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00:01

Welcome to the brain space optimized podcast. This is the place where creative entrepreneurs get the insight and inspiration they need to become the best versions of themselves. I'm Haley and I run brain space optimize where I help successful business owners get control over where they spend their time, energy, and attention. Today, we are talking all about changing all about iteration in your business. Now, sometimes change brings up painful emotions if it's forced upon you. Sometimes it brings up levels of uncertainty, or regardless of what comes up emotionally, it always requires experimentation and a little bit of faith. Today we're talking with the vow geyser, a fixer turn about the many iterations her business has undergone over the years from being a general virtual assistant to one of the top authorities on customer retention for subscription based businesses. I love our story because it's a case study on a variety of the transitions that a business can undergo in a short amount of time, but also about the real evolution, patients of iterating and your business for you as a human for that context of you and your family, and the overall scheme or scope of your career. So without further ado, we're talking iteration without Geisler.



01:19

Now, welcome to the podcast. Hey, thanks for having me. Yeah, I'm so glad to have you on. To get started. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do now?



01:30

Sure. I am Val Geisler, I am an email marketing strategist. And I work with monthly

recurring revenue focused businesses. So typically, that looks like software companies. Sometimes it's ecommerce if they have a subscription model. And we optimize their customer experience, and customer messaging. So we focus on onboarding and retention.



01:58

Yeah, I love that. And I've just heard from a few people that have, like worked with you, and in those industries that really, really great at what you do. And I want to take a minute to back up and talk a little bit about how you got there. So can you just spend a minute or two talking about where your business started, and how you've kind of narrowed down into this area?



02:19

Sure. My business started as a virtual assistant business in 2013, maybe 2012. And I just knew people who were in businesses, and they had expressed, needing certain things done. And I knew that I knew how to do those things, or I knew how to Google how to do those things, right. And so I asked them, if they would pay me for those services. And they said, Yes, and I started my business doing that. So I did a lot of different things in those roles and work with a lot of different clients, everything from a cross Jim t shirt company to a imports, imported goods from Bali ecommerce company. So we worked in lots of different kinds of companies and, and did lots of different things. And over several years that that business evolved, I became more of a project manager for each of those companies. And, and so then, I was really teaching, I was doing project management, but then I was also teaching companies how to leverage a project manager and how to make use of, you know, somebody on their team, as a project manager. So some, some companies reached out to me for training as well as actual services.



03:46

Oh, nice. Okay, so I think when I came across you on, you know, online land,



03:52

it was probably in like, 2015, or, yeah, so that's 15 or 16. And you had made that pivot to Product Manager, and then you were doing a lot of like, systems work. And, and I love just kind of reading your blog and following along there. And then, can you talk a little bit about this next transition, because I think at some point, you kind of went to corporate,

and really got into email marketing and and really started, like digging in there and creating a name for yourself there. Can you talk about that transition?



04:19

Yeah, so I was doing project management. And, and then, you know, writing on my blog sharing about systems and kind of becoming known as the systems girl, people would always refer to me as, and in doing a lot of those systems and processes, I was really interested in how we onboard our our customers. So even in a service based business, there is an onboarding to your customers to your clients. So I worked with a lot of people on, you know, fixing up that that process was it looked like to get a new customer in a new client in the door, because I worked with a lot of like web designers who they just didn't, because they wanted to do web design. They didn't want to set up an Asana project. And you know, like, write a welcome packet and all those things. So I was teaching that at the same time, I was trying out a new email service provider for to run the email for my business. And they were fairly new at the time. And and I noticed that there was like, No, customer onboarding. I didn't, I didn't get emails telling me about the platform. I didn't, I would find out about like, Oh, yeah, every Tuesday at 2pm, we have this webinar where we teach you like different pieces of the platform. I was like, Whoa, I didn't know about that. I should, people should know about these things. So I pitched them coming in and fixing their customer onboarding. And they said, that's cool. And we want to do that. But right now, what we really need more than anything is we need someone to run our blog, and we've seen your writing and love it and showing it to other people, and they love it. And so will you come right for us. And so that was the beginning of my in house career as a marketer was I was brought into run the blog. And when you're an early hire in a young startup, you do a lot of jobs. And so I was writing blog posts, but I was also answering support tickets and helping with the onboarding experience and, and starting to take care of like other marketing activities, took over the email. So I ran the email marketing for an email marketing software company. very meta. Yeah. So but I yeah, I learned that like, everything I could ever want to know about email while I was there, and and then about a year and a half later pivoted back out into entrepreneurship again, because it's just really where I belong.



06:48

Yeah. And how so what year was that? When you went back to entrepreneurship?



06:52

2017 2017. Guys, like mid 2017?



06:58

Yeah. Which is seems like a long time since I feel like I've been following online. But really, that was not that long ago,



07:05

two years ago, was about two years ago. Yeah. In the beginning of June, I celebrated two years of, you know, being back out on my own.



07:13

Yeah. So talk a little bit about once you came back, yeah, you were like the email person, like, go to gal, she does all the email things. Talk a little bit about that?



07:24

Well, what I'll say, first, is that coming back into entrepreneurship, I had a very different view of what this life would be like, in this job would be like, and, and I know that in the world of, you know, especially creative based businesses and, and entrepreneurship and running your own thing. And like, hashtag boss, babe, you know?



07:50

Are those hashtags? Yeah, yeah.



07:54

In that whole world is this kind of like hating on having an in house job, and like getting rid of your JOB. And I have to say that, I learned a lot about myself about the way that I like to work about my own systems and processes about what I did and didn't want in my business, about running a team. I learned a lot about all of those things just by taking an in house job for a year and a half. And I didn't intend on going back to entrepreneurship. And I did, like, continue to stay in touch with my email list and shared, you know, things I was learning not as regularly as I was when I was, you know, kind of hustling for clients.

But I did continue to stay in touch with them while I was in house, so I think that there was maybe always in the back of my mind a little bit of like, I will end up going back at some point. But that wasn't why I didn't take the job thinking like, I'm going to go learn all these things, and then come back to entrepreneurship, all that to say that, when I did come back entrepreneurship, it my plan for it was very different. And my view on why I do what I do was very different as well, you know, previously, I was just trying to replace a salary. And now I'm trying to grow something that will last longer than I will and will have a huge impact for a very long time, which is a very different mindset than just trying to replace your salary.



09:32

Yeah. How did you? How did you get to that point where you made that switch? Right? So very easily, you could have gone back and touch mentorship and gone back into like, Okay, well, now I need to or I want to replace, you know, my salary, I had balls and house or, you know, you could have had a different approach to coming back. What about that experience? or What was your thought process when you were like, Okay, let me come back and do something different, like, let me create something different?



09:58

Yeah, well, I wasn't starting from the ground up, because I had already had a business I knew, you know, what that was, like, I already was used to working from home and you know, kind of all those like hard parts, when you're first starting out. It was really about like, shifting my mind from, I'm a freelancer just doing this thing. Like, whenever, and I have two little kids. And so you know, and when I started my business Originally, I had my first daughter during that time period. And so there was, I think, a little bit of like the mompreneur mindset of like, I'll just work, you know, work after she goes to bed and that kind of thing. She was in daycare. So I did take like my my job pretty seriously. But I do feel like it was less about creating something sustainable. And and that people can point to and say, This is why you should hire her. And more about like this trying to fill a gap. So instead of building something that, that, like the gap comes to, I was trying to just fill the gap myself? Does that make any sense? Yeah, yeah, it's just like a different mindset of instead of, you know, if you are to take it out of the world of email, if you're like a graphic designer, for example, you have a lot of different kinds of opportunities. But you could, instead of just, you know, being like a general graphic designer for hire. And you could choose a specialty of I do graphic design for restaurants, and really focusing on that and grow a strong business model based around that specialization. And this is something I run a incubator a couple times a year where I teach copywriters how to do exactly this,

and then become email marketing strategist. And you know, you get paid more you can scale if you want to, or you don't have to, you know, so there's a lot of there's a lot of opportunity when you start to think of it as a business. And that's what my focus was coming back, which is, is what led me into specialization. Yeah.



12:14

So you come back, you have a specialization around email, but then you can even like more specific, you take it to this, like further level and start talking a lot more about like, were you focused on subscription based businesses at that point when you came back? Or was it just yeah, I'll kind of period



12:32

Yeah, when I first started freelancing, I was definitely more generalized. So I was a jack of all trades marketer for software companies. So that was kind of a specific as I got, like a generalist marketer for software. But I found myself drawn towards email projects over and over and over again. And so I just channeled all of that into Yep, this is what I do is email marketing. And specifically, I knew that I didn't want to do like ongoing newsletters, kind of general email marketing, I wanted to focus on those campaigns that impact the customers lifecycle. So that looks like onboarding campaigns, retention campaigns win back campaign. So as long as it's like a campaign driven, the meaning a series of emails, and that's the kind of work that I do. So I don't do, you know, newsletters, I don't, I don't write website, copy, I don't do marketing strategy. I don't do any of that I solely focused on email. And I've done that for almost two years before I launch, I rebranded, which is really, it's I guess it's called a rebrand. But I really just think of it more as like, getting even more specific, right? Because now I run a company called fix my turn, and fix my turn is really focused on exactly what the title is, you know, we help monthly recurring revenue focused companies fix their churn problem, because one of the biggest problems in these companies where you have, you're asking customers to continue to pay you month after month after month, is that eventually, they leave. And we've all been there, as customers, we decide, there's Oh, there's this new shiny platform, or I watched a YouTube video and some influencer, told me about this thing and gave me their coupon code or, you know,



14:26

or, or never happens to me.



14:28

Yeah, or there's a feature missing that I really want to have. And that's why I'm leaving. But eventually customers leave. And you can either solve that problem by going really high top of funnel and bringing more customers in like five times the amount of customers that leave every month, or you can focus on the customers that are leaving, and not like, convince them to stay, but find out why they're leaving, and then do what you can to preempt that in the first place. And then potentially win back customers who already were customers once?



15:04

How was that transition in your marketing? Or was that very much transition? When you first started to pivot into this even, you know, more specific segment, you know, how did you come up with the marketing and like, the different? Like, how do you have a different conversation when you're so known for? Maybe something that's not as specific if that question makes sense at all?



15:23

Yeah, yeah. So I think what I'm most known for is onboarding emails. And I, that's largely because of a series that I wrote on my blog about email onboarding tear downs. So I wrote tear downs for for my blog for six months, where I went to different software companies signed up for their free trial, I collected all their emails, and then went through them with a fine tooth comb and wrote about it on my blog. So I got really known for onboarding through that, in that conversation as people would hire me to help with their onboarding. It easily became a conversation about well, now let's it's not just about onboarding. Once they're on boarded, well, we want to keep them. So then we talk about retention. And retention is really where churn comes in. And, and so the development of fixed my turn came through how different conversations I was having with my my clients around retention around, you know, the reason that they want better onboarding, is because they know that if somebody comes into their platform, and has a really good experience from the gecko, they're more likely to stick around. And so if we can help the onboarding experience, be better than that reduces their turn, and then we have more opportunities for long term retention.



16:44

Yeah, it sounds like you like this is a very natural progression, right? If you and I were

having this conversation, which I mean, we currently are, but like, as a client, that's a very natural flowing conversation a half, do you feel like there's any pain for you at any point, in any of that these pivots, has been has there been any pain or has it kind of naturally,



17:08

every day,



17:11

for instance, I now have three different calendars and, and because I have my old brand, and my new brand, things are still overlapping, you know, I've multiple in boxes and calendars. And somehow things still fall through the cracks. And so, you know, there's kind of those natural like as inflows. And then there's also the the pain point that I think is very real for a lot of service providers that not enough people talk about is kind of up leveling your business, like I, I tend to run directly toward very scary things. And, and the the building of the brand fix my turn was has been scary the entire time, because I'm really, instead of just being under my name, which makes me really flexible, I can do one thing, and then another. And then another thing by saying, Our company is fixed my turn, that's what we're really focused on. And we're not doing anything else. So. So there's that there's, you know, working with bigger and bigger clients and on more complex projects, because an onboarding project is pretty straightforward. But a term project is a little more complex, a lot more complex. And so I'm up leveling the business left and right. And, and it's scary every step of the way. But it's the only way I know how to to be. And it's, you know, I feel like I could keep doing what I know works really well and what feels safe and comfortable. But that's not why I got into entrepreneurship. If I wanted to feel safe and comfortable, I would just take a job. Although I am the first time argue with the idea that a job is the safest thing you could have. Because I believe entrepreneurship is because you can you can always go get a new clients. I kidding. Great job is really hard.



19:11

So short term, it's more emotionally



19:14

safe. Yeah. Yeah. And your day to day is more steady. And, you know, you know what's expected of you? No one's your your job is handed to you. Whereas in entrepreneurship,

you're really deciding what's next for your job. And so yeah, it's all scary.



19:31

Yeah, that's would be like the tagline for entrepreneurship. It's all terrifying. It's, it's very



19:36

scary. Come on. Yeah, no,



19:39

that's legit.



19:44

Hey there, Haley here. Before we get into the rest of our episode, I just wanted to say thank you for listening. To show my gratitude, I've created a short audio training and checklist for you, that walks you through my six steps, we're getting more uninterrupted work time into your schedule we after week now these are the insider tips for making deep work actually happened on the regular that I learned from my first two and a half years in business as a virtual assistant. I basically helped dozens of leaders in all sorts of businesses implement more uninterrupted work blocks into their calendars. And actually practice doing it even on the weeks when real life totally screws with the schedule. You can find it at brain.space/optimized.com slash podcast bonus. That's brain.space/optimized.com slash podcast bonus. Okay, on to the rest of this episode. Okay, so we're going to wrap up here in a second. But I wanted to ask a few questions of you. And one is what kinds of questions would you advise someone to ask themselves as they're contemplating a pivot in their business?



20:50

Hmm, how willing are you to be wrong? Because that was a realization as well, in the process before fix my turn, never launched, I had to be really willing to be wrong, and to invest a lot of money and time into building a brand that I potentially wasn't going to ever launch. So I had to be willing to be wrong about that. And, and kind of everything right, like as you grow and pivot and change, and you're learning new things along the way. And so if you if you're willing to be wrong, that means that you're you have that like mindset of

a student, you're learning from everyone around you. And so I think that that's the most important trait to have is like, sure. tenacity, and, you know, bravery and all that stuff. But the willingness to be wrong will serve you well.



21:47

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being on this has been really enjoyable for me to like, hear some of the behind the scenes. Where can people find you online?



21:57

Yeah. So fix my turn is it's my turn calm. And then I also still maintain Val Geisler calm is the training platform now. So I train at copywriters and in house marketers to become email specialists and strategist. So I run those programs through Bell geyser calm and then fix my turn calm is the service based business.



22:21

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. And yeah,



22:26

this was awesome. Thanks for having me. I'm really



22:30

a big thanks to our guests for being on the podcast this week. Thank you to our producer, Melanie Scroggins. And to get details about anything we referenced in this episode, you can go to [brain space optimized.com slash podcast](https://brain.space/optimized.com/slash/podcast). We will see you in the next episode.