



EP 12

**THE
DIVERSE RECRUITING EXPERTS
INTERVIEW**





VIRTUAL ASSISTANT : THE AGENCY GROWTH MACHINE

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Alright guys, welcome to another episode with our amazing guests today. Mr. Jeff and Cody are the CO owners at diversified recruiting experts. It's an amazing recruiting firm, obviously focused on diversity mainly in the United States. And they're having an amazing journey. On the side of Jeff Fisher over here, Jeff Fisher's been running multiple businesses in his career, and, you know, has run a digital marketing agency as well as a coach to a digital marketing agency. And now inside this particular field, so if you guys want to just quickly take a minute, Jeff and Cody, and just kind of let us know a little bit about where you guys are coming from, on this podcast today?

Cody Horton 1:15

Yeah, sure. I'm Cody Horton. I'm the Managing Director and Founder for diverse recruiting experts. I've been involved in recruiting for a couple of decades prior to starting diverse recruiting experts. I worked in the corporate world. And before that, I was in the Navy for a while. That's where I met my great friend and business partner, Jeff Fisher. Jeff, I'll let you chat a little bit about your background.

Jeff Fisher 1:44

Well, you know, I just love business. And so there's always an opportunity to help others in the business. And that's really what I consider my unique ability. And so it's been...yeah! A little over three and a half years ago, Cody asked me to join Diverse Recruiting Experts(DRE), and come in and do the marketing and that kind of stuff for the company. And it's been an amazing journey, we've completely changed our format of how we sell what we offer, over these three years. And the exciting part is this last half of this year, we've really got it nailed down. We know what our niche is, we know who we're trying to serve, and all of those kinds of things. So that's an exciting time. And then, of course, working with RepStack is, you know, my coaching passion. So that need gets filled by working with RepStack as well.

Azhar Siddiqui 2:47

Yeah, so people who are listening to us, Jeff is also our Chief Growth Officer at RepStack. And he's been tremendous for the success we've been having on our side, helping us - guide in the right direction, and making sure that the growth targets are consistently hit. So, one key point that you guys just pointed out that, you know, you guys met way back during your navy careers. And that's, so intriguing to me and exciting because that's kind of how I've been, you know, every time I met a person in my life, you know, working at a: maybe even at a gas station job early on, you know... I used to try to kind of pinpoint people who have great passions, and who can work really well with me and these lofty dreams that maybe we'll come together and work on one day. And that did work for me in a lot of aspects like some of my clients on my legacy agency side. They've been my friends for years, and they came on as clients and now they've been clients for a number of years. Cody, did you know who to reach out to when it came down to starting DRE and working with Jeff specifically?

Cody Horton 4:08

Yeah, what's really cool about this is the business plan for DRE, I wrote the business plan probably 20 years ago. And Jeff was involved in that. And so he knew about this for years and years. Ironically, Jeff, and I have - We've played around with business for a long time, you know, he's got that entrepreneurial bug. And we've always tried to figure out how are we going to work together?





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And, you know.... Jeff originally started helping me at DRE because of all his expertise in digital marketing, his coaching experience, his leadership experience. He started coaching me and consulting at DRE, and then we realized that "Hey! why don't you just come on as a business partner and really help us grow and scale this". Because Jeff has grown and sold and scaled some businesses over the years, you know... when we got on the Navy, I went the corporate route, Jeff went the entrepreneurial route. And so it was just a natural connection, we've always wanted to work together in the same business. And this just gave us a great opportunity to get together and to work together. And because of the partnership, we've seen our business, accelerate over the last, you know, three and a half years.

Azhar Siddiqui 5:23

That's an amazing story. And you know that I really enjoyed listening to that, because, that's how I've been. And right now I'm working with my brothers. And we've been all doing our separate things. And all of a sudden, this RepStack business startup started taking off and all three of us are like, connecting at a very different level, we obviously grew up together, but you know, like living in different parts of the world and things like that for the last 20 years. And now we're closer together, and obviously, with brothers, like, we do have a good amount of understanding. And that's what I see. Between you, and Jeff, where, you know...you guys had this idea, and you guys kind of put together plans to make it work and now you guys are doing it and what's the point on working on a business where you don't enjoy the company you have? And you guys are good friends, and now you guys get to work with each other every single day. So that's amazing!

Jeff Fisher 6:24

You know, it's the proof that it's good to dream. it's okay to dream, even though you may not know when it's all gonna come together. So when you think about the fact that yeah, Cody and I actually met 33 years ago this year, and we had a small business we were building, clone computers, we were back in the day, before voicemail was a big thing, we were doing a digital voicemail system that we were selling, then we did something crazy and we sold Santa letters for a couple of years. So for five bucks - send your five bucks in we'll write a little letter and send it off to *Little Johnny*. And again, Cody said he's busy working at Microsoft, Dell, Walmart, and all these huge corporations where he's making his name in the diversity space. And I'm over here slogging it along in a small business doing the entrepreneurial component, which is the part I love, and sustaining that relationship. And I don't know about yourself. But one of the things I learned a long time ago, if you really want to sustain a relationship, you have to have something to talk about all the time, not just reminiscing. So every time that we've had something going on trying to build something, you know, we've connected as friends at a whole different level. And so that's kind of been going on. So yeah, when I sold my digital marketing agency, and then I almost simultaneously, I agreed to step in with Cody, and moved from a consultant to Diverse Recruiting Experts into a partnership role. And we were negotiating that out. And 30 days before that I had negotiated my coaching, availability to Josh Nelson, Seven Figure Agency, so they all kind of come together all at once. And now I'm going, dang, I just got rid of a business. I was unemployed for like a day. And now I have two full-time jobs. How did I do that to myself? You know, and so, the fun part about that is, so I did Seven Figure Agency coaching for three years, that was exciting. And then I, you know, Cody's like: "Man, we got to keep growing". And I'm like, I got to stay more focused. And so I step away from the Seven Figure Agency to focus on Diverse Recruiting Experts. But as you know, Azhar I have to coach somebody, so it was natural when you provided the invitation to join Repstack and coach your team.





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Azhar Siddiqui 9:18

Yeah. And that again, you know like we can probably go on about how these things manifest and come together with these business relationships. It's a that you should always be on the lookout for the right people and the right friends that you know, you can have something to work together on, like, Jeff said that you know, it's not just something that you were going to be reminiscing about good times, but we can actually work on something together and that's what it's all about. And then what happened with Jeff was that you know, I had this in the back of my head that you know, like, wouldn't be amazing that Jeff Fisher comes on board in some capacity and works with us on our core Watching internally. And you know, and I may have brought this up to Jeff, like a few months before. And when that opportunity came along, I've already planted that seed. And you know, it happens. So, you know, ask for the relationships that we all want. And usually, they do come true. So that's an amazing guy. So I want to quickly switch gears, and maybe just quickly talk about the journey that, you know, we've talked about a few things here. But you know, like the word journey, what led the experiences that you guys have had in terms of your professional journeys do lead up to Dre and that coming together, so Cody, maybe we can start out with you.

Cody Horton 10:48

Yeah, so I won't cover the whole life story here. But the driver and the motivation for DRE, when I was graduating from high school, I joined the Navy. And my Navy recruiter was intentional about saying, hey, the Navy has this program, where they're trying to get more diversity into the opposite ranks of the Navy. So that recruiter intentionally introduced me to this program called the boost program. And it allowed me to go to college, get a degree, get real-world experience, and do things that I would have never known I could do coming out of the small little town with no money or no resources, and it changed my life. And so at that point, I decided I was going to be intentional about that and do that someday. So fast forward through the Navy meeting, Jeff, in the corporate world, writing this business plan, and kicking off this business, the driver for DRE is our vision is to empower people to change their lives because that's what happened to me when the Navy recruiter was intentional about putting in that program. And then we connect great companies to great people as our mission. And that allows us to really do what we do, we're trying to make a difference in the world, and have an impact. And the business that we're doing every day, you know, run by our core values, is really allowing us to empower people to change their lives and connect great companies to great people.

Azhar Siddiqui 12:25

Wow, it's such an amazing journey, like you had this year, right from the get-go. And the Navy kind of, you know, planted the seeds for you. But you really took it through and the path that you took had always diversity in it and to this day, running DRE together. And Jeff, let's jump on your journey a little bit as a summarised version. I know it's an extremely big resume that you carry as well. But give us a picture of all.

Jeff Fisher 12:55

Along the way, starting way back when I was I don't know, 10 years old, probably I discovered the need to be an entrepreneur and have my own business and the Navy. The second part of that is, I grew up in a small town in Minnesota. And in my head, I had watched enough John Wayne Navy movies that I knew I was going into the Navy. So I showed up at the recruiting facility, dragging my mom along to sign me up because I was still 17 years old. And you have to have a parent agree to that. So that launched into 14 years in the Navy real quick. And then in the digital marketing agency, and then over here to the DRE, and interesting question. You know, Cody asked me a little over three years ago, as I agreed to come on board is he's like, how do you know you like this? And I'm like, Well, you know, I didn't know that. I'd like the Navy. I didn't know that I would like a landscape company.





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And I owned and ran it for 12 years. I didn't know I'd like digital marketing. But I did that for nine years. So what the heck, let's do recruiting together, because it is that first time that dream of working together as possible. Right. And so that was great. My background, again, is small businesses running small entities. And so taking Cody's experience of you know how to deal in the corporate world, and then adding mine in and I've had to adjust a little bit because, you know, in my past, my, my target was companies that I would sell to typically be under a million dollars. Now we focus on 300 million to \$3 billion companies. So there's a little bit of a mindset shift, and how you do marketing and stuff. And so it's been exciting. And, you know, we've got the part of the excitement is we're both learner and core values, and that's since been reduced to six. And, you know, we have a mission and a vision. And we actually just finished up last week, a two days session with an implementer. From Entrepreneurial Operating System, we're in the process of putting that in place and seeing great strides. So that's how we ended up here today, you know, of course, I got to meet you in the brothers. And I'm also a believer that we all have great relationships, that we need to co-mingle. So I need Cody, my business partner to meet you, for example, you know, so that it just is a better relationship. And that way, when I'm telling a story to Cody, late at night over a little beverage, you know, he knows who RepStack is, and how that fits into my life as well.

Azhar Siddiqui 13:08

That's so true. And another thread I'm seeing over here from Cody's journey, and your journey is that niche that you guys are currently focused on all the importance of die, because, you know, Jeff, you mentioned that you ran a landscaping company, and then you know, digital marketing agency, you know, coaching inside digital marketing agency and Cody's been, you know, diversity recruitment from day one, building out his career in, you know, first in the Navy, and then different corporations as well. So how important and Jeff, you always mentioned this, I know, you're going to have some nuggets for us, you always mentioned that riches are in the niches, but how important that has identified a really a core niche for DRE, for example? And how has that kind of helped you guys grow? As you guys are growing right now?

Jeff Fisher 17:12

Well, it's interesting, because you would think on the surface that our niche is diversity, right? But what we discovered is to really be successful in this diversity space, we really still needed to niche down one more level, to a particular type of industry or company, group within that. And so I don't know, it's been six months or so we decided to focus on the SAS industry, and go after clients. So the reason I point that out is, you know, if you want to focus on dentists, for example, you may only want to do pediatric dentist, you know, because the problem always comes down to you've got to be able to buy the list. And can you go imagine yourself going into Google and typing in, give me a list of diversity? You know, you're not, you're not gonna get anything. But if you go in there and say, give me a list of SAS companies that want to grow, and they support and believe in the idea of diversity, we can actually get that list or we can build that list. And so that's what we've been busy doing. And, you know, we're refocusing our business, we have a three-year plan, it'll take three years to get 70% of our business into the SAS space. But we're also looking out, you know, there's a day in the future that we'll want to sell this. And niches that part of the riches that we talked about aren't the daily or monthly revenue stream, but it's in the equity that you're building down the road. Because at some point, I fully believe that some larger recruiting company will see DRE and say we want that attached to us, and they're just gonna come in and say, what's it gonna take to bring what you already do extremely well, and bolted on to our agency and move forward from there. So for everybody out there that has a digital marketing agency that's the big aha moment for you is, you're also building equity as you're building out your niche. So yeah





Azhar Siddiqui 17:31

True. Cody, anything to add to that?

Cody Horton 19:42

So one of the things I think that you guys have talked touched on a couple of times is that relationships matter? Right, and by niching in the SAS space, I already have a lot of relationships with heads of talent acquisition chief diversity officers, people in the space. It's just a matter of narrowing that focus to build relationships with the leaders in the SAS space so that we build those relationships. So they know like, and trust us, right? They know what we do, we know what they do, we understand their space, you know, very much like you're doing it RepStack, you're focused, and you're enabling those agency owners to really scale with your services. And they know people know, they like and they trust you. And so by being in that niche and becoming the expert in that space, you just bring a level of credibility to the table, that somebody who just goes out and tries to do everything I like to say they try to boil the ocean, they're not going to be able to be as impactful as you are being in your niche. And so there's a lot of power in that niche. And the relationships that form within that space are tremendous and invaluable.

Azhar Siddiqui 20:59

Yeah, no, that's so true. And I was just having this conversation with Jeff a while back where, you know, the more we niche down, the better our business is getting, like, you know, used to be a time when we first started where, you know, a client would come to us, and he'll ask for the world. And I'll just break the entire process and just go to town and provide that person for them. But the more we've started saying no. And the focus that we have is, you know, helping digital marketing agency owners with three key roles, the more we stay close to that vision or our mission, the better our business seems to be doing, there's less hassle, there's less churn, it's just and then also, because we're working with 70, plus digital marketing agency owners and the best agency owners that we see are who are doing amazing, they have a really cool niche identifier, and they're just focused on that. So that really works. And you guys are a testament to that, and you know, all for clients as well. And even RepStack so quickly, again, changing gears, and we're running out of time here too. But you know, just to I know, you guys are doing a great job in, you know, reaching out to these people, but you know, as an agency, you know, what's the process on the marketing side? On the sales side? And when you guys get a client in? How are you doing the account management for that client? So you know, just because all even on the digital marketing agencies, we struggle with these things. And you know, how to pull in clients, using marketing, how to close those deals using sales, and then how to retain those clients using our account manager. So if you guys can quickly talk about those processes for us, I think that'll be really helpful.

Jeff Fisher 22:46

Go ahead, Cody, you can!

Cody Horton 22:48

Yeah, so I'm not an expert in marketing on the business development side, right, a lot of our sales come from long-term relationships that I've had. As we get more into our niche, we just brought on a marketing person, right? Don't be afraid to make the investment as an owner of a business or the owner of an agency. If making the investment in a person that is coming from RepStack or a person that's coming from any environment, you're going to be able to do the things you need to do so for instance:





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What we need to do and what we're working on right now because we've invested in a marketing manager who is going to help us with this inbound lead stuff is to make sure that we've got a message that's compelling, that's adding value, that's going to get someone to say, hey, tell me more about this, right. And then just being bold and going after it, once we get into the sales space, we have a pretty high problem-solving ratio, right? At least, you know, 30 to 50% of the people who get into our sales process, we actually move them forward because they have a need, right? I never felt like I'm selling. I'm just working on solving a problem. And that mindset is what makes the difference, right. And so the benefit of the digital marketing agencies is, there's a lot of techniques and capabilities. I'm just fortunate I was called Jeff, our secret weapon. I'm fortunate to have a business partner, who's a digital marketing coach. And so all the top of the funnel things that get people to know who we are. He knows how to do those things in an amazing way. And I know our recruiting space, and my confidence level has gone up with how we sell just because we're solving problems. We're not even, we're not even selling anything. We're just solving people's problems. And when you do that, people just buy themselves and we have high-value high-dollar transactions that get that happened with every one of our sales, right? So I don't know if that gives you exactly what you're looking for. But I get really excited about the fact that it's easy to sell our service because there's a huge need for what we do.

Jeff Fisher 25:05

I think that's the other key point in there, as Cody mentioned, we just brought in a high-power marketing director. But simultaneous to that we brought in a RepStack assistant for him as well. So instead of just building this one-person Marketing Show, that you've got this senior person having to go back and do things that maybe haven't done in 20 years of, you know, sorting lists, and all of that kind of stuff. You're like, here's your assistant, ready, set, go, the two of you work together. And so the speed of implementation is just that much higher. You know, we got a guy that's thinking strategy, implementation, and then we got a tactician that actually puts that idea into play. And they're working out simultaneously. In addition to that, we just had the conversation with our RepStack, marketing assistant explaining to him that, you know, if you stick it out with us for a couple of years, we are willing to make the investment in you over that period of time. So you'll know how to do Facebook advertising, LinkedIn advertising, you're not just going to set in the corner, you know, sorting out lists and stuff. But the other thing I talked to this young man about was, you know, we talked about riches are in the niches, but the big foundation is your list. So every effort that he does, to build out that list at a better, you know, just so it's better. So when we email, we get higher deliverables, you know, we get more opens to all of those kinds of things and set the stage for him to understand that he may be the junior person in our company. But he's doing a lot of heavy lifting, not necessarily for today. But for three years from now, you know, and we've been marketing to a really high-quality list for two or three years for now. So the next time Cody gets on stage, or we do a webinar, they actually know who the verse recruiting experts are they understand and have heard some of some portion of Cody's journey, they know how I fit into that puzzle as well. And so work, you're excited about all of that, and putting all of that in play. And so it all fits into again, the business, the develop the business, so, and then the deliverable side, in our particular case, basically, we have the equivalent of that recruiter that also does the account management for us. And they're assigned somewhere between four and five, sometimes six clients that they work on. And they typically have a team of three to five individuals that work for them. So they're also managing a team of about six people.

Cody Horton 28:00

And I know we're tight on time, but I want to underscore what Jeff said about having the RepStack marketing assistant with us RepStacks already vetted the person, and they're good. And so they can come in. And we're certainly going to teach them things that are in our environment.





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But we're getting a quality person through RepStack that's making a difference and really accelerating our ability to be more impactful in our marketing efforts. And so I really, really appreciate the work that you guys are doing to get that done.

Jeff Fisher 28:33

Let me take that a step further. So the internal joke between Cody and I, as we're a recruiting company, and we hired RepSack to recruit for us. I'm crazy is that you know, and so we did exactly the RepStack process, you know, step by step, you did the interviews, you did your process for RepStack. And we accept that you said this is the guy you need. We had a 30-minute meeting with him, which was really more of an onboarding meeting almost. Because we trusted the decision that you'd made. I sure wish we had more clients like that for diverse recruiting experts that trusted us at that level.

Azhar Siddiqui 29:18

If you find out what Cody just said a small while back was that you know, the sales process that you guys have in place is a really educational and problem-solving process? And I think we've done that with Jeff's help on our site as well. And what that has allowed us to do is that, you know, we're selling right now we did have do still have some joint ventures in the face that God has started. And you know, we were selling a virtual assistant, which is higher in the VA world at \$10 an hour, but since Jeff's been part of the team, we're at \$14 An hour and you know that problem-solving approach that question approach that Cody we follow as well that we're trying to solve a problem for the client. And if that fits in, we have a 90% close ratio once that customer comes into our fold, and usually, they don't even bat an eye on that \$14 An hour price tag, and they can go and easily find somebody for \$5 an hour on Upwork or Fiverr. And here they're playing at paying \$14. And Jeff and I were just having a conversation that, you know, with the value that we're bringing, and adding new things, we should easily be able to take this higher in the new year. So usually, the sales process becomes so much easier if you have those things figured out. And, you know, I think you guys are doing a tremendous job, I really admired the space that you guys are working in, I think with Jeff's experience on the digital marketing side that SAS is kind of also a little bit of a unique play for you guys. And, you know, I continue to hear great things about you guys. So I really want to thank you for this time. Before I let you guys go, though. And we've kind of found out the background stories and things like that. I just want you guys to maybe identify that one. Why? You know that which is the core of the company, that why you guys wanted to start the business, that you guys did start in this diverse field that what was the core reason behind starting out this business?

Cody Horton 31:31

Yeah, so the core reason is, there are we want to empower people to change their lives, right. That's my personal vision. And that's the company's vision. And what better way to empower someone than to give them the opportunity for a great career option. This is a way to be to give them something tangible and make sure that people can take care of their families, they can take care of themselves, by us, connecting great companies to great people were exposing opportunity to people. And so if I had to pick a why my why is to empower people to actually change their lives. And to do that by connecting them to some great opportunities.

Azhar Siddiqui 32:22

Yeah, that's so true.



**Jeff Fisher 32:24**

Yeah. And then for me it's helping but you know, people on the same side didn't have that exact wording along this career path that I've been on. But imagine this as our, we take us a young man in a border, Texas that has big dreams, but has no idea how to move those along. And he gets to college, and he's looking for his first job. And this young man is an underrepresented minority. Right? So he's competing in a pool of people that, you know, he's gonna stand out in. So not just racial makeup, but we want him to stand out and say, Hey, I'm really one of the best choices you can make. And so on a daily basis, when we take that young man and all of a sudden that his dream that way back here was the, you know, the work for Microsoft or worked for Walmart. Yeah, and we help him achieve that. And, you know, I'm just telling Cody's story right there, you know, very small town, get your college degree do these steps in the process. And we want to help that person achieve that goal for themselves. And at a higher level than they even maybe ever dreamed about. Along the way.

Azhar Siddiqui 33:45

Yeah, and I can relate to that with RepStack where, you know, we're, we're at 170 People from a country, which is, you know, women and girls usually don't get all the opportunities over here. And almost 60% of our workforce is female right now. And, you know, they get to work with these amazing agencies in the United States and Canada, and you know, so that your why is, you know, very similar to our why were, you know, the impact that we're having on these lives, it's just, you know, it's you know, it calms me down, it makes me feel that you know, I just go and take a look at the people we have and makes me happy if I'm having a rough day. So, and we kept on listening to this small town Cody that you're - What is this mythical small town that you're from?

Cody Horton 34:35

Yeah, so I grew up in a small town. It's called border Texas. It's right in the middle of Texas, with not a lot of people there. And if the occupations that would be there would be maybe working at a refinery or being in ranching, and neither one of those was on my list of things that I wanted to do. So I joined the Navy, right and so at another time, I can give you more of that story for sure. But it is that town where you grew up in the end. And you go, man, I don't have a lot of career opportunities here. What can I do? You know,

Jeff Fisher 35:09

So the funny thing Azar is that he keeps referring to this small town of, I think three or 4000 population, I grew up in a town of 884 people. Okay, so when you talk, that's a micro town, I guess it's not even a small doesn't qualify as a small town. But that was the attraction for the Navy. For me, as well as I need a way out of here. Because I can either work at the gas station, if I'm going to work at the grocery store, I got to travel 20 miles every day, because that's the nearest grocery store, you know, or I can do farming, which is in Minnesota was the big profession there. And so, you know, our stories line up, it's just amazing how it's all come together. And you know, where it's going, we're extremely excited. And I like to say for myself, you know, this may be my last career because I'm in my 60s now. And somewhere in my future, I want to want to retire. I don't know when that's going to be but you know, I have this opportunity for the first time to build truly build the company that I've always visualized along the way how to take care of people how to treat people, you know, things like that. And so, you know, for me and hanging out with you guys that are RepStack, it's the same thing. It's, it's a lot of fun. And we're making a difference, you know, and I hadn't even thought about it when you say 60% of the workforce is female, that's so contrarian to what happens in your country, right? I mean, so in your own way, you're setting the pace, you're being that leader and leadership company.





Azhar Siddiqui 36:54

Yeah, I think another common thread between the three of us is that all three of us wanted to get out of our town. I did apply for the army, they rejected me. So the next ticket was to go study in Minnesota, a small town called Morehead right on the border with Fargo, North Dakota. And you know, I went there and you know, the rest is history. So it's been a pleasure, guys. Thank you so much for doing this. Cody and Jeff will get this uploaded, and we'll be happy to share it and we'll make sure that we tag border Texas on that podcast.

Jeff Fisher 37:33

Thanks, Azhar. Thanks a lot.

Cody Horton 37:35

Thanks a lot. Appreciate it. Take care.





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