

115 - How to Build a Team for Search Marketing in AI Times with Wil Reynolds

Wil Reynolds

When you're a young manager, the more you actually turn people out, the faster you start learning about people, because you're like, Oh my god. So when I started, I mean, the first four years I ran this business, I probably let go half of the people I hired in their first year, because I wasn't good at hiring. But what that meant is, I ended up seeing 30, 40 people in a year, right? Where I was able to reflect on like, oh, learn from that, learn from that, 'Oh, I thought that that person was going to be okay'. And then it ended up being amazing. What did I learn from them that I missed in my interview process. So for me interviewing and building a team, is a contact sport, like the more people you meet and see their actual fucking work product, you can't, look everybody's resume sounds the same. Like, you got to work with somebody every day to really understand their freaking work product. And the more that you get to see, the better you are at knowing who isn't, isn't going to be right for your team, your working style, your organization and culture.

SEO Leverage Podcast Intro Music

Welcome to the SEO leverage podcast, where we talk about search, marketing, and conversion.

Gert Mellak

Welcome to SEO Leverage. This is episode 115. And today we are going to talk to Wil Reynolds from Seer Interactive. Welcome Wil.

Wil Reynolds

Thanks for having me today.

Gert Mellak

Thank you so much for coming to the show. Seer interactive, your agency definitely has been on my radar for quite a few years already. I have been in SEO 20 years as well and remember, your agency was definitely one of the leading and is still one of the leading digital marketing agencies working with all the big, all the big names, big brands. So congrats on that one. I've read you have about 200 team members right now, is that correct?

Wil Reynolds

Yeah, that's correct.

Gert Mellak

That's, that's definitely impressive. And I want to get get back to you and on that topic in particular, but really first, get a little bit of a feeling of your assessment of the current movement in Search Marketing. At the time of recording, this is late May 2023. We are in a situation where most people working on the internet, at least are probably using Chat GPT. We have Bard from Google being the chat version, we have some previews, what search might look like in a few months. What's, what's your general assessment, where things are going?

Wil Reynolds

I honestly think that it's, it's probably the most disruptive thing I've seen in my time in Search. I mean, you know, if you've been around long enough, you've heard several times, you know, SEO is dead, SEO this is going to kill, SEO that's going to kill SEO, and everybody has been wrong for the freaking 20 years plus, they've been saying it, right? This is the first time that if SEO is defined very narrowly, as where do I rank on a search engine? Again, it's far from freaking dead. It's like, you know, I still believe that, let's just say we get to a world in the next, let's say six years from now. 50% of people are using some kind of search generative experience or something like that. That's still billions of freaking searches every year that are going to traditional Google. So I don't think it's like, you're out of the job. What I think more of is, you know, the pie might be a little bit smaller, but it's still a pretty big pie, right? But I think that as an agency, you know, my responsibility to my clients is to help them to make wise decisions about what that split kind of looks like and where to make investments. And that's where I'm mostly focused on is, how do you know when to time it right? Because let's be honest, like in terms of the disruption, you need customers to be using Chat GPT, you know, Google, Google's Bard, Bing's chat search. And right now, we don't have good data on that, you know. So the last thing you want to do is have your client jump all in on something to find out that their customers aren't there yet. So that's where I'm starting, it's like trying to put my head around, where can I get the data that will help me to better consult my clients. Now, on the flip side, you know, that's the searcher experience, then you've got things like content generation, and we can talk about that separately. But like the ability to build content, and things of that nature is another area that's going to be highly disruptive, I think for folks in those, in the organic search side.

Gert Mellak

Do you think you're going to have 200 team members a year from now?

Wil Reynolds

Yeah, like I don't, I don't use, I don't use automation to try to lower my headcount, right? I'd rather use the automation to lower my price point. And to lower my price point to use those efficiencies could actually help me to grow as a result, not hire fewer people or have fewer people.

Gert Mellak

And 100% agree we do the same thing. We actually try to increase the deliverables with the same team or a growing team, just leveraging the new possibilities which are definitely absolutely now on a different level. I like that you look at, at where tangible data can come from,

we're in a situation where really every single week literally. I was talking to a friend of mine who's a marketer, as well, just before this call, and we, we just we don't know in the world, but this week, if there are different possibilities than next week. And it's moving that fast. But it also means that you never have trusted experience or experience you can trust, you don't have data points, really, you don't know how search users are going to react right now. It's pretty much SEO's evaluating what's happening. And we probably have a very biased way of assessing things as well. The average user might react very, very differently. So it's all, it's all growing, but I do see on my end is like a growing need for branding, I think, in search marketing in general, because Google just needs to be educated more around the brand, and really understand what the brand actually stands for, rather than having a specific article. But it's definitely going to be interesting to see where your tangible data comes from, to make some, some more educated decisions.

Wil Reynolds

Yeah, this is this is, like you said, it's such a pace of change and it's so new. So to me, that's always exciting. Like, I remember when I first got into SEO, it was so new, that it didn't matter that I was fucking 22 years old, right? But people had to listen to what I had to say, because I knew more than they did, right? And, like, to me if I was if I was in my 20s right now, I'd like this is the reset. All those old guys that go around talking about I've been in search for 20 years, that has nothing to do with your ability to think through, how to use Chat GPT, how to use these tools to revolutionize the way that we deliver services for our clients and help people to discover answers. So if I was in my mid 20s, if I was in my mid 20s, I'd be like, I needed this opportunity and I'm going to lean in so hard because I could be one of the first 1000, 1500 people that's really pressing this technology. Now, I'm not going to give up the crown that easily my damn self, so you better believe I'm not just gonna give up my, you know, you say, 'Oh, let the young guys have it'. Like, no, I want to get in the arena and I want to do get out with them, right? But to me, I remember being 22, 23 and watching my friends learning to like, you know, they're trying to learn how do I impress my boss, so I can get a fucking promotion. And I was like, I'm just gonna be really good at this thing that I'm learning. And then it shouldn't frickin matter, right? So yeah, to me, it's a massive reset. And I'm super stoked to see who kind of rises up at this time.

Gert Mellak

It's absolutely really, really impressive. I want to go back to your teams. I want to walk you a little bit back to you when when you started out. I imagine you also started out as a one man show, at some point. How did you go about building your team, you always have a really big team in mind, I meant 200 people that are crazy. We have thirty people here and I can imagine probably 50, but still have a hard time wrapping my head around a bigger team? How did you go about growing so big?

Wil Reynolds

Well, I didn't want to, uhm, we didn't take on any new business like we took them, let's just I'm not gonna say any, because that would be a falsehood, I'd say that we maybe only took on 10% of the clients that approached us once we got to a certain size. So I didn't want to get over like 10 people. So therefore we spent a good like year, year and a half, just saying no to almost

every opportunity that came to us because I didn't want to get big. So it's like, well, how did you go from ten and I would tell the team that. Like it would literally be like, 'Guys, we're not gonna be over 10 people. That's not my vision, yada, yada, yada'. So I knew I didn't want to win by myself. I think winning by yourself is boring. I think when you're in an industry that's constantly changing, it's one thing to have, like a mastermind group. It's another thing to have people that you're sitting around and talking to and conversing with eight hours a day, all the time, right? Not a once a week mastermind group, right? So I like winning with a team. I like the concept of yeah, I could be really smart by myself, but you added something in that I never would have thought of. And now the thing that I started with is made better because we work together. So I knew I never wanted to be a solo consultant because I find it extremely freaking boring to have nobody to high five when, when you create victories for clients, I also find it much more fun to help somebody else to grow than just to have me just do well on my own. So I didn't want to be big, but I wanted to, I knew I wanted to have a team. So what ended up happening for me, was I started realizing that people had been with me, let's say it's been three or four years at this point. And we're kind of stopping our growth intentionally, so that we don't get too big. And then I started bringing in another person and another and the team would be like, 'Well, you said we weren't going to get over 10, why are we at 12, why are we at 13 and it was because we were turning away so much business that I knew we had enough work to take on the additional team members, and I was meeting really cool people I wanted to work with. So for me, I think, I wanted to grow, because I kept meeting new people that were doing really cool things that I wanted a chance to learn from and work with. And that's how I kind of got over my artificial limit of not wanting to get over 10 people, and then I also realized that if you don't grow, you're gonna have team members. And it's fine if this is your business model, but you have to be honest about that model. If you're not growing, you're probably not creating chaos in the company. And if you're not creating chaos in the company, there are fewer opportunities for people in your company to grow, and to spread their wings, and to take on new challenges. So if you keep the company a certain size, you know, it's harder to find new challenges for your people that have been with you for three, four or five years. And they might move on because they're like, 'Hey, I got really good at search, but now I want to try this other thing, and you're not really growing the business, so therefore, I gotta go somewhere else to expand my knowledge'.

Gert Mellak

You really have quite a few points I really, really like so definitely winning with a team. We have the situation here as well, I intentionally, I remember, had a physical office before, we now are working remote. And I had prepared it, we refurbished it, we prepared it for seven seats, because I wanted to have seven people in my team sitting in the same office doing the same thing. This was pretty much the idea from the beginning. And then we, we just started adding more people as we just started to grow, as well. So we have an amazing client base, as well, and I would love to have coffee and or meet every single client in person, because we're just working with amazing people right now. So I can very much relate to your story, but I can also relate to this, this kind of chaos necessary for growth. When I, when I look at the last team meetings we had where we were talking all about AI and how is this going? How are we going to do this differently in the future? And the other things, etc. You can almost feel like everybody's had smoking after those meetings, but you definitely also know that the week afterwards,

everybody is going to have gone through like their own growth journey on how they're going to embrace this new thing and, and finding the role you suddenly have people taking initiative of. And so okay, I'm going to see how we do keyword research in the future with AI now. And then the other person saying, Okay, we're going to be much smarter about link building, let me, let me do this thing and see those people taking, like leadership in the, in the growth journey. And this is a beautiful thing to watch, even with a small team like mine. But obviously, with 200 people, this is definitely something I can imagine is an impressive experience as well.

Wil Reynolds

Well, I think with 200 people, there's just more change management, right? So actually, you know, there's a nimbleness that you have at your size that I don't necessarily have, you know, I gotta get people on board, like I remember back in the day, you just get a bunch of people in a room boom, new way of doing something like, 'Let's go'. At 200 people, you know, you got to kind of go through group by group, by group and show them a new reality and brainstorm with them. And like, you know, if you've got a bunch of people that are client services, let's just say. You know, you're looking at them and saying, how can you use these tools to do your job better? And then you look at your BD team, and you're saying, how can you use these tools to do your job better, so that the client experience throughout their journey at Seer is. Oh, when I talked to the sales team, they were they were looking for things like this, they were asking Chat GPT to explain my business back to them in this kind of way, so they could better understand, you know. Then when we started working together, I got I have account team that using Chat GPT this way. And then my SEO team is using Chat GPT or Bard this way. And my analytics team is using it this way. So I gotta go through all these different divisions to try to get us aligned as an organization. And I'm trying to find the people in my company who are really jumping at it. This is the same advice I give to CEOs, when I talk to big company CEOs. I'm like, find your Chat GPT whisperer, you know, find that person in your company that's going to teach you a thing or two, or show you new prompts and ways of thinking, because to me, they're gonna be the most valuable people in an organization. Anybody that's not questioning, wait, "will Chat GPT, is this really the thing that I should be doing? Like, you know, it's like, you can for the next six months, but a year or two from now you're gonna get a job, and you're not sharpening those new skills that are going to be really important for you in the future?"

Gert Mellak

Absolutely, yeah. They definitely need those innovation drivers. Do you think those are the people who should then be team leaders? Are those naturally the leaders of a team or can just be any team member on on a bigger team?

Wil Reynolds

I think definitely not. You know, I'm wired that way. And I try not to run any teams, because you start to realize the bigger your business gets, the more comfortable you are with chaos. Like, you can change my job every day and that's exciting to me. It's a comfortable place for me, because it means I'm on the cutting edge of something and I'm trying to innovate in an area. I think most people are like, can I please get like documentation on how to do my job so I know I'm doing it well, because then I can feel good about my myself in the work that I'm doing.

Whereas for me, I always focused on the super long end state of like, okay, am I creating value for my client, and I'm okay with whatever the freaking job to be done is in between that. But those people are usually, at least in my experience are not great team leaders, because inherently, I would be changing process on my team. And they'd be like, you just changed this process like four months ago and we haven't completely rolled out those changes yet. And you're already changing it again. And it's like, Oh, shit. So I think that I just don't have great empathy for like, 'Oh, my God, what does it feel like to constantly be in change?' I love that. So that's why I don't think people that lean into that much change are always going to be your best team leaders.

Gert Mellak

Do you think innovation comes in your agency, mostly from you? Or from team members?

Wil Reynolds

No, it comes from team members, but it comes from us, well, it's actually a collaborative effort. Like I'm just throwing stuff out, right? Like, Hey, hey solve this, solve this, solve this. And what you're looking for is the five to 10 people out of a couple 100 that then like, lean into that shit. That's what you're looking for. Because then when you guys get together, you know, they spent the last week thinking about the stuff you've been thinking, you've been using the last week to think about this stuff and a lot will come from that. So you don't need a bunch of people like that. But you need enough that they're looking in corners and being like, why are we still doing this this way? Why are we still doing this, this way. So I'm hoping to get a couple of ambassadors from each team, to try to be the people that I work most closely with try to figure out how we can create success for our clients because also like, the team members are the ones closest to the client problems, the people out there innovating, because you can be so far away from the day to day reality of what it's like to deliver the service to the client, that your ideas sound good on paper, but they're hard to execute on the day to day. So I think it really is a collaboration between innovation and the teams themselves.

Gert Mellak

Interesting. What do you, what do you think about? I mean, I guess with 200 people, quite a few people of those are going to be rebuilt, right?

Wil Reynolds

Yeah.

Gert Mellak

So how do you how do you go about about things like team culture values, things like those? Do you have any, any thoughts? Any anything you do in order to, to try to foster something like that?

Wil Reynolds

No, well, I'll start off, I'll take a couple of steps back. The thing that scares me most about business is when people become names and numbers on spreadsheets, instead of people that

have got their own dreams for their families, themselves, and whatever. So when I started the business, everybody was in Philly, then I couldn't get enough talent in Philly to keep up with my growth. And it took me about a good year and a half to be okay, opening up a second office. I like to know my people, I like to be close to them. I like them, I sit out in the open. So I like people being able to hear my conversations, they can get a real education on like, what's, what's really happening in the business. I try to have as few meetings as possible in private rooms, so that the people around me can kind of understand what's happening in the business. We used to change where everybody sits every year, so they'd be sitting around different executives and stuff. And they'd be able to hear all kinds of things happening in the business, so that we can, so there's just more transparency straight up. So when I opened my San Diego office, I basically relocated like, you know, eight people that had been with me for multiple years and was like, I'll pay for you to go out there and open it up, because then I knew it would be kind of serious culture to get things started and kicked off there the right way. And then what ended up happening is I started hiring people remote that used to work here. And my president, that person that really runs the company, Crystal, she was like, 'You keep hiring people that used to work here remote, but we don't have a remote policy'. Because I was like, Oh, we used to work together, we did dope shit, like, let's get them back. Let's get them back, like, let's just work with them wherever they are because I know they're great, right? Like when you find somebody that you know is great and they strive for greatness, you're like, I don't care where you are because I know that you strive for greatness when you wake up every day. And I was bringing in all these alumni that Crystal was like 'We need a policy'. So I think around 2000, probably 18, I started blogging a bit about like our journey to going remote, I think that we had, at one point we had probably about 20% of the company was remote. And the way that I used to do it was if we hired you and you were remote, in your first year, we bought you three flights, that you had to go to one of our headquarters three times in your first year whenever you wanted to, you didn't have to try to come up with a client excuse or something. You could just whenever you felt a little disconnected, you could just fly out and see people in the team and get to know them. We had apartments in all the cities that we were located in so that people could just kind of come and, when they wanted to. When it's a fixed cost and you run a business it's a lot easier to stomach it than paying for hotel rooms each time.

Gert Mellak

Yeah.

Wil Reynolds

And that's how we kind of got our remote journey started today. I mean, like it's we're mostly remote. And I think that I am, it's like, it's like, it's like an it's a necessity, right? It's like, you know, my clients deserve for me to go out to the marketplace and get the best talent that I can get. But I'd be lying if I said it wasn't, it wasn't hard. It's not hard sometimes because I get energy from knowing who the fuck I work with. A lot of, a lot of founders get energy from making money. And I went to school to be a teacher, right? So it's like, my energy doesn't come from looking at my bank account, it comes from working with people, and watching them grow. In the same way, when I was a teacher, it was fun to watch people learn and grow. So I'm leaning into this, but I'm trying to find my own ways to stay connected. And I think that Seer's been very

vocal about what our values are as a company and our impact on community. So as a result, I think we attract a different type of person. And that person is like, alright, like, I'm down on what these guys are trying to do in the world. So that's kind of how we remote wise, try to continue to instill that culture, and we've got a person whose full time job at pretty much is, is to make sure that we are impacting communities for our co workers, whether they're remote, or in person. So we're getting all different types of backpack drives, and clothing drives and days where we all go and pick up trash wherever we are across the country, to try to find some way to try to spark some of that culture that we that we've had when we were in person, still, whereas we are, as we're leaning into remote.

Gert Mellak

I love that. I love it. It's interesting, I hear from other CEOs as well, very often where they like, I need somebody who I can just plug into my company, and they are going to, to do the job. We have always been, been more on the opposite side. And there's been a lot of time with every single team member still with, with thirty people, when they, when they come and they're going to have a daily call with me. And it's probably in our case, probably me mostly, first of all, trying to explain what we do and why we do it. First and foremost, why we do it, what, what we think should be the value that we bring here. And then try to have our strategies, which are usually like in between me probably, operations and, and the rest of the team trying to try to pass this on. But it's a lot of meetings, a lot of conversations, a lot of communication, to actually drive this forward. But I love that you have built a culture where people pretty much when they when they apply already, already know what this is going to be about or what the values probably are going to be about.

Gert Mellak

Yeah, it's pretty obvious when they join us to what we're what we're all about.

Gert Mellak

A couple of more questions. If you still have have a little bit more time for us. What do you think a good hiring process should look like? And I want you to think a lot about about more small, smaller teams and most of of people listening here might have 5, 10 people maybe at some point, but are still very often struggling in the heat is all the time and to share our process very often. What do you think he could hiring process should look like?

Wil Reynolds

I have no idea. I was never good at hiring. I know this is very not. I think Zuckerberg said doesn't cost a lot of heat. But like I blogged about it. So I'm out there with it. Like, I've never been good at hiring. I think I'm very introspective and I'm kind of hard on myself. So I think when I was younger and smaller, I , if somebody said they worked hard. I used my version of working hard as like, oh, so they work like this, or 'Oh, like, you know, I'm innovative. Oh, you know, I am a lifelong learner, you know, oh I like to learn, you know. I'm like, Oh, great, that means like, I read a book every month, like I'm trying to learn about that. And for somebody else that might mean, you know, I found a new way to pick my nose, I don't know. So I was bad at hiring early in my career. And also like, it's easy to mistake mediocrity for excellence, when you have a very

limited view of what's in the marketplace. Like if you haven't worked around, so that's one of the, I've not talked about the checks, I'm trying to find a way to write about it in a way that people don't get all butt-hurt. But it's like when you're a young manager, the more you actually turn people out, the faster you start learning about people, because you're like, 'Oh my god, so when I started, I mean, the first four years I ran this business, I probably let go half of the people I hired in their first year', because I wasn't good at hiring. But what that meant is, I ended up seeing 30, 40 people in a year, right? Where I was able to reflect on like, oh, learn from that, learn from that, 'Oh, I thought that that person was going to be okay'. And then they ended up being amazing. What do I learned from them that I missed in my interview process. So for me interviewing and building a team, it's a contact sport, like the more people you meet and see their actual fucking work product, you can't like, everybody's resume sounds the same. Like, you got to work with somebody every day to really understand their freaking work product. And the more of that you get to see, the better you are at knowing who isn't, isn't going to be right for your team, your working style, your organization and culture.

Gert Mellak

Right I absolutely agree. I don't, I don't give too much on, on resumes here myself. I probably

Wil Reynolds

Or even interviews, interviews, it's all a waste. Like I used to hire, so that's one thing I used to do is once I realized I was bad at hiring, I then started doing group interviews for a while. And it was very kind of not, I don't know what the word to say is but it was like, 'Oh group interviews' like, it was like well one, I had to maximize my time and two, nothing's easier to be able to ascertain talent than giving people a project to work on real time and present it to you. And we would do it in groups, we'd be like, okay, you know, group A, group B, Group C, Group D, all y'all are interviewing for this job, or these two or three jobs we have open. Here's the project, you got 45 minutes to put it together, go. And I remember one of my best hires came from that, and she's still with me today after about 10 years, because what we noticed is, she could figure out the time, the pressure around like, oh, this has got to be presentable in a certain amount of time. And we're not putting our ideas on paper or on our slide decks fast enough that you can watch her command of the room. And when she got up to present, she made everybody else instantly look like they didn't know what they were doing. And if I had a spent, think about the time, it would have taken me as a small business operator, to try to interview those 20 people to sit down with all them and go over their resumes, to have them kind of go to round two and round three, I was able to make my hiring decision instantly. Because I was able to compare in real time how to Teresa presented against these other 19 people. And in real time, you're not having to look back at your notes. You're just like, wow, that person that went up first looked great, until Teresa came along and smoke them, right? But you got to give people something, at least for me, that's like a work product, you can see how they actually work and how they then present, that connect their thoughts. And then to have that in a bunch of notes. And for me to try to recall that later, was a complete waste of time, because I was going to not recall it well. I wasn't going to remember it well. And then like here I am four weeks later, trying to remember what she did four weeks ago. Group interviews were great for me early days, great for me.

Gert Mellak

It reminds me of my first hire, which I thought was a great employee for two years until the second one came. And they kind of realized that this is not, it's not all, as, as I actually expected. And now obviously, as soon as you see people work, like you say, as soon as you see them work, you kind of get a feeling of what, what is actually possible and what you can expect, what you can't expect. And we definitely are very big on sample tasks. So I think the most, most important focus in the interview process is to filter out whoever was lying on the resume. So you have been doing SEO for eight years, I ask you a couple of questions and I'm going to figure out, and I tried to do this by email before we actually get on a call. And then we have a sample task. And then we talked about it and we definitely know. But I think this is probably most of what we do. We kind of search chemistry and filter out the liars. And then we give them a job as soon as possible and see what they can actually do.

Wil Reynolds

I'll tell you one thing though, that's a downside of, of some sometimes you can like like you said, You hired person one, thought they were great, hired person two and was like, Oh, shit, this person, this person one wasn't as good as I thought. The problem is of person two is like a unicorn. And my years, that's been something I've had to learn as well as we grew, which is sometimes you get a person that is able to kind of do so many different things well, that you then have to say, like so then you start believing that those people exist in the marketplace, you just got to go find them.

Gert Mellak

That's a good point.

Wil Reynolds

And then you start looking for them and you think you find them. And then they come in here like you're not like them, you're not like them, you're like damn, I just hired five more people that I thought were like that, why can't I find someone and you have to reflect on of shit. You know, that person's a unicorn, they can hop out of a meeting about Chat GPT, jump into a finance meeting, and then jump into a client fire and they're just like, I got it, I got it, I got it and they come out with it really strong, well delivered, etc. And you just got to be like that person's a unicorn, let me not try to go and replicate that unicorn activity. I've done that a few times in my career. And it's really come back to bite me, where I've surrounded myself with a group of kind of unicorn style people. And then when we went to go and expand that outside, it was like, No. Yu know, some people just get so into solving a problem that everything else melts away.

Gert Mellak

Yep.

Wil Reynolds

And, and I think that those people are really hard to find. And then you don't want to hold the rest of your team up to that. You want to try to find scalable ways that those other team members can get close to that greatness without having to work and think the same way. That is

the challenge. And that's the fun, right? It's like, okay, well, I can go and try to find these unicorns, which will be nearly impossible. Or I can try to find a way to say how can I take person and take this kind of unicorn thinker and turn them into somebody that thinks in terms of scale and leveling up other people to be like them?

Gert Mellak

Absolutely. Absolutely. That's interesting. Yeah. I was just reminded of something my my mentor said at some point, and is that a good business is going to have those unicorns but it's only going to have the, it's also going to have the bus drivers who are very happy doing the same thing, very good and we're very well every single day, the same thing, are responsible for this particular part of the business. They are not looking at, at being those unicorns and being good at everything, but they extremely good at what they're doing. And this is something that kind of stuck with me and it was okay. You definitely have those unicorns, you can plug them into whatever team and they're going to excel. But then you have people who are pretty much maintain the system, you can rely on them, they're going to stick with you for years, they're going to be loyal, they're going to grow within their role, but they're not even interested in in like, going much beyond because they just love what they're doing. And they see they add value this way.

Wil Reynolds

Know what that's, um, I learned that lesson too. So I remember I've reflected once on like, so when somebody gets promoted at Seer, you know, there was all this, like, you know, all this like hoopla like, oh, this person got promoted, big, big, big shout out and all that stuff, a lot of attention paid. But then if somebody stayed in the same job kicking ass for another year, it was like, you know, and I was like, Oh, that's interesting, culturally how, you know, think about it, what do you get? You think about the kudos you get when you get a new job on LinkedIn, versus when you just stayed at your same job for another year, as humans were wired for that, like, Oh, you got a new thing change? Great congrats, right? You stay at your same job for six years. It's like, Wow, are you kind of complacent? Or you're not moving? You know? So I kind of, I looked at my own company and said, Oh, look at how much kudos we're given to somebody who gets promoted, that's been with us for eight months. But somebody has been in the same role for six years, what do we get for them? And that's when I decided to start to have MVP dinners for people who chose to stay in the same role. It's like a so often people get promoted, like, oh, you know, let's get let's get time with them with. Well, let's explain, like, what they've been working on, and why we saw the promotion. And you would have all this. And I'm like, 'Wait, what about the people who made it possible for those people to get promoted?' Who are so good at their jobs, that they help other people to get their promotions? And what about the self confidence to say, I'm really happy where I am doing what I'm doing and adding the value that I add. But yet societally and within a lot of our companies, as we were growing, we kind of forget that, like, Oh, those people are sometimes more valuable, because they're not in your office every two weeks talking about their promotion plan, right, they're very happy doing what they're doing, I think they're very easy to ignore. So that's why we systemically created some things in our company, to get those folks together on a regular cadence pre pandemic, while to figure it out post pandemic, to just be like, you're not forgotten here, like you're at your sixth

year, in the same role and we appreciate you for that. And we're going to spend a weekend or you know, the next two, three days brainstorming with you working with you, and not giving you that pressure of like, oh, what's next for you? They're like, doing my same job, I really enjoy it. And I think sometimes that pressure that managers can put on people to be like, 'Well, I'm a manager, I got promoted three times into this role. What's next for you?' Sometimes people are like, well, I guess it's not good enough for me to be happy in the job that I'm doing well, and you got to be careful with signaling that as a manager, too.

Gert Mellak

Absolutely. I remember one conversation I had early on with a team member that has been have been doing the same thing for a while and the system isn't not something I could, I could actually imagine, because I'm always trying to do something new. And I was like, what other department what other division in our agency would you like to get into, etc. And he was like, I'm really happy with where I am. And he's doing an amazing job. He's, he's pretty much involved in every single project in his role. And I really appreciate for him, I just say, Look, I'm not going to bother you anymore. If you love what you're doing, please stay here. If whenever at some point, you get bored, let me know. But I love you for what you're doing here. And it's amazing to be able to rely on those people. So it's it's really interesting how you, how you definitely need to still show obviously, those people that they are valued for what they what they're doing, and give them a shout out. And, and yeah, definitely the promotions get a lot of attention. But it's short term, short term attention.

Wil Reynolds

I'll even challenge you, I'll challenge you on that. I think you got to put a reminder in your calendar every like six months to check in with them. Because sometimes those folks, they may not even know how to approach you about like, Hey, I'm kind of ready to do my next thing. I know, I've been in this role for five years. So I don't leave it up to them. Like when I was smaller, I would not leave it up to them to hit me up. I would tell them, is it okay for me to check in every six months, we'll go out for beers, we'll go out for breakfast, we'll do something, we'll go for a run. I don't care what it is. And if you want to bring up something that's related to your career growth, great. If not, we're just going to have beers catch up, learn about your family what you're doing, blah blah ba and we don't talk about work. And I found that those were some of my most valuable meetings because otherwise people can feel like they're not valued. And you value them a ton, but you're waiting for them to approach you to say like, Hey, here's the next thing that I want. And it's like, well, is that how I get your time? And it's like, nope, let me just at least for me, as we got bigger, and I couldn't just spend time with every employee. It was really important for me to to put some systemic things in place or otherwise just the day to day the business can have you not following through on that, on those promises to those those team members.

Gert Mellak

Absolutely 100% agree appreciate the, the piece of advice here as well. Well, this was really great. I think it's certainly such an inspiring conversation, obviously, leveraging your amazing experience with your big team here. And as an, as a fellow SEO as well, I really appreciate you

spending the time with me. If somebody wants to reach out to you, get in touch with you, and I know you've got a great YouTube channel, definitely recommend everybody to follow your work and what you're doing online, what is the best way to get hold of you or get in touch with you?

Wil Reynolds

Say, you know, still use the old Google and Google me. And you'll find my YouTube, you'll find my Medium, I think on Medium, it's been a while since I've posted anything on medium, but I want to get back into it. Because I really post, tried to post things about the entrepreneurial journey. So if you, if you go to my old blog, I mean, there's things I blog posts from running this business that are probably 15, 16 years old, and are really great to reflect on and look back at, like, at one point one, our team members did outreach to Moz asking for a link. And I was like, oh my god, like, what did you do? And like, I wrote the whole thing about like, how it felt to start to scale a business and have cracks like that showing up or you're just like, like, I speak at that conference, like, what are you doing? Like, how is our process So Jack, if you're reaching out to somebody I have a relationship with, right? And I wrote the whole blog post on how it felt to run a business that scaled. And you know, and you watch the cracks in your own business and the pain from that. So I've been writing about this stuff and the growth of the team probably for 15, 16 years. So if people go really far back either on my Medium, or on my wilreynolds.com site, you can really kind of see the throes of going from probably 25 to 200 plus over the over the years.

Gert Mellak

Awesome. That's amazing. Thank you very much for your time with us. It's been very nice to talk to you. Thank you so much.

Wil Reynolds

Yeah, thanks for having me. Have a great day.

Gert Mellak

Thank you