

Jerry: Hey Alex, how are you?

Alex: How are you, Jerry? Good to see you.

Jerry: I'm really well. Thank you. It's good to see you too. I really appreciate your taking the time to join us today. Before we get started, why don't you just take a moment and introduce yourself?

[00:00:30]

Alex: Sure. My name is Alex Rethore and I'm a start up executive that has been building and leading at two high growth venture backed businesses over the last seven years. I definitely started the early part of my career uh, in more established companies and went to some good schools but I'm really proud of kind of putting that to work in start up context and kind of seeing what's possible.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: [00:01:00] And I've had two great experiences over the last couple years. Specifically, I was, I was with a business called Rent the Runway and in most recently, I spent five years uh, at a company called Onefinestay which is a high end, private home rental business that was acquired back in 2016. I would say unlike many of your guests, I'm not a founder myself. Um, but I've come to realize through the process of building and leading commercial and Ops teams over the years, that I'm a builder after all, um, and I've really enjoyed being a right hand to founders who are trying to big, scary things, scaling businesses and really trying to find the right folks to bring along with them for the ride.

[00:01:30]

So, I've definitely adopted more of a founder mindset. Um, kind of that obsession with a mission and that feeling that deeply, the highs and lows of that roller coaster. Um, I'm really trying to do good work well for the right reasons as you guys say here on the show.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alex: [00:02:00] So currently, I- I live in L.A with my dog, Breken um, and I've been navigating a bit of a transition period, having left the, my last company in 2017. Um, trying to really think through uh, kind of why that's been tricky and get myself organized for my next steps, really getting excited about the next step opportunities.

Jerry: [00:02:30] Alright. Well, before we jump in there, let me just uh, let me just respond to something and say, um ... I was really struck by your desire to make clear that you weren't a founder. Yeah, and there's that, there's something in there that it's worth noting, which is that, you belong here. Um, even though we're just meeting really, for the first time, um, part of our good work done well for the reasons at Reboot, is to try as much as possible to make everybody who's struggling feel like they belong

[00:03:00] and so, um, the gift of you coming on and sharing this moment in your life and talking through that and really getting some support. The gift of that to the larger community is um, that someone out there will feel themselves in your shoes and you won't be alone. And neither will they.

Alex: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Jerry: [00:03:30] So, we'll just pause and honor that and, and um, it's one of the things I love best about doing this show is that um, it's not about the, what's the big brand name interview, you know, interviewee that you're gonna get. It's uh, it's about this. It's about, it's about everybody. So, I just wanted to create some space for that and ...
[00:04:00] So, what I'm hearing, Alex, and, and, and we've, we've shared some notes before, is that, um, you've had this uh, experience for the last few years with Rent the Runway and Onefinestay and now you're in this transition period and um, and that's a logistical thing 'cause you're, is this right? You're in between positions?

Alex: Yes.

Jerry: And that's also an emotional existential state as well.

Alex: Yeah, definitely (laughs).

Jerry: [00:04:30] Yeah, yeah. So, why don't you give us more of the details about uh, the transition? Where, what's happening? You're, you, you've you know, are you um, what's happening with you in terms of the job and what do y- what do you looking to transition to?

Alex: [00:05:00] Yeah. So, I spent a lot of time thinking about that after I left Onefinestay. It was more of an emotional departure than I expected it to be. Uh, partly because of the pace of the work that I had been doing over the last few years. It just was always continuing in the next crisis, the next thing, the next role to kind of figure out. And I when I actually kind of paused, like a pause button on there, realized I was actually quite burnt out.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: So, I took a couple months to kind of recenter myself and kind of think through what I had loved about the jobs that I had been doing and what I could see for myself next.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Um, and I guess the thing I should say about me is, I'm, I'm an all around profile. I'm not a deep functional expert, um, and I kind of love that because, especially, for businesses that are growing and changing so much. It's really given me a

[00:05:30]

transformational experience in some of the companies that I've chosen where I've just gotten to do things that they never intended initially for me to do.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: But because of the kind of institutional context and the opportunity, I was able to kind of jump into.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: So I guess for me, I'd like to continue working with another uh, venture backed business that's trying to build something.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: [00:06:00] But the question has been like, where's the best fit for a skillset like mine. Um, especially now that I have a couple more years of seniority under my belt, I may be a little bit less nimble in that way.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Um, but is it a real ops-centric role, is it more revenue related because now I've had the chance to do both through those kind of experiences over the last couple years. So, I think that's part of the reason why this has been challenging.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: And then, what kind of team and product can I get excited about. I've done mostly consumer facing work. Um, kind of consumer tech enabled I guess I should say.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Um, so again, still kind of a generalist.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:06:30]

Alex: Um, which has made this a bit tricky too.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So ... What I'm hearing is it would be helpful to talk through a little bit of a kind of plan. What's the plan?

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Does that feel right?

Alex: Definitely. I'm a planning kind of girl (laughs). And I think some of the, the frustration in the search has been that I've chased a lot of the things that I knew I wanted to chase up front and gotten the wheels moving, kind of reengaged in the search but not having next steps has sort of created a little bit of anxiety around, alright, I'm a doer. What's this girl gonna do?

[00:07:00]

Jerry: Okay. So, um ... I promise you that by the end of this call, we'll have a firmer idea of the plan.

Alex: Okay.

Jerry: But, um, you're gonna have to indulge me a little bit first.

Alex: Okay.

[00:07:30]

Jerry: And what I mean by that is, um, sometimes when we're in this points of these transitions, sometimes they're, you know ... When I first started coaching, I had a good friend Hue Macleod draw a, um, cartoon for me to sort of symbolize the business. And what it was, was, I don't know if you know, uh, Hue, but, uh, he's the artist behind Gaping Void and so, it's one of these crazy looking characters, screaming at the top of his lungs, "Now what?"

Alex: (Laughs)

[00:08:00]

Jerry: Um, and in the now what moment, the impulse often times is to move expeditiously as quickly as possible to putting the plan into place. Because not having a plan produces its own anxiety.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Right? Does that feel familiar?

Alex: Yes, definitely.

Jerry: And the problem with moving and responding to that is that um, we miss the opportunity to [existentially 00:08:29], to, to, existentially define our next step. And so, what we end up with is, we roll along and then, four or five years pass and we go, how the fuck did I end up here?

[00:08:30]

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: To the point where we end up in a position where, and now, I'm gonna quote from one of your emails, the deep philosophical differences that made it hard to lead authentically, right? Where you were in a place where there was deep philosophical

[00:09:00]

differences where you were unable to lead authentically. And that phrase, unable or hard to lead authentically is easy to write but emotionally hard to feel. Does that resonate?

Alex: Absolutely. Yeah. It was really hard.

Jerry: Yeah. And so, we're just gonna honor those, that [inaudible 00:09:25] just come into you right now.

Alex: (Laughs)

[00:09:30]

Jerry: Because, um ... When we make our career moves and our life choices, paying only attention to the voice in our head that says, "Hurry up, make a decision," ... we often will find ourselves in places where the inner part of who we are is out of

[00:10:00] alignment with the out of part of who we are. And I wish this is one of those moments where I wish the listeners could see you because you just nodded in that sort of knowing way. That's-

Alex: [inaudible 00:10:12]

Jerry: Yeah, say it.

Alex: I mean, you, you know it when you're in it, I guess, and I, I've heard other folks on this podcast talk about transition points like that, just that sort of like, ugh, and-

Jerry: Ugh.

Alex: And to f- and the, and the frustration around knowing that there's nothing actually
[00:10:30] more that you can do to kind of reconcile that. And for fighters and doers that kinda wanted to you know, go to the mat for the idea or for the team, which was really important to me. It's really one of the most heartbreaking things that can happen as a senior leader. And sometimes saying that it's enough is actually like the most important thing that you can do but it's like, rips your gut out.

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: Because, you've convinced all these people to come along with you and you've been candid and transparent in your style-

[00:11:00]

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: And for me, it was just like, getting there and realizing that there's actually nothing more that I can personally give to this thing-

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: To make it better is just really hard.

Jerry: It's really hard. And now I'm gonna note something, too, that you said in an off hand way. You made, you used the phrase, good schools.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: Yeah (laughs) you're laughing (laughs).

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: So, what I can read into that and tell, correct me if I'm wrong. Oh, Alex is a high achiever.

[00:11:30]

Alex: (Laughs) yeah.

Jerry: Alex has been always the high achiever, hasn't she?

Alex: I mean, I've always tried to live up to the opportunities that I've had.

Jerry: Well, notice that. There's a beautiful framing in there that's forward looking and then there's a little, little whispery voice inside of there, right? What's the whispery voice saying? When you think that you're not living up to the opportunity, what's that saying to you?

[00:12:00]

Alex: Well, it's just, it makes you feel like you haven't, you're not as entitled to having that opportunity in the first place. So there's a feeling of, no, I wouldn't say like, not good enough but a sense of obligation around wanting to make sure that you're always striving to do your best because you got a shot at things that some other folks haven't gotten a shot at, wanting to really have an impact. And I think that drives a lot of my, like, the way that I look at my work and my teams.

[00:12:30]

Jerry: Yeah. Can you draw out the connection for me a little bit more? You said it drives a lot of the way you look at your work and your teams. In what way?

Alex: I think there's a, often an expectation given backgrounds about what I'm gonna bring to the table. And there's a positive and negative association space on other people, people have reacted to and worked with that have gone through similar schools. Luckily, in the, in the businesses that I've worked in, there's been a lot of high achievers. But I think we all feel this sense of (laughs)-

[00:13:00]

Jerry: (Laughs)

Alex: Wanting to meet those expectations like, I don't just look good on paper. I can do this thing. You know? This hard thing, I can figure out. And I'm not achieving this because of those opportunities, it's part of the work that I do and I think I expect a lot from the people [inaudible 00:13:19] also of myself because I don't wanna let, I don't wanna not take advantage of that opportunity. So, I guess in thinking about how that relates to searching for work, (laughs), it's like the most critical thing.

[00:13:30]

Jerry: Yeah, yeah.

Alex: Kinda just thinking like, where is the best use of my time and skills? Where can I have the most impact at like a pretty critical time in my personal career-

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: Like, it's a really, it's like a big heavy weight almost (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah, yeah. I can feel the weight and I can read the weight in your, in your notes to me. And we're gonna talk about the weight in a second, and where I'm gonna ask you to hang out with the thing that gives that weight first.

[00:14:00]

Alex: Yeah. Okay.

Jerry: For a little bit longer and that is um ... Here's a phrase you may have heard, Alex, you have so much potential.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: Yeah, a few times (laughs).

Jerry: Yeah, um, that phrase always strikes me as having a double edged sword. It cuts positively and negatively.

[00:14:30]

Alex: Yeah, definitely.

Jerry: Yeah. So, positively, it's, it's the belief that others have in us that we can do things. What's the negative?

Alex: I mean, the, the downside is that, it creates a sense of uh, like, having to live up to that's just hard to grapple with everyday. And when you, like, me as a person, I wanna do everything at the umpteenth level. It gets hard to kind of maintain that pace and that (laughs) that level of execution. So, it feels like when you don't hit it,

[00:15:00]

not that you're disappointing people but you're mostly disappointing your expectations of yourself. So I think-

Jerry: Well, you've-

Alex: It's sometimes hard.

Jerry: In, in that instance, what's happened is you've internalized the assignment. However it was first expressed to you, you've internalized the assignment that unless you are and I'm gonna quote now, working in work where you are leading authentically, and truly inspired and completely passionate about and that you're making the next few years count. Anything less than that is failure.

[00:15:30]

Alex: Ugh.

Jerry: Ugh.

Alex: It's a, it's a high bar (laughs).

Jerry: (Laughs) that's a heavy-

Alex: How many people get a chance to do all of those things?

Jerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:16:00]

Jerry: And so, and so, in past situations where the, I imagine that when you, when you transition from say, Rent the Runway to Onefinestay, there was a lot of um, uh, affirming and positive belief in the potential. Ah, here it is. Now, I'm gonna be able to do good work and do it well and rest my head at night knowing that I did it with good intention.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And then, we get the crushing that starts to happen when we realize the philosophical differences, these are your words, lead to a misalignment where who I am doesn't get al- get allowed to speak and manifest. Am I naming the fullness of what, part of what's going on here?

[00:16:30]

Alex: Yes.

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: [00:17:00] Yes and where, (laughs) and where the exit, the amazing exit (laughs) is not actually something that can continue to give life to the, to the company. It becomes something that isn't what you thought it would be. And so, that sort of linear trajectory is sort of stopped abruptly.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Ugh, as you kind of figure out what the new version of this thing is gonna be and are you gonna be happy supporting that, that mission. And I think that's, that was the hardest part.

Jerry: [00:17:30] Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, I just wanna give space and recognize all of that. Um, and in my observation, if we were to chart this out, and talk about this as a journey, the words we might end up using might sound just as much as like we're talking about a life journey as we are talking a career journey.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: [00:18:00] You know, uh, Joseph Campbell would focus on the hero heroine journey. This is, this is the movement because and I'll speak a little bit about high achievers, we spend so much time inculcating and internalizing those expectations. You have so much potential, that the whispery fear behind that is, and so you better not blow it.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: Right? Because potential is not realized. Potential is just potential. Right?

Alex: Yeah.

[00:18:30] Jerry: Whereas the message is not necessarily, congratulations, you are enough. The message is, congratulations, someday you may be enough.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: [00:19:00] You have that potential. Don't blow it. Too much, who is, to whom much is given much is expected. Right? Now, that, that is a beautiful altruistic expression for our society and it carries with it a negative existential charge. Don't blow it, don't waste this opportunity. Those of us in our lives who've made sacrifices for us in order for us to get to where we are, including those who may not even be our family, all of those people stand behind us. And then we go into our twenties trying to manifest this and we run faster and faster and faster. And then we go into our thirties and we start to hearing those whispery voices, louder and louder and they're saying things like, "What the fuck! When does this stop?" And then we get a pot of gold. [00:19:30] And we think the pot of gold, acquisition, here's the, here's the return on investment. We think the pot of gold is gonna make it all go away.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: But it doesn't, does it?

[00:20:00]

Alex: No, it doesn't.

Jerry: And so then, we're left with what?

Alex: A reset, I guess.

Jerry: (Laughs)

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: No, no, no, no, no. A reboot. (Laughs).

Alex: A reboot, of course, of course. How could I forget.

Jerry: (Laughs)

Alex: Yeah, but sort of taking all of that stuff with you and ...

Jerry: Yeah.

[00:20:30]

Alex: Figuring out what to do with all of it and how not to put that much expectation on the next opportunity but knowing that you will because that's a lot of how you look at the world.

Jerry: Whoa. I think you may have just hit upon something really important. The call is to learn how not to place all those expectations into the next opportunity and then, another voice popped in, "But Alex, come on. You know you will 'cause that's how you're wired."

Alex: (Laughs)

[00:21:00]

Jerry: And so, really, there's actually a second assignment I'm gonna point out which is how do use this time of transition to renegotiate with yourself a new agreement about how to maintain that same drive that is so beautiful and so wonderful but no longer allow it to drive you to be burned out.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:21:30]

Jerry: Right? To come into relationship with that inner sense of expectations and potentially in a way that ... is authentic to who you are now. Not who you have the potential to be.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Does that make sense?

Alex: I think so. Yeah, and it's, it's hard not to get sucked into the new thing and maybe not looking for that new thing with so much expectation that it fills all of those things for you as the right thing. 'Cause this break for me has been amazing in a lot of ways. I mean-

Jerry: How so?

Alex: I had been traveling quite a lot. Most of my teams were in Europe so it was a very punishing travel schedule and a lot of expectations that I felt like I had to instill to do my job well. Um, and so, just reconnecting with the place that I moved to in the middle of all of this and really finding out if it was a place I loved and you know, really broadening my personal circumstances here and reconnecting with my passion for tennis. Just like, I missed the competitiveness of playing uh, and that's been just like a real joy to get back to and like, I'm never gonna be an amazing super, super star player pro but just getting back to enjoying the game and leveraging that in my place here.

[00:22:30]

[00:23:00]

And then, the biggest change for me was just committing to getting a dog which sounds like not a big commitment for I'm sure all the listeners who have kids and all these other things but actually, carving out the time to like build a relationship with my rescue pup and kind of just saying, you know what? I'm gonna do this. Like, whatever job comes next, it's gonna be a priority and I'm gonna take care of this little guy.

Jerry: So, what's the little guy's first name? Or, first name, it's not, I imagine he doesn't have a last name.

Alex: (Laughs) he does at the vet. He does at the vet. Um, his name is [Brekin 00:23:22].

Jerry: [Brekin 00:23:22] that's right.

Alex: And I got him, yeah, about a year and a half ago, so.

[00:23:30]

Jerry: And so, there's this, again, there are tears as you think about [Brekin 00:23:30] but it's a soft tears, it's a wonderful tears, it's a-

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: There's a joy in there. And uh, what I'm hearing is, uh, in this transition, there's been time and space for you to reconnect with your body.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Playing tennis.

Alex: Which has been so awesome. So awesome.

Jerry: And there's a time and space to reconnect with the other, this other being.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And those other beings, that's community.

[00:24:00]

Alex: Yeah. It really is. It's a real gift. It's just like a pause, you know? Being present or I don't know. Doing all the work to make our life together worked, like the training and things like that but just like not getting on the phone, for a walk, like, just all those things that I would've just blown off in the past-

Jerry: Okay, so-

Alex: Because there was too many things to do.

Jerry: Let me reflect something you just said. So, it's like a pause.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: What if it's not a pause? What if it's the new way?

Alex: Yeah.

[00:24:30]

Jerry: What if it-

Alex: I guess-

Jerry: What, what if being present is what the new opportunity is?

Alex: Hmm. That's interesting. I mean, I guess, how do you do that plus find the thing that does kind of pay bills but also keep you energized as a like, thinking person.

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: Like, how do you do those two things?

Jerry: Right, right, right, and so, so, remember I was talking before about renegotiating the relationship with that drive?
[00:25:00]

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: This is, here it is. It came right up. Because I offered a radical and scary notion that the way you are with [Brekin 00:25:14] might be the new norm.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: And you were like, that's great. I would love that, except, oh, then the scary voice comes up. What are you gonna do to pay bills?

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: What are you gonna do for meaning? What are- right?

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Whoa, slow down. Slow down.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:25:30]

Jerry: In the renegotiation that happens, in the rebooting, in the resetting that happens ... As we try to move towards more inner and outer alignment, um, there's an opportunity to redefine for ourselves the work patterns, cadences and styles that work for us.

Alex: Mm.

[00:26:00]

Jerry: Right? See, one of the challenges about the high achieving is that we take our cues for what our work pace and cadence should be from the speedy high achieving people that are all around us.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And behind all of that is a shit ton of anxiety. And so, what we're doing is, unconsciously amping each other up to go faster, to do more faster, to be faster, to go, go, go, go, go, go to the point where we are out of alignment with our own values. Now, this is the moment where usually a client will say to me, "Yeah, that's easy for you to say, Jerry." No, actually, it's hard for me because I'm just as driven
[00:26:30]

[00:27:00] as anybody else. I am constantly, weekly, negotiating with my own self about this. And it's also the moment where a client will say, "Yeah, but, what if, what am I gonna do to pay the bills?" As if what I'm saying ... is somehow, don't work anymore.

Alex: (Laughs) yeah.

Jerry: I'm not, uh- I think implicit in the wish and to the, y-, now a year later, I continue to struggle to find a full time opportunity to get truly inspired about. Particularly,
[00:27:30] given my preference to stay based on the west coast. Because, what you're saying is, there aren't opportunities on the west coast?

Alex: Yeah, I know. It sounds crazy but that's how it feels (laughs).

Jerry: It, it's, it's not crazy. It's that I think ... I suspect that part of what's made it hard to choose opportunities and really pursue certain opportunities is a whole nother
[00:28:00] whispery little voice that says, "Alex, don't do to us what you did to us before." I don't want you to burn out.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Does that have any resonance?

Alex: Yeah, I think so. I mean, it's tricky because I, I mean, this thing about hard wiring is still ... Like, I actually do get joy out of like, seeing things come to life and I throw
[00:28:30] myself into the things I care about. Whether it's this dog today or the jobs in the past. So, some of that is still always going to be there. But, I guess I learned with the last experience that no matter how good the team is, how passionate everyone is about the product, things happen and even under the best of circumstances, it's hard to make these things last. And so, reframing that sense of what success
[00:29:00] actually is, you know, exit aside, but like, when the thing itself doesn't exist in the same way, is that a success? I think coming to terms with that has been really important. But it does put a lot of pressure on the next opportunity because you know, I've seen a lot of, I've seen a lot of things along the way, uh, in a way that early, early days of my career, I would've just said, "You know what, ah, we're just gonna, we're gonna try it and see what happens. Anything's possible."

Jerry: Right.

Alex: But I guess you got a bit jaded, you know, along the way.

[00:29:30] Jerry: Right, and what I, what I see you doing is moving to the same pattern. It's like you just raised the standards even in the sentence that you just used.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And so, I love your phrase of reframing the definition of success. I think that's a gorgeous notion and it's something ... Framing, first of all, framing the definition of success within a startup, within a company is incredibly important. But it's equally important to reframe or to frame a new. What does success and happiness mean for me, personally? Because, it is possible to take all of that gorgeous passion that drives you. I mean, you know, I, I've got it. I've got a boat load of clients that I adore. I'm the CEO of a company and I've got a book coming out in June. And as I've been lamenting for the last few weeks, I feel like I have three jobs. But, there's a part of that that is life affirming for me. It's life giving. To see things come to fruition, to, to be able to pause in the middle of my day and have a gorgeous conversation with somebody that I've really feel connected to, you, in this moment.

[00:30:00]

[00:30:30]

[00:31:00] I, I think to be able to come into relationship a, a new kind of relationship, you know, a framing that I have been using lately is, for myself is, moving into elder hood. And seeing each of this positions as moving towards that. Now, I offer that not because I think you're ready for elder hood 'cause you aint.

Alex: (Laughs)

[00:31:30]

Jerry: But um, but seeing a larger movement for you than striving to get to the next rung in the ladder. But, perhaps, you know, I sound a little esoteric even to myself in this moment. What if being successful in that position isn't just about being a great right hand to a leader as you defined before but, but also, being a healthy and life affirming right hand to that leader.

[00:32:00]

Alex: I think it's possible. I mean, I like to think that I, I did try to not run myself into the ground and of course, I cared a lot about the work and the teams. I did try to carve out space for myself. But then I had a lot of autonomy with all the travel to kind of do the way that I could manage it. And, and be where I needed to be. So, in many ways, it was quite flexible. But, it's tough to find ... I guess it's just hard to find those leaders that you still get great work but you also can do it in a healthy way that doesn't drive you into the ground on some of this.

Jerry: Okay. Okay, let me reflect back what you just said. It's tough to find those great leaders.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: Uh huh (affirmative). I want you to open up a mirror.

Alex: (Laughs)

[00:33:00]

Jerry:

Guess what this next phase of your transition period may be? What if you were to actually be that leader?

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: What if that was success?

Alex: Hmm. Interesting.

Jerry: What if it's not about what others, what if it's about you stepping into a role, whatever the position is ... where the commitment isn't just great work, but done well.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:33:30]

Jerry: And where well is defined as a way in which the enhancement of humans is part and parcel.

Alex: Yeah. And maybe that's the criteria around, you, like that I could re- like review this opportunities.

Jerry: How does it-

Alex: Like, would I have this space to do that?

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: And how could I, how could I do it? And it may change the scope of the kinds of companies you go after (laughs).

Jerry: Uh huh (affirmative), it very well may.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:34:00]

Jerry: You may actually be in an earlier stage company, for example, where your ability to affect the culture is greater or it may change the conversation where you have, where you're being, say, for example, just to brainstorm, where you're being presented an opportunity to sit in a seat as a COO and you sit down with the CEO and say, and look in their eyes the way I've been looking in your eyes and you look in their eyes and you say, "Are you building the kind of company you'd like to work for? 'Cause I wanna build the kinda company that I'd like to work for, where great leadership is defined not only as executing well but creating healthy nontoxic environments where the inner alignment, where the alignment between the inner and the outer is welcomed and valued."

[00:34:30]

Alex: [00:35:00] Yeah, or, even potentially, passing on some early things where the commitment required to run to chase the mouse, [inaudible 00:34:58] doesn't allow space for those other things to be important, either, in terms of hiring the right folks or carving out the space that I would need to kind of recharge.

Jerry: How does that sound when you say it?

Alex: Scary (laughs).

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Yeah, a bit scary.

Jerry: Scary? What's frightening about it?

Alex: [00:35:30] I guess the expectation with a lot of early things. For example, where you do have influence over, who to hire and all that and I'm looking at something now, is that, there's so much work to do in the beginning and really kind of coming up with the right relationship with the founding team. To kind of do that in a healthy way is actually really is, is almost as challenging as meeting the deadlines that they've set already and I haven't even started yet (laughs).

Jerry: Aw, look at that.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:36:00]

Jerry: So I smile because, um ... Well, let's go there. Let's fast forward five years into the future and let's imagine that you've actually successfully been able to do that. What's that company like now? As you think about it five years into the future?

Alex: I guess it's ... It's got folks in it hopefully who started early and had opportunity to grow with in the org but where it took longer maybe to get there (laughs).

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:36:30]

Alex: And we kind of put the pause because at certain inflection points, it just didn't make sense to run our teams into the ground and wanted to make sure that they did the right things around you know, taking care of themselves. Probably a remote business where people have flexibility about locations, the extent that that's possible ... or could make decisions on their own based on what work needed to get done. As long as they could do that and, and live where they wanted, that would be a dream, because location is always an issue for me.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:37:00]

Alex: Around how to be there and still do good work. No matter how much you prove that you can still do it remotely-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: It's still a hard thing.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Or maybe it's a more dynamic kind of place like that, if we could actually get there.

Jerry: And imagine if you will, for example, that you're asking or you're interviewing a potential candidate and they come to you and that company that exist five years from now and they say, "Alex, I was really burned out in my last job. Uh, I felt like it was harder and harder to live authentically. Will I be able to do that here?"

[00:37:30]

Alex: I'd like to say yes. I don't know if I would, I mean, I hope I could get to that place where I would say, "You know what? You've been here, you've shown good work. Like, take two months off." You know? Sabbatical it up (laughs).

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: Go do that thing that you've been meaning to do and kind of reset yourself.

Jerry: So notice that there's, there's the, I would love to be able to do that. I'm scared I might not be able to.

[00:38:00]

Alex: Yeah. That's the truth (laughs).

Jerry: And that's a powerful inflection point.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: 'Cause you know what that feeling is? That little bit of terror and that little bit of excitement? That's the moment that proceeds growth.

Alex: Hmm.

Jerry: This is no longer about dri- being driven by inner demons. Hey, don't fuck it up, girl.
[00:38:30] But this is being, shifting the drive to, what if we all focus on creating the companies that we'd like to work for?

Alex: Hmm.

Jerry: What if we created the space for good work done well for the right reasons? Nothing about that means not working hard. In fact, in some ways, it's actually even harder work. Because it's about creating the space for human beings to show up to work and then, be able to go home and take the dog for a walk and leave the phone at home.

[00:39:00]

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And think about the tennis game that they're gonna play tomorrow.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And then when they go back to that desk, and they log into some video call, their metaphorical sleeves are rolled up and they're ready to get back to work.

[00:39:30]

Alex: Yeah, I mean, that would be amazing. And-

Jerry: Say that again.

Alex: That would be amazing.

Jerry: One more time.

Alex: That would be amazing.

Jerry: Okay.

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: That's what we're aiming for.

Alex: Okay.

Jerry: I know it was annoying to get me to, for me to, to do that but I think neurologically, we wanna really imprint that.

Alex: Hmm.

[00:40:00]

Jerry: Because the old programming, which is gonna show up with, but, Alex, fill in the blank. The old programming ... It was super helpful. It was super useful. It got you

to where you are. It got you to the point of being able to say, "That would be amazing."

Alex: Hmm.

Jerry: And what we wanna do is reinforce the new programming. The new programming is, I'm gonna take all of that drive and I'm gonna stay focused in creating a business and a position. Instead of waiting for somebody else to lead, I'm gonna lead into that place.
[00:40:30]

Alex: Yeah. And I can do that.

Jerry: Say that one more time.

Alex: I can do that.

Jerry: Yes you can.

Alex: (Laughs) yeah.

Jerry: Yeah. 'Cause this isn't just an intellectual challenge. This is an existential, spiritual, emotional challenge. This is leading, as I often say, from your stomach.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:41:00]

Jerry: More from, more than from your forehead or the back of your throat.

Alex: Mm.

Jerry: It's like, I can do this.

Alex: Yeah and I guess it's taking pressure off of all of the external things around the new idea.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alex: You know, great product, great team, good funding, whatever those things are and putting it back in my own control.

Jerry: Yes.

[00:41:30]

Alex: And deciding you know, is this something I'm passionate enough to move for or whatever, basically. Can I make it-

Jerry: Yeah.

Alex: What I want it to be. It makes those compromises easier.

Jerry: That's right.

Alex: Whatever that is.

Jerry: And, and, and, and, you know, the organizing question isn't necessarily do they take all the boxes?

Alex: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Jerry: Does this opportunity take all the boxes? But do, does my gut tell me that this is a place where I can do this work?

Alex: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:42:00]

Jerry: Because if it is, then the calling is to step into that and do that work. And if it's not, head for the hills. That's what your body was saying when it was like, I need time off. I'm done.

Alex: Yeah. Cooked.

Jerry: Cooked.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: Stick a fork in me, this cake is risen. I am done. Right?

Alex: Yeah.

Jerry: And that's the beauty of this time, is that you get to reinforce that new programming, that new wiring, that says, I'm gonna take all that gorgeous energy that drove me to achieve and I'm gonna reassign it to achieving something that's actually even not only healthier for me but healthier for the people around me.

[00:42:30]

Alex: Mm.

Jerry: That feels pretty powerful.

Alex: That's definitely a good way to describe success when you look back.

Jerry: (Laughs) that's right.

Alex: (Laughs)

Jerry: Amen.

Alex: Yeah.

[00:43:00]

Jerry: That's right. Well, Alex, I wanna thank you for opening yourself up to this and you know, I'm gonna suggest that you, that you really use that as the framing for looking at these opportunities that present themselves to you and um, and, and really keep asking yourself that question. Almost as a litmus test.

Alex: Mm.

Jerry: Can I create that opportunity here?

Alex: Yeah. That'll be the, kind of, guiding principle. I think it'll help.

Jerry: No, you got it. You got it.

[00:43:30]

Alex: Alright, well, thank you very much.

Jerry: Thank you, dear.

Alex: That was a good chat.

Jerry: It was really good and uh, say hello to [Brekin 00:43:35] for me.

Alex: (Laughs) I will.

Jerry: Alrighty.

Alex: Bye.

Jerry: Bye.