

Music: [00:00](#) [Music Intro.

Randy: [00:13](#) Hi, I'm Randy Berridge. I'm the CFO at industrial resolution and pub forge, a industrial resolution as a custom software development company located in the heart of downtown Lancaster. Uh, we also run a tech focused coworking space at the same location called pub forge. This podcast is dedicated to the challenges and opportunities in the tech sector and what we can do about them. What are some solutions? Um, so I'm here today with our CEO and owner Joel Walker. Um, and we are also joined by Sarah Payne. Sarah is the impact consulting manager at assets. Um, assets is a nonprofit organization here in Lancaster that's focused on transforming our community through business. The reason we have them here today is to talk about B Corps and we'll be diving into exactly what a B Corp is and is not, um, doing some terminology explanation. Um, but you may be familiar with a few examples of, of B Corps .

Randy: [01:05](#) Um, these are companies like Ben and Jerry's, Patagonia and recently Dannone, um, who you may know for their yogurt, a Dannon, uh, at assets. Sarah is focused on helping businesses measure and improve their impact through, uh, the department of impact consulting at assets. Uh, one way that businesses have begun to do this, um, that they've begun to measure their impact and validate it is through the B impact assessment administered by B lab at a Philadelphia. Um, so welcome Sarah and thanks for joining us.

Sarah: [01:36](#) Thanks for having me.

Randy: [01:37](#) Awesome. So we are going to be kicking this off. Um, here and I have a question for Joel of being a business owner. I'm a leader in the tech community. You've been, you know, in this for about 10 years now. Why is this a conversation that's important to you? Um, why, why does measuring your impact matter as a business owner, as somebody in the tech community?

Joel: [02:01](#) There's, there are so many ways to answer that. Um, in tech we like to, we're data driven. We like to know that's the thing that we're doing works is, is, uh, backed by actual data that's being received. And we like to monitor, uh, things. We build frameworks and applications all the time that um, that empowers other people and users to sort of play by a set of rules. So anytime we find ourselves intrigued by somebody else's set of rules, you can bet that, um, we're going to be asking a lot of questions like, Hey, what's that about? Um, it sounds great. How are we actually doing it? Um, another angle is just as a business owner, man, you want to track your metrics,

you want to track your, all of the things that you could possibly be tracking, especially on the financial end. Um, and as you know, just a business owner in the tech sector in Lancaster.

Joel: [02:56](#) I would say that just never even occurred to me that it's not the right thing to do. Um, just seemed normal to me, uh, to, to pursue a B Corp status. Um, just like 100% of healthcare coverage seem normal 10 years ago when we first started. Um, some things just smack in the face and I don't think in the tech sector I'm an isolated voice. I think that's probably the reason that we're hosting this topic here today on technical resolution is simply because I believe there's probably a lot of tech companies out there that don't know what the B Corp status is. Uh, what to be impact assessment, you know, could do for them. And they're already doing many, many of the things that, uh, are in line with this. So hoping to, to raise some awareness today. Awesome. Thanks. And Sarah, how did you get involved with this originally and why are you so passionate about this?

Sarah: [03:57](#) Yeah, I'm really passionate about using business as a force for good to transform our communities to transform our world. I originally got involved in this space more from a nonprofit angle, thinking about, you know, how can charities, how can maybe government entities create positive impact? And I was specifically focused on economic and international development. Um, it was a little bit skeptical honestly, about the role of business in creating a better world, but learned about social enterprise, learned about certified B corporations. And it really opened up my mind to the possibility that businesses really can be part of the solutions to some of the challenges that we face collectively. So, um, love being at assets, doing this work every day. I also briefly was working at B lab, which, um, created the benefit corporation and the certified B Corp entities and also the B impact assessment. So fairly well versed in it at this point and I'm just really excited to spread the word more and more about it.

Joel: [04:54](#) That's awesome. And there is, um, a ton of terminology that comes along with this. Uh, so it would be a good idea to maybe do a debrief on what all of these things mean as somebody who doesn't work in this every day may just hear a lot of, uh, the word be coming at them and unsure how it all relates. I'm so sorry. Could you just give us just a rundown of what is a B Corp? Um, is it the same thing as a benefit corporation?

Sarah: [05:18](#) Yeah, great question. So a certified B corporation is a company that has been verified to meet the highest standards of social and environmental performance as well as accountability and

transparency. They're companies that balance purpose and profit and it's really a company level certification. So similar to how you can get a fair trade certification for coffee. This is a certification that isn't for products, it's for the entire company level, looking at your overall impact as a company socially, environmentally in every way, and going through a rigorous verification process to obtain B Corp certification. So the creators of the B Corp did also create a legal entity of the benefit corporation. So the difference here really is at a certified B Corp is a company that has gone through a certification process through a third party B lab and has been verified to meet all these different standards. One of them is adopting a legal structure that enshrines their mission and values over time.

Sarah:

[06:16](#)

So that could be benefit corporation governance. Benefit corporation is really just that legal entity. So it's like a C or S Corp. But what it does is that it legally ensures that the company can maintain its values and mission over time. I'm just protecting the company. And it was really a response to, um, an experience of the founders of B lab actually had as they were coming out of a, an addition of previous career. Um, the co founders of Bila, I've actually had cofounded and one which was a basketball or apparel footwear company known in the 1990s. And dating myself, the more I talk about it, you know, I'd asked the audience like, I don't know who that is. I'm like, okay, thanks for making me feel old. But, um, it was a really successful company. Um, and from the beginning, the co founders designed it to be a good company in every way.

Sarah:

[07:06](#)

So making sure that they engage their employees, that they do responsible sourcing. So they had things like 40 hours of paid time off for volunteering every year for employees. They audited all of their overseas suppliers. They had yoga on site. This is back in the 1990s when this stuff was pretty progressive. Sure. And so they built this great company and it became very financially successful as well. And eventually they had an offer on the table to sell the company. Um, at this point it was competing with the likes of Nike and Jordan and all this stuff. So they ended up deciding to sell the company. Um, you know, kind of in the life cycle of a corporation, you start the company successful and then you make your money, you know, you walk away from the table having, you know, done your thing. Um, but unfortunately what happened was within months of that point of sale, the new owners stripped away all of the social and environmental impact that the company had built up.

Sarah: [07:59](#) And in a matter of years, the company became a little bit more, you know, unknown. Like we don't really hear the N one today. It's still in existence. And so the co founders walked away being very disillusioned by that process and really wanting to make sure that other entrepreneurs who wanted to build good companies could do that and preserve the DNA of the company over time, even through a sale or some other event. So they started B lab and they started this benefit corporation entity, which legally allows you to prioritize your stakeholders in addition to your shareholders. Traditionally a for profit company legally has to maximize shareholder value. So for the folks that own and control the company, you have to maximize value for them. What benefit corporation does is flip that on its head and say you can also consider your stakeholders in that equation.

Sarah: [08:49](#) So your employees, the community, the environment, they're all equally as important as shareholders, which allows you so much more latitude as you know, the leader of a company to consider those things. So short version, a certified B Corp has gone through this entire certification process and has made a legal change. Um, but a benefit Corp is really just the legal entity. So a company could become a benefit corporation and change their legal structure. And not go on to become a certified B Corp. They may choose not to do that full process, but every certified B Corp has to go through a legal process. Okay. Yeah. Thanks for clearing that up. How does that story, Joel, kind of strike you thinking about an one and what happened after there was a change in ownership and everything that they probably held very dear about the culture they had built with stripped away. How does a story like that strike you in, make you, like, what does that make you think or feel as as a business owner, as I'm sure almost the legacy of, of what we're trying to build here as well. Um, lives on, uh, how, how does that story hit?

Joel: [09:50](#) Yeah. All right. It's, I mean, for me that's, that's a, that is a nightmare. Like that's a worst fear coming true sort of scenario. Um, yeah. And my first reaction was to shutter, um, yeah, you pour your heart and soul into something and uh, you know, you want it to grow and, and get healthy. And I think one of the interesting paradoxes that we face, especially, you know, for entrepreneurs, um, is that a certain point? You know, especially in tech, my God, we see this all the time. Founders flounder, you know, um, the unicorn CEO is not the best CEO, uh, sort of thing. But that's, you know, probably true for my company too. Um, at a certain point, you know, I, I've already accepted that I'm, I'll, I'll need to step down if I want this to continue to grow.

Um, you know, and so you start to think about that at some point in your life.

- Joel: [10:47](#) Everyone thinks about that. What have I done with my time? Where did I put my passion? Who's going to carry this torch? You know, um, and how is it going to be carried? And so I guess the idea of a business structure amongst other things, I mean, that that validates and that enforces, this is what we're about. We cannot, you know, call that into question. It's incredibly, uh, Loring to hear about. Um, and then the questions arise, right? 1 million of them. Wow. How's that going to do it? You know, I'm a big believer that, that, that people, people create process, people are over process. A process that runs without people is actually probably doomed to fail at some point anyway. Right? There's always going to be this symbiotic relationship. Um, but Oh boy.
- Speaker 5: [11:48](#) [inaudible]
- Joel: [11:48](#) it just always really tempting to hear of a process that could potentially control and guidance, you know, shape I guess the future of something that the way that people should sort of align around. So, I dunno, how's that for a bucket of words?
- Sarah: [12:05](#) And that was actually what drew Patagonia to the B Corp certification process. They were one of the early adopters of becoming a B Corp. um, and a lot of it was because the founder of Patagonia, Yvon Chouinard wanted to build from the start this company that was so rooted in people in place and committed to a very specific positive impact and doing no harm on the earth. And for him as, as the company became more successful, I think it was the same fear of, you know, this, I want this company to outlive me. I want this company to be around in 50 years, how do I ensure that's going to happen? And so you start taking these kind of steps to, to legally enshrine your purpose, to baking in your values, into every aspect of the organization, your business model, your operations, everything. And it's a way of, you know, guarding, you know, the future of the company. Um, and I think it's, it is very powerful.
- Joel: [12:54](#) Yeah. I think for S for sure, every business owner will grow their company that will, is growing their company at some point is going to reach a point where they look around and realize, Oh my gosh, there's, there's enough people around me with mixed interest, with different interests simply because you need different skill sets, talents, people from, from all walks of life to do some of the jobs that you create. And then all of a sudden, one day you look up and you're like, Whoa, we're not all

thinking that this way is the best way to do that thing. You know, for some people that happens when here, as soon as you add your first employee. But you know, um, it's, it's startling. And so, I don't know, I just think that, um, I can relate very much to, uh, to mr shipyard in that regard.

Sarah:

[13:44](#)

And it's not just employees, it's investors too. That's a big piece of this as well, that as your company gets more successful than if you do decide to bring on outside investment, giving up control, any amount of control, um, or decision making or voice to other folks, you want to make sure they understand what your company is about so they don't come in and say, well, you know, you're underperforming performing on these financial metrics. We need to do this, this, this, and it's, you know, as a business owner saying like, those things are important. This is also important. You don't get to come in here and call all of the shots and change our corporate values. So if from the beginning or early on or at any point before that would happen, um, pursuing this structure, whether it be Corp and or benefit Corp, um, can be very valuable in that way as well. Again, just to protect the company and what you've created, it almost like paints the box. You're working in an obit. What does kind of really interesting to me as I think about that question, the story of Patagonia and thinking about, you know, ourselves here at Indy Rez is, um, there's often a lot of talk and you know, you mentioned like not only does the financial need to be sustainable, but the point of measuring this is, uh, to make sure that the environmental end, the end, uh,

Randy:

[14:52](#)

and sort of like, you know, those employee engagement things are sustainable as well. Uh, you know, there's often talk of, you know, usually when you think of that word, you think, Oh, can the company survive longterm? Do they have, you know, a viable business model? Um, but then also, you know, taking into question, you know, what are they doing in their community, you know, environmentally that actually has longterm viability as well. Cause I think, and I think about that with the tech industry, a lot of, you know, there's often kind of like almost the parody of like fake employee culture at tech companies. You know, you got your, your ping pong tables and your pool tables, but you know, that's not gonna show up on a, a B impact assessment that is not the probably like longterm sustainable. Like yes, it could en contribute to employee engagements if they really like ping pong.

Randy:

[15:37](#)

We have a professional ping pong player here on our team. So for him, yes that may be a longterm sustainable thing, but it kind of makes you put a bit of the proof in the pudding that

longterm this company is committed to doing good things in their community, doing good things for their employees, you know, for all their stake holders outside of the fine. So it's kind of like a really attractive thing that a is also interesting to parallel to the tech industry. Have you seen any companies that are kind of surprised by their, like impact results or do you, are you aware of, um, even if you haven't personally done them, uh, companies that believe that they are contributing more impact than they are, um, based on like I kind of, some of those like sort of like really fake employee engagement type things?

Sarah: [16:24](#)

For sure. Yeah, I think that there are a lot of companies out there that want to kind of be included in this camp. Um, and a lot of them we kind of used the term greenwashing or good washing. So these companies that they talk a really good talk and they market all of their innovative and cool things and how they plant trees and, um, give back to their communities. But, um, but I think if you were to actually look at their impact and look at their operations, if they were to take this B impact assessment, you may be surprised by some of these companies. And I think in part the B Corp movement is a response to that of not allowing companies to get away with just slick marketing in good talk. You have to walk the talk. Um, we're seeing more and more emphasis on transparency and consumers have looking, they're doing their homework.

Sarah: [17:10](#)

You know, like we have the internet, they can look up these things that you know, your company is involved with. I mean, one of the great examples that has is very relevant, but I mean, thinking about the Sackler family and Purdue pharma, this is a family that built fortunes on selling opioid medications. Um, and with that money, their riches, they donated a lot to organizations. So they were huge philanthropists. So around the world there's buildings, the Sackler, this and that. And there was a time when people thought that, you know, that's good business. Like this is a good business there. They're getting back so much. Right? But then you find out, I mean now there's a huge backlash against, they made their money in these sorted ways and that's not actually a good business. It's not enough just to do your business. And then with what's left over, take a fraction of your profits and then donate them.

Sarah: [18:00](#)

The whole idea of a B corporation is that, that from the beginning and in every way you're creating positive impact, um, which still allows you to be financially sustainable and profitable, but it's just that mindset shift. Um, and again, it gives you a way to kind of validate and affirm that my company really is doing the good things. We did this assessment, it looked at

our governance, our employees, our community, the environment, our customers, these five different areas asking in depth. And then you actually have to prove that you have positive impact in all of those ways. And you have to publish a public benefit report. You have to actually display that score so the world can see how Patagonia is doing in all of these areas. So it makes it very difficult to get away with green-washing or good washing when you have that level of verification and accountability and transparency.

- Joel: [18:49](#) I have a question on that. Um, and I don't know if it's even something you might know the answer to or not, but the, the, I listened to a podcast recently, uh, you know, the guy Raz, how I built this podcast with intervention art and, um, loved it. It was beautiful story, but, but one of the things they said was that, you know, it's a privately held company and they don't disclose their financials. So how, how does that, does that financial information show up, I guess, you know, in that public good report, like does it like fraud specifically? Now
- Sarah: [19:24](#) you have to disclose your revenue to be lab, that third party that does a verification process, but publicly there are certain things that would remain confidential.
- Joel: [19:31](#) That's good to know. And I'm curious too, like, I mean, are there examples then, are most B corporations also privately held? Are there any publicly held corporations?
- Sarah: [19:42](#) The vast majority are privately held. There are some publicly held V corporations, um, but they're a bit more rare.
- Joel: [19:48](#) Gotcha.
- Speaker 6: [19:50](#) [inaudible].
- Joel: [19:51](#) Yeah, I'd imagine it changes the game quite a bit in terms of you have a lot more control around the public disclosure over your financial tools to your stake holders and whatnot and this and that. Have there been any stories, um,
- Randy: [20:05](#) I don't know if you know this off the top of your head of a company that was a B Corp privately held that went public. Um, have there been any cases of that yet? Do you know? I believe was Etsy public? They went public. Right? I'm unsure. We'll have to, I wish we had a, they were Jamie like on Joe Rogan podcast, so we can be the first, I know they were a B Corp, but then ultimately decided they did not want to stay certified. Um, and

their employees kind of had some things to say about that. Um, but, but yeah, I think it has happened. Yeah. Joel, what are some, um, we were just kind of talking a lot about there around like, you know, kind of validating and affirming what you're doing and saying, you know, this is true that we, we are a good company.

Randy: [20:50](#) Joel has, as a tech business owner, what kind of questions or things have you seen in tech media that they care about? Like the tech community in Lancaster? What would they look upon favorably, you know, for, for a, a company that exists within that community or, but would they look negatively at a company? What type of validation would they be seeing of saying, yes, you know, this is a company I support, this is that a company I would want to work for? I would want to invest my own money or time in, um, what are some of those things, uh, that could show up on something like, you know, a B impact assessment?

Joel: [21:25](#) Hm. Um, I definitely think, um, environmental impact is, is a no brainer for most of the tech people. I know. Um, there's no, I've never, I mean never had a conversation with a technologist. I'm sure they're out there that, uh, denies, you know, global warming, climate change or anything like that. You know, um, you know, it's very science, uh, loving industry. Um, so I mean, the environmental side for sure. The community side, you know, certainly in Lancaster. I think, I think tech community varies from region to region, you know, um, then without a doubt. And so that's, that's a little bit harder to sort of track along with. I think you would get into a lot of the dynamics of what is, how do we, how are we defining good in terms of the social good, you know, um, cause you're going to get tech people on all sides of the political spectrum, you name it and things like that.

Joel: [22:24](#) But generally on the issues, openness, transparency, um, you know, you're going to get open source software enthusiasts, um, that and, and it's an industry that is essentially built like personal advancement is built off of sharing of information. Somebody's going to share how they did this thing. You're going to share that code. Like they're constantly sharing effort and work and they sometimes get pretty upset, um, when that is exploited and taken advantage of, you know, uh, for S for certain. So there's a huge, uh, concern of over openness and transparency. But likewise, it's also the industry that deals with security. I mean, uh, it's security of all the things of all the data. So not only do they want openness and transparency, but they,

uh, you know, also very focused on not knowing certain things, like knowing enough to just say, I don't want to know.

Joel: [23:22](#) That is a really interesting problem that we deal with in the custom software field all the time where like a business will come to us and say, Oh wow, I heard that there's a technology that you can do that you can give me all this information about whatever, my customer segment. Um, but then we have to almost, it would almost be nice in some ways if we had like industry ethics, like, like a CPA where it's like, we can't do, you know, tell you not, you know, we can't do that for you. Um, we don't have those, you know, so it would be, it's a very unregulated, wild West sort of industry and is something, you know, HIPAA in the health care, you know, um, financial data, software banking, that stuff is regulated of course. But, um, generally speaking, um, the same rules don't apply to us. So I do think that we flock to strong rule sets, frameworks, things that we can that are built intelligently wisely with those things in mind. I'm gonna stop myself there.

Randy: [24:28](#) Yeah, I was just thinking as you were talking kind of about that transparency and openness piece. One, one thing you told me, you know, as soon as we have met and I had started with Indy, Rez was how transparent the, not only employees are within the company but also the tech community in Lancaster. And how this is data is, is getting out anyway. And you know, people are consistently sharing, you know, what their, their salary structures are, what their benefits are and that seems to play really well too. The kind of transparency that is pushed by something like a B impact assessment. Um,

Sarah: [25:03](#) yeah. And it's pushed by the public. I think too, you know, people more and more. Um, there are these perceptions around big tech or you know, tech in general, concerns around privacy, um, all of these things, just a lack of trust often. Um, and, and so I think for consumer it would be very beneficial to kind of have this inside look on the mentality of these leaders in tech that really are taking these things so seriously. But I'm not sure that message is being conveyed strongly enough to the general public and to consumers. And I think that that's one of the benefits of a certification scheme like the B Corp certification because it kind of allows you to, once you have that certification and you're branded as a B Corp, that means something very distinct to the consumer. It's a growing movement, it's becoming more and more recognizable.

Sarah: [25:48](#) And when you have that B Corp logo, it's almost like a shortcut for that consumer to know this is a brand that I can trust. So if

you're kind of looking for that really quick way to just put almost like a stamp of approval on like, we are a good company, we're thinking about the right things, we're thinking about the unintended consequences of our impact, that's huge for tech. And look at all the platforms where there is a shadow side. Um, and so if people kind of knew that this level of intentionality was happening, I think we would see a very kind of different feeling towards tech. Totally. And as somebody with a decision fatigue, that is a great thing. Absolutely. What I'm searching for, you know, this happened last year, I was searching for a desk and there's a company out there fully that makes desks and they're certified B Corps. I know from now on, I don't need to look at every desk that has ever been made in the entire world to figure out which one I want. Yup. I can do same thing with my mattress. Like I need a new mattress. Okay. This is the least that there's actually a lot of before, but yeah, it kind like immediately narrows your focus. Um, to know that I want a good quality product obviously, but I also want to know that it's my purchase supporting you, a company and that company is supporting the world.

Speaker 7: [26:53](#) Do you have a, that makes me think about the impact of, of um, that trustable logo on a consumer versus as a businesses in a B2B sort of world. Have you, um, their metrics up there, like, you know, numbers around, you know, does it, I'm S I'm just gonna assume a consumer is more moved if they're educated about what a B Corp is by that logo in another business. Is that generally like what the numbers reflect

Sarah: [27:23](#) 100%. Um, there is a lot of research around, um, just general, you know, good businesses are responsible businesses and consumers reactions to those specifically with B Corp. But I do think that, um, there was one study by Helio that shows more brand affinity and more trusted to be court brands. Um, but you know, even for companies operating like B Corp's, but outside of that family, it's, its certainly strong customers want to buy products from these companies. And in fact, 56% of us consumers, sorry, 66% would pay more for a socially or environmentally responsible product. So there's so much research out there that shows that once a consumer, um, has a brand that they buy from maybe for these reasons, social, environmental, mental impact, they stay loyal as well, which is huge. You know, you want your consumers to stay loyal to your brand over time and, and this allows that kind of resilience and trust.

Speaker 7: [28:17](#) That's interesting. I mean, do you think that is also reflected specifically in Lancaster? Um, you know, one of the questions I

had for you is, you know, the reason you're here today is, you know, assets is based in Lancaster, in Reza is based in Lancaster and you're seeing this trend, not only is this happening, you know, nationally, globally that, uh, you know, people are starting to care about where their dollars are going, but there seems to be this big upswing in Lancaster as well. And why do you think that's happening here?

Sarah: [28:44](#)

Yeah, absolutely. So I think Lancaster does have a unique history and heritage of people in general, people in business wanting to give back to the community and this community orientation. Um, you see it in things like the extra gift where companies are willing to donate to all of these local efforts and nonprofits. Um, and we have this history of being a welcoming place. Um, so I think what the B Corp movement is and what this wider business for good movement is tapping into is some of those values. Um, and then just sort of elevating this as, let's move towards this. Let's, let's move towards business as unusual and kind of thinking in new ways about how we can push the envelope, um, and do even more through our businesses. So since I've started at assets two years ago, um, when I started, we had four certified B Corp's in Lancaster and now we have 20 and it was more in the pipeline.

Sarah: [29:33](#)

So it's something that has certainly caught on. Um, I think, I think it really does tap into both, you know, our community, but also disease innate kind of human tendencies to, to want to be part of something bigger. Because when you become certified, you're joining a community of over 3000 other companies around the world that are the best of the best. And so you're now part of this movement. You're part of this trusted family of companies. You can network with these other companies, pursue business relationships with them and, and feel like you're part of something that really is making a difference. Um, and I think locally too, companies feel that way as well. Um, and so I think even beyond B Corp's, we're seeing more and more interest, um, around these concepts of using business as a force for good, um, from, you know, local businesses, local anchor institutions, all thinking about how can we have a positive impact, um, through our business, not just by doing business well and then giving over some money based on what's left over at the end of the day. But rather thinking about how from start to finish, you can have more positive value on everyone that your business touches, which I think is a different paradigm. And I, I do think it's certainly,

Randy: [30:40](#)

that's awesome Joel. Not only as a, as an entrepreneur, but as a Lancastrian does that, does that strike a chord with you as well?

Uh, does it seem almost fitting that there is this natural sort of swell of business for good in Lancaster? Um, how does, how does that kind of hit you as somebody who, who's from here, grew up here, you know, has family, you've lived here your whole life pretty much. Um, how does, how does that strike you? Is it, is it a surprise to this feel like, you know, this is something that Lancaster naturally would gravitate towards?

Speaker 8: [31:11](#) Yeah, totally. Um,

Joel: [31:14](#) I'll take a distinctly nontechnical, uh, angle with this one. Um, we're living in a region where, you know, most of the, the, the PA Dutch, um, influence of this area goes way back when you take a drive through Lancaster County and you see these rolling farm fields and you know, all the different colors, um, all laid out in these beautiful, very paintable sort of, um, landscapes. You as a business owner at one day occurred to me, Oh God, what if I missed that one day? Like in the spring when it, you know, where it was dry enough to get out there and put my, my seeds in. Like then every single person around here wouldn't know that I was lazy on that day. Like, and they would know it all year long, every year. And, and you have this huge influence on, even though it's modest and humble work, right. I think it's work to be proud of. Um, you have this very real

Speaker 8: [32:22](#) like

Joel: [32:24](#) pride, pride in your work saying that comes from everything we do is always on display. And um, there's so there's a nature to that. That's, that's beautiful. Um, it's pressure, social pressure, it's all of that. Yes. But I think it also like gets leavened in with some of that. This is a place that comes from a self, you know, from a perceived moral high ground here as well. So they don't dilly dally about what's good and bad. Like they know, you know, everyone knows what that is around here. So that kind of helps. Um, you know, and it's also a challenge, uh, in its own way. But the bottom line is that when you take that community and you overlay it into something like this built towards sustainability, like they've been doing it truly grassroots, truly like route oriented, you know, business, uh, for hundreds of years and they know you weather storms, not by like chasing like the great opportunity.

Joel: [33:23](#) But uh, tonight I'm going to go to the Lampeter fair. He's the 95th annual, the fair book is this thick. It is like, and I'm, it's about an inch. All right? And that I'm making this with my, uh, fingers here. This little gap on every page is like a list of people who are volunteering, things like to that, you know, this

committee, how they're judging what a good sheep looks like or a impair, you know, did you know that there are standards of uniformity for eggs? I didn't, did not tell them the land pure fair book, but I mean you think about for 95 years and they've just been coming together and just convening and sharing, you know, their crop showing each other what they're doing. Like there's a balance too. I think agriculture in this area in general that understands that if you want to do business for a long time, if you want longterm sustainability, there's a community effort where you're doing your volunteering, you're at church, whatever that is, there's a um, environmental effort and impact because you've got to make sure that that land continues to yield and you've got that business impact because you've got to feed yourself and do your work.

Joel: [34:33](#) And I think that, I don't know, you just, yeah, that's the connection, right? I mean so strong, which as a technologist, if I get a third of that infused into our people, we've, we've changed the tech sector like, you know, for good.

Sarah: [34:50](#) Yeah. I think that's so well said. Just thinking about the sustainability of the business and kind of depending on the sustainability of the community and on the environment, you know, a healthy business can't operate in an unhealthy environment, you know? Or we like to say, no, a business can't outperform its community. And so you have to take this holistic view. Thinking about, again, if you want, your companies still exist 95 years from now. These are the things you have to consider.

Randy: [35:16](#) That's huge. So what are some ways that, um, a tech company can get involved in this business for good movement? I mean, not just, you know, maybe specifically here in Lancaster, but also broader, um, whether those be examples of tech companies that are, um, you know, more socially minded that are B Corp's, um, or what are some, some quick wins, you know, that a tech company

Sarah: [35:38](#) can have to improve their impact they have in their community or for their employees? Um, yeah, suggestions around that. Yeah, I think I'll tackle the second part of that question first. Thinking about some, some quick wins. Um, I mean there are a lot and thinking about all the various aspects of your impact and things you can do. So we've already mentioned a couple of times, you know, engaging your employees or providing creative benefits. So even if you're a small startup that, you know, can't afford healthcare out of the gate, um, although it's something we should strive for, thinking about, can you set up

an HSA? Can you make excuses? Don't make excuses. Students, um, can you set up other creative benefits? Um, I remember I worked for an employer that they, um, you know, offered healthcare for part 10 employees and you could get a college education for free.

Sarah: [36:22](#) And they also offered Spotify premium for free. And it was always that last one where like the employee would perk up. You offer Spotify for free. It's like the \$10 disc elegant discount that people are most excited about. It's so did you not hear the other stuff? But it's like some of those things like what are things, even if you can't afford the big stuff out of the gate, how can you still provide, you know, a benefit to your employee and engage them. So I think getting creative with your benefits and, and providing benefits is huge. Um, I also think that being intentional about who you're doing business with. So when you think about, um, your vendors and suppliers and business partners, I'm looking at that through a variety of lenses, through sustainability. Also through, um, gender equity, which is huge. The tech company, thinking about, um, if you want to create inclusion, uh, purchasing from women owned businesses, people of color owned businesses, um, and having impact on them through your purchasing is huge.

Sarah: [37:14](#) Um, environmentally, we also already talked about that and how you deal with e-waste. When you look at your facilities, are there quick things that you can do there that would ultimately lead to efficiencies for you? Um, I also think, uh, community engagement we've talked about as well, but sometimes, uh, for a tech company, if you're feeling, you know, like your physical footprint isn't huge, maybe some other ways to get involved would be creating a formal, um, charitable engagement. So an example of that is called 1% for the planet. It was actually started by Patagonia and it's something that businesses can sign onto, give at least 1% of their revenues to this organization, 1% for the planet. And then they go and donate that to all of the top tier best environmental organizations that are working to combat environmental issues. So it's kind of a way of saying that I can't do all this work.

Sarah: [38:01](#) You know, I can't be out there fighting climate change, but I can give some of my money to an organization that's doing that. Um, and kind of showing your values that way as well. So that that is, you know, maybe costly, but it definitely is quick. Um, and we've talked about transparency, but I think that's so key. And I also think starting to measure some things is a very quick win. Um, specifically I'll go back to measuring your diversity, um, doing a pay equity analysis, things like that. Um, just starting to

capture some of those things that you may not think about on a regular basis. Quantifying. Once you do quantify it and measure it, that's when you're able to then say, can we move the needle on this? Because you don't know what you don't measure. So a great first step is actually just measuring your impact, which sounds super esoteric to some people.

Sarah:

[38:51](#)

And which is why I think the B impact assessment is so useful because it's this one assessment. It's online, it's free, it's confidential, it's a great platform. And it goes across these five areas of governance, employees, community environment and customers. And it asks you questions and all of these areas in generates one number that gives you your overall impact, which is huge. You know, for somebody like me who, you know, if you would ask me the question how you quantify a good company, I have no idea. But fortunately they're really smart people that have come up with, you know, this is now the sixth version of the assessment. It's governed by an independent standards advisory County council, experts from the field giving their input on what questions to ask to, to understand a company's impact. So it's just such an easy way for company to get kind of that, that gut check, that baseline of what's the positive impact that I'm creating.

Sarah:

[39:42](#)

And then once you know that you can pick out areas that maybe you can work on, maybe your engaging are employees and your gauge of your community, but you haven't thought about your environmental footprint, then you know, you can shift your energies there if your score was low in that section or vice versa. Um, and I also think what it does is the areas that you score highly in, you can feel good about celebrating yourself in that regard. I do think getting back to this kind of Lancaster mentality, humility is huge, which is great. You know, just doing a good job and I don't need no special things, but the fact is you do deserve to be celebrated and people want to know that your company exists and is doing those cool things. You know, I'll go back to there. So many trends are that people want to buy for Bri from work, for invest in companies they believe in and they won't know what you're doing if you're not talking about it.

Sarah:

[40:32](#)

So you have to talk about it. Um, and I think again, it starts with once you measure your impact and you know where you're strong, don't feel bad about kind of applauding that. Um, and you can do it in a way that kind of shines the light maybe on certain employees that are doing this initiative or something. But I think that's so important. So great. First step to sum up the past five minutes of what I talked about, um, measure your impact and you can do that using the B impact assessment. Um,

if you go to quick plug here, if you go to measure what matters dot assets pa.org, you can start the assessment there and that is probably the best, best first step. I'll also maybe get back to them the first part of that question of an example of, of a B Corp, a tech company.

Sarah: [41:13](#) Um, an example that sticks out for me is a company called done good. You guys heard of done good. So they're out of Boston, Massachusetts. Um, it's basically, it's an online marketplace, browser plugin and app. Uh, that is basically a directory of all of these different types of responsible businesses, purpose-driven brands that you can buy from. And so basically they go through a very serious vetting process. They choose which brands get highlighted on this website. Um, and you can go in and as a consumer and if you're looking for clothing, it shows you all the different brands that you can buy from it. Also through the browser plug in. You can be Googling, you know, new desks for my apartment and it will actually pop up and say, you know, like check out this store and you can go there. Um, so that's a really cool example of their whole goal is to make it easier for consumers to find and buy from these brands and done good actually offers discounts to incentivize you to buy from these brands.

Sarah: [42:11](#) Um, and so not only through their business model, um, being impactful, really trying to make it easy for consumers to make good decisions but also through their operations. They're a great company as well. So they are part of that 1% for the planet initiative. They talked about, um, they, they take privacy very seriously. They take their company culture very seriously and they, um, transparently post on their website. This is the process we use to select vendors. You know, we have to make sure that they're the best of the best so that, you know, you're buying from the most responsible brands. So that's one example that, you know, I've personally used as a consumer and find it really useful and awesome.

Randy: [42:45](#) That's awesome. I had also seen, um, there's one called canvas host. Uh, you know, I was recently looking at web hosting and there's a web hosting company out in Oregon whose entire facility and all the web hosting has done, um, on renewable energy. So they entirely use, you know, solar panels to generate all the energy for it. I'm not a tech super tech person, so that the, the, the web hosting, um, that's great. I thought that was really cool. And back to your first point, I think that is huge is like kind of getting that line in the sand. Um, we had gone through the impact assessment. I mean, and it is pretty rigorous. Like they ask some real tough questions and things

that you even realize like, Oh wow, we should as a company be tracking this, we should know how much volunteer time, you know, we let our employees do every year.

Randy:

[43:27](#)

Um, and that is huge, um, to just know where you're at. And I think it's also an exclamation to kind of the community. And, uh, you know, your stakeholders that we're doing this because we do care. Um, and I think a lot about your B you'll be in this transition phase of getting to become, whether it's just a socially responsible business or you, you know, actually go through with a B, you know, the B Corp certification. Um, but you're in this transition phase. And I think I kinda compare it to, I had one time bought cereal and I bought Kashi. And on the back of the cereal it said, um, we're not organic. And I would like caught my eye was like, Whoa, like that's pretty, like it's crazy to throw out there stronger than I read it. And it was like, because we're transitioning to organic and that takes time. And they explained the process of what it likes to become an organic farm. And it's not an easy process when you're a huge company like Kashi. Um, so they were explaining, you know, we do care about these things. We want to provide the best products possible. We want to be a good company. But it takes time. And I think about that knowing the tech industry where we have a lot of startups, you know, we have a lot of lean running companies that

Joel:

[44:32](#)

sometimes being, you know, as socially responsible, as environmentally friendly as you want to be is not easy to just flip that switch over night. And I'm sure you think about all the time it's a journey. And so having that line in the sand say, Hey, here's where we're at. And then working with, you know, whether your internal team or somebody had assets to say, okay, how do we get to where we want to be? What are some things we can improve? And what is the timeline for that? Cause these are costly. They're going to take time and they're going to take resources pretty much all we got as a company. Um, so how are we going to invest in those areas?

Sarah:

[45:06](#)

Yeah. And, and I think to your point, I think that transparency about where you're at in that process too is really important because consumers resonate with that. I mean you resonated with that. When you read that employees will also resonate with that. So if you tell your employees we're going for B Corp certification, I actually had an experience of working with a local company. Makes sense. Natural spa line. She heard about the B Corp certification was like super bought in, you know, this is the right way to do business. I want to do this before having a fully outlined plan of how they were going to get there. They had a

meeting with their employees and they said, these are what P Corp's are. We want to be one of these, we're committed to this, let's make it happen. So not, you know, I'm throwing this crazy dream out, you know, something, but something that they would actually work on and be part of because your employees can then be part of it. So they started measuring how much waste they were. Um, they were generating every day and employees got excited to know like how much they were generating and then starting to reduce it. And so it's actually a great way to engage your employees by being pretty open about that process that you are on this journey.

Joel: [46:07](#) I remember going through that assessment and like, yeah, thinking about all those things, jeez, we recycle. Yeah. How do I, how many pounds of recycle, whatever. I'm like, geez, we didn't do that. You know, and it's like, Oh yeah, I'm sitting in a room full of engineers. That's not going to be a problem. There's a sensor for that. Um, for the, so, you know, speaking on behalf of my people here at the [inaudible],

Joel: [46:38](#) I give you a good example of how much these people hate to take tests, but they don't know how they're going to score. Um, Tyler Golden wa, you know, um, one of our leadership team, uh, brilliant engineer, he just got his elastic certification. Yeah. Elastic engineer certification is very hard to get as a Silicon Valley sort of tech start up, uh, gone big gun public called elastic. If they're probably close to 2000 employees now and there are only 400 elastic certified engineers in the world. Uh, I mean a tremendous amount of their own employees won't even take the certification test because they're terrified that they will fail it. And a lot of them that have failed at the first times I had to go back. Um, and uh, it's a, it's a pretty hard test to pass and they don't like to put themselves out there, um, unless they want to gather as much information as possible about this.

Joel: [47:35](#) Right. So like what about maybe we can do a couple of like clarifying questions, you know, for, for their benefit. I'm thinking about things like, um, you know, gender equity in your employment. Um, in the tech industry, this has been an issue for a long time. People are dedicated to solving it, but the numbers just are the numbers. You can't do it. Like there aren't enough female engineers to like to, to ballast it out. Like does the B impact assessment have like, um, adjustments I guess, right, like based off of industry, based off of region. For instance, like in Lancaster tech, there's, I don't know, I'm going to guess if there's a 50,000 people in the it field. And like stir, probably less than 10% are going to be female. So like how

does, how does a company in Lancaster score when they honestly assess their gender, you know, hiring, you know what I mean?

Sarah: [48:38](#) Sure. Yeah. So a couple of thoughts on that. The assessment does take into account this size sector and geography of your company. It's not quite as granular down to, you know, the specific County, but they do take that into account because for example, a manufacturing company has a higher environmental footprint so they actually more heavily weight that section because you should be responsible for making sure that that impact is positive. The other thing that I'll say is that the way to be impact assessment is framed. It's um, accumulating positive points in the assessment. So never at any time if you reporting it, you have, you know, low diversity for example. You don't lose any points, you just, those are ones that you have to miss out on. Um, but the assessment is hundreds of questions. Um, and we like to think of it almost as a menu that you can select the things that make sense for your business that are applicable to you, um, goals that align with some of your strategic goals and work on those things.

Sarah: [49:31](#) But there's always going to be questions that you probably won't be able to answer affirmatively. I mean, even the best B Corp in the world still don't have a perfect score because it's just so much. Um, and so I think that there are a lot of ways to, to make up, um, to get a high score, you need at least 80 points on the assessment to be eligible for certification and there are a lot of ways to get there. Um, I think again, looking at what makes sense for your business is really important. Um, if it's strategic for you to do these things as well, not to do them in a vacuum just because you're earning points on a test, but what actually makes sense for your business? What will actually strengthen your business by looking at these things? You know, an example might be that, okay, our workforce is what it is.

Sarah: [50:12](#) We can't bring in more female engineers. Maybe though we can look at our supply chain and see who we're buying from and if there are other women owned companies that we can support trying to shift our dollars that way in support or thinking about, you know, your hiring process, making sure that um, you know, job applications, all of these things are not, um, there's no implicit bias. So there are things that I think can be done. Um, but certainly every company is at different stages. Um, and none are perfect. I think it's just a matter of finding out what things you are good at and what things you do want to pursue achieving and working towards those. I think, you know, any company can do it, they can become a B Corp but certainly

helps if your business model itself is tied to positive impact, but even through your operations that are so many opportunities to improve your impact.

Randy: [51:01](#) Yeah. I mean, in thinking back to almost the purpose of, of this podcast of, you know, challenges facing the tech industry and solutions, you know, and what you were saying about figuring out that baseline and where we're at. So we may be able to look at that and say, you know, we are going to struggle to do well, you know, in our gender balance as a company. But instead of accepting that and saying the solution is still, maybe that's a struggle hiring, but how do we become part of the solution then as a company? What does that actually look like to get more female engineers in Lancaster? And what, how can we be a part of that? Is that through apprenticeships, is that through getting more involved with our local school districts to encourage more STEM? Uh, so what does that look like and how does a company have that conversation and be a part of the solution instead of just saying, Hey, you know, this is just the reality. You know, we can't do it. Um, and I think, you know, everything you've been saying is that this comes back to this just brings it to light of these are the inherent challenges that not only the company's facing, but in this case the community and how can we be a part of making it this easier for everybody to take part in the business for good movement.

Sarah: [52:13](#) And these are exactly the kinds of things that business can be part of the solution. You know, I think a lot of us recognize that business has created some problems, you know, over the years. Um, a lot of the issues that we face have been maybe spurred on or um, by the private sector, but there's also such opportunity for the private sector to step in. Um, I mean, especially in tech being so, you know, um, problem solving oriented and the skills, you know, around transparency and making things work and, and connecting I think are so valuable in this space. Um, you know, identifying needs and how do we best address them. So I think there's such potential for, you know, unleashing that on some of these social issues.

Randy: [52:55](#) That's awesome. We've been going for a bit here. So I want to move towards a wrap up. So Sarah, what are some, some key takeaways, uh, you know, for those listening that they should have around, around [inaudible] of the business for good movement?

Sarah: [53:08](#) Sure. So I think the first takeaway, I'll echo what I was just saying around measuring your impact. Um, just get that baseline, get that initial understanding because then you can

actually start moving forward with it. And if you need help, there are resources out there. This is what assets does, uh, we with companies to find ways to improve their impact, but that really is the first step. So going to measure what matters dot assets pa.org and taking that assessment is a great first step. The second thing I think is thinking about the current landscape of business and thinking about the future and where we're headed, how the landscape of business is changing. We're seeing more and more that employees, investors, consumers, we all want business to be responsible. Um, and I think that's so important for the future and companies looking ahead to wanting to stay relevant in this century, you need to be thinking about those things.

Sarah: [54:01](#) It's not going away anytime soon. People want transparency, they want positive impact, you know, they're understanding that you are contributing to the world and that can either be positive or negative. Um, and also finding like-minded peers to kind of go on that journey with you. Um, because kind of striking out on your own in trying to be that beacon, maybe lonely. And so finding that network of people that could encourage you, that you can share ideas with. And a great example of that in my opinion is the B Corp movement. And then lastly, I think the third thing I'll call out is just underscoring that doing business for good and focusing on positive impact is good for business. There's so much research out there, so many studies showing that taking your impact seriously, measuring it, prioritizing your stakeholders actually leads to stronger financial performance. It leads to more engaged employees, it leads to higher customer attraction.

Sarah: [54:51](#) Um, so I think as the research comes out more and more being attentive to that, um, and really understanding that it's not just, it's not just that you want to create a better world. I mean, certainly our businesses need to be sustainable. Um, and so I think keeping that in mind, just thinking, um, yeah, business can be so much more than, you know, just coming to work, doing your nine to five. Um, and it's good for business when you think that way. Thinking about your impact, thinking about how you can do more through your business and preserving that value and mission over time. Awesome. Thanks so much. Joel. Any final thoughts from you or key takeaways you've had from kind of this conversation?

Speaker 7: [55:34](#) There's, there's never been a lack of interest. I've, I've so many more questions about how things are measured. What is the measure offline, right? Yeah, we'll have part to show that there's so many. Um, but one that I'm really intrigued by is that,

so, I mean B Corp has always been, um, not to be confused, the triple bottom line, but you know, environmental, social and financial, right. Um, are there other like elements that should be considered, you know, um, in the tech sector we are like, like digital, like, uh, data, you know, in the tech sector we are completely focused on some of those things. Are they open to a digital or data driven? Um, Ooh, element of assessment something. How open is your information? How secure is your data, how discrete are you handling sensitive information? Um, seems like that could really, you, we can create it tech, Oh, a wave of tech companies be going, B corporations.

Speaker 7:

[56:50](#)

If you start to establish standards for responsible use of software and technology information and things of that nature, I'm just noodling it all and I'm sure there's probably a few things out there already, but now it's closing thought. Anyway. Awesome. Well thank you so much for joining us here today, Sarah, and talking about this. Um, you know, I'm very interested in this and I think, you know, as a company we are as well. So it's great to get some inside knowledge and also clear up a lot of confusing terminology and also understand, you know, how companies here, um, you know, as we, as a business in Lancaster, you know, we want, you know, all businesses take part of this and we want to care about this and we want our employees. Um, so it's great to have that inside knowledge. So thanks so much for being here. Absolutely.

Music:

[57:54](#)

[inaudible].