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Oral History Conversation with Deb Martin

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This is an oral history conversation on social enterprise between students in business ethics from the University of San Diego and Ms. Debra Martin, CEO and Executive director of Elder Help of San Diego. Deb before we begin the conversation and just by way of introduction to scholars who will be listening to the recording of this conversation.

Could you give us a brief overview of what Elder Help of San Diego does?

I can, Elder help was founded in 1973.
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00:00:31.420 --> 00:00:33.280
Their primary mission

00:00:33.280 --> 00:00:36.300
is to serve seniors who are living in
their homes and trying to remain in their

00:00:36.790 --> 00:00:38.220
homes by using

00:00:38.240 --> 00:00:43.810
a wide range of social services and volunteers to provide companionship,

00:00:44.070 --> 00:00:48.590
errands, transportation, social services,
access to benefits, and things like that so

00:00:49.460 --> 00:00:52.940
it's evolved over our forty five year
history but that's the mission of it.

00:00:54.520 --> 00:00:59.720
Could you tell us more about your background and what got you into working with Elder help?

00:00:59.820 --> 00:01:04.260
I can and my background is born and raised
in San Diego I was in corporate event

00:01:04.260 --> 00:01:09.090
meeting planning and ran those companies
for many many years I did that for twenty

00:01:09.280 --> 00:01:15.020
five plus years. My parents were older
when they had me so by the time I was ten

00:01:15.030 --> 00:01:18.900
most of them are in their sixty's and older so I grew up around what I consider
cronies and older adults and I got used
to that population and being with them and I got

very comfortable with that and as they
started aging encountering

challenges I got more involved with some
of their troubleshooting, some of their

issues they were having. My mom who was
eighty one and living independently

by herself up in her condo
up in San Marcos had kind of

a stroke of memory loss,

a sudden memory loss and even before that,
caring for her when I saw cable companies

come in and install new boxes and not tell
people how to use them and their T.V.

programs for everything to their day to day
routine and the destruction of that or

when she lost her license at the D.M.V.

And they took her license and she couldn’t
drive home and she was trapped in the DMV

parking lot for three hours so I kept seeing
all of these distractions in this lack

of awareness and care for the aging population
and then and she was hospitalized

expectedly and then we had to discharge her and then
we had to figure out if we could get her

home or not and it became so

traumatic and emotional and difficult that
I decided that was something I was going
to really invest my future time in.
So I semi retired from the corporate road and

created

a business plan and to start my own for
profit it home company that would focus on
home modifications, security checks, wellness checks, using technology, geared towards

adult children and by accident and coincidence
I found out Elder Help. They were a non
profit doing

a lot of the same work and they hired me because I had my own business at the time

they hired me as a consultant to come in and help their financials and their staffing

and their attrition and some other things and then through that I became the accidental executive director of Elder Help and They were a client of mine for about eight months while they did an executive director search they had a separation with the prior executive director and at the end of that they asked me if I would stay on permanently and I accepted. I haven’t looked to go back to full time work because I was still raising our son but I was passionate about the mission about the work.

The team needed leadership, which started a lot of new really good new work and I wanted
to continue see it coming to fruition so

00:03:30.440 --> 00:03:32.120

I stayed with it and I've
been there about five and

00:03:32.130 --> 00:03:42.770

a half years now. So I noticed on Elder help's page that you have a law degree, so how does your law
degree come in to play with what your doing for Elder Help?

00:03:42.780 --> 00:03:44.360

Well I had an undergraduate, I had

00:03:44.370 --> 00:03:48.920

a business admin degree with an emphasis
in law and as part of that undergrad

00:03:48.930 --> 00:03:53.500

emphasis I did take the first six
months of law school. It helped

00:03:53.510 --> 00:03:57.660

a lot in the corporate role because I was
running companies and acting as a C.E.O.

00:03:57.660 --> 00:04:04.430

so I was responsible for contracting and agreements between us and our clients

00:04:04.440 --> 00:04:09.180

and local hotels that created policies
and procedures and structure and H.R.

00:04:09.190 --> 00:04:10.560

And everything that goes into running

00:04:10.570 --> 00:04:16.450

a company so obviously my skills around
that were very useful and the non profit side,
not as much for still anytime you’re running a company, any just

experience I think studying law in business just gives you good best practices

you know hopefully. And skill sets that you’ll use across the spectrum of running

any kind of business.

So working for a non profit, what are some of the challenges that you faced in the corporate world?

I think that some of the differences are in the corporate world especially as

a C.E.O,

most of our clients from are interested in our salespeople in the relationship

builders so I could be

a little bit more behind the scenes I was there creating the infrastructure, making sure the tools were available to the frontline in the staff and the sales but the

clients wanted relationships with the
the salespeople, they didn’t need
to physically see me to know that the

company was running well or that we were
taking care of their proposals properly or

executing their programs on the
not profit side, they want to see me, they

want to you know who’s representing the
agency, what is their are their ethics, their

integrity, how is the money
being invested what is

their philosophy, so that's one thing is
they physically want to see me

a lot more and have

a relationship with me and then of course
the fundraising piece, is nonstop and it's

all the time and again a huge
amount of that falls to the C.E.O.

we do have

a director of philanthropy who is amazing, she's from here actually she worked at USD for
thirty something years in the paralegal oversee the college graduate program

I believe but. She's fabulous and she helps offset and carry the load
tremendously but they still want to see who's leading the agency and what do they represent and then the third thing I just really say is that getting funders and the industry at large to understand financial surround nonprofits the financials are done differently you do a budget without a real profit margin and time so if they don't want to really see you make too much money but you can't there's too much money either so you have to have a serious you know a narrow window for targeting your financials in so I think about you know we're
about one point four million dollars agency riches almost pure profit group

probably about a six seven million dollar small business if you look at us like

a thirty percent profit margin or something like that so that’s another thing too

is you got to find that sweet spot right there where you’re not making too much

money but they’re not losing too much money and the funders have

a hard time especially in Human Services real back and I think the overhead is

people you know they often say we don’t want to see your overhead MORE THAN THIS

percent of your total expenses or really want to see your program expenses to be

less than eighty percent of your law is different for every nonprofit depending on

what their mission is and what they did there were some that would be the probably
the three key takeaways that I would pinpoint so there is little difference as.

Long. As. There’s now I didn’t it

wasn’t hard for me and actually ever to my manager of

to go into other help first as

a consultant before I became executive director for

a couple reasons is as I’m someone as they had hired me they were quite

a mime I also wasn’t. I could’ve said this so executive directors in the nonprofit

run with the board the board is the boss and so they have this weird dance between

running the company and being responsible for day to day and vision and strategy

somewhat but then you have the board which oversees that and manages the well that

can be a difficult relationship that isn’t
a very different thing for me to have I would choose to be in charge economy shots

and I don't think much about

a board or going to them to get permission or things like that and coming in as

a consultant I was my pa the board but I didn't really care so much what they

thought what they needed because I was there at his home what was working what

wasn't working I didn't need to be mindful of their feelings or their relationships

or any of that so I came in to say this is ready this is it ripping you guys have

dropped the ball you need more accountability you need work checks and balances and

they could just take it because that's where they repay me for and I'll send my

shift over to the executive director and they're my boss and I've gotten used to
having a dialogue with them in

a certain way and now I need
to be either bit more or less

a respectful but I need to be

a bit more diplomatic and incorporate
them into the decision making in

a way that was fairly different than when
I did it as it is in the corporate run so

for me my skills are very transferable
obviously the biggest learning curve in

Human Services for us understand it restricted
and restricted grants and how to do

the financials and. You know
our government contracts and

compliance with Federal Fair Housing
Monson all of these things I mean I knew

nothing so I had to just
get in there and do

a rapid nosebleed assent on learning
everything there was not just about running

00:09:18.860 --> 00:09:23.880
a nonprofit contracted financing and then
Egypt and everything that was an agent

00:09:23.890 --> 00:09:28.450
space and who are the players in that
respect to be doing so there is definitely

00:09:28.460 --> 00:09:32.430
a lot of there and there but this goes
for actually for the transferable and I

00:09:32.440 --> 00:09:36.510
think you see a lot of for
profit upper management X.X.

00:09:36.520 --> 00:09:39.470
Moving into the nonprofit space
as they get out of their careers

00:09:39.690 --> 00:09:46.260
a little bit. Oh so it’s. Just
like one of the this is her

00:09:46.270 --> 00:09:52.620
Tiger and like what. I just

00:09:54.160 --> 00:10:00.110
read. Up in this one here jump on
there they’re under it’s burning

00:10:00.600 --> 00:10:07.540
a lot more. I think kind of your
comment that. Heaven help you

00:10:07.550 --> 00:10:12.600
out I think if I understand what you’re
saying is just I mean we actually don’t see
a lot of people retiring in San Diego unless they live here because of how expensive it is and because housing is terrible but of the richest and then in the United States. And so and the kind with you do a lot with isolated seniors who don't have any family or they don't have anything on the really to advocate or be a part of their life in a decision making role at all so and the statement around aging is that I think especially in Southern Californians we just don't want to deal with and then I mean we’re in the land of Hollywood in Bostock’s and we don’t want to think about it in Toronto half of it's very invisible it's not like come assess down in San Diego streets downtown which I used to rip down
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14 March 2018

00:10:57.620 --> 00:11:02.070
a lot it's very visible you see it it's a
blight it's in the business area it's in

00:11:02.080 --> 00:11:06.140
a tourist area and everyone is coming
together we put millions and millions

00:11:06.180 --> 00:11:10.670
of dollars Toto in this nest and the numbers
are getting worse our population is

00:11:10.680 --> 00:11:15.700
super invisible and they often times
loss life and they're not socialized

00:11:15.740 --> 00:11:18.410
and that's a huge problem you
know the isolation the it's

00:11:18.420 --> 00:11:22.330
a chronic disease and hospitalizations
and training their savings and their

00:11:22.340 --> 00:11:27.100
resources so there's that piece of it for
sure and then I feel that there's no good

00:11:27.110 --> 00:11:31.500
way to get people to understand
the impact of aging until it's

00:11:31.510 --> 00:11:36.810
a condom so we have funders who are
really good in health and maleness and

00:11:36.820 --> 00:11:40.370
understand what we do and they've given
us hundreds of thousands of dollars but
until their parents started being discharged from hospitals or going in the school.

of nursing or getting back home you could tell about this from the light bulb went on and all of a collision a patent you know I need to figure out a placement for my mom I need Scott nurse and I need someone to come in my mom’s house once a week and each lost her license until that happens they don’t like doesn’t go on and so there’s not a way or we haven’t found a. To get people to kind of role play that early enough so they realize what it is because Must the time they come to us are panicked and it’s too late and I’m out of work says bill because it’s preventing you know we’re trying to get in their homes.
early we're trying to prevent falls for prevent hospitalizations we're trying to
give them

a say affordable way to stay. Efficiently and people don't think about that so

that's a huge obstacle to representing a population I don't know whether

this answer your question. So just building off that so I don't it's my family and

people that are around my elderly that suppose to intend to help their own

grandpa friends it's never want to do anything for him and I saw you there I was doing so I
don't know if you experience that Elderhelp

try to help me help it's OK now I want to help you that's

a good point what we really try to do is foster independence so the key thing is
that this population wants to stay in control
they're totally capable they want to

00:13:08.050 --> 00:13:10.500
maintain their independence
and it's kind of

00:13:10.510 --> 00:13:14.690
a mess that they're looking for dependency
or handouts or support most of them

00:13:14.700 --> 00:13:16.130
don't want that they just need

00:13:16.140 --> 00:13:21.130
a little bit of help to do that and so
what I think is just making sure they

00:13:21.140 --> 00:13:24.940
understand they're being independent means
availing yourself of certain resources

00:13:24.950 --> 00:13:29.100
if you can't get it done the other thing
that helps with the other help is that

00:13:29.110 --> 00:13:31.040
we're not a family
member because they have

00:13:31.050 --> 00:13:33.890
a natural resistance to have
an average station with

00:13:33.900 --> 00:13:37.740
a family member so we can have the
conversation or facilitate it or be

00:13:37.750 --> 00:13:42.640
a proto that we can help identify what
are the supports in the family that they

00:13:42.650 --> 00:13:48.550
have been in their inner circle and maybe
help them figure out how best to use that

00:13:48.740 --> 00:13:52.580
and often times it's not
complicated sad I like to tell

00:13:52.590 --> 00:13:56.330
a story about this one John a man
who was disabled about it he was

00:13:56.340 --> 00:14:01.890
independent and alone that I’m doing great but he
had crutches and he could not physically

00:14:01.900 --> 00:14:02.320
anti his

00:14:02.340 --> 00:14:07.490
Trash that was all he just. Get it down the
stairs into the back trash can then you

00:14:07.490 --> 00:14:12.240
can get the trash can out to the curb
some months went by this trash

00:14:12.280 --> 00:14:17.160
I asked him in his apartment and of course you
can imagine that that affected his prior

00:14:17.170 --> 00:14:21.500
to self esteem he didn't go out of the house
he did invite people over hygiene and

00:14:21.510 --> 00:14:25.980
other things and fortunately some of referred
him to us and we immediately sent our
staff over and they emptied out themselves like eight bags they just kept taking things out to the trash and now we send somebody over once a week just to take out the trash so this isn’t expensive it is not complicated but it missed one eighty between is he going to be hospitalized I have chronic disease and have serious serious health issues or just find someone can take out the trash so what we do can be that simple and it can have an astronomical health and wellness impact on their ability to stay independent and there are common to be fine they don’t have any issues with asking for what they need or what they do so no where to go get it so I don’t know that helps either but definitely using us to help facilitate those conversations
this is huge.

We have a lot so we have five hundred volunteers and they range from nineteen to about ninety three and if they are amazing on average most of our volunteers to work to have children of their own they still find time to donate time every month to spend time with our clients and then we have our own retirees of course you do the same and last year for example we provide transportation to that our volunteer driver program or volunteers did about eight thousand writes I’m just found in tears and the volunteers in general. Donated almost twelve thousand hours of time which is the equivalent of five and a half years of time compressed into one year of service which I think is an amazing selfless thing that they did and
I mean Elderhelp does not exist without

00:16:09.680 --> 00:16:14.220
the volunteers and that’s true for most
nonprofit so we do have millennial and when

00:16:14.220 --> 00:16:18.080
they come in we make sure
everyone understands what the expectations

00:16:18.090 --> 00:16:23.390
are what the orientations going to be like
how to understand the Gerontology proud

00:16:23.400 --> 00:16:27.890
of it and working with seniors in the time
commitment and not in their hours and

00:16:27.900 --> 00:16:31.040
their time so we can
document that I mean it’s

00:16:31.050 --> 00:16:34.800
a huge amount but definitely we see more
college students and we’re just immediate

00:16:34.810 --> 00:16:41.080
post grad students come to offer
service so it seems like it is.

00:16:55.870 --> 00:16:59.670
a full time outreach manager and all
she does is pave the Pam pavement for

00:16:59.680 --> 00:17:01.960
volunteers and we fly or

00:17:01.970 --> 00:17:06.420
a lot of Starbucks let me tell you and if
they are social media that’s still our
best recruitment tour believe it or not and she attends every health fair or she goes to

every community civic event the lions the Elks the rotaries you name it. And of course we have to try to have an active social media platform and most of the time if we can just explain to the member doing we can get a lot of interests and me use our existing volunteers as word of mouth as well because every one of them will say that they get more back then they gave and if you can just get someone to prioritize a time and be a part of our program they feel it's dividends back to them more so than anything that they're doing so it's really word of mouth a lot of it and they're firing and being showing up at every possible thing we can
and just using our existing relatives to keep spreading the word.

holes which. Has the age difference between a volunteer and a client post

a challenge no not that I'm aware or. It's.

Been phenomenal I mean that's the cross neuron and mentoring they each get from

each other I mean we have so many stories where the senior learn how to use

a computer or go to a you know

a Pinera they never been there you know who knows what it is and the younger

especially younger twenty something thirty something or learning about history

education artifacts are things that might be in their home stories about there are

three Germany stories about you know them the Middle East to come to America to
have

a safe harbor for their family and so like I said the mutual benefit is

we've not on rare occasion you may find a senior that they use maybe some of the younger is not quite as respectful as they would like maybe a little bit too casual or slimy or something like that but we've never had it but it's recently to my knowledge to point where they've asked to be replaced or have that person changed they recognize that they're donating their time and we have pretty strict policies about for both the client and the volunteers these are our values these are our expectations this is how we engage with each other and we expect them to follow that if they have
a hard time following and that may be one of the few reasons we would ask them to leave our service.

I have done the driving in me also there is a simple resident occupancy hotel downtown that we provide social services twenty hours a week and this is a contract with the city were housing commission and there’s about one hundred thirty units and the residents there are fifty five sixty plus and a lot of them are borderline homeless very low income some behavior how alcohol drug you know drug usage it’s a little bit different from our usual client I can tell and so we provide social services there it’s funny our it’s
a man rate and it’s been phenomenal as far as getting them to come together as a community access their benefits be more respectful of property management and their space and I go down there and I command that a few times and touch some computer classes and you know we all try to do a little bit I think it’s important for me to be in the field and do that I can’t do it as much as I like but I love I tend Oliver we have workshops at our office we do computer classes we do fix at home improvement classes and I usually pick up a drive seniors to and from that and attend the classes so now. My goodness that’s a very good question you might not have enough tape for me to think about. I don’t know
I always think it’s interesting maybe not for me but I just love watching when we have our workshops and things I just love watching the volunteers with their heads bent over the seniors and everyone kind of had to gather around that I mean give the technology workshop seen them try to teach them how to use their phones you know the apps on the phone and understand all that it was just touched my heart to see everyone kind of and then just I’ll set my car and I’ll see this young man helping this older woman with her walker get into the office and how kind and caring they are to each other that stuff gets me every time so it’s really just the humanity and the compassion of it is amazing, and I haven’t had any crazy stories but every time I ride in
a car with a senior I hear it and I learn
something new a new story.

00:22:03.180 --> 00:22:05.790
I rode with a woman a few months back that she was

00:22:05.800 --> 00:22:10.640
a huge activists you know in the Washington
marching and of course they are all

00:22:11.590 --> 00:22:15.500
Quite unsure about why they're still
marching but you know telling all the stories

00:22:15.500 --> 00:22:20.320
about their activism and their rights
to get the vote out and all of that so I

00:22:20.320 --> 00:22:26.700
never tire of hearing the legacy and I
think that we need to put it more respect

00:22:27.120 --> 00:22:31.830
and one thing I often say when I’m speaking
about what we do is that

00:22:31.830 --> 00:22:33.540
what Elder Help does is so important

00:22:33.540 --> 00:22:37.100
and I think everyone should respect and care for and mind our elders,

00:22:37.100 --> 00:22:44.230
I think as a community we're only as healthy and
together as our ability to take care

00:22:44.430 --> 00:22:49.470
of the under-served or the invisible
and our others and I think we have
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00:22:49.480 --> 00:22:52.650
a duty and I was say it's not just a
human dignity thing that I think it's

00:22:52.660 --> 00:22:56.040
a human decency thing.

00:22:56.040 --> 00:23:01.880
Going off of that, I come from a more community-wide culture, and

00:23:01.880 --> 00:23:04.500
in the past few years I have seen my mom having to go around

00:23:04.500 --> 00:23:08.780
taking care of all of the different elderly people around in my family

00:23:08.780 --> 00:23:11.490
With that different mentality that we have here,

00:23:11.490 --> 00:23:13.750
what is something that we can improve upon to become more caring

00:23:13.750 --> 00:23:17.290
and become more accepting of these elders that we have around us

00:23:17.290 --> 00:23:19.700
and to maybe git rid of the stigma

00:23:19.700 --> 00:23:22.680
and try and help them out more

00:23:22.680 --> 00:23:27.150
and help people become more open towards helping them?

00:23:27.150 --> 00:23:30.250
Especially in collectivist cultures, my family is Indian,

00:23:30.250 --> 00:23:33.020
and they don't like asking other people for help
but even if you help them, they'll be like, "go away, stop!"

It's interesting you bring up culture because we definitely see a difference in culture in approaching aging.

I mean, I think generally speaking,

most other countries and ethnic groups are better about caring for aging

I think maybe their family size, their sense of duty and responsibility is more ingrained.

Our overall population is not super diverse,

it is a large Caucasian population

and it is mostly women, average age 80.

A lot of them widowed

and so, I think there is definitely a culture issue there for sure,

and I also think that within the communities, even within San Diego, there are pockets of communities,
like the Somalian community,

they do take good care of themselves within their community.

The Indian community, they may not ask or want it, but within they’re a little bit better,

about taking care,

but I think what I always say when I'm out speaking and on panels

is that I ask everyone in the audience to just take a look around their neighborhood

or their apartment building,

and just be more mindful, so the first thing is to be more aware

are there people around you living alone? At any age?

They need to have a companion.

These recent fires up in Napa and Sonoma were huge right, because

the largest loss of life was 75 plus,

and most of them just didn't have anyone to help them evacuate,

which is tragic.
We talk a lot about what happens in San Diego when we have these evacuation orders and someone is living alone and they can’t drive, I mean it is a terrible thought.

So, be just mindful of paying attention to your community, who’s in it.

Do you see someone struggling to get the trash can out? Every morning, I walk every morning, a couple of miles, and I’m constantly running into people doing things that they probably shouldn’t be because of their age.

I have to be very careful, do you need help with that?

Because you don’t want to be demeaning or send a message they are not capable.

But I just say, I’d like to give you a hand with that, or you find ways to do it that doesn’t feel like you are taking anything away from them but you know there’s not
a lot of answers other than I'm the legislative government advocacy side there's

a lot we can be doing to bring more light in and awareness and illustration than an

individual side is just being mindful. I was at the airport

a few months ago coming back from Chicago, and late at night it was really cold and

there was a woman in

a wheelchair, easily seventy plus sitting by herself out front. Hundreds of people walked by her she was out there promised an hour and that one person stopped,

so I watched her for a little while then I went over and just said you know do you have

a ride coming and are you warm enough? And she said yes I do and I am, and she
stops me thank you so much for asking and
I talked I told the story on another show

because I was so, she was so shocked that I
just stopped and asked her and again it

took nothing you know thirty
seconds over there do you have

a ride, are you OK? Thirty seconds back,
so it's around us all the time.

It's somebody in line at the you
know the seven eleven and someone in

a park you know having

a hard time finding their car or their
keys or it doesn't have to be complicated.

That's awesome!

I guess one of my other questions was going to be, you kind of answered it a little bit, but

how can people that maybe don't have as much time, or financial resources, maybe like some of us,
can get more involved,

and I think you kind of already elaborated on it, but doing your best to look after the community.
I guess it is more difficult for us here,

we are not around as much, probably where we are living and on campus

but if there are any other ideas you might have on how people like us

could get more involved and help out?

Well I think that. For

Elder Help once you become

a volunteer you can do as much or as little as you want. We ask for your

commitment just to create

a relationship with the time that we spent in training and oversight that you're invested, but it can be as little as a couple of hours

a month and it can be something specific to an interest or thing that you like

maybe you like organizing bills and paperwork
and that’s all you want to do maybe you

00:27:35.510 --> 00:27:38.330
just want to drive people but you don’t want
to spend time with them in their home

00:27:38.340 --> 00:27:40.020
visiting and we have

00:27:40.030 --> 00:27:43.550
a lot of people that you just want to
visit being home but what we try to do is

00:27:43.560 --> 00:27:46.960
match your interest with the interest of
the seniors so we have people that say

00:27:46.970 --> 00:27:51.270
look I want to learn Indian cooking and
you know they’ve they’ve been paired up

00:27:51.280 --> 00:27:54.880
with volunteers and fount out I love to
cook Indian food you know that’s practice and do

00:27:54.890 --> 00:28:00.420
stuff together so they start creating
their own things that they enjoy doing

00:28:00.430 --> 00:28:00.920
together and

00:28:00.930 --> 00:28:04.750
a lot of our volunteers start bringing
them into their family going with them to

00:28:04.760 --> 00:28:09.580
church, having them over for their holiday
dinners. It’s different for everyone, but
it can be tailored to your schedule or
to your likes and your interests so

that it doesn’t you know it can be you
just maybe taking your homework over to

somebody’s house and sitting
with them while they needle

point and they just want companionship
or someone to talk to or walk the dog or

whatever it is.

I’m going to back track a lot right now.

To when you started your own business,

what were some of the more interesting memories you had or

the difficulties you went through, when you started your own business independent of Elder Help?

I did before Elder Help so I had
been in the corporate world and event

meeting planning like I said for over twenty
five years I started my own consulting
business called the Deb Martin Group, 
and it was to handle

00:28:55.800 --> 00:28:59.460 
a lot of event meeting planning clients 
that I had had relationships with and also

00:28:59.470 --> 00:29:03.350 
any business you know if they needed help 
with budgeting your or running it or

00:29:03.360 --> 00:29:07.650 
selling it or mergers or anything 
to do with the operating of

00:29:07.660 --> 00:29:13.580 
a business and of course the challenge is 
and I was caring for our son primarily at

00:29:13.590 --> 00:29:17.810 
the time to so the advantages was the flexibility 
of it but that can always be the

00:29:17.820 --> 00:29:23.110 
disadvantage, some people are made to work at home and some people are not and then

00:29:23.210 --> 00:29:26.790 
you kind of have to start taking work that 
you might not take if you didn’t have to

00:29:27.170 --> 00:29:31.490 
so you don’t quite have the luxury of cherry 
picking if you’re more concerned with

00:29:32.010 --> 00:29:32.490 
making

00:29:32.560 --> 00:29:36.320 
a certain amount of money to cover your 
bills and all that so I just got smarter
with it. It's healthy when you don't have to have the business that for the

projects and the clients I really didn't want to work with I just charge them

a lot more and then if they still wanted to hire me I would say well the the worst

thing I can say the best thing is that they're still paying the bills and then the

other clients for fine, but again it wasn't

a difficult transition for me and I liked the flexibility of it and I liked being

able to be there for my son when he was he's

a little special needs so we had to make some accommodations for him so I liked

being available to do that and evolved on its own.

I'm interested, I want to work for a non-profit in the future.
But with my family's background of how are you going to pay the bills,

00:30:22.782 --> 00:30:24.610
so how was that transition?

00:30:24.610 --> 00:30:30.580
Did you think it was better that you had your own business at first and then moving into the non-profit sector?

00:30:30.580 --> 00:30:33.960
Or did blessings just happen and then you ended up?

00:30:33.960 --> 00:30:35.350
That's a good question.

00:30:35.350 --> 00:30:38.700
I was fortunate enough
to be fairly successful in my corporate roles

00:30:38.880 --> 00:30:39.740
so from

00:30:39.750 --> 00:30:45.010
a financial standpoint I had done my savings, I own my house I had some retirement

00:30:45.330 --> 00:30:48.090
so I could probably afford
to take a little bit of

00:30:48.100 --> 00:30:51.710
a pay cut to go into the nonprofit to
work for my self. First of all, which was only

00:30:51.720 --> 00:30:55.270
supposed to be until my son graduated from
high school and then I could afford to

00:30:55.270 --> 00:30:56.020
take
a salary cut somewhat in the nonprofit space, so there's definitely financial considerations.

for sure. People who do it, it has to be your heart and they're certainly and an ascension you know.

a way that you can ascend into higher paying positions and running the company.

But if you're looking for that doctor, attorney kind of money that's never going to happen in that way. Although, there are some C.E.O.'s make a lot of money but I will tell you for me personally I negotiated a lower salary and I had them freeze it for the first three years because I wanted the financial freedom to hire people to pay them what they deserve for what I wanted to do to get increases to people I was it doubling up on their
responsibility as I slowly created the team and the leadership and I didn't feel right having my name and my payroll with that big chunk of money by there.

if were only making nine hundred thousand and I'm making ninety thousand you know already it's like almost ten percent a budget so I had a hard time with that and that was my choice I had them freeze it and I focused on hiring new people and paying them more money and getting the team in place so I had a leadership team finally the board forced me to take an increase and I accepted it only because it looked bad on the 990.

That my salary wasn't moving and it didn't look good the funders to say well that's not really about a confidence in their C.E.O.

That their salary isn't moving and they
would come in and say why isn't her salary
moving so do the good of the agency I had
to take an increase but ya I
you know you certainly want to make
good money. You want to pay the bills and all
that I think it's easier being older and
longer in my career to be able to make
some sacrifices now where
I probably would have had
a harder time in my twenty's and thirty's
Well yes and no you know if I didn't
have
a family in my bonus weren't as big it's
probably would be perfectly fine the hospitality
industry isn't extremely high paying either
and I ran multiple offices and we had
sixty full time staff and about five hundred
part time and it was not the highest
paying so what I was able to give them as
the environment control flexibility time
to take care of their kids if you work late come in late. You know things like that

and great benefits so found other ways trying to create their work life experience

that wasn’t just about a paycheck and in elder help I pay one hundred percent of their benefits because

it’s. The full reimbursement from mileage which

a lot of non-profits do the charity reimbursement rate we pay the full reimbursement rate.

So there’s things like that we have a match for a 401K so these are things that dollar for dollar are more affordable to give to

employee than just

a dollar for dollar increase in their salary because that’s more expensive for us to do

I don’t know if that answers your question
but you know when you're younger and your expenses are lower the salaries aren't that bad compared to other industries but certainly if you know. Big money.

Working from home were you able to build relationships with other non-profit organizations before you got to Elders Help.

Or is the non-profit completely different from your personal business. It was very different I mean I have sat on boards in volunteered and or worked non-profits like the deaf and heart of hearing camp and the children's center for hearing and talking up in Ensenada and others from way back a back but not to the point where they offered me any education or integration or any way that I can incorporate it into the work I was doing with elder help in fact that was my professional relationships that became more
necessary like we were evicted from our building and had seven days to find space

00:34:49.469 --> 00:34:54.510
knew and the office building brokers and things like that so now there wasn't

00:34:54.520 --> 00:35:00.970
a lot of overlap there are almost two entirely different minds two entirely different bubbles.

00:35:00.980 --> 00:35:07.590
So would you say that where you are in life right now is your true calling or are you progressing into that

00:35:08.830 --> 00:35:12.930
I think its my true calling I mean I'm passionate about aging in senior and

00:35:12.940 --> 00:35:16.540
really people who are going to be in it for long time. We need younger people coming

00:35:16.550 --> 00:35:21.510
in and caring forth the mantle the legacy and I have some board members and

00:35:21.520 --> 00:35:27.230
colleagues who want me to go into politics and it scares me and but they think

00:35:27.240 --> 00:35:31.720
that we can make greater thing around these policies and aging if there's more

00:35:31.730 --> 00:35:37.070
people doing the political side of it so I don't now but sometimes you feeling like you can
do more here behind the scenes kind of tipping
the windmills where no one can see you versus

be out there for everyone to see even. So I don't know but now it's my passion I hope to

always be

a involved in aging and somehow I've never
said I absolutely will if something else

comes along but I can't imagine that
doing anything else. Do you imagine yourself

being in the political light since that disposition

Do I let myself? Could you let yourself, or manage yourself

Well I if the positions some
what political you know I work

a lot of legislators and I share

a group called the San Diego Senior Alliance
which is around eighteen nonprofits and

some for profits that meet every other month
and about aging and we were really big
on advocacy legislation awareness and all the legislative aids from all the local

congressmen and women and political offices come to that meeting and we do

data about what bills are coming what bills do we need to pass what's happening

with the Older Americans Act what's happening with the cal freshman reimbursement Section

eight housing so we're very involved and have

a lot of strong connections and relationships locally and state through that so.

As C.E.O.

Of any nonprofit there's going to be

a political advocate piece I don't travel up to San Francisco all the time to do that

kind of advocacy like many do but within the circles of people that I work with

there are people doing that work for us for sure
you can’t get away from that its always there especially the social services budget cuts current

administration taxes and everything that happens at the national level affects our ability to do we’re doing right now were looking at you know human services being cut

by billions of dollars were looking at the tax cuts were reducing the benefit for people who don’t need to ask corporate and individual you know there’s a lot of things out there that are competing with our ability to do it we do and all these things only mean a greater need because population is affected now it’s doubled in need because of all these things are impacting them negatively and the tools we need to do the job are being taken away so it’s
a perfect storm for crisis even
more than the one we have right now.

00:37:56.080 -- 00:38:01.140
Going off of that just talking about legislation is there any bill currently

00:38:02.860 -- 00:38:08.770
That is on you guys radar that is very important for Elder Help if you can inform us.

00:38:12.200 -- 00:38:15.530
If there was one thing you could share with us

00:38:15.540 -- 00:38:18.290
not with great detail. We did a brief thing about a month

00:38:18.300 -- 00:38:21.780
a half ago and I can’t think of anything
specific right now I mean requests for

00:38:21.790 -- 00:38:26.600
looking at avoiding anything to
Social Security Medicare that stuff should

00:38:26.610 -- 00:38:30.860
not be touched I don’t I think Medicare
can be more efficient social security

00:38:30.870 -- 00:38:36.340
that’s just should not be touched. You
know the taxes already been pass so right now

00:38:36.350 -- 00:38:38.040
we’re having a hard time
with that we’re having

00:38:38.050 -- 00:38:41.670
a hard time with the housing money that’s
been taken away but it’s coming in

00:38:41.680 -- 00:38:45.600
through some other places so it's hard
to see what's going on but there's not

00:38:45.610 --> 00:38:50.850
a specific bill right now that comes to
mind I could research and get back to I

00:38:50.860 --> 00:38:55.250
think I should I probably should know more
than I do but that's what I got I always

00:38:55.290 --> 00:39:01.870
get for it sometimes it's
just too hard to pay attention to politics

00:39:01.880 --> 00:39:05.470
were not funded government wise for the most part we do
have some hug money that comes through

00:39:05.480 --> 00:39:09.900
community development block grants mostly
around our housing and our shared housing

00:39:09.910 --> 00:39:10.640
program which is

00:39:10.650 --> 00:39:15.240
a roommate matching program but we only
have about thirty percent government

00:39:15.280 --> 00:39:20.570
funding. And so we're not impacted as
much as some non-profits have fifty sixty

00:39:20.580 --> 00:39:24.610
eighty percent of their funding
government and so it's a pro

00:39:24.620 --> 00:39:28.070
a con on one hand it's nice to know you
have that steady income month after month

and the other hand it can go away like that and it's

a good chunk of your budget and then you
don't have anything to replace it so

we like the ratio that we have
the diversity of it only having thirty

percent but we want to keep that
we don't want to drop. So you've

mentioned some financial and political obstacles that you guys have facing at Elder's Help

With this change of demographics within American population with baby boomers going into
retirement,

with less people getting born nowadays

What challenges do you feel like would affect the help our elders

at a point where we don't have enough people to be helping all this people that are aging

or are there other types of challenges that you guys would see in the future

We're seeing it now and to your point your right.
It's the fastest growing population out there by far and they say ten thousand people a day in the United States turn sixty five.

As of three years ago it was due to double by 2020 and so it is the fastest growing population I often times say that with this population I get people who don't want to fund us because they want to fund children or people getting started in their life which is great but they said you know they had their chance the seniors had their chance they were taken care provided they had their trip wherever they are now is it at their circumstance of choice and I say that that's not accurate because what's
happening is this perfect storm of living

00:41:19.260 --> 00:41:23.610
longer than they planned. There would be times in the Social Security system you know wasn't

00:41:23.620 --> 00:41:28.740
equipped no one understood or plan for that at that time. Now we've had enough years

00:41:28.750 --> 00:41:31.000
for people of starting know that they live longer and plan

00:41:31.010 --> 00:41:35.330
a little bit better but right now we're in that place where they're living longer and

00:41:35.340 --> 00:41:37.380
they weren't able to provide a plan for it so that's

00:41:37.390 --> 00:41:42.090
the first one then you know the health care has become so expensive so they have an

00:41:42.100 --> 00:41:46.450
unplanned medical event all the sudden it becomes catastrophic to their financial picture. Or their ability to get out and then there's the other thing

00:41:50.610 --> 00:41:52.080
that happens for a lot of them I said

00:41:52.090 --> 00:41:57.740
are widowed so they no longer have the benefits or earn anything around that and they may
have drained their savings providing care for their spouse or loved one and all the

sudden they're not only widowed but they've lost income and they've lost their retirement savings this could happen to anyone of any affluence any geographical location and they didn't make poor decisions or do anything randy or careless it's just all these things coming together so living longer having an explosive population having less people to care for them is a crisis in the making and for the caregivers themselves for those who do have caregivers who are seeing them leave the work force right so that's affecting your earning potential your retirement we're seeing stress and health issues for those caregivers. That affects our workforce it affects the productivity of our American
corporations and their output so it's

a domino all the way so the reason Elder Help works is we're prevented So

hopefully we're getting in there to find a way to prevent

a lot of these things from happening we're trying to prevent caregiver burnout

we're trying to prevent the expense of caring for

a senior and we have an employee family caregiver program where we go into local

corporations and we counsel and train and educate working caregivers you know family

caregivers who work full time but also caring for an aging love one so that they
don't burn out and their promotions they're not passed over for promotion or raises

and then that just dominoes all the way through their earning career receive
a huge need to take care of the caregiver too because that's the next epidemic

after you been happy

a nation. You're supposed to. Just as most capable. For you know he will lend to.

People so. There's a shift the ones leaving these households entering the plural how how does that affect maybe the perceived security here for them people that the cotton pickers people. And how how do we run some school area. To caregivers in the workplace sorry asking about a male and female the difference if you are feeling. Somehow that you have.

Lost the use of the piece of woman care for Carrie because every man Mark.
Curry corporate career is so how that. Shift with other people have to come in and take your place take your place however I hope that creating a child list of people or even if you come. I think I understand your question and to chip parts to it one bit yes right now the majority of caregivers are female just their dress that really are part although you are seeing a huge influx of milk every caregivers and fact I don't know the last number I should have I say forty to forty two percent of caregivers for now showing up as male and every year I go to the American. Society of aging conference and the last time I was there they had a huge number of break outs I'm dealing specifically with male caregivers and the
impacts of that and how that affects earning potential and things like that but in

00:45:17.540 --> 00:45:22.300
the Rep force you’re just seeing that millions of dollars in lost productivity are

00:45:22.310 --> 00:45:28.300
happening from I said people taking leave the absence retiring early and stressing

00:45:28.310 --> 00:45:32.730
health leaves all of that is affecting you know Rush domestic product affecting

00:45:33.120 --> 00:45:38.480
bottom line. And you’re seeing more people leave the workforce experience qualified

00:45:38.490 --> 00:45:42.240
people and then you’re trying to replace him with new incoming reports that don’t

00:45:42.250 --> 00:45:46.720
have that skill set so our corporations and in

00:45:46.730 --> 00:45:52.720
a larger thing are like I said our overall economic health is very much affected by

00:45:52.830 --> 00:45:58.910
that turnover and transition I’m not sure I’m answering your question. Sure

00:45:59.660 --> 00:46:00.090
OK.

00:46:09.210 --> 00:46:09.700
Was.
I know just in my entire career.

Wow. The end of the TAFE.

You know I am I’m going to have a really hard time answering that because I’m a big believer that everything happens the way it should and it really all evolves especially the challenges and the hardships and I have had more than my share.

Especially with my hearing loss and you know I was running companies early on in the other ship positions and I was told that I couldn’t do the job because of my hearing loss and I had to make a lot of accommodations and get a lot of people to help me and. You know it’s there’s been some tough separations from prior preparations I worked for after I’d
been there a long time and created

00:47:09.050 --&gt; 00:47:11.620
a lot of body of work that I was really proud of and created

00:47:11.630 --&gt; 00:47:18.470
a team that I really admired.
The corporate road tax and you

00:47:18.480 --&gt; 00:47:24.070
have to. Not take things personally really just kind of stay true to your integrity

00:47:24.080 --&gt; 00:47:29.380
your reputation be especially if you are good at what you do and you have staff

00:47:29.390 --&gt; 00:47:33.400
that follow you people want to take you down when you leave because they don’t want

00:47:33.410 --&gt; 00:47:37.460
the staff to bow in you and they need to bring in the new leadership and so the big

00:47:37.470 --&gt; 00:47:42.040
thing I had to do is just trust my reputation and my integrity and make sure that

00:47:42.050 --&gt; 00:47:46.590
when the dust settled the everything that I had always been all the ways I conducted my business with stay true and that people would follow that and I’m

00:47:46.600 --&gt; 00:47:51.790
a big believer in The Four Agreements I use
those cards and every staff meeting at

00:47:57.140 --> 00:48:01.530
other how I used them before in my corporate
life when I felt we needed complete

00:48:01.540 --> 00:48:06.840
culture shift that need to be around
integrity and accountability and focusing on

00:48:06.850 --> 00:48:11.520
work and not on people and they
gossip and stuff and they became

00:48:11.530 --> 00:48:15.830
a huge parent ever culture shift in my
corporate role and now I use them in the

00:48:15.870 --> 00:48:20.930
nonprofit world because. We can only
have so many people today there's

00:48:20.940 --> 00:48:25.410
a lot of people we can't have and it can
really rare on the staff and the softer

00:48:25.420 --> 00:48:30.060
records by train and so we make sure that
they just keep focusing on what they can

00:48:30.070 --> 00:48:34.450
do and not take it too personally so it was
not grounded in answer to your question

00:48:34.760 --> 00:48:38.890
and I can't think of any major regrets
or things I would have changed I think

00:48:38.900 --> 00:48:43.120
everything's gone the way it was supposed
to and if not I you know still do what

00:48:43.130 --> 00:48:49.900
you do. For the exam and so I’m kind of survivor versions and should

00:48:49.910 --> 00:48:56.360
be. A serious it was

00:48:56.420 --> 00:49:03.370
a small reference here’s bus tours with. What the US is

00:49:03.380 --> 00:49:08.880
history as far starting out your career is about you want to do yes I’m doing it.

00:49:10.510 --> 00:49:14.820
And having a dream you say that like getting have had

00:49:14.830 --> 00:49:21.050
a good. Life you know stuck here. Well I would say that

00:49:21.760 --> 00:49:25.980
the comic comes over time because first time to get in we have to carry dues and

00:49:26.020 --> 00:49:30.610
figure out what we want to do what we’re good at and so early on I was that is

00:49:30.620 --> 00:49:34.110
important to reporting be willing to do anything and this isn’t news to guys

00:49:34.120 --> 00:49:36.410
everyone says the same thing we really do
a lot of different things and then you
start finding out what you're good at or

what you're interested in and I was made
of this of the skills that it would take
to get to that next thing and I thought
I had these and I didn't have these and
then I say how do I get these families I
need to spend more time with Ali I've been
mentored by her you know I need to go meet
a stakeholder in the industry that
I can talk to I mean to go take
a class so every step of
my career I was good in
a job for about two or three years and
then I would get restless I was ready for
the next thing and almost my entire career
I have like these to be your windows
where it's like OK what's next and I always
did that I always made less to figure
Out what do I have what can I have what does this job require when I was

00:50:16.040 --> 00:50:17.140
a new young C.E.O.

00:50:17.150 --> 00:50:20.840
I got no training they kind of Trust me on it they said we're going to lose four

00:50:20.850 --> 00:50:24.540
million and your first job is to figure out who are going to they are and I quacked

00:50:24.550 --> 00:50:26.460
that can't be my first act as a C.E.O.

00:50:26.770 --> 00:50:26.970
That's

00:50:26.980 --> 00:50:31.760
a terrible thing and the staff will never trust me again and so there are they I

00:50:31.770 --> 00:50:33.500
pounded the pavement and drove to L.A.

00:50:33.510 --> 00:50:36.860
And Orange County and all their offices and motivating the team and we made that

00:50:36.870 --> 00:50:40.750
four million and we didn't have one person but I also recognize I have the skill

00:50:40.760 --> 00:50:45.690
sets I want to build these the other thing I did that rich useful was when I came

00:50:45.700 --> 00:50:50.040
to decision making time and I have really
difficult decisions I have this Ray I do

00:50:50.050 --> 00:50:51.470
a checklist for I would make

00:50:51.520 --> 00:50:55.840
a list of all the things that I was
considering in my decision that has two
different jobs you know pay location
flexibility benefits autonomy and skill and

00:51:00.890 --> 00:51:04.340
then I would put them up here and I would
rate it I wouldn't just check it I would

00:51:04.350 --> 00:51:04.750
made it on

00:51:04.760 --> 00:51:09.150
a scale of one to ten because sometimes
your chin emotional and you can't break it
down but I would find that waiting at
home on the Thames you know U.S.T.

00:51:09.160 --> 00:51:13.960
As

00:51:14.120 --> 00:51:17.730
a five in the OR city and Sandy would stay
with the Senate you know who knows what

00:51:17.740 --> 00:51:22.660
it may be but I rated it like that got to
be an. But I got down to the bottom got
that number really kind of was the true truth it was the truth of what I was

feeling it took the much negative so I've use that as

a way to really help me make it very difficult decisions to end things with too

close to see and it's just really to paying attention to yourself you know listen

to you'll be able to tell the things of value and you'll be able to tell the thing

that stuck it out of you and there will always be

a part of your job that will suck things out of you I mean that's just the way the

world but certainly want to have the majority of it be that they're lying so I

think if the pay attention to that and you kind of I pay attention to what I'm what

looks interesting what's the next step for me and how do I get there whether the
skills I mean I think that’s amazing and
good luck good writing I mean I can’t ever

said I have been able to write

a good letter corresponding in now as
she. Been able to communicate with

a wide range of people from
attack to driver to C.E.O.

Him paying attention to current events and
current affairs and being able to speak

a little bit about something like that you
know you don’t have to be super smart or

memorize things are taken I just have
enough of an interest and interest in the

sting and asking questions which I know
doesn’t feel like I’m doing today but maybe

I won’t peppering me with questions I don’t
think they ever know so I don’t know if

that and that helps in any way or kind of
the things that I’ve relied on that help
me and takes a long time to figure out
your passion with us and then usually with

00:52:55.470 --> 00:53:02.410
a passion is not always. Financial
right so I do think that passions

00:53:02.420 --> 00:53:05.630
more important than financial because
I I do think that will work out.

— End of Transcription —