

Chris: [00:00:00] The big underlying piece of what I've done here is tried to, A, eliminate friction. B, solve some inventory problems where I've got a room and I'm paying for the lights and the people and the everything and I don't have that many people in seats. And also try to get people reconnected with each other in real life versus looking in their phones.

[music]

Peter: [00:00:30] Welcome to improv is no joke podcast. It's all about becoming a more effective communicator by embracing the principles of improvisation. I'm your host Peter Margarita's the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business the accidental account. My goal is to provide you with thought provoking interviews with business leaders so you can become an effective improviser which will lead to building stronger relationships with clients customers colleagues and even your family. So let's start to show.

[music]

Peter: [00:01:01] Welcome to episode 64 and today my guest is Chris Shirer, the Founder of two companies: Madison + Fifth, a marketing agency, and JoinMyTable, a new platform for prepaid group dining created to encourage community and increase our time spent in real world conversation. She is a Pittsburgh native but has called Columbus Ohio her home for about 25 years. Chris' professional life is about creative ideation, problem solving, and connecting people. Her personal time is spent in her home art studio and kitchen where she is observed very carefully by the rocket: her 14 pound Pomeranian lifemate. Rocket is convinced that Chris' hidings with the scraps and just needs to know where they're located. Our discussion focuses around her newest business, JoinMyTable, which is a fascinating and very unique concept. I'll let Chris tell you more about this concept, but it's about bringing communities together over dinner for some good conversation, without the use of a smartphone or tablet. This could be a group of your friends or your team from work. But the real gem here is bring in a like-minded community together to make new friends and has some good conversation. When we recorded the episode, FindYourTable was launching the very next day. She is testing the concept in Columbus, Ohio, but has plans on expanding that once some initial feedback is received and the edges are smoothed out. Before you get to the interview, I'd like to talk about Listen Learn and Earn. I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits](#). You can earn up to one CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute [self-study website](#). The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, Go to the MACPA and BLI self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take the review and final exam while you're working out or after listening to an episode on your commute to and from work - It's that easy! While all Improv is no Joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA and BLI self-study Web site are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed instructions by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE credit" on my home page. I hope you enjoy this exciting and flexible way of earning CPE credit. OK with that said, Now let's get to the interview with Chris Shirer.

[music]

Peter: [00:04:05] Chris, thank you for taking time out of your hectic schedule to spend some time with me today on my podcast.

Chris: [00:04:12] I love having breaks in the action like this because it gives me a chance to recenter and rebalance. So thank you for having me.

Peter: [00:04:19] And this conversation is long overdue because you were the one who finally pushed me across the line to start this podcast about a year and a half ago, when after you came for dinner and we had talked about the podcast (because people had talked to me about a while about it), I look to Mary I said she's pushed me over the edge. I'm going to go for it. And I haven't looked back since. So thank you for that.

Chris: [00:04:48] Oh I'm so glad. You know it's really and truly it's wonderful when people will take that initiative you know and when you encourage somebody along the path of communicating what they know for other people, it benefits... the ripple effect is amazing. So I'm really I'm glad that you took that leap and it's gone so I can't believe it's been a year and a half. It's crazy.

Peter: [00:05:11] Year and a half and we just celebrated the one year anniversary at the end of June. So I'm into I'm into the second second year this and I've had a blast the whole time. I had no idea what this was going to turn out to be. But it is tenfold whatever I ever anticipated it to be so thank you once again.

Chris: [00:05:31] Excellent excellent.

Peter: [00:05:33] So in preparing for today I was thinking about what we're going to find more information out about you. And I always like doing my research, and one of my research places is this going to linkedin.

Chris: [00:05:44] That's called cyber stalking. I just want to make sure that you understand.

Peter: [00:05:50] Hahahaha.

Chris: [00:05:50] But it's OK. I'm OK with that.

Peter: [00:05:53] Because I've actually said it live that cyberstalking you, but for all the good reasons.

Chris: [00:06:00] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:06:00] And on your LinkedIn page you state that you're an entrepreneur and devoted champion of all things food, beverage, and guest experience, and you had me at food.

Chris: [00:06:11] Hahah.

Peter: [00:06:11] Can you go into some detail on what you mean by that?

Chris: [00:06:16] You know I... when I was growing up in Pittsburgh we were always a very get everybody around the table kind of family. I remember from my very very young years my father had five siblings, and every Sunday night we would go to my grandmother's house and she was a fabulous cook. I still to this day have recipes in a binder that she put together for me of all of her best. I called it the party. I mean that's what I refer to it as when we were when I was growing up. It was a table just filled... They were a fortunate family. It was a very large table and it was cacophonous and fabulous and the food was wonderful and it really made an impression on me. The connection between food and getting together with people, and as I transitioned through my life, her recipes... my mother having given me my first book as a child was a little Betty Crocker cookbook for children. And I learned the basic practices of mise en place. I didn't know that that's what you called it when I was seven but you know getting everything in order so that you can do a really good job of moving right through the recipe and cleaning up afterwards and all the rest of that. So cooking was always a big thing for me. I loved it and I loved cooking for other people. And weirdly you know fast forward decades later I'm in this digital marketing business running an agency and one of my best and biggest clients for the last 16 years has been Cameron Mitchell restaurants, the amazing restaurants of a Columbus native who has done a phenomenal job of spreading great food all over the country. He's now coast to coast with his Ocean Prime concept. So I watch you know 16 years of watching him run this business and having this wonderful front row seats with all these incredibly talented chefs and equally talented and amazing hospitality people led me finally to this place where there was no place to go other than to express my deep love, affection, and passion for this idea of food and gathering, and to do this startup thing. So really the intention of what I've landed on here comes very much on the way back to that Sunday night. Are we going to the party?

Peter: [00:08:42] Hahaha.

Chris: [00:08:43] Which was every Sunday night. To How can I make everybody get to have a party, whenever they want to? And so that that's kind of the back story of the passion and the food piece.

Peter: [00:08:55] So JoinMyTable is the digital age that you have created, and we're require this and this app is by the time you listen to this it will be out there live. It's actually launching the very-- tomorrow. And one of the questions I had for Chris, in creating this experience is joinmytable, because when I look at my cell phone and I look at these apps I think well they just showed up. I don't really really put a thought on how long is it taken from inception to becoming a reality. And I thought to be an interesting question and hear your perspective on. How long has it taken? From the idea to tomorrow.

Chris: [00:09:42] Well you know the idea interestingly is five years old. It was a concept that I had that needed to be smoothed out in certain ways, and I had taken it to Cameron that long ago and said What do you think about this? And he said Oh I love this. And I guess we should share with people that what what the concept is. It has evolved to be this thing, which is a way for restaurants to allow people to find really cool off-the-menu dining experiences that they can prepay for online. Everything is included: the tip, the tax, the credit card fee. So if it says that it's \$50, that's all you're paying. You pay for it online, invite your friends and family, whoever, your workmates, through the application. And then show up at the restaurant and just have a great time, and you don't have to open your wallet again. You don't have to check. You don't have to

worry about figuring out a tip. Because there's always that person at the table who's like I didn't like her. I think it's 5 percent for the tip.

Peter: [00:10:45] Right.

Chris: [00:10:45] The agony of service life is you know I've got a big group. Is everybody going to play by the rules? You know. So we eliminate all of that, which is great for servers. And one of the things... the business problem that I was trying to solve with this was to make sure that restaurants were busy on nights that aren't necessarily busy nights. Some of my participants and partners in this, the restaurants, are choosing to do these tables -- is what we call them -- on busy nights. But they also have the opportunity to drive additional incremental revenue straight to the bottom line on a Monday or Tuesday night, when it may not be that easy. So the servers making better revenue, the chefs on the line who you know you may have a rock star there waiting to do something really interesting, and this is a chance for them to step out, do something fun, come out to the table, talk to people, get those relationships going so that the party really has kind of a host to it. It is not just server, but it's also the person who's created this really interesting thing. And it can be bar chefs. I mean there's so much going on in cocktails and you days, And in Columbus alone we have an incredible ecosystem of craft breweries and distilleries and coffee roasters and wineries popping up all over the place. There's an unlimited supply of amazing creativity available for everybody to experience or start to get a relationship with. So back in the day, five years ago when I went to Cameron, the original concept was boy I'd really love it if I could just go somewhere and sit at a table in a restaurant that they'd set aside where I could just try the menu. And I didn't feel funny about going by myself. So it was sort of an open community type table. And they really liked the idea about incremental revenue and not busy nights, but one piece of feedback I got when I circle back around I got busy and came back to them and said Is there anything that stuck in your head that maybe it wouldn't work? Because these are great advisor to have. I mean they know everything about hospitality and food and operations, and they said you know people don't like eating with strangers. And that was the only thing that we had a concern about, and I thought you know that's interesting because I'm just gregarious and I love meeting new people and so it's not in my head to think that other people might share a table with somebody they don't know. So I went back to the drawing board and I thought you know we need to circle this around something. There has to be an anchor point to it, and that was going to be this should be remarkable. They should be something where even if you are seated at what we call a community table that anybody can join, there's at least a common theme and you're going to potentially meet people who have the same affinity for bourbon or cuisine or something like that. And then we layered in on top of that private table options. So what people can do is find an experience that they just want to have with their friends family coworkers and order it up for a specific day and time that the restaurant is willing to do it, pay in advance, get everybody invited either through the platform or you can choose your own methods (But it's really fun to be able to see who's coming who's responded and manage your guest list from inside the platform), and we've got you know something for everybody. So if you want to meet new people, if you want to be with other people, great. If you want to just be with your close group of friends, we have that option as well.

Peter: [00:14:19] OK so this. Well you had me at Bourbon So now I'm definitely going to download the app.

Chris: [00:14:26] Oh, yay.

Peter: [00:14:27] So ocean club, or one of the restaurants... and maybe you can give us a hint on who some of those restaurants are. So they decided on a Tuesday night going to have a bourbon tasting or a wine tasting. And so the menu is already pre-planned. And so I look on the app. Oh look there's a bourbon tasting is not too far from here is a Tuesday night and it's going to cost everything a total is 50 bucks. And I'm in, so I go by myself, But there's like a community table there that other people who have chimed in, and we're sharing the experience. And I could be making two or three new friends.

Chris: [00:15:08] Exactly.

Peter: [00:15:09] Interesting. Because when I when... and maybe this was during the only conversation you had with us a while back because I thought it was I'm having dinner by myself and there's three other seats on the table and the restaurant can basically say well this person wanted to sit. Do you mind if have dinner with you?

Chris: [00:15:30] No. Hahaha

Peter: [00:15:31] And I'm a pretty outgoing person. But there's some time now I think I just kind of want to sit here with some Peace and quiet so...

Chris: [00:15:39] Right.

Peter: [00:15:39] I love the concept that you've created.

Chris: [00:15:43] Yeah. No. This is and this is exactly to the point of what Cameron's team said to me back in the day was, if you just drop a stranger next to somebody, that doesn't really work out that well. But if somebody goes in knowing this is a thing, there's a theme, there's an event to it, and it's got you know some substance that everyone can kind of get around. Then you are going to draw people who would like to be with other people in that moment. But again the really powerful piece is this private table kind of offering where the restaurants have decided on Mondays Tuesdays Wednesdays at 6:00 or 7:00 o'clock seatings we will deliver this experience at this price and everything is included. Nobody's got to get out their wallet once they purchase their seat online. That is incredibly powerful for them because it does so many different things on you know and inside the restaurant level and gets us back to that relationship that a lot of restaurants used to have with people, where you come in and you see somebody that you know who's working there. And it's not just kind of I'm ordering off the menu and whoever happens to be in the cycle that night is my guy. You're starting to get a relationship with the kitchen and the food and the people who are in service because there are servers who are going to be really into this. And the restaurants will identify them as the great hosts for that evening for these tables. But to circle back and kind of drifted off on you so that people understand what we were talking about. You asked about how long it takes to build one of these things. And so the concept is really important and I think one of the things that I've learned over a few decades of being an entrepreneur and running my own business is that you don't even bother going anywhere near building a web based application, which is what this is. We'll turn it into an app once we're done tweaking. But for right now it's simple and easy and no downloads necessary of anything. You just go to joinmytable.com and you can see and buy from there. But to get to that we really needed to work out the real world business problems we were solving to make

sure that it was valid; to do market research. So I think we spent an incredible amount of time. I'm going to say close to two years really digging into how can this functionally work inside a restaurant when you have a kitchen. And if you know anything about kitchens they run like Swiss watches when they're great, and what we're asking them to do is suddenly interrupt that flow on particular nights and times to deliver something outside of what they do, and a great kitchen and a great group will embrace it and go OK we'll just figure it out. I mean we've got it's going to stay in line with what we do and this is how we pick the things that we'll do. And then you know that getting those problems solved first then helps you determine right now how does my part of the equation have to work for this. How do I eliminate friction for the restaurant, for the guests, for everybody in the process. And that's really what technology has done for us. The big underlying piece of what I've done here is tried to, A, eliminate friction. B, solve some inventory problems where I've got a room and I'm paying for the lights and the people and everything and I don't have that many people in seats. And also try to get people reconnected with each other in real life versus looking in their phones all the time here.

Peter: [00:19:14] Hahaha.

Chris: [00:19:14] So that and, truthfully, as a person who worked in technology and built over 300 Web sites for amazing clients, my largest fear as a human being is that we have a whole generation of people who have lost the art of conversation; who feel it's less threatening to be able to hide behind personas and Facebook profiles and everything else. You know when's the last time you saw someone post something on Facebook that was vulnerable. I mean all we're doing ever in digital is putting out our best. You know it's like we're on a terminal first date with everyone we know.

Peter: [00:19:59] Hahahahaha. You're right. We're on the terminal first date. Hahaha.

Chris: [00:20:03] So you know we need to get back into that real world space. And I'm hoping that what we offer to people is so compelling that they'll be like I really want to go do this thing. I want to be with you guys. And hopefully they'll choose, we're not going to supply it because I think that's overreaching, but hopefully they'll put their phones in a box in the middle of the table and let them go. You know?

Peter: [00:20:24] So is that something that well maybe you know maybe the restaurants do put a box at these tables and say feel free to put your phone in and enjoy a conversation with the people around the table.

Chris: [00:20:39] Yeah. And I think you know with all brands it has to fit in with how far the restaurant wants to go with being a part of that message now.

Peter: [00:20:50] Right right.

Chris: [00:20:50] Because a lot of... I just heard about this the other day. There is some sort of three phone rule or something that millennials in particular follow because they're the digital generation, where before looking down at your phone if you're in a group at a table you have to check to make sure that no more than three people are also looking at their phone.

Peter: [00:21:10] Oh really?

Chris: [00:21:11] It's a rule of three or something so that everyone doesn't devolve completely into just being on their phones. And I just... I don't know. I mean when I reach back into my memory of happiness, it's when everybody was listening to one another and hearing a funny story that you then could share with other people, and that screen time is just... it's a little scary.

Peter: [00:21:37] It really is. And I actually I interviewed a gentleman who is a CEO of the South Carolina Association of CPAs, Chris Jenkins, who is a technology guy but he basically said the same thing. We've got to get back to that to communicating, and you know technology is not to be the be all end all. It's to help us but it's also hindering us from conversation. And I have a 17 year old son... at times I think it's great that he doesn't talk to me because I don't hear sarcasm or whatever.

Chris: [00:22:12] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:22:12] I mean he's a lot nicer when he texts versus sometimes when he talks.

Chris: [00:22:15] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:22:15] But but we do need to get back to that Sunday dinner at grandma's or that you know every other night sitting at the table and I know we've kind of gotten away from it. I love the concept. Now that I'm thinking about this... Is this going to be launched locally and grown nationally, or is this going to go national? How is it going to work?

Chris: [00:22:38] We really you know it's part of the path of a lot of startups is the local first. Small, Let's see... you know kick the tires and make sure everything's OK and yes. So Columbus first and then outreach, and I wish I could tell you where we would go next. I think we have a lot of regional cities that are very powerful and have great chef stories in them and great food stories. Pittsburgh was just named the number one food city in the country or something by someone reputable. And Cleveland is also great. I think the weird thing about the Columbus market that I'm hoping to address through the social posting that we end up doing and other stories we end up telling is we don't really talk about the chefs that much, and I'm really hoping that we're able to start telling those stories very aggressively. There are some amazing food that is being created here; some amazing creativity, not just in kitchens but also in the breweries, the distilleries, the coffee roasters. There are these guys on High Street at One line coffee that are just amazing. They do fair trade. They travel all over the world. They find really amazing stuff, and it's just it's one of those little hub kind of places that you want to say wow where... how how did you do this? And and they do some tasting kind of event on Saturdays that people can pay for and go to and I really encourage people to reach out and look for those kind of events even if they're not on a platform because we do have so many incredible people. And again that's the other part of this people connection story is I would like people to start getting to know those people: the people behind these great food and beverage experiences.

Peter: [00:24:26] Yeah. That would be cool because I always liked it. You know I have every now and then in a restaurant the chef will come out and ask how is everything, and you know kind of get some feedback and wouldn't take a whole lot of time. But it was it was nice when they did and making that connection with us. So this is going to start off in Columbus Ohio. Can you share the names of maybe some of the restaurants that are part of your program?

Chris: [00:24:56] Sure. Because by the time everybody hears the news will all have been out there so it's not so much a secret now when everyone is listening. The Refectory came on board a very early tomorrow. Kamal Boulos is one of the greatest restaurant guys, somaliers, and marketers on the planet. I mean back in the day in 2009 he won an award for a small business of the year from the chamber or something because... you've got to remember those were the dog days for restaurants, particularly, of the Great Recession. He made money. He increased sales.

Peter: [00:25:34] Wow.

Chris: [00:25:35] Which is insane because he is a relationship guy. And when you go there, there are relationship things happening and remarkable things happening. I went to dinner there once they served a cuckoo egg. OK I mean come on.

Peter: [00:25:48] A Cuckoo egg?

Chris: [00:25:50] Yes. What am I going to talk about the next day when I'm sitting around people? You know I had a cuckoo egg. How did it taste? Well like an egg. But it was a cuckoo egg!

Peter: [00:25:59] Hahaha.

Chris: [00:25:59] You know I mean that it's that kind of really amazing thinking and contemplation of the guest experience that that restaurant delivers. Cameron's team has stepped up to the plate with The Avenue putting together a really beautiful four course meal. It's paired really well with various things. We've got Paulie Gee's pizza. This kid is amazing. He is under 30 probably like 26 I think or 27, and right out of LSU went to spend a year in New York City with Paulie Giani, who started Paulie Gee's in Greenpoint in Brooklyn. And this guy has been voted number one pizza in New York City multiple years, and T.J. I went up there to do this tutoring. Went through a year of being underneath him and then convinced him to let him bring one of the Paulie Gees here to Columbus, and I think it was the first one outside New York City. The pizza is outstanding. He's a great energetic force, and he's partnered with other great purveyors here and sound like Katzinger's. There's a Katzinger's pizza with their Pastrami on it. They've got to Ray Ray's hog pit barbecue brisket based pizza. He does a vegan selection of pies. I mean that kind of stuff is great. I mean it's really interesting work. We've got Napa Kitchen and Bar up in Dublin. They're doing an introduction to wine tasting where you get five pours and there are menu items matched sorta family style, like the party, so that you can just really enjoy that and learn how to taste wine if you never figured that out.

Peter: [00:27:36] Anybody in Westerville?

Chris: [00:27:37] I'm trying to think of who else we've got... Barrel and Boar at Creekside. These guys are phenomenal and they're doing a Low country seafood boil where you get 20 people and put them down at the table with butcher block paper and they're going to dump out this amazing seafood. An authentic low country boil with southern sides kind of experience. So a wide range of all kinds of experiences and a five course course prize French country wine

dinner with Chef Burchard. You're not going to know what you're going to get but he's going to deliver it. And we also have the Whitney House involved.

Peter: [00:28:13] Oh yeah!

Chris: [00:28:13] Wonderful operator. Ian Brown, who you know used to work with Bravo Brio for 20 years, finally jumped out on his own with chef Max Avon, and chef Max is going to do another... it's a little more intimate. It's two to six people, as is Chef Broussard's, two to six people. He'll do whatever is in the pantry, Whitney house style, and just deliver something amazing with paired wines. So those those are the kind of experiences, and the price ranges are going from \$50 up to \$150 depending on what's involved in the preparation and service.

Peter: [00:28:45] Sounds good. I love the Whitney House. I'm a big fan of Ian and when he was at Bravo... Mary was over there a lot. He and Mary go back a long way and I got to know Ian and over the years and love the restaurant, and I'm glad I wasn't thinking about it... we're recording this right now, it's about 12:45 in the afternoon, and I'm going to interview some people and we're going to talk about food. I'm glad I went ahead and ate lunch before because I'm hungry now. Just listen to this I would be I'd be starving if I hadn't had the foresight to eat ahead.

Chris: [00:29:24] Yeah. All these business meetings I've had to have are terrible. Oh no yeah. I think I picked the right thing.

Peter: [00:29:33] I think you did. I guess Whitney House might be the closest to us. We live in Westerville. Anything up in the Westerville area?

Chris: [00:29:42] Not at the moment. That round up that I just named for you was a very carefully selected because I know everybody who's in that mix really well and understood that on the operations side I was probably going to get my best feedback and understanding of where hiccups would happen, because if the best operator can't execute it first thing then it's going to be a real problem and we've got to fix it or find a way to fix it. So at the time that we start we're rolling out with just those and gradually starting to talk to others, and we'll be adding to that mix. I mean I'm hoping... I have an interactive Google map of all of the potential restaurants that could accommodate this kind of thing, and there are over 200 of them in the Columbus metropolitan area.

Peter: [00:30:31] Really?

Chris: [00:30:31] Anybody could end up on this and we're certainly going to be trying to engage people on social to tell us who do you want to be doing something, or what would you ask them to do? What's your favorite restaurant and what kind of thing would you like to see them pull all the stops on? And we'll follow those leads and try to make those things happen.

Peter: [00:30:51] Oh that's cool. How are you getting the word out? I know you probably you know keep it in until it's actually live, but once it goes live tomorrow how you are getting the Columbus community... How are you informing them?

Chris: [00:31:05] Well it's funny because I finally put up a nice little video slideshow of a brief overview of how it works. It's like a minute long and it had over 500 views within two days, and I wasn't... you know I'm not a big Facebook person. I kept my list very small. But a number of people from my list then shared it down to their networks and it's really kind of amazing that network effect. That if something really resonates with people, and I think that's the thing that is such a good sign for us is that that level of share in a brief period of time means that this is something people think would be really cool. And and so I think it's going to end up getting shared pretty widely pretty fast. My biggest fear and I may live to regret putting it out there before we finish the game is that we run out of inventory. We know that we have to hurry and scramble and get a bunch more restaurants on board so that we can actually sell things but.

Peter: [00:32:02] That would be a good problem to have.

Chris: [00:32:04] That would be a very good problem.

Peter: [00:32:07] Do you have a Facebook business page for your business?

Chris: [00:32:12] I do. Yes. And it can be found at Facebook.com/joinmytablefriends, which I will start aggressively upping like a post a day, starting today. It was funny. I racked it up last fall and I started doing things thinking that we were right on the eve of launch, and then we for various reasons... you when you asked about how long this take to do you never really realize. I mean there's a rule of exponential growth in scope that everybody goes through. And I thought we would be launched by January and it just wasn't going to happen so I stopped contributing to the channels, and I'm going to ramp them up pretty heavily. We have an Instagram channel that again is joinmytablefriends, and then our Twitter feed is me @tablefounder. So I wanted that channel to be very personal and it's me talking directly to guests and sharing things that I think are really cool about what's going on. And I'm hoping to make that really super personal channel, but we'll also certainly be responding to anybody who jumps in and wants a conversation.

Peter: [00:33:19] So the Twitter handle again was.

Chris: [00:33:23] @tablefounder.

Peter: [00:33:25] I've just now liked your Facebook page.

Chris: [00:33:35] Thank you.

Peter: [00:33:36] I will share the posting that you did. Obviously when this comes out, I will help promote this as much as I can, and for my audience and anybody in the Columbus, Ohio, area listening to this... when you listen to this go out to findmytable.com. This to me sounds like I got to try at least once just to see just just to see what it's like. And my biggest fear is that I will love it and I won't be at home any more and I'll go broke and destitute . But you know but it's for good cause.

Chris: [00:34:14] Hahaha. It's for a good cause. And you know what I tell you that's another really powerful component. I mean we have lots of plans for how to grow this bigger and make it more meaningful over time, and one of them is certainly going to be building in a charitable

component where I imagine your Pelatonia rider, the race here that we have in town for cancer, and you know your friends are tired after eight years of just giving either 25 bucks. What if it was built into a meal that you all share together with the rider and you were at least getting a meal?

Peter: [00:34:47] Wow.

Chris: [00:34:47] So those... we have you know I think the big intention of this business, even though it's grounded in solving a very real very large set of operational problems, is more about serving the really big people problem that we have about connection and community. And it's sort of like this little lure to bring people back into the party.

Peter: [00:35:17] Yes. I love how you refer back to the party was something that you created when you were seven years old.

Chris: [00:35:25] Right.

Peter: [00:35:26] And it has stuck with you ever since. And I love the fact that getting back to a community again and I mean if I if I can be a soothsayer, a fortune teller, I think this is going to blow up big time for you. I think it's going to be bigger than you than your wildest dreams would ever take it because I just absolutely love the concept. I think the possibilities are unlimited. The relationships with restaurants with the chefs and the creativity aspect of it, and I think that's what has me really excited about it because it's so creative and what the community can create makes the possibilities endless.

Chris: [00:36:11] Well and I will say just to round this to your world... one of the biggest legs up that we got in this process of defining that was from BDO, the accounting firm.

Peter: [00:36:25] Oh. Yes.

Chris: [00:36:25] That is the 800 pound gorilla in the restaurant space in the United States. And their team jumped right into this and were so supportive and helping us sort of anticipate accounting level problems about you know and solve them. Come up with a streamlined way for handling these transactions so that everybody gets what they're supposed to get and we're staying inside sales tax lines and all the rest and that. It's fantastic.

Peter: [00:36:51] Yeah. That's great. I didn't realize they were the 800 pound gorilla in the restaurant space. But yeah there's not a better group to help guide you through all the accounting tax issues and from state local federal level. That's awesome.

Chris: [00:37:12] Yeah. I mean once you grow out... when you're talking about online sales, you're into this horrible vortex because every state treats these things differently. We tax food and beverage in Ohio, Pennsylvania doesn't. You know what happens as you grow out the software to have to handle all of those things? And there are third party tools that you can look at who will you know attach into your checkout system so that it calculates and gets all the stuff done the way it's supposed to get. But I mean those are the kind of larger issues things that you have to have in your head and on the roadmap when you build something like this, if you do intend to go large and you can only get those anticipatory questions answered if you're dealing with good people who really understand the world. Thank you everyone for listening!

Peter: [00:39:55] Thanks Chris. Great talking with you!

[music]

Peter: [00:40:05] I would like to thank Chris again for being a guest today and bringing JoinMyTable to Columbus, Ohio. You can tell my excitement throughout our conversation, because I want to test it out myself. Listen, learn, and learn. I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits](#). You can earn up to one CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute [self-study website](#). The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, Go to the MACPA and BLI self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take the review and final exam while you're working out or after listening to an episode on your commute to and from work - It's that easy! While all Improv is no Joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA and BLI self-study Web site are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed instructions by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE credit" on my home page. I hope you enjoy this exciting and flexible new way of earning CPE credit. Remember you can subscribe to my podcast on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#), and [Google Play](#). If you'd like to purchase an autographed copy of my book *Improv is no Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*, for \$14.99 with free shipping, please go to my website, PeterMargaritis.com, and you'll see the graphic on the homepage to purchase my book. Please allow 14 days for shipping. You can also follow me on social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#). In episode 65, I interview Debbie Peterson, who is a keynote speaker, keynote trainer, and mindset expert who works with companies to increase bottom line results through greater clarity, communication, and leadership. Thank you for listening and I'd greatly appreciate it if you leave a review on iTunes. Remember to use the principles of improvisation to better connect and communicate with those in your organization and personal life.

[music]

--