

Episode 84 - Brandi Szeke - Social Media For Your Business **[00:12:00]**

Intro: Welcome to Profiles in Prosperity. The leading podcast for residential service contractors, sponsored by Service Roundtable and hosted by David Heimer.

David Heimer: Hi, I'm David Heimer, welcome to Profiles in Prosperity. So we're doing something totally different today. We're going to do this on video because why not try something new, right? So to try this out, I've got Brandi Szeke here with me. Brandi is in charge of all things social media at Service Nation Alliance. So I thought we would try talking with Brandi and hearing some stuff about here. So start off at the beginning for me, Brandi, how did you get into this great industry?

Brandi Szeke: Kind of by luck and by chance. I just started out when I was in college, was going for my creative writing and marketing degree, and I really just needed something while I was, you know, taking my classes and everything. I started part-time as a success coach, really just helping our members learn the membership, learn all of the tools that they have access to walking them through it and being there with anything they needed. So after that, there was so much opportunity here. Leadership was great with getting me involved in things I was good at, such as creative writing. I started writing some press releases for Matt, Michelle, and then shortly after that, our VP of Marketing noticed that I was really active on social media. I had my own page at the time, I had a big following and just by chance, I was asked to start running our social media pages, which I turned out to really love. I put a lot of energy and effort into building our following and engaging with our community, engaging with all of our members on social media. And I've been here about five years and it's been the greatest opportunity I've ever had in my life.

David Heimer: Fantastic. So you really do work here.

Brandi Szeke: I do.

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David Heimer: I've seen you around, I've seen you on some videos like you with a fake gun. I've seen you hiding behind things.

Brandi Szeker: All over the place.

David Heimer: So you really do work here is what you're telling me?

Brandi Szeker: All the time.

David Heimer: Really?

Brandi Szeker: I am.

David Heimer: Wow. {Cross talking 02:05} Yeah. I've seen you in the hall. Sometimes you wave at me a little bit. {Cross talking 02:10} so on a daily basis what do you do when you're not playing around?

Brandi Szeker: When I'm not messing around, I handle all of our social media accounts. So Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook. I work with our lead multimedia design specialist, Nick, to help with our video production. I work with all of our social media marketing ads. I work closely with our graphic design team to get content out all the time. So I'm really all over the place. I do love making our fun videos as well to put smiles on our member's faces, give them ideas for what they should be putting out on their social media pages to interact with their homeowners as well.

David Heimer: You do a great job with it.

Brandi Szeker: Thank you.

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David Heimer: Let me ask you a question. If you were talking to contractors, you've worked with a lot of contractors now you're heavily active in social media. What are three things that you think the average contractor could do to improve his or her social media presence?

Brandi Szeker: Great question. First and I say this to everyone. Remember this phrase 'entertain before you educate', because your homeowners do not want to see constant promotions. They don't want to see old AC units. They don't want to see plumbing pipes. They want to see your company.

David Heimer: Are you sure? Because I love seeing that stuff. {Cross talking 03:26} all we do is take pictures of, you know, terrible pipes, water heaters that are bursting, and badly installed air conditioning units. I mean, that's fascinating to me. Are you telling me homeowners don't like that stuff?

Brandi Szeker: You know, they aren't thrilled when they scroll through their news feed and they see that kind of thing. What they are thrilled about though, is they love seeing your company. They love seeing your people. They love seeing birthday posts. They love seeing quirky, fun videos. They love seeing dogs in your office. A great example is Dutton Mechanical. They have a company dog named Duke, gold retriever and their homeowners absolutely love them for including him in their videos and their pictures. It makes them relatable. It makes them trustworthy. Who doesn't trust a gold retriever?

David Heimer: Yeah. Puppies and kids.

Brandi Szeker: Puppies and kids. I mean, that is the key. So entertaining before you educate, always put out content that you yourself would want to see to be entertained on social media. We all stop for a funny puppy video. We all stop for, you know, to say

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happy birthday to somebody when we see it on our timeline. So that would definitely be the first one. The second one I would say is if you don't understand how social media works, if you aren't active on it, I would not try to do it all by yourself. Even if you are a smaller company and you don't have a big staff, if you don't have the budget for a third party marketing company or, you know, hiring in house, I would say, get someone, get a college student to intern. I promise you anyone in college, anyone gen Z, millennials, we grew up with social media. We are very aware of what goes viral. We are very aware of what people like to see on their Facebook page, their Instagram.

David Heimer: So, don't hire somebody like {cross talking 05:11}.

Brandi Szeker: I wouldn't say that, but you know it won't always turn out great. Especially if you know, you're not super well versed on Instagram. So I would say, bring somebody in, even if it's your niece, even if it's your nephew, even if it's your daughter, your son, somebody who can come in part-time even, and just get the ball rolling. They'll know what to do. And if they don't have them take a couple YouTube courses, YouTube teaches you everything. So that would be second and thirdly, I would say, be as personable as you can be as engaged as you can constantly reach out to your community. Even if you only have 50 followers on Facebook, constantly respond to comments, constantly comment on their posts. You know, if they have a birthday coming up, if they just got married, if they just got a new dog, whatever the case is, never miss a chance to be active and to interact with them as much as possible.

David Heimer: Those are great by the way.

Brandi Szeker: Thank you.

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David Heimer: If you think about all of our members and you already mentioned Dutton Mechanical, is there anybody else who kind of stands out in your mind as somebody who does a really good job with it?

Brandi Szeke: Mc Williams and Son, they are phenomenal in social media. They do put a lot of effort into their content. I actually got several ideas for our own content from their page. That's another great point too, is constantly try to look at other companies and see what they're putting out. The ones that are really engaged, the ones that have a big following, always see what they're doing. Mc Williams and Son, they would put out videos where they would bring in their technicians' kids and they would ask them questions about their moms or their dads. And you wouldn't believe those funny answers that they would come up with. It was hilarious. And they got the most engagement I've ever seen. I mean, they had thousands of views. They had hundreds of shares on that video. It really blew up. So always look towards other companies that are doing really well.

David Heimer: That's another thing I wanted to ask you about. In our industry, one of the great things about it is that it's a lot of family businesses. Sometimes mom and dad both work in the business and their kids may or may not be involved in the business. But you know, you sort of like some of these businesses as a homeowner, you like them because you feel like it's a family.

Brandi Szeke: Right.

David Heimer: You feel like you can trust them. So I've always wondered about bringing the kids into it, like, you know, showing pictures of your family. Is that a good idea in social media? What do you think about it?

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Brandi Szeker: Oh, absolutely. The more personalized you can make it, the better. So showing whether you bring your daughter to Workday, whether somebody just had a baby and they brought their baby in and you threw a baby shower as family oriented, as you can make it, that's more trustworthy than a bigger corporation that, you know, you don't see what's going on. You don't see the people, you don't see their lives and all of the stuff going on with them.

David Heimer: Do you think that they should be at all hesitant at exposing their kids to the world, through social media?

Brandi Szeker: To each their own. You know, some people are hesitant and that's fine. However, these are smaller companies. This isn't Coca-Cola or Apple where they have, you know, millions of followers, you know, that could be a little risky here and there. But, you know, with a couple of thousand followers or a couple hundred, whatever the case is, I don't think it's that big of a deal. And like I said to each their own, you know, you can hide it if you want.

David Heimer: What do you like about working at Service Nation?

Brandi Szeker: Great question. I love working for you, David.

David Heimer: {Inaudible 08:34}.

Brandi Szeker: Honestly, I've been here for five years for a reason. I have never been so involved. I've never had so much respect given to me, so much creative freedom. And I believe that this is by far the best culture I have ever seen. Leadership is so involved with everybody's lives in the best way possible. I mean, for example, anytime we're in the office, Matt does his rounds in the office. He asks our team what's going on. You know, tell me something good, plays harmless pranks {inaudible 09:10}. And I've

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just never felt more family oriented. I've been at a couple other jobs where, you know, there's sometimes there's a toxic culture, sometimes there's tension and just a lack of communication. I've been here this long because we really care about our members.

Anytime we have a new company that joins our membership, we care so much about helping them. We put all of our effort, all of our energy into constantly giving them everything they need to grow. I've never seen even just as high up as leadership gets, they are so involved, you too David. So involved, so caring and not just that, but I mean, Matt constantly preaches to us how important our members are. You know, how important it is that they keep our toilets flushing, they keep our air cool. And it's always reminding us that, you know, we really care about our people. This isn't just profit. This is helping them and helping the nation grow.

David Heimer: I understand that we have tested your ability to tolerate spicy food on occasion. And has it turned out that you really do like spicy food a lot?

Brandi Szeker: Absolutely not.

David Heimer: And so is it true that Matt one time gave you some chocolate with just a little bit of spice in it?

Brandi Szeker: First off, it was not a little bit, it was a lot, in my opinion. I thought he was being pleasant, like super nice. Came over to my cubicle, held out a box of chocolates and I thought, wow, he is such a great president.

David Heimer: So, Matt Michelle showed up with a box of chocolates, opened it for you and you didn't suspect anything?

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Brandi Szeker: I was really new at the time. Now, maybe I wouldn't have fallen for it. But I thought he was the nicest person. I took a piece of chocolate, you know, hummed as I ate it and my throat was on fire and he was rolling. Everybody was rolling and I thought I was choking. So yeah. Loves his pranks.

David Heimer: Well, ultimately harmless, I hope.

Brandi Szeker: Very.

David Heimer: Alright. Anything else I need to know?

Brandi Szeker: No, I think that's good.

David Heimer: Alright. Thanks for doing this with us. It was great talking to you.

Brandi Szeker: Thank you. It was so fun.

Outro: We're always looking for good ideas and interviews for our podcast. If you have an idea or maybe you think you should be interviewed, just shoot an email to profiles Prosperity@serviceorroundtable.com that's profiles Prosperity@serviceroundtable.com. If you think what we're doing has any value, it would be very helpful if you would give us a great rating on iTunes. Thanks for your support. Hope to see you again soon. Bye.