THE BEST OF — EPISODE 330

Bill Bailey

Chief Revenue Officer, Satisfi Labs

On episode 330 of the Digital and Social Media Sports Podcast, Neil chatted with Bill Bailey, Chief Revenue Officer of Satisfi Labs, the conversational AI platform whose agents run fan chat for about 70% of major league teams.

What follows is a collection of snippets from the podcast. To hear the full interview, check out the podcast on all platforms and at www.dsmsports.net.

Bill's Career Path

"Interesting career path how I got here. I'll go fast through it because I don't want to put you to sleep. I spent a lot of time in the food business and the bottled water business back in California, for decades. Eventually found my way into pro sports. I joined an NBA team, New Orleans Hornets before they were the New Orleans Pelicans. Kind of joined at a pretty high level versus most people worked their way up. So it was a different connection point. I was fortunate enough to run revenue for them and all the strategy pieces and CRM and all that kind of stuff, for about seven years, which was great.

“Then we joined SSB when they were just starting, as the concept of data warehousing and building data warehouses on top of your CRM systems was kind of beginning in pro sports. And we had a couple clients, and ended up with two, 300 pro sports and college athletic programs on our data warehouse platform. We got that company sold off, and I joined Satisfi about — boy, it seems like yesterday, but about six years ago. Right before Covid. So, interesting time to join a tech company. Very, very interesting.”

What Satisfi Labs Does Today

“We deploy chat technology around the organization. So I often say, if you think about it, we just want to help our partners have a conversation between a fan and a brand. That’s it. Full stop. All topics, all channels. We believe that a conversation is everything between a fan and a brand.

“In the past when I used to run revenue — long, long time ago because I’m old — people used to buy a ticket, for instance, and then they would start asking questions, begin their journey to the game. It’s not like that anymore. We all know it’s not like that. My kids are in their early 20s and they’re asking about the Uber sitch, and do you have gluten free options for food. And if you think that is a post-purchase service question, you’re mistaken. They have not yet engaged with you. They have not yet decided to go to the game or the event or your city yet.

“And so you need to treat it like it’s just a conversation. Open your arms and say, how can I help you? And then based on what they ask, our AI models will take them on journeys. And believe me, we’ll ask them for revenue. We’ll get the revenue out of them. But let’s not start with any assumptions that you’re just trying to sell them tickets, you know?”

Data, Stories, and Selling: How the Discipline Evolved

“It’s actually — if you go back to before sports, when I was with Ventura Foods, a $3 billion food manufacturing company, huge sales organization, and I had no formal sales training. So I wasn’t allowed to be in sales. I was a director of analytics and strategy at that point. And so I was directing the sales people on how to sell, what to sell, where to sell it, what stories to tell. That’s old school sales. And what happens is data starts informing the sales process.

“What’s paramount is data and stories and the passion you can bring forward about your product because of data, and because of how passionate you are about the fit it has and the need. And then sales becomes easy. I think highly of myself as a sales professional at this point in my career, but I couldn’t sell something I didn’t believe in. I couldn’t sell something that didn’t have stories around it that I could tell. I’m a natural storyteller that evolved into sales.

“And it’s why Hugh Weber, who was the president of the Hornets and we worked together in the food business, brought me into the Hornets. I said, but I’m not in sales. He said, yes you are. Sales is data and stories and that’s what you’re good at.

“So it just keeps going. So we build our first — the first CRM system really that a pro team had. We hired KORE to build it for us. We used a lot of data back in those days. We had to. New Orleans was the smallest market in the NBA by a lot. I mean, we’re the 30th market and 29 was a lot bigger than us. So I think the numbers said we had to sell season tickets to 1 in 5 households that could afford them. There’s some crazy stuff like that just to survive. So we had to mine the data. We had to go deep and be very efficient. You couldn’t just dial for dollars and burn leads. You had to be very, very judicious with what you’re going to say to them.”

Uniting Fan Data Across Channels

“It was tricky in those earlier years. It’s become a little easier. But there was a whole groundswell of data for data’s sake. It was just data collection, and there wasn’t a lot of actionable insights from it. And you had to build a golden record around your fan at that point to even understand what was important, with all the channels coming on board. What channel do they like to speak to me on? Do I want to have to channel switch them to get them a sales brochure, or can I send it through SMS, or things like that? There’s a lot of thought that had to go into how to engage — but there wasn’t a lot of thought. This was the wild West back then, turning on new channels and running with it.

“But I think now teams do a really good job with thoughtfully thinking about the fan journey, understanding it’s omnichannel. And how do I carry that conversation from someone that hits the website, to get them to sign up for my SMS alerts, to firing a conversation with us. And that’s partly why we say we want to be in all those channels as the first line of defense. We aren’t a channel. We are just your knowledge and your conversation and the pipes to all those channels, so they can stay where they are and get the answer they want — you know, the answer on text isn’t, oh, click here and go to my website. Why? I got the answer right here. I’ll tell you.”

Are Organizations Mature Enough? Garbage In, Garbage Out

“The answer is yes. They’re mature enough. And thankfully, because about 70% of the major league teams are on our platform now. So we’re happy that they were ready for it.

“There is still a mantra that it’s garbage in, garbage out. So that foundational layer of your content is still important. And as much as now, post the LLM frontier models coming out and us using those, now we’re able to kind of scrape and grab data more easily, less work for our customers. But I’m still going to scrape a web page that you thought was gone and it’s got bad information on it. So there’s still a little bit of a wait a minute, that’s answering wrong. Well, I don’t know. We got it from your website. So there’s always that kind of cleansing hygiene layer when we first implement.

“So there’s still learnings to it. But our clients are ready. The data is ready. Now their customer records are ready to begin the next frontier of this, which is more personalization — whereas the bot fires, if I know who it is, I should answer the questions even more specifically to, where should I park? Well, you’re a season ticket holder. You should park over there.

“If we’re talking about content, then that’s what we’re getting it from. We’re getting it from data feeds, APIs, all kinds of different integrations with our ticketing partners. All the other big ticketing companies are giving us an event feed. So I know all the events coming up at that building. You don’t have to tell me.

“We have great partnerships with a lot of food and beverage companies. We’re working on some really cool stuff with Aramark right now where we’re getting a feed in on our mutual clients. So if the menu items change, we know about it. I know metadata around that item. I know it’s a local option. I know it’s kosher, whatever it may be. And so the conversations get very robust. We want to get as much as we can from automatic feeds versus anything else.

“Our meetings with our clients shouldn’t be about content. We have that. It should be about campaigns you’re running. Our agents run campaigns. And so all we need to know is, where are you in your sales cycle? Are you launching renewals in the next month? Okay, let’s start getting the renewal campaigns going. Let’s start making sure I have the latest nudges and I’m pushing people to renew in the conversation, whereas a month ago I wasn’t because it was too early. So our conversations have shifted now to be much more strategic and fun about your business. And we’re just an extension of your marketing arm. Not about, hey, we’re not answering where a hot dog is, what should I say? Those days are gone.”

Authentication, Contextual Personalization, and the Creepy Line

“I think you hit on it. It’s authentication and being logged in. Not everyone wants to be. That’s fine. We’re not pushing it unnaturally. But if you can encourage them to log in and it’s through a channel that I can grab an identifier as we’re firing the agent, then I’m going to know a lot more about them. You can give me their unique identifier. You can give me some parameters about whether they’re a season ticket holder, whether they have a ticket to tonight’s game already. And then the ways I nudge and start to push the conversation can change. I’m not going to try to sell them a ticket for tonight’s game — they already have one. I’m going to talk about how to upgrade the ticket or add parking or things like that.

“And that stops short of saying, hi, Bob, how’s your wife, Jennifer? That kind of personalization is available. A lot of people aren’t really ready for that. I’m not sure I even am. That’s the creepier part of it.

“But contextual personalization we’ve had for a long time. If you fire our agents from a QR code on the suite level, it shouldn’t ask you, hey, do you need help parking? Well, I’m already on the suite level. My car is in the parking lot. So it can cut to the chase even with zero personalization — knowing anything about that fan, I can already start to take them on a journey from where they launched it from.

“Now, if you tell me some more things, like they’re a suite holder or they have a season ticket, then I can do even more. All the way to, if you have a data warehouse and the desire is there, we can take that identifier you gave me and we’ll go get what fan profile they belong in. What segment. Have they renewed yet? Things like that. So there’s lots there. That’s the next frontier. We’re ready for it. It’s more of the business decisions and user stories being developed by our clients as we speak. But that’ll be the fun part.”

“When we started this company — or Donny started this company, who you’ve met — it was much more about the guest experience and the service. What time is the game? What gate should I enter? Where do I get a hot dog? And that was nine, ten years ago. And so we were dealing with the guest services people, the stadium folks.

“And as it evolves, ticket sales gets more involved, marketing gets more involved, food and beverage people get involved. And so there was a long time in my tenure here where we served a lot of stakeholders, from ticketing to even sponsorship — we can activate sponsors in these conversations — to marketing, brand voice, to guest services. And so it actually was difficult for us to manage sometimes inside of our customer, five different stakeholders. And so where would we land? We’re a digital marketing asset, so we’re often thought about that, and we landed in digital marketing, which is great. More and more we see — as analytics and strategy departments get more robust, we see us kind of landing there more so.

“It should be a department, in my opinion, that is conducive and is used to walking the halls, I say. If you’re already building websites and apps, then you’re already down with the sponsorship people and the ticket people and you’re roaming the halls. If we’re stuck in a department inside of an organization that doesn’t roam the halls, I’m not going to hear about the things I need to hear about, about what’s ailing the organization and what they’re trying to push. I’m not going to hear about Bark in the Park and the new thing they’re having at this promotion, because I’m over in this other department.

“So the full circle now is our new agents. Now it’s not just one platform or one bot, it’s agents. So they’re a set of agents. The fan sees the same thing, the fan’s solving a conversation. Behind the scenes there’s a ticket agent, there’s a fan experience agent, a guest experience agent, there’s a food and beverage agent, and they’re all working in unison. But now I have different stakeholders. Hey, marketing people, I want to talk about the fan experience agent and how we have some ideas on how to improve the brand voice and the fun and how it’s getting stats from the league. Hey, ticket department, come engage me on the ticket agent. Let’s get the latest in conversational flows and our new ticket e-commerce that says, hey, I want two tickets when Bronny is in town — and it knows what team he plays for and when that game is, and things like that. Food and beverage agents, where I’m working more directly with Aramark and their Aramark content. So it’s kind of splintered a bit. We still usually end up in some strategic thing.

“You brought up the chief AI officers. We certainly love them. They are great friends. We find that they are more focused on how AI is used inside their organizations. So we’re engaging them more these days on guardrails and making sure that we’re secure there. They want to make sure we’re as secure as we should be. And then they’re busy helping the organization build other agents. And we’re big fans of — you should build your own things, until it gets to a fan-facing third rail of, whoa, this agent is actually talking to. If it’s a fan, that’s when it’s not worth it. We’re not that expensive. You should come grab us.

“We’re doing more content around that build versus buy. You should build stuff yourself. You should partner with vendors. You should buy the ones that touch the fan, because there’s too much risk. We spend too much time on guardrails and making sure that certain topics aren’t spoken about, and protecting the brand and not getting you screen grabbed and all that sort of stuff. So we spend a lot of time with the AI committees talking about that, about helping them and suggesting ways they should be building it in their org. I don’t want to help sales reps write emails in Copilot. That’s not me. You should do that.

“But these agents — there’s a lot of risk in there, and compliance with SOC 2 and redacting credit cards. If someone puts a credit card in, I don’t want to see it. We redact it immediately. There’s a lot of that sort of stuff going on. If you do it internally, there’s examples where people have tried and it fails almost immediately, and then fans are laughing at you.”

The rise of ChatGPT and how that affected Satisfi

“Luckily, we were battle tested by an even bigger issue, which was Covid. So Covid hit.”

“We have 900 customers now. We’re blessed. We had 240 at the time, I think. And that weekend, March 13th, we all remember it, all 240 closed. Every one of our clients closed the door. So there’s no renewals happening. Hard to get new sales. And so our company was battle tested. We had to reposition to make sure that we’re really important. Now you’re not playing games — it doesn’t mean you can stop talking to your fans. We’re more important than ever. A lot of time doing that and getting through that.

“So when the LLM boom came up, certainly Donny was much more ahead of that curve than I was in my role. But our investors and the world came to us and said, I guess you’re out of business. Anybody can do it. And we said, hold my beer.

“So we were able to get through that and use that technology to actually improve some of the things that were hard about our product. Before LLMs, we knew everything — but to know every answer to every question, I had to get every single question from you, Neil, every single one in a spreadsheet, to make sure we’re doing all kinds of algorithmic matching and some really cool IP. But it was content fatigue for our clients at some point. So these LLMs, instead of anywhere near putting us out of business, we’re now marshaling them and using them to understand how to grab that content, so that our meetings with our clients are about strategy and about campaigns, not about content anymore.

“So it’s actually really improved ours — and our patents pending and our IP is around how to use those LLM models that are out there in an enterprise safe way. How to use them against things like data feeds that are very static. And then how to make sure we put the guardrails in to have them not hallucinate, because they will. And our brands don’t want to answer questions about the president. Those models without guardrails will say, well, I don’t know how your owner feels about the current president, but I can imagine — and they start, and you’re like, whoa, stop, stop, stop. So we’re very proud of all that stuff we’ve kind of locked down. We use their content. We know what a president is. We’re not going to say, I don’t know what you’re talking about. But we’re not going to answer anything that’s not in the content we were given.

“We say last mile. We’re really big on saying we’re that last mile vendor that you need. You can use these models for lots of things and we use them too. But that last mile between all that content and the fan — that’s us. That’s where we put all that sophistication in, is in the last mile.”

Fans Going to ChatGPT, and the Trusted Source

“It’s part and parcel to my days when I was standing in the box office in New Orleans and someone would say their ticket’s not working, and I’d say, where’d you get it? And they’d go, the guy in the parking lot sold it to me. And I’d say, I don’t know. Next time, maybe you should buy it from me. It’s not much different. It’s still my problem. I still have a fan in my box office that’s upset, and I often would give him a free ticket and they’d go on in. But I didn’t cause it.

“And we’re seeing there’s a lot of teams and leagues that are concerned and having meetings about the fact that their web traffic is down — significantly down, because it’s going to ChatGPT and other things.

“It is my belief that as those people find out you can get the wrong answer from those models, they go back to the trusted source. And our clients are reminding their fans as best they can: we’re the trusted source, come back to us. And by the way, with the help of Satisfi, our experience is very much like ChatGPT when you talk to us. But you’re talking to us. So it’s still that really nice, robust conversation, that warm conversation, that intuitive experience — but you’re having it with me, not with some model that scraped the interwebs and God knows what Reddit articles it was referring to when it said, don’t bother buying a ticket to a game.”

Live Escalation: Getting a Human In

“And don’t forget that behind our agents, our AI agents, is live escalation. So there is the ability to — we will get out of the way if our clients say, hey, if they’ve asked and they seem like they’re frustrated, then get one of us on the phone.

“Certainly when it’s revenue generating and someone says, hey, how do I buy a suite for this particular game — we’re going to show them all the suite options and beautiful pictures and a carousel. But every one of those pictures has got a ‘do you want to talk to somebody’ button. We’re trying to encourage, let’s get a rep on the phone and sell that to you. Or go to one of your tech partners that does that — Attend or SuitePro,or FEVO. Then we’ll integrate with those models just fine too.

“But we want the AI to at some point stop and move to — there’s a call to action. Let’s go get the revenue. This person said they want to spend money. I don’t want to keep talking to them. I want to go get the money.”

What Fans and Teams Want Now: “Questions Going Unasked”

“There’s a ton. Where it’s headed, we’re all trying to guess, but we certainly see the conversation getting more and more robust, more and more personal.

“Again, I’ll go back to Covid. Covid changed the game for digital conversations. It’s all I could have during Covid was a digital conversation, and use a QR code — which we all thought they were dead. So it brought both of those things to the forefront. And now it’s come to be expected. I expect to have a digital conversation with my brands. And if it’s not there, what do you make me do, call you on the phone? And I don’t want to call you. No one wants to talk on the phone.

“And I often say to our prospects: don’t think of any questions going unanswered. Think about any questions going unasked. And the Predators here in Nashville, where I live, are a client, so I’ll use that as an example. If they weren’t a client — how important must a question be before I’m going to pick up the phone and call the Predators? That must be really important, because otherwise I’m just going to guess. And I’m going to guess wrong. If I’m not sure about the menu options, I’m going to feed my kids before the game and walk in full. I’m going to do all kinds of things. So the questions going unasked, that’s very dangerous.

“So our fans want to ask questions. They want to ask questions. And our clients are saying, wow, let’s give them a chance to ask it. And the conversations are 4x what they used to be. No skin off their nose. We’re answering them for them. But now that fan experience is so much better.

“Fast forward to the Indianapolis Colts, who want those conversations so much they have eight foot cardboard cutouts of their mascot, Robo Blue, and on his paws, a QR code. He’s all over the concourse saying, hey, how are you doing? Can I help you with anything? They know these people are already at the game. They’re in line buying things. And still I want to have a conversation with them for better fan experience. And maybe more revenue.

“So that’s where it’s headed — just more and more and more conversations. From that comes all the analytics, all the intents. It’s like having an unstructured survey that runs constantly. I’m not a big survey guy myself. I don’t fill them out, so people don’t hear my opinion. This is like having a survey that runs constantly without being a survey. You know what they’re concerned about. You know their tone of voice. You know if they’re upset. You know if they used a curse word. There’s all kinds of things you know by looking at our data.”

Proactive Conversations and the Membership Agent

“I think in more and more proactive pushing of that conversation. That’s the next level. I know you have a ticket to the game tomorrow, so I’m going to go ahead and give you some information. I’m going to try to start a conversation. Today, that’s in the form of the know-before-you-go emails that people send out, and we’re buried in those emails that say, here’s some information, if you have more questions, ask, click here.

“It will evolve to: I know what your questions always are, Neil. You always get lost on the way to the game. You can’t seem to remember where the parking lot is. Let me just tell you, it’s over here. And I’ve already loaded the map into your car, so don’t ask again — it’s going to take you there. Things like that will be the future, in my opinion. These are just my opinions. But it’ll be much more of understanding you personally.

“Our newest agent we’re releasing now is a season ticket membership agent, where the endpoint to that agent is specific to that season ticket holder. So I can start to know where they sit. I can start to know who their rep is. I can text it and ask questions. Someday, add a ticket to my account because my son’s coming tonight — let’s get a ticket close to me. Things like that. So that’s where we want to head with these, because that’s where the conversations are going.”

The NHL Game Companion

“We took a really good step in that direction when we built for the NHL. So the NHL, we have a game companion, and so that’s a whole different agent. It started with the rules of hockey. Rules of hockey can be very complicated if you’re not a hockey fan. And they are trying to get new fans all the time. So we built a bot that turns the rules of hockey into a conversation. Step one.

“Step two is, hey, wait a minute, let’s connect a live feed of every NHL game. And now there’s a game companion module that’s your companion while you’re on the couch watching it, or in the building — but anywhere you are watching the game. And you can say, whoa, what just happened? Because often the play is fast. The referees don’t always stop like an NFL does and announce what happened. It can be quick, you missed it. But what was that? Oh, here’s what happened. That was icing by so and so. That was a goal by so and so. And then, well, what’s icing? And now they’re talking about what’s icing and offsides. And you can actually have a whole conversation about that with our agent today, with our NHL games for sure.

“Same with how to watch. Like, I’m in Toronto, but I’m a Rangers fan. Where do I see the game tonight? So we can help with all that kind of stuff. And I think that’s just part of what you’re talking about, is just becoming more of a part of the fabric of how I engage with my favorite teams.”

From Message Analytics to Conversation Analytics

“Funny you should ask. I didn’t prompt you to ask this question. Literally what is coming out — I mean, it’s in a few clients’ hands right now, it’ll be rolled out soon — is our whole new console approach. We’ve always had good analytics and can always tell you how many conversations and messages and topics and where maybe some things aren’t being answered. Our new console approach I’m super excited about, because it breaks every agent that you have down — ticket agent, F&B agent — into the campaigns you’ve said are important and we’ve worked on together, and it talks about task completion.

“So we’ve moved from a message-based analytics to a conversation-based analytics, because that’s what’s most important. What did that conversation entail? It started as gluten free food and it ended as buying a partial plan. That’s important to understand. It’s important to understand the dynamics of a conversation. And did we complete that task? Yes, we pointed them to gluten free food. Yes, we got them to talk about ticket plans. And yes, we got a live agent in the chat to hopefully complete the deal.

“So we talk about task completion. It’s not a 100% metric, because people are always going to do what they want to do. But there are certainly tasks we set out to accomplish. Now, we’re going to answer all the questions — but when was the task completed? Let’s measure that with the ROI. We’re using all kinds of KPIs that will back up each one of these campaigns.

“And alongside of that is an agent where you can look at the data and you can also say, how can my bot be better? How can you help me sell more tickets? What are people asking about right before they ask about tickets? What are the conversations about? And the LLM will tell you, as a client, here’s what to look at. So we’re using agents to analyze agents, which is like breaking the fourth wall and all kinds of stuff. It’s crazy.”

Nudges, ROI, and Group Tickets

“The approach we use is called nudges. So we will answer the question, then we’ll nudge you to say, hey, is there other things related to it — or sometimes not related to it — that you might want to know about? And we don’t always nudge on related things. Sometimes the campaign will be, we have brand new Korean nachos on the menu and no one knows about it. Can you get more traffic on that? Sure. I’ll answer the question. Have you ever tried the Korean nachos down at 112? They’re amazing. So there’s always things like that. But in general, we use nudges to further the conversation. We never want to just answer and then stare back at them. That’s the tool being used.

“And then what our clients are looking for in all those tasks and campaigns is ROI. I mean, the world wants ROI on what they spend with us. So that’s hours saved by these questions being answered 24/7 immediately. So that starts to not only save labor, but improve the guest experience. All the questions — remember, that were unasked — are now asked. So my experience is better. And then how many times did we kind of steer them to revenue opportunities they wouldn’t have known to ask?

“Group tickets is one of my favorites, because to this day it’s a very important part to all of our sports teams. It was a big, big team of people I had in New Orleans. I still think the average fan doesn’t understand that there’s a thing called group tickets — that if me and 11 buddies went to a game instead of me and four buddies, it unlocks all kinds of assets. I might do a high five tunnel with the players. There’s things like that that it unlocks.

“And so before we just run off and sell them a ticket in chat, I want to talk to you about other ways you might want to experience the game. Have you tried our promotional nights like Bark in the Park? Have you tried thinking about coming as a group? The best way to see a game is through a partial plan, where you can choose your own menu of games you want to go to. So that’s my passion around this.”

“I think we all appreciate the algorithms that are out there these days. I go to my Instagram feed and I follow what my algorithm tells me to follow. And by the way, I appreciate it. It’s showing me the hot new band it knows I’m going to like. And by the way, I do. And it shows me the new pair of shoes that I might like because I was already shopping for other shoes that were like it. It’s okay. It actually saves me time and introduces me to things that I wouldn’t have seen otherwise. So you know, it’s not creepy.”

Human in the Loop: Dynamic Routing in Practice

“Well, there’s a couple aspects to that. One, we work with our clients to say, first of all, we suggest if they’re talking about revenue and it’s not just a single game ticket, that you escalate it to a live rep. And so we get from them all their different sales people and what team they belong in. So we’ll actually escalate that to someone on the group sales team if it’s about groups, someone on the renewals team if it’s about renewals. It’ll round robin through those groups. And you might want to say the renewal team can back up the group sales team if no one’s online, but the group sales team can’t back up the renewal team if no one’s online. So there’s lots of rules and dynamic things you can set.

“And so it’s dynamic routing. You also can say, and if they ask about gluten free hot dogs and my answer is we don’t have any, I’m sorry — and they say, can I talk to somebody about that? You might want me to give them the phone number, because you don’t really have someone available online 24/7 to talk about that. You can; that’s certainly a business decision, not a technology decision. But that’s often sometimes a decision. So we can route certain topics and not other topics. We can dynamically route to the right folks as well.

“And there’s a mobile version, which I would have loved when I was running a team. Because you’re having a live conversation with somebody during a game and they’re asking about a partial plan, and you’re like, where are you sitting? I’ll be right there. I’m bringing a beer. Let’s go. I’ll go talk to you about the partial plan right now. Seat visits were a big part of my life. And to have those dynamically driven by who’s actually having conversations in the building would be pretty — whether they’re happy or sad conversations, either one, let’s take care of it right now and go talk to them.

“And they get an alert however they want. They can be texted, it could pop on their desktop. Lots of different ways to alert them that someone’s waiting for you online. They can click it, walk right into the conversation. What’s also nice is they can see what the AI has been discussing quickly, so it’s not starting over. We all hate calling the doctor’s office. You tell the AI a bunch of stuff and then you finally get a human and they’re like, okay, what’s your account number?

“Why do I put my account number in 17 times? So we can kind of see — oh, looks like you’re having some issues with valet parking. Yeah, we don’t have any, that’s why. But we have these great lots here, or whatever it may be. So that kind of speeds it up a little bit.”

Where It's Headed: Satisfi Forward, Voice, and Multimodal

"We have a whole practice we just launched called Satisfi Forward, that its job is to take the agents we deploy — the productized but highly configured agents that we deploy to our clients — and we are now at a place where that client is driving. And innovation is driving the fact that they want those agents to push farther into their organization. I want those agents to push into my voice systems, for instance. Push in to be more personalization, so pull from my data warehouse, things like that.

“Those are so — I wouldn’t like to use the word custom, but they’re so highly configured to what that client needs that we have a whole practice now called Satisfi Forward, which is forward deployed engineers that will go and do that piece to connect it to your voice system, to your data warehouse. To get the most out of our agents you’ve already purchased from us.

“So that is the future. They don’t want to maintain another whole knowledge volume for their voice vendor who says they have an AI agent. Yeah, I know you do, but it doesn’t know anything. Go hit Satisfi’s APIs and get the answer from them. And let’s work on that.

“So that’s the future. And I think we’re well set up with Satisfi Forward to now not have to drive it — but it can also come to us. The actual user stories our clients want, we can now deliver, without it being completely bespoke and nothing to do with our actual agents. They’re still tied back to the base agents. So that’s the future: personalization, voice, more channels. That is where it’s headed.”

“The multimodal is fascinating. Where I’m driving in the car and I’m asking some questions about how to get there and parking and stuff. And as I pull up, it says, would you like to continue this conversation when you’re inside? Let me text you a link to this conversation. As I’m walking in, I pop it open and now I’m asking about how to find my ticket on my phone and what I can eat. So the ability should be there. I’m sure we could do it today, but that’s what Satisfi Forward will begin working on — how do I pop from mode to mode and keep that conversation flowing all the way through? That’s where it gets fun. We’re just there, buddy. To your point, we’re that companion at the game that’s there with them.”

On Ranch Dressing and the World Cup

“I’m not surprised. Ranch dressing is the best dressing for sure. But I spent ten years selling salad dressings and margarine and stuff like that. And it’s a hell of a product. I guess I didn’t realize it was so globally not known. That was a surprise to me. But I assume these companies are busy capitalizing on that. I know there were all kinds of jokes about suitcases full of ranch powder being caught in airport security and things like that.”

Most Memorable Day with the New Orleans Hornets

“Boy, there were quite a few. It was a very interesting time. We came post-Katrina. So I joined the team in Oklahoma City when they were there for two years, and then was part of bringing them back to New Orleans. So you still had lines on buildings from the flooding. You couldn’t find a dry cleaners and things like that.

“So I don’t know if it was a day, but it was a period of time when we discovered, being in that market, that while they were there for some years and then went away, it didn’t really stick. The brand didn’t stick. It was more like, when they first came to New Orleans, they just ripped Charlotte off their chest and put on New Orleans and played basketball.

“And so when we came back, they were like, oh, there’s a team here. Like, yeah, we were here before you were. Now the whole city is different, dealing with different things. So we knew right away we had to be part of the city fabric. So we decided to, early on it was the mantra: to be a New Orleans business that happens to play basketball, not a basketball team that happens to be in New Orleans. And that shaped everything we did, from the authenticity of our branding to the way we talk, the way we sold, to know that we’re not going anywhere. We’re here for the long haul. It was a really, really important piece. It was fun.”

The Satisfi Case Study He Cites Most

“Some of them I’m not allowed to mention. But it runs the gamut. I’ll give a couple examples. One, we just are launching with Kroenke, and that organization — Kroenke Sports and all the Denver properties. And I’m very excited about that, because that’s a whole new resurgence for them and their brands and what they have going on in Denver with that rebuild. And the fact that we get to be a part of it is going to be cool. We’re launching as we speak.

“And then we have a ticketing partner that we do all their call center business internationally for. And we’re handling millions of conversations for them a year. And it’s great. It’s very rewarding to just see all those questions being answered in real time, and all the guests being happy because of it.”

A Valuable Way He Uses AI

“We as a company, and I especially — I’m really leaning into Claude right now. We use several models for our platforms and I’m always staying up on the latest, and which of those frontier models are best to use for what pieces. I’m using Claude a lot right now.

“And not just to plan my Italian vacation, but actually, for work — anything from building a skill that can onboard a new partner, to building a repository to hold all of the enterprise knowledge I have around the NFL and the NHL and what we’re doing with those great relationships. So we can proliferate that knowledge throughout the company, and people don’t have to call me anymore. Hey, what’s going on with the NFL? What teams are our clients? What are some best practices?

“And so we’re using Claude not just to synthesize, generating content. I’m using it more and more to be that really smart filing cabinet repository of content. And it’s very good at it.”

Most Impressive Sports Executive

“I’ll have to embarrass him and give a shout out to my very good friend Hugh Weber, who got me in this damn sports business in the first place. We were in the food business together. He joined the Hornets. He brought me to the Hornets. And is a dear friend to this day, but he’s also a phenomenal leader. He just joined the Oilers and that whole organization as CEO recently.

“And the thing I learned about leadership from him, I quote all the time, which is: a good leader will provide context and remove obstacles. And that’s it. That’s all you have to do. If you hire the right people, if you hire smart people, tell them what they’re doing, why they’re doing it, and get shit out of their way, and good things will happen. And so I quote him quite a bit.”

Number One Tip for Young People in Sports

“Network, network, network, network. And it sounds cliche, but I mean really authentically network. Spend time with people your age, follow their careers, give them the kudos, text them, congrats on things. At this point, I’m blessed to be able to pick up the phone and call a thousand people in this business and authentically call them. And that becomes what your value is, half the time. So drive your own career, but man, you gotta salute other people and be with them. And if a colleague or someone you know is looking for a job, help them find a job.”

Most Memorable Sporting Event Attended

“Oh, my. I will go back, unfortunately, back to a Hornets game. I gotta go back to it. The memories and the success of a sports team is not just winning. It’s beating the expectations of your fans. Your fans think you’re going to maybe be a playoff bubble team, you make the playoffs, and then you win the first round of the playoffs and you go to the second round of the playoffs, and they’re like, oh my God. And that’s what helped us sell all those season tickets that year in New Orleans and break the NBA record. So you gotta keep pushing on the gas as that happens.

“But thinking about Peja Stojakovic hitting that buzzer-beating three pointer from the corner in game seven to beat the Mavericks — those kind of things, you still get goosebumps just thinking about that. Especially when it helped your paycheck. But even more just as a fan, it was great.”

Best Meal: Nashville and New Orleans

“Oh boy. My favorite restaurant in New Orleans is Jacques-Imo’s, for sure. And get the alligator cheesecake. It’s absolutely phenomenal. Phenomenal. And Jacques is a great chef and it’s just a great place, great vibe. So that’s an easy one for New Orleans. And all the food in New Orleans is amazing. It’s the best food city in the US.



“Nashville — I mean, obviously we’re known for our hot chicken. So you gotta experience the hot chicken if you’re in Nashville. I would do Prince’s for sure. Hot chicken, the original. And don’t get it too hot, because it will hurt you.”



Most Novel Use of the Platform

“I go to stories where people have changed the menu because of what they ask. They’re asking about ice cream and they don’t have ice cream, they have frozen yogurt and they think it’s good enough. And enough people ask and you’re like, well, you gotta have some ice cream.

“Or the story recently with one of our college clients where people kept asking, how much are softball tickets? And they were free. And they’re like, well, I don’t think we should make them free anymore. People are asking how much they should cost. Let’s do that. “So it’s just good uses, unique uses of where, if you’re paying attention to the data, you can actually steer your business from it.”

Most Important Lesson as a Sales Leader

“I think it’s that authenticity. People are going to see through it in this day and age especially. People want to buy. They don’t want to be sold. So I always talk to folks about the stories you tell. They should be authentic. They should be real. If you don’t have your own stories, borrow mine, whatever — but make them real authentic stories about what’s going on and how you can help them. And believe it. If you don’t believe it, go find something you believe in and go sell that. Sales is very hard if it’s not something you believe in.

“So dive into the product, really know it, and know your customers. Be curious about how your customer’s business operates. So you can speak to them — not just, I used to work on that side, that’s great, I can cheat. But the people on my team know that business too, because they’ve been curious. They’ve asked questions about our client’s business. I don’t care if it’s a zoo or a botanical garden. I want to know what makes you tick. What are you trying to do around here? Because I can’t help you if I don’t know what you’re trying to accomplish.”

All-Star Follow

“I’ll go way off topic and go more political, and talk about the fact that in this day and age it’s really hard to get the facts and get news in the area of politics. And so I search out and I spend — and maybe people think this is biased — but newsletters and things like 1440, and those kind of newsletters that are very much trying to lay out, here’s what this side says, here’s what this side says, I don’t have an opinion, let me just tell you what they’re saying. So you’re able to juxtapose and not live in an echo chamber.

“I’m really big on trying to get out of my echo chamber. And hear other points of view, no matter how much I think the other ones are dumb. No, I’m kidding. You gotta hear the points of view so you can understand. So I like those. I seek out newsletters like that. I’m a big fan of that particular one.”

Where to Find Bill and Satisfi Labs

Find Satisfi Labs on their website at Satisfilabs.com

“You will see our website actually has become putting our money where our mouth is, which is there’s not a lot of content. It’s one big bot. So just open our arms and say, how can we help you? Whatever you ask, we’ll take you on a journey from there. That’s probably the best way. Follow Bailey on LinkedIn and email him at bill@satisfilabs.com.”

THANKS

Thanks again to Bill for being so generous with his time to share his knowledge, experience, and expertise!

For more content and episodes, subscribe to the podcast, follow Neil on LinkedIn and on Twitter @njh287, and visit www.dsmsports.net.