



Kevin Coppins

President & CEO Spirion

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<https://predictablesuccess.com/kevin-coppins/>

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

Les McKeown: Hi everybody. And welcome back to 'Scale! with Predictable Success', where we welcome leaders who are using Predictable Success to scale their own organizations. And today I'm absolutely delighted to be speaking with the president and CEO of Spirion, Kevin Coppins. We're going to hear a lot about Spirion during the course of our call, but first of all, welcome to the podcast, Kevin.

Kevin Coppins: Thanks. Great to be here.

Les McKeown: As I said, I want to focus a fair amount of our time together on your most recent experiences with Spirion, but you've had, shall we say a meandering route to get there. Share with the folks what the path has been that's got you to this current position that you're in right now.

Kevin Coppins: You know how these things work, Les. You're you're you head off to college, you know exactly what you're going to do and have it all scripted out from the time you're a freshman - the time you retire - and it all follows exactly that, or maybe not so much. So. Yeah. My first role out of college I reflect on often. I was an accountant, not to disparage any accountants out there, as a matter of fact, I was a horrible one, I hated it but it was the only job available. It was actually a little bit of a bait and switch. I was offered a job to be a junior purchasing agent at a refinery in New Orleans. And when I got down there they said, no, that job's not here anymore. You can be the capital projects accountant, I'll not be doing that. And they said, well, that's fine. If you don't want to do that, you can leave. I'm like, I'm your mate. I've always dreamt exactly of this job.

Kevin Coppins: But every role that you have teaches you something. So from that role being 'okay, this isn't where I want to be, I don't think, but what can I get out of this?' Of course, when you're 23 years old you don't recognize all that you're going through. I realized I didn't like it. And I realized that what I did was monotonous. So I figured I'd just change it. This process can be done and I'll automate this and I'll change this. And I took what was a full time job and turned it into 15 minutes of work once a week. And I said, yeah, the job doesn't exist anymore.



So I'd like to have the one I applied for, and that just kind of started a trend with me. I was always looking at that: is there an easier way to do this?

Kevin Coppins: Is there a way to build a process around this as a way to eliminate it? And that kind of set the tone for my career for the first eight or nine years or so, which I spent in business process, reengineering roles. I worked with Bausch and Lomb for a bit up in Rochester, New York. Then I went into high tech. My first job in high tech was working for Packard Bell NDC (for those that remember that company) up in Sacramento. So I traveled out there and did some customer success stuff. And what I realized that all that was teaching me was I enjoyed business when the transaction happened. I enjoyed the people side of the business and the more I can get involved in making an impact on the people side, the better off they'd be. So the last 15 years or so have been working in sales and marketing and executive operations roles for project companies since then. So that's kinda how I got here.

Les McKeown: what was it that attracted you to take the president CEO role at Spirion? Obviously, you know, all the usual stuff, but when you looked at it as a company, what were the challenges that you felt Yeah, I would enjoy this?

Kevin Coppins: Well, it's interesting. Cause I remember when I met with the chairman it was just an introductory conversation - they were looking for a sales leader, and I said, nah, I'm okay. I'm working in a startup in cybersecurity. And I was a chief revenue officer there and I was enjoying that, working for somebody that I'd worked in the past. So I was like, this is kind of an equivalent. And he said, well, would you like to be the CEO? And I said, I don't know, except for that, wasn't a very convincing answer. And I said, well, it's gotta be the right fit. It's gotta be the right fit in terms of work. My skill set is what I'm passionate about. I don't want to go work for an organization where I'm so far disconnected from making an impact. I've realized that for the last seven, eight years of my career, I didn't want to say, well, I make, I make wireless access points that connected devices, those devices, connected applications that then connect to things that connect to patients. So therefore I save lives for a living. It was too long of a string for me.

Kevin Coppins: So I needed to be somewhere I can make an impact, and it needed to be something that leveraged my skillset. I am not an engineer. As my people will tell you, coding is not my thing, but he said, look, what this company really needs is it's got to get its culture re-anchored, it's got to get its strategy and it's mission reset to match the market today, but it needs somebody that's going to help lead us from being a 15 year old technology company, which is what we were with a good installed base of clients, to transition that to a more modern organization, both technically as well as cultural. So I said, well, that's, that's a little bit more in my wheelhouse. That's what attracted me.

Les McKeown: So before we get into some of those challenges and how they've been developing over the last year, first ell the listeners a bit more about what Spirion does. Tell us a bit about



your marketplace, share whatever you're comfortable with that would give us a general sense of its size.

Kevin Coppins: Yeah, so I always try to come up with analogies that help visualize what we do cause I've been in technology so long. Trying to explain wifi to my mother was just never something that was gonna work. So I'm always trying to find a way to couch it. Similarly with Spirion. If you picture your junk drawer in your kitchen, and everybody's got that one drawer, or the console of your car (I drive a truck and everything goes inside the console), we chuck anything in there. If you ask me of the 15 things in there, I could probably name five, like the scotch tape's in there. We do the same thing with data - organizations have data everywhere.

Kevin Coppins: And if you were to ask them where things are, they could tell you, well, that's going to be in this file store. It's going to be on this server, or it's in this application. But over 20 years there's been a lot of other stuff shoved into those doors. and with the advent of cloud computing, that stuff replicates. So let's take the console of my truck cause I cleaned it up this week and I found a old credit card. It was one that had expired. So I just chucked it in there when I was trying to pay for something at the drive through. I found receipts from the last time I got new tires, I found an old iPhone that I think my kids were using it as a toy. At some point you just find all kinds of stuff in there.

Kevin Coppins: the challenge is, that that's physical things. I can put my hands around it and I can say, well, this is more important than this is. When I get out of my truck, I'll lock my iPad in that same spot. But with data, how do you tell the difference between the lunch menu and last year's tax returns? You can't. And the other thing with data is as soon as you save it once - you'll probably save a recording of this and it'll update itself to Dropbox. So it will be saved there. And then just to be really sure you're going to save it to your external drive. Well, that's like when you email something to somebody you blind copy yourself and save it in your inbox. Your data, it's just replicating everywhere. So what we help companies do is identify those bits of data that are important, which typically have to do with individuals or companies secrets. So sensitive data as it pertains to social security numbers, credit card numbers, healthcare information. So we can help segregate that out from the general population of stuff in the junk drawer and say, you might want to secure this stuff a little bit differently. And that's really what we want the business to do and is helping to help him to find those bits that if you were compromised from a security standpoint, that's the thing the bad guys are after. So make sure you got a really handle on that, right.

Les McKeown: And where do you sit in the marketplace?

Kevin Coppins: We were a pioneer in the space. The space was, I don't want to call it nascent - it was always interesting. It gets a lot more interesting when somebody gets breached and that's when you get a lot of phone calls. So like, well maybe we need to have some of that stuff, but it was one of those things where it's like, 'we're going to build a firewall first'. We're going to build



a giant fence around. And now people are starting to realize that the fences aren't keeping the bad guys out. So maybe we should start looking at what's inside. Let's start looking at the target. And everybody talks about the threat surface in terms of devices and in cybersecurity, what's the threat surface in terms of how much data you have that is sensitive. So things are starting to turn this direction for that one reason.

Kevin Coppins: The second one is privacy because five, six, seven years ago, 15 years ago when the guys (the two guys that founded the company are still on my board), nobody really cared about privacy. They did. They were absolute zealots about it. But now you have laws like in Europe the GDPR, here in the US you've got CCPA, you've got the Shield Act. So you've got more and more of these laws being passed everyday saying, hello companies, you need to protect that sensitive data. And the first thing is, well, how do I find it? So those two things have really taken what was a relatively slow industry, which we were, we're always ranked one of the top technologically. Well, now it's into a whole exploding market of data privacy and data security. That's a whole different thing for this one product company to deal with. So interesting times.

Les McKeown: Fascinating. And if we can turn to the leadership of all of that, Kevin, as you had that, what sounded like a relatively informal discussion - I presume you did a little bit more due diligence, all that sort of stuff - just as you were about to go into this role just over a year ago, what did you think were going to be the big moving parts - the challenges you'd face as the newly arrived president and CEO, and how has that mapped out, now that you've been there long enough to know what the reality is?

Kevin Coppins: Yeah, so, again, what was really explained to me is good company, good product, good customers, needed product, not a product that was going to be something going away, but I knew it needed to be modernized so that the platform itself was a little bit long in the tooth. There hadn't been enough features added to match where the market's at. The market had moved to SAAS - cloud based applications. We weren't on from product at the time. So I knew we had some work to do there. I knew we also had some work to do, with the team as you always do, when you come in and you kinda say, who can take us to where we need to go, not where we've been? And I also knew there was some cultural impact, cause there've been a lot of change on this little company.

Kevin Coppins: We had two different private equity owners. We had the founders in there, the founders had been out there, they were back in again. So there was a lot of change. There was also a lot of new hires. When I had my first all hands meeting I brought everybody together and said, how many people have been here less than a year? And it was three quarters of the room. So a lot of why it was founded and what the history of the company was. There wasn't a lot of that there. So I knew I had to put a lot of that together. I leaned very heavily on the founders in terms of creating that mystique, that, that comes with, you know, where the guys that quit



they're jobs. And one of them had had a vision and founded his fist in the table and said, there's gotta be a better way to do this.

Kevin Coppins: So I really pulled them in. I recorded a lot of what they did, so their presence still looms large here, which is important. What I didn't realize coming in was how tumultuous the market was. I was, I felt it was a pretty tried and true technology and that people understood what it was. And we would just kind of take it to the cloud, maybe do a couple of different things with it and things would be grand, but right at that same time was when all of these privacy regulations were coming, and the amount of funding that's gone into funding my competitors - billions of dollars have been pumped into this market in the last 12 months. There's been more people enter my market in the last, I'd say 18 months than in the previous 10 years. So that's the part I wasn't counting on.

Les McKeown: So you have these cultural issues, and it's remarkably difficult to maintain a culture with any of the founders not running it but still around, or with one venture capital investor, let alone two, and relatively new employees, any one of those would tear your cultural apart. You had all of those going on and you've got the tumult, which was new to you. Tell us a little bit about your toolkit - some big Lego bricks that you can apply. Share a little bit about what was your toolkit, what did you reach for to help you to address those issues?

Kevin Coppins: Well, I'm a fan of alliteration, I use that everywhere I possibly can. The last six or seven leadership roles I've had is to try to get to this point of purpose. What's the purpose of the organization and at the CEO scale, or even if it's staffing, running a sales team or running an operations team, what's the purpose of this company? What's our role inside that purpose? So, I'm a, I'm a Simon Sinek fan in terms of understanding why, and really trying to dig underneath that, why conversations so that you realize you're working for something bigger than maybe the brain that's on your business card and let that be at the CEO spot. It's easier to be able to make that connection directly to the brand or the purpose of the company, but sometimes you gotta take it to the purpose of the individual.

Kevin Coppins: So, you know, what is, what are you trying to accomplish the next three to five years I know what the company is, but what about you it's Cause if you can tie into something that stretches somebody's ability to take themselves out of where they are today, to where they want to be five years from now, you'd be amazed. What kind of productivity and what kind of insights, more kind of employee you have. So you just take that to a macro scale and say, where do we want to be three to five years from now Or it's important to go back and say, well, why didn't they start with being in the first place Then in my case, spending a fair amount of time with the founders, it was clear as all get out, but they started admitting company. They didn't know it at the time.

Kevin Coppins: And they thought during the middle part of this, it was a cybersecurity company because that's what you were supposed to call people that did what we did. But their defining



moment was they were, ethical hackers for a large, a large accounting firm GSI. And what they did is they broken people and say, you can't break it. And they found all the sensitive data Enron, and they'd say, okay, well, how would you break it into like, well, forget about that. So you guys gotta clean this up. That's that's my mother's date. That's my, that's my neighbor's data. That's my dentist data. But this, this is the important stuff and nobody listened to him. And that was actually the reason why they left. So connecting the company back to that purpose was that say the first part of the journey and that's proved incredibly valuable, especially going through what you've been going through the next one. So that's the first P

Les McKeown: Before we just, before we come to it, what were the, what was the dirty fingernail work in making that happen Was that, you know, having umpteen stand up all stock meetings, was it, you know, doing voice broadcasts, was it having strategic offsites Was it mentoring individual leaders Was it all of the above You know, what, what would the, what's the hard wiring

Kevin Coppins: To start all of that Yeah. So the first one was again from my particular situation, getting those founders back, and I would say if it's not founders, get somebody that was, was core to the strategy is your tribe. Right So for me, clear as day. So I put those guys on stage and I interviewed not, not the smoke in the conversation you and I are having, why did you start this company What was it just pounding moment Tell me about the early days. And they actually started this company off as a consumer because they thought that less would be, you know, I've got all this information on my laptop. I got last year's tax returns. The same way I have an antivirus on your I'm going to have any sensitive data. Well, so they have boxes of pictures of them on the Martha Stewart show, you know, selling there were kind of taking that journey.

Kevin Coppins: So I spent a good 90 minutes in front of everybody and I recorded walking through that and we had scripted it ahead of time. So it can be an artifact as they took a step farther away from the business, but I could still have that again, that mystique that follows founders around. And then it was a matter of just constant communication. We always talk seven times, seven different ways. Time-saving, I mean, it's just a nonstop conversation and we settled on, we protect what matters most, which is not a, not uncommon tagline for companies, but it's true. We are really absolutely where the company is. So people have been able to lean into that. They all parents that we tied it into our interview process. you know, what happened Tell me an example of when your personal identity was stolen or something that would have happened to somebody close to you.

Kevin Coppins: And we bring that right into the interview process before we hire, and that's really helped them proliferate through the company. So, you can ask anybody here, they'll tell you what we do. So that's your first Pete interrupted you and I will do the same. So we will carry on throughout the discussion. The second one's perspective, we're a private equity company. we've got 120 or so employees most are based here in the Florida area, but we've got people scattered about, we've got some international hires now, but understanding who we are,



who we're not, and really being able to put perspective into who you are as a private equity held company, what that means how private equity works. It's not a bad thing. It's not a scary thing. It just works differently than VC money than being publicly traded or being founder owned, but really trying to get that perspective to say, okay, here's what the market looks like.

Kevin Coppins: Here's what we've historically, here's where we want to go. Here's what our shareholders want out of this, but making sure that perspective is common across the organization. Because if you don't take a minute to say there are other constituents in this mix, there's customers, partners, and shareholders, but being able to get that perspective on who you are, then that real look in the mirror, that that's who we are, is the critical next step, because that's what then I think stops a lot of the, a lot of the questionings of the wise and shouldn't do it this way. And should we do it that way Well, yeah, if we were publicly traded or yeah, if we were this or yeah, this is who we are.

Les McKeown: Was that mostly a clarification of a fact - The reality of who you were, or was there any degree of, was there any degree of pivot in that

Kevin Coppins: No, it was, it was a clarification of who we are. We're back to the purpose though. So these punches, so when I say it had to go back to the word data privacy, right So that, that was a little bit clarifying. And there was some debate even with the founders and they were like, no, we're not, we're a cyber security company. I'm like, why did you start this company Cause getting off of that cause being cybersecurity, that's the darling of the industry. That's where you want to be. Right. That's not who we are. Let's lean into who we are. And then also those other pieces are important elements.

Les McKeown: So one of the things I've noticed in Kevin whenever, and the reason I've asked you that question is that whenever I see organizations too Sad, which is to take something that has got sort of foggy, you know, and it's not just that clear and it's, to me, the word pictures, like you take a cloth and you clean the lens and the camera on the end and you look through it and Oh wow. That's a really clear picture. One of the things that, almost always happens is that you realize in pretty quick retrospect, that one of the advantages of keeping it foggy, doesn't explain it, it doesn't excuse it. And it's not right. But one of the advantages is it allows some of the old guard to hang in there because nobody's really making it. No, we're not that anymore. And that often what happens when you bring that clarity know like turning the lens

Les McKeown: And you get the picture is that some of the previous high performers who got the business world was here, get uncomfortable with that and say, Oh, that's the kiss. I don't know if this is the journey now for me. Did you experience any of that.

Kevin Coppins: Yeah. And it brings up a good point. So yes, on some of the old guard, remembering though that I didn't have a lot of old guard left, which was a challenge they didn't have. I mean, trying to bring in industry DNA and other pieces was a challenge, but I also have



that you're at different places in the journey. So he could use sports, analogies, whatever you want to have. Sometimes you need a different player for a different spot. And there was one realm of when the firm was acquired by private equity in 2018, there's a lot of that typical cleanup stuff to do, right? Fix this process, fix that, change this well, that only takes you so far. Then being able to take you to where we're now in a massive growth business because we have that clear lens. This is where we need to get to. And what was okay is just, that's not the skillset that we're going to need to get us over here. So making some of those decisions more hard because they've done good work, they know exactly what was asked of them, but they weren't the right person to do the next thing that needed to get done. Not that it was harder, easier. It was just a different thing. So making some of those changes was a, was difficult, but also clarifying for a company.

Les McKeown: Yeah. It's it's I just refer back to Jim Collins, but phrase about getting the right people on the bus and that's great. And it is right. The difficulty is when you take that bus into a bridge and it comes out the other side, it's not the same bus anymore. You know, your transport is not even a bus. It's something that's like a drone or something. And the people who were the right people for them understandably are not all of them are the right people for not, and that, you know, that's not a negative or a judgment, it's just,

Kevin Coppins: You're at different phases. So, okay. So with a purpose,

Les McKeown: And perspective, what else did we did you have in your toolkit

Kevin Coppins: After, after you have those first two, then you can prioritize, but don't start, don't start trying to prioritize until you have a real good clarity on the first two. Right? Because otherwise you'll be prioritizing wrong stuff. Correct. I think that was, some of the stuff had happened in parallel. We realized some of our prioritization, wasn't what it needed to be. But leaning back into those, because all this stuff's happening real time as it doesn't business, you don't have this, you can just do this stuff, sequentially. So prioritization. And then the last one is productivity because when you got the first three, then it's about really getting the execution engine coming so that you can productively get done what you needed to get done in line with the priorities, with a good handle on the perspective of communicate across the company, but never losing focus on that purpose. So those are, those are my four, that's my, that's my 14th.

Les McKeown: Right. And the priority. When you get to thinking about this just as you share, it is fascinating. So I see purpose you reaching back to the fonder, she right at the, you know, the core of the heart of the business there, and you really got the one that's gotta be the bridge for all of that. and then the perspective, again, you're the

Kevin Coppins: One to implement and initiate that. I'm assuming by the time you're getting to prioritization, you're beginning to push out and you're, you're really having to have your, what we call Predictable Success, your T to your management team, not just the senior leadership team



they have to, they have to shoulder that. I'm assuming at that point. And then the time you were at productivity, that's right at the runway level, lets everybody in the organization scuttle learned to block and tackle. So am I right in thinking that this feels like a sort of a radial thing that starts at the core and workshop towards the edges of the organization and you hit the hinge point. So in terms of getting from that point of perspective to prioritization, right That's where you're on into what I, what my team is actually calls the Kevin said syndrome as to be very conscious about saying, I need everybody to do what I mean, not what I said, right

Kevin Coppins: Because if you do what I say, we're all gonna be in trouble. Because when you sit in this chair, people will do what you say because I've been on calls where like, well, Kevin said, if I did, it's very, very possible that I could not be further away from what I meant. So we have constant conversations, but getting from that perspective, the priority, you gotta eliminate. The Kevin said, so we laugh about it internally say, is that Kevin said, no, that's not what Kevin, when you're in, in our terminology, visionary synergist leader. so you know, you're very strong in the, on the vision obviously is, comes across clearly in the call, but with the synergist side as well, what that means is you're not one of those visionaries that wants to stand alone. You want to work with a team. So you probably communicate over communicate.

Kevin Coppins: You combine that with the visionary's natural natural style, which is to talk to think that's how visionaries thing is. They talk. They want to discussion to think, you know And so there's an awful lot of stuff. That's just a preamble to come into a conclusion. But as you say, if you happen to be the president and the CEO, people are looking around and saying like that, he wants us to do that. Where do we start How can we possibly get all this stuff down He has no idea what he's doing. So it's a constant recalibration. Kevin said, so I have to be very open about that. I will start. And especially in this age of COVID, we're all on these screens, right Literally a quick inside story is I would typically have you see a glass wall back behind me and that's what we use our whiteboard.

Kevin Coppins: So we talk, you can't do that shut down. We've got no more than five people in here. So how do you share that You know, six people have been in your office, you can talk about things all day and it's continuing to get better. And you iterate because I built something in PowerPoint because it was the only way to take this, this whiteboard that had been literally scribbled on hand. But if you put something in PowerPoint, it looks very official, right So it's no longer the scribbles on cavity wall. It's formal documents of, of it

Kevin Coppins: Its own.

Les McKeown: Yeah, exactly. I think what you want to do is you want to put a little blue flag or something on the corner of it.

Kevin Coppins: It's just you thinking. So



Les McKeown: Come in, you recognize you have, these challenges I had all of you,

Kevin Coppins: share with us a little bit about where,

Les McKeown: Well, you saw see Sperry on the life cycle when you came in and how did that help if it did help

Kevin Coppins: And attacking. Yeah. So this company went through all the traditional stages, right And I'd spent my time career wise, on some of the further end of the stage, very mature companies that have been through, you know, not heading towards death rattle, but in the conversation, definitely spend some quality time on treadmills. I'll go there. But if you look back to the founders, these two guys were the, you know, we're going to pay, make payroll and credit cards and have a, you know, a two by two office in New York city where everybody stands like this. So they went through all this stuff. I wasn't there for that. Right. So it's very difficult for me to carry that torch. They went through that and made a very successful company. He had a very successful exit for themselves. Lots of customers got themselves to 30, 40 employees.

Kevin Coppins: So they definitely had the fun stage. What private equity is asking us to do is that's interesting, but I really would like to have Predictable Success and I'd like to have it yesterday. Kevin would be great. So, I knew the path that we'd be going through. I didn't have a word I stumbled across you work kind of in the middle of that and remembering it that same time. This time, last year, we also decided to build six new products, and obviously market full on force. So now we're going to have a company that's only ever built one product, bill six only ever built it on prem, take it to the clouds. And I got to build security operation centers. And Oh, by the way, we don't have the processes to bare, barely be able to function today, much less than that type of environment.

Kevin Coppins: So we talk about being thrust into an Epic cat seven whitewater in the mix, but we didn't have a word for it, but we felt that the company felt it. And it was, it was very uncomfortable for a lot of people. for me, change is awesome. I don't mind stirring things up. A lot of people just can't operate that way. And once we found that word and we can even put the visual and you'll see occasional slide backs, you'll see people shoving through the whitewater, but once they can put a touchstone to it and say, we're just at a phase, this is a phase we have to go through. And on the other end of the phases as much calmer waters, the appetite, I would say the anxiety goes down because now that realize this is not a permanent state and that there's a method to the madness.

Kevin Coppins: And there's also from a productivity standpoint, they now can say, how can I lean in to lay down some of the tracks that are here Because of course we don't have a process for that because we never had one. Whereas before it was, what do you mean You have no process for that. And it just to change the tone by being able to clearly identify where we were. So it's been huge. It's still, you know, we, we talk about, we've probably got another good three to four



months left and they look at me like, I'm not saying like, there's just, we're just not going to get out of it if we can be internally focused

Kevin Coppins: And get us out of the whitewater and we'll totally miss the Mark. So that that's, that's the nature of the beast. So did you socialize the term and, and, use it as a, as part of the toolkit, you know, did you get your folks to understand what, what, what, what was the, as you shared that, what was the, how did they receive that? What did it make a difference that you could call this a thing? Yeah, couple of things happen. So first I had a couple people resign because now that they realized it was a thing, they didn't feel like it fix it. And they knew they weren't comfortable and things like that. and some people come out of government that, that were, I'm going to come into the shop and I'm going to do my thing. And it's like, well, how long are we going to be in this

Kevin Coppins: I can't survive in this position. It's just not gonna work. Right. I realized that it'd become cultural because I don't interview everybody in the company, but I'll I'll spot check or I'll help. Or if it's right, when by the time they got to me for an interview, they were talking about the whitewater. So these are candidates coming through the organization saying, and I understand you guys were on the whitewater. And that's actually where I do my best work. And that's what I enjoy doing is helping complete it. That's when I realized it would become much bigger than a Kevin said, I should become part of it. And so one of the things you said, just in passing there, I actually took a second and Jada to Don, you sort of double down in the whitewater side of things. So most T executive teams would grapple only with the internal whitewater or if it's what hit them first, the external aspect.

Les McKeown: But you decided to take both on, is that a conscious decision or did you not have any option or was it a mistake or, you know, just to be transparent, why would you take on such a broad swathe of things to do? It was definitely conscious. So then you can question my sanity that's better. but sometimes, sometimes you don't have a lot of options. All right. So I'm coming in to the company, brought in by, by the shareholders. You know, we gotta get this thing on the, on the right track. So Kevin, you got a track record with some good cultural stuff. Also a good process guidance report. That'll help us a ton. Then as we dug into the purpose of the company, it's just part of the culture, right? That's when we had this, that we were a data privacy company. And that's when we realized, well, Holy crap, we are, we are not equipped to compete.

Kevin Coppins: and then we looked around at literally the billions of dollars being poured into not just competitors, but startups everywhere. And we said, if we don't, if we don't start doing something, now we might get all of our processes. How many, I might be able to start getting 15 to 20% growth quarter, quarter of my legacy product. And maybe I can get it to the cloud, but I'm going to totally miss the market. And I'm not going to get the, you know, the valuation that the PE guys want, et cetera. So we didn't really have a choice. It was forced on us by the market, but we also knew if I just chased the external stuff,



Kevin Coppins: I've got no processes, right. So I've got to take on some of these internal stuff at the same time. So it is we're, we're, we're definitely in the whitewater, but I have the benefit now looking back a year and where I would say it was fairly calm, then we threw ourselves into the ethic, whitewater. I can see a ton of great work done by the team, both culturally process-wise and where we're at. So I can see us coming out and just sometimes really hard to see that when you're upside down in the cat six section of the road,

Les McKeown: That's absolutely true. So obviously we don't make any hostage to fortune, but, what do you sense you since you've got another year, two years, three years of this

Kevin Coppins: I think we've got next year's I mean, well, yeah, and we forgot to mention a pandemic got thrown into the middle of the night. That's mentioned that little thing that, that, that one definitely that wasn't in the small print when I took the job. so as we get more accustomed to this, this new normal of working from home and different things that going on, clients, et cetera, I think the middle of next year, we're going to, we'll still be rolling, but it's going to be no words as intense as it is right now. We are in the epicenter of it right now, we've launched three of the six new products. They're all one Datto product. So they're in their infancy. I'm starting the transition of existing customers. We've sold the first one. So all that's going to continue to be the Mark, the mile markers along the river of change, which is another very important part of this process that I need to get a bit better at is showing that we're not in the same spot in the river, that we worked two months ago, that we've actually made progress farther down.

Kevin Coppins: It I'm still going to be a little chaotic. So next year should be a lot calmer towards the end of the year. But some of that depends on the market too. I can't control what's happening externally, but internally we'll definitely be in leadership

Les McKeown: Well for what it's worth, not that this is why we're having this discussion, but, something that would pass on to the pattern that you're in is a pretty classic, which is a good thing to know. Right. what I have discovered over the years is that, a trucking thing that can be, very, disheartening, if you don't recognize it and incredibly heartening, if you do recognize it is that the initial signs of real genuine change is not suddenly heading goals and targets and milestones and successes. It's a realization that we're not filling in potholes anymore. That, you know, we're back on the road, we're making progress, we're driving, we're going forward. I'm not there yet, but we're not having to stop every five minutes and take a bucket of tar and fill in a pothole. And, and it's, it's that realization of all, we're not doing the remedial stuff anymore.

Les McKeown: That's, that's the first phase. And it sounds like you're very close to that two things before we closed Kevin, you know, you take a big career leap as you did. We go into stuff like that. There's all of this stuff that we know we know. Right. You know, you clearly knew leadership in your market shifts and there's the stuff that, you know, you don't know, you've self of oddly said, you know, I'm not an engineer. I know. I don't know that stuff. So I'd presume you



just get the right people around you. and if either of those two categories are what knocks us off that North philosophy,

Kevin Coppins: Because you know, that's stuff we know, we know what shouldn't and stuff that we know. We don't know. We should have fixed that.

Les McKeown: This is the stuff that back then, you didn't know. You didn't know. You just, I didn't know that. And I didn't even know. I don't know

Kevin Coppins: No

Les McKeown: Bumped into you in this last year that you didn't know. You didn't know, what's just new, new challenge wise to you.

Kevin Coppins: Well, this is going to sound somewhat like I'm pandering to the interviewer, but I'm not. and it came from a couple different directions. I, I would never have labeled myself a visionary. it just, most of my career, I was known as the process guy, right. I was the guy that would give it to Kevin and he'll get it done to get stuff done like you did with that very first job. And that's what I carried throughout my whole career. I wanted to be the guy that my boss or VP never had worried about. I'm gonna go worry about everybody else. Cause I know Kevin's might not have made this quarter, but he's doing everything exactly. Right. So, so I was a rule thig. They didn't get on radar screen. That's what I was known as. So, but that said my tendencies were definitely, I think out loud, I'm thinking with my hands and I'm going with stuff.

Kevin Coppins: And that realization came somewhat from, from your stuff also, Gino Wickman stuff in terms of, the EOS and traction in those moments and going through that and talking about the visionary and integrator and I'm like, well, I think I'm going to be one of those visionary things, people, but it, and that sounds, I know that's that's introspective, but at the same time, what that casts and this role is made very, very impactful. So bringing that to my conscious has been a huge thing. I had no clue going into this. I was just being me as what I thought. I didn't recognize that being me had implications further than I thought. so being able to understand that, and then also the, and see the bigger part of that is being able to start looking at my team and saying, well, I got to fill this thing out cause you can't have too. And by the way, it's okay to be the visionary that actually adds value. That was the other problem is a process guy. I'm like, those guys don't do anything. It's important. It's a very important part, especially in this company where it sits right now. But also I got to have some people that are pretty operationally focused and some process focused folks. And the synergist thing is natural for me, but really understanding how do I fill up my leadership team. So we're complimentary, and at best make sure that not

Kevin Coppins: Subconsciously not embracing each other's natural tendency. So that's been a very big thing for me going into this job that I did not recognize.



Les McKeown: That's, that's very helpful. And I'm so pleased that that was abused. I think self-awareness really helps us to hone our, our toolkit. Essentially. We, we, you know, we can reach for things that otherwise you'd have thought, no, that's not for me to use, but then you realize, yeah.

Kevin Coppins: And I think to your point, putting a word to it, I promise that interrupt. At least once like the whitewater we put, we put a word to whitewater and now it's a thing that you can, instead of saying, I feel like things are chaotic. You can like, it's a thing and it's the same revision or that label. Then you can say, well, it's a thing versus saying, Kevin kind of acts this way. So it's very helpful to give it a name.

Les McKeown: And when folks said to me, look, I only have time for you to do one thing for me. What would it be

Kevin Coppins: Have a bunch of shared vocabulary. There's nothing stronger than knowing when this person says this thing about this important

Les McKeown: That you know exactly what they mean by that,

Kevin Coppins: That word. They know what you mean by that as well. And so finally, well, what would a, what will a big win

Les McKeown: Like for you in 2021 set the pandemic side of stuff aside,

Kevin Coppins: You know, I'll go to fix that, but what would it be

Les McKeown: A big one for you in spirit on 2021

Kevin Coppins: a big win for us. This is probably not going to be the most inspirational thing, but you had mentioned that we're not filling potholes anymore. Right So, so if we can feel like we're moving down a road and start to see us in the mile on what water is calming down a little bit, the industry that we're in, what we do, how we do it, the, the, the algorithms underneath our product are fantastic. I mean, it's just a really great product and a great group of people. So it's just matter. It's harnessing that and being able to, to really open her up on the road a little bit, I guess I'll put it that way instead of having to keep it as slow as we are and hitting all the potholes and worry about a thing, you know, shattering our bones. When we hit a big one, being able to say, you know what, now we can go and maybe put this thing in second year and take it into third year. That would be a lot of fun.

Les McKeown: Well, folks, if you want to help Kevin reach that goal next year, and if you have got a digital everything drawer, and I know I have just go to dot com, SP



Kevin Coppins: On.com, find out what they do.

Les McKeown: we've got Kevin's, contact details right here in this page. You can reach out, talk to him directly. I'm sure Kevin, you'd be delighted to talk to any of the Predictable Success tribe who would like to use your stuff. And I want to get you to promise to come back in a couple of years and tell us how it's like

Kevin Coppins: Out of whitewater. I would love that looking forward to it. Thanks again. Thanks.