163. Kyle Roberts: Being Present

Gavin Kelly 00:18
Hey everybody! You're listening to Beyond 1894. This is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. My name is Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications, and we are joined for this episode by Kyle Roberts. He's an adjunct professor here at Louisiana Tech. He's an ESPN Plus broadcaster for Louisiana Tech Athletics, and he's also the co-owner of the Lincoln Parish Journal, one of the news outlets here in town. Kyle, thanks for making time for us today.

Kyle Roberts 00:41
Of course, Gavin, I'm honored to be here. Thank you.

Gavin Kelly 00:43
Yeah, so we've we talked a little bit about this before. Your wife, Judith Roberts, she has been on this podcast before. We're going to get into kind of what it's like working with somebody, working with a life partner, and also in a in a career and personal capacity. We'll get into that later. But as with all guests, I like to to get you to take it back to the start for us. So, talk to me about growing up, realizing you know when and where you wanted to go to college and what you wanted to study and why Louisiana Tech was was it for you.

Kyle Roberts 01:10
Oh, sure. So, I actually grew up right here in Ruston. There is a neighborhood that is now called University Hills, and so my first 19 years of life were in a house on Bienville Avenue, and and that's what probably a five minute drive to the Thomas Assembly Center to Joy Stadium, to campus as well. And so I have been Louisiana Tech since I was very young. There was a small period of time that I don't, I'm not proud to talk about, where I was thinking that I was going to head to a certain college in Baton Rouge. We've all we've

Gavin Kelly 01:41
all been there. Correct. We've all been so

Kyle Roberts 01:43
thankful that didn't work out. I like when I got to to Louisiana Tech when I became a student when I got involved in some other campus groups as well. I knew that this is where I wanted to be, and I wanted to I wanted to be a bulldog. And so it did not take very long for me to shed the old purple and gold. And now you know I bleed red and blue, and I love this town. I love this community. I love being here in Ruston, Louisiana. I'm very thankful that I'm able to plant my roots where I've been my entire life.

Gavin Kelly 02:11
Yeah, you get we. I've had you know the number of guests that have been on this podcast. You get a lot of tech stories, and a lot of them came here to Ruston because they wanted to get away from somewhere else, maybe Baton Rouge, maybe somewhere in a different state. You know, they wanted

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

to get further from home. But we also do get plenty of stories of you know Russ and born and raised and was exposed to and been around Louisiana Tech for most of my life, and it just felt like the the natural option. So I get both sides of that of that coin. When did you know? Well, first of all, what did you study when you came to Tech?

Kyle Roberts 02:44
Well, I will first. I'll confess, I was not a good undergrad student at all. Happens. Yeah. If there's any of my old professors that are listening to this, they're probably thinking, "I cannot believe that this guy's a professor at the university that I used to teach at too." But I, I started in music. Okay, interestingly enough, yeah, and so I I thought that I was going to be a concert piano player. I've been playing the piano since I was four years old. It's it's a wonderful talent that I've been thankfully given, and I love the chance to play when I'm able to. So I just naturally thought that that was the path I was going to take my first quarter at Louisiana Tech. My GPA was terrible, and so I immediately got put on some form of probation. I started to realize that what it would take to study music here at Louisiana Tech, I did not feel like I was able to do that. It is a, it's very understandably so, very strenuous. So a lot of practice time, and at the time, being an 18-year-old, I didn't feel like I could devote to that. So from there, I switched to computer science. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly 03:49
an easier man. Of course, right? Yeah, but when

Kyle Roberts 03:52
you're 18, you're invincible, right? And so, so I go to computer science. I realize this is not working either. So then I go to CIS, and then I'm in there for a little bit, and that didn't work either. And so, finally, a buddy of mine, Brett McCormick, also a Louisiana Tech graduate, Brett actually one of my very dear friends, he was he was in the journalism and he wanted to be a sports writer. And that was when I realized, oh, this is something that I actually do want to do. So I just kind of bounced around through some majors before I finally figured out that that's where I wanted to be. My undergrad took five years instead of four. Took a victory lap, you know. And so, but once I finally realized that journalism was was where I wanted to head, like that's where I ended up graduating in the College of Liberal Arts with a focus on journalism, that was my first time at Louisiana Tech, and so then I get into the you know private private work work sector after a stint with Malcolm Butler in the sports information department, and then I realized I wanted to get a master's in counseling and guidance, so I came back to Tech to do that again. This time I was a much better student. Like the life experience just changed it for me, and I realized as somebody who was married, wanted to have kids one day, I need to take my education seriously. And so at that point, it was straight A's. Like I, you couldn't you couldn't get the textbooks out of my hand. I loved studying at that point, and so I got my got my master's degree, and so two-time Louisiana Tech graduate, something I'm very proud of. Yeah, obviously, and so for me, that was that was kind of my journey. Took a little bit for me to understand what it would take to be a good college student. Finally, figured it out a little bit later in life, and I'm very thankful for that.

Gavin Kelly 05:37
Well, talk to me about because you know those two degrees are are different from each other. Those aren't exactly coinciding degrees. So, talk to me about kind of the thought process behind what what

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

what in your life was making you want to pursue that degree as a master's. What were you kind of hoping to build a career out of at that point?

Kyle Roberts 05:52
So, first of all, the when I worked in the sports information department at Tech, and I'm sure we'll talk about this, but I worked for Malcolm Butler. Now I co-own a business with Malcolm Butler. Malcolm was an incredible boss, and we spent four really good years together. But the reality was is that I was married, and I wanted to have kids one day. And at the time, that I needed to try to figure out a career trajectory that could kind of help with some more income. Malcolm was doing everything that he could to help with that, but we all realized that you know, in order for me to have a family and the time that I was spending traveling with with that department, we knew that there there needed to be a change. And so, very amicably, Malcolm and I came up with a, all right, we know this is going to be your last year here with us. Help us train the staff for when you leave. And so, from there, I started to kind of think, what what do I want to do? And Dr. Dustin Whitlock, who's another one of my very dear friends, he at the time was working for a company in Monroe, and he said, "Man, whatever you have to do, you need to go work here." And so to do that, I went to I needed to go get a degree in counseling and guidance, and so started there, worked there for about over a decade and a half before I just kind of realized that you know that season of life was also over, and and then I wanted to start looking at some other opportunities from there too. And so, really, for me, I think the thing that unites journalism with counseling and guidance for me has become my passion to learn. I love learning. I really do. And I also have an MBA that I got at LSU Shreveport, and and that one has a concentration in marketing. And so those things don't really feel like they're connected. But the thing that unites them for me is that I just really enjoyed as I got older, being in the classroom, reading, gaining new knowledge in some different in some different areas. That does not mean that I'm ready to get back in the classroom now. I think that that ship has also sailed. Just being in my mid 40s from here, but for me, just the the general learning like that's the kind of thing that just really does it for me.

Gavin Kelly 07:58
But also, you're putting all of that to use. Like if you look at this unique sort of amalgamation of degrees and and educational experience that you have, you know the different facets of your career now are tied to each one in some way. Totally agree. So you know it's not it's not all for nothing, obviously. Let's talk about the the sports information side of things, the the sports journalism and and cutting your teeth, like you said with Malcolm, so you've kind of come back to that in a way between your ESPN Plus broadcasting, and then also you know your work with the Lincoln Parish Journal, being able to do sports broadcasting and also journalism, kind of in two different camps, but also connected because you know when you're working in Lincoln Parish and you're reporting on what's going on in Lincoln Parish. There's a lot of crossover there, right? Sure. So talk to me about like then versus now. You know, like what what your you know sort of career aspirations were like working in sports information back then with Malcolm, and kind of how that's shaped out for you, and what what you feel about your current positions now.

Kyle Roberts 08:57
Well, I've always loved athletics. Yeah, you can't see this through through a podcast necessarily, but I'm not athletic myself. I just love sports, and so thankfully between Louisiana Tech and at Ruston High

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

School as well, and there's all all sorts of other schools here in Lincoln Parish too that they all have great athletics departments. They all have great schools that are do that are competing, and so for me at the time, back in you know 2005, 2006, I just wanted to do something in sports. Well, now that's kind of come back full circle with the Lincoln Paris Journal with broadcast opportunities that I've been able to you know live life and then kind of come back. And now I'm like, all right, cool, we get to I get to be a sports writer. My main beat is Rust and High. I also do their Friday nights for football. They're hopefully going to go back to the dome for a fifth straight year, and so that's exciting to be able to do that as well, both from the broadcast and from the sports writing side of things too. And so, you know, God's so interesting. You know, the the way that our all of our narrative. We've like the the generation before us, Gavin. Like you got your job, you worked there for 30 years, you get your pension, and then like that's what life was. It's not that way anymore. Correct. Like I'm thankful for the time that I had in sports information office. I'm thankful for the time that where I was before I was able to come back to tech, and I'm going to be thankful for what I'm doing now. Depending on what happens in 10 or 15 years from here, you know, it's just not we're just not located in one spot anymore. And I try to convey that to my students too: that you want to be diversify your skill set, you want to learn different things, and you want to be able to bring something to the table. So for me, like you said earlier, the amalgamation of journalism, counseling and guidance, marketing. Yeah, like you, you are going to find ways to use those things no matter what it is that you are doing.

Gavin Kelly 10:49
Yeah. As you know, we before we started recording, you know, you were talking about kind of radio. We were talking about using the podcast equipment. How you have experience, obviously, around broadcasting equipment. Talk to me about kind of the origins of that, because for a lot of people, like being in broadcasting slash commentary slash radio, you know, whatever you want to call it, it's it's a scary concept. For some people, it's very natural. What was it like building up to where you are now from that?

Kyle Roberts 11:18
So I think the first step for me was luck, kind of right place, right time. I was in the same class with Sean Fox back in 2004. We were in Memorial Gym, and we were we were in a football class together, like just as as an elective. Right, and he was just getting his his show started, Fox and Company, and we happened to have a great conversation. And he told me one day, said, "Hey, I'd love to have you on the show. We're actually looking for a third person for the next season of Fox and Company. Would you be willing to do that?" And I was like, "Sure, I don't mind." My dad will tell you I've never had an aversion to microphones. If we were at church, if there was a microphone on the ground, I was grabbing it. Yeah, there's old video footage of me fake announcing professional wrestling from when I was an 11 year old. Yeah, and my cousin sent me a video of me pretending that I was a broadcaster when I was 11. We were at a we were at a basketball camp together, so that's always kind of been a just a lifelong dream. Like from being being a kid, and I know that sounds like it's kind of cliche, but it's true for me. And so that first step for me was just being in the right place at the right time. Had a great conversation with Sean Fox, and then from there I was able to be on their show for a full year. But we also had the opportunity to work with some high school football at the time back in back in the early 2000s. And so from there, I was a color broadcaster for Cedar Creek, and then after my time in the sports information department, I was able to go back to do some broadcasting for high school football. For two years, I did

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

West Washita football, and then when the Russ and High School football job opened, they called me and asked if I was interested in it, and I said, "Sure, I'll be happy to come talk." Of course, I'm internally screaming at the time because I was so excited. Rust and High is my alma mater, graduated in 2000, and so naturally that that felt like a really good fit too. And so from there, I've been able to work with some great people. My current broadcast partner, Nick Brown, we have tremendous chemistry together. We've developed a wonderful friendship, and so I'm very grateful that we are able to do this together too. Currently, and then in the middle of all of that, I've also had the opportunity to do the radio for the Lady Textures. I did that for four years, and then when Kyle Kavanaugh brought in broadcasting in house to do ESPN, he you know we had talked as once that last lady texture radio season for me was ending, we had talked about if I wanted to be on television, and I and to me I was like, of course, I'd be happy to do it. A natural

Gavin Kelly 13:50
progression. Yeah, Kyle

Kyle Roberts 13:51
Roberts, ESPN, was something I ran around the house saying to my dad all the time growing up, and so now I get to actually say it here for the for a university that I love, and so you know again for me it was a matter of being in the right place at the right time having great conversations with people developing relationships that is what has led to me achieving this childhood dream of mine doing ESPN broadcasting doing sports writing doing Rust in high school radio all of these things have all come have all come together because I because I just really tried to look at everything as like can I just be the best version of myself right now and even in the classroom as a kid like that's led to where I am today.

Gavin Kelly 14:32
Very good, very yeah. It's your music background helped you helped you with your microphone abilities. I'm certain. I I my dad has been a musician for his whole life, pretty much, and so I was born into kind of a musician's world. He was always, you know, picking a guitar or writing songs, singing into a microphone. So even when you're three years old and you're babbling into a microphone, because it's just there, and that's what it is. So you get you get comfortable. Around a mic, and that's just the way it is.

Kyle Roberts 15:01
Well, and I think too, the the piano performance piece helped me as I was growing up. I wasn't afraid of being in front of people. Yeah, attention. Yeah, yeah. Like Jerry Seinfeld, one of his best jokes is like the public speaking is everyone's first fear, and then their second fear is death. Like that people would rather be in the coffin than giving the eulogy. So for me, being able to being able to do the the performance piece in very formative years of my life helped me get over stage fright very easily. I don't get nervous, and I don't say that to boast. That's just because like it was kind of pulled out of me because I was able to do performance performance growing up, and so the the microphone, the television, the camera. Thankfully, that's not something that I shy away from. I also try not to lean too far into it, where I always want to be like on or the center of attention. But at the same time, it is something that these things just they just don't make me nervous. And same thing for teaching. Like when I'm standing in front of students, I don't, I don't get nervous talking to you know a group of 25 or

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

40 kids. Like I really, I'm very thankful that as I was able to grow up and and do the piano, like musician stuff, like that's what prepared me for the jobs that I do today.

Gavin Kelly 16:19
Yeah, and not only does practice make perfect, you know, the longer you you do that sort of thing, and the more you're around music equipment, musicians, people broadcasting, whatever, the more you just get more comfortable with it. But like some people just have a natural kind of tendency to to be okay with that kind of thing, and even prefer it.

Kyle Roberts 16:35
Well, and I too, Gavin, I would be remiss. I know we were going to get get to this topic at some point, but I've got the biggest cheerleader in my corner for everything. Go ahead. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just I could talk about Judith. I was on another podcast a few weeks ago, and this came up. And you know, you'll have to cut me off. I love my wife. Judith is my best friend, and we have two wonderful girls. They have grown up knowing that hey, dad's gonna go on the road. Dad's gonna be doing radio now. Dad's doing TV. He's able to come home every night, thankfully. And so, like, that's just that's just ingrained into our family rhythm. But I couldn't do that without her. I could not do that without her being fully supportive of all the opportunities that I've been able to take. And she has been by far the most encouraging, most supportive person. If I have to be on ESPN, which I do tonight for a women's basketball game, if I have to do that, there's not a question of who's going to do what. It's like I have to go do this, which means that she's going to take care of these things. That flips sometimes when she goes and does something. I'm taking care of those things, and that has made a great rhythm for our marriage, and I'm very thankful that she sees this as like she's part of this too. Like that, like she's just as important to me getting to live out this dream as I ever could possibly be.

Gavin Kelly 17:54
Very nice. Yeah, let's talk about that a little bit more. So you, I know you guys don't necessarily teach the same thing, but you guys are both professors here, and I'm sure you've had. There's a lot of crossover between her communication students and the marketing students that come see you. Those two majors go hand in hand a lot of times around here. So I'm sure y'all have had plenty of shared plenty of students.

Kyle Roberts 18:15
We do. In fact, what's funny is that we both teach a form of social media marketing, and hers is Com 440. Mine's marketing 440, and so we laugh about that because it's a very similar class. Yeah, but she's teaching more of the storytelling side because she's in comms, which is completely understandable. Yeah, I'm teaching the more marketing data analysis, but also there's so much bleed over between the two. Absolutely, I've had her come in and do a guest lecture for me. It's interesting; she hasn't asked me to do it for hers yet, but that's okay. You know, but I love getting the chance to bounce ideas off of her in those regards. She was also instrumental in just helping me kind of prepare for what it was going to be like to be in front of students. Like, what do you have to like? I go to her first before I call anybody in my department. If there's anything that I have trouble with, I'm calling her and asking, "What do I need to make sure is in my syllabus?" This student has this question, and how do I answer this? What and and she always has a great answer. And then sometimes she does direct me.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Hey, talk to your department head about that. Talk to the college about that. But it's it is very helpful to have two people in the same household that are doing similar things. But the focus, obviously, as you said, Gavin, they're they're they're they're different. Yeah, like she she's focusing from a liberal arts comms perspective. I'm focusing from a marketing business business side of things.

Gavin Kelly 19:37
But y'all get to to brag about who's got the which student likes which class more? I'm sure, and a friendly little friendly competition. That is

Kyle Roberts 19:44
always so. She busts my chops so much because I I'm easy and like a lot of my focus is on presence. I really want the students to be in class, and but and the reason for that is I'm a big believer that especially. Especially in the College of Business, you're teaching kids or young adults. Excuse me, you're teaching young adults the importance of I have to be at a job at a certain time, and then I get to leave at a certain time. If I'm not taking that seriously as their professor of saying, "Hey, you need to be here for roll call at 930 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday," if I'm not taking that seriously, I'm not preparing them for the real world. So I do weight presence very heavily in in my grading, you know. And so, like the the joke for us is like she's weighting a lot of other things too. Like that's fine, you know. So of course, please if you're listening, attend Dr. Roberts's class too in the comms department. Like I can't stress that enough, but we we we joke because she is a very tough professor. But she also teaches things like media law. You need to be tough with that. You don't need like for me, digital marketing, social media marketing. Like I take those very seriously. But I'm also a big believer that if you're present, you're going to learn something every day. And and then when you go into the job force, when you are when you're at your other at your new job, if you will go and show up, the rest of it will come to you. Like, but showing up is a major part of the battle every day.

Gavin Kelly 21:11
Yeah, I don't know if you ever have or when the last time you have either of you have peeped your rate my professor scores, but you're both doing really well, so that's good to hear. Yeah, I wouldn't, I wouldn't sweat it too much. I think you guys make a great, great team. You should consider asking the university if there's a way you guys could just both teach the same class, ever just some sort of hybrid comms marketing class that is offered like once a year or something. Well, and what's funny is

Kyle Roberts 21:37
that I'm sure there there are some spouses that would that would balk at that? No, seriously. Like we actually work really well together. Like even with the Lincoln Paris Journal, there is a very our our group, me, Judith, and Malcolm. We have a very very good way of of decision making, but it doesn't bleed over in anything else. I can disagree with Judith about a decision that she wants to make for the Lincoln Paris Journal. She could disagree with me, but it's because we respect the roles, and I think that it would be the same if we co-taught. Like there is a respect the role. We're trying to pitch to a to a conference to come let us both co-present some some field of expertise with her research, I also teach some things that kind of bleed over into that. So we're trying to pitch to a conference to let us come do a co presentation. We we don't fear that. Like that's actually that we're very collaborative. We work incredibly well together, and and I'm not just giving that lip service. Like that, we we genuinely do that.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Gavin Kelly 22:37
Yeah, I believe you, Emory. There's there's evidence to that. So that's you know, it's always good to hear about a good partnership that works that way.

Kyle Roberts 22:44
100%.

Gavin Kelly 22:45
You kind of led to my next question, you know. So about the Lincoln Parish Journal, not only getting to work with your wife with something like that, but any sort of news outlet like that, it it takes a lot of time and effort and energy to stay on top of current events. It ebbs and flows in terms of busyness, but also there's a baseline level of busy that it's it's never going to go below, right? Correct. You got to always be reporting on what's going on, and especially if you're working kind of a community beat, and everyone in town is going to want to know what's going on. So, what's it like trying to balance putting out the news, quote unquote, the news and being consistent and in your quality and in your ability to to do that, while also balancing these other aspects of your job and your life, like what's it like trying to turn out stories every day and making sure that you stay on top of things?

Kyle Roberts 23:35
It's the people. I mean that that's just the truth. Like we again, we've got a great team between Judith Malcolm and me, we also have other great writers that that we that we get to work with. We have great photographers, and we and we have established ourselves intentionally in the community as we are going to report with integrity. We are going to make sure that we are staying on our beats. Like again, Rustin High School football or Ruston athletics in general. That's that's one of my beats, but also the school system here. That's one of my beats as well. And so it's important for me to have trusting relationships with our superintendent. It's important for me to have a trusting relationship with Ruston High Principal, Ruston High Football Coach, with other teachers as well that they know if there's something going on they can let us know about it whether it's good or bad like that's the reality is is I would prefer to tell good stories every day in the Lincoln Parish Journal and so when somebody reaches out gives us information we write about it and so we've spent five years establishing ourselves as a trusted voice here in Lincoln Parish that if if if there's a story, this is a great place to tell it, and we get the opportunity to do that. So the balance of that is you got to have great people. You have to also be able to be in in the community at school board meetings, at city council meetings, at. Different local high school events that are going on, you have to be present, and so I think that knowing that there's going to be days whenever it's going to be feast or famine, you know, yesterday was one of those days where you had to be on the whole time because there's four presidential candidates that are all that are all doing a public interview, too advanced. We're recording this podcast, and we don't know who the next Louisiana Tech president is going to be. It's down to two. That was a busy day. Today is a day where the the journal, knock on wood, is currently not as busy as it would be on that. It's going to be tomorrow. So I have to know what that rhythm and that flow is going to be for my day to day. So today, thankfully, I'm getting to record a podcast with you. Super excited about that. My next, my next goal is going to be getting final preparations together for Louisiana Tech's women's basketball game tonight for ESPN, and then I know tomorrow my day is going to consist mostly of who is the Tech president,

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Gavin Kelly 25:56
right?

Kyle Roberts 25:57
And we have to put stories out. We have to make phone calls in the light of, in the midst of all of that, I'm a husband. I'm a father. I'm a friend, and those relationships too can't just be put in a vacuum. So I've had to really just figure out when I when I'm able to be fully present with my wife, with my kids, and my friends. I take advantage of that, and I did not do that very well at first, and so that's that's had to be a learned skill set for me of how do I turn out the noise in a in a ESPN broadcast and know right now I've got to be as present as possible, and having to figure still learning that yeah and still not not the master of it per se, but I'm certainly better now than I was back in 2022 when we were first starting this thing.

Gavin Kelly 26:46
Yeah, because I mean, like I'm sure there are there's a world where you're in the middle of a broadcast and you get a text on your phone about some kind of breaking news, and you know, so yeah, how do you how do you work on balancing that? And you know, being present, I think is is a is a good answer. Is probably the right answer because it it keeps you from being torn in too many different directions at once. It's going to make you bad at all the things instead of you know trying to focus on one thing at a time will help you be the best you can in all those areas, right? Yeah, and

Kyle Roberts 27:11
we try to explain to people from a journal perspective we we only have a certain amount of capacity. There's only a certain amount of hours in a week, and a third of those we have to sleep. Yeah, and so like for us, just being fully transparent and honest about what we're capable of doing, and doing what we can with excellence. Yes, but there are sometimes that we pass on stories because we just aren't equipped to tell them, and that's okay. Yeah, I do think that there's power in just trying to be as laser focused as possible with what it is that you're doing. I have I have struggled at times with that in the past, and that's one of the things that I've tried to make. You know, I'm here fully present with you right now, Gavin. I've got my and I appreciate that. No, and I've got my phone on Do Not Disturb. And so the the hope is that they didn't just magically announce who the next tech president is going to be on in the middle of our podcast. But tonight during the text or basketball game, I'm going to try to have it where I'm just laser focused on this right now. Working with great people also helps. So if there is a time when I know, hey, I'm going to be out of pocket for the next couple of hours. Understood. Can you take this? And Malcolm does the same thing with me. If I know he's doing a football broadcast, or if I know that he's doing a softball broadcast. If I'm able to, I'm going to be like I'm going to be kind of watching to see because I don't want him to have to worry about that. And he feels the same way. I'm pretty sure about me when I'm doing my when I'm doing my broadcast. And then when we are doing something at the same time, Judith is on call. So all of that you can't do that if you're not working with great people that understand the job.

Gavin Kelly 28:40

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Very good, and also like humans are not good at multitasking. Just in general, people we try so hard. I know, and people think that people swear I'm a good multitasker. You're not not as good as you think you are. I know, and

Kyle Roberts 28:52
I've I have been learning that the hard way, and I'm trying I'm trying my best to to course correct that.

Gavin Kelly 28:57
Well, I mean, not just like you said, you're juggling very different aspects of a career, but also a family. You know, like you know, you being in the middle of an ESPN broadcast and some news thing for the Lincoln Parish Journal popping up is just as likely as something that might happen at home. You know, so it's being able to know when and where to deflect and divert your attention when it's necessary, while also maintain. It's a it's a tough. It's a balancing act. It really is, but it seems like you're managing. So

Kyle Roberts 29:28
I would say that I'm managing better today than I was maybe even a year ago. Okay, it really, yeah, and and it's because I one of the things that I'm probably doing more of now is shedding things, and and I think that 10 years ago, my my thought set was I've got to gather as much as possible, and I think that now in the in the place of life where I am, like I think that this is where you kind of go, okay, where can I give my best to? Where can I give my best? Like I need to be fully present for these students. Be fully present for the Lincoln Paris Journal. Like we, our our mindset had to shift when we bought it back in back in July, and now that we own it, that's a different mindset than it was a year ago. And so, like, I want to be the very best version of myself that I can be, and in order to do that, I have to give full presence, and I'm telling myself that because I know the temptation is going to be for me in the future to to try to do that multitasking again, and and so now where I am, I've got to be the very best version of what it can be.

Gavin Kelly 30:33
Well, listen back to this podcast if you need a friendly reminder about your your abilities. Let's talk. You know, you mentioned so. At the time of recording, you're right. We are in the middle of our presidential search. Yesterday, it was narrowed down from four to two candidates. By the time this episode comes out, we will, by all accounts, probably know who our next Louisiana Tech president is. So this will be an interesting sort of time capsule. Yeah, we're in

Kyle Roberts 30:58
a weird limbo. This is kind of cool. Yeah, yeah. This is

Gavin Kelly 31:00
an interesting time. So, but like with an example of kind of again going back to the news, media relations, things like that. You know, I work in university communications here. We are our own news outlet in the way we put out press releases, media pitches, that sort of thing. But it also you can't have a university communications area like that that does PR without having a good relationship with local news outlets. So naturally, it's a two-way street, and I appreciate when something like a presidential

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

search is going on, where you know our office and personnel on the UC team are also doing work to make sure you know we have press releases in order, photos together. We're ready for any story that might break on this at any given moment. But also, when we're at these events and getting these things together, we see Lincoln Parish Journal and you know other other local news outrest Daily Leader. There are people not just from here, but from far and wide, and all kind of working towards a similar goal in our own separate areas. But at a time like this, it kind of it kind of works. It works both ways. Like we've we've more than once leaned on local news outlets, and it's worked. You know, I I feel like we we we say all the time whenever we have a press release, we put it out. We're like, we know that we can rely on local outlets like Lincoln Parish Journal, of course, to to to share this story and help get it out. So, and we're thankful for that. Yeah, yeah. Like

Kyle Roberts 32:23
we really are. Like it's it's good to get like that's an easy way to get information from the university is for you guys to be putting it out. And we're very thankful for that. Ruston is a very unique ecosystem. Yeah, and it's it's got a thriving business economy. It's got a wonderful school system. There are some things that need to get shored up that I hope that we get in the future. Healthcare is probably the top thing. Yes, one thing that we are that we've learned as the Lincoln Parish Journal is that this place thrives with multiple news outlets. Like we're thankful that we get to be a part of that, and the the community at large has said thank you for doing what you're doing to us, and and and we we receive that we are we're very humbled to be able to be one of the storytellers here in town. But Rustin Rustin needs multiple people telling its story. Like there can't just be one, and so I think that that's one of the things that I'm proud that we've been able to do for these last few years has been another voice that is trusted that people know. At 645 every morning, I'm getting an email with the most important things that I need to know today.

Gavin Kelly 33:31
Yeah, and also, you know, to that point, Russ and is not the direct headquarters or in the central media market for any of the quote-unquote larger media outlets in the in the North Louisiana area, you know, without naming any names, you've got Monroe, Shreveport, and a lot of times, you know, they cover plenty of stories in this area, but it's a little bit of a hassle for them to come 3045 minutes, an hour, hour 15 to cover things or to be on on on top of that, so I think that creates sort of a gap that local news outlets are able to fill, and so I think and

Kyle Roberts 34:09
everybody's doing the best they can. Exactly, that's what it boils down to. There's so much

Gavin Kelly 34:13
news bouncing around today; it's impossible to cover it all.

Kyle Roberts 34:16
Yeah, and and everything is vying for our attention. I don't know how much time we have left, but I could talk about that for hours, and I tell my students that too. That they're living in a very unique time where there are so many different ways to get information to people. That now the way that the most important thing is to sift through and know what matters to you. Yeah, what is the important thing that I

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

need to know? And that to me is and is the future of the Lincoln Parish Journal is that we're going to keep putting out news stories, but we have to stay connected to the community and have their trust that we're helping them sift through the constant bombardment of notifications and emails and Facebook posts and TikToks. What are the important things that you need to know that's going on in you? Community, and so to go back to your earlier point about multitasking, when you have all of these things that are constantly bombarding you, it's my job as a co-owner of the Lincoln Parish Journal to have your trust and know that if we put something out, here's the important matter. Yeah, here's the story. Yeah, yes,

Gavin Kelly 35:18
yeah. Also, too, like it's we're we're going to get into this too. We're going to talk about social media a little bit more because you obviously social media marketing and that sort of thing. But like quality over quantity, and plenty of news outlets are happy to just fire off as many stories as possible, and that's how you see. I mean, I'm not talking about anybody local, but you see these like national news outlets, and you'll see them. You'll see a a press release of theirs that ends up, you know, going getting some traction on Facebook. So it just ends up in your feed, and you click it, and it's got a typo here, or it's grammatically strange here, or it was very obviously visibly written by AI or whatever. And um, but to To a news outlet that's just trying to fire off as many stories as possible, it doesn't matter. You know, let's just so to your point, you know, sifting through that's a good way to put it. That just constant, constant, constant news, and it's all so negative now because that's the kind of headlines that grab attention, and it's what gets people talking and worrying. So, good news doesn't sound like bad news does. It seems like so it

Kyle Roberts 36:24
doesn't. And and one of the things too that like we also have to just acknowledge that there are sometimes that like we have to put stories out that because it happened. Yeah, like you you we we're not we can't sweep things under the rug either. Like I, I would rather spend my time writing a story about somebody that overcame odds, somebody that was told they couldn't do something, and then they went and did it anyway. That's what I would rather do. But there are still some things that it's like, dang it, we have to run that. We can't pretend it didn't happen. And so, but you you are right. I think that the overwhelming thing sense of what like what we get from algorithms, what we get from echo chambers is it's keeping us angry, it's keeping us fearful, it's keeping us scared. And so for me, it's important at the journal is that we have to make sure that we're still telling what are the good things that are happening in in our community right now. What are the things that that are going on that are good? What are the things going on that are not good? We still have to tell that as well, and so. But one thing that we won't do is just constantly churn out our just for the sake of it, just to do it, just to get clicks, just to get eyeballs. We I tell my students that we have a we know when our our stories are going to be read, and it's because when that email goes out, people are expecting it at that time. I don't want a majority of our of our readers' time to be more than you know 10 or 15 minutes with the journal every morning. Yeah, like that doesn't make sense. Now you know Netflix, of course, they want you on their app. They want you watching TV shows. They want you binge watching. They want you watching. They want it playing in the

Gavin Kelly 38:01

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

background. Correct. Yes.

Kyle Roberts 38:02
For me, I'm like I want to be on in your inbox at 6:45, and and I want you to go on with your day at 7:15 or whatever because you you've read your news and you're done. You're you're ready to go on. Sometimes we send out breaking emails. We only do that when it's important. Wait, we wrestle over whether something needs to be a breaking email or not. Yeah. So we we really we know that at 645, that's when our readers are reading, and then after that, please go about your day. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly 38:34
yeah. That's this is also leading into you know kind of my next line of questioning about social media. So I, when I came into my position here at UC, it would have been summer 2019. My title was social media strategist. I came from tech athletics. When I graduated here, I worked in athletics for a year doing marketing over there, and social media was part of my job. So then coming here, it was the main focus of my job. And my position has evolved a lot, but I still have oversight of our main university social media accounts. And I came into it with a love-hate relationship with social media. I think that's only over the years. I guess as I've gotten older, as the social media ecosystem has changed. I think it's aired more on the side of of hate more than love lately. But I think it's so tricky to exist in a place where, like, your responsibility is using social media as a tool, finding out a way to use it for for your personal enjoyment, but also like because everything you put out there is just out there. It's you have to use it professionally. You have to you know, and it's just so it's such a strange time for social media. And I think it's it's to a lot of people's detriment. I think especially younger people. But I'm not saying it doesn't have its uses. But working in an in a branding office where I've been responsible for sort of the brand voice, the brand image, the content that gets put out on the university social media accounts, you know, has taught me much like with the news stories, quality over quantity is the way to go. You know, if I'm just firing off a post just because, right? You know what? What? What is there to gain from that?

Kyle Roberts 40:25
Well, if I could wave a magic wand, the first thing I would get rid of is algorithms. Yeah, I think algorithms are bad for people. I think that they're they're just easier for the developers of these apps, and rather one of the things that I tell my students because if I'm if I'm not teaching social media marketing, I'm usually teaching digital marketing as well, and we do always have a lecture that is specific to social media in there, and I always tell them that because of because of where they are in their life right now, 1920 21, they did not experience the true golden age of social media that you and I had, Gavin. There was about a five-year time frame when social media was was great. It really was when Facebook was just for college students, where we and you and you're only seeing posts from people that you have chosen to follow.

Gavin Kelly 41:20
Yeah,

Kyle Roberts 41:20
and you are only seeing like what pictures they're putting up, and they're and you're only seeing like their status updates. You're seeing, hey, we're all going to go hang out. Yes, you're not seeing ads.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Like Facebook was was truly a paradise, and over time, Facebook has turned into like what it is today. And I'm not dragging them alone. Like, like all of these apps, like they are, they are dependent on algorithms that are just putting things in front of you that they believe they that you want to see, whether you truly want to see those things or not. And if I could, that would be the first thing that I would eliminate because I think that we social media is a useful tool. Yeah, if you talk to exchange students that are here that are studying that live in France, or that you have athletes here that live in different parts of the world. They need social media to stay in touch with their with with home. They need to know what's going on. But I think that what has what it has turned into now is just a cesspool of echo chambers for everybody. That like you're not being challenged with your own worldview. No, you're only being fed what it believes it wants you to believe. And over time, like you're going to start to believe those things if that's all that you see. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly 42:32
and also it it makes this is and this is going to sound rude, and I don't want this to come across the wrong way to anybody who might be listening, but it makes everybody feel like their opinion is valuable and and needs to be heard by everybody. You know, it when you when someone you know fires off a Facebook post about just a thought they had that they wanted to put out into the world, and they're met with comments from again the echo chamber that you mentioned. It's just like yeah, you said it, you said it. Well, now suddenly they feel like you know some sort of influence, or they feel like they have some sort of influence over the way other people think. When it, like you said, it's just an echo chamber of people bouncing off the same ideas on each other. And yeah,

Kyle Roberts 43:12
and there's 10,000 years of human history where we didn't know what everybody was thinking at all times, and it should be that way. We

Gavin Kelly 43:18
shouldn't have to know what everybody's thinking at all times. But

Kyle Roberts 43:21
at the same time, Gavin, I feel like you and I are both old man shaking fist at Cloud. You know, like one thing that I have done that, and I hope that if people are listening, one thing that I have intentionally done is I have set my social media intake. It's limited to 30 minutes a day. That's for every app. That's incredible, and but I've had to go as far as setting it up where there is a there is a password that I don't know that once that once like the time's up, it's up. Yeah, and and I'm and you know what I'm okay. Like I like I don't like I don't crave it the way that I used to. But to go back to feeling important. One thing that I I've quit Facebook a couple of times. Yeah, I wish. I wish. Yeah, but one of the times that I quit, the last status update that I put up was I'm leaving Facebook. It's given me an inflated sense of my own importance. I need to get off this platform, and that was so therapeutic for me to just literally deactivate an account, move off, and and now I'm back on because I need to stay connected with what's going on with the Lincoln Paris Journal. It helps me stay connected with what's going on with some of the different community things going on around here in Ruston. But I don't have that same sense that I've got to post my opinion the way that I had the first time around, and I think that if people would limit their time on social media to whatever they think is necessary for them, I do think that we would all just feel

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

better. I do think we need to get off and get get to a place where we're not as dependent on some. These platforms, as we currently, I agree, but

Gavin Kelly 45:01
these platforms aren't going to let us. I mean, like we, they have they have tailor made going back to algorithms, going back to ads. They they they create an experience where they want you spending as much time on these apps as possible, so they make it they make it so.

Kyle Roberts 45:14
But let's not lose our own agency in this gamut. I would I would hope yes, like that that is where again going back to my example, I limit 30 minutes a day. That's it. And the platforms at that point they can try to get as much of my attention as possible. But once that resource is up, I've given it 30 minutes. Once that ends, I go about my day, and I don't need it. I don't need it the same way that I used to. And so that's where you are 100 right. These platforms want our attention constantly. I've put up guardrails to where once my attention that I'm willing to part with for that day ends, they don't get it anymore.

Gavin Kelly 45:53
It takes it takes effort. It takes willpower. It's like overcoming an addiction in a lot of ways. Even you know today, doom scrolling seems to be an issue for a lot of people. Just like mindlessly, just scrolling and scrolling and scrolling through a TikTok feed, through a Facebook feed, whatever, to the to the point where when you know at a certain point you're doom scrolling the news a little bit because you're just getting news bit after news bit. So it all it all ties back together, but but Gavin, that's what these platforms want.

Kyle Roberts 46:23
I know, but Gavin, there's a beautiful world out there. I agree, and and that's the that's the thing. Like I try to tell tell my students: connect with a church, connect with a civic group, go see where your time and your energy can be made best.

Gavin Kelly 46:39
Yeah,

Kyle Roberts 46:39
and like that's the true magic of of living. And again, if if TikTok wants that time from me, they're not going to get it. Like I want to give it to I want to give it back to people. I want to be I want my circle of influence to be as close to where I am as possible. And again, to go back to where like my unhealthy relationship with social media in the beginning, when when I thought that what I said on a social media platform was more important than what I was actually doing with my real life time, I needed to rebalance that. So for me, just the the call to everybody that's listening to this podcast is like, there's there's so much good in the world that if you'll go out and experience it, it's wonderful. But if you stay connected to these apps and that's all that you're doing with your time, you're missing so much, and it's not worth it.

Gavin Kelly 47:31

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Yeah, well said. It definitely is not. And in a lot of ways, people kind of need a dopamine reset. You need to you need to change the the places where your your joy is triggered because it's not when it comes from a screen. It's not you know people also attention spans, and I mean I'm sure you've seen this in your students over the years because I feel like every year that goes by, the younger people, the younger generation, their attention spans getting shorter and shorter, and they need a a higher volume of of dopamine inducing things to come from a screen at one time, and like it's just it's kind of untenable in a way. But also, like I know I know people who aren't you know too much younger than I am that like can't sit through a movie like a two-hour movie because they got to grab the phone, you know. And and I don't think even apart from social media, just texting and calling and being available to friends and family 24/7 is just not how humans I think are are naturally wired. But it's kind of what we've become, and so

Kyle Roberts 48:33
well. Hopefully, the next time you and I do a podcast, like hopefully I will have figured it out. Hopefully we'll have more people that have figured that out again. the The value of just being fully present where you are, like the that that matters so much in this world in this world now. And again, I think that until we in our own lives reset that incentive structure, like you said, the dopamine that we need, until we figure out a more healthy way to get that. Like I think we're going to continue down a bad path, but I do think that again there is hope out there. I do think that if we all would just reconnect with our own communities, with our own friend groups, and and put up appropriate boundaries when we need to of availability, I think that we would all be happy. Yeah, we got to get the

Gavin Kelly 49:18
scales to tip one way. A lot of people are happy to, you know, are think are happy or believe they're happy to have their whole social life within their phone. You know, friends and family, and for all their friendships to kind of be digital and over the internet. And again, back to the power of social media, the power of the internet. You can create genuine connections through those, but also if if if if that's all you're you're doing or attempting to do, it's kind of probably not for the best. We could talk about this all day, so we'll we'll we'll shift a little bit. But as we as we go out, I guess I got one more question for you. I like to kind of save the introspective question till the last. But you kind of alluded to your first time being a. Student here, not having figured out the whole learning part yet, and and and being a good student and being a good learner. And you've kind of left, you've kind of mentioned tidbits along the way as we've talked about your life and your career, your family. But looking back to Kyle growing up, Kyle attending tech, Kyle figuring it out to Kyle now. Talk to me about kind of the things that that you're happy about and the way that you think you've grown.

Kyle Roberts 50:28
Man, I do think that probably my second time coming back to tech and just like being young, married, and about ready to have kids, I do think that my mind shifted more towards people and away from myself, and that has helped me be happier. Now, sometimes I think that I go a little bit too far in that direction, where I'm where I'm sacrificing, giving yourself too much of myself. I'm still learning that, but I do think that as I've tried to open my eyes and see the world and and allow my own horizons to be broadened, I think that that has helped me be a happier person in the long run. I think that that's helped help me connect with more of the teachings of Jesus in a way that I think growing up I was I was too

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

inwardly focused to who am I and what do I need and how can I how can I be the best whatever but that wasn't really translating to the classroom I think that as I got older and more life experience I think that making sure that my focus is more outward and less and less on myself and my marriage in in teaching in learning like wanting to learn about other things I think that that's kind of created a passion for that. To me, I think that that's probably the the biggest thing. And I don't know if that's the best way to answer your question, but I think that like as I just look over my time from my first time as an undergrad. I think I was I was much more selfish, and I've tried to drop that and be more people focused and people oriented. And now I'm trying to rein myself in of like, okay, how can I do this and have have healthier boundaries as well? I think that that would probably be the best summation for my journey as a as an adult.

Gavin Kelly 52:23
Yeah, I mean that answer, Mike. Yeah, that was great. I appreciate that, and I appreciate you making time for us. It was good to talk to you about, you know, kind of focusing and how do you spread your focus? How do you hone in your focus? And I appreciate you, like you said, being present here and making time for us on the podcast. I know you're very busy.

Kyle Roberts 52:41
Well, I will. I will just say this: it's truly an honor to be asked to to come talk about a university. I know we hit a lot of different topics, but I love Louisiana Tech. I love being able to do any part of the the story for this place. This is not just a local university. This is a national university. This is a global university, and to to be able to serve it through broadcasting and through teaching, that's something that I don't take for granted, Gavin. And so, just I appreciate you being willing to let me be be a part of this, and thank you for the job that you do too. It does not go unnoticed, and university communications as a whole, Louisiana Tech is better because of the job that y'all are doing.

Gavin Kelly 53:26
Well, thank thank you, I appreciate that very much, and thanks again for coming on. And we will see you around and go dogs. Thank you for listening to Beyond 1894. Please subscribe and rate us wherever you listen to podcasts. For more information about this episode, you can check out our show notes. Beyond 1894 is produced by Louisiana Tech University's Office of University Communications.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai