

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal
Episode Transcript



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Episode Transcript

Kris:

Hey. I'm Kris Plachy, host of the Lead Your Team podcast. Running a million-dollar business is not easy, and whether you're just getting started with building your team or you've been at this for a while, I'm going to bring you honest, specific, and clear practices you can use right now, today to improve how well you lead your team. Let's go ahead and get started.

Kris:

Hello, everyone. Welcome. Welcome to the podcast. I'm super excited to have an interview for you today. I am interviewing Meha Agrawal with Silk + Sonder. She is the founder and CEO, and if you don't know about Silk + Sonder, it's an absolutely beautiful organization she has built on a couple of different platforms. So I actually was a member, and that is part of why I was so excited to interview her, because I received her beautiful journals in the mail. That's exactly what you do when you sign up for Silk + Sonder. You get this beautiful ... It's beautiful, and it's got questions to reflect on and quotes, and it's got this gorgeous layout and ways for you to think about the month. So you get monthly journals. Then she also has created the Sonder Club, which is a community where you can take the work and deepen it. She talks all about that on our podcast today.

Kris:

So what I wanted to share with you all, and the reason I was super excited, first of all, because I kind of fangirled and I was like, "Oh, I love your business. Come and talk to me." Second of all, she's built a really beautiful business, and she's done so through seed money and through growing her business a little bit differently than I think a lot of my listeners do. But she has a gorgeous perspective, and in order for her to qualify and to get the funding that she needed, she had to do a lot of the work that I teach my clients in order to establish a business that is scalable and also maybe in some cases one that you might want to sell.

Kris:

So she shares some really powerful perspective. She shares, I believe, her gorgeous story about why she does what she does, and she also shares very salient wisdom that all of us can apply to our business. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to the interview with Meha Agrawal of Silk + Sonder.

Kris:

Well, hello, Meha. How are you?

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal Episode Transcript

Meha:

I'm great. Thanks for having me, Kris.

Kris:

I'm thrilled to have you. For everyone listening, as I mentioned in the intro, I am a huge fan of Meha's business, which is Silk + Sonder. So when they approached me to have you on, I was like, "You know what? I don't normally interview people that aren't clients, but I want to meet her."

Meha:

Oh, I'm delighted. I'm so excited to be here.

Kris:

I fangirled a little bit [crosstalk 00:02:59].

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's do it. Let's find out how she built this beautiful business."

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

So why don't we go ahead and just have you ... I'd love for you to introduce yourself to my listeners. Who are you, and what's your gorgeous business? Tell us all the things.

Meha:

Absolutely. So I'm Meha. I'm the founder and CEO of Silk + Sonder. For those of you listening that don't know, we're a self-care and mental wellness experience for modern women. So we make daily self-care easy and fun from the comfort of your home. We do that through a couple different touchpoints. So as part of your membership with Silk + Sonder, you get access to a

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

beautiful, thoughtfully curated guided journal inspired by positive psychology, bullet journaling, and other evidence-based exercises that's really your space to create, to be yourself, to reflect, but also combine it with action, thinking about productivity and blending that with a bit of introspection.

Meha:

Then also as a member of Silk + Sonder, you get access to what we call Sonder Club, which is a private, members only community. It's online, and you essentially visit it for all things Silk + Sonder and beyond. So in that group, you are able to share your learnings from all the activities and the journals themselves. You can get inspired by one another. But most importantly, we've created a safe space to go deep and ask the questions that you don't normally ask your friends or your family or your colleagues about.

Meha:

So that's Sonder Club, and then last, we have Sonder circles, which are these guided journaling sessions where we foster deeper connection with yourself and others through a very special programming, where it's a mix of the facilitator participating alongside of you, but we have you reflect and go through certain guided journaling prompts, as well as authentic connection exercises to elevate your emotional health.

Meha:

So that's what I do day-to-day, and then I guess a quick backstory, before I started Silk + Sonder, I was a software engineer and product manager. So I started my career working at Goldman Sachs in New York, switched over to the startup industry, worked at a company called The Muse, and then eventually found my way to San Francisco, where I worked at Stitch Fix. So a lot of great experience working for other female founders, which is just not always something people get access to. So I'm very, very privileged in that sense.

Kris:

That is so, so fabulous. I love all of that. Silk + Sonder is such a curious, right, name for your business. So where did the name come from?

Meha:

Yeah. Yeah, great question. So sonder is actually a made-up word. It's not yet in the Webster dictionary, but it's in the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows. What it means is that every passerby around you is living this life populated by their own ambitions, their own fears, their own worries, their own dreams, and you think you're on this journey of life and its complexity alone,

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

but in reality, it's a shared feeling. So sonder is really about that shared heaviness of what life presents itself as and what you think is isolating. So silk is our way of adding a smoothness to that otherwise isolating, complex heaviness that life usually offers.

Kris:

How beautiful, really.

Meha:

Yeah. Thank you.

Kris:

It's very beautiful. So one of the things I ask, I have to point out to everybody listening, first of all, I just want to point out to all y'all that she introduced herself as a founder and CEO. So I know that Meha and I don't really know each other that well, so I'm going to give you a little heads-up. I'm on a mission, as part of my work is the How to CEO program, right? Because so many women won't call themselves CEO, right?

Meha:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Kris:

Of course, I'm just determined that we need to be everywhere and build our own tables and stop waiting to be invited to them, right?

Meha:

Absolutely.

Kris:

So I just want to point that out, because I just loved it. That was spontaneous, and that's how you introduce yourself. Secondly, I love the clarity of your vision. It was said so beautifully.

Meha:

Thank you.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

So you were a software engineer, and that led you to this introspective, right, gorgeous coach/wisdom-seeking maven, right?

Meha:

Oh, thank you. (laughing).

Kris:

So what is your compelling reason? I ask my clients this a lot, right? What is it that you believe you were here to do and that your business is the vessel to create that?

Meha:

Yeah, I am happy to share. It's a very simple reason, and it's really to spark joy and confidence in myself and others. That is literally my reason for being, and that is why Silk + Sonder is something that I see myself working at forever.

Kris:

So why did you leave the work you were doing to do this work?

Meha:

Yeah, that's a great question. I think as a software engineer and as a product manager, right, there's this desire to build and create things. I think what's interesting is with software engineering, there's a whole compounding effect of imposter syndrome playing in, because in order for your program to run, it needs to first compile. So you're constantly tinkering, but if you forget a semicolon, you might be stuck for days. What I love about entrepreneurship is it's building, but on steroids. You become a founder because you're a lifelong builder and creator, and there's this innate curiosity that you're constantly tinkering with, right?

Meha:

So computer science is the study of solving problems, and I think entrepreneurship is just the limitless opportunity to apply that, right?

Kris:

Application.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

So the transition, I mean, I didn't realize it at the time, right? Because I was always complaining about being a software engineer and feeling like my creativity was being stifled and constantly on this negative cycle of not realizing that it was really just setting me up for success to be a founder and an entrepreneur. It's really because you're constantly solving problems. I mean, when you think about what we do for the team, we are not always being the visionary that we want to be. We are constantly firefighting alongside our team, but also rolling up our sleeves and thinking about what's next.

Kris:

Exactly and what we have to, right?

Meha:

Yeah.

Kris:

That's your goal. So how long have you had this business?

Meha:

Yeah, so it's been a nights and weekends project since the end of 2017, but I went full-time in 2019.

Kris:

(laughing). [inaudible 00:08:57]. I've heard all the things, but I've never heard of a nights and weekends project.

Meha:

(laughing). Yeah, and then I went full-time in 2019. Then I ended up raising my first round, my pre-seed round, rather, at the end of 2019.

Kris:

Okay. So you went the way of startup with some capital.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

Oh, yeah. So initially, it was bootstrapped. We were self-sufficient. However, in order to carry out my much larger vision, I knew that we needed to inject some capital to really transform into the bigger business that I still dream of for Silk + Sonder.

Kris:

Yeah. So what's that like? Tell me about working out there in the world, because I know a lot of the women I coach are bootstraps, right?

Meha:

Yeah, yeah.

Kris:

A lot of women also don't want to go this way, right?

Meha:

[crosstalk 00:09:49].

Kris:

But when you do really want to multiply your growth and your reach and your exposure, this is certainly the way to go. So how did you go through that process, and what were some of the steps you took to achieve the capital that you needed?

Meha:

Yeah. Well, first of all, it's aligning with your why, right? So especially for folks that don't have a coach or don't have access to a coach, I think the first step is to really think about why do you want to go for outside capital? I think there's a lot of stigma, right? Only less than 3% of women get venture capital. So it feels like this uphill battle, which I'm not going to lie to you. It is. But you have to ask yourself, why are you building this business? So if I want it to be this beautiful stationary business or notebooks business, the unit economics pan out, I probably wouldn't need outside capital, but I'm trying to have much broader impact more quickly and really change the game for the emotional health epidemic. In that case, I can't do it alone.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

So I needed to identify, "Why do I want this money?" It's not just to be on the front cover of Forbes or anything like that. It's really about inspiring my customers and delivering on my promise for personalization and all these other things I promised since the beginning and knowing that I can't do that alone. I'm going to have to hire people much better than me and smarter than me, and I want to do that sooner rather than later. So it's a mix of knowing why and also understanding what you're going to use that capital for. If the answer is, "I don't know," maybe you're not ready.

Kris:

I love your perspective, and I think it's really helpful, too. But that's the culture you came out of, too, right?

Meha:

Yeah.

Kris:

That you watched and witnessed. This is just how you roll when you worked in the Bay and et cetera and watching these startups there.

Meha:

Honestly, Kris, I think for me personally, whether or not ... I mean, I know Silk + Sonder's going to succeed, but even if we don't end up having a large-scale impact quick enough or whatever it might be, I think for me personally, what I felt was missing both as a software engineer, but mostly as a founder and CEO was enough women who had paved the path for me. So I highly respect those that did, but at the same time, I felt like if I have the option and I actually want this for my business, what might that do for women who second guess, "Is outside capital right for me?"

Kris:

Exactly, right?

Meha:

Yes.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

Yeah. I say this a lot. I just think we're in such a transformative time right now as it relates to leadership and thought leadership and how we think about developing, growing, leading companies. It's very fractious, and there's a lot of tension. But I think it's good in the long run that a lot of the systems that have been in place for many hundreds of years and what leadership looks like and who leaders are and how leaders are supposed to be, I mean, that's deteriorating, and we're watching the tumultuousness of that, right? Yet at the same time, that's what my fist pounding on the desk is. I'm teaching an empathic CEO course right now. It's just we need you. We need the empaths who are leading companies to show up-

Meha:

Yeah, absolutely.

Kris:

... to fill this void, right? Whether that's using capital or not, it's just standing up and owning what your ideas are and really doing the work of getting them out there. Of course, my little part of the world that I work with my clients on is you can't do that if you can't grow the team.

Meha:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Kris:

So let's talk about that. All right. So you get this idea. You're like, "Okay, I'm going to change the world. I'm going to solve the emotional wellness epidemic," which, of course, I'm now in love with that phrase.

Meha:

Love it.

Kris:

Who did you start with?

Meha:

So do you mean by who, you mean-

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

Who was on your team? Who did you bring on to work with right away? Who was part of that first team for you?

Meha:

So for me, it was just having a graphic designer work on the actual product, and I was doing most of the legwork initially. I have to give myself credit, because I normally don't, but that was who it was, nights and weekends. Then I had my then boyfriend, now fiance helping me stuff the bubble mailers in the middle of we were growing, while this was still a project. I remember we took the little carts from our building and were lugging those in the middle of winter to USPS, only to get there and they're like, "We don't have space for this. This is too many orders. We're not going to be able to get these out." I'm like, "I don't know legally if you're allowed to say that, but okay, we'll go to a different USPS."

Meha:

So a lot of it in the early days was me. But that was because I didn't have the financial resources to pay someone fairly, right? So I figured out pretty quickly what was the absolute bare minimum that I needed help with, and I am not a designer by trade. So I knew I needed help with the new monthly editions. It's new content. I was doing my own research and curating the content for Silk + Sonder month after month, but someone needed to bring that to life.

Meha:

So I was the first person, and then over time, I started to hire other kind of freelancers. We had this arrangement where most of the work wasn't full-time, anyways. So it was really, really lucky when I realized that I could leverage those types of resources, and some of our freelancers actually were customers of mine who really loved the product and wanted to help in any way they could. Then eventually fast-forward, I guess May or June-ish of 2020, I ended up closing our seed round led by Redpoint, which brought us to four million raised in total.

Kris:

Nice.

Meha:

That's when I could really commit to hiring a full-time team. So at first, our first employee happened to be from Stitch Fix, where I used to work, and she kind of handles all the operations side of things, because there were things that I needed to now get off my plate and

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

be less in the weeds so that I could start to focus on the other parts of our business and hiring other resources to carry out a bigger vision. So yeah, it was definitely a bit of a journey, but I think what's really critical is for people to realize that you don't have to go zero to 100 right away, right? You can start to create your army and also empower those around you to realize that you only need a few hours of their time, but they get to contribute to this very amazing and compelling vision that you have. Then once you have the financial resources to bring either them or new folks as full-time employees, you absolutely can and should.

Kris:

Yeah, that's really good. So when you started building the team, when you actually had that capacity to do so, what I love about what you're saying is you have the ability not only to hire the team, but also to hire people who had a certain level of experience and skill, too.

Meha:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kris:

So what did you have to do as the founder-CEO to prepare for and make those jobs ready to create the space to build this team? Did you manage people before?

Meha:

Not officially, so not officially, but I did. As a product manager, I think you get really good about influencing without authority, because they're technically your peers that you have to bring along on the ride with you. But officially, I did not have any direct reports. So that was definitely a learned skill, and I'm still learning. I think influencing with authority is a whole different piece.

Kris:

Yeah, that's a whole other [crosstalk 00:17:03].

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

You've got to figure [crosstalk 00:17:06].

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

Exactly, exactly. I think that's a learning I've had to make, where I can speak with a lot of conviction and a lot of strong opinion, but at the same time, I expect my team to push back, because oftentimes I'm not always right, and I don't want to be always right.

Kris:

No, it's great to have people who will tell you no.

Meha:

Yeah, yeah.

Kris:

I was leading my coaching call this morning with the How to CEO clients, and we were talking about that very thing, that as a female CEO especially, I had two calls today, and one of my other clients was talking about a CEO group that she is a part of. It's all men.

Meha:

Oh, man.

Kris:

Right? So there's that, and then B, just being at that level is very isolating. You can feel very isolated, because there isn't anybody giving you feedback-

Meha:

Yes.

Kris:

... or sort of going through the corners of your brain to get through those things. You can't do that with your team.

Meha:

Yep.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

That's not their responsibility.

Meha:

Yep.

Kris:

So what has been, then, for you the most challenging part of building this team? What kind of surprised you about managing people or leading people that you weren't expecting?

Meha:

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think there's many things. I think the first one is as you transition from founder to CEO, right, your role evolves a little bit, and you need to inspire your team to make some of those executive decisions within their scope without you. That's challenging when you've touched every part of the business. You may not know the best way to do things, but you know the scrappy way to do things. So you're constantly used to offering the how's. So one thing that I found challenging is when I pose a question or when I'm noticing a problem, I have a tendency to jump to the solution instead of pausing and saying, "What do you think is the best solution?" or "How would you do this if you were in my shoes?" or "This is yours. How will you tackle this problem?" That is not natural, right? For the problem-solvers, AKA the founders, it is so unnatural to pause and assume that someone's going to have an idea that-

Kris:

Well, then you'll have to watch them think.

Meha:

Yes. Yeah.

Kris:

It's exhausting.

Meha:

It's exhausting.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

I already know. I know the answer.

Meha:

(laughing). Absolutely. But it is so rewarding when you watch your employee maybe struggle at first, but able to arrive at the same, if not better solution that you had in mind. Then they're just never going to forget it, and they're going to feel ownership of it.

Kris:

Yeah. Then they can replicate that, too.

Meha:

Yes.

Kris:

So good, right?

Meha:

Yes, absolutely.

Kris:

What do you think has been sort of the biggest mistake you've made as you've been growing your team?

Meha:

Ooh, let me think about this. I think core values are incredibly important, and I think I'm lucky in that I worked for companies with great, great culture. So I knew that was going to be one of the [crosstalk 00:19:47].

Kris:

What I love for you about getting seed money ... Excuse me, for interrupting you, but you have to prep all that, right?

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal Episode Transcript

Meha:

Oh, yeah.

Kris:

You've got to show up with everything.

Meha:

Absolutely.

Kris:

So a lot of the bootstrappers out there, they do this as like an afterthought.

Meha:

Yeah.

Kris:

But when you have to go out into the world and say, "This is what we do, and this is what we're going to do. This is why, and this is the problem we're going to solve," and all the things that I know you have to do to prepare for the angel [crosstalk 00:20:10] angel prep meeting, yeah, you had to do that work. So I'm sorry. Continue [crosstalk 00:20:15].

Meha:

No, no, and I will say whether or not you're raising capital, I think the core values that you have for your company, A, the beauty is that you get to choose that. I mean, they're probably stemming from your own personal core values, right? I mean, ours are very simple, but they're totally me. It's about celebrating authenticity, practicing radical thoughtfulness, [inaudible 00:20:36] child, thinking outside the box. Those are our main core values.

Kris:

What was the one you said about child? You blocked out.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal Episode Transcript

Meha:

Embracing your inner child. So when you're silly, making time to be silly or play, that's what's going to inspire the creativity that we need to succeed at Silk + Sonder.

Kris:

Do you have a lot of threes in your numerology chart?

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

(laughing). [inaudible 00:21:00].

Meha:

I'm not sure, but that's probably it.

Kris:

We'll have to find that out.

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

That'll be the next interview [crosstalk 00:21:06].

Meha:

Yeah, that'll be a fun little exercise. Yeah. I'm an Aries in its truest definition.

Kris:

[crosstalk 00:21:12].

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

But anyways, I think the reason those values are important is whether or not you seek an advisor or an investor or a partner, like a romantic partner, those kind of carry out, right, outside of your company as well. So now I can't even remember, Kris. What was [crosstalk 00:21:26]?

Kris:

Well, we were talking about values and what is one of the biggest mistakes you made [crosstalk 00:21:29].

Meha:

Oh, biggest mistakes. Yes. Yeah. So the reason I bring up values is because I think you have to be very intentional with the interview questions you ask related to the values, as well as whatever you hire for. So in our case, we hire for being bright, thoughtful, and kind and of integrity. So in order for us to vet that, right, we should make sure that we have the right questions that are stemming from those very specific values or what we hire for. I think the reason I bring this up is chances are, many of the founders that I know, we're likable people. We're personable people. It's natural for us to get along with almost every candidate that we talk to. It becomes very difficult to see who's right for the company stage and who's right for the business and who's able to be a self-starter versus who might be good two years from now.

Meha:

So I think the mistake that I made early on was kind of jumping the gun sometimes on hires and kind of putting them at a disadvantage, right? Because you come into the chaos of a startup, and if you're used to structure, you're not going to enjoy it. I think those are the things that you have to be intentional as a founder to make sure that you're vetting and you're being fair to who you're bringing in, because you shouldn't be giving them any surprises.

Kris:

Yeah. Well, it's a great point, because I think one of the things that I know to be true about entrepreneurs is we really do see potential in everything.

Meha:

Yes.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

So that includes people.

Meha:

Yep.

Kris:

So they're amazing and friendly and so cool, and I can make them be an expert in insert here, right?

Meha:

Yeah, yeah.

Kris:

Then, of course, like you said, we set them up for failure. Then we have to deal with that part, and that's not any fun. I have to ask you, because I love that you brought up tying interview questions to values, because that's a big part of what we talk about also. With the values, the way that I like to also teach clients to think about values is the values are how you hire and fire, right? So I want to know how you know in an interview if someone's bright.

Meha:

Ooh, that's a great question.

Kris:

I know that can be job-specific, too, in the way that you ask the question. But I'll give you an example. We were just talking about this in my group. We were talking about how to know if somebody takes ownership, right? The first kind of interview question is, "Tell me about a time when you had to show and demonstrate [inaudible 00:23:53]." Then we have the other kind of interview question, which is, "Here's a scenario. How would you handle it?" Of course, my preference is actually witnessing people do things, right? So I either will make someone role-play, or what we were talking about with ownership is I would say to someone, "You know what? I'm going to send you three questions at the end of the day that I'd love for you to answer. Get those back to me by eight in the morning," and then we wouldn't send them.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

Oh, interesting. To see whether they would actually ...

Kris:

If they would email me and say, "Hey, I didn't get the questions you said you were going to send me."

Meha:

That's super interesting.

Kris:

Or if they don't and then I say in the morning, "Hey, I didn't see the questions come through," they'll see if they say, "Well, you didn't send them to me."

Meha:

Yeah. That is really interesting. I might try that.

Kris:

I know, but I ask about bright, because that's something we've been talking about as a team. We've been calling it quick-minded. So we've been also thinking like, "How"-

Meha:

How do you vet for that?

Kris:

"How do you vet that?" Yeah.

Meha:

Yeah. So I think there's two things that I typically do. So number one, for role-specific stuff, we actually have a pretty strong philosophy on take-home projects. I know they can be controversial for certain roles. However, for me, I think it shows you how this person can independently work. Given the stage of our company, it's really important. So I think there's certain roles where that's a good bit. For the bright question. I vet this in two ways. Number

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

one, I first ask, "Tell me your quick life story. Where were you born and raised? What brought you to what you do?" That really allows an individual to focus on the holistic picture of who they are and what brought them there, very much like a podcast, right? That's something you don't get to do always with interviews, right? You don't start at the very beginning. You just kind of start after college.

Meha:

So when I start to pick up there is how can they articulate their story? Which pieces are they focusing on? What do they sound most energized by? Then I also do a case study question, and that's specific to the role. Kind of to your quick-minded piece, it's how does this person critically think on the spot? How can they diagnose the problem and come up with a solution or multiple solutions and then convince me that it's the right solution? It helps me see how they're thinking about the edge cases, and it helps me think about how they're responding and what their body language is like. It all feeds into the thoughtfulness and the brightness of this individual, because you can be smart, right? But to be bright, you have to be willing to go deep. That can only be solved in a response to a difficult question.

Kris:

Yeah. In my experience, this has been an interesting time, because my business is growing also. We have this core team of women that are just fricking quick. It doesn't matter what their role is. Between one of us, we're going to figure something out. It becomes very obvious when someone doesn't have that. So yeah, and I think as entrepreneurs, I love that you brought it up, because I think it's an unspoken truth that most of us actually should be hiring that quality-

Meha:

Yes, yes.

Kris:

... because of the nature of the business that we run, no matter what it is that we do. We've got to have people who can think and be resilient and quick and bright. So I love that. Okay. So what are your favoritest books?

Meha:

Ooh, I'm so happy you asked me this question. I have a laundry list. So *The ONE Thing*, really great book, especially for entrepreneurs, talks about how you can't just go from one extreme, work, to the other extreme, family, work, family. You have to really think about the different buckets of your life. A lot of Silk + Sonder's inspired from that book and really balancing your

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

spiritual life as well as your personal goals as well as your money management. *Essentialism* is another great [crosstalk 00:27:29].

Kris:

Oh my gosh. Love it, love it.

Meha:

Yeah. So you know, all about *Essentialism*. *Multipliers* is ... Have you read that one?

Kris:

No, I haven't, but [crosstalk 00:27:36].

Meha:

Oh, man. It is amazing. Honestly, it is really, really empowering for a founder to see how you might be accidentally diminishing your team by qualities that you consider your strengths. For me, I'm an idea generator, but that's actually diminishing the multipliers that I'm hiring. So that's a great book. I love ... Oh my gosh. I'm going to butcher the title. I think it's *Predictably Irrational*, but it's about pricing strategies and the psychology behind that.

Kris:

Nice.

Meha:

Then *Power of Now*, which is great. So those would be probably amongst my top five. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kris:

[crosstalk 00:28:13]. I'd love to know that. Then what thought leaders do you follow?

Meha:

Brene Brown. Love her. I don't know if Reese Witherspoon counts, but I love-

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

She does. I love me some Reese.

Meha:

I love Reese because I love thought leaders, especially women, who are unapologetically feminine, but multifaceted and just so bright and embody our core values, right? I think Brene and Reese are fantastic. Then other thought leaders, I would say [inaudible 00:28:43] is a coach, and he does all the positive intelligence and saboteur test-type stuff and research around what are your self-sabotaging beliefs, and so I really love him. Then, obviously, you've got your Tim Ferrisses of the world. Love me some Tim sometimes. So I think it's mostly those folks.

Kris:

That's very cool. So what's next for you? Where are we going?

Meha:

The journey never stops, Kris. I don't even know where the destination is. I think we are really leveling up our community offerings. So Sonder Club and Sonder Circle is really what's next this year, is to deepen that connection to others on a shared journey for personal growth. I think Weight Watchers has figured it out for weight loss. Noom has figured it out for weight loss. Peloton has figured it out for fitness. It's time for mental wellness to have that same peer-to-peer-driven mentality.

Meha:

So that's really what's next at Silk + Sonder, And then I think for me, personally, I think it's how does Silk + Sonder create the next gold standard for company culture where work-life balance is not clocking in and clocking out and separating. It's about combining and recognizing that ambition is powered by self-acceptance and everyone that works at Silk + Sonder or works on the periphery of Silk + Sonder, whereas a customer of Silk + Sonder can define ambition on their own terms and let it evolve through life stages.

Kris:

Right.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

So for me, I think about that a lot, because we're trying to build a culture that celebrates mental wellness, but also combines it with championship sports team-winning philosophies. I think it's interesting. It's a really fun challenge that I hope will be immensely rewarding once we get back into building an office. (laughing).

Kris:

I was going to ask you, right? Are you in a building yet, or no?

Meha:

No, we're not. So I raised my round, grew the company, and hired my first founding employees in the midst of a pandemic. So we'll have to-

Kris:

[crosstalk 00:30:46]. We're all virtual yet.

Meha:

Yeah. We're all virtual right now.

Kris:

Are they all in the Bay or no?

Meha:

No. There's a few in the Bay, a few in LA, a few in Texas. Yeah.

Kris:

Do your employees get a membership and get the journals every month?

Meha:

Yeah, they do. They do. In fact, as part of our meeting culture, we integrate some of the Sonder Circle exercises or do a prompt together once in a while, just to practice what we're preaching.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

Well, I just got this idea, so I'm going to give it to you.

Meha:

Yes. Tell me.

Kris:

So you're welcome. Have you ever read *The Dream Manager*?

Meha:

I have not.

Kris:

Matthew Kelly.

Meha:

Oh.

Kris:

It's really, really good. It's a parable, so you'll read it. It's like Lencioni stuff. You'll read it in a day. It's fast, but it's the story of a company that their premise was in order to make the company the best version of itself, you had to help employees become the best version of themselves.

Meha:

I love that.

Kris:

So they hired a dream manager.

Meha:

Wow.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

The dream manager, I have goosebumps. There's so much I could talk about this book, because it was such a pivotal book for me. But the dream manager is somebody that worked in the company and worked for the founder. That person's job was to work with all of the employees to help them manifest whatever their dream was.

Meha:

Wow. That's beautiful.

Kris:

Whether it was job-related or not was irrelevant. As I'm listening to you, you could just totally have a Sonder-

Meha:

Dream manager.

Kris:

Yeah. You totally could.

Meha:

Oh my gosh.

Kris:

They would fit right into your culture and feed the ... Right? Because the businesses that are the most successful are the ones that have the most integrity inside and out.

Meha:

Yes, absolutely.

Kris:

As your business is growing, you're going to get, of course, those invitations to settle or to compromise, or I'm sure you already have. Your determination and commitment as a CEO is going to really be what drives that. So I'm so excited for you. I love your business, and I love

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

how you're complementing a need so brilliantly and so beautifully in the world, because as I've mentioned, we need more of you in the world-

Meha:

Oh, thank you.

Kris:

... more people like you to step in. So I guess what I would ask you to share, I was just coaching a beautiful new client. She's a CEO of a gorgeous business, and she's [inaudible 00:32:59] three million. One of the things that she says she wants to work on is her fear of failure.

Meha:

Ooh.

Kris:

So I'd be curious to know what advice you give women who ... I mean, everybody has their story about failure, but I do think women keep themselves small, much more so than men do for that reason.

Meha:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Kris:

What advice do you give women?

Meha:

Yeah, that's a great one. I think the best advice I have around fear of failure is it's never one and done, failure, right? It's a learning. I think the first time, it feels like a mistake. It feels heavy. But the only thing that'll help you overcome that fear of failure is one baby step towards action. Once you do that one baby step, you start to instill this confidence to keep trying and keep going. You realize, "Why should we care if we fail?" If we fail at the beauty, especially if you own your own company, it's that almost anything you do is not irreversible. It's always a step in the right direction.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

Right.

Meha:

Nobody around you cares, right? You could fail all day, but who's really watching you? Are you looking at everyone else's failures?

Kris:

I don't know. They all know I made a typo. They all know there's a typo on my website.

Meha:

Oh my God. Oh my God. I always share this story with new employees, because I tell them, I say, "If you join Silk + Sonder, you're never going to get penalized for experimenting and failing, but you will get dinged if you don't try," right? "If you don't try to make that failure fast enough so that you can learn from it." It's much easier said than done, but I remember distinctly when it was back at nights and weekends, baby project, I accidentally took down the entire subscription platform for Silk + Sonder, so I lost all the customers' information, and I freaked out, because you as a former customer know that you don't get your journal on time, it's like [crosstalk 00:34:38].

Kris:

"Where's my journal? Where's my journal?" [crosstalk 00:34:41].

Meha:

(laughing). Exactly. But you know what? Even in that moment, I was able to figure it out and revert it back. If I can do that as a CEO, everyone should be willing to take those risks. I would say don't be so hard on yourself, because chances are, you're not going to fail. There's that beautiful quote. It says, "What if I fall?" Then the response to that is, "Oh, my darling, but what if you fly?"

Kris:

Right.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Meha:

Anytime I have fear of failure, I think of that, and I'm like, "No way."

Kris:

"Let's go."

Meha:

"Let's go." Yeah.

Kris:

I love that. I think for all of us who've been negotiating businesses during this pandemic, right, I've been at this for a while, and I think all of us have those worst case scenarios and the what-ifs. Listen to me. We just had the what-if year. We did it. So we got a pandemic that halted shipping and messed up the supply chain, right? I mean, we had the year there was no business that went untouched. So failure is a part of the process.

Kris:

The other piece that I always love to share is that the other thing about failure is it doesn't come with required emotion. It's just what you make it mean that triggers the emotion, right? We can do embarrassment. We can do shame. We can do worry. We can do humiliation. These are all the emotions that typically go with failure, right? We can stand in that emotion for a hot minute and move along, right?

Meha:

Yeah, absolutely.

Kris:

Oh my goodness. Well, thank you so much for being here with me and for coming on the podcast with a chick you don't know.

Meha:

(laughing).

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

I certainly am glad to know you and chat with you. Like I mentioned, I fangirled when I got your [crosstalk 00:36:19].

Meha:

Oh, that's so sweet.

Kris:

I'm really impressed with what you've built, and I hope a lot of women hear about it and go and check it out. So where do we send people?

Meha:

Yeah. So you can go to silkandsonder.com, S-I-L-K-A-N-D-S-O-N-D-E-R-dot-com, and then subscribe to Silk + Sonder and be part of our growing Sonder fam. We have members in every single state across the country, and it's just the most beautiful community you'll ever be a part of. It's where we exist alongside one another even if we don't have the same political or social views or the same upbringing, and it's so humbling and rewarding to see the thoughtfulness of every member. You can also follow us on Instagram, [@silkandsonder](https://www.instagram.com/silkandsonder).

Kris:

It's so pretty.

Meha:

Yes. Thank you. Thank you. I'll tell our social media. Yeah, they're [crosstalk 00:37:06].

Kris:

They're doing a good job.

Meha:

Yeah, great job. But yeah, thank you, Kris. I know I'm an exception to your rule, and so hopefully I did pass the test. (Laughing).

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal

Episode Transcript

Kris:

You did. You answered all the questions right, because I'm always like, "Somebody might say, 'Oh, values are dumb.'" Okay. [crosstalk 00:37:23].

Meha:

(laughing).

Kris:

The guy [inaudible 00:37:28] who has the talk show, the Graham whatever, he has the [crosstalk 00:37:31].

Meha:

Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. I have one last plug, especially for your clients and anyone who's a founder that's also a listener. But I will say if there's one thing I've learned and one thing that I hope I can hold myself accountable for, it is to always run the process your way. Be your authentic self, because that is your best self. So if you're having a day and you're not feeling it, take a break. If you want to run your fundraising process your way, not make it a numbers game, do it that way. You don't have to listen to anybody. Your most important stakeholder is first your customer and then yourself, and trust your gut.

Kris:

Trust your gut.

Meha:

Trust your gut.

Kris:

So brilliant. Thank you so much. I'm so grateful. It's just lovely to meet you. Everybody, go to silkandsonder.com immediately.

Meha:

Yes.

Ep #113: Conversation with Meha Agrawal Episode Transcript

Kris:

(laughing). Great. Thanks.

Meha:

Thanks, Kris.

Kris:

One more thing before you go. In a world of digital courses and online content, I like to work with my clients live, because I know that when you have someone you can work with, ask questions of, and meet with, you're so much more likely to get the success that you want. So head on over to howtoceolive.com to learn more about our very exciting, very exclusive program just for female entrepreneurs. We'll see you there.