



channel mastery

Channel Mastery Podcast, 133: Jason Duncan, Outdoor Research
Pivot to Produce, Source and Donate PPE, Follow up to OIA and SIA Webinar, Part III

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Kristin: Garrett, welcome to the show. And you founded Taxa there in Houston from an incredible background as a habitability design leader for NASA. And we're going to talk all about how your consumer has evolved through COVID-19 and now the recession, and how outdoor recreation will play such a pivotal role in our healing from the pandemic.

But let's start by talking about your incredible background and why you founded TAXA Outdoors.

Garrett: Okay, well, let's see, years ago I went to architecture school and was an architect in New York. And then this job opportunity arose at the Johnson Space Center, which is where astronauts are, so being in the habitability design center. And the reasoning that center existed was the engineering culture of NASA realized they had a quality of life problem. Which means that over time on a six month mission, astronauts were losing a lot of productive time, more than half of their productive time to do science or repairs or anything. And was that stress, was that living in a machine, what was that? So I was really trying to represent, as a designer and a more holistic optical enterprise than an engineer might be. Because once you can breathe and eat and go to the bathroom, then how you do all those things makes a big difference in your stress levels.

And so I became a weird expert in how people live in small spaces. What they really need, what they think they need. How to design spaces to accommodate change over time, which I translate at TAXA to be different types of adventures and different types of demographics, whether you're 25 or 70 or a three year old kid.

How is a small environment like a jungle gym? How is it like a library? How do you spill juice boxes on the cushions? Or how do you have a fine glass of wine? All those things are certainly relevant now and were differently relevant, but a big training ground at NASA. How do you do that?

And so I founded this company because the RV industry, which was the other mobile habitat industry, makes houses on wheels. And that's really antithetical to everything I believe about why you want to go outside and have an outdoor experience, whether that's a true wilderness experience or a car camping with your three year old and your three year old springs. You want to do everything different because that's good for your

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soul. And yet you want a comfortable place to sleep and a place to get out of the weather or away from bugs and a place to pee in the middle of the night. That's the big Venn diagram overlap. Other than that, I don't care if you want to watch a movie, but we're not going to sell you a flat screen TV. You already have a smartphone.

Kristin: Right. That's awesome.

Garrett: And it's really, it's quite bizarre to have the extreme environments of designing at NASA translates weirdly into this COVID thinking.

If we were just an RV, we would just be, I don't know, a white box, but now we are, people are dreaming about us as escape pods because people are less inclined to jump on an airplane. People are less inclined to do a lot of other things. People just want some sanity in their house. And so how can you have an office in your backyard? How can you have one thing that does all those things? Lets you dream about as soon as your state up, going and finding some land, a state park, a national park, the corner of a farm field, whatever it is. And go and how useful is that thing, wherever you're going. I'm not being very articulate.

It's been very useful, for the home office that hasn't been in the office to have units at home. We're doing Facebook lives from them to show them as home offices or as children's playrooms, but we're really using them. I started this interview there because I didn't have to wear my mask because the front office is mostly depopulated now, but we try to be careful in saying and all those things.

Kristin: Awesome. Well, I have to say, I'm so excited to have you on, and I think you're going to bring such incredible perspective to this. So we've been doing a lot of work, just trying to backfill on our understanding and specialty.

You have an aspirational specialty brand. You created your own category, frankly. Nobody has, I think it's very hard to find a competitive set, and I think in that it's been difficult for you and your team to understand well, how do we reach our consumer? I think initially you came at this from an RV perspective and quickly found that yes, it's an established line of distribution there, for sure. Obviously we have things that happen state by state in terms of distribution. We don't need to get into the weeds on that, necessarily.

But I think one of the most important places for us to start here today is how Taxa Outdoors has taken responsibility to tell its own story. And how you have attracted a community of people who believe in what you're doing because you're flying your own flag.

And what you did was, I think it's a huge undertaking to spearhead a new category that may have a little bit of an audience over here and a bigger one over here. But ultimately, you have people that you are attracting that haven't had what you're offering before.

And one of the things that I thought was so fantastic about us getting together and

doing an interview and having a talk today, is how consumers are using the product today.

Number one, before we get into that, let's talk about the fact that you have had such high demand for your products, even since the beginning of the pandemic. And we also should say, I guess, before we even get into that, that you and your wife have both survived COVID already. You had mentioned this when we were live before when we were having some technical issues. Talk a little bit about that to catch us up, but then let's also talk about the demand that you've seen, you and your team have seen for TAXA Outdoors product.

Garrett: Well, my wife and my COVID and our kids probably too, they were asymptomatic, was very mild relative to how horrifying it can be. Obviously we weren't hospitalized. We were just sick, like having the flu for a week, except all of the symptoms were slightly different than the flu, which we've had before. And I've taken a long time to recover from just being exhausted from that. So I'm cranky because I haven't been exercising as much as I want. Because whenever I exercised, I had to take her three hour nap because I was tired.

But more important than is the interest of our listeners. Just how our plans in a real sense, most three out of four of our products are RVs. That's how the state categorizes them. And most of our customers are from the outdoor industry world. And the RVs are something they've driven past on a highway, but it's like a parking lot to them. It's not selling a lifestyle or a dream of freedom or even as a piece of equipment. And all those things are what we're trying to sell.

We sell adventure equipment you can sleep in. We call them habitats because we really think that the RV model of a house on wheels or apartment on wheels is messed up for our customers. Obviously a lot of people love them. So I can't say it's wrong for everyone, but philosophically we are an outdoor industry company and we're trying to make equipment that lets you get places and bring the other stuff you want. And then there's a lot of detail about what does equipment mean? How comfortable is it? What is luxury? What is required? But basically the word habitats really just, I don't know if some NASA evoking version of a base camp and it's supposed to be a philosophical foundation for you to think, Oh my God, here's this thing that I've, hopefully, you've always wished existed. And this is going to allow me to do X and Y and Z, which I've long thought of, but I've been missing a crucial piece, which is, I don't know, they're really simple ways to describe that are really deep ways.

A simple one is to say, how do you go to a national park and set up a base camp for three days or seven days and go to a different Trailhead every day without having to break up your camp and without having to take things apart and without having to reorganize everything? Having a habitat in your garage is really amazing because you're 90% packed before you've even thought of going on an adventure. But that's the normal world.

In the COVID world, in the pandemic world, the silver lining, it's a weird way to say it. But I think everyone's interested in camping. We see that on our social media, we see that in newspaper headlines where airplane flight is going to be less extensive, at least for a while, till we figure it out. And everyone is out on the bike trails and walking, if you're allowed to do that in your city or state. We are here. And it's beautiful to see this sort of blooming of outdoor activity.

And so, because in a legal sense, we make RVs. We've always known that our messaging has to bypass the typical RV structure because that's not where people are. So we've always planned and plotted. And now are trying to do a hundred times faster is to own the sales funnel or our customer, interact with our customer as much as we can to explain to them are intuitive, but not necessarily easy to explain quickly products, and try to help people dream appropriately and try to fit them into the right habitats, and try to give them advice on how to achieve the road trips they've always wanted to go on. Also tell them, because we're all working from them, how they make great home offices in your backyard. How you can have a camp out right in your backyard, even as you're waiting for another month or two months, or next week, depending on your state for a state park to open up and let you go. We've achieved sanity again in a different way.

Kristin: Right. That's amazing, and I love what you said about seeing outdoor recreation booming. Were you with NASA at the last big recession 2008, 2009?

Garrett: I consulting there still on lunar habitats. But I experienced that, because that's when I was just having the idea for the cricket was the first trailer. So I was just beginning to call people up and say, "Don't you want to see my idea?" When everything crashed, and I was like, "No, thank you. We really did not want to see your idea."

Kristin: Not yet.

Garrett: Now we're kind of the opposite. Our RV dealers, because that's how we distributes most of our products because it's a distribution and sales points game for us. We're trying to own our messaging and our interface. Our dealers were a bit resistant to that before COVID. But now they too are saying to themselves, "Oh, TAXA was on the right track because we have to do that now too." So they're asking us questions, "How do we reach out? Oh my God, we really do want data.

How do you use social media as something other than just an ad when you want it to be an ad, of course, but you really want to be telling a story because everyone needs to be writing their own stories now?" So I don't know. I have a test, our journals, waiting to be written in. Our...

Kristin: That's awesome. Well, you know what I heard, I think you'll like this. I heard from a really, a great friend of mine who has for a long time been an Amazon consultant. He said it feels to him and a lot of his colleagues that this pandemic and recession combination has really accelerated the way that business is done and consumer perception and consumer evolution by about three or four years. That is so interesting to hear about the feedback that you're getting from your dealers in the RV world. Verdi

obviously worked in RVIA with them for, I think it was just under three quarters and it was a really interesting opportunity. We actually tried to do some training hand-to-hand with some of the dealers. I have to say, they definitely were in a very staid lane, they were used to operating a certain way. One of the things that is an opportunity that's come out of this is all of the habitual lanes have been smashed for all of us. We're all on the same page in a lot of ways. We've had to really put aside what has been normal for us for a long time and be open to meeting the consumer where they are today. That's ultimately what we're here to talk about is not only, I feel like your trailers are a canvas in terms of what we're going to talk about today, and how people are choosing to use them. I mean, you're giving them ideas and you're letting them make it what they want it to be.

I feel like so much in wholesale and even in directed consumer up until this point has been telling the consumer what it should be. So I really applaud that you and the team are basically saying, "Come into our world and let us know what it means to you." Now your dealers are even raising their hand and saying, "Teach us how to do that." That is actually a pretty cool story.

Garrett: It is cool, and I at least... So the RV industry, I think for years and years has been quite passive and successful. We have always thought, because we really think of ourselves as a new category, or a new overlap of category, or something, a new channel. We've always separated in our minds, not like, "How do we do this?" Because the easy answer is you get a distribution and sales and service all at an RV dealership.

We've always split those up and say, "How do we... Who are our customers and how do we find them? How do we talk to them? Then how do we conceptually think of these three separate categories of distribution of a large and not inexpensive item and the literal closing of the sale and the service?" So there are a lot of things that go into that and a great dealer is still a great dealer. They can tell people, it's like, where does the trash go? Where does the cash change hands? Where will you get your water pump fixed, if it goes out? That kind of thing.

But we've always been proactive and not passive about finding our consumers and trying to message them. Just before COVID we were making great plans and now we're implementing them and it seems to be working. It's not that we're 1,000 times busier than we were before, but we are seriously busy and we're looking to expand our communication and our sales, of course. But now the different pieces of our strategy are talking back to us differently. I'm not being very articulate. Right. The feedback loop of our customers is much better and as a designer, that's the best, really.

Kristin: Oh I bet.

Garrett: Because the way that we are figuring out with our delivery systems, like what can happen? What can't happen? How do we rethink servicing individual customers' needs through a dealer is different than how a dealer thought. They're like, "We have to have some products on our lot and then the customers will come to us." Now it's we are, in

essence, pre-selling many more products because we're calling up our dealer and saying, "Bob is coming in on Tuesday. He wants to look at a silver this. Bob is a fisherman. Have your fisherman sales guy talk to him, not your mountain biker salesman," that kind of thing.

So, that's great. I think for a lot of the people who might be listening, this separation or the rethinking of the distribution channel is enormous for us of shipping a large product from Houston to Seattle is impossible. We have to put three or five of them on a trailer at once to make it economically sensible right now. But all those things are being rethought live. So I think if you make a shirt, the delivery system is a major concern and a line item, but it's not a whole other industry.

Kristin: I actually just finished up doing a panel for the Snowsports industries of America. We had the active discussion was on consumer evolution, and one of the panelists talked about breaking up the transaction from the fulfillment. The transaction obviously starts with, "I've discovered TAXA. I'm raising my hand and joining your community. I'm following your content. Now it's time for me to buy. I'm going to reach out and I'm going to find out where I can go see this in my region." So I love that though, because there's two things I've been guilty of. One is lumping all the consumers into one bucket and saying, "This is consumer behavior today through COVID," it's so different. There are people angry that Amazon can't deliver their toilet paper. That's the same consumer who's willing to wait however many days, or whatever to have a custom tax outdoors trailer built.

I feel like consumers are realistic people and they are having some of their behaviors changed right now, for sure. One of the other points that I heard on this panel was about consumers maybe not having as high of loyalty or bouncing from one brand to another and outdoor due to having a friction experience with obtaining a product from one brand and going to another. I feel like that actually may be the case in some places right now. But with a product like yours, I feel like it's actually part of my identity.

It's something that I've wanted for a long time and now I'm actually evolving how I might use it in justifying it more because it's actually a far more than something I take out just to enjoy the outdoors. So with that, before I get into kind of the very cool way that people are using your habitats in the Coronavirus, in the recession that's happening right now, I would like to just get your take on your experience because it sounds like you've really written a book, if you will, like an approach that you have put in place around TAXA Outdoor and then using RV as points of distribution. But you're really telling your narrative brand story from the point of discovery to the point of when that consumer actually gets to the lot to look at it.

Garrett: I'm not sure there's a short answer to that.

Kristin: That was a long question

Garrett: I've been at this 10 years from napkin sketch to now. The first four of those were pretty stupid, meaning I was stupid at only a designer, and it's like, if I design something good, then everyone will think it's good, and I can be passive and everyone will find it. So I guess TAXA it goes through waves of becoming more sophisticated, but it's always been a constant that the RV channel is not the best fit for our customers.

So it was a race what's going to change first? We've always known, but haven't had the ability until recently that we had to get closer, own more of the sales funnel. I don't know what jargon to use, that it was important for us to talk to our customers. When we had no money for marketing at all, we just hoped that our dealers would get that and then we would be disappointed in them. Then more recently, we were making some of them angry, is the wrong word. They're like, "You're doing our job," and it's like, "We are trying to do your job and we want your job to be closing the sale and making money and we want to do the thinking because just I... And, again, we have some great dealers and we have, I guess like any business, 20% of our sales team, they understand what they're selling and they concentrate on whatever, more camping oriented vehicles. But, it's like, "We're trying to help you. Let us help you. You think you know how to do this, and you don't know how to do this traditionally. We're not calling you stupid." So we're saying our customers are different because at the same time they're complaining about something they're also joking. It's like, "Oh, we know who the TAXA customer is before they even get out of their car." It's like we know it's one of these four car brands. The moment they step out, it's just one of these four outdoor industry jacket brands. Because we know they're not interested in looking at anything else on our lot. So that's a big sort of success, but except we've also forced our customers to go to an RV dealership where they've never wanted to go. And I'm not explaining this very well. I'm going to jump to-

Kristin: No, you actually are.

Garrett: Yeah. It's not that we hate RV dealerships. It's just that there's a mismatch, and legally, that's where we have to be. As we have gotten the ability, we have augmented our ability a lot, and it's really paid off in this pandemic. It's like, no, we want to talk to the customers. We want to answer these questions. And actually, you want us to also. And they finally believe that.

Kristin: That's fantastic. Talk about pushing a boulder uphill. They had the best of intentions. All of our businesses have a tendency to hold onto what got us to this place and to protect that and try and grow that. And now I feel like we're being forced to, I think, kind of be open to everything that's out there and choose some new ways to modernize. And some people are going to have to modernize more than others, but every single business, I think, is going to have to modernize because the consumer is changing so much right now. Let's talk a little bit about the creative ways that your consumer is using TAXA Outdoors products at this time because I was just... I loved this story when I heard it.

Garrett: I don't know which story you're talking about now.

Kristin: I'm talking about habitats versus RV or versus camper. The multitude of needs.

Garrett: Right. So all the whole front office is using them as home remote offices in their backyard. And that is logical and sensible, and they're designed for that. We have 12 volt outlets and USB things to charge things. And if you're at home, you can just plug into a 110 extension cord. I'm not sure I feel like I'm not telling the story as well as you want. The story for me is how that happens during the day. And is my wife in it, or am I in it? Who's at their dining room table, and who's in the office in the backyard where you want to be?

But then at whatever it is, at happy hour or dinner or after dinner, now it evolves into where am I going to hang out with my kids and do X or Y. I should say something artistic. Watch Dr. Who or something. Depends which kid I'm talking about. So it's very gratifying to me. As we've talked about earlier, when we design a habitat, it's never only about being at a campground. It's like where is it when it's not in the campground? It's in your garage, it's in your backyard or it's pulled over by the side of the road. We have thought about programs for all that, whether it's the picnic by the side of the road. Not particularly relevant for COVID right now, but the backyard and garage, it really is. And it ranges from jungle gym to special outdoor dinner time to home office to I just want to get away from the people who are driving me crazy, which was very important in a space station too.

Astronauts would always deny they needed an individual space for privacy. And you'd be like, okay, you don't need it, but someone's going to. And then let me ask you these series of embarrassing questions. And I will basically prove to you that you too want a private space. Whether it's talking to your spouse at home or your kid who just flunked out of something or whatever, you just want to be alone. And luckily, the doctors are backing us up because that's the only place they got decent radiation protection.

Kristin: Well, and I just want to add a couple more that Divya Brown, who's your president, shared with me when we were going through a rehearsal call. Podcasting content studio, art studio. I like the work-from-home. I like the old school mother-in-law quarters. In my case, it would be for my 18-year-old son. Desperately wishes that he was already in college, but he's not there yet.

Garrett: I have 18-year-old son too.

Kristin: Yes. And then also a way to go across the country and have a clean place to stay that you know is safe for you. Let's talk a little bit about that trip. How many people are raising your hand to use it in that way right now, knowing that air travel is impacted and that there really aren't a lot of places to stay and camp et cetera? I thought that was really interesting as well.

Garrett: Yeah. I am first in line. I'm raising both my hands for that.

Kristin: Me too.

Garrett: And then all our marketing events were canceled, so my planned sanity breaks were canceled. So yes, I forget if you said music studio too. One of our customers put on a 15-minute concert on YouTube.

Kristin: Oh, that's awesome.

Garrett: So yes, road trips. Yeah. I keep fantasizing about that for myself, for my customers. I want to learn and consult, and it's like planning an expedition. What's your gas station policy going to be? How long are gloves going to be? What states do you have to avoid because they might tell you into quarantine if you had driven through the wrong state before that? But all the actually very serious things like that that can sound like jokes too, they all change week by week. So we all know that things are opening up. And we all know, the people who care, that we want to open up in the right way. And going on a road trip seems actually a controllable, great way where you can monitor and control your exposure and what you're exposing other people to. And you can go to beautiful places. And I don't know.

That's the exciting part about, not the pandemic, but the opening up and the re-concentration of people on taking care of themselves locally. And by locally right now, I mean literally in their living room. But by locally, I mean not through distraction, but by being present to wherever you are, which is what camping is all about. So the road trip planning is my favorite evening fantasy, but it's also our next Facebook Lives will be about that. We want to help people responsibly and safely and all those things. Get out there because humans are made to get out there. And right now we have an additional layer of thinking, and who knows when that layer of thinking disappears. I don't know. I can't say it very well. I guess I mentioned early on, it's beautiful to see so many more people out on the streets walking, and it can only be beautiful that more and more people will go camping and be exposed to the outdoors and, in my mind, automatically become stewards of our ecosystems because we are now experiencing life as an ecosystem.

We're just a part of it. And I think that should wake people up in a good way. And it's not that adventuring is dead. It's that adventuring is being rethought. And we like to think we're evolving rapidly, or we pre-thought that already because we're so in love with camping and adventuring and that we're fairly well situated to come out of that as something that can be really helpful to people's souls and happiness and well-being and all those things.

Kristin: I totally agree. And I don't know. As I live in a kind of a higher altitude area, we're just starting to see green and hear the birds. And nobody's complaining of allergies. We all are realizing we've taken it for granted before not being able to get out and enjoy our usual way that we've recreated outside outside of our local community. We're still fortunate enough to do that. And I feel like that has been really heartening. Nature keeps trucking on. That is one thing that is constant in this crazy state of change that

we're listening, or living in, rather. And I think it's part of what's calling us to be in the middle of it as soon as we can.

Garrett: Yeah. It's really interesting to talk to people in different parts of the country. It always is, but the micro seasonality things, or it's not really a microclimate, but our doors have been open at the factory and the front office for a few months because we're in Houston. And now we're afraid that we're going to have to shut them because it's about to be terribly hot. So spring never...goes away here, but it's a hot spring to summer. But, in different ways, people in snowy climates are really itching to get outside in a different way than we are, which I think is difficult. And you have to remember when you're talking to other people. But it's one of those being present where you are things that's also really cool. It's like-

Kristin: I totally agree.

Garrett: I think tourism or outdoor experiences will also sort of migrate in different ways than they did just a few short months ago, as people are trying to find where they fit in, instead of being able to just say, I'm here.

Kristin: Exactly. One thing I want to talk about is, you said that you had a plan to increase your content prior to the pandemic hitting. And now you're still doing that. I know that a big chunk of that has been video content, but the Facebook live, I think, is maybe a different layer that has been accelerated by your team. And I'd love to hear kind of your instinctual sense of the connection that that has brought. Because I think that that connection would have happened, even if we weren't all in isolation. But I think, because of your independent nature and the interesting facets of your brand, such as your founding story, or U.S. based manufacturing, which we're going to talk about in a moment here, but it really feels to me like people are like excited to kind of get to peek behind the curtain and interface with your team live. Can you talk a little bit about what that's been like for you? Because I don't know too many executives who just love being on Facebook live. And it seems like you're pretty well practiced at this point. How has that served your business?

Garrett: Oh, well you have to ask someone else. You can ask Divya whether I love it or not. I'm happy to do it. I don't like to perform, but if I'm able to act natural, that's okay.

Kristin: Yeah.

Garrett: So, in addition to that, also we have people you can talk to. We have habitat specialists, who are people who use our products, who are happy to talk to you and make appointments to talk to you. So, that's just another way to interact. I think it's great. But, let's see... I hate it when I feel like I'm only being marketed to and I'm not getting the whole story.

Kristin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Garrett: And I think the whole story involves everything.

Kristin: Yep.

Garrett: So, behind the scenes looks, but also some really candid conversations about like, is this the right product for you or not? Or it sounds like your husband really needs this kind of luxury and we're not giving that to him, or whatever.

Kristin: Right.

Garrett: So, but I think it's great because I've been the face of the company forever and for too long. Like that's not interesting to me. More of the great people I work with are being exposed. But more of that like customers, our audience realizes that it's not monolithic. Just the way I don't answer design questions very succinctly, because I really have thought a lot about how 20 year olds, and 70 year olds, and everyone in between have different personality types. And that doesn't help me. I'm a crappy salesperson because I want to talk about design. But it's great when people of all different backgrounds who work for me get to talk to people of all different backgrounds and figure it out, it's like, oh, I should not be talking to this person. You should really talk to Ben, who is a, whatever, a great mountain biker, like you know, or is crazy, or is... I don't know, anything. So, I don't know. I'm giving the wrong answer, I feel like.

Kristin: No. I think you're spot on you. You don't like to be sold to, is basically it.

Garrett: Right. So, I know Divya did one last night where her kids were in it, because home office. And they were not in perfect control, I'm sure, and were yelling and screaming. But that's great because actually many of our customers want to see little kids climbing, and yelling, and screaming and get the confidence that they're not breaking things and that other people's kids yell and scream too.

Kristin: Right? Well, yeah. As they say, we're all in this together. And that's the thing that is true of-

Garrett: Yeah. We're not trying to sell amenities. We're trying to sell the plan, the equipment that lets you achieve dreams. Those are two different things.

Kristin: Yep.

Garrett: It's not always sunset. There's sunrise, and good moods, and bad moods. And we thought about them. It's not necessarily a design solution, but these habitats really are containers for life. And so, the idea of both us being able to express that, but also our customers being able to see that is really crucial and good.

Kristin: Exactly. So, as we look to wrap up here, I would love to talk about your U.S. based manufacturing. I feel, through a lot of the work we've done for the podcast, we've talked with a lot of our clients who produce apparel or Tailwind, which is a nutrition solution, pivoting their manufacturing to serve frontline healthcare workers.

Garrett: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kristin: That can really span a lot of different types of people and instances, regionally, nationally, globally. But I wanted to talk about how consumers, I think, are going to be really gravitating towards storytelling and the truth behind manufacturing with brands. And you've done U.S. manufacturing since day one. Correct?

Garrett: Yes. I only answered with an asterisk because, if you really want to dive into details, the definition of U.S. based actually has a number. Our windows don't come from the U.S., for instance, because no one in the U.S. made those windows. But in a U.S. certified way, we are totally made in the U.S. Does that make sense?

Kristin: Yes. And where is your factory located, if you could share that with the audience?

Garrett: Oh, we're in Houston, Texas, Space City.

Kristin: Great. So, everything is there.

Garrett: I mean, we are lucky enough to be, because of the energy industry, there's lots of great fabrication shops with high tech equipment that can make our CNC laser cut stuff. I mean, it was on purpose a bit, but when I started out ten years ago, my supply chain was notional in my head. And I was like, where is the best thing made? And then, sorry... each piece. Sort of where is the best light? Where's the best tent? Where's the best tire? And then, to understand it much more like a system, it's like, where does the best overall supply chain fit us for where we are right now? And how can we take pride in where we do it, and how we do it, and involve communities, and all those things? That's great and important to us.

Kristin: Are you getting more questions from your community about that right now?

Garrett: I am not. I don't know if we are or not.

Kristin: Okay.

Garrett: As a designer, I think of designing a better mouse trap, whether it's the system or the finished object. So, I don't usually think of it to myself as we are made in the U.S. as a point of pride. It's just like that is the practical thing to do. It always has been for us. And it's practical in every sense. So, it's so practical, I should take great pride in it somehow. But really-

Kristin: One thing that I think that's important to bring up about it is the fact that you have aspiration to be as just in time as possible. That, to me, is a sustainable business mindset. And I feel like that's an important part of what you're controlling with your U.S. based manufacturing, and also just with the customization of the units.

Garrett: Right. Yeah. Of course, COVID is proving that that's not always the best. There are weaknesses to that system too.

Kristin: True.

Garrett: Everything has weaknesses. So, and then every business should be getting smarter right now, again about the perils of that hybrid. But yes, we want it to be lean, and efficient, and just in time. But I mean, in a much higher, more vision level statement, really we want more people to go camping. And how do we get them product that we think they should take to get up there?

Kristin: Yep. And I love your view here, Garrett, about getting more people out there so more people fall in love with it and want to protect it.

Garrett: Yeah. I've always thought that.

Kristin: Yep. Well, I have to tell... you've been super gracious with your time. I knew that we were going to go long because you have such an interesting story to tell. But I just have to say, one of my favorite things, I'm not sure if Outdoor Retailer will go forward, the trade show, but seeing Garrett at an Outdoor Retailer is literally like seeing a kid on Christmas morning. Like he is just in his element and cannot get enough of the gear. And I just want to tell you, like we are so delighted to be partnering with you. We share your inspiration. And we really can't wait to see how you evolve this with your team going forward. Because frankly, like you created this category, there's a consumer that's changing, and I feel like we're about to have this like awesome like meeting of that. And it's going to take us in maybe an even different direction. But you have all the groundwork in place. And I'm super excited to see like where the consumer will take you next.

Garrett: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you. And we're excited too. That's what I'll say.

Kristin: Awesome.

Garrett: Yeah.

Kristin: Well, thanks. And we will be keeping tabs and rooting for you, obviously, from the sidelines. But I'd love to get back together with you and the team perhaps in like July and kind of hear where things are then. And hopefully, by that time, I will have my Cricket because I'm ordering one.

Garrett: Excellent. Excellent. All right.

Kristin: Thanks so much. It's been great to have you on the show.

Garrett: Thanks so much for the chance. Bye, bye.