

EPISODE 852

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00.0] ANNOUNCER Welcome to the Real Estate Syndication Show. Whether you are a seasoned investor or building a new real estate business, this is the show for you. Whitney Sewell talks to top experts in the business. Our goal is to help you master real estate syndication.

And now your host, Whitney Sewell.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:24.4] WS: This is your daily Real Estate Syndication Show. I'm your host Whitney Sewell. Today, our guest is Joey Kilrain. Thanks for being on the show Joey.

[0:00:32.1] JK: Thank you so much for having me sir.

[0:00:34.5] WS: Joey has 15 years of experience in developing enterprise products, this includes research, visual design and development, he leads projects from the idea and research through execution. His research informs visual decisions, which power the processes and protocols to prove ROI.

Joey, thank you again for your time and being on the show. What you're good at is something that almost all of us, if not all of us in this industry. We need somebody like yourself in our team, we always think of that attorney or we think about that property manager, we think about all the lender, but we don't think about this person that's in your shoes that could help us in such a big way.

I wanted to just jump right in and you tell us a little bit about your background and then let's talk through how you can help the listener to improve their business?

[0:01:22.1] JK: Yeah, that's great. Yeah, you're right, a lot of times, design and even development are often thought of as a – well, we'll get to that, when we get there type of thing. For me, a lot of times, when I work with clients, it's disheartening to hear that they put a lot of their resources and efforts into the wrong bucket.

My goal for our conversation today is to try to unearth what some of those challenges are, try to provide you like a roadmap so you don't fall into those things and hopefully, get to work with them on helping build their products because a lot of time, what you're looking to start with, it shouldn't be this gigantic product and I think you should be trying to focus on what are my resources, where do I have in hand, what am I trying to do.

[0:01:57.2] WS: Nice. Why don't we jump in there, obviously, you know, our listeners, they're operators, they're looking for large commercial projects, they're trying to connect with investors, they're trying to have that online presence that's showing that they're a professional business and brand and attracting investors and there's also investors in the other side too that are listening that are investing in these operator's deals but tell us about some of the challenges that you would foresee when we're getting started or talk about dumping money into just the wrong things or things that don't make sense.

Maybe you could help us think through some of those things as we're getting started.

[0:02:28.3] JK: Sure, I would say, right out the gate, it definitely depends on the size of your business. If you are just, let's say like a smaller firm where you're doing like local listings and the like, the thing is obviously you want to get a domain. You want something that's pronounced fully, want something that when you put it up there, it will be easy to say and I know sometimes.

For example, my last name, people usually put two L's in Kilrain when there's only one. If you have a situation like I do, you may want to buy those additional domain names when people do is search and they misspell it, you can then have it redirect at your page. Now, again, with the name like mine, if you have a different name, then you probably won't have that situation.

However, that's part one, part two is where do you register your domain name? You can go to one of the big guys. You can go to One on One, you can go GoDaddy, what I recommend this at

when you get your domain, use your Gmail account as a register. I say that because let's say for example, you have kilrain.com and I go there and I also register it with joey@kilrain.com. If I should ever problem with the host, my domain name will be locked up with that as well and I won't be able to move the domain name to a different host.

Instead, I would use my kilrain@gmail.com to register my domain name and then joey@kilrain.com for any sort of correspondence that I have with customers and the like. That's number one. Second thing I would get into is when you're thinking again about your budget. First thing is a site. Are you going to go with something like Wix, are you going to go with something like WordPress or something enterprise?

I think that Wix is a great starter package for a lot of people who have never done a website before. It's really basic. What it also does is teaches you why the Internet can be complicated. Instead of you getting into something really heavy like WordPress, you get into something like Wix, you get an idea of what it does and from there, you have a pretty good idea of what you should be looking for going forward.

However, when you get into WordPress, there's a lot of benefits to that. You get into SEO, you get into digital campaigns, there's a lot more tracking involved but again, I feel like most companies dive into something really big out the gate when in reality, they should try on a smaller pair of shoes before they put on obviously a bigger pair of shoes.

[0:04:33.9] WS: No, that's very wise I'm sure, thinking through, I mean, websites can be such an expensive thing, right? I mean, we all need one if you're going to have a business and a professional brand, right? They can be so expensive, I mean, we got quotes anywhere from 5,000 to 45,000 from different people when we were looking at having another website designed and we just wanted that next level, right?

Like you're talking about. Help us walk through that a little bit, I mean, what should we expect? How do we know that we're getting the best bang for our buck? Let's say we are just getting started, maybe we can afford that \$50,000 website. What's going to get us there and what's going to be most important things that we're going to need to know?

[0:05:14.5] JK: Right, that's awesome because again, going back to Wix. Some people would say, "Why would you want to go to Wix or Squarespace," and I think the reason why is because there's a little bit of a learning curve.

I think there's also managing your expectation. Quite often, people get in and they think, "Oh, I'm going to build this gigantic thing and it's going to be wonderful." What they don't realize is it could take months to do that, how much time do you have?

Then also, to your point budget. Some guys will say, "Hey, I've seen some people build a Wix website and charged the client 15k for a Wix website" and I think you realize, it takes you about an hour to set that up and you're done. You get your pictures, you put your product up and you're done.

Now, granted, everybody's got their own mouths they got to feed, their own responsibilities. When I've heard things like that, I'm like, "That's where companies that are not obvious to what goes on with this. Yeah, you could really be taking up the river." Again, I would think sort of – Wix is great because it's simple and cheap and you get a basic idea of what you're doing.

However, what it doesn't do is incorporate something like RealtyMX. Where now, you have a database of listings coming into your site that people can also look at and get through there. Wix does not do that. Now, if you wanted to get into something like that, you're going to get into a little bit bigger, which is WordPress.

WordPress has a slew of things that you can do with it. It really is a great tool, you're probably looking at around maybe 5k to start on a WordPress site and that would be basic, when you can get – definitely Google analytics, you can definitely get some really good ones at RealtyMX as well. As a matter of fact, I've actually worked with at Folio and a couple of others where the listings just get directly pumped at the site, which is great.

Again, it's a little bit of a bigger package but it's something that I think you can grow into to do that.

[0:06:56.7] WS: Okay, well why don't we jump into that roadmap a little bit. I want us to have time for that so you can help the listener kind of walk down that road a little bit, thinking through what they need and then I'm sure we'll talk about some of the challenges too as well as we're going through that.

[0:07:09.8] JK: That is pretty straightforward. I think from a designer perspective, when we are dealing with a – what we call like a basic site design, we're considering 88 compliance, I think a lot of people overlooked that and they don't realize how many of your customers may have like dexterity challenges or vision challenges, you really have to consider that stuff and that points to your corporate colors.

Again, if you're a smaller firm, you may not have looked into branding. If you did, great but if you haven't, try to stay away from like really bright colors or complicated visuals. Again, that usually doesn't bode well with your customers but not to mention if you have a color pallet that is, let's say, very similar like darker grays and darker blues. Well, chances are, they're going to have problems sort of differentiating link colors and the like.

You may want to set it where the colors, where your call to actions are bright and big. Another challenge that I see is that when it comes to messaging, people have like these super long titles for messaging and you really should boil it down and try to keep it simple because the Internet in a lot of ways is just like a giant billboard.

You get like a flash, you get like 10, 15 seconds, it's almost like you're traveling down the road, you look up, see that banner and you look back on the road.

[0:08:15.4] WS: Elaborate on that a little bit. Where would you see these titles or what part of our website or where and where should we be thinking about that?

[0:08:22.2] JK: Awesome. Obviously, the challenge with that is you have multiple device types. You have mobile, you have the tablet and then you have desktop. Now, when you think of your audience, I would think audience first with a real estate if you're looking for a property, your customers are probably going to be on their phone.

Now, they may go to the site later on but they're probably going to be on their phones. In that regard, you would probably want to be mobile first. Now, what's great is with analytics, you can determine who and how many people are not only coming to your site but at what time and what device type.

Then again, that gets in the analytics part and it's not complicated to do that but getting back to the device type. If I'm working on my phone, your most important thing is you want to know how much do I have to scroll to get to something actionable. If I had to scroll like one flick or two flicks to get to something actionable, that's probably a bad idea.

If people are coming to your site, looking for listings, you should have a big button that says, "listings here" or even in actions that let them start seeing what properties you have available right away. Don't make them look for that content. Bring that up to the top.

[0:09:24.7] WS: Yeah, how much do I have to scroll to get to something actionable? I think that's a great thought and as the listener, have you looked at your website on your own phone recently or often and thought through, what does a new person see or get to when they see it on the phone or the computer?

Maybe you could speak to that as well like phone versus a computer. It seems like so much more is done on the phone now than ever obviously before. How should we be thinking about that or are our websites so compatible now that it's more seamless?

[0:09:53.0] JK: Yeah, I would say the desktop is where you get your heavy lifting done if you're doing like a campaign and you're trying to setup like – let's say you want to have an email list of people you want to send these things out to then obviously yeah, you're going to do it through the desktop.

Your customer is probably on a phone. A great example just recently, the boss, the wife, we were at a Target getting some stuff done and she immediately pulled out her phone and was flipping through Amazon to see if there was a good deal, right there. She got the product in front of her and with the phone at the same time still on this.

With that, I would say the same thing is probably going on if people are looking for a property and if they're in a particular area, I've seen people pull out their phones and flip through and say, "Hey, this property's available" or "I like the area, I get invited for it" obviously COVID is kind of changing that stuff, the way they perceive it but it's the very similar where you could use your phone in order to check properties and if they're in the area, yeah, they're going to look at it from there.

[0:10:42.4] WS: I think that's a good segue also into just the experience consistency and maybe you can speak to that?

[0:10:48.2] JK: Sure, experience, where it gets a little tricky with experience is you want to make sure that it's consistent, not only from what they see in their phone but how they talk to you when they call you, right? When they envision when talk to you.

Things like your email, branding for your email need to be consistent, what's on your site to be consistent but also, what's happening with social. Do you have a social presence, are you using Instagram, are you using Facebook? You're probably going to be on LinkedIn if you're on real estate but again, all those different voices have to be consistent and that experience is what they see from not only from the phone but from desktop from when they call you and even what they see when you post socially.

[0:11:24.0] WS: Nice, okay. Thinking through all our platforms, what it looks like being consistent and then, what about, especially with websites and design, it can be pretty overwhelming, right? We're getting started even some of the stuff you've already talked about. I think somebody's getting started in this business like, "I really need these things but man" without going back to say, the type of site and some of that stuff, anything else that they should be keeping in mind as far as ways they can keep the expense down a little bit. But have a well performing site and be marketing well?

[0:11:54.2] JK: Right and funny, because I'm currently trying to buy a piece of land in Philadelphia. I'm obviously not a real estate guy. I've had apartments in Queens and the place is already built, I just move my stuff in and I was done.

However, trying to buy a piece of land and not knowing all the legalities that go in with the city and municipalities and all that stuff has been like an absolute eye-opener. Thinking, “Wow, why don’t we want to build it now going through that?” The same could be said for the web because of all the intricacies that are involved.

It really can be frustrating for someone who just – they just want it, “Just give me the key, I just want to turn around and go.” Yes, I would say, out the gate, keeping it simple is your best bet. You don’t want to go anything that’s starts to get you comfortable and you obviously want to try to find someone like me who could walk you through, to give you that advice. Now, I give advice all the time to people.

One, because I just love being able to make sure that that person doesn’t feel like they’re making an uneducated decision. Something I didn’t mention earlier was also, while you could have a great site, where you’re going to put a lot more money is going to be in the marketing of that.

That’s the bigger thing and I think that pill is a really hard pill to swallow because people don’t realize that to do like an SEO campaign can start at around two to 3,000 a month, right? For something decent to get some real fallback and the way that I measure SEO related work is my phone is ringing. The more opportunities that are coming in that’s how I know that the SEO is working. Don’t go and buy into that down sense to that GoDaddy and all of those guys have because that’s stuff, while it may work it trickles through and you are getting what you paid for.

You’re only getting maybe like a small amount but if you get into a SEO package that is really around your brand and those things usually take about a month for it to really kick in and then you are constantly fine-tuning it, it’s absolutely worth it. I do that for my LinkedIn as well, all of that social stuff, it is absolutely worth it in my opinion. It’s a pinch, don’t get me wrong, you’re definitely going to spend some money but the return that you get on that is that I get constant calls from people that are relevant to those that I am going to work with versus what happened back in the day where it would just be some random opportunity.

Now, it's like instead of going in with a shotgun and I'm like kind of spraying everything, I have a rifle with a scope and I am picking off exactly what I want. It is probably not a good reference but you get the idea.

[0:14:10.4] WS: No, that's good. That's good and thinking about that marketing side I feel like especially coming into this business, you have no idea what that is going to cost and it can really hit you like a ton of bricks. You know when you think about it especially start getting into SEO and you have no idea what that is going to cost but one thing I know you can probably help us with as well is finding somebody like yourself. How do we vet someone like yourself?

What questions should we be asking? How do we know that this is a person we're going to be putting this much of our budget to that's really going to seriously move the needle for us?

[0:14:39.7] JK: Yeah, that's awesome because I've heard people as wild as going to Craigslist to find designers, which I think okay, they're there, right? But then when I look for credibility and credibility obviously can go do a lot of things. You can go online and you could see what the reviews are. Read some of the reviews that company. Now, the reviews aren't always truthful and it could be a certain way. However, you could also go to LinkedIn and I think LinkedIn is a great way to find somebody.

Because chances are, you're probably connected to someone who is connected to that designer or know someone that's know that designer world and that I think is awesome. From there, all you got to do is look at their work. For example with what I had, I have portfolio examples that are up there. Now, they're not all real estate focus because a lot of the work I get is an AdTech and in FinTech but I have done a pretty amount of work in regards to real estate as well.

However with that, you can see the process and they should be able to explain the process as simple as it is for you selling real estate. If they can't break it down that simple, then chances are they don't understand and then from there, someone like myself would talk about if we are getting into development, if it is something big, are we're going to keep development local or are we going to keep it offshore? Earlier I was mentioning there is pros and cons to both.

I think when you deal with an offshore company, while you could probably save a lot of money, there is a lot of maintenance involved. There is a lot of handholding because culturally, they don't have the same get it factor as we do here in the States. If you are dealing with State to States, it doesn't matter. If you're in New York to Cali, there's a get it factor even in the middle of the country. There is a get it factor to what we do but the second you step outside of that, there is that misconception that, "Oh, I am going to save some money but it's going to take me an extra month to try to get it done."

[0:16:16.7] WS: Joey, what is the hardest part of doing this well for people in the real estate business like yourself?

[0:16:22.9] JK: The hardest thing for me working with guys in real estate?

[0:16:26.2] WS: Sure, I mean just like somebody on my side getting this done well, you know working with someone like yourself?

[0:16:30.9] JK: Awesome, so yeah. You know, it's funny, a quick note. I'm working with a company called Sonic Tools down in Alabama and they build like hand tools, right? Like ratchet sockets, you know it is a perfect thing for a guy like myself and one of the things that I've learned with this has been managing expectations and I've had a lot less hiccups with customers managing expectation when we talk about what are we trying to do and being realistic on a timeline.

A lot of people think it can happen in a week or in a month and I think it depends, right? It really does and there is also with customers is educating them on trying to put everything in this one box and then we don't change what is in the box until we get it done because a lot of times customers is like, "Oh, so and so is doing this, I need this now" and now you're distracting. You are putting too much stuff in the box and it is not going to hit that deadline.

The next thing you know not only have you missed your launch point but now you're putting more money into it versus, "No, let's stay focused on what we have and we're done." I really haven't had a lot of trouble with that, knock on wood, use my head — but there is a lot of like

letting them know upfront, managing their expectations, letting them know what you are about to get into.

[0:17:32.0] WS: Yeah, letting them know what they are about to get into, being upfront with all of those things is so important. Joey, how has this pandemic affected your business or how do you see it affecting just business just in general, what do you see over the next six to 12 months. Are you planning anything different just how you are operating versus maybe what you thought you would be doing?

[0:17:50.6] JK: Sure. Yeah, so obviously no one knew this was coming. Now, being digital, we haven't had those problems. We've been on the opposite. Now, early in late February up until about April, yeah it was really dark. There was a lot of confusion going on, a lot of people are scared. A lot of people are pulling back on what they are doing but I took that time to double down on catching up with as many people on LinkedIn as I could.

That without a doubt hands down, I went full bet on the social stuff and it worked out and what I saw was there's a lot of companies that were looking for people like myself but the problem was they wanted to meet with them face-to-face and again, the guy is selling in Alabama they were – yeah, we were just local and the pandemic allowed us to mobile and meet with more people and that really opened up a lot of doors.

For me, I am doubling if not tripling down on my efforts with LinkedIn, trying to get on more different podcast like yourself where it's not necessarily a design focused podcast but it is talking with people who could use the services of someone like myself. It's obviously a total pivot from what I usually do, which is like you're talk about design challenges and the community. Talking to your customers like what we do on the show would be great.

Because now they know, "Hey, that actually resonates with what I need" so that is what I am actually going after.

[0:19:04.8] WS: Do you have any daily habits or morning routine that you are disciplined about that have helped you achieve success?

[0:19:10.1] JK: You know what, again, with COVID what changed, first thing was obviously with my kids. I get to see my kids grow up hourly versus only on the weekends and that has been absolutely wonderful and I get to see everybody as much as I can, which is great. The routine prior to COVID was I'd get up around six to 6:30, go for a jog for about 30 minutes, come back, do some pushups, get all my body looking good, whatever and then get into the rat race of racing up and down the turn pike to try to get to different clients and the like.

Now, I wake up around 7:00 or so, I cook breakfast for everybody in the house. That includes my in-laws, my two kids, the boss, obviously myself and then from there, take my daughter to school, take a little walk around the house, a walk around the neighborhood and then I come right into my magical little room here and I get things done and honestly, I don't want to go to the office. I want to see my colleagues. I want to get around like other human beings but at the same time, this has become so comfortable because I don't have to worry about racing around or doing all of that myself that I just find to – I don't really have so much stress and anxiety in my life.

[0:20:13.9] WS: Yeah, the time freedom in getting to spend that time with the kids and being there is just priceless, right? You can't get that back, no doubt about it.

[0:20:22.2] JK: There is actually four phases to COVID that I realized and I will send you the link once I finish it, the article but the four phases are or what I have noticed is that first, it was living the life of an introvert. That was the first couple of months with COVID. Second, was the perpetual work week, where I wake up on Tuesday and think it was Sunday. Week three was the introspect, where I realized, "All right, this is going to be permanent" like my life and the way I've done business is absolutely changed.

What I mean going through the last couple of months has been implementation and that has been getting into the things that I normally didn't do in the beginning, which was a lot of like video meetings or again, pumping all of my content on LinkedIn, trying to get around those people. That, like identifying those things has been a total game changer for me.

[0:21:06.5] WS: What's been the number one thing that's contributed to your success?

[0:21:09.2] JK: The number one thing that's contributed to my success, one I'd say regaining my mental health not like driving around like I said, that was pretty stressful but I would say another thing is just realizing what my resources are now. I know it's challenging, a lot of businesses, those that aren't doing digital work like restaurants and all of that is absolutely challenging. Real estate obviously is really challenging, how do you do that stuff but there are so many resources online now.

I think a lot of it is just connecting with people that do what you don't do and then getting that confidence and getting a plan with them to go forward. That for me again, I didn't really deal with a lot of people who did the SEO stuff. I did it for like development purposes but I wasn't the guy using it for my benefit. It was usually other people using it for their benefit and then the – yeah, I should be pumping that myself and it isn't just going to Google.

It's definitely trying to get those personal connections on LinkedIn and getting around people that need my services.

[0:22:03.6] WS: How do you like to give back?

[0:22:05.1] JK: Awesome, so I give back in a multitude of ways. The first way is having been an educator for about 14 years now, anyone of my students that needs help, my rolodex is open to you. A lot of them are struggling to find work and I help them find ways to get work and in some cases, if the customer that calls me that needs skills that may not be able to afford what I do, I will send it off to one of my students and my students being made a couple of years in the business.

On the flip side, I also work with the Goldman Sachs Program. I was a part of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 small business initiative. I was actually group one, going back maybe six or seven years ago and anyone in that cohort, from one to what's been graduated, I absolutely opened my time at least an hour to give you advice or even help you try to get some of the work flow that you have and then also locally. There is a lot of businesses in my neighborhood here in Edison.

That when the pandemic hit, they didn't know what to do and I said, "Yeah, you need a nerd in your corner." One example was, there was a gym and they were struggling because nobody could come into the gym to work out and they're like, "What am I going to do? You know I am going to have to close up." I said, "You have your phone. You could do FaceTime. You can work out FaceTime. You're not in-person, you just leave the phone on. It's almost the same thing" and it is amazing.

Because in March, that was like no one is going to do that and now, that is what almost everybody does. Peloton had been doing it but now it's a reality and it's these things, what you do, it's right in front of your face, it's right there and yeah, it may not be your norm but we can pivot and make this work and that's how I've been helping a lot of guys with giving them a dose of reality, giving them that confidence to say, "Hey, one, it's okay if it doesn't work out because we are going to try to make it work but if it does, we just fine-tune it and we just go forward."

[0:23:48.4] WS: Yeah.

[0:23:48.8] JK: We keep making it work and again, I think there's a tremendous amount of things out there that are trying to turnkey solution that you don't have to go and dump months of resources into to make a lot of these go. At least start to inch the needle in the right direction.

[0:24:02.9] WS: Joey, grateful for your time and just helping us think through some visual design development. Well, you know I mean, it is simple as getting a domain but then thinking through the budget as well, depending on where we're at and just to have a road map a little bit of you talk about visual challenges and I mean different things that are going to help us when we are thinking through that design process and even finding someone like yourself, which can be difficult, right?

Vetting it because if you don't know anything about these things, you don't even know what questions to ask somebody so grateful for your time. Tell the listeners how they can get in touch with you and learn more about you?

[0:24:31.7] JK: The best way to get in touch with me is obviously email or you can go to my site. My company is DED Company and the reason for it is Digital Experience Design is a

mouthful so we just boil it down into an acronym. It just so happens that the domain was available, so you could reach me at ded.company.com or you can go to joey@kilrain.com and catch me that way as well.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:24:52.9] WS: Don't go yet, thank you for listening to today's episode. I would love it if you would go to iTunes right now and leave a rating and written review. I want to hear your feedback. It makes a big difference in getting the podcast out there. You can also go to the Real Estate Syndication Show on Facebook so you can connect with me and we can also receive feedback and your questions there that you want me to answer on the show.

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[OUTRO]

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