



MODERN CPA

Transcript for Podcast Episode: 014

The Highs and Lows of Starting a Business with Connie and Rob Lawson

Hosted by: Michelle Ward and Shawn Cahill

Guest: Connie and Rob Lawson

- Michelle:** We are modern CPA. Our purpose is to provide valuable information to small business owners on our podcast profit points. We discuss business how tos, give tax tips and dig in to real life experiences in the crazy world of running your own business. If you find this podcast helpful, then like subscribe and follow us on social media.
- Michelle:** Hi there. On our podcast today, we're talking to Rob and Connie Lawson from Sweet Ashley's Chocolate about the highs and lows of starting a business. Please join us. If you haven't subscribe to our YouTube channel. You can do that now. Welcome, everybody, to our podcast Profit Points, where we talk to professionals, industry leaders and other small business owners about what they see in the crazy world of running your own business. And today we have Connie and Rob Lawson from Sweet Ashley. Welcome, guys.
- Michelle:** Yeah. Rob, Connie and Rob are small business owners with a retail location in Pennsylvania, and they make the world sweeter. Right. So tell us a little bit about what you do there.
- Rob:** So we make chocolate all different kinds of confections. We have our retail store. We also have a wholesale line that we do and online. So we make pretty much anything you can think of in chocolate.
- Michelle:** That's fantastic. We have experienced your chocolate and I'm telling you, it is very good. All I can say it's some of the best chocolate we have ever had. So I think really hits way out of the ballpark from like Hershey's or any of those mass produced chocolate companies. So. Yeah, yeah, for sure.
- Connie:** Thank you.
- Michelle:** You're welcome. So tell us a little bit about what led you to have your own chocolate store. What was the chain of events? Do you just wake up one day and say, yeah, chocolate or?
- Rob:** Exactly. It's been a very long journey. It started out initially when we lived in State College, Pennsylvania. Okay. We had it was kind of like a side hustle, so to speak. We wholesaled to some coffee shops in town. You know, we came up with the name because at the time, Ashley was about eight months old.

Michelle: Your daughter?

Rob: Our daughter, yes.

Michelle: Yeah.

Rob: And, you know, it was, like I said, totally a side hustle.

Michelle: So you went from having this as a side hustle like you were. I guess you enjoy chocolate and just start making it for yourself, is that how it worked? So I eat chocolate, but I don't make it.

Connie: I guess it was kind of my hobby. I always just equate it to some people can play the piano and have never been taught. I just happened to know how to make chocolate. So I was on a Girl Scout tour when I was like nine or ten years old in the town I grew up in. And it was a small like mom and pop chocolate shop where they made their own chocolate and they sold it at the store. So they were giving us a tour and kind of going through it. And I just kept on saying, Oh, I know how to do this, I know how to do this. And I just I was like, you know, it was just something I was like, Oh, I totally know what's going on here. So I really was probably an obnoxious nine or ten year old telling this nice woman who was trying to just give us a tour and get us out that I knew what I was doing and I could make chocolate. So at the end of the tour, everyone got like a little bag of a couple of pieces of chocolate, and she just handed me a chunk of chocolate and said, Go home and make your own. Like, just. That's hilarious. I was convinced that, you know, so and I did. And then it just kind of became my childhood hustle. You know, your parents would give you your Christmas money. I would make chocolate for everyone and then keep the extra money for myself or, you know, clothes or whatever, whatever I wanted.

Michelle: So you're saying you were always kind of an entrepreneur, so you were out there?

Connie: I was not exactly. I remember. Yeah, like one summer, my next door neighbor and I, we were making those pot holders and we had to get locked up in neighborhoods, knocking on doors, selling those to people.

Michelle: And then you turn that into chocolate you started.

Connie: Yeah, I think it's just always kind of been there like, wow, you know, doing that. So I kind of so, you know, once we had actually I was doing it and then when we moved here and went from working in restaurants to a pharmaceutical job. So I didn't have a lot of time to make chocolate. So there was like a little hiatus there. I don't know. Something I've always known how to do. I do.

Michelle: So you start making this chocolate. It was a side hustle. At what point then did you say, you know what, we're doing this all in, or at least, Connie, maybe you're doing all in.

Connie: So at the pharmaceutical company I worked for, I was working in clinical trials, and I just happened to get a clinical trial that was for juvenile HIV patients. And that was a

little harsh. Ashley and I would spend the whole weekend together. She's four and five years old. I would come in to work on Monday and I would have a list of expired kids. Yeah. Oh, and that must be heartbreaking. I mean, this job is important and it needs to be done. Like, I'm never going to take that. I'm not the person to do that job. Right. I never met these kids. I didn't know them. They were a series of identifier numbers.

Michelle: But then still, it still hits you so hard.

Connie: Oh, I just was not emotionally equipped to handle that job.

Michelle: So you're looking for an out, right? You were looking for a way to do something else.

Connie: I definitely did it like I could not, you know? Yeah, I didn't want to. I Monday mornings, I'd be crying going into work. I didn't want to know. Like I didn't want it. I want to know. So I was just complaining him. I got to get out of this and got I can't do this. But I didn't want to go back to, to the restaurant business. I was being in restaurant management. I just didn't want to do it. And so we had Christmas at his parents house and we were really busy, you know, the at the pharmaceutical job. And I didn't make chocolate for anyone that year for Christmas. And he's got this uncle, Uncle Frank, he is a doctor. But to give you a proportion of him, he's a doctor for the WWF when they come into the area. Big, huge guy. He's just a big presence, you know. And we didn't give him his chocolate and he banished us from the room. And every time we try to go up and give food or we try to go get another drink, Uncle Frank is like yelling at us and kicking us out of the room. Like he just didn't want to to see us or deal with us or anything. Rob and I are on his parent's blue couch in the formal living room where we have been ostracized to, you know, and where I'm just like, All right, if I can find a spot to do this, we need to do this because this is a grown man. Complete meltdown. Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Michelle: So there was a desire for it.

Connie: It's like, okay, if he's going to meltdown over this, there's got to be some sort of way to move this forward. Like, how do we, you know, and so in June? So that was the Christmas. That was December of 2004.

Rob: Yes.

Connie: Yeah, June of 2005. We kind of went and got our business name, our business license. We were kind of tinkering with the idea of maybe doing like farmers markets or something like that. But we didn't really have like a plan. And if you're you're familiar with Warrior's Port, they closed the bridge in between the two towns.

Michelle: So Warriors Port is a small little town that has a main street and a lot of activity just for people that are not in this area. Yeah. Yeah. They they have a pretty good population of stores and things on Main Street there. So yeah.

Connie: And they had just gone through this bridge closure and I had never been into

Warriors Port for it. I lived in Spring City and would take the backroads into the pharmaceutical company. The bridge was closed down for, I think almost two years or something. The day the bridge opened. I took a half day off of work and I drove into Warriors Port to see what it was all about. And there was this empty store there that had just gone out of business. And I looked inside. I was like, That is a perfect candy store. So I called the owner of the building and he's like, Well, what do you want to do here? And I said, Oh, I wanted to be I want to open a candy store. And he said, Oh, when my parents bought the building in 1972, it was a candy store.

Michelle: Oh, amazing. It was, like, meant to be.

Connie: So I'm like, okay. And I think like two days later, you know, we had a lease and we were opening it. No business plan, no thought.

Michelle: Did that feel like a whirlwind of, like, craziness? Like, what the heck are we doing?

Connie: Well, I was like, come on. It was meant to be look, it's supposed to be a candy store. It was a candy store for 30 years it can do it again. Like, that was my level of thought. Oh, it was a candy store once before. It can do it again. Everything's fine. I kind of dove in.

Michelle: Yeah, that's awesome.

Connie: A year later, my father in law jumped in and helped in between him and Rob. They kept the store open and myself. And probably a year. I quit my job at the pharmacy and went full time.

Shawn: So we're so at that point when you opened that store, were you making everything in the store or still kind of doing it at home? How did you.

Connie: Yeah, we were still at home. We were three years?

Rob: Two years.

Connie: Two years out of our certified kitchen in our house. And as it was getting busier, there just wasn't any more kitchen left. Fortunately, we had a huge kitchen. Yeah, we had a huge kitchen in our house.

Rob: In that two year period, though, we acquired some additional equipment as we were growing and we couldn't hold any more in our kitchen. So we leased a space in downtown Spring City. Okay, that became our production. We were in that space for about five more years. Yeah. Yeah. And then. And then we moved from there to Limerick for our production.

Shawn: So you can reach out to the retail and the production you ended up combining into a one space in a different location.

Connie: No. Not yet. I wish that dream that's the end goal. I'm hoping in the next five years to bring that all together where the manufacturing in the retail can all be in one nice

big glass wall, people can see the chocolate being made, bringing some, you know, return the favor to those future nine and ten year olds. Where they can come and see people make, you know, that kind of I'm not there. I'm not there yet. Now, it's the hunt for the space for that. So it's been from the start two separate facilities. There's always been the store where we package everything and then the manufacturing where we make everything. So everything comes into the store in bulk boxes and then we package it up. It sort of split it. So it will be nice to have that all together.

Rob: One central spot. Yeah. Hmm.

Michelle: Yeah. So I guess, you know, the, the what I hear a lot in people that are having their own business is they kind of ease into things. You know, it's like a stepping process and it keeps changing. It's ever changing and you're constantly tweaking. And so you weren't looking at, you know, this huge location with this huge facility, you started in your kitchen, a little tiny retail store. Yeah, no. Even talking about going to farmer's markets and stuff where it was much more manageable than being full on jumping into something that's huge.

Connie: I can't imagine doing that like all of those steps felt so huge at the time. Now you look at them and they were just small risks. But all of this entrepreneurship is a risk and you have to kind of weigh each step, you know, as you go. And you know, they seem huge. Yeah. Now in hindsight they look like tiny little things, but it felt it huge.

Michelle: It was all new stuff too. So you were like learning.

Rob: And we were naive.

Connie: And I had no. Besides me being able to tell if chocolate is in temper by looking at it. I had no clue what I was doing.

Michelle: You just knew how to make chocolate.

Rob: And we were very naive too.

Connie: Oh, yeah.

Rob: Well, we opened the first store. We we figured we could open that store with maybe about...

Connie: Like 20,000?

Rob: Between 20 to \$30000 total. Then another \$25,000 later, we're up and running.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah.

Rob: Well, they're capitalized at that.

Michelle: Yeah. So. So you're saying is shoot higher for what you need?

Connie: Well, yeah. Yeah. And you just don't know.

Rob: So many unexpected things.

Michelle: Can come up.

Rob: That we had no idea. Yeah. For a really good example that you would never think of. Is that our building on Main Street faced the wrong way? Mm hmm. One of the enemies of chocolate is sun.

Connie: This store faces the wrong way. We did it twice.

Michelle: Not the third time. You won't do it. .

Connie: I will not do it a third time.

Rob: So when we moved in here, we set up a great display. We're getting ready to open our very first day. So the night before, we stage the window with baskets and stuff.

Connie: All this chocolate in the window.

Rob: Come in in the morning time, and it's all melted.

Michelle: Oh, my God. Oh, yeah. That's so much product, too. Oh, my God.

Connie: Now, we did it twice. We made that mistake twice.

Michelle: But you didn't do it a third time. So, like, that seems to be your M.O.

Connie: Are you sure you want to interview me for this?

Rob: Right. Yeah. With that being said, all of a sudden now we had to get the windows tinted right. We want a special tent where people could still see in. I think that cost around 3000.

Michelle: Oh, that was an expense you were not prepared for.

Rob: We were not planning on.

Connie: Well, it didn't work.

Rob: And the tinting didn't do enough. Well, now, the next thing you know, we are spending another 3500 for an awning. You know what I mean? So, right there is \$6500 that....

Michelle: You did not budget for.

Connie: No, not at all.

Rob: We had no idea and how would we? Yeah. There's no way that we would have

known and learned that there's. You learn a lot of hidden things. Sure. Fortunately, when we moved our store to our current location. After having 12 years in our previous store. We have an idea of the numbers. Mm hmm. You know, if we ever open a second store, it'll be a whole lot easier.

Michelle: Well, you are ironing it all out.

Connie: Yeah. I joke about the fact that we didn't know, but we did know. So we knew we were going to have to make a plan for those windows, which is why they've got all those great decals on there and stuff. But when we made that move, we wanted to stay as close to our old location as we could with the nice connection from the highway right there. So the spot is perfect for us.

Michelle: Right. A lot of traffic, a lot of hard car traffic there. We don't live in a location that is heavily foot traffic as far as, you know, in towns or in a city. So we rely on easy access for a lot of people that are driving in suburbia. And so, yeah, where they live, here they are. Yeah. Parking is a bigger deal. Yeah, it's a huge deal. And I guess it all lends itself to, like, what's easy for the customer that you're serving. Yeah.

Rob: Yeah. Parking has been huge.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So tell us a little bit about some of the struggles I know we talked about, you know, not having enough in your budget early on, but you've been up and running for quite some time. Have those struggles that you deal with now different, very different from the ones that you've had before or a long time ago, or they see some, some of the same struggles?

Rob: Um, I think a lot of the, a lot of the struggles are different now. You know, in the beginning or struggles where, like I said earlier, we were undercapitalized. Mm hmm. And we didn't have a plan. We didn't. We didn't realize the costs of a lot of things, like the cost of doing business for a lack of a better. Now our struggles are more growth related. Mm hmm. You know, like, we understand the costs. We can plan and budget. It's just a matter of pulling it all together.

Shawn: Right. I mean, other than. Other than, like, pandemic stuff.

Michelle: Right we can talk about how that affected you?

Rob: Oh, yeah.

Connie: And supply chain issues. Now, it's supply chain issues currently. But that will pass. We'll get back to a normal again, you know.

Rob: Right. So our struggles now are more just I'm going to say, you know, growing the business. Mm hmm. You know, I think anybody that owns a business has that same struggle.

Connie: Absolutely.

Rob: Fortunately, the business doesn't just come to you. You have to go.

Michelle: Invest it into getting it and the awareness of your brand. And, you know, and then I think also as you grow, too, you've got to keep in line all of the costs that are associated with growing and managing that. I know people in your position change vendors because of that or have been working with a certain vendor and now their terms have changed. So they have to look for something else. And so it's never going to be set it and forget it.

Rob: No, we can't just mail it in ever.

Connie: No.

Rob: It's Yeah. That, that's been. Yeah. A challenge.

Connie: Yeah. We've been through that in particular this year with changes that companies have made with the supply chain and items like that. So we're finding new vendors. We're separating from vendors we've been with for 17 years. And yeah, but ultimately. You know, I have to make sure that I'm good with my values on that. I want my packaging to be made in the US. You know.

Michelle: You have certain quality standards that you want to maintain.

Connie: Yeah. And so I might have been with a company for a really long time, but when those boxes are now being being produced overseas, it's not... Yeah, I'll find. Yeah, I'll find a U.S. vendor. We did. We found one. They're actually closer to us. They're in Pennsylvania. So amazing. Yeah, which is great.

Rob: Sounds like to take a positive from that. In some respects, it's forced us to explore other options that might turn out to be better. Yeah. You know, there's no doubt that, you know, we can kind of get stale some time. Yeah.

Michelle: So the struggle became an opportunity for you to examine what you're doing and maybe make something fit better than had you just stayed with the status quo.

Rob: Correct? Yeah. Yeah. Essentially, we take the blinders off, you know, and instead of looking ahead, we're looking all around.

Shawn: Well, that's a big struggle for small business to step back and evaluate, you know, all of those different things and constantly, you know, make those changes because you're so busy just trying to produce your product or produce your service and serve your customers that spending time on the business, in making creative changes and making good positive changes. It's really a struggle.

Rob: And it's very time consuming, there's no doubt, you know, and it's, you know, trying to do 40 hours worth of work and, you know, a very limited, you know, bit of time. A bit of time. You know. The other side of it, too, that we don't know if it's a struggles I'd call a struggle. But we also are very mindful of our customers who don't respond well to change. Mm hmm. Even though, you know, I might change about the

contents of the box might be exactly the same, but the physical appearance of the outside of the box might be a little bit different. Maybe it's a different color scheme, maybe it's slightly different size. Whether it be bigger or smaller, it throws people off, which can be an issue, even though you explain that it's the exact same.

Michelle: The same weight. Same, yeah, same product.

Rob: Exactly the same. Looks a little different? You know, sometimes people don't respond well.

Connie: The sampler box hasn't changed in decades. It's still that, you know. It's still that box that people know.

Rob: Yeah. Yeah.

Michelle: So are your customers then. I know you had very good online presence during the pandemic and I'm sure that you have maintained that a lot. Are they are you shipping out to customers and are they different than the customers that are coming into the store? Do they look different? Do they does the online customer not really care what the coloring of the box is or like any anything about that? Are they different customers?

Rob: They are. They are. It's funny.

Connie: It's a lot of gifts.

Rob: It's a lot of gifts. You don't seem to be as critical. Sometimes I'm going to say the best word. But, you know, now, mind you, we're not having, you know, direct communication with those people.

Michelle: Right.

Rob: So it's a little different than when somebody is in my store maybe criticizing or giving me their feedback. And, you know, online they're hitting buttons and that's it. And you hope for a good review? Yeah. I can tell you online shoppers are a much different animal than in-store customers in terms of dollar amount per transaction. Oh, you know, and not to get off track, but we learned in the middle of the pandemic that our online sales, our dollar per transaction amount was more than double.

Michelle: That's it is huge.

Connie: For the curbside pickup because, you know, once the pandemic came, everything was curbside for almost a year. So we kept the curbside pick up. It works well for a lot of people who want to take their kids out of the car, but they want to get, you know what I mean? So we put the curbside pickup in. Even when they're buying online for curbside pickup, the it's a little bit. It's higher.

Michelle: That's so cool. I mean, it's great for you because I think that people, you know, are

expanding what they're purchasing from you and they are enjoying it. I mean, it is a product that is enjoyed. It's not a bad thing. So, you know, it's a win win for everybody. Yeah, yeah.

Rob: Yeah, yeah. And it's definitely I mean, it's a weird phenomenon. Yeah. We spend a lot of time trying to figure it out because we're confused.

Michelle: Well, you know, when I do curbside pick up for, like, groceries, I spend less than when i'm in the store.

Connie: Really?

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah, I spend less, but I can see how maybe buying chocolate online. You're like, right, yeah. Let me do that now. And I might as well get it now. And instead of splitting up my purchases between now and next week or something like that.

Rob: What we found is that people, when they're shopping online, at least with us, they're not on the clock, meaning they can put things into the shopping cart step away. Got it. They actually will look at more items. You know, the interesting to check out everything. Yeah. When people come into the store, they're on the clock. You know, they want to get in, get out. So, yeah, maybe they just go directly to what they what they had on their mind and don't do any impulse buys.

Connie: We have a what they call like a high conversion rate, on of abandoned... What they call abandoned shopping carts.

Michelle: Oh, okay.

Connie: So, like, if somebody starts a cart and then they walk away from it. You know, after I think it's after like 16 hours, we'll send them like a little reminder email. Hey, you have some stuff in the cart? Yeah, they'll add a couple more things in. Send in the order. Like the conversion rate on that. According to Shopify, the statistics are pretty good for us.

Michelle: That's awesome.

Shawn: That's great. Yeah.

Connie: So but I think they like he said, they're not on the clock. They mean Father's Days coming up, but maybe they're trying to figure out who they're seeing and they sending one gift to one location, one gift to another. You know, they might be trying to, like work some of that out and then it come back and order. So which is great right now. And we still ship in the summer, so which is nice. A lot of companies don't.

Michelle: Yeah that can be an issue because of that daggon sun again.

Connie: Yes the heat but we do it just needs to be two day we only ship Monday through Wednesday Thursday will ship if it's a one day ship and we know it's going to get

there. You know, Ice packs, insulation, coolers, all kinds of stuff.

Shawn: Um.

Connie: But we do get it there. And you know, I think I know there's a lot of people in the industry that don't it's a it's a risk, but we've been pretty blessed. You know, it's that pharmaceutical side again. When I left there, I got some pack outs on how to ship stuff in the summer.

Michelle: Oh, nice. So you learned some stuff, too?

Connie: So I got the knowledge enrolled. Yeah.

Shawn: But it's a skill that you gain to help your business that others don't have, which is valuable.

Connie: Yeah. When you're shipping medicine, especially in trials, they have to stay within a certain temperature range. So these accounts are designed to stay within temperature ranges. And so it did. I spent some time there learning how to do those back and.

Michelle: That's amazing. And you brought it with you. So that's awesome.

Connie: I did. Yeah.

Michelle: So is there any any advice that you would give somebody who's just starting out, not necessarily in the chocolate industry, but any small business owner that you know. Just from your experience, you know, like maybe what you would have done differently or you would have thought about a little bit differently looking back on it.

Connie: I think you're going to make a lot of mistakes, and I think you have to be forgiving of yourself of that. Don't let it, like, knock the wind out of your sails too much. Yeah. You know, it's really easy to get into that mindset that this is for somebody else and I can't handle it. And look, I've, like, you know, flushed \$14,000, you know, in mistakes or whatever it might be. I just think you just have to say, oh, let's not do that again. And move forward. And an accountant probably isn't going to like this piece of advice. But let me hear it. I think the books are wrong where they say, like after five years, if it doesn't work, you should be done with it or whatever. You know, we were still at five years not turning a profit at the five year mark and statistically saying you should at that point fold up at that point and call it. Our numbers were increasing constantly. So it's never like the way we're growing. It was it was gross the entire time we even had an increase in, you know, a little increase over, you know, the first downturn, downturn in 2008. You know, COVID was a wash, so I'm not upset about that. So the numbers were going in the right direction. But there's equipment and there's mistakes and there's whatever, you know, stuff, you know, stuff happens, happens. And it doesn't look great on paper. But how do you like.

Rob: Five years wouldn't have been enough time.

Connie: Wouldn't have been enough.

Michelle: Yeah, I hear you!

Rob: 7 to 9 years.

Connie: You know, there was there was a move in there when you're moving in manufacturing and now you're a huge investment. And then we had to buy additional equipment. So on paper, I think people would have probably folded us up at the five year mark.

Rob: But some of that stuff you could say, okay, we cannot we have to kind of reset because now we're we're starting this. We're in a new retail space. We're in a new manufacturing space. So it kind of reset some of those expectations, too.

Michelle: Yeah. And we did some automation when it came to some of your. Well, a lot of things actually. Right. So none of the the back office in your inventory. Right. That takes a lot of work and a lot of effort and and costs for software. But you also did stuff with your chocolate in your making and how the chocolate is being made helped you know, you bought a lot of equipment in order to make that easier on yourself to accommodate the growth that you were seeing in the sales. Yeah, all the chocolate that you were selling, you couldn't have physically done that yourself.

Connie: No, no, not at all.

Rob: Yeah, as an example. But ah, the one bigger machine that we have, you know, unfortunately cost us in the end is close to \$100,000.

Connie: Yeah, that's huge. And we had to do in five years. Yeah.

Rob: Over five years. Now, on the flipside of that, you know, as Connie was him tipping all the chocolate previously, she could do that on average, about 175 pieces an hour. Now, with the machine, I have, you know, three I have two people working the machine. I can do over 2000 pieces now.

Michelle: Oh, my gosh. That's you know.

Rob: And the reality is, if I had a third person working on the machine at the same time, I could probably pull 3000 plus pieces an hour. But we had the expense of \$100,000. Once again, from a profit standpoint, it hurt for a while.

Michelle: Sure.

Rob: You know.

Michelle: And that's a long term investment.

Rob: That's a long term investment. No doubt. But I think people need to realize that they have to be ready. So take that step back in order to take the steps forward later.

Connie: And don't wait three years to get an accountant.

Michelle: That's good advice. Don't wait.

Connie: Don't wait. Biggest mistake. Number one, biggest mistake I made was my father in law loves accounting, but he's not an accountant.

Michelle: Mhm.

Connie: Loves accounting. And so he really wanted to be involved in the bookkeeping and the accounting and all of that stuff. In my first three years as a good daughter in law. I let him do it. And then I just. I needed automation, I needed QuickBooks, I needed an account. I needed that, yeah. You needed more. Or I should've never played the nice role of daughter in law.

Michelle: Many times you hear that people want to do it themselves, which is fine. You know, doing your own accounting is good. I think you understand your numbers a little bit better. But it is another job. You know, it's not it's not going to be a cakewalk. You're gonna have to learn.

Shawn: Or a Chocolate walk.

Connie: Yeah, right. I think there's yeah, I think there's a couple of things in there. The accountant probably would have, you know.

Rob: Wanted to kill us.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah, something different, maybe. Yesterday.

Rob: It was more so directional. Mm hmm. Not that we were doing anything wrong. Yeah or incorrect.

Connie: No, the accounting was good. He loved it. He was obsessed with it.

Michelle: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. Gave him a job to do. Yeah.

Connie: Yeah. He loves it. He still. He loves it. He doesn't do it.

Rob: You know, mind you, at that time, everything was a ledger. There was nothing computerized. And so for things like tracking our production. It was not there. Well, how do you grow when you don't know what you're supposed to make?

Michelle: Yeah, well, this is empty, so maybe we'll make that right.

Rob: You know, I'm forecasting for next year. It's great. I keep numbers in the ledger books, but they don't mean anything.

Shawn: You don't see trends. You don't see.

Connie: You can't see day over day, year over year, month over month. You can't see that. I

couldn't you know, it would take he would give me the information when I would say, oh, how much do I spend with blah, blah, blah vendor last year he would ultimately get it for me, but it's not the same as being able to pull it up and have everything. Yeah, absolutely. I see that. So, yeah. Yeah.

Michelle: We are so thankful that you are here with us today. And we really enjoyed having the conversation and learning about your journey. And Shawn, did you have anything that is sitting in top of your mind you want to ask Connie and Rob?

Shawn: I mean, we could talk, you know, for a long time about all this but it is good to hear, you know, get some background of where you came from and how this came to be.

Michelle: So yeah, it's great. A lot of good information for other small business owners.

Rob: My biggest learning experience from all this is learning to be humble enough to hire the right people to do things. An accountant, a great example, you know, a marketing person, a great example. You know, an I.T. person, if you need it. Because we tried in the beginning to do everything ourselves.

Michelle: That's so hard.

Rob: We're not experts at everything. Mm hmm. You know, so.

Shawn: Yeah, it's hard when you have a limited budget, you try to try to do as much as you can yourself. But, you know, you're going to fail at a lot of those things because you just don't have the expertise.

Rob: And that failure ends up more expensive than just. Made that investment. Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. You know, I mean.

Shawn: You're the typical small business you have. If you've had all these mistakes, you've had successes, you know, you learn. You grow, and, you know, you just keep changing, keep changing, keep adapting. And that's, you know, that's the typical small business model.

Michelle: Yeah, it is. Yeah. All right. Well, thank you guys so much for joining us today.

Connie: Thank you.

Rob: Thank you.

Michelle: If you find this podcast helpful and liked, subscribe and follow us on social media.