

Authenticity At Scale

The Virtual Campfire Podcast | Episode 335

Transcript

Kade Kimber [00:00:00 - 00:00:22]

an advocate of not forcing doors open, right? Sometimes doors aren't meant for you. Sometimes the door opens easily and it's still not meant for you, right? And it's in those, those cases where you truly do have to go back to who you are at your core and what you feel most strongly about. And maybe that's the right thing at that moment, or maybe it's not, and you come back to your point later.

Tony Martignetti [00:00:26 - 00:01:21]

For generations, we've gathered around the campfire to share stories, build trust, and pass along what we've learned. Welcome to the Virtual Campfire. I'm Tony Martignetti. Here, we go beyond the success you see on the surface to uncover the stories of transformation behind it, the challenges, pivotal moments, and small steps that led to big leaps. Because every journey has a story, and every story has something to teach us. Let's gather around the campfire where stories spark transformation. It is my honor and pleasure to introduce you to my guest today, Cade Kimber. Cade is a client experience strategist, a speaker, and the founder of Kimber and Oak, a custom gifting company that helps organizations create thoughtful, brand-aligned gifts for the people who matter most to their business.

Tony Martignetti [00:01:22 - 00:02:11]

Before building Kimber and Oak full-time, Cade spent nearly 2 decades in corporate, corporate marketing, including global leadership roles focused on brand strategy and client experience. That background also led him to create Cade Kimber Advisory, where he helps founder-led, partner-led, and professional service businesses make their client relationships feel more intentional and less interchangeable. I love that. Cade is also the creator of Gift Intelligence, a strategic framework that helps companies use gifting with more purpose, not as a last-minute gesture, but as a meaningful part of retention, loyalty, referrals, and long-term relationship growth. It is truly a pleasure to have you here at the virtual campfire today.

Kade Kimber [00:02:12 - 00:02:20]

Well, it is actually all my pleasure, so I will take that from you and have it all for myself. No, it really is great to be here and to spend this time with you.

Tony Martignetti [00:02:21 - 00:02:49]

Absolutely. It's been, as we've gotten to know each other, I just have been just blown away at what you do, but also how you do it and the energy and passion you put into it. It's just wonderful. So this is gonna be so much fun to really get into the story that brought you to

this work and, and to also dig into, you know, what is gift intelligence and how can people really tap into this beautiful, beautiful way of showing up? So how does that feel?

Kade Kimber [00:02:50 - 00:03:12]

Great. And actually, it just made me realize how much I appreciate this format that you have for your show versus just speaking about gift intelligence, right? Because there's so much behind it that, yes, I can speak about gifting just in and of itself, you know, till the cows come home. But being able to share more of the insights behind it, to me, is, is a lot more meaningful because it's what drives my work.

Tony Martignetti [00:03:13 - 00:03:42]

Yes, I love that. So, Kade, here's how we're going to navigate today's show. We talk about these things through flashpoints, flashpoints of the moments in your life that have ignited your gifts into the world. And so I'd like to start with, you know, those moments, and you can start wherever you'd like and share what you're called to share. And along the way, we'll pause and see what's showing up. And so in a moment, when I turn it over to you, Take us wherever you'd like and we'll see where we go.

Kade Kimber [00:03:43 - 00:03:43]

Awesome.

Tony Martignetti [00:03:43 - 00:03:43]

How's that sound?

Kade Kimber [00:03:44 - 00:04:17]

Sounds great. And I had to write them down so that I would not forget. Um, so yes, good old ADHD brain, right? So I'm actually going to take us back to the mid-'80s. We're gonna take a little hike back. So I was, I was born in '80, so, uh, '85 I was 5 years old and I lived in this really, really small town in Utah. So less than 100 people, 2-room schoolhouse. My great-grandpa held down the town. I was actually born in Idaho because the nearest hospital was in Idaho, an hour and a half away, like that kind of that environment.

Kade Kimber [00:04:18 - 00:04:52]

Right. So my partner calls it Little House on the Prairie meets electricity when I introduced him to it years later. But, and it's actually pretty accurate. So I was 5 and it was a very community-minded community and all centered around gathering for the big occasions. And so Christmas was a huge, huge thing. In Grouse Creek, not said creek, it's spelled creek, but you say it creek there. Everywhere else is creek, there it's creek. So in Grouse Creek, Utah, I learned the love of the holidays and the joy of giving.

Tony Martignetti [00:04:52 - 00:04:53]

Hmm.

Kade Kimber [00:04:53 - 00:05:36]

It was a really, really good model for me as I watched everyone come together in joy, really. And it was one of my absolute favorite, favorite times of year. And so that was early, early childhood. And then skipping ahead slightly, when I was 7, my parents divorced and I laugh about it now. There's also, I suppose, some uncovered trauma there too, but they decided to try to outdo each other out of guilt one Christmas. And we had no money whatsoever. We were dirt, dirt poor, a single-wide trailer house, shared a bedroom with multiple siblings, all that. But my parents, they went into like extreme debt that year trying to buy our love of effectively, right, over feeling bad about this divorce.

Kade Kimber [00:05:37 - 00:06:10]

That in and of itself isn't so great. The best part was being the kid that got all of these gifts. Because it's not just because of the stuff, but I mean, because you're a kid, it's stuff. But at the same time, it was just a light freeing moment, right amongst all the chaos that was happening in life. It was a really high density moment of joy and, and gifting that just kept stretching on and on because there were so many boxes to open and whatnot. But yeah, that really is the, I would say, the foundation of where everything started.

Tony Martignetti [00:06:11 - 00:06:44]

I'm just blown away by that. Because there's something, obviously, there's some ulterior motives behind it. But also understanding that meaning behind a gift means a whole lot more than just the gift itself, but the joy, the end result of How do you feel when you get something? And all of the elements of gifting that, you know, you experience at a young age and then all comes back to you. But that wasn't immediate in terms of you didn't just jump in and say, I'm gonna be a giftologist, or, you know, I'm gonna do gift strategy for my, my job. It became—

Kade Kimber [00:06:45 - 00:06:46]

Never saw that one coming.

Tony Martignetti [00:06:46 - 00:06:52]

Yeah. It came back to you. And I love that you followed back to that early childhood thread eventually.

Kade Kimber [00:06:52 - 00:07:12]

Mm-hmm. Eventually. Yeah. Well, and that's the thing is that And as you'll see, as we talk through these flashpoints, gifting was nowhere on my radar. Nowhere. Business ownership itself wasn't even on my radar for some time. There was so much that wasn't. I lived in an environment that was very, and this actually is part of what goes or speaks to my next flashpoint.

Kade Kimber [00:07:13 - 00:07:39]

I lived in an environment where there were a lot of expectants. So as the only son, I was expected to become a rancher and take over my dad's ranch, just like he had for his dad and so on and so forth. Right. I am not a rancher. I never had an interest in ranching. I was a fish

out of water in that environment. Not that it wasn't a loving and embracing environment because it was, but I knew it wasn't me. I didn't fit.

Kade Kimber [00:07:40 - 00:08:17]

And so the big moment of realization for me was when I was 9 years old. So I, my parents divorced, moved with my mom, then I moved back to my dad's house. In the middle of nowhere, but with my mom, I lived in the city, which was awesome. And I felt like that was more me. I moved back to Browse Creek and my dad took on contract for a neighboring ranch, neighboring being like an hour down the street, down this gravel road. And he decided that at 9, I was going to become a man. So I prepared to take over just as he had had to do with his dad. So he taught me how to drive stick shift.

Kade Kimber [00:08:17 - 00:09:10]

because I have to drive myself to work and I'm driving stick shift. And so, like I said, there's a lot, a lot there that really you're like, man, there were some moments that were normal for me, right? But looking back, I'm like, oh my gosh, I can't believe this happened or that anyone would do this. But that was the environment. And so my dad reacted to the environment and to his, what he knew, his pattern. So at 9 years old, I had to fulfill this contract, which included, but was not limited to, driving a tractor, a swather, a baler, you name it, to basically plow, plant, and harvest these fields of alfalfa. So at 9, I was driving an hour, 45 minutes to an hour down the street or down the road and would get on this tractor. It wasn't like the really nice ones with the COVID and all that. It was blazing hot in desert Utah sun.

Kade Kimber [00:09:11 - 00:09:23]

Miserable. And there were rattlesnakes in the area and I'm terrified of snakes. So I kept imagining, you know, 9-year-old me was imagining these snakes coming flying up on these huge tires. I mean, it was a debacle some days, but I got through it.

Tony Martignetti [00:09:24 - 00:09:24]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:09:24 - 00:09:46]

And as I sat there day in and day out for that entire summer, I just thought, I have a lot of time to think. I just thought about how this wasn't me. This wasn't for me. This wasn't my future. This was not my destiny. Yes, the OCD side of me loved getting the challenge of like plowing these perfectly straight rows. And, you know, I made games for myself out of it, that sort of a thing.

Tony Martignetti [00:09:47 - 00:09:47]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:09:48 - 00:09:56]

But I knew that that was about the extent of that joy in that work for me. And so I knew at 9, there was no way that that was the environment for me.

Tony Martignetti [00:09:58 - 00:10:31]

It's interesting when you share this, because it's like, I can think back to, you know, my own childhood where, you know, my father had us doing like, Intensive labor and all that. And the quote that comes to mind is, it builds character, right? It builds character. But I think in many ways, it's also the invitation to let yourself think and allow yourself to say, okay, I know this isn't for me. Something else is out there waiting. And it's my invitation to allow myself to see what else is out there, because I don't want to do this.

Kade Kimber [00:10:31 - 00:10:35]

This isn't it. I don't know what it is, but it's not this.

Tony Martignetti [00:10:35 - 00:11:10]

Yeah, exactly. And interesting, you know, I feel like there's a polarization that starts to come to mind. And not to say your parents were, you know, never meant to be together, but it seems like they were very different people. And so in both environments, the city versus the country, and I think that can be good because it gives you a sense of, okay, I have places I can go, I can show up differently. And I can also start to see how I want to form myself, my identity. Absolutely, these people. So it's a great container.

Kade Kimber [00:11:10 - 00:12:03]

Well, and I am glad they're not together, by the way, and that they didn't stay together. Not only because they weren't right for one another, but because it held each of them back from becoming who they ultimately are. And where my dad's passed, but my mom is still with us. And so it's her life took on— and his as well— but her life took on a totally different trajectory, which became in and of itself an amazing footprint and model for me to see how resilience through all of these unexpected changes in life, how you just have to keep going. Yeah. And she didn't have a choice as a single mom. And then later on, even though we had moved in with my dad and my stepmom at that point, and she didn't have us full-time, She still had all these things that she was doing and accomplishing and going to college for the first time and getting— graduating with honors while she was actually still having us full-time. There's a lot there.

Kade Kimber [00:12:03 - 00:12:34]

So all that is to say, you are absolutely correct. They were not right for each other. It gave opportunity not just for them, but to your point, to each of us to have different worlds to exist in. Rewinding from 9 just slightly, I was 7. When we were living in this, this city, it's, you know, 30-ish thousand people, something like that compared to less than 100. It was like moving to Manhattan. And so it was such an interesting time. And I actually started my first entrepreneurial venture there.

Kade Kimber [00:12:35 - 00:13:15]

I sold a newsletter to the neighborhood of, I think there were 8 houses, maybe not a lot of news happening, but yet I knew that I needed to write this newsletter, right? And I sold it to a neighbor. There's, I got one subscriber, Mrs. Barker. She lived across the street, little old lady, never had really spoken to her. And I, after selling her this subscription, I want to say it was like \$2 and she paid \$5. I was like, oh my gosh, you know, 9-year-old me was, or I'm sorry, 7, 7-year-old me was like mind blown by this influx of wealth basically. Right? So this is the era of, but wait, there's more, right? Infomercials. And so I'm like, oh, but wait, there must be more.

Kade Kimber [00:13:15 - 00:14:07]

I need to give more. So I ran home, I dug through all the closets thinking, what can I give as a subscriber gift? And came across— I mean, she was an old lady. Why wouldn't she love a pocketbook? Like, that's what old ladies do, right? Or at least that's what 7-year-old me thought. And so I grabbed this empty pocketbook out of a closet, took it over and thanked her for her subscription and gave her this gift. And she, she was so excited about it. And, you know, obviously I didn't have the language then to put into it what I do now, but really it was about retention, client retention, right? And how gift giving has the power to do that when accompanied with the right message in particular. Side note, that pocketbook happened to be my great-grandma's, my gram's, that was a keepsake of my mom's, and I didn't ask before giving it to her. So the other lesson I learned was ask permission first before giving things away.

Kade Kimber [00:14:08 - 00:14:20]

But Mrs. Barker loved that pocketbook though. So yeah, it really was about seeing how gifting does work into business itself, even though I, again, couldn't really put the language to that.

Tony Martignetti [00:14:21 - 00:14:29]

Yeah. Oh my gosh, I love this story. It's so, so brilliant. I had a feeling, I was like, it's going to be some kind of expensive Prada or whatever you want to call it.

Kade Kimber [00:14:29 - 00:14:34]

It wasn't Prada for sure, but it was definitely an expensive, uh, heartache, we'll call it.

Tony Martignetti [00:14:34 - 00:14:34]

Yes.

Kade Kimber [00:14:34 - 00:15:08]

Yes. Yeah. That was not my finest moment on, on the gifting front, but I think that was really a significant moment for me without realizing it, because again, at that point I wasn't thinking gifting. So that was at 7. At 9, I'm learning to drive, working in the fields, but I also learned at 9/10 that I had some greater capabilities than I gave myself credit for. And so I, the school I went to is, you know, 2-room schoolhouse for kindergarten through 10th grade. You boarded out for the, the last 2 years. There's one teacher for all of it.

Kade Kimber [00:15:09 - 00:16:09]

It's a really interesting learning experience, but what it also afforded was non-traditional structure. And that came in the form of us being able to test into a level in various topics and subjects and operate in that level. So in 5th grade, I was in 9th grade English. And so That was, and I went on to major in English and all that, but my realization there was I do have some strengths here, right? Like on the, not on the ranching front, like my brain actually isn't wired just for ranching. And there was some jealousy of peers and friends that were in advanced grades that weren't in that same level. And so that really became a highlight of navigating perceptions of others and just humanity in general. But the big takeaway for me from that was to embrace what I have and not boast, but not diminish. That's kind of been the thread of my life too.

Kade Kimber [00:16:09 - 00:16:11]

But that was a biggie at 10.

Tony Martignetti [00:16:33 - 00:17:12]

One of those moments where, and it's also kind of something we kind of figure out later on in life, is that sometimes you realize that your environment is not suiting you any longer. And if you try to diminish yourself too much to fit in, then that doesn't serve you. And so you need to kind of put yourself in a different pond, if you know what I mean, and figure out how can I embrace my greatness or my brilliance by putting myself into a better container that will support it. Not because they're going to make me feel better, but because it allows me to be on my edge a bit more too.

Kade Kimber [00:17:13 - 00:18:07]

Absolutely. Well, and I think of the Marianne Williamson quote that— and effectively it comes down to, well, there is a religious angle to it, but at its core, it's who are you not to be great? Why wouldn't your light be shining? Why shouldn't you be kind of this, this bright light in the world? You don't need to diminish who you are, because in doing so, in embracing that, you allow others to do the same. And it's absolutely true. You, by being that person who isn't ashamed of the good things, not boastful again, but just not ashamed of it, you allow others to realize that because we do live in a society that doesn't necessarily embrace uniqueness and it doesn't embrace those who outshine in certain areas, assuming because the ugly jealousy monster can creep in or Whatever it is. And so yeah, it's about being you and embracing that.

Tony Martignetti [00:18:07 - 00:18:33]

Yeah. And recognizing when it's time to step into that, which is hard sometimes because, you know, you continue to see yourself from that old identity and say, okay, well, this is who I am. This is where I need to maintain my place. Well, sometimes we outgrow those things and we figure out, okay, it's time to move on. So it's realizing and having the courage to step into that next place when the time comes. Yeah,

Kade Kimber [00:18:34 - 00:19:01]

right. Because it's scary. I mean, not to, not to gloss over that part of it, right? It's, it's not easy to embrace and it isn't easy to be different and to willingly stand out. We do so much to not stand out, to blend in, to not be the noticed one, especially. So I consider myself an extroverted introvert. Yes, I can be absolutely extroverted. I can get energy off of that. But at the end of the day, I really, I'm an introvert.

Kade Kimber [00:19:01 - 00:19:13]

Most people who know me don't believe it. It's true. So, and as a case in point, when I was 10, my dad, so for school there was, oh, what was the name of it? A League of Their Own, I think.

Tony Martignetti [00:19:14 - 00:19:14]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:19:14 - 00:19:17]

Is that the Kevin Costner one? If you build it, they will come?

Tony Martignetti [00:19:18 - 00:19:19]

No. Field of Dreams.

Kade Kimber [00:19:19 - 00:19:19]

I'm blinding to.

Tony Martignetti [00:19:20 - 00:19:20]

Field of Dreams.

Kade Kimber [00:19:21 - 00:19:28]

Field of Dreams. Thank you. I'm like, no, that can't be right. Field of Dreams. Okay. So Field of Dreams just came out and you remember how huge that, that

Tony Martignetti [00:19:28 - 00:19:28]

movie was.

Kade Kimber [00:19:29 - 00:20:17]

Oh yeah. So there was a competition that at school, if we sold these fundraiser books for like a taco, it's basically the local Taco Bell in a neighboring town a couple hours away. But if we sold these, whoever sold the most got a VHS copy of Field of Dreams. I was determined to get that. But again, Little town, everybody has a kid at home, sometimes multiples. Who's going to sell the most, right? So my dad took me to that town where those coupons were even good for, because otherwise the local people had to drive 2 hours. So he took me to where it actually would be applicable and where people actually would use the item and then made me go by myself. He did a couple of times to have an example for me, but then made me go in and talk to these shop owners.

Kade Kimber [00:20:18 - 00:20:43]

And it was terrifying, especially as an introvert. Terrifying. But I got actually pretty good at it, set a record, outsold the rest of the school collectively, and got that dang VHS copy. And I have it to this day. I don't know where it is. It's in a box somewhere, but probably in my mom's garage. But it really became a moment of, I can step out of my comfort zone and achieve great things. And to 10-year-old me, great thing was a VHS copy.

Kade Kimber [00:20:43 - 00:20:52]

But when we look at it big picture, it really can be anything, right? Like getting out of your comfort zone and out of your own way allows for big things to happen in your life.

Tony Martignetti [00:20:53 - 00:21:15]

It's so amazing to hear you say that. And we need to collect that evidence that we can do big things. And sometimes it's the little reward that reminds us and says, yes, that is the thing that shows that I did step out of my comfort zone. I did do the work. And this is what happened.

Kade Kimber [00:21:15 - 00:21:49]

Absolutely. And it's not always success either, right? Like, in fact, sometimes more often than not, it's not success. I think of that same exact time period, 10, 11 years old, my mom put me in flag football and modeling school. I'm not a sports baller, as I call it. Sports ball is not my thing. I hated flag football. Like, and I couldn't tell you a thing to this day about football. And some of my closest friends back then and neighbors played in the NFL, and I'm having to ask them the most basic things, and they're looking at me like, how can you be this dumb about sports? I am.

Kade Kimber [00:21:50 - 00:22:15]

So 10, 11-year-old me did not succeed. Modeling school, I loved it. I killed it. I slayed that catwalk, right? And it was so exciting to me, because it was so different, again, outside of my comfort zone. And the funny aside, and this comes into play later, is my mom actually did that to try to help me. She knew I was gay. I was not out at all. Of course, small country town, never going to come out there.

Kade Kimber [00:22:16 - 00:22:29]

And so, but she knew, she said she knew from the time I was 5. And she was trying to help me in the way she knew how to figure out because apparently if you love modeling school, you must be gay if you're male, right?

Tony Martignetti [00:22:29 - 00:22:30]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:22:30 - 00:23:06]

Otherwise, if you love football, you're definitely straight or bi. And it's obviously not that, but that really was the binary thinking at the time. So that was her way of trying to help me figure it out. And so actually served a twofold purpose for me. Well, it was supposed to serve a twofold purpose for me. It didn't help her decisions and, and whatnot. But it did help in terms of me realizing that It's okay to step out and do scary things and not be good at it. Even if you're— I mean, there are plenty of parents watching and plenty of team shaming because I sucked so badly, right? But that's okay.

Kade Kimber [00:23:06 - 00:23:07]

I made it through it.

Tony Martignetti [00:23:07 - 00:23:33]

Yeah, I mean, like, that's the thing, you know, getting out there and trying those things is exactly what we need to do, even when it's scary, because, you know, you learn so much about yourself at the end of the day. you know that later on in life, you're going to have to do so much more challenging things like stepping onto stages and being in front of big audiences. For me, I still get that jitterish feeling of like, oh my gosh, am I doing this?

Kade Kimber [00:23:34 - 00:23:36]

Right, right. Is this reality? Can I make it?

Tony Martignetti [00:23:38 - 00:23:41]

Is this reality? Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:23:41 - 00:23:42]

Well, absolutely.

Tony Martignetti [00:23:42 - 00:24:03]

I'd like to take you a little further along and because I want to know, so what did you do when you first got your professional jobs? And you got into marketing, I know that. But tell me what made you flip from marketing into this idea of starting your own company, Caden Kimber— Caden Oak. Kimber and Oak, sorry. I'll get there eventually.

Kade Kimber [00:24:04 - 00:24:06]

No, well, yeah, you were right in the right realm, right?

Tony Martignetti [00:24:07 - 00:24:07]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:24:07 - 00:24:30]

So yeah, it actually— so in High school, I did an internship, just like a day-long internship in marketing. Loved it. Started college. My original major was marketing and I took Marketing 101, hated it. Looking back, I know why now. It was all analytics driven and well, I can

explain analytics to a 5-year-old today. At the time, that wasn't the interest. I wanted the creative side.

Kade Kimber [00:24:31 - 00:25:10]

So I switched to pre-law and did English as major, communications and PR minor. Vowing never to work in marketing because that class was so awful. I then at 20, well, here's a big pivotal moment too, to not skip too far ahead, but 20, I decided to serve a Mormon mission. And typically speaking, you go at 19. I think the age is now 18, but at the time it was 19 and I delayed and people were like, oh, there must be something wrong with you. You know, And no, I just didn't feel like you feel compelled to go. And at 20, I did. And so I moved to North Carolina to serve my mission.

Kade Kimber [00:25:10 - 00:25:40]

That's where I was assigned, North Carolina up into Virginia. Went back, finished up my undergrad, and was working in the courts when I got laid off. First job out of college, I got laid off, but I'd also planned a trip for that very weekend to Mexico with some friends. And my best friend, before we left on the trip, he said to me, You've been wanting to move back to North Carolina. Maybe this is the time to do it. And it stuck with me. So I go to Mexico, sat on the beach, made that decision, and moved back to North Carolina. No plan.

Kade Kimber [00:25:41 - 00:26:02]

And I am a planner, right? Like, I am a planner. When we go on vacations, here's your agenda. Here's the packet for each day with all of your tickets and where you need to be. Here's the time agenda. That's me with some flexibility. But to do so was again big and scary to move across the country. We drove Lafonda the Honda, my Honda Accord at the time. and dropped my best friend off in DC, which is where he wanted to move.

Kade Kimber [00:26:03 - 00:26:33]

And I came down to Raleigh. That opened up a whole different career path for me. So my very first job was basically glorified admin, but I was working for Manpower Professional for a franchise at the time. And they had a marketing position open up and my boss came to me and said, hey, I know you're new here. I'll sign off on the waiver that requires like 6 months before you can change jobs or whatever. I think this would be for you. And I was like, well, I really did want to do marketing. At that same time, I'd already taken the LSAT.

Kade Kimber [00:26:33 - 00:27:11]

I'd been accepted to law school. I had a scholarship. I had the plan in place, but then this popped up and I took it. And at the same time, this is when I was 26, I came out. And when I came out, I had so much brain space, just vacant brain space. I literally was like, what do people think about? Right? Like, I'd spent so much time hating myself and filling my brain and time with this negative self-talk that all of a sudden, right, I needed to fill it with something. And so I started my first business. I had gotten a dog at the time, little Matzah Ball, and her name was Mitzi, but renamed her Matzah Ball.

Kade Kimber [00:27:12 - 00:27:36]

So Matzah, she was a quirky little dog. She was, I call her my spirit animal because she really was my soul dog. And One of the things when I adopted her, they said she loves to wear clothes and this is relevant. So I said, no dog loves to wear clothes. People love their dogs to wear clothes. Motts actually loved to wear clothes. She would nip at you if you tried to pull them off of her. And so, and she would try to put it on if you didn't have something on her.

Kade Kimber [00:27:36 - 00:28:13]

So anyway, she had a weird size. So I was like, well, I wonder if I could do custom dog clothing and looked around and it didn't really exist. So I started my business and that's how I filled my initial brain space was starting my first official business. And it was called Second Coats because, you know, dog already has a coat. Then that grew. I bought another online dog boutique actually at the time, bought and eventually started my own dog clothing and accessories company called Cade Kimber Dog Couture. Grew that to several hundred retailers in 8 countries. And at that very same time, my marketing career is growing.

Kade Kimber [00:28:13 - 00:28:46]

But I, going back to when I was offered the marketing role, I had just started Second Coats. And so I was like, you know what, let me see where this goes. The requirement was that I postpone law school for a year to take on this job. I'm like, okay. And I never did law school because this whole other path opened up for me and very unplanned marketing career grows. And I was starting to get, my heart was kind of getting out of the pet industry just in general. I felt like I'd done some great things, but I just moved on. And right then I started doing more on the gifting side of things.

Kade Kimber [00:28:47 - 00:28:51]

I'm going to pause there because I know I've covered a lot. Anything that we should hit on? Also, I need a drink.

Tony Martignetti [00:28:52 - 00:29:27]

Yeah, that's good. You can take a sip. But I think it's so interesting that you've covered this because there's, you follow these interests and you see what kind of bubbles up. And when you do have that space to explore, it's great to say, okay, what's lighting me up right now? What is it that I can follow? And, you know, the commitment that you've originally said, okay, well, I'm going to take my LSAT, going to follow this other thing. Sometimes you gotta say, okay, it's not what's important anymore. And I can close the door on that. I don't need to follow that lead. Not everything that you say yes to initially has to be a definitive yes.

Tony Martignetti [00:29:27 - 00:29:42]

You can take things back and hell, you could always go back and say, oh, I wanna go get my LSATs now. And that's— nothing's ever final. You're always at agency to be able to make a choice. About what you want to do and when.

Kade Kimber [00:29:43 - 00:29:52]

Yes, an advocate of not forcing doors open, right? Sometimes doors aren't meant for you. Sometimes the door opens easily, and it's still not meant for you, right?

Tony Martignetti [00:29:52 - 00:29:52]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:29:53 - 00:30:25]

And it's in those, those cases where you truly do have to go back to who you are at your core and what you feel most strongly about. And maybe that's the right thing at that moment. Or maybe it's not. And you come back to your point later. Right. And so, yeah, it's a very interesting way that it shook out, right? Like I was supposed to be in law school and yet I was working in a marketing career running a dog boutique. I mean, it was very, very, very different, but I loved my marketing career. Then I had moved on to corporate, to the corporate base, which is in Milwaukee.

Kade Kimber [00:30:25 - 00:31:00]

And so I was based in Milwaukee, still lived here in Raleigh. That exposed me to leadership That was phenomenal. I went from a very toxic boss actually, who purposely held me back to advance her own career. And it was, I didn't know it at the time. I felt it to some degree, but I didn't know it. But I moved to this other team. It was eye-opening how they focused on your strengths. So StrengthsFinder became the very first thing they handed me when I went to Milwaukee for my team onboarding was, here, take StrengthsFinder test.

Kade Kimber [00:31:01 - 00:31:50]

We keep a spreadsheet of everyone in the department. We talk about it. We live it. We build teams around it. And to me, that was such a mind shift from, well, here's all the areas where you need to improve, right? Or the, you remember the mistake you made 3 years ago in this Excel sheet by not circling this one item? Don't do that again, right? That was the environment I was in versus You have so much to offer us and this team and your unique strengths, and this is going to be amazing. And it was so much so that I took StrengthsFinder with me to every future company that I worked for. And because I was in leadership, I was able to implement it. I've given it out as a personal book to I don't know how many people, but focusing on strengths really became such a monumental core of who I am.

Kade Kimber [00:31:51 - 00:32:30]

So at that time they were doing business gifting just like everyone honestly does business gifting today. It was a lot of promotional items or forgettable fruit baskets or what have you. And don't get me wrong, I love a gold-wrapped pear from Harry and David, just like anyone, but it doesn't make for a memorable gift. And the challenge is when you were working in marketing, you are focused on ROI. You have to have measurable outcomes. gifting didn't provide a measurable outcome. It was only measured by how many thank yous were received, how much, how many thank you notes or emails came in. People are terrible about remembering to thank you for things, right? Horrible measurement.

Kade Kimber [00:32:30 - 00:32:59]

And it doesn't directly tie to a business outcome. So I sat there and looked at it. I was like, I don't understand why we're spending all this money on gifting and it's not doing anything. Had an idea on it, not a great idea, but still it was something. I took it to one of the key stakeholders. They weren't interested. They didn't quite align to what they understood business gifting to be, and they weren't really willing to step out of their tradition. So I started my own company at that time.

Kade Kimber [00:32:59 - 00:33:26]

It coincided with some other side projects I was doing, and a conversation, a really pivotal conversation with a random stranger ultimately led me to start my gifting business. And 3 months later, I was gifting for the US Women's Open. And so I knew, I just knew I was onto something. They had turned it down, my employer, but the idea itself, even though not fully fleshed out, it was still solid enough that it got me to that point.

Tony Martignetti [00:33:27 - 00:34:17]

One of the things I just love what you shared, because it's the conviction that, you know, that you're onto something, but even naysayers, as at first they kind of deny you and they say, oh, this is kind of crazy. I think, you know, we're going to continue to do things we've always done because that's what the playbook says we should do. But when you're on to something, you have to continue to stay with it and know that there's something there. And I think it's this brilliance here. Obviously, I think, you know, what you're tapping into and I know you're not the only one, but I think what you're particularly speaking to and we're going to get more into this is that it's not about just Christmas or their birthday or things like that, but trying to really be more intentional about the gifting strategy, which love to have you expand on some of the elements of what you do with this.

Kade Kimber [00:34:17 - 00:34:37]

Yeah, absolutely. And to your point, yeah, it's, you do, you're learning, you're growing, right? You're figuring it out, but it's conviction. And to me, I did know, I absolutely knew. And You know, I'm not an overly competitive person, but I do love to say, told you so. Like, there is nothing, not much in life brings me more joy than saying, told you so.

Tony Martignetti [00:34:38 - 00:34:38]

Yeah.

Kade Kimber [00:34:38 - 00:35:34]

And I regularly get to say it to clients because, not obviously not like that, but well, with some, yes, because we just developed these great, great relationships. But the point being, they come in as naysayers because they hold those traditional beliefs. They don't necessarily have the same conviction, but they have a conviction to do better for their teams, their clients, for their prospects. They know what they want to achieve. They have a conviction towards their relationships, which is why they reach out and they don't understand how it's going to play out, but they know they need to do something differently.

I call it the sea of sameness. They are, and you know, in the bio, it spoke to making brands so they're not interchangeable. And that is a big part of it because highly saturated markets and industries, the ones that we gift in the most, right? Financial services, legal, real estate, they are all profoundly oversaturated.

Kade Kimber [00:35:34 - 00:36:29]

And so how is it that you're going to stand out? So in 2020, I actually— so I started my gifting company in 2014 and it evolved and I kept it growing alongside my marketing career, ironically. Never marketed my business. It was all word of mouth. And so it grew to the 6-figure revenue by word of mouth as a side venture because people started seeing results. And as those results came in, as I tried out different things, I came to learn more and more of what makes business gifting effective. And that ultimately is what became Gift Intelligence. One of the biggest things that Gift Intelligence does is it makes gifting a measurable outcome. So instead of saying we want thanks or we're sending it for client appreciation, well, you might be sending it for appreciation, but that's not your business goal and that's not measurable.

Kade Kimber [00:36:29 - 00:37:15]

So most people, when they say client appreciation, they're talking about retention or maybe expansion of an account. Those are measurable. We want to gift in order to achieve a 10% increase in our client retention rate by next year or whatever it might be, right? Like very specific goals. You're making it measurable, but just sending a gift itself doesn't achieve that goal. So gift intelligence takes a step back and has very specific things that it looks at. First of all, it's who are you gifting to? It is not often people say their clients are, you know, their top revenue generators. It's driven by a report. Those are typically not your top clients for an objective.

Kade Kimber [00:37:16 - 00:38:28]

So it's who you're gifting to and what you're looking to accomplish, because then you have to decide, are those the right people to help you accomplish that goal? If a top revenue-generating client does not ever give you a referral and your goal is more referrals, why are you gifting to them at the same degree you are gifting to those who actually would achieve that goal? So it's about getting very specific about your goal. It's about getting specific about Who you're trying to reach to make sure you're reaching the right person, what your outcome is that's measurable, how much effort you're going to put in for the amount of impact comes into play. But then I call it authenticity at scale, and this is a really crucial component. So like I said, I started my company in 2014, 2020. I had heard about the book Giftology along the way as I was building my gift company. I didn't actually read it until 2020. And part of me is glad that I waited so long and part of me was like, oh, this would've been a kindred spirit earlier in, you know, I wouldn't have felt like I was on an island unto myself out here preaching, hey, business gifting is not being done well, right? You can do better. So John Rutland, he spoke about in Giftology about his why gifting works, right? Some of the premises behind gifting.

Kade Kimber [00:38:28 - 00:39:20]

And as I read the book, I was like, yes, I absolutely agree with that premise, right? It is about, about this meaning, about this connection. Where we differed wildly all goes back to our individual backgrounds. You know, his was in personalized knives for Cutco, was primarily his gifting approach, right? Mine was working for some of the world's largest brands that had to have scale and achieve meaning at scale. How do you do that? Because it can't be hyper-personalized. And so authenticity at scale became my biggest focus. It was how can you achieve meaning at any volume? And it might be, it's one gift, that might be 100 gifts, it might be 100,000 gifts, right? It doesn't matter how many it is. What can you gift that's going to retain meaning? And that all comes back to why companies do business with you. It's about your values.

Kade Kimber [00:39:20 - 00:39:56]

It's about your story. People do business with you for a reason, and that's the reason to speak to. It's not about, oh, I need to know their favorite XYZ, their favorite color, their kids' names, whatever it is. If you get that wrong, good luck to you because honestly, you are so much better off giving an entirely forgettable gift than one that's remembered for all the wrong reasons because you got the details wrong. And I've seen it time and time and time and time again. It's avoidable. And that is what gift intelligence comes down to is how can you at scale influence what happens next in a relationship using business gifting?

Tony Martignetti [00:39:57 - 00:40:48]

It's beautiful. I mean, just everything you shared is just so spot on. And, and I love this idea of doing it wrong can really go awry and have people remember you for the wrong reasons. I also see something that you didn't mention, but I'm sure this also comes into play, is when you make a mistake, it's a great way to correct a mistake. A product doesn't go well and you're like, look, We are so sorry and we'd like to do— we'd like to make it right because we do value you and we want to— here's a little something that— an offer of good faith. And someone's going to see that and they're like, wow, like they didn't have to do that, but they did. And I kind of see that as a good quality company that's willing to kind of stand up for who they are and what they do. And even when they make a mistake, I'm going to stand by them.

Kade Kimber [00:40:49 - 00:41:17]

Yes. Well, and our mutual friend Shayna, I had a conversation with her the other day on Substack about how those moments are actually some of your most powerful gifting moments is when a mistake is made. And it might not be a mistake about the gift. It might be a mistake within your organization or within a relationship or what have you. Those are moments where you can generate emotion. There's already emotion there. So it's a matter of switching it from a negative emotion to a positive. People don't remember you because you don't make mistakes.

Kade Kimber [00:41:17 - 00:42:10]

They remember you more because of how you handled a mistake. Gifting becomes one of the greatest ways to do so. You know, working with all these tools for all these amazing

brands and having access to budgets I would kill for today, right? Marketing budgets I would kill for. It was an amazing way to discover what's out there. And it also has really served as a confirmation really about the strength of the conversion rate that gifting has versus any other marketing tactic and tool out there. It's not 100% because of course nothing is, but it is significantly higher than anything I ever saw across any other approach, in part because it is an emotion-tied thing with— and going back even to the name of your podcast with Campfire Stories, it is about stories. It's about their story more than it's about your story. And that's what makes business gifting effective.

Kade Kimber [00:42:10 - 00:42:30]

And there's a way to do it at scale. But it's, I call it think inside the box, right? Because you do, you want to think inside the box because that is what is going to resonate with people if you do it correctly. And it's basically your brand story in a box, combining it with the story that they connect to. Yeah. That's where the magic happens.

Tony Martignetti [00:42:31 - 00:42:38]

I love it. It's like, you know, thinking inside the box so that everything resonates outside of the box and continues to live well beyond what you give them. Yeah,

Kade Kimber [00:42:38 - 00:42:39]

absolutely.

Tony Martignetti [00:42:40 - 00:42:55]

Wow. We could talk for hours. I just feel like there's so many threads we could pull here. I have to come to our last question. So my last question for you is the one I ask every guest, and that is, uh, what are one or two books or more that have had an impact on you and why?

Kade Kimber [00:42:56 - 00:43:30]

So first one that comes to mind is Jane Eyre. So Jane Eyre honestly is my favorite book, and it Read it first in high school English, and it taught me a lot, or it got me really interested in historic and older literature. And that ultimately led to me deciding to become an English major. And so to me, Jane Eyre really— I've always enjoyed reading, but Jane Eyre for some reason just stood out to me as a profound book. And yeah, it changed things for me.

Tony Martignetti [00:43:30 - 00:43:49]

I love that. It's really, I mean, that's when we have fiction can be such a powerful way for us to feel emotion. I mean, obviously it's the, that's the whole thing about fiction is that it tells stories, but it also evokes emotion and it can shift a life. So that's really it.

Kade Kimber [00:43:50 - 00:44:19]

Well, absolutely. And, and the other shift for life for me came in my other, one of my other favorites of 3 I'll mention. is Oh, the Places You'll Go by Dr. Seuss. So I have a copy here at my desk. I received a copy of it for graduation gift, as I'm sure so many do, from my best

friend's parents who were like parents to me. And it was such a big, expansive, positive book, right? Like it really just got me thinking, yes, I can go places. Yes.

Kade Kimber [00:44:19 - 00:44:58]

Because by then I wasn't living in the small town, but still it was a small town, small world. And I wanted big things in my life. And that really, my mom always pushed us on that, right? Like small towns can be small minds, big towns can be big things, right? And it's not necessarily just tied to the town, but your environment in general. That book made me realize I can do things and got me thinking, where can I go in this world? So that was a biggie for me. And my last one is just because it makes me laugh. I love to laugh. is Politically Incorrect Bedtime Stories. It is one of the greatest literature masterpieces out there.

Kade Kimber [00:44:59 - 00:45:22]

Absolutely one of the worst ones, but it is so funny. It just, it makes you stop being so serious, I guess is the biggest draw for me. So yeah, Politically Incorrect Bedtime Stories is also here in my office as well, but is one that I absolutely love. There are a lot of business books and all that that I love, but for me, what's affected me the most is Jane Eyre. Oh, the Places You'll Go and Politically Incorrect Bedtime Stories.

Tony Martignetti [00:45:23 - 00:45:28]

Oh my gosh. I'm gonna have to go check that out. Is that by John Mayer? Uh, John, what is, who's the author of the Politically Incorrect?

Kade Kimber [00:45:28 - 00:45:32]

I can't remember off the top of my head, but I will get it to you. But yes.

Tony Martignetti [00:45:32 - 00:46:00]

Oh, wow. Wow. I just so love that. Uh, such a great, interesting, I mean, obviously a lot of those books have not been mentioned. Uh, Oh, the Places You'll Go has been mentioned at least once. But I just love that you brought those books into this, into this podcast. So bidding is so— saying goodbye is such a sweet sorrow, right? But I just— it's been so wonderful having you on. You've shared so many great insights.

Tony Martignetti [00:46:00 - 00:46:05]

And like I said, we could go on for so much longer. So thank you so much for coming on, Cade.

Kade Kimber [00:46:05 - 00:46:13]

Absolutely. Thank you. I appreciate it. It was great to walk the streets of Paris talking and today to be sitting here virtually talking. So thank you for having me.

Tony Martignetti [00:46:13 - 00:46:22]

Of course. And before I let you go, I want to make sure people know where they can find out more about you and tap into gift intelligence with you.

Kade Kimber [00:46:23 - 00:46:41]

Absolutely. So you can go to cavekimber.com. It's Cave with a K. And that will speak more about gift intelligence as well as my client experience advisory. kimberandoak.com, which you can also get to from cavekimber.com. Kimber and Oak is my gifting company. And that's where the execution component happens.

Tony Martignetti [00:46:41 - 00:46:57]

Wonderful. Thanks again. And thanks to listeners for coming on this journey. Please do go reach out to Cade. His work is amazing. He's got so many great ideas and you won't regret getting into his world. It's so many cool things that he has to talk about. So thanks again.

Tony Martignetti [00:46:57 - 00:47:07]

And that's a wrap. If you'd like to learn more about today's guests, connect with their work, or explore their books, organizations, and resources.

Speaker C [00:47:08 - 00:47:41]

You'll find links for each of them in the show notes. Before you go, make sure to subscribe to the Virtual Campfire Podcast. If this episode resonated with you, I'd love to hear from you. Please leave a review, share it with someone who could benefit from today's conversation, and continue the journey with us. If you'd like to learn more or take the next step in your own leadership journey, journey, visit tonymspeaks.com. Until next time, keep leading, keep growing, and keep showing up for what matters.