

Mind Your Business

Sim Shain: "You Have to Live Your Business"

By Yitzchok Saftlas



Every Sunday evening since July 2015, Yitzchok Saftlas, CEO of Bottom Line Marketing Group, hosts 77WABC's "Mind Your Business" show on America's leading talk radio station. The show features Fortune 500 CEOs, CMOs, and top business leaders, where they share their business knowledge and strategic insights on how to get ahead in today's corporate world. Since Q2 2017, the 77WABC "Mind Your Business" show has remained in the coveted Nielsen "Top 10" in New York's highly competitive AM Talk Radio market. Guests have included John Sculley, former CEO of Apple and Pepsi; Dick Schulze, founder and Chairman Emeritus of Best Buy; Beth Comstock, former Vice Chair of GE; and Captain Sully Sullenberger, among nearly 200 senior-level executives and business celebrities.

Every other week, TJH will feature leading questions and takeaways from Yitzchok's popular radio show.

On a recent 77WABC "Mind Your Business" broadcast, Yitzchok sat down to speak with Sim Shain about the secrets behind his remarkable success and the motivation behind the founding of his unique, life-saving business.

Sim is the CEO and founder of ParaFlight E.M.S and Aviation, a full-service medical and corporate charter company. He is a national registered paramedic, who started his EMS career in March 1993. Since 2007, Sim has worked as a 9-1-1 paramedic for the largest provider of Advanced Life Support in New Jersey. In 2012, he earned the Paramedic of the Year Award from the State of New Jersey.

YS: So, Sim. Let's get started. What caused you to go into the medical aviation field? What led you to found this very special and unique business?

SS: I actually started my E.M.S. career in 1993. I got my certification as a paramedic in 2007, and I have been practicing as a paramedic with

Hatzalah since then. But what got me into the medical aviation business was my close friend, Shlomo Steve Zakheim, who passed away several years ago. He was both a philanthropist and an entrepreneur. He owned a private jet that he outfitted with a stretcher and oxygen, and he used to send myself and others around the world, flying patients to specialty hospitals, bringing them home for care, or anything else they might need.

YS: Can you explain to the audience what your company, ParaFlight E.M.S. and Aviation, does?

SS: We offer various different verticals, and each one fills a different medical need. We have what's called a medical escort component. It's for a patient who doesn't require the services of an air ambulance. They don't need to be lying flat on a stretcher, and they're able to sit up on a plane for takeoff and landing. They don't have a huge oxygen demand. It can be an elderly person,

or someone who isn't in critical condition but needs medical care while being transported. So, we send them on a regular commercial flight with an oxygen concentrator, a nurse, a doctor, and a paramedic. We have an entire team that deals only with medical escorts. We take care of everything, including flight reservations. That way, we can save our clients thousands of dollars.

We also have an air ambulance component. We are currently the only licensed air ambulance company based in the New York City area. We also provide organ transplant flights. Another one of our verticals, unrelated to the medical field, is supplying corporate charter flights.

YS: What is an air ambulance?

SS: An air ambulance is basically an ICU in the sky. We have the ability to provide services for patients who are on ventilators, patients who are in IV drips, patients who can't stand, sit up, or anything like that. We will send a full ICU team along, which usually consists of a paramedic, a

flight paramedic, and a flight nurse, and sometimes we'll send a respiratory therapist and a flight physician. Our chief medical officer is Dr. Mark Merlin, who is an absolute legend. He has about twenty-five physicians that work under him that go with us on many, many of our flights.

YS: Are you nationwide? Or do you offer your services worldwide?

SS: We're worldwide, based out of the Northeast. We cover flights all over the country and all over the world.

YS: I understand that ParaFlight is a medical business, but there's also a corporate aspect. Can you elaborate on that?

SS: Sure. One of the verticals that we provide in addition to the medical verticals is corporate aviation. We don't do luxury flights to the Super Bowl or anything else like that, but we do whatever we can to our save our clients time. We recog-

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nize that there's only 24 hours in a day, and so much that needs to get done in a single a workday. There are people in the health care industry or in real estate who need to be able to get to three states in one day. And they don't really have the time to go through the airport and the lines. That's where we come in.

We save people tremendous amounts of time by coordinating their day for them. They tell us where they need to be, and we make sure that they have food and that their limousine service is waiting for them wherever they land. We'll coordinate their day so that they can leave in the morning, get to multiple locations, and be back by night.

YS: It's like a magic wand! How do you accomplish that?

SS: Well, there's a lot of work involved – a lot of details. We have a lot of flight coordinators that work with us. We have a tremendous team that works really hard. We tell our clients: leave the details to us, and you focus on making money and growing your business.

YS: Back to your incredible life-saving work... You're dealing with saving lives, so you have to be ready for anything. How do you have an entire operation ready to go within a half hour? How does that happen?

SS: We're always planning ahead. We're always checking weather patterns. We know a week in advance what the weather is going to be. But you're right— we have to be ready to roll 24 hours a day. As soon as a call comes in, that's when that mission starts.

YS: You just shared a very important point that any person in business could take away. And that is: prepare! Surprises are inevitable. But prepare as much as you can in advance. That's a very important takeaway.

SS: That's correct. Preparing properly is essential, especially in this business. But you're right – in every business, you always have to have some sort of backup plan. And

in the business that we're in, you need more than one backup plan because things can go wrong. Things can change. There are some things that are not in our control, but we still have to do whatever we can to accomplish and achieve our mission.

YS: How do you balance the financial aspect of the business with the charity aspect?

SS: I think more than 50 percent of our business is charity work. When I started this business with Shlomo Zakheim many years ago, our mission became mission-driven, not profit-driven. Our goal is to always make sure that we get the job done as economically as possible and

How do you manage to scale your business?

SS: We scale mainly through word of mouth. Our word of mouth is social media, and there are many different social media platforms that we use. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, things like that. What we share on those platforms are what really impresses people because they get to interact with us and they get to see what we do.

YS: What tips could you share on communications in an industry like yours?

SS: One thing that we always tell people is that we get it. Our entire company is medically-based. Our

“And that was, and is, our goal: to make a difference and change the world.”

get the patient safely to their destination. Of course, we need money to run our business, but that's not our goal.

YS: Sim, your company is in a very unique industry, as we've been discussing throughout the show. What marketing challenges do you face? What can you recommend to someone who's also in a business that's so targeted and specialized?

SS: Well, the marketing issue that we face is that everything we do is confidential, from the patients' perspective, from the hospital systems, and from the corporate perspective. So, the only people who could let the world know what we do is our clients, because we can't share any of our information. Everything that we do is extremely, extremely confidential.

YS: I would imagine that you rely heavily on word of mouth.

medical directors, our nurses, our paramedics, even our flight coordinators are all EMTs or physicians. We understand it's stressful, but let us do the worrying for you. You focus on your loved one. You focus on what you need to take care of. We'll take care of everything else.

Also, I think it's always important that somebody who runs a business has to be in the trenches. You really have to understand what's going on to be able to communicate effectively with everyone involved on the operation. I always make sure to go on flights. I've gone along on organ flights just so I can see what happens, so I can communicate effectively. I have people who work for me, but I micromanage. I'm on top of everything because I need to know about any issues ahead of time.

YS: Since you built a company in a very niche industry, what are your tips for other businessowners who are trying to build and scale their business-

es in a very narrow market?

SS: You have to really live your business. You really need to know every aspect involved. You need to know everything and be prepared, so that if someone walks off the job or something changes, you need to be able to step up and fill that position. So, I'll coordinate flights, I'll answer phone calls, I'll be a paramedic, I'll drive people to and from the airport.

I'll do whatever I need to do to get the job done.

YS: How do you stay current and come up with business strategies in this constantly changing environment?

SS: We continuously train, and we continuously create partnerships with many different providers and operators all over the country. We're always in network mode. We're always in marketing mode wherever we go. We'll do whatever we can to try to expand our business, to try to look for little things that'll make a big difference down the road. We spend a tremendous amount of money on software development to make everything seamless.

YS: Do you have any final takeaways for our listeners?

SS: Yes. The life of aviation is extremely stressful, but it's extremely rewarding. We have the opportunity to be able to help people in their time of need, to take something that's so overwhelming for them and make a difference. We're here to take your loved one to a hospital for critical care. We're here to take your loved one home. We're here to help someone get a heart transplant or a lung transplant that will save their life. We really, really make a difference. And that was, and is, our goal: to make a difference and change the world. ▲

