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Welcome to CenterState CEO's semi monthly podcast Talk CNY, presented by NBT Bank.

Kate Hammer 0:11

On Talk CNY you get an inside look at the people, projects and planning Moving Central New York forward.

Andrew Fish 0:18

I'm Andrew Fish, Senior Vice President of Member and Business Experience at CenterState CEO, the region's leading business leadership and economic development organization.

Kate Hammer 0:27

And I'm Kate Hammer, business coach and member at CenterState CEO. We are your hosts for Talk CNY. Take a moment right now to subscribe in your listening app for new episodes every other Wednesday.

Andrew Fish 0:41

On this episode of Talk CNY we'll talk with Tim Kennedy, President of Advance Media New York about The Good Life to see and why and how this effort is helping to attract talent back to Central New York. Tim, thank you so much for being here. Welcome to Talk CNY.

Tim Kennedy 0:49

I'm thrilled to be here, Andrew. Hey, I am, as I was telling you before, I am a subscriber to your podcast and you guys do a terrific job for all our listeners out there right now. But at the end, perhaps hit that subscribe button and subscribe to the podcast.

Andrew Fish 1:07

Thanks!

Kate Hammer 1:09

Yeah, and maybe there's never a wrong time to hit subscribe. So Tim, you are the president of Advance Media New York.

Tim Kennedy 1:21

Correct.

Kate Hammer 1:22

And we're so excited to have you here. So Advance Media New York operates Syracuse.com and The GoodLife among other publications. And a big part of what you do is tell stories about the region. Why is that so important to you?

Tim Kennedy 1:36

You're right. And most people know me as the president of Advance Media New York, the publisher of the Post Standard and Syracuse.com. And and we're storytellers we employ, you

know, professional journalists and editors that live here in the community that know the community that tell stories about the community, we use professional journalistic standards to tell those stories to establish our brand. And really to inform the community. We do that through storytelling. You know, I think we do a great job, no newsroom across, you know, Upstate New York has won more awards in the last 10 years than the newsroom down the street here@syracuse.com. And the Post Standard, there was a great newsroom when I got here 10 or 11 years ago, it's still a fabulous newsroom. Again, I think it's important to have a healthy, vibrant local news organization. And that's what we do. We tell stories, we've been doing it for 194 years, there's been a lot of different versions of the Post Standard flag flags for the Post Standard and various newspapers, we started syracuse.com In the mid 1990s, we're on all these different platforms, because I have to tell stories on every platform today in this digital age. So we've evolved with the times, and I think we're terrific at anything storytelling is important. The community has a story to tell. And that's really what we're here to talk about is the good life. And what will be this is CNY. But you know, at the heart of all this is great storytelling, and that's at the heart of our company and our mission and what we do. It's

Andrew Fish 3:07

Great. And you know, great segue right into the next question, because in 2020, we partnered CenterState, CEO, advanced media on DACA. County, and we launched The Good Life initiative to tell the story of our region. But I want to let you and your words talk about why we did that. What was the intent of The Good Life CNY. And, you know, frankly, how are we going about trying to reach that goal?

Tim Kennedy 3:08

Yeah, it's an interesting story to look back there. The so I'll take folks back to the beginning in 2018. Again, a little shout out for percenter state at a CenterState CEO, board meeting in 2018, the topic first came up. And you know, this is the kind of work that CenterState does to convene folks, board members, in this case, to talk about issues that are important to the community and to get after it. And whether you're a member or not a member, you benefit from those discussions in those outcomes and those programs. And it's just one of the benefits that CenterState brings to our community. So, you know, the origin story is, I think, pretty interesting. So 2018, we gather just down the street here in the red arts house, The Red House Arts building, they just moved in the uptown and they have the siblings building are in phase one of that project. And we had a we had a board meeting there. And I know that the board members that are listening probably will remember this in the conversation veered toward a problem, right, a problem that that companies in our community have and they still have today, which is attracting talent from outside the region. And you think about it if you're a higher education and you're trying to recruit a professor, a high powered professor and a growing field, how do you get them to attract them to the community, the hospitals and health care? You hear it all the time doctors surgeons trying to recruit that kind of talent from again outside the community. Defense, high tech they've been It's manufacturing here. How do we get engineers and programmers again from outside the community? So, you know, it is it started with a problem, which a lot of the in an opportunity, right, which a lot of the CenterState work centers are revolves around. So the conversation got to hey, you know, one of the issues that we have as a community is we just

we don't tell our story well, and, and member after member started speaking up, and that's true. And after a point in time, I kind of I kind of listened for a while. And at one point, I kind of spoke up and I said, you know, I said, what I just said to you guys, here, hey, there is good news out there. But we just don't have a place where we can curate all that good news. And put it in a place where people can easily ship that. Think of it as a brochure or pamphlet to somebody who's looking to move into this community. So I said, Hey, I get it. Let me take this project. And I talked to Rob, I said, Hey, let's do some research, we'll find so advanced meat in New York, paid for some research, we wanted to look at this question and figure out what is the solution that we could bring back to center state, and the members and the sponsors and say, Hey, here's a here's a chance to do this. So, you know, our origin story goes back to 2018 2019. We built the good life site, we can talk about that in a minute. And then COVID hit, which was a bit of an issue for just about every pleasure. But you know, I think I like what we I liked the way we went through the process, we were focused on what the problem and what were what we were trying to do with the solution. And I think we came up with a good a good product, a good project. And I think we did good work. And now we need to retool it for the future. But you know, the origin story is is interesting, and I'm sure a lot of folks that are listening that were in that room, remember.

Tim Kennedy 6:38

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, it was a fun process to go through and great product that we ended up rolling out.

Kate Hammer 6:43

Yeah so about the website, what sort of traction are you seeing? And who is visiting The Good Life?

Tim Kennedy 6:50

So The Good Life , we're about 600,000 or so visitors over the course of the years. And you know, what, I think we've had about 20,000 or so folks engaged with the jobs, which are the important thing about trying to introduce, hey, there's a lot of jobs here in central New York for you. And we've had about 20% of those folks actually engage with applying for a job supplying their information or reaching out to a company. So we've had success that we can demonstrate with what we've done with the good life. But I think there were limitations to the way we went about it. You know, what we did was we curated a lot of the content that we produce, either in the Post Standard syracuse.com, New York up another website that we run, or central knife, Central New York, a Good Life magazine, right. So a lot of that content shows up in the Good Life website here. But we don't, we don't really create original content for it. And what we've done over time is we've used our digital marketing solutions to help drive audience so we know, for instance, from the research that we're looking a lot of our companies think are looking for professionals that are moving from, say, the northeast, so we target markets in the northeast, heavily with our dark or digital marketing solutions. So we've relied a lot on that, and again, curated the storytelling we're already doing to create the site. And you know, again, I think we've we've done we've done a nice job. I know CenterState, and a lot of it's in many companies in some of the attraction projects here. I've used the good life extensively to highlight again, the

quality of life here in in the region and have used it successfully in many of those projects. So, you know, proud of that. I think we all should be proud of that. But I think with the challenges that we continue to face, and we'll face with the build out of micron and all of the add on suppliers and growth in this community. We're going to take a fresh look at it. And that's what we're doing.

Andrew Fish 8:35

We're also seeing, we talked about this term, a little bit "boomerangs" coming back to the community, right? You send the people out and they come back, hence the term boomerang. But we're seeing a little bit more of that we're seeing an influx of population again, do you have any specific stories around that, that you want to share that that are a result of maybe some of this targeted marketing or people that we're seeing coming back to the community?

Tim Kennedy 8:55

Well, you know, boy, actually, one of the things that's interesting about boomerangs, I was looking at the original research getting ready for the podcast, and, you know, something that concepts was new with the research. But one of the things that we heard from companies was that when they are successful in attracting talent from outside the region, most likely they have some connection to service here. They went to school here, they have family here, they grew up here. As a matter of fact, we had one of the companies we did we interviewed told us, you know, matter of fact, if they get a candidate who has no connection to Syracuse don't even bother, right. Don't even bother going after. And this again, this is back in 2018. I think things are changing. I think the research, the current research tells us that too. But you know, that's a that's a telling tale of boomerangs. And I think everybody has a story about a neighbor or a family member or somebody who's come back to Syracuse to work because of the quality of life. We feature. So a lot of that came out of the research. And I think we need to expand the pool beyond boomerangs right now. Right? But we have we did a series where we did interviews and video Use of boomerangs and put that on the site in our shop at advanced media in New York, we've got a number of cases of our talent that have come back to Syracuse and that are boomerangs. And you just see more and more of that in the community. It's it's a good story, what we're going to continue to tell. But I think increasingly we're going to have to rely on on boomerangs to really fill our labor needs. We're talking about boomerangs. But it occurs to me, Kate, from our discussion before the podcast that you indeed are a boomerang. What, what is your boomerang story?

Kate Hammer 10:32

Oh, that is the truth. Yes, after college, I moved out to Chicago, and I was there for a few years. And I thought, it's so important to have this big city experience. And I've got to get out of my hometown and go do something new and fresh. And that's a way to kind of like, prove yourself or really go out and live and do a thing. And what I realized being in a big city, is actually there are a lot of drawbacks there too. It can be really difficult to get around commute is really long street parking is a whole other animal. Whenever we hear anyone complain about parking downtown, it's like nothing compared to anywhere else, right? I mean, so there are just all of these comforts that I remembered from being here in Central New York that I missed. And so

coming back, settling down, having kids having my kids be able to be close to my parents. And so having, you know, that relationship with their grandparents has been so wonderful. Like you said, the four seasons experience here of hills, if you've ever lived somewhere flat, it's just and it's you know, everyone every place has their ups and downs, but being able to go home has some very clear advantages, and I'm so glad that I did.

Tim Kennedy 11:43

Well that is that is the boomerang story. I think anyone who works in a company here who has been actively recruiting knows that that is a common story, why people look to come back to Central New York. For all those great reasons.

Andrew Fish 11:57

We got a lot of growth coming. It's a good place for us to pause and we'll continue that conversation. First, we're going to take a quick break and hear from Taksim wise presenting sponsor NBT Bank.

NBT Bank Sponsor 12:06

Every day at NBT Bank, we focus our business around all the ways we can help yours were large enough to offer leading business and digital solutions, but local enough to ensure personalized one on one service. So turned to NBT Bank for a full range of business solutions like capital and treasury management services, even fraud protection. And see how NBT Bank is just the right size to help you do big things. Visit [NBT bank.com](http://NBTbank.com) to learn more, and start a conversation. Equal housing lender. Member FDIC.

Kate Hammer 12:37

We are back with Tim Kennedy from Advance Media in New York to talk more about The Good Life CNY. Which you hinted that some changes happening? Possibly, right? It's been evolving a bit. And it sounds like there's going to be a relaunch of the brand. Can you tell us more?

Tim Kennedy 12:55

Correct. Yes, I can't really reveal all the secrets. But but we are we just get a few. Yeah, we'll get to a little bit of that later. But yes, we are we've been working extensively for probably the last six to nine months on what do we need to do now the needs in the community in the business community have not changed, they've increased and we think that the site needs to increase to respond to that. And we have some ideas. So what we did was we fielded research again, we wanted to make sure we had data to support what we were going to do. And we went out and I think the you know, the headlines on the research were, you know, a lot of the assumptions or the research that we got in 2018. A lot of it hasn't changed, you know, what is the quality of life? What constitutes the quality of life? Why do people why would they consider moving to Central New York, but there were things we wanted to dig into. And one was specifically about the brand, the brand, the original brand could [life.cny.com](http://life.cny.com) didn't resonate, we heard that from users. And so we wanted to go out and test some ideas about what the brand in a different URL would do. And we tested a number of them. And one of them was this is CNY. So this is [cny.com](http://cny.com). And one of the things we found in the research, which is a little different from

over the five years from the original research that changed was when we asked respondents about whether they you know, in New York, do you know what, you know, what CNY is? Or was exactly the question, but there was really a much better recognition of CNY as a place. So that was encouraging that let us think and we thought okay, so this is seeing why can resonate. So you know, you will see the creative. So we have a map of the state of New York, and we have this is CNY across it. And we think that'll tell the story well, and avoid and get rid of some of that confusion about what exactly is good. We know what the good life is. But it didn't resonate from a brand perspective. So we're gonna change the brand to this is CNY, the heartbeat of New York and we got some cool executions around that. And the other thing that I that we, that we that we believe about the site and we heard from the research is we need more fresh content. And so we're going to produce we're going to still curate the terrific content that we produce. At syracuse.com, in New York and the other places Post Standard, but we're going to generate, we're going to generate fresh content that focuses and tells the story of, you know, the quality of life, why we all live here, why we believe in this place. And we're going to do that with a dedicated research resource. And I think the other thing that we can do is leverage community input a lot better, you know, without going too deep into the woods, the good life, we launched, we curate the content, we push it out there, but we really haven't focused it on folks in central New York to say, hey, put this in your social feeds, add a story here. Help us tell what's your story about the good life in central New York. So we think we can leverage the community more with the new site design, and the new resources we're going to put put against it. But, you know, I think that one, the factors that make up the quality of life here, you know, they haven't really, they haven't changed. If anything, they've gotten better. I think one thing you know, whether it's something that we always talk about appear, and it's a, it's a two edged sword, we have four seasons, people love that it's part of the quality of life, but of course, we have winters. And that scares away many people. And the research showed that, you know, that it's generally the older age demographic that equates sort of winter with bad and in is a negative when it comes to climate. And, you know, I think there may be reasons for that, I think, you know, younger generation is more in tune with climate change, you might say, in what's happening. And I think it's didn't show up in the research. But I think, you know, the four seasons in the climate around here increasingly is going to be an advantage for for our community here.

Andrew Fish 16:34

You know, Tim, it's really perfect timing that we're going through this launch and rebrand. You know, we are, we've been talking about this all year on the podcast, where it's such an important moment in our community, where we've got growth ahead of us where we've got the opportunity for not just the growth from micron, but we're hearing from all of our members from all of our companies, they're looking for people, they're looking to attract talent to this region, we really are going to have to bring that in from the outside. And The Good Life is such a great tool soon to be this as CNY is such a great tool for that, because it allows us to tell that story, right, and allows us to tell a story, promote the jobs that are available on the job board. I think the last time I checked, there was like 5400, job postings that were on that site, which is phenomenal.

Kate Hammer 17:14

Just a few.

Tim Kennedy 17:14

Just a few. And what's interesting of that, but I think that was one of the things in the original research was, we heard from people Well, are there how many jobs are there? So if you're thinking about moving to an area, right, where any area, you want to know, not only is the job I'm going to take right there, but what happens? Where do I go from there? And I think that we have surprised people because the depth of the number of jobs in these well paying very technical roles that we feature on the site, and that was an important from day one was that counter about, hey, how many jobs like that are here? And that's a special thing that we do.

Andrew Fish 17:49

Yeah. And I'm excited for us to, you know, really push this tool even more collaboratively working together, bringing the businesses in this community together, you know, we've we are we CenterState have committed to taking our community guide that we produce each year in partnering with Adance Media to put that on that as a resource. So that really we're again, bringing things together curating them in one place to tell that story. But if you were to kind of say, how could we as a community leverage this tool better? How are we going to spread the word to support this growth? What would you like to see happen from the business community? Like, what's the message you want to send around this initiative?

Tim Kennedy 18:25

Well, the message is, we're going to retool the strategy, we're going to rebrand as this is CNY, we're going to place Katrina Talak, who is one of our most talented journalists at advanced media in New York is going to be our sort of editor in chief, and she's going to run the site, and she's going to create fresh content. And she's going to go out and find stories and talk to the community. And again, tell those fresh stories. And that's where the community, that's where it starts. Right. So that kind of connection to what stories do we need to tell we want to hear, we've always we've had a focus group that we've always use to try to help surface stories, we'll be more aggressive with that. And that's where members come in both sponsors for the site, members of central CenterState CEO and non members alike, but we want to hear those stories. We want to get that input. And then we want you know, we want folks to help share this to see and why on their social networks through their networks, businesses we want we want anyone can use it, anyone can refer to it. If you're trying to recruit somebody right now, you can go out and use this, say, Hey, you want to know more about what it's like to live here, what the schools are like here, what the four seasons are, you know, what is the quality of life, you can use the site, and that's what we want in the day. We'll be out asking for sponsorships or no, we're going to be out asking companies to help support the effort here, what we're doing, and we've sponsorship packages that we have sold since we started the site and sponsorship packages that we'll have for the CNY we'll do a little bit of a reveal. On November 16, yes. At the Economic Champions Luncheon. Yep. So you'll hear more about that we've got some creative that we're working on. You'll see that on the pages of Post Standard and uncertainties.com and in different digital channels. So well, we'll be out promoting the CNY shortly, but the big reveal will be at the CenterState event, I encourage folks to sign up for the CenterState event on the 16th Come out and see us. Well, we'll you'll see some see a booth and some promotion for this

CNY. And then shortly after that, you'll see us out engaged in the community, looking for stories looking for companies that have stories to tell about boomerangs about people that have moved into the community share with us, what is the quality of life from, from your perspective, and we'll share those stories with others.

Andrew Fish 20:34

And then we do and I think one of the things that I've found really important to understand is those sponsorship opportunities. Those are the ways in which we're leveraging this, these stories and pushing them out even further, right. These are what's driving some of those opportunities to market and to promote into these other regions, to these other places where we're attracting this talent back. And so that's why those partnerships are so important. And I'm hoping there's a lot of people that I know, talent is a major issue out there from all of our businesses, we hear about it. So this is a great resource and a great tool for us to really start moving the needle and bringing more people to this region as we continue to grow

Kate Hammer 21:08

Tim, thank you so much for joining us today. It has been so awesome to hear from you.

Tim Kennedy 21:13

Great. Thank you. It's been a pleasure to be here and have the conversation, support and topic. Happy to be here.

Andrew Fish 21:17

Thanks so much.

Kate Hammer 21:18

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Andrew Fish 21:26

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Kate Hammer 21:33

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Andrew Fish 21:38

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Kate Hammer 21:45

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