

Transcript of the Ninety-Seven Podcast *Pilot Episode — Welcome to the Ninety-Seven*

[0:00] *[Background music fades in]*

[0:18] *[Music cuts and Libby answers her phone]*

[0:19] *[Beginning of phone call]*

Libby: *[heavy sigh]* Zack, It's 2:00 AM. What's up?

Zack: I know, I can't sleep. I figured you were up anyway.

Libby: Yeah, Odin won't sleep either. What's going on?

Zack: I feel like we need to do a podcast.

Libby: What?

Zack: A podcast about everything that we're hearing about and experiencing. I'm just sitting here trying to answer all these emails and get back to all these communities, and I'm listening to podcasts about other things, and it just seems like an effective way to get the word out about everything that we're hearing.

I feel like no one reads email anymore, and I don't want to turn Facebook back on.

Libby: No – or Zoom. I'm tired of trying to be camera-ready when I'm a tired mom. I can't do it.

Zack: [0:59] *[laughs]*

Libby: Yeah, it'd be a good chance to get the word out too about all the research Alex has doing to kind of simplify the available resources for communities.

Zack: That's a good idea. Hold on, let me patch her in.

Libby: Zack, it's an hour later there.

Alex H.: Hello?

Zack: Oh good. I figured you were up too.

Alex H.: Yeah, I just can't stop.

Libby: Can't stop what?

Alex H.: Oh, hi Libby.

Libby: Hey!

Alex H.: I'm just working on the website that we're putting together for our communities, and there's just so much information.

I mean, Congress passes a \$2.2 trillion bill, and this money is just flying everywhere. HUD, USDA, SBA – all the acronyms. I'm trying to figure it all out.

Zack: How far are you?

Alex H.: Well, I have Lindsey and Emily already working on it. We're already in the web development phase, but there's just so many programs, it's hard to compile. You've got grants.gov and sam.gov and all these .gov web sites. I'm just trying to put it all together – there are so many pieces to it. I don't know how communities do this.

Zack: Good. Those other websites are garbage.

Alex H.: Ugh, terrible. That's why we're making a new one!

Zack: Are Emily and Lindsey up?

Alex H.: No, I don't think they're up.

Libby: I hope not.

Alex H.: They turned off their chat.

Libby: Do not patch them in.

Zack: [2:11] [laughs]

Fine. So Alex, I think we're gonna do a podcast.

Alex H.: I'm sorry, a what?

Libby: [2:19] [laughs]

Zack: A podcast about everything that – all the stuff that you're finding, all the information you're finding. We can use this to get the word out instead of, you know, mass email chains.

Plus, you know, it's a podcast. It sounds easy. No problem, we'll get Joe to do it.

Libby: [2:31] [laughs]

Alex H.: Yeah, sure. Let me just finish the website and climb Mount Everest, and then we'll start the podcast, OK?

All: [2:39] [laughter]

Zack: I feel like if we do it right, we can interview and talk to all the communities we're working with, [about] everything that we're hearing, [and to] all of our colleagues that are doing this work.

I mean, people are scared, and I think there's a lot of people that are not going to go back to cities. They don't want to be in these dense urban settings – they don't feel they're healthy or safe. I just feel like there's gonna be a shift of where people are going to go, and rural communities are not ready for that.

Alex H.: Yeah, no they're not. I mean they need the broadband support; they need better telemedicine capabilities.

There are so many resources out there – they're so hard to figure out and find. I mean we need to be helping our communities grow with this opportunity.

Zack: That's true. I mean, what if a percent[age] of them don't go back, and there's a percent[age] of them that like teleworking, and they want to keep teleworking. I mean, it's not going to be a ton of people, but what if it's like 5% of the workforce?

Alex H.: That's millions of people, and teleworking seems to be the new trend. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from if you can't telework it's really hard to make a living these days.

Libby: Mhm.

Zack: That's true. And a lot of them are challenged in the city anyway. This might allow them to live somewhere they can actually afford.

Alex H.: Yeah, totally. I mean — [gets cut off]

Libby: Yeah, they can choose where they want to live.

Alex H.: Exactly. I mean, a lot of my friends have already left the city and several of them told me they're leaving permanently. I'm sure other cities are — that's happening to them too.

Zack: Yeah, I'm hearing that too. This spread is just gonna happen — I mean, it's already happening with the virus, and people are going to bounce around.

A few companies are getting cool with telework because they have to. I mean, this is the kind of everything we've been talking about, but I don't think the communities are ready for it.

If we show them where the money is and we help them talk to other communities like them around the country, they might be able to get some real help.

Alex H.: That's exactly right I mean they need the funding, they need the resources, and they need it now to get through this, but also beyond.

Libby: Mhm.

Zack: Yeah, totally. OK so, podcast?

Libby: Yeah, fine. Let's do it, but tomorrow. Everybody go to bed.

Zack: Alright, goodnight.

Libby: Goodnight!

[4:55] [End of phone call]

[4:57] [Music fades in in the background as Zack starts speaking]

Zack: Ninety-seven percent of this country's land is considered rural. There are endless opportunities for creativity and innovation, paired with affordability and high quality of life in that ninety-seven percent.

What's working and what isn't? What are communities doing to attract the next generation of workforce?

We believe rural America is the next place to pioneer.

This is a look at the Ninety-Seven and these are their stories.

I'm Zach Mannheimer with Alchemy Community Transformations and this is the Ninety-Seven podcast.

Join us for episode one as we explore Pageland, SC.

[7:31] [Clip of interview with Timothy Griffin plays]

Tim: We were riding high; we were getting the national attention. We were, you know, having businesses contact us about moving in. And then the virus hits, and so I think while everything has flatlined right now, I think we learned our weakness our strength and what we, you know, once this is

over, that we have to immediately resume where we were and get right back on the horse.