

Bob Gilbert (00:00):

Welcome to tourism heads and their tales, a podcast series that explores with travel and tourism leaders, their take on key issues of the day. My name is Bob Gilbert, general manager for the tourism and destination marketing practice at the award-winning strategic marketing agency, Alexander, who are bringing you this podcast series. I've had the privilege to have worked with iconic global brands, including Disney, Choice Hotels, Yosemite and Shenandoah National Parks, Kennedy Space Center, visitor center, and Best Western International, plus served on the boards of the U.S. Travel Association, National Tourist Association, and an elected commissioner for Visit California looking forward. I will be chatting with those that are helping shape the travel and tourism industry, all with unique tales to share that I know you will find both interesting and educational. So without further ado, let's get started.

Bob Gilbert (01:06):

Welcome to tourism heads and their tails. Today's guest is David Lorenz, vice president travel Michigan, where he's responsible for leading the state's tourism, branding, advertising and public relations efforts overseeing the award-winning Pure Michigan tourism campaign and coordinating overall statewide tourism initiatives. In addition to his day job Dave is chair of the National Council of State Tourism Directors, and serves on the executive committee of the board of directors for the U.S. Travel Association. In addition to that, he also serves on numerous boards around Michigan. So tell us a little bit about yourself, Dave, and your background and your journey so far.

David Lorenz (01:52):

Happy to do so. Good to talk to you. I have the great luck of having grown up in what we now know is Pure Michigan, this beautiful state in the middle of the great lakes, touching on four of the five great lakes with very distinctive seasons, very diverse places to explore and diverse people as well. And because of that, growing up at a time when this state was very challenged as a, uh, you know, manufacturing state, the biggest manufacturing state in the country that for years and years was on top of its game. And, and then as I was growing up and the economy was changing this state didn't diversify fast enough. And, and, and I, and I really believe this and I, and I mean it, the way I say it, I was lucky enough to grow up at a time when Michigan's best times seemed to it, passed it by.

David Lorenz (02:45):

And I think because of that, the, the great challenge of double digit unemployment and being a young person, just getting out of college when things were still pretty tough, I've seen what I think is the, the worst times for my home state. And I've been able to impact in my small little way, better times because of the experience of growing up in a, a difficult, challenging time. It taught me in a whole bunch of other people, how to be innovative, how to think out of the box, how to create something new with every opportunity. And I've done that in former career paths. I was in broadcasting for 14 years and TV and a little bit of, or radio most, mostly, and a little bit of TV also in retail marketing. And that led me to travel Michigan 20 years ago, hard to believe. Wow. And in all that time, having this kind of interesting background of growing up here of having these very interesting career paths that all blended to where I am today, I think it, it provided this different perspective on how things could be done or should be done. And, and we're doing a pretty good job with Pure Michigan, I think partially because of that.

Bob Gilbert (03:51):

So as a state tourism leader, what are your main objectives?

David Lorenz (03:57):

It's, you know, it's interesting, you ask it that way because most people think being at a state destination marketing organization that, you know, a hundred percent of your job is to put heads and beds as they always say. Uh, but in reality, that's almost a side benefit of what our true goal is when we built Pure Michigan as a brand about 17 or 18 years ago, our goal then was as it is today, not just to encourage people to, to travel to and throughout this great state and to have a great deal of fun and spend a great deal of money and employ a great deal of people and bring in a great deal of tax revenue and spending through private sector jobs. Our greater goal back then was to reawaken a people of a state that had gone through some really difficult times and had lost faith in itself.

David Lorenz (04:49):

So our thought then was that we knew this was a beautiful place. We knew it was very different and that if we kind of got our confidence back, we'd find it easier to work together to find that next, you know, really interesting position that, that we could find ourselves in. So it was all about engendering, a sense of pride. So even though we don't really talk about it that way, very often to the general public, that's really what it's always been about is encouraging residents in the state to be proud of what they see around them and encouraging other people to come and sample a little bit of what our lifestyle is all the time. And in doing that, yeah, they come here, they travel, they have a good deal of, of fun. Many of them see a state that maybe could be in their future. In other ways, by moving here, investing here, going to school here, bringing their companies here and jobs with them. I hear those stories all the time. So yeah,

Bob Gilbert (05:45):

I mean, that's,

David Lorenz (05:45):

We wanted to promote travel, but it was a lot more than that.

Bob Gilbert (05:47):

Right? And in interestingly, you know what you have just said, there reminds me of the famous Maura Gast quote. Uh, if you build a place, people wanna visit, you build a place where people wanna live. If you build a place where people wanna live, you'll build a place where people wanna work. And if you build a place where people wanna work, you'll build a place where where business needs to be. And if you build a place where business has to be, then you build a place where people have to visit and so on and so forth, right? So the

David Lorenz (06:17):

Cycle continues,

Bob Gilbert (06:18):

The cycle continues, but that's really what you did back 17 years ago with the development of Pure Michigan. And it, it sounds as if you spoke internally to the residents to get a, an understanding as to where their head was at, so that whatever promotional campaign you put together was believable, it was authentic, but at the same time, a degree aspirational. Yeah. So how was that processed? How, how

did you engage with the local community at the state community? It obviously broken down into its different regions to bring that Pure Michigan campaign to life.

David Lorenz (07:02):

Yeah. It really all started with our former director, George Zimmerman. I was managing director for him at the time, and yes,

David Lorenz (07:08):

Yes. And he had this vision that I don't think many people would've been able to have because of where he came from. He came from another state, grew up mostly in Texas, but he went all around the, the country and yep. Had been travel director in Ohio and, and did a bunch of other things all around the country. And when he was lured to come to Michigan to be travel director, he had a different set of eyes, a different perspective. And he could really see Michigan for what it is, what it was at the time and what it could be, cuz he really could see that, wow, this is a pretty special place, but Michiganders don't see that because they'd been so beaten up. So that's really where it all started. If he had not been here to P have that presence, that sense of perspective.

David Lorenz (07:53):

I don't think we ever would've gotten to where we are today. And so he put this really great team together. I like to think I'm, I'm a big part of that, but there were a whole bunch of us. We, we brought in probably maybe 200 people that we felt represented the state of Michigan, mostly the travel sector, but other sectors of the state. And we, we tried to use a couple of branding companies and we didn't really feel like we were getting where we needed to go. So we kind of took it on our own to, to bring together a bunch of people, ask them a bunch of questions, what they felt the state really was or could be. And from that, we took those learnings and we, we set out to talk to marketing agencies and we hired McCann Erickson out of Detroit. And we said, Hey, here it is.

David Lorenz (08:38):

This is what the brand is to us. This is a place with unbelievable unparalleled natural beauty, with unique, authentic experiences, real Americana, where important things happened and are happening today to make the American story what it is and friendly people. It seems strange to say that, but we always hear that from other people. Yep. That it's a uniquely friendly place. So we, we brought that all together. We went to McCann and they started to put the ads together. And before you know, it, we had these beautiful ads that we think told the authentic, real story of a place that's not perfect, but that has a goal to get there, to be opening and to be welcoming to all with all of its blemishes and all of its challenges. So we never pretended to be something that we're not. We just started to tell that story in a variety of ways, namely in commercials, TV, and radio and you name it.

David Lorenz (09:33):

And that really resonated with, I think, first Michigan residents who started to see their state in a different way. I can't tell you how many, I mean, hundreds of emails and cards and letters, people still write them in hand written letters. Couldn't believe it love letters to us and to the brand people who just had to say how much Pure Michigan meant to them. And that messaging changed the way they thought about their own state and rekindled this real sense of pride. And when you start to see that, when, when you hear radio announcers say I'm getting calls, asking to play that ad again, that's never had before. That's never happened before. Right. And we were hearing that, you know, you've really caught

something that you've really been able to accomplish something. And I can't even tell you that we thought we would get there, but it happened relatively fast.

David Lorenz ([10:26](#)):

So now over these, you know, many years we've continued to evolve the message to still tell the true story, to expand upon it, to try to get people to think in different ways to, to be, you know, more welcoming as a state, as so many other places have been dealing with these incredible racial challenges and other challenges. I think it's very interesting to note that a state with the city like Detroit that had gone through some very difficult times that in the sixties had burned partially over racial issues. I mean, literally burned. Yeah. What was one of the cities that did not go through that strife recently? When so many others were Detroit in Michigan, primarily because I think not only did we learn our lesson to try to treat people better and all, but I think part of it, a little teeny part of it was because people had bought into the fact that even though we were imperfect, we were trying, and I like to believe that we played a little role in trying to get that message across. And I think that's helped us to understand that we have a long way to go before perfection. We'll never, it's never possible, but we're gonna always try to get there. Right.

Bob Gilbert ([11:35](#)):

And I think using the word pure yeah. In Pure Michigan has that essence of authenticity real it it's straightforward. It's, it's not manipulative. And you know, it's honest. And that is something that I think resonates. And, and I think also selecting an agency from Detroit, you're kind of halfway there. So you don't, yeah. You haven't gotta fly in an agency out of New York or LA or wherever. Yeah.

David Lorenz ([12:02](#)):

Uh, they did a, they did a tremendous job. They were our agency of record for 15 years. And as eventually happens with, with any, um, agency, client relationship, you, you feel it's appropriate at some point to shake it up a little bit. So now we work with MMG, Y global, they're doing a tremendous job and they're following in the footsteps that, that had been made the very big footsteps by McCann and our previous teams. And we're trying to live up to that standard. That's been set as things change, right? And as our goals adjust to some degree, we've been trying to blend the messaging that we've used for travel and tourism, to be more of a message that talks about business and travel, you know, talent, cuz everybody's looking for workers for every sector of the economy right now. So now we're trying to still keep that very important travel message resonating through people's minds while also using the Pure Michigan brand to encourage people to come here, to be part of this story, to work here and we'll see how it goes. Right.

Bob Gilbert ([13:10](#)):

You know, you've brought up, you know, the work issue and, and that, that challenge is across the country. And if not across around the world. Yeah. Are there any steps that you are taking to work with industry, uh, to two parts that a question one to attract the kind of workforce that you're looking for and then the second, the bringing new businesses into the state.

David Lorenz ([13:35](#)):

Yeah, there are, and you know, we are Travel Michigan is the organization and Pure Michigan, the brand that we developed and manage. And we're a business unit of what's called the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Yeah. A lot of states call it their department of commerce. Mm-hmm we felt

it was important years ago to kind of separate from being a hundred percent governmental to be quasi-governmental to bring in people with expertise. And it's helped us get to where we are today. And that has now led us to try to extend that brand messaging to be used in multiple ways. It's a delicate process because you don't want to damage that pure messaging that you've had out there that really talks all about lifestyle, but you do wanna try to utilize it to some degree for the equity that you've built up in it to extend the use into this, this other need.

David Lorenz ([14:27](#)):

So we are pretty early in the stages of putting together our program, but it, I believe I expect it will be one where we work with the private sector. We put together collaborative marketing programs showing how potential workers should come here and can come here to have a great life, to find a tremendous career. And, you know, we have the jobs because of the type of, of state we are. We have thousands of engineer jobs open in this state just as an example. Yep. We're the leaders in EV technology electric vehicles. Yes. We are working with our EV tech office to help install an initiative of our governor to help, to install electric charging stations, all along the lake, Michigan shoreline. And we're working with the other states in a collaborative move around the lake so that people can use their EB, their electric vehicles, uh, without rang anxiety and go to all these wonderful places, state parks, uh, lighthouses restaurants, wherever these EB charging stations are located because we see this as not something only important to the travel industry to provide access to these places with people with EVs. But we see it as the move of the future. Michigan put America on wheels in the first place, Henry Ford virtually created the modern travel industry by making the car affordable to the average American family and putting people on the roads. And we see this next stage as Michigan playing this really important role of getting people in EVs. So that's gotta be part of this messaging and we evolve the messaging into a sustainable travel message plus a lifestyle message. So you're gonna start to see some of that out there.

Bob Gilbert ([16:10](#)):

So

David Lorenz ([16:11](#)):

Looking forward to that challenge.

Bob Gilbert ([16:12](#)):

So with an I two sustainable tourism and with EV and the initiatives there that does kind of skew to a Gen Z audience, is is that an audience that you do target?

David Lorenz ([16:27](#)):

It is. And you know, it's interesting you say that because that's, that would be my first thought as well. And the more we looked into this, we found out that this is not just a Gen Z thing more and more. So the baby boomer population is looking for more sustainable travel opportunities. They're looking for places like we offer where you can go to, uh, places and, and find how a craft beverages are being made in a sustainable fashion. You know, things like this. So it, it's interesting that this messaging, I think is one of the things that people wanna know about. And I think more so because of the impact of COVID, I think COVID changed the way we think. I think people wanna look for wellness opportunities. They wanna be part of a better environment and they wanna make sure that they're not making things worse. I think that's partially what has come out of COVID this need to explore new places we've never been to before,

maybe go to those places. We love so much and want to go for generations in the future. Mm. And we wanna see family and friends, but we also wanna meet new people and understand new cultures.

Bob Gilbert ([17:34](#)):

So,

David Lorenz ([17:35](#)):

So that's, that's all part of this, this very complicated communication approach that we are taking.

Bob Gilbert ([17:41](#)):

Right. You know, COVID and the challenges that it presented. I mean, there were certain things that were happening that I think that COVID accelerated. Yeah. And I think one of those actually was workforce that it wasn't something that halfway through COVID and we were all locked down that we thought I want to go and do something else, you know, the big quit. It was just accelerated as there were many things that accelerated due to the pandemic,

David Lorenz ([18:11](#)):

I think you're right.

Bob Gilbert ([18:12](#)):

Yeah. So, well, let me ask you a question, first of all, that goes back to workforce, but not necessarily, but MEDC, when did that start? How long has that been in existence?

David Lorenz ([18:25](#)):

I think the MEDC has been around for about 25 or 30 years. I know when I was in retail marketing, I certainly was aware of this transition from department of commerce to this new quasi-governmental approach. And I liked what I heard from the very beginning that this thought about finding the best of the best of the private sector, who could help meet the needs of the greater public. And that's something that really resonated with me to tell you the truth. I was loving my job working in private sector, in the retail marketing world. It was a great, I mean, retail's a lot of fun. Mm-hmm, <affirmative> when you're a marketer and maybe, you know, it doesn't seem like it to most people <laugh>, but you used to have a little retail and fun. We used to always say, uh, because cuz it can be. But when I heard about this organization and their goal to try to bring people who could kind of look at things in a different way and not in the stereotypical government way, that intrigued me and it still does today. And I'll tell you, I really appreciate my coworkers because almost everyone has the same attitude of how can we serve people better than maybe they would ever expect from a quote unquote government office. You know, there are all those stereotypes about government workers and I'll tell you, most of those are very old and out of date, but they're there occasionally my coworkers I'm really proud of the work we do.

Bob Gilbert ([19:46](#)):

So you work hand in hand with them, which is interesting, you know, looking at developments in different parts of the country where I look at Orlando when they actually fuse, they came together. Yeah. And so the tourism entity in Orlando is a branch of, I'll use the word you used before commerce. It's part of the economic development organization. And there are other destinations where there is a

little bit more frigid. <laugh>, there's a frigid relationship between economic development and tourism. But you think the two of have that blend of cooperation, which just makes sense.

David Lorenz ([20:26](#)):

So it does make sense. And here's the thing. If you are lucky enough to have like our CEO as Quentin Messer, Jr. He came from new Orleans. So luckily as an economic developer, he knew the value of travel and tourism. Now that doesn't always happen. So there's the problem with so many other states and other communities. If you have an economic development management team that doesn't value travel and tourism, as part of that economic puzzle, then there's conflict that's eventually going to happen because the truth is, and I, I think especially for a state like Michigan travel and tourism is like one of the, the three legs of the stool. You have manufacturing, uh, you have agriculture and then you have travel and tourism in addition to all the finance sector and sector, all that. Uh, but between those two, these three things, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, without any of those three operating, well, the other two can't perform at their best levels either. So luckily we have leadership at the very top who understands just that little extra thing that people do to have fun. We're a really important part of the economic development endeavor here.

Bob Gilbert ([21:36](#)):

Yeah. The, the, the visitor impact, you know, which, you know, can be quantified and validated a lot more today than it used to be years ago, as we all know, years ago, the only KPI was how many travel state travel guides, um, were distributed. And that was the KPI. Uh,

David Lorenz ([21:54](#)):

Yeah. I, you know, I it's, it's interesting because I, even now, occasionally I hear people say, well, you know, I don't understand why we invest so much in travel and tourism. They're not quality jobs. I hate that term quality jobs. I'll tell you this, my first job I made 60 or 80 cents an hour. I forget that was a quality job to me at that point in my life. Yeah. I was washing dishes at a restaurant and I became a, a fry cook. And then there was a time I cleaned up the expressways for a dollar an hour in my summer job. It was gruesome sometimes, but I did. And every job I've had, it's been a quality job for me because it helped me learn things. It helped me grow, it, paid the bills. And I don't think there's any such thing as a, anything other than a quality job.

David Lorenz ([22:45](#)):

So we provide jobs that are often the first jobs for people jobs when they get to understand how to interact with other people, how to do relatively simple things. We think like changing money, which it teaches responsibility, it teaches self-worth and you know, these days we've gone through all these government programs where money has been handed out and now it's being handed out even greater degrees. I'm really worried about that because without then understanding that every job counts and that every dollar counts and, and such, I think psychologically that's gonna impact us negatively. But yeah,

Bob Gilbert ([23:23](#)):

I'll

David Lorenz ([23:23](#)):

Tell you it's important for us, every job we provide in this industry. And then the last thing I'll say about it is not all of our jobs are low paying either by far. Uh, we have a lot of quote, unquote quality jobs out there in the travel industry as

Bob Gilbert (23:38):

Well. Yeah. You know, it's, it's fascinating within the travel and tourism world where you see CEOs and presidents who started as an entry level position within travel and tourism. Yep. Um, I, I remembered, uh, well a friend of mine, David Kong, who was for 20 years, the CEO of Best Western International. And he, he started out washing dishes.

David Lorenz (24:05):

Oh, there you go.

Bob Gilbert (24:06):

Yeah. I mean, so, and, and there are so many stories like that, for those that, you know, wanna start, you can't become a president of a company overnight <laugh>. Yeah.

David Lorenz (24:16):

And I, and I don't understand how people get to positions like mine without having perspectives of other people and other people's positions and positions, not only in life, but in their work until you can really understand what it's like to do those other tasks. How can you really build a team, a team that supports one another? Cause it's not just, it's not, this is not Legos. Right? Every, every piece is a different shape and size when it comes to building a team.

Bob Gilbert (24:48):

Yep, indeed. So with Pure Michigan, what is the infrastructure in terms of regional DMO? How do you work with them and how do you balance your statewide programs and how you break them out with the, that have a regional impact. Um, which is really, I guess, talking about development and prioritization of co-op programs. Uh, how does, how does that work here in, in Michigan?

David Lorenz (25:20):

Yeah. We have a, a nine person office at Travel Michigan. That's always surprising to people. You only have nine people. Yeah, we do. And we operate out of our state capital. We don't have regional offices. We have taken a different approach where we have the, I don't think it's like 70 local destination marketing organizations around the state. Mm-hmm <affirmative>, some of them are one little town. Others are multiple counties. One is the entire upper peninsula of Michigan. And we use those entities as co-working partners, where they are like our coworkers. We are like theirs. We try to stay in our own lane when it comes to branding the state, but we also wanna provide any kind of assistance we can to help them. So we put together a lot of cooperative advertising opportunities where we will do the, the analysis, the research we'll help them with the branding at the local level.

David Lorenz (26:18):

We'll make sure it ties in with the Pure Michigan branding. We'll develop the ads. We'll we'll. If there are radio or TV ads, we'll use the voice of Tim Allen like we do for our own brand. We'll, we'll use the, the various other creative elements, the music of CDER house rules and the other creative elements that we

use. And then those local communities have a pure Michigan ad just for them. And then a variety of other medium, of course, always taking that same approach, that same look and feel at least to some degree with the personalization that that local community wants and needs as well. And this way. And again, it all fits together. And as I mentioned, it's not Legos. It's more like a puzzle because everybody has their own unique little piece to play. And in doing that, we tell this bigger story about this really diverse place that has all these really interesting pieces to visit.

Bob Gilbert (27:11):

So,

David Lorenz (27:11):

And it's worked on.

Bob Gilbert (27:12):

So, so in, in terms of your feeder markets, you have your drive market, you have your longer, longer haul, uh, and, and you have international and you are blessed to have an amazing, I love the airport in Detroit. It's, uh, I just, you know, when you live in a small city and I, you know, moved here to just north of green bay, um, and I came from Buffalo, but everything for me, uh, changed in Detroit <laugh> because it's, it,

David Lorenz (27:41):

It's a great airport. It really is.

Bob Gilbert (27:43):

Plus the international, um, routes that, that, that are there. So talk to me a little bit about your key markets, how they may have changed with, with COVID. Obviously the international market was, came to a standstill, but, uh, are you seeing science of recovery from international and what markets and how the, how your domestic feeder markets may have changed the dynamic over the last few years?

David Lorenz (28:12):

Yeah. For most of what we do, we see real potential growth coming back, um, up until 2019, we were having pretty, I mean, certainly, um, I'll just say substantial growth every year in our travel economy, like so many others, you always start out, you know, in your backyard. So when we had smaller budget, we mostly just did a Michigan marketing campaign. We eventually moved into the great lakes region, almost all domestic. At some point we included a Canadian element into Ontario. Our neighbor and Ontario to us is like Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, it's, you know, right next door. So we don't even treat Ontario really as an international market. It's more like a domestic market. Mm-hmm <affirmative> over time when budget became more available. And as we knew that Pure Michigan was resonating with audiences around everywhere, we went, we, we started a national campaign that used cable, eventually digital, other promotional elements with some additional activities.

David Lorenz (29:18):

And some of those markets that we know we'd have really good draw from like Dallas and Atlanta places, where in the summertime, if you try to go golfing, you're gonna melt <laugh>, but we knew we could draw them to Michigan and, you know, state with the most public golf courses than any other

state in the country and beautiful long summer days, and mostly, really wonderful, comfortable days to be out there. So we knew we could do extra activities there that led us to expanding our international presence. I currently share great lakes, USA, which is the international marketing consortium of the various states around the great lakes region. And we've had that consortium for more than 25 years. It went into a pause during COVID, but we've been marketing Germany, Austria Switzerland in the UK, Ireland as well. And for a while, we were working in China, just starting when it all fell apart.

David Lorenz (30:11):

Our international marketing effort included China just for Michigan. And in three years, China had become our number one overseas market. Wow. All those people and all that money. And so COVID made all that stop. So here we are with this challenge. Now, as we, as we start to unveil everything again, we know China, won't be back for a long time, at least for the foreseeable future. So we have that huge gap to fill. Meanwhile, Canada is slowly starting to cross the border again, it's getting a little bit easier, even though Canadian government's been slower to open up from COVID. Our overseas market in the EU is starting to awaken and we've reinstated the, the great lakes USA consortium activities. While we also started to work more in our German and UK market activities, we have agencies in both of those markets. And so that's all starting to work again, and people are starting to travel, but I mentioned China without that huge presence, we have a huge gap to fill. And this is after three years where Michiganders mostly kind of felt like they could and wanted to stay in state for their travel. So moving forward, there are gonna be more of them who wanna explore the rest of the world. This has been at a time when our budget decreased a bit. So we've only been marketing in the great lakes for the last three years.

Bob Gilbert (31:36):

How, how you funded by the way? What is the funded mechanism?

David Lorenz (31:40):

Mostly through general fund through an allocation, through the legislative and mm-hmm <affirmative> administration process. Yep. You know, so we we've gone up and down, back and forth. We've mostly grown, but as we were going into COVID, we got in the middle of an argument between the legislature and the administration. And we ended up getting zeroed out in our budget, going into COVID. Very, very unfortunate, but we're getting the budget back. And so we can start looking at that national message again. But you know, it's gonna take a couple of years for that to really resonate. So we're gonna have people in state start to look for other places. We still haven't filled that China gap, our other international audiences slowly starting to come back, but not to the levels it was. And we haven't been out there nationally for a while. So I think the next two years are gonna be big challenge. And, uh, it's where to do our best to, to kind of fill in those gaps left by all the other laws. But it's gonna be a challenge. Yeah. I like challenges, but it's gonna be a challenge. <laugh>

Bob Gilbert (32:37):

That's what gets us outta bed every morning.

David Lorenz (32:39):

That's right. It was easy. Anybody could do it.

Bob Gilbert (32:42):

<laugh> so let's chat a little bit about some of, I, I think I refer to it as, uh, in addition to your day job, you know, your chair of the National Council of State Tourism Directors. Does that come under U.S. Travel Association?

David Lorenz (32:58):

It does, yes.

Bob Gilbert (32:59):

Okay. So it's one of accounts -

David Lorenz (33:00):

Association.

Bob Gilbert (33:01):

Yeah. Okay. So is, is that connected to ESTO? Cause I think you had, you had ESTO, you hosted ESTO this year in Grand Rapid.

David Lorenz (33:08):

Yeah. We just by, yeah, we just, by chance, uh, we're um, happy to host ESTO in 2022 and that was supposed to happen and 2020, but that all came to a, a stop because of COVID. So we had to delay that, but the national council chair position is a voted position through the other travel directors. So this will be my, I think third or fourth year, fourth year, I guess, cuz I came into it early, the prior chair ended up leaving her job. So I ended up coming in early cuz I had been vice chair. Right. So I think this would be my third or fourth year. I've lost track. It's all a blur <laugh> but it's a great honor. It really is.

Bob Gilbert (33:47):

Absolutely, absolutely. I mean to

David Lorenz (33:49):

Share the group open, to get to know all the other directors and we you'd be surprised how much we share among it's the most collaborative group of competitors I've ever worked with. So, and I love those people.

Bob Gilbert (34:01):

What are the, um, topics that you discuss that you're able to share <laugh> with the, with the listening audience?

David Lorenz (34:10):

I guess I will say we share everything we really do. I've learned not to share in advance our marketing platforms. Mm-hmm <affirmative> I'll just say, I think that some of my friends out there might have taken some of that advice and used it themselves <laugh> I'm just as egotistical to believe they did <laugh> but, but so what we mostly share are, are challenges that we all share. There are about 50 or so people who do what we do in the country, it's a small party mm-hmm <affirmative>. And so we, we all support each other as brothers and sisters. We really do because there's nothing, there's no special secrets. I mean, every so often, one of us has a really great idea nobody's thought of and they put it into

practice and then we learn about it later. But for the most part, we're all doing what each other knows can be done. We're just doing it, you know, differently in our own way and what meets the needs of our states and territories. But we have a lot of talented people out there. And um, I think we really enjoy sharing with each other, what we are doing and we keep each other on, on our toes.

Bob Gilbert (35:17):

Yeah.

David Lorenz (35:18):

Because we, we love to share, but there's a, there's a competition there too. Believe me. Right.

Bob Gilbert (35:24):

<laugh> I can, uh, I, I do see that I'm very aware of that, but it's, it's interesting, you know, before I into the wonderful world of destination marketing organizations, I was the executive teams of a number of hotel chains and I go back some years and the, the very notion of sharing or publishing your marketing plan, I know can be read by your competitor was just one of the definitions of insanity, but I know it is so easy and, and mandated that you can go and onto a particular state or a CVB and look at their marketing plan downloaded. And that's the thing. And that, that has always amazed me.

David Lorenz (36:06):

Yeah. That's the most, most of us because we're state funded or territory funded. Yeah. Well that's all public information, right? So we just, even though our organization's a little bit different, we wouldn't have to share so much, but we're happy to, and you know, there's something I think valuable about being a leader in certain areas. It, again, it keeps you on your toes, it makes you wanna continue to be in that leadership position. So in some areas we are in some areas, other states are, so we learn from them, they learn for us. And uh, at the end of the day, everyone in America is better off because of the work we do. Yeah. And so there's a, a patriotic element to what we do. I truly a hundred percent believe that. And that's why I think at least in my case, I'm, I'm happy to share.

Bob Gilbert (36:54):

No, I, and, and I think giving back is absolutely to be applauded. And, you know, I have also been on the executive committee of the board of directors for us travel. And I absolutely understand the role and the importance of that. It was a, it's a lot different today because it's a lot larger and I guess by degree more important. But the, I was on it for a short period of time because I then changed jobs and went to Disney. There was, uh, Randy Garfield who you probably know yeah. Was already on the executive and you can't have two people on the executive. <laugh> right. Uh, so I had to, uh, he was the more senior. So, um, I it's,

David Lorenz (37:36):

It's been, it's been especially interesting this last few years because of going through the COVID process and all this period going through, you know, a transition of CEOs yeah. With Roger dental, moving on and Jeff Freeman now coming in and going through all that search process, I can tell you, I thought about that position for about three seconds. Um, and you know, just realizing that, you know, I love doing what I'm doing for my state. I wonder what I could do for the nation. And, and I had several people ask about that, but I'm doing what I should do and I'm happy to do it.

Bob Gilbert ([38:08](#)):

I was saying you, it sounds very much like you love getting outta bed every day and, and waving the pure Michigan flag. So, absolutely.

David Lorenz ([38:18](#)):

True.

Bob Gilbert ([38:18](#)):

I wanna thank you so much for being our guest today on tourism heads and their tales. It's been very engaging. I've learned a lot and I'm sure that our listening audience has as well. I just wanna thank you for your time, Dave, and, and again, I, I wanna thank you personally, for the work you do with the national council of state tourism directors and your role serving on the executive committee of the board of directors for us travel association and all the other work that you do that we haven't even spoken about. So thank you so much for being our guest today.

David Lorenz ([38:52](#)):

It's a great pleasure and honor, and it's been great talking to you and I would be remiss if I didn't remind you that your trip begins@michigan.org.

Bob Gilbert ([39:02](#)):

We hope you enjoyed today's episode. Please like thumbs up, subscribe and leave a review. You can also visit EddyAlexander.com to learn more about our tourism marketing and destination management services and read some of our recent case studies. Finally, if you'd like to suggest future guests or podcast discussion topics, or to sign up, to get an email alert, when we drop new episodes, please do so at eddyalexander.com/thatt