Business Acquisition and Growth with Kristy Mumma

Linda Ostovitz: Hello everyone. Welcome. Today I have joining me, Kristy Mumma. Who is co-owner of Stewart Technologies.

I met Kristy I think for the first time as a result of my involvement with Howard County Chamber of Commerce and got even closer to Kristy, I would say in more recent times as she managed the most successful event that the Chamber has had lately, and that is the Women's Leadership Conference.

We had hundreds and hundreds of attendees, we sold out. It was an amazing event. Kristy, thank you for your leadership and management of that event. And I'm glad that it was something that gave us opportunities to get to know each other a little better. So thank you and welcome.

Kristy Mumma: Oh, Linda, thank you so much for having me. I have interacted with you many different times through the chamber and I always look forward to speaking with you, so I'm excited to have this conversation.

Linda Ostovitz: Wow. So are we. So Kristy runs an organization which uses terms like IT and CRM and ERP and cybersecurity and other numbers and such that I'm not familiar with. They're overwhelming to me, which is why we have experts who do that kind of work. But Kristy, just to give our audience a little bit of an idea what does Stewart Technologies do in a few sentences, if you would?

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. Thank you so much. Stewart Technologies is a full service technology consultings provider and we specialize in IT and accounting ERP technology solutions. And what we do with all of that word jumble is we work with businesses to ensure that their systems run efficiently, allowing the front and the back office to work better together.

We help establish and optimize workflow. This could include networking, protecting, supporting, streamlining, and a lot of times helps customers with scaling in their environments. And this allows them to focus on their business and what they need to get done instead of worrying about the systems and the technology and the cybersecurity piece of that.

Linda Ostovitz: Well, in addition to Kristy being a problem solver, as she's just indicated there in a more sophisticated manner than I just did.

What drew me to Kristy and really an interest in having this discussion is the fact that she and her business partner were formerly employees of Stewart Technologies and made a big deal decision to buy the company and basically to make it their own, which has been a process that, maybe a number of people who've been employees have crossed their minds sometimes, gee, I could do this better, I could do this differently. I could expand our reach. All kinds of things, I guess, that go through people's minds. But Kristy's actually done it. So, Kristy, let's start with what is it that caused you to make the decision to go ahead and buy the company for which you had worked for I believe since 2007, 17 years I think.

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. Yes. So I had worked in different roles with the company for many years. I joined the firm right after I completed a three year contract on a Y2K project. And I was looking to move into consulting role. I had worked internally in internal support roles, and I knew that my ability to kind of flex and pivot and you said before about that like strategic problem solver kind of role.

Like I would have more opportunity with that working in a external consulting fashion. And so I, I did join the firm in 2000, and I've had various different roles through those years. And then my former boss announced that he was going to retire and that he was going to sell the firm.

And I was a department manager at that time. And the other department manager who is now my business partner and we are co-owners, we kind of paused when he said he was gonna sell the business and we thought. We're here, we know the business. And honestly, we felt like we had, been running a fair amount of some of it ourselves.

He had given us a lot of liberty in some areas, and we thought, well, why wouldn't you sell it to us first? Right? And so what we asked for was a right of first refusal, you could say, where, give us the opportunity to give you an offer, and if we can't come to an arrangement. Then of course his responsibility was to make his exit and to have that have financial value to him.

So we came from a place of respect for our former boss and trust that he would, work with us to find a place where we could be the owners. And it was a big leap, right? My current business partner and I we had to really think about it. Not because we didn't think we could do it, but because we knew that being an owner is very different than being an employee.

We didn't know how much different till we got into it. But we knew it was different and we knew that, we would have to make changes in the business. Some things we had already thought we needed to make. And we had my business partner and I had to have some deep discussions about, could we commit to this? And fortunately we're given that opportunity.

Linda Ostovitz: That's great. You we're referring to your business partner. Let's put a name on her and tell our listeners a little bit about your business partner, Tara.

Kristy Mumma: Yeah Tara Schinkel, who is the co-owner with me I've actually known her for many, many years. Our families actually grew up in the same neighborhood across the street from each other, and that's how I originally met her. So we jokingly say we've known each other since we were in diapers, and it is a blessing to have a business partner that you've known throughout all of your life phases.

Because you can read each other very well, and you also really have a respect for their gifts and their talents. And Tara is a certified CPA, but she doesn't she used to really practice as a CPA. She wants to use that accounting, and she also has a computer science degree. In the accounting software, sort of design, implementation, connectivity role.

And so she heads up the ERP and CRM system side of the house and their project work. It's actually pretty amazing to me the work that they deliver for our customers that are in the wholesale distribution manufacturing kind of warehouse space. They really look at warehouse management systems, inventory control, and the whole workflow from sourcing inputs to delivering something like a finalized gift basket on a shelf that you see at Costco.

Linda Ostovitz: Is that your primary customer in the manufacturing of warehouse arena.

Kristy Mumma: So a lot of our customers are in the wholesale distribution and manufacturing space on the accounting software services ERP, warehouse management side. We have a slightly different and overlapping customer base in some areas for the IT services and cybersecurity side of the house. We have franchisees there.

We have financial advisors. We have a regional movie theater company as one of our customers. And something that's pretty common, like a dry cleaner, right? So it's a pretty wide base of of customers. And to me, and also to Tara, this is something we love about our job. We love the diversity of clients.

We love having to become experts in their industry. And, we have earned their trust, over time so that they are involving us in some of their strategic business decisions or they are looking for our ear, they're thinking about maybe expanding or taking on a new product line. And we just see that as such a compliment. And so it gets us really excited about serving them.

Linda Ostovitz: That's interesting. That is exactly the word I was gonna use. What a compliment that you are being involved in these businesses, strategic planning that says you're a real partner. So congratulations to you and Tara for arriving at that state of relationship. Because that's huge.

So when you and Tara took over the business or bought the business I guess a question anybody would have really is, you've been there you anyway, for 17 years.

You've made observations of what has occurred with the business during the time you were there from a lot of different vantage points as you've indicated. What was the sort of state of mind that you went into the business with? Was it to change everything? Was it to switch direction? Was it to be more strategic in your view of things as somebody who goes and buys a business they worked in for 17 years, how did you go into it? You and Tara?

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. Wow. That's a really deep question because there's so much that changes when you go from employee to owner, and we did know that. We respected what our boss had done. In terms of running the company, right? And so we knew there were gonna be components some of which we didn't have expertise in.

Give you an example of HR. We're not HR experts, so, we knew there was gonna be some gaps that we would have to augment upskill, et cetera, hire own business partners to address. And so in looking at, how are we looking at this? We had to assess the company, not from the financial piece as much from the buyout.

I mean, there were financial negotiations to buy the company, but we had to look at it from what is the strategic plan for us? But also what is our one year plan? What is our three year plan? What is our five year plan? And that involved not a lot of work because we were so involved in the business, but what it really involved was an ability to pivot when we got new information or we had additional challenges or information that we couldn't have predicted.

So I'll give you an example. One of the first things we had to do after we bought the firm was we had to make a decision about where would the office be? The company had had an office at a certain location that was a lease for many, many years. And that location was picked by our former boss because it was super convenient for him, which is fine.

But it wasn't super convenient for the whole rest of the staff. And so we had a look at, making that decision very quickly after ownership transfer. And so, in looking at the state of mind when we were buying it we knew there were things to circle back more directly to your question, Linda, we knew there were things we had to address maybe in the one year timeframe.

Okay. We had this lease coming up in front of us. We had a big insurance renewal coming up. We had a large contract coming up at the end of that first year. And we knew we had to hire. We knew that there were some gap areas and support that needed to hire. And so we had kind of a clear map on that.

That was like 2017 was when the transfer occurred.

And looking at what we didn't know, was that COVID was coming down the road. And so, of course, like every other business, our plans had to pivot. But we were blessed that we had taken a strong approach to shoring up the firm's finances as soon as we took ownership.

And so because of that hard work we did that first six to eight months, going into COVID we were in a really good financial position, and so we were able to make the pivots we needed. We actually needed to on staff at that time. And of course there were expenses that every company was taking on due to additional technologies and infrastructure needed.

And so I'm thankful that I had a business partner where we were so in line, going into it. And we were able to work together to just navigate those challenges. Those are external things nobody could have seen. But you have to deal with them as the business owner. You've gotta convey a strong voice and clear direction.

Linda Ostovitz: Absolutely. A business again that's been around for a while has charted its own course or maybe didn't chart it anyway, it has run a course. Did you and Tara take the opportunity to take a hard look at what are we best at and how do we identify that and how do we amplify that as we go into the new era of Stewart Technologies under your ownership? And if so, how did you do it?

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. So that was work that Tara and I did have to take on. We needed to review who are our target customers, who do we work the best with, and who can we do the best job for? Because I think deep down, every person wants to do a good job at their job. They want to deliver. I sincerely believe that everyone is good at a point, and they want to do a good job in their job. And so we're supporting companies whose staff is only trying to do a good job in their role. And so what we wanna do is. Deliver solutions that work for that customer so that they can have their employees be in their zone of genius.

That's a phrasing of something we talk about a lot in our firm, making sure that we are maximizing the skills and talents we have and that is something we have taken to our customers in a little bit different way more recently we're stating that very clearly, right?

That we are trying to help them be as efficient as the things that they have to do. Utilize tools, software supports workflow to maximize efficiency so that really they can focus on like the hard work that, that people have to do. Let's let the computers and systems do the things that they can and automate where appropriate.

And so. What we had to do was turn that on ourselves. We had to say, just because we've been doing things this way for x, y, z long time that doesn't mean it's the most efficient, that doesn't mean it's the way it should be done now. And because we had staff changes and we took on additional staff, we really had to rework our own company.

I know that might sound odd 'cause the company had been in existence for so long, but we had to look critically at everyone's role and make sure that we had the staff working kind of in their zone of genius, identify the gaps, and then either up staff or partner to make sure we could cover those core services areas.

And that led us to a rebranding. It led us to recognizing that the message of what we do for our customers unnecessarily hadn't been delivered well. I was, a bit horrified when I started my presence in the Howard County Chamber, that even though the company had been in existence for, at that time, over 30 years that people hadn't heard the name, they weren't familiar with our logo, they weren't clear what we did, even if they were familiar with us. And we took that on as a challenge to make sure that people knew the brand, the name, our core values and those services that we can provide, but only in the areas where we can deliver, excellence. We're not trying to do everything.

And we took on and welcomed what we see as more of a niche firm type of role.

Linda Ostovitz: You gotta know what you're good at and that's what you deliver and you're not good at everything, like you say. You have mentioned employees though, in connection with your most recent answer to staffing.

When you went from being coworkers of the, I think you had five employees when you bought the company, to now being owners, bosses how was that transition and did everybody stay with you?

Kristy Mumma: That's such an important component of the transition was how do we as the future new and then owners convey what our vision is for the firm. And how the staff has such an important role in continuity of service, continuity of excellence, but also in that reshaping that I talked about.

We had to look critically at the firm itself and our own procedures and we needed the people that were doing the work, in their zone of genius to share with us where they saw inefficiencies and where they knew that we needed to make changes and pivots. And so we had to have some really straightforward discussions about what those areas of improvement were.

And also of another really important component that Tara and I was to make sure that we were talking to the staff about how valuable their role was. The firm could only be successful if we could continue to deliver on those small group that really knew who we were, we had a really strong reputation and we needed to continue that as we transitioned and as ultimately we grew the firm.

And we have grown to a firm of 10 now. So there was a growth period, but we wanted to do that in a managed and strategic and thoughtful way. And that included getting the current staff to hear what we wanted to do and preview some of those changes. One example would be that, we wanted to expand the benefits that were offered to the firm.

We wanted to have more flexible work balance policies, which was pre COVID. I ironically. But there were things that we needed to be very specific about with them so that they understood we had really had thoughtful discussions about this, and then we had to also talk at that, 10,000 foot view so they could see the vision.

It was really about being direct and straightforward and transparent and making sure that we had a high level of communications. Now with that being said, not everyone chose to stay with us, right? We had someone that sort of left and transitioned in their life, and we had someone that we weren't sure if they would stay. And, they ultimately chose to make a career pivot when, this opportunity came to Tara and I. I think that when you look at it in hindsight what happened was what we thought would happen when Tara and I previewed it, and I think that's just because we were trying to be honest about what was in front of us.

And I'm glad because I think you have to have the team behind you. And if they're not with your mission, your goals, your value then it's not gonna work anyway. And so I think the sooner that sort of is brought to the top the better it is for everyone involved. And, we're so happy that team the team members that stayed with us, what a blessing, that they have that organizational knowledge to bring with us. And it's also hard to think about our firm without the people that have recently joined us. And it really just is such a strong team now, and I'm so happy with who are members of our team. I'm just glad that it worked out the way it did.

Linda Ostovitz: It's not all luck for sure. There was a lot of planning, and I know you, you're a planner, you're a thinker, you're an analytical person, and you don't make a move without analyzing it. The one person who left that was, I'm gonna say somewhat unanticipated. Did that cause you any problems with delivering services to your clients?

Kristy Mumma: I would say that through the very hard work of the remaining team, and those new folks that I had said we had staffed up in a couple support areas, through the hard work of those team members we were able to hold the line. But we did have to be very, very thoughtful about project timing, projects we committed to, and we had to be transparent with our customers that had some very large projects coming up. We had to, make phone calls to talk about timing and to talk about transition and resources. And I think that earned actually a deeper even respect from the customers that were, the very few customers that were involved in that because they recognized that we were thinking about them, right? We were really focused on making sure that our quality didn't change during the transition, and we were able to hold that, but it was only because the efforts of the team.

Linda Ostovitz: You know, sometimes that situation, like you say, where you have to fall on your sword a little bit, really does strengthen the relationship between you and a client. 'cause not everybody's that honest and that direct. When you are, I do think your consumer really and truly does appreciate that.

Kristy Mumma: Well, we're in the support business, right? I think our customers get that. Ultimately, they're counting on us for services or project completions that they need to deliver to their customers. So we have to start, we Stewart Technologies, we have to start from that role of support and empathy in a way.

We have to say to them, we know you're counting on us and we don't wanna let you down. And so we need to have a discussion about X, Y, Z, whatever it is. Whether it's project timelines, deliverables staffing challenges, whatever it is. And I think that people really get honesty. Anybody can be in a bad situation, but if you are honest about what's going on and bring, this is how we're gonna help fix, address, adjust, whatever that word is.

It just really ups the value that they see in the relationship and that ultimately allows us to serve them better.

Linda Ostovitz: Agreed. So we've talked about your acquisition and staffing and so forth.

Let's talk about budgeting. Again, this business has been operating for how many years before you bought it?

Kristy Mumma: Yeah, so it'd been in operation for over 30 years.

Linda Ostovitz: 30 years. When you buy it. And again, I'm sure had a history of how budgeting was done and what was traditionally spent on and not spent on. You buy this business, how did you handle budgeting? I guess you got left with a budget or inherited a budget is a better term.

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. Yeah, that's a great question. And boy, this was one that we probably didn't see we would have to put as much work into from that beginning. But now reflecting on it, I'm glad we did. So let me fill in the middle there. So we did, and we did inherit a budget. And because my business partner and I were former department managers, we had some influence on budgeting before and inputs on budget.

All the curtains weren't pulled back, so we didn't have full visibility to the budget. So we did inherit a budget and the ownership transition happened in May. So we inherited a budget and we stuck to, I'm gonna say lived with that budget, going through that first year and noted challenges, problems, concerns.

One kind of adjustment we had to quickly make in the budget was we wanted to have some pay scale changes to reflect sort of the level commitment we had asked of some of the staff during this transition. And some new opportunities that they took on. And so, we had to make those adjustments quickly on that HR side.

And then as we looked to prepare the budget for what I would say that first full year of our ownership, when we got into it, we realized, Ooh, there's a lot more work here than needed. Not because it was off or a mess or anything like that. But because we realized that we needed to get our priorities into the budget.

And how your budget is projecting your staffing, your expenses, your investments, all of those things that is basically, your growth if that's your target or it's delivering on what your plan is, for that year and beyond. The first year we did a lot of work in the budget, but what we learned was that we had to do even more work and we had to start sooner.

And, I, at first I was a little like resistant to this. Budgeting, I didn't see it at that time as sort of part of the strategic plan review and part of really how you put all the pieces of the puzzle together to equal the growth. I just saw it more as a financial exercise, but in going through the nitty gritty details of it I really got a much deeper respect for the budgeting process as a crosscheck on your other goals you have for the business.

And so that second year we spent even more time on the budget and we started sooner. And what was a great result of that was that we actually put in a kind of a new endeavor of making sure that we increased our interactions with our staff and increased what we're now calling mentoring sessions.

Where we have in addition to, work reviews or project planning meetings we're looking at, what is their growth plan. As individuals, as professionals in addition to someone that's part of our company. And that was work when we were looking at year-end reviews and staff reviews.

We had these amazing interactions with our team and we realized we wanted to do more of this because it really added such a depth to the relationship and kind of that sticky connection with the employee and the employer. And that was something that came out of the budget review process that originally I was pretty, standoffish about.

But now I have such a respect for it and we are now starting our budget review and planning process sooner. We're looking at it as soon as September hits, and our goal is to have it done early November, but there's always tweaks and some contracts aren't even up, out of available for input until closer to the end of the year.

But, it's something that we inherited, we had to tweak slightly. We had to change, and then we really had to dive into it. So now that we're, beyond kind of those first five years, I feel like it is only increasing our ability as owners to dive into the company at deeper levels every time we look into that budget.

Linda Ostovitz: And now it belongs to you. Right? It's not a, a legacy budget anymore. It's now yours.

Kristy Mumma: For better or worse.

Linda Ostovitz: Well, I'm sure it's for the better. I don't know Tara, but I know you, so I'm sure that it's for the better.

One of the things that has recently invaded, if you will, the lives of people like you who provide it services, is the fact that your service is going to be taxed now. And for our listeners, there's been a lot of fight in the legislature about taxing service that is sold as a commodity basically.

And while a lot of industries were successful in beating back a tax on them IT stayed in the cross hairs and IT is what I happen to believe is the first of many services that will be taxed going forward. How does that Kristy affect how you operate your business? How you deal with your customers? And if you know how your customers may deal with their customers given the nature of the work that you do.

Kristy Mumma: Yes. There's our crazy hornets mess we're gonna jump into. So the new 3% sales tax on some specific data and IT services passed by the Maryland State legislature is certainly impactful in a lot of ways. I believe as you do that, this is the first of many business services taxes to come along and IT was just the way that I think the legislature thought it was the most fair. I'm not sure if that's the word, but they saw it as something that almost every business has to have. And so maybe it was seen as less targeted. Now as someone delivering IT services, we certainly feel that it was targeted. And we certainly wouldn't wish this on any of the business services.

Accountants, lawyers, there's many business services. And we see an IT service provider, we see a systems integrator. We see, a software support team, such as we are, we see that as just an important relationship as some of these other business relationships you have. Insurance, accountant, business advisors, you have HR. All of these. And yeah, maybe we feel a little targeted that it came to us first and certainly we're not happy about it. What we have though is an opportunity to have really clear communications with our customers about the fact that one, this is coming .

In technology, IT automation, cybersecurity, a lot of our role is education based. We are having discussions with our customers in areas where they have hired us because they're not experts in them. And so we have an educational piece to a lot of these discussions, and this is similar.

And so the first thing we're gonna have is messaging to our customer base and broader through, our social media channels regarding the fact that this service is coming down the pipe. It does go into effect July 1st, 2025. Talk about budgeting, right? Here's something that wasn't in the budget for anyone, including us, and now it's coming down the pipe.

So as a service provider, we will actually, have a double hit on this because we now have the administrative burden of collecting the tax for the state that we're taxing onto our customers that they don't wanna be paying really. And as a consumer ourselves and a distribution channel type of situation of many IT services and softwares, we will also be paying this service.

I think our firm, like many other in the IT services field are not happy about it. I see it really as something that is not going to help where Maryland wants to go in the state of being, the IT cyber capital, of the world. Because this is now a tax that anyone in the industry will be paying and also dealing with on a consumption side. I hope I hit on that, Linda. I could just talk about this tax all day. You can really tell it gets under my skin a little bit.

Linda Ostovitz: And you know what? You're the first of many people whose skin it will get under because I believe, as sure as I sit here that you know, I'm an attorney. My firm, our services, we're gonna get taxed. There's no question. And like you're saying, maybe you all got nailed first because there's very few people I'm aware of who can do business without needing IT services.

But you did answer my question, so thank you for that. So let me ask you, from a broader scale, you, you've jumped off that cliff and you bought this business and you made it work and hired the staff that you're happy having, and it sounds like you're very pleased with your business partner and so forth.

What does the future of Stewart Technologies look like? What will we see as you continue to share your brand with us?

Kristy Mumma: When I look at where the company has grown, we're now at a staff of 10. We're already looking to add more staff. We'll make another hire before the end of the year. We'll make another hire early in next year. So as we continue that growth, we are looking for managed targeted growth as we own our role as that niche business for companies who have wholesale distribution, manufacturing needs. And for those companies that are in the small to mid-size businesses, mostly in the Mid-Atlantic or with their headquarters on the east coast that they, need that IT superpower.

They know that something isn't right. They know that things aren't as smooth as they could be and they just don't even know maybe where to start. And so that's where our holistic, 10,000 foot view really allows them and their business is to shine. We start off any new relationship by trying to be as humble as we can and learn about their specific business, even if we worked on that industry before, even if we have other customers that are doing things very similar to them.

Just like no network, no IT security structure is exactly the same. No business is exactly the same. And so we try to use sort of our humble, inquisitive nature to become experts in their business, to advise them how they can use automation tools, technology and I'm gonna have to say the word AI, right? To excel at their next level. So we will feel that we are thriving, excelling when we see those exceptional results, for our customers. It's an exciting time, I think, and challenging. You're thinking about tariffs, right?

Because we have many challenges in the business industry right now, and IT just like many industries that we serve is facing tariff pressure. So how can we be lean, efficient, and make sure that our teams are utilizing their zone of genius, because that's gonna be the difference makers in the companies that excel and thrive over the next five, 10 years.

Linda Ostovitz: You have done again, what some people think about doing after they've been in a business. I could do this. I have a different vision. I could make us leaner and meaner. I can have the zone of genius. It maybe doesn't exist under current ownership.

And for those who are listening who may be contemplating a move such as what you and Tara have done that is buying the company for which you have worked, are there any lessons learned that you would share with someone who might be contemplating such a thing?

Kristy Mumma: Yeah. Wow. Wow. As we approach year eight, Linda, I'm thinking so many lessons. Big and small. And I think that maybe I'm gonna go with, two or three kind of key things that I hope can pull them all together here. So I mentioned the word humble before when talking about learning about our customers and making sure that we are as open-minded as possible in hearing what their business challenges are and not thinking ahead of the solution, but really understanding the problem first. And so I would say, be humble whether you're starting a new business or you're taking over a business that has existed. Because, I said before, I feel that everyone really inherently is a good person. I really do.

That's one of my kind of core beliefs in that they wanna excel in the work that they do. Whatever is set up now, whatever's going on now, it was there for a reason. And be humble about the fact that there, there was a reason behind whatever's happening now and maybe when that ownership veil is pulled back, the reasons will be more clear. And you need to be open-minded to the fact that there was good judgment behind whatever those decisions were made before you really had all the information.

And I think another one would probably be you gotta trust your gut. We talked about this in a couple ways before. And mostly related to staffing. Tara and I knew coming into that transition that there might be some friction points. We knew there were gaps. We knew there were areas we might have to upskill, add change, and, we knew that going in. And then it took time for that to be seen to, to be either an accurate reflection or had we misjudged. But a lot of these big things we've had to decide, like I talked about, we moved office space hiring two staff people within a week. That never happened in the company. And we had to take a leap because we were expanding one of the business lines. And you really know in your gut, like your gut tells you, inherently, I think the answer. Maybe you don't know all the details of how the answer's gonna play out, but I think most of us have a gut feeling.

I'd been in this industry at this point taking on ownership role. I'd been in this industry for like 25 years, so I definitely had a lot of experience in the industry. But that doesn't necessarily translate into ownership, but it does translate. And so you have to trust your experiences and go with your gut, especially with hiring customers.

That might sound weird, right? Hiring customers. But when you have a new customer, you are taking on a business relationship just like they are. And so you have to, we think about it as two-way interviewing. We wanna make sure that it's gonna be a really good match before anyone makes that commitment.

And same way with staffing. So you really just from your experiences, I think have a good feeling about how something's gonna play out. On the times when Tara and I questioned our gut, our gut proved us to be, that we should have followed it. And so I would say stay true to your core values, your guiding principles, and trust your gut when you're making those tough decisions because you have to make the decision. Not making a decision is sometimes worse go with your gut and have confidence that it will lead you the right way.

Linda Ostovitz: Great advice.

Thank you so much, Kristy, for your open and honest conversation with us today about, what has transpired, what worked, what didn't work, and obviously you're on a tremendous path as Sterart Technologies for the future. So you know, this podcast is called Real Talk, real Growth, and I believe we've just heard that from you. So thank you for it. Much appreciated.

Kristy Mumma: Oh, Linda, thank you so much for having me. It was really quite, quite a lovely experience to sit and talk with you about the company. From a different angle, from someone asking different questions. So thank you. It was really a joy to be here with you today.

Linda Ostovitz: It was my pleasure, and again, not everybody's got the guts to buy their employer out, which is what you've done. I think a lot of people, as we said, think about it, but to actually do it is a whole nother thing. So thank you Kristy, so much. All the best to you and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Kristy and I run in a lot of the same circles in Howard County and support a lot of the same nonprofits and business organizations and so forth. So we'll see you soon, Kristy. Thanks again so much,

Kristy Mumma: Thank you.

Linda Ostovitz: Thank you.