She saved $30k/year canceling Webflow | Anita Kirkovska, Head of Growth & Marketing @ Vellum

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Show notes

Anita Kirkovska leads Growth and Marketing at Vellum, a YC-backed AI startup. She came up through data science before moving into marketing, which means she approaches organic growth, content, and AI tooling from a different angle than most.

In the last few months she's rebuilt Vellum's website off Webflow into a custom Next.js stack, shipped an AI-native GEO content pipeline, and turned off more SaaS tools than she's added.

My 7 biggest takeaways from our conversation:

1. It's not about AI. It's about you.

Her line: if you use AI you can be better or worse at your job, and if you don't use AI you can be better or worse at your job. The tool doesn't decide. The most common failure she sees is marketers using AI before they have built the system, then trusting the model over their own judgment and losing agency. Own your process first. AI is just an amplifier.

1. Migrating off Webflow wasn't a "Claude Code can do everything" story.

Shipping new pages had gotten slow, PLG experiments were hard to run across two disconnected systems, and engineers didn't want to work in the visual builder. Coding agents plus the right process fixed that. But Webflow handles a lot out of the box (sitemap, robots.txt, redirects, schema, image optimization), and all of that becomes your job.

1. Get a strong technical partner and test small first.

Her CTO spent weekends replicating pages into code to build confidence before they committed. She wrote a full PRD of everything that had to transfer so they didn't lose rankings. The migration itself took one week.

1. Velocity becomes technical debt without shared patterns.

Coding agents are still weak at design. Her fix: shared components, AGENT.md guidance files, review flows and clear ownership, so anyone can ship a page that stays on brand. A deliberate bet to invest now, because the agents will get better.

1. For skills, you own the process, AI owns the docs.

When writing skill files, a human should define the actual workflow and rules. That's your domain. For anything technical, like how a skill connects to an API, let AI write the documentation. Go slow first to go fast.

1. The ROI of AI is not cost cutting.

She saved $30k a year leaving Webflow, but she wants to double the spend on intelligence tokens for 10x or 100x the output. It's not about saving money. It's about not paying for things that slow you down.

1. AI is pushing toward flatter orgs and high-impact individual contributors.

In her view, she can contribute more as a high-impact IC than in a pure management role. With the right systems, each person can produce what used to take a team. She believes AI will ultimately create more work than it removes, though the transition will be painful for some roles and regions.

Let's connect

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Full conversation

[00:00:00] A lot of people want to use AI. A lot have their own assistant that it's on the phone, computer... That does things for them but education is still not there. They don't know what they've done now. If you had to compare AI with a previous breakthrough innovation would you rather compare to something like Internet or industrial revolution? If I have a good answer to that question, but like these days if you use AI You can be worse or better at your job And if you don't use the eye. You can do worse for better. it's not about AI. It is on you. before we dive in you're listening to the masters of search podcast with me Your host Nicholas Bushner each week as sit down With some of these modest people around the world and SEO and AI search To bring you their strategies mental models and top pieces of actionable advice.

[00:00:53] If you enjoy this podcast, don't forget to like and subscribe. then follow it in your favorite podcasting app or YouTube. It helps us get top-notch guests and create the best possible content for you! Let's dive into todays episode. Anita Akirkovskar leads growth & marketing at Valem – a YC backed AI startup. She came up through data science before moving into Marketing which means she approaches organic growth, Content and AI tooling from different angles than most In the last few months, she's rebuilt Valam's website of Webflow into a custom Next.js stack shipped an AI native Geo content pipeline and turned off more SaaS tools than she has added. There is lot to unpack I feel so let us get right to it.

[00:01:37] Welcome to the podcast. Anita Thank you for your invitation! Yeah, so cool to have you on and also heads up right at the beginning. We are hosting our first conference AI search conference. It's called The Masters of Search Conference this October in Berlin. You find all the information in the description or On mastersofsearch.com And Anita will also be on stage and I'm super excited that we'll have you. And if you want to learn more about what she's doing, what she learned along the way beyond this podcast? I definitely recommend to check out the site depending on when you're listening to this. maybe still one of the early bird tickets otherwise just a regular ticket and join us in Berlin for the conference.

[00:02:22] yeah i think. um That presentation is gonna be an extension off everything that we're going to cover here. Yeah, I mean now we're recording this at the beginning of July. The conference is in October? I feel like an AI time calculation. This is basically five years so i also expect you to do a lot Of interesting stuff In the meantime. yeah see oh god like october it's still far away. yeah I Also got the feedback from some people that they cannot plan for october and july. So I think time has really flown. But anyway, let's talk more about you and what I would be interested in to kick it off is... ...I also said

that the introduction already. You basically have a data science background but how did end up marketing?

[00:03:18] It isn't natural path right? Yeah definitely not! Ever since i was little this creative kid always wanted me do one extra thing like early on how to get more attention whenever I was doing any presentations or projects. And so that actually excited me, but then everyone was starting to just learn all of these new technologies and the technology started to enable all this business processes in like how companies were being built. My thinking at that time is you know...I need to truly understand how products are being built if I really want to be the greatest marketer. And so that took me through a path where actually studied computer science, and my degree in computer science actually taught me on like how do you better problem solving?

[00:04:17] How to change perspective of approach things which i don't think would have learned it when studying marketing. If That Makes Sense expand on this knowledge in the way that it's gonna prepare me for what to come into future. And like, this was like, twenty sixteen and I saw a lot of our subjects at school actually were covering AI but like... AI at that time is very rigid model didn't do anything good. But okay! This is the future. Like i need to get ahead. So um..I got a scholarship I moved to Florida I studied data science, and actually started in the golden ages of AI when like... When paper was published on how transformers could be built to power models that we're using today. The papers attention is all you need.

[00:05:14] And i was studying at school building my own neural networks using it. And so like I was deep into the trenches of, oh this is so freaking cool! Like ten years from now. and at that time i've been thinking like ten years From Now? It happened two years after That? I Was like okay companies are gonna run with This The whole industry's going to be changed because Of This? Like I need To Get Ahead Of This. So that took me Into a Path. Okay Now Im Done With Understanding Parts Yeah, the technical parts of any product and I like how to build a successful product. And now i can truly think about okay? How Can I position products Like this? so i started To work with A lot Of startups. most of my background Is working With yc startups in that field like In machine learning in ai and having had The chance to understand the Technical components Enabled me to just be better at My job and Be better at positioning Products within verticals That i cared About.

[00:06:16] Thinking about the users, they're gonna use this product thinking how I can market better to them. and like these days. I think like i've made The best decision because now I can enable my team To use AI Because it has become so easy. but Like I have the right frameworks on How to approach every problem In any different type of task no matter whether that's marketing Product or just growing a team. And So You're probably one of the most A.I native marketers I've come across. do you feel like that? your computer science data science background also, you digging into these papers these transformer papers? Do you feel it helps in not having to chase every trend comes up on LinkedIn but actually approach things more fundamentally and from first principles, if you want to call it like that?

[00:07:12] Oh yeah. It definitely helps me a lot And That is something I have found to be big challenge with marketer teams because they would use AI prematurely. Its not even about following trends. its how can build the right process for your tasks so that AIs actually helpful. And so some of the challenges that I've seen is, you know marketers would use AI to do their work before they even start thinking about a system. In such scenario basically just let go and depend on the AI. decide how your work will be done. That feels powerful in a sense. If you want to automate like a certain task that feels very repetitive, very manual. But then your not really producing the impact That You should produce within an organization Because Your Not using your common sense You're starting To trust your AI A lot more than you are Trusting your own Judgment.

[00:08:21] You Are Starting Just Like Loose Agency In The Process And Then You Stuck in This Loop Of having to chase AI in their outputs and having to fix whatever AI is gonna do for your work. And so like. if you come from a different background where you haven't really understood AI, how it can impact your work then... ...and you want to chase it? If the manager says that they need to use AI or be more productive here's what other teams are doing. there was a lot of pressure on people using AI because limit, they do not really think about like giving some time to themself. To actually question the process Like how should I approach this? Should i spend a lot of time into building my system? How should I communicate About This to My Manager?

[00:09:14] How Should I tell my manager that wait We should adopt AI and we should be using AI but what is right? structure here? How can I be more successful with it? And so like, a lot of people are just getting lost through that. Yeah definitely my background has helped me build the confidence to communicate right now and to communicate that with the team That i currently work With So they get To Build Like A System Of Thinking In This New Age For People To Have More Context. Can You Give Us First a quick elevator pitch on what Vellum is doing. And then secondly, take us through a normal day in Anita's life leading growth and marketing at Vellom? Yeah so the quick one liner for Vellem is that we're building a personal AAS system.

[00:10:08] they can take part of your work and it also help you with like your live admin ops stuff. We're building this assistance so that it's completely yours. You get to define how its gonna work with you, and your going basically transfer Your line of thinking into an assistant. That should be like your sidekick because right now if use chat jupiter or clod It feels very specific Chatbot someone built for a mass of people versus with vellum a very lightweight harness that it's enabling you to build whatever you want. And when I say, To Build Whatever You Want like... That might feel heavy for non-technical people but using AI these days is so easy. we come back to the systems of thinking ...you just need to apply the right process to make yourself more productive and So We Really Want Help People Achieve Greatness by building their own system.

[00:11:14] they get to decide how its gonna work And so on. the daily, my days look like at Vellum. We're doing a lot of experiments. I think we are going to also cover how our content pipeline is built right now but it's a lot. innovation around determining Could be marketed to a specific group of people on the market right now because as you can imagine like building up personal assistant and having to compete with like Claude anthropic and open AI, it's very tough job. Everything around engineering is pretty much automated. The biggest weight falls upon distribution and having the growth team in the marketer team to actually find a unique way on how you can build a repetitive system that it's gonna bring a lot of people into top-of-the funnel.

[00:12:18] But I'm going see this thing, like these last few weeks my biggest focus was on solving activation day one... ...and retention because its new novel concept we're trying building right now. people right now think that our product is like child GPT and Like, that's only one-tenth of what they can do with this assistant because it enables so many other things. And The biggest challenge right now Is there a lot pool on the market? A lot of people want to use AI! A lot have their own Assistant That its under phone or computer in the browser. that does things for them But education still not here. they still don't know what, right? So like I cannot really spin up an SEO pipeline where i'm going to target people asking questions on what they can do with their assistant because They Still Don't Know What Is Possible.

[00:13:15] so you need somehow circumvent that and find another way to inspire them of Like What Could Be Possible With Their Assistance. It's a lot about moving the right pieces Right Now On How Do We Build The Right process within activation and retention so that people actually stick with the product.

And they're enabled, and excited, and delighted from their products to continue using it in a way that they dreamed of... if that makes sense! A hundred percent. I would also recommend everybody we will put the link To vellum in the description to just check it out yourself and like Try it out if you like. but You rightfully mentioned your content pipeline. I think this is a topic that we definitely have to look into before We do that?

[00:14:01] I want to take Just one step before because what Actually made me aware of you was your post about migrating the Valam site off webflow. So this was a post that you put out on LinkedIn and I found it very interesting also thinking behind Because it was not your average. Yeah, I can do everything with cloud code post. It was more nuanced and it was very Very interesting to read it from like a first-hand real life experience. so Can you take me? And also listeners with you and back to that point and let us know Why he decided to move the Valem site of Webflow, because I think there are still a lot people that consider Webflow one-of-the go-to solutions for content management systems website builders etc.

[00:14:57] And now you obviously had some good reasons for wanting to abandon it. and what were those? Yeah! Don't get me wrong. like Webflow has enabled my work For last ten years It's been my favorite tool ever used And I feel like it was so helpful for a lot of marketing teams. It was the best product where you could easily spin up beautiful websites, where you can easily manage content... ...it's easy to use it for SEO and track everything. in regards to SEO. They handled things through first-class features that everyone just enjoyed. But then they used coding agents. You get to see how fast you can move Again with the right processes, and then you start to question yourself. You started thinking like well if coding agents can help us build better products for our business?

[00:15:56] And we get- If we could built some internal tooling that fast why are still stuck in this no code realm of possibilities? Right? so at first it was a lot of discussions my engineering team, and with the CEO on what should we do? And evaluating how fast are we moving our content in our pages. Honestly one thing is creating SEO articles or geo-articles for the last six months but then also it's about creating a lot of programmatic landing pages and testing different messaging. We're a startup that is still defining our messaging. And I feel like every other week, we have new campaign or demo for which we need landing page where want to test new messaging and then saw the friction in publishing those pages.

[00:16:51] sometimes it would take a week work with contractors outside of company because engineers they didn't wanted to work with Webflow. you needed learn visual builder. They didn't like the experience. You're, why are we doing this? Why isn't everything in code?". And for marketers it's always oh because we don't know how to code and we also need to be enabled.". That is a problem that Webflow actually solved for a lot of startups. but these days when you get to see the full picture shipping new pages has become very slow. I think Webflow had a lot issues with their visual builder And just like the pricing changes and all of that, it was so confusing. I feel to a lot of marketers It started to be very buggy.

[00:17:43] For us is really hard to run PLG experiments because we're building a product A consumer product And then it's truly important for us to just follow the whole user journey of like, The source where this user came through. The landing page and how do we pass that information into the app? That disconnect between Webflow in our App made things very hard-to-manage. We were building connector scripts between the two isolated systems. It was still slow! Again as I said engineers weren't able easily contribute and help us scale. So those were like kind of the things that we've evaluated, but then also Webflow was so slow to adapt To this new Like coding agents realm Of Things or like in this new agentik era.

[00:18:34] They didn't do anything. I remember twenty-twenty. they Were talking about oh We're gonna

introduce all these EA features. You are going be able to move faster and faster. None of That has happened. And it feels like they Didn't caught up AI, we're starting to use AI in a more prominent way. We are seeing how fast it could be. and then the question arises so well can you actually manage your content on our marketing page with AI? And that's where everything starts. During that migration process what did you learn or what were the most like yay moments? I don't want to use words here that get us an explicit content label. So what's happening now, Moments? What were their highs and lows? Frankly it is a bit of complex process And i was so lucky to have the support from our CTO.

[00:19:40] Number one advice if we can give some advice you need to have a great technical partner in this. Like, I'm very...I have a very technical background but then like having to rely on him To make better decisions around how do we actually implement it? That was awesome and really helpful. And so what did we learn? So i think In our first iterations We first wanted to build Confidas. that is gonna work Because there's still a lot of limits to AI When it comes to like building pages and coding, you know Like Vibe code at Slop all of that. And we wanted To make sure That Coding agents At that time when We were making the transfer This was January Of this year They're good enough so that We can build a process around them.

[00:20:31] So what we started to actually experiment with Is my CTO. He would just enjoy his Sunday afternoon and he would run like a given coding agent in the back to try to replicate our Webflow page into code. And, I think Claude used in the browser other coding agents. just evaluate them but then also learn more about how it will behave right? So that's number one thing you should be thinking of set up these small experiments where you could test whether this process can work for you. And then also write down the things that you would notice of. like, I don't know Webflow. they have a lot of JS scripts and a lot compressed code That it's sometimes harder for coding agents to parse into other type of code.

[00:21:27] And jot-down all those things and get a good partner from the engineering team to help you understand those patterns. So that was the first thing, And then once we figured out how we can transfer the page... One weekend he just sends me this link. He's like look at it This is one-to-one To our homepage. Frankly It wasn't one-on-one. But his engineering brain sees that as one-o-one. My marketing brain. I see a lot of inconsistencies And i saw lots of sloppiness Seventy percent there and that makes me enough, you know excited to actually proceed with this right. so again like he needs my perspective And I needed his. And at that point we started too To think okay well Apparently. We can do this. What are the next steps?

[00:22:20] And we started to define a process. The process basically was relying on me to write down all of the requirements that we need to do in order to transfer the content into this new repo so that we don't hurt our SEO ranking, right? So there are a lot things. Webflow handles out-of-the box for you like the sitemap it generates robots TXT. It handles maybe technical SEO performance stuff. You haven't really thought about being a marketer and using a SaaS tool that handles all of it for you. And so there are a lot of primitives in Webflow, but they need to now handle by yourself. So no, that's your job! That feels tricky because seems like creating more work for yourselves. But if the value from this transfer exceeds what you can do as marketing team then its worth it.

[00:23:19] When building project The KPIs that you're trying to reach is actually, it makes sense with the effort that your gonna put into this project right? So like find a great CTO partner. If I didn't have him i think would've been very challenging. Start experimenting small and fast To test coding agents Because if you just decide on one coding agent without testing It's going be harder for you. come back to something else. Then Webflow comes with alot of primitives You need write down like a proper PRD plan where you outline everything that you need to transfer, and it's a lot of work. Like I'm not gonna

joke about this but like i had like a full notion dog... That actually I am going be showcasing my checklist at the conference..I planned to do that!

[00:24:07] But like You NEED TO THINK ABOUT ALL OF THIS THINGS!! And I feel like MY PROCESS ALSO HAS ENABLED A LOT OF MY MARKETER FRIENDS BECAUSE LIKE I GET TO SHARE THIS CHECKLIST WITH THEM NOW!!! So they're- They are NOT actually thinking about it alot. And then you set up a challenging thing, coding agents even today in July right now. They're not really good at design. they struggle with the same and so we've made decision back than of like where okay into putting more work to making these pages look like they have common and consistent theme even if that means we're gonna spend a lot more thinking tokens on them or time from ourselves just to make it work, because our bet is coding agents are going be better.

[00:25:03] They will become better in design so its better. get ahead of yourselves here and start doing this. then reap the benefits once the coding agents were better. But these days, honestly it's all about trying to handle that process of like. how do we keep a consistent design? So whenever my content marketing lead wants to publish new landing page. How I enable him actually published something that is actually consistent with the whole brand day without having them think twice. and so there are lot things i can talk if you want go into details And like how do I actually enable them? It's right to cover as much as possible and we should definitely put. this is a reminder, but i also want to confirm that from my own experience because We Also migrated our site of WordPress To cloud code.

[00:25:57] And then it was very humbling Experience Because on the one hand you can basically Do everything But Then You have to be more Thoughtful in Deciding what do you actually want? And I feel like this is exactly what you just said, especially then also with design. You have to get really clear on What Do You Want because if you tell Claude or whatever coding agent codex etc. that it should look nice It Should Look Like Modern tacky then this basically means nothing and you will have some very generic designs. So I just wanted to confirm that a hundred percent. but before we talk about enabling the team, how it actually looks like in practice because i also feel super important for other leaders who want to enable their teams to use AI more.

[00:26:56] Let's quickly look into that content pipeline, because I feel like people listening to this podcast would be very curious. So what can you share about the content pipeline? How it works? The content pipeline is straightforward. Our project lives in a next JS repo right now and we handle all of the code behind the landing pages there or behind the website, right? It's well connected with our app as well. So like every time I would want to run a PLG experiment with new messaging. it is so easy for me to chat with ClotCode and pass some events into an app then to pass some event in our analytics platform that we use And its just working with clotcode to enable me do this Like i don't even use any sass.

[00:27:51] now the question like, how do you handle your content? Like what... How do you build a Content Management System. Should you built it from scratch or should use a Headless CMS? for us It was really important to use a headless CMS and What I mean by that is this CMS is just integrated with our project. We publish content through the CMS without waiting For someone to redeployed the website And so that means, my team right now can just use the API from that CMS using their assistance. They can write and publish content by telling their agents to like publish this. So it's literally like here is an article... Just publish for me! And they have a whole sequence of rules on how that gets to be published.

[00:28:48] What are the APIs that tasks should use? How do we create cover images on the fly? how Do We link to other links in the website. So, how do we handle interlinking and format these articles like for SEO or GEO? have different types of formatting. within those two we have different type of article

that were writing. A lot of the work right now is about creating those rules and documenting them in markdown files so that my team doesn't get to think even a minute more than what they need. They write great content or use some cases, we make trade-offs like sometimes you put much effort into your contents but also rely on your assistant to do it. however he already has all these rules through those markdown files so that the assistant is going to create less AI slot for you.

[00:29:48] But then, image generations format build out of the pages. we have rules documented in a lot of these files That their assistants have access too So every time they get to publish content it's properly handled and right now works like hundred percent. Can you share a little bit more about these skill files? What exactly do, Do You have in those? how detailed are they? is it like How many skill files aren't? because I feel Like some people Have had the experience of working with skills and Claude co-work. For example or in Claude In some shape or form. but i Feel that there's still A lot Of room to educate People About how To leverage skills And The best way possible. Yeah Definitely agree. I think what i've learned about writing the skill files is that first you need to document the process for yourself.

[00:30:45] You need to know, What kind of information do you need provide? For a skill file then it's not only a file. It can be a folder with this skill file inside and another like documents that handle. I don't know. API requirements credentials on all that I mean, not credentials. You don't put the credentials in the skills. they're stored securely but how do you connect with this system? What are the labels that you need to map in order to publish an article? How do look up things and so like try document every bit of data for certain thing. on writing these files or rules a human is more readily equipped. um the information and for some ai is like actually pretty useful. And so I can tell you what i mean by that, So for example i was working with my content marketer lead in uh...I think in June..and we started to do this like hands-on sessions because like i wanted like a frame of reasoning on how he can enable his assistant to do better work, because he was feeling very challenged in how his assistant was working.

[00:32:03] Because it's creating a lot of slop and I don't know what to do about that or i get more work... It is actually harder for me because I feel like i'm going in circles. And those are the things that you get to hear from people who were really new to AI, and he's actually very experienced with AI... ...and can still fall into a trap! So what we started doing in June was having this hands-on session with him.. ..and it was like forget about the outcome of the output. Forget about your skill created only by AI. He would ask his assistant if they could create their own skills for me. find a way to write it down. He didn't even sit down, think about what should be in those files because he wanted to move fast and that's an illusion that AI gives us right?

[00:32:54] Because like oh now I can move fast! Why don't i just ask my assistant? Like I can do this. And then put on the side you have two hours. we're gonna define these process based on them. we are going to write first draft of skill. So I advocate for this a lot within our company because you need to first own your process. You're doing this work, like...you are the expert! You bring the domain experience. Like AI is great and other things but you bring the Domain Experience And YOU bring the guardrails on how this assistant should work in specific tasks. And so, like then we wrote it down. It's just like oh well this is so good! Like I get to organize my thoughts better because they would work on the framework and structure of these documents.

[00:33:43] Then when you write down the outline there are certain rules that need to follow in writing skills. but essentially... You know? You'd need to test them out. You'll first have to write your version, give it a system ask your assistant to do a task using the file, see how he's going to do it. Then you come back to the file and update them so that they also need some time in experimenting with the file as their assistant is using it.". So first we did this session which was really productive. I always advocate for that. then she started to use his assistant. The process what better. but there were still issues. And

when i said AI Actually, good at documenting stuff for very specific things is that I don't want to go and read documentation.

[00:34:33] And write down all of these rules on how the skills should integrate with Sanitas API which are like the headless CMS we use. AI's great for that! For that component just ask your assistant Write Down a Documentation On How This Skill Should Work With The System. And so for anything technical related, AI is great. For any thing process-related you need to own the process and test it over and over. So like these days he's just running wild. He has the best processes The best skills. Most of our users actually are using his skills because now everything set up from start to finish And any assistant that would use those skills is going to be like ten times more productive and better at doing the task than any assistant or AI out of the box.

[00:35:24] Would you agree, especially with skills that touch the process? That also touched on the shape output we get... You have to go slow first. so it goes fast. So you have to take that time, actually make sure the foundation is well because otherwise how can we expect a great output from a mediocre input? Agreed. Garbage in and garbage out right? Yeah I think. but also touched on so many important principles like AI. it's just a tool And We Have To Understand What It Is Good For Where Its Not Good Out Of The Box But Where We Can Make It Good, basically. And I always...I don't know if you had to compare AI to a previous breakthrough innovation would you rather compare it to something like the internet or rather through something like The Industrial Revolution?

[00:36:22] Because i feel Like It's Hard To See A New Technology That Is Just Unfolding and To Understand What Do We Do With It. But Then On The Other Hand Its Sometimes Helpful. How did other things start and how we humans adapted to it? And with the internet, at first people didn't really understand what you can do. Now look us recording this podcast based on the Internet. so... I feel like if i have a good answer for that question but let me tell something about my friends last week. is they said these days when using AI you could be worse or better in your job? But, and if you don't use AI. You can be worse or better at your job? And so like it's not about a high It's-it's Not About AI! IT'S ABOUT LIKE... IT'S ABOt YOU!

[00:37:18] ITS ABOUT YOU! EXACTLY! Like it Can Make You Worse Or Better! IT IS ON YOU! LIKE HOW YOU USE IT! AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TOOL OR INNOVATION TO CONNECT THIS WITH BUT LIKE IT ESSENTIALLY COMES BACK TO YOUR DEMAND EXPERIENCE. AND THAT'S WAY ENGINEERS ARE SO GOOD WITH IT. That's why engineers are so good with it because AI solves most of their work, which is easily verifiable. If you code something, you could easily verify whether that code is working versus if you use AI for a marketing campaign how do you verify? Whether the output is good or not? It's hard right and I feel like engineers also were able to write better prompts like the pre-reasoning models, they weren't really good at just that reasoning.

[00:38:11] Right? And you needed to prompt them well and skills is another component of where your still prompting a model. but don't need very specific in how you prompted. You just need be very specific about your prompts or rules About process and your rules. Before two years ago it was. How do I How do I communicate this in the best way? how Do i write, The Best instructions so that. That model knows what it needs to do and today the models have become more powerful And better at doing things but they don't know your processes data no What you want to achieve. what is Your actual task? how do You do that task? and you need To really document that tasks So that the model does like a great job at It. hmm you already shared A lot of things about how you enable your team.

[00:39:06] is there anything. You haven't shared yet that you learned over the last weeks month and years, How to especially enable non-technical teammates? To use AI And for example if they used cloud code it immediately feels very technical. yeah too not shy away from It but actually embrace it like

See the superpowers of it, so to say. Yeah and like that's definitely The hardest part of this I feel like Deciding to do something is easy. deciding too To make a trade off on some things. It's easy. making using AI or paying for cloud code Or learning how to use Cloud Code. That's somewhat easy. what this falls back into is the organizational change. This a very important question that you just asked me because as manager or founder, someone who's enabling teams to use AI... ...this isn't about changing a few things.

[00:40:14] it's about changing everything in how you do work and so like You need be ready make that change to enable the people, not be scared of that change and to enable them with right resources or mindset. And spend time helping them get on board in this new narrative. most importantly because it's so scary for a lot of people. I'm feeling very excited about AI that it's doing for me at work, or us at work. For a company just like in general I see my mom and my father using Chajipiti on the daily. they're not that technical. They never were like. yes they've used laptop in their life but Like...they weren't growing up In the technology era like we did And so i liked the impact That its having. But also understand how scary It is because of you know It's still unpredictable.

[00:41:19] You don't know if you're actually going to lose your job, If this is gonna automate the work or make a decision like use more EI Or what? Like...you need spend meaningful time in enabling your team And so that something I've learned Actually last month or two That kind of connects with it Is i'm trying It stems from my team, but that I also get to talk with the founders on how do we enable the whole company. Specifically what i talked is like How Do You Define The Right Process To Do A Task Well With AI? How Do We Enable The Right Mindset To Approach Your Problems With AI? And How Do you Build The Confidence In Your Colleagues That They're The Actual Expert? It's literally their judgment and they're taste, in the common sense that you drive all of these processes instead of AI.

[00:42:19] And AI is just an amplifier right? AI can only make it better at work but like... You need to own process specifically what comes down too workshops, a lot of sessions. A lot hands-on sessions like the one that I just mentioned. it comes back to setting right example and communicating with your team. they should be proud their work. if you use AI prematurely They're not even proud because they don't feel involved in output. this is creating somehow you feel disconnected from it and your like, okay this feels like slop. This feels like its not good enough. what is the problem? Why are other people using AI better than I am? so there's some... dissatisfaction that forms if they don't know how to use AI and They feel like their lacking either the skills or The mindset to actually do that.

[00:43:15] And they blame themselves Usually, they're like oh well I should know this better etc..and Like i would argue That it's up To people who are more versed in using AI and managers and like Founders Who need to instill This into them Because we cannot expect people to just like know how to use this and especially in marketing teams. I would say rather unconventional. take on the ROI of AI, can you share that also with the audience? I don't think it's unconventional but yeah i'll share it. okay maybe i felt like let me put it that way i feel a lot of people are talking about the ROI being, I can cut costs. and then you basically said it's not about cutting cost. And then I felt like okay this is an interesting perspective.

[00:44:08] let's hear more. yeah i still don't think that it's unconventional. i just think maybe its the exactly right perspective? I don't know if it was the exactly right but like It's a way of thinking in approaching it. You know um...I feel Like I posted About how we off-boarded off of webflow on Twitter And then I literally said in the first post that we save thirty thousand dollars per year. Like, That's an obvious hook! As a marketer you do it like...that what people care about But than..what people struggle to understand is that i actually want to double the spend on. You know anything related To What We Do On The Top Of Funnel With Marketing and Content but I Want Us To Have Ten Times More If Not

Hundred times more of An Output.

[00:44:58] I'm willing to spend a lot more money on intelligence tokens. If that means we can sprint, move fast and validate messaging or launch campaigns ten times faster... ...and if my team becomes like the TenX marketing team then it's not about saving money but paying money for things that slow you down. And to be honest with you, we actually pivoted the business in January of this year and previously were building a B-to-B SaaS. Now we're on the consumer market And in the previous scenario, we were relying a lot on HubSpot and doing sales calls. We needed obviously like a CRM to manage all of those contacts. These days from January on... ...we only used HubSpots for marketing components that they have specifically email.

[00:45:54] Now we're off-boarding off of HubSpOT. I think we are spending four thousand a month on Hubspot these days? I don't know if you're familiar with them. Yeah, but um i Don't even want to use like a SaaS marketing client? I just want something that it's That runs fast that my assistant can understand. and now all of our transactional Um emails All of our marketing emails or like every kind of email that we need to send It's handled through uh recent And my assistant basically handles that for me because I have the right skills The right rules and all of that. and now we are off boarding off of HubSpot And we're onboarding on recent and it's all about like my assistant doing the job right now. My system can design emails, a lot of creatives that I need on-the-fly because he knows our Figma is also connected to Figma or branding.

[00:46:50] What i'm trying do is enable my assistant work with me by putting down time to define how this should be. A lot of systems thinking right I mean yours obviously someone that is able to look at something and then. Like also looking from a very abstract perspective so you are able to zoom out zoom in basically, Look at hey house how i mean even being aware off the process that your following and be aware of building components or something that this uh... would say. it's probably a good skill. that. Good leaders also had before, but that has now become super power with AI because you have this new tool set and are able to leverage it way more due to the way of thinking. so... But I still come across people who struggle a little bit with system-thinking being able zoom out or zoom in on perspective change.

[00:47:59] what would say those Basically, if you tell them hey. You have to do more systems thinking? that tells what does it mean? Yeah um That's actually a great question and the answer is not straightforward I think because It depends on like The experiences they've been through as i said some fields They educate your system thinking than others to school, to learn marketing. I don't think that i would have picked up on problem-solving skills as much because like...I was learning how to code and how to solve problems in code right? So it comes back to previous experiences. And then if you're a junior or If You still struggle with the system thing Because I feel senior marketers wouldn't struggle so much they should have went through some challenges in their work that could've enabled them to form the systems thinking, but if you're a junior and start dealing with it I feel like its upto your manager or team.

[00:49:12] Just find an environment where it's gonna challenge that in you. That is number one thing. And then second... Find ways on how can help yourself. What i usually talk about my teams Is that Some type of Work Shots your brain and some type of work makes you Just like think of ideas, and like it fires up Like your creative side And like you get to think about things in like you Get more motivated. You know what? Some things are so boring too To do something's or more exciting to do. and um Usually when we plan the week for any of uh, you know The markers on my team like I get to have a mix of both because they need to pick themselves up with the creative stuff and things that they get excited about. And, for example if you do GEO today it's all just writing articles on AI search versus if

you run a campaign with UGC creators, that requires a lot more thought.

[00:50:31] If you mix the two within a week and have like two projects between those topics then you get to capture new perspective apply it here and then get motivated to do more... And throughout this you actually get to learn or be motivated. how can think about things because you get the mix of both worlds. And like, the manager should push to do both things Because obviously there's boring work and fun work. We need to do BOTH! But then a good balance between two could actually instill some set of thinking that we can apply for better or to then, like as an extension do better with AI. Or is it an extension in the future? To lead a team and transfer that knowledge into them? How you think about this idea?

[00:51:30] some people have raised That strong leader nowadays Is basically the person who contributes Stuff with the highest leverage so basically flipping. The idea of a leader, the higher up you go to letter them or your are detached basically from individually contributing work and more like managing. looking at dashboards all that kind stuff I mean looking at desports can also be cool. but anyway how do think about it? Do feel actually something is viable for also day-to-day work, or is it just like a fancy idea? A provocative thought. How do you think about that? Also from yourself and your peer group I guess other leaders from other startups and also other companies you talk to. Yeah You touched upon very interesting topic That i have been advocating for in the last two months.

[00:52:35] We didn't script this. We didn't script this. This is so funny that you actually mentioned it, but I think today in our startup and we're like twenty-five people... Like..I have a role where its more required to manage other people do better work. And all of my life i wanted climb the ladder right, like I wanted to be the best at what i do then. Then I want it grow into a senior marketer, senior growth person that I Wanted To Lead A Team and now I get to Do That. But Like Practically And Within A Startup In With AI? I Feel Like I Can Have Better Contribution To The startup If Im A High Impact Individual Contributor. And That Feels Like Demotion. Right but Think About It. We've built all of these organizations to have like a hierarchical structure because we needed people to manage teams so that they actually, you know achieve like KPIs or whatever is it?

[00:53:41] You said per month. But imagine if you get to build like a flat organization where All your team members They have their own ownership They have the right system thinking and they had AI then enable them To create ten times more output than a team of ten people or then me just like going into their channels and trying to tweak things. It's so much faster for them to experiment, it is so much better for them make mistakes learn from it build that judgement in the agency themselves be high impact individual contributors. these days I'm actually enabling my teams. all us are individual contributors within specific channel. i have one person who manages content. I have another that manages community, i'm mostly on like.

[00:54:32] uh activation and retention. right now in like...I have a blended role of Like..i am gonna jump into processes And things where can bring the biggest value because I understand business from both perspectives. But I feel more useful to the company today In an operational role then a management role, because with AI we can move so much faster. We can do so much more. and it's actually like... It stemmed from what were doing at Vellum. but you mentioned Piers. I read this also from Elina Verna. She is the head of growth at Loveable And i love everything that she writes about. Like..She specifically did this! This exact thing and I think she calls high IC or something like That. But she was like-I can be SO MUCH MORE USEFUL for Loveable If I get to just jump on projects and be more involved in the things that i want do, contribute then managing a team.

[00:55:31] Everyone is like ten times more powerful. we need the right systems. so it's an organizational change. And Lavable gets because they're new company. We are small and a new

company. It will definitely have been harder for our company. That has worked in certain ways. but also seeing this happen I don't know if you noticed ClickUp, they had a lot of layoffs two months ago. And it was devastating! They let go like forty-two percent of their workforce and it is devastating. but what they're trying to do...they are trying to build competitiveness on the market by truly just deleting everything that they knew up to the point and starting to build their organization with workforce for future. And actually introduced one million dollar salary bans, For new AI first hires.

[00:56:28] So if you know all how scale your work With AI You're gonna be paid a million dollars per year because you get like ten people Right and so like that. It's not bad, but I have a very well-running agency. So here you go. No no just kidding. yeah mean it's crazy its crazy. i would be curious to see after A year how many people actually reach the top of The salary band? But um ya i'm. it's definitely something That Gives food for thought. let's put it Like that for sure. I think like generally we're moving towards more flatter organizations. But that requires a lot of education, enablement systems thinking as you said and it's not an easy thing to do for sure. It almost sounds very idealistic but so much more doable today than in the past And its gonna be even easier doing five years from now because of AI.

[00:57:38] I mean, in the ideal world you have this type of people on your team and maybe at Vellum most probably only those types. People that are willing to learn or willing to embrace change and also go through time having to unlearn a lot stuff then learn new things. but what's your perspective? might be more resistant to change, also have a hard time. Not only because they're not motivated but maybe just due to the personality structure etc., having more hard times to lean into new stuff... What would you say if those people are in organizations today? And I mean there's different jurisdictions and a lot of jurisdictions where Let go of all the people and I also. Happen to come across companies where they have been in a team that had exactly that situation, what would you say to someone leading a team?

[00:58:51] That has these types of people on the team but They still want to transform this people. Where should they start like? What do you need to get right too? Also turn like the most critical person into a raving fan, so to say. Yeah that's hard right? I'm only asking hard questions here on this podcast. No i love it! I should have told you earlier before you agreed to come one. That is always gonna be a challenge like no matter whether they're using AI or if we are going through innovation. It was challenging even before. I think startups like us, we evaluate for that when we interview new people. And it's a filter that we set when we hire so that... We're very intentional with who we hire and the type of people that we need on team.

[00:59:57] For leaders first-and foremost It is important to mitigate if you're working at a startup. If it's fast-paced startups like ourselves, we are working in the AI industry and everything is changing day by day. We need people who can adapt or willing to learn throughout that experience And so just evaluate for them and be intentional with whom they hire. But what happens when you want to restructure your team? Personally this is my style how I lead my team. I'm very direct and i don't overwhelm them with like a lot of information that it's gonna make them feel you know comfortable. Like,I'd like to challenge them but they know my mean well And They Know That I Spend A Lot Of Time Thinking About How They Should Grow Or Not how they should grow...that is not the proper way to say it.

[01:01:03] I want to find and tap into the things that they love to do, And enable them become ten times better in that. It's upto me to notice those thing for then because sometimes They cannot capture it. Every time when i talk about it... I would say something like oh! I just noticed this. how you feel? How did you know that? Like..I wasn't even aware of that. That was so true!! I get see the world in a new way. So like one, be mindful to understand how each of them work and how each gets motivated because we're all different. We get motivated from different things. Try to tap into that motivation To help people feel comfortable growing And accept the change But then also be very direct Of what is

expected Because no-one wants you feeling they've been played.

[01:01:59] They've been told to do something without actually telling them what's going on. So just like don't be vague Be direct. Outline everything that needs to be outlined and she was like we're a team. there is no ego. There's nothing. We are all here to do our job, be great at it. Greatness is the goal. if you want to do That I wanna help You Help me help you. And thats It. Identifying the things that people love is such a beautiful way to look at it, because everybody has a passion. And if you unpack their passion and help them obviously... If they have weaknesses then sometimes try to reduce the impact of those weaknesses. but I always also believe that when we allow others to engage in what they like doing So much better so quickly Because it's not hard like even if it's challenging.

[01:03:01] It's not heart because you like what? You do, so that's a really great way to put it. I have two more questions because honestly time has flown. so the first one is If you had to share One like idea of framework or tip or takeaway with other marketing leaders about AI, or search. What would that be? One thing people should take away from it. The common theme of this whole conversation is don't start using coding agents and enable your marketing team to use those. Don't make the trade-offs today because AI will only get better. So like, uh when I talked about like Webflow and coding agents not being good at design. Don't worry about that now. be willing to spend enough time To enable your agent today because in a year from now they're gonna get better.

[01:03:55] What it's really important is you invest a lot of time into enabling your team. Your competitors are already doing this. You should get ahead. don't be scared off the friction. Don't be scared of like feeling throughout this process because, Like... This is so new. No one really knows how to do these things. and listen to podcasts like this. talk to your peers. Go to conferences. Yep Masters of Search Conference Berlin October just saying You can hear Anita speak, you can maybe have a cappuccino with Anita and learn some of the behind-the-scenes stuff. There's actually something very interesting that I just did like two weeks ago so i had my own personal assistant Ava. Don't share too much always keep a spoiler or always keep cliffhanger just like not only taking notes, but she would be doing things for me in the back.

[01:05:08] Like if I say hey Eva this is something that i want to do. can you handle that? For me like she's already on it awesome okay that's really intriguing. uh You have to give me a private beta of that. yeah right...I would also be willing to spend money on it. But um then my last question Is what didn't we talk about That We Should Have Talked About? I think that, you know like a common theme right now is that AI's gonna automate a lot of jobs. Right? And even the most fearless leaders are scared. because no! Now i get to do more work...I need to catch up and educate. everyone needs to upskill. it puts pressure on me for being the most leader. then it's gonna automate. And I just wanna leave everyone with that thought, is the transition...I'm not saying the tradition isn't going to be painful for probably more specific roles or regions and industries but history tells us we can adapt pretty well.

[01:06:31] You know, I think very deeply about this because like again my work it's not only on marketing but also positioning and how the market is going to move. How do AI industry are gonna develop? And i want get ahead of that build product for future... To do so.. I started reading and educating myself a lot of economic points-of-views and how it can impact the labor market. And so if you think about it, AI could automate jobs in a way that just will go down right? That's going to be catastrophic like people are gonna lose their jobs. or AI make us more productive we'll create more work If anyone who uses code right now thinks they're working ten times more. I believe this is my second way of thinking And I truly believe that it's gonna make us more productive, That is going to create new types of work.

[01:07:34] At the end It will be like us adapting and doing more productive work Novelwork Something

we're gonna create. If you look at what leaders from Unpropic & Open AI have been saying They've all portrayed The doomsday scenario Of AI. Why aren't you worried? Then i was looking at All of the layoffs. I was like, this is actually going to make us better. And it's gonna make certain industry be more expensive right? Like Right now in the US if a punch of fist on my wall and If i Make A Hole It's Cheaper To Buy A TV Than To Get Someone To Fix The Wall Which Is Wild. So When One Industry Becomes So Productive Like AI Other Industries They Become More Expensive. That Just Like The Economic Point Of View. But Yes, AI will automate some jobs.

[01:08:29] But then it's also going to make us more productive and is gonna create a lot more work for people too.". So I'm kind of on that positive spectrum And i want to leave people with the notion That you own this It literally in your hands. This tech cannot change who are How you think how you approach things, how you lead your team and all the learnings. You gained along the way. I'm already very much looking forward to the conference and hearing you speak there and sharing more And i can also very much recommend it everybody To follow Anita either on LinkedIn or on XI think Or Twitter what used to be twitter because regularly, irregularly post a lot of stuff that you do and share your learnings. So there's also a cool way to keep up.

[01:09:30] And yeah what left to say? just thank you for sharing so much openly. very much looking forward meeting in Berlin in October Of course! Thanks again for the invitation. I really enjoyed it. We should do another one after we cancel others' platforms. Yeah will do that surely Alright. have lots talk about thanks. See you soon. Bye-bye!