



# Behfar Jahanshahi:

Founder and CEO, Interworks

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<https://predictablesuccess.com/behfar-jahanshahi/>

**Note:** *This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and understanding. There may still be grammatical and spelling errors,*

**Les McKeown:** Hi, everybody. Welcome back to 'Scale! with Predictable Success', where we get to talk to outstanding leaders who are delivering Predictable Success in their own organizations. And today I'm delighted to be talking with Behfar Jahanshahi. Behfar is the CEO of an incredible company that I've got to know quite well called Interworks, based in Oklahoma. And we're going to hear a lot about Interworks shortly, but first of all, welcome to the podcast Behfar.

**Behfar Jahanshahi:** Thank you, Les. I'm honored to be here.

Les McKeown: I first met you a couple of years ago - no doubt we'll talk a little bit about that - and then you were kind enough to extend to me the privilege of coming out to see you and your group. And I've got to know Interworks reasonably well, but on a sort of an aside conversation we had in a corridor the last time, you were sharing with me a little bit of your own personal background. You know, if I can be straight about it, Jahanshahi is probably not one of Oklahoma's oldest family names, and yet you've got this incredible presence there. What got you and your family there and what was your path to starting a business in Oklahoma?

Behfar Jahanshahi: So I was born in 1976. I think that puts me at 43. My, my parents came here in 1972 from Iran to attend a university. Their intention was always I think, to come here and then head back home. and while they were here in the States going to school, there was a revolution back home and they wanted no part of that. So they ended up staying here. They gave me an Iranian name because they assumed that we would be going back. And, but you know, I was born and raised here in Oklahoma. It definitely confuses people when I call and say, you know, this is Behfar, and they have to kind of do a double take because, they're expecting to hear a different kind of voice to go with that name, but they get the Okie accent and everything - it's strange thing. My parents stayed here. grew up here. I grew up in Stillwater, started a company here in Stillwater and by the time and ended up going to university here, so by the time I graduated, it, you know, for me it was home. It is home, I love the community, love the small town feel. I get to travel a lot. So I get the best of, I think every world.



Les McKeown: You mean you \*did\* get to travel a lot - that's presumably now less so.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Definitely. I had to travel once work really picked up. And so, as a family, we took a lot of road trips. I always had this desire to go live in Dallas or San Francisco or New York, and I love all the cities - they're great cities, but what I found was when I was traveling for work, I really enjoyed coming back home to small town USA. I enjoy the slower pace. And so again, I got the best of both worlds and I think the other thing that was interesting about growing up in Stillwater, Oklahoma is that it is a college town and I grew up in student housing. But the demographic of my neighborhood is not necessarily what you'd expect. I mean, my neighbors were Jamaican, South Korean, Brazilian. And so growing up, I got to learn a lot about other culture, the foods they eat, how the house is run - the differences. And, to be honest, I feel like it taught me a lot about empathy and learning how different people operate and being sensitive and more in tune with that than I might've been otherwise.

Les McKeown: Right. It's a remarkable eye opener, whenever you do realize that. I grew up in Northern Ireland and during the 30 years that I was there, there were only two types of people - Protestants and Catholics, and that was it. And the Protestants never met the Catholics and the Catholics never met the Protestants. And then I went to live in Clapham in London. And it was just as you described - you know, Rastas two doors down, Mexicans cross the street. And, it was one of the greatest, positive shifts in mindset for a boy who'd grown up in such a two dimensional world. Essentially that's been your, birthright and you've stayed there. You weren't tempted to go anywhere else. Obviously, as you said, you always felt at home when you came back - was entrepreneurship also always part of - maybe you didn't give it that word -, but did you always imagine you would do your own thing or did you stumble into it? How did that happen?

Behfar Jahanshahi: Yeah, I would say it was a mindset, but I never thought of it in terms of entrepreneurship or running my own business. Even just growing up, I always had kind of a hustle, for lack of a better word. Whether it was baseball cards or I remember in elementary school, we used to have these things called Happy Dollars where they would give everyone money and you had like a month or a week when you could go try to buy things from other people with your Happy Dollars, and you could sell things. And I went and borrowed a bunch of video games from my friends - at that time video games, now everyone's got it on their phone or back then it was a device that would play one game that you get from Radio Shack or something.

Behfar Jahanshahi: And I got a few of those, went out to recess and I had lines of people and they'd have to give me Happy Dollars to play the game. And at the end of the period of time, I had, you know, just stacks of bills of happiness, whether it was that, or a paper route or whatever it may be, I always loved this idea of being able to go and delight people and find things they want and bring great service to go with it. It never had my eyes on "I want to go start a business". And honestly, when I started Interworks - it's something I started while I was



at university - it was just a fun thing to do on the side. I mean, I had my eyes on "I want to go work for IBM".

Behfar Jahanshahi: At the time Boeing was starting their space station. That was where I wanted to be. And, and so I started while I was in college. I was great with technology. I grew up with technology. There weren't a lot of people around me that knew it well. And so a lot of people would call me and say, Hey, help me with this tech problem I have. And, what ended up happening was by the time I graduated college, I thought, why am I, you know, showing up in my full suits to go interview with these companies. And I thought, why am I doing this? I really love these companies, but this doesn't feel like me. And so Interworks was running for four years while I was in college. And then when I graduated, I sorta jokingly say it became my real job. This is what I want to do.

Les McKeown: So that was how long ago - when you graduated?

Behfar Jahanshahi: I started the the company in '96. I actually graduated high school in '94. I started the company in '96 while I was at Oklahoma state getting my bachelor's degree. And then I graduated with my masters in 2001.

Les McKeown: So we're now 20 years further down the line. and I want to talk about the time in between there, but, you know, just do the 'sliding doors', 'before-and-after' thing, and tell us what Interworks is like now. Share, however comfortable you are, in terms of size and scale and tell us what you actually do.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Interworks is a tech consulting company. We do your traditional IT services type of work. And we have another side of the business that does data analytics, data visualization, architecture, you know - a lot of things with to Fortune 100's. Our footprint is around 250 people globally. We're in the US, the UK, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and we're sprinkled through some other countries across Europe. Obviously very geographically spread out. We have a strong density of presence here in Oklahoma, and in the US we're also in Portland, DC, Chicago, all over. And revenue-wise, we're probably, let's just say 80 million across the different companies. We're a high growth company.

Behfar Jahanshahi: We've been on the Inc 5,000 list of fastest private growing companies for around 12 years. We've won a lot of awards around best places to work, including an international award. We won an award we're very proud of, which is the Forbes Small Giant award. And for those that don't know this idea of being a Small Giant means, we choose to focus on being great for us. It's less about size and achieving some head count or revenue target. It's more about focusing on quality and who we are as a company. That's really what we're all about.

Les McKeown: I want to talk a little bit more about that in just a moment or two. But before we do, if you just take that snapshot that you've shared with us, you know, it's a moment in time, it's



a slice of a picture of where you are right now. And if you go back 20 years ago, is this version of where you are now, sort of gobsmacking - "Oh my good grief. I never dreamt it would be this!" Or is it "I'm really frustrated. We could do so much more." Is it, "it's pretty much what it is. And I love how we got here and I'm comfortable with it". You know, where is it in the expectations arc that you came into this with?

Behfar Jahanshahi: I'll answer that a couple of different ways. For me, if someone said, is this - what Interworks is today - what you thought it would be when you started it? Not really, but there was no upper bound on what it might be. There was a framework for how we should operate. I grew up, I had a lot of friends that were really smart. I knew they were going to go on to do big things. Some of them were in tech. And when Interworks started I thought, wouldn't it be great if I could get my best and brightest buddies together and we could do something together, we can have a common mission and, who cares where they live. What if that one's in Chicago and the other one's in LA and the other one's in New York.

Behfar Jahanshahi: And so that loose framework was there. And the idea was if we deliver incredible service, which I feel like in general, in the services industry, that's something that's lacking. I felt like that in and of itself would bring people to us. So if we could get the best and brightest and we could deliver a high quality service, who knows what could come of that. And so that always was a general framework. Now, I never imagined that the largest shoe companies and search engine companies and CPGs and banks and governments would be calling us saying, Hey, we heard about you - come help us. That one's still blows my mind from time to time. a

Behfar Jahanshahi: And I would say just in general, I operate with never being satisfied. Like we could always be better, so it's not, 'we want more', it's not that the dissatisfaction comes from 'We need to grow more. We need to go get more', but there's always this push to go, okay. Yeah, we did a great job, but what could we have done better? And so that's just always been with me from the beginning.

Les McKeown: And one of the things that struck me most at our first meeting - one of the Inc 5,000 meetings - and then as I mentioned, I've had the pleasure of meeting pretty much most of your folks either virtually or physically, is that you've got a really, really strong culture there and great people. I listened to you speak at your annual conference a couple of years ago, and you told a couple of stories about the reality of the cost of being true to the Small Giants precepts, that growth at all costs is not what is of interest to you. Share a little bit more about where that came from and how it developed. And did you discover the Small giants - did you meet their folks and and think, Oh yeah, that's that I want? Or were you drawn to them because that's how you were hard wired anyway? How did it develop as a personal approach to business development?

Behfar Jahanshahi: I look at my motivation for starting the business. I've always loved tech. Tech has always been a big part of my life. Now today, you know, my, my kids, when they were two,



they had an iPad they could play on - So it's a little different today, but when I grew up, everyone didn't have a computer, they didn't have access to technology. If it had blinky lights, I wanted to play with it. And that, that ended up over the years becoming me accidentally learning how to program at an early age, accidentally learning about computer hardware. And all of this was with the idea of like, I'm going to get to play video games, but I got to learn a lot in the process. And then again, growing up, my friends were calling me saying, I have a problem, Will you help me?

Behfar Jahanshahi: And then their parents were calling. So being in tech and helping other people is something that I grew up with. And so the motivations for starting the company, what ended up happening was I was helping my buddies and their parents. And I thought, I want to do this for businesses, because then I'll get more complicated problems, more complex problems. And, and so I approached some of the local computer companies. Cause back then you had a local computer company, not the Apple store. And I said, I want to service your business customers. You guys are in the business of building computer hardware. I want to service your business customers. And they said, great, because we have no interest in doing that. And again, my primary motivator was I want a challenge, not, not to be rich, not 'I want to be a billionaire'.

Behfar Jahanshahi: I don't want to own an island or a plane - I just love this. And I want to do more of it. It was about craftsmanship. So that was part of the company from early on. And what I tried to do is bring my buddies and people I was friends with into it. And it became kind of 'wouldn't it be great if it could just feel like we're all just having fun together?'. And so at the point it became serious and the growth really started accelerating, I had to think a lot about what's important to me. And of course in any company money's important, revenue's important. Profit's important. I think what's different for my mentality is that's not number one on the list.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Other companies may pay kind of lip service to, put the customer first, et cetera. But for me, what I want to be known for is, 'we do amazing work'. And so that pushes down the priority of revenue or profitability. And as we grew, we realized we, we know how to make things happen. So what's the end game. And at some point we really had to ask like, what, what are we trying to do? Do we want to be Accenture? Do we want to have 20,000 consultants around the world? And, and to be honest, like I love their model. I love the company, but it's not for me. You know, I don't want that. And so I thought, I just want to be small, have fun, but I want to do big things. Right. And so that narrative always existed. And then I remember being at the Inc conference and hearing this guy talk by the name of Bo Burlingham.

Behfar Jahanshahi: He wrote a book called Small Giants. And I just sat there in awe listening to him because, you know, the irony is at the Inc conference, they celebrate growth. And I thought, I'm surrounded by all these people that I perceive that all they care about is growth (and maybe they don't). But I just felt like that may have been the case and we're celebrating growth and we're winning awards because of growth. And I'm like, I don't care about growth. Like I just want to do great work. And so when I heard Bo give his talk, I thought that it just resonated very strongly. And I thought, Oh, I've found my place. I found my people, the people that believe in



this kind of notion of Small Giants, like that is Interworks. That's what I want you to stumble into it.

Les McKeown: And that comes across very strongly when interacting with your people. It obviously isn't just you and your senior leadership team - how have you worked to infuse that mindset in your broader organization now that you've got hundreds of people?

Behfar Jahanshahi: It's definitely an important concept to us. And we're definitely in a lot of situations that can pull us into a world we don't want to be in. And what I mean by that is that when you go deliver anything and you do it well, there's a good chance someone goes, 'I enjoyed that experience. I would like that experience again'. And so what ends up happening is in a lot of the companies we work for, they go, Hey, I liked what you did for me. I have 20 other things for you to go do now. Or I'd like to just get you out here full time, or how do we get five of you out here full time. So it was really important for us to make sure everyone understands. That's not the goal. The goal is not how do we staff an engagement with as many people for as long as possible.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Let's focus on leveraging our ability and who we are. And let's have influence at a high level where we can bring deep expertise. And so what ended up happening was before we had offered clarity to everyone around this, people would come to me and say, Hey, this is fun, but what are we trying to do? What's the company's mission here? And I would just say, well, we just want to have fun. Like, let's just go do things, let's have fun. And people would say, Hey, that's great. I get it. Yeah. I want to have fun, but really, what's our mission? You know, what's the vision, what are we trying to accomplish? And I really got caught up in 'I just want to have fun', like, quit asking me this question. The problem was that it didn't offer a lot of clarity to people here on what we should be doing and how, and so we ended up coming up with this mantra, a very simple mantra of, do the best work for the best clients, with the best people.

Behfar Jahanshahi: And it's something that we reinforce all the time. And the idea of this is that it's our company mission. We don't talk about revenue. We don't talk about target profits. It is when we go somewhere, let's focus on doing incredible work, better than anyone else. When we hire, let's make sure we're very specific about who we hire and we hire the right kinds of people and beyond anything that what every organization looks for, hardworking, honest, integrity, beyond those, those same attributes. We all look for. We want people who are passionate about their craft, whatever it is, whether it be marketing or data analytics or IT. And we want people who are kind, which sounds a little silly to say, but we want people who go out of their way to help other people. Because at the end of the day, that's part of delivering, you know, there's kind of this servant leadership mentality or this idea of giving back and then best clients like we, at some point, we realized we can do this to infinity.

Behfar Jahanshahi: We can go keep getting more work and go and go and go. And then I'm 90 and I die and you know, the end and I go, well, why, why would we do that? Why wouldn't we, if



we know we can go get as much work as we possibly want, why wouldn't we be particular about who we're doing work for in the kind of work we're doing And so we have this notion of best clients. Now, that's clients doesn't mean that everyone we work for is trying to cure cancer. It just means that, it means we have a healthy relationship. They value our opinion. they, they want to engage with us. They're happy to see us picking at our bills every month. and so for me, I go, as long as those three conditions are true, then I am having fun. And that is the mission of the company. So it's part of onboarding as part of our internal Slack, boards that are pinned everyone's, account. And we reinforce it every week in a subtle way or not so subtle way.

Les McKeown: Right. And I want to talk in a minute or two about your, how that's impacted your M and a and acquisition approach and philosophy, but just a hold in for a second or two on the, on the real world challenges that the small John's approach that you've got, brings, you know, a couple of hundred people. I'm assuming that there could be somewhere somebody that you've hired maybe recently doesn't know the company that well, it's a sales person, three, four levels down from direct report to you who quite get it and, you know, ends up stuffing a client with a scope creep and flair to proposal or, or whatever, just, you know, something that isn't, close to, does not have affinity with all that you just shared. How do, alarm bells go off what's w w you know, are you, are you feeling stretched in terms of quality controls, not the right phrase, but you know what I mean, just ensuring that at right at the periphery of vendor works, that people are upholding the philosophy that you've just told us about it.

Behfar Jahanshahi: I would say in general, we, we stay on track, but, when we start going real fast, things start slipping for sure. And we ha we have to rebound, in general, a very large proposal that would, that would give us a big commit. There's, there's kind of a couple of layers of approval they go through. And the people that are part of that are, are, you know, let's say properly vetted and trained. So they, they, these are people that believe or support the inner work's mission. And so they're signing off on what we're delivering. We do get into situations, you know, there's a large social media company. We used to do a lot of work for, and when they first called us up and said, Hey, come help us. we were really excited to come in and help. We were helping transform the entire organization, what they're doing, how they're doing it.

Behfar Jahanshahi: And at some point it went from really this high level consulting and the kind of work we want to be doing to, shifting to staffing. And, and they wanted more of us. They wanted more people, they were happy to pay eight hours a day every day. but we kind of looked around and said, this is not really the work we want to be doing so great name. Everyone knows the name. We thought this isn't what we want to be doing. And so, to be honest, we had a conversation with them about it. They said they would, you know, put us back on track of the world. We wanted, it didn't happen. We had a conversation again, it didn't happen. And so we went to the mental listen, like, we're, we're putting you on notice. Like we're pulling our team out in nine and it was 60 or 90 days.



Behfar Jahanshahi: So we had a great relationship with them, but we basically said, we're this isn't for us generated revenue. it was healthy revenue. And again, they would have taken as many of us as we would have offered, but it wasn't in line with our mission financially. It was great, but the other pieces weren't there. So we, we put the brakes on that. So, you know, sometimes we have to, to learn and sometimes we get into things we, we realize we don't want to be involved with. So we'll see those to completion and then, you know, move forward.

Les McKeown: And, and finally in, this is a decision like that at that level, without a weight of consequence, is that, you know, go to the mountain top long mole for you. Is it a clear, bright line Don't have to double think double thinking at all Where does that in terms of your own head when you've got to make decisions like that

Behfar Jahanshahi: Yeah. Well, well, if we're already engaged and we want to, you know, this may be too hard of a word, right. But if we're going to fire a client or we want to disengage from a project we're on that will, that will generally come to me. And then we almost, we almost do this courtroom style because, when we talk about firing clients or, or, or getting off a project, the motivations may be different. It may be just the particular person on the project. Doesn't like it, there may be a personality mismatch. And to be honest, sometimes there are things we have done wrong and now the clients are unhappy. So they're not treating us well, but we were the root cause of that. Right. And so the reason we do this almost courtroom style is just to ask the right questions and go, can we get this back on track

Behfar Jahanshahi: And, and to be honest, a lot of times when we're unhappy with the situation, the majority of the time, we can have a very direct and blunt conversation. and because we're not bluffing about wanting to fix it or, or, or we, we know we'll walk like it, it, it's just very honest and transparent and kind, and it generally fixes the majority of issues, but there are times when we go, this is just not for us. And we agree as a team to walk away. So that's, if the engagement's already started, if it's pre engagement, we, you know, we're very fortunate that we have an abundance of opportunities coming in. If something doesn't feel right, then, then we walk away and that's more at the discretion of the person who's being in architecting the solution.

Les McKeown: So let's shift focus a little bit. Tell us, tell the listeners a little bit about where M and a and acquisitions have fit it in for you. And the growth of Interworks

Behfar Jahanshahi: Just in general. I, when I started the company again, it was just to have fun. There was no, the exit strategy is, one day I'll die, you know,

Behfar Jahanshahi: So there's, there's no, we, we get a lot of emails every week from people saying, you know, we're interested some, these are can, some of these are very deliberate and they're targeting us. and I just have a standard response of not interested in M and a, or capital or capital, but thanks. And I file it away and keep it all in a folder. And to be honest, it's very flattering that we're reaching out. and, and in some cases, some very big names and very



reputable names, you know, for me, I go, I, I love what I do. I genuinely enjoy it, right. So, so I like, I like spending my time doing work things. I mean, I, I think I have a good balance of, of, family time, spending time with the family and work. But for me, I love work.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Like it's on my mind. I think about, it, it consumes me in a positive way, so we're not, you know, we're not, we're not trying to optimize EBITDA. We don't have outside shareholders. it's just not something we're shit. And, and, and we're not really, interested in growth through acquisition, for us, we want it to be organic. it, it, it, we, we, you know, we're steadily growing. but the growth is a byproduct of, of success rather than a destination or a target where we're trying to achieve, if that makes sense. So I don't, I don't, I mean, we, we might opportunistically consider some sort of, acquisition, but I, I, I just don't really see it happening.

Les McKeown: And is your, is the main sort of X factor or turn off factor or whatever it may be for you, around just getting distracted from doing great work with great clients, to all the nuts and bolts of making an acquisition work. Is it, you know, being fearful that you're going to bring in a, you know, a culture that's different from yours and maybe not succeed in integrating it, or is it something different Where does, what is your notch, you know, when you look at that letter that came in or that email and you think, no, I'm not doing that. What's the core motivation do you think

Behfar Jahanshahi: Well, well, I think the core for not selling is just, I I've been around long enough to see what happens when companies, so, I mean, when you sell it, you become either company.

Les McKeown: I get that entirely in selling, but just in terms of, you know, meeting perhaps in emerging client need, venturing into another channel, rather than selling w what is it about the possibility of doing that that is least attractive to you

Behfar Jahanshahi: Yeah. I think it's just, it, it's just, when I think about how we've, when I think about the kinds of people we hire here, when it comes to technology, I am of the opinion, we hire a certain kind of person you're worth tomorrow. We decide we want to be doing a new technology thing. We will just go learn it, and we will get good at it really quickly. But for me at acquisition, you know, we're, we're not a, a capital intense company. I mean, we are our biggest asset and really our only asset are the people. And so the idea of like acquiring 30 people that someone else's picked, or, you know, let's just say that the size of a company, I go, well, that doesn't make a lot, you know, if we want to go and do a new market, let's just go into it.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Right. And we've, and we've had good luck with this. I mean, we, we were not in Australia two years ago. We are now, and we've really, our growth is, it's a great trajectory. We weren't in Singapore, in Singapore, we're seeing a lot of opportunity happened. So, I mean, we, I feel like we have a good handle on if we want to go, if we want to, if we're in pursuit of something, let's go get it. We're not trying to, we're just not trying to force growth. We're not,



we're not, I'd rather do it organically. So there's nothing wrong with acquisition and I'm not knocking it again. It's just, it's just not for us. We can do this the organic way.

Les McKeown: And so, as I've noticed you in your interaction with your people, you're very, you're very conscious, by shaping enter works, you know, it's, it's something you're very engaged in it. I'm very good at it. And you clearly reached out for a lot of excellent tools to put in your toolkit. What was it that attracted you to the Predictable Success model and, and how has it helped you and your organization grow over the last year or two

Behfar Jahanshahi: Well, so similar to when I heard the Small Giants authors speak, I mean, I think for me, and this may seem like a stretch, so bear with me, but again, you know, growing up, I was surrounded by a lot of different, a lot of different people with a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of different culture. And so I've always been fascinated with why are people the way they are. What makes them act a certain way. What makes them spawned a certain way. Why are they disciplined or not in a certain way. And so, and both of my parents are sociologists. And so, and so kind of the study of people has always been a thing of mine and, inner works. I feel like we're, we do a fairly good job of pairing people, understanding who works well with what, what other kind of person, but I've never really been able to quite articulate it.

Behfar Jahanshahi: And sometimes when things didn't work, I didn't really understand why. I mean, it's kind of when it worked, it was easy to go. Well, of course that works. And when it didn't work, it's easy in hindsight to go, of course it didn't work, but I thought there's gotta be more to like, we need a better way to articulate this. So when I accidentally stumbled upon your, your talk at inc, I thought that that's it right there. You know, I started thinking about, as you were describing the different kinds of, people, you know, operators, visionaries, et cetera. I started thinking, well, that reminds me of, so and so, and the company, and they pair really well at this person. And I get how this visionary comes in and really frustrates everyone. And I started thinking about the complexions of our team as a whole, and then within a department. And, and it all really just started clicking. So for us, it's been, it's been eyeopening. And, and, and we use these, we use word like operator and processor every day. I was on a marketing call an hour ago before this podcast. And we're literally describing what kinds of roles we want to hire into the future. And the descriptions are accompanied with phrases. Like we need an operator, or we need a processor. so it's, it's been an absolute game changing for us.

Les McKeown: That's great to hear. I appreciate that by far as clothes off, I'd like, I'd love to, have you share a little bit about something that again was really striking when it was, with you, and the before times, when you had your physical, annual meeting, last year, it was a pleasure to work with you and your team on a virtual session this year. But when I was there in Oklahoma, one of the things that I noticed really quickly was there almost wasn't a session went by without something then would be interspersed that had something to do with the community that you're part of. So talk a little bit, share with the listeners about giving back and that, you know, what, what does that come from and what does it mean to you. And I'd love you to share some



of the, you know, some specific examples of what Interworks does to get back to your local community.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Sure, sure. Well, so I'll explain my philosophy and I, I haven't done this a lot, so I may not articulate it very well, but I grew up in, you know, in a, in a house where my, my, we didn't have a lot growing up. Right. My parents came here for an education and they were working while they were in school. and, and I was fortunate enough to have programs and other things out there that I, benefited from that, you know, federal programs like national youth sports program, or, you know, my mom was involved in working at headstart growing up. And so I definitely had an appreciation for, w it was helpful to have that lift when we needed it. And, and, and I, and I benefited from it. Right. And I think that, when I look at the world today, I go, we, we don't all start from the same starting point.

Behfar Jahanshahi: I mean, there's some people who have, depending on where you're born, what country, what family, you may have a hundred opportunities in front of you, or you may, you may grow up somewhere where you don't even have clean water, and it doesn't feel right to me. And I feel very privileged to be in the position I'm in. and, and frankly, I think as Interworks, becomes more powerful and, and, and, stronger and, accumulates more wealth. I go, we need to do something about helping those around us that could use that extra lift. So in prior to this year, it was really just my, my wife and I, Stacy, just picking and choosing, you know, the initiatives were a part of, and I think just given the events of this year, it's just may force this issue. I need to think about this a lot more.

Behfar Jahanshahi: We need to be more deliberate and really operationalize how we give back. And so, we, we go to everyone here and we, we encourage them, especially those that already spend their own time helping a cause and say, we want to support you. If you are passionate enough about a cause where you are willing to spend your own time and energy, doing a thing, then how can we take this deep expertise that people pay top dollar for and use that to help these organizations So I'll give you a couple of examples. we have a local food bank and, that help people that are, that are food insecure, right they're not in the business of technology and we are, so if they have a technical need, but let's just go give our time to them and let's go to them and say, Hey, from this period of time to this period of time, and it might be a 12 month period, whatever you need, you just tell us, we're donating all our time to you.

Behfar Jahanshahi: That's one local example at a, at a more, at a grander scale. we're, we're in discussions today with an organization that, looks at data that, a lot of the homeless shelters around the country may use, to, to analyze who's coming in, why they're coming in. And we realized all of the, all of these organizations across the country are using the same questionnaires, collecting the same data, and they're trying to solve the same set of problems. Is there a way we can take our expertise, help at a national level where this can trickle to all the local organizations And so we've got a small group of people that didn't work. So working on that, but what I want to do is take people's passions, whether it be climate change, or, you know,



whatever it may be and, and go, how do we take that passion and turbocharger and how do we re help Reese add some resource to it

Behfar Jahanshahi: And to be honest, like it, we're having a great time doing this. I mean, we're going to be doing more and more, and I would imagine over time, what, what will end up happening in works as there's a healthy percentage of time, we will set aside for each person who wants to go pursue these types of causes, to do it as part of, you know, the, the, the company's time. So as we continue to grow in revenue, strength numbers, we want to take that energy and, and do something good with it. I mean, otherwise what's the point, what's the point of all the growth, if it's just, I mean, I'm not trying to buy like a plane or a yacht. I mean, let's go do something that's practical and helpful, you know, with this sort of thing.

Les McKeown: Well, it's, indicative of the natural generosity that you have by far. And I want to thank you for giving up that generosity and coming on the show today and sharing. So, with how you've grown into works has fantastic story, and you should be very proud. And I know we are very proud of what you've got, and I hope we can get you to come back a couple of years from now and tell us what the next phase and the growth of Interworks in your own development as an outstanding leader. But thank you.

Behfar Jahanshahi: Yeah. Well, thank you Les, thank you for the opportunity.