



# DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

## SESSION 105

MANAGING A NONPROFIT: KEYS TO SUCCESS

WITH DAVID RHODE

**BETH:** Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I have with me David Rhode. David is the Founder and the Executive Director of a really great organization called Pitch in for Baseball. David and I originally met when he was in the audience at a talk that I gave and we have stayed in touch ever since and recently got together to talk a little bit about his organization and what's really working there and he had such great ideas on what it takes to build a foundation at an organization and grow it to success. I really thought it was important to get him on here to share his experience with all of you. So David, thank you so much for joining me today.

**DAVID:** Beth, I'm delighted. Thank you for having me.

**BETH:** So David, I'm sure there's a lot of people that are listening that did similar things to what you have done. You know decided there's a need in the world and gone off and started their own organizations, but you probably you know didn't start out thinking you were gonna do that in life. So how did you end up wandering into this work?

**DAVID:** That's a great question and one I've been asked countless times and the reality is it's the path I've chartered is a very unusual one. I started in consumer packaged goods, marketing so my branding roots were started at Proctor & Gamble and HG Heinz and then I ran my own business for about 12 years in the Philadelphia area and at that point I was 40 years old and having a quasi mid-life crisis in the sense that professionally I asked the question "what do I want to do? What do I want to stand for? How do I want to be known?" and I was very reflective and very intentional that I really looked at where I was spending a lot of my time and energy outside of work and that was in service, service related



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things in the community and I wanted to know and challenge myself and know could I do this full time. Could I create something that was gonna allow me to give back and then I looked at my other deep passion, which was in the area of sports. I'm a Philadelphia nut when it comes to sports and I was coaching my two boys in baseball at that time and a very simple question dawned on me, which is "what happens with all this stuff that kids just grow out of because it doesn't stop =being good just because your kid had a growth spurt" and you know I really was trying to think through that equation and during that same moment of reflection, I came across a gentleman also from Montgomery County, Bill Piesak and Bill was trying to help get a lot of baseball gloves to kids in Poland and that was a passion of his based on his heritage and his father's interest and his father's connections and Bill had started up a project called Pitch in the Glove for Little League and I said to Bill, I said "Bill, I think I want to kind of steal your idea, but make it a lot bigger" and I asked his permission to do that and then I asked him to join me and then he became my very first board member. So I started with this idea of connecting people that had stuff with people that needed it. I truly believed as I did my research that there was no one out there doing this with any meaningful scope or scale and while I didn't know that I'd be doing it now 10+ years later, I did believe that there was a genuine need and if we did this right we could make a real difference.

**BETH:** Wow, so talk briefly about like the scope of what the organization has grown into. What do you actually do now and how in executing this work today, what has participation come to mean to you in a way that's helped you grow this organization and sustain yourselves?

**DAVID:** So participation is the cornerstone of what we do. It's an incredibly grass roots organization. We're very leanly staffed so participation for us happens on a number of fronts and let me outline what a couple of those key ones are. So while we are an organization that donates baseball and softball equipment, so a lot of the focus is on where the organization has donated equipment and I'll talk about that. We don't have anything to give away if equipment doesn't come through

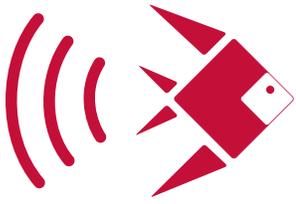


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our front door. So almost all of the equipment that we have in the early days, which was 90+% was gently used equipment and that equipment was collected primarily by kids. These were kids doing community service projects because they may have had a service learning commitment to graduate middle school or high school. It might have been a child doing an Eagle Scout project, but the overriding case was a kids doing a mitzvah project for their bar or bat mitzvah. So we would have these 12 and 13 year old boys and girls collecting equipment all around the country, doing peer to peer fundraising, which we can talk about later if you like and getting stuff to us. So at a very basic level, participation means giving kids an opportunity to participate in philanthropy through organization and one of the things in my original business plan and very few things in my original business plan actually came true. A lot of things I felt would happen didn't and a bunch of things I didn't think would happen would, but the thing that I hoped would happen that did happen was creating a culture of philanthropy among kids and as rewarding as it is to give away stuff and to make an impact on the lives of kids in communities, seeing how excited kids and their parents get when their child gets passionate about this philanthropic effort has really been a tremendous amount of fun. So that's one element of participation. Participation for us is this very grass roots level of fundraising because most of our donations that come in are people that are purchasing a glove or something on a very sort of micro level that enables them to engage and participate in our organization, but they don't have to have a lot of means to do so. So we're not Children's Hospital or something where you have to make a couple million dollars gift to maybe move the needle. In our situation, people can really concretely participate and do all the time by making a small financial gift. So those are a couple elements of participation.

**BETH:** I really love that. I love the fact that what you're doing there's kids all around the world that are benefiting from the work that you do, but that just as important to you are the kids right here that through becoming a giver, through basically matching up caring about somebody else through the thing that they already love, they're able to see how that can benefit others. My kids are grown



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and almost through college now, but I remember that high school experience of pressure that's on kids to like build their resume and do some volunteer stuff just to kind of check that box on an application to college and I just remember at the time just thinking "this is not creating a culture of people that want to do these things. It's creating a culture of people that do them because they think of how it's going to help them" and the fact that you're able to work with these kids when they're well before that age where they're thinking about it that way and really helping them say "here's this thing that you already love. Here's how you can help other kids have the same wonderful experience that you do", I feel like it's really doing a service to children and towards society as a whole change, the purpose and the idea and the connection to volunteerism to this resume building activity to something that can actually have the potential to carry these kids through their adult lifetime.

**DAVID:** It's an amazing point you're making. I mean we're also jaded. I have two boys that are in college and a younger daughter and so there is a pressure to build the resume and parents are certainly more focused around it than their children are and getting them before you know they kind of get caught up in that chaos is really, it's really important and from our perspective, kids really can relate to the work we're doing. You know, if you're trying to create a situation where kids have clean drinking water or cured from an illness that may be difficult potentially for a child to conceptualize, but what's not difficult for a 9 or 10 year old kid to conceptualize is what isn't as much fun if you can't have a baseball catch and it's harder for them to process that kids don't have stuff and so many of the kids that we help that are kids that have almost never had anything to call their own, especially on the international projects that we do in some of the very impoverished nations in the world and so when you give a kid a baseball glove and you hear how they slept with that glove under their pillow, it's a very moving image to keep with you and we share those stories because kids you know for the most part and it's not their fault, are touch spoiled and touch secluded from the realities of the world. The reality of the world is not everybody has everything they want and far from it so just being able to make that connection, make it in



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a positive way and give kids a chance to participate for us is just terrific and plus the kids that are connecting with us from a most simple branding perspective are kids that are at very engaged platform of their life and stage of their life as related to social media and so you know giving them a way to, something to share with friends, a visually cool thing is a way to help a male perspective develop their brand sort of one piece at a time.

**BETH:** Right so you're really I would say lucky, fortunate. You came into starting a nonprofit with an actual background in brand building. Very few other Executive Directors I think have that kind of a perspective and even you said your vision when you started this organization was "here's your business plan. Here's what it's gonna be" and that as it kind of grows and goes through its growing pains, it moves around and it ends up some things you thought were gonna work didn't. Some things you never expected popped up. It's so easy to say "this is what I'm gonna do" and then you bring in your board members and somebody has this idea and somebody has that idea and the next thing you know you've gotten kind of pulled off your center and you're doing things that maybe other people think are a good idea. How have you learned, muddled through/figured out, like where's that line between you know this thing that we thought we were gonna do isn't panning out. We're gonna shift and when there's somebody else coming in and saying "I think this is a good idea. We should do this" and that's pulling you out of your kind of core central channel that you know you can do well with, how did you get to this point where you do really feel like you know this is what you should do and this is who you're not?

**DAVID:** So that is

**BETH:** It's like the million dollar question.

**DAVID:** : It's the million dollar question, but it's the one that you need to keep asking yourself over and over again to somebody leading an organization and it comes down to a number of things. So let's start with the basics. So is there



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a shared understanding of no organizations and that may sound simple to say “we’re Pitch in for Baseball. We collect stuff and we give it away. We help kids play.” That’s actually, we’re actually one of the elegantly simple brands out there and even within that there’s a lot of room for people to interpret that in their own way and so it really becomes an if then question. If this is your mission, then we do the following things and when you talk to board members one at a time, you begin to get a clearer sense for what is their take away for what the brand and the organization is all about and do they say the same things and so taking the time and the considerable effort to reinforce that is part of that process of keeping us kind of in our lane. There’s another side of it is you know, what don’t we do and sort of the don’t do lists are really as important as the to do lists and one of the things that I continually asked of myself and others was can we scale this idea. So if you want me to drive out an hour and a half from our warehouse, which is located in Harleysville, Pennsylvania and come to sit at your leagues opening day event so that I can set up a table and talk about Pitch in for Baseball, I’m not gonna do that because I can’t replicate that in any meaningful way and while it might be a nice opportunity for me, there’s 5,000 little leagues around the country and I can’t clone myself or create enough hours in the day to go to all those places so it really for us became a function of trying to condition people to think about trying to scale and replicability as we built in and created concepts because my notion all along was I want to be able to push a button and have a whole bunch of people be able to do the same thing at the same time, potentially or hopefully without our assistance. So can we create online tools and create other things that enable people to do the work with and for us because of the fact that like most start up organizations you have a very small budget, you’re very leanly staffed. I didn’t pay myself for the first three years of the organization you know so there’s a lot that you want to do, but there’s only so much you can do and in the earliest days, you’re really constrained by dollars and people and so we made some hard choices about what we could or couldn’t do and then there were times where board members said “I think this is a really good idea” and then I would say “that’s great. Are you going to do this because I’m not going to, I can’t do this based on the other things I have to do, but this is something that’s



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important to you personally and it falls well within our mission of what we're doing, which is fine, then go do it. You know, knock yourself out" and some of those things happen and other people are kind of like "well I really didn't mean for me to do it. I wanted you to do it".

**BETH:** Yeah, right.

**DAVID:** And so I'd say "well I understand, but at this point in time it's just not a priority for the following reasons", but it really becomes a function of really shared understanding of your brand, your mission and then a continual reminder of your resources, your bandwidth to get things done and the long view of if this works, then what do we do about it. I can't do this a bunch of times. I don't mind investing a bunch to get a core idea developed, but then I want to be able to roll that idea out to a bunch of people with limited guidance and how to be aware.

**BETH:** Yeah, so you were talking about board members and these people come in because they want to have an impact, they want to have influence on the organization and you said you know if someone comes in and they have a great idea and they're willing to take it on you know they can run with it. What do you do if this,. how do you evaluate you know, when is it too much? When is it too far off of that center? You know you said if it falls within the mission they can do it, but sometimes people push. Like sometimes people say "well I know it doesn't do this, but I really think we should do this" and they want to expand beyond you know what you've decided. What kind of things have you seen work to you know be respectful to the board member and their ideas, keep them engaged and involved, but not let everyone's potentially or perceived great ideas even make you bigger in a way you could go, but maybe shouldn't?

**DAVID:** : Right. So the board meetings happened you know in the cliché-ist fashion around the dining room table in my house and very quickly in the process we created a parking lot and had index cards on the table and encouraged people to write their ideas down and we could discuss them at the end of the



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board meeting because I wanted to cover what I thought were again through my eyes the most mission critical things that we needed to work on, which in the beginning tend to be getting the other board members in the room, raising some money, doing the work of the organization and what's the barriers to get it done and then there's other people which have kind of not hair brain ideas, but "hey I know this guy and I think you know you should give him a call" and so it really becomes a question of pushing back and saying "I'd love to talk to him, but why don't you talk to him first and see how you might, is he excited about our concept or she, is there a way that we can discuss potentially how you want to involve them and actually have that initial conversation and then I'm more than happy to get involved and then some of those cases just kind of pushing the responsibility a little bit back on them. When it comes to things which can truly pull you off mission, those are the shortest conversations and because it's easy. We just don't do that. I know we help kids with baseball equipment, but what we're not gonna do is do coaching clinics. You know, coaching clinics would really help kids play ball. I've seen those terrible coaches out there and that's a big problem. It is. It's just not the problem we're signing up to solve. So we could agree that it's a problem, but we also can agree that we're not gonna be the ones to solve it. Let's stay focused and what happened early on is we began to understand that there was a much bigger need and a much bigger opportunity in our space than we even imagined. So you know the notion that "we'll do Pitch in for Baseball and then we can do it for other sports as well. Then we can do this and then we can do that". There seems to be a lot of room to grow within our world and I can't see the finish line from here so why don't we not worry about those other things yet and sort of God willing we get to that point, then we'll make those decisions then, but the more we got into it, the more we knew we had to do what was in front of us and the people on board were so excited about the work we had accomplished and what was in front that it was easy to keep people on board. There were a few people that decided for whatever reasons this wasn't for them either because they weren't willing to roll up their sleeves because most boards begin as working boards and ours was and so we just parted company and I asked a few people to, they didn't realize they were being demoted, but a few people were not invited



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back because you need all hands on deck in the beginning and it's really made a different type of a board structure, a board make up and the start up phase and then when you get into the growth and sort of sustainable phase and the early board really has to do more and for the most part responded.

**BETH:** And I think that is a really important point to say if you don't have the right people it's hard to move forward and you know you start out with the people that are in the room and what I hear from people that I speak to on this podcast over and over again is like the next step from that is collaborating with people outside your walls, building partnerships. How have you used you know that next step, reaching out and building relationships with partners to your organization to help you focus and also grow your brand faster?

**DAVID:** So partnerships are the key in our success. It's a fundamental part of our strategic plan to identify, cultivate and then retain partners. So we really put a tremendous amount of effort into that and if anything can be you know sort of looked at in terms of what my job description has been all about as your chief cook and bottle washer I get that, but the you know finding the partners that can help disrupt the growth path that you're on and put you on a new and better trajectory are what it's all about unless you have the power ball you know board member that can change your trajectory you know with one stroke of a pen. The rest of us have to do it the old fashioned way and for us, that began to look at not who do we want to be partners with, but who can we be partners with based on our relationships because there are very few partners that are gonna look at a young and upstart organization that put their big eggs in your small basket. It's just not realistic. It may be realistic from your vantage point of why they should do that.

**BETH:** Right, yeah.

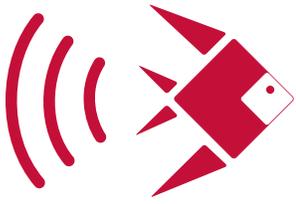
**DAVID:** Makes absolutely no sense from their vantage why you should even be in the room with them. So you have to you know in hindsight understand that. In



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the early days you're so pumped up about the work you're doing that you think everybody in the world should listen to you, but what happens is if you can, it typically happens to board members is a board member has a relationship with a particular organization that they can get you in the room with the right people and they can say "trust me. I think it's worth your time for this meeting" and for us, that was little league baseball. Little league international is the largest new sports organization in the world. They're the folks out of Williamsburg, Pennsylvania that put on the Little League World Series and they're the WalMart of new sports and not in a bad way, in a great way. Being WalMart of youth sports means that a lot of people are gonna knock on your door and say "you should work with me" and so a lot of what happens in life is circumstance and good fortune so while we were able to get this meeting with Little League, roughly six weeks after our board was organized and our organization was launched, the reality of the situation was we came to them at a time when they needed something that only we could provide and that's a very unique set of circumstances in the right place, right time world that most success stories have and can point to. We were launched just after Hurricane Katrina had hit the Gulf coast region and while the organization was originally focused on how can we help kids all around the world play baseball and softball, the most important thing driving emotional need are for people in this country was those poor folks in Louisiana, Alabama, Texas, wherever that had just been devastated by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, which came right after that and so when we brought our story to Little League Baseball, it was clear to them that they didn't have a solution. They, the largest of their type, really didn't have the infrastructure to get equipment to communities that needed it. So this was a very early validation for us that our basic business model would add value or could add value to other organizations. If Little League doesn't have the ability to get equipment to people, I wonder who else doesn't have the ability to get equipment to people. The answer became Little League Baseball doesn't have the ability to do it, individual teams really don't have the ability to do it. They might have the money to do it, but their people aren't tasked around it and they don't have the, they might have the interest in it, but they don't have sort of the



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operational plan in place to do it.

**BETH:** And it's so easy to think like everybody always thinks that organizations that are big or have a lot of money like they don't have any problems, they have all the money in the world so they can do whatever they want and that it's easy for them because they have money and that is, you've seen that's not the only factor in whether people are able to execute something.

**DAVID:** It's not. I mean there's a lot of capabilities or a lot of resources in the world. Money is one of them. Money can solve a lot of problems, it's just the Executive Director of a nonprofit organization, but it's not the only thing. I mean major league baseball is located on Park Avenue, you know there's not a lot of warehouse space at 245 Park Avenue and so and there's a lot of talented people there and they have other things on their plate that are at the top of their to do list.

**BETH:** Well like you, they also have sort of to find their brand. Like they're not in the business of doing this. They have circled their wagons around a different focus and while this might be something that they would partner and is important to them, it's not a good business model for them to actually execute all the delivery themselves.

**DAVID:** Right. So whether anyone runs an organization, you try to figure out what are the things that we can do and keep internal and what are the things we outsource to somebody who is just better at it and we quickly became or positioned ourselves as sort of the experts in this logistic side of getting equipment, identifying communities that need it, getting equipment and checking it for safety and matching it with the needs of the community and getting it to them on time and that FedEx of the new and gently used baseball equipment world and people were quick to say "we don't know how to do that at all, but we'd like to do that and in most cases they just wanted us to do it for them and it became a little bit more difficult for us to realize it would be helpful



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if they surprised us with some financial support once in awhile and it's like a soup kitchen needs more than a food donation. They need money for operating support. You know Habitat for Humanity needs more than hammers and nails and lumber. We needed more than baseball equipment. You go to some of the wealthiest people you knew and some of the biggest corporations and they'd say "oh I have a couple of gloves in my garage". That's great, but I can get a lot of people to give me a couple gloves from their garage. I can't get a lot of people to help me do what you can do.

**BETH:** So how did you get in touch with them? So did you specifically go and look for board members who might have the right connections or was it just this unsuspected gratuitous thing?

**DAVID:** In the case of the Little League stuff, it was fortuitous, but it was also this founding board member that said his family had spent a lot of time within the Little League world, but I figured this guy had to be great for us to have. I knew it intellectually that board members had to have some diverse set of skills, had to have means, had to have a passion for the work that we did. I didn't necessarily understand one of the dynamics of board service, which is board members, people that had reached a certain level of success in their life want new experiences, want new stuff that maybe they can't get on their own because they can afford to buy things, they can go on vacations. They can afford what they want, whatever. So what can you bring them that they can't get on their own and I think that I certainly didn't have that perspective with my founding board members. I began to develop that understanding later on and then I began to look a little further, which was we were just too geographically proximate to each other all of the board members for an organization that wanted to have a global focus and serve kids all across the country. If you're a local organization serving the local community, then that's perfectly fine, but from our perspective we had a footprint which was the entire globe and so having a bunch of people from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania only gets you so far. There's a lot of overlap in the networks and so you know understanding that, that became something which



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was very helpful for me as I began to recruit sort of stage two, stage three board members and that's when the board was really involved to one that has a very diverse set of backgrounds and industry connections across the country.

**BETH:** Yeah. So as you then grew further, you know one of the things that we see in branding a lot is that a lot of time and energy goes in to figuring out who you are and sort of putting these foundational elements together of which you know visuals are one and communications are one, boards are one, but then you've got to go out and iterate this. You've got to go out and live and communicate and stay in touch with people and kind of getting that brand out there into the world takes time after time communications. So can you talk a little bit about what you're doing you know in support of this now focus and the building out these partnerships to build your brand out there in the world so that people know that you exist and are an opportunity for them.

**DAVID:** Right so that is, I mean that is for us the number one thing. So we know we have those three resources we want. We want to grow awareness. We want to grow our financial budget. We want to grow the amount of equipment we have. It's our fundamental belief that if we grow awareness then the other two would follow so we put a lot of time and energy around that and what's interesting from our perspective and this applies in varying degrees to many nonprofit organizations is when you go to a partner, the first thing they're gonna like cover their wallet. They know that's what you're coming for. So when you come to a partner and you can tell them that the thing you need the help with the most is to grow the awareness of your brand, then there's a palpable sense of relief and what a desire to help you solve that problem. They have things that, there's assets that they have, there's things that they can do that they would be willing to dedicate to you to help solve that versus what I really could use is \$25,000 for you to sponsor this event, this, that and the other thing. Like they know that's coming and it's not that we don't want those things too and we know that and we tell them that might be something that we're gonna come after down the road, but most of our partnerships now are focused around how can we grow the awareness



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of our organization and what it comes down to is in a corporate partnership sense, so corporate partnerships are different than partners or donors. From a corporate partnership stand point, money is the hardest thing to get. Awareness building is actually something they're very willing to give away because it creates content for them, it creates an image for them to be helping you do your work and so we think that you know getting on the back, Pitch in for Baseball has a modest 2,000 people that follow us on Twitter or whatever. Other partners that were involved have hundreds of thousands or millions of people so one tweet from the NY Yankees you know totally changes the way people look and feel about us and the number of people that will find out about us and the same thing with Little League and the same thing from Major League Baseball and the same thing from Major League Baseball player. So while other people that are in your listening audience, not necessarily in the world of sports, they can still take the generalized or principle which is don't think of a partnership as what they can do for you. Think of it in terms of what they can give you that's the easiest thing for them to give you.

**BETH:** I love that!

**DAVID:** And that's what you should be asking for because they'll want to, or they'll be much more willing to give away something that's easy to give away than something that's not. So one of our partners as an example donates warehouse space to us. So we have a warehouse in the Philadelphia area but we just opened a warehouse in Los Angeles and we did that because a major partner gave us this space to do this. Now there's a real monetary value to that. If we were to go out and purchase a or rent that space, but it was very easy for them because they're in a very legitimate district business and so it took us a period of time to determine what they could give us that would be the easiest for them to give and the most value for us to receive and that common area was around a warehouse space.

**BETH:** So how do you go about doing that? Like say do you go to the NY Yankees



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and pitch them. Hey we really want you to tweet about this or do you go in and say “what are all the things”. Like how do you begin that conversation? Do you know what you want out of the relationship or what they can give before you start? I’m just curious because I bet a lot of people are listening and thinking “how do you know what to ask for”?

**DAVID:** Right, so the thing is you have to ask for a number of things that all would be valuable to you and allow them to select the thing that excites them.

**BETH:** Oh I like that. That’s good advice.

**DAVID:** So all of the choices, the answer to all of the choices are great, but you just don’t always know the one that’s going to resonate with them because there’s no way for you despite the research you may do before you a partnership meeting to know what’s happening behind closed doors and where their heads are at. So you talk about the kinds of things you do with other partners. We do this, we do this, we do this, we do this, we do this. Ultimately what we’re trying to accomplish is this, which is to grow the awareness of our brand and to serve kids and do this, that and the other and try to figure out ways that they understand that any program that we have is gonna need to have some of this awareness building stuff baked into it and then the easiest way to get them to do the things you want them to do is to get them excited, is to deliver. So when you deliver on something, when the NY Yankees were there when we gave away equipment to the ten schools in the South Bronx a few weeks ago, the kids were so excited that the executives that were there to see that were so excited that they were able to and were willing to then push out over their social media the events of the day. So asking somebody and requiring them contractually to do something is not really where it’s at. ?Where it’s at is for them to be excited and for them to want to help you and to want to tell the good news., Everybody likes to share good news.

**BETH:** That’s really cool and this aligns a lot if anyone has been listening for



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awhile. Way back in the beginning on episode 8 we had Gail Bower on and Gail is a sponsorship strategist and she says one thing to me a thousand times is that people have got to stop dropping the gold, silver, bronze package level of sponsorship and get into really understanding who they're talking to and find out what would be a sin-win, what would make both groups really happy and I love the sort of layer that you're putting onto it that is like what is, like go in for that, ask for a date first kind of thing, but then that lowest bar of entry where, give them an easy yes to say "oh sure. I can share this on social media for you" because you're right. Just like a media outlet, people are always looking for content and it's sharing your content with other people and asking them to put it out on your behalf is an incredible way for you to build your list and grow people that are attracted to your organization because you get that endorsement and that lift from obviously the exposure and you're right. It costs them nothing and it's not just that it costs them nothing, it actually helps them with something that they have trouble with. It's so easy to think that larger organizations have everything that they need and they don't. They need content.

**DAVID:** They need content.

**BETH:** And any number of a million other things.

**DAVID:** Right, but what they don't always have and this is the case in you know, go on a lot of corporate websites ad go to their community page and see that they've got this standard photo op with someone picking up trash in a park and that's fine, but there's not a ton of substance to a lot of the work that they do and so when most of the smaller nonprofits that are out there are really good at programs and actual content, actual impact, actual stories that can be told. What we don't have is, it's like opening your window and yelling out "we're doing this great thing" and the dude on the street hears you and a few other people and that's it and so if you get, actually get an audience that does listen to you then that's something that you can't have on your own and a real story of making a difference is something that is very hard for them to generate because of the way



# DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

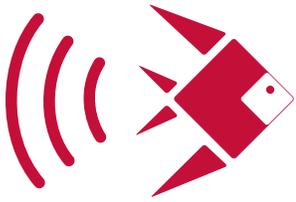
they're structured and so you really get more comfortable over time telling your story, gaining the confidence of how you can help them, how you can help others and there's a tipping type mentality to that. You know, we help partners A, B, C and D. Now we can help partner E. It's a lot easier than "we want to help you. Who else are you working with?" Well not really anybody yet. "Oh okay". That's just kind of a buzz kill for the conversation when you can't point to a lot of other meaningful partnerships you have so in the chicken and the egg world getting your first partner and I think I want to talk a little bit about that if that's okay.

**BETH:** Yeah.

**DAVID:** It's important for people to understand how partner A impacts partner B and a lot of times I'll go into another nonprofit's website and see who they work with and if they're working with really small local people, that is gonna greatly diminish getting their bigger partners to come and play with them and a lot of times because we've got things that we can give away, we as nonprofits can give away... "I'll put your logo up on our website". That's sort of in the gold, silver, bronze role.

**BETH:** Exactly.

**DAVID:** So now I have gold, silver and bronze myself. Having a bunch of partners on my website who say the wrong things about me in a certain sense and now you're trapped because it's not that easy to pull someone off your website by the way. I mean you can do it physically, but maybe that would hurt their feelings. So being really cognizant of how the image of a larger entity will then make other larger entities feel like the water is safe, it's like the scene in Jaws where like the Mayor has to go into the water first so that the other citizens of Amityville will go into the water and the big companies are not going to go into the water unless other big companies are in the water and so you really have to work exceptionally hard to get that first big partnership.



# DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

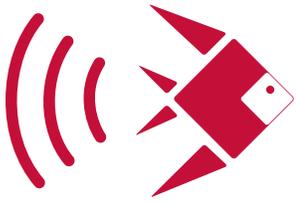
**BETH:** What works?

**DAVID:** Well I think what works again is relationships. You have to go back to the relationships you have through a board member that enables you to get in front of those people a) and then b) you have to be able to solve a problem for them they can't solve on their own. It still is the fundamental reason people buy things because I don't want to be selling Pitch in for Baseball. I want people to buy Pitch in for Baseball, which is a very different thing. The problem is they can't buy Pitch in for Baseball until they are aware of who we are and what we do. Once people become aware of who we are and what we do, then they can say "wow, you can really help us". Then it doesn't become this me taking something from them. Then it becomes me providing something to them that has value so in the world of a value equation, I am now bringing value to them based on my capabilities and my expertise that's unique in the world that they don't have.

**BETH:** That is fabulous and I think that is an excellent piece of advice to leave people with today. I think this was really inspirational and helpful for me. I always learn a lot when I talk to people and I love what you're doing with your brand. If people wanted to see what you're doing and ask you any further questions, how can they get in touch with you?

**DAVID:** So Beth, people can go to the Pitch in for Baseball website, which is PIFB.org, PitchinforBaseball.org or they could just email me directly at Rhode, which is D-R-h-o-d-e-@PIFB.org and I'm more than happy to help others that I've consulted with for free. People that are starting their own nonprofit organizations or are in the early days will help them cut through challenges and give them the benefit of our experience and I'm not the only one that's done this, but I'm willing to share what we've learned and if people go to our website they can get in touch with me any way they would like to.

**BETH:** That is so generous. Thank you and for anyone that is listening, I can tell you I hear all the time from my guests and from other listeners who actually do



# DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

reach out to the people we're talking to here. When they say that they're willing to talk to you, they really mean it and a lot of people have gotten a lot of help from connecting with our guests and connecting with me. So please reach out to David. Connect with me on LinkedIn. Send me an email. Let us know what you're working on and what you're going through. We can either help you directly or you know i can find the next guest on the show that can work with you on whatever is going on in your organization with your communications right now. So David, thank you so much for sharing all this insight and your time with both me and the nonprofit community. I truly appreciate it.

**DAVID:** It's been my pleasure. I would do it again in a heart beat.