



channel mastery

#172: Joe Wold, LifeHandle
ChannelMastery.com

Kristin: Welcome back everybody to another episode of the Channel Mastery podcast, I'm very proud to introduce a Verde client today to you for the Channel Mastery podcast. Please meet Joe Wold, who is the Inventor and Co-founder of LifeHandle. You can learn more about them at mylifehandle.com. Welcome to the show, Joe. It's great to have you here.

Joe: It's wonderful to be here, Kristin. Thank you for having me.

Kristin: So here we are in June. Well, this will air in June, it's just before June, 2021. And we started talking with you and your team prior to the pandemic. You had a lot go on during the past 18 months. But what I wanted to do to set the show up today for the awesome Channel Mastery audience is we're sharing Joe's and his team's story about launching and basically getting through life as an entrepreneur in an active launch cycle, during a pandemic, we're going to talk about the interesting channels that Joe and his team utilized and my team helped with during that time. But ultimately I think the main takeaway that everybody's going to enjoy is, is perseverance, right? And, and the marathon is one with every step, not the sprint. And I really just have so much respect for the fact that you all stuck with it through this difficult time. And now we're right at this amazing precipice going into 2021 summer. So let's start by having you talk with the Channel Mastery audience about your background and your founder story for LifeHandle.

Joe: Yeah. So it's, it's a little interesting one. I have always been an inventor and a tinkerer, but my occupation before going into LifeHandle, I was a geologist working for a construction company engineering firm in Boston. And during that time I had suffered a car accident that left me, you know, really bad whiplash and the separated shoulder and having she's about a one-year-old baby girl at home that, you know, through all that rehab and everything, you still have to be the parent and you have to help them. And, and I've got a chocolate lab. So he also needed to be going on walks and thought that there was a solution, that really wasn't on the market that I was able to, able to come up with with a couple easy pieces that are put together and came up with a first prototype of the LifeHandle. And knew at that moment when I, when I first was able to hold my daughter for an hour in one arm, without even realizing how long I had been holding her. So there's just something to be developed here. And I think it can help a lot of people. And I began the journey that is now LifeHandle.

Kristin: That's awesome. So I have to say, I think that you really, you know, you lived through this yourself, but I think that you also have really hit on something in our society today, which is just the fact that we all have to multitask so much. And I love that you created something, that's almost like a bit of an identity piece in terms of, it looks like something that the outdoor active lifestyle consumer would gravitate toward. It looks like a piece of gear. Right? But it really is such a functional it's going to become, in our opinion, obviously, like we're a little biased because we've worked with you from the beginning, but like, we feel like it's going to become just a necessity as people discover this. And we're just at the journey, you know, where we're starting to do that and we're ready to kind of go to market finally. So let's, let's fill the audience in on the gap. There's a big gap jump that you landed. So everybody, Joe obviously was at the helm and, you know, pushing this brand new company forward also had another child. So you have Tucker who's 10 months old. And then your daughter Wells is three years old now.

Joe: That was, that was the, the big I would say it was a bit of a fortunate coincidence where we were working on something that helps you with holding your kids, walking your dog, and to have a baby come into the mix on all this was really, I think, a benefit for the product because we were able to take all the, the mishaps that, you know, the first generation had and really ideate, I guess, to make a better version each time we, we definitely took all those unique aspects of life that we're living with through the COVID pandemic and really made a product that will help with so many activities. And as you said, it's lightweight, versatile, and comfortable.

Kristin: That's awesome. Well, I just, I love that you had to iterate as you had, you know, another baby joining the family and also just, you know, your rehab story is really interesting too. I think there's so many people who don't realize like the freedom that they can get back with what you've designed here. So we obviously had our work cut out for us cause you know, retail is compromised, everybody is looking online to have their problem solved during COVID. We had a couple of really great consumer trends going for us, which was everybody loved being outdoors with their family and walking their dogs and RVing and camping and all the things that we love to do. Right. So we had some great trends, but we did have a lot of noise to break through. Meaning like when people are searching online, we had to make them aware of this. We had to enable them to understand what it was for et cetera. And obviously visual content is, is so, so important to that. So I'm curious to know, like, as you were iterating on this design, Joe, did your target consumer change at all, or did you really feel like you kept assigning for the same person? You just kept refining it for them?

Joe: Yeah, we kept, we kept really focusing in on the active family segment, and that would be our kind of our ideal consumer. And the big thing that we really focused on was something that you can put on with one arm that can go over your coat or worn under your coat. And, you know, be that, that slim profile product that can be worn in the hot temperatures and not be overbearing for temperature, but also, you know, something that you can really take with anywhere. And we, through that process of, of developing it really had to, to eliminate a lot of the you know, thick straps and, and ladder walks. And we wanted to make it really compact obviously, but still have the adjustability to meet in, in fit work with the, the human body as it does.

Kristin: Right. And now here we are obviously you know, you've gotten through summer, it's kind of the height of the pandemic, if you will, in 2020, and then you decided to do a Kickstarter, can you walk us through that decision? Because I think that's going to be one of the things that our audience will really, really love to hear about today. Like what was it like to come to that decision and we'll talk through what it was like to go through that in the, in the pandemic?

Joe: Yeah. The Kickstarter was, was the decision that, that we really were kind of forced to make in a sense, because our, our manufacturers said we've had so much delay due to COVID that, you know, we can, we can get you a couple of hundred sample, finished, good product by December. And the rest is going to be later, maybe in April. Knowing, that we were right there, we had finished product, but we were going to have to really scale down on the amount that we can get.

So that's where the Kickstarter campaign was, was super helpful and, and figuring out, you know, how we were going to market this because I, we, we really didn't have initially that, that worked out in how, you know, with content and everything coming together, and obviously working with the team at Verde, we were able to really paint that picture and who we were going to be marketing it to. And that was one of the initial, the feedback that I was not, not surprised, but, but I guess excited to see who was reaching out to us and, and who, you know, was going to benefit from the product more than what I was initially expecting.

Kristin: Right. and it's just, it's really, really interesting to pivot to that, and I want to just say, prior to COVID having helped brands through Kickstarters, nothing gets you closer to your audience. There's no better way to embed yourself if you will, like with your audience than through a Kickstarter. I mean, you're literally like hearing from them about everything. They like everything they don't like. And I love the way that Kickstarter really focuses on the storytelling, especially providing it in different visual mediums. So you're even able, not just visual written word, imagery and video, and you're able to see like what's resonating with my target consumer historically Kickstarters prior to the pandemic were, I think some of our brands really saw like a bit of a different demographic come into that, the people on the Kickstarter platform. And sometimes that can be different from like an active lifestyle consumer, like a specialty brand, like yours would go after, but I have a feeling I'd love to hear your take on this, like with the pandemic. I think that that really merged because the nature of what you are bringing to market is appealing to a specialty consumer, but also a broader consumer. So I'm almost wondering if like you were able to really see like audience engagement and what brands have seen prior to the pandemic is sometimes it's a separate audience on Kickstarter that then their normal target audience, but in your opinion, like, was it really the same audience that you were speaking to on the Kickstarter platform as we were working through in the quote boardroom together from a launch standpoint?

Joe: I did see a lot of the similar similarities with the consumer and and how we kind of envisioned the, the branding and the product to be, I guess, portrayed from the

consumer. Right. And yeah, so there was a lot of, a lot of carry over with that, but as I mentioned earlier, we, there was, there was a bigger segment of, of people that were, were truly in need of a product like this from the recovery side that really hadn't been available or wasn't, wasn't on the market.

Kristin: What are some of the surprising things that you were learning and seeing through the Kickstarter you know, watching it all unfold, like what were some of the things that were kind of like, oh, wow, that's really important for us to kind of carry forward into the product. Do you have a couple of those memories you can share?

Joe: So, yeah, we there was a lot of people reached out with, with I guess guide dogs and you know, service dogs and being able to actually train your dog a little bit easier with the hands-free aspect of the, of the leash and the sling. And that was something that didn't quite come to mind right away as we were doing this and building it more or less, I was focused on just a comfortable, you know, ability to, to hold my daughter's hand and push the stroller and have hands free for that, but a whole different side of the dog teaching and training world kind of spoke up during the Kickstarter, which was neat.

Kristin: That's super fascinating, especially when you consider like how, just the incredible rise of like pet adoptions, right. And I adopted a pet a year before COVID and I still am trying to figure him out. I love him dearly, but point being is adopting a pet in a pandemic and then really not having a place to take your dog because retail or training might be compromised in person. You probably do have to do a lot of that online by yourself. So that's super interesting to learn, and I agree that's that was a facet that we were also surprised by, but also it was just a very pleasant surprise because ultimately that's an example of us being able to get in front of that pet owner on the Kickstarter channel, where it would have been very difficult to get in front of them in a regular PR channel, frankly, because it was so congested out there with people researching online and looking at different content.

So that's an awesome point to share. And I appreciate you bringing that up. So let's talk a little bit about the audience that you obtained through Kickstarter. So again, this is my pre pandemic hat on here. The clients that we've helped with Kickstarters, sometimes their audience is, as I said, different than their core audience, but sometimes we're able to migrate them onto the, the, you know, the brands, email platform that is not Kickstarter related. And I know that, you know, we're still working on a lot of audience growth, which we'll continue to do with life handle. But did you notice that you were able to like naturally nurture that Kickstarter audience or did they really still feel like they were really more interested in like, when's this product coming to market, you know, instead of joining a community per se?

Joe: Yeah, there's certainly a big group that were kind of worried about the Kickstarter, not, not being able to fulfill and, and actually meet our goal. And and that was the nature of it was that we, we had, we had already manufactured the product, you know, it was just a matter of it arriving. And so we were able to able to give, give some reassurance on, on that and that, you know, their, their support obviously is, is certainly something that goes into the next next product and the next variation of the dog leash that we're actually already working on.

Kristin: That's awesome. And so I think that everybody on Kickstarter, anyone who's backing a project is aware that it is possible that they may not see things hit the right timeline. So that's a great way to that. You'll be building trust with them because you'll be able to actually fulfill, which is awesome. So just curious also here we are, again, like when, by the time people listen to this, it'll be June 20, 21 or beyond, depending on when they tune in and your product is now in the United States. And you're ready to go. I mean, this must be just a very validating moment for you and your team with all that you've been through. Can you talk a little bit about that and just your excitement for what's ahead here?

Joe: Yeah, it really, I mean, as, as we've all said, you know, people are just so excited to get outside and to take the mask off and go out and explore and be, be kind of free to come back to the life that we kind of knew before COVID. And like you said, we're, we're just excited that our product is, is here and able to, able to fulfill the orders quickly and get people out and enjoy joy of life. And you know, whether it's, whether it's a walk in the park with the dog or pushing the kids in the stroller, you know, that there's one little thing that you can bring with you that makes it a little bit easier. And so, yeah, I think we're just really excited to be back into summertime and get out.

Kristin: Well, I have one other last question before we wrap up today, you've been super generous with your time, and I appreciate that, but obviously we're deploying influencers to try and get the word and the vision out that you're trying to impart with LifeHandle. And I invite everybody to go to, again, mylifehandle.com and you can find all the social media channels there are handles there, and we'll be posting everything in the show notes as well for, for your interest on life handle. But let's talk a little bit about how influencers ambassadors, what's your vision in there in terms of helping them showcase what the product is for and how it makes their lives so much easier. And I mean, I feel like I can see this just by going to your website and looking at your video, but we've definitely seen through COVID Joe, that like people are watching other people who remind themselves of their own lives. So I'm curious to know, like, if you feel the same or, or what your hope is around your influencer ambassador team.

Joe: Well, I know that a couple of the ambassadors have, they recently had their own children, so, you know, they, they were testing the leash out for their dog and now they get to experience pushing a stroller with their dog and the benefits of that. With our all-purpose handle they're now able to hold their kid or have their toddler hold onto the handle and go through on their adventures. And so they're working with the brand ambassadors and influencers has been really, really good, and they've, they've brought up new ways to use the, the all purpose handle and certainly showing us some, some fun, new things.

Kristin: That's awesome. I have a feeling they're going to continue to do that too, because they're just, you know, right now, being able to tell the story LifeHandle, as it pertains to their lives, things are warming up out there. Like you said, we're starting to get back to it and really just kind of settle forward into what our new normal looks like. And

everything that we're hoping to do with you at Verde is to make life handle a part of as many people's lives as possible. It is such a versatile product. And again, I invite you all to check it out at my life, handle.com. Anything I can I might've forgotten to ask you Joe, before we wrap up here today.

Joe: I think we're just now a, no, nothing, nothing right off the top, but so, so wonderful to be with you on the podcast, Kristin, and thank you so much.

Kristin: Oh, you're so welcome. I am such a huge fan of what you're doing and also just entrepreneurs in general. And I understand that you kind of, this is who you are and what you love to do. And, and we're just so excited to be able to support you, Joe. So thank you so much. And I hope you check it out. Everybody listening, because this is definitely a passion driven product and the fact that Joe and his team were able to keep focused on this and keep hitting milestones through this tumultuous time that we've just lived through is, is a testimony to like the heart and soul of the entrepreneur, especially in the active outdoor lifestyle markets. So good on ya. And we're so proud to be working with you.

Joe: Well, thank you. Thank you again.