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Gavin Kelly

You're listening to beyond 1894, a podcast dedicated to updating you on research, innovation and Campus Life happening in Louisiana Tech University. This is Gavin Kelley, social media strategist with University Communications, I had the privilege of sitting down with Marlon watts and Nicholas Clark, co founders of the evergrowing, world envision apparel company for an interview focus on passion, the theme of the latest edition of the 1894 alumni magazine, in which world envision is a featured story. In this episode of beyond 1894, Nick and Marlon talk with me about what passion means to them, their journey to success, how Louisiana Tech has helped shape them, and why they've chosen to stay in Reston, as they've ascended to a million dollar business. Alright, so I mentioned passion. So in the context of your business and your brand, what does passion mean to you guys?

Marlon Watts

You got you started out. Um, so I say passion for us is, is like some that you can't see. So is is one of the ones where, you know, we'd like to use sports, that football player has waking up early watching film, catching balls out to practice, doing the things that no one will have to tell them to do those things. No One No have to watch them. So for them to go do the things that they know they need to do to be great. And that's when you know you have passion. And when you're doing when you have those intangible moments, because it's something where like, I can just show you passion, you know what I mean? I could get riled up inside. But at the end of the day, you that could just be false passion. The real passion comes from doing from doing what you know, you're supposed to do and nobody's watching. And I think that that's what we did, like a lot of people didn't see our vision when we saw it. But we believed in it that much that we want to push that we want to keep on trying that even when we felt like we just didn't want to give up failure for us was just like, another opportunity to show what we could do. And we didn't want to let people see us fail. So for us, it was like, Oh, yeah, now we got to, you know, come back harder, even, you know, 10 times harder than what we did. Um, so having passion is just like I said, is that is that intangible thing that you can't even explain, but you have it?

Nicholas Clark

Yeah, this is just like what he says some that like money can't buy, you know, so it's just like, like doing a brand starting a brand. Just getting to where we got, you know, here today is like, we really just was working when nobody was watching. It's just something that we love to do is just like, it's just us coming together, you know, on our entrepreneurship journey, just facing struggles and facing challenges and just overcoming it just some fun for us to do like a lot of people don't get fun, out of solving stuff, solving problems, or, you know, like being challenged or being obstacles that they never thought they could face. But that's what I will say, what drove us, you know, those type of things. And I will say that what what, what describes passion for me?

Gavin Kelly

Good, good. And it's evident just being in here, the short time I've been here, the passion is evident as you walk into this place. So y'all mentioned, you know, that it's not always easy, and that you have to

have passion to keep going. And there are failures and struggle. So during those tough times, whether it's a COVID year or something like losing a laptop or something like that, I know that story. So what motivates you guys to keep going during times like that?

Nicholas Clark

Oh, I say the people around us each other, like because you don't have down moments. But if you got other people around you that just always up and just energetic and just keep going and you'd see them going that makes you keep going to so putting yourself around the energy that you want to have is a one huge thing. But what would you say?

Marlon Watts

I would say, in our store is different from everybody store. But for us, it's like seeing where we come from, to where we could be, you know what I mean? Because first, we used to talk about it all the time. Like we just didn't know there was sometimes like people where we come from, they they haven't just they haven't seen some things that will just make you think different. You know what I mean? what we're doing in that environment is normal to us. So when you put yourself in a different environment or different circumstances, and you take yourself out of those circumstances, you think differently. It's like you're not doing it's crazy to say like, you know, like, you could think you're doing something right when it could be wrong. And you know what I mean? You literally think you're doing the right thing, but all you need is someone to actually show you a different route. And you will take a different turn is like people wound from they think two plus two is four, but that is four but they don't think They like one plus three is four, they don't think that one plus one plus one plus one is four, you know, five minus one is four, they literally only see the two plus two. In one of us, like, if two plus two equals four, we just result in something else. You know what I mean? It's not like a, and we just understood that man, it was really so much more than once we got to college and started to travel. And it was like, man, we, it's like, we were, were boxed in, and not to say, you know, I just encouraged people to travel, even if you stay in one city, your whole life is own is great to get outside of that. So you can see different things and you could actually bring that back to your own city. So I think it's just a lot of being in the same place talking to the same people. I'm not actually growing, it's kind of what a made us where we are. Because you to keep growing once you grow up, man, once you get a little, a little bit of growth is like your one stop, like addictive, you know, read one book and you think you know everything. Yeah, it's really it's crazy, though. But that's what I said, just once we got knowledge, we realized that it was more opportunities. And that's just in our mind, we don't think of opportunities, like people don't think that they could create their own opportunity. They could create their own path. They let the past dictate them, somebody else lay out a path for them, and they just follow it. But um, we realized that we had that or that power to you know, choose our own destiny. And that's, I think that's what's gonna keep us going.

Gavin Kelly

Yes. Wow. That's a pretty powerful answer. Thanks, guys. And you mentioned you know, you just talked a little bit about you know, traveling is important and there's you know, so much going on in so many different places and things going on. But you guys are still here in rust and I'm not saying that it's like a bad thing. I'm genuinely curious like why why stay here? Why plant your roots here? Why put HQ here Ruston, Louisiana Tech Community, why is that still like a cornerstone of your business?

Nicholas Clark

As a Louisiana Tech invest in in us. So it's just like an investment back to school and to rush them. But just in general, like, we came from a big city. So we like to be in a different environment. You know, this is totally 100% different fun, right? Yep. But like he's saying, like, is, is no problem for us to make that huge change. You know, a lot of people will just, they just like not, I won't go to a big city, just because it's a big city. It just like when you travel, people be thinking of the main place like, well, you won't go to New York or LA like to go to Nashville or go somewhere, you know, like, there's not the average place that people go. So I felt like, This allowed us to actually see, you know, the opportunity that is here. Like his opportunity in wrestling, like people would just see rustling and because it sounds like, you know, wrestling yesterday, but it's not rusty at all. Definitely. Man. I love it. And I'm glad we actually was able to put the business here because we could just make it through Dallas three hours away. No, like, we could easily just go to Dallas casual playing. Yeah, you go to Houston. You could travel wherever you want. Yeah, just come back here and just live my normal life.

Marlon Watts

Yeah. Um, for me, I say it was the opposite. Once again, coming back to that opportunity, just the opportunity, low cost of living. So we were literally being young men out here on our own, you know, what I mean, we had, we felt we have much at all, we felt I was live by ourselves, you know, in a city is, you know, us is a little bit tougher to make ends meet. But rustling was able to really, you know, live comfortably here. And when we, when we thought about moving our HQ, you know, in acquiring people, you're going to want to be able to pay people enough to live and I'm moving to a bigger city, that would definitely cost a little bit more than what it would be in a restaurant. So it was like perfect opportunity for us to college to hire some of the college students that's coming out of college, that's right here. So we were already tapped in with the colleges. So it just felt like leaving this we're kind of like, take away some of our connection and what we built already. Um, it wasn't like we built a lot of connections and walls, and we had, you know, programs that were in New Orleans and stuff, even though that's where we started. But we grew all of those things here. And it was only right to keep on making it bigger keep we already had, you know, so much traction and so much people already invested into us here that it would be like, kind of like just kicking them to the curb. Once we left, you name it. So it was just I mean it was God given a restaurant was the place first and like next year, we can always travel you know a lot of people know we young and a lot of people want to now is more of a microwave mentality for no society now. It's like if you start a podcast tomorrow, you want 100,000 views yesterday, literally right? You know first podcast never did anything. You know, you want that success, you want to feel successful. And for us, we're not we don't have a problem. We live in a slow place lifestyle at the beginning of life is okay, we like it. We're not going anywhere. We're not like pressure to prove anybody. And then you know, we're not in a rush for anything we, like we say we we are controlling our own destiny. So only we're gonna stop ourselves. And like I said, I think rustling gave us the perfect opportunity to continue to excel the

Gavin Kelly

business. Great, yeah, resonates. You know, people talk about special places. But a place is really more special when you're there and you get to know it. And like you say, you guys plant roots here and stuff. And your business has been growing here. So that connections very evident to obviously

Louisiana Tech's a big part of it just elaborate a little bit more about how Louisiana Tech helped you guys pursue the passion and how to help this business get going.

Marlon Watts

So I talked about miscarriage and maybe some accelerated Yeah, so Miss Kitty was the director at the Enterprise Center. And we went to her, Well, it had to be like maybe 2016 2017. And we were making a little bit of money. And they had an accelerator program at Tech. And most of the businesses that were in this accelerator one day didn't make any money at all. In two, they were businesses that were supposed to change the world innovations that, you know, you know, rechargeable battery pack pads, well, you put your keyboard on it, you know, things that, you know, a little close a clothing brand wouldn't seem big in this room, you know what I mean? But they did believe in us, and they allowed us to join that incubation program, and we became one of the best businesses in that program. And in that program, we got to learn about taxes, team building and balance sheets, profit losses, cost of goods, market and budgeting. I mean, our why Oh, why? why we want to do our brand. We don't we came up with our mission statement. I mean, just our elevator pitch everything that we you know, all the fundamentals of business we learned in this program. And after we completed the program, they actually gave us workspace so they get laid gave us free workspace to come and actually start running the business because at that point, we were just doing it out our apartment. Oh, me, I think we had free space for two years. Wow. So we grow business for ramp, yeah, two years and the incubation program. And they were ready to set us free. Once we were able to move to tech point. And then as we you know, we started to pay and give back to the school. And but that that program and Miss cat did, I was one of the things that take that definitely helped our business out a lot, for sure.

Nicholas Clark

Actually, how we got introduced to miss Kathy was with my graphic design teacher, Mr. Todd Matthew. Mr. Ty Matthew actually introduced as soon as Kathy I used to just always be working on my brand, kinda a little bit in class instead. And then I'll be showing them just kind of always excited about just the brand. Wasn't really doing it, you know, full time, just a little part time thing. But every time I talk about it, I just be excited in fashion. Because Yeah, like, I was telling him I was like, like, we had to do like some internships and stuff like that. But I was just telling him, I was like, I just want to do my brand, like, like, just let me just do my brand. But they wanted me to still have a portfolio and stuff and have that, you know, ready, but they allowed me to do the brand. Like they were saying just go for it. But before that, I was telling all Mr. Ty maju about the company. And he was like, like, did you know they have a business accelerator program on campus. I never knew that. It was actually the day that it started on was when he brought us over there and introduced us to Muscat. And then everything just changed from that day forward. We actually also incident It was called go works. design on which it was like a

Marlon Watts

was a workshop, how design and entrepreneurship can influence our community. Okay,

Nicholas Clark

yeah. So we actually represented Louisiana Tech graphic design program at that event, and that was in Cleveland, Cleveland, Ohio. We flew out there, caught a plane, they actually paid for it. Um, got us in an event. And we talked about the company talked about Louisiana Tech graphic design program. Oh,

man, that was also some that we was able to, you know, just put the brand out there and also the school. So that was something big that we attended during the year. But in general, it's just the people here they just always wanted to help us. Once we just tell them our story is just telling where we come from. They love the brand. Yeah, they just want to do anything to help literally so it's just like, the love here and wrestling slash you know, Louisiana Tech is just it's just amazing in this journey. So I will say that's one of the things that I truly admire about Louisiana Tech people.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah. And like I said earlier, it's one of the reasons you guys are still here and still getting people involved in the brand from this area. You know, it's because it's that sort of helpfulness radiates throughout the campus community in the city. So, again, it is it's clear that that's what's happening here, too. So you guys have come a long way, still growing, still pursuing that passion. So how has the meaning of the company and the brand changed over time? Or has?

Marlon Watts

Oh, I say it hasn't changed. From the beginning. We just like I said, once in an accelerated we realized that we had the power to be example for other people, like, can you be example by showing them the way by leading away? And that's what we want to do. We want to go out there and actually sell our product, we want to create a successful company so that people could see that they needed someone to follow. They need someone to lead that way so that they can actually know that it was possible. And I'll say, that never changed. So we always we always want people to trust in a vision and believe in what they got going and realized that hey, I mean, we started this with 12 shirts, and \$120. And if we could do it with no knowledge start, no, you could do it, especially now that we given you at least 30 to 50% of our money. Yeah. I mean, yeah, literally

Nicholas Clark

90%. But I would say, definitely the missing the mission didn't like the mission, or the vision didn't change. Only thing that changed is just like the storyline and just the location and what we physically are. Because I feel like, I feel like we got a story written up on us like movie was in, like a mini 10 by 10 foot office. And we thought we was like, we thought we was oh yeah, like we got an office and talking about the brand. And then we put the story out, it was just big to some people. It was like, people just just love the come up. And then I feel like we got the story upgraded when we got a little bit bigger. But it's like, even from No, we went to take point. And we was like, well, we big, you know what I mean? And then it's just like, we have plans on being far long. We have been here for a long time. And it only lasted one year. Like Like when we got that we was like Daddy, there's a big space like how are we gonna use all this? Like we was thinking about as he was moving in, like, we was thinking that this is too big. And it is just like, in one year then is another another way? Yeah, warehouses like now we need another story is always just crazy moments going on in a company that we just appreciate. And it's just, it's just an endless thing.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, for sure. Always grow and you guys seem like you're always ready to be growing and still grow. And you got that upward trajectory going. You guys have been dropping nuggets of wisdom, this whole this whole discussion. But what would you say to somebody directly? Anyone out there at Louisiana

Tech or anywhere else that might be a part of our community who is finding and following their passion? I say just trust just trust the process of

Marlon Watts

revision where you sign a person or I'm gonna say Boston Scott.

Nicholas Clark

Oh, you want to pick somebody?

Gavin Kelly

Oh, no. I mean, like, what would be your advice for somebody who is somebody that would

Nicholas Clark

be the person? That would be an example.

Gavin Kelly

I mean, that's a good point, too. If you want to talk again about somebody else who might be who isn't? Yeah,

Marlon Watts

well, it was like a shout out to Boston. Boston Scott. Like literally a walking on didn't even you know, he didn't even start at his position. But he worked harder and put film out there and show his abilities and now he's playing on Sunday. That's a person that like I said, people even on the team wouldn't even expect it.

Nicholas Clark

And it's not about the sports thing. Right It's more about the process. Yeah,

Marlon Watts

the process I you can tell I once he got it. When you look at it. We can see his vision not at you like he there you saw now you think about you like God dang, he was he was doing as he was doing that. You know, but you don't see that was actually going on. I saw the Boston ball rolling vision sponsor. Just some advice to give to people is follow you actually. Because there's a thin line between following your dream and just doing something to get by. I think a lot of people that were in my shoes, if I had to speak to myself four years ago is, Hey, I'm sorry. It would be tough to say but you don't have to tell mom and dad know that you don't want to do. You don't want to be an accountant. You want to be an artist or you don't want to be an artist. You want to be a business management. You don't want to be business management. You want to be a doctor, but don't let someone knows basically tell you what you should be doing, or what's gonna make you happy when you know that that's not what you want to do. You know what I mean? And that's the biggest thing I say, be able to, you know, stand up for yourself and, and challenge. And I said be disrespectful about it, you know what I mean? If you gotta do what you gotta do, you got to do what you got to do, but actually go for something that you love. And don't worry about the money, because you can make money doing so many things. Now, you your main job might not even pay you more than your side job. Now, that's the world we live in, right? Literally, you know,

people main jobs, don't even pay them what they make for what they have on the side. I'm so General, just follow your dreams.

Nicholas Clark

I will agree with that. Because just like with the football thing, like when Marlin was saying he wanted to do the brand, it was like, bro, you got football, right? Come on, they thought he was crazy for that. You know what I mean? Like, but now it's just a different story. It's just like, dang, like, you really don't. But nobody, just like when he just, you know, he kept saying nobody can see it. So it's like, sometimes people not gonna see what you see. So you got to go do it. You know what I mean? And then when you do it, it's crazy. Because when you do it, then they see it. But it's like, I mean, you will never know unless you try and you want to live your whole life. Just wondering like, should I have done that? Right, right? You know what I mean? So even if you just go do it, like,

Marlon Watts

and ultimately they just want the best for you. Right? They only tell you that. Yeah. Cuz they want the best for you. Right? You know what I mean? Yeah,

Nicholas Clark

but I mean, I'm, I'm agreeing with that. And also just a man, literally, just trust yourself. Like, like, you get advice from anybody and get tips from people, but you know, you more than other people will ever know. So it's like, I mean, when you got like a certain feeling about some, you gotta go with your feeling, you know, go with your gut, really. So I just say, just really just believe in yourself, like, no, before anybody could even give you, you only going to accept advice, you know, based on you just believing in yourself in your ability, and you're gonna take things from that, that you know, that you can apply to your life. You know what I mean? So I say, just trust yourself, trust what you believe in. And just trust in me, right? Like, I'm not marketing. I'm now marketing. Now you live. And that's why you're saying it because you believe this. Brands? know for sure. Any more questions? Yeah, I got one more for y'all. So we, you know, this is going from an idea to a movement is growing. So grow. And you know, we talked about how you guys just mentioned, people don't always see what you're doing. The way you're hustling and moving and get things going and getting your vision to be a reality. So in just a few years, few years, you guys have clearly come a long way. And you know, there's no finish line in sight. So from from then to now, how are you guys feeling right now? is still a hit me yet. I still hit me. We're still here still down still Where?

Marlon Watts

I think we still got a long way to go. I mean, we definitely happy and we definitely would do pat ourselves on the back for sure. Not to say that we like, you know, don't think we don't good. But um, like we just know, like I said, when you come from where we come from, we seen nothing, basically. So it's it's so much more out there that we don't we're having accomplished let me just say that it's like, you know, we have plans on owning, you know, 500 Plus, employee business, we now know where they are yet. No, that's how big we want it to be where we at least have 500 new employees. That's what we know. We run in a big operation. And so that's the goals that we're striving for right now. I say, but it is great. And it feels good. And it's anybody that want to be in this position. I would I would definitely say it's a great position to be in but don't don't get away. Yeah, cuz if you if you if you get where we are

right now, we bought the blue patches. And if you pass us we own you better wake up at three o'clock tomorrow, because you got some hungry lions by

Nicholas Clark

putting like this, like everybody still say the greatest hour like I don't watch sports that much. But everybody say that, like when they say we're the greatest basketball player, they still say Michael Jordan. So it's like LeBron still like look at LeBron James. He He's that guy and he's still putting in work to be considered, you know, the best of his time. So I say we might have made it to the league but we know anila Brian Oh my Michael Jordan that we like Zion Williams hype got people talking a little bit. We ball. me so got a little press going on around us but just

Gavin Kelly

we just we just head down steady working here. Don't stop. Well, thank you guys for agreeing to talk with me today. I really Appreciate it as a college business Louisiana Tech graduate, it's always inspiring to hear about appreciate alumni. And it's always nice to see something like this in action. I appreciate it and trust in your vision very much. Thank you. Once again Marlon was Nicholas Clark. at Louisiana Tech we out thank you.

Gabrielle Crockett

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Gavin Kelly

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