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Expand into home improvement

with Wendy Marvin
of Matrix Roofing

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MODERATOR
Heidi J. Ellsworth
Partner
RoofersCoffeeShop



PANELIST
Wendy Marvin
CEO
Matrix Roofing



PANELIST
Nathan Ferraro
Sr. Marketing Manager
Home Improvement at Sashco

Heidi Ellsworth:

Hello, and welcome to an RLW from Roofers Coffee Shop, Differentiating your Business. It's really about taking what you have and looking around and seeing what can we add to this? What can help us through these hard times? What can help us through material shortages? And so, today, our friends at Sashco have sponsored this great webinar with our dear friend Wendy Marvin. And we are going to talk about what you can be doing with your business to really differentiate it.

Before we get started, again, my name is Heidi Ellsworth. And we want to make sure you're part of the conversation. So, we're going to be taking all of your questions at the end of this webinar. So, please look into your control panel up in the chat, write in your questions as we go. And we have Ms. Megan Ellsworth in the back, as always, keeping us online so that we can get these questions answered for you at the end.

Also, this is being recorded. So, as always, we want to have this for you now and in the future. So, however you want to listen to it, whether you want to read the transcript, read some articles about it, listen to it or watch it again, it's all going to be available to you under our RLW initiative on rooferscoffeeshop.com. So, let's get going. Let's start. I'm so excited for this today. So, again, we are looking at how you differentiate your business.

And today, we're going to be talking about home improvement. How do you add other home improvement to your offerings to help during those crazy times? And this, as I said, is coming from our friends at Sashco and Matrix Roofing with Wendy Marvin with Matrix and Nathan Ferraro with Sashco. So, hello, welcome both of you.

Nathan Ferraro:

Thank you.

Wendy Marvin:

Hi, Heidi.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I think this is such an important topic. When we were sitting down, Nathan, when you and I and Sabrina and [Brittany 00:02:02] and the team there were talking about this, we really wanted to bring someone on the show who has done this, who has expanded their business to offer a whole house, the whole exterior, and even inside, outside, you name it, whatever it is. So, that is Wendy Marvin, who is the founder and CEO of Matrix Roofing & Home.

Wendy, why don't you introduce yourself a little bit and just tell everybody a little bit about yourself?

Wendy Marvin:

Well, thank you, Heidi. So, yeah, founder of our company back in 2007. Founded because of that contractor experiences and knew that we wanted to do something different. So, part of the reason we ventured into this stuff is we really plugged into our customers and looking for ways to do more, be more, be different. And so, yeah, we've been really blessed. Thank goodness, the COVID has kept us all going and everything.

The things that we're talking about today are just so important. We're really excited to be here with you.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Great. Thank you so much. And, Nathan, we have had some great discussions around this. So, if you could, just introduce yourself a little bit too and a little bit about Sashco.

Nathan Ferraro:

Absolutely. So, I usually tell people, I warn them in advance that I have a technical background, right? So, I'm a chemist by training, turned marketer. I've tailored my career to really focus on product development and how can we build a better mousetrap for people to use, right? How can we add value for customers, and that marries really well with what Sashco does. Sashco is a high-performance sealant company that only makes what we consider to be the best, right?

We tried to over-engineer things, such that even if you use the product in a way that it isn't supposed to be used, you go outside the box a little bit, you're going to be okay. And we think that that's adding value to folks because they can trust our products, they can rely on them. So, I'm thrilled to be here with you and with Wendy. I'm excited about the nuggets that you're going to throw down, Wendy. I think there's going to be some really, really good takeaways for folks and hopefully I can add a couple, too.

Wendy Marvin:

We appreciate your nerdiness, Nathan.

Heidi Ellsworth:

We like that. We like that. Okay. Let's get down to it. Let's just started. Probably, you don't even need this slide right now but just for those who maybe still are thinking I can just keep doing exactly what I'm doing. Wendy, start us out. Why should people look at diversifying their business?

Wendy Marvin:

Well, COVID. The key lesson to take away from what we've been through in the last couple of years is just 150% diversification will help you when stuff goes sideways. I almost said a bad word there. And if nothing else, we've learned that you can't control everything. And so, when you have multiple streams of income, and you'll hear that a lot in the business world and Robert Kiyosaki and different things, but multiple streams of income are safeguards for you to be able to transition to something else when something isn't working.

And so, we started because of customer requests, like I mentioned, mostly realtors who loved working with us because our differentiator mainly in our business is customer service. And so, they loved working with us, that we got the roofing done. But then, they had this list of all these other things and they were like, "Who do I go to? Where do I go? Do you have anybody you can recommend we try?"

But there's so many contractors out there that just want to do that old business model of I don't call people back when my business is full. I don't answer the phone. I'm not going to show up on time. And our customers knew we did all that stuff and so they just wanted us to do more. So, we dipped our toe

into it in 2019 and it went crazy. Again, just that we did it before we needed to and I'm so thankful we had this to fall back on when roofing got shut down and was being looked at a little tighter by OSHA.

Or I'm glad we had roofing when the home was locked down and people didn't trust us to be in there for the moment. So, it's just good to have those things to fall back on.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, and I mean, when you're looking at it right now with the material shortages, if you're able to do a number of projects, a homeowner might be like, "Okay, I understand you can't get that right now but we can do this for you. We can do that great outdoor living space or we can do that a little bit of remodeling in the house." Nathan, you have to be seeing a lot of the same thing where people are looking in different directions.

Nathan Ferraro:

Absolutely. We've all been experiencing raw material shortages, right? And so, whether it's diversifying your business by selling different services that use different products or manufacturing different products with different technologies, right? Right now, diversification is huge because you could have a stream of income that your company has relied on for 20 years and all of a sudden, it's going to be down for a month or it's going to be down indefinitely, right?

And we don't know when we can get more of a raw material. And we're all employing folks, right? We want the income but we want to keep a healthy company that keeps people employed so they don't have to be nervous about where the next paycheck is going to be coming from and all that sort of stuff, right? And so, any diversification right now, I think, is just adding some stability to the program where-

Wendy Marvin:

That's a good way to say it.

Nathan Ferraro:

... folks can feel like they know where their next paycheck is going to come from.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Exactly, and that they don't need to go somewhere else because we want to keep all of our skilled labor. We want to keep our amazing people who are working with us. And that takes us into this next, that whole concept of material shortages, pricing increase, how you protect your business. Wendy, how have you been dealing with all of this?

Wendy Marvin:

I think that you have to recognize the fact that your business is based on relationships. And the better you do to try to anticipate what your customer is feeling and being ahead of that, you're going to be ahead of the game. Supply chain and material shortages, there's so much right now that there's just nothing we can do. I can't make shingles in my backyard, right? So, how do you deal with something that's out of your control?

It's about communication and it's about keeping your people, employees and customers, just in the loop of what you can control, what you can't, letting them know that you've done a great job with relationships so that you are getting the best service you can from the distribution centers, that you're plugged into the association so that you know what's going on. The labor part of it, it's a tough time right now with employees.

We've got people in our area that has gotten employees off people that they're paying them three times what we're paying them, and that's just not sustainable. But I think sometimes employees don't think that way. They think now and money in hand. But having conversations with them about what's coming like winter, we're in winter right now. And I've been planning for eight, 12 months for this winter to try to be sure that we have the right type of work that we can do inside the home, and that's another diversification piece, right?

Was it three years ago, we had that torrential rain in our area, Pacific Northwest? We went through two and a half months of straight rain. It was awful. So, we didn't have this diversification at that point. We didn't have this other place. And what's nice is, you mentioned the customer is pivoting. We literally have had customers that are waiting for. They want that color, and they're not going to wait and do a different color.

So, they want to wait for three or four months for that. But hey, by the way, I'm looking at this double door that goes out to my backyard, and I hate it. Can we maybe put a slider in there? And we were like, "Heck, yeah." So, we're in the house, we're still working. We're doing these things while we're waiting for the other things. It's just being what you can do to them. And if you can't, then be able to pivot and offer other services. It's a big deal.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, I think so, too. The consumer is looking forward and goes to part of that what you're saying communication, that if you're communicating all the things that you can do, working with them, it makes all the difference as you're going through. And I think that really takes us to are you listening to your customers?

Wendy Marvin:

No, I'm not doing that on purpose.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Wendy, you say this all the time, and I'm all about the customer. What are they asking? What questions are you asking? Can you talk about this a little bit?

Wendy Marvin:

It's why you're in business. I think there's a lot of times as business owners, we get our egos involved. And we think that we're doing a service for somebody or we're doing them a favor by doing these things. That's just not how it works. They are the reason we have a business. And the ultimate start of any business is that you've identified an issue that isn't being filled and you're going to fill a niche. Therefore, your customers that like that niche are coming to you.

But don't stop listening to them after you start. And I think that's a hard part when you're an owner-operator and you're out there doing all of the installs is you're so busy doing that you're not listening. And they have a lot to say. They have a lot to say just in everyday conversations. We've done extensive training with our... we call them client experience staff but they're the frontline, to hear things that customers say that matter that they don't even know matters, like I have an aging pet.

Well, that means that I may have an extra conversation with you about the fact of how noisy and disruptive installing a roof is. And if I do you a favor and give you a heads up that we're trying to find a pet sitting area that can help us in that realm. But until I get there, even if I give you the heads up that this might be detrimental to them and really make them anxiety filled and you may want to have them out of the house, they love that.

Hear about the koi pond they have in the backyard. We had a lady talk about \$1,000 fish. Are you kidding me? And we didn't even know about it, right? And we're up there throwing, slinging shingles and tearing off the roof, those kinds of things. Hey, read this note. Here's a star. This is unusual. Let's deal with it differently. Let's be proactive. And all of that activity that you do just breeds trust, and that trust is what brings people back.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And you know what, Nathan, I just really feel that this is one of those things, too, that Sashco has been listening. In diversification, you need to, as a contractor, listen to your homeowner, your building owner, whatever it is but you need to listen to the contractors on what they're needing. I mean, I know you do this. Talk a little bit about that.

Nathan Ferraro:

Sure. So, listening is important for a few reasons, right? First off, you can differentiate yourself by listening, right? So many people just want to go make a sale. Here's my bid, and I hope I win, right? But to Wendy's point, I mean, she's listening to what these people care about and that she's actually adding value because she's listening, right? So, that's a forgotten talent in the first place. But then, when you listen to your customers, you'll also pick up on stuff you can improve on, right?

And it's a fact that it's cheaper and way more effective to keep your current customers and to keep them happy than to try to go get new ones, right? Getting new customers is hard. And so, I love that Wendy found by listening to our customers that she had an opportunity to go into a brand new business by just hearing the demand, right? As a manufacturer, we oftentimes tow a line, right?

There's a quote that I'm not sure that Henry Ford actually said it but it's famously misattributed to him I think, that if he had given customers what they asked for, he would have given them a faster horse, right?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, I love that.

Nathan Ferraro:

And so, there's that. You can't just listen to your customers, right? You have to innovate because a lot of times, customers won't be thinking about new technology. Give me the same thing that you have but

make it dry faster or make it easier to apply or something like that. And those are really good pieces of feedback that you need to listen to and incorporate and constantly be improving.

But at the same time, you try to look for those game changers, how can we disrupt the marketplace and totally make something new for our customers that they'll really appreciate? But I think too often, we get stuck in that second one without listening. And so, you're right, we definitely try to listen and give little product improvements or little diversifications. Because if a customer is asking for it, they usually want it. They're willing to put their money where their mouth is on those.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, they need it, that's the thing. And I think too, really listening to what they're not telling you. I always talk about this with Roofers Coffee Shop is that we got to be listening to what we're not hearing too because people will just, in today's world, they'll just walk away. So, if you're not offering the services that they need, also now they're gone because there's a lot of options and a lot of different things to do.

Wendy Marvin:

And to your point on that too, there's a real big key here that I think is worth mentioning, is a lot of times contractors want to go out and they want to share that information, right? So, they're almost vomiting that information on their customers. And they don't even realize that it's really overwhelming when somebody is not in our world and not in our industry. And it would be like talking chemicals with Nathan, right?

Or it's like you just don't realize, but when you hear a need in amongst what a sentence is saying, they're not going to say, "Knock, knock, knock, I need x." They're going to get around it by telling you some of their pain points. And I think one of the things that's really cool about being an entrepreneur is we think that way. We think I'm solving problems while you're talking to me, and how can I help you? And how can I plug you in?

And what can I do that's different? And when you answer a problem with a solution in that manner, that is not sales. That is building trust and relationships, and that's a really big difference. And even what Nathan was talking about, that's a really big difference in how to approach a customer.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, I love that. I think it's so true. And as we're looking at it, I think we need to look at the business overall, right? Because by listening to your customers, by really looking at what they need and finding out, also that's going to open a bunch of doors. And so, Wendy, I would love you to talk about your experience, I mean, being prepped before COVID and how that helps your business financially.

Wendy Marvin:

Oh, wow. Yeah. Our phone kept ringing. We were one of the two states that actually got shut down for being non-essential. And the ability to continue working where we were working because we built trust with our customers, that the fact that the phone kept ringing because we've already established that we are a trustworthy company with our customers, that was a time when we didn't trust anybody. We didn't even trust our neighbor.

Don't even come near me because you're going to give you something, anything, and that's a big one. From a financial standpoint, again, that diversification, it's like I can pivot easier. When roofing got shut down, I pivoted into home for a little while. When home got freaked out and nobody wanted you in the house, then we went back to the drawing board of what can we do to earn trust to be able to be allowed in there and that meant telling them how we're addressing this COVID thing and what we're doing different than what we did before.

And then, just being able to continue to work. You cannot run a successful business if you have a long period of inactivity. And like you said, this has been unprecedented but there's been a really great opportunity to learn some good lessons that there's always something that can come up out of the woodwork. And maybe it's a disruption of the internet, maybe it's a whatever and it's just giving yourself that ability to maintain your customers, have that multiple streams of income.

And then, just looking for different ways like being in the home as a way to alleviate if we have a bad weather situation where the guys can't be on the roof doing things. Just pivot.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, the year-round work. And I know that in some places, in the south, in Florida-

Wendy Marvin:

That is not possible.

Heidi Ellsworth:

... yeah, they work year-round but then they have to deal with heat. So, they want to be inside, too. So, I mean, I think anywhere you go, trying to figure out how to differentiate your business with the right products, with the right model to give you that help financially, it's just going to position you in such a great place.

Wendy Marvin:

And value-added services, like you said, the products that Nathan's company is offering and the people that I'm meeting at this company, I mean, Nathan is pretty cool and he's been fun to chat with. But it's like when you're meeting these people at Sashco, this is a good company, and they're going to stand behind you. So that if I'm in a new realm and I'm inside a home and they want us to do something, and I don't usually have a caulking that we've worked for, for interior or whatever, I can call Nathan and be like, "Hey, what do I need?"

And they're going to help us figure it out so that I look intelligent to my customer.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Right. Those are the relationships. Okay. And we're going to come back to that some more. I keep jumping ahead because I get so excited about this stuff. Okay. So, we've got everybody out there. They know they need to differentiate. They need to do some, just need to have, as we always said, more arrows in the quiver. So, one of the big things is getting your general contractor licensing and just becoming a general contractor so you can do more. So, Wendy, what's the process for people out there to do that?

Wendy Marvin:

So, if you're a roofer and you're not a GC, you need to do this. We did it initially a long time ago just because we had a condominium complex work that required the bond to be different. And so, in the state of Washington, our general specialty contractor bond is 6,000 and then your licensing and insurance requirements are a million. We ended up needing a \$2-million liability policy, and we were like, "For the extra couple 100 bucks a year, we're just going to go ahead and become a GC."

We weren't really doing GC work but we needed that. Yeah, there's a little bit of extra insurance and again, the difference in the bond, but it's not like you pay double going from a six to a 12. It's not like that. Then, you elevate yourself over the guys that are just, just a roofer. You don't want to be that guy. And so, it gives you an elevation in a way to talk about things, and doesn't mean you have to build houses. I don't build houses. I don't do full-scale, large remodeling.

But it does give me some flexibility if I'm in a situation where maybe you've got a prevailing wage job that you can bid for a school district and it's still roofing, roofing, roofing, roofing. But because of what they do and their requirements through the state and through that stuff, they end up with higher requirements of liability stuff. So, I've already got that covered. So, then, I can just make a decision if the project is right for our company or not and I'm not stuck trying to run at the last minute and get that.

And then, the other one is just talking about the subcontractors is just making sure that as a GC, I'm showing a level of professionalism that when I talk to subs, they're already thinking of us differently than they are other people.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Wow. It sounds simple. It's like, okay, our customer needs this. We're just going to start adding outdoor living or bathrooms or whatever it may be that you decide it fits your crews and your models. But you need to take some of these steps first and then you need starting the process. Wendy, I'm going to come back to you one more time on this. How are we starting that process?

Wendy Marvin:

Of becoming the GC or looking at that stuff?

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, and diversifying.

Wendy Marvin:

You just go to your state agencies. I mean, once you've done business stuff, it's like you know where to go and it's typically the Secretary of State's, your licensing divisions, your business licensing divisions. Sometimes you have classes. In Washington, we don't have to take classes for RGC. But we work in Oregon as well and Oregon requires hours of schooling. And so, anybody at your company can take those classes. And they're difficult in that there is a lot, but it's not rocket science.

So, you just have to do a little bit of digging. The state agencies are amazing at supporting us and helping us understand what we do. I couldn't figure out a certification for Oregon that we needed, and it turned out to be something really dumb and easy. I was thinking it was different. I just called the state agency

and I said, "Hey, I'm not understanding this. Can you tell me more about how to do this? I'm trying to sign up."

She's like, "Go here, click this, do that. There you go. You're done." And I went, "What?" So, yeah, it's just every state is different, which is hard when we're doing a national podcast like this. But utilize your agencies, utilize your association memberships. I'll bet you money, if you attend an event, you can find somebody else that's been through this process who'd be willing to teach you and help you get there.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Go through that. And then, Nathan, so once a contractor does get that GC and they trying to, even as they're getting it and they're really looking at what do I need to do, what do I want to do, what are some of the things from a manufacturer standpoint that you can help? And also, just an overview of how do they start going down this and making this happen, the diversification?

Nathan Ferraro:

Sure. So, whenever you're expanding what you're doing, you want to make sure that you don't give up in quality, right? Your quality needs to stay the same or else you're going to risk losing customers, right? And so, we've talked about trust a lot already, but I think that this is key, right? So, if you have manufacturers that you trust or even distributor partners, who helped you when you needed a product and said, "Oh, this is a really good alternative," you can leverage those folks, right?

And folks at Sashco will be happy to train someone who's used to using through the roof on a roofing job to do Big Stretch on a window job, and that'll be true for any manufacturer out there, right? So, if you have products that you trust, look in parallel for those products that those same manufacturers or those same distributors can provide. And I think we'll all be happy to do training, right? And I think this even relates back a couple slides ago, right?

We were talking about how does that increase or help your financials. There's a training and a labor and an engagement component of that too, right? So, right now, labor is super short. You can usually get folks excited, right? If someone has been roofing for three years and they get an opportunity to learn how to do something new and to go do some training and stuff like that, what a cool thing to do for your employees to keep them engaged and to make them feel like I'm improving myself.

I'm learning how to do more things and more valuable to the company now, too. This is a pretty cool thing that I think is going to be a win for the company and for the employees, that people can get excited about.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, I think being able to have employees really be able to do additional carpentry, to learn other trades, to really work within that, Wendy, I'm sure you've seen that. And how has that worked for your team when you said, "Okay, we're going to start doing some other things besides roofing?" What was some of the feedback that you had around that?

Wendy Marvin:

Yeah, a lot of trepidation at first, right? Hey, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, I don't do those things. And I'm like, "Yeah, you do. You do framing. You're fixing things on the roof. That's framing." They

don't call themselves other things. And again, to Nathan's point, it's just partnering with those people that can help alleviate some of those stresses of change because all that is just change. That's what everybody is freaking out about.

And then, give them some professionalism to be able to speak because the hardest part about it is you just don't want to make these changes and just toss your guys out there into the field because they don't have the confidence, right? And if they don't have the confidence, when they're standing there with your customer in the house, which is typically like, "Hey, what are you doing?" The customers are checking things out.

And they ask a question and your guys can't answer it, that's a ding in the trust department. So, before you send these guys out, you're engaging with companies like Sashco and using their advertising to talk about this is why we chose this company and why our guys have been trained by this because we care. There's so silly little things like little certificates. They go through training. We have some from CertainTeed. We have some from GAF.

We have probably a dozen certificates on our walls. But if the guys have a certificate on the wall from Sashco with their name, hint, hint, Nathan, that they can... we frame because we honor it. We go to IKEA and we buy cheap frames. But that wall is not only a wall of the customer's board and waiting for someone to come get them, and they're looking around and they're like, "Wow, this company really invests in their people. And look at all these things these people have done."

"And oh, my goodness, how cool. I saw Felipe sign up there, and Felipe is the guy on my jobsite. Oh, my gosh, I saw that." It's just good juju. Good stuff.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah, yeah. And I do want to say too, it's just like today, as we were visiting with you, we need to come on here. And Nathan and the team at Sashco were like, "We want to build, we want other contractors to know this." So, it's really about working with your manufacturers to find out what other contractors are doing because everyone is talking, whether it's your manufacturers or your associations or Roofers Coffee Shop.

But really finding out how other people are doing this I think through products, through employees, through training, it makes such a huge difference as you're trying to expand and put this together.

Wendy Marvin:

And you don't have to follow the exact same path. But you know what it does is it helps you avoid the puddles. They found the puddles first. Let's not step in them 10 times. Let's make a life lesson here and realize that they're going, "Hey, I did this," and it really didn't work. You should try this and you'd be like, "Oh, okay."

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. Yeah, I agree. So, I want to take this a little bit deeper because I think it's the employee, I mean, I think there's many levels when you start bringing on different things, right? And people do it all the time in several different kind of businesses. But when you're talking about construction, you're talking about

the water tightness of your home, everything you're protecting. There's a lot of fear based around that, both for the employees and for your customers.

So, Nathan, can you talk just a little bit about the importance of that communication. And really, I love it when contractors, I know Wendy does this all the time, use the products like caulking or sealants or ventilation or something that's not a shingle, and they talk about it during the sales process and really bringing the importance of performance products into that discussion.

Nathan Ferraro:

Sure. So, there's the initial pitch that there is a better way of doing things, right? When you're diversifying your business, you can do things the same way they've been done by lots of other companies or you can look for a way to add value. And most people get that initial piece, right? There's a way that I can add value here that maybe my competitors aren't doing. But a lot of times, we'll change something that we've been doing or change a product and we're still doing things with that pre, new way of discovering things.

So, I've got a case study here that I think is amazing. So, we had a customer in the northwest, who was using a urethane for a lot of their projects, right? And they came to us and they said, "We're having issues where the urethane doesn't have good adhesion." We said, "Oh, that makes sense because it's an area of high humidity so the products probably struggling to really bite in and get its adhesion, right?" So, they started using Big Stretch.

And they called us after a day, and he said, "It's not dry." We said, "Oh, no, no big deal. Give it another day and you should be fine." He call us the next day and the next day and the next day and he said, "It's still not dry. What is going on?" And we thought, "What could possibly be happening here?" Well, it turns out that the person who was doing this job was using an old trick where they were spraying the product with water, which when you're using a urethane helps it kick over and cure faster.

But when you're using a latex, does the exact opposite. And if you go out and spray it every day with water, it's never going to dry, right? And so, this is an area where I just like to talk about take advantage of the trainings because that's such a simple, simple fix. As soon as we figured it out, we said, "Oh, quit spraying it," they quit spraying it with water, everything was good, right?

And so, when you're diversifying, you can make simple, simple mistakes like that, where you're doing things the same way you've always been doing them but that's maybe not right when you're switching technologies or doing a new process, right? So, take advantage of those trainings and let the tech service department of the manufacturer solve issues for you, right? Don't try to problem solve on your own. Something is going wrong.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. I mean, and part of that too, is those relationships with you, the manufacturer, but also the relationships with distribution to make sure that they have some confidence that way and making sure that all of this is working to dispel that fear of a new product or a new way of installing with both employees and the customers. Wendy, I know you've been working with Nathan. How is this working for you with building these relationships?

And actually, go back to when you were expanding into some of these new areas. How did that work for you?

Wendy Marvin:

I think what's really interesting is you can't just walk in the room and plop down a box of products and say, "We're using this now," right? And we can laugh all we want, but people do that. And we ended up getting our box. We got a sample box that we asked for. And we ended up getting our box, and we didn't sit down and have training right away. They're all going, "Oh, we're moving to this stuff now. And it's like, oh, what, the owner is getting a kickback."

"I've never heard of this company before whatever, whatever." And it's like, if you explain to them, "Hey, we've met this company, and we haven't worked with them before but they are really standing behind their products and they're really interested in helping us learn this new technology." And I giggle when you talk about the Stretch because the guys play with those samples. They're like, "There's no way this is going to work. I don't even know. Oh, my God."

And it's like they're little kids with the slinky kind of thing. But then, they start asking questions and then we got product, paperwork and talked about installation and everything. And we still haven't connected and it's my fault with Nathan and the team for full on training yet. But it's not just about plopping the box on the desk. Then, they start asking questions. They start solving problems with the products.

And we have wet installation constantly this time of year, like we're in the PNW. We have green trees for a reason, let's just say that. And it's real pain to put any type of adhesive caulking or anything outside right now. And so, we do repairs in the rain and they tarp, but the paperwork and everything gets wet and stuffs wet outside. And they have this amazing caulking that we started to use.

And the guys came back and they were like little kids. "Oh, my God, we used it and we put it in and it sealed. It works." And I'm thinking, "Wow, it's funny. That's how that's supposed to happen."

Nathan Ferraro:

Right, right. I knew that.

Wendy Marvin:

And, Nathan, tell me the name of the product because I'm not pulling those out fast enough yet.

Nathan Ferraro:

That one is Through the Roof. Yeah.

Wendy Marvin:

Through the Roof. That stuff is gold. Gold. And the guys are super excited about it, which then gets them excited about looking. Okay, well, let's talk about some of this other stuff because one of the other things we have appear is masonry issues, right? So, we have a ton of chimneys because it's super cold sometimes, but nobody ever uses them for years on end. Nobody ever seals them. We've all kinds of mortar issues and stuff.

And the guy start going, "Hey, we got this job up there and the chimneys this. And what do you think about using this product?" I'm like, "Let's call Sashco," so they did. It's invaluable because then they start to say, "Oh, there it is, yeah." Then, they start solving problems and that's where you get people excited. And guess what, you're solving the problem for the customer, your guys are in the field.

They're representatives of your company and they're helping you make a sale for the next five things. I think one of the saddest things I've ever heard is being in a roofing best practices roundtable, 30 roofing companies there, and people say things like roofing is just one-off. It's really dumb. We do have roof. You just suck out as much money as you can because the customer is never coming back. And I'm thinking, "What? What? No, no."

I have customers we have done five roofs for because maybe the family transferred. Maybe they bought rentals. Maybe their daughter needed a roof. It is about creating relationships and showing them that you are an expert in the field for them to turn to, to solve problems. And Sashco helps us do that.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I love it, building the relationships on both sides with your own team. And so, I want to take that one step further and, Wendy, I want to start with you. What about your sales team? Okay. So, you have your production. They're using it, they're stretching it. Everything is great. But now, how do you correlate that training and not just with what you looked at now at Sashco but across the board? If you're going into different areas, how do you get your sales team into this diversification and training?

Wendy Marvin:

I always start with why. Why are we doing this? It's not about making money. Why are we doing this? We're solving problems for our customers. And so, then, we start to talk about the difference of the businesses. This is really interesting. Roofing is a very linear business, right? We tear the roof off. We put the roof on. They deliver the materials. We don't really have to do a lot of research and sourcing and going out and looking at different products for the customer or relying on a bunch of different kinds of subs to get bids back from.

So, it's a pretty clean, linear process. And when you start looking at selling this diversified work is you're really herding cats. And I don't know, there's no other way to describe it. You are trying to keep five cats in one place in a room, and you're, "Oh, God, that one is leaving and oh, this one is hungry." So, it really does take a lot of babysitting and training and help and bringing in some new people and bringing in partners like Sashco and other vendors, reaching out to your existing vendors.

We reached out to ABC the first time we got a siding bid. We were like, "Okay, what do we do with this?" And he was like, "We got you James Hardie, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." ABC was also the one who was like, "Hey, Hardie is not making this anymore. So, we want to give you a heads up, do you want to pick this up because you're going to want to have this on hand? They're not making trim right now."

So, those partnerships and that plug in for your people, for your distribution, and then having the manufacturers behind you, they all have to be working simultaneously. Because if your guys are not knowledgeable, they will sniff that a million miles away. Your customers will smell that, and you don't want to be part of that. Like Nathan said, quality, you have to continue the quality.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Quality. So, Nathan, in upselling, exactly what Wendy is talking about in upselling products, especially in a diversification, if you're doing new things, but just overall, what are some of the things that you train salespeople on? I mean, maybe I'm just missing this but it seems like we talk a lot about training for the installation but I don't know if we always talk training about sales and really being able to talk about why performance products, why they should care.

Because as a homeowner, we're like, "Do I really care about my ceilings and caulking? I don't know." But how do you train the sales team to get them to care?

Nathan Ferraro:

Yeah, you're totally right, Heidi. If you're changing your business, you need to learn how to do what you're changing into but you also need to learn how to win the bid, right? You've got to understand how do I sell what I'm doing? Because I've been selling roofs for so long, I'm not used to selling a siding or a remodel or whatever it is, right? And so, that's where I think, again, your manufacturers would love to train you on that piece too, right?

I mean, we arm folks all the time with our demo pieces, right? So, you can go to someone and say, "Hey, not only am I using a 40-year shingle instead of a 20-year shingle, but even down to the sealants, right?" This might be the traditional sealant that you're used to using. And this one that's going to move and flex with your house is the one I'm going to use, right? So, even down to the accessories, I'm using high-performance products that are going to make this something that you don't have to do again for a long time.

And then, when your daughter builds a house, you can give me another call.

Wendy Marvin:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that language too is a big deal. What he's talking about is you start to incorporate the training brings the sales to have the language. What makes you different? You don't want to be different because you're the cheapest. I mean, there's a model for that I guess if that's what you want to be. But if you really want to thrive and have a really exceptional business, you differentiate yourself by what? I want to be better.

I'm not the highest, I'm not the most expensive, but I'm a quality installer and I'm doing business in a manner that I will be here in 10 years if you still need me. And what do you say? I work with high-performing products like Sashco. And my guys have been through training specifically from this manufacturer. Why do they care? You said that they're not going to necessarily care. But if you lead in with one of the number one things that fails in any construction system, it's caulking.

It lasts about a year, maybe two. And when you change from the standard everyday thing that they don't even know is leaking to a high-performance thing that they don't have to think about, that's a huge upsell for a customer.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. And I think it shows respect to your customers too that they can learn and that they care about those little things because that's where the leaks are. Nobody wants a leak.

Wendy Marvin:

Big time.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I tell you. Look, it's amazing how these slides just work together.

Wendy Marvin:

It feels so good.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I know. So, when you're eliminating the callbacks, I think that again goes to that reputation of specially, say, you've just started in the siding and you're just doing siding. The worst thing you want at that point is a callback. And we always call that the penalty box. Wendy, talk about this.

Wendy Marvin:

We've talked about trust. Our penalty boxes we talked about, it's a bank account, right? And so, when we greet the customer warmly, we're making a deposit into the bank account. And when we help them solve a problem, we're making a deposit in the bank account. And when we screw up and we don't do something right along the way, we're taking something out of the bank account.

And what you're hoping for is, at the end of the day, that you've got enough input, you got enough balance in there, that if you do make a mistake, which stuff happens, that they're not going to use it as a, oh, you're a horrible contractor and everything. And that penalty box, when you're dipping your toe into this and it's new to you, you have to tread softly and make sure that you're getting in there in a manner that honors your reputation, right?

So, my company has built their business off of being trustworthy and doing great work and having quality installs, and we don't have a lot of callbacks. But if you jump into siding and you mess that up to another level, that is not only a ding to them but it's a ding to everybody that they know. Hey, yeah, whoa, we worked with Matrix and we love them for our roof but whoa, they did this part of our whatever and it just didn't go well.

And there's going to be some of that as you learn. But you got to take those isolated incidences and just make sure they don't happen again. And don't learn that the hard way where you start to see your reputation starts to suffer. Because it doesn't matter how great you are at roofing, if you dip your toe in this and you screw it up regularly and you don't do anything about it, it will take your reputation down for the other-

Heidi Ellsworth:

It will hurt your whole business, that's the thing, not just the part that you're diversifying into, but the whole business. So, training, prep, being aware, talking to other people, don't learn the hard way. I love that. That was one of the bullet points. I think it's so important as they're really going through that. As we're talking and this really takes it to the next thing, and Nathan, I'd like you to talk a little bit about this, starting us out because this isn't just about contractors and their customers.

This is about manufacturers to contractors, too. And contractors have a lot of trust issues.

Wendy Marvin:

Rightfully so.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. So, what's the importance of that customer experience?

Nathan Ferraro:

I mean, that's everything, right? Without trust, what are we doing here, right? I think that's part of why Wendy and I connect so well because at the core of both of our companies is trust. And we have less interaction face to face with a lot of the people using our products. And so, for us, that no callbacks thing is a huge piece of how we build our trust account or make sure that it stays high, right?

And I think it might even shock some people to think, you can have an expectation of no callbacks. That's okay, right? I think it's probably very wise to, when you're doing a job, set aside a little percentage of that job for the callbacks fund, such that if I need to go do a little maintenance, I can do that. But we don't want you to hang on to that money. We want you to, two years down the line, go spend that money on something else because there was no callback.

And that's really the expectation that we're going for and that's how we think people can build trust in our product. And hopefully, once they've used it, try new products from the manufacturer and keep using those in a really successful career of construction.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Yeah. When anyone is looking to diversify their business, it's that trust issue all the way through from when the products are made all the way through that finished beautiful product. And the contractor is really what brings it all together and finding the right connections. And I know, I can't believe the hour is going so fast. Wendy, I'm going to go to this one because I think this is really important.

You have great customers who have stuck with you. You have long-term relationships. How are you turning that into recurring sales on new, whatever you're diversifying into in the home improvement sector?

Wendy Marvin:

Well, you have to let them know we're not the greatest at that, but we're getting the word out through community events and different things that we go to is, hey, by the way, did you know we do home services now, when you talk about that. And then, just hearing what they're saying while they're talking, your sales staff, and not even your estimating staff but the people that answer the phones. Man, they're invaluable.

Wendy Marvin:

And they start to talk about, "Yeah, well, my husband and I were going to be doing this remodel or whatever. But now, we're going to have to do our roof and whatever." And it's like, if your person has picks up enough on that to say, "Absolutely, let me get your roofing information. But hey, by the way, I

want to let you know that when you're ready to do that remodel, we've got a new home division that we're expanding into." "Oh, my gosh, you do?"

There's a ton of opportunities with that. We bring in, looking at our bullet points, again, talking about one-year free inspection. I got so much grief from my team when we implemented this one year free inspection on our roofs. And they were like, "That's just dumb. Nothing is going to be wrong. We installed it right, whatever, whatever." It's an opportunity to meet again with the customer to find that some little squirrel out there stuck his nut up beside one of the shingles that's going to be a potential leak.

Or just to say, "Gosh, everything looks great. We might want to think about getting you a cleaning next year. Let's move forward." Again, you're not just anything, you're not just a roofer. You are not just in construction. You're out there to solve problems and to have these relationships with these customers. And if you're doing business in a manner where you can't run into your customers in the grocery store, and you feel like you have to duck behind an aisle, God, don't be that guy.

Heidi Ellsworth:

That's not good. No.

Wendy Marvin:

Don't be that person. And Nathan said it earlier, we are such a culture that is moving to that, right? I mean, try asking for a lemon at the dang restaurant anymore. And it's very small things that are getting taken away and not seen anymore. But this is a no cost way to differentiate your business to be something better to your customers. And we're giving you the tools to even have the people that are going to teach you how to do it.

And just that you're on this call at one point, you are already differentiating your company. But now, we're talking about you've got partnerships with your manufacturer. You've got another level of partnership with the distribution. You've got ongoing service that you can offer from top to bottom in a house for a customer of houses that I'm sorry, they age. It doesn't matter how brand new it is, three to five years, they're going to have issues.

And so, just ways to solve problems and to treat your customers like they are the gold that they are. Because if they're out selling for you, your sales budget doesn't have to be \$150,000 a year. If every person you talk to is out there telling their story, funnest ever we had, two realtors arguing with each other. They come walking in our door and I'm like, "What are you guys doing here?" They've worked with us for a long time.

And they're laughing, "We have to tell you this." I said, "What's going on?" We just had an argument in front of our customers about how we will not use any other roofer than our roofer because they didn't know each other initially. And they're both arguing about they won't use anybody but Matrix. Talk about the biggest compliment you could ever receive from a customer. Love that. That's what you want, that passionate referral that they are out there selling your business for you.

Heidi Ellsworth:

And that you have what they need. So, you're the first stop. Hey, do you do this? And then, they know.

Wendy Marvin:

And if I don't know how, I can call Nathan.

Nathan Ferraro:

That's right.

Heidi Ellsworth:

I love it. I love it. So, we just took that whole hour and that was amazing. And so, at this point, we did have one question that came in and that was on that free inspection. So, just real quick, Wendy, because we have four minutes left. But real quick, how did you implement that free inspection with your sales team? And how did you get your sales team prepped to be able to sell other things around the house since the roof is going to be perfect after a year? How did you help that?

Wendy Marvin:

So, the free inspection I'd clarify is on the roofing side. If you've installed caulking around their window and you have free inspection but we've done the roof, we could throw that in that we're going to look at it. But it's getting the people that talk to the customers to be able to mention it. And by the way, did you know that not only being a Master Elite contractor, but we also offer a free inspection at the end of one year.

We leave it to the customer to call us to schedule because navigating that scheduling was just way too much for us, and we learned that the hard way. But if even 10% of your customers that you install a roof for or you do major work for, say we do siding and we can head something off at the past, we're still going to charge them for the repair. We're not doing repairs for free but we make them part of our Matrix family.

We give them discounts because they've already done work with us, that they get an extra discount for providing those services. And we elevate them in times of crisis. So, if you're on my Matrix family list and we have a tornado blow through this area, you are a priority over standard customers by being a past customer of ours. And man, that stuff carries weight, carries weight with our customers. And have we found everything on every roof?

No, but the percentage of times that we've found things and fix them before they were a problem or had another ping in the customer's mind to remember that the next time their cousin is talking about a roof, "Oh, my God, that's so funny. Two years ago, this company did our roof and I couldn't remember their name, but they came out to do this inspection."

Heidi Ellsworth:

And left a card and a little magnet. I know it's stuff like that, that I think just makes such a difference. I have to thank you. Honestly, I learned so much every time we do these. And I am so impressed-

Wendy Marvin:

Me too.

Heidi Ellsworth:

... with both of you. Thank you, Nathan. Thank you, Wendy. Thank you so much for being here today. We're going to have their information here everyone out there. These are the folks to reach out to. This is where you build your network, right? And so, Sashco has a full directory on Roofers Coffee Shop. You can find all their information. You can get contacts. You can find Nathan. Nathan has done a lot of great podcasts.

I mean, there's a lot of really good stuff out there. And of course, Wendy is one of our RCS influencers. So, not only does Matrix have a directory as part of the R club, but Wendy also has a full directory as one of our influencers. So, really, if you want to stalk them, it's really easy to do on Roofers Coffee Shop.

Wendy Marvin:

I'm happy to help.

Heidi Ellsworth:

You can find them, no problem. And so, I'm going to, before I find a way, talk about our next thing one last time, Nathan, thank you so much for being on the show.

Nathan Ferraro:

It was my pleasure. Thanks for putting this all together. And, Wendy, I'm glad we could connect to get you on. This was great. Thank you.

Wendy Marvin:

Thank you guys so much.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Wendy, thank you. Thank you. I know that it takes a lot of time out. And this is the kind of stuff that we're sharing that I think just makes such a huge difference. Especially thank you to Sashco for really coming up with this idea and putting it out there. I do want to say I am on the road. I'm at the Midwest Roofing Contractors Association show in Milwaukee. So, we don't stop man, whether we're at home or we're on the road.

We're bringing this stuff to you. But I also want to encourage everybody to watch. We're going to have live video coming from the show this week. Be sure to check in and see what's new out here in the Midwest. And this week also on Thursday morning, we are going to be having our coffee conversations. Our coffee conversation is going to be with women veterans. I'm telling you, do not miss it. Thursday morning, it's going to be awesome, 7 A.M., Pacific.

And finally, not quite finally but on December 1st, we have John Kenny with Cotney talking about estimating training. So, estimating training for your folks online. It goes right back to what we talked about today. So, our next RLW, please don't miss it. I know everyone is looking for it. You get a certification with this estimating training.

Wendy Marvin:

We just put one of our estimators through that training. It was amazing. It was amazing. Yeah.

Heidi Ellsworth:

Awesome. He's going to be talking about this on December 1st. Please join us in. And as we talked about before, this RLW has been recorded. It will be within the next 24 hours up on Roofers Coffee Shop. Please share it. Share it with other people out there who want to diversify their business and find out from these experts. Thank you so much for joining us today. And we'll see you next month on the 1st with the next RLW. Thanks a lot.

Wendy Marvin:

Bye, guys.