

Alison 00:06

Welcome to the breakthrough. I'm Alison Dean and today we are talking with Leesa Eichberger, currently SVP, Corporate Marketing at RingCentral and has previously held roles at Farmer's Insurance, Jenny Craig, At&T and Ogilvy. We've not heard of any of those. Leesa sent me this quote from Emerson, which, I just, it makes me happy on a Friday, ..."and live in the sunshine swim the sea, drink the wild air." Hi, Leesa.

Leesa 00:59

Hello, Allison. Happy Friday.

Alison 01:01

Happy Friday. I want to know what that quote means to you.

Leesa 01:04

You know, that quote, it means a lot to me because I'm a triathlete, or I like to say a recovering triathlete. And I'm also kind of a workaholic. And, you know, triathlon is also I guess, a form of workaholicism, in its own space. But it's something that just reminds me to get outdoors, get away from work, get away from, you know, the kind of the stresses and just you know, enjoy, especially as a Southern California native and living in Southern California, enjoy what, you know, what that has to offer. So, you know, it's I have it actually on a coaster next to my bed, and try to remember like, that's an important thing like the outdoors. It's kind of what brings me energy and brings me renewal and refreshes me.

Alison 01:50

Yeah, we all need it. So, I think I should have that coaster as well, just to myself to leave the desk. Get outside for a moment. Okay, so this is the breakthrough. So, and season three, one of the things I started asking, just because I think it's interesting, what is the first breakthrough that you remember that set you on your career path?

Leesa 02:15

Yeah, there's probably a handful. I'm going to give you one that's maybe not the first. But one that to me has been incredibly important throughout my career and has helped me I think, evolve and improve as a marketer. And that is really making sure you truly understand your target audience. And I'll give you kind of the example of what made this come to life for me. I was working for Vonage, this was in the early 2010s. So not ancient history. But yeah, a little while back. And as marketers, I think so many of us are inclined to have a tendency, at least to trust our gut, or to think like we kind of get it. And really not always do the deep dive research and digging and getting to know customers as much as we could or should. And so during this period of Vonage, we were launching what at the time was a new product, which was unlimited calling to 24 or 26 countries for a flat rate. And our target audience was US based people who were calling internationally. And we then broke those into segments. And one of the segments that was our key focus at the time was the Asian Indian community. So I am now tasked with leading the marketing to bring in people who are probably speaking Hindi as a native language or, but definitely not necessarily native English speakers who had moved here from India, and we're calling back, calling back home. And everything I knew about kind of our consumer, or that I thought I knew about our consumer, I mean, I'm not Asian Indian, I don't have a ton of exposure to that culture. And I certainly don't speak the language. So I had to really go in and go in with obvious hypotheses, but do the data, do the research, do the digging, get to know the consumer understand like how the community worked in a way that I had never

done in the past. And we had incredible success with that launch. Within about six months, we had dominant market share. And a lot of that was due to I think being so just hyper focused on understanding the target audience. And it was the first time like I've always think I've always known like, you need to know your target, you need to understand your consumer. But this gave us, gave me like just so much more insight into that. And I took that and I continued to take that to every job I go to. The next role I held was CMO of Jenny Craig and I think that was one of the biggest things I brought to Jenny Craig. That was a benefit to the entire organization. Jenny Craig is based out of San Diego, had very high percentage of female leadership. And you know, a lot a lot of women have, at some point, you have thought about their weight, thought about losing weight. And so I think our leadership team in particular really had this, like, I get the target audience, the target audience is me. And we weren't the target audience, right? I mean, we're young women living in Southern California, got access to all kinds of exercise year round, complete access to farmers markets, and fresh food and, and frankly, kind of being on the forefront of like, healthful eating as part of our culture. So take that step back and go, we're probably not the target. And our target is probably you know, someone in a different part of the country who maybe has different ideas about food and exercise and nutrition. You know, it allowed me to really bring in just a different way, I think of thinking about the target audience and not just say, Oh, I got it. Like, she's me. She's not me. And so I tried to use that, that breakthrough to help me in every job I go into like, Okay, I may think I know the target. My team may think they know the target. But have we really dug in, have we really done the research, have we looked into this and pulled out all the nuggets that we can to, you know, to help us proceed?

Alison 06:12

Was your first like job out of college at Ogilvy, or was it somewhere else?

Leesa 06:18

My first job out of college was writing technical manuals for computer printer manufacturer was very glamorous.

Alison 06:25

Okay, so then what was the like launchpad into your first job?

Leesa 06:29

So while I was in college, I thought I was going to be a writer. I at the time, I had been working for an interior design trade magazine that I had a byline, and I loved it. And I just assumed they would hire me. And they folded, I think, like, two weeks before I graduated college. So that job that I was just like, oh, yeah, of course, I'm gonna get that job turned into an Uh Oh. And so I had this opportunity to work for this very small printer company, writing, as it may be, which then parlayed into kind of being a marketing assistant marketing coordinator in a marketing department of two, so yeah, I got my feet really wet. I was a trade show manager, I designed and wrote a lot of our collateral. But it wasn't where I want it to be forever. But I also knew nothing about marketing. And I, we were teeny tiny team. So part of what I would do when I would write a press release is I would just go onto the masthead and call the advertising leads, and try and pitch the story to the advertising people. And they're always like, we're advertising people we don't like, we don't take pitches. But by doing that, I got to know a lot of people in the ad world and somebody said, Hey, you know, the small ad agency, Papi Tyson, which was actually before Ogilvy, is hiring, you

know, would you be interested in going to an ad agency?" And was like, Oh, my God, I love advertising. I've always wanted to be in advertising. And so that's, that's how I got started in the ad world.

Alison 07:52

I love that. Um, okay. I know that you're extremely athletic. And so I'm curious, like, what your morning routine looks like, is that injected in the morning? Is it injected throughout the day? What does that look like?

Leesa 08:05

Yeah, you know, my quote, even the drink the while there goes back to that, my my view, like I said, kind of recovering triathlete, I actually now focus a lot more on ocean swimming, and cycling. But that's a huge part of my life. And it's a part of my sanity. And it's part to me of I work... So your direct question. First thing I do every morning is workout. And that is something to me that is kind of sacred. And there are very few things that I will allow to bump that. And one of the main reasons is, there's so much you have to get done in the day. And if you've gotten a workout in before your day really gets rolling, no matter how sideways the day goes, and some days go sideways, I've accomplished something, and I've accomplished something for me. And even if it's 15 minutes of stretching, you know, that's not to say there are plenty of days where something else wins, including the snooze button. But that has really helped me maintain some balance. And I don't you know, I'm actually I'm not a huge believer in work life balance. I think there's a pendulum and there are times when you have zero balance and that's okay. But that does allow you some sanity, some is healthy, makes my brain work. And you know, I've often said probably far too honestly, I'm not a very nice person until I work out. So it's better for everybody. If I've burned off some of the crazy before the day starts. And you come in with my brain working in the blood flowing and yeah, I'm feeling like I've accomplished something.

Alison 09:44

Yep. I can understand and I I longed to be someone with a more regular morning workout routine. So yes, I I look forward to that day when I can and it is a mandatory part of my life. Okay, so as someone who has held senior marketing roles in vastly different industries from telecommunications with AT&T, to weight loss with Jenny Craig, you have a unique perspective on what it takes to build successful marketing campaigns across diverse audiences. So this is kind of like a two part question. One, can you share some of the key strategies and tactics that have worked well, for you? We'll start with that.

Leesa 10:22

Yeah, well it goes back to what I was saying about, you know, that big aha moment. You know, while I was at Vonage, it's understanding your audience, right? I think that's the most important thing for any great marketing is, you need to know who you're talking to, and you need to talk to them at the right time, in the right place about the right thing. It's, yeah, I'd love to say that it's super simple. I don't know that it's that simple. But it's certainly that's the core, and the crux of good marketing.

Alison 10:52

And then so like, once you've identified the target audience, what is the like, what's that next layer? Or what's the next strategic element that is sort of just fundamentally necessary with everything that you do?

Leesa 11:05

I think it's understand their pain points, right? So you find the people and then like, you know, how can I how can we solve a problem? I think that's, that's a good sales person's tactic. It's a good marketing persons tactic. We don't want somebody who doesn't need or want our product buying it. We want somebody to say, "Hey, I actually need this."

Alison 11:22

Yeah

Leesa 11:23

Or this, this will improve my life, this will make things my job easier this will be or whatever it might be. But creating it, and I hate the idea of creating a need that doesn't exist, I think it's more like solving a problem that maybe someone didn't realize they had. But solving someone's problem.

Alison 11:41

Okay, so like the second part of the question, how has, like, the idea of target audience - How has that evolved, I guess, through your career, because there's so often, where, even when people ask me about the podcast, you know, like, who are you directing this to? And it can be pretty vast, right? Because at the end of the day, I think that hearing interesting stories from interesting people is something that can fit, really, anybody at any stage of life.

Leesa 12:09

Right?

Alison 12:10

So I'm curious, in your, like, span of projects and initiatives, is the idea of honing in on target audience the same now as it was, you know, when you started your career?

Leesa 12:25

It's an interesting question. And I think some of that ties back to the whole idea of how much marketing has changed over, you know, my, the trajectory of my career and the people who are older than me and more established in their careers, I think, even greater shifts, right. I mean, when I started, and even more, so years before that, there was only mass marketing, really. There was not the ability, the digital was just a nascent thing that we were just starting to figure out. Now we are able to get to almost a one to one place. And I think that's created some interesting dynamics, because, you know, one of the things that helps grow marketing, grow markets, not marketing, is the spill, right. Getting you think, you know, who needs you, you think you're targeting the right people, but there's probably people on the periphery that you're potentially missing. And what I think is really interesting, as we move from, you know, mass marketing, to targeted marketing, to super targeted marketing, and then we're moving to this cookieless world, do we start reverting a little bit and start doing more lookalike modeling and doing more kind of contextual advertising? And does that change the dynamic, almost swinging the pendulum back at that? And I, you know, I don't know, you know, I'm not sure how we're going to solve some of these things that we haven't quite encountered yet. But I think, you know, the reality is, we need to be targeted. But we also need to be open to the idea that there may be people outside who we think our target is, who are also interested. It all depends on the product, right?

Alison 14:07

Yeah, I can only imagine it totally depends on the product. But I also, like now more than ever, our ability to leverage data is totally different today to sort of gauge those things. That's probably an interesting, like, piece for you. That wasn't necessarily as readily available.

Leesa 14:24

Right.

Alison 14:25

Or part for career as it is now. So you know, interesting to kind of see that periphery, I guess, right? Maybe?

Leesa 14:35

Yeah, but I think becomes more and more interesting. And I think this is something that especially as we look into these new spaces that AI is inventing.

Alison 14:43

Oh yeah.

Leesa 14:44

And having massive amounts of data and almost analysis paralysis with numbers. Where does the human experience come in? And what like, programmatic advertising is, you know, AI is a step even beyond that, but even programmatic advertising sometimes lost the human element. No completely new idea is coming from auto optimizing. Right. And AI at this point is only able to use what it can find, which means that new ideas are still necessary. And I think what will drive our future what, what I think will maintain the health of this industry, we need the creativity, we need still genuine new ideas.

Alison 15:31

Oh, yeah. Okay. So like, given, like how much emerging tech has, well, has been introduced in the span of your working career so far, I'm curious the challenges that you've encountered in adapting to like new technologies or new platforms, like I guess, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Maybe I'm sure there's like...

Leesa 15:57

I could take that all kinds of different directions. I think, you know, one of the challenges is staying on top of all of it, and trying to figure out what matters and what doesn't, right. I mean, you know, I would argue, and maybe history will prove me totally wrong and in six months, we'll listen to this and say she didn't know what she was talking about. But the metaverse was like, the biggest thing ever a year ago. It kind of feels like it's lost a little bit of that, like, "Oh, my God, you got to be in the metaverse." Did it matter? Maybe it's gonna still be the most important thing ever. I don't know. But it feels like it's lost some of its fire, right? And then tempering those things like with the partner or the senior leader that you're working with, it's like, well, why aren't you doing, you know, why are we on a Tik Tok? Yeah, why aren't we why aren't we in the metaverse? Or shouldn't we be using AI? And it's kind of like, we can't do all of it. And we can't try all of it. I mean, we need to be aware of it. But then there's, I think the necessity of doing the things that work, and then testing and learning into things to see what else works. And you can't test them all at once. You know, that it's just impossible. So that, to me is one of the biggest challenges of all the changes we've seen is you know, staying on top of it, and then also making sure that everyone you're working with is aligned and gets it.

Alison 17:18

Boy, is that true. Alignment? Yes. Okay. I'm curious, like, so this question, I take in sort of different batches, because I'm curious, what the most memorable, like marketing project or transformation that you've been part of is and why. But then also, like, is memorable. Also, the most difficult? Is memorable, the most innovative? Are they all, are there three different things in the universe? So like, curious.

Leesa 17:49

So you know, there are a handful of things I think that are memorable. One, for me, that was a massive learning experience.

Alison 17:57

Yeah.

Leesa 17:58

I was working on a brand. I don't think, I'll leave the brand name out just because I'm sure you could Google it and find it. But we went, we won a Ken Gold Lion for creativity for an advertising campaign. And the ad campaign was brilliant, right, like, just smart and clever, and really, really, really creative. And tanked sales.

Alison 18:18

Wow.

Leesa 18:18

And that, for me has been the Gold Lion sits over here on my counter, because it's the thing that it reminds me, just because something's creative, if it doesn't drive results, who cares? Right. And it's one of the reasons that I mean, you know, and I will caveat, this was I mentor for the Effie's, and I'm a very big supporter of the Effie's, but it's one of the reasons that, to me, I've won a few Effie's and those to me have value in a different category than the lion does. Because I, you can't win one without being effective. And you can't win one with bad creative, either. But creative that works is more important than just great creative. And that's hard to remember sometimes, and it's hard sometimes to get your ad agencies to always see that light. But you know, your your good partners absolutely do because we're all in, you know, aimed at the same goals. But that, for me was a really big learning.

Alison 19:21

All right. And then so, in terms of like, most difficult project that you've been part of - any, any sort of trenches, in the trenches type stories, anything top of mind in that capacity.

Leesa 19:37

Wow, you're giving me a little bit of a curveball. I mean, there have been plenty of those. You know, I, I think they're, one I'm kind of managing through right now. RingCentral, where I where I am right now is a organization that we're a \$2 billion publicly traded company that's been around 20 years, and incredibly successful some of the best unified communications as a service on the market and the research and the data, and the fact that we've been at the top of the Magic Quadrant year after year after year proves that. But I would say one of my biggest challenges there, especially as someone that helping to lead the brand initiatives, are that we're still confused with the doorbell company. And we're incredibly successful in our space. But it is frustrating, you know, when I go out into the world, and people go, "Oh, I love RingCentral." And like, you don't know, you don't. You don't have us. You have your doorbell. We are a

B2B company selling to small businesses through enterprise, but we're not selling doorbells. So I would say that's probably one of the bigger, you know, that's a big challenge. And you have to temper like, how much how much brand awareness do you need? If your target audience who is businesses actually does know you? Do I need the average Joe to know that we don't sell doorbells? No, I don't. Right. But as a brand person, that's still frustrating.

Alison 20:57

Right? Like, no, I don't work there. Yeah.

Leesa 21:00

Right.

Alison 21:02

I understand this. Okay, so you used to lead sponsorships for Farmers, which is awesome. Andrew, our producer is obsessed with, well, maybe not obsessed, but he's big fan of Ricky Fowler and I think he appreciates that you have a tie to Ricky Fowler. Anyway, Farmers has partnered for many years with JK Simmons. So with so many potential sponsorship opportunities that are available, how did you determine which partnerships would be the best fit for the Farmers brands? Like what factors did you have to consider in the decision making for that?

Leesa 21:37

Well, so starting with JK, he was already attached to the brand when I joined the organization. And, yeah, I think the question became, is he the right spokesperson, and he's not actually a spokesperson, he's an actor representing a character that works for us. But you know, that was one for me. He was he's trustworthy, he's known, he's so much a part of the brand that even as we looked at, okay, how do we get, how do we start bringing the target audience age down, you know, is he the right guy for Gen X, for Gen Z or for a millennial. And we, going back to the research, people liked him, people trusted them. And so he was also, he's an absolute pleasure to work with. One of just the most professional, wonderful sponsorship relationships I've ever been engaged in. So that was an easy one. Yeah, when you're looking at broader sponsorship, things like the Farmers Insurance open and bringing on like, a Ricky Fowler, I mean, Ricky has such great appeal across a whole swath of both golfers and non golfers. And I think, you know, especially at a, you know, somewhere like a Farmer's where we were trying to be very, very thoughtful and choiceful in what sort of things we were involved in. I mean, we weren't spending tons of money like a State Farm, who have sponsors, all kinds of stuff, Farmers was much more focused. So since we chose golf, we looked for an ambassador, who really appealed to a wide, wider swath of people than just golfers. And I think that's something that Ricky brought to the table. So while it worked really well, in golf, golf spoke really well to our target audience, Ricky went above and beyond that, and brought in a younger demographic, brought in makes things a little bit outside a golf.

Alison 23:17

Besides like, hosting or sponsoring like an event, were there any other sort of creative approaches to maximize impact with these different collaborations?

Leesa 23:28

Yeah, I mean, you know, Ricky was in some of our advertising that was featured, obviously, in golf tournaments, but also outside of golf tournaments. So that was one way to kind of expand that exposure.

The golf connection, Farmers has gone on to bring in kind of younger and more diverse golfers and sponsor outside just the PGA into some of the other categories, which I think has been a great opportunity there to expand exposure again. So yeah, obviously always looking to kind of, how can you maximize what you have? I mean, at the Farmers Insurance Open is, what four days a year, how do you take that and expand it throughout more than just those four days? And, you know, that that's, it's a challenge, because that's the crux of it is those days, but there's other opportunities to get out there. And one of the things Farmers did that I think was really really wonderful was the Farmers Insurance Open really gave back to the community and that was part of their ongoing story. So they linked that together really tightly.

Alison 24:26

I think that's yeah, that's awesome. Like curious too, certain brands now will obviously leverage certain celebrities on like social media where they'll like you know, actually take over an account for like a day or a certain period of time. Did Farmers ever, I guess, leverage some of those celebrity relationships for something like that?

Leesa 24:45

I don't know that we never had Ricky take the account over but yeah, we definitely had a relationship where Ricky was sending things out that were tied to Farmers as part of the relationship. And then yeah, with JK he had such a great sense of humor and we were able to use him for things outside kind of the traditional campaign. The one I remember that I think actually won some awards was, there was an eclipse, I forget what year, but you know, JK doesn't have a ton of hair. And so we had done like the sun going behind his head and moving through as a social media campaign that just, you know, if nothing else, it got definitely a wink and a smile. And, you know, just get people thinking about the brand and positive just, you know, anytime you bring in humor or warm feelings, it improves your brand perception. And he was, you know, open to doing that. And like, I think we actually may have won some sort of creativity award on that one. That was fun. That's been quite a few years ago, though.

Alison 25:39

I feel like I need to, I need to YouTube that one I have to check it out.

Leesa 25:46

I think it might have been just on Facebook. Oh, well, I don't remember.

Alison 25:50

It all ends up on YouTube at some, in some juncture, right.

Leesa 25:52

Yeah, probably,

Alison 25:53

It like lands there. Okay, so you've mentioned AI, which is obviously on many people's minds right now. I'm, I'm curious, like how you see AI impacting, well, the marketing realm. And if you're taking any steps now to leverage, you know, AI tech to gain competitive advantage.

Leesa 26:16

Yeah, AI is one of those thing, it's a little bit like I was talking about the Metaverse like I, I'm afraid whatever I say now, in three weeks, I'm going to be like, Ooh, I shouldn't have said that. That was that was a dumb statement. So I think a lot of us are still dealing with it much more from opinion than fact. It's, it is both

terrifying and exciting, I think, for the industry. And I see, yeah, I'm gonna get back to the the human part of creativity, that I think we'll, I can't imagine AI is ever going to take over people's jobs when it comes to being truly creative. But I do think it can augment and speed processes on things that are you know, kind of much more just fact based and direct and straight to the point, obviously, it can pick up tone, but it's not inventing anything totally new. So I do see it as a great tool to speed some of our more busy work forward. Where it's where I worry about it, is for more junior writers for smaller companies that don't have necessarily the budget that they start relying on this to, to write content to generate imagery. And then also just the fake news aspect of it. That is so easy. But you know, that's a whole nother probably philosophical conversation another time.

Alison 27:39

Another podcast episode for us.

Leesa 27:40

Yeah, exactly.

Alison 27:42

I am curious about, we talked a little bit about data already, or just like the impacts of how the access to meaningful data has really shifted through the years. So like, what role does data play in marketing campaigns for you today? And how are you leveraging data to help like, inform decisions and optimize the work that you're doing?

Leesa 28:04

Yeah, I mean, data is one of those things that it's, you know, it creates some almost magic. I mean, it's not magic. It's, it's facts, right. I mean, that's the great part. But it allows you to really make great decisions. It allows you to focus on the right things that allows you to test into things. So it's, I mean, it's a critical part of every decision we make. At the same time, I think, you know, you can't follow it all out the door. And I'm going to get back to that human creativity that new ideas are, it's like a, you know, multi mix model for media is never going to tell you what you haven't tried yet. It you know, you've got to still be testing new things. You've got to be adventuresome, you've got to be bold, and trying things that are outside what the data tells you to continue to grow and learn and advance. So I mean, you can't do your job without, now these days, you absolutely can't do your job without the data. I think you can also get buried in it. I think you can follow false information that one little thing gets tweaked. And suddenly it extrapolates into something big. That's maybe not accurate. But it's it's critical to your success, but then also isn't necessarily shouldn't be the be all end all of everything.

Alison 29:19

Is there anything that comes to mind that, like a decision that was around data? Like did you change anything because of a like any, like a top of mind project for something where data really did shift? I guess how you executed something? Is there any I don't know fun stories on that front or?

Leesa 29:38

I don't know if I have any specific stories off the top of my head. I certainly can think think of times when you know, we've looked at like where, you know, back to kind of media mix models, you know, in saying okay, the model shows X and we've got 10 people in the room with you know, combined 100 years of experience going, "Are you sure?" But the data says something and so you test it, pour into it. And like,

let's double down on the audio spend, right. And one of the things I think data was kind of almost predicting for us that maybe people weren't totally getting is the growth in audio, right? There was a time not that long ago, where we all kind of felt like audio was dead. And maybe terrestrial radio has been declining. But podcasts, I mean, like who would have thunk 10 years ago, we're going to be where we are with podcasts.

Alison 30:25

Right.

Leesa 30:25

Right. And I think the data was showing us that and we weren't all quite getting it all the time. And so that's one that's been an interesting growth area that the data certainly was showing us stuff that we didn't all believe. Yeah, years back.

Alison 30:40

Right. Interesting. All right. This is a segment I call break on through since we're moving to the second part of the interview. It's also like a quick fire round. So just basically tell me first thing that comes to mind short answers, nothing, I don't I mean, you can tell me the context if you feel it's meaningful. Okay, favorite breakfast? Oh, favorite? Yeah.

Leesa 31:08

I mean, I was in Vietnam last week, and I was eating pho every morning for breakfast, but that probably is more of an anomaly. Favorite breakfast would be like, eggs.

Alison 31:17

Okay.

Leesa 31:18

Super boring.

Alison 31:19

Oh, that's fine. All right. What's the best restaurant in Los Angeles?

Leesa 31:24

Oh, my goodness. I can't answer that. I'm going to make somebody mad.

Alison 31:29

Or like, top three if you can't choose one.

Leesa 31:33

I mean, yeah, I'll give you a Gilbert's El Indio on Pico for like dive Mexican food. I've been going there since college. That's going to probably win just out of like, the amount of times I've gone in my life.

Alison 31:43

Nostalgia. I like it. Okay. Um, favorite song to sing in your car?

Leesa 31:49

Oof. Probably whatever's on the radio. Just kind of sing.

Alison 31:58

I love it. Okay, coffee or tea or neither?

Leesa 32:03

Coffee. Hello?

Alison 32:05

AM or PM?

Leesa 32:08

For what?

Alison 32:09

I know. Okay, fair. That's a fair answer. That's a fair answer. So on depending on what we're talking about. Um favorite place to travel.

Leesa 32:17

Oh, everywhere, anywhere everywhere. I have massive wanderlust and love to travel. Portugal has been probably one of my favorites lately.

Alison 32:25

But yeah, you'd like to travel. Okay historical figure that you'd like to have dinner with?

Leesa 32:33

Historical? Like to have dinner with? Goodness. There's so many good ones.

Alison 32:40

I know. It's a hard question. I know.

Leesa 32:43

Who's yours?

Alison 32:44

Yeah, I don't know. At this point I'd say my father. Just because he's like, historical at this point. But yeah, that's the first one that comes to mind.

Leesa 32:55

Yeah, I don't have one off the top of my head. I'm sorry.

Alison 32:58

Okay, is there just any famous person you'd like to have dinner with?

Leesa 33:02

You know, there's so many authors that come to mind Mark Twain. You know, like, he's just so smart and interesting.

Alison 33:10

There you go. Actually that transitions to the next question. What's your favorite book?

Leesa 33:14

My favorite book. So I have a degree in English literature. Like for me to pick a book is like picking picking a child.

Alison 33:22

Like one of your faves.

Leesa 33:24

One of my faves. Perfume? Patrick Süskind.

Alison 33:29

Oo if you could have one superpower, what would it be?

Leesa 33:36

Time travel.

Alison 33:37

Ooh, fun. Last TV show that you binged?

Leesa 33:41

I'm in the middle of Daisy Jones in the six. Does that count?

Alison 33:44

Oh, sure. Yeah, we're not sure.

Leesa 33:48

Game of Thrones. I was late to the party. I just watched Game of Thrones, like eight years or something behind the ball and I binged. I powered through the whole thing in like two months.

Alison 33:58

Did it satisfy you, the very end or no?

Leesa 34:01

Yeah, I think so.

Alison 34:03

Okay, besides the breakthrough, what's another favorite podcast?

Leesa 34:09

Oh boy. My friend Michael Linton has been doing some really good ones called CMO Confidential. So I'm gonna give him a shout out in the marketing space.

Alison 34:17

Sounds good. I love it. Okay, what projects or initiatives are you most looking forward to as you continue in your career?

Leesa 34:27

Huh. You know, for me, and one of the things I'm looking forward to is getting more involved in like board work. And looking at different companies that like we've talked about. I've got this industry agnostic background, and that's one of the things I've had so much fun in my career is like learning about a lot of different things. So the idea of like getting involved in something that maybe isn't my core business, but still being in it is that that's for me is really exciting.

Alison 34:51

Yeah, I love that. What are the most important lessons that you've learned from your mentors and how have those lessons influenced your approach to leadership?

Leesa 35:00

That's a great question. I think one of the most important lessons I've learned is giving people, like truly giving them trust and, and free rein. Giving them enough space to succeed and try things without putting them so far out there that they can fail. And I learned that from actually, the CMO Confidential guy, Mike Linton, was a man I worked for a few years back. And when I first started working for him, I went to him with a project and I say, this was at Farmers, and I said, this is going to be a million dollars. And he's like, what percentage of your budget is that? I'm like, oh, it's not that much. And he's like, Leesa, go, like, you don't need my blessing. And like, but it's a million dollars, right. And that was just such a, it made me feel so trusted. That gave me a lot more confidence. And I thought about how that impacted how I felt when

people were asking me permission to do things. And it's like, this is your job, you know, I'm trusting you to do, I hired you to do a job because I trust you, I trust you to do your job. Go for it. And so that's something that has really stuck with me. It's just giving people the autonomy to do their jobs.

Alison 36:11

A beautiful thing when it when it works that way, I yeah, I totally feel you on that. Okay, continuing our tradition of past guest questions. This week's breakthrough club question is from Terry Dry, CEO of Future Proof Advisors, and he has this question for you. If we can consider AI as "the thing" in marketing and strategy these days, what is something like a technology a behavior, a tool, a methodology that you believe we should all be aware of or anticipating moving forward?

Leesa 36:45

Wow, that's like a meaty question. Anticipating? Yeah, exactly. Anticipating moving forward. Yeah, I think the, how we track the accuracy or veracity of AI. Like, how much what's real? You know, there's so many fake things being written so many fake images being done. I mean, you know, that new song with Drake, and whomever? I know, I should know that I can't remember off the top of my head that AI produced that they had nothing to do with like, right. That's the stuff I think we need to be aware of, and then how do we compensate? And how do we make sure that the right people are getting credit? You know, as as computers start generating things that sound like look like, act like humans?

Alison 37:34

Well, Leesa, I'm so with you on this front? Yes, that was? That was an excellent answer. There you have it, Terry. Okay, what other future innovations, if any, are you most excited about? It could be personally, it could be professionally, something that helps you swim faster? I don't know.

Leesa 37:54

I'd like some sort of like, a swim booster. I'm not sure if somebody's working on that yet. Um, I don't know that I have anything that's on top of mind. That's the thing like I would have never imagined where AI is like, even even a year ago, right. So I guess I'm most excited about the things that I don't even know exist. What's gonna come up? That's like, wow, where'd that come from?

Alison 38:21

Yeah, I can understand this. Okay, so we talked about an early breakthrough - target audience stuff. What about a recent, given given you've done some travels recently, any, any breakthroughs on on the trips that you've gone on recently, or maybe just being at home, any anything that you've had a breakthrough on?

Leesa 38:41

I don't know if it's a breakthrough. But one of the things about travel, for me is that every time I come home from a trip, I'm both excited to have learned about a new culture and in some ways, that much more grateful for what I have, and the lives we lead in this country. That's something that it almost doesn't matter where I go, it's like, wow, that's amazing. And I come home, like, Oh, thank God. Having just been in Vietnam, like, the food's incredible that you had, all these things are so amazing, and different, and I respect the culture, but then there's, I'm sure glad, like, we have the traffic laws we have after nearly being smashed by a motor, motorbike, you know, crossing the street in Hanoi. You know, and it's like, there's certain things that you know, oh, like, we're so strict with our traffic or, you know, I hate getting a ticket. But I'm also like, watching people nearly die every time they cross the street. So I think the the

breakthrough is recognizing there's amazing stuff out there. And that can be amazing, while ours is too and those two things can exist in the two cultures can exist and both can be really really cool and and maybe not match up.

Alison 39:51

Yeah, yeah, I love it. Okay, is there anything that I didn't ask you that I should have? Well,

Leesa 39:59

Well, I mean, there's some only things you could ask me, but you got me with some good ones today. So I think we're good. I'm afraid to bring something up, you're gonna ask me another question. It's gonna be a gotcha.

Alison 40:09

I'm never trying to do a gotcha never trying to get, well, I guess I'll say, is there anything that you were hoping to talk about that we didn't, that we didn't chat about?

Leesa 40:18

Yeah, I think, you know, we talked about a lot of really interesting things around, you know, between AI and research and data, and you know, what's happening with marketing. So good topics, even you know, who would I have dinner with historical figure, I gotta think about that one more, I'm gonna have to call you out like, a week or two ago.

Alison 40:33

What we can do, Leesa is when we post to like the various social pages, you know, when your episode goes live, you can comment of what we can just like, we can close the loop there, which is, you know, I love it. And then that way, you can pose it to everyone else. Hey, who's ever watching and reading? Now tell me who you would like to? Right? Just keep keep the gift giving there. All right. Well, I thank you so much. I thank you for you know, I feel like I was tardy with getting you on the show. So I very much appreciate having you. I loved our conversation, and I certainly look forward to our next one.

Leesa 41:15

Thank you. Great to see you.

Alison 41:17

And thank you all for tuning into this episode of The breakthrough. Be sure to subscribe on your favorite platform. Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at Breakthrough Pod. I'm your host Alison Dean. Until next time.