

Jerry: So, hey, Matt, thanks for coming on the show. Thanks for coming in. And it's good to, we're seeing each other in person.

Matt Blumberg: It's good to see you. You're one of the... This is one of the first in-person meetings that I've had.

Jerry: Yay. It's like we're rusty.

Matt Blumberg: (Laughs)

Jerry: Why don't you take a minute and just introduce yourself?

Matt Blumberg: Yeah. So I'm Matt Blumberg. I'm founder and CEO of a new startup called Bolster. Uh, Bolster is in the executive talent marketplace space. Um, before this, I spent 20 years building, uh, and running and ultimately selling a company called Return Path in the email marketing space.

Jerry: Which I was an investor in.

Matt Blumberg: Which you were an investor in.

Jerry: Yes.

Matt Blumberg: Yeah.

Jerry: Way back when I was an investor with Fred and, Fred Wilson and Brad Feld in my old Flatiron days.

Matt Blumberg: Yeah. I believe Return Path was the last new investment that Flatiron made.

Jerry: That may have been true.

Jerry: And so now you're onto something new?

Matt Blumberg: Now we're onto something new.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Matt Blumberg: And, um, Bolster has been a really fun journey so far. The company's just over a year old. We have what might be a record eight co-founders.

Jerry: (laughs)

Matt Blumberg: I'm sure there's-

Jerry: Nine, not a baseball team? (laughs)

Matt Blumberg: I'm sure there's a whole story in there someday, but, uh, it's a whole team of us that work together, building Return Path. The newbie on the team was with us for five years. Uh, and it goes all the way back to Jack Sinclair, who was my co-founder at Return Path, and one of the co-founders here. So he and I have worked together for 20 plus years. And, um, we are having a great time, uh, and I think we're doing some really important work for the startup ecosystem.

Jerry: Well, before we get into what Bolster is or anything like that, um, the burning question I have is what on earth are you thinking starting all over again?

Matt Blumberg: You know, it's been a really interesting, um, journey starting something from scratch again. And, um, when we sold Return Path, and I left, I did not wanna start something from scratch. I said, you know what? I, I, I've been there-

Jerry: Been there.

Matt Blumberg: ... I've done that.

Jerry: Yeah.

Matt Blumberg: You know, we built something to a \$100 million-plus revenue level, 500 people global, the whole bit and-

Jerry: 20-year run.

Matt Blumberg: 20-year run. And, um, uh, you know, I thought what I wanted to do was do something, um, either bigger or something that was, you know, sort of close to that side that had a lot of opportunity to scale. And I had kind of felt like I had really built a, a, um, a, a pretty solid skill set in managing a, uh, you know, sort of growth size or midsize organization, uh, which is totally different skill set than, than a startup. Um, you know, it's all about mobilizing the troops and motivating the troops and, uh, a lot of communication, a lot of, a lot of human problem-solving.

Matt Blumberg: And I dabbled in that for a little while. Um, I did some consulting and some interim kind of things. Um, and then, you know, ultimately decided that, um, I, I really wanted to do something small again. And, uh, and I had this group of people that, you know, we'd worked together for a long time and all wanted to, to do something together. And, uh, we, uh, played around with a bunch of different ideas and different combinations.

Matt Blumberg: We wanted to do something in and for the startup ecosystem. Um, we wanted to do something that was gonna have a material impact on how startups, um, succeed and on, uh, you know, when you think about that, you know, startups

fundamentally need three things, right, they need a good idea. Um, they need money and they need the right people to bring that idea to life. And, um, we, weren't gonna get into the idea business or the money business. Um, we really wanted to get into the people business. So we, we talked more about Bolster later, but what's been, um, really interesting about starting a business, uh, in, in our 50s as opposed to in our 20s, like the last one-

Jerry: So most of you, most of the eight are in their 50s?

Matt Blumberg: Over half. Yeah. I think the average age of the founding team is probably 50 or 51. Three of us turned 50 as we were starting the business.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: Return Path, we started in our, in our late 20s. And, um, uh, it's a, it's a very different game when you start it, having had a pretty significant journey along the way with successes and failures.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: We, um, and it's not to say that we're not making mistakes this time, but I, I think we're probably making fewer, um, we are executing very, very efficiently and very effectively. Um, some of that is the, you know, it's individuals with a lot of experience and some of it is that our team has a lot of experience working together. Um, and, uh, what I've discovered, you know, about, about me, and I think it's true of a lot of us on the team, is first of all, it's way more fun to operate with a blank slate, you know, by year 20 of something. There's not a lot of blank slate left, right?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: You're optimizing, you're refactoring, you're scaling.

Jerry: [crosstalk 00:06:00]. I have this image of all those, uh, ghost marker, marks on the dry erase board, where it's no longer clear. (Laughs)

Matt Blumberg: (laughs) You need to buy a new board.

Jerry: (Laughs) Yeah, exactly.

Matt Blumberg: So I'm loving working with the clean slate and, and inventing from scratch as opposed to optimizing. And, um, the other thing is, uh, I really missed doing the early stage stuff, and I had forgotten that because it had been so long. But, um, you know, my, my day used to be consumed with, with running the company, whatever that meant, right. A lot of meetings, a lot of communication, a lot of-

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: ... making sure that the managers and the managers of managers and the department heads are, are aligned, uh, and you know, lots of communicating, a lot of board and shareholder things. And I, I, you know, if I spend 5% of my week now doing that stuff, I'd be surprised.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: So, you know, at the moment I'm a sales rep, I'm a product manager, I'm a customer success rep. I'm a proserve guy.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: Some days I'm an SDR, some days I'm a copywriter and I love every minute of it. And, right, you know, it's fun to be on the, on the front line as opposed to watching the front line. And like I was a pretty hands-on CEO at Return Path. It's not like I was, you know, ordering people around from the corner office, but it's totally different when you're, when you're actually doing all the work.

Jerry: So I'm gonna take you back in time. You used to have a blog.

Matt Blumberg: I still do.

Jerry: What, what is the name of that blog?

Matt Blumberg: Um, I renamed it startupceo.com.

Jerry: Right. But what was the original name?

Matt Blumberg: The original name was OnlyOnce.

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: And you can still get to it if you go to, I think it's onlyonceblog.com.

Jerry: And what was OnlyOnce referring to?

Matt Blumberg: And, uh, your former partner, Fred, our mutual friend, Fred Wilson inspired that name. He wrote, he started, well, he was one of the first bloggers.

Jerry: Yeah.

Matt Blumberg: And he started his blog in 2003 and he wrote a post in early 2004 entitled, you're only a first time CEO once. And, uh, you know, I think, I can't even remember the gist of the post was like, you know, you only have to go through these learnings.

Matt Blumberg: You know, he, I think it, I think what he was talking about was you, you, you only have the first lap around the track that one time and, you know, it's okay to make mistakes. You just have to learn from the mistakes, et cetera. And, um, and I thought, uh, you know, yeah, I'm, I'm, this is my once.

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you know, the thing that always struck me about it, um, uh, was how well written it was and how poignant it got to be at times. And, um, I don't think I've ever said this to you, but I can't tell you the number of people I pointed that blog to. Especially as I, you know, veer it off, left venture capital, started coaching, and I would start to point to people to that blog, because the thing that you sh- that struck me about what you were doing was you were, um, documenting in real time your own journey, and you were making notes. Now, you know, there's an old coaching trick, right, which is whenever somebody's in a transition, you ask them to think about, you know, what lessons would you want to pass on to a younger version of you? And the thing that struck me as I was thinking about our sitting down today was that you were documenting those lessons as you were learning those lessons.

Matt Blumberg: That's right. I mean, that, that's, that's what it's ended up being.

Jerry: And, and I know I'm gonna jump to, to, to the next phase. I can imagine that you changed the title when you launched the book, *Startup CEO* version 1.0, um, which again is another resource that I can't tell you the number of times I've said to people you should be reading this book.

Matt Blumberg: Thank you.

Jerry: And I think that, that's a really important mitzvah you did for the people behind you, you know. I often think about the experiences that we have, and sometimes I'll say this even in the middle of a coaching session, let me talk to you not as a coach, but let me talk to you like an older brother. And it kinda goes like this, "The patch you're about to enter, that's rough, but I'm over here on the other side and it's okay. You're gonna make it through." And you're smiling. Does that resonate with you?

Matt Blumberg: It does. It does. I mean,, the blog and the book, *Startup CEO*, were both kind of, they were very much, hey, I wish I had this resource-

Jerry: Yes.

Matt Blumberg: ... myself.

Jerry: Yes. (laughs)

Matt Blumberg: No one teaches you how to be a CEO unless you are working at a giant company and you're being groomed for it for 20 years.

Jerry: Yeah.

Matt Blumberg: Right. One teaches you how to be the CEO of GE.

Jerry: Yeah.

Matt Blumberg: But no one teaches you how to be the CEO of a startup.

Jerry: And last of all, no, one's gonna teach you how to be a startup of your own company that you found.

Matt Blumberg: Right.

Jerry: Yeah. Sorry, I interrupted you.

Matt Blumberg: No. So that was it. I mean, I thought that was missing from, I, I read a ton of business books and I, I have gotten value out of, you know, all of them, most of them, um, but this one didn't exist. And, um, there's a great line from, from Toni Morrison. Um, uh, obviously a very different kind of author, um, who said something to the effect of, if you want to read a book and you can't find it, you must write it. So that in- that, that inspired it.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And when you think of that younger Matt, that late 20 something-year-old Matt, and, you know, it's a bit cliché, but it's worth asking at this point, what would you tell him now at 50 on your next startup? With all this accumulated knowledge that you've had, what would you tell him?

Matt Blumberg: I think what I would tell him is, um, as much as you love your company, the company you founded, right. You're pouring your heart and soul into it, right. As much as you're gonna love your company, you might love the next one even more. And, you know, I think I've met a ton of founders and entrepreneurs over the years, and I spent a lot of time mentoring and coaching people, and forget about founders who fall in love with their product and can't hear no and all of that, but there's, there are so many founders who just, who love the environment that they create with their company, the team that they've surrounded themselves with. They're excited to go to work every day, they love their mission.

Matt Blumberg: I think that can get in the way sometimes of, uh, of, of challenging yourself and asking yourself the hard questions of, are we doing well? Are we not doing well? What can we be doing better? And I've, I've heard a number of founders say to me over the years, um, you know, I'm just, you know, I'm, I'm scared to do the next thing. I'm scared to move on. I'm scared, I don't know if I, someone wants to buy the company, should I sell the company or not?

Jerry: Should I shut it down?

Matt Blumberg: And, you know, I'm afraid that I'm, I'm you know, this is as good as it's gonna get. Right. I'm not gonna love the next thing as much. And, um, I think good advice for a, you know, for a, a first-time founder is, you might love the next one even more.

Jerry: I think that's a beautiful phrase, Matt. I, you know, I thought about the you might shut it down because several times over the course of this podcast, we've had conversations, I've, I've talked to entrepreneurs who were sort of in that moment of, you know, there's a kinda zombie state-

Matt Blumberg: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: ... that a company can enter where it's not really progressing but it's not really failing. And, you know, I thought of that when you, when you ask a question, are we actually doing well? Right. Which is actually a quite complex question, because what does well mean? Right. We're paying the bills, um, but are we in a place where we're thriving, and what does success mean? 'Cause success at 28 may be very different than success at 38 or 48. And, um, I think that one of the challenges if you love and can only think that you love the thing that's in front of you is, uh, you may be reluctant to make the shifts to, to, to hire a replacement CEO, which is another big transitional question. Um, and those unanswered questions tend to exacerbate the difficult journey that's already hard. It's already hard enough to do it. Does that resonate?

Matt Blumberg: For sure. The other thing I think that resonates with that is I think successful founders have to ask those questions and answer them and challenge themselves on two dimensions at the same time. Right? One is the company and the other is you. And, um, and sometimes they're aligned and sometimes they're not aligned, and the times where they're not aligned, it's actually even more important to dig into the two questions as separate questions.

Jerry: Can you elaborate on the two questions as separate questions?

Matt Blumberg: Well, so I mean there, maybe there's of questions, right. But the the series of questions around is the company doing well?

Jerry: Yeah.

Matt Blumberg: Right. Is it having an impact? Is it vibrant? Are employees engaged? Is it solving customers' problems? Are shareholders happy? And those are a really different set of questions from, am I as the founder thriving?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: Those questions, I, that I have a set of questions that I ask myself every year, which I think I, I wrote about in the blog at one point and it's, um, am I learning

and growing still in year 5, 10, 15, 20? Am I having fun? Am I having an impact? And uh, am I making enough money? And, you know, thinking through whether you do it at the end of the calendar year or your anniversary of starting the company, or just once in a while, thinking through those two sets of questions, it's, it's a useful exercise each set and then the two together.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So, so let's fast forward 'cause we, we just time-traveled to the past a bit. How are you holding those questions now as you launch Bolster? And for extra credit, um, I get the part of Bolster's mission is to positively impact the startup ecosystem. How are you holding those questions now.

Matt Blumberg: I think the challenges that you have as a CEO trying to scale a business are many, and there are always challenges about money and balance sheet and investors, and there are always challenges about product, technical scaling. Is there enough market, addressable market in front of me while we're a lot bigger analysis. Still enough addressable market. Do I have to redraw the boundaries of the business? So scaling a business has those challenges. Scaling a business has a lot of operational challenges. I, I always refer to it as the art of the teardown, right? The, you know, all of a sudden all the systems and processes that have been in place for the last two years don't work anymore and you gotta tear them down and it's kind of a bummer 'cause you were the one that built them.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: And as good as founders and CEOs are at building things, it can be really difficult to tear them down, um, you know, mentally, emotionally, uh, et cetera, but, um, scaling the leadership talent of a company and scaling the board of a company, um, need not be as difficult as I think they are.

Matt Blumberg: what we're trying to build at Bolster is an agile way of scaling your leadership team and an agile way of scaling your board. And that means it matches the tempo and the needs of a startup, which are quick, which are fluid, um, which are not necessarily the same thing in every seat all the time.

Matt Blumberg: Startups can't afford, uh, an experienced C-level executive in seven different seats around the table. They can't afford to get them and then they can't afford to pay for them. But, uh, startups also can't afford not to have the right advice and expertise around the table when they need it most. So Bolster, um, is designed as an on-demand talent marketplace for executives, uh, to connect those executives with, with startups, with CEOs, and we place people for different kinds of roles than you would normally think of. Um, we place board members that you think about, and that's a little bit of a different business.

Matt Blumberg: Occasionally we'll do a full-time placement, but for the most part, what we're placing are coaches and mentors and, uh, interim executives and fractional executives. And, you know, think about the use case of a fractional executive, which many people haven't even heard that term, what does that mean. How can you be a part-time CFO? You can be a part-time CFO. Um, startups don't necessarily need a CFO 365 days a year, but it's probably really helpful to have one a couple of days a month.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: And as they get bigger, maybe a couple of days a week before they grow into full-time. Um, the world of, um, mentors is a, a really important world that we didn't pioneer or invent, right? I mean, uh, that mentors been around for a long time and Techstars, uh, you know, was probably the, you know, sort of a flashpoint in the history of mentoring in, in, you know, in terms of, of, uh, CEOs and tech, but mentors are a great way of bringing expertise and talent into an organization without hiring people. Uh, mentors are a great way to look at your existing team, which, you know, maybe junior people, maybe people that have never done the job before and be able to say to them, now, I've got confidence that you can get to the next level, but I can't be the only one getting you there and you can't be the only one getting you there. Let's go find someone who can help.

Jerry: I wanna take you back to, to, you were sharing before some of the core questions that you would sort of annually ask annually. What I'm curious about is, how are you holding those questions now, uh, as you're, let's put it this way. You're only a second-time founder once.

Matt Blumberg: So here's the, here's the difference. My expectations, our founding team's expectations are very different this time around. We are much more impatient to get to the answer. And what I mean by the answer is, um, is it working? Is it not working?

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: You know, I think first time around the track for me and for a lot of other founders that I talk to, they love the journey and they're learning every minute of the journey. And, um, you know, for us this time around it was, you know, we wanna go after a big idea. Um, we're gonna go after it with big team. We're gonna go after it with-

Jerry: Eight co-founders?

Matt Blumberg: Eight co-founders, right. We're gonna go after it with-

Jerry: Who are all old guy, old people.

Jerry: (Laughs)

Matt Blumberg: (Laughs) We wanna go after it with some great and investors and people we've worked with for a long time and some newer investors as well. So you know, we're adequately funded. Um, but we don't wanna spend five years figuring out if it's gonna work or not. Um, so I think the, the cycle time of asking those questions again and again, and again, it's not, we're not asking them at the end of every year, we're asking them at the out of every month or quarter.

Jerry: I'm gonna tell you a story. I wanna see if this resonates with you. One of my earliest investments, one of the first investments I made at Flatiron way back was in a company, uh, called Mainspring, and I co-invested with two really, really talented co-investors. Um, Paul Maeder from Highland and Bill Kaiser from Greylock, and the CEO's name was John Conley. And John was a terrific CEO. And about 10 months after I made the investment, uh, John scared the crap outta me by announcing at a board meeting that the model wasn't working.

Jerry: And as I remember it, and I'm probably distorting it, 'cause it's memory and it was a long time ago, Paul and Bill were incredibly calm 'cause they had backed John before. And John offered to give what remained of the money back to us, or he said I could take a couple more weeks, fire everybody, except the CFO whose name was Mark, and, uh, Mark and John would come back with a new business plan and then we could decide if we wanted to go forward with the original funding. And that story just pops into my head when you were talking about being impatient to know if it was gonna work or not. Now, uh, as an early investor, I was, and early in my career, I was terrified because it felt like I had just made this investment, what do you mean it's not working? But you're smiling and laughing and nodding, as I'm telling this story, what, what do you make of that story?

Matt Blumberg: Well, what I'm reflecting on...we had the founders had a, a meeting on the one year, basically the one year mark after we started the company. And um, so it was just a couple of months ago. It was the first time we'd met in person. It was like just when people were starting to come out of the pandemic shell. And of the eight of us, uh, three of us have been, uh, founders before, uh, and the other five, new experience. And, um, and I forget that sometimes because we've been working together for so long. Like I know we know how to work together, but I forget sometimes that five people have never been on the founding journey before.

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: And one of our co-founders Jen, um, kind of stopped the meeting at some point. And I started, I was, you know, kind of standing up in front of the room at a little state of the state and um, she stopped me and she said, "I just have a quick question for you. Are we doing well?" (Laughs)

Jerry: Aah.

Matt Blumberg: I had kind of taken, you know, taken that for granted. And I said, "What do you mean?" And she said, "Well, I know we have a lot of good things going on. Like that's, that's obvious. I know we're talking about the good things going on, but, you know, but are we where we expect to be like? Are we doing well?" And I thought about it and I, actually, the reason I was smiling is I said something that sort of mirrored that, that story about Mainspring, which is, I said, I said, there's a version of us that gets to the one year mark and gives the money back.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: And says, "Nope, didn't get there. It's not gonna, it's never gonna be worth all of our time." Uh, and I said, "And we're not there. We're, we had a great first year and now we're about to have an even greater second year." Um, so I-

Jerry: And did you terrify anybody with that statement?

Matt Blumberg: I don't know. Not, not that anyone, not that anyone admitted.

Jerry: Well, you know, it's funny when you tell that story, and now that I think about John even further. This was, I think John, certainly his second startup, if not his third startup. And so there's something really powerful I think that we're both hitting upon, which is that maybe part of the wisdom that gets gleaned in this process is to know that there's life after the startup, right? Maybe that's a corollary to the, uh, you may love the second thing more than the first, and that is, uh, letting go of the first doesn't necessarily mean an end.

Matt Blumberg: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry: It's a closing of a chapter not the closing of the book. That resonates with you?

Matt Blumberg: Yeah, absolutely.

Jerry: Yeah. Yeah. So speaking of books, um, part, what you've been doing is also following up, if you will, to not only *Startup CEO 2.0*, which is now in, you know, its, its second version, start- but, but *Startup CXO*, you call it a field guide. It almost looks like a textbook.

Matt Blumberg: It's a book of books.

Jerry: It's a book of books and, and, and the, and the thing that strikes me about it, and I think you say this, uh, either in the introduction or somewhere in the book, it's not a book to be read cover to cover. It's a book designed to sit on the shelf and being taken down and referred to time and time again. Is that right?

Matt Blumberg: Yeah. It's um, it's 140 chapters of how to do something.

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: Each chapter is how to do something.

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: So, I think there are a few ways to read the book. You could read it front to back. There are a couple brave souls that will probably do that.

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: You can read a chapter or you can read a section, or a couple of sections and, you know, the structure of the book, so if *Startup CEO* is how to be a startup CEO, um, this is, uh, *Startup CXO* is how to be, uh, the head of any function in a startup. So the first 20 chapters are how to be a startup CFO, uh, written by my longtime CFO partner, Jack. Um, uh, the second section is how to be the head of HR at a startup. Uh, and it goes through each section is about 20 chapters of how to do each functional job, sales, marketing, uh, business development, customer success, product engineering, um, privacy, maybe forgetting one.

Jerry: So let's go back to the Toni Morrison quote for a moment. What was missing that called this book into being?

Matt Blumberg: So the first thing, um, was from the perspective of CEO, um, was most CEOs, um, especially founding first time CEOs, come up through one function. They come up in the ranks through one function. They were a good marketer. They're a technical CEO.

Matt Blumberg: They're, they were a salesperson, sales rep, head of sales. So they know that function really well, and they, they know how to hire for that function, they know how to manage and supervise that function, they know how to scale that function, but they, they probably don't know that for all the functions. So that was the thing missing for me where *Startup CEO* is kind of how to do your job every day. A big part of your job is, is supervising all these other jobs. And what was missing for me was, God, you know, I wish someone had told me what's involved with running a sales department before I became a CEO, 'cause that would've made me a better leader for the person running the sales department.

Jerry: And, and, and it would make you better at recruiting someone for that position.

Matt Blumberg: Right.

Jerry: I mean, one of the, one of the experiences that I have a lot of my clients will go through is they go through that expensive search process that we were talking

about before. They go through that expense. And then they, they turn to me as well. How do I know if this person is good in their job as a well reference check? You know, my reference checks, but really, I think part of what you're giving them is, is, uh, in effect a cheat sheet for understanding that function so that when you're, you're interviewing, whether it's fractional through Bolster or it's a full-time placed position, um, what's happening is you have a knowledge base that you can have a, a coherent conversation about whether or not this is the right person for the job.

Matt Blumberg: That's right.

Jerry: Right?

Matt Blumberg: Yeah.

Jerry: Yeah. I could also imagine, you know, asking a potential candidate to read the relevant section and say, now, given our mutual understanding of what the job is, now give me your 30, 60, 90-day plan before you step into the job.

Matt Blumberg: Right.

Jerry: And by the way, if you're not succeeding in that, talk to me about how you'll handle that. Right. You know, in some ways, that's the thing that I really appreciate about what you've done with this, you and the co-authors of whom they're a number. Um, what you've really done is put together in, in a sec, not, not just a guide posed for the CEO, the way in some ways *Startup CEO* is, but something that everybody in the executive team can pull down, because the truth is the marketing person needs to understand what the heck is going on with the CFO.

Matt Blumberg: Absolutely.

Jerry: Right? Think about all the conflicts that we have both had to, had to match at executive team level. And a lot of it comes down to, I don't understand why that person's always doing X.

Matt Blumberg: You wanna have empathy for your teammates on an executive team? Yeah.

Jerry: Forget even empathy. Just go with common language.

Jerry: It's like, okay so this is what, oh, your job is actually to do this. I thought your job was to do that.

Matt Blumberg: One of the fun things about working on this project was that all the co-authors had a shared experience of working at Return Path for some number of years, but all the co-authors had plenty of other experiences of working at other places. So there is, and I think Pete wrote this in his sort of afterward, like

there's a nice common thread that runs through it, but this is not the story of a particular company.

Jerry: That's right.

Matt Blumberg: And, one of my favorite moments reading as I was reading it for the first time and sort of reading each person's section and, you know, kind of proofing it and commenting on it my, uh, long time chief people officer at Return Path, Kathy Holly, who's one of the co-authors and one of my co-founders at Bolster, I start reading her section and I learned something about her I had never known before, which was that her first job outta college was running HR for a hundred person truck stop. And the job of running HR for a truck stop is pretty different-

Jerry: (laughs)

Matt Blumberg: ... than the job of running HR for, uh, you know, for a tech company. And, um, and I found that as I was reading each section that, you know, there were things about, um, that person's view of what the function was and what made it successful and what scaled it and what connected it to the other functions that I hadn't thought about before.

Jerry: Well, and, and those bits and pieces of origin stories go forward, roll forward and impact and shape their view of the job for the rest of their lives.

Matt Blumberg: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, a lot of what's built into the book is also now built into Bolster.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: So the, you know, kind of underpinning of Bolster is the functional competencies and skills with each role. Um, so you're, if you're searching for someone you're not just saying, oh, I need a CFO. Well, what kind of CFO?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt Blumberg: What does that CFO need to be great at in your environment right now for the next leg of your journey?

Jerry: Right. Right.

Matt Blumberg: The other side of the marketplace, when we onboard a member, what are you great at?

Jerry: Right.

Matt Blumberg: What are you passionate about?

Jerry: You know, you've just helped me understand another use case for this, which is that, um, you know, too often, and, and, and, you know, we both are, are cognizant of companies that are going through this. Too often what happens is a board, uh, will start to say to the founding team, even at a successful company, oh, you are not, um, public company ready. You're not the kind of person who can take a company public.

Jerry: And there tends to be that leveling up and leveling over and over, over, uh, taking people, bringing people in above the existing people. And there's very little dialogue about what does it actually mean? What does it mean? Um, and, and this, let's acknowledge too that there's a lot of room for bias in that. You know, bias towards men, for example, away from when, women, bias towards white men and away from people of color. There's a lot of bias built into you are not ready, but there's also a lack of language about what does it mean to be ready? There's a lack of dialogue. And so your comment about a CFO who's right for this stage of the company versus this stage of a company, I think is a really important, uh, dialogue that we, we, we don't have a lot of conversation around.

Matt Blumberg: Yeah. I think that's right. And I think, look, I always say one of the things I learned over the t- last 25 years is that, um, everyone can scale further than you think. They may not scale infinitely. Right? The, a startup founder may not be the, the guy running General Motors someday, um, or the, or the woman running General Motors someday, but everyone can scale further than you think if they're intentional about it, right. If they care about it and they try, and the ability to, um, I call it, you know, sort of see around corners, um, I think is really important to, to scaling one's career no matter where you are in your journey. And, um, you don't wanna get to the point where someone says you are not ready for X, and the way to avoid that is two years before you figure out what, what that is and then you start getting ready for it.

Jerry: Right. And so you have, you, you have that view of what that is supposed to be, and you know, where you're, you are to be filling in those experience gaps, those education gaps, those knowledge gaps, that sort of thing. Well, Matt, I, I really wanna thank you for coming in and having this. First of all, it's just a delight to see you, and it's a delight, this is my first post-pandemic live recording for the podcast. So mazel tov to both of us. I really appreciate the book and I appreciate the effort that you all put into doing that. And thanks for coming on the show.

Matt Blumberg: It's great to see you in all three dimensions.

Jerry: All three dimensions, body, heart, and mind.