Jeff Sauer:

So if you treat marketing like it's an expense, then it's always going to be justifying what you do. Versus if you look at it, as we're on the offensive here, the more marketing we get, the better we're going to get. Then you change the conversation entirely to like how much marketing can we put out there?

James Robert Lay:

Greetings and hello. I am James Robert Lay and welcome to episode 221 of the Banking on Digital Growth podcast. Today's episode is part of the exponential insight series, and I'm excited to welcome Jeff Sauer to the show. Jeff is the founder of Data Driven U and he holds a firm belief in data driven marketing. In fact, Jeff has developed a world class marketing curriculum that is taught in universities, and he's also delivered over 100 keynote speeches in 20 plus countries while empowering more than 14,000 digital marketers to become Google certified professionals through his in person and online training programs. And today, Jeff and I are going to be talking about how financial brands in FinTechs can overcome the biggest data and analytics roadblocks standing in their way so that they can gain clarity into the greatest opportunities available for you, the dear listener, to maximize your future digital growth potential. Welcome to the show, Jeff. It is so good to share time with you today, buddy.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Thanks for having me. I'm really excited.

James Robert Lay:

Before we get into talking data and analytics and some really huge growth opportunities that I see for financial brands and for FinTechs, what is good for you right now, personally or professionally? It's your pick.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah, so right now, professionally, I'm drinking from the fire hose. It is Google analytics 4 and just exploring it, learning about it, and teaching the world about it. And then personally, I am about to go on a trip back to my native Minnesota and spend some summer time in Minnesota on boats and at the state fair.

James Robert Lay:

I love it. And the idea of Google Analytics 4, it's almost like every time they make an update, there's something new to learn. But which is why I appreciate what you're doing because it's like Oregon Trail. You're out on the leading front. You're learning what's going on, and then to be able to transfer that knowledge back in to help people shortcut their learnings, reduce the complexity, which is exactly what we're going to be talking about today. I know one of the maxims that you speak of frequently when it comes to data and analytics is set it and forget it. What do you mean by this? Because I want to start here and use this as a reference point for context before we dive even further. Let's start with set it and forget it. What does that mean? And what's the opportunity?

Jeff Sauer:

Set it and forget it was the original appeal to a tool like Google Analytics where you could put some code on your site, set it up, and then never look at it again. But then if you run a campaign or you do some marketing, you can look at the data and say, okay, well what happened there? How did our organic search perform? How did our paid search perform? How did email marketing perform? And so the original idea was set it and forget it, but I quickly learned that set it and forget it needed more of an active characteristic to it. So actually I started to at first say, set it and forget it with your analytics. Then I started to say, don't set it and forget it. Set it, configure it, make sure that it makes sense, and then when it comes back to you, it's going to be a lot more meaningful for you.

So I started out and Google started out with the set it and forget it. And we've actually quickly moved over to set it up properly, and then you can come back to this thing over and over again to know how your campaign's performed. And so set it forget it's the promise, but the reality is that there's a little bit more work that you need to do in order to get this thing to be meaningful for you. But that work pays off in the form of more efficient marketing campaigns, spending less money on ad platforms, spending less money creating something that's probably not going to work anyway and more time on, okay, well what worked and how do we get more of it?

James Robert Lay:

Set it. Optimize it. Forget it. Would that maybe it's that optimization.

Jeff Sauer:

Sure.

James Robert Lay:

We get into this and we don't know what we don't know until we know it. We can use that data, those insights to optimize it and then be even better going forward, and it's that idea of being even better going forward. I know a lot of financial brands and FinTechs they've dabbled in Google Analytics. We look at some of their installs and see major rooms for growth and optimization, but what are they missing? Where do you see organizations falling short at a macro level? And I think more importantly, what are they losing? Because they haven't done proper either installs or even optimizations to get the value out of data and analytics.

Jeff Sauer:

I think that whole setup and forget it mentality make us think that we can launch something, anything we can do marketing, and that we'll know the answers without having to do much. Right? We think that it's going to be there. And what ends up missing is that if you don't think about how you're going to measure something from the beginning, or if you don't think about what your KPI for success is going to be, then you end up doing marketing and yet you don't know if you are successful or not. And so can be very frustrating, especially in a regulated industry, right, or in something where there is more regulations where you have to be more considerate of who you're talking to. We need to be more thoughtful of it. A lot of times what ends up happening is you go through all these different checks and balances just to even get your marketing out in the first place.

And yet when it comes time to measure, you don't really know if it was successful or not, because maybe you don't know how many leads you generated from it. You don't really know what your sales cycle looks like. Maybe you're generating leads to go to a sales team and they don't communicate with each other. Right? So a lot of the problems that end up happening, aren't so much that they're not tracking something it's that they're either tracking the wrong things or they don't have realistic expectations of what that tracking will do for the rest of the business. And that's really where tying it together is the important piece here.

James Robert Lay:

I like the idea of, A, realistic expectations and then, B, ensuring that we're tracking the right things. I see a lot of times in financial services, the challenge being we have Google Analytics installed on a corporate website, but when it comes to an application, whether it be depository or loan or mortgage, you go off to the third party site. And then unless the scripting is set up properly and you have to work with that third party organization to facilitate that, which they're not always very friendly, and then that makes me wonder, well, what are you actually hiding on your end? If you don't want to help be a part of the solution, then you're probably a part of the problem.

When it comes to those challenges, which I see a lot of the times that is the greatest challenge, what's your recommendation there for the dear listener? Because it's a question that we get often. I want to get your take. How do we solve that problem? Because they might be tracking clicks on a CTA, but I'm like, that's only one part of the equation, because we then know that 85, 90%, 95% sometimes on loan applications are abandoned. So we can just throw that percentage into that, and it's a rough estimation. And then there's the depository at 60, 65% abandoned. What's your take on solving this gap?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. I think it's funny. It's not necessarily a technology problem, but it's more of a human problem. And that is what line of thinking are you going into at the marketing? Is it faith? Is it a hundred percent faith, which is really analog world or a hundred percent proof, which is the digital metrics driven world. Right? We like to think that in a digital world, and this is what Google touts and all their mechanisms for all their marketing, and this is what Facebook says, you can have a hundred percent proof that you're working. You can have your return on your ad spend. You can have all this information available to you and we know that it works, but anybody who's done this for a while realizes that there's actually, the proof is usually not telling the full story. It can tell you somebody drops off an application, but it doesn't really tell the human story.

And so I think there is an aspect of faith slash analog that gets us to the fact these are real human beings who are using our website. These are real people who are filling out an application who might be dropping off. These people are targeted with an ad. So I like to try to think about it in terms of how do we get a complete picture of what's happening here? How do we tell a story of what's happening? And then does each step fit into a logical reason why that person would've left or that story? Right? So somebody is seeing a Facebook ad, the one that you were able to get approved, that everybody and all the different regulators went through.

Then they go through to a landing page. Do you have a form that's forced on you by your software provider that is a third party? Does that make sense? And are you tracking it? The cool thing the metrics can do, it's not going to give you an absolute number, but it can sort of piece in together the gap of the darkness in between the beginning and the end. Right? And that's why I love Analytics because it's not so much of there is a solution, it's a conversion. It's more of what happens between concept and conversion in the first place.

James Robert Lay:

I like the idea of this shining a light into the darkness helping to make the unaware aware of what's going on, which is one of the reasons, if you take this third party application, which has a completely different URL, and you actually install a form on your primary domain, that'll help you get some additional perspective into what's happening before going off to third party. And there's ways to close that gap. It's a bit more technical, as we both know, and I don't want to go too deep into that in today's conversation.

But I'm curious, are there any other roadblocks that the dear listener needs to be aware of when it comes to data analytics tracking that could be potentially holding them back before we switch and look at some possible opportunities going forward?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Sure. So I think that roadblocks are often that it does require some kind of code placed on your website or some kind of forethought and planning. So again, going back to the beginning, set it and forget it would be you put pieces of code on your site, never look at it again. And then you say, how did my campaign perform? And that might tell you that a thousand people went to your application page and that's it. That's all you know. Right? You know that 10,000 people saw the ad, a thousand went to the application page, but you don't know how many of them were forms. Then you'd have to go into your third party system and say, okay, well we got a hundred applications. So we think that 10% were successful here. Right? That's a set and forget it. But if you were to put some code on your site, you would be able to track even down to an individual form field level, you could track that. You could track how many people are on form field one versus form field two and all the way down.

And you can get a true funnel experience and you can see where you have leaks in your process. Now the problem ends up being that that is technical. That requires a consultant to implement that. It might not be the cheapest thing in the world to do, and it requires some planning. Right? So set it and forget it is V1, which is something is better than nothing.

James Robert Lay:

Correct.

Jeff Sauer:

It is taking advantage of the digital medium, but then the next step is actively paying attention to it and seeing how something performs. Now there's a lot of reasons to do that. There's millions and millions of dollars worth of reasons to do that if you have an application funnel that you're feeding over the time, over the course of years. Right? Then you just keep on going forward with it and making that and improving on that. But if you're doing a one off campaign, usually it's not worthwhile.

Or if you look at this thing as like, hey, I just want to track this thing right now for tomorrow's campaign, you're too late. Right? So I think the more time you spend planning, the less overwhelming the coding piece of it seems, the more you can find a consultant, and the more you can prove the value of this thing as a long term position. Now an example in the real world is Amazon. Like Amazon has a really high conversion rate. If somebody has Amazon Prime, I think that it's in the 60% of the time a Prime user that goes on Amazon buys something. Now they didn't start out with a 60% conversion rate. They might have started out with 1% and they keep on making these 5% improvements, but they've compounded it over 20 years to the point where they've optimized what's going on here. Right?

So if you look at a long timeline, you probably will never be at 60% like Amazon, but you could be at instead of 10%, you could be at 20% if you keep on making 5%, 20% improvements over time. Right? So over the course of a year, you could double your response rate, which ultimately means that you have twice of effective media. You have twice as effective marketing and twice as many people coming into your opportunity list. Right? And that's super valuable. So short term timeline we give up because we meet some resistance and we don't know where it fits in the timeline. Long term, if we do persist, you'll out perform anybody else because nobody else does it.

James Robert Lay:

I like the idea of optimizing, optimizing, optimizing. I mean that's the whole essence of CRO conversion rate optimization. There are these micro wins that over an extended period of time create really exponential value. And when you think about financial services, I think a lot of times marketers incorrectly tell the wrong story. And what I mean by that is they're like, okay. I'll use your example. We had 10,000 people see this ad and then we had a thousand people click through and then we had a hundred people convert and kind of taken the funnel down piece by piece. And then out of that a hundred that started the application process, 15 converted because we had the fall off and all of the abandonment happening right there.

James Robert Lay:

But if you were able and then they're like, oh, well we lost, they don't even talk about loss, and the reason I like to dig into the loss, because that is really what encourages people to take action, whether they're on the lending side or they're at the senior management level to get more funding into some of these initiatives, because they're like, oh my gosh, we lost 85 opportunities this month because of a bad process or something like this. And that's a great way to start. But when you start attaching revenue to that, and let's just say each opportunity, the average lifetime value was a thousand dollars, well now we lost $85,000 because of this in over the course of a year. That's a million dollar problem right there. And people begin to say, instead of thinking, oh, we lost a thousand opportunities over the course of a year.

No. We lost a million dollars. That pain hurts far worse for people to take action to because then you're like, okay, well we're going to take this and we're going to go from maybe 15% conversion rate, and we're going to up that into a 20%. So just a 5%. Well over the course of a year, once again, at a thousand dollars over the lifetime value, that's $60,000 and it's just a numbers. It's a math game. And I like the storytelling that goes on behind here, and I think that's the way we should look at this is the long play, small wins compounding over time. But something else that I want to connect the dot for the dear listener is time. We can't wait until the last minute to do this. So let's circle back on that point.

Let's come back to the point of planning and pre-planning because I see so many times it's like marketing teams in financial services they're running last minute. They're getting a request from lending or from the depository sites saying, we need deposits. We need loans. And we got to get this campaign out next week. And so they don't even have time to really think through it. They're always reacting instead of responding, which is a very dangerous place to be, number one. But how might we be able to proactively think out some of this into more of a repeatable framework that, regardless of the campaign, we at least have the ingredients to cook with on the shelf?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Love it. And I think that really there's two things I can think of that we put into practice, even at my own company, that will give you the 80/20 of measurement. And that is making sure that all your traffic is properly tagged so that Google Analytics recognizes it, using campaign term, UTMs. Right? They've been around for a long time, a campaign code, what source it came from and so on. So whenever we send somebody an email, for example, we have an automatic field that appends those URLs without having to do it. So taking somebody who's not technical creating a formula and a spreadsheet where it automatically adds that to the URL so they don't have to do any work. Right? So there's a million of these trackers out there that it could be called that UTM builder or campaign tracker software as a service. There's templates.

They're very easy to find. And there's also the Google one that's free. And you just put your URL in there. You say what sources and they'll just build it for you. So building a URL, anytime you send out traffic, absolutely, non-negotiable baking it into your process, if you have any project planning and so on. That's something to do. You do it once. And then every other time it should be a lot easier and it becomes second nature for the company to do that. So that's on the front end. That's anything you drive to your site, make sure you do the UTMs, and track them. And then on the back end or on the measurement side, it's setting up a conversion, a generic conversion, or a pattern based conversion so that anytime that somebody visits like a thank you page, that as long as they visit a thank you page, it's counted as something so you can track that.

And then you can just put two and two together. You say this is the campaign that we've created. This is the conversion page. Here's our conversion rate for that campaign. Those things just make it so much easier. And honestly that might even be more than the 80/20. That might be the 90/10 or the 95/5. That's really how important it is to know those two things, how they got here and what they did when they were on your site. And the rest you can fill in a lot of the blanks or you can plan more in advance, but if you don't have those two metrics, then you won't really know what is the room for improvement.

James Robert Lay:

I could think about a lot of financial brands that we've coached and advised over the years to get them out of the last minute campaign emergency mode and into the proactive planning of building essentially inventory of assets that they can pull off the shelf whenever they have a need, coming from different departments. Because if you think about financial services, you have three to five key products and you have a couple of different ways to drive that. You have the organic side, which is someone shopping and coming into the website, or you have more of the campaign approach. You're trying to increase traffic, bought, earned, a lot of different ways to do that. And that's where I think you have kind of the evergreen campaign.

Two, I can think of one organization in my mind that has been in our program for about five or six years. They got out of the emergency mode into the asset campaign mode. And they're able to go back now and look historically over five years worth of data and see the progression. And every single year they pull the campaign off the shelf. They make some small optimizations based upon what they learned the year before. And they continuously are increasing the value with very minimal time spent. And I think that's the other important because one of the big complaints I hear from marketing teams, particularly on the subject of data and analytics, is the lack of time.

What about automation? Because I'm a big believer... Learning from Issy Sharp, founder of The Four Seasons hotel, where you can systematize the predictable so that we can humanize the exceptional. We automate the predictable to humanize the exceptional. Where are the opportunities to automate data and analytics to gain back some time so that we can spend more time thinking and not worrying about all of the complexity of doing?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. So automation, it can work in so many different ways. And we're actually at a point now where things are shifting. There's a lot of software that would automate things you did with Analytics, with the universal Google Analytics. Now we have GA4, which is new and people are still learning. So there's not as many automation capabilities with third parties, but there are quite a bit of things within Google Ads. And so just some ideas around automating is very easy to set up reports that either automatically show up or that you have a template that you can feed in. And so, for example, I like what you're saying about doing annual campaigns. Right? Most people can't even get past that. They're like, well, if we don't do this year, then I won't be here next year, or I won't be for the next one. Right?

So it's a very short term point of view. But if you're doing a campaign every year, which we do at Data Driven, then we have a dashboard and all we need to do is we change one campaign ID and all of our stuff gets updated. So reporting for us is pretty straightforward. We set up something. We have a single campaign ID, and then we just filter the report on that. And then we have next year's report done. We automate that. And that saves at least a week of time with pulling things together and fiddling with stuff. So if you're doing this over and over again, you set up a dashboard once, you create a filter and and it's up to date the next time. And doesn't it to be a sophisticated or skilled person that does it.

You just follow a checklist. Right? We've also, we've created a series of checklists for how to just get everything done properly. Right? So we've automated through SOPs. So like you were talking about the Four Seasons, we've created processes. We have over a hundred of them now in our library at DataDrivenU.com that allows you to just pull it off the shelf, check the box, and then somebody can install those things. And then a lot of automations, there's stuff around data collection at it enhancing your data collection. So one of the concepts behind Google Analytics is events and that's things that happen within a page. Right? So you could automate the collection of people hitting the play button on a video, the stop button, the fast forward button, that they completed it. You can automate that tracking. Right? You can automate when somebody clicks on an external link or when they click on a download button on your page. You can automate that.

So you can automate a lot of the collection mechanisms of the data. Then you can automate the reporting. And if you have that then everything in between is really just analysis. I think that when I first started teaching this stuff and when I first started doing analytics, it was 75 to 80% technical time spent configuring. And the remaining time 20 to 25% was analyzing. Now I think that we have the tools with automation to do 80% plus analyzing and the rest of it, the remaining time, is on the technical piece. And so it's completely flipped as to how we can spend our time because of automation.

James Robert Lay:

Listen to that again. And I'm going to pull this back. Can you just say that one more time, because I have a big hypothesis over this decade, but what we're starting to see this play out and you're kind of bleeding edge here, but let's roll that back. Can you repeat what it was before to what it is now?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. So when I first started with Google Analytics, when I started teaching it 80 to 85% of my time was spent on here's how you need to technically put stuff in there to configure it, how to get things out of it.

James Robert Lay:

It was the doing.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. The doing and the thoughtfulness of that. And then 15% of my time was analyzing, actually making sense of that data I collected.

James Robert Lay:

Review, learning, thinking.

Jeff Sauer:

Exactly. Yeah. Saying here's reporting or telling my company how it did and telling my company here's where we should get more of, giving them insights. Right?

James Robert Lay:

Right.

Jeff Sauer:

Now it's completely flipped. It's 80/20, the 80% of your time is insights, 20% time configuring. And that's only going to get better and better as Google Analytics 4 has introduced machine learning, AI, predictive modeling, predictive analytics. They're have reports that are just getting started. They're on the leading edge, but they're not as good as they're going to be in 2030. Right? But they will predict somebody's upcoming behavior. If somebody's on your e-commerce site buying all the time, or if they're coming in and they're downloading every one of your financial service packages, they're going to be able to predict when they're going to do it next.

They're going to be able to predict behavior and they use the same models they use in the Google Ad system. So a lot of the same predictive modeling they're using in ads, they're using to take your analytics data and predict what that person's going to do next. Now, obviously any, well, maybe not obviously, actually I shouldn't say obviously it's not obvious. But any data mining, any data modeling requires a lot of food. It requires a lot of data coming in order to get these insights out. Right?

James Robert Lay:

Sure.

Jeff Sauer:

So if you have three financial packages and you have a hundred customers, you're probably not going to get as good of a prediction model as Amazon would, or as a e-commerce store that has a repeatable purchase. Right? But that's the concept behind it.

James Robert Lay:

Well, I wanted you repeat that because, as I'm writing my second book, which is titled Banking on Change, subtitle, How to Maximize Exponential Growth in the Age of AI, it really works through, what I call, the Four Seasons of exponential growth, learn, think, do, review. And where historically, a lot of us, we've over indexed on whatever it is that we do. We are doers essentially, and we get addicted to doing. The AI and the automation are going to really, that's the out of those four seasons, the A in the automation has probably the greatest potential for disruption there. So if you attach, and I know we're going to get a little psychological here, but if you attach your identity, even your self-worth to what you do, I think it's a very dangerous place over the next decade.

And because when you have AI and automation to do the quote unquote dirty work, that's a huge opportunity to gain back a lot of time to review, to learn, and then to think so that we can then do even better going forward. And I think that's where there's just a lot of complexity, because it's like, we just don't understand. That's why I'm a big believer. We need to probably have some philosophical conversations on this front too, to help people navigate this in their own minds to see clearly, because I want to roll this back. One of the things that you were talking about and we got really granular was around tracking start and stop on video. I get it. I understand it. But for a lot of financial brands, I think that is just too overwhelming to try to put into their overall data mix. If you were to prioritize where to begin, what would your prioritization list be thinking about just the funnel of sorts.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. So I created this idea called small data in order to explain exactly that. And that is how do you do the minimum amount of data collection and the minimum amount of reporting needed for where your company is at, and where your business is at right now, and the size of your marketing department. And so it goes small, it goes solo, micro, agile, leveraged, and leading edge. And each one of those things has the last L is a huge department with lots of people. And then the solo is just you. It's just you. Right? And so for each of these different phases-

James Robert Lay:

I love acronyms because that's how this ADD mind remembers things. So if you could just repeat that again. What is the acronym for small?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Sure. Solo, micro, agile, leveraged, and leading edge.

James Robert Lay:

Got it.

Jeff Sauer:

So a lot of times people come to me and they say, well, I use Amazon an example or they're like, hey, should I be studying data science? And should I be learning programming languages in order to do things? And it's like, those are leading edge technologies. You can probably get by without worrying about that. When you're a solo practitioner, there's one metric and one KPI that matters. And that's your bank account. That's the only KPI that matters for you. Right? When you're micro, when it's you and another person or a very small team, there's two KPIs you need to worry about. One is how many people are seeing your message in the first place, awareness. And the bottom one is bank account. Again, bank account's important for everybody. Right?

James Robert Lay:

Conversions essentially.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Yeah. Conversions. Right? Exactly. And then agile means you have a little bit more of you're growing the team and you're starting to make some better decisions and you're starting to have more resources. Then you can go into more of a full funnel, awareness to sales. So it's four steps. AIDA or I call it ACES and then the further you get along, you might hire consultants. That's the leverage. You're leveraging other people. You're leveraging single level expertise people, specialists, if you will. And then leading edge is where you get even more experimental. You're starting to figure out what's next for the business. And so I like that because if you're a small shop, it's alright to not have to try to compete with somebody who's got venture capital funding and who's got a bunch of data scientists on their team.

Right? You're just trying to figure out how do you optimize a funnel for one, for one product even? That's a good starting point.

James Robert Lay:

I'm going to overlay this with a digital growth perspective here that we teach, which is TLC, because everyone needs a little bit of TLC in their life. And of course we all need some tender loving care, but when it comes to growth, we need traffic. We need leads. We need conversions. And I find it a bit ironic. We think growth happens, for some reason, at the top of the funnel. It's like, we need to grow. We need to drive more traffic and we need to spend more money at the top of the funnel. And I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. Let's go to the bottom. Let's take that. And where conversions leads traffic to ensure, A, we're able to track this to begin with and identify most likely to begin where we're losing opportunities at the point of conversion, because what good is driving traffic at the top of the funnel if we have a leaky bucket at the bottom?

It's like grains of sand. We go to the beach. We pick up sand. And we have that sand in our hand, but then it just falls through our fingertips. It's the same thing. So once we have that conversion problem solved, then we can move up to the middle of the funnel and look at lead conversion, nurturing and automation, all of that fun stuff. And then now we can move to the top of the funnel. And I think that's where we can turn the spigot on and start to drive traffic in. And you're doing this at an incremental pace too, because if you move too fast, you lose opportunity. If you're not moving fast enough, you're not getting the numbers you need to quantify each one of these different data points in behavior. But I like the point of small because I think it gives the dear listener, particularly if they are at a smaller financial brand and they are strapped for time and resources, it gives them permission to focus on the few things that matter most because there has been so much hype about big data.

I like the small data approach to start with because it's a way that I can measure progress and not perfection. What would you say exactly to someone who might be struggling in these areas trying to do too much? They feel overwhelmed. Maybe give them some peace of mind to say, hey, this is okay. Because you see a lot from a lot and a lot of different verticals with a lot of different teams and a lot of different structures. What's your take on that?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. I think that there's some psychological conflicts that happen that lead to this and then there's also it some of it's just how we frame it, the problem. First one is that, as you mentioned, usually the conversions is handled by a sales team and then the top of funnel is handled by marketing. And usually they're sort of at a conflict with each other, not at a collaboration. And because of that, it's things ripple through where marketing does something that the sales people don't want. Right? Ultimately making the economic engine work is the end game here. And so I think that it is often on marketers listening to other marketers as opposed to what the rest of the company needs or does not having those conversations. And then they're like, okay, well I'm going to run ads because Google tells me too. I'm going to run Facebook ads because they tell me too, and it's really tactical around what vendors are pushing you, not what's right for your company.

And so I think that this idea gives you the permission to talk internally versus externally and to go there. But also I think that sometimes sales has an unrealistic expectation or they're impatient. Right? They're like, well, why would I even do a marketing program if I can't sell it? So I think the marketer's position is very difficult. It's very challenging. And I've taught over a thousand marketers at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota about this. And everybody has the same problems that they're expected to do so much yet they get so little resources. And so what I teach people is how to frame up the conversation to be more about... You actually touched on this earlier and that is a 10% conversion rate means nothing to an executive, but saying we just lost $85,000 because of opportunity means that you can actually put that into an ROI equation and you can start to change a conversation and say, hey, it's not so much that we need to spend money on marketing or that marketing is this or that. It's that if we can frame this thing up, we get more going into sales.

It's not easy to measure right away, but this is the momentum we need. We are definitely leaving $85,000 off the table from the current metrics. If we can just get some more resources aligned with this thing, if we can get alignment here, we will get there. Are you okay with doing that? The projected ROI of spending an extra 10 grand on this thing is tremendous. And that compounds over and over again. You guys get finance. Right? So you should be able to get this stuff. Right? But a lot of times it's marketing is always treated like a cost center. And yet sales is treated like a profit center. Sales counts as top line revenue and marketing is usually something that counts as an expense center. So if you treat marketing like it's an expense, then it's always going to be justifying what you do. Versus if you look at it, as we're on the offensive here, the more marketing we get, the better we're going to get, then you change the conversation entirely to how much marketing can we put out there.

James Robert Lay:

This is why I wrote Banking on Digital Growth, to provide a framework for marketing, sales, and leadership teams to learn, collaborate, and grow together, because to your point, I feel that pain so much from a marketing team perspective. It's like we're at cost center. We're kids that play with paint and crayons. We're the last minute Kinkos who's just kind of always in this state of chaos. And that's where I am a big believer going forward into the future, marketing plus sales. There's a lot of collaboration that can happen and a common language is needed there because marketing and sales, when you add them together, that really equals the growth team.

As we start to wrap up here, Jeff, and I'm telling you, man, I could have this conversation for another hour, two, three with you. I'm so grateful for the perspective you've shared so far. There's a lot to do. And I'm a big believer of small things adding up lead to really big things going forward. What is the next best step for the dear listener, kind of at a very macro level to empower them to establish a future growth habit through a simple action, something small that they can take today to at least get some momentum to at least get some forward progress when it comes to data and analytics?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. It's a good question. And it's so open ended that it can be anything. I would say that the opportunity that I recognize now is this and that is Google Analytics 4 is going to be the only Google provided analytics tool on July 1, 2023. What will happen is your old analytics you might have had for 15 years will no longer collect data. And those reports will blank when you log in on that day, July 1, 2023. And so you can either wait until the last minute and be like, okay, well what do I do next? Or you can use Google Analytics 4 as an opportunity to be the way that should've done it back in the day. It's a fresh start. So I would say the best thing you can do is consider your analytics right now as a fresh start, because you're going to have to do that anyway, whether you like it or not. Your hand is forced.

So look at this as a fresh opportunity to learn things from the ground up and to do things that are important to you, whether you use my small framework, whether you use TLC, whatever you use, to frame it up in the process of, we do need top of funnel awareness. We do need to get people along the journey and we need conversions. We need these things. How do I steer our measurements, that we're only focused on those things as opposed to all this other noise, all this other stuff there? And so the cool thing about GA4 is that you can completely customize the interface to remove any report that you don't like. So in the old Google Analytics, it was the same one for everybody, one size fits all, whether you're a 10 person cat blog or a million customer e-commerce store, they all have the same Google Analytics when they logged in.

Now you can actually remove menu items. You can remove metrics that you don't like. You can change the charts. You can customize it. And so I've gone in into GA 4 and I've just made it so that it matches my ACEs framework, my small data framework. And you could match it to TLC so you can rebuild it, how you intended to so it makes the most sense for your company. And so I would start experimenting with what is analytics when I have a choice? When I get to choose what's going on there, what would I show? Would I have a lot fewer things there? Would it be a lot less confusing for me and my company? And then how do I make it so that I am incentivized to log in so I can see progress towards these KPIs that I'm looking at? So I would say fresh start is the big thing for you. And then only adding things that matter. So looking at it as like addition by subtraction, as opposed to addition by exponential.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. I like the idea of the framework, whether it be ACEs or small or TLC, because a framework and we teach a lot of them because a framework provides a mental model to calm the complexity, to simplify a lot of the chaos into a unified view. It's that common language that I was mentioned before that is easily understood throughout the organization. And I like the idea too of a fresh start in simplifying things, removing the things that don't matter so that we can really focus on the few things that matter most or what you've referenced a couple times in this conversation, the 80/20. So we want to continue this conversation. I know some listening do as well. What's the best way for them to reach out, say hello, connect with you, to do just that?

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. So I have a website, DataDrivenU.com like U like university. And if you go there, you can check out all the blog posts we have and the different digital products we have. We are an education company. So I teach people this, both in live seminars and prerecorded courses, as well as a bunch of documents you can use, SOPs and so on. And then I also have a YouTube channel where we publish once a week and our YouTube channel, which we can put in the show notes, YouTube.com/c/Jeffalytics. That'll give you just a weekly video about these topics.

James Robert Lay:

That's old school right there, Jeffalytics.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah.

James Robert Lay:

You're bringing me back in the day, man. Good stuff.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah.

James Robert Lay:

Good stuff.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Yeah. I haven't changed that one yet so hopefully it's still there, but yeah, I had that blog for a long time and then we moved over to Data Driven U after a while.

James Robert Lay:

Well, this is great stuff. Connect with Jeff. Learn from Jeff. Grow with Jeff. Jeff, thank you so much for joining me for another episode of Banking on Digital Growth.

Jeff Sauer:

Yeah. Thanks for having me. I really appreciate it.

James Robert Lay:

Until next time, and as always be well, do good, and make your bed.