

Jamie Savage – Revolutionizing Recruitment

Host: Jeremy Strachan

Overview:

Jamie Savage joins us to discuss challenges in talent recruitment. Jamie Savage is the Interim CEO of Startup Canada and is also the founder of The Leadership Agency, the executive recruitment partner of choice for North America's fastest-growing startups and non-profits. Under Jamie's leadership, the Leadership Agency has seen impressive growth, expanding into the US within just 18 months. Savage shares her tips to help organizations improve talent recruitment and retention.

Highlights from our conversation include:

1. The key to a good recruitment strategy is knowing exactly what your business needs are and what areas of recruitment you need to focus on (for example, attraction vs. retention).
2. Every organization does recruitment and having a strategy isn't what sets you apart. What organizations need is the human element.
3. How moving her organization to a four day work week helped improve their productivity and revenue by 200 percent.

JEREMY:

I'm here with Jamie Savage, who is the founder of The Leadership Agency, which is an executive recruitment firm specializing in hiring for high growth companies in North America and the UK. Her company is known for helping startups and scale-ups hire top talent with a focus on diversity and inclusion. Jamie is a leader in disruptive HR practices, including the implementation of a four-day work week at her firm. Jamie, welcome.

JAMIE:

Hi, thanks for having me.

JEREMY:

How has it been for you so far here at the event? What are some of the things that have made you think differently or is there any key takeaways that you've seen yesterday?

JAMIE:

Well, first I would say that I've been having a great time and I'd say that my number one takeaway in terms of experience has been that this is a very different platform for engagement and for networking. It's very obvious that the intention behind Magnet Network Live in this event was to facilitate meaningful connections. And you can really see how they've done that. There's multiple different locations. So your settings are different. They're smaller, more intimate. You have a very diverse group of speakers from diversity and thought. You have leaders and subject matter experts who are from non-profit, you know, the non-profit sector, from startups and scale-ups, you know, to large enterprise corporations. And you can see it in just in the overall experience, but you can feel it. And I would say that my overall experience has been a feeling, but also there's been some really meaningful connections already made.

JEREMY:

That's really interesting. I think like our interview here is a prime example of that in terms of like very different worlds coming into contact where they otherwise wouldn't. I come from a research world, which probably is a little bit farther away from your space. But one of the things...I was at your talk yesterday. And I wanted to ask you about Taylor Swift and retention if...I was really sort of surprised and also blown away just by the sheer magnitude in terms of numbers, but the impact that it's had. Could you...could I just leave it off there?

JAMIE:

Yeah, of course. You know, and I use the Taylor Swift example, not because I'm, you know, as Swifty as they say.

JEREMY: My daughter is.

JAMIE:

You know, a lot of people are. And hence the Eras Tour...her grossing two point billion dollars. But I think the reason I use that as an example is because recruitment and the talent crisis is multifaceted and it's incredibly nuanced, right? So I think showing examples of how different industries, sectors, you know, in this case, talent, like Taylor Swift is the talent and she's the brand and she's the, but she's the organization as well, right? And I think that it's important to be able to show the contrast of how the talent crisis and recruitment is solved by not just one solution. It's, you know, the talent crisis is underpinned by having the right recruitment and talent solution. But to be able to do that, you have to identify what your actual business needs are. And the Taylor Swift example, you know, she doesn't need to invest in a talent acquisition strategy that is heavily weighted in attraction. Because every top AV professional out there or backup dancer or logistics professional is going to want to join the Eras Tour. So she doesn't need to focus on attraction. She needs to focus on retention, you know, to have a continuous, you know, team from the beginning to the end of the tour, right? You know, so that's the reason why I drew attention to it is because, you know, talent acquisition and recruitment strategies have different components that need to be identified by an organization to be successful.

JEREMY:

I think it's obvious why that example has the potential to resonate and sort of amplify that point. But I just wanted to follow up. I'm going a little bit off script because I'm just interested to hear what you said about the kind of like flipping over between talent and retention. So much of the productivity gap, the skills gaps that we've been talking about over the last day and a half have in many ways, from my observation, kind of been focused on that sort of like getting the right people into the role. The whole piece after what happens post-recruitment, post-onboarding, how do you, I just want to sort of open up the conversation there in terms of like what you see the differences are between those two sides of that coin?

JAMIE:

Yeah, that's a great question. I would say some of the differences, you know, that I've identified in my years of experience and with my clients and in the practice of recruitment is that it's never linear, right? It's never this perfect linear path to success. And what I mean by that, it's almost like, you know, the challenge or the issue I take with the term even digital transformation. It implies that there's a beginning and there's an end. And, you know, recruitment is often looked at that way as well. We have an opening and we make the hire and the job is done. You know, and I think that it's something that is a continuous investment. It's an evolution. Business needs will change and as they should. You know, so to bring it to maybe a more current and relevant topic of future of work is, you know, the big elephant in the room, which is AI, which is digital adoption and transformation. And what does that mean for, you know, today's talent crisis? I think that the truth is, is that a point was made yesterday by Paul Thompson that I thought was really powerful is that our number one workforce right now is our current workforce. And, you know, I think as companies grow and evolve, identifying opportunities for their current workforce to be upskilled, to be, you know, identified for potential growth and future opportunities and applying a model and a space within the organization to be upskilled or to grow versus having to, you know, hire from outside of the organization. So there's all these different layers to it that I think are important to look at. But I'll leave it with the fact that recruitment and a good recruitment strategy isn't what differentiates you necessarily. Everyone recruits. If you own a business or if you work, you know, like everyone has to make a hire at some point. So doing the practice of recruitment and doing it well isn't necessarily your differentiator because everyone's doing it. It's almost like AI to some degree, right? Like at some point, we're all going to be digitally transformed and we're all going to be adopted on some level in terms of what we implement in terms of our business. But it is the key that's going to set you apart is that human element to it. And, you know, being able to identify the needs of your business and how you want to differentiate. It's not just because you have a recruitment strategy or just because you've digitally adopted or transformed your business. It's specific to your business needs.

JEREMY:

So I just want to follow up on that and get your take on the difference between a job description and the other skills that a candidate brings to an interview that aren't on

the job description, the social and emotional skills, the soft skills and whatnot. Can you talk about how those might align with organizational value or organizational culture? And from your perspective, your leadership perspective, where does that kind of fit into the equation?

JAMIE:

Well, I think that, you know, as an organization, when you look at what needs to get done, you typically look at, you know, the hard skills. I don't even know if we're using that terminology anymore, but you look at experience, right? You look at relevancy. You look at things that you identify with. And people often think because this person has done this job before. And from what I can understand, relatively well or exceptionally well. So therefore, they'll be great at the job that I need them to do. And we often see that play out not successfully, you know, and oftentimes we it works out perfectly fine. It all depends on the job and it all depends on the organization and the person being hired to do the job. But I think in today's world, what is going to set a candidate and an organization apart is their ability to be agile. Right. So I think being able to demonstrate agility and resilience, because I think even if we look at the past four years, think about it in the past four years, we've gone through a global pandemic. We've completely disrupted, you know, the future of talent in the moment from what the organizations need, what they don't need. You know, our work from home policies, our culture of the organization, identifying purpose. And, you know, we're trying to build the bus as it's moving in a lot of cases. And really where we're left right now is without a lot of historic or benchmark information to help us determine where we go from here. The only thing we can really rely on is our ability to be agile.

JEREMY:

I'm going to pivot to, not pivot, but that takes me into one of the questions, one of the prepped questions that I want to get to, I think, which is about the shift to a four day work week, the impact or influence on productivity. And what I think is really critical is to is employee well-being. And as a last question, so what can other businesses learn from that experience of moving to a four day work week?

JAMIE:

Yeah, so I'll take you on a bit of a journey here. So we made the decision in October of to transition to a four-day workweek. And that was fueled by burnout. So in the early stages of the pandemic, my business, the Leadership Agency, we basically shut the doors. And literally and figuratively, like, you know, I remember on March th, I said, okay, I'll see everyone in two weeks. Thinking that was really going to be the beginning and the end of it, not realizing that there was going to be major implications around, you know, organizations no longer hiring and so on. So when that, you know, started to pick back up again and our business became busy, it was like drinking from a fire hose. It was very, it was palpable how burnt out we were and also dealing with, you know, the trauma of a pandemic. But I had been through this before, you know, in a prior role. I was a partner at another firm and I had burnt out to the point of hospitalization and exhaustion. Like it was, it was brutal. And so I, I mean, like one day I thought I was having a heart attack and I Ubered to the hospital and I thought the situation is only bad because I'm going to miss a presentation and not because I think I'm having a heart attack. So I had been through that before and I didn't, I wanted to build my company to be a better company than I'd ever worked for. And so when I started to see, see it in myself and in my team, I knew that we can make a change and we had the ability to do that. You know, we're an agile, small organization. And so we did it. We just did it. And we knew that our intentions were really good in doing it, but we had a lot to figure out. So we were able to do that as an organization, figure out how that was going to be implemented and the policies that we were going to need to have to support that. And so it's only gotten better since then. But what I've learned and what I share with other organizations who want to explore this, whether it's a trial or a full rollout within the organization is to really identify what it is that you're trying to do and why. You know, if it's to support, you know, well-being, if it's to pressurize your organization, identify your weak spots in your productivity, be really clear and upfront and intentional about what that is that you're trying to achieve. And what that did is it did just that. It helped us see our blind spots in our productivity. And to this day, our revenue increased, our productivity has increased by over % and our organization has grown globally.

JEREMY:

Wow, amazing. Jamie, thank you so much. It was great to talk with you. It's Jamie Savage, the founder of the Leadership Agency.

JAMIE:

Great, thanks so much for having me.