

Transcript – Episode 87 – [Morning Routines of Very Successful Nonprofit Professionals](#)

Dolph Goldenburg: Welcome to the Successful Nonprofits™ Podcast. I'm your host Dolph Goldenburg, and this is our second compilation episode. In this episode, we will explore how some of the highest performing nonprofit executives and consultants start their day. How we start our day has an oversized impact on the rest of the day going forward. The few times I've overslept, for example, I start my day in a rush and a panic, and almost no matter what I do to change the flow of the day, I feel rushed pretty much throughout the day. Even when I get back on schedule, I still feel kind of out of sorts and kind of rushed. So, knowing that how we start our day is so important. We asked some of our podcast guests to share their morning rituals and routines.

You may remember Dr. Doug Borwick from episode 80 where he talked about community engagement and the strong importance of community engagement. He is an artist educator, author, public speaker and nonprofit administrator, and we have a very important question for him.

Doug, you are an accomplished professional. I just said you're an artist educator, author, public speaker and nonprofit administrator. Just three of those would exhaust most people. Tell us what your morning routine looks like.

Doug Borwick: I get up, and we have a three-and-a-half-year-old golden retriever. When I get up, she is very interested in going outside. We lived downtown in Winston Salem Road, an old department store with 16-foot ceilings and lofts. We can't just open the back door and let her out. She and I go for a walk. If the weather is nice, we try to do a 30- to 40-minute walk around downtown. It's not at a break neck speed because there are many things that need to be sniffed, including other dogs as we go by. I feed her, and she will sit down. I give her some frozen green beans, which is her dessert. I start getting myself ready, get cleaned up and have some breakfast. I make a pot of coffee, and over the course of the morning, I manage to go through it all by myself. Then after breakfast, I come up to my office and get to work on whatever is the next thing that I do, whether it's blog posts or working on developing the community engagement training tools that I have or other kinds of writing, preparing for workshop and those kinds of things.

And that pretty well takes me most days through the morning, and then it's lunchtime.

Dolph Goldenburg: I love you're walking the dog. It sounds like that's also sort of a quiet time for you.

Doug Borwick: Yeah, and it's the one way I found to actually get myself a little exercise – the discipline to do that on my own. I will always start and do it for a couple of weeks. The nice thing about the dog is she won't let me not.

Dolph Goldenburg: Yeah, dogs gotta pee.

Doug Borwick: Yeah, that's right.

Dolph Goldenburg: Hey, Doug. Thank you so much.

Doug Borwick: Sure. It's a pleasure as always.

Dolph Goldenburg: A few episodes ago we had Dr. Nathan Fleming on to talk about his organization and his book Pathways to Population Health, and now we get to ask him the question. We have asked him this question because he is without a doubt an accomplished person. He has an MPH. He has started three nonprofits. He has an MD. He has written a book. He is impacting healthcare across the state of Wisconsin, and it is incredibly pertinent that we ask him, Nathan, what is your morning routine?

Nathan Flemming, MD: No, thank you so much, and I really think that as someone who tends to work late at night, mornings are really the way that are restarting each day. In the morning, in the first hour there, is no internet. There's no TV. There's no social media. What my wife and I do is we get up, we have a cup of coffee together. We take our dogs for a walk, and we make sure that our relationship is solid because we know that my wife is also a physician. She's also an academic. We're going to have lots of things that are pulling on us throughout the day, so we want to make sure that we have that first hour together. Then by the end of the day, we figure out our to-do list. What are the urgent things that we need to take care of? And then the next thing that I do before I launch into that grind is I try to write 300 words. It doesn't always end up getting published. It doesn't always end up as a manuscript, a blog or a post, but it really is 300 words on a topic that matters to me, and it's usually reflection on something that happened the day before. Once I've made sure that my marriage is strong, that I'm caffeinated and that I've produced at least 300 words of writing, then I'm ready to face the day, and there's a bunch of things that can happen, but I'll know that I at least accomplished those things that are important to me.

Dolph Goldenburg: That is awesome, Nathan. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Nathan Flemming, MD: My pleasure.

Dolph Goldenburg: Alexandra Black-Paulick's career spans both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, but one thing holds true throughout her career. She is an extraordinary marketer, brand developer and business person. Alex is the strategist behind www.nonprofitsforthefuture.com and Positive Impact Media, which provides marketing solutions for mission driven companies. Like me, she has also been a podcaster, and so she's a busy person. I've got to ask you, Alex, with marketing two businesses, a lot of personal travel, you are busier than the average professional. Tell us what does your morning routine look like and how does that prepare you for your day?

Alexandra Black-Paulick: I gotta tell you, I hit the gym first off. I try to hit it four to five days a week because when I get that energy and I get some exercise, my mood's gonna be better. I'm going to be more productive, and I'm just going to be able to hit the ground running. I also have

copious amounts of coffee in the morning as well because I am new to the coffee-drinking world. I don't know how I got through college without it. But alas, here I am. I've arrived.

Dolph Goldenburg: Alright, so it sounds like cardio and caffeine, the two C's start your morning.

Alexandra Black-Paulick: Definitely. It's a great way to go, and we just moved into a new house, and we are building out this huge, almost like monstrosity of a garden that's going to be amazing. I imagine moving forward, especially over the summer after my cardio/caffeine, I'm going to have a little bit of gardening as well.

Dolph Goldenburg: Nice. Thank you, Alex.

After retiring as a teacher, Susan Bacon built a successful grant writing business, and over the course of a decade, she built that business to have many grant writers who served dozens and dozens of nonprofit organizations as the grant writing arm for that organization. Last year, in addition to having already lived the dream of starting a business, she sold her successful business and started a second retirement. Susan, as a retired teacher, I assume you're a morning person because you probably had to be at school at like 6:45 or 7:00 AM. As a retired business owner, you understand what busy means. What does your morning routine help you prepare for the day ahead?

Susan Bacon: As a business owner, when I was very active in my business, I'm working out first thing at 5:30 in the morning with either a power walk/run of three to four miles or working out with my personal trainer twice a week. Those were key components for me to think about the day, plan and destress from the day before and just to get ready for the day, but just to have that 45 minutes to an hour to workout at 5:30 in the morning, I was at my desk by 7:30 and ready to rock and roll. Early morning workouts are very key as well as eating a good breakfast. I know I sound like a mom when I say that, but I found that if I didn't have at least a protein shake and my hot cup of tea or coffee, then I was a grouch the rest of the day and not able to do what I needed to do.

Dolph Goldenburg: Susan, you are an incredibly successful person, and I'm grateful to you shared what your morning routine is and how it helps you prepare for the day. Thank you.

Susan Bacon: Thank you, Dolph.

Dolph Goldenburg: Doug Barker is a principal in Barker and Scott Consulting, which helps organizations grow and fulfill their mission. His clientele is a veritable nonprofit hall of fame listing, including Feeding America, City Year, Save the Children, and Special Olympics. He even has a book coming out later this year called the *Major Gifts Playbook*. So, Doug, you have got a busy professional life. You've got a lot of clients. You have tremendous demands on your time every day. You're finishing off a book so you can hopefully get it out and make sure it gets into people's hands this year. With everything that you are doing, do you have a morning routine that prepares you for the business and stress of the day, and if you do, what is it?

Doug Barker: It always starts with a cup of coffee. I have to admit, and that's an important part of it. But then from there, it really depends on the season. If it is winter time, I'll have the coffee, read a little bit about the paper, but I'm fortunate enough to have a hot tub outside my bedroom outdoors, and if it's winter time, I go, and I lay in the hot water and just do kind of little mini meditation. If it is summertime and warm, I've got a screened in porch out back when I go back there and listen to the birds and maybe just take a little stroll through my garden and get centered that way. But in both cases, what it really does is it just enables me to have a little quiet centering time and not immediately start focusing on my to do's, but get centered, get myself prepared for day and feeling good and connecting a little bit with myself and with nature and that really makes all the difference for me.

Dolph Goldenburg: Doug, thank you so much for sharing your morning routine.

Doug Barker: My pleasure.

Dolph Goldenburg: Like a lot of entrepreneurs, Matthew Goings is a busy guy. He's the director of operations at Georgia Lawyers for the Arts and started his own boutique law firm serving technology startups, creative individuals and small businesses, and in his spare time, he is a musician and a husband. Matthew, I am sure that your days are packed from early in the morning until late at night. What morning rituals do you have the propel you forward to a successful day?

Matthew Goings: Well, my ideal morning ritual and my current morning ritual are a little bit different. When I'm working back toward, after a bit of time off from exercise, is getting up early, trying to get up around 6:15am, eat a small portion of my breakfast and then do probably about a 30-minute workout, eat the rest of my breakfast, take our dog out for a walk, then shower and don't have to be in GLA the office until later in the day about a 9:30, 10:00. I can either work from Goings Legal stuff beforehand, maybe sit down and play a video game to know in my mind that gets it out of the way. Now, I'm not sitting around all day wondering, "When do I get to go home and play something?" I've already had a little bit of time to myself and then can concentrate on work throughout the day.

Dolph Goldenburg: Now that you said you worked out, I'm going to have to ask, so it's about 30 minutes. Is it CrossFit? Old Richard Simmons episodes? What are you doing?

Matthew Goings: It's just a little bit of a compilation of some stuff since I've been away from working out for about a year. I had some health issues going on. I can't jump right back into what I was doing, which was a P90x3. Back in college I did P90x, and now it's P90x3. They have shorter 30-minute workouts, but they're pretty intense. I'm not at that level, but that's my goal is to get back to that and do those p90x3workouts.

Dolph Goldenburg: I love it. Hey, Matthew. Thank you so much.

Matthew Goings: You're very welcome.

Dolph Goldenburg: You may remember a serial entrepreneur, Jeb Banner, CEO of the board management app Boardable when he spoke with us about impending leadership crisis on episode 85 of the podcast. In the last 12 years, he started two successful businesses and two successful nonprofits. Jeb, I did the math. It was not hard math. On average, you have started a new enterprise every three years, and each has become successful. I would be willing to bet that you power up your day with an amazing morning routine. What is that routine?

Jeb Banner: Yeah, it's always evolving, but I'll tell you what it is right now. I get up somewhere between 6:30 and 6:45 AM. I usually get my kids up or sometimes a little bit later because I take them to school. My wife usually does the evening, afternoon routine. Then I go upstairs, and I have a little area upstairs with an elliptical. I do a five to six minutes on the elliptical just to kind of get my blood flowing. Then I do five to six minutes of yoga, mostly stretches to kind of open up my hips. I've got some arthritic hips, and I just get kind of my body loosened up, and then I do five to 10 minutes of meditation and breathing. Now I've cut out caffeine. I don't drink coffee anymore.

I'll do decaf occasionally and then I'd take my kids to school, and then I usually do some sort of mantra on the drive from there to the office, which are usually just things like focusing on being energized and caring for people. These ideas easily three times out loud. I believe in manifesting through language, as much as possible. Never actually shared any of that. When I get to work, I try to take a walk. I try to take a walk, and then often I'll just open up a notebook and go through it, and make sure I build the list, which is all the things I want to get done. I review what my goals. The first part almost always is some days, I go into a breakfast at 8:00 AM, and I take a walk later.

Dolph Goldenburg: That is an amazing morning routine job. Thank you for sharing it with us.

Jeb Banner: Well, my pleasure. Thank you for having me.

Dolph Goldenburg: A few episodes ago we had Liz Frayer on the podcast. You may remember Liz because she is the CEO of and Intrepid, a benefits advisory firm. She is incredibly accomplished in this field. She has been named one of the most influential women in benefits advising. She, as I already said, owns and runs Intrepid, which is benefits advising from, but her company is also ranked among Atlanta's best places to work and ranked with INC magazine is one of the 5,000 fastest growing small private companies in the country. Someone who is that busy must have an interesting morning routine. Liz, what do you do in the morning?

Liz Frayer: I am probably going to bring maybe make some people feel better. In the morning, I probably hit snooze three times before I wake up, and then it's straight to email, and then I am getting my son dressed who is a fifth grader and out the door ready to take on the world through his school.

Dolph Goldenburg: Wow. Well that's actually kind of a busy morning even with the three snoozes. That's a pretty busy morning. Yeah. Alright. well thank you.

Liz Frayer: Okay. Absolutely.

Dolph Goldenburg: We're toward the end of the show, and this a place for me to share my morning ritual. I got to share with you that my ritual changes a little bit when I'm at home versus when I'm traveling. But the first thing is with the exception of when I'm flying out (and I typically fly out at 6:00 AM, so I have to get up at 4:00 AM), I don't set an alarm. I try to go to bed early enough that I'll wake up early enough to have a productive day. So typically, I get up between 6:00 AM and about 7:00 AM again, don't really set an alarm. Now I get out of bed. I turn around and then I make my bed.

Then I put on a robe, pad downstairs and make some coffee. Now, after I've got coffee in my hand, I'll often sit quietly for between five and 30 minutes. If it's cold or rainy outside, I'll probably do it in the living room where we've got kind of a nice view of downtown Atlanta, and if it's a beautiful spring, summer, fall morning, I'll probably spend that quiet time out on the back deck. My husband typically gets up at 6:30 in the morning and leaves for the office at 7:00 AM. I make a point of kissing my husband goodbye. Then one of my rituals is he walks down the stairs, and he starts to walk across the plaza to go to the parking lot, and I can see the plaza from our living room window.

So, I'm a couple floors up, but I open our living room window and blow him a kiss. He blows me a kiss, and then it's 7:00 AM. I sit down, and I watch the CBS morning show for about 15 to 20 minutes. It's an interesting ritual, but it helps me start to move into my day to engage the rest of the world, and I will say that like a lot of folks that watch morning shows, I kind of feel like I've got some affinity or relationship with the four people that host that show now. Normally by 7:20 I'm ready to shave, shower and get on with my day. When I travel, my ritual is largely the same, though I typically will send an email to my husband instead of seeing him out the door. Then the other big change that's happened when I travel, and this is really thanks to Michael Strader.

I have started to make my bed, and there's something really powerful I have found knowing that someone's going to make my bed later in the day, but I go ahead and do it myself. I get out of bed. I turn around. I make my bed, and I put the fancy pillows on top. It's interesting because then when I turn around after having made some coffee, I see a made bed, and I feel better about it. That's how I start my day. It is not surprising that all but one of our guests that we asked have a morning routine that helps center and focus their day. I think the takeaway from today's episode is to have a morning routine that gets your day started off right and reinforces your personal and professional priorities. If you have a morning ritual, I hope you'll share with us on Twitter or Facebook, and if you don't already have one, let us know if this episode inspired you to create one.

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