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Matt Jones: [00:00:01] Hello listeners and welcome back to Toolbox Talks on The Site Shed podcast you are joining me, Matt Jones for episode 1 of the Creating a Million Dollar Design Build Business series. I've got my man, Fares Elsabbagh.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:00:20] (Laughs)

Matt Jones: [00:00:21] Run through that, how do you say it?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:00:25] Elsabbagh. There you go though (Laughs)

Matt Jones: [00:00:29] Fares, all the way from Ottawa in Canada. Welcome to The Site Shed.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:00:34] Awesome, Matt. Thanks for having me super a big fan of The Site Shed, love what you guys got going on there.

Matt Jones: [00:00:40] Thank you sir. Great to have you as part of our community obviously you're pretty active contributor in there which we all appreciate.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:00:48] Yeah. Hopefully I don't piss off too many people just get in my opinions across there. But love love all the energy that you guys got going on there a lot of insightful opinions and people giving a lot of great information.

Matt Jones: [00:01:01] Well I mean I suppose that the beauty of that community is it's so filled with people that have got results you know so when people like yourselves comment on certain things that it makes a lot of it makes a lot of sense because it's not just some expert you know talking about what should be done it's you talking about what you have done and what works and that's the power of it. So by all means if it pisses people off you're probably doing something right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:01:28] Yeah I hope so. I like to think so at least.

Matt Jones: [00:01:32] So we've been chatting for a while and this is serious I suppose has come come about as a result of a couple of conversations that we've had both online and off line and you certainly got some pretty epic results coming through within your business and there's a lot of listeners out there that are in I suppose similar verticals wherever they are around the world and they'd like to maybe also get some similar results so you know I've invited you on the show today to share some of your experiences and hopefully instill a bit of your knowledge and wisdom into the people wherever they are that want to learn some of these traits your business is called to a general contractors to give us a bit of a rundown on that.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:02:14] Yeah for sure so yeah we've got auto general contractors and we've got Vancouver general contractors to make up the Canadian general contractors group. At one point in time we were in Toronto and Calgary as well. But we kind of grew a little too fast and decided to take a few steps back there. Essentially what we are as it were designed built firm. So we do everything from a tizzy from architectural plans to a preconstruction to construction to building the whole shebang. And that's kind of what we've coined as a design build firm

Matt Jones: [00:02:51] So it's not uncommon here in Australia where a lot of the builders out there have been doing that themselves. Sorry I just realized they had my finger on it but it shouldn't be that

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:03:06] (Laughs)

Matt Jones: [00:03:07] It's not uncommon to have builders want to take control of that process especially for the benefit of their customers to make it all like that one point of communication. I know one of our clients are starting to do that. One of them has bought together all my clients have recently bought in-house architects into the mix and it just makes it a lot easier and a lot smoother when they're dealing with the client sites because I haven't got to refer to a third party and I think it's quite a smart idea but of course the whole question that's you know will be a right he keeps arising is that around costs and you know how to make sure that that's a profitable I suppose avenue to take in regard to the comparatively just outsourcing that work to somebody else I'm pretty interested to hear your your take is on that when we get into this series the three or three episodes we've broken this down into the first one it's going to be called: Building won't make you a million bucks marketing will. I know you're a marketing wiz so I'm looking forward to hearing your take on that the second episode is going to be: Stop working for free, time is money. And then the final episode will be: Building a business model that is scalable. Now obviously you've you've helped us design that series structure and it gives a bit of a rundown as to why you think those three episodes are paramount when we're talking I suppose creating a million dollar design build business.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:04:36] Yeah absolutely so building what make you a million bucks marketing. Well I really feel like a lot of contractors a lot of business people in the industry are under estimate the importance of marketing and in my in my opinion and we can talk about a little bit later on it's the most important part of your business. And that's the only way you're going to be able to generate you know a million to 3 4 million bucks and we can get into that. You know the the old the old school method of just relying on referrals is not going to get you a million bucks. You know that the second episode of Stop Working For Free time is money. I think a lot of people can relate. Everybody is expected to do free work and in time is money. But once once we figured out how to stop giving free estimates, and start getting paid

Matt Jones: [00:05:35] Mhmm

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:05:35] To prepare these estimates a huge shift in our business happen I'd like to elaborate on that during the show and obviously that relates to building up your company right. And then the third one building a model that is scalable. Build a scalable model isn't just about sales and marketing. There's a lot of a lot of pieces a lot of moving parts if you will that need to align together to be able to make sure that you know the sales that you are producing are profitable and that's part of making a building a model that is scalable

Matt Jones: [00:06:08] Yeah exactly. I think that's a pretty valid point. Typically I think this this series as a whole is probably going to appeal to the type of listener out there that wants to scale but you know has a few of those pain points especially in the space of well you know facilitating growth can be an image that actually when we get into when we get that episode a little bit I want to talk to you a little bit about how the business in Toronto and Calgary why so much a success because of growing pains that you had. Because that's I think a lot of our guys actually shipbuilders like a lot of our builder clients are so freakin' busy like they're booked out years in advance which is great except I just question you know if I could if I could grow effectively and scale effectively you know they'd be able to deliver on those lead times a lot better which means they could potentially be adding a lot more people to that funnel you know etc. etc. But a lot of them have that conversation around well it's a lot easier for me it's not more profitable for me to manage six guys on you know across two sites than it is to manage you know 100 guys across 20 sites or whatever it might be. And from my experience anyway that that is certainly true. Except for the fact you know if you want to become you know you want to become bigger and you want to become a lot more profitable than you need to implement things like systems and processes that are an order that will help you. I suppose facilitate that growth and that kind of seems to be a bit of a bottleneck. I think within the industry which I'm working hard on to alleviate

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:07:47] Yes I see that a lot of exciting things are truly made pro

Matt Jones: [00:07:52] Yeah exactly. So why don't we jump in the first episode. This one is going to be called: Building that won't make you a million bucks, Marketing will. Who are we typically talking to in this conversation is that are we talking at the business owner here are we talking about people that manages the site foreman who is directing his?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:08:15] Yeah it's a definitely directed towards the business owners. You know the the renovators that probably got a crew or a few crews and are the ones that are basically making decisions on where their resources are being spent.

Matt Jones: [00:08:30] Right. Yeah. So I'm interested I suppose before we dive in too deep. What like what your experience is here. I mean I know your business is really profitable and I know that you put a lot of resources into marketing so I'm just curious as to suppose before we jump into the nitty gritty of the framework behind it or how how you apply marketing towards your business. And you know the comparatively you know where your business might be if you focused more I suppose the building aspect as opposed to marketing

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:09:05] Well I mean if I was focused on just the building aspect and not the marketing I would have probably ran out of money by now and not be in business typically in to city.

Matt Jones: [00:09:14] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:09:16] I mean I always look at things from a sales and marketing stance. First I know a little bit of background information I'm I'm not I guess I'm a magot. Construction guy by default I've been doing it for eight nine years. But before that. I'm Just a business development sales and marketing professional. So I approach this from a lot from a different perspective from most of the listeners out there. But I mean so does that answer your question or did you

Matt Jones: [00:09:46] Yeah yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:09:47] Have another part to it.

Matt Jones: [00:09:48] Yeah I'm curious now to see I suppose within your business you know you're extremely profitable business there. What how does the marketing look. How does the marketing look within your organization. What is a Canadian general contractors do? From a marketing perspective that you know makes makes you guys a million dollar business.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:10:10] Cool, that that's that's a big big question for sure and I'll try to scale down a lot. But just so everybody has an idea of kind of the size of our business we've got between both cities. We do somewhere between 15 and 20 million dollars in revenue a year. We've got about 50 or 60 employees in probably another 50 or 60 in the field.

Matt Jones: [00:10:31] Are they all employed or are they contractors?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:10:33] So so so the 50 or 60 are employed the other 50 or 60 are subcontractors but for the most part they only work for us.

Matt Jones: [00:10:42] Gotcha.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:10:42] So we've got agreements with them that that that they where their primary client and you know subcontracting work will act. I'll talk a lot about that in probably segment 3 building a model a scalable because

Matt Jones: [00:10:57] Okay

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:10:57] It becomes very important to grow the company in that sense when you're subcontracting work. But our marketing mix you know it's a beast

Matt Jones: [00:11:05] Mhmm

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:11:05] You know it it really starts you know you know we've got an awesome website. We've got awesome branding. We've got different means of traffic to the website. You know we the image in our reputation management is top notch. And it's it's it's how all those kind of come together that form this marketing engine that literally produces millions of dollars worth of leads a month like you and it's all how they come together. So you know you can break down each one of those significantly and we could probably talk about it for an hour but it's how they all align. You know others I think I think a lot of people in the industry you don't really see the bigger picture and you know they kind of think as marketing as. Maybe one ad here or one ad there or maybe a decent website

Matt Jones: [00:12:00] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:12:00] But it's kind of more how it all comes together.

Matt Jones: [00:12:02] So what what I've coined that over the years is that ecosystem. I like to call it the digital ecosystem or the marketing ecosystem because I think you're right. Like it really does. And this is a big disconnect. Like I say, oh yeah I did marketing I've got my logo on the side of my on the side of my truck door. And so I'm like, okay cool. I mean to be fair that is marketing. But then

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:12:24] Yeah.

Matt Jones: [00:12:24] When it when you look at the ecosystem like how does that when you drive past somebody in your car you know how does them looking at that logo on the door. What's the journey like what's the ecosystem. They typically will I mean I know in Australia statistically before they call the phone number they see under the logo they're going to jump on their phone and search you. So you know what is that and Jony look like for them once they are you know if they jump on their phone can they find you can they find you know a website that's reputable. Can they find a case study can they find all this sort of stuff searches which adds to the conversion factor of them pushing then the phone number and calling.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:13:01] Yeah exactly. And that's exactly it. You know I like to think of business as like like oil pipeline if you can imagine like a pipeline in the pipeline having different compartments. The first compartment where where the oil flows in is the marketing compartment. So if you're really missing the first compartment out of your whole pipeline well then there's there's a lot that's that you're leaving on the table

Matt Jones: [00:13:27] Mhmm

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:13:27] Right. I think I think traditionally this industry has been run off of your reputation in the community and through referrals but with the emergence of online marketing in the digital age you know with Google being you know as popular as it is the last 15 10 15 years there's it's really changed how the industry is run and a few players I would say, are taking advantage of it and a lot are being left behind. You know that's that that's how you know I'm 33 now. But you know when I was 25 26 that's how a 25 26 year old who never picked up a hammer was able to start a construction company and do a quarter million in sales the first month in a random city with no existing network of suppliers or contractors or I don't even know that gypsum board was drywall and you know I'll never forget it. I remember being in a Home Depot running around trying to find these materials and the contractor I brought along with me because obviously I knew nothing was laughing at me because I think it's so hard that I actually broke out in a sweat you know like he's like Man he's like you dig like you're sweating you know I'm sorry I wasn't running around at that point. He's like, man you're thinking so hard that you're sweating. That's hilarious. And you know that like I really feel like anybody who is not putting significant resources or attention or effort into marketing are going to be left behind and into elaborate on that like you know they are no. Yes but it really about that

Matt Jones: [00:15:01] Well, what do would do this why don't we go back and let's break it down. So you spoke about brand and you talk about branding before we even get into webs on that kind of stuff. So let's talk a little bit about the branding aspect because I know this is something that we come across daily pretty much with every web project that we build. You know we look at okay well what does their branding look like. Is there. Does their brand represent the type of client they're trying to attract. And so I'm interested to see what your take is on the way that you developed. You know Canadian General Motors branding for General Motors Canadian general contractors around you know making sure that your brand your logo your design speaks to your ideal customer your customer Avatar whatever you want to call that.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:15:50] Yes so when we were first coming up with names and the reason why we chose the the structure of the city and general contractor was specifically to cater to SEO. So anybody that knows SEO, probably heard of EMD's Exact Matching Domain.

Matt Jones: [00:16:07] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:16:07] So when you search Ottawa general contractors you'll show up right away. And that was the original strategy behind it. But what happened later on is that we realized that there is a lot more to add to that strategy. And there's this

Matt Jones: [00:16:21] Google figured it out.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:16:24] What's that?

Matt Jones: [00:16:24] And Google figured it out.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:16:26] Yeah yeah. Google figured it out. But you know why people keep saying, oh EMD's are not that relevant anymore but I still think that they're pretty relevant you know

Matt Jones: [00:16:34] I think they are as well.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:16:35] I mean I mean I know I know that Google is like super sophisticated and they know everything but there's still little loopholes here and there. But yeah. What ended up happening with that is a sense of familiarity and you know a brand has to convey so much if you can imagine as you know a brand being the personal representative of the company when when a prospective client meets that brand or meets that that represents the company what do they portray and what we did a few years ago was we created you know a prospective client Avatar, and we put together a series of characteristics that wouldn't encourage buying decisions by these prospective clients. And we had to make sure that our brand represented that

Matt Jones: [00:17:27] So what are those

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:17:28] Or or communicated that

Matt Jones: [00:17:29] So what are some of those characteristics. What did that Avatar look like?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:17:33] Something just as simple as like professional you know like and you know with a clean a clean logo as a good starting place. Like do not put, I mean you know I hope I'm not offending anyway but do not put a hammer to it as a letter in your logo name. You know what I mean like get a professional graphic designer to build your logo. Like it's very very easy to identify what's professional and what's not. So you just just professionalism and how that's portrayed you know like I can't put just a magnetic decal on my on my hands. I've got a completely wrapped that whole vent because that looks professional

Matt Jones: [00:18:12] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:18:13] You know. And sure you might not have the resources but if you don't then it's really all or nothing.

Matt Jones: [00:18:19] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:18:19] Don't do it then. Right. There's no point because you're actually hurting yourself at that point. Right. So so portraying professionalism a sense of familiarity. Right. People want to work with contractors that they're familiar with whether they're familiar because they work in their community they've worked with neighbors they've worked in their city. And such you know

Matt Jones: [00:18:46] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:18:46] It's funny I'll never never forget this one time I mean to go back to when we first expanded to Vancouver about six or seven years ago. And I remember that one of our clients we had a shared work office so it's like a co-work space. I don't know why you guys call it in Australia kind of

Matt Jones: [00:19:04] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:19:04] Like where you can look out an office there.

Matt Jones: [00:19:05] Yeah, co-working. Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:19:07] And everything's white labels so there is no company brand so like whoever's coming in might think like you own the whole floor. Right.

Matt Jones: [00:19:14] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:19:15] And we had one of our clients come in a month or two later and he's like, man like I just ran into like my my mother in the lobby like this is your whole office and like we just kind of rent a little office here and here's the whole time he thought we owned the whole floor and we're talking about like 40 offices. Right. Because. But but but part of that was the brand that we're reflecting. So if you're going to if you're going to reflect professionalism in a beautifully designed logo you need to carry that through out the client buying journey. Right. Like you can't you can't have this awesome logo this awesome website. You got a lead but show up in your overalls with paint splattered all over me and being 10 minutes late. Like part of reflecting professionalism in your brand is a lot more than just your logo. It's how you carry yourself how your uniforms look, you know what what is your marketing collateral look like

Matt Jones: [00:20:11] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:20:12] You know what's what's your what's your sales process like you're running in there taking a few measurements and run now like you know we make a point to tell clients like we're going to take some measurements were going to sit down. We're going to go over sales kit and we're going to literally talk about each page that we've got in

Matt Jones: [00:20:28] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:20:28] There. You know it's so. So yeah there's there's there's a lot to it than just a professional logo but it's a great place to start.



Matt Jones: [00:20:36] So you kind of touched on something which I I like to I sort of encapsulate it over. I mean I've done presentations in the past and I've called it representation and it ties in to again like we said the ecosystem but you know it also brings in things like you brand. It brings in who you want to target. It brings in the type of work you want to deliver on the do you want to target you know are you looking for. You know the prestige sort of market. Are you looking more towards just your standard residential are you trying to target construction and development all that kind of stuff because it does kind of correlate throughout you different different parts of different collateral you know like if you're the way that you that your logo looks will often reflect the type of work you want to do the content the content that you've got on your website will often be written in a way that will communicate to your ideal customer be that you know if you're working for you know large building companies and you know you give a content new the way that you speak is going to be a little bit different to the way that you'd be speaking to you know moms and dads and that kind of stuff. So I think taking it back a notch you know having a clear indication of who your ideal customer is. It will certainly help you from a branding point of view in order to ascertain you know what that cloud looks like across the board.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:22:06] Yeah absolutely. You know being consistent with your message from the first point of contact to the final sign off is is very important because you know in my industry it doesn't take one meeting to close a client.

Matt Jones: [00:22:19] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:22:20] Sometimes it's many meetings. And last thing you want is to be on that final meeting only for them to to have some doubts because of an inconsistent piece of your message. Right.

Matt Jones: [00:22:32] So I'm curious I'm curious in regard to that and if we're going to be jumping into this into a next one of the following episodes and let me know. But I'd like to know a little bit about that that sales cycle for you guys and how you how you manage that. Because I know with building you know it typically is a longer sales cycle and one of the things we've started to implement with a lot of our clients that have a longer sales cycle is a communication pattern which sees them engaging with their customers throughout the part of the throughout that I suppose that process where they initially come to you for information primarily not so much a quote but more information. And then you know throughout that process which could take you know 12 months 18 months 24 months even who knows you know how are you nurturing that potential customer to the point where they're ready to get acquired or they're ready to take the next step.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:23:29] Yeah. So I mean I'll touch on it a little bit more is gonna go into the segment and start working for free time is money but I'll touch on it briefly. It's a lot easier to ask somebody for a couple of thousand bucks as opposed to a couple hundred thousand dollars.

Matt Jones: [00:23:44] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:23:45] And when you're able to get them committed there is almost a psychological situation that happens there where they've kind of already committed to the second step.

Matt Jones: [00:23:57] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:23:57] But but it's a lot easier to commit to a few thousand as opposed to 100000 dollars. Right. But what what that also does is it buys you some time to build a relationship with the client to get that bigger close. Right. So what we did is we basically split split up our sales cycle between design and build. Another reason why a design build business will scale you to millions of dollars is because you know when you're asking for a design service and when you want to sell a design service for two or three thousand dollars it's easier easier pill to swallow. Right. But when something interesting happens there right is that it allows you to deliver on a better product. Because when you're putting a little bit more upfront time on designing and organizing in the preconstruction steps then you're less likely to deal with variables that could upset the client later on. I mean there's always those variables but what I really think it does is it minimizes that gap.

Matt Jones: [00:24:58] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:24:58] If that makes sense. You know what I mean. Like oftentimes our contractors are expected to give a free estimate. Spend one hour with the client and somehow magically put together this 50000 or 100000 dollar scope of work

Matt Jones: [00:25:11] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:25:11] And expect no surprises later on in. And like I don't understand that because sometimes it takes us three to four weeks to design and properly plan and organize these projects and we still have you know variables that are missed just because there's like hundreds of moving parts.

Matt Jones: [00:25:26] Exactly.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:25:26] Right.

Matt Jones: [00:25:28] Yeah. I feel like we're going to jump into that episode too. So we'll see. Back to the marketing side of things. Now I'm curious as to talking a little bit about first of all I suppose the lead generation process but then second of all and most importantly being affable to deliver and facilitate on those leads. So how do you guys structure that. Because you know if you're turning a couple million bucks a month. Some months. How how does that look from a facilitation perspective.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:26:06] So that's a good question and that's really the magic nobody would really ever think of that they think, Generate Leads sales are naturally going to happen right. No it's actually funding we generate so many leads that I have to like beg my sales guys to like follow up on calls like Talam like can what industry are people like literally giving like

Matt Jones: [00:26:24] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:26:24] 10 leads a day. You know I mean like it's like. But but but they kind of get in that nasty cycle but generating our leads. You know what it starts with It starts with a, High Converting Website you know. And I say like imagine a website is like a storefront you know like you're not going to have an ugly you know on proportionate laid out storefront space. So why would

Matt Jones: [00:26:51] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:26:51] You have one as a website and if you can almost imagine your website as a digital storefront you can pay for traffic to go to your digital storefront just like you can open a retail storefront downtown in a downtown city get lots of traffic but nobody's going to come in if they don't like what they see. And nobody is going to be making buying decisions if the clothes are wrinkled or if they're not hung properly or if they're torn

Matt Jones: [00:27:17] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:27:17] Right. So it all really starts with like a highly optimized converting website and then you bring the traffic

Matt Jones: [00:27:24] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:27:24] Right. So the traffic, yeah.

Matt Jones: [00:27:28] Well this is I was going to say it. This is man if I had a dollar for every job I've said this in the last 18 months through the podcast and then presentations and declines and things like that but people get so caught up you know people that come to us. I mean we get people call every day and then I go any more leads and more leads anymore leads. And my answer is always the same. You know. It's not so much about the amount of leads you get if you're getting 10 leads a day and you're converting one of them. Like that's one lead a day really. Oh you have one. You know I suppose. What would you call that one qualified lead. Let's call it

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:28:06] Right.

Matt Jones: [00:28:07] If you can convert if you can increase you conversions you know to two of those out of 10. Then you've basically doubled your conversion which means you've doubled

the amount of qualified leads that you've got and you're still getting the same traffic and people get so caught up in this churn and burn mentality of more leads more leads more leads more leads more leads and they tend to neglect that conversion factor which really is what it's all about it's not about more leads it's about conversion it's about taking what you've got and optimizing that.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:28:40] Right. Yeah. You know I couldn't agree with you more and then and then. Yeah. There comes the sales process. Right. Like are they taking two days to call leads. Well I mean there was there was a Harvard study that was that was put together and they said that if you call a lead within the first hour you are 90 percent more likely to close that lead than if you called them the hour after that and then a second and then it significantly drops you know after every other hour and then every other day. So yeah if you're taking two days to call a lead back well then you know what like. There's a reason why you're not converting them right. Like just small little things like that go a long way.

Matt Jones: [00:29:23] That's interesting

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:29:23] Right.

Matt Jones: [00:29:25] Because I know a lot of a lot of the guys in a red number of books and listen to podcasts and there's there's a lot of there's a lot of I suppose to and fro in regard to that time. Like some people say well if you apply too quickly then you look too needy and then people so if you're a party you know if you're a fighter quickly you look like you just sitting there waiting for a job and that kind of stuff. But I tend to agree I think if you if you get a lead come through then at least make some sort of contact with them. Actually this leads onto the next thing I want to talk to you about it which is was the qualification process. Obviously you don't want to work for everyone and I know we certainly don't want to work for everyone like we. To be fair we probably I'd say it's about 50/50 with the amount of leads that we get. You know we we only really want to qualify. Well we only really half of them suit our profile. Basically our custom profile and we have a process in place which kind of helps us decide on who that half is. How does that look for you guys.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:30:29] So our qualified customer is somebody who has money on hand whether they've got the cash or whether they've got financing in place. They they've got a project that requires multiple tradesmen. They won't see value in a company like us for like a one off trade like if they just need like a carpenter Telek frame up a wall as an example like they get value from us. When we manage multiple tradesmen. So you need to have money ready to go. They their project requires multiple tradesmen and our minimum is typically about twenty thousand dollars if they don't have twenty thousand dollars and we were not ready to go. We're not the right company for them. And our thing is as you know what we'll come and visit your space and take some measurements and talk to you. But if we tell them this on a first phone call they must come into our office and give us their time. So forget to invest our time. We want them

to invest their time and if they're not ready to do that if they're one of those guys like oh no no I just you know I just sent me the scope of work in an email

Matt Jones: [00:31:29] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:31:30] And then we don't even send it to them.

Matt Jones: [00:31:32] Yeah that's right

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:31:32] And we say do bad come into the office or you know we're not like we don't we don't try to get involved in this business of just being a company to quote for the sake of having a quote

Matt Jones: [00:31:42] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:31:42] Right. We don't we we don't like doing that. So yes our qualified client or prospect has got money on hand multiple trades minimum 20k and they're within the vicinity that we service.

Matt Jones: [00:31:54] I think that's a really important thing that you've touched on there. It's something that we do as well that we always get the cussed oh sorry we get our prospects to make a time commitment to us and that for us comes in the form of completing a web form which is quite detailed but we just know that people that are willing to take that step and complete that form are typically the type of people that we want to work with because you can tell straight away if they're serious or not and the people that can't be bothered doing it or they haven't got the time inverted commas then they're not really the people that we want to be working with because it's just like they're out there price shopping or you know they don't. I just know from experience like putting that process in place has been really really good for us because we only speak with companies that we know are the ones that we want to work with at the end of the day.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:32:45] Yeah I mean I don't blame you you know and especially in construction. Like you can literally spend a whole day working for free

Matt Jones: [00:32:51] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:32:51] And nobody even being grateful for that. It's crazy right. So like we get lots of calls. I mean one of my guys got a call today for for like a restoration and an insurance job. But we had lots of those because all they're trying to do is get a quote from a contractor try to up their buyout from the insurance company.

Matt Jones: [00:33:10] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:33:10] You know what a waste of time. Right. So I mean we don't really mess around with that kind of stuff. So we because we get lots of leads we are very careful on how our time is spent.

Matt Jones: [00:33:22] Mhmm

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:33:23] But also I got to be very careful in making sure that we're not overqualified.

Matt Jones: [00:33:27] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:33:27] And I have noticed that happening

Matt Jones: [00:33:29] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:33:31] And what we, what I've put in place is a certain KPI's so Key Performance Indicators that need to be met weekly. So in some cases if we don't have enough KPI's will maybe entertain somebody who is not necessarily the perfect prospect because I'd rather have my guys meeting people than not meeting anybody. And those those KPI's revolve around in office meetings site consultations in Project Walk-through to show prospects and some of our existing projects

Matt Jones: [00:34:04] Isn't that interesting. So I was going to ask you what those KPI's look like because I think sometimes we get caught up in it and the listeners out there will relate to this like people who are caught up in how many sounds you got how many leads you got how many this you up there how much money we made lullaby when in reality like the KPI is not necessarily that you need to take the focus off those things and put the focus on how many meetings have we had with people how many follow up phone calls have we made how many proposals have we sent like that the more the stuff that happens in the back a bit more

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:34:38] Exactly exactly. And you know like I find myself a few years ago you know coming into the sales meeting and talking to one of my guys and saying you know what do you mean you don't have 300 grand in sales for the month.

Matt Jones: [00:34:51] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:34:51] Like that's your goal. That's what you got to produce and it's like it's kind of a little too late situation right. Because like at that point the month

Matt Jones: [00:34:59] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:34:59] Is already gone. And like am I really motivating them to get more sales by asking him why he hasn't gotten say like. So we had to reverse engineer the a little bit.

And then when we realized, okay well you know what we're getting sales when we're getting in front of people. So we had to identify what it getting in front of people look like and that looked like a site consultation or a home visit. So the initial meeting there and then meetings in our office and then meeting Project Walk-through us which show off our existing projects

Matt Jones: [00:35:29] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:35:29] Because like often if we got stuck in the situation to well send me a reference send me a reference and when you're prospecting like 10 clients a week like your past clients get annoyed if you're calling them ten times a week right. So we completely found a solution to that. It's like you know what. I've got something better for you than a reference. I'm actually going to take you to one of my jobs right now. And we actually built a whole referral program around it. So I give my clients gift cards. If they if they allow us to do a walk on their home and if they also speak well about us. So you often get these homeowners are really excited and they can't wait to have prospects come through their homes completely incentivize them where it was the opposite. You know getting somebody give you a reference for the third time was like pulling teeth. And I understand I don't want anybody I don't keep talking to strangers you know like I love you guys. But like I don't want I keep talking to people right. My my wife is a great example of that she hates talking on the phone like literally if it's

Matt Jones: [00:36:25] Wow.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:36:25] Not her family or like she won't talk on the phone.

Matt Jones: [00:36:28] Jesus, that is that is very unusual for a woman.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:36:31] Yeah I know it was great when we just get to know each other like us she's not blowing up my forehead. I love this girl.

Matt Jones: [00:36:42] Very cool. So let's go back to you conscious of the fact that this episode is coming to a close I want to just talk a little bit more about the frameworks that we've spoken about. We've spoken about the fact that you need to be have a conversion process in place for your leads. And you've got to take the focus not so much off leads but more on that conversion which is awesome. (inaudible) spoken about the website you got to make sure your website is converting. And of course anyone for the list is out there that's what we do so you can reach us. Quick plug

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:37:16] Yeah.

Matt Jones: [00:37:17] And then and then what I want to talk now about is suppose the lead side of things so where do you guys generate your leads from. Is it all online due to off line. Do you do your letterbox drops to run ads in newspapers digital TV radio like where does it come from.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:37:34] So I would say that the majority of our leads come from on line.

Matt Jones: [00:37:39] Yep.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:37:39] We do some off line like trade shows very embarrassed like the one which trade shows because I've had something terrible but the majority come from come from online specifically AdWords. However we just try to a new strategy on Facebook using custom audiences. That's driven our ad spend per visitor per action significantly low that's been working great but further for the most part is driven through being Google Facebook.

Matt Jones: [00:38:11] Okay cool. So do you guys with your current website do you have like a lot of SEO running on that site do you guys invest in SEO or is it purely Google AdWords SEM Search Engine Marketing that console.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:38:29] We used to invest heavily on SEO back in the day. You know through blogs and getting back links

Matt Jones: [00:38:36] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:38:37] And doing guest blogs and doing all that kind of stuff invested heavily in Google Local although it's not that kind of SEO kind of not like

Matt Jones: [00:38:46] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:38:46] Through building citations

Matt Jones: [00:38:47] Yeah. Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:38:49] And what not but to be honest I think because we've invested so heavy in that the past 10 years the last two years we haven't needed to and

Matt Jones: [00:38:55] Yeah. Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:38:55] It kind of just kind of does its thing, right. So I've stopped investing in that.

Matt Jones: [00:39:02] One of the big indicators that we seafarer's because we do a lot of audits now we know obviously we're pretty heavily involved in the marketing space for trade businesses and one of the indicators that constantly pops up for us on our client sites or you know people that we order businesses that we audit is that there's not enough content going on to sites and Google obviously loves to see you know you websites being updated with new fresh content. As a result we built an entire product around it and only yesterday recorded a video on how effective that has been for the purpose of Search Engine Optimization. Now I'm just curious



to you guys. Are you in the space of adding content to your website in the form of project galleries in case studies in a lackluster

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:39:47] You know what, as of recently not as much as we should be but I definitely think that it's very important to do so. But we haven't in the last little bit but we used to invest in that significantly.

Matt Jones: [00:39:59] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:00] You know it's not cheap and it's not easy and it takes a lot of resources to build out content. But it is definitely still very important and relevant.

Matt Jones: [00:40:11] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:11] I mean you know you know part of our strategy right. Because we've got a lot of resources. What I'd like to do is just like the flood of Edwards and I just like

Matt Jones: [00:40:17] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:18] I try to make it very difficult for my competitors by making

Matt Jones: [00:40:21] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:22] By me making my bids very expensive

Matt Jones: [00:40:24] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:24] Because I can afford to do so. But the guy the guy that works out of his pick-up truck can afford to spend four or five grand

Matt Jones: [00:40:30] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:30] A month on AdWords. Right.

Matt Jones: [00:40:33] And so what sort of what sort of keywords are targeting within your AdWords campaigns?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:42] You know as of recently because I was going through a custom home boom we've been doing a lot for custom homes.

Matt Jones: [00:40:47] Yeah.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:48] We do a lot revolving around kitchens. We find that to be the most popular is the kitchen campaign are the keywords that are the most popular.

Matt Jones: [00:40:58] Okay.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:40:58] So

Matt Jones: [00:40:59] Renovations

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:41:00] Yeah yeah you know. You know kitchen renovations you know countertop renovation countertop replacement just because you find that a lot of these bigger projects typically start

Matt Jones: [00:41:13] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:41:13] Off with the kitchen and end up getting added on from

Matt Jones: [00:41:16] Right.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:41:16] There. I mean I think that's something that we have we found

Matt Jones: [00:41:20] Yeah definitely. All right interesting. All right cool it's been really good so I suppose as a general framework we're talking about Creating you know a Million Dollar Design Build Business in this episode you know, Building won't make you a million bucks, Marketing will. For me the key takeaways and by all means I want your feedback on this. Fares' well primarily make sure you've got your your branding and your I suppose your avatar down pat so you know who you're targeting and you know the type of work that you want to be delivering and you know where you know even if you want to call it your vertical or your name where you're focusing your attention because you don't want to be everything to everyone you really want to make sure that you can specialize and you can be the expert in the certain thing that you want to do. Once you've got that established then you can go about creating a website which is designed really around that avatar and communicates to that specifically. So whatever that might look like for your business. But of course you want to make sure that you know the key focus on your website is not so much. Well the key focus has to be around conversion you know once somebody gets to your website what are you doing on that site to help them take the next step. Once you've got that in place then you can have the conversation around generating leads because you know that once leads get to the website they're in a position then where they're going to convert. And then once you've got that all happening you want to make sure that you've got at the back and you're able to deliver on the following up on the you know speaking those customers and making sure that you know the next stages of your sales cycle are being fulfilled so you're delivering on all the leads that you guys are getting. What have I missed?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:43:03] No that that's it and that's perfect you know and then the last thing I'd like to add to that is leave marketing to the professionals, folks. You know I had a conversation with somebody on social the other day and he's wondering why is Facebook ad wasn't it wasn't getting approved. I asked him I'm like, would you get a guy who's never built a deck to build one for you?

Matt Jones: [00:43:23] Yeah

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:43:23] Like you know you wouldn't. Right. So let let the professionals do it because sometimes you can actually be doing more harm to your marketing ecosystem, than good.

Matt Jones: [00:43:32] Yeah I know it's crazy. And to be fair I know like some of these some of the guys within the community they're they're starting up and they might be you know trying to conserve costs without realizing how expensive it is to do some of this stuff yourself like in the long term vehicle.

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:43:47] Yeah.

Matt Jones: [00:43:47] If he just let us do it for you, you have no idea how much money it would make you and save you. But anyway I feel like that's a conversation that's relevant across the board with lots of businesses people try, and people try and wear too many hats and that takes it waters down you know it takes the focus off what they should be doing which you know could be things like falling out quotes or you know actually doing proposals and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, that's a conversation for another time. Fares, all right cool let's wrap this one up and let's come back with the following episode. So are we going to be talking about Stop working for free, Time is money. What do you reckon?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:44:27] Sounds good to me, man.

Matt Jones: [00:44:28] Rock and roll. All right, well listeners as you've been listening to The Site Shed podcast. I've got my man Fares Elsabbagh, did I get it right?

Fares Elsabbagh: [00:44:37] Yeah, yeah. There you go, good.

Matt Jones: [00:44:39] Rock and roll, from Ottawa General Contractors. Joining me this is series, this series is called Creating a Million Dollar Design Build Business and that was the first episode called Building won't make you a million bucks, Marketing will. Stay tuned for the next one which is called Stop Working For Free, Time is money. If you got any comments or if you wanted to get any follow up questions answered the best place to probably do that is in The Site Shed Facebook group. It's a private group. You can get across The Site Shed and you can go to Facebook and you can find that private group there, Fares' in that group and you'll be able to answer those questions. Otherwise you can email Fares' at Ottawa General Contractors dot

com and he's: I am Fares, I am F A R E S on social media. All right let's wrap this one up and we will speak to you in the following episode.