

SUBTA Power Hour - Transcript

Nov 15, 2017

Today's Guests:

- Cindy Nichols: The Wordy Traveler
- John Haji: Gentleman's Box
- Paul Jarrett: Bulu Box

Topic: Celebrate National Philanthropy Day

Michelle: Hello and welcome to the SUBTA Power Hour as we celebrate National Philanthropy Day. As entrepreneurs, we take inspiration and support for our businesses from the communities where we live, work, and everywhere that we have customers. We are fortunate to have our guests today as subscription box leaders who are celebrating doing good as simply good business each and every day. I'll start with introductions.

Michelle: Cindy Nichols is the founder of The Wordy Traveler. She is passionate about creating a better life for women and girls throughout the world while providing their subscribers with the best literary experience available, and we are excited to hear your story Cindy.

Cindy: Thank you.

Michelle: John Haji is joining us from the Gentlemen's Box where he employs Steps Services team members to help pack the boxes and John just launched Giving the Dollar--an actual subscription site that makes it simple for individuals to give back. John, welcome aboard.

John: Thank you so much for having me, Michelle.

Michelle: Our pleasure. Paul Jarrett is also joining us from Bulu Box. Bulu provides incarcerated people a second chance, and they also partner with Vitamin Angels. Paul you do a tremendous amount in your community to foster entrepreneurship as well.

Paul: Thanks for having me.

Michelle: Thank you! This is your host, Michelle Lang, and welcome to our program today. Now, before we dive into the details of each of the programs that you are each doing, I would love to hear from you as to why you believe doing good is good for business. Cindy, why don't we start with you?

Cindy: Well, I just believe that the more value you can add, the more impact you can have, then more people, then, that are attracted to you. You know, it's that old adage, "You get what you give," and I just think that in today's society having any business that runs on that principle of adding value to the community and value to the world, you know, that's just responsible entrepreneurship and it's responsible business, and I just think that most people--I mean, all people, I think, when you look deep down in our heart, we do wanna know that we're making a difference through choices we make that are helping the world, and so being able to have the ability to do that in your business or in your life, I just think is--you know, it's a responsibility, but it's also creatively I think one of the best places to be.

Michelle: Well put, Cindy. I really love how you captured your story. Paul and John, what do you guys think?

Paul: I think Cindy nailed it. As she was saying it, I was like, "Oh, man. I don't know if I can say it any better than that," but I totally kind of--you know, the karma thing or "You get what you give," it is--there's a part of me that is the business competitor, always wants to succeed by any means poss--kind of like win by any means possible, but you know, I've done that and it's lonely, right? And celebrating with a team, and winning with a team, and doing good by a community, it really, truly does feel better. It's more fulfilling and I kind of always remind myself, you know, "On your deathbed, what are you gonna think about doing?" And the truth of the matter is, you know, going to our warehouse and shaking hands with folks that are really grateful and thankful to be part of something bigger and have a great job means so much more than kind of saving a penny on something because you got the better end of the deal on something, but I think Cindy really nailed it. Thank you, Paul. John?

John: I've been on the end of having a fulfillment team prior to working with Step Services and now having Step Services to Paul's point, and you walk into your warehouse. You know, it's just--you are filled with joy when you're looking at something that you're giving back. For us, it's not even something that we advertise, to be honest. It's not like Gentleman's Box is saying, "Hey. We employ Step Services," or, "We work with disabled individuals and give them the

opportunity.” You know, we do it because we feel good about it, and I believe in good karma as well. So, I believe by giving back it goes full circle and it’s something people have for us.

Michelle: For any of you, was there a catalyst that started you on these paths?

Paul: Yeah. I would say I didn’t have a lot growing up, and kind of the--I actually grew up in a trailer park, and it’s kind of--I witnessed kind of a lot of really great people that kind of caught the raw end of the deal. So, I’d say not having a ton growing up and kind of being familiar with kind of the type of individuals--and it’s just made me feel more comfortable about hiring formerly incarcerated folks, and just frankly doing the right thing. So, it’s just the way that I’ve grown up has had a significant impact, and then further, kind of having a job in New York, having some pretty terrible bosses has really taught me what not to be like.

Michelle: That is powerful Paul. Can you tell us more about your program that helps incarcerated people get a new start.

Paul: I think John had a good point about how a lot of this stuff you just do it, and it was interesting for us because on this topic we actually had to pause for a moment and take inventory of the different things that we’re doing, and not because like, “Oh, we’re such a great company,” or whatever, but it just felt like the right thing to do, and we always look for the scenarios that are a win-win-win for all parties involved, and Defy Ventures is a group that actually came to us, and they’re all over the nation, and they said, “Hey. Do you wanna come spend a day in jail?” And I was like, “Woah. Okay. You have my attention. What is this?” And essentially, the program has people that are either going to be incarcerated their entire life, formerly incarcerated, and they put them through what they call the EIT--entrepreneurs in training program--and they spend all year working on it, learning about markets and competition, and some of them have a violent history, some of them don’t, which I think is fascinating because typically, inmates have a violent history, don’t really get much attention or a second chance at programs or whatever offered, and so I spent a day in jail and there were some folks that we were talking with, we ended up working with the state, and we not only--I actually found out that we had been hiring a few people that went through the program. We kind of tightened up a bit through Defy Ventures and started hiring more people out of the program. I think this is fascinating the people that we’ve hired--actually, Defy Ventures graduates that go through the program, and then they go out into the general population, only 3.2% of them return to prison versus 76% of people that don’t go through the program. So, to be--I mean, 3% versus 76% is insane, right? And to have potential jobs lined up for these folks when they graduate, it’s huge

for them, it's huge for us. The happy outcome of that is the state actually provides benefits. So, it's kind of a win-win-win scenario, but at the end of the day, you know, when you go and you're part of this program, and you actually feel the nerves of some of these folks that are pitching ideas--because that's part of the program is they pitch a business idea or they kind of pitch themselves. There's a real connection there because I think most of us on this panel have been pitching or presenting, and that anxiety--it's kind of fascinating to see--you know, picture the scariest inmate you can in your head right now and to have that person really nervous, pitching their jewelry company to you, you immediately connect with that, and it's just been a fascinating--one of the programs that we've run, and we're just thankful to be a part of it and thankful that we just kind of took a chance on it, and it's been phenomenal.

Michelle: Thank you for sharing Paul. You brought up something that I believe many people struggle with, and that is fear. You grew up around people that came from many different walks of life, right? Perhaps many were incarcerated or on the edge, and you never quite knew where they were going to end up, but when you are familiar with the situation, it takes away a little bit of the fear.

Paul: Yes, that is absolutely right, and to be honest, a 6'8" dude with a tattoo on his face is scary as hell.

Paul: When you're in that scenario and you're in that environment, and then you learn like, "Oh, man. This guy did something when he was 18," and it was just a stupid thing where he drank too much and beats somebody up and hurts somebody, and he 65 and he hasn't hurt a fly, I think it's gonna be okay if we give them a shot or whatever, and you know, we make sure all our employees are comfortable with the scenario, but I 100% agree with you. I think that our perceptions and our ideas when you get in this scenario, many times they're fulfilled, but many times, they're not at all what you think. You know, there's one of our newest hires, you know, he was an accountant at a firm and something bad went down and he didn't do the right thing, but this guy is now working with us and he's a phenomenal guy, and he's catching stuff, and frankly, adding to the process of making the company better because his skill set is so much higher. So, and with anything, there's risk and reward, but so far the program's great, and think that you really struck on we fear that which we don't know, but when we embrace it and are kind of transparent, and open, and honest about it, a lot of that kind of--our ideas just start crumbling to the side. You know, they just start a falling apart of what it is, but it's interesting planning a holiday party and we have to consider house arrest people and whatever it is, but it's been great so far.

Michelle: Great example. John, I know that you're working with Step Services team, which helps people with disabilities. As we head into your topic, can you share the catalyst? I also think this is another group that people are sometimes fearful as well. Sometimes people see somebody in a wheelchair and they don't know what to do. Is that because they don't wanna be helpful? Sometimes they are fearful of saying the right or wrong thing.

John: Yeah, sure. So, as far as a catalyst, you know, I think that our initiative with Gentlemen's Box and since inception, we've always thought of ways to do good, and so when the opportunity was presented to us--in this situation, Steps Services, which stands for Services to Enhance Potential--you know, we were working with a PR company, and the gentleman who was a really sweet guy, his son is disabled and is part of this organization. So, when the opportunity was presented to us to employ them as part of our fulfillment team, you know, we jumped right on board with it. You know, we started off with a handful of individuals, and what we saw in turn was the level of commitment that came from these individuals was far better than what we've seen in the past in experiencing other fulfillment companies, and even our internal organization we have and other staffing company. So, from there--you know, we've been working with them for about a year now, and from there, we've only had [inaudible 29:48] relationship out of it. You know, I think--you know, one thing--to your point about being fearful about these individuals, it's funny because I question how they define disabled because of the couple dozen people that come in every month to pack boxes, one person is walking with crutches, and so I think why people become fearful is because disability could be not just physically--it could be emotionally, it could be socially. So, I think there's always that thought of socially and emotionally, how are they gonna act when you're around them, and I think maybe that's where sometimes people can be a little bit fearful. They don't know how to communicate with them or they fear how they'd react communicating with them, but that's not something that--fortunately, we have not experienced that and I think it's been a really good relationship so far.

Michelle: Excellent. Thank you, John. I'm curious, John and Paul, was there any pushback in your organizations about bringing these different kinds of people than the people we're used to or "non-professional fulfillment" into your organization?

Paul: Yeah, I think there was indirect--maybe pushback isn't a good response. It was questions or concern, etc., and I kinda take the stance of everything lines up and it makes sense, and our core passion at our company is win-win-win, and it's like, "Hey. It checks all the boxes of what

we're trying to do as a company," in regard to the technical and cultural thing. So, unless I hear a really great reason why we shouldn't, then I think we should proceed because it's fulfilling, and ultimately, I said, "It's up to the person running operations. This is how I feel and I know the person in operations feels really comfortable in this situation," but yeah, I would say there was a little bit of a slight, indirect pushback, some questioning, and now what's cool is we have an open relationship with Defy Ventures to kind of send whoever from our company through program and it's kind of--it's fun to go and attend and see an 18 year old intern going straight into kind of prison and being part of this thing and playing patty cake with an inmate or whatever weird exercise they have us do. So, it's turned out for the better.

Michelle: Wonderful. Thank you, Paul. John, any pushback in your organization?

John: Yeah. Like Paul said, maybe there were some questions that just--raised that were regarding perhaps maybe the efficiency of fulfilling line, right? You know, we try to cram fulfillment in a certain set number of days, and I think the small little question was like, you know, "Is the crew gonna be able to handle it in," let's say it was four days, but that was quickly overcome, but the value of the fulfilling--like, feeling good about employing Step Services outweighs the question of efficiency and just--you know, you just bring them in longer. If it takes longer to fulfill the boxes, then you have the crew in much longer because helping them out outweighs any efficiency issues. So, that was the only--I don't know. Like you said, I wouldn't call it pushback, but that was the only question that ever was brought up, and that was quickly overturned by the team. We realized it.

Michelle: What about the financial bottom line? Does it cost you more, less, or about the same?

John: You know, actually, it costs us less. So, financially it also made sense for us to do it, but you know, it sometimes depends on certain months that we're building boxes. You know, they may take longer, and you think, "Okay. The crew we had before could've done it much quicker," and some months it's much cheaper, but yeah, I think overall, though--yeah, we don't--I think that since moving over to them, the costs have been relatively the same if you average it out over the months that we've worked with them, so.

Michelle: Okay. Paul, what about you?

Paul: The cost is lower, but on occasion there are issues that arise, and so I'll say, like, soft cost on occasion is higher. So, I think net, it's probably about the same, or I'd say we come out making a little bit more money, but I would just say, you know, there's definitely--you know, if

we're getting tax breaks and things like that, and we're getting sort of more money on paper, there's time that's added to figuring out things like--you know, figuring out how to do a proper holiday party with kind of some additional things that we have to consider. I think it kind of equals out in the end, and like overall, something you can't add a value on is how it adds positively to the culture, and that's--you can't put a dollar amount on people being happy at work and engaged, and you have to believe--I know there's some studies out there that back this, but you know, you just have to believe deep down that that kind of happiness and engagement is more valuable than anything.

Michelle: Well, *National Geographic* just did an entire issue on countries that are happiest on this planet, and it's a slightly different topic and definition of *happy*, but so much of it revolves around social connections and engagement with your community. The bottom line is also important. You brought up a great point, Paul, that there's also other ways to get tax breaks and other advantages that add to that value. I think you're each doing it for the right reason, but it's also good to know that there's other parts of the economic engine here that make it a good business decision as well.

Paul: Absolutely.

Michelle: Thank you both for sharing that. We're going to take a quick commercial break and come right back, and Cindy, heads up, we're going to be going global with you. Okay?

Cindy: Sounds great.

Michelle: Meet Vantiv, a new partner has joined the SUBTA community. For those of you who don't know about Vantiv, they are a leading payments company. They do it smarter, faster, and easier.

- Number one ranked US merchant acquirer in total transactions.
- Vantiv is the number one ranked US merchant acquirer in PIN debit transactions as well.
- They serve over 800,000 merchants, and 10 of the top 25 national retailers are Vantiv clients as well.
- Testimonial from Taylor Chang, who is the senior group director of finance for DonorsChoose.org, "Support a classroom and build a future."
 - Taylor shares that, "With Vantiv, we have recovered more than 35% of our authorization declines, which speaks to real revenue lift." Authorization declines is an issue we all struggle with.

Vantiv has joined the SUBTA community and I'm sure would welcome any of our listeners taking a second look at them if you're looking for another payment option.

Michelle: Cindy, I read that you are obsessed with creating a better life for women and girls throughout the world while providing their subscribers with the best literary experience available. *Obsessed* is a strong word. Where does this come from?

Cindy: Well, I will say, you know, there's very many people who start very many boxes for many different reasons, and you know, this box--I built my box for me and maybe that's the wrong way to come into a marketplace with an item, but it really was--I was looking for a box and I couldn't find something that really appealed to me. So, I thought, "Well, I'll just make it and see if it appeals to somebody else," and what this box came from is my background in travel and as a travel photographer, and having been able to see so much of the world and to see what we're able to do in Western Europe and America compared to the opportunities that so many people face in the world really was, then, how can I use something I love, then, to impact the places that have given so much to me, and it just has been something that I was raised with, both in my fam--my mom and dad have started charities and it was just something that I grew up around, and it was something that--I don't wanna use the word *preach*, but instilled in me from an early age and something that has become a platform of my life is how can you use the gifts and abilities you've been given to help others.

Michelle: Beautifully put. Tell us a little bit about what the Wordy Traveler is, and then let's talk about how you are bringing that doing good component into it more visibly.

Cindy: Well, the Wordy Traveler, for a subscriber, it really is designed to transport you into another part of the world. You know, for those who are maybe saving up for their next trip, for maybe those who can't travel, but want to have the experience of it, and we use it through all sensories--through obviously the written word. You know, compiling some of the best literature in that area that gives you not only the taste, and the sights, and the sounds, but also what it's like to live there and what it's like to travel there. We like to source, then, either a tea or coffee from that region and we are very particular in how we source that from working with Fair Trade Brewers from making sure they're paying their employees a liveable and fair wage, and then lastly, with an art piece from an artist or a travel photographer from the region. Once again, we wanna make sure that when we source those items that we are paying the artist a fair salary for those items, a fair price so that they can support their own families, and so that's kinda how

we--we were lucky because we had the ability to build the box from the beginning with those principles in mind.

Michelle: First off, Cindy, I'm glad you brought up the sourcing component and understanding your supply chain. Have you found it at all difficult to source those Fair Trade items and ensure they are genuinely Fair Trade without going there? How do you verify they are.

Cindy: Luckily, I came across a gentleman in the tea and coffee industry who has set up shops all over the world, and that was his big factor in sourcing his items. So, when we started to launch, I was able to sit down with him and pick his brain, and he was a person I trusted completely and he's traveled to a lot of these different breweries and farms, and so he has been able to come on and help me with that aspect. With the art aspect, a lot of that was my background. My background before the box was travel photography, and working with a lot of different magazines and stuff like that. So, being able to use contacts and artists that I had come by throughout my travels, to be able to work with them. So, it's been--you have to research people that have knowledge in the area you're looking for.

Michelle: Wonderful. Thank you, Cindy. Let's talk about the other side when you say, "helping young girls." How do you do that?

Cindy: What we do is we partner with different charities and we give a percentage of our sales from each box to those charities. So, once again, we research the different charities. There's a lot of different organizations that accredit charities and looking at what goes actually to the people that they're helping versus what's used internally for their own needs, and being able to partner with them and being able to supply part of that.

Michelle: How will the funds actually be used?

Cindy: Well, it depends on the charity we partner with. One of the ones that we really love is Care.org, and what we do is, you know, they have a lot of initiatives. The one that we help to support directly is actually buying textbooks and medicines for women and girls, and you can actually choose through them what region of the world you want the money to go to. So, we try to focus on the region that we're focusing on in that subscription box for that month, for that quarter.

Michelle: What is one of the regions you've focused on and then where did those funds directionally go?

Cindy: Well, our first box that we sent out our first quarter, it was actually South America, and so with that box, what we did is working through Care.org, our money then was sent down--it was actually used that month to buy textbooks for women and girls in the country. You know, a lot of those countries--number one, they don't have access to education or number two, if they do have access to it, you know, obviously, they don't have money to actually have the textbooks or be able to send those girls to school, or even the women, and so for that month, that's what we made sure that that money was earmarked through that organization that we trusted to go and buy the textbooks, and to help support the schools those were going to. This month, for instance, we're doing the Caribbean, and this box was chosen well over a year ago, and we went back and forth on whether we should even offer this quarter with everything that happened with the hurricanes. With this month, the money is actually going to hurricane relief efforts in the Caribbean countries that were affected--BVI's, USVI's, St. Martin's, St. Barf's--those countries, and those are actually going to go to rebuilding efforts.

Michelle: Cindy, thank you so much for sharing that. I find it very interesting on a couple of levels. First, when you went down to South America, how wonderful for your readers that are subscribing to books that the funds went to helping people learn to read books and textbooks. What a great fit, but I also appreciate the nimbleness that you were able to embrace with the Caribbean, and then change the focus to something that's on the front of I think a lot of people's mind, "How do I help? Oh, if I am subscribing to the Wordy Traveler, well, I'm helping because they're helping the Caribbean and people get back on their feet". Those are great examples of being both relevant and also being timely.

Cindy: Thank you. Yeah, we're really excited about what we're doing, and you know, when we first started out, our goal was going to be just textbooks for women and girls across the world, and as we've gone down this journey, we have then started looking in other areas and what are their particular needs, and that has caused us to go from our original idea and evolve it to make sure that what we're doing is helping and we're not just so focused on what we think should happen versus what is actually.

Michelle: Excellent learning. Thank you, Cindy. We're gonna change over right now and listen to Paul tell us a little bit about Vitamin Angels.

Paul: Yeah. Well, first of all, I think I'm signing up for the Wordy Traveler. As you were talking about it, that's a fantastic subscription box. So, hats off to you. It's really cool. I've seen a lot of

things and thought--or a lot of subscription boxes and I thought, "Oh, this is really actually very interesting." I think you will have a new subscriber here soon. So, thanks for sharing it. So, Vitamin Angels is a group that we work with, and I empathize with Cindy about trying to figure out where the money is gonna go because I had--when we first started, I had no idea all of the different kind of charities, and organizations, and the pros and cons of working with each, but we selected to work with Vitamin Angels. It's a pretty upfront organization. \$0.25 per purchase and that helps give life-saving vitamins to mothers that are expecting children or mothers with newborn children. Malnutrition is the number one cause of deaths for a lot of these countries, and being able to provide vitamins, and supplements, and healthy nutrition with these folks helps them do things like breastfeed or other kind of mandatory, functioning human things. Sorry. I have some people that are kind of banging around in this room. And so, being a part of that, it's pretty awesome to see the impact of the purchases made at Bulu Box and to help folks, but I think the thing that I'm most proud of our team in that is that we've actually brought over 100 companies to Vitamin Angels that have participated in the program. So, it's cool to see--you know, you can go to VitaminAngels.com and you can see what they do, and you can see your money that's being used to help out mothers and children in third world countries, but again, I think the cool part of it is that we've brought over 100 brands to participate in that program as well. So, again, it's really hard to figure out what to be a part of and where to put your money. So, I totally feel you, Cindy, on that part.

Michelle: Thanks, Paul. Well, that's an excellent program and I have to say that I don't believe that this planet will ever lack places to send money. What's important is to simply pick some place and start, and I think that's what each of you are doing on the line today. So, John, you've started a new company that is also a subscription company, and your primary focus is actually not a box, but rather giving back. Tell us about Giving the Dollar. What is it?

John: So, Giving the Dollar is a non-profit organization that has implemented the subscription model, if you will. So, we're giving people an opportunity to give back--or look at giving back in a different way because we believe that giving them a small scale can have such a large impact. So, for a dollar a month--a subscriber subscribes for a dollar a month and their dollar goes directly to helping somebody in need, and I think--you know, I think oftentimes, people do wanna know where their money is going when they're choosing--you know, it could be somewhat overwhelming when trying to choose what charities--which charities you wanna give to. I know that, you know, I'm constantly [inaudible 54:32] charities and always questioning--and I think a lot of people are always questioning--you know, where does your money go to. So, the idea is we work alongside organizations and that could be the children's hospital, or we worked

with--for our first month, we're working with a local foundation that works--that helps quadriplegics out, and it's working with these organizations to help identify an individual within that organization that could really use help, and then we directly impact them with something that they need. So, we don't necessarily give money to them--like, give financial assistance, but if they need medical equipment, or they're having issues with living situations, you know, that's what we focus on, that's how we give back, and we want people to see that their dollar is going somewhere and that's something that we--it's part of our mission, that's what we wanna showcase is that your dollar is actually going directly to someone in need and this living individual, and the more people you have signed up, right--like I said, a small scale equals a large impact. You have a thousand people that could potentially join on and you could help so many people with just that one dollar.

Michelle: Thank you, John! You launched within the last couple months?

John: Yeah. So, it was an idea, actually, my brother and I had awhile--back in February, actually, and it was really some unfortunate circumstances within our family that helped fuel the launch of the organization that launched in October. So, relatively new. We just launched a couple months ago.

Michelle: Wonderful. Well, we'll be cheering for your progress, and I know I've already given my dollar plus. I'm excited to see the impact and just know that it's actually working for somebody as well. So, thank you. It's always nice when doing good is also recognized by others, and I see that each of you have received recognition externally as well. Now, I know that's not the primary reason that any of you do this. You're doing it for the right reasons, but I do think it's good to share the recognition because it inspires others as well. John, you've recently received a recent workplace award. Could you tell us briefly about it?

John: Yeah. The Gentleman's Box is located just out in the suburbs of Detroit area, and Detroit's--the city of Detroit has an employer of the year ceremony, and through our efforts and contributions with Step Services, we were been nominated as employer of the year and actually won employer of the year through this organization in Detroit.

Michelle: Excellent. Well, congratulations and was well-deserved. Cindy, I know that the Wordy Traveler has been featured in *Instyle Magazine* as one of the 12 best subscription boxes that give back to charity. Can you tell us about that and what that has meant for the Wordy Traveler? How did it come about, actually?

Cindy: You know, we were really surprised. Someone there had found out about us and had looked into us a little bit more, and we just basically got the email saying, "You're gonna be featured," and so we were incredibly thankful, incredibly surprised. We did have a little jump up and down dance party in our offices that day, but you know, what it means is it just means more people are aware of us. Being newer to the marketplace and being a smaller box, I'm here with Paul and John who are incredible leaders in the industry--you know, just being able to get the word out and being able to have our--the people that--the subscribers that we're looking for being able to know that we're out there, and obviously, *the more subscribers that we have, the more we can do, the more we can give, the more we can help other people, the more impact we have, and so, you know, at the bottom line, the more you can impact the marketplace, the more you can impact lives, and that's what we're excited about doing.*

Michelle: I love that. The *more factor* we'll call it. Coined here today. Paul, what has it meant for your team to be recognized in the community--what has that meant for your team?

Paul: You know, it's--it's funny because I've struggled with this a little bit, and I think at the end of the day, we just kind of have this attitude of everybody likes to get trophies, right? It's nice to, like--all of these things are great, and it's nice to be recognized. I think we were just recognized for the city of Lincoln--actually, put us in the hall of fame, which I think everybody has quite a bit longer of a career, but we were added to the Lincoln, Nebraska Hall of Fame, which was super cool, and it's a team effort and there might be an individual, or hopefully it's our company, that is recognized. As long as it's a happy outcome, you know, the goal shouldn't be the trophy or the reward. The goal's what you're actually doing and all of the recognition, and awards, and trophies and all of that stuff are happy outcomes of those things, but I think we also--we wanna keep it real and say, "Yeah, it's pretty fun to get up on the stage and get a trophy. Like, that's pretty fun."

Michelle: It is, and you know, I think with all of you--I know that John and Cindy--you did not apply for those rewards either, but in the crazy busyness of running a subscription box business and being the entrepreneurs that each of you are, it gives you a moment to pause and celebrate. I love--Cindy, you said you guys did the happy dance. It gives pause and a moment to reflect on what you've accomplished and however many people's lives you're impact as well. Good for each of you, and good for your companies, and even better for the planet. Thank you very much. As we wrap up, I have two more questions. One is can each of you give your fellow subscription entrepreneurs one actionable tip on implementing a philanthropic--excuse me--a social good program at their company, or even personally? I will start with Paul.

Paul: Yeah. My tip would be this: Be--there's a ton of things to do. Just Google it, but more specifically, be upfront with the organization of what you're willing to do in regard to the amount of money--and that might be zero, it might be a lot of money--and your time. So, just be upfront so that expectations of the time and money that you're willing to give, and be non--just be unapologetic if and when--it's inevitable--that entity starts asking for more.

Michelle: Great point. Thank you. Cindy?

Cindy: Yeah, that's a great point, Paul. You know, mine's really gonna be a little bit more out there. I guess, I'd just say, I listen to John and Paul, and their efforts and mine came from our experiences and our passions, and you know, I think that's one of the great things about the subscription box industry is it does--it is an industry that really will allow you to put your passions into practice. So, you know, I always found when it's something that I'm excited about and passionate about, something that means a lot to me, it motivates me to do more and it motivates me and my business to be better. So, I guess, don't do something because it's the trend or you think--find something that really means something to your business, and to you, and to your place in the marketplace, and then use that, then, to create change.

Michelle: Love it. Thanks, Cindy. John?

John: I think whatever it is that you do in terms of giving back to do something that's gonna be impactful. I know a lot of people do opt for, I guess, smaller ways of giving back. If you're really gonna go for trying to make a difference, I think aligning yourself up with some type of like socially conscious, being good organization, I think you have to--I think--I would recommend getting involved and aligning yourself up with something that you know is gonna be very impactful and actually, like, show that you're making a difference.

Michelle: Well, I think that feeds right into our last wrap up question. John, how have your social good initiatives changed your life, even in the smallest of ways of how you see the world?

John: This has changed my life tremendously. You know, a month ago--two months ago, I should say, you know, my brother and I fully launched Giving the Dollar. You know, something that was an idea back in February is now fully launched into something that we want to focus a lot of attention on because, for us, all we've ever wanted to do is just give back. That's my--my

whole mindset has changed where I think constantly about what is going on in our world. Like, how can Gentlemen's Box give back? So, it's changed the way I think to always think that way--like, "How can I give back? What can I do today? What can I do tomorrow? What's going on in our world that I can help make a difference?" So, my mindset definitely changed.

Michelle: I love what you just explained, John, because it's almost like flipping the seesaw, right? Certainly the chase for revenue and profits, is part of what we do. It's part of growing a great business so we can do good things, but when your first motive becomes, "I want to do good and make money," it changes how you see the world. So, thank you for sharing that. Cindy, how about you?

Cindy: Yeah. I mean, John hit it on the head perfectly. I think, for me--you know, I think a lot of times we sit, and we see things, or we watch the news, or even my background with traveling--when I remember when I first started traveling as a single girl and you see things, and you're like, "What can really--what can you do?" You almost kind of start to feel powerless when you see things that maybe you don't agree with, or you just see horrible things in some instances, but then when you realize that here, you know, the great thing with business ownership, entrepreneurship, with subscription boxes is you can start out with just yourself and your idea in your home, and through the power of the subscription box, the power of business community, through the power of your customers and your employers, you realize that you have a lot more ability than you think and you're truly making a difference, and that when you focus your efforts and you find people who are passionate about your idea and your company just how much you really can do and how much a difference you can make.

Michelle: Thank you, Cindy. Paul?

Paul: Ha, John stole mine, and then I had my backup plan and it was Cindy's and she stole mine too. Props to both of them. I 100% agree with them. I guess I'll just reiterate, you know, for anybody listening out there, I kind of did this exercise mentally where I went back like 10 or 15 years in my head and saw some of the awards and saw some of the things that we did, and I thought, "Woah." That doesn't seem like a big deal now, but if I think back to 10 years or 15 or 20 and kind of the hall of fame effort, and the Defy Ventures, and that we'd done, it'd seem like a big deal at that time, and I think what I wish that I could go back and tell myself and what I wanna share with the crowd is--or anybody listening--is it really isn't that hard. Like, I always kind of think of participating in the programs that we are, it's not that hard to get involved, and a lot of times you make it in your head that it's a little bit harder and it's more of a time consuming

thing and it's more money, but it isn't, and I think as long as you manage expectations, you start doing things, and I love Cindy's point that you have to be passionate about this. It's actually shocking how much you can impact and then you see how much people actually need things, and then, in turn, you kind of realize how little you actually need and it's kind of this cool flywheel and for me and I think for our time it's just much more fulfilling kind of work lifestyle, etc. etc. So, I think my big kind of point is it does not take as much as you think it does to have a significant impact.

Michelle: In summary, my takeaways are:

- Think impact first, John;
- Be passionate, Cindy;
- And it's really not all that hard, Paul.

Thank you each very much. Cindy, Paul, and John, what an absolute joy talking with you has been today. You are each an inspiration, as are your companies that you are growing and impacting, and I really believe the planet is that much better because you are on it and making a difference. Thank you for being on the SUBTA Power Hour. I hope everybody's feeling as inspired as I am, particularly on National Philanthropy Day, which should be everyday. This is Michelle at SUBTA and we are out. Thank you.