

EPISODE 3:

DOES YOUR COMPANY NEED A CTO?

**ADVISOR EPISODE WITH BLAVITY CTO
AND CO FOUNDER JEFF NELSON**

Every company needs an architect to build walls and problem-solve. Just ask Jeff Nelson, Co-Founder and CTO of Blavity Inc. While tech sits in Jeff's title, more goes into his CTO status than writing code. On this episode of the WorkSmart Podcast, Morgan chats with her long-time friend Jeff about his early days in tech, how he reigns with empathy, and why you don't need years in Silicon Valley to run technical aspects of your business and make data-driven moves.

THE RELATABLE CTO?

Growing up with nine siblings, Jeff mastered the art of listening and helping others feel heard. Jeff's patience and ability to empathize helps him reach customers and meet them wherever they are. Because even with a degree and years of perfecting Python, Jeff gets that tech is hard, and most of the time your tech confusion has nothing to do with your tech aptitude.

STARTUPS VS. TARGET IT

With the help of a few stellar professors, Jeff was bit by the tech bug in college. He realized that computer science wasn't just coding, but a chance to solve problems and learn to source information quickly. So after graduation, Jeff hit Silicon Valley for a crash course in startups. Working in an IT department has its perks, but there's nothing like thriving in the front lines of tech to prep you for infinite success.

DOWN WITH DEPENDENCIES

As a company adapts, so must you. Your role quickly changes from trying to build something quickly to figuring out what problems you'll have while it's in use and in production. Eventually, you'll set the technical vision and let others execute. You've heard Morgan say it before, but let's hear Jeff say it again: As your company grows, so must your staff. Once you've made it past the first few years in business, hire yourself out of your job and away

rom being stuck in the day-to-day weeds. Remember, if your company depends on you, it won't be able to scale!

TECH FOR THE NON-TECHNICALS

Most of us overthink tech. Rather than throwing money at something in a desperate attempt to innovate, start with a problem and go from there. Put yourself in the mindset of your customer and think workflow. How can you streamline and automate the workflow for the best user experience? Jeff reminds us that sometimes the answer's already out there and all we need is Google.com.

DON'T DREAD DATA

You can use data. Yes, you! Even if you don't have a fancy analytics suite, you've got data. From the most basic aspect - customer emails: are they using AOL versus Gmail? How about devices: are they using desktops or mobile? What's their location and what site do they visit most frequently? Many build-a-website platforms come with analytics tools and Google Analytics can be easily installed and used. But beyond this data, are you analyzing your finances, your Instagram engagement, or your busy days? This week, Morgan challenges you to use data. Look at reviews, check your balance sheets, analyze Instagram insights, and look for trends anywhere you can. Data doesn't have to be scary but it can be incredibly useful.

OVERALL

Despite the complexities of tech, thriving as a CTO has more to do with empathy and problem-solving than a stacked Silicon Valley resume and a math mindset. Even if you consider yourself non-technical, you can start to think like a CTO when it comes to building your business and leaning on data. Don't underestimate your ability to win with tech.

Remember: work smarter, not harder.

GLOSSARY

IPO: Initial Public Offering

Offering shares of a private corporation to the public in a new stock issuance i.e. Spotify just went public with an IPO

B2B: Business To Business

A transaction between businesses

B2C: Business To Consumer

Selling products directly to consumers by by-passing middlemen

CTO: Chief Technology Officer

Executive-level position within a company whose primary focus is handling the company's scientific and technological issues

MVP: Minimum Viable Product

A very early version of a product with just enough features to be usable by early adopters who can then provide feedback for product development purposes

MRW: Minimum Required Workflow

The most efficient version of a process or the most efficient way to solve a problem

IT: Information Technology

i.e. She worked in the IT department at Target

Silicon Valley

The Southern San Francisco Bay Area of California, home to many start-ups and global technology companies

Product-Market Fit

The degree to which a product satisfies market demand

Battle Tested

Shown to be an effective and reliable product in-market

Angel Investors

Someone who provides capital for a business start-up, typically in exchange for ownership equity

Enterprise

A for-profit business or company, most often associated with entrepreneurial ventures.

STAGES

Idea (or Pre-Seed) Stage

The early stages of a company where founders are defining the problem in the market and figuring out how their idea can offer an effective solution. Financers are often the founders themselves.

Seed Stage

The stage following launch where the company starts to execute against its idea or work on proof of concept. In this stage, a company seeks feedback from its early customers and has had some revenue but hasn't been able to consistently repeat success.

Series A (or Early) Stage

A company has consistent revenue, an established user-base, and a go-to-market strategy. At this point, the company is likely searching for the early-stage capital needed to quickly scale.

Series B Stage

A company is past its early stage and has proven that it can scale. The company has an established user base and is likely growing internally.

Series C Stage

A company is past its growth stage and is likely looking to go public in the stock market. The company is successful and searching for additional funding to expand into new markets or acquire other entities.

RESOURCES

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