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Spring 3-28-2017

### Oral History Conversation With Chuck Samuelson (Kitchens for Good)

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#### Digital USD Citation

Almatar, Sulaiman; Truong, Michelle; Chander, Jason; and Strickland, Megan, "Oral History Conversation With Chuck Samuelson (Kitchens for Good)" (2017). *Philosophy: All Student Work*. 6.  
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## CHUCK SAMUELSON (KITCHENS FOR GOOD)

with Jason Chander, Megan Strickland, Michelle Truong, and Sulaiman Almatar

**Megan: Thank you for coming Chuck, we just kind of want to get started by maybe asking you, so your firm Kitchens for Good, so if you can give a brief overview of what Kitchens for good does, like the business model, and also kind of like what their goal is overall:**

Chuck: So, Kitchens for Good: we do number of things. We are working to solve issues of poverty, food waste, and hunger in San Diego. We do those in a base of social enterprise platform, meaning that we operate businesses that support our program. We address poverty through colonel training program, we are taking students 15 per class, 5 times a year, and those students come from background of formerly incarcerated, homeless, victims of domestic abuse, and anyone who essentially who has a barrier of employment. We train them in industry, in the kitchen, so they can be good employees in hospitality. And by good employees I stress that because we are not only teach knife skills in the kitchen, we teach life skills in the classroom. Those life skills are just as important as the knife skills. We have found that it's easy to do train to get people a job. It's much more difficult to train people how to keep a job. So, we teach conflict resolution, we teach many things that this population did not learn in their families of their origin. So, we teach conflict resolution, how to show up on time, how to be respectful on job, how to get along with employees. We teach financial literacy, how to manage your paycheck when you get it, we teach nutrition, how to feed yourself better so you can do a better job at your job, and teach exercise. To do that, we partner with many other agencies that refer clients and students to us.

The social enterprise piece support our program. We operate a catering events company and the profit support our program. We have a retail line of products that we have developed and will start selling them in farm's market. And the last thing we do is meals for senior centers. The difference between our senior center and the usual meals that you get from a senior centers is that all of ours is scratched cooked, locally sourced food, healthy and flavorful for the clients. So that sort of Kitchens for good at it's basics.

Megan: Awesome. Well, thank you for sharing that.

**Megan: So, Social entrepreneurs have so many characteristics that differentiate them from others. Can you share with us some of the characteristics that make you different, and the formative or childhood experiences that got you to develop those characteristics?**

Chuck: One of the biggest things about social entrepreneurship that maybe goes unnoticed or explained quite often is the fact that, in a typical business, and I was in a business world my hale life until I started Kitchens for good, in a typical business, you judge that business, you rate that business, everything you do is about profit efficiency, market share and cost of goods. That's how you judge everything you can do. In our social enterprise, all of those things are important to us because we want to be effective and efficient business people, but we also have other

outcomes that are equally important to us. How many students graduates from our programs, how many meals we produce for hunger relief agencies, which is another thing we do as part of our business operations and what impact we have in our local community. So, since we are operating a catering events, It's not just about how much money we can make in an event, but how many community organizations can we do event for at below market costs, so that we can increase their capacity. So, the social enterprise component really comes down to not only the profit, but comes down to are we good of our resources. So, are we returning values to the community. So it's that triple bottom line of people planet profit, we are taking care of all those. Do we have good outcomes in every respect in our social enterprise.

**Megan: Very cool. So, was there anything from your childhood that inspires you to go on this path, with like the triple bottom lines and sustainability, that sort of mentality I guess?**

Chuck: Yeah absolutely. I was born and raised in an Indian reservation in northeast of Montana. I belong to the tribe four packing reservations. Growing up in an Indian reservation and being part of the first nation of native American culture. What I learn growing up is that we when there in abundant, we shared everything we had, and when things were tight, everyone pitched in and we all suffer to the same degree. That's how I was born and raised. And to me, this is the ultimate expression of social enterprise. Left everyone up, share us much as you can, make sure that no one left behind, and the work that you do should always leave the world a better place when you're gone and you found it. Its those simple tannest that I grow up with that have guided me my hale life. And now, as I've gathered enough experience that I can give back, that's what I chose to do.

**Jason: One thing you mentioned when you were talking earlier is that you were in business before. So, I'm curious what were you doing before Kitchens for good and how did you make that transition?**

Chuck: Excellent question. So, I've been to the hospitality industry all my life. I started out as a dishwasher at the kitchen at a 13 years old, worked my way up to cook, and to other kitchens, where I was chief, executive chief, general manager, owned my own restaurants, owned catering companies and owned a hospitality consulting firm Through all of those different jobs and businesses, earned how to operate businesses effectively, and how to put together effective working teams that could make my businesses successful. And so, reached a point in my life through having conversations with my son, who at that was just become a teenager, about what high school was going to look like for him, what he might be interested in after high school in college, what college will look like, and then what he might be thinking about for profession. I know this is a big conversation to be having with a 13 years old, but I know you all have same conversations with your parents when you were teenagers about what your life will look like. And so, my son dashel and I talked a lot about right livelihood, about what you do for living should give back more to your community that it takes away. That the end result of your life should have a positive benefit to your community. And so, we operate Kitchens for good on a believe that we can change one individual's life by giving them this opportunity, that they can lift themselves and their family out of poverty, and by lifting themselves out of poverty, they can improve their communities. So everything I've done in business has sort of pointed me to this direction, where we operate Kitchens for good at a very effective organization in many levels.

**Megan:** So can you tell us about what it was like the starting for Kitchens for good, and what are the obstacles that come in and get through when you started the business, and also how those lessons were and how you applying them to your practices today?

Chuck: I'm sure that you've heard the expression that starting a business is like jumping off a cliff and fly all the way down, it's not. It's like jumping off a cliff, building an airplane on the way down, and learning to fly an airplane on the way down to the ground. And so, starting a social enterprise has all the same challenges of starting a business, with some additional challenges in trying to convince whoever your investors are, and whatever that looks like, that some of the profits you would normally generate are going to be invested either back in the business or into the social outcomes that are more important. And so, as with any business, some of the challenges in any business, any startup, are the right team. You absolutely have to have the right team. You have to have the right product, or people simply not going to be interested in investing in or buying your own product or supporting your organization. You have to have a good story. A good story is not enough, you have to be good at telling that story. So, you have to be good at marketing and advertising. So, all the things are coming into business. Start of funds, locations, operating capital, marketing and advertising, and the right team or the same in business they are in social enterprise, and if you cheat in one of those areas, then your business will fail, your social enterprise will fail just as quickly as any regular business. If you are under funded, you started for capital, 50% of all businesses fail within the first year because, and mostly because under capitalized. Simply don't have enough money in reserve to scale up. And so, that was one of our challenges for us too in the beginning. So, the right team, I've been very fortunate in it and I was able to attract the right team early on, so we have a really strong team. And then the story, there are people out there doing much more important work than I am doing, we're lifting people out of poverty and we're feeding the hungry, and we're doing really important things, but seriously, there are people out there that are fighting human trafficking and doing things that really. I got up in the morning and thinking everyday to do more and be more and be better, because there are people out there doing much more work than I am doing. So the work that I've chosen to do, I have to do as well as I can. And so, having said that it's just critically important that we do what we do well and we're successful at it. That if we're going to use resources that we use them responsibly and well.

**Megan:** So we've kinda talked about in class like how personally we've always gauged like our milestones as like our gauges for success. So if it's for like a summer internship, like we got the internship or if it's for a business it's like profits like you said, hitting KPI's that sort of thing. So for kitchens for good how do you personally like gauge your success with the business or social enterprise.

Chuck: Good, so we have both umm personal KPIs for all our team members and we have organizational KPIs that are divided amongst different departments. Some of the KPI's for our catering and events company is to get into more outside venues, real simple. We have a venue of our own, were in a number of venues around San Diego, we just want to increase that number of venues, so that we can do more catering that supports all of our programs and everything else. For me personally it's about leadership am I the best leader I can be? How can I become a better leader? Umm and So Umm I work with my board of directors to establish a yearly set of KPI's for me personally as the president of the organization, and so we do the same things with each one of our departments, and each one of our team leaders.

**Megan:** that's awesome that's really good to hear. Umm can you give a story of maybe like how you've had to adjust like how you've measured growth throughout like the beginning of the company and like where it is now like how that has changed, like what are you more focused on now

**Chuck:** Absolutely, as so in any business you have an idea you think you know where your sales are going to go, you think you know where your customers are going to come from and then you open your doors and things change. So we opened our doors with the belief that our catering and events company would be much more profitable much more quickly than it was. What we did not anticipate was umm we had one senior meal contract that was interested in coming on board with us, but when we opened we didn't have any, within a month we had one. What we didn't understand was that in our first year we would have two additional senior meal contracts. Which would make that part of the organization much more profitable than we thought it was going to be. Umm we thought we were going to do our retail product line much sooner than we have. That's been put onto the back burner while we put a lot of energy into our catering and events umm part of the business to get that successful, which it is now. The last months of 2016 were each more profitable than the previous month and so we've got that on track now. But you sometimes just don't know when you get into business where the money is going to come from, or where it needs to be spent

**Megan:** Have you seen like kind of a turn around with people that are involved with the program like maybe coming back to work for kitchens for good once their done with like the classes like you said or like coming back or like starting their own social enterprise have you seen any turn around with that?

**Chuck:** So a lot of our students come just drop in anytime, so their part of the family now they drop by anytime. They come by on their days of just to work in kitchen with the current students, they come by and teach classes. They just started an alumni organization for the student graduates, we now have 60 something graduates out in the world. And so yes they're very much involved in the organization. We hope to expand our business organization so we can start hiring more of our students

**Megan:** That really cool, so one thing that's personally deterred me from becoming a social entrepreneur was like how uncertain...sorry I'm reading this wrong. One thing that Personally deterred me from seeing myself as a social entrepreneur was how uncertain the future of my venture would be for a good while until we completely established ourselves in the community. I'm sure you went through the same process of uncertainty when you started kitchens for good. What's your own attitude towards uncertainty, and how did you maintain your confidence during the first years of its inception?

**Chuck:** I am comfortable with chaos, and you have to be. If you are going to be in business of any kind, and make no mistake social enterprise is business, if you are going to be in business you had better be comfortable with chaos. You better fail quickly, Iterate, and move on. And if something isn't working you better change it, abandon it, do something as quickly as possible. I am a fairly stubborn person and what I have learned is that does not benefit me or the organization, unless I have empirical proof that I am right. And so we do a lot of human centered design in our organization. It's not what I think, it's what the customer wants. It not what I believe or what my experiences tell me, or any of those things. Whose the customer, what's their

pain point what's their problem how can we as an organization solve that. And how can that provide value to them and to us. And so it's those sort of things and believe me over the course of 2 years since we really started doing this, my whole team is much more comfortable with chaos now than when they joined us. I think that's a very valuable thing, to be confident in our model, that it will prove out, but being willing to iterate at any stage.

**Megan: Do you ever feel like you have to sell customers on like what you're doing, or do you think they just come to you because it's such a great product? Like you said you run a catering business, like do people come to you because it's such good food and it's a reasonable price so they can take, or do you think it's the story about kitchens for good that's really selling them on it**

Chuck: At this point it's really about catering to what they want. When someone is booking catering they want what they want when they want it first, so if it's between you and another caterer, our story might tip the balance for us but if our prices aren't in line and our food isn't as good and our service isn't as good, we won't get that second look. So I think that marketing piece is important, but you have to be comparable in terms of service quality goods up front.

**Megan: One part of being a social entrepreneur for me personally, that kind of has not really bothered me about social entrepreneurship, but is kind of holding me back from being a part of it is that sometimes your kind of band aid fixing and you're not really listening to the people, I'm taking a religious peace building class and we talk about your going in as the other, and if you just project your own ideas of what the ideal world should be you won't enact lasting change, so how do you think you've kind of combated being both an outside and someone who's trying to enact change.**

Chuck: Yeah great question, If someone were just looking at this video, they would see a middle aged white man who has had some success in his life, but the truth is i'm a highschool drop out from a broken home from a background of alcoholism, drugs, i've been homeless in my life, i've been a drug addict, so these students that come into our program arnt other to me, there where I came from. I understand their stories, for me there's no leap of understanding, there's no gap there. And so again going back to the human centered design model we did not come into this with the idea that this is the solution. Our original plan for kitchens for good was we were going to turn wasted or rescued food into meals for the hungry, that was it. That was the plan. As we started exploring the issue of hunger what we determined was hunger wasn't a lack of food, yes if you're hungry it means you don't have enough food, but the true base underpinning for hunger is lack of economic opportunity, lack of decent jobs In america. Hunger in america isn't a food scarcity problem it's a food distribution, it's a food access problem. And so my original idea was well i've been in the restaurant business all my life I know how much food we waste in hospitality, we are simply going to capture that food, get it into a big kitchen turn into shelf stable meals and food products, keep that in the food strain, hunger solved thank you very much. When we started exploring the model of hunger, what we realized was hungry people aren't hungry because they want to be hungry, it's because they can't get to where the food is, food can't get to them, and they can't earn enough to buy their own food. So we very quickly looked at this as a poverty problem. And if we were going to do anything about poverty, we were going to have to use the things we knew, been in hospitality all my life, been a chef all my life, been a restaurant owner all my life, I know that right now in san diego there are thousands of jobs in kitchens waiting for people to step up and take them. And there decent jobs you can use as a

base to go to school, to get something better, to work your way up the hospitality industry. So understanding that gave us the basis to go very early on to go food rescue to feed the hungry, great idea. Lets layer job training on top of that and lift people out of poverty. And that way we can have a real impact on communities

**Megan: Do you feel like people in your organization kind of are very similar to you where they have a background where they can relate to the people you're helping, Or is it that their really inspired by the work you did?**

Chuck: oh yea they're clearly inspired by it, there all college graduates, I'm the one in our organization that has that particular background. But again i don't want it to seem like its prerequisite, but i do understand you know because I have had this conversation before about the other who tries to push a solution onto community so we listen very closely to our dozens and dozens of partners who refer students to us about what their needs are and what we can do to improve our program

**Jason: So I know that you guys are in San Diego right now, have you guys ever thought about expanding to other bigger communities, or does that not interest you as much?**

Chuck: It absolutely interest us so we've always thought because of the geographical nature of San Diego county we would need four locations in San Diego County. So we're currently in southeast San Diego. Were working on a location in San Marcos, so inland north county. We always thought that we needed to be in oceanside, for the veterans community in oceanside. And then probably somewhere in city center or city heights, another neighborhood of great need in san diego. So that's three or four locations just in San Diego. We thought that once we did that, had proof of concept and prototyped it, why not take it on the road. Why not take it to portland or Chicago, or Atlanta, or wherever, or Austin then we would be there for south by southwest every year, that could be cool. So yea we absolutely thought that this should go on the road at some point.

**Megan: Very cool. Social Entrepreneurship is a call for change; Often inspired by a problem that someone feels needs to be fixed. How can social entrepreneurship feel like lasting change rather than just a band-aid fix? Can you give an example of how you perpetuate this kind of innovation?**

Chuck: Great question. We do both. We band aid things because we do meals for the hungry. That's clearly a band aid. It's a real problem giving people meals is not fixing the problem it's a bandaid so our approach is culinary job training. So we don't do anything. We lift people. We give people the opportunity. They take the chance. They do the work they accomplish this. That's the lasting change. Our students changing their lives and their families' lives is the lasting change.

**Megan: Can you give a story of one of someone who started out int program ad and how they now?**

Chuck: Yeah! My favorite, Hammer, a veteran who had gotten into some trouble. Spent some time in prison and couldn't get a job. two years looking for a job. He couldn't get an interview or a second interview. Simply couldn't get a job. Went through our program. Came out of our

program got employed immediately and within 3 months had 3 other job offers. He is currently the head baker at panera bread and just as soon we open our facilities in san marcos, we will have a bakery and hammer's going to come back and work for us

**Megan: That's really cool to hear. Do you find that working with veterans is pretty common at kitchens for good especially in san diego?**

Chuck: No, we've had a couple of veterans go through our program but there are fortunately more resources out there for veterans so we don't focus on that yet, but once oceanside opens up that will be a focus.

**Jason: So what is the age range of people in the programs?**

Chuck: 18-58. We call them kids in class but it's literally 18-58.

**Megan: Oftentimes major corporations fall into the trap of corruption and greed. While these are often precisely what social entrepreneurship is working to combat, how do you work to balance business needs with your organization's mission?**

Chuck: that goes back to when we were talking earlier about kpis, we make that everything we view has success is filtered through our mission, our mission to alleviate poverty, our mission to reduce hunger, our mission to reduce food waste. Those have to be the primary drivers of our bottom line so we are willing to accept less dollar profitability for more social good outcomes. Ex: We pay 15/hour a living wage, we think this is an important internal metric how that we are walking our talk

**Megan: Being an entrepreneur, you've had the chance to work with many people with different work ethics and personalities. What are some characteristics in people that you've enjoyed working with and seek to work with to succeed?**

Chuck: So, i tend to be fairly passionate about what we do and that comes through. I seek people with similar passion for changing the world but with a diverse skillset. I'm a pretty good sales person, real comfortable with that i don't need a lot of people like that on my team. I need people with other skillsets those skillsets can be on the programmatic side like a counselor. You wouldn't want me as a counselor but we have people on the team that you want as a counselor. You don't want me as executive director in charge of fundraising but we have someone that is absolutely best at that. We want people who want to be here and is complimentary for the team. I always hire people smarter than I am.

**Megan: that's a good standard to have. For investors, how do you gage their interests and rally convince them this is something to believe?**

Chuck: We don't get investors. Nobody invests in this something. For two years we've heard the same thing, come back when you've got more business history, banks like 3 years, come back when you're profitability.. We aren't supposed to be profitability we are a social enterprise! Come back when you have more assets so that we can use that as collateral for a loan. So we've heard the same things. Fortunately, we've been talking with an organization that understands



social entrepreneurship and we are talking about a line of credit and a bridge loan for a new project.

**Jason: so when you guys first started out, were you self-funded?**

Chuck: we've had some very early supporters. We got grant money. It took me 2 years to find our first kitchen. I could have had our first kitchen within a few months of starting up but it had to be a kitchen that had revenue attached to it because the challenge with social entrepreneurship is the challenge with any business. We can start off with borrowing 1 million dollars and build this beautiful facility and hope that people show up. Recipe for failure. Why not find the revenue first. So that's why we chose this kitchen that had a catering and events company that did a million dollars a year. They were losing money but they had a base of revenue. I knew i could take that base and increase the revenue by trimming the costs and making it profitability. That was critical to our success early on. It was critical at a scale that couldn't be done otherwise. I think if you do social enterprise, people start out really small because they are afraid and their chance of failure will be small. No the failure is the same. Why do you want to make a small impact? Very small impact. Why would you want to spend your resources, talent, energy and that of your supporters to have a small impact. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in a big impact. If you don't want to change the world, why do anything? Why bother? Why get out of bed? If you're not going to change the world and so that's what we operate on. If we are going to do this, we are going to make it scale. And we need to see what that scale is out of. What we want to design is a 1 million dollar a year company. What are the steps from now and then to get there? We need to plan how to change the world. The only things in between are the steps.

**Michelle: What other agencies do you work with and how do they help?**

Chuck: we partner with a bunch of other agencies like the corrections department when people get out prison and go directly into general population or halfway house, there are a good number of support services around the correction system now and we work with multiples of those and if their clients are candidates for our program.that we work with them early on like organizations like second chance or just in time foster youths. We have 75 applicants for classes of 15. We have a pre-screening and then we screen them ourselves. One thing we look for is a passion to work in the kitchen. That is what we are looking for. Like if they want to learn the ways of the kitchen, we have that but if they want spend time here but really want to be a DJ. go be a DJ. don't waste our time here.

**Megan: have you thought about moving into preventions for high school aged- children?**

Chuck: i'm going to tell these 4 college kids that are right in front of me something. Not everyone could or should go to college. I didn't i wish i had to be perfectly but it wasn't my path and it's not for everyone. we have lost in America the alternative. Back in high school, there were kids that were never going on to college, and they were on a vocational side of high school and they ended up being auto mechanics and machinists and all the things we still need in america that have less training for. There's less incentive to become that. The people i grew up with made a good living working with their hands. That's a difficult thing to do in america right now. Those jobs should not regulate us to a lower standard of living. I agree that doctors should be paid more but mechanists and plumbs should still be able to make enough money to have a decent standard of living. Even more important, that guy cooking your breakfast at a restaurant should be paid enough to support his family and get to see his kids. He shouldn't be working two jobs just to make enough money to put food on the table and that's what's happened in

America. The people at the lower end of the economic spectrum. If you adjust for inflation, they have not had a raise in 30 years. That's not right.

**Megan: Do you like Kitchens for Good becoming more a a vocational school for kids who maybe aren't on that college path?**

Chuck: I think that what we would like to, since we're open source, and we share our best practices with everyone, I think that um we would like to partner with local schools if there's an interest in that. We're actually talking with the Oceanside School District about putting a program in one their schools. And so I think that's definitely a way that we want to go. But here's the sneaky idea about what I want to do. Okay so, in my perfect world we scale this up. Not only do we these large centers where we do all this work that I'm talking about. We start to open our own retail outlets. So, think coffeehouses, sandwich shops, bakery-cafes, and burger stands and all of those kind of things. And so as we have these large hubs where we're doing this work and we're feeding the hungry, and doing culinary job training we have all these small retail outlets around them, dozens and dozens of them. So, if what you've learned about me is that I like to pay a living wage, I like to provide medical benefits to my staff, I like to give them good working conditions, I like them to be fully employed and have a path to success. So imagine if Kitchens for Good were now the largest hospitality employer in San Diego, and we were paying all of our employees a living wage and providing medical benefits for them, vacation, and dental and healthcare, and all the things that come with a good job. Imagine if we were doing that, imagine if we employed 3000 employees, what would that do for the rest of the hospitality industry in San Diego?

**Megan: It would raise it.**

Chuck: Everyone would have to raise. Everyone would have to match us. Imagine the economic impact we could have on San Diego if everyone had to pay as well as we did and treat their employees as well as we did. That's the sort of anarchist in me. We're going to bring the system down from within.

**Megan: So you kind of touched on what your ideal world is. When you think of where you want, not just necessarily having those working conditions, the living wages, and the benefits for your employees, but like what is the ideal world that you're trying to build with Kitchens for Good, other than the hospitality industry coming up? What is your ideal world?**

Chuck: Well I still go back to the original idea that I started with, which is end hunger. I think that access to healthy food should not be a privilege, okay? So, I like to tell the story about as you rise up the economic ladder, what you start buying is, first you start buying quality food, okay? And less carbohydrates, less processed food, less salt, sugar, all of that kind of stuff. And then as you rise up, you start buying better food. Then you start buying better, more convenient food. And so eventually you're buying really good stuff from the deli in Whole Foods or the meal kits that you know you take home and whip up or you're having blue apron deliver it to your door. And look honey and you're cooking together cause now you have time, and money to do that. And so, what I would like to do someday is to be able to drive that convenient, healthy food down the economic scale to people. So that, healthy, access to healthy, convenient food is available to everybody. And when we do that, again, it's going to change society. If you do that, so that food no longer becomes a privilege, but a right. That everyone should have it. If you do

that, again, it turns everything in the industrial food complex on its ear. So that's my big thing. To me, that's how you end hunger. You make it affordable for everybody, you make it quality for everybody, you make it convenient for everybody. People at the lower end of the economic scale aren't working 8 hours and going home and cooking and putting their feet up, and watching TV and helping the kids with homework. They're working long hours, often two or more jobs. They're tired. They take public transportation. What they don't have is time and convenience. And so if we can attack some of that lack of time and convenience, and access to healthy food, by providing better healthy food, more conveniently, then we can change things too.

**Megan: And then you mentioned that, that sustainability was kind of like ending food waste as well, was kind of like your original model, do you still have like the food waste idea as part of your business model?**

Chuck: Oh, absolutely. We glean from local farms, we have partner organizations that glean from local farms, we take excess produce and seconds from some local farms. We use that in our meals for the hungry every week. We are currently doing about 800 meals a week for the hungry. Our goal is to get that up to 5000. So think of a quarter of a million meals for hungry relief every year, high quality, scratch cooked meals? So yeah.

**Jason: So have you ever really thought about doing, I don't even know if this is economically possible, but for that person that maybe doesn't have the time, or are working two jobs, have you ever thought about doing a food delivery system, like Blue Apron, for someone at a lower economic level?**

Chuck: Absolutely. So here's what kills all those food delivery models, every single one of them is going to blow up eventually, transportation. The transportation always gets them. It is so expensive for me to deliver a meal to you at your house, at whatever time of day. You know so all of these companies, what they want to do is, they want to deliver to you for five meals in a box, not just one. And in a perfect world, then you're paying for all of the packaging, there's all the waste from that, and there's all this sustainability issues and everything else. So in my model, in a perfect world, reusable storage containers, and pick-up locations. So pick-up locations in your neighborhood, where on Monday you come pick up your meals Monday through Thursday. And on Thursday you come back with that same reusable container and we fill it up with your meals for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And so, in that model, the transportation is more diffuse, it on you. So instead of delivering to thirty people in a neighborhood, I'm delivering to one pick-up location. And so there's actually a model that does this very successfully in Atlanta, it's called Good Measure Meals. And they do both meals for the hungry, plus they sell meals on a regular subscription meal program. We love that model and would like to see that in San Diego.

**Megan: Do you think it would be successful here with, aside from customers of higher means also cash in on this and also be able to provide the convenient healthy food to like lower income families as well?**

Chuck: Yeah, I think that quite frankly one subsidizes the other. No question.

**Michelle: One last question for you, what are your top three pieces of advice or tip for young entrepreneurs like us?**

Chuck: Oh lord. Top three pieces of advice? Vet your plan is the first thing. So, fortunately, unfortunately, we got caught up a few years ago when we were getting our IRS non-profit certification, the 501C3 certification, we got caught up in, I don't know if you remember this, but there was the whole thing about conservative political action groups and their non-profit status and the IRS was putting them on the back burner. Oops, we'll get back to you a little bit later, or maybe a year from now. And so when that whole scandal happened, the IRS stopped certifying any non-profits for almost a year they didn't certify anybody, or nine months or more.

Anyway, and so we got caught in that and because we couldn't then solicit funds or do anything else, what I was left with was just telling my story. And so what I got to do was I got to go to many community partners and tell my story and listen to feedback. And one of the very first most important conversations that I had was with the executive director at Feeding America San Diego, Jennifer Gilmore. And at that time, I told her this idea about turning rescued food into meal products and shelving stable foods. And so think bruised apples into apple jelly, applesauce, apple pie. We'll keep that in the food system. We'll alleviate hunger. And she listened very politely and she said to me, "yeah but could you do meals?". I go "Meals? Well, yeah." If I have a kitchen and I have food product coming in, I can make meals out of those, we can freeze them, or make them shelf stable in some way, and then have them be able to be distributed. Yes, I can do meals.

First iteration right there. The very first iteration. And it came from me just telling the story. And so I think that we all have great ideas and sometimes you put them out in the light of the day and they might wither a little or at least change color. And so I think, telling your story to people who would be interested in seeing it successful. Or be interested in it. And so I thought that I wanted to end hunger. I started talking to everyone I could find in hunger relief. Hunger action network, the hunger advocacy network, both food banks in San Diego, started reading everything online I could about it. And so, the first thing I would do is vet your idea. It's like with any business. Is your model going to work? I had a food critic in San Diego years ago who came to me and a friend of mine, we were both restaurateurs at the time. He had this great idea for a restaurant. Absolutely guaranteed to be successful. This thing was going to knock them dead. His idea was a Caesar salad restaurant. That's all they served was Caesar salad. But get this, different toppings. So you could have fish, chicken in your meals. And so we said, "Okay, and so what else do they serve there?" "And oh no that's it. Just Caesar salad. That's the whole deal." And we very politely convinced him that great idea. We personally do not have time to help you with this, But I'm sure someone will help you launch this restaurant idea. That idea was doomed for failure from the get-go. It was so limited. And so, really putting your idea out there with people and having it vetted is critical before you do anything. Take that idea out there and road test it. Just like they do with plays. Take it to Shagouven and see if it plays or not. So that's my best advice, is really vet your idea at first.

Secondly, is, and I tell this to non-profits, social entrepreneurs, and business people all the time, when, and I do consulting for free along these lines, what's your revenue stream? Where's the money coming from to make this sustainable? Now if its all going to be grants and philanthropy, that's fantastic. But from whom? Philanthropic money is incredibly difficult to get and then its very fickle once you get it. Philanthropists love to fund the shiny new thing and then the second year, not so much. And so you may get a lot of money up front for your great idea. How are you going to fund that year two? So find your sustainability, find your revenues streams. Make sure those revenue streams are bulletproof. Regardless of what happens year to

year, in your mission piece, or what is going on over there, have a solid base of revenue that you can count on all the time to keep your operation going through lean times and good times. Third thing, it has to be the team. You're only one person, you're only going to be able to take this so far. You're going to need a team. And your team is critical to your success. Again as I stated earlier, I've had the great good fortune to attract to me just amazing team members. We have an all-star team. And without that I just don't think you can be successful. One person through just sheer personality is going to have a very, very difficult time being successful. One person with a forceful personality and a great team around him, can do amazing things. So my job in this organization is to be the lunatic at the head of the mob. And I do that very well. But there's only room for one lunatic in an organization. Around me I have really talented, really smart people.

Thank you so much for coming, we really appreciate it.

— End of Transcription —