

**Episode 171: Paid Vs Free Why One Summit Changed Their Model moments before their summit.**

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Dr. Mark T. Wade: Hey summit hosts. Dr. Marty Wade here, founder of Virtual Summits Software and your host on the Virtual Summit Podcast. We are in for a treat today today's episode. We're going to be diving in to a special virtual summit. We got legendary Danny Den Hartog with us today. How's it going today, Danny?

Danny Den Hartog: Hey Mark. Great to be here, man. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Mark: I'm so excited you're here with us. I cannot wait to dive into the interesting summit that you put on. We're going to look at some of the things that worked, some of the challenges that you experienced, some of the complexity behind what you decided to do and how you decided to do it, and it's going to be a blast. Now, before we jump into the summit goodies, why don't you take a moment and just quickly tell the audience a little bit more about yourself?

Danny: Yeah. Hi everyone. Thanks a lot for listening. My name is Danny Den Hartog and I am the founder of Coach Africa. I see myself as a social entrepreneur. I'm a certified knowledge broker from a Tony Robbins KV program and I'm an international business coach. Um, and I really believe in, uh, that business has an essential role. It really can be a force for good in the world. And I think that the role, you know, business as a maximizing shareholder value is really over right. People are expecting businesses to make a difference in the world and to solve real problems out there. And we don't need another, type of toothpaste. Right. Um, so that's, uh, that's really what I believe. And I kind of wear two hats. So first of all, I support businesses with access to global markets, uh, through international business coaching and consulting. And secondly, I also incubate, uh, social ventures, um, that work on different sustainable development goals. So that is what Coach Africa is about.

Dr. Mark: Love that. Excellent. Well, that brings us right to the next point of this. Why don't you talk to us about the summit that you ran, kind of, how did you come up with the idea to begin with and then just give us a little overview of what the summit actually was.

Danny: Yeah, thanks Mark. So, uh, what, uh, pulled together is, uh, we organize the Coach Africa Women Impact Summit. So one might think like, okay, what is, um, a guy doing in, in three and putting together a Women Impact Summit? Right. I think that's a very fair question to ask. Um, what, uh, I personally, one of the things that's frustrates me is just inequality in the world, right? And during my travels in the past, especially to Africa, um, I've seeing so much talent, so much drive, entrepreneurship, but at the same time also very unequal opportunities and access to markets. So that was kind of like, uh, during my travels there, um, my stereotypes on Africa were actually really shattered. So, um, I was actually quite shocked about it because how can relatively educated and well-traveled guy know actually so little about all the beautiful country that are out there.

Danny: Um, and, and it was kind of the seed that was splendid that I want to do something I want to, uh, uh, create access or opportunities, uh, for, uh, ambitious driven people, um, in Africa. And, um, when I was, um, when I was thinking about, uh, my, my, my basis, like I incubated about eight months ago, um, I was thinking, what can I do to kind of bring out a different image of Africa, right? I mean, um, how can we actually show the world what great minds, what inspiration is actually coming from there? And I thought, okay, why don't we, why don't I do a virtual summit that is actually bringing together like really powerful female leaders, because you, you don't hear so many voices from Africa. And, um, I just wanted to do a very different summit. So what I did is, um, I, uh, I was really blessed to actually create a whole team, um, off, off of the most amazing advisers, uh, uh, wonderful global Africans that, uh, that actually helped me, um, to pull the summit together. So the summons is wasn't about me and that made it also much easier to look at the subject, right?

Dr. Mark: So let's dive into that a little bit. Actually, this is, that's a unique aspect. There's not many summits where the person who decides to run the summit is actually taking kind of a back seat as far as the face of the summit. So you organized it, you came up with the idea, you kind of managed it, but you had somebody else as the front of it. So kind of talk us through that process. How did you decide who to have, um, was it, did that end up working out well? Would you have changed anything going back? Like just talk us through that.

Danny: Yeah. Um, so, so actually I think the, the whole summit, um, especially the beginning was a, was a very uncomfortable experience for me because, you know, as a, as a, as a Caucasian guy, right. Um, you're doing a summit with, uh, with, with people, uh, that look different than you and also the audience at, and these are different from you, but in the end it's not about the colors of our skin, right? It's, it's really about the message and the voices that we had, the um, the, uh, voices that we want to share with the world. Right. Um, and I managed to work with an amazing, uh, virtual emcee, uh, very experienced in doing, uh, in person events. And she was actually, she, uh, introduced the event. She did a lot of interviews and that worked really well. There was a great chemistry with the speakers. And I think that was one of the reasons why the summit was a, was a real success.

Dr. Mark: Excellent. So, um, when we were looking at the summit and the, the speakers that you brought on, because this is, you know, it was Coach Africa, so it was target. I'm going to assume the demographic or the target audience was in Africa. Can you talk us through how you set up this summit, um, to target a specific kind of country that you're not in and how that worked out? Any challenges, any tips, any insights there?

Danny: Yeah. No great, great question. So, um, so actually, because I want to do things different, right. Um, the idea was that, uh, the audience attendees would actually be in the West because then, uh, they, their minds would actually, and their thoughts and beliefs about Africa would actually change, right, through the speaker. So the attendees were actually, uh, mainly in the West. Um, that was the idea. The reality was that, um, since I, um, I mainly use affiliate marketing, uh, and the speakers did an amazing job to promote the, uh, the event that actually in the end about 90% actually came of the

attendees were actually from Africa. So the initial idea and the targets was a bit different than the outcome, um, in the end.

Dr. Mark: Well, and, you know, we can never predict a summit perfectly moving forward. So that's, that's of course now, um, talk to us when you with, you know, some of the aspects, what was something maybe one or two things that your summit, um, when you were putting it together, the things that you've done that are different than some of the other summits that are out there.

Danny: Yeah. Um, I think one of the differentiating factors in summit was that we managed to, to really get amazing speakers. We got a former president, so this is my first virtual summit that I put together, but we managed to get the first female presidents from Mauritius, so speak at the summit. And we got, um, one of the youngest, uh, female, uh, leaders in parliament in Africa, um, a former minister of trade and industry from Botswana to speak as well. So these, uh, these speakers, um, we, uh, the way we managed to get them on board was, uh, was very much through warm introductions by, by others. And so I didn't have, um, I actually, I didn't have much of a network prior to the summit in this space. Um, and I just started to ask, um, people like, from, for example, from embassies, okay.

Danny: Who are the people from, from your country that inspired you most? Right. So then they mentioned a few names, and then my next question was, okay, great. Are you able to introduce me to them? So, uh, that's the way that I actually got in touch with, uh, with some of these people. And, uh, that's probably, for me, that's been one of the most rewarding aspects of the summit just to kind of, my mind was blown by, uh, by the content of these yeah. These, these, these speakers. So that's one of the differentiating factors that I would say, um, that we just had a very different type of speakers, speakers that, um, unfortunately we don't hear enough about, right. Just simply because of the geography that they are coming from. And I think that is just plain wrong, right. Our systems are just not set up in a way to support people that Yeah, well, not go on. And that's it.

Dr. Mark: Absolutely. So I want to circle back to one of the things we were talking about with, um, the, the, you know, you creating a summit coming up with the idea and then having somebody actually facilitating or hosting the, the interviews. Did you, did you come up together with the idea of what the interviews would be about where they were each interview a little bit different? Did the host provide you with the, like, talk us through how you did that, because I'm sure there's others out there going, you know what, this would be really great. I'd love to run a summit, but I don't necessarily want to be the face of it, or I don't want to do all the interviews. Maybe I could bring somebody on. So let's talk about the challenges and the benefits to this and how you actually orchestrated it or organized it to make it work effectively.

Danny: Okay. Yeah. So what I'm, what I started out with is, as I started to think about, okay, what is the actual transformation, um, that we want people to go through, uh, during the summit? So where do they start? Right. And where do they end up? And then, over these three days, we kind of established, about like what's the summit theme was how to become unshakeable in uncertain times. Right. Um, and it was very much about, uh,

providing people with, uh, the attendees with, with tools and strategies to actually master their mindset too, to have extra well strategies who changed their business around in these days, or just to be safe right. And to, to strengthen their, their certainty. So, so these were some of these transformational, uh, aspects that we wanted, uh, speakers to touch upon. And then we just created a number of, of blocks or main themes for her day.

Danny: And we, um, and I talked with the, uh, with the virtual emcee about, okay. Um, so, you know, we prepared these, these interviews together. And, um, but, but she had a great amount of freedom because she, she just knows it's, it's, it's coming naturally to her. So we didn't really need to kind of micro manage that process at all. She was just an amazing emcee and, uh, it kind of, it worked naturally. So I guess it's, as my advice would be like, um, it really depends on the person that you have on the other side of the table, right. Is it an experienced person? And do you have trust in their capabilities then you can kind of leave a little bit more freedom and, but just kind of determined the main outcomes with your moderator.

Dr. Mark: So let let's talk, let's switch gears a little bit and go towards any challenges that you experienced when setting up this summit.

Danny: Sure. There were definitely many Mark. So the first challenge was that, I mean, a summit is a big project. Right. And I probably grossly underestimated the amount of work that it's kind of took to put it together. Right. And it wasn't, I didn't plan it at the beginning as a project. So I might, what saved me was that I set a date at the beginning. Right. So, okay. It was just three months later and the clock was ticking. But if I would have set specific mini milestones, right. And I would just have chunked it down into the specific blocks and just would have tracked my progress, then I would have made it much easier for myself.

Danny: But now at the, at the start, I was just working on a summit logo or, or, or some stuff that didn't really move the so in hindsight, I wasted a lot of time on trivial things which actually was at the cost of my marketing, which obviously is one of the, the most important activities. So one of the challenges that I experienced is that 11 days prior to the start of my summit, I actually didn't have a single SMT at that time. So, I mean, can you imagine how stressed I was? I had these most amazing speakers, right. At 20, 20 plus 26 speakers. And I just hadn't sold any single ticket because, I initially worked with a paid model. Uh, but yeah, since I didn't do any marketing, I just didn't have any entities. Um, so that's, uh, that needed, I needed to do something quite, uh, yeah, I need to really need it to pay for it.

Danny: Right. Because it wasn't going anywhere. Uh, so what I did is, uh, I finally listened to some of your advice, um, and, uh, you know, some of the advice in, one of your groups, um, and I actually, uh, changed my model around. I realized that my objective of the summit was actually to reach as many people with the message as possible. Um, so paid model, wasn't actually the best vehicle in doing that. And secondly, what I, what I realized is that I just wanted to impact the lives also as as many people as possible. So, um, you know, I changed the route to the free model and I did the all access pass as an upsell. So that saved the summit, ultimately, and I managed to get over a thousand

leads in a, in about the last seven remaining days. Oh, it's, it was actually in the end, a good success, but, um, it was kind of tight.

Dr. Mark: That is, I mean, that is very, very common. I'm glad. Thank you so much for being transparent, open with us about this. It's one of the things I talk about regularly with a paid summit. I mean, that's great. And we, you know, it's definitely successful in a lot of areas, but it's more primed if you already have a warm audience that you can promote it to. If you're trying to build, you know, if the, the summit framework or goal is a list builder, then it's better to, to, to host it as a free opportunity and move from there. So I love that you actually, you didn't just let it sink the summer. You didn't just throw your hands up and say, Oh, well, this is what I'm stuck with. You actually jumped in, you pivoted you changed it and you were still able to pull off a success there. So that was really, really great. Now let's kind of look at, um, some of the aspects, like let's, let's talk about with the promotion of the summit, what is something that was working well for you and maybe something you would do a little different?

Danny: So in the promotion of the summit, um, I would say the number one thing that made the summit a success, um, was the involvement of the speakers. And I've listened to a lot of your, and there's a lot of people out there that, uh, did great stuff with affiliate marketing. Um, but it's, it's, it's really important, especially if you don't have a list yourself. So I did, I didn't have a single the person on my list. Right. Um, and D speakers, uh, they all did an amazing job in the marketing, uh, and it promoting of the event. And I had an affiliate structure, um, with, uh, with them. So I set it up with the links, which worked really well. And I got about, uh, I just looked at the data and I got about somewhere between a 30 and 40% conversion, um, uh, from speaker networks from clicks. So it was actually pretty, a pretty good vehicle, um, for, uh, for the promotion of the summit for me. And the other one was a, was Facebook ads, which worked quite well. I had a, a CPC of around 20, uh, Euro cents. Um, so it was a, there was also quite, uh, quite good. I, um, it was quite specific in my targeting, uh, did a, did a few things and yeah, that worked out quite well as well.

Dr. Mark: Now you mentioned in our pre-interview chat, one of the challenges or lessons learned was upsells and, and how that works. So talk us through what that challenge was and what you would do differently going back.

Danny: Yeah. Um, so, um, the, uh, this is, uh, probably another, um, you know, I hope you don't mind me sharing kind of more of the mistakes maybe, but this, this definitely was a, was a mistake. Um, so, you know, funnel building is, is kind of a new thing for me. And I've just been, uh, it's just less than a year that I've really looked at at this. So, you know, the first part of the funnel was, uh, was quite a ride. Right. I managed to, I had a great conversion on my website, um, but it was all for free tickets. Right. Um, but, uh, it would have been nice to, uh, you know, to, to, uh, also profit a little bit more from the summit. And what I did wrong is that, um, I got a lot of great data from attendees because actually my upsell wasn't assessment. So I, I asked men, people a lot of survey questions, but what I didn't do is I didn't ask them to go for the all access pass. So, um, that sounds like, I mean, maybe a really dumb thing to do. Um, but at least it's set me up to really target people, uh, properly in the future. Uh, but I, I would definitely, um, I

have definitely changed my, uh, my upsell and I had to, yeah, I have a more decent funnel now

Dr. Mark: Well, and I think, you know, like one Danny again, thank you for being transparent with this. This is going to save a lot of people, you know, from doing things like this, but you know, you were doing a paid summit at the beginning. And so it would make sense to have something that was free as the next step, collecting data, et cetera. And then pivoting, I think you said it was, you know, just like 11 days before the summit changing the entire kind of foundation or model of the summit is not an easy task to do so those types of things getting kind of overlooked or not, not, you know, the insight not being there is, is definitely understandable. So don't beat yourself up too hard over there now, as we kind of get towards the end of this episode, I'd love for you to, um, any other insights let's, let's, let's dig into a little bit more with your summit and um, in like what was, what would you say the number, if you had to pull one thing out of the summit, what was the top thing that contributed the most to the success of your summit?

Danny: Now, that's a great question. Um, the number one thing, which you, you need to have is that internal certainty and mastering your mindset as a summit host that you push through whatever it takes, right. Because there's this a three months plus project. Right. And it can be lonely at times. And it's, yeah, I mean, especially if you work with a lot of people, right. There's so many speakers, there's just so many moving parts there. And if you're don't have that internal certainty or just, yeah, you'll just be stressed out and we'll, you'll miss that overview. So I think it's really important is that you, um, disciplining yourself and kind of push yourself through. So maybe that's not the kind of the most common answer, but I think like it's really starts with yourself and the, also the enthusiasm and the belief that you portray to, uh, to the team that you have or the people that you work with, if you don't believe anymore your own summit. Right. Why would other people kind of like jump in, right. Um, especially not if you work with senior people, right. Mmm. So yeah, I would, I would say that will be one of the main things that determine your success.

Dr. Mark: Well, that is a great insight to share right there. Let's look at, let's flip it on the other side. What is something that you will do? One thing you would recommend doing different if you were going to do this summit again?

Danny: Yeah. I think, one of the things, especially if you're a more of this creative personality or, you know, your entrepreneurial type, you need to master this as a project and just break it down again in these disciplines. Right. And these chunks and just make it manageable and that overview that you will get through doing that, uh, that will just create so much. Yeah. You will feel more relaxed in that process by, by doing that. Um, so I would definitely have, I've done some proper project management, uh, at the beginning. Um, and just making sure that I, I ticked some more boxes at the beginning so that I wouldn't be so stressed out at the end. So that would, if you don't do that, I mean, you, uh, I still pull off a great summit, right. But, uh, in hindsight, I mean, if, if I would have got some more advice maybe on my, on my funnel, right. Um, if I would've focused more on the, on some of the needle moves at the start, then I could have really done this I think even better.

Dr. Mark: That is great information to have now, Danny, I know everybody's going well, Mark, how do I reach out to Danny? Where do I get in touch with him? How can I follow up with him? Why don't you let everybody know where's the best, how to best get in touch with you and where you're hanging out.

Danny: Sure. So, um, I would love to hear back from me, even on some of the comments or on the, on the summons that you, you guys are building. Right. Um, and, um, I'm organizing a new summit in three months' time. It will be on, uh, on African business and any partnerships, any people that would like to partner or speak or sponsor the summit. Uh, we really great to hear from you. So my, uh, my email is Danny@Coach.Africa. So there's no .com or anything in it. It's Danny@Coach.Africa.

Dr. Mark: Excellent. So we'll make sure all of that is in the show notes as well. So Danny, why don't you leave us with one final parting piece of wisdom?

Danny: And, um, I mean, that would be, we're talking here about the power of virtual summits. And I mean, if you look at how competitive webinars are becoming, right, like half of the world is now pivoting to, to online business. Right. But virtual summits are still a little bit an unkept secret. Right. And we are in front of that wave together. So I think let's just, you know, crack ahead. Crush it. And, um, you know, with the help of Mark, take a look at all the resources out there because you can figure it out by yourself through trial and error, or you can learn from people that have actually done what you're looking to do. So just take some, really take some advice and save you some time and money.

Dr. Mark: Saving some time and money such great insight. Thank you so much, Danny, for being here with us today, it's been great having you.

Danny: Thank you, Mark. Really appreciate it. Really enjoyed being on your show. Thank you.

Dr. Mark: Absolutely. And thank you all you summit hosts for spending this time with Danny and I. I am Dr. Mark T. Wade, your host here on the Virtual Summit Podcast, and don't forget your message matters. So go out there and make an impact in the world. Don't forget to check out all of these amazing summit gems that Danny just shared with us over in the show notes at <http://podcast.virtualsummits.com/171>. And we'll see you on the next episode.

Dr. Mark: Now, I want to end this episode by saying to all the summit hosts listening right now, I believe in you and you can do this summits are by far one of the most powerful ways to quickly grow your list, launch your platform, make more money. And most importantly, make an impact in the world, even if you're just getting started. So don't get caught up in analysis paralysis because the world needs to hear your message. And there are people who are waiting for you to help them just get started because imperfect action is always better than no action. Thank you and see you on the next episode.