

John-Mark Collins of Electric Playhouse

Speaker1: [00:00:04.77] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin and the host of the show in which we interview Angel Investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity, many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. Hello, this is Hall Martin with Investor Connect them here with John-Mark Collins, co-founder of Electric Playhouse. Playhouse is an experiential platform company building easily replicable, distributed content and operational facilities for families and adults to enjoy. Playhouse has one open location in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and two more in the works in Dallas and Houston John. Mark, thank you for joining us here. So what was your background before cofounding Electric Playhouse? What did you do before this

Speaker2: [00:00:51.62] Very kind of diverse background? I spent some years in the hospitality industry while I finished my degrees in engineering and I got my MBA and moved into software development for the national laboratories here in New Mexico and then wanted to build software for public use to be able to get. Some of that computer stuff in front of people, the human computer interaction is really my interest. And so I wanted to exhibit design with that software background. Built a lot of exhibits for Smithsonian's across the country, corporate clients like Starbucks and Coca-Cola, and then branched off in twenty sixteen to start my own business, which was doing B2B work for other other corporations and institutions, which led me to essentially build a kind of library of experiences that we had built. And we decided to try our hand at something direct to consumer with an immersive dinners. And those immersive dinners became the kind of fountain blocks of what is now by. So obviously we branched out from dinners to all kinds of games and experiences for all ages.

Speaker1: [00:02:01.71] What draws you to work in the immersive experiential space?

Speaker2: [00:02:06.19] Know, the human computer interaction thing for me is is quite key. I mean, I think we see a future of technology enhancing our lives. And just from what you have in your pocket and from a computer standpoint. But how can we use the technology? We have to actually really enhance the lives around us without having to pick up a device and take us away from the people around us. We'd much rather have your heads up and have your eyes engaged and your ears engage with the people that you're you're sitting next to as opposed to down. So

being able to build these augmented spaces that enhance dining, enhance play, enhance social interaction is really the goal. The goal is to get people active and engaged with the technology as a tool as opposed to a distraction, which I think it can be sometimes.

Speaker1: [00:02:51.04] So what's your advice for people investing in the immersive space? What do you tell them to do before they write that check?

Speaker2: [00:02:56.19] Well, the immersive space is hot. And so it's very I think a lot of the things that are coming out, both nationally and internationally, is really focused on on drawing people in the world that they couldn't they weren't able to to see and experience years ago. I would say that if you're getting into the immersive space that you think about the full experience and you think about what is the guest experience, how do they how are they going to walk through the space? How many people are going to go to the space at the same time? What are they hearing? What are they seeing? You really think about it as a as a trip to another place, another physical location, even if it's a fabricated existence. So it's the future of entertainment. It's the future of retail and.

Speaker1: [00:03:35.61] Great. So how do you see the industry evolving from here? How do we reach that future?

Speaker2: [00:03:39.93] Yeah, I think the technology is just going to get better and cheaper and faster. Know the projection material and equipment that we've used even to build this Albuquerque location is already outdated. Within 18 months, they've got new new versions and they're cheaper and lighter and smaller. So I think the technology is going to come to a point where it is really about content and story and and attachment to the people who are in the space. So instead of building something that doesn't change, build something that is very much about the people that come through it and can change with them, which is what our space is about. So it's not just immersive, but it's interactive. It's taking cues from the humans that walk through it and and what they're touching and moving through and looking at so that it becomes something that the user has participation in. And I think that's going to be really key because going to a museum traditionally is someplace that you walk into and you're going to stare at the art, you're going to learn something. And it's great, but it doesn't it's not taking part of you and then giving you something back that's unique to you. You're learning something which is a good

thing, but people like to be a part of the creative process. And so I would say that look for look for that interaction in the immersive space as opposed to just the just the eye candy. There's lots of eye candy out there. But the eye candy that you can create and you can be a part of it is much more appealing for the user and the consumer.

Speaker1: [00:05:01.96] Right. So what is the growth rate of this sector?

Speaker2: [00:05:05.22] The growth rate is pretty incredible. I mean, we've seen large scale groups like Talab out of Japan open multiple facilities just the last few years. Some of them are getting two million visitors within three or four months. You know, that's both in Tokyo, Paris. There's a large one called the Lumière, which got a million in less than four months. So these spaces are are they're hot. They're both marketing themselves because they're so beautiful and they have all the things that you need to be able to sell. It doesn't large scale commercial space is open nationwide that have attracted a lot of attention. It's actually forced USA Today just recently to start a new category for their their readers. That is what is the best immersive experience nationally. So we've just started to do that in the last couple of years. So it really is becoming a thing. It isn't just a there's a little jewel here and there throughout the country, but they're they're popping up all over the place. And I think that being able to do something like electroplate house that is more of a platform for content creation than it is just an art experience is is going to give us some flexibility. Also in that space. We have the ability to. Change where others are kind of the same thing and repetitive, we can be much more in tune with the needs of the customer as time goes on.

Speaker1: [00:06:23.22] And how many companies are engaged in the emergency phase, including the supporting technology

Speaker2: [00:06:27.87] In the consumer side of it, the threat to public know there's probably not many, 30, 40 companies doing things. A lot of them individually owned single location places. Folks that are branching out in multiple locations is less than 10 nationally, including ourselves, I think. And then if you look at the tech side, though, there's a there's a lot of companies, because a lot of the technology that's used in the commercial space is also in Dowi DOD contracts like our scanners and motion tracking. And it's it's it's huge in both the film industry as well as defense and government sector. So there's the technology itself is is

becoming ubiquitous. And so the entertainment side of that is now just starting to blossom. And you can see some of the technology that we use being used in shows like the Mandalorian, where you're using screens and motion tracking to actually fake an entire world behind the actors without having to do it in post-production. So we're using a lot of the same tech, but we're bringing real people into it as opposed to it being a soundstage. So it's I think they're just going to get more and more advanced and more and more interesting as a consumer product as the technology gets better.

Speaker1: [00:07:42.15] And so what are the challenges in this space, technical and otherwise?

Speaker2: [00:07:46.18] Your technology is advancing at such a rate that there's always that point of where is the experience best? And I think that's actually the bigger challenge in this sector is, is how do you tie the technology and the experience to what what people really enjoy? Know, I've actually seen some immersive experiences that were beautiful, but the the flow of the people through the space or the hospitality that surrounded the experience we're lacking. So overall experience with what what brought it down. So I think you can't take the hospitality or just the ability to really be a pleasant place to go out of the equation. The tech, the tech gets them in the door. But you but you've got to keep them there. You got to smile and and really give them that that fun experience they're looking for.

Speaker1: [00:08:36.24] So how is Electric Playhouse fit into this landscape of immersive experiences?

Speaker2: [00:08:41.16] Well, so we come in kind of a mix of multiple other options. There are folks that are doing art specifically like Wolf and our Tucows and on the East Coast. And then there are people that are doing more kind of art and VR type experiences where you're using a lot of equipment. In our space. We actually have a little bit of art, but we also have a lot of games. So we're actually bridging into almost like the lockable videogame space. And the real big seller for us is that the platform is built on such an infrastructure that we can change it constantly so we can change it every every 30 minutes, every hour. We can change it for the customer demographic. We could change it for a private white label to that. So we become really almost like the immersive media platform. We're sort of the holodeck for the community. So we really see ourselves as being the flexible solution for for our communities.

And that that, I think, sets us aside from other other groups. We're not a one stop shop. You can come back several times and see something different.

Speaker1: [00:09:43.68] That's great. And where do you plan to take it in the future? Seem like technologies is increasing every every 18 months. Is that the current rate of transition?

Speaker2: [00:09:52.48] Yeah. So we see it being instead of, say, spending less money on tech is that we're going to add more so that the experience becomes richer. You know, we can do more with one sensor now than we could two years ago. In fact, we're replacing some of the sensors we put in Albuquerque, 10 sensor with one sensor because they're they're the power is there. The reach is there. The cost is down. So it's really about making sure that we're able to just continue to evolve the experience so that it's like you're walking into a new world. So we really see the growth, just making the experience so much better for the customer.

Speaker1: [00:10:28.50] That's great. And so in the last few minutes that we have here, what else should we cover that we haven't?

Speaker2: [00:10:33.39] Just that we're really excited to to reopen the doors in Albuquerque and get our Houston and Dallas locations open. We are very excited. And to look to Denver and Phoenix and some of the other states in the region and and present this to the world.

Speaker1: [00:10:48.69] So great how best for listeners to get back in touch with you.

Speaker2: [00:10:53.46] Best way to contact me is John Market, Electric Playhouse dot com. Check out all our offerings at Electric Playhouse dotcom as well. And look at us in social media and Facebook and Instagram it at play. Electric, all one word.

Speaker1: [00:11:09.18] Great. We'll put those in the show notes. I want to thank you for joining us today and hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker2: [00:11:14.16] Look forward to it. Thanks for the time.

Speaker3: [00:11:16.59] Investor Connect helps investors interested in startup funding. In this podcast series Experience, investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at Investor Connect, Doug. Paul Martin is the director of investor Canek, which is a five Wannsee three non-profit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding. All opinions expressed by Hall and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinion of Investor Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for investment decisions.