



SoundBites Podcast Transcript

Episode: Building an Online Community in Hearing Healthcare

Dave Fabry:

Welcome to Starkey's "Sound Bites". I'm Dave Fabry, Starkey's Chief Innovation Officer and host of the podcast. I'm really excited and have long anticipated this podcast today. Derek Johnson is on the Information Technology team, part of the team at Starkey. And actually, my first encounter with him was through a problem that I was having on my computer. We got to talking after that, and I learned that, in addition to his expertise in solving my problem with my computer that day, he's also the creative force behind his duck, who is Insta-famous, with over a hundred thousand followers on Instagram, and that duck's name is Ben Afquack.

We'll talk a little bit more about that a little later. But how does this apply then, to hearing healthcare professionals, who are our predominant listeners on the podcast, or viewers, if you're watching on our YouTube channel. We know that our customers often wear multiple hats, including the one of hearing care professional as well as small business owner. I've had many conversations with small business owners and audiologists who say they don't understand how to promote themselves, how to even get started on social media to promote their business. And that's where Derek is going to share some of his wisdom as he began with Ben Afquack, and talk a little bit about and provide some tips that people can use as to raise their expertise on social media and perhaps shed some light on what they can do in social media. So, Derek, with that by way of intro, thank you for joining us on the podcast today.

Derek Johnson:

Thank you for having me.

Dave Fabry:

Oh, it's, like I said, I've been waiting for this a long time. And, and as I said, you're an IT professional. I'll endorse you, two thumbs up, at Starkey. Let's talk a little bit about how long you've been here and, and what a typical day is like for you.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. I started with Starkey year-and-a-half ago. I was a contractor and then came on full-time. You know, it's a lot of running around like a chicken with my head cut off, to be honest.

Dave Fabry:

A duck or a chicken?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah.



Dave Fabry:

Let's keep it to chicken.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, we'll go with chicken for now.

Dave Fabry:

So as not to get Mr. Afquack upset with you.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, we don't wanna scare him.

Dave Fabry:

Indeed. Well, and to that end, how have you seen, I mean, IT used to be sort of the help desk. Information technology has really evolved, and at a rapid pace. How have you seen, since you've been a consultant and now a team member at Starkey, how has information technology changed in the past five years?

Derek Johnson:

It's a lot like a constant game of whack-a-mole, right? When you get caught up with one thing, then the next thing comes out and you have to figure out how to make things work with whatever it is that just changed everything that you thought you knew.

Dave Fabry:

Well, so now let's transition to the star of the show, really, and the vehicle, really, for the beginning of today's podcast, anyway. How and when did Ben Afquack come about?

Derek Johnson:

So, I got Ben a little over four years ago. I got him when he was a day old. He was just a tiny little fluff ball. No intention of him becoming an internet star. I just got a pet duck 'cause they're cute and it was \$8 at a farm store. The whole Instagram thing kinda happened on accident, to be perfectly honest. We were out at a park, and when you have a pet duck, your friends come with you to the park and take pictures. And there was one picture where the duck was walking away, and he kind of turned around and looked back at the camera right when my friend took a picture, and it looked like he was posing like a model.

Dave Fabry:

Awesome.

Derek Johnson:

And so he just, on the spot at the park, whipped up this Instagram account called the Duck of Fitness Model, and then hashtagged all of the funny, trendy, fitness model hashtags. And we all



thought we were hilarious, and for the next month or so, we were just coming up with different ideas of, you know, different ways that we could poke fun at that sort of community.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah, you were kind of doing it on a lark, right?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, we were absolutely trying to make fun of Instagram. Just between, you know, four or five of us. Like, we never thought anyone else in the world would see it. And it just kind of blew up. It was, it was pretty wild.

Dave Fabry:

So, one day, did, was it literally, you said that one post where he's looking back, striking a pose, did that one really hit a lot, or was it just sort of a slow boil when you... How often were you posting, and was there a trigger that caused, one, to go viral, that caused your number of followers to explode?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, so the first one, I don't think anyone other than us saw it. But it kind of sparked the idea of, the concept of what we were doing, what the purpose of that Instagram account was. And so, from there then, you know, because it was the fitness model thing that he was making fun of, we would sneak him into gyms and make fitness tutorials with him, and sneak him-

Dave Fabry:

I've seen some of them. They're hilarious.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah! So, funny side note on that one. We posted that before the duck got famous. So, we snuck him into this Anytime Fitness. And fast forward a month later, all of a sudden, you know, 20,000 people were following him. And I got a call from the owner of the gym, like, "Hey, I just saw my gym on a video that my friend shared with me. Please don't bring ducks into my gym."

Dave Fabry:

And then did he ask to sort of have you throw him a bone in terms of an endorsement by Ben Afquack, that he was able to buff up his, his wings a little bit more, or?

Derek Johnson:

I was hoping that could be the first endorsement, but no, he made it very clear, like, "You are welcome to come back here, but no feathered friends with you."

Dave Fabry:

So, yeah. So, tip, pro tip for those looking to start out. In your case, it was better to ask forgiveness than permission, but it probably walks a fine line, or, you know, walks like a duck, quacks like a duck. You gotta be careful in terms of the permissions. And I've noticed more and more places now, actually. I belong to a different gym, and there's lots of postings about, you know, not having your camera in the locker room areas. I've noticed recently on the airline that I fly, Delta, they now make announcements that, you know, you need to get permission from flight attendants or passengers before snapping photos and loading them up to social media. So, it is the world we live in now, that there are sometimes permissions that need to be received before proceeding. But, like you said, you kind of, kind of early on discovered that you had 20,000 followers after some of those initial posts. And where? A hundred thousand? Is it over a hundred thousand these days?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. I think it's 102, 103, something like that.

Dave Fabry:

The most followed duck still, right, on Instagram?

Derek Johnson:

You know, there's a bunch out there now. I'm not sure.

Dave Fabry:

I see.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. I think, you know, the record, the Guinness World Record is still-

Dave Fabry:

Which you are the holder.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, we still hold that. But I also think that what really happened there was Guinness got the bit, right. They bought in and they were like, "Okay, I see what you're doing. Yeah, we'll play." And I don't think that it'll ever be in another Guinness World record book, or like, you know, that you can look it up anywhere anymore. But I think they just played along with the rising, famous duck joke that we were kind of in. I don't know.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah. But a joke with a point. And this is now, again, I wanna segue a little bit into private practice owners who are looking to increase their visibility in their community. You can use traditional marketing, you know, newspapers and things like that. We're seeing a lot of that go



the by and by. Still some effective for the local market, if they're looking to attract patients. But to increase their visibility, many people are turning to social media. You chose Instagram rather than Twitter early on because you were using a video format.

Derek Johnson:

Right.

Dave Fabry:

And so, what advice might you have for, and people saying, you know, "I don't know even how to start." You had sort of this special combo of, you had this duck, who turned out to be photogenic and not shying away from some of the poses you were asking him to do. And then you had this sort of... You were ahead of the curve. Now you said there are lots of imitators in terms of ducks and different fowl on Instagram, different fowl of different kinds. But you know, how, what advice might you have for a practice owner as to how to get started on social media?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, that's... The funny thing is, is I was, I wasn't even on Instagram before this. I didn't have an Instagram. And the only reason I have a personal Instagram was to figure out what my friends were posting about my duck and laugh with it. So, some of this was all, like, I kind of only know this side of things. Like, I didn't really use social media, other than, you know, Facebook, you know, to keep up with friends from, you know, back in the day or whatever. But I think the big thing that really made it happen was having that initial theme. There is consistency to it.

Dave Fabry:

Consistency. Know what your vision is.

Derek Johnson:

Exactly.

Dave Fabry:

And you knew that right from the start. And I think that's so important, is figure out what do you wanna stand for. How would you describe it in 10 words as to what the vision is for what you want to do?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. And for us, it's actually kind of evolved over time. I think you can only poke fun at one specific demographic for so long before it becomes mean rather than funny, you know?

Dave Fabry:

Sure. Understood.

Derek Johnson:

And so, it started as just, yeah, making fun of the trendy trends, being trendy, you know. It was like, some of it's just so ridiculous anyway that it's like they handed me the content to make fun of. And then it has sort of just, it was a very gradual change, so I don't think that it really caught people off guard. It wasn't this hard turn. It kind of just turned into the duck goes with me to do the things that I enjoy doing. So, it's become this kind of adventure page, this travel page, a motorcycle page, a music page. And it just sort of worked out, because I brought him with me to do things anyway, the same way that I bring my dogs with me to certain places. And it just sort of worked out that the duck comes with me to do the things I'm doing anyway. So sometimes I just whip out my camera, and it's an easy post. But I think adventure has really been the main theme over time. Started as just making fun of a specific trend thing, but has really evolved into just adventure and fun, and just good vibes. I think there's so much negative stuff out there.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah. And there's also an authenticity. As you just said, you know, you bring, you bring Afquack with you to do the things that you like to do, the same way that you bring your dogs to do things. And there's an authenticity there that you can tell as a follower of the page, that isn't phony, and it isn't... And it's part of really understanding what it is that you want to use this vehicle for. In your case, it started one way, but then it sort of is now an online diary of your life and the adventures that you enjoy together; like you said, motorcycles and everything else. It's fun to watch and watch as it continues to build. How often do you post? Has that increased or decreased or remained the same over time? What advice might you have? Again, we all know that, with social media, content is king or queen, and you can lose followers, or lose interest, at least, with your followers if you don't post frequently enough, but then there's also sometimes fatigue.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. And it's a fine line, for sure. I've definitely noticed that if I have consistent, good content, the following grows. If I'm trying to... There was a period of time, 'cause I've experimented a little bit to kind of see what happens, and tried to trick the algorithms and just see what you can do, you know. And I've found that if I'm consistently posting things that are really creative, it grows like crazy. But then if it starts being, well, "I said I was gonna post four times this week and I've only done three," snap a picture of him in the backyard and don't put any effort into a cute caption or anything like that, when I start getting lazier with it, it actually might be better to just not have posted that fourth one that week, or not post anything for that. So, I think quality of content is very important. And if you're able to maintain that quality content, or you have enough stuff in the chamber, you know, you have enough things lined up, then posting frequently I think can be a really good thing, and I've seen really good results from doing that as well.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah. But it is essential, again, for thinking of developing that long-term vision, having content, updating it with meaningful content that's gonna have your audience be impacted and not feel like, "Oh, they said that they're gonna do four posts, and it feels like two of them are authentic and two are filler." So.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. It's like when you get an album and you can tell that only four of the songs were actually good and the rest was like, "Oh, but we said, we told the record label we would release it by this date," and you can tell that those in-between tracks aren't very good. Like, we all skip those tracks, you know? And on social media, that means you're a skipped account now. If people get too familiar with some of the lazy posts, they don't wanna follow that anymore. And so-

Dave Fabry:

The other thing I think of is, you know, the authenticity, and really, in a way, it's finding your passion, the things that you can do that come natural, you said adventure, and then when the duck comes along with you. For practice owners, thinking about within the hearing space, I've seen Instagram accounts and other social media platforms as well that are solely devoted to cleaning ears. Something you can think about in the most unlikeliest of spaces, where doing something that you do all the time, and with regularity and frequency, that, suddenly, people take an interest in. People are fascinated with wax in ears. So, it, again, it isn't having this big vision to be serious sometimes. Sometimes it may start out of something that you enjoy doing, whether it's recording different loud sounds, or the levels of sounds in everyday environments, cleaning ears. Ear mold impressions, I haven't really seen one light up yet on that, but I think there are people that are fascinated by scanning ears using digital scanning or ear mold impressions. And I think it's really figuring out what it is that you can get consistent content, that you're not gonna jump the shark, or jump the duck, I guess, in the Hollywood sense that, really... And the history of that was with "Happy Days" back in the 70s, they had a plot line that worked for the first several seasons, but then they started going on location, away from Milwaukee where the show had been originally set. They went to Hawaii, and Fonzi jumped over a shark on water skis. And it really became the definition then of when a show jumps the shark, it's run out of plot.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah.

Dave Fabry:

So, think of that runway as you're thinking about your Instagram or your social media posts. Keep the focus. Allow for evolution, but maintain that authenticity and passion that you started with while you were evolving into the different areas. And that's what you've been so successful at.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, and if you think about it, like, I think about the things that I follow personally, right? There's some things that I would've never thought to Google, or thought to, you know, look up. Like there's this account that I follow, where it literally is just, it made me think of this when you said the earwax thing, it's this person who heats up a metal ball to like as hot as it can be without melting, and then he just drops the ball on random things. Like, you can see what the ball looks like on jello, or on a snowball, or like... And if you described that to me, I'd be like, "That's weird. Like why would you watch that?" But I do. Absolutely.

Dave Fabry:

Well, absolutely. Well, I remember the old one from a number of years ago. "Will it blend?"

Derek Johnson:

Oh, yeah.

Dave Fabry:

They would put stuff in blenders and see whether it would blend, or just be a chunk, a ball of material, or it would destroy the blender. I think it's all about, whether it's new technology, whether it's within the information technology space or the hearing aid space, how do you differentiate yourself? And that's I think, where you were on the leading edge of that, by differentiating yourself from the sea of sameness out there. And I think that's what practice owners who are thinking about how do they differentiate themselves in the sea of sameness, whether it's traditional newspaper, or TV, for those who are fortunate to live in a small enough market that can afford to do TV commercials. Social media is such a great way. Gary Vee is someone that I follow, just because he's so authentic in terms of allowing for imperfection, allowing for himself to come through. And I think you've done that so well with Ben Afquack.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. And there's definitely been some mistakes and learning opportunities along the way too.

Dave Fabry:

Can you list a mistake or two that you learned from?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. Not getting, I think the biggest mistake that I've found is trying to do the same thing that works, but not getting creative enough with changing the way that you do it. So, like, have you seen the drumming video, the duck drumming video?

Dave Fabry:

Yes. Yes.

Derek Johnson:

So, that blew up like crazy, and people were making all of these remixes with it, and each one's getting 20 million, 50 million views, and it was just going nuts. And like the following was increasing, which meant, you know, places were calling and wanting to, you know, do these deals with us and stuff. Well, and then I was like, "Oh, well, that's all people wanna see," so that's all I posted. And now it's kind of run its course, and now it kind of lost it. Like, everyone's seen it. And, and I didn't, I was able to find all these different ways to do it at first, and then I kind of ran out of ways to become creative and new with it. And now people just started seeing the same thing with a different background. And I kind of played that into the ground, because I got lazy with it. I was like, "Oh, all I do is post this. Ten million views. Then I get a call, and someone wants to send me a scooter." You know, like, "Let's keep doing that. This is great." And I think if, keeping the theme, but without it getting boring, I think is really the line you have to find.

Dave Fabry:

Completely. And then going back again to the roots of keeping your authentic self. You're not doing it to get things or money. I mean, it's turned out to be, you know, you've had some great visibility. Talk a little bit about, you know, I know you've been on some local shows, you've been on some national shows. Talk a little bit, just a handful of the appearances you've made with the duck during the time that he's become Insta-famous.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. Well, I got to be on a podcast at Starkey once. That was pretty wild.

Dave Fabry:

Yes, indeed. Well, that's gotta be the pinnacle. Yes.

Derek Johnson:

So, we've done "Good Morning America". The coolest one was when, I actually can't say what show it was, now that I think about it.

Dave Fabry:

Okay, don't.

Derek Johnson:

I'll tell you later.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah.



Derek Johnson:

But we got to be on a show, and they flew us out to Hollywood and paid for us to go hang out in California when it was February and snowing and terrible here. So that was probably the coolest one, because we got to get out of Minnesota in February.

Dave Fabry:

And there was a post on that one, I believe, where he's walking down the aisle on a plane.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah, and apparently, they have really strict duck policies on planes. And normally, you can't fly with a duck at all, but because some agency in Hollywood called and got permission and said he was a celebrity, then we got to. I was really worried about that, because I don't know how he's going to react to that. We went to the vet to make sure that it was safe for him and all of that, but I was like what if he just quacks the whole, what is it, three-hour flight to California, four hours, something like that? What if he's just quacking the whole time, and I'm the guy sitting there with a duck on my lap? Like, this is, I was so nervous.

Dave Fabry:

The scourge of every other passenger.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah!

Dave Fabry:

But he did well?

Derek Johnson:

He slept the whole time. Yeah, just immediately. Like, something about the plane, he was like a baby in a car, right? He just went to sleep immediately.

Dave Fabry:

I love it. Well, and so let's... You know, did you come up with the name when you first got him as a, you said you got him just a couple of days, did you come up with Ben Afquack right off the bat, or did it become, after you started considering names when he became, and you were looking for the tagline on Instagram?

Derek Johnson:

So, it came before the Instagram. And like I said, when you get a baby pet duck, like, all of your friends show up. People that you haven't seen... Like, everyone was over at my house, meeting this cute little fluffy duck, and we were just throwing out names. Like, if you're going to ride a moped with a duck, you know, and walk a duck on a leash, like you have to do something weird with the name. You can't-



Dave Fabry:

Oh, yeah. You gotta have a name.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. You can't be normal with the name. It's gotta be strange. So, we were coming up with dad joke pun names and-

Dave Fabry:

Oh, yeah. No, I will say I made a list. You know, like Quacker Jack, was that a possibility?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah.

Dave Fabry:

Or Duck Norris?

Derek Johnson:

Duck Norris. That one would've been good.

Dave Fabry:

I like that one a lot.

Derek Johnson:

Quack Nicholson was one.

Dave Fabry:

Quack Nicholson is great. I had Quack Efron.

Derek Johnson:

Bill Murray.

Dave Fabry:

Oh, yeah.

Dave Fabry:

There's another. Or Quacky Chan.

Derek Johnson:

Quacky Chan would be good too.



Dave Fabry:

Would be good too. But I think Ben Afquack is the winner, I mean, even after you considered all those options.

Derek Johnson:

I love it. We thought about getting a pet chicken and naming it Hennifer Lopez.

Dave Fabry:

Nice.

Derek Johnson:

To the point where like I was so set on the matching pun names that I started researching chickens, and then after researching decided I didn't want a chicken, though.

Dave Fabry:

No. Well, and that begs the question then. So, you said you have dogs?

Derek Johnson:

I do, yeah.

Dave Fabry:

And a duck isn't a typical, unless you're a farm kid, it isn't a typical kind of pet. So how is it that you came to get him?

Derek Johnson:

So, yeah, and it's definitely not typical to have them in the way that we have him. You know, usually we have them, it's for eggs or for, you know, whatever. But I actually, when I was a little bit younger, I had a duck. And some life things happened. You know, it was a little bit darker of a time in my life, and I ended up going to treatment to get help for that. And when I went to treatment, I had to find a new home for this duck that I had. He had been kind of my only buddy for a couple of years. And so that kind of broke my heart. That was one of my, like one of the hardest things, was like, "I can't just go get this duck back." Like, there's no... You can bring your dog to a kennel or something, but there's nowhere like that for a duck. So, I was like, "Okay, someday when I get my life together a little bit, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do this again, I'm going to do it right." And that's how the adventure duck thing sort of started, because I didn't want to just get a duck and then make a mistake with it again. I wanted to really give it a good life, and really have it be the king of all ducks, you know, like just live like royalty. And that's how that all started, so. When we got our first house, literally, before we even moved into the house, I had a duck. It was just, it was on the vision board. I don't know why.

Dave Fabry:

I love it.

Derek Johnson:

It was kind of a-

Dave Fabry:

No, I can understand. I mean, especially if it represented a period where you had to give up something that, at that time, was exceedingly important to you. And then wanting to put that on the vision board, to say, "I want to get back to a point." We can't rewind things that happened to us, but to get to a point where I can do that again, but do it the right way, and-

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. It was very metaphorical, in a way.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah. I get it.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah.

Dave Fabry:

I get it. That's, that's impressive, in terms of, then, your commitment. And how long do duck, what's the life expectancy of a duck?

Derek Johnson:

So, I didn't look this up before I got a duck. Eight to 12 years.

Dave Fabry:

Okay. And how old is Ben?

Derek Johnson:

He's only four, so we have a lot of adventures left.

Dave Fabry:

Because that's always the thing I say about, about pets in general. The thing that's so wonderful, but also the thing that's heartbreaking is they just don't live long enough. And they become such an integral part of your life, no matter what... I guess unless you get a parrot or a tortoise, it's likely that you're gonna outlive pets. And so, have you contemplated that that's, I mean, as I would imagine now, that you really have bonded, and that does set up a point in time in the future where it's, you know, there will be a loss. People may not understand it if they're not pet people, but I get it a hundred percent.



Derek Johnson:

Yeah. And I think that, you know, I'm the sort of person, I will always have a dog, I will always have, you know, the normal, easier pets. But I'm pretty decided, I think, that, that this will be the last duck that I have.

Dave Fabry:

It's a one-and-done.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. I think if you win the lottery, stop playing, man, you know? Like, I think that I'm too afraid that, after having a duck that's this cool... I've never seen another pet duck that acts like him and wants to be around its people the way that he is. And I think that it would just set it up to like be disappointed and, you know, then you have eight to 12 years of a duck that you're like, "Well, you're not the other one," you know? And that just doesn't seem right, and so.

Dave Fabry:

Well, no, and I, I just think it's so admirable that you had that goal, and now you've put that on your vision board, vision accomplished,

Derek Johnson:

Yeah.

Dave Fabry:

and then see what is next. And that's really my final question that I have, is, you know, what's next then for you and for the duck in the short term, and what do you see in the future?

Derek Johnson:

So, yeah, we get to do all these cool opportunities, right, and a lot of them are just for fun. There are things that, you know, going out to California in February, it's a lot of fun, but we've also gotten to use that following for things that are really important to us. And so, I've really used it a lot to promote things like resources for people who have addiction issues to find recovery or, you know, overdose prevention and awareness, and things like that, mental health resources. And I own a small business outside of my day job here, and I've been able to use the following to kind of help build that business, which is an addiction recovery business, and get to use it for, to help people as well. Like, laughs and being goofy and riding a moped with a duck is awesome, and that's mainly what we do still, but also, it's like, okay, can we do some good with this?

Dave Fabry:

You know, you buried, you buried the lead, in a sense, really, from my perspective, is that, you know, yes, it's funny, he became Insta-famous, but you're using it for an impact. And that's really, I think where it blends so well, and I hope that's one of the reasons that attracted you to



Starkey a year-and-a-half ago, is we're so much more than a company that just makes devices that you stick in your ears that help you hear better. We're really connecting people to each other. We know there's strong comorbidity between untreated hearing loss, loneliness, social isolation, depression. You know, there's links, at least correlations, with untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline in humans. I don't know the links on ducks, and whether ducks indeed suffer hearing loss as they get older in life, but we'll talk about that professionally later. I'll see if I can return the favor that you capably served me in terms of my IT needs. But you know, the fact that you found that way to get to something even more personal with the vehicle that you were provided is perhaps the best tip, really, to offer clinicians, practice owners who are looking to navigate through this morass of social media and say what, you know, find a platform that works for you. If you're doing video, Instagram's kind of the preferred choice, in many cases. And if you want to just do one liners, Twitter, now Threads, is another one. Are you on Threads now too?

Derek Johnson:

I don't even know what that is.

Dave Fabry:

That's a new one off of Facebook.

Derek Johnson:

Oh.

Dave Fabry:

And so, there's, it's finding your vehicle. As you said, I think, thinking about your vision for what you want to do with this. And really, I don't know whether your vision included at the start this pivot, that going into issues with mental health and those issues. Was that a part of it when you began, or did this sort of become the byproduct of what happened when you had success?

Derek Johnson:

I mean, I think it was a part of my own mental health and journey with recovery. And so, it was never, I never thought we would have enough people to have any sort of impact. But it was very impactful to those things for me. And so, then it was, it was kind of just an easy, like, "Well, I have all of these followers. Fun videos are cute, but, you know, can we help someone with this?" And you should see some of the posts whenever we do like a recovery or a mental health post. It is so many people that are like, "My son this," "My dad that," you know. And it's literally just hundreds of comments that are like, "Thank you for sharing this." Like, "I needed to hear this today because so-and-so in my life is struggling with this." I think it's just so important. And a lot of these things don't get talked about enough. And so, I think it's, for whatever reason, as human beings, like, it's really nice to know that you're not alone with something.

Dave Fabry:

And humor is the vehicle to get to that more difficult conversation in many cases. And I think that's where mental health, number one, it's inextricably intertwined with hearing loss, but also, it's something that people are often uncomfortable talking about. So again, what you've done so successfully, like I said, I think you buried the lead on this, in the sense that you've used it as a vehicle to now enable you to have a conversation. And people just come out of the woodwork by the humor, that then goes to a serious place, a serious topic. And that's not that different than addressing hearing loss and use of hearing aids. And so that's where I think people may have wondered why in the heck were we talking about Ben Afquack on the podcast today, but I think there's so many parallels. And I really, really, sincerely appreciate your coming on to talk about this topic, and especially knowing that it is such a personal one for you. And I love watching your journey that you're on now. I love how it's pivoting into these other areas, where you can really make an impact, and you're making an impact on people's lives, in your day job, and with Ben Afquack.

Derek Johnson:

Life is crazy sometimes, isn't it?

Dave Fabry:

Crazy, but it's good, right?

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. It's a good ride.

Dave Fabry:

It's a good ride. So, thank you very much, Derek.

Derek Johnson:

Thanks for having me. This was fun.

Dave Fabry:

It's our pleasure. And to our listeners, we hope you enjoyed this episode of "Sound Bites" as much as I did. If you liked it, please like, rate, review on your favorite podcast, and share it with your friends, with anyone who you might think that would benefit from this episode. We also want to hear from you if you have ideas for other podcasts in the future. Send us an email at soundbites@starkey.com. And Derek, before we go, I want to ask again, what's Ben Afquack's handle on Instagram? We didn't discuss it yet. I think they can find it pretty easily but go ahead and spell it out.

Derek Johnson:

Yeah. It's @MinnesotaDuck, and Minnesota's spelled out.



Dave Fabry:

Excellent. Okay. And so, for those who didn't go to the University of Minnesota, M-I-N-N-E-S-O-T-A, Minnesota. So, you know, please, again, let us know what your thoughts are about this episode, and in the future, your ideas. Thank you very much for listening, or watching, if you're watching on our YouTube channel, and we hope to hear and see you again very soon.