towards a purpose, being mission and objective oriented, like all being able to work as a team, being able to lead and delegate all of these things that we learn. And not everybody in the military learns that right as you move up in rank, you will learn those things. But all of these things directly correspond to success in the civilian spec and the civilian sector as well.

[Chris Faust]

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when transitioning from military life to starting your own business?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah, this is a great question, Chris. You know, one of the main things that we really do skill set training a lot, right? Digital skill set training is one of the main things OBF teaches.

But one of the main things that we actually focus on and work with a lot of vets with is mindset and personal development. And the main reason that is, is because the transition from military to civilian is one that is quite daunting and difficult for so many of

us. And there really isn't much out there.

You know, TAPS program, a couple of different things that exist, but there really isn't much out there as far as the military provided that really helps us with that with that program. There's many out there now that do a great job. But it really was a struggle.

You know, my whole identity was tied up in being a combat arms scout for the military. You know, I kind of was on this like 19 year old. I'm a badass kick, almost, if you will.

When I got hurt overseas, that all got taken. And then I also had to deal with the fact that I didn't have my friends to talk to anymore. You know, unfortunately, I lost a lot of really good friends, eight in total from May 5th when I lost David Timmons, who was our first friend to die in a helicopter accident, all the way until I almost passed and was flatlined on August 14th.

We lost eight total from my unit. And that was for a long time something that crippled me, something that kept me up at night, something that I wasn't at peace with, mainly because I didn't think that I deserve to live over them. One of the main things for me is that I wasn't a good soldier, right?

Like I had Article 15s. I got in trouble. I wasn't I was young and dumb and just living my life.

And, you know, when the time came to serve and go overseas and do what I had to do, did I do it? Yes, 100 percent. Did I do it honorably?

One thousand percent. But when I was stateside, I was wild and I got myself in a lot of trouble because of that. And I had a lot of really good people who got me straight, got me narrow, got me back on the track, always looked out for me that never came back.

And so I dealt with a lot of survivor's guilt, best way to, you know, that's the most common term to use there. And it for the first five years being back, I think I would say that that was the main reason why I was so self-destructive. I didn't want to look at myself in the mirror.

I didn't want to deal with the fact that I wasn't living up to any kind of standard worth them. And it just was really difficult for me. But, you know, there comes a time when you can only run so long, right?

You can only run from yourself, from your demons for so long. At this point in my life, I'm a full blown drug addict. I'm using all the pills they're giving me way more than they need to be.

That's not working anymore. So I found myself using Oxycontin for a while there. Towards the very end of that very, very deep hole I put myself into.

And so I had to come to terms with the fact that, like, I am not doing them justice. I am not living a life worthy of that sacrifice. And ultimately, the thing that shifted for me was I was in Georgia.

I was doing a nine day personal growth and development seminar, all inclusive. It was the very first like this is actually how I met Mr. Todd Campbell, Tom. OK, and I'm sitting there.

It's three in the morning. We're going through an exercise. And I came to the realist.

I'm going through this exercise thinking I'm getting closure on my father and some past trauma. And ultimately, what came to realization is that, like, I've been running from the fact that I didn't feel worthy to be alive because I wasn't I wasn't the time and I had not been living up to the sacrifice that had been had been given so freely for for me and many others. And when I came to that realization, I started to shift my belief a little bit more.

That is when the real success, the real fire, the unstoppable Chris Celeste that you know today, Tom, and that you're going to get to know Chris came alive. And I think that also is a huge driving force behind why OBF has been willing to pivot and handle all these blows that we've taken with Facebook shutting us down and tech not working and all these different things to really just keep going and keep being of service in any way we possibly can, because it's much, much deeper than a business. It's it's literally living a life in their honor.

[Tom Faust]

And you brought up Operation Veteran Freedom again and the things you're doing. What what type of programs do you do you offer through that that have helped the veterans get ahead and get their own businesses going? What kind of things?

[Chris Celeste]

So it's been an evolution. And as all social media and tech is, it's just an evolution, constantly evolving and constantly growing into something bigger and better. And so when we first started it, it was a Facebook community, just a Facebook group where you could go learn if you needed additional help.

You could buy one of our courses or go deeper in. But really, it was the place where we did live trainings every week. We help people out.

We would share different mindset or skill set hacks or things that we were going through and just really just help the community. But what ended up happening is that Facebook decided that in a group of, you know, thirty five hundred people, they would show that video to less than a hundred repeat week after week after week. And, you know, we are

pouring our heart and soul into growing a group and doing, you know, providing this value to them.

And no one was seeing it. We ended up switching gears. We built an app.

We started doing more of like a off off of platform stuff where we have built like an inner circle. We built coaching programs. We did all this stuff.

People can come meet us outside of the social media platforms and actually learn from us. And that's what we've been doing behind the scenes for a while now. It's been really effective to people who are ready and willing and have the ability to get started in a business to kind of meet us off the platform and kind of build it there.

We've had a lot of really great success with that. We've had people in nonprofit. We've had people in health and wellness.

We had people in CBD and cannabis. We've had people in real estate. We've had people in digital, digital products and sales, physical product and sales, apparel.

We've helped them in all these different things, growing and using these frameworks to build it out. But ultimately, at the end of the day, to have the community aspect is what we love. And we've lost that over the years.

Really, we've kind of lost that. It's it's, you know, in through text or if we can in a post that we can keep going. But one thing I think we really solved here recently is bringing back that community aspect, because we like to try.

Everyone rising each other's boats, everyone inspiring each other, everyone sharing what the struggle is so we can all come together and solve it. Like that was what OVF thrived off of in the beginning. And why so many of our people who we now inner circle and all these different fans of ours rave about what we do is because that community, that tribe aspect of what we had.

Yeah, a lot of them learned really great stuff and went on to great, great success. But the reason they stuck around after that success was the tribe, right? They didn't need to learn.

They're already creating what they wanted. They stuck around for the tribe. And we kind of lost it, like I said.

And so here recently, we just in the last week or two launched a new community on school. And we've been finding that to be like the buzz is good. Everyone's interacting in the comments.

Everyone's dropping what they're dealing with. You know, Tom just did a post today inside school with us about something he was learning. So it's much more engaging.

And we're actually able to reach you with what we're teaching you. And that's what we love to do. Right.

We love teaching like Liam, who is my business partner. Probably one of the best coaches sought after in the industry. Tom, do you have an opportunity to work with him personally?

[Tom Faust]

I have not only in the things that the lives that you've done with that. But yeah, he's like the AI master.

[Chris Celeste]

That he is as well. Yeah. And so, you know, I have almost eight years of digital sales and marketing experience.

I've made millions of dollars in multiple niches online. Liam also is like he's like a tech wizard to my marketing expertise. Right.

And so us together create what is like the founding team of OBF. And we've had people help us and interns and other people who are out there, you know, promoting us. But we are the core team.

And, you know, what we've been able to do here recently is simplify the framework. So what we taught our millionaires and people, the 3000 who first came in has been evolved and upgraded, just like technology with AI. What we have going on now is the ability to build businesses and automate them using software, which we've always had that ability.

Right. That's that's the bread and butter of what I've done for the last eight years and how I've literally paid my bills and supported my lifestyle. But what's different now is that instead of spending weeks and months, maybe even longer, depending on, you know, your learning curve, developing the brand, the offer, understanding who your customer is, like which is really important advertising.

So many people don't know that to really do all that with with AI and the frameworks that we have built. You can have all that up and running in under a week, which used to take forever to do, which is is really what, you know, the combination of marketing skills and AI together, me and Liam together has done.

[Chris Faust]

Well, speaking of success, do you kind of have any like a success story of a veteran you've helped out with the with the organization?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah. So I mentioned Chris Wilson earlier, and he's kind of the unicorn. But I already briefly talked about how he created his.

So I'm going to talk a little bit differently about someone else. So there's a gentleman. He he's the owner.

Him and his father are the owners of a CBD company called Fiddler's Green. Both of them are vets. Both an amazing family owned veteran business.

They farm their own hemp and they create their own CBD for veterans by veterans, which is what was really what drew us to them and them to us. When we first met them, they were doing pretty well marketing their products. They had a tincture.

They had some rubs. A lot of vets were really loving it. What we did was we we introduced them to the idea of understanding what a dream customer is, which, again, I mentioned a little previously earlier.

So many companies out there are marketing and talking. And yeah, maybe your product can solve a problem for a lot of people. But when you speak to everyone, you get no one.

But when you know who you're speaking to and you can solve a problem for a specific person and you can meet them where they're at in the conversation already happening in their head, you can win and you can help them. And so we introduced them to this concept of a dream customer. We walked them through a training actually Tom actually been through, which is our dream customer or customer avatar training.

And by going through that and then going through our brand training, he was able to take who his dream customer is, which is a veteran who is suffering and his brand and combine them together to create some marketing promos. But his marketing promos, we found out very quickly, could not involve at this time CBD or anything inside of it. Taboo words cannot be used inside of advertising.

So we said, OK, anytime we run into this, we're we're going to niche specific and we're not allowed to actually say these words. OK, great. We'll say those words when we get them into our ecosystem.

Let's branch out a little bit. Let's talk about a more broad word and let's get them involved that way. And so with him, we created a success story pamphlet of five of his greatest customers who have gone from absolutely in pain, suffering, miserable to using his product and having all this great relief.

And let's share these in a case study format with other people. And we can share that freely on paid ads or organic because now we're not talking about CBD or hemp.

Specifically, we're talking about a wellness practice.

We did that. And we ran into another issue at that time. Payment processors would not allow sales funnels to promote CBD.

So we're like, OK, instead of promoting directly to the customer, what is your number one way of getting this distributed to people? And he says, well, we're actually in three local dispensaries. They actually take up bulk of our, you know, of our harvests.

And I said, OK, well, what would it be like if instead of promoting it one off online, you only had to promote it to a dispensary and they were placing orders 10 times with a regular customer or 100 times with a regular customer? Yeah, that would be great. Why don't we do that?

OK, cool. So instead of promoting B2C, which is business to customer, let's promote B2B. Let's promote your business to another business.

And so we switched it up. We changed the promotion. We changed the dream customer to other dispensaries, placed the ad.

Within one month of placing that ad, he had another 60 dispensaries who are now promoting his product and he had to buy another farm. He had to go out and buy a whole new field to keep up with production, because when we understand our customer and we understand our objective and we understand how to place our brand in front of them, we can win big. And I believe in situations which would be called win-win where I win because you win.

And that's how you create a happy customer who keeps buying and real brand relationships. And that was one of the people who went on to to gross, you know, a very large sum of money inside of their business using our particular coachings and trainings, which those exact trainings are what we just updated and dropped inside of school. Brand messaging, dream customer.

We walk you through how to identify it like we did with them. But then we added more to it because we tell you how to use AI to bolster it and make it even more impactful.

[Tom Faust]

And in that story, you kind of mentioned, you know, a few challenges that you had, like you couldn't couldn't use these words in advertising. You couldn't then you got farther and you couldn't accept the credit cards because you're mentioning these things. And are there any other like common challenges that entrepreneurs face when they're trying to get their business going this way?

Like common things that everybody runs into that you need to deal with?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah, I think the number one thing that we run into with clients and students that we work with, not necessarily inside of OBF, because when they're coming in, we're directly steering them away from these things. But Liam and I do a lot of consulting and coaching for other large education companies. And one of the things that we notice, because one of the common.

Issues that I see is that everyone wants you to get a quick win. Which is great, everyone should get a quick win. I believe that that's important, right?

But a quick win at what cost is really what I see. And so a lot of companies out there will tell you, you know, just put up this post, just share this thing. Just do what everyone else is doing.

Share your link here. So all you got to do is put your link out. Someone's going to buy.

Right. And what it ends up doing, it ends up hurting them more than helping them. And a lot of times if they don't know any better, they'll put paid advertising behind it.

And what ends up happening is if you try to promote an affiliate link or a case study story that isn't yours or any of these things that are actually banned from being in advertising, you'll lose your Facebook account. I believe that marketing has not really changed since the beginning of marketing. It just evolves, like I've said a million times.

And marketing is just going where the attention is and drawing that attention somewhere else. And the attention is on social media. And so if you can't get on Facebook to put your ads out, you're shooting yourself in the foot.

Right. And so what I've noticed is that so many people do things either because they're being told to or just because they don't know any better. And they're actually shutting down their Facebook accounts.

And so one thing I would say is that it's not the end of the world. You can rebuild it. You can start a new account, new car, new all these different things.

But it is a very common thing that I see people running into is jumping the gun, going out there, performing bad practices and then losing their ability to promote properly in the future. And so I would just say, understand what best practices are and being your own brand and sharing your own story. Even if you are just getting started, it's always going to work better than just blasting links everywhere.

And the number one thing I would add to that is that a first grader is an absolute rock star genius to a kindergartner. And so there's a thing that people perceive in the marketplace and get wrong that you have to be an expert. So many people go out and

they falsely represent themselves as experts because of this.

But instead, what you can do and what is powerful is just let them know I'm on a journey, too. And I'm just going to share with you what I'm going through so that maybe it can benefit you, too. And if you come from that place, especially as a brand new person in affiliate marketing, you will win.

It's not on the expert. It's no, I'm just like you and I'm going on this journey. If you're like me, you can either watch or you can come with me.

Either way, I'm going to share it. And that'll keep people from getting the number one thing I see happen, which is getting your Facebook account or any account taken away from you before you even get started.

[Chris Faust]

So we know that things like PTSD for veterans can really affect their ability to hold the job just because, you know, one thing or another can trigger, especially in the customer service field. So kind of like how would you how does your organization help veterans overcome things like PTSD that could affect, you know, how they interact with potential customers?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah. So there's two things that I think are really valuable about the way we have things set up when it comes to people, especially like myself, who are overcoming PTSD. One is that you don't have to interact or deal with other people directly unless you choose to.

In the business that we build, is there a level of you need to share yourself 100 percent? But you can do that from the comfort of a keyboard, from the comfort of your home without anybody staring, staring you in the face or laughing at you or any of the things that, you know, may make anyone feel uncomfortable. So that's one thing that I thought really ultimately, too.

I was really excited about when I first got started is that I can create this business. I can create success without having to put myself out there and be the guy in front of everybody. What I did discover is that I actually benefited from doing that because it was pushing me outside of my comfort zone.

And that ultimately I kind of enjoyed doing it because I was helping people. And so I just kept doing it. Can you repeat the question?

My brain just like went off track.

[Chris Faust]

So, yeah, so so basically, you know, you know, we know these issues, you know, but you know that veterans have can affect those things like that. So how do you kind of help them navigate through that? You know, you had mentioned that, you know, they can do this stuff from the comfort of their own computer.

They don't have to worry about, you know, being in front of everybody, staring somebody in the face as they try and sell something. Just how? Yeah.

Kind of like what other ways would you help somebody get through, you know, whatever it might be, you know, if it's anxiety from PTSD, you know, you know, being rejected. I mean, you never know what could trigger it. But do you have any other things that your organization helps with to kind of push past that potential barrier?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah. And I thank you for repeating the question. What you would never know it talking to me these days because I've worked so hard at it.

But sometimes the old railroad track just comes right off, you know, TBI and all that. But yeah. So on the skill set side, as you mentioned, it's more of a hands off.

Do it at your own pace behind the screen, like behind your own keyboard. And you have your own comfort there. On the other side of that, when people are ready, we also because I benefited so greatly from personal growth and development, I have stayed very deeply studied in that ever since I went in the very first time.

I've actually become very close friends with the very first person ever introduced me to that. I traveled the world with that man. I have actually been a facilitator for his company for years and helped other people kind of overcome these things and work their way through it.

What we realize is that with a lot of veterans, you know, obviously myself included. Traveling and going to a group setting and putting yourself into a hotel and doing these things might not be what you're ready for just yet. And so we've done a couple of different things that allow veterans to start moving forward, start gaining some more tools and resources to overcome anxiety and PTSD and deal with some of these things that may get triggered without ever leaving the comfort of their home.

One of them is a 12 week you walk through it yourself kind of course that you can go through. It's not interactive. There's I mean, it is interactive for you, but it's not fully immersive, as I would say, which we do have another program that's more like that.

So this one's 12 weeks. It's called Tactical Mind. It's created by my mentor, Todd Campbell, and you can walk through it and gain a lot of really great tools over 12 weeks to help you with anxiety, with help you with clarity of purpose, to help you with dealing

with some of the triggers such as family that may come up and really being more present and available for your family.

He works with you guys a lot with you veterans through that. Again, that's more done at your own pace through 12 weeks. You watch a video, you do some workbooking, and it really does help.

We found that we needed something that could do that exact thing again for vets who aren't ready to to get interactive, to really dive in. But what we also have available is something called The Calling. So The Calling is a fully immersive challenge series.

And so what we did was we gamified growth. And so you come in and every month you unlock a new category. There are eight categories that we believe fulfill you in life.

You know, some examples of that are career, family, finance, social life. So there's eight of them all together that go around every month. You unlock a new category.

You go into that category. And every week of that month, there's a challenge. Week one, we give you the challenge.

Every category has a different facilitator. So you would come in. The very first category you would get is attitude because everything in life is based off the way we look at it and the attitude we bring to it.

And so you meet Todd, you get introduced to Todd. Todd walks you through what attitude is and why it's important. And then he tees you up on your first challenge.

You do that first challenge for the week. At the end of every week, you do a video recording that is uploaded into our community, to our private community. And we cheer you on.

We support you. You let us know how it went, what results you saw, maybe where you came up short, maybe some obstacles that you came into. And it's really a rallying cry around you and your and what you're doing to grow.

And so every again, every week is a new challenge. Every week we record it. And then we we keep rolling through every category.

The community supports you and rallies behind you. You get one on one calls on every second week with that facilitator. We help you walk through the challenge.

We again, cheer you on, support you. And really what it's doing is allowing you to take the areas, the categories of life that really come whole and create wholeness in one's life and directly schedule and implement things that are going to grow it from what we call a zero to ten scale. And so every month you're going to be trying to go from zero to ten in that category using these challenges.

And it's up to you how much you pour in. But we lay it out for you and we cheer you on. And it's actually, I think, you know, a way to really have fun and gamify a growth experience.

[Tom Faust]

Nice. So with these communities that you have, like you mentioned, the school and in your inner circle and various things, I suppose those veteran can help other veterans in that as well. They all get to talk to each other.

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah.

[Tom Faust]

And we cheer each other on.

[Chris Celeste]

100 percent. The community is by nature, the tribe is very interactive. We support each other.

It's not just Liam and I who help. If you know if someone's already been there, done that and has the answer, they will pitch in. They will help as well.

Chris Wilson actually sponsors. When we had our inner circle coaching program, it was a thousand dollars per person to join. Chris Wilson was actually one of the advocates who was sponsoring people into that because he believed in it so much.

So it's not just coming back and providing knowledge and sharing. Some of our vets actually come back and sponsor with monetary like they give money to help all their vets go through this program because they believe in it. So it really is a supportive community of people who want to see you win.

The inner circle itself is more of like a brotherhood, a camaraderie. It's like it's a place where we just come together. We're all, you know, seven or eight figure business owners who come together and chat about what we're doing, what's working.

You know, how can we help each other? It started off as this is coaching program, but then they started having so much success that it was like, there's not really much more we could teach you other than to keep you keep you on track. And so now they're more like, like I said, like a brotherhood.

[Chris Faust]

You've said that, you know, you've had to evolve the program, obviously, as the times

change. So what are your kind of, you know, what are your kind of future plans for for OVF and how can how do you see it evolving, you know, in the next couple of years as things change?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah, I love that. So ultimately, at the beginning, we helped people build businesses, right? Businesses around their passions, businesses around things they believed in, missions they wanted to support, whatever that was.

We helped them build businesses. What we're switching to is more skill set oriented. So learn the skills of digital marketing, learn the skills of AI software automation, learn the skills of funnel building, learn the skills of copywriting, which is the written word that actually sells, which is like the highest paid profession in the world.

They're like insane what those guys can rake in just for a couple of words and get really specific on it. So right now, what we have inside of school in our community is really the foundation of how marketing works and how you can apply that to any offer. So instead of being very specific on, you know, promote school and grow school or promote this offer and grow this offer, it's more of like, hey, what does every good campaign that you're ever going to promote on ever in marketing need?

OK, these are the one on ones of marketing, the foundations of is what we're going to teach you. And then, you know, we're going to grow and keep going and have sales and different like so sales is something that Liam has a big background and it's something that I'm actually, you know, the sales engine for our team. And so teaching more of the skills of what works rather than just, hey, build a business because, yeah, we have a really successful business and that's a lot of fun.

But I believe in multiple streams of income, not multiple streams of distraction, get one up and running and working successfully and then switch over. But my skills provide me multiple streams of income. My business only provides me to.

So teaching people skills that they can apply anywhere, business, career, another company, helping a friend, whatever that is, is really the evolution of where we're going. And because of the network and the relationships and all the, you know, collaborations and partnerships we've had in the last almost eight years now of my being online and almost five years of OBF being in existence, we have some of the best in personal growth and development backing us and helping us. We have some of the best in digital education backing us and helping us.

We have some of the best funnel by funnel builders and copywriters who, you know, have not only seen what we've built, but love the idea of helping other vets, love the idea of getting these skills in the right hand so they can actually get out there and do

something with them. That's the evolution. The evolution is a community of people who are coming to better their lives, learn digital skills, have personal growth and development baked into their everyday life.

And so that's why Operation Veteran Freedom is the name of the company. But OBF Academy is where we bring people because we want to teach them skills and we want to better their lives.

[Tom Faust]

So how can I mean, we'll provide links to, you know, to your website and your training and things that if people want to find out more about that. Is there any other any other information that?

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah. So, I mean, if you just want to know about us, then just go to OBF Academy dot com. We have, you know, a regular website just like anybody else.

Talks about our mission statement, talks about who we are, me and Liam. It talks about, you know, some of the courses we've done in the past. Some of the stuff that's on there we no longer offer.

It's currently being updated as we speak. As I said, we're always evolving. And so school just started.

It's funny how you say that school just started, even because it is an education program, just started, you know, within the last month. So that's all going to be updated on that page. But you can go there and learn about us.

We can go to our testimonials. We have hundreds of testimonials on there. You can go check out.

But if you wanted to get started with us, if you wanted to kind of join us on this journey, if you're also a vet looking to learn skills, have an awesome community, maybe get some more in-depth coaching, then I would highly recommend you join us in school. And right now you can join us at school for the first hundred members that join our school community. It's only twenty five dollars a month.

You get all the education, all the training, plus biweekly coaching, which for coaching for us is hot seats, which means that we pull three members of our community out every every coaching session. And we actually solve whatever the biggest problem is in your business live on the call, get you moving forward. So you start seeing results and then anybody else may be dealing with that problem in the audience or, you know, another student who watches on replay gets that problem solved for them, too.

Right. So we want to get you moving forward and we want everyone to gain value. We do that every other week inside of the community.

And I think that's really the best way to get people moving forward and getting results. Again, all of that, plus our deep dive trainings on customer avatar, creating an irreversible offer, how to build a brand, how to use funnels, how to post your first ad on Facebook, all of that is back there. And it's only twenty five dollars a month for the first hundred people.

And then it's going to double when we hit one hundred and be fifty dollars a month after that. So when you join, it may look different as far as pricing goes. But that's because we want to honor those who start and join us before we even have anything going before.

It's you know, it's just the foundation right now. You'd be a founding member of the OVF school. And it's twenty five dollars a month.

[Chris Faust]

Well, is there is there anything else, you know, before we wrap up? Is there anything else you'd like to share with the audience about your work or the importance of supporting veteran entrepreneurs?

[Chris Celeste]

You know, there's there is one thing that comes to my mind and not on either of those topics, but just, you know, to other veterans. I've worked with thousands of veterans at this point now. And one of the things that I have come across is that we are some of the most capable people when when we actually apply ourselves, but we don't find ourselves capable for whatever reason.

There's many different ones. You know, loss of identity, lack of support, change in environment, having a hostile environment that you're currently living in, whatever that may be, there's lots of reasons why. But what I will tell you is that you can choose to create something different.

You may not have the resources or necessarily the opportunity sitting in front of you at this moment, but now you do. Right. You have an amazing resource here with Tom and Chris with this podcast where you can tune in to their every episode, gain insight, gain inspiration, learn from other vets.

You have the ability to link up with people like myself and Liam who are running programs and coaching to help other vets to really move forward. And so what I would say is that it may feel like things don't have a light at the end of the tunnel right now. It may not feel like you have any resources or anything that you can really use to get ahead to start really creating something for yourself.

But I will tell you from personal experience that it's only one click away and you can absolutely change your life if that's really what you want.

[Tom Faust]

All right. Well, I just want to thank you for being on here with us. It's great information.

I really appreciate it. It has been good working with you. We'll mention that I actually met you at one of those events, sort of like you were talking about.

And and you did help me specifically through one issue with something we were dealing with with heights. Yeah. And just to kind of center me and all that.

And it was very helpful. I do appreciate that. I do appreciate the work that you do for veterans.

So with that, I think we're done. We'll wrap this up and can share the links that you have that you want to.

[Chris Celeste]

Yeah, I just I will send them to you in Messenger. That way you have them that way. Because I know once we leave here, the chat goes away and all that.

That way you have it. And one thing, too, that Liam and I have been talking about. Is that for like for people that are actively participating inside the community like yourself, Tom, who's, you know, showing up for trainings or watching the replay is taking action.

Like you built your ebook this morning using our training. You're serious about what we're doing. And we love that.

Right. We we pour so much value and time into what we do that when people actually do something with it, it means the world to us. And so we want to honor that.

And, you know, whether someone joins off the podcast or joins any other way, people like yourself, we want to just let you know that like if you bring someone into our community, we're actually going to honor that with we're going to reward that with a commission. And so not everyone gets this opportunity. We don't want to grow the group for the only.

We don't want people coming in and then only growing it because they make money. Right. Like we don't want that.

We want people there for the right reasons. We also want to honor those who are actually out there doing stuff, creating something for themselves. And we believe in multiple streams of income, like I mentioned.

So for every member you bring in who is an active member, you get five dollars for that person.

[Chris Faust]

All right. And there you go.

[Chris Celeste]

And you're rich. It's funny, though, they add up like that CBD offer I was telling you about that I use to save my family. I still get checks from that and I have not promoted it or done anything with it in three years.

I still receive commissions from that till this day. I have multiple offers that do that to me. Now, I'm not by any means.

Am I like paying all my bills with it? But it's still it adds up. They they really do start adding up.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah. Again, thanks for being here. And that note, we will see you all next time.

Yeah. Thanks for tuning in.