

## Jason Brown – Point of Pride Transcript

[00:00:00] **Jason:** At Simantel, coworkers are more than just fellow employees; they're family. This is a story about the sincere concern and support of not only Simantelites, but our client, in the face of a natural disaster that proved we can do great things if we rally around each other.

[00:00:28] **Misty:** Hey there, friends. Thanks so much for checking out our Point of Pride series. In celebration of our 40ish anniversary, Simantelites are sharing stories about the work they're most proud of that made a difference for Simantel, the client and perhaps most importantly, themselves. I'm excited to share this story with you from Simantel's Insights Director: Jason Brown.

[00:00:46] Jason is a pro at getting answers for clients with an emphasis on insight gathering and data driven decision making. While his story is about the work, it's also about relationships with our client and with each other, and even with me. Have a listen as Jason shares his point of pride about an experience that for some will never be forgotten.

[00:01:15] **Jason:** My point of pride moment at Simantel was helping to create an identity for a joint venture product, but really it was more about people coming together in the real meaning of community. Hi all, Jason Brown, Insights Director at Simantel and I have had the pleasure of working at Simantel for 10 years. At the time of this project, way back in November of 2013, I'd been with Simntel for just over a year.

[00:01:42] I was still getting settled in, in many ways, including just having moved into the home my family had built. The project was a great opportunity with a new client named Knapheide, a fifth-generation family-owned manufacturer of work truck bodies based in Quincy, Illinois. Simantel had met them through a non-profit that both companies supported: The First Response Team of America.

[00:02:06] Our first opportunity that I was brought in for was to help create an identity or a name for a joint venture product launch. I was going to go out on the road and do interviews with some commercial truck dealerships and meet with a few of Knapheide's distributors as well. It was a week-long trip with stops in Kansas City and in St. Louis, and it was also going to be my first time working on a project directly with my boss, Misty.

[00:02:33] Back to the personal side, when I say I had just moved into my house, I mean the week before this trip — still having moving boxes everywhere. And I remember that vividly because of the day that it was and the time of year.

[00:02:48] It was mid-November, and I was one of the group of Simantel men who were participating in "movember". And let me tell you, I should not have tried to grow a mustache. But it was for a cause and I don't think my effort was the worst of the bunch; you could look up pictures if you would like. To be more specific, it was Sunday, November 17th, 2013 and on this Sunday, it was warm, especially so for November, and the skies outside were ominous.

[00:03:20] Since we had just moved in, we did not have much in the way of electronics or entertainment set up, including our TVs; only one in the basement was unpacked. Due to the weather, we took the kids down to the basement and turned on the TV to see the local weather people talking about how it was very serious and that dangerous tornadoes were in our area, and to seek shelter.

[00:03:42] We did not want to alarm our young children, four and almost two at the time. So, we turned off the TV and we played some games. About an hour or so later, and after hearing the storm sirens multiple times, I headed upstairs. I will remember the next few minutes forever. I grabbed my mobile phone off of a moving box that it was lying on charging.

[00:04:03] I called Misty, who I was supposed to travel with because she lived on that side of the river. It rang twice and then she answered "Hey, are you okay? I'm alright. I'm surprised you got through. You are the first person I have talked to. I have not been able to get a call out. Oh, wow. I, I, I won't keep you then, but are you okay?"

[00:04:25] "Yeah, we were at church, but it's gone. It's all gone." Misty started trying to talk about our upcoming trip and I cut her off. "Don't worry about work. I got it. I am just glad to hear your voice." The reality was, even if I didn't have it, I had to have it — stuff much bigger than that project was happening. I hit the road bright and early that next morning and had about a six-hour drive to the Kansas City area.

[00:04:55] The road was relatively uncrowded, but my thoughts made up for it. I just kept thinking about Misty and my other colleagues back in Washington and in East Peoria, and how I wanted to do whatever I could. Out on the road, I was getting a chance to meet with commercial dealers and distributors of Knapheide equipment.

[00:05:13] I was asking them thoughts on the proposed partnership and talking deeply about their experiences. I had a discussion guide, but no two of those discussions were identical. I listened to what the person was saying and I followed where their passion was — and I was having productive discussions, all while sporting a mustache.

[00:05:34] We were talking about important stuff, but we were just talking. Shortly after that trip and throughout our working relationship with Knapheide, we got positive feedback on our approach and some of the insights that we were able to pull out. And to me, that in so much came down to a simple quote from Theodore Roosevelt: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care".

[00:05:56] What also stood out to me was the genuine care and support these relative strangers felt toward me and my company due to the tragic tornado that had hit here. I was showing these individuals who, were virtually strangers, pictures of places that I knew in the devastation.

[00:06:16] I remember friends' streets being the lead story on CNN and Fox News. I was moved by that sincere care and their offers of support, both those that I encountered on the trip, but also the Knapheide family as a whole. The project allowed us to name a product line, which became Expand. It was in line with the company's existing offerings, but also with growth and customization through Knapheide in mind.

[00:06:42] We honed in on the ability for customers to make it their own. And from this project, our relationship with Knapheide grew to span multiple years, incorporate their overall brand and marketing strategy and to develop the position of never settle. Now, my overall philosophy in life, like how I approach research, is to learn as much as I can about the situation.

[00:07:08] I also try to understand the impacts, positive and negative, of decisions. You might say I'm a measured individual, but the first thing I did when I walked into Simantel that Friday afternoon, after a week on the road, en route to my office in the building, was not measured. I heard Misty's voice, which I later learned was the first time she had been in the office since the tornado.

[00:07:34] And I walked straight up and gave her a giant hug while she was in mid conversation with someone else. It wasn't me thinking about Misty as my boss, or Misty as my colleague. It was Misty, my friend, and someone who had gone through a terrible experience. I had never given her a hug before, I'm not sure how HR handles hugging your boss.

[00:07:57] All of these things I should know. But in that moment, I did what I felt. The reason that this project or this moment more specifically, is my point of pride goes beyond the great clients and the fun opportunity to get out in the field, or even the excuse to rock terrible lip foliage. It's rooted in how we can do great things if we rally around each other.

[00:08:24] My Simantel pride is seeing our company bring the most out of others, and that we tend to seek out and attract clients who are also driven by doing good. There were so many examples of Simantelites rallying around our colleagues and our community to do good. There are countless times where I have relied on or confided to my brothers and sisters at Simantel who go so far beyond coworkers.

[00:08:53] And that is why after 10 years in a geographic move, I have never been prouder to call Simantel home than I am today.

[00:09:08] *Misty*: Jason, thank you for the important work that you do, but thank you even more just for being you. Thank you for stepping up to carry the work and support your teammates as friends at a time when it mattered most. We're so fortunate to have you on the Simantel team, and I'm grateful to call you my friend.