**TORY JOHNSON: Our next guest is the co-founder of a company that makes a cool and fun product. Now that IdeaPaint is successful, Jeff Avallon is here to tell us about some of the small bumps in the road along the way to getting here. Hey Jeff. JEFF AVALLON: Hey Tory, how are you?

TORY JOHNSON: I'm great, and I love IdeaPaint! So tell us first off, how does it work and how'd you come up with the idea? JEFF AVALLON: Well, [INAUDIBLE] thank you very much for having me here today. I'm incredibly excited to be here. But we also brought some paint for you.

So I'm equally as excited to see what you think of to use your IdeaPaint for, because that's one of the coolest things for me, just to see how everybody ends up using the product. TORY JOHNSON: All right, fair enough. Tell me. How'd you come up with the idea? JEFF AVALLON: Well actually, IdeaPaint's story is very fun.

It's a true college dorm room startup story. It started out of Babson College, a school just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. And the idea came from one of my best friends, John Goscha, was in a study room in one of the dorms, brainstorming some business ideas with some other students.

And what they were doing was tacking up a bunch of Post-It note sheets of paper all over the walls, just to create plenty of space for them to put all their ideas up all over the place and generally create a dynamic work environment that was more team-oriented. And after doing that and seeing how awesome it was to write over the entire wall, the concept of IdeaPaint was born.

So fast forward about five years to our launch in June of 2008. There were two product development labs that we worked with that called it impossible. And then finally, the third one that we worked with created the product that we currently have today, which is the highest performance dry erase writing surface on the market, and also the most flexible.

And since the launch a year and a half ago in June of' 08, I'm real happy to say that we've done two real cool things, which is one, we've had over 10,000 successful installations worldwide and growing every day. And also, we've completed the development of our second generation water-based product along with 10 new color lines as well.

TORY JOHNSON: Amazing. And I know that for any small business owner, for any entrepreneur, you can smile now at those successes, and you can also smile a little bit and reflect back on perhaps some of the growing pains in the early days, which are I think inevitable for most startups.

And I know one of the things that you said was that you guys were guilty of lacking focus. And by that, we don't mean you didn't know what to do, but in some ways you were so excited, you had a lot of ideas to potentially pursue, and you had to figure out which ones to go with.

JEFF AVALLON: Yeah, you know what? One big challenge for us was exactly that, is focus. We had so many different customer segments we could go to, and also so many different ways we could get to them. It was almost daunting, figuring out where to start. So to articulate at one key point that I think is a takeaway for all entrepreneurs is knowing when to start building the business versus planning it.

And I think the planning and the market research and everything is extremely important up front. And you really need to know your customers and your markets. But there comes a point where you just have to make a decision and go and focus on that, and get the business going.

TORY JOHNSON: And just move on. I know also though, sometimes when you're moving on and you're so involved in all the day to day stuff, that it's often difficult or challenging to plan ahead for the future, sort of who's looking at the long haul. So how'd that play out for you?

How did you guys figure out, how we're going to just do the day to day to get moving here, but also not lose sight of what we need to do long term? JEFF AVALLON: Yeah, one thing that was really exciting for us was after so many years of development, it got a great reception on the market.

And that was with work, school, and home. And the business really started to grow quickly. And I think that's every entrepreneur's dream, is to get that business that just starts to take off. We were sitting there, very focused on creating a successful business with that first channel that we launched into.

And I think at some points, we lost a little bit of sight of where we were going in the future. Not that we didn't know, we had it figured out. But we needed to do a better job of knowing where we were going and planning the infrastructure for that growth, because there's no way you can keep up with that high growth startup that you always tried to get to if you don't build the infrastructure along the way to make sure it's able to happen.

TORY JOHNSON: That includes hiring people, knowing who your team is, not just thinking that you can do it all by yourself. JEFF AVALLON: Oh, Absolutely. I think the team is one of the most important things. And getting the right people on board is really critical. Even if it takes a little bit longer to do so, at the end of the day, the team is what makes the business.

And the team is what's going to make you enjoy it as well. TORY JOHNSON: Absolutely. So when you think about that long term growth in that planning, tell me what does the future hold for IdeaPaint? Where do you see it, thinking back to that kid in college who had sort of stars in your eyes, where is it going in the future?

JEFF AVALLON: With IdeaPaint, one thing that's been so cool for us is that we don't see ourselves as launching a new product or launching a dry erase surface or a paint. We're launching an entirely new product category, because it didn't exist on the market before we came up with it.

And so one thing is staying constantly on top of the development around our product lines to make sure we're always at the forefront of our product category. And then from there, it's just expanding our distribution channels both domestically and internationally, and coming up with other products that fit those channels as well.

TORY JOHNSON: Are all the surfaces in your home and your office covered with IdeaPaint? JEFF AVALLON: We repaint everything, it's unbelievable. We have our countertops painted. We painted every wall many different colors. We've even painted mannequins, which are kind of cool. TORY JOHNSON: For anybody who wants to learn more, the website is ideapaint.com.

And I know that you can't help but be inspired by all of the creative uses of the paint. NARRATOR: ABC News Now, good to know.**