

Cheryl Broom (8s):

Hi, I am Cheryl Broom, CEO of GradComm. and this is the Higher Education Conversations Podcast. sponsored by EdTech Connect. Today's guest has had a true cornucopia of marketing experience. Jeff Bunch has been a journalist, faculty member and director of communications at private universities, public universities, and now at a community college. He is a natural storyteller with some great stories that will get you thinking about how you can maximize your college's ability to turn current events into showstopping global reaching content. I had a lot of fun talking to Jeff and I think he will inspire your creative side.

Cheryl Broom (49s):

Enjoy Alright Jeff. well Thank you so much for being on the podcast. I'm so excited to have you here. And for some of our listeners that you and I met kind of a funny way because we were working, I GradComm was working for a project on a project and you were selected to be interviewed as part of that project and I didn't even interview you, somebody on my team did. and they came back and they said, you gotta talk to this Jeff guy. He has the most fascinating background. He has done so many interesting things. And so that's how you ended up on this podcast.

Jeff Bunch (1m 21s):

Well, however it was, I'm just really grateful it happened and yeah, I would do anything for NCMPR the organization that we were working on a joint project on and in which I'm a member of and a regional representative here in the northwest. And you know, then I found out what great things you all are doing at GradComm and I'm like okay, I really wanna know more about these people.

Cheryl Broom (1m 42s):

Oh good. Well it's been a match made in heaven. Yes. Well I wanted to start off by asking you to share your background with our listeners. You know, most of our listeners are communication professionals, so you've got just the most fascinating communications and marketing backgrounds. So tell us a little bit about yourself.

Jeff Bunch (1m 60s):

Well thank you. I'll try and be brief because I've had a long, long journey to my current path. And I just wanna preface this by saying I was in some interviews for an outreach person this week at our, one of our campuses at our college. And there was someone who said at the end of their interview like, I just wish I'd known, you know, earlier in my life and earlier in my career that I would've ended up in higher ed and whatever this particular person's doing because it's definitely a calling. And So I felt a strong sense of calling from the beginning. And I thought, I've always been a storyteller. I'm just gonna give you a really quick background. When I was like 11 years old, I was publishing some sort of print thing publication for my family and having the newsletter and my, my parents were very tolerant of that, but I knew at that time that I wanted to do something with telling stories and I ended up being at Eastern Washington University and kind of walked into journalism and sports radio host Colin Cowherd was one of my students that I worked with me and you know, they just had this great broadcasting journalism program and I fell in love with sports writing

'cause I was a sports fan and So I took a whole career in journalism where I then went to the technology side, like whenever we do new technology at the newspaper, 'cause I ended up working at the local newspaper after a short stint and other stu in out of town and then, but I really just loved writing So I always would like do editing, design and writing.

Jeff Bunch (3m 25s):

I always had writing at the same time. And So I just love getting people's stories. I'm the person who goes into the grocery store and comes out, you know, with the clerk story and my wife rolls her eyes. And so then you know, journalism started evolving the digital platforms and I really like felt that digital marketing, because I was in the Portland market at the time, helping a newspaper launch its website that digital marketing and social media marketing was really coming to the front. I'm living in Portland, there's events every night, you know, big speakers are coming in, influencers and Intel's hosting this and this group's hosting this and So I just had this rich environment of people around me. We had one of the best bookstores in the nation there pal's books.

Jeff Bunch (4m 5s):

And so I'd go down and get a book, you know, like what does technology one, things like that. So it was just this really like, okay, this is like bringing together all the things I like the tech, the connections and the Storytelling and you know, literally that's of course how a newspaper makes, gets web views. So we just focused on storytelling and I, and I realized that a lot of my skills were transferrable. And I think a lot of journalists are finding in later in their like midway through their career or some earlier like, okay, you don't have to just work at a media outlet if you have journalism skills. 'cause we're taught a lot of things. And I was fortunate enough to work on the web team at both, both my papers more recently before I became a marketer.

Jeff Bunch (4m 45s):

And then I got this job marketing gummy vitamins 'cause then the US headquarters for the gummy vitamin company lives in Vancouver, Washington. And then I went to PR firm and got to do some fun stuff and like agency work as you know can be really fun 'cause you get to do a great variety of stuff and come up with a lot of strategy. But I started teaching on the side teaching journalism and I'm like, you know, how does this higher ed and, and and storytelling come together. While I came back to my alma mater, Eastern Washington University about seven years ago and I worked in the communications department, I had the opportunity to just do a digital electronic like website. Started internal communications, also wrote for the publication, which is a great publication.

Jeff Bunch (5m 28s):

And then I got an opportunity to, to go to Gonzaga after a couple of years, which is mostly known for its basketball. But we did two years of a web migration and then while there I got to work on video projects, photo projects, multimedia storytelling, even help them start their podcast network. And then I became an

adjunct and teaching both undergrad and graduate students about content marketing and all that. And then about a year ago I ended up working not only So I did, you know, state university private college. And then I ended up coming back honestly to my home and community colleges as a first gen student. I ended up with a community colleges in Spokane and it's, it's really just great to bring all the skills I have and put those in the co community college space.

Jeff Bunch (6m 11s):

So that's why I ended up here today talking to you. I wouldn't have been part of NCMPR if I wasn't at a community college. And you know, there's just, I work with a bunch of superstars and they're super nice people and just on our campuses like community co higher ed people I think are so generously focused on the students and they know they could be elsewhere elsewhere and make more money. But I think we're all there for a reason. And so I've actually found this calling and I'm able to use, you know, everything I've learned over the last 25, 30 years in this, in this venue now. And so that's how we got here today.

Cheryl Broom (6m 44s):

So Jeff, I love the fact that you have taken like a reverse direction on your career. So we work with a lot of community college marketing directors and they have these like big dreams of going to a public university or private university and having endless resources and everything's figured out and the marketing plan's perfect or going to work for an agency and and getting to do things you've never done, but you've done it in the reverse order. You've done all these great fascinating things and now you're at a community college. What do you see are some of the differences between the different organizations and the type of marketing that you're doing?

Jeff Bunch (7m 20s):

Yeah, well I, I think the biggest difference, and if I look at kind of those distinguishing characteristics because I can find commonality, but at an agency, on the one hand I loved working with a variety of clients in every industry and having a lot of ideation. Of course as you know, everything you do is billable. You're, you know, always on the clock. You might have clients that disagree with your ideas and that happens in our current jobs also. But then, you know, something like the big university, one thing that's different about it is with those resources, with that visibility, especially in the case of a program that has a top 10 sports team in the nation every year, I think there's, you're bringing in actually more applications, you know, maybe six times more applications than you could ever accept.

Jeff Bunch (8m 5s):

So there's a lot of people who would love to get in there, So I, think as a marketer you're like, okay, we're kind of overshooting the mark here, you know, what are we, we're not able to do anything with all the quote leads we're generating, which is what, you know, agencies look at. And then I feel with the, the smaller regional universities and the community colleges, where I'm at now, it's really more, I'm not gonna say it's more mission focused, but it's a different mission. It, it's like, first of all, we could probably take all the people

we get and maybe some more, you know, maybe there's been enrollment challenges. So you're very aware of the business side of higher ed. But I think the places I've worked, they've said don't let that drive, you know, drive what you do. If we do the right things, if we, you know, are authentic and trying to serve our mission and serve our students, which is what every I think higher ed institution wants to do, even if we don't have the right resources, if we can show people a possibility that they didn't previously think of.

Jeff Bunch (8m 58s):

And you know, you think about the adult learner, that's the other thing. Like the, the percentage of adult learners or transfer students versus the, the four-year journey at any four-year university is much different. And I want to, I just wanna give a a really good personal story just really quickly. There's actually a person in our town who I'm friends with now and he is the perfect model of the difference between say a, a big private university and the colleges. And it's a person named Rick Clark in Spokane. He was on a micro Facebook show about starting a nonprofit, but he was literally a middle-aged person who was homeless. He was a father, he just felt like he was a failure.

Jeff Bunch (9m 38s):

He lived in a part of town where no one he knew ever went to college. And he just said, I don't want my kids to grow up and be, feel sorry for me. So he went, walked into the community college and got, you know, all these resources and worked, slept in his van, studied by flashlight and it, he didn't think he'd even be able to get his two year degree. Well, coincidentally to our story today, he ends up getting done, his son says, well now that you're done you should apply to Gonzaga. And he's like, yeah, that they're never gonna take me. It's a big private, it's a big private institution, yada yada, very elite. And they, he sent him his application and it still gets chill. I get chills when I think about this, but Gonzaga said they read every application and they said, Rick, we've been waiting for you and we have scholarships for you and come join us.

Jeff Bunch (10m 22s):

And he's now a GradComm student there. So to me that's, that's the difference. But it's also, I think the mission expressed in different ways and the different populations you're reaching and of course with running start in a lot of high school programs being possible, people are, kids are having, I'm gonna call 'em kids 'cause usually they're under 18, you know, the, the young, the new generation has a lot of options, especially with the community college, sometimes with the, the public universities to do a running starter early entry program. And they may or may not know what they wanna do. But I think that's really been, I think the affordability of community colleges is the other thing. Both even our, we, the community colleges in my area are about half the cost of the smallest university in our region.

Jeff Bunch (11m 7s):

And and most of the region, most of the region in the near town here are private universities which cost, cost substantially more and are more of a residential experience. Whereas a community college, you know, you might be able to work live at home, whatever and you know, be able to kind of pace your way through it. So

for me as a marketer, it's different audiences and all that. And So I think the reverse experience worked because you know, instead of saying who are the fans of Cupcake Wine and what do they want on National Cupcake Day? And we had a great idea for that. It's now like, okay we have this one year accelerated degree, how do we creatively market this and show people like you can get a two year degree in one year. So, you know, you as you know as a marketer, those are things that you're, you're always trying to solve a problem.

Jeff Bunch (11m 51s):

But I guess I like the problems I'm trying to solve, solve now they really get me fired up and you know, I that's, I don't wanna say there's anything negative to anywhere else I've been, but I think everything I've done has prepared me to be here.

Cheryl Broom (12m 2s):

Yeah, I just actually had a kind of an epiphany moment while you were talking. I've been seeing this trend of colleges combining community college con combining their PR and marketing departments with their foundations and you know, calling it advancement and it's a four year model and I've been trying to think like what's the advantage of that? And then when you were talking about how Gonzaga has so many applications, like they don't really even need to market their oversaturated. Well no wonder there's an advancement model because marketing then becomes the arm of raising funds for the scholarships to pay for the students. So anyway, I was just like, oh, maybe this is where the whole advancement model came from is if you've got an overwhelming amount of applicants, why do you need to go out and market continually for more?

Cheryl Broom (12m 50s):

I'm like, go raise money, right?

Jeff Bunch (12m 52s):

Yeah. And what's, what's what I really would say, especially as a Jesuit institution, Gonzaga was very intentional and said, well we're not just gonna become more elite. We wanna be more diverse. We want to, you know, make like we've been known as a liberal arts program but we wanna do stem, we wanna do research. And so really yeah, giving and then giving the best facilities and experience to the students that come along. And then I think this happens in our case it's a separate foundation and then, you know, technically our PIO is the head of that. It works for that foundation for also, but the advancement part of the community college and I don't know if it's everywhere this way is more like, yeah, just carving out that half, you know, regardless of who came through, we're only focusing on alums.

Jeff Bunch (13m 33s):

And I think to me, and I think the model we're working on in my current position is let's you know there's gr some of our alums are best stories that can also inspire, you know, someone who's not in our college today.

And I would say someone like Rick Clark is a good example of that, you know, if he can do it. And he said that like, I want people to come behind me and if I could do it, anyone can, you know, and and teaching at a private university, there's also like a lot of behind the scenes stories, especially in a covid slash post covid era where there's the same struggles for all students right now. And you can be on, you can look on paper to be having it all together, but you know, there's a lot of outside the classroom challenges for all students.

Cheryl Broom (14m 15s):

Now I wanted to ask you specifically about one of your experiences where you were at. Is it Gonzaga or Gonzaga? Yeah,

Jeff Bunch (14m 22s):

It's Gonzaga. That's fine. Don't worry

Cheryl Broom (14m 24s):

Gonzaga, because So I am not a basketball fan. I, I sit on a soccer field every weekend with my boys.

Jeff Bunch (14m 33s):

We have a pretty good soccer team too.

Cheryl Broom (14m 35s):

But you capitalized on, on basketball and I know you even had to do like behind the scenes web work because of the amount of web traffic you got around the basketball team and, and I think that is something that most community college marketers have never had to deal with. So I'd love to hear that story again about Google and the website and how you dealt with all of that.

Jeff Bunch (14m 57s):

Yeah, So I came, you know, as basically Gonzaga had never really updated their digital platforms to the standard of where the institution had risen kind of a national view. And they're like, we need to do this. So they did this big web project. But the year before we start, well while we were doing the web project, the basketball team had becoming more then become more popular. And as they were kind of a quote Cinderella team, 'cause they were upsetting higher ranked teams, then people started Googling where is, what is Gonzaga, where is it? And so the first year they had that sensation, they literally crashed the servers for the website 'cause they were used to just a regular lower academic volume of, of, of traffic. So then the first year I'm there because I'm working on the web and I'm really more on the technical backside things And what I was doing some content creation.

Jeff Bunch (15m 45s):

I find myself in this meeting with it and us and they're like, okay, so we're gonna not let this happen again and we're gonna go ahead and have a backup website ready to go on Amazon web services and just in case

we hit this traffic thing, if we need to flip the switch we wheel, the other thing we're going to do is like they hit all these ways like caching and trying to, you know, make sure the whole website wasn't updating all the time. And I'm glad to say that they didn't have that problem again. And, but what was really cool was the traffic kept rising and it kind of built on itself. And I think any institution that's known for something hope, the best thing you can hope for is if it keeps going, you know, you build the awareness of it and like I said, it's free advertising.

Jeff Bunch (16m 27s):

So then we got to this point where after a few, you know, it had been almost 15 years, this was going on when I was at Gonzaga and I said, okay, well academics, we think we have great academics, how are we connecting it? You know, there's literally a separate website for athletics. And I said, if you google Gonzaga basketball, you won't find our website even. So when we built the new website, we put basketball on there as kind of an SEO draw. And then the thing I really loved doing was I created, when I saw every year, and it was even in Google's yearend video, like what people searched for and year whatever it was like where is Gonzaga was one of the top, but

Cheryl Broom (17m 2s):

That was in Google's urine video. Yeah,

Jeff Bunch (17m 4s):

Yeah. With Gonzaga and So. I was able to like send that to my boss in our department and go, okay, we're missing out. Like yeah, we think the world knows about us but, and so there's more room we can do So I, I did the most, and I'm not gonna say spammy, but the most SEO friendly article ever where, and it then the head, the URL was, Hey Google, where is Gonzaga? Because you know, people were starting to ask their devices stuff and I just tried things and I put in, tried to see what searches were specifically looking at. 'cause you got all this data as a market digital marketer behind the scenes, like you can see what people are searching for to get to your site. So I basically put this really dense five paragraph article on the website and it has been the number one or two top article on the website since I wrote it, which was, you know, five years ago.

Jeff Bunch (17m 50s):

So, you know, I think it just shows the power of what we do and if we do it intentionally and then it does call more attention. Like yes Gonzaga has great athletics, but we also have these great programs. And then when we're able to kind of revamp the homepage, once we get people to the homepage, there's a, it's almost all academics and you know, we try not to, they, I keep saying we, but when I was there we tried not to focus on athletics because it was a really good university at the top 100 large university just under the, the research institutions.

Cheryl Broom (18m 20s):

Well I wanna ask you more about content marketing and SEO, but first we're gonna take a quick break and we come back and I want, I have another story that I'm gonna draw out of you. So I, hope that you're prepared.

Jeff Bunch (18m 30s):

Okay, sounds good.

Cheryl Broom (18m 33s):

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Cheryl Broom (19m 13s):

Vendors EdTech Connect is the place to go. So visit [EdTech connect.com](https://edtechconnect.com) and set up your free profile to get a pulse for what's happening with higher ed technology today. Okay, welcome back.

Jeff Bunch (19m 27s):

It's great to be back.

Cheryl Broom (19m 30s):

So we, before the break we were talking about content marketing and SEO and I know you teach content marketing. Yes. And we always hear content's king, content king, but how, how do you define like what is content marketing and how is it different than other things?

Jeff Bunch (19m 44s):

Yeah, well I I appreciate that you said that phrase because I was in the journal when I was in the journalism business, I actually had an editor as we're building this website that he wasn't too fond of. He liked the old school model and he kept saying, content's king, content's king. And I said, and as a digital change agent I would say, okay, so what does that mean about not building a website or not putting money into a website? He's like, well people wanna pick up their paper in the morning. That was his definition of it. I think we are now learning because all marketing is digital now. And I think that's something that's been a transition in the time I've been doing webs, you know, 'cause everything has some sort of translation either from social to to web, but you know, so even within digital there's cross channel promotions, So, I think the, the platforms have just changed a little bit, but content is the key of all of it.

Jeff Bunch (20m 33s):

And I do have a story, but I wanna say that because I know this because not just I believe it, but web traffic when I was in the newspaper business, you know, is the currency they're looking for. And when we had a good story, especially a national story where Peter, what's his name from NBC News would be sitting in a courtroom in Vancouver, Washington. You know, we had 4 million views when we normally had a million per month. So content does matter and sometimes it's not the content we think is going to have results.

Cheryl Broom (21m 4s):

We're both taking a sip out of our GradComm mug. Cheers. And our cheer virtual cheers. Thank you you Mike. But that's what's to the podcast. We were trying to figure out before we started how we could do a virtual cheers. It's kind of sad we yeah, I think we're very successful.

Jeff Bunch (21m 21s):

Yes, thank you. I appreciate and it's a great mug. That's a free commercial. Thank

Cheryl Broom (21m 26s):

You.

Jeff Bunch (21m 27s):

So I said, okay, well what content do people want? So just really quickly, still in the journalism business, well this old school person said a newspaper should have things like why your taxes are being raised. That's great. People want to know that and they want to know what it is. But they don't want a full front, a front page article that takes 20 minutes to read. That's, they just want information quickly. So from journalism we saw this adoption of kind of this digital publishing model. And so content strategy, I know it matters because there's people like Christina Halverson and Ann Hanley and these are people who are kind of, you know, all the people that go to content marketing world. And I get to go as a plus one and I'm not gonna be at the conference, but my wife is going and I'm gonna get to see Anne again.

Jeff Bunch (22m 12s):

I'm hoping, 'cause I met her a couple of years ago. But these people have seen, they're the like four runners and said, content marketing is intentionally creating content where you know what the use of it is. And I think that's a big difference. A lot of times we would create content in the past and we wouldn't think about the use of it in advance. Or maybe does one piece of content mean multiple things that, you know, so in the higher ed model we have evolved it to podcasts like we're on here now. Maybe there's a short article about it, maybe there's a picture, maybe there's a social media post I, a lot of things I see you do and other people doing to promote your, your podcasts are a lot of what higher in higher ed institutions should be.

Jeff Bunch (22m 53s):

And not just looking at things as a one channel thing. What I have to tell my students all the time is in, in a

technical academic way, content strategy is different. Content marketing is the creating of content and using it. Whereas strategy is kind of like figuring out that why and where it goes. And so in the class, I just want to give an example. We work with three nonprofits every year and and say okay, especially ones that need a lot of help because they're smaller and they can't do this. And it really helps the students to understand, you know, that you're not just gonna be working for DocuSign, which has a big presence in Seattle for example. But there's a lot of ways that you can make content that's both compelling and does the job.

Jeff Bunch (23m 35s):

So one and one example I share with them, going back to the basketball analogy is that we had one year at Gonzaga where Jimmy Kimmel was really a big fan and he, he wanted to talk about Gonzaga and I don't believe it exists. And so we, we just would take the clips and we'd embed 'em and I started this one web article and instead of creating 17 web articles, a new one every day, I just created one and I kept adding to it, which was thing, something I learned in journalism. and so that URO for or that topic became gold to Google because we had Jimmy Kimmel, does Gonzaga exist? Like the university is printing up t-shirts. They actually, the athletics department showed up at Hollywood to be in Jimmy's audience and present the T-shirts and then they played in the regional in la.

Jeff Bunch (24m 18s):

Like it was just like this perfect marketing campaign. I'm getting goosebumps thinking about it. And that article was ranking really high in Google. And then I was able to say, have links in it that linked to things like the article I mentioned before. And the other thing I didn't tell you was the first year that Gonzaga went to the Final Four, and I don't wanna talk just about them, but when they won the semi-final game against South Carolina, I had real time analytics open in Google and I saw our website go from 1000 users at one point to 10,000 within 60 seconds. And I got a video of that and I was like, okay, this is the power of being in the right place at the right time.

Jeff Bunch (24m 58s):

So whatever that is, you know, Rick Clark became a national story both for Gonzaga and for us at the community colleges. And he is so humble and so loyal to where he started that that's the type of compelling story I'm looking at. It talks about our values and what we do as an institution, but it's really personal. You know, it's about this person's journey and if you watch anything about Rick Clark, you can't help but be moved. 'cause he went back and helped other homeless people on the streets when he got his himself up and going,

Cheryl Broom (25m 30s):

You know, I think you bring up such a good, you bring up so many good points, but one of 'em that I've, I saw just a couple weeks ago, another college did, was really capitalize on what's happening in pop culture. And I think that a lot of community colleges miss these opportunities maybe because they're so busy with their jobs or they don't have that journalistic background. Yeah, we saw this, we're recording this podcast in

August of 2023 and the Barbie movie has just hit a billion dollars. Yes. And one of the colleges that we follow, that's not one of our clients, just one that we really like their social, they took all these traditionally male dominated careers and they took pictures of female students and then they morphed them into Barbie.

Cheryl Broom (26m 15s):

So it was like mechanic Barbie and, and then they had the salary range like graduate with this salary and then it was like, that's brilliant. Firefighter Barbie and Police Barbie. And I'm like, this is brilliant because Barbie's trending and now you're, you're giving information that's relevant. Yes. And you're talking about women in careers that traditionally are male dominated, but they were like on it. I mean they, they had their Barbie post up like the day after the Barbie movie came out

Jeff Bunch (26m 44s):

And that's really being on it. And that is really smart and I would love to learn more about that. 'cause for example, at our colleges we have a lot of comm career and technical education and we really like to empower those female students who are in there and really just honestly all the programs and all the participants and say, hey, like you know, you can go to two years of running start and go out and make \$70,000 a year as a, as a welder or a CNC machine operator. But yeah that is great because you're right, we are too busy. I mean I think everyone in marketing or everyone in higher ed or sometimes everyone in every job would say we're too busy. But I think that that's where you see that impact of less resources in a smaller organization generally like a community college that sometimes, I mean you also now have a hundred clients on campus, you know, who maybe haven't updated their Facebook page in 10 years and they want you to help 'em, you know, because enrollment 'cause some programs least open the doors and they had, like you've probably seen there were certain careers that, that were just automatically full programs.

Jeff Bunch (27m 43s):

Now we have to fight for it a little bit more. And, and there's also private small private colleges, you know, like cosmetology school, cosmetology schools or business schools that are just in the local community and they're saying, oh well you don't need to go to a community college 'cause we can give you the same thing in six months for 10 times the cost. You know?

Cheryl Broom (28m 2s):

Yeah. And people are liking that. We actually just talked to a college president last week and he said, you know, we are not losing students because of Covid anymore because they don't wanna come to college. We're losing them because they're going to the for-profits down the street that offer our programs and half the time and people are willing to pay for that.

Jeff Bunch (28m 19s):

Yeah. And I, and I honestly, this is just my personal opinion, but I, it really makes me sad to hear that because I get people's stories all the time. And I remember being, talking to my grocery store clerk one day

and she was, she's going to one of those schools here locally. And I'm not saying it's a bad school, but she's just barely making it in life and she's paying, you know, this higher cost to get it in a shorter amount of time. And I don't think, you know, we have to help students understand that two years where you can still work while you're doing the degree versus a year, let's say to earn the same CER certification, but you have to like drop everything or you know, pay all this, you're gonna end up with a lot of debt that's not normally associated with like a private university.

Jeff Bunch (29m 2s):

And I think that loses the value of the community colleges. And I think that, you know, the other thing we've seen is like in our medical programs overall, there's such a shortage in a lot of medical fields that my doctor's office hasn't, you know, the, the company that owns them, which is a northwest regional chain, they are doing an in-house program where they'll teach you to be a medical assistant and then pay for any schooling you need. So yeah, I think because the capacity isn't always there and it's, and it's hard to like adapt your whole academic offerings on the fly. And so I think a lot of community colleges which have ref, which reflects on our jobs when they're trying to pivot on the fly to create academic programs, which is hard to do with faculty and all the steps you have to go through to update catalogs and you know, do it right, then they come to us and then we have to get them leads and you know, it's, it's a competitive market in almost every field.

Jeff Bunch (29m 54s):

But yeah, I think that when you mention covid OI definitely, you know, we're, we are glad in my current institutions that were back to basically a baseline of pre covid and a lot of people haven't gotten back there and some people, and probably we don't know, like even if we've gotten back to pre covid levels, it's unclear whether there will ever be growth in the future, whether it's just kind of maintaining the status quo when that's a win.

Cheryl Broom (30m 19s):

Yeah. Yeah. I think that's a question that a lot of colleges are battling with right now. Well, as we wind down our conversation, I don't, I don't wanna point out that you are in the latter part of your career. Oh yeah, I am. But I just did right here you are, you are, you've had a, a fantastic, amazing career. You do some consulting, you do some teaching. You, you've just had such an interesting career and there's a lot of job openings right now for community college marketing directors. I've seen them pop up every single day. Do you have any advice for people who are looking to move into that job and how they can be successful?

Jeff Bunch (30m 59s):

Yeah. Well first of all, I would say like, like the reverse career that I'm doing here is probably not the way people should go because if they start earlier in higher ed, like if you, I think, you know, if you have a passion for changing people's lives in that way, and I wish I'd known earlier that this was a good way to take my storytelling skills and help people like myself who is first gen. So I would say, really you have to first of all be passionate and enjoy what you're doing. And if you go out and say, I wanna do this other job or this

particular university and maybe even be lower on the, the, the employment grid organizational level, you might not ever get to that marketing director level or communications or PIO director.

Jeff Bunch (31m 41s):

Whereas I feel like the opportunity at the community colleges is, in my department, for example, I oversee social web, writing, video and photo. And by doing that, I would say anyone who's on my team could be the next person in my spot if I ever left or retired or whatever. I don't plan on doing that soon. But you know, there's some people on my team that are very capable and then that's just like basically one step away from being a market. Well that would be a marketing director in a lot of organizations or marketing and communications and then you're one step away from being API O, which could be a 30 year career. You know, and, and I think the other thing that people don't look at is just the benefits of publicly funded universities.

Jeff Bunch (32m 23s):

When you look at healthcare and all the things, like, you don't think about those things when you're 22 years old. You know, like, oh, I'm still on my parents' insurance until I'm 26. But if you have kids and copays and surgeries and dental bills, you know, you can really, I think look at the full benefit. But you really, I So I would say if you come out with a journalism degree, if you come out with a marketing degree, there's even a student at Gonzaga recently who was working for the marketing team there and they were more of a computer science person, but they knew how to like solve problems in marketing with, with their skills. And so yeah, maybe even tech people, I think we're always going to need education and people are always wanting to be bettering themselves. And even people in the latter stages of my life or in programs like act two where they're doing, you know, learning how to run their own nursery at age 65 and retire out in some community nearby.

Jeff Bunch (33m 14s):

I think there's something for everyone and, and it's also just a fascinating place to work. Like we have poets, we have, you know, there's a lot of EDI focus and I think you can be in a place where that's not part of the fabric of the community, the greater community. But when you go on to a community college campus, it's just different. You know, there's this connection and there's this community and even if there's a lot of commuting students and students who aren't just hanging out on campus for eight hours a day, there's just so many great places, student orgs, you know, and, and affinity groups that people can get connected to. And so really just put yourself out there, spend some time, go to events at community colleges. And I can tell you like if you're working at a bank creating marketing content, that's great, but you know, there's also a lot of regulation with that.

Jeff Bunch (34m 1s):

Maybe you want to be in a place where you can dress someone up in a Sasquatch, you know, funny stuff like we do or do

Cheryl Broom (34m 8s):

Or you can dress up as a Sasquatch. Yeah,

Jeff Bunch (34m 10s):

No,

Cheryl Broom (34m 11s):

PIO client who also wears her school really mascot. Yeah. Oh my god. She's the only one that will fit in it.

Jeff Bunch (34m 17s):

That's, yeah, we have that dilemma too. But yeah, so you know, or maybe you can then come up with this Fun Barbie campaign and I love it because you can make an impact and also just establish yourself as a leader in the marketing field. And you know, if you go to an NCMPR conference and you present, you might find yourself presenting at a national conference for a great idea. You had, you know, we won probably, I'm not bragging, but our organization won several national awards last year. That's really hard to do, to be part of a team, first of all that does the work then be nominated. But you know, I just think the, the, the entry to success at a higher level is more open at a community college level, but higher ed in general, I think just go try different things and maybe you like it at a bigger regional university or state university or, but just try it, you know?

Jeff Bunch (35m 5s):

'cause I think to me, if you're a lifelong learner, if you wanna learn more, if you want to learn more about anything, if you wanna turn your talents and gifts over for other people, to me it's a great way to express your mission in life.

Cheryl Broom (35m 18s):

Well, thank you for making it your mission. 'cause you've clearly made an impact and everywhere you've been, and I really appreciate your time on the podcast.

Jeff Bunch (35m 26s):

Well, I appreciate yours too. And you know, I'm just, congrats on all the success you've had and keep doing it because you know, a lot of us out there in the, in the working in the field need the inspiration and, and you share great ideas. Your company scares great ideas, so keep inspiring us in every way you do.

Cheryl Broom (35m 43s):

Well, thank you, Jeff. I hope to see you in person at NCMPR

Jeff Bunch (35m 46s):

R. There you go.

Cheryl Broom (35m 50s):

And that wraps up this episode of the Higher Education Conversations Podcast. I'm host and GradComm, CEO, Cheryl Broom, a big thank you to our sponsor, EdTech Connect. EdTech Connect is free, so anyone with the.edu email address can sign up and list the software and services they use in their role at their school. So visit [EdTech connect.com](https://edtechconnect.com) and set up your free profile to get a pulse for what's happening with higher ed technology today. And while you're online, take a few minutes to leave our podcast a five star review. It will help other colleges and universities find us and learn from the great experts we have on the show. That's it for now. Until next time.