



EP 08

**Traits that Separate
Successful Agencies from
Unsuccessful Ones**



VIRTUAL ASSISTANT : THE AGENCY GROWTH MACHINE

Azhar Siddiqui 0:00

Thanks a lot, everyone for joining the topic is the top traits that separate a digital marketing agency, a successful digital marketing agency from an unsuccessful one, or from an average one, so to speak. So, you know, I, myself have been a digital marketing agency owner for the last 13 years, been in the sales field for the seven years before that. So I have some experience in that. And then now the co-founder of RepStack, which is our virtual assistant service, providing virtual assistants to digital marketing agency owners specifically, and in three key roles specifically, and we'll talk more about that when we get to that point. But, you know, it's, it's very easy to kind of let go once your agency is starting to do you know, \$5000 \$10,000 a month and you know, you're starting to see good, good things come in, cash is coming in, you quit your job, but going from that 200 \$300,000 to a million-dollar, a 7-figure agency, that's a completely different ballgame. And we're gonna try and get you to see some of those points today, where, you know, just doing these key nine things that we've identified really easily should be able to get you out of this vicious circle if you're there. And on to seven figures and beyond. So, my name is Azhar Siddiqui. I'm the co-founder of RepStack. And it's, it's a one-year-old baby of ours, but we're having a huge amount of success in growth, just because we were able to apply the same formula that we're going to be telling you today, which is what the number one thing is focused on a niche. So we did that for ourselves. And we saw like a huge, huge success. In our first year, we just turned one year. We're over 150 people as of today, and things are going very, very well. Working with digital marketing agency owners like yourself, I'd like to introduce my co-host today. AJ Casetta. AJ, you want to quickly introduce yourself, my man.

AJ Casetta 2:20

Sure things. So yeah, I'm AJ Casetta. I'm a b2b sales consultant. I've been in sales my entire career, basically, since I've been 18. And co-founded Revenue Boosts, which is a sales training consulting company, and similar to our RepStack, we focus on helping agency owners grow. So I'm super excited about today's training. Because, yeah, I mean, just from working with tons and tons of agencies, I've really seen the patterns and I know is our house as well. And, yeah, we're really going to share the do's and don'ts. And I really love what you said Azhar about how you might get to one level and then do you just hit a roadblock, and you have to change your approach to get to that next level. So the skills that got you where you are, are very different than the skills that got you that is going to get you to that next level. So just really excited to bring a lot of value here today. So let's dive in.

Azhar Siddiqui 3:09

Awesome, man. Thanks for doing this with me. AJ is a great sales consultant. And we add RepStack Believe it or not, we've got 250 people with a lot of organic growth. And the biggest thing we were struggling with was our sales department. And we've engaged AJ, & his consulting firm to come in and build out our entire sales department. And he's kind of working with us on the backend as well. So really excited about that as well. And I think your specialty is working with agencies, mostly as well, right?

AJ Casetta 3:44

Right. Yeah, I've been in the agency space myself for almost five years. So when I started the company with a niche I chose and we'll get into the importance of picking a niche today as I said, Where can I give the most value, and it was to marketing and creative agencies. So yeah, again, just really familiar with what, the various successful ones do that the average ones don't, and can't wait to share.





Azhar Siddiqui 4:07

Excellent. So so let's dive in and talk about our first point, which is the importance of focusing on a niche. So he has done that. I've done that where RepStack And I know a majority of the clients that we're working with right now, we're working with close to 70 clients, digital marketing agency owners, who are the most successful, people who are running their digital marketing agencies are focusing on a particular niche. So picking the niche is extremely important like most of us do start out with a generalist agency. And you know, a generalist agency is not a bad thing to get the ball rolling for you guys gets you the experience and things like that. But the biggest drawback of being a generalist agency is that every time you bring on a new project, so say, say you're working with a flooring company, so they're selling carpets and things like that you're crushing it for these guys, all of a sudden you bring in a blinds company in the local market again, and all of a sudden, you know, the same website's not going to work, the same marketing material is not going to work, you're going to have to kind of reinvent the processes for this new business niche that you've taken on as a project, wouldn't it be a lot better to have the focus on only blinds companies to say you must have a client or two that you really, really crushing it for, I'd recommend if you are an agency who's already doing five to \$10,000 a month, take a look at who you have, who you're crushing it for, this is a way of how you pick your niche. And, and you already have results coming in, you already have a case study ready to go. And, and now all of a sudden, instead of focusing on your local market, for example, me I've been a generalist agency in Calgary, Canada, that's where I've spent most of my last 20 years. You know, I've been working with a condo management company, flooring companies, blind companies, and God knows, right. And it's been a struggle, every time you bring these people on, every niche is different, every type of marketing material is different. And it's just a struggle. And sometimes, you know, the clients would come back to you and they're like, where are the results, you get results much faster in a particular niche. In some other niches, you may not have cracked the code yet. So instead of doing that, why not pick a niche like blinds, for example, which I know is extremely hot right now. And open up yourself to the entire North American market. wouldn't it be great to have that recurring revenue in that niche and just be able to go and tell your clients that I specialize in working with blind blinds companies? And I've been working in Calgary, Canada, Vancouver, Houston, and these are all the case studies, I'd like to take you on as a client. So, I think I think picking out a niche is extremely, extremely important. That's, you know like I said earlier, most of our clients who have a niche picked out are crushing it. You know, our own example RepStack, we are focused on working with people like you, digital marketing agency owners, and we've seen phenomenal growth because of the focus on our niche. And why don't you jump in and chime in on this a little bit, AJ on the importance of picking a niche for a digital marketing agency?

AJ Casetta 7:53

Yeah, I think you covered some amazing points. And I know probably most people here watching this, I've heard this over and over again, pick a niche, but it's really so so important. Again, from all the agencies I've worked with, they've always had a niche. And I think the stages matter a lot to like you said in the beginning, it's okay to be a generalist because you're trying to figure out, picking a niche is partly a business decision. It's partly a personal decision. It's like Where can I give value? Where can I really help people the easiest, what do I enjoy. So you really have to kind of play around to find where you are the best fit, you can always just figure out the research. So when I first started freelancing and building an agency, before I left my corporate job, many years ago, my first two clients were a bagel shop and a landscaping firm. So it's like all over the place. But obviously, that's not a very scalable business model. So I think, at least how it was for me, and how it's been with every company I've started and with, again, a lot of agents that I've worked with, you might be broader in the beginning to find your focus, then you get laser-focused, and then maybe later, you can start to get a little bit broader, very





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strategically, because maybe, you know, like, once you're least focused and you master nation, you have all the processes down, then you can look at maybe a related niche. But I think what holds a lot of people back is they, you know, I think success is more about saying no than it is about saying yes. So when you pick a niche, you're gonna have to be prepared to say no, of course, you can still say open-minded to some projects, depending on what it is. But really, like you need to, you need to be okay with saying no, and realize that no matter what niche you pick, the opportunity is probably massive. So a lot of people feel like, Oh, if I just help auto dealerships, like, Can I really build an eight-figure company? Yes, you can. Even in some very obscure niches, you can build a massive, massive company. So don't feel like you're limiting yourself to picking a niche and realize that you can always change it later. I think that's a big mindset thing is we feel like maybe it's permanent. Like oh my god, I'm going to be married to this niche for my whole life. What if it doesn't work out? Just look at it. As a marketing campaign, look at it as an experiment. You know, you could pick your niche based on what you think is going to work best based on auditing. You're maybe the most successful clients and where you've had the most fun. And then from there, it's just an experiment, don't think about it's going to be permanent. But the other thing that I took out from what you said Azhar, which was really smart was how every area of the business is affected. So I know that maybe if you're watching this, and maybe you're one or two, or you're a small agency, you know, it's maybe it's hard to think about all the departments in a company. But really, by not having a niche by taking whatever just comes your way. All of the departments get affected like Azhar said, operations and fulfillment are more difficult because you have to create new processes for each niche. Sales is way harder. Because if you know if you're a generalist, agency, I mean, guys, we probably all know have friends with agencies as well, there's a lot of agencies out there. So sales is a lot harder, sales is already very, very hard. And when you don't stand out from the competition, it's even harder. So the way I like to think about it is if the pie of potential clients is this big, so let's say you're just a digital marketing company, you have the biggest pie ever, there are so many other agencies. But if you're a digital marketing agency that specializes in SEO, okay, the pies are a little bit smaller, there's less competition, if you're a digital marketing agency that specializes in SEO for restaurants, now, that's a little bit smaller. If you're a digital marketing agency specializing in SEO, now 'S' becoming a tongue twister, that also focuses on Mexican restaurants, how many other agencies out there that even do that? Maybe not any. So like, I always look for the low-hanging fruits in business and in marketing and sales. So rather than trying to go after everything, like good marketing, and good strategy, and good positioning, makes sales way, way easier. So you can just make it way easier. And it's easier to become number one in a small pond than it is to become number one in a big pond. And the last thing I would say on this point is if you think about Amazon, they are basically like The Everything Store, they sell, you know, you can find almost anything on Amazon, but they started with just books, right? So it's the same with all businesses, not just agencies.

Azhar Siddiqui 11:59

Yeah, some great points there. AJ, I think the last thing on the focusing on the niche site is, again, like what you said that you know, pick a niche stick to it, you're not really married to it, I've seen people who are, you know, who kind of picked out a niche and didn't work out, they move there. And they've been extremely successful, in the new niche. So hiring a coach, a person who can help you guide, you can also benefit over here, you can kind of shorten the learning curve over here. I recommend Josh Nelson, we use Josh Nelson as our own coach. So definitely look at him at the seven-figure agency. So moving on to the next point. This one is kind of a bonus because it's probably not on the slide deck. If the team hasn't shared the slide deck yet, please share it in the chat. And this one is saying no to project work. So I think this is going to be extremely important as well to your next step inside your agency, where, you know, you only want to focus on retainer-based clients. So I'm sure most of you guys understand what a retainer-based client is. A retainer-based client is somebody who pays you





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on a monthly basis. So this would mean that you're they're engaging you for your SEO services, your Facebook ads, or Google ads and things like that. And, you know, and things like websites, anything that you used to do on a project worksite, you can just throw in as a package, or come up with two to three different packages, and just only offer these retainer-based services. Imagine having, you know, having a \$2000 or \$3,000 retainer kind of middle of the way which covers the website covers the SEO cover some Google Ads budget is always on top of these. And having 10 of those right 10 times \$3000, you're already at \$30,000. In monthly recurring revenue, you go from 10 to 100. You know, you're a \$300,000 company. So you know, a retainer is the way to go. I would shy away from project-based work as long as it's paying the bills right now. You know you got to do what you got to do. But your future should be moving towards retainer baselines. Have you had any success in retainer versus project-based work? AJ, what are your thoughts on that?

AJ Casetta 14:36

Yeah, I think for sure, it depends on what you're doing. But retainer has always been the best way to go for me and you know as we work with marketing and creative agencies, but all in all different niches and yeah, the pattern is the guys that keep clients for a while it's are the ones that are more successful. So it's I think it's even you know when I when I'm hearing your talk about it's it's not even I'm not even thinking about it as retainer project, I'm just thinking about client retention and long term, client retention and ascension, right? So, because, you know, like, just being dedicated to sales my entire career, one thing I've learned is that sales are hard. Like even for me, I would consider myself a sales expert. But I don't close 100% of the people, the deals I sit down with, you know, so if you realize that, like, no matter, no matter what you're doing, there's still a good amount of energy to acquire a client to go from a stranger to a paying client, it's a lot easier to bring in revenue by keeping that client over a long period of time. So that's also another low-hanging fruit, which is Yeah, related to having a trainer.

Azhar Siddiqui 15:40

So instead of going for a \$5,000, website, project, go for a \$3,000 a month project, which in turn, turns into a \$30,000 client at the end of the year for you. So it was way, way better in the long term, and clients word because these are all long term projects. So you know, clients would usually tend to stick with you, as long as you have the, you know, the stuff on the back end that the deliverables figured out. And we're going to talk about that in just a minute. So, just moving on. The next point is, so you figured out your niche, you figured out that you're going to stay away from Project waste, you're going to move over to the retainer side, now it's time to get your first five clients. So getting your first five clients, you want to get to that point in as little time as possible. And, you know, at this point, what you want to do is that you want to do everything in your power to get to those points. So whether it means picking up the phone, and calling your friends and family, that's always the best. Like if you can convince your friend friends and family, then you know that there might be a problem. So, start out there in your inner circle, and work your way up there. Cold outreach is a huge one that will get you your first client. So get a list of you to figure out the list and the niche that you want to target. There are different platforms that you can get data. For these particular niches, for example, SICCode is one of them that I've used in the past where you can just purchase, we have a list of I think now we have a list of 30,000 digital marketing agencies that we haven't even tapped into. So having that list of your niche is huge. And now you want to start running some sort of cold outreach on this, using email marketing, as you know, as the front end center, but then also applying sales assistants and appointment setters, who would be calling these people up as they start opening up your emails and things like that. And I think between that, and the focus of your niche, and if you already have a case study within your niche, then you know you already have a case study. So now you can run





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a case study campaign for your target market, you acquire a list that costs you maybe \$1000 \$1500 \$2,000 Max, start running a cold email outreach campaign, with some case studies in there. If you don't have a case study, you work out a lead magnet where you know how to go from, you know, zero doors, for example, a condo management company. You should go from how you can go from 10 doors to 100 doors by using Facebook ads or Google ads. So you can easily turn this into, you can easily turn this into a lead magnet which is helpful to your target audience. They'll get something in return from you. And you continue to send out emails of five to six usually they work best in our on our site, but But yeah, AJ, So what are your kind of tips and tricks on getting the ball rolling for agency owner was just recently picked out a niche and wants to get to their first five clients ASAP?

AJ Casetta 19:19

Yeah, so I think the first thing which you touched on is just making it a priority. How many? How many times? how many times I'm sure maybe people watching this maybe got stuck in the trap of doing a million things that aren't sales. So I think like one of the biggest traits of successful agencies is that they have a relentless focus on acquisition. Sometimes maybe I might be sitting down with an agency and they want me to help them with sales. But I might hear oh, I'm just too busy to focus on sales much the next few months. And if that's really the case, you may not have an agency and three months. So sales are the lifeblood of a company and we need to always keep doing it and no need to think you know, crazy far ahead right away. Just focus on the next five. I just keep it a very simple goal. But as far as that, so first make it a priority. And by that, I just mean do something every day, even if sales scares you, or if it's the kind of thing where you know, you have some fear around it of reaching out to people or sitting down with clients. Generally, I found that things that scare us are the things that we should go dive right into because there's usually a lot of growth in that. But just know that if you're in, business, you're not just providing a service, you're selling a service, there's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. So you need to just get used to it, the only way to get used to it is to do it. And just do something every day, even if it's really even if it's something that you don't make a big habit of, just maybe make a checklist like today, did I do something to either prospect or to close deals, so make it a priority. And as far as methods, there's like, if you search online, how to get clients for an agency, you're going to find 1000 different things. So just try to pick one or two that you can really focus on to not overwhelm yourself. As as I mentioned, cold outreach is one of the best things you can do. Because you get very fast feedback. You know, if you wanted to start a YouTube channel in a niche, and maybe it takes 12 months to actually get people watching you. And 12 months later, you find out that you don't even want to be in that niche anymore. It's not really a good situation. So cold outreach is a great way to test your niche and to test your messaging because it's basically, Of course, there's software that helps. But it's basically free to go out and send emails or message people on LinkedIn or Facebook, and you can get a very fast response, is my messaging working? Is the targeting working? Do I need to change something before you waste too much time? So I would just say, go out, make it a priority. Don't try to do too many things. And focus on helping not just selling if you most people what I see in their emails, it's always about, hey, this is me from this company. And we offer this and we're amazing at this. But nobody really wants to hear that in their inbox. They want to hear, Hey, I heard about your company looks like you have some great reviews, I really like XY and Z. After reading your website, I thought that maybe we could partner we could help you with this, because of this, whatever it is, but keep your messaging focus more about the prospect and their problems, because selling isn't selling your company selling is helping people solve a problem in their business.

Azhar Siddiqui 22:06





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So a lot of our clients just to add one more point to that, on how to get to your first five clients, and even beyond a lot of the clients we work with, they do these cold outreaches in very, you know, like digitized formats where they'll be sending these emails out. But they'll also be sending out a Loom video recorded by the owner of the company doing an audit live audit of their website. So you know, if you can record like two or three minutes, and you just do 10 of these a day, just seeing the ball roll on a daily basis on a weekly basis on a monthly basis, there's no way you're not going to get traction out of that back in my agency days, I did it all wrong. And you know, I could never get my agency over a particular amount, usually around \$300-\$350,000 a year, but it was a one-man show just me. So it was you know, the money I was making was more than enough. But I would go from being a salesperson for a marketing person to a salesperson, do an account manager and just do that circle constantly. And I remembered like, as soon as I dropped a client or two, and all of a sudden I'm in you know this, a mode where you no need to bring money in because the need to pay the bills next month. And really, like I had a list of maybe 500 600 clients that I've worked within the past. And what I would do is I would just start calling five to 10 people on my list that I had on a daily basis. And that's it, that's all I really usually did on the sales activity. And that was enough to you know, some clients I haven't talked to for years, you know, they're like, oh, yeah, my website is too old and blah, blah, blah, and I'll get work going so you know, just have it just doing like what he just said right now just doing those activities, but on a regular basis, they have a huge impact in the long term. So you know, just small things, simple things. They will definitely get you there for your first few clients. And some of these things you should continue doing even as you go into six figures and become a seven-figure agency over time.

AJ Casetta 24:16

If you have someone that's full-time that' you know handling a lot handling your clients, that's a very important role. \$2,000 a month means if you have \$3,000 A month extra, you have \$1,000 runway for yourself and then your business will explode from there. And yeah, guys, just check out RepStack Because that they're the best in the game I've seen about hiring, training, and placing talented, employees and virtual assistants.

Azhar Siddiqui 24:40

Thanks, guys. Thanks, everyone. We'll talk soon. Thanks, AJ.

AJ Casetta 24:44

Thanks, guys.

