

Jerry Howard:

Welcome to Housing Development. I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin:

I'm Jim Tobin. Jerry, how you doing?

Jerry Howard:

Good, Jim, how's it going with you?

Jim Tobin:

I can't complain too much. The end of a busy week here in Washington, D.C. and it's been quite interesting since we last did our podcast with the fallout from the Supreme Court leak and Washington has collectively held its breath. It's been an interesting time.

Jerry Howard:

Yes, it has. We've had a great mortgage round table session here with experts from the housing finance sector here in NAHB discussing various issues the last couple of days. So it has been an interesting time indeed, but perhaps what we're all going to be holding our breath for over the weekend is the impending statement from the White House on housing. What do you know about that?

Jim Tobin:

Yeah, I'm optimistic, as I always am, that the President, in particular this White House, and HUD will, I'm cautiously optimistic as I always am, that we're going to finally see this administration address the fundamental causes of the housing unaffordability in this country and show some solutions to the issues that Jerry Konter and Alicia Huey raised during a White House listening session on lumber and supply chain in March, as well as finally get an answer from the letter that over 10,500 members of NAHB signed to the White House three weeks ago, with what essentially is our list of the policy that needs to be addressed by this White House, and Congress, in order to solve the affordability crisis and keep this economy from plunging over the cliff into a recession. So, I'm anxious, and I'm looking forward to hearing what the President has to say and Secretary Fudge as well.

Jerry Howard:

Well, we'll all be waiting to hear, and maybe we'll do our next podcast covering that event. Hey, Jim, something really important that I want to talk about just for a second, Thursday, May 19th, as I know you know, is the second annual Mental Health Action Day. That's a national effort organized by MTV to turn mental health awareness into action. Last year, NAHB was really proud to be a sponsor in the inaugural Mental Health Action Day and we're doing the same thing this year. I don't have to tell anybody listening how stressful the last few years have been for everybody. And we all need to make sure that we're looking after not only ourselves, but the ones we love. NAHB encourages all of our members to take a free mental health screening test on May 19th to see if further action might be needed. It just takes a few minutes. You can find it and other mental health resources at nahb.org/mentalhealth. Please, God, it won't be necessary to do any follow up, but it's better to know the truth. So, everybody, take advantage of this opportunity if you will.

Well, Jim, let's bring in our guest this week, a pretty interesting guy, Brent Ridley, he's a master HVAC technician, which means he's a lot smarter than you and I, because he doesn't have to call people to fix

his house. He's got over 15 years of experience and he's one of the co-hosts of Tool Pros, a podcast that highlights all things about tools and their various uses. Brent also created and runs a give back project, which is pretty cool, called Miracle Mechanical. That project provides major HVAC repairs at no cost for people who are elderly, veterans, disabled, or just guys that are down on their luck. Brent, welcome.

Brent Ridley:

Thank you, Jerry. What an intro that was, man. That makes me feel awesome. Thank you.

Jerry Howard:

Well, you should, it sounds like you're doing an awful lot to give back.

Brent Ridley:

Yeah, I'm not used to that. That just makes me feel nice and warm inside. Thanks, Jerry. You know how to make a guy feel welcome on a podcast, I tell you.

Jerry Howard:

I hope so. That's why they have me do the intro and not Jim, he's a crotchety old guy so he doesn't get to do these very often.

Brent Ridley:

That's funny.

Jerry Howard:

What are consumers looking for in tools in 2022?

Brent Ridley:

What are consumers looking for for tools in 2022? What a great question. The very first thing I can think of is as far as cordless tools go and stuff like that would be run time and weight, things like that are really big time stuff that matters to consumers. And everybody's going to want to, as soon as a new tool comes out, first question everybody asks is, "Okay, how long is the battery going to last with it? How long is it going to last me? How many screws can I drill with that drill?" Or, "Is it going to take one battery, two batteries? Is it going to work on the same battery platform that I have? Am I going to have to change or upgrade?"

And then of course it's the age old price point. Everybody's worried about price point, but those are things that we get mostly is price point and then of course with the cordless is the run time. But also, I guess when it comes to hand tools, quality is a big thing. And we get into stuff like that as far as making sure they're quality tools and they're not going to break and it's not going to be a cheap thing. And if you spend your money, it's going to be worth what you're getting.

Jerry Howard:

That's interesting. I think that a lot of people don't even think about the different types of batteries that can go into the tools and the fact that if you can get it all on the same platform, it certainly is going to be a whole lot easier for you to use so that's very interesting. And how about the market in general? It's been hot for two years. What's your business been like? What are people looking for?

Brent Ridley:

Oh my gosh, it's been amazing. So, the pandemic hits, so obviously people were staying at home more, so with everybody staying at home more, that means they're going to do more home repairs and things like that. And Lowe's came out with their state of the pro report, which was great, which gave us pros insight on how to look at the market a little bit. And yeah, everybody staying at home more, they're investing more into their home. They're putting more money towards projects around the house and it has increased our business tenfold, maybe not tenfold, but it's increased our business a lot. Let's just say that. And it's been fantastic. I'd say you're getting more millennials, or I guess, Gen Z I guess is after millennials, I don't know, the people after the millennials, and they're buying houses now and they're looking at that as more of a long term investment and they're trying to invest and things like that. So, we're definitely seeing an uptick in that kind of thing, for sure.

Jerry Howard:

Do you see any difference in what the younger people are looking for in their homes than compared to some of the older ones?

Brent Ridley:

Yeah, absolutely, definitely. Young people want it right now and they want you to be at the service of them right now. And that relationship means a lot too, to them it seems like, with younger people. The older folks are more the people who want the three quotes and I don't know if they value the relationship as much, but maybe they do, but it seems like the younger people, they want that guy that they can count on. And then they want you to be available for them to call or text at any time of the day. And I think that's important and that really means a lot to those younger generations.

Jerry Howard:

Okay. Let's follow up on that a little bit. NAHB's economics department produces a survey that we call what home buyers really want, which looks at the features that people want in a home. But some of what you're saying speaks to what they want in their home builder or in their remodeler or in their HVAC technician. How do you relate to these kids? How do you talk to them? How can builders build a better relationship with this next generation of customers?

Brent Ridley:

Yeah. You know, I think you build value in yourself, not in the product that you're doing. You have to build value in yourself and make them confident in choosing you. I think that's a big part of it. And that's what I try to do at least, is make them feel comfortable with me and let them know that yes, we are creating a relationship here. You're not just buying service and the product that I install or put in. You're buying into a relationship that I'm here to give you, and I'm here to provide you with that service.

Jerry Howard:

Hey, listen, I mentioned it at the beginning and it's something that I think is really neat. Tell me about your Miracle Mechanical Project and what you've done and what inspired you to do this.

Brent Ridley:

Yeah. So I appreciate you asking about that. That's a great question. So Miracle Mechanical came about after years of doing the Tool Pros Podcast. So we did the Tool Pros Podcast, and then we have social

media, we're heavy into Instagram and things like that, our Tool Pro social media, and we've had fun with that, we've had fun with that for almost five years now. And after you review the 30th drill it's like, "Okay, this is great, but I kind of want to do something else. I want to do something more."

So I decided to take these relationships that I built with these different type of companies and to expand upon that and to try to serve my community and serve people in other communities by helping them out with the Miracle Mechanical Project. And it's worked really well so far, we've done three projects, we're working on our fourth project now, and we've been able to help some people with a major HVAC, and plumbing also, repairs too. So it's been great and I really appreciate all of our sponsors, who Lowe's has been a sponsor of that. They helped us out with one of our projects and they really want to work with us going forward so I've been excited for that.

Jerry Howard:

That's terrific. The old adage, from him to whom much has been given, much shall be expected. It certainly seems like you are giving back a great deal to your community. How can our listeners get in touch with you if any of them are interested in joining you in this effort or seeing if they can help you out some?

Brent Ridley:

Yeah, absolutely. They can find us on social media, which is the best thing to do. Look us up on Instagram, send us a message. We're just @toolpros. You can also find us on our podcast at the Tool Pros Podcast. And that's probably some of the best ways, but just look us up through our Instagram. That's the best way to get ahold of us.

Jerry Howard:

Great. I hope some of our listeners out there will take us up on that. And I know one other thing that you're into, you're a very diverse guy, you're a podcaster yourself. What are some of the things that you've learned on that side of the microphone, and how does that impact your day job?

Brent Ridley:

It's been fantastic for my day job. It's enlightened me a little bit. For years, I did my job and I knew my job and I didn't really understand what others did. And so by creating the podcast here, I've been able to bring on, I call it the Tool Pros and it's not because I'm the tool pro, it's the people that we bring on the podcast who are the pros. There are guys that are pros out here using different tools and different applications. Those guys are the pros and it's enlightened me to how they do their job and it makes me, I guess empathetic is not the right word, but just kind of understanding their job and their side of things. And to understand, whenever you work in a trade, you need to respect the other tradesmen on the job site and respect what they do, because they're trying to do the same thing too.

It's been great. And you know, we've had lots of conversations with carpenters, plumbers, HVAC guys, we've done roofers, we've done pool guys, we've had commercial kitchen repair guys, we've had framers, we've had concrete guys. We've had the whole gamut of blue collar tradesmen on our podcast over the years and it's been fantastic. And it's really led me down that path to understand what they do and, like I say, understand more and be empathetic to what they get into.

Jerry Howard:

You know, that's really neat. And it's really, really important that we get that message out that these people that do these jobs are great, fine people. And that not only should we hire them whenever we need them and whenever we can, but we need to get more young people into the fields and into the trades. NAHB is working really hard to do that. Is that something that you've considered adding to your portfolio, trying to recruit young people into the construction trades?

Brent Ridley:

Absolutely. I'd love to, and that's definitely something that we're trying to do. We are always looking at that and I've had some gentlemen reach out to me about helping with Miracle Mechanical Project and they think that would be a good way to help introduce young kids to the trade, but also help them give back. So they get to get out there and work with their hands a little bit and learn a little bit about what we do, but then also have that feel good feeling. So, we're going to try to incorporate some of that into the Miracle Mechanical, hopefully coming soon. We'll see how that goes.

But yeah, the trade is lacking in young people tremendously. And I find that a struggle every day as I try to hire people and find people to do the job, but we're going to continue to keep putting it out there. I got another project in the works, another podcast coming out called Plumbing School. So we're going to be educational only, 100% educational for plumbing. And so we're going to try to put that out there and we're going to try to educate everybody. And I feel like podcasts are a good way to meet and reach some younger generations of folks.

Jerry Howard:

That sounds great. You know, NAHB is involved now with Boys and Girls Clubs of America to try and have some of those young people, before they become at risk youth, before they possibly go down the wrong path, make sure that some of these kids who are in these Boys and Girls Clubs have opportunities. It sounds like something we might be able to work on together. And I'd really look forward to that.

Brent Ridley:

Yeah, absolutely. We'll definitely see what we can do. That'd be great.

Jerry Howard:

And you and NAHB have something else in common. And that is our ongoing partnership with Lowe's. NAHB is very grateful for everything that Lowe's brings to the table for us and I know they help you out quite a bit too.

Brent Ridley:

Oh yeah. Lowe's has been a great partner for us and I can't thank them enough. Like I say, not only with our social media, they've helped me out with my company, with the state of the pro report. Like I talked about a little bit earlier, and I've mentioned it a few times, I think you can go find it at lowes.com/stateofthepro and you pull it up and read it for yourself. And if you're a tradesman or a business owner out there, it's some really good information that really helps you kind of grasp that homeowner mentality and feel what they're thinking. But yeah, Lowe's has helped me with that, with social media, and Lowe's has been a fantastic partner and I can't thank them enough for what they've helped us do, and I hope they continue to be a partner and we go forward further with them.

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Jerry Howard:

No, we feel the same way. Brent, thanks very much for being with us today. We really appreciate it.

Brent Ridley:

Oh, thank you, Jerry. I appreciate the conversation, man. It's been fantastic.

Jerry Howard:

All right. Take care.

Brent Ridley:

Yes, sir. Thank you for having me.

Jim Tobin:

Well, Jerry, that was a great interview. And I want to thank Brent for joining us today to talk about what Lowe's is doing for our members. And it was a great interview, so happy to have him on board and look forward to more successful partnership with our friends at Lowe's.

Jerry Howard:

I couldn't agree with you more, Jim. It was really interesting to hear what Brent had to say. And once again, you're exactly right. People like him and companies like Lowe's are always looking out for the best interests of the American builder and the American consumer. So thank you again to them. And, Jim, this has been another one of our very interesting, very thought provoking broadcasts so thanks for participating with me. For now, this is Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin:

And I'm Jim Tobin. See you next time.

Jerry Howard:

Bye bye.