

Andy Latimer:

How important is it to keep that culture and that culture of being really an incredible strategic partner for your clients and having that culture permeate throughout your teams? How important is that? And how do you do that? How do you keep that going?

Rob Fallon:

Yeah, I think even recently with Christmas being not that far away, it was the gifts even we send. And some of the messaging I get back for some of the gifts were just like, "Hey, thank you for your partnership. We so appreciate how we've built together." And I think that that moment, that smile from the guy in the warehouse for you. That moment where someone says, dude, what you've done for our business ... I think that's probably secretly what we're all playing for. If we're being super honest. Money's nice, building business is nice. Stuff's nice. But that get of, we accomplished something, dude that's everything

Gina Pomponi:

Yeah, and we're an extension.

Rob Fallon:

And hearing that you are a partner, I think it starts there, and presenting it that we want to be a partner in a consultative group. When you feel that way here and you share that with your team and our management shares it with their team, it's, Hey, this is how we're building their business. I think that is how you keep that culture going and that evolution.

Gina Pomponi:

You know what's funny? No one ever calls us a vendor. We are not their media.

Rob Fallon:

Right the only time it's a vendor is-

Gina Pomponi:

We're their partners.

Rob Fallon:

... feel this out for our accounting. That's the vendor form.

Gina Pomponi:

We're not their vendors.

Rob Fallon:

Probably the only time we say that word.

Gina Pomponi:

And that's really interesting. Once again, having come from places where just you did media, you had some clients that called you your media vendor. No one calls us that because that's not what we are. We're an extension of them.

Rob Fallon:

Vendor feels like carnival, like a nacho guy or deep-

Gina Pomponi:

Like you're selling something?

Rob Fallon:

... deep-fried fried pretzel. And I want on of those.

Gina Pomponi:

Yeah. Funnel cake guy. Now I'm hungry. Thanks, Rob.

Andy Latimer:

You hit on a good point there, Rob. I think there's a pride and a sense of responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by doing great things. I believe Zig Ziglar, if you ... I'm going to actually quote Zig Ziglar.

Rob Fallon:

We're going to Ziggy.

Andy Latimer:

I think his quote was, once you become an expert work, it's a paraphrasing, work is no longer work. It's your passion. It's what you love. So how are you guys as leadership going forward, how are you going to cultivate that inside the Bluewater family and inside the Bluewater team? How are you going to cultivate that chase of excellence, that aspiration to be the greatest? And how that becomes a place of joy and personal, establishing personal growth and personal ...

Gina Pomponi:

Aspiration.

Andy Latimer:

Aspiration. A personal accomplishment, a sense of self through doing greatness in your work.

Rob Fallon:

Golly.

Gina Pomponi:

We do so much for that.

Rob Fallon:

Good question. I think that's-

Andy Latimer:

I ask the tough ones, Rob.

Rob Fallon:

You do.

Andy Latimer:

No softballs.

Rob Fallon:

No softballs, right. That starts and it started years ago. With one word, and it's on the wall, it's right by the studio, and it says hustle. It's the most important verb. And I watch a lot of motivational dudes out there that are pitching their stuff and their methodology on social. And it all comes down to that. And it's a personnel decision. And you can ask anyone on our team, especially at the senior level who came up to it, we can hire just about anybody to do just about any of the job functions. As long as they have that, as long as there's a hustle and a want.

Gina Pomponi:

Desire, yeah.

Rob Fallon:

I can't teach anybody how to desire or be passionate about getting up and waking up and kicking ass every day. You got to want that yourself. And if you have that, just about everything else is possible inside of our company. And I think those are the people we look for, our production crews do working interviews. And when they do, they're looking for one thing, give a shit. Just hustle, just wake up and want to go. And if you can do that, that's how we keep that fire alive. That's how we keep it. We call it the Bluewater way. We've given it its own name at this point. But that's what it is. It's that tenacity to want to serve your teammates that you're around. If you can do that, we win.

Andy Latimer:

All right. How do you manage fear of failure versus fear of success inside a company?

Gina Pomponi:

Always fail forward. There's not one person that is afraid to walk into my office or his office and say, this is what happened. Honestly. And I've thrown myself on many a sword over the years because of that. As long as they're failing forward. So anytime something happens, we sit down, we look at the situation what happened and we change the process, or we change how we do things so that it makes it better and it becomes a learning experience moving forward.

Rob Fallon:

Yeah. Fail forward is a good one, fail faster. I think the other thing is, you have to have enough stomach to say to our clients, we don't agree with that. We're not-

Andy Latimer:

That's a tough conversation, Rob.

Rob Fallon:

... yes people-

Gina Pomponi:

Sometimes, yeah.

Rob Fallon:

... even though our wallets depend on it. There is a failure point in there. And again, our clients will turn to us and go, if you feel that strongly, fine, but that's on you. And then there's a moment of-

Andy Latimer:

Gut check.

Rob Fallon:

... we win or die based on this decision. And so, are we going to miss some of them? Absolutely. We've been wrong before, but I promise you if we've ever dug our heels in that hard, better things have come from it than not. And so failing is definitely part of business.

Gina Pomponi:

But not testing and not doing things-

Rob Fallon:

But not trying or not giving a crap-

Gina Pomponi:

...is failing for sure.

Rob Fallon:

... is worse than failing.

Gina Pomponi:

Yeah.

Andy Latimer:

We used to talk about all the time. There's three levels of the way a campaign's going to come out. It's either going to tell you real quick that it's a loser and you can't go forward. It's going to tell you that it's an absolute winner success. And that makes an easy choice.

Gina Pomponi:

Grand slam, yeah.

Andy Latimer:

But it's working campaigns and working strategies that are long in tail that I think are a challenge of today. How do you help manage the success of your clients? And how do you manage the success of your customers when you're working with them from a standpoint of, look, this is a middle of the road. You're getting good response, but you're going to have to stick to it. And you're going to have to hold the line because the big reward comes later?

Rob Fallon:

Yeah. There's not a lot of home runs.

Gina Pomponi:

Not as many as there used to be.

Rob Fallon:

There's tons of losers. There's a lot of base hits, but those base hits if you look at the data. And I think that's ... We become data junkies. If you're in a D2C business, you have to look at those numbers and go, okay, all right, well, this is telling me this is close. We're going to have to do something else to get ... Maybe it's more response, or maybe it's conversion rate, or maybe it's ... they're working. Everything on those campaigns means you have to work it. Even winners. There's two problems with D2C campaigns failure and success, sometimes failure is because you had such a winning campaign. You weren't set up for that. We've seen that plenty of times.

Andy Latimer:

Or you expose the fact to another more set up operation to be able to attack you.

Gina Pomponi:

Those are good problems to have though.

Rob Fallon:

Yeah, or you open the door to the sharks. So how do we do it? Yes. It has to be a nurture relationship. You have to be willing to grind. And 80% of the work is the grind. It's that middle ground. It's not all homers. It's not all losers. It's how do we grind it out for our clients.

Andy Latimer:

Now that you set the tone for the business, and you literally are setting the tone, the example of Bluewater, What are you most passionate about now? What's next and beyond? And when you get out of bed in the morning and you put your feet on the ground, what are you thinking about for this business? What gets you stoked? What gets you excited?

Gina Pomponi:

For me ...

Rob Fallon:

Go ahead.

Gina Pomponi:

Yes, it's the operational stuff because I'm a dork, but I love sales. I spend a tremendous amount of time with our sales team. I love to be on the calls. I love to get a challenge from a prospect and put that proposal together and get them there and close the deal. Close the deal. Exciting. I do love looking at challenges internally from process and infrastructure standpoint. That's exciting to me. I know that's boring. You both are not that way.

Rob Fallon:

No, it's okay.

Gina Pomponi:

So somebody had to be the-

Rob Fallon:

I'm thankful for that, by the way. My God, believe me, I am.

Gina Pomponi:

Yeah, somebody had to be that way.

Rob Fallon:

No. God, it's awesome to hear you say that. Because what stokes me, I've got four words written down, build value, build people. So if we're doing those two things, that's how we're going to grow. But for me, I look at it and go, we're two people, five people. And then 25 people, okay. Back maybe to 18, 30 people, cool. 100 people.

Rob Fallon:

And that was, Oh, by the way, 30 square feet, 300 square feet, 33 ... now 36,000. Size of the building is ...

Andy Latimer:

The growth.

Rob Fallon:

It's a growth story, but I want to continue that. We've had a hell of a lot of growth accolades, but for me, it's like, I want to grow it so that I know that, yes, I love the get of a new client that's saying we trust you. We're trusting you. And it's even more exciting when they're an established brand has been around. Golly, that's a moment. But I wake up in the middle of the night and I go, I got an idea for this client. And that to me is the most-

Gina Pomponi:

He emails me at 1:00 AM all the time.

Rob Fallon:

Yeah. There's a lot of late nights for my brain. But that's where I feel super stoked. And then the idea of continuing our growth story. I don't know what it's going to be like in two years. I don't know what it's going to be like in three, but I know the path I want to go. Best-laid plans. Let's see if we can get there. Let's see if we can double, triple, quadruple in size. Maybe.

Andy Latimer:

I think It's been a ... I described to somebody the other day. Well, what's, because I'm involved in other businesses and sit on boards of other businesses and own other businesses, and they said, "Well, what's the difference between where Bluewater is and where those other businesses are?" And I described it to them. What I love about Bluewater and from the origin is it was just a scrappy little start-up business that no one gave a second look. And there were points where people were like, well, who the hell are you? And there was a point in the business where we intentionally kept ourselves off the radar. We didn't want anybody to know who we were. We didn't. Because we were doing things that were taking the outer edges of the business and closing it in.

Rob Fallon:

I remember the pitch. It was, we had the best producers you've never heard of. And I think that was like, well, I haven't heard of you. Well, you've seen my shows.

Andy Latimer:

You've seen my stuff, you didn't know it was me. So from I think that growth, and you see the growth of the business over time and then you see it have these great periods of growth where you're 1300% growth. And you're having years that are just off the charts, crazy growth, 13000% growth I think we had one year, 13000. Mind you, that was a hard growth period. So that made us Inc 500 companies, Inc 5,000 companies, top 100 agencies to watch and the fastest growing agencies from ad week. Those types of accolades have given us validation as a business, but now it's also set a standard. It's now a mature

business that is grown, that has the infrastructure in place. That, like I've said before, it's debt-free, properly established with a great management team and great leadership going forward.

Andy Latimer:

Now the question is, where are you going next? What's the growth place? Where is it growing the most? And where are you seeing the potential for the business? Because what we've always been good at in the past is saying, okay, here's where the business is. Here's where a need is in the marketplace and responding to the need. Where's the need in the marketplace? Where do they need us the most? And where do your clients need you to expand the most? And how are you going to do that?

Rob Fallon:

Digital. Digital, digital, digital, digital. And I count OTT as part of that. And I think it is the single ... and digital is an all-encompassing throwaway bullshit word. But what does that really mean?

Andy Latimer:

You're not supposed to say that.

Rob Fallon:

I'm sorry. But it's just a platform. And it's like, we're marketers. I don't give a shit what the platform is. I want to find success no matter what the platform is. But I think the most expansive opportunity and the most, and coincidentally, the most hockey stick like opportunity for our business is expanding the digital touchpoints, the digital outreach, the digital growth for our clients in all of their social media marketing, their programmatic, their PPC, their search. All of it is opportunity for us to help them build and find ways to get even more nimble. And I think D2C television was a market change or market changing thing. And I want to be the same for OTT. I think we have the same opportunity. And I said I, but it's we, we have the same opportunity to do something disruptive on the OTT side.

Andy Latimer:

So is this the great age of direct to consumer? Have we now entered into the new paradigm shift that's going to define the next 30, 40 years?

Gina Pomponi:

Hell yes. I think so. And all these ... I'm not saying-

Rob Fallon:

Yeah. It's just going to be platform. How are we going to be able to ... I'm going to be able to thumbprint my watch eventually. And that's going to bring me the grocery. I don't know. It's just going to continue to evolve.

Gina Pomponi:

Brick and mortar might not go completely away. They're going to need to have that other element.

Rob Fallon:

It's not going away, but it's going to change.

Gina Pomponi:

They're all going to need to have an online presence. They're all going to need to figure that infrastructure out. And that's not an easy thing to do. They're not set up for that. They're not set up to advertise that way. They don't know how to market direct to consumers. They never had to do that before. They just had to put a fluffy commercial on TV and hope that when you walk through the grocery store and you walk past the Pop-Tarts that you were like, Oh, shit, I want Pop-Tarts.

Rob Fallon:

Simply put, we're only going to move the economy and the buying habits, it's only going to move at the rate that marketing can put out the way we're going to do it and logistics can keep up with it. Consumers will respond by and large to what marketing tells them. We know that. But at the rate that marketing continues to push product and innovation and then consumers respond to it and logistics deal with the bugs and how to get it, that's the speed we're going to move at.

Rob Fallon:

And now we found, we had to. There was no other choice, unless you want to be homeless and have no food this year, but to pivot. So it forced everybody into this type of channel now. And I think that's going to ... We are in that place where this is the new way of life. And I don't think we're going to go completely backwards. I think it's just going to evolve into new and better ways of getting things easier.

Andy Latimer:

What makes you better than the big agencies out there? The WPPs? The Leos? The monsters out there? What makes you better or a better choice? Why? Why Bluewater?

Rob Fallon:

You didn't see us coming. Dude, we're not Ogilvy. We don't have a history like any of the biggest agencies in the world. We're scrappy, we're nimble. You get the boutique service with big results. And for us, it's not ... I get asked like, Hey, how are you going to do best in class? How are you ... like, okay. Yeah, you're going to get awesome results. And here's why, because I don't give a shit about the deliverable count. Yeah, I'm sure our lawyers and our accountants, they're going to tell me we can't do ... Yeah. I know. But sometimes results mean you've got to do option three. And let's do it because it's right. And that's going to make this thing work.

Rob Fallon:

And so I think that's the difference. It's not, Hey, I'm worried about, Hey, what's the billable rate on that one thing. It's like, yeah, that's cool. We got to do that so we can eat, but son of a gun, I want the campaign to work. Because I don't want you leaving me because it didn't work. So whatever it takes, let's go at it. We're all in on our relationships. And I think that's, for me, that's what it is. I want to look you in the eye and go, we did that. I want to look that to our client and say that and say, we accomplished this for you. Not, sorry, bro. That's the worst phone call I got to make.

Gina Pomponi:

It's the experience and the passion and the building. And we don't have this big, huge communications department over here that's charging you by the hour. And who you are getting when you go to Leo Burnett? Is Leo in the corner that I don't know about?

Rob Fallon:

There's a lot of great things that come from the big agencies. Yeah. I know they compete creatively and I get it. And I think our creative is pretty amazing too.

Gina Pomponi:

They're all going to be trying to get into the direct response space. I'm guessing. And I've seen a few of them try to do it. And once again, you're not a marketer that suddenly wakes up and becomes a direct marketer. It doesn't work that way. It's experience. It's all the years and all the things that we've done and our deep understanding of it. It's an art, it's a cross between an art and a science as we always say. They're going to be in our pool soon, but I don't care how big they are. I feel like they're ill-equipped to be in our pool.

Rob Fallon:

Yeah, scrappy. I think scrappy, and I think it's, again, it's the work. What do the work did for you? And I love some of these amazing commercials that come out every year and it's like, awesome. And then I saw another group yesterday who had some cool tech and I'm like, yeah, but what kind of story are you

telling with it? And so for me, it's like, what did the work do? How did it move you forward? And are we creatively attacking what's best for our clients?

Andy Latimer:

When I look at this and I look at the way we built the business originally, we built the studio and the assets as a producer's toolbox. That everything was available and there was nothing you couldn't achieve creatively. And then we put the best media team in the world together and said, okay, let's go out and let's attack. And let's make sure that we're getting the data and we're sharing that back and forth and we're getting smarter and we're getting our team smarter and we're getting more educated and we're getting better data sets. And we're building these data sets to start to tell us the future of the business. And then we said, well, there's holes that we went out and filled, and we filled those holes.

Andy Latimer:

So what's the end piece? How are people buying it? How are they consuming it? We went out and bought an Amazon management company to understand what was going on Amazon. We built the digital company to figure out the transactional side of it, to make sure we had the transactional data. We built out social media teams. We built out paid digital advertising. We built out all the elements of it to say, if you can't understand the full picture of it, you're going to lose it.

Andy Latimer:

But the most important legacy that I leave behind here is the good name that is Bluewater media and that is Bluewater. The one thing that no one can ever say and has ever been able to say about this company is that we didn't care and that we didn't give all of our passion and all of our concern and all the effort in the world to make them successful.

Andy Latimer:

They always left, even if the campaign was a failure, they left with assets that would drive them forward in the future. They left with data that would help them make them smarter with their business. If you hold that and that honor and that character in the sense that every time we shake a hand or sign a deal, that it's our name. It's not just Bluewater's name, but it's Rob Fallon's name and it's Gina Pomponi's name. And it's everybody who works in the business's name that's out there on the line because you only get one thing. I tell my kids all the time, you'll only get one name. Make sure you honor it. And that's the name you got. The name you got is Bluewater and I want you guys to honor it.

Andy Latimer:

This has been Bluewater Talks. I thank both of you for joining me today. I look forward to the incredible future and the things you're going to build together. And that I get to be a part of, and enjoying growing it with you and seeing the path that you guys take it on. I'm excited for you. I'm excited for the future. For those of you watching out there, if you want to learn more about Bluewater, just go to [bluewater.tv](http://bluewater.tv). These fine cups are available for 19.95. Not really available, just a joke.

Andy Latimer:

But come visit us, come check it out and come see what's going on. And you just might find that there's something here that these guys can help you with. I'm sure they're happy to take a phone call and have a free consultation with you whenever you want.

Gina Pomponi:

Absolutely.

Andy Latimer:

We love looking at businesses and we love helping businesses grow. That's what it's been from the beginning. And that's what it will always be. This has been Bluewater Talks. I'm Andy Latimer. You guys have a good day.