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with



**JOEL
CAPPERELLA**



MARKETING



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Episode #10

Guest: Oli Gardner Co-Founder of Unbounce

intro: [music] Leading Matters with Joel Capperella

Joel Capperella: Welcome back to another edition of Leading Matters. Today, I am speaking with Oli Gardner. Got to get into it pretty quickly here in a second, but just a little bit about Oli. He is the cofounder of Unbounce. Unbounce is a landing page system that let's marketers quickly create landing pages and provides analytics. Again, I kind of reiterate this when we get into the interview. You'll see all the details, or hear all the details there.

I committed, a little while ago, to suggesting some of the take-aways from these. That's why I'm doing them. I learned quite a bit. I hope to propagate this knowledge to others that are seeking to gain some insight from business leaders and marketing leaders that have really shown a pattern of success and are trying some different things. And are approaching what and how they execute in a way that might be new to you.

So, what do we take away from this interview with Oli Gardner from Unbounce. You're going to hear a couple of things from him. You're going to hear about their values, one of which is courage. You're going to hear about a unique and creative way to have the requiring talent. You're also going to hear about their commitment to focus and their investment in partnerships over the ecosystem of the industry that they serve.

So, listen keenly to how Oli has propagated to his staff the importance of tactical metrics and how they translate that tactics- those tactics into engagement. Really employee engagement, keeping the workforce focused and centered on the project at hand, so that the metrics are not only met, but are met from a position of strength where all the employees are committed and excited [00:02:00] about delivering those metrics.

So what's the take-away? The take-away is this: What is your one key performance metric? A very tactical thing that you measure on a daily basis. And then, how are you translating the measurement of that item, that metric, into the daily execution across your entire organization, whether it's a small team, a large team, or a large company. And then, what I would suggest is to be honest with yourself about, do we have it well enough defined, and are we communicating it clearly to our workforce in a way that's going to help them internalize that action, that

tactic, necessary for the delivery of the metric to the level that we to perform at.

If you're not, that's the place to start, today. Take a hard look at the metric, how you're communicating that metric, and whether or not your workforce really understands it intimately enough so they can adopt it as their own. So that's the key take-away. I hope you enjoy this one. I certainly did. I'd like to thank oli again. With no further ado, let's go ahead and get started with Oli Gardner, cofounder of Unbounce.

Today, I'm joined by Oli Gardner. Oli is one of the cofounders of Unbounce. Unbounce focuses very specifically on helping marketers build landing pages. Gives them a lot of analytics to understand how those landing pages are performing. Oli is very passionat about conversion centered design. What motivated me to reach out to Oli, recently, I've be a fan of his work, as he does a little series evaluating- kind of pitting two pages against each other. I thought that was creative enough for me to ask him to join me on leading matters.

So, first things first, Oli. Thanks for taking time out of your day to join me.

Oli Gardner: My pleasure. Thanks for having me on.

Joel Capperella: So, Oli, listen. I know you do quite a bit of these things. As I said before, we got on the com, I'm appreciative of your time, for sure. But I want to take a- you cover- I want to [00:04:00] encourage the audience to go check out Unbounce and what you do specifically, because I think you guys are very dedicated to improving how businesses are trying to make that digital space work for them to convert their traffic into customers.

But today, I want to take a little bit more specific look at Unbounce, and how you guys have built the values and managed it, today. The first thing I was curious to ask you was that Unbounce kind of grew up in the midst of a heavy wave of marketing automation tools. The temptation is to be all things to all people. But rather than to chase that complete solution, you guys really stuck hard and fast to landing pages and conversion metrics and things like that.

So, I guess the first question is, how has that decision- How was it made, to dry focus on Unbounce, specifically as it has been over your successful history?

Oli Gardner: Right from the start, the discovery and valid phase we went through, it was really clear that getting landing pages done quickly and easily

without developers or IT was a real, observable pain for marketers. We did quite an extensive research before we even started. So we knew that [inaudible 00:05:19] plan was really important. Given that we're six years in and we're still not feature complete. So expanding, at this point would be a big distraction and counterproductive. But sometimes, marketing automation tools, pretty much all of them have a landing page component to their software, but being honest, they're really- not to diminish the product, it's just a signal of how complex a landing page platform is.

It's kind of funny. When CEO Rick Perot- it was his idea. When we started out, he was like, how hard can it be? It's only a page. We need [00:06:00] an image on there, a bit of text, and a button. That's it. The reality is, it's a lot- we didn't even have forms on the page when we started, you know, as part of the project.

There's always been some internal dialogue about expanding the platform. Some people think, oh, we should do this, or that. But we resist because it's kind of Mecca, but like an effective land page, where there's a laser focus, it's laser focused on one single goal. We want to stay focused just on our goal, empowering marketers to create better marketing experiences by using landing pages for their campaigns. It doesn't mean we won't expand-

Joel Capperella: Sure.

Oli Gardner: The features in the future. Microsites, for example, are a vital option that we'll explore 'cause that's still about trading and better operating experience, but tailored to a campaign, getting people the tools to do that. That might be where we can expand.

Joel Capperella: Sure. I appreciate that , You're right about that level of complexity. What I like, and what I'm hearing is that we talk a lot about leadership here. Is that- You've identified that focus and stayed true to that. But there's always a temptation always to expand that feature set, right.

What specifically- Can you identify it with specificity, some of the things that you've done to say, Listen, we're going to maintain focus on getting the landing page equation completely solved, removing that complexity for marketers to take advantage of how they analyze and do their jobs. What have you done internally to make some of those difficult decisions that arise when it's tempting to expand that functionality.

Oli Gardner: We remind ourselves that we haven't finished solving this pain point. One of the things we are focusing on is helping our lifers. Those are the people looking in our internal [inaudible 00:07:51] analytics. They're people who've been with us for ten months or more. They tend to stick around. There's an aspect [00:08:00] of churn, there. Their biggest pain point at that point isn't getting it done, it's scaling. So when you have thousands of landing pages, and thousands of assets in the system, the feature set needs to skew toward managing word flow and collaboration. That's really a signal that we need to stick to what we're doing, but help people stay with us longer and become something they can never live without, essentially.

Joel Capperella: Is the team aligned with that? In other words, do you have- are your employees, do they understand the natural conflict that arises when you're trying to accomplish something like that. I guess in every day- You know at the strategic level, it's one thing. But then, boiling that down to the every day, to the front line, if you will. Is it embedded in what you're doing as a company, that every employee understands that this is the focus?

Oli Gardner: Yeah. In different ways. When we use OKR, we just started doing that, like objectives, cures, and all, as a way of structuring what our focus is. One of our big focuses is churn. So the whole company is aligned in what we're doing from a feature perspective to help solve- in our customer success perspective, to solve that problem. So everybody's very well aligned. It'll be the same when our product management team, they work very closely with our customer success team to make sure we are building the right things. So from that point, everyone's pretty aligned. We don't really- [inaudible 00:09:39] he's always saying, Aw, I want to do this, or I want to do that. But no, we're pretty well aligned.

Joel Capperella: That's good. One of the things I've discovered by doing these interviews with business leaders is that, I find that alignment is a natural of a successful company. Right. That it's not necessarily- big corporations sometimes want to beat alignment [00:10:00] in with catch phrases or placards on a wall. More nimble companies, because of the proximity with how we are to our clients and customers that it's more ingrained in- for instance, in your example, if churn is a metric that matters to us, then I need to understand, me the employee, the front-line employee needs to understand that and translate that into what I'm doing on a day to day.

The question here would be, Is that something that just kind of evolved into how you're executing, or was it a conscious decision to say, We're going to manage in this way, so our people are connected to- for

example, this instance of churn, is it decision to manage that way, or is it evolutionary process.

Oli Gardner:

It's been a bit of both. Because we're growing, we're a fast growing company, we're seeing that we need to understand how to scale, how to do that effectively. This is why we- We just have a new COO. We're really trying to structure a stronger kind of management layer, even though we have a structure. That's why bringing these OKRs and really focusing on what's important. We identify churn as being our major goal. Now we even have a churn taskforce set up which is- There's one guy leading it, then there's people from every different functional group in the company. They all work together to do research with our customers and then talk to all of them to share the feedback. So we're all learning about this important event for us, and how we can solve that.

In terms of communication, this is fairly new for us. But we have our monthly town hall every - well, every month. We've been going over these little hairs with the team. There are yearly [00:12:00] objectives, and quarterly. It's a lot more structure than it used to be, I'll tell you that. These things happen as you scale.

Joel Capperella:

This kind of moves me into my next discussion point here, because, especially for fast growing companies trying to embed that into the culture, and it's great that you're communications important, and you're doing it on a regular schedule. But culturally speaking, is it something that- I'll give you a great example. In preparation for this, I know you guys recently moved to a new office. I saw you re-tweet something from one of your employees about the courage to try something new and delightful. Right. And I think one of your employees had done a pretty cool mural on your new white board wall. It was kind of cool to see that because if I know anything about Unbounce, and I'm doing my homework on them in the buying process, I'm going to see that, Hey, new and delightful matters to these guys, so much so that one of the founders is communicating that externally.

So buried in here is a question, I promise. The question would be: The tactics of measuring on a monthly basis and communicating, how do you make that translate into the type of culture that you want, too. Because while you're growing fast, you don't want to lose that sense of who you are, right? This is- I'm finding this to kind of be the really the most difficult transition, if you will, for fast growing companies, is how do I connect who we are so I don't lose that personality as I drive my growth?

Oli Gardner: Yeah. One of our core values, we have six. That mural you were talking about, it's our core values put up on the wall. Transparency is one of those, and delight is another. We really try hard to let people know how we function internally and how we like we to translate that into how we deal with customers. I just got PMs, actually, on the [inaudible 00:13:59]. She [00:14:00] used to run a social. She shared a quote, today, from one of our customers and they said, What I love about Unbounce is the balance of the product and the culture. When I was looking for a tool, the difference with you guys was really the human behind the product. This came through, today. It's a perfect example reinforcing that we're doing it right. It's great. It's so nice to hear that feedback. It's a nice kind of ongoing loop of we do things and we hear good feedback.

We do some pretty fun things. Our customer success team is incredible. The things they'll do like from cute happy birthday videos to our customer, or even just someone tweeted something and we respond with a video or something. There's always something. There's a lot of rapid communication going on with our customers or fans or people who are potentially interested.

Joel Capperella: I like that. The rapid response, the rapid communication. It's much more personal. It's funny, I think five years ago, social was more personal in nature. It's become a little bit more sterile, today. I always love when a company's more representing who they are. Their personality connecting with their customers over those channels, so I'm encouraged to see that.

Let me ask you this, it just kind of came to my mind as you were talking about that. I mentioned the web series that you were doing for a while called page fights. I'm not sure- are you still doing page fights?

Oli Gardner: We just cancelled it, actually. We did some research. It was very polarized. Some of the people loved it and half of them didn't. But they loved it and hated it for the same reason. Clique thing. It wasn't growing the way we wanted it to, so we've cancelled that for now. We're going to do something bigger and better.

Joel Capperella: Oh, great. I'm glad I asked the question, then. What I saw about it was, I thought it was pretty bold, myself. I, personally, I liked it, because it was a bold, kind of different way to juxtapose [00:16:00] content out there. It was definitely a little edgy, right? I think it was intentionally so. Was the edgy, part of what people didn't like about it?

Oli Gardner: Some people. It's also what people loved about it. They loved that fact that it was unadulterated, genuinely honest feedback. Some people took

offense. I mean it's called Page Five, not Page [inaudible 00:16:25] It was never intended to be this kind of, you know, thing. And so, yeah, you can't please everybody, right?

Joel Capperella: That's true. That's true. I think it brings up a good question. That's a great example of being unafraid, to having the courage to try something new. Do you encourage your employees to take the same tack here, as that, obviously you have a job to do- Again, that metric you talked about earlier is important to us. We have to solve that. But within those confines, those are the boundaries, right. But within those boundaries, do you encourage your employees to bring their creativity, to bring a certain level of courage to their jobs on the daily?

Oli Gardner: Definitely. And you picked the right thing, because courage is another one of our six core values. We do that for sure, whether it's from me, starting as a public speaker, or that- trying something like that. We just wanted to pod cast. We're trying these different things and or- Empowerment is another one. Giving people- Letting them know we trust them and they can go do these things. That's one thing. Saying we empower them, is something entirely different for them to have the courage to go and do it. Some people don't know how to deal with that, or it can be kind of scary. So it's kind of a two-way thing. And being out there, being public, being as transparent as we are, it does take courage for sure.

Joel Capperella: So, [00:18:00] do you- Now here's another thing I'm kind of seeing a consistency across organizations that have more success than the average company is that they embed the cer- When they're searching for talent, their talent acquisition process includes criteria that's going to identify the right personal fit. In other words, the right personalities, the right cultural fit. Is that something that you consciously prioritize when you source talent into Unbounce?

Oli Gardner: Yeah. We have a really unique hiring process, which I think, in large part, is responsible for the excellence of our team and the culture that's involved into it. What we do, if you send your resume either digitally or paper form, we won't look at it. We'll just delete it or rip it up and throw it away. We don't want to see that. People send those things all around town. They'll send a resume to everyone, every tech company in town, trying to- We ask people to open a free trial of Unbounce, build a landing page, to tell us why we should hire them, and why they want to work with us. And it immediately takes away- I think of them as acquisition. It takes away customers, gives you ideal customers. It just ups the level of people applying. The creativity and effort that goes into them is

incredible. That's why we have such an amazing company, I think. I think it's one of the biggest reasons.

It's funny because Joel, a guy, he came to our Montreal office with his resume. We chatted, he's a great guy, he handed it to me at the end, he left. I put it in the recycler. So, I backhanded Joel. But luckily, he found out the actual way we like it to be done. He applied with a landing page. It was [00:20:00] great, and we hired him. So he's here now. It's just a really great cultural thing that everyone can identify with. We share the pages around the office. We'll get a good laugh at them, and get inspired.

Joel Capperella: I love that. It's funny. I ask that question a lot to my guests. I've heard everything from- One company has done this whole almost quiz type of thing, not necessarily to see people get the answers, but to see them react. But this using your approach into what you do to have talent come into the organization, that's- if I could say so, I think that's brilliant. I'm really encouraged to hear that.

Two quick questions, then I'll let you go here. I want to transition into the industry and how you've focused on such a specific area, I've seen you guys have done a pretty good job with partnering. That ecosystem of marketing automation predisposes itself to, Hey, there's so many options out there that it's better for us, as a company to play nicely with our competitors, like [inaudible 00:21:08] dot-co opposition, if you will, than not.

So the question is: How have you navigated that ecosystem in regards to collaborating with competitors?

Oli Gardner: I guess it depends on what you define as competition. Our real competition are other landing pages. Marketing automation, they're tools that we integrate with. Rewinding a bit. From day one, we did two primary things to grow. We started doing in bound marketing from day one. Specifically, I started our blog on day eight and I've written 350 posts on our blog. We are very generous with our content.

But the other half of it was technical integrations. So our first, and most successful integration was with mailchimp. And that still ranks number one in terms of adoption among our customers. So these relationships we have with these other vendors are really important to us, and to [00:22:00] our customers. We also integrate with Hubspot, Marketo, and Infusionsoft, Salesforce. Each of them- Well, some of them have their landing page, like I said, but they wanted to integrate with us because it's a stronger platform we have and their customers want it and our

customers want it. We have this seamless integration with these tools. That means we also have- We build great friendships and relationships with them. We're closer to everyone in the industry. When you're close like that, when you integrate, when you collaborate, everything becomes stronger.

We do partner web- Well, these guys, Marketo, Hubspot, Infusionsoft, mailchimp. Everyone we integrate with, we do partner webinars. We do ebook swaps. We have one coming up with Hubspot. So we're really, really tight in the community. It's important to us. Yeah. There's enough room in this industry for quite a lot of competition. Even our competition, we're friends with. I've sat down with CEOs of our closest competitors and we're all on good terms.

Joel Capperella: That's funny. Your kind of covering that makes me reflect on- I think this industry in general is much more cooperative in nature. When I was reaching out to you, to interest you to do a guest spot on Leading Matters, I saw- I came across an interview you had done- or maybe it was a speaking gig you did where you talked about that content generosity. I think you had done a huge infograph on the Mas blog, if I'm not mistaken. And it had a great outreach and things like that. I think Mas is a great example, too. They're very generous with their content and they collaborate. It made me think of popspot. They really generate content. Not, never to show their product, but just to lift their profession. [00:24:00] It seems like you're doing that as well.

The last question I have for you: is it unique to this industry, do you think, to be so collaborative? And if it is, what are the benefits. What have the benefits been to your ability to continue to drive where you're headed and keep that work force challenged?

Oli Gardner: It's definitely a stronger thing in this [inaudible 00:24:23] industry, in online software, in technology, because it's newer. It is very open and transparent. Thanks to people like Mas, Unbounce's buffer, we're exposing all this stuff. We're lever- leveling the playing field for the fast business model that enables people to come into it very quickly. So it's a bit of a community.

It's not the same other- in the streets. Some are quite a bit further behind. Some are necessarily cut off from one another like in the education space. They don't want anything to do with each other. They need to keep their secret acquisitions to themselves and they don't want to share so much. The same with e-commerce. [inaudible 00:25:12] they get a list on their sales. They don't want to share that case study because

every e-commerce site is essentially the same, so if someone copies it, you lose your advantage. It depends on the industry for sure.

I would encourage everyone to be open and collaborative. Like I said, it's a big market and you work together. You build these relationships that are mutually beneficial to your business, but more importantly, they're beneficial to our customers businesses. And that's what we want. Talking about- [inaudible 00:25:53] just quickly, our core values are transparency, humility, empowerment, courage, delight, and generosity. And [00:26:00] that guest post I wrote for Mas, I think in 2010, is 15,000 words, a 15 million pixel infographic, and it's the biggest post I've ever written. We could have put it out on our own blog, but there was more potential to put it on the Mas blog, 'cause they were a much bigger community then, and we were just starting out.

That's kind of scary. [inaudible 00:26:24] Rand was like, Whoa! You're giving that to us? That's huge. So that's generous. That's courageous. And it's delightful because people loved that and it just blew up. It was a massive explosion for us. It's been translated into, I think, ten or twelve languages. It was really, really huge. It took me a long time, you know, a few months, not full-time, but working on it every day. We were kind of one of the first to do content marketing. There were a few doing the forms, but we were in the big, early days of it. It really worked out well. It was a risk for sure, but it paid off.

Joel Capperella:

That's great. I love that story. I'm glad you kind of filled it in a little bit there. We just want to wrap it up and thank you again for joining me and for those of you who are listening. We've talked about a lot, here. We've talked about culture, and focus, and the courage to be collaborative. Really, the generosity and why generosity pays back ten times, twenty times, even a hundred fold. Listen, Oli, I love what you do. I love what you cover and how you approach it. I've always paid attention and I was really glad to get you to join me, today.

We've been speaking with Oli Gardner, co-founder of Unbounce. You can find them at unbounce.com. I would also encourage you to look up Oli and see some of the other- He does a lot of these and his- It's always valuable, so look him up on youtube and see some of the speaking that he's done, and some of the [00:28:00] interviews that he's done. I guarantee you'll learn a thing or two.

Oli, thank you so much for your time. And I'll keep an eye on what you've got going on there. Appreciate it.

Oli Gardner: Thank you. Thanks for having me on.