



# GlobalPDX Podcast

## Season 2 Episode 2 Transcript

*With Tony Andersen*

### **Andrea Johnson**

Hello, and welcome to the GlobalPDX podcast. As we kick off the New Year, and try to navigate (both personally and professionally) the ever-changing world we find ourselves in, we are excited to continue this podcast, and provide connection, content, and support to Oreon's Hub of Global Changemakers. My name is Andrea Johnson, and I'm the Chair of the GlobalPDX Advisory Board, and the Executive Director at *Green Empowerment*.

In today's *Speaking Change Podcast*, I'm joined by Tony Anderson. Tony has worked on some of Oregon's, and the West Coast's, toughest policy and business issues during his nearly 15-year career in Strategic Communications, Public Affairs, and Marketing. Tony is the Strategic Communications Director for *The State of Oregon Wildfire Recovery and Cleanup* effort following the September 2020 wildfires that devastated Oregon communities throughout the state. I'm so excited to have Tony here to speak with our audience today and welcome!

### **Tony Andersen**

Thank you Andrea, thanks so much for having me, and happy New Year!

### **Andrea**

You too! So, in thinking about your background and our GlobalPDX Audience, I feel like so much of your kind of nonlinear, maybe meandering, career path really reminds me a lot of folks I know and people in our hub of Global change makers. So maybe you could tell us a bit more about your trajectory and how you ended up in your current role. That sounds so interesting and kind of unique.

### **Tony**

Absolutely. It's funny how resumes and backgrounds and context and everything that goes into it and how it strikes different people in different ways because in my mind right like I'm looking at my back on going to, "Hey, every one of those roles had a very clear connection to the following role, or to the bigger picture". And in that sense I would say my background is very most rooted as a public policy and government professional. In college I



majored in Public Policy, it's called *Planning Public Policy and Management* at U of O (Go 3PM!). And then I got a minor with a concentration in creative writing. So definitely made my parents happy (happier) when I added that public policy major to my initial English and creative writing concentration.

What happened was that that public policy and creative writing background just naturally became sort of a government PR career. I started in a policy role at Metro. While I was at Metro I was working on my masters full time. So I was a busy mid-to-late 20-something trying to get that masters out of the way, working hard, and then going to work during the day. And I got my masters degree in strategic communication and writing. So I was really able to pair my creative side and my love for writing and love for reading and the English language with my extreme interest in public policy and trying to make the world a better place, however I can. So my comms career really started in 2012-2013 during the 2013 legislative session, where I was able to work on some education reform work and initiatives. Oregon had received some federal funding to create an early learning division within the Oregon Department of Education. So it was really interesting stuff to work on. I had never personally been involved in education policy but what I did provide was a firm understanding of the public policy process, strategy, and the communications that needed to happen in order to make early learning education successful in Oregon.

And then I jumped into my true passion: natural resources. So really my career has been rooted in that natural resource policy sphere, and that includes everything from forestry (as public affairs director and public information officer at the *Oregon Department of Forestry*), I worked on environmental public health issues at the *Oregon Health Authority* (so primarily dealing with air quality and water), I was a strategic Communications Director at the *Portland Water Bureau* (so you know Bull Run Watershed, one of the most pristine watersheds in the country, providing nearly a million people with their drinking water), and now as the Strategic Communications Director for the *Wildfire Recovery Effort* (it sort of packages that full spectrum of natural resource issues into my career). So it's definitely been interesting, definitely seen a lot in Oregon politics, and the Oregon policy realm, and it's been really interesting and fun being able to work on all these different issues.

### **Andrea**

Yeah the way you just said it now makes it sound not at all meandering, and fairly straight forward. So thats really interesting!

### **Tony**

Well you know our brief move to Colombia happened to throw the natural resource trajectory off a little bit, but it was definitely great.



## Andrea

But strategic communications still has a piece of all of that. But we will get back to Columbia at some point. I think maybe you could explain a little bit more about this wildfire recovery. Give us some context about the scale and scope of that, maybe you could explain a little bit more about this Wildfire Recovery, give us some context about the scale and scope of that, and kind of what you've been focusing on since you joined the state working on that.

## Tony

Absolutely, so Oregon is no stranger to Wildfire. We've had super large wildfires in the earlier 20th Century throughout the history of Oregon. There have been numerous fire seasons where more than million Acres have burned. As Public Affairs Director and the hard department of forestry 2015 morning million acres burned that year. What hasn't happened in Oregon wildfire history (at least in modern wildfire history) is destruction to Oregon communities on such a massive broad-scale as what we experienced in 2020. So what happened is: immediately following Labor Day weekend in 2020 the convergence of drought conditions, high pressure winds, and then just wildfire-prone conditions all sort of converged to create one of Oregon's worst natural disasters in history. 8 - 9 major wildfires (those are the major ones there's others that happened throughout the state) 8 - 9 major wildfires claimed nine lives, it burned more than million acres, and it destroyed nearly 4,000 - 5,000 homes and businesses throughout Oregon.

So it became a National Emergency event where FEMA came in and supported the efforts, they are also providing funds to help reimburse the effort. And so just an incredibly tragic, incredibly unfortunate event, and it's one that folks are still coming back from recovering from to this day. So the first major step of that work is, once the smoke settled, once an inventory was taken of the damage, the critical First Step was really diving in and thinking about what needed to happen to help these communities, help his fire-ravaged, fire destroyed, fire impacted communities. And that first half is really you know cleaning and clearing the debris, and the ash, and the toxic materials that were left behind from these fires Statewide. And the other step is hundreds of miles of highways that have both been closed with standing dead or dying hazzard trees that were lining the state highways as well. So these trees need to be assessed and evaluated and also removed in order to get to Highways re-open so people could travel these highways are moving forward. To do that Governor Kate Brown & the *Wildfire Economic Recovery Council* created a series of task forces. The most active task force being the *Debris Management Task Force* which I am the Strategic Communications Director for. It launched immediately in October, that first phase



was really *functionality*, right. Getting the highways back open, removing some of the toxic materials from some of these home sites, and then moving towards phase 2: the long term clean up and the longer term recovery process.

We were able to bring together some of the state's best experts from Oregon Office of emergency management, Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of transportation including the governor's office (all sort of happening under the umbrella of the Governor's office). So for the Debris Management Task Force we have had all of that expertise around the table. ODOT is leading it just based on the massive contracts that have to be managed throughout this process. I've come in and been able to serve that external communications function. Obviously working with 8 different counties, 4,000 different households, cities and towns alike (at the local level who have been impacted by these fires) is definitely no small undertaking. So we really wanted to make sure that folks had the information that they needed, they were able to plug in to this work, and that property owners and renters alike had the information they needed both to be safe and to know where to turn while this process was underway.

## **Andrea**

You know I think one of the things that is interesting always about speaking to people who have such different perspectives on this is, you know obviously people in Oregon were aware of the wildfires and were impacted (either directly or indirectly) but I don't know if everybody really appreciates the level of effort going into the cleanup, and how much it's continued. Interestingly right after we were introduced in December, at the end of 2021, it came across my Twitter feed a story about a couple whose house was being cleared with some debris (and I believe is pretty recently). And it was a very darling kind of personal story about this Heart-Shaped-Rock. And it was very personal to their family. I don't know if you know that story specifically, but it was interesting like you don't hear about things sometimes, and then you meet one person, (I met you in preparation for this podcast) and then that came across my Twitter feed and I was like, "Oh! This is what Tony was talking about!" There are all these individual stories. So maybe you could tell us a little bit more about some of that work that the task Force's is really doing and maybe that story or another one you're familiar with.

## **Tony**

Yeah, yeah. Well first I would plug our news blog [www.debriscleanupnews.com](http://www.debriscleanupnews.com) to check out play stories. And this Heart-Shaped-Rock just for the listeners: and it happened to be a river rock that was found, that was in the shape of a heart. And the father of the family had given that to his wife to help, you know, show his love for her, and as a symbol



of their time together and of their marriage. And he eventually ended up putting that into their chimney. He was a stonemason and (I don't know what the correct terminology is for placing a stone into a chimney but lets say he "plastered it") he plastered the stone into the chimney and it was front and center in their property.

Now when the wildfires came through it, their entire home was destroyed by the chimney was left standing and they were able to find that rock and deliver that. And the story of him receiving it before Christmas Day was just an amazing sort of wrap-up of this work and a symbol of Hope for what *can be* for these communities. So many touching stories, so many amazing experiences and stories that these Wildfire survivors have trusted us with right? They trusted us with their livelihoods, and the recovery process. And these amazing moments in their lives that help provide hope for the State of Oregon. And the Heart-Shaped-Rock story is just one example of that. I think (1) it's a testament to how we have really tried to root empathy and support and partnership in our Communications and operation. You know, it took our on the ground what we call our on-scene Incident Commander Drake McKee just a matter of moments to know when he heard about this, when he heard about this from one of the property owners, that he was going to prioritize this for that day. You know he was going to make sure that this family was able to find this Heart-Shaped-Rock that was so important to them and deliver it. And you know I just I encourage everyone to hop on that website, take a look read the story, [watch the video](#), because it's really touching and it's a testament to how even given all of the trauma in the challenges of the past year/year-and-a-half that there that there is hope, and that there are some some great things happening in these communities for Wildfire survivors.

So there was not a dry eye when we shared that video, I mean everybody was watching it and it hit everybody emotionally on an emotional level and in a different way. And what I appreciate about being able to share that story of the end of the year, is that the operation is pretty much done now. There's 12 home sites left to clear, and that'll probably go a little bit further in 2022, you know as you can imagine each individual home site is very different and they have very different needs. So for the remaining home sites we are working with the property owners to help get those wrapped up but the majority of the work is complete. And I think what the Heart-Shaped-Rock story helped us all do is to realize that it's so easy and emergency response Communications and emergency response work to go down the checklist, right. Of talking points, and press releases, and these base-level things that you need to do, and often what gets lost in the statistics is the people! There are people behind each one of those percentages, each one of those numbers. And the Heart-Shaped-Rock story really helped ground us in that. It helped remind us of that: wow! we have provided the critical first step for Oregon, we have worked with the communities to help them be able to get that place for now they can rebuild and



many are rebuilding. And behind every one of those statistics is a person, and behind every one of those statistics is a story. Often accompanied with tragedy and heart ache, and tough times, but also with hope.

### **Andrea**

I really appreciate you highlighting that story because the level of devastation can feel overwhelming. And to the point about human interest, like the individuals behind statistics, I think that's something a lot of GlobalPDX think about in our work. We want to scale our work, we want to have a certain impact, but a lot of it is about people. This role obviously sounds like it has been pretty incredible. You are dealing with a lot of different things, but what are some lessons learned that you have about storytelling when communities are really suffering from a disaster. You mentioned some things like trauma, destruction, and loss. So what are the lessons you have learned around storytelling in this role?

### **Tony**

I think first and foremost is: Asking rather than telling. In any kind of operation like this you have to share information so you have to use that basic public information playbook. But the flip side of that is: you don't have to stand atop your government platform and *just tell*. My priority for my comms team was: let's get to know each and every one of these people behind these statistics. Let's get to know these communities, these property owners, let's get to know these people who have been so tragically impacted by these fires. Through those organic, real, genuine relationships came stories. And came real relationships. I mean some folks on our taskforce were receiving "Happy Holidays" texts, and "Happy New Years" texts. Some of the on-scene instant commanders have been talking with some of the wildfire survivors about new children being born in these communities, and it is really touching to see some of these folks take that vested interest in these communities. And for these communities to trust us. To both share with us, and also trust us to share their story.

Once the operation was moving, once communities saw that we were there to help, we were able to really start learning about what they had been through, and how they had navigated it. Through sharing that with us, I really saw our ability to help share their story, and to use our platform as a microphone for their story. I saw that as almost a healing process for everybody involved (for everybody involved). I also saw that form partnerships. I saw us being able to share a video of somebody's amazing story, I also saw that being able



to help a variety of outcomes that resulted from this work. For example we were able to work with the Mackenzie School District to help get their school open sooner than expected. We were able to work with the Kane's Marina in Detroit to help get that open by Memorial Day. So through relationships, through storytelling, we were able to help build those bonds that helped make this work happen and hopefully in the end it has created stronger connections with these communities.

### **Andrea**

Yeah I really love your emphasis in helping communities tell their own stories. I think that's something we think about quite a bit in fundraising work or in other work that we are trying to do to potentially influence how people are thinking about some of these issues. But it's often not our own story to tell. So how do you help people tell their own stories, that's beautiful.

### **Tony**

If I can just add something real quick to that, I have to give big props to GlobalPDX. I remember hearing the "Telling Stories with Empathy" luncheon (in 2019). And that has really stuck with me. One, it's a testament to the programming of GlobalPDX. And Two, just how that sticks with you when you are maneuvering a traumatic experience, and experiences with trauma-informed communications.

### **Andrea**

That's a really nice shout-out: Caliopy Glaros of [Philanthropy without Borders](#) provided that training. I attended, I remember some of the other people in the room. It was *so useful* to center people, and their stories, and that dignity piece. So maybe that's a good segue: You have been writing about these issues on the west coast for 15 years, you have all of these different experiences that now you have shown me how they are all very connected, how has this story-telling from this experience been different, and how have you seen the narrative change and grow related to climate disasters, people, strategic communications on policy issues... what is different now?

### **Tony**

That is a great question. In Oregon Specifically?

### **Andrea**

Across the west coast, or overall, however you want to frame it.





## **Tony**

I think a couple of things. I think for better or for worse, things are more polarized these days. The reality that that Polarization has always existed, is a fair statement. I think now it's a little more front and center. What used to be discussions around the urban/rural divide, said in jest maybe, now is blatantly front-and-center at the table. The politics that come with that, and all of the other things that come with that. I think that polarization is unfortunate because it continues to put us back in our corners. When I would really love to see more and more folks coming together around all of these tough issues, right? But I also think that in the Oregon policy landscape, I am really starting to see this idea of public policy NOT being a siloed monolith (if that makes any sense). People are starting to see the interconnectedness of all of these different policy issues. It's not just transportation for transportation's sake. But transportation and climate have a very strong connection. How we manage our forest and how we think about wildfire resiliency that connects to economic development, and how communities are growing (or not growing). Land use, thinking about how our communities are built and how they develop. Obviously there's connections to wildfires there, and live-ability and affordability. All of these things in our day to day lives that we see, as we step out of our door, and bike/ride/drive to the store. We know that all of those different policy issues are there. But for us in the government world it's so easy for us to get stuck in our lane (to get stuck in your one policy issue). What I have seen in the past decade/15 years of being primarily in the public sector is an understanding of how it all works together, how it all interconnects. And that's a personal interest of mine, a personal passion of mine: trying to tell the story of individual policy issues and try to connect them to everything else that is happening. In my mind, that's the only way that we are going to arrive at a successful outcome. But I think other folks who may not have been engaged in the past are starting to see that too. And that's pretty cool! I think it's the result of more dynamic communications, I think it's the result of people being exposed to some of the positive things that government can do, that government can provide. But also being aware of some of the shortcomings of government as well. Folks are starting to see how certain issues connect with others. It's definitely an interesting time to work in government, that's for sure.

## **Andrea**

I think one of the things you highlighted in there is that this divide is not just an Oregon issue. We are seeing it nationally, we are seeing it globally. The interconnection between social justice, racial justice, environmental justice, climate change, we see that play out in these ways you are working first hand with. We see it play out in different ways,





but we are seeing that play out but across the globe. We have an opportunity in Oregon to dismantle some of those silos, and do it right and interconnect those things, because it could potentially be an example as well

### **Tony**

Absolutely and I do think that that is an opportunity for Oregon. I think sometimes, well I will speak for Portland anyways, I think sometimes it's easy for Portland (and Oregon) to draw a boundary around itself and forget that it is a part of the larger global landscape. Exactly to your point, Oregon is one of the largest exporters on the West Coast. The international trade conversation in Oregon is strong. I think Oregon can continue doing a service for itself by connecting to those global issues, seeing Oregon's role in the broader Global landscape. Because there's a lot yet to connect with.

### **Andrea**

For sure. So as you are thinking about how a lot of the wildfire recovery work is kind of coming to a close, what's really struck you about working in those wildfires that made you think differently, or some kind of take away from your experience that isn't just about the communication side.

### **Tony**

Man, that is a great question. I think ultimately it's so easy in the PR world to lose track of who your audience is. You may have an understanding of who your audience is (you have your market research and you have your crosstabs in your polls that show how a certain demographic is going to respond or react or connect with a certain message you have all this information in this data). But what gets lost in that, as I mentioned earlier, it's just the individual stories. And how having the information that they need, being able to see and connect with their neighbor's story and being able to use storytelling in both a way that helps them process and navigate trauma, but also heal and move forward. I think that's been one of my biggest takeaways.

Because until you experience that, and until you experience these folks who have been through so much, and experienced so much trauma, until you experience that and are really forced to think about how you're going to communicate both with them, and about them, you don't really have an idea. It's not something that can be taught in a public relations class, it's not something that a training can give you a playbook for. It's one of those things you have to experience. And I think that experience helps inform both future work (it provides the playbook for future work) and also you get to know some really great



people. You come Tto meet some really great people and form some really good relationships that hopefully we carry and have throughout our lifetimes.

### **Andrea**

For our listeners, you obviously have a lot of expertise in public communications paste and strategic communication so do you think there's any tools or tricks or things that you feel like organizations under-utilize, when it comes to being strategic about our Communications?

### **Tony**

I love this question because I think sometimes “Strategic Communications” has become this buzzword, right? And a lot of people just throw it out there when they think...

### **Andrea**

Oh yeah, I totally do that, by the way!

### **Tony**

I do it too! It's like, okay why do we need the qualifier of “strategic”, you know? Shouldn't communications and its own right have a purpose, to get us to an outcome. I think for me, what I've noticed is that sometimes in the effort to be a strategic Communicator, folks chase the next shiny thing, you know? They immediately jump into a situation and they say, “Oh we need this and we need that and we need to be on Tik-Tok...” and that's not strategic Communications, right? I mean it's part of the Strategic communication conversation, but it's not strategic Communications in its own right. I picture strategic communication as being essentially a tool box. If I can draw an infographic for the listeners right now: on one side you would have your challenge. And then you would have an arrow pointing to an outcome (how are you gpoing to address that challenge? How are you going to turn the dial on an issue? How are you going to deliver information to the folks that need it?) any number of things. And in the middle of the challenge and the outcome is a strategic communication tool box, and it's going to be different for every challenge, and for every situation. Sometimes, if we're going to be connecting with a teenage demographic or (sorry, this is going to date me...) a 25-26 and under demographic, we obviously need to be on Tik-Tok. We need to be where our audiences is at. So strategic communications is really: zeroing in on your audience, who they are, understanding them, understanding the stories and the content that they want to hear in and read about and interact with and then working backwards to think about what tools are going to reach them.



I think to the detriment of some, I think some folks are just now (especially in the government sphere), are just now hopping on social media as though that is the new shiny thing and unfortunately that's 10 years too late. Folks are now starting to use video and that's a new shiny thing. But it's not a new shiny thing! It's just a part of the strategic communication toolbox, it's what viewers/audiences often connect best with. Heart-Shaped-Rock story is one example. We can write 5,000 words of text and that in no way, shape, or form is going to capture the father of that family opening the box during the holidays and seeing the Heart-Shaped-Rock and the tears that formed, and the family members standing around him. I think as communicators, as marketers, as folks in the global development arena, it's all just about being open to try new things, to experiment, to take risks. Sometimes those tools are going to work, and sometimes they aren't. But I see strategic communications as an opportunity to open up the toolbox and try a lot of different things.

### **Andrea**

So not to change courses too much, but we mentioned Colombia earlier, I think that's one of the things on the resume like you were talking about in the intro. So, what happened? Why did you end up moving to Colombia? Tell us more!

### **Tony**

I am very lucky to be married to a Colombian-American Woman, Maria Ellis. She has taken me and taught me a lot about Colombian culture. She has taken me to Colombia prior to moving 5 different times. As a mid-west farm boy, I was blown away! I was blown away to really learn and adopt, and be integrated into Colombian culture. So in 2016-17 my wife and I started talking about opportunities to move to South America. We said hey, if we don't do it now, we are never going to do it. We didn't have the luxury of traveling abroad after college, even though that would be my one advice for people listening: when you graduate, save up money, do whatever you have got to do to travel abroad right after college. We decided to make that move in 2016-17, my wife had a consulting opportunity to take a trade mission down from Portland to Bogota, Colombia. And I was offered a position with a real estate start-up that was founded by 4 different Americans that I happened to connect with on LinkedIn. We started chatting for 6 months, and the rest is history.

They offered me a position as their Director of Marketing and Public Relations. So all of those opportunities converged at once. So all of those opportunities converged at once, I will never forget. It was a rainy February afternoon, we were sitting across the table from one another, I had just been offered the position with the real estate start-up down there, my wife had been approached about a trade-mission down there, and we said, "Well, now or never! It's time to do it, it's time to make the move!" And so we blew up our life, we sold



pretty much 3/4 of what we owned, and put the rest of the storage. I had a year-long contract, and my wife had to be there until the end of this trade Mission. We said, “We're not going to be here any shorter than 6 months to a year, and we're not going to be here any longer than 3 years”. And so all in total we were in Columbia, lived and worked in Colombia for about a year-and-a-half, and I'm proud to say that I'm a card-carrying resident of Columbia.

### **Andrea**

That's great! I think one of the things that's interesting about this is that it kind of disrupts a little bit of the old-fashioned narrative about a career in terms of “when is the right time” like sometimes there's never a right time and sometimes it's very personal, like your story was much more personal “right time” and obviously you've been able to launch into some really exciting work after Colombia. So i feel like that to me is a really powerful thing to share with some of our younger audience who is wondering, when's the right time? Like you'll find the right time but also say “yes” to the opportunity when it is in front of you, right?

### **Tony**

Well said, well said! you and I think you know if you're going to do that you have to assume some level of risk. you have to go out on a limb, and and commit. I think no doubt about it, when we moved I'll never forget, I went down there 3 months before my wife and then she stayed down there 3 months longer when I accepted a new position back up here in Portland. I'll never forget leaving my wife at PDX on the terminal, I was shaking. I mean I was *shaking*. Everything under the Sun is going through my head: am I blowing up my career? Are we blowing up our lives? You know, is there going to be a place to come back to if this goes horribly wrong? And all those things. But you don't grow as a professional or as a person (you know the little harder and their mid-to-late thirties doing it than winter resilient and have few less responsibilities in your early twenties). But to this day I still, I'm so glad we did it, it's so many Lessons Learned so many things that I took away from it.

### **Andrea**

What are some of those things that you learned from that time that you carry with you still that have improved, or influenced how you think about work and life now?

### **Tony**

First and foremost and you know I think this if we're going to create like a bar chart of most important lessons and then some the secondary lessons: *not sweating the small*



*stuff* is like Far and Away the biggest lesson. Colombia is an amazing country, a beautiful place, but it's still developing in a lot of ways. And our U.S. American standards of what works and what doesn't and the processes that we're used to, that is extremely extremely challenged when you move to a place like Columbia (or any developing country for that matter).

I'll never forget some of the stories of especially working down there trying to tell folks how we would do things in the U.S. right? Like "Hey, this would be really efficient if we just did it this way" or "Have you thought about tweaking this?" And I'll never forget the very polite Colombian way of nodding their head and saying, "Okay thank you, thank you for that". And then as we were there longer that politeness sort of wore off and you would hear folks just say (in Spanish or they would say it to one another thinking that I couldn't fully understand), "Yeah, we don't really care about how your process is and how things worked at home. We are here and we have our own history and we have our own context." And, by the way, some things work better in Columbia. I mean I think it's a very sort of tired stereotype to think about a U.S. American go to a developing country and that we bring all these ideas that are just going to work magically and perfectly and not gain any understanding, or better ways of doing things, in return. I think that's what I really took away. One is just *you can't sweat the small stuff*, you'll go absolutely insane you have to just roll with things

### **Andrea**

I love that. So lets flip that question and think about it now coming back to Portland. I have done that "Re-Entry" is what they refer to in Peace Corps. So how hard was it when you came back to Portland or maybe what's something that surprised you the most?

### **Tony**

I feel like we could have a whole podcast just on that! Folks that have lived abroad come together and talking about that re-entry because it is brutal. It is absolutely brutal. The range of emotions that are happening, and everything that you are processing. And you know your friends get tired of you being that guy around the table always talking about your experience abroad. I think friends have about a month in them of listening to the stories, then you start seeing their eyes glaze over losing attention. I think what surprised me, living abroad and living in Colombia, not only did I get to learn a lot and see my wife in a new way (I got to meet the Colombian-version of my wife who doesn't have to code switch constantly in Portland). And that was a really special experience. But then when you move back you have to re-acclimate to "what-was" and the place. I think, aside from mourning, having to leave the experience, having to turn the page and write a new chapter, was my



complete lack of patience for first world problems. I just had no patience for it. And obviously you can't sit in a board room or a meeting room or in a social situation and start calling people out on it. It's not going to work, you are going to be that person no one wants to talk to pretty quick. But I think any major city with large concentrations of wealth and privilege you are going to find that moving back to. I think Portland is very unique in its response to first world problems, I won't get in to specific policy issues but seeing strong reactions to *what color a building is going to be painted* or things like that just don't even register when you are living in a place where where families are making \$250 a month and basic infrastructure are provided to only a few. I think working through that and applying the lessons learned of *don't sweat the small stuff* and *live and let live*, trying to take my own advice and my own lessons learned helped me navigate re-entry. But man, those first 6 months to a year is tough.

### **Andrea**

It is, and I love what you are saying and I think our GlobalPDX Members and our audience are folks who have had some sort of international experience. And I do think that point about resiliency and having a respect and appreciation for different ways of doing things can really make us successful and can help us define success differently.

### **Tony**

Yeah!

### **Andrea**

So last question before we sign off for the day, you have talked quite a bit about some hard things you have done in your strategic communications work, especially the devastating wildfires most recently. What keeps you hopeful and motivated?

### **Tony**

I think what keeps me motivated is this idea that we can do things differently. We can do things better, and we have the license to do that. What gets me excited is thinking about innovative new ways of doing things. And that will always have a shelf life. That will always be something that we need to collectively come together on. Yeah, it is going to be a little messy. Change is a hard thing, change is a messy thing. But I think never resting on our laurels, never throwing in the towel. Thinking about how we can change, innovate, make things better. Even in my most cynical, jaded days, knowing that we can all contribute to making things better, we can all contribute to innovation. I don't mean to sound like a cheesy Apple commercial, I don't mean to sound like a Tech Guru but I think we all have a



responsibility to continue staying engaged with how to do things better and how to innovate

### **Andrea**

I love that. Tony, thank you so much for being a global changemaker and for joining me today.

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