

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dr. David Phelps

Welcome to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint, a podcast about freedom—freedom from expectations of society and the traditional path to success that has been ingrained in us from our early years, I'm joined by mavericks, renegades, and non-conformers to discuss an anti-traditional path to financial freedom, freedom of time, relationships, health, and ultimately freedom of purpose. My name is Dr. David Phelps. Let's get started.

David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind community and the Dental Freedom Blueprint Podcast.

Today, I've got an energetic, very fun and engaging person who I had the blessing (really honored) to meet some months ago at a local CEO meeting.

And I love those kind of meetings because a person who lends these up brings the best of the best. And being in a collaborative place where you can be around other people who are like-minded (business people in this case) and trying to figure out, how do I navigate the current economy and what my clients, my customers, my patients are thinking — these are all parts of what we call marketing, and branding, and messaging.

And I have the perfect person here today, Dacia Coffey, of The Marketing Blender. Dacia Coffey, thanks for being here today.

Dacia Coffey: I am delighted. I'm a huge fan. And so, this is going to be so fun.

David Phelps: Well, let me give a short snippet of your background, and this is not going to cover everything. So, we might go down

some rabbit holes and pull up some other parts of your past that make it relevant today.

But in brief, again, the company, you're a CEO and founder of The Marketing Blender, I believe from my history evolved around 2013, is that about the time?

Dacia Coffey: Right.

David Phelps: So, been off and running for a good number of years.

You're a leading authority on accelerating growth. You're the host of the Corporate Caffeine Podcast, lots of caffeination on that one, I imagine.

You're the author of the *Corporate Caffeine* book. So, another book for your caffeine mornings or full all day, whatever you like. She's also a Fractional Chief Marketing Officer. We'll talk about that, and I think that's a strong piece to make people aware of.

So, Fractional Chief Marketing Officer, and the CEO of The Marketing Blender, as I said, a B2B sales and marketing alignment agency. She's a member of the Forbes Agency Council, and a Forbes contributor, was named an American Advertising Federation Shooting Star.

So, we'll have to dig into that a little bit. You are a shooting star. You're always shooting somewhere. I guess that fits to you to a T.

In addition to her client work, she writes and speaks on how people can use their work and words to unleash their potential, and use their work to bless the world.

I love that. I know a lot of what you talk about with your clients or potential clients, those who are looking to get the word out about who they are, what they do, who they serve — all those things that are the differentiators.

We're always like, "What's the uniqueness?" Because we all have them, but most people can't find them. Well, need other people to help us find those. And I think that's a big piece of what you and all the folks at Marketing Blender do.

And in that differentiation, and having a culture that has buy-in and understand what that mission is, how you're serving, who you're serving, what kind of transformation you're making in other people's lives. Again, the work that blesses the world, and I think that's really where you got to start. Do you not?

Dacia Coffey: It is absolutely where you have to start, because I'm a huge believer that there has to be a paradigm shift when you're talking about growth of any kind. So, unpack that for just a second. We're talking about using your work to bless the world, this is countercultural.

Unfortunately, a lot of the world is, "Thank God it's Friday." And they kind of treat work as a four-letter word, not the real one. And it's inappropriate because I feel like from a personal growth and a potential standpoint on an individual level, it is literally dealing our ability to realize our own human potential. And that's incredibly dangerous to buy into that language.

But then on top of that, when you compound it, and you're thinking about communication and how it can and should unify people inside of an organization, and then align them with the people they serve; their customers, their stakeholders, their partners, their vendors, their peers, their referrals.

Anybody that they are engaging with day-to-day in the business world, the opportunity for prosperity and connection and meaning inside of a huge community, and as almost a revolution inside the business world, I think it's possible and doable.

And so, I'm very passionate about the role that communication marketing can and should play, because I feel that too many of us limit it, but you know what? Every single one of us in our work world and our personal lives, we're going to talk and communicate for the rest of our lives.

We might as well start getting really good at it now, not later, because it can unleash a lot of opportunity in our lives. So, yeah.

David Phelps: Yeah. That's really, really strong, Dacia. And as you said, we all spend so much time at work or on work. It's a big part of who we are. And I think most of us want to be doing something that does feed us because we're seeing a difference. We don't want to be living for that, "Thank goodness it's Friday" syndrome.

So, building that culture, what I see what you do, and what I know about you is that, as you engage a new client or prospective client, and I'm sure as you're doing an audit ... we may have a chance to talk about maybe what audits look like because I think this is a smart thing for very business to do.

Whether they're compatible client or not, just having an audit, where we stand outside eyes, just come in and it's just like you go to the doctor like, "I feel good but I need a physical. There's some things that are going on that I may not be able to see or

feel, and if I know in advance what those are, I have a chance to do something about it."

So, what I'm saying is looking at the whole thing and just taking your message and your mantra about the work that blesses the world. When you work with a team, obviously you engage the CEO, initially first, and you see if there's compatibility.

But as you work together to strategically build the messaging, the branding, and understanding who the clients are, the personas, the avatars, and look at case studies, and then you're going to bring the rest of the team in, because they're part of that, they're part of fulfillment operations.

And that's where I think the synergy, if it hasn't happened up to now, boy, it can really start to happen now because the clarity of like, "Oh no, we did make that huge difference for Bob Jones or XYZ Company. And well, what's the story behind that? Well, have we actually even celebrated that? What does that mean?"

And now, you start to build buy-in if you haven't already with your team, and that's the first step. If you've got that buy-in now, everything else can build from there. And you've got a machine and momentum that can roll from there.

Dacia Coffey: It is so true. And it's very exciting what you can learn what team members can learn from one another in these kind of workshop environments. So, for instance, we always insist that people have their best and brightest from different points of view around the customer experience.

And the reason is yes, you're serving the same customer, like let's pretend that you're thinking about one person in particular,

but each person interacts with them at a different place in the business, and in a different way.

It's sometimes more so on a place where maybe the money conversation is tricky or delicate. And so, that person is in a very specific emotional place, but then in another place, they're excited and they're confident.

And when you get those people talking about what they know about the humans that you serve, the "aha" moments across the team, where they really start embracing a servant leadership position, and now, they can see a more holistic point of view of the customers and the people that they are called to serve, it feels good.

You would not believe the amazing ideas that will come out of a single room, just from team members hearing that tribal knowledge that's hidden inside of everybody, and it doesn't come out until it's in a community format.

Inside of that team, we're openly asking just questions that really kind of kill sacred cows. Assumptions are very, very dangerous when you're working on how to best understand and predict how to serve other people.

And so, it can be really fun, and you're right, that is definitely where that chemistry and that unity starts.

David Phelps: The uniqueness that each company, the culture are able to provide again often is not well-defined, or even acknowledged by even the CEO many times just because we're busy, we're busy, we're busy, and we run the risk, especially in good times.

We've had a bull market in all regards for the last how many years? 10 years, and now, we're seeing the signs of economy starting to falter and potential recession, inflation headwinds. We're seeing headwinds.

And that's the time actually before that time, but anytime when we've had upmarket, we tend to get complacent. Profits are good, seem can do no wrong and money's cheap, it's just everything's kind of fits together.

And then we hit these headwinds and go golly gee, now customers, clients, they're not willing to seem like to buy as much services, products, whatever it is — seem like they're holding back.

And boy, there's never a better time to figure out what your differentiators are because you've got to be able to communicate that message. You don't want to be a commodity, is what I'm saying.

You can't be a commodity when we're reaching some potential headwinds. That's why what you do in helping your clients understand what that is, and create that differentiation in everything they do, the entire experience, but putting that out first and foremost, one of the things I think I read one of the stats that you provide from The Marketing Blender is that before a customer or a business client decides to buy services, product, whatever you provide, they've done 83% of the research before they actually engage you-

Dacia Coffey: That's right.

David Phelps: So, what does that mean to me, the business owner then? I'll let you talk about it, but what does that mean? What do we need to be doing?

Dacia Coffey: It means you either are the one that they have a confirmation bias towards, where they're just trusting that you are the one that they like the best, and the others are people that they just checked out just to make sure they're not taken advantage of. Or you're the one that they're price checking against, because they like somebody else better.

You literally in your marketing and outreach either stacked the deck in your favor or you didn't. Because they are everyone, no matter what kind of business. Like the most complicated business to business long sales cycles, all the way down to an everyday consumer decision, that's important to someone that they take really seriously.

All of these people are pre-deciding who they believe in, how they're going to vote with their money, and what they want to do. And by the time they call, by the time they click on your website or take a couple more action items, they've already decided you're the one to be, or you're the one that they're just validating their original choice.

And so, that's really dangerous. It's interesting because you were talking a minute ago about the different economies and extending that, how people's behavior changes depending on the economy. And one of the things that I know to be true about people and buying decisions is that if there is no pain, there is no change.

And this is really, really important on two sides of the coin. Number one, if you're talking about your current clients, this is

good because unless they are super ticked off, they won't leave. No pain, no change.

But man, if there's hidden pain in their experience and you don't know about it, and you're not asking the questions that could surface those opportunities where you can delight your customers better, and you can find opportunities to continue to evolve your service level where it creates loyalty and even evangelism — ooh, be careful because you could potentially always be facing possible customer churn if you're not aware. Because if there is pain, there will be change.

Now, on the opposite side, when you're thinking about growing revenue and finding new customers, no pain no change. If people are not motivated to do something different and to change their habits ... and I don't care if their big habits are small, people don't like change. They don't.

It's really, really important to understand, and so, kind of a little funny side note and encouragement, and a challenge for your listeners is that the type of clients that we get in marketing when a recession is coming to bear or significant market headwinds are there and people are trying to figure out how to navigate them, those clients are winners because they're not waiting to be in pain.

They're saying, "Let's go, I see an opportunity. I know other people are going to either delay their decision or they're not going to make changes because of fear." It is stunning how predictable it is that the people that step on the pedal around business development, and do not rest on their laurels around new customers and existing customers, they are so predictable.

They will always show up before the pain happens and ready for when the pain is about to hit the rest of the market because they are going to move forward.

And so, I know you've got a lot of listeners out there that have that same heart and mind in regards to how they see trends, and how they're balancing their prosperity, and so, I just want to put some encouragement around there that this is not a time to be scared.

It's a time to be optimistic about all the opportunities that your listeners are going to be able to see in the future. Really, kind of interesting to be able to have that mindset despite all of the doom and gloom that creates sensational headlines right now.

David Phelps: I agree so much just having gone through a number of the business cycles myself, being in business and realizing a lot of people, maybe even the majority tend to tuck down.

And certainly, you have to look at different real expenses of a business, but to me, and I know you say the same thing, they say that marketing messaging, that's an investment.

Dacia Coffey: It really is.

David Phelps: And you do not want to pull back from investing. Continue to always invest in your business, in the right places. So, to pull that back, just because you feel like there's some fear out there, I don't know how ... no, no worst thing you can do is you've got to be on the forefront of keeping your message relevant and speaking to those existing customers' clients who already appreciate you, because that's a referral source.

And if they see you strong, as you should be, or at least projecting strength, even if you might be going through some tough times, projecting that strength is very important because I want to do business with companies and people who appear to be successful to me.

It just fits my persona. I love to help everybody, but if I'm trusting them with some part of my business or something that's that important, I'd like to know that they are successful in themselves and not struggling-

Dacia Coffey: Completely agree. And it's so interesting because when you think about that — let me be clear, I'm not a fan of spending for spending's sake. You need to be very smart and very strategic about what you're spending and why, and when it will work, not if it will work.

You should always know that your marketing dollars are going to work and you predictively know why, and it's a timeline of when are you going to harvest that. So, that's one thing.

But the other piece about that is that when we're talking about spending, I like to broaden that definition because you're talking about spending money, yes, but also, time and attention.

Even in times where you do need to be lean and where you technically need to cut expenses, and that is a real and specific strategic decision you need to make in your business, wherever you're at, there is other things that you can spend.

There are other ways that you can maintain an aggressive and optimistic show of strength, even if it's not just spending money.

So, I'm a really big advocate on what you said about that investment paradigm, and not limiting it to, "Oh, it's an expense on my P&L," because it's really about how you approach marketing, and whether or not you allow the impact and influence in its total definition, versus just keeping it a narrow little area, because there's so many opportunities where marketing can influence literally every aspect of your buyer's journey, and the strength and stability and even the resilience of your business.

And I stand by that fervently because it's what we do, is we grow companies and we build resilient, aggressive companies. And it's exciting.

David Phelps: It is. I know it's got to be so much fun. Dacia, give our listeners a little bit of how they should think about the word "branding." From your perspective, what does that mean? Why is it important? What level?

Because I think about branding as being Nike and FedEx and Coca-Cola, and these are big companies and big brands, but in a smaller business level, what does branding mean for me?

Dacia Coffey: So, branding is how people feel about you. And this is really, really important. It's not what you and your team think about your company, and your brand, and your offering.

It is what the market believes about you. And this is tricky because if you have a black eye, if you had a misstep, if something happened through or cast out over your brand, that's real. It doesn't matter if it's wrong or if it's technically not accurate.

If the market believes that about you, that is real and you have to address it head on. So, it's about the emotion that people associate with you.

And so, having clarity around what emotion you're trying to peak on purpose, and I also want to challenge people, go to the thesaurus, like be curious about what kind of words you can use, because so many people just go, "We want to be trustworthy," so does every other business on the planet.

Because branding, you should be thinking differentiation. And that is to be different. It is not to be better, faster and cheaper. Now, you can build a brand on that. Heck, the emotion that Walmart evokes, they don't start with trust.

They have a lot of substance behind why they're able to be better, faster, bigger. And most of us don't have that. Most of us don't have the budget to be able to propel a better, faster, cheaper, bigger strategy than anyone else, but we can sustain an emotional intelligence, and emotional perspective from the audience because it's who we are naturally.

So, some companies are funny, you know why? Because the founder is funny and they have a tendency to like funny people. And there's weird things on the wall and they're quirky.

Some companies are fast and it's because there's an impatient founder who has no tolerance for calendars and late appointments, and this, that, and the other. Some are sensitive, some are thoughtful, some are faithful.

Some give their teams permission to talk to people about really deep personal stuff that in similar businesses would never happen, or wouldn't be appropriate in a different culture.

So, I think it's important to understand that everybody's got a brand. It's just whether or not you're in control of it. And that's really important.

So, just taking the time to talk about what words describe you, and then using those words as decision-making criteria. When you pick colors, when you choose words. Some brands can get away with swearing. Some brands could never get away with even having an informal language.

It's because you're just trying to align your communication choices with who you already are, and make it as easy as possible for people to be like, "Yep, I know these people. These are my people. I get them, I like them." And it creates a relationship even when you're not in front of them.

And David, your marketing and branding is so perfect for this. People should be paying attention to the word choices in your emails, the familiarity you put into things. You really know your market so well and you align all of your branding and communication choices around that heartbeat of who you are.

It's so consistent. It's very easy to like you and be all in on your vision and your purpose, and how you help people. And so, I think, of all people, you're a great example of the impact of brand and what it does for it.

David Phelps: Well, you're very kind. I'm a big believer in marketing; what you do. I'm a huge fan. I got more involved and educated around it so many years ago, but I've just always been a huge fan and like to study it.

And what I find, to your point, is as you evoke those emotions with your languaging, that when your clients start repeating

many of those words back to you, you know you've got immense ... you're in sync, isn't that it?

Dacia Coffey: Feels so good. And your team when they start saying similar things too, it's so exciting. What was your big "aha" moment when you decided to really double down on marketing and what triggered you to be curious about that? Because I think that's important for people to understand why.

David Phelps: Well, yeah. So, I'm always curious. I'm always wanting to read about other subjects and things that whether it's business or not, I just I've always been that way.

And so, I got a hold of a book from ... he's actually a mentor of mine today. His name's Dan Kennedy and I got a hold of one of his books. This is like 15, 20 years ago.

And I read the book and first thing was, the book resonated with me. He was talking to me; the small business entrepreneur and he was just kind of laying out my life in front of me.

Not all bad and doom and gloom, but just a lot of the frustrations. Boy, he's singing to me. And then Dan's a big marketer, so one thing led to the next and I thought this person is speaking to me so clearly. He's got something I need to learn more about.

And that's where I first got my foray into what this world of marketing was all about. And it came into play for me very, very well because there was a time when I had to revamp my dental practice back in the day when I actually had a failure of a sale. I had to take it back and redo.

And I thought I'm going to use some of my marketing now to help re-propel and rebuild a practice, and I actually got to use what I was learning. And that was my first look at what does all this mean. And then you just keep moving up as you learn more and the nuances of what really works.

Dacia Coffey: I love it. It's a great point. Back to when you learn a discipline that can be applied to any aspect of your life, it builds resiliency and the type of skillset that will lend prosperity.

No matter what pivot you have to go through, no matter what business model or new revenue stream you're adopting, there is always going to be communication including your personal brand that will fuel or hinder your ability to move, change and thrive. So, that is so cool. I love that.

David Phelps: So, here's where I want to kind of help land this today, and we talked earlier in your bio, that Marketing Blender acts as a Fractional CMO, Chief Marketing Officer for businesses, because it's difficult when you don't know a lot about marketing and branding and you need some expert help.

So, fractional means you're able to serve a lot of customers kind of where they are and what their needs are, and you kind of build a suit after you do an audit. You want to make sure there's compatibility, but once there's compatibility, you kind of build a suit and you offer a lot of different aspects of the whole realm.

The whole umbrella of online marketing is from videos and social media and website help, and whether you're doing podcasts, but building the branding, the messaging so that you've got incorporated it incongruent was what I would say.

So, talk to me a little bit and to our other listeners about again, specifically, how does Marketing Blender ... how do you work with clients once you do an audit and see if there's a place to begin with. Just give us a little bit of what that looks like for people.

Dacia Coffey: Yeah, thank you for that question. First and foremost, it's just super practical. The reason that term fractional is in front of Chief Marketing Officer, just like other professions, is just because it's for a fraction of the cost. It's a reasonable expenditure on somebody that is seasoned, experienced professional.

So, specifically though what you should expect anytime that you work with us or any sort of fractional executive, especially in the marketing space is, shedding some light on blind spots.

You talked about an audit earlier — that is so important. I will speak to my own business. I mean, goodness, I'm in marketing. We're launching other divisions and models all inside of marketing, but when we're close to it, naming gets harder, decisions get harder, budgeting gets harder because it's personal. It's right in front.

And so, making sure that you have somebody that could come in and truly be an advocate for you, including in the face of your own emotions and your own personal preferences, is a really big deal, and that's why an executive is a good choice because an employee, their main job is to not get fired. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But when you need a truth teller, you need to check the type of relationship that you're engaging with, because a fractional CMO, I'm fired if I can't grow your company. You don't have to

like me, but you are going to like the results and the outcome based on the work that we're doing.

And we build decision-making criteria. For most of our clients, we literally grow them to the point that we graduate them because it's time to hire somebody internally or to restructure because we've helped build this system.

And so, that's what we do. It's very aggressive. So, for most of our clients, they engage, and we nail down the target market, we nail down your budget, we nail down your marketing plan, we nail down your differentiation strategy, your positioning, your messaging, and your competitive environment in eight weeks, and then we are off to the races.

And so, for eight weeks, we ask clients to slow down so that they can aggressively speed up. And we put your best people, your leadership team, your best client facing people in the room, in order to get everybody aligned, because what we want to avoid is having a CEO where all that tribal knowledge is locked in his head. And then he's responsible for figuring out how to communicate that to us, not going to happen.

David Phelps: Not going to work.

Dacia Coffey: So, getting everybody on board. And so, we have a small business program, which is exciting. So, it is a graduation program. Eight weeks, you build the program and we launch you.

No more questions, no more, "Is this going to be a waste of money? Is this going to be a waste of my time? What if it doesn't work?"

No, no, because it's so dangerous to small business, but equally dangerous to large businesses because their expenditures are larger because the competition is bigger. And so, same approach just scaled to where people are to make sure that it's effective, and that I can truly create an impact in the business. It's a lot of fun.

David Phelps: Outstanding. Dacia Coffey, themarketingblender.com would be the website. So, I want to make sure we've got that. Any other contact information or I can put the other podcast in your book links there in our show notes. We'll add those as well. Anything else to add to our listeners?

Dacia Coffey: No, I think that's it. You can follow me on social media.

That's the marvelous thing about an unusual name is I'm easy to find, but you and I are aligned because we just both have a passion for helping people really prosper, and expanding the definition of that.

So, if there is ever any way that I can serve your audience or they're looking for resources, let me know. And yeah, I will send a whole bunch of stuff your way for the show notes so people can dive in if they're curious.

David Phelps: Beautiful, Dacia. Thank you so much.

Dacia Coffey: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

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