

Transcript

Krystal Hobbs 0:04

Welcome to Beyond the Tools, the podcast that helps contractors attract more leads, grow their business, and finally get off the tools. In each episode, you'll discover marketing tactics that work. You'll get actionable insights from other successful contractors, and connect with experts to help you grow. I'm your host, Krystal Hobbs, owner of a social media agency that helps contractors attract and convert more leads. Get ready to take your business to the next level so you can finally enjoy the fruits of your hard labor. Ready, let's go!

Hey, contractors, welcome to Beyond the Tools, the podcast that helps you grow your business. And finally, get off the tools so you can enjoy the fruits of your hard labor. Today's guest is an absolute powerhouse in the home services industry. And I'm so excited to have her on the show. Angie Snow started Western Heating & Air Conditioning with her husband a little over 14 years ago. And they went from a husband and wife team to a team of 45. And they were actually recently acquired. Aside from now serving as the Director of Marketing at Western Heating & Air Conditioning. Angie is also a principal industry advisor at ServiceTitan. And everything she does is about giving back to the industry. She served on the board of directors for Women in HVACR for the past six years. She's a presenter, she's a coach, she's a mentor. And honestly, I could go on and on. But what you most need to know about Angie is that she is really good at building a successful HVAC business. In today's episode, we dig into what I think is a really interesting topic, which is how you can build a successful contracting company with your spouse. Angie talks about how she and her husband divided their roles, and how they built in accountability without nagging each other or killing each other. And also how they got to the level of success they're at today, how they celebrate the wins, and how they infuse that culture into their business as well. So whether or not you are in business with your spouse, this episode is going to teach you so much about the relationships that are fundamental to growing your business. So let's head on over to hear from Angie.

Krystal Hobbs 2:52

I am so thrilled to introduce today's guest, Angie Snow of Western Heating & Air Conditioning. So glad to have you here.

Angie Snow 3:02

So glad to be here. Thank you, Krystal, I'm very excited.

Krystal Hobbs 3:07

I think there is so much for us to talk about. But I love your story in particular. And I think it's a story that a lot of our listeners can relate to. So maybe tell us how you got involved in the trades.

Angie Snow 3:27

It's a fun story. I actually had no intention of being part of the trades. As a young girl, many of us happen to fall into this - my background is actually in education. I was a second-grade teacher; teaching school loving it. And then one day, my husband, who did have a desire and a passion for HVAC, he'd been in the industry for 10 years and he said, "Angie, I would love to buy a heating and air conditioning company. There's one for sale. It's a great company. They've been around for about 12 years and the owner is getting ready to retire. Would you like to come and do this with me? I need someone that can help me run the numbers, run the books, and stay in the office." And as a mom with three young children under the age of five, I thought this is a great opportunity for me to stop teaching, stay at home with my kids, and I can just run the business from my living room. And that's what I did. And so we bought our business in 2007 right before the recession. So that was a challenge in itself.

But as we got through that recession, we had four technicians, we started to grow, and we started to learn. We joined some best practice organizations, hired business coaches, and began to see a lot of amazing success. And so throughout that success, we were then asked to come to speak and engage with other contractors, which is fun, and share some of our best practices, some of our knowledge. And the one interesting thing that a lot of people were really interested in is how you run this business with your husband. Because working together and you're married, is that even possible? So we started doing some business coaching and coaching other couples and helping them run businesses together. We've had our company for 15 years and it's been so fun to the point where we were just acquired last fall. It's been awesome to go from beginning to end to be acquired, and still be able to be in that day-to-day, but just at a different level now. So it's a lot of fun. We've loved growing our business and blessing the lives of our employees and our customers and just building a solid brand. And our community spent a lot of fun,

Krystal Hobbs 5:49

Amazing, and congratulations on 15 years and all your success. I think that's huge. And I love that you talk about that. It is somewhat common in this industry to be in business with your spouse. And I can only imagine some of the challenges. So I guess I'm curious if you can take me back to when you started. Did you go into it super excited? Or were you a little bit nervous or hesitant about how that might go?

Angie Snow 6:29

Well, I really did not have a passion for heating and air conditioning. In fact, my husband had been a general manager for a service expert out in Fresno, California, right before we bought the business. And his boss gave him this plaque that said, have fun. Do you call that fun? I would rather go play in a room with second graders all day, that is fun. Running a heating and air conditioning business is not fun. So I really didn't have a desire, but I love my husband. And I knew this was a dream of his. He talked about it for years, eventually, one day, I'm going to have a business. And so because I loved him, I wanted to support him and his dream. And I had no idea that once I got in there, and started learning more about business, and what things were working, and we were doing, trying different marketing tactics and seeing what worked and what didn't, and trying to develop a leadership team and develop our employees. And as we were doing this, I started having fun. And then I realized what that plaque meant. And I really started to develop a passion for that. And so that's when I really kind of decided, alright, if we're going to do this, and this is fun like I want to be good at it. And so that's when we joined a best practice organization. We joined the Service Nation Alliance, and they were critical. They really helped us and coached us, they gave us resources to help us grow our business. We started hiring additional business coaches, I joined Women in HVACR because for so long, I would go to these conferences and be the only woman in the room. And so to know that there were other women out there in this as well gave me an opportunity to network and learn and grow from them as well. So it was it started to become fun at that point.

Krystal Hobbs 8:18

Amazing. And I want to dig into all of that. But I guess let me start with when you did first go into business together that first year, how did you go about divvying up the roles? Or, what did that look like for you to work together?

Angie Snow 8:37

Well, it was really interesting because the couple that we purchased it from was in their 60s, they were ready to retire. And they were running it together as husband and wife

and they had their specific roles. The husband, and because they were so small, would answer the phone, he would book his own calls, would run all the sales calls, would manage his two or three team members to make sure everything was done and keep the relationships going with the vendors. He did all of that. Her job, she would do payroll, the backend invoicing, work with vendors, and pay bills. And so that was kind of like, well, we'll just step in and do what they're doing, which was fine. And it worked for a little bit until my husband was overwhelmed. He was like, "How in the world am I supposed to answer a phone call while I'm meeting with a customer? Like this isn't working Angie, I need you to take the phones back to the house." And I agreed, so it was really trial and error and pretty soon he took on the marketing because that was what his degree was in the business, technology management business. And so he did that but it wasn't working. I'm just gonna say, we sent out this cow postcard once. That was just we spent so much money on it and it was such a bomb. I asked him, "How about I take over marketing?" and he agreed. And I have this creative, and fun mind. And so once I took over marketing, and some of the numbers that I was tracking, even though my master's is in math education, I was not loving the accounting side. He took over the numbers. So really, it came to a point where we had to use each other's strengths to develop our roles. And then we had to trust each other in those roles, and support each other in those roles. But it wasn't until that point that we really started taking off when we were using each other's strengths in the right way to help our business grow. That's when it took off. So I think for some advice for any couples who are trying to figure this out, stop for just a second and take a look at what your strengths are, and then assign those roles and then trust each other to do that. I could not be a nag to him and say, "Have you got this report on? Have you done that?" That's not good for our marriage and not good in a business. Just trust each other. And yes, something's flopped. But we supported each other, we lifted him up, and we kept going. So that would be my advice when you're looking to determine roles in a marriage and in your business.

Krystal Hobbs 11:14

I love that. So you talk about learning to trust each other and say that ball is in your court. What is the balance there with accountability or is there accountability to each other? How does that work?

Angie Snow 11:30

Absolutely. And we kind of found that out the hard way, too, because to have a strong marriage, I did not want to be that nagging wife that was, "Hey, this still hasn't been

done, this bill needs to be paid.” I didn't want to do that. And one of the things that we did that was the best thing for our marriage, and for the accountability in our company was to hire a business coach. Now we have a business coach. And we've hired a lot of different business coaches, since we've had our business, we typically look at like, where are we the weakest in our business right now? Like, where do we need help? Is it in our finances? Is it in our management? Is it in just our overall business setup? And so we would get a business coach, and that person would help us as we're choosing our action steps, and we see accountable to them instead of each other. So now it's like, oh, my gosh, we're gonna get that done because our business coaches are going to ask us about it. And so it was really nice to have that third party there to keep us accountable. And it was worth every single cent I've paid for a business coach to help us do that.

Krystal Hobbs 12:32

That makes total sense. And then you're not needing to nag or check in on each other. It's somebody else's job and that keeps things nice and neutral.

Angie Snow 12:44

It's been the secret to our happy marriage. Well, one of the secrets.

Krystal Hobbs 12:53

That's awesome. I guess what would be another secret that you learned to keep a happy marriage and business?

Angie Snow 13:01

Another one is to know when to turn off business. And when it's time to just be a married couple, and time to focus on your family. And it's very hard. I see this with so many couples who are in business together. And maybe not necessarily couples, but even just partners like father and son. There are a lot of different family dynamics that work in businesses. But when you get home, it's important to turn that off. And sometimes it's difficult. He'll get home and he'll want to talk to me about some of the things that just happened at work today. And so, we have set up a boundary though, and we've set up a boundary as far as like, where in the house, we can talk about business, and for how long. So for us, our place was our kitchen counter, we would meet at the kitchen counter for 10-15 minutes after work. And we would kind of wrap up all those loose ends and talk about business. And our kids understood this as well, when mom and dad are standing at the counter talking about business, we know it's not going to be all night, we know will only be for 10 or 15 minutes, we'll let them talk and then their mom and dad the rest of the night. And so setting up that boundary of when

and where to talk about business. And then knowing that you're only leaving it to that little bit of time, and then being able to turn it off, and find that balance. I think is super important and very key to a healthy relationship and a healthy balance with your family.

Krystal Hobbs 14:26

Absolutely. Was there ever a time that you felt you didn't have that balance?

Angie Snow 14:32

There have been plenty of times. I'm trying to think of all the different times. Of course, you'd have fires in your business. We have if something happens to one of our employees in an accident or we have a customer escalation that happens at eight o'clock at night and we're in the middle of family time, we have to stop and take care of it and the kids understand that as well. And I think it's really important to when we're going through some of those things, to stop and explain to your children like, Hey, guys, this is an emergency, this is why we're handling it right now. And they realize this is our livelihood. This is how I paid for you to go play basketball and your dance class and all of those things. So they understand that. It's important to communicate that with the kids and set those expectations as well. But for the most part, they know where mom and dad are when we're with you.

Krystal Hobbs 15:26

Amazing. And I guess, are there other examples of ways that you've had to kind of separate your personal life, the culture that you create there?

Angie Snow 15:40

So when my husband and I were the presidents and vice presidents, sole owners of our company, we both had our specific roles there as well. I knew what I was in charge of, he knew, and the employees knew as well. And they also knew that we were on the same team very much like a mom and dad. They're not going to come to ask me something. And if I say no, they go to Ryan. And he'll say, yes. We're the same team. And they understood that as well. We're aligned, and our goals were aligned with our vision for the company. And so the team understood that as well. So even though it was we're married, that shouldn't matter, right? In a company, you'll have a vice president or president, the whole leadership team is aligned, regardless of those relationships. And so there was a very different dynamic. And I appreciate that our teams always respected us as such, and as different individuals, and it's never, there's never been that awkward, well, you guys are married. It hasn't been that way because we've kept it very professional at work.

Krystal Hobbs 16:48

And I guess having that clarity in terms of these are the roles and this is who you go to for xyz makes it a lot more clear. So now that you are coaching other people in the space, what are some of the common challenges, or hang-ups that you're seeing from the couples that you're coaching?

Angie Snow 17:17

Well, a lot of them we've already talked about - how to separate roles, how to separate business from work, how to still have a relationship outside of work, we really talked to them about making date night a priority and making sure you prioritize time together were all things the business is off limits to talk about, like do not talk about them. So go and work on your relationship. And then we also talk about the importance of celebrating, celebrating the successes in your business, celebrating the successes in your life. So often we have these big things we're trying to achieve, we achieve them, and then we're on to the next we don't take time to pause and celebrate. I remember back in 2011, we were just getting through the effects of the recession. And it was difficult. We owed one of our suppliers, it was over 86,000 dollars. And we'd owed him that for like six months, we just we could not get the cash flow to work in our favor to pay them back. And they were patient with us. And I remember my husband coming in, he's like, "Man if we're in business in six months, that will be a miracle. And we need to celebrate." And I remember six months later, he came back and he said, "It's been six months, we should celebrate." And I'm like, "I know exactly what we can do." And I get in my purse, and I said, "I've got a coupon, buy one, get one free. Let's go have lunch." And it was like a \$14 meal for both of us because of the coupon. But we've made it through that and we took the time to celebrate. And even though it was not the best meal we'd ever had, we still found a way to go celebrate that. And so there's just like a little sentimental spot in my heart for I have now because that was kind of like we turn the corner, we did it, and now our celebrations are much more grandiose than an IHOP visit but we still take a moment to celebrate those things. In fact, last month in June, was the first million-dollar month that we've ever had as far as revenue goes. So there is our highest month ever, and something we've been working on for a long time and it's hard when we see a lot of our competitors, and maybe not competitors, but some of our colleagues already hitting that milestone and we've been waiting and working so hard for to finally hit it. Like okay, we're gonna celebrate and so we're planning a big celebration for our team. Also for us, what do I mean? It's important to stop and

celebrate those things. So that's some other great advice for couples that we help couples with.

Krystal Hobbs 19:54

I love that. I think especially when you've been in business for a while, you are focused on the future, and you're never looking back at what you've done. I know even for me, in the beginning, I celebrated like every new client that we signed on, and you forget. You forget to do those things. So I think that's a really important reminder.

Angie Snow 20:17

I think another challenge that I see and I see it more in the women that I work with, I know the men out there struggle with it, too, but maybe are not as vocal with it, but just the overwhelm by the stress of so much to do, and where do I prioritize? And how do I manage my time? And how do I, how do I feel like I'm being a good mom and a good wife, and so be able to run my business successful? So that's another challenge that a lot of women work with or that women struggle with. And I know men do too, is what I'm saying. I just don't know if men sometimes are as vocal about how hard that is. In my experience, they tend to keep it in a little bit more. And so working with women on setting those boundaries and prioritizing. What can I delegate? What can I automate? What can I eliminate from all of these things? We, women, like to be nurturing. We like to bill. We like to do all those things and create and sell. It's working with them to help them set it up in an organized way so that they can be successful and not overwhelmed, and well balanced.

Krystal Hobbs 21:22

So what do you see as the signs of overwhelm that you're typically seeing?

Angie Snow 21:29

Burnout, not loving what they're doing anymore. I came into this, I've loved it, I've been learning and growing. And now I'm just like, "I need a break, I'm tired" like, they're just tired, they take on too much, and they're so busy taking care of everyone else, they say, forget to stop and take care of themselves, and nurture themselves and reward themselves for all of the things that they're doing. So it's this balanced approach is not having the business be the only thing that you're prioritizing. It's finding all of those other things - your health, your fitness, your relationships - whether it's spousal children, parents, friends, or social - making sure they're making time for that in their day. And if they're not, we look at their schedule, and what can we take out of your schedule, what do we need to eliminate, and they're like "But I can't, things will fall apart" and it's

helping them realize things will not fall apart. They won't. They're not going to fall apart. They'll still be there. You need to stop and take time for you to power you up so that you can continue to power that. Because now you're just running on empty, and the business is not going to move at the momentum or speed you want to when you, the machine that's powering this business when you're on empty. So it's taking time to stop and refuel.

Krystal Hobbs 22:51

I think that's interesting because I know a lot of business owners struggle with delegation. So where do you start with someone who is taking on too much? How do you help them with that fear of letting go?

Angie Snow 23:08

I know right? Some of the things that I teach, we talk about the hats that you wear in your company, right? How many hats are you wearing right now in your company? And the smaller companies, I get it. You have to wear a lot of hats. You have to be the accountant that does payroll. You have to be the one that answers the phone. You have to be the one that's working with the marketing. You have to be the one. You have a lot of hats at times. And so it's number one, identifying all the hats that you're wearing, and making a list of those. And then when you're looking at those hats, which hats bring the most value to your company? That's first. Which ones are the most valuable? If any of these hats dropped, which one would be the biggest impact on the company? And you'd probably need to keep that hat on for just a little bit. But look at the other ones that may not have as big of an impact. And think about how you can delegate. Another one is what are you passionate about? Out of all those hats, which one do you love doing the most? Do you just love it? Because you should love what you're doing. And then which one are you really good at? Because sometimes we're a lot of hats, but you're not really good at some of them. And there are people out there that can do those things better than you. Right? So it's really just taking a moment to do a little exercise where you identify the hats that you're wearing. And when I'm coaching women, because I'm not a hat person, I'm more of a bag person. So I call it carrying my bags. I got a lot of bags. Who can carry some of these bags for me and what's in the bag? What are we keeping in the bag? What can we take out of the bag? I like to use the bag analogy when I'm working with women. But it's really just redistributing those bags and realizing that hang on to the ones that you love the most, that you're good at, that you're the most passionate about, and then make the most impact for your business. And then delegate the others or start identifying people in your company who can rise up to wear that hat,

or find people. There are so many good people out there. And just make sure that you've got a really great defined job description. You can build a company and build whatever job description you want to help with these hats. You don't have to do it alone.

Krystal Hobbs 25:20

Absolutely. Once a business owner is able to let something go, the exponential growth that comes from that because they've finally got the mental bandwidth to be able to do the most important things is incredible.

Angie Snow 25:37

Absolutely. Especially as a business owner, your job should be overall, your focus should be on the overall health of the business, and vision and lead the team. You need to make sure that is your goal and your focus. And if you're stuck in the day-to-day, you're never gonna get there. So build a team and delegate so that you can all work together to get to that end goal.

Krystal Hobbs 26:05

Absolutely. So I know, Angie, now at this point. I mean, you guys got a team of 45. Is that right? At what point do, I know you said that coaches have been really instrumental to your growth, at what point did you bring on a coach? And at what point would you say it makes sense to look at getting that accountability partner?

Angie Snow 26:34

We joined the best practice organization about a year after. And I think it was mostly because we didn't know what we didn't know. And we wanted if we were going to make this work we needed to and so just joining a best practice organization was awesome because it opened her eyes to a variety of coaches and helped us realize what type of coaches were out there. But shortly after that, we hired our first business coach, and his first focus for us was to identify our core values, and who we were as a company, lay those out, and define them. And really, once we knew who we are and what we were building, then we could build upon that. But with that lack of clarity, we didn't know what direction are we going. How do we build a mission statement or a vision statement if we don't even know who we are? And so once we got the values in place, it was like that was the foundation and then everything kind of took off after that. We knew that we were a company that we could be trusted, we were going to have integrity. We knew that we were a company that valued families. Family was always first for us and that was our motto before we started. Family first. Before we were in the business and in the business, we wanted all of our employees to know that their family is important and we

were going to treat them as family. Our customers we're going to be family. So having family be one of those core values, we really just identified and when we're trying to think of values, we've seriously brainstormed 50 different values, and then narrowed it down to about seven. And today we've narrowed it down to even further like four we have four main values. But I think once that business coach helped us identify who we are, and then helped us identify how to and teach us how to build systems and processes off of that foundation, that's when we really started to grow. So that was the first business coach that we hired. And he was really great at time management, too. We've talked about being overwhelmed, how to be more productive in our day, and how to get things done in an orderly way instead of a chaotic way. And so it was really great to just start with a nice structure to be able to do that. And I still use so many of the things that he taught us to this day, in my own personal life and in my coaching as well.

Krystal Hobbs 28:42

I love that. And I've found the same thing in my business - every coach or consultant fills a gap. But it's something that not only helps you in that time, but it's things that you continue to go back to and become essentially a foundation of your business. So I know Angie that you're doing a number of things now that you've got your team to the level that you're at, you got acquired. So tell us a little bit about your work as well, how your role has evolved with Western Heating & Air Conditioning, and some of the other things that you're involved with now.

Angie Snow 29:22

Absolutely. 2020 was a big year for us. We started out with our goals, we set out with our ambitions, we knew our revenue numbers, and we knew what we wanted to achieve as a company. And then, of course, the pandemic hit. It was very scary for us. I remember we were actually in Hawaii at the time, everything started shutting down. I didn't know if we're gonna get stuck there which wouldn't have been bad. Don't get me wrong. I would have been okay to stay there but I just remember sitting by the pool and starting to write all new protocols and all these things that we're going to do - communications to our customers, to our employees. I spent that vacation trying to rework what business was going to look like at Western Heating & Air Conditioning, and how to get through them really taking on that proactive leadership: we're gonna get through this, we've got to find a way to not lose our employees, to not let our business fail. It was very scary. And so to come back from that vacation and start implementing everything, working harder than we've ever worked just to make sure everyone be safe

and still be able to keep the doors open and serve our customers, it ended up just being such a blessing. And so many good things came from that for our business.

Our business actually grew quite a bit that year. And it was awesome to the point where I actually was recruited to go work for ServiceTitan, who was our software provider at that time, to go and advise other contractors to help write playbooks to help work on some of these things to help other contractors. And so it was awesome because I was able to take what I did and bring it on a higher platform and be able to serve more people there with what I've learned. And so as I started to do that, I realized that to be able to get my 100% to ServiceTitan, I was no longer able to give 100% to Western Heating & Air Conditioning. But my husband was so excited about this opportunity. And our company had been doing so well. We've just gone through a major rebrand as well. The timing that just worked out to do that. And so as I stepped away from Western Heating, without totally stepping away, keeping a foot in the door, they're coming in visiting, working in the office every now and then just so I could stay fresh in the industry. But not really in the day to day that I had been, it was a great opportunity and I've learned so much. It's a different dynamic, being a business owner and now working for a large corporation. I've learned so much from that amazing professionals at ServiceTitan and, I'm still there, and I'm still learning and growing. But now, coming back in and taking the marketing back on. I'm now the Director of Marketing there. And just so many fun things about marketing. It's I think that's the thing that I love the most. That was my passion, and you talk about all the hats, if I could wear one hat and come back into the business, that was the one I wanted to do. Because you just have opportunities to connect with the community, connect with your customers, and continue to build and develop the brand that we work so hard to develop over the last 15 years. It's been a blessing and a privilege to be able to come back and keep working on that with the company.

Krystal Hobbs 32:41

That sounds amazing. And what a perfect fit with what you're doing with ServiceTitan now as well. So, Angie, I know we covered so much here today. And I feel there's a lot more that we could but every good thing has to come to an end. I know our listeners are gonna want to learn more about you. So what's the best way that they can connect with you?

Angie Snow 33:10

Find me on LinkedIn, on Facebook, and reach out. You can send me an email at

angie@westernheatingair.com. I'd be happy to connect with you and learn more about you and see how I can serve you. So thank you.

Krystal Hobbs 33:27

Amazing. We'll put all those links in the show notes as well. Thank you so much, Angie. I think our listeners are going to learn so much from this episode. And I'm so appreciative of your time and insights.

Angie Snow 33:40

It's been my pleasure. Thank you so much.

Krystal Hobbs 33:48

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