

Lucas: Welcome to Bridge the Gap Podcast to senior living podcast with Josh and Lucas. This is another exciting show. We want to welcome a good friend of ours and one that's so many in our audience know we want to welcome Micah Hunt. Welcome to the program.

Micah: Oh man, this is an honor and a privilege and I'm humbled to be asked to be a part of this.

Lucas: Well, you are a very humble guy in general. Anybody that knows you for two seconds understands that, and you're a guy who's passionate about older adults and passionate about their wellbeing. You know, you have like a laundry list of titles; one of them being a BTG ambassador; a brand new ambassador to the podcast. Which we're really excited that you're bringing your energy, you're bringing your thought leadership, you're bringing your ideas and your passion in the industry. You're also the director of Senior Support Services, The Vision Agents, Seniors Trust, and your moniker is "the geriatric whisper".

Micah: I like what you did there.

Lucas: I know it, it's incredible. Uh, you have this career that you've built and you're an incredible networker. You've built a great network and you really care about connecting people and educating people and then helping older adults. Why do you do all these things? Where does all this passion stem from? What's the story behind becoming the geriatric whisper?

Micah: So, first of all, that was not my quote. That was actually a family of a senior that I was helping. So I did not just go out there and go, I'm going to call myself this. It was a senior family I was helping and we were getting into the nitty gritty and the kids just kind of were throwing up their hands. And they're like, we've told him 5,000 ways, five different ways times so forth, what we need to do. And then I go in and I say exactly what they said, and the parent goes, that's true. And they're like, I just said that and they're like, you must be like a way you must be a geriatric whisper. And I was like, ooh, I'm going to take that. Do you mind if I take it? They're like, sure you deserve it. So, it's not me. I'm not cocky or conceited by any means. But I guess, my path in senior living, it's very unique. I had a discussion this morning with somebody else and they provided it very well in a word. It was accidental. I actually started out as a lifeguard, that was my career path before senior living and I got my EMT license because I was working for a waterpark and there were some changes going on and it wasn't a right fit for me. So I decided to take certification and go into an EMT service and work for a medical transport company. And I started doing private duty, like nursing home transfers, hospitals, having a patient in the back of the ambulance, 15 minute transfers to dialysis, long distance trips and I think those were the ones that sparked a fire in me. I took two patients, one to Albany, New York, from Virginia, and one to Athens, Alabama from Virginia. And to kind of culminate this, I used to take dementia patients and Alzheimer's patients to doctor's appointments and so forth, but they were 15 minutes, maybe a five minute transfer and we would just go check the box, they have dementia; Medicare is going to pay for this. So it didn't really

register with me and I would talk with these seniors. They had some amazing stories, so much information to share and they just wanted somebody to listen. So when I took these two transports that were long distance, they were Alzheimer's dementia patients, 13 hours in an ambulance, in a box with nowhere to go, no way to redirect every five seconds I was redirecting this person. And I was like, why, what is going on? Like, why do I have to say the same thing over and over and over telling them not to take the straps off. We're almost there, 12 hours, an hour in going, we're almost there. We have 12 hours to go. And one of the way back, I just was like, what's why is that? And then I met our local chapters executive director and we had a conversation and I just became passionate. Just like a fire lit in me, like this is not right. Like, this is not something that should be happening and there needs to be more out there. And then I think that's where I just started exploding and I just had a passion, I wanted to do everything and anything to learn more about seniors, about healthcare, about senior living. And I just, the rest just kind of evolved from there, but that's where it started.

Josh: That is super, super cool, man. Thanks for sharing that story so that I have a lot of questions that just popped into my head. I don't want to chase too much of a rabbit here because I know we've got other questions, we've got a lot to cover because there's a lot about you that we want the audience to hear about. But what you just described of being in this position and just being faced with the moment of like, what do you do and asking yourself why, I have to believe that there are people out there at this very moment, just a few minutes ago, I hear firetrucks and ambulances go by and all this kind of stuff. We hear those all the time here in the city, but people are faced with this. I mean, Alzheimer's and dementia, I mean, it's such a growing disease and people are probably in your position asking those same questions. What do you think are some of the things that we can do to help? I don't know if the term is to better educate people or better equip people that are out in society. These are, we're talking outside of senior living communities here. We're not talking about a senior living community, but outside just the general public and first responders to equip them to better understand and know how to communicate. Do you, or have you guys thought a lot about that? Are you doing anything about that?

Micah: Probably should, there should be more of that. I know that there's in Virginia we actually have a police officer that is pushing that. He's actually working with dementia practitioners, people that specialize that and have certifications too, like Tepasnow, to work with law enforcement to train them in how to do it. We also have an organization called project lifesaver. So they are trying to train them and give them more insights that just because they're acting this way, doesn't mean that that's who they are; that's just the disease. So there are organizations that are developing it and pushing it and educating law enforcement because it is becoming more and more prevalent. I think some of the harder things are getting them to understand that when you're looking at an 89 year old individual, they're not 89 when they're looking at you, they're probably in their thirties. So you're having to go, I'm dealing with an 89 year old, but what, they're not looking at me like we're right now in 2021, they're looking at me as if we were in 1960 and how do we correct them? How do we redirect them? And I think a lot of it is just patience because a lot of people, especially in the fire department or law enforcement, it's go, go, go. But if you take the time and be patient and really ask the right questions and go, okay, this isn't making sense there's something else going on here and look at the person, not the situation. That's where I think the challenges in teaching that.

Josh: Well, I think that's really good insight. So to our listeners that are hearing this, I think this is a very valid conversation that we want to continue having. So I'm glad that you brought up that piece of your story because you know, our listeners, if you know of great organizations out there that are doing these kinds of things to equip first responders, and we'd love to hear from you. So make sure you message us at [BTGvoice.com](http://BTGvoice.com). But let's continue on with the conversation because for our YouTubers that are watching this online and those that are not, you've got to go check it out because this beautiful purple suit, that you are famous for wearing all kinds of cool suits, like let's go ahead and transition the conversation. Now you've got this great network, a growing network and that's actually how we found you because you've got such an awesome online reputation and network. Talk to us like modern day you've, you've kind of stimulated us to know how you got into this. What was that aha moment, but where has your journey taking you and what does a day in the life of Micah look like now?

Micah: So, you know, I'm a big advocate for networking, connecting especially more so now. And I think, you know, pre COVID, I was meeting with people, working with seniors, helping them downsize, helping them transition into retirement communities as a free service. And so when COVID hit all the retirement communities were shutting down. A lot of you can relate to how that felt and in the day of the life now, I've decided that because I had such a large network on LinkedIn, especially LinkedIn, I probably wasn't the only one feeling like, what do we do now? Like how, you know, trade shows, conferences, everything was going on hold or just canceling, like, I don't know what we're going to do let's just cancel. We're not going to reschedule right now, let's just see what happens. And I knew I was struggling and I knew I was a networker and a hugger and wanting to embrace people and see people. If I was struggling, I can't be the only one that's struggling with this, even just having interaction. So locally, I actually started virtual networking groups for my local area and having different, I had four a week, each one catering towards the different geographical areas and oceans and bays and different sections. You all know there's groups that hang out in this area, but then there are groups that only hang out in this area. So I created four different ones to kind of attract those people in that area. So I started with that and it was going well, and we were connecting and we would talk not about, Hey, I have a move in need. I have, you know, I need to move in today. It was more of how are you coping with COVID? How are your communities doing? Do you need toilet paper? Do you need hand sanitizer? What is it that you need to make your job easier and to keep your seniors safe? That was the discussion. A lot of it, and we would kind of encourage others going. We have a situation with a senior at home, but we don't know how to help them. And then through our network, people were handing out like suggestions and offers, and it wasn't looking to give back. It was giving. And I think that's what we needed was just that interaction to know that we're not alone, everybody's struggling with lockdown, but now we're opening up those, those doors that probably would have never been opened pre COVID even. So it was just building on that and then I decided that if we weren't in COVID, we would have conferences, educational seminars, something. So I just reached out to a few random people on LinkedIn and Hey, I don't know who's going to attend, I don't know how many, I don't know what the outcome's going to be, but would you be willing to speak on the subject? Because I think we need this. Like, we need something. And so that the rest is history. One person said yes, and we just kept going. So now I'm kind of like reaching out to people to see who would be a good topic. Who'd be a good presenter, much like what you guys do just on a slower scale, because you know, you guys have been doing this for four years. Um, but it's still that chance of interaction that chance of, hey, we're meeting and actually having open dialogue. And the goal is also that more connections are happening after it. Because again, it's about collaboration. And I think senior living, pre COVID, it's what you can do for me? And I think since COVID, it's been a lot of

collaboration, how can we help each other for the benefit and the support and the care of the senior? And I think more people have been open to that.

Josh: Well, I love this. So, I mean, I really, so you kind of coming at this from a lot of different angles, but I love that, you know it seemed like you kind of started here in a very hands-on first responder type of care role, then you transition and you're helping the elders navigate the system and get into finding the right place. But then you're also like in the industry helping better the industry, man. So kudos because that's so multifaceted, multidimensional, I love that Lucas.

Lucas: It makes him a great ambassador. This is the reason why we have BTG ambassadors and Micah really does it. He kind of like set the mold on that. The thing about the Bridge the Gap Network and our platform here is it's always been bigger. It's bigger, it needs more people, right? It's we're better together, like that's the point is, is being that bridge a bridge connects one point to another people to other people. And that's why you make such a great ambassador for this Micah. So, talking about the day in the life of you, you're currently helping seniors make a very difficult decision of moving out of their homes that they've known into a new home into a congregate community setting, what's that like?

Micah: A Lot of listening, it's a lot of patients. I think you know, I'm a Christian I follow God. And I think that God put us all here with a gift and I think God gave me a very unique and a direct gift. And I think that is listening and having sympathy and empathy in a way that's not normal, especially not certified or trained. So a lot of people, when I meet with seniors, they kind of almost take on the role of social worker, a therapist, a psychiatrist in a lot of cases, because they are going through a very challenging time. They're going from, in a lot of cases it's a loss; they're a widow now and they've done their life with this other person and now their left arm or right arm is no longer there. So they're having to make these decisions to move to the next chapter in their life. And so what I do is really just walk them through that. Like how, how are you feeling? And there are times where like this one person that comes to mind every time someone brings this up. She had lost her husband six years prior to me getting involved. And she still lived and had the same emotions as if she just lost him that hour. And you know, her friends, her family were saying, mom, you need to move on mom, you need to sell this house. Mom, you need to get a life. Mom, you need to find a relationship again. And her own kids would say that. And it's like I tell people, seniors especially, that if they've gone through a loss, there's no law, there's no written statement that says it should take you a year to get over a loss.

If someone says that, they're not correct, because every person's different. And I've seen it, so like this one, it took us two years for her to be ready to make the transition because she was just so heartbroken that she lost somebody. I went every Friday for six months to have lunch with her, just to talk, not to push her, not to say you need to move; here's what the next steps are. It's just to get that trust and that understanding of where she is versus what everybody else is telling her. But then on the flip side, I had a lady that lost her husband in a month and she was saying, Micah, I'm ready to go. And I'm like, all right. Again that correlates that every person is very different and we have to kind of, again, it's hard for some of us salespeople to remove the sales hat and put on the listening ears and just be that person, that shoulder to just listen and cry. And if it takes six months or two years, in my case, it's building that relationship and that trust. And they feel comfortable knowing that you're there for them, not just the move in

Josh: Well, I think it's really interesting too, because so often we hear in our industry and we talk about, hey, you know our customer, our target, our persona is actually the adult center daughter. But, you know, in both of those incidences where you just mentioned, you're actually talking with the actual potential resident. What is kind of the balance in your daily life, or is that kind of the norm, or is it more the norm of the adult center daughter or both, or like what are you coming in contact with in the industry now?

Micah: I probably have more with the seniors themselves and then they'll bring in the child or the child wants to get in because a lot of people get taken back that it's free. They're like, nothing's free. I'm like, it's your lucky day? So my services are free, I help navigate the process, sit with them, talk with them, engage with them, try to build that trust, to let them know. And the way I get paid is when the sale of the house happens, the realtor pays my division, a portion of their commission. So the seniors never get a bill from Micah Hunt. And so we like it that way and that's the only reason why typically the kids get in, cause they're like, there's nothing free in this world. And it's like, again, you're blessed today, this is your blessing so just be grateful for that.

But when the kids do get involved, it's always a fun family dynamic because the kids want certain things done their way. And then the parents are the ones that say, well, no, we're not gonna do it that way or I don't know if we should. So the family dynamics have been entertaining and it's more of me just again, listening and hearing both sides and then going, okay, you're the decision-makers you still have your abilities to make the decisions for yourself. So let's talk to you and these are what I'm hearing. So I kind of repeat just like any of us would do on a regular basis, but it's in the heat of the moment. You still have to go, I'm the third party I'm hearing, I'm listening, but this is what I'm hearing. Let me repeat it back. And then that's usually when the fire starts dying down, because everybody's going, no, that's not what I meant. It's like, well, that's what was said. So it's kind of redirecting all the time. It's really interesting in my way, it's kind of entertaining because it's just like, wow. You know, we all think that our family is really awful, but then when I go to these appointments and I'm like, woof, wow this makes me feel a little bit better, but it's really, again, just listening and having the patience and really listening, not just hearing it and going okay, but I'm going to do this. It's I think I heard the term empathic listening, probably pronouncing that wrong, but it's just really sympathetically listening and really being in the moment and hearing the tone, not just hearing the words, but hearing the tone and the body language that goes with it and that really tells a lot.

Lucas: Yeah. It's fascinating to hear you describe this. And it's so interesting to know that this really truly is a gift that you have that you're just wired this way. Like I said, I mean when I am making that transition, God willing I make it to 90, I want a guy like Micah to come and hear me out on this stuff.

Micah: You know, I'll live long enough for you brother.

Lucas: That's right. Yeah. You, me and Josh, we can find a place to get some bunk beds.

Josh: Oh God have mercy on where, whatever community inherits us. That's all I've got to say, man.

So this is so cool, and you know, Josh, a lot of times I'll mention one of the reasons that I love this industry so much is because of the people in the business and Micah really does, he's just one of those people that is the reason why this industry is so great. So, now Micah, let's talk as we're rounding out the conversation, let's talk about your virtual presentation Fridays. This is something that you just started. You kind of asked the question, hey, would you come and do this? And now it's blossomed into this big thing and you're leveraging these new ways. During the coronavirus scare that everybody has been affected by, everybody's been forced to innovate and do different things. And you mentioned some of your previous points are just like, hey, I still want to network, I still want to interface with people. So we do it this way. So how is virtual presentation Fridays going right now?

Micah: It's going pretty well. So we started out just weekly and we keep doing it every Friday. March was the interesting month, we had a loss personally for me. And then many of our speakers had sicknesses and or COVID. So there were some challenges there, but for every week it's just been, I'm learning a lot. Like I talk to the speakers, like you all, you all do this, you do an interview. And then when I meet with the speakers, it's only 15 minutes to talk about what I would like, what I'm hoping that they can share with the industry, but then when they do their presentation, I'm just like, tell me more like I want to be involved more. And so I know if I'm getting that kind of feedback, everybody else should be too.

We actually did our first week-long conference. So we actually had the amazing Kim Campbell as our keynote speaker, which was pretty amazing. Having her be there and we had seven speakers that were there and that was a really cool step up. Cause you know, like you all, you want to be innovative. You want to keep, how can we do the next step? How can we do the next level? And so that's what's been going on and it's been great just to be able to offer something that's unique and it's not consolidated to just one state; it's anybody. We have people from California, Texas, Canada, you know, all over the country that are joining in. And they're ranging from senior living professionals in a C-suite or even a life care planning committee community, hospice area agencies on aging, social services, adult protective services that help seniors. They're getting on them because they're learning something new. And even if it may not pertain to them, it's still information and that's what we all are striving for. So I think, and you all probably know this too in a negative situation, you know, we're Christians, we follow God. We know that God pulls the positive out of the negative. So if we were not in COVID, I never would've thought to do this. I'd have been like, you all keep doing your podcast, I'm going to just keep doing what I'm doing and not be involved in anything. But because of COVID I felt a spark go, hey, you should do this and I just did the ask. God took care of everything else and, and has blossomed it to where it's, where it's going now. And I just, I give kudos to him because I'm just Micah, I just was like I'm going to do, like you guys said, I'm just going to ask and see where it goes. And now we're getting amazing speakers with bigger speakers and people are reaching out to me now to say, hey, how can I be involved? How can I be a speaker? And that's a pretty cool feeling. I mean, you all probably know that better than I do.

Josh: Dude, that's so cool. Well you know, kudos to you for just being willing and having the courage to step out of that comfort zone and do it. I know that was a big step and so happy to see how that is blossoming. So tell our listeners if they want to be part of that Friday, like how do people best connect with you to get on board with that.

Micah: LinkedIn. I'm on it probably too much, luckily I have a great company that allows me to do that and sees the value in what I do and the different ways that I've been innovative to get through this pandemic. But LinkedIn, find me, Michael Hunt on LinkedIn is your best chance. Cause I have

notifications on, so anytime there's a private message or a connection request, I'm getting it. And that's the best way, because then there's more connections that are made. Actually kudos to you all because I actually connected with a gentleman in the Philippines and he reached out to me and he's doing some sort of an organization, but he actually connected with me because he saw what we were doing for the ambassador program for Bridge the Gap. And he actually started subscribing to Bridge the Gap because of a connection that I just came out and said, I'm an ambassador. He connected to me and subscribed to the group. And now he's trying to be more involved in senior living from the Philippines. And I think that's what we miss, we think that if we post for us, we don't think about how many people are actually being impacted by a post, by a connection. It goes far beyond an hour posts in our second degree, it's far beyond that. You never know who you're touching. And that's what I love about LinkedIn and being part of these groups because you're touching other, other voices, other hearts to go, I want to do that, but how do I start? And now there's an opportunity for that. I love that.

Josh: Ahh i love that.

Lucas: Totally, LinkedIn is an incredible platform. There's actually a very robust senior living community that has over the past, probably three, four, five years grown. It's exploded on LinkedIn, it's been fascinating. Josh, his network is exploding on LinkedIn. I've got a good network myself and Bridge the Gap is on LinkedIn, we're posting every day on their digital content related to social media and Micah is doing the same. So, we really encourage our listeners. You can find all of this information at [btgvoice.com](http://btgvoice.com), but definitely hit us up on LinkedIn, go to Josh's page Lucas's page. And Micah page and connect with us there. Micah Hunt, he is the geriatric whisper on the program today, Micah, thanks for telling us your story and thanks for all of your passion and all that you do in senior living.

Micah: Thank you all for your passions as well, because that inspires so many others to want to, to jump on board and be innovative in a time where innovation is really proud of. So thank you.

Lucas: Absolutely. We'll connect your information in our show notes and once again, you can go to [BTGvoice.com](http://BTGvoice.com) and access all of our social media links. You can get the transcript of this show, you can get the video of this show and check out that cool purple suit from Micah and get all of our information. You can check out our ambassador page, you can check out our Contributor Wednesday page and all of our other shows. Josh, good to see you my friend, another great episode in the books and thanks for everyone listening to another great episode of Bridge the Gap.