

Podcast With Al Bsharah



Today's Podcast Highlights

[2.25] Because the consumer is getting content they want to engage with, we're increasing opens, clicks, and revenue by 5 to 20%.

[3.34] If you know exactly how much one click makes...and you can increase that number then you can clearly identify return on that investment.

[4.11] We do it because we want to provide the consumer with something better.

[5.25] We're going to make sure that we deliver an email to each person when they're most likely to engage.

[7.59] Different types of companies have people following them or receiving their emails for different reasons.

[8.25] Try different lengths, try different subject lines, try different things and figure out what works for your audience generally speaking.

[9.34] It is a big buzz right now, that personalization and engagement and all that stuff is, that segment of the marketing automation industry is growing pretty dramatically.

[10.32] TechStars is big on the founders and the team.

[12.02] I mean I made a ton of mistakes. Now that I look back it was like I did everything wrong.

[13.34] We realized that we had a good company, but we were going to struggle to make it a great company.

[14.20] I'm really bullish on the San Diego startup scene. There's a lot of great things starting to happen here.

[15.34] There's an incubator program here in town called EvoNexus.

[17.40] I'm looking for entrepreneurs that are coachable and looking for entrepreneurs that have proven some ability to execute in the past.

[19.17] We want to make a dent in the universe and we're willing to take risks to do that and I think that's something that you don't necessarily grow out of.

[19.29] I think age is becoming less of a stereotype when it comes to the startup thing.

[22.01] When your older you can still make mistakes, you just got to make them faster.

[26.14] I'm a pretty big fan of partnerships.

[27.40] We are not trying to replace the marketing automation tools and service providers and things like that out there. We actually integrate with them.

[30.03] We're all human, we want to be engaged with something.

[30.58] Grab me with something in 30 seconds that makes me excited about what you're doing and then keep grabbing me every 30 seconds right.

[34.15] The purpose of that pitch or that elevator pitch or that on stage pitch or your deck or whatever it is, is to peak interest and that's it.

[35.12] It's really the possibility of making a difference and making an impact in a way that not just makes my life better, but other people's lives better.

[36.21] I love working in this space. I love coming into the office because I'm surrounded by people that are just way smarter than me.

Podcast Transcript:

Paul: Hi there software entrepreneurs and welcome to the [Disruptware](#) Podcast. This is the show for entrepreneurs who are either just starting out or those who already have a software company and are looking for techniques and ideas for massively scaling their business. The way we do that is to interview experts in the market who are already running their software company. Whatever level they are at, they have great content to share and we dig deep to get factual experiences that you can put into action right now. Let's get on with our guest today.

Okay so on today's show, I'm really excited to introduce someone called Al Bsharah who is the founder of a company called [Embarke](#), which is all about email marketing and optimizing open rates and click throughs. But essentially I'm going to let Al explain everything about that to you. One thing's great about Embarke is it's really succeeded really well over the last couple of years. They raised 1.25 million in equity from VCs and Angels last year. They graduated both from the [Founder Institute](#) and [TechStars Accelerated Program](#). I'm really excited to get Al on the show, talk about his startup and hopefully give us some strategies for growth and even some insights into email marketing as well. Al, welcome to the show.

- Al: Thanks Paul, I appreciate it. That's a great intro, I appreciate it. Thanks for having me and yeah, hopefully I can help somebody somewhere.
- Paul: Yeah, absolutely and I really appreciate you taking time out of your busy day. I know what life in a startup is like. You have to do a bit of everything no matter what level you're at. Let's kick off by just like in your own words, just tell us a little bit about Embarke. What's that all about?
- Al: Yeah, so Embarke automates essentially the two main things that email marketers have to fight with everyday right? Who to send to and what to send them. So our data intelligence on each individual automates both of these items. Ultimately, giving the consumer content they actually want to engage with. Because their getting content they want to engage with, we're increasing opens, clicks, and revenue by 5 to 20%, which is essentially more money for marketers and kind of less crap in your inbox for us as consumers. It's a win for everybody.
- Paul: That's amazing because my experience in the internet marketing world is very much from email side of things. Obviously I have customer lists, but I also promote a lot of products as an affiliate as well. Everything comes down to the open rates, the click through rates, and everything like that. Even just a few percentages on your open rate can make a big difference. I mean a huge difference to your campaign. I guess with your sort of customers where you're talking about hundreds of thousands of mails per day I guess. Those sorts of percentage points make unbelievable difference in revenue, right?
- Al: Dramatic differences, yeah and in some cases it's millions per day. A lot of the bigger companies especially the ones that kind of have that direct line from a click to revenue, which is usually in the commerce space. They know exactly how much one click makes them, right?
- Paul: Right.
- Al: If you can increase that number then they can clearly identify return on that investment.
- Paul: Wow, cool. How do you that? How do you, obviously without giving away your secret sauce, how do you get increase this in open rates and click throughs in a nut shell if there's a simplest way to frame it?
- Al: Yeah, well essentially we pay attention to the consumer that you're sending the emails to. We learn their behaviors, we learn their interests, we watch what they

do and not for a creepy reason. We do it because we want to provide the consumer with something better. And the only way to do that is if you know more about them as an individual, right? The biggest problem with email marketing today is...email is a very personal channel, but marketers don't have the tools to treat it as such. So they treat it like a public one and everybody gets the same messages or very nearly the same messages.

Really we watch when people are engaging, the devices they're engaging from, geographically where they are, what their interests are, what types of emails they're engaging with, things like that. We don't hand all this to the customer, that means you still have to do something with it. We actually allow them to automatically take action on that. We would say, "Okay, here's a group of people that are interested in this type of thing." Now you know who you need to send to and you know the content you need to send them, so go do it, right?

Paul: Kind of like demographic, but on a larger scale?

AI: Yeah.

Paul: Like demographic breakdown of the customers and not only that, I guess working out when are their best times for opening mails and things?

AI: Absolutely, yeah. There is definitely a demographic piece to it. There's also a very heavy behavior piece to it and time optimization is one of those things right? We're going to make sure that we deliver an email to each person when they're most likely to engage, because for some people that's in the morning, for other people it's in the evening when they put the kids to bed. Some folks it's on their mobile device at lunch time. It just really depends on each person and that's really where all of our decisions are made are based on that individual.

Paul: Right, so I guess if I'm framing this right. You kind of track let's say your John Doe and you store against him like when he normally reads his email. So if I am a customer of yours and I want to send a campaign out, then you'll make sure that John Doe only receives my mail at the time when he is normally reading his mail.

AI: Yeah, exactly and it goes back to listening to what the customer is telling you. When they open and click, that's them telling you something, right?

Paul: Yeah.

AI: They're telling you "Hey, this is when I engage with your stuff," and overtime, we get much stronger signal and we can look through historical data and we can look

through other things to really make sure that we're hitting the mark for those people.

Paul: Fantastic.

Al: Yeah.

Paul: Okay, and I have a lot of internet marketers in my communities and we're always talking about how to get increases in open rates and things like that. You're obviously tackling it from the technology side, but is there any tips or advice that you can give people from the way they write? Is there a certain length of email that they should put together? Should they try and target certain types of subject lines or anything like that? Do you sort of recommend or help your customers along that side of things as well?

Al: Yeah, it's interesting. We don't necessarily help so much with that specifically today, but certainly we're in the space so we pay attention to that stuff. The interesting thing that obviously we see, like take it back to time optimization right? You can look on the internet and pretty much find, if you want Saturdays at 3 PM to be the right time to send an email, you will find a study that says Saturdays at 3 PM is the right time to send an email. The problem is this data is based on aggregate information and it's based on different types of customers and companies that are sending and all these different groups.

The same thing goes for content, the bottom line is you need to test. You need to try some things because your customer base is going to be very different than mine, right? Different types of companies have people following them or receiving their emails for different reasons. Some of it may be knowledge, some of it may be deals and discounts, some of it may be very important to their day to day, and some of it may be fluffy. Each individual is going to engage differently with those types of things. I would definitely say do heavy, heavy testing and see what works, try something. Be very rigorous about that.

Try different lengths, try different subject lines, try different things and figure out what works for your audience generally speaking. Then work your way towards trying to figure out how can I deliver what each person wants inside of that framework. Does that kind of makes sense? I mean I'm not really answering the question, but I really believe in the fact that personalization and testing, and doing what's right for your customer base. Whoever they are is really the only true answer.

Paul: Yeah, I mean the whole topic is really fascinating to me. I was in deep discussion with the head of mail delivery for a company called [Ontraport](#) a couple of years ago and he was saying that the key thing now with ESP's is it's just looking for engagement. If you're not engaging your customers within your first two or three emails, in other words, if they're not opening and clicking then you're far more likely to go into the spam box on your fourth and fifth etcetera. All their algorithms are geared around engagement now.

Al: Yeah, absolutely. I mean it is a big buzz right now, that personalization and engagement and all that stuff is, that segment of the marketing automation industry is growing pretty dramatically especially in email space today.

Paul: Yeah.

Al: It was big in social for a while, but the email channel wasn't...it's a little bit less sexy despite the fact that it knocks the pants off of pretty much every other channel from an ROI perspective. It's starting to get a lot more attention now, so yeah, it's hugely important.

Paul: Which is fantastic for your company because I think you're ground breaking in terms of what you're trying to do and certainly ahead of the curve. I guess that's why the TechStars and all these people sort of jumped and were keen to get involved with your organization and really accelerate it.

Al: Yeah and you know it's interesting. TechStars in general, well the funny thing is we actually went into TechStars with a different idea.

Paul: Right.

Al: Actually TechStars is big on the founders and the team. That's really what they bet on. Because, it's my belief and there's a lot of people that will back me up on this, that people can't pick good companies, but they can pick good people, right? That we'll probably figure it out in however, whatever manner they need to figure it out. So TechStars they've bet on the founders and hope that they'll figure out the product. Ironically, this product came through going through the TechStars process. We were not doing this when we got into TechStars.

Paul: Ah, that's really interesting okay. That's brilliant, so what did you...now, we talked a bit about Embarke and email marketing.

Al: Sure.

Paul: Let's just take a step back a bit, so how did you get started and perhaps maybe take it a step further back. What did you do before this?

Al: Yeah, sure so I'll kind of give you a quick history of me. I grew up in Detroit and I got an electrical engineering degree, worked in the auto industry for Chryslers and GM for a little while and it just wasn't my speed. It wasn't really what I wanted to be doing and so I moved out to San Diego about 15 years ago. Kind of been doing startup stuff ever since. My first gig was I was a second employee at a startup that build and manage large scale corporate networks. We grew that company to 50 or so people. I left and started my own e-commerce company around, I guess this was 2003 or so, and had marginal levels of success.

I mean I made a ton of mistakes. Now that I look back it was like I did everything wrong. It was a great learning experience for me but I wasn't surrounded by the startup ecosystem and mentorships and things like that that I am now. I learned a lot from that, made a bunch of mistakes. Actually went back to the original company that I started with. We ended up getting acquired. I had a small, a bit of equity there but after that, I kind of got the itch to do my own thing again. This is fast forwarded to about three years ago when I joined the Founder Institute, which is a really early stage program and it's great for early stage founders and that's where I met my co-founder.

That's where Embarke was born. We were focused on communications in general. That's kind of something that we were both very passionate about and we wanted to solve some problems there. So we iterated a number of different products, we tested, we built some small stuff and a number of MVP's and iterated through a few different products over maybe a year and a half. Settling in on one where this is right before TechStars. We were actually helping developers communicate on multiple channels. We give them one API to use to communicate with say email or Twitter or Facebook or any of these other communication channels.

It was good, like we had some customers and partners and we're doing okay, but then we get into TechStars and everything changed. We realized that we had a good company, but we were going to struggle to make it a great company. We spent you know TechStars is a three month program and we spent a good month and a half of that figuring out where we're going to land and it was grueling. It was brutal and there were days where I wondered if we're ever going to figure it out but we did. Fast forward to a year and a half later, here we are.

Paul: Wow.

Al: Yeah.

Paul: That's brilliant and not only do you have a really, really successful startup but you really got involved in the startup community as well, haven't you? I think you mentioned that...you created this startup poker, mentor hours, EvoStart, just tell us a bit about that, what else are you doing there?

Al: Yeah, so I'm really bullish on the San Diego startup scene. There's a lot of great things starting to happen here and bottom line is I mean I want a good community for startups and I got a lot of help over the past three years once I really dug into the community from mentors and programs and things like that. I want to make it better, for the people that are coming up behind us, right? See how the startup poker one is great.

We actually founded in Seattle when we were going through TechStars and we brought it to San Diego. My co-founder Brian started it up and essentially it's a curated list of investors and a curated list of really good founders playing poker and we get together, it's very casual, it's fun. And it's a great way to just get to know different people, different founders and network. The mentor hours is kind of a similar concept, but it's more really curated mentors.

Some of the best in town and founders and giving them 30 minute windows to get to know each other, help each other out and things like that. We do that probably once every two weeks in small form and then every quarter we have a big massive blowout one where there is 25 mentors and probably I don't know how many founders...a lot. Been involved in those programs and then EvoStart. There's an incubator program here in town called EvoNexus and we're in the middle of...we're MVPing this incubator program and there's five companies going through it right now. It's a four month kind of cohort based program inside of EvoNexus.

The goal is to get these companies to product market fit, right. And there's specific things that they focus on each month to get them down that direction. Yeah, it's our first run at it and so far we think it's going pretty well, but I love doing this kind of stuff and it's a lot of fun.

Paul: That's really good. Do you like...looking at EvoStart you know when someone comes to you with an idea. How do you sort of, I guess vet them, I don't know if that's the right word, but you don't want to take anyone in right. You want to make sure that you got the right person coming in because you want them to be successful and it takes a certain type of individual to be an entrepreneur. To get through all the bumps and the troughs as you move through developing a

business. How do you actually qualify the right sort of person to get into EvoStart?

Al: Yeah, it's a good question and it's a really tough problem to solve. [EvoNexus](#) has had an application process for a while and we have used that and made some tweaks and streamlined it a little bit better and we've taken some notes from other accelerated programs. Obviously, we've been through TechStars and I've seen that. One of the guys who is helping with EvoStart has been through [Y Combinator](#) so we've seen that. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel, but really it boils down to just ... you have your questionnaire and then you can weed out a bunch of people from that and we ask for short videos so you can kind of get to know the people in person.

We have a review committee that goes through some of the stuff and we start ranking and scoring. Everybody in the committee has their own things that they're looking for which I think is good because you get a bunch of different viewpoints on the teams. Ultimately for me I'm looking for entrepreneurs that are coachable and looking for entrepreneurs that have proven some ability to execute in the past. That really kind of get it, they have a good team, they may have an idea, they may have traction. It may or may not be right, that's a little less important because if they're the right team, they're going to figure out what's right.

They're going to go talk to their customers, they're going to learn from them, they're going to pay attention, they're going to keep their eyes open and they're going to go after the right market or they're going to fill that gap that's this huge gaping hole that the market needs. They're going to figure out where that is. That help answer your question a little bit?

Paul: Is it any sort of age or anything like that. Do you get people who have sort of come out of the corporate world, who want to do things as well as the student type who has just got this crazy idea and happy to live on Ramen Noodles for the next six months?

Al: Yeah, for sure. It's all over the map and that's something I think is really cool. There's this painted picture of what a startup company is and it's all super young guys, fresh out of college crammed in sharing living quarters and sleeping on couches and stuff. That happens, but age is less important right? I think sure younger guys are willing to take more risk and things like that, but I know a ton of folks who are older. Myself included who this is what we thrive on, this is what we live for. We want to make a dent in the universe and we're willing to take risks

to do that and I think that's something that you don't necessarily grow out of.

If you got it in you, you're going to have it in you for a long time. I think age is becoming less of a stereotype when it comes to the startup thing. We see it all over the place. I'm not exactly the Spring chicken myself.

Paul: Me too right? I took a big risk coming here. Literally, we just left the UK last year. I thought we'd just come over here for a few years and try it out. What I always find interesting is that there's a lot of amazing talent and very young talent with amazing ideas and they can work all hours under the sun and get stuff done at a great pace. I think what gets harder is the older you get and I'm not talking about age per se. I'm just talking about when people get more established in their lives. When they get married and have kids and they're in the corporate job which pays pretty well, but they've got this burning idea and they want to do something with it.

The longer you're in the corporate world you have an established life. It makes it a lot harder I think for someone to actually leave that and start a startup. I think those kind of people who can actually do that. I think they're the bravest to a certain extent. They're probably the ones most likely...there's no stats behind this. This is just speculation, but I see that in a way someone who is prepared to take a risk, leave their job, build a startup and they've still got a family to feed and all the commitments and everything around that. They've got grit, they're going to succeed, because it's not like they can just give up.

Al: Go ahead.

Paul: No, go on.

Al: Yeah, I agree, I think it's a different kind of motivation right? For success for us to figure it out. Because like you said, the older you are, you have likely more responsibility, you have family, you might have kids, husband and wife, whatever. You've got a mortgage and car payments and things like that that you might not have had 10, 20 years earlier right? The risk is different.

Your motivations for getting to the success that you need to get to are very different. I agree, you're young, you can make mistakes and you can be like yeah, whatever, I'm young, I can keep at it and figure it out later. When your older you can still make mistakes, you just got to make them faster, right? More efficiently and get to the point quickly and not drag it out because if you drag it out odds are your runway's going to run out quicker.

Paul: Yeah. You've got to look at the core motivation as well. When you're younger you want to change the world right? When you're older you want to feed your kids.

Al: Right.

Paul: I was listening to a podcast the other day and it was Jamie Tardy who is the founder of something called [Eventual Millionaire](#) and essentially her whole program is about interviewing millionaires, really pulling out their success stories and sort of mapping that into her mastermind. What was interesting is she found out with a lot people who wanted to do great things and just never did it as soon as they had babies, they went and did it. It was like the clear category of people. As soon as they get a family, all of a sudden their motivation changes and they just go and do stuff.

Al: That's interesting. I wonder if...it feels like there's something that is very subtle but very important and that's a work life balance, right? I think it's very important for you to step outside your business every once in a while, get your mind out of your business. You can either consciously or subconsciously think about it and not dwell in the details and I think having a family or something along those lines kind of forces that.

It makes you get out of your business because you have a family now. Go spend time with them, right? It's an interesting thing and I hadn't actually heard that before, but that was the first correlation that popped into my head and maybe why that's a real thing. Because I know whenever I force myself to either go on vacation which is relatively rare or take a long weekend or even just take a day in the middle of the week and focus higher level on business stuff. That's when the epiphanies kind of come.

Paul: Yeah, exactly because you're giving yourself space to think right?

Al: Yes.

Paul: Even in a small way when I was doing my corporate job, I was an exec for a startup but we're under massive pressure and every day you're just there in the trenches firefighting or whatever. I found that all my planning, I was doing on the plane from one place to another, because it was the only place no one could call me. No emails or anything and all of a sudden you start thinking, I should do it this way, that way...it's not the right way but it certainly proved to me that getting out of the work environment and everything and doing something a bit different really did make a difference.

Al: Yup. It's funny I crack this joke every once in awhile. You weren't here when this happened but San Diego county, the entire county lost power...a couple of years ago and it was pretty much an entire day. I think it was somebody in Arizona flipped the wrong switch or something and the whole thing shut down. The funny part was everybody came out of their house, everybody...I met neighbors that I didn't even know existed. It's like something like that that kind of is a forcing function that makes you get out of your routine. Opens up doors to different ways of thinking, different people, different whatever right?

My joke is we need to shut the power off once a day every month just to get people to do that because it was fun. Everybody's like well let's barbeque and drink whatever beer's left in our fridge, right?

Paul: Yeah, it's amazing. Some sort of common thread in the community that gets everyone together and they will have one thing in common and that's what brings them out. Tell me, let's just go back a little bit to how you got started, well not so much how you got started, but with Embarke how did you get your first customers on board? How does that work?

Al: I'm a pretty big fan of partnerships. For us we have a really good partnership with a company called [SendGrid](#). We provide value to their customers and they feed introductions to some of their biggest customers. We've been working on this partnership for a year and a half and it's been spectacular. They're great for us, we're great for them, it's a really good symbiotic fit and that's really how we kicked things off right?

We do get some inbound and we're spending more time generating inbounds. We've just recently hired a marketing guy, so that's going to be one of our pushes over the next few months, but that was a great way for us to get started and so if you can find a partner that's got great customers and see's that you can add substantial value to them. You'd be amazed at what that can actually turn in to. That's really how we kicked things off.

Paul: Right, okay, brilliant. If I'm a customer and email marketing's a big part of my business. Do I need to be using SendGrid or do I need to be using any particular sort of email marketing provider or software or anything like that to get involved with your company?

Al: Right. That's a good question. We are not trying to replace the marketing automation tools and service providers and things like that out there. We actually integrate with them. SendGrid is a perfect example of that. They do

spectacular email delivery. They have some newsletter products and stuff as well and our integration literally takes 15 minutes.

You can be up and running and using our stuff on top of your SendGrid platform that you already know and love right? When we were in TechStars and we're doing interviews, we probably did a 120 interviews in the first month alone and a lot of what we heard was, "hey I actually kind of like the tools that I use." I just want to do more with them. And you need to make it easy for them. So we kind of based the company on that because we kept hearing those three things over and over.

Paul: Interesting. So SendGrid obviously is a good option and do SendGrid have the... obviously I know they've got the infrastructure for delivery. Do they have the front end software like the autoresponder type software and stuff built in?

Al: They're really kind of building out their marketing side of their infrastructure. They have the newsletter product, they have some AB testing. I think we can do some trigger stuff or at least it's early, it's getting close. They're starting to come out with some of the more standard things that are required.

Paul: Right, okay.

Al: And then we layer on the intelligence on top of all that.

Paul: Brilliant. Cool so one other thing that I know that you do and maybe we should just talk a bit about that. When someone has a new startup or a new idea. They need to tell that story, they need to put together the elevator pitch and I know you talk on that don't you...quite a bit. How to pitch, how to tell a story to investors or on stage or something like that. Can you just give us a few tips or strategies on how you should do that?

Al: Yeah, it's a great topic, I love talking about it. There's a number of things that when people are trying to tell their story, they don't do a good job of. I could go on and on, but really it boils down to telling a good story. We're all human, we want to be engaged with something. We want...when we're talking, I want to be paying attention to you because you're teaching me something. You're educating me. It's exciting, it's a space that I can get excited about. It's a problem that I can actually relate to. A lot of times people go through and they'll look at [Guy Kawasaki's 10, 20, 30 templates](#), right? Which by the way is great, but it's not something that you should cut and paste and plug your own stuff into, right?

Okay here's the problem, here's the solution, here's the team, here's the blah, blah, blah...that's not a story that's boring. If I'm an investor I've seen hundreds of those last week. You need to take those points which are really valuable and weave them into your story. Whatever your story is, right? Grab me with something in 30 seconds that makes me excited about what you're doing and then keep grabbing me every 30 seconds right.

One of the first things I do when I'm crafting a pitch of any kind is I will sit down with a huge sheet of paper on a big table and I start drawing story arts, right? Okay I could tell the story this way. I don't care about what I put in it. I'm telling the story of Embarke or what we do or why we do it or whatever and I'll draw three or four of them out. Then I'll take all the content that I know I need to provide and figure out how to weave it into that story. Now when you're presenting or you're handing a deck over and that story is in there or it's in your voice. It's a conversation. It's not you barking information for a lack of a better term right.

Paul: Sure, it's engaging.

Right, exactly. If you're by the campfire and you're telling a story, you're actually telling a story and people are interested in hearing you right? You're not just throwing bullet points at them. Because nobody is going to listen to that. It's really about figuring out how to tell that story well and it's hard. Don't get me wrong. A lot of people fail at it because, one, they don't try - they don't know to do that, but, two, it's really hard to do. It takes a long time. It took me forever to get my story right. Even while I was pitching VC's and Angels. My story and my pitch changed every day, right? It's something that just kind of morphs and grows with you. Hopefully that helps.

Paul: Yeah, it really, really does. Funny enough, even with Disruptware, I'm still evolving my elevator pitch on what that is. I started it, it's just for software entrepreneurs, but that's meaningless. So then it was for people who want to start a software business or people who want to scale because it's both kind of audiences. Now I'm kind of thinking well, the message is you don't have to be in San Francisco to be a startup. Join a virtual community where you still have a benefit of sharing strategies and everything in one forum based community. That's what Disruptware is all about.

Al: Right.

Paul: You know what I mean?

AI: Absolutely.

Paul: It's kind of getting that messaging right, but also how it appeals to your target audience to make sure that they go, "yeah, that's for me" or I can understand that in 10 seconds or whatever.

AI: Yeah, that's a really good point is knowing your audience. I have different conversations that I have with my mom and her friends versus the VC versus a customer, versus whoever, right? Because they see things differently and they understand things differently and they care about different things. So you have to figure out how to relate those guys. That's another big issue especially for guys who build great technology and they're really excited about their technology and they want to talk about their technology or they want to put too many details into their presentation or their deck or whatever. That stuff's not important.

It's important for the conversation you have after the pitch. The purpose of that pitch or that elevator pitch or that on stage pitch or your deck or whatever it is, is to peak interest and that's it. Keep it simple. Get me interested to the point where I'm flipping through these pages quickly and I'm like wow, I really want to learn more about these guys, I'm going to pick up the phone. That's what you want right? You want that interest so now you can sit down with that investor or partner or whoever it is and have a conversation and then you can share the crazy details when they ask you, right?

Paul: Right. That's brilliant yeah. Tell me, where do you get your inspiration from as entrepreneurs you really need to wake up in the morning and sort of fire yourself up because there's no one else to do that. What do you do to sort of get yourself motivated and keep driving your company forward?

AI: That's a good question. It's interesting because for me, it's really the possibility of making a difference and making an impact in a way that not just makes my life better, but other people's lives better. We were always focused on communications because we see a number of aspects of it are just broken.

And in particular the email marketing system is broken. There's a lot of room for improvement. That improvement will directly help my inbox. It will directly help your inbox. It will help marketers with their businesses and for me, it's a little bit of that but it's also the fact that I get to wake up, I get to come to an 11 story building or 11 story office in San Diego with seven other startups that are all doing amazing things.

My team is now a team of eight and we're all amazing and this is...I love working with these people. I love working in this space. I love coming into the office because I'm surrounded by people that are just way smarter than me, right? For me I get ridiculous value out of that as opposed to maybe going to a company and not being able to make an impact. Not have a difference even within that company let alone the world, right? That to me is kind of the nutshell of every morning I wake up and I'm not a morning person, but I wake up because it's awesome and I want to get at it again.

Paul: That's brilliant and that's really great to hear. Surrounding yourself by intelligent or people smarter than you is one of the key philosophies I think. Who mentioned that, Richard Branson actually mentioned that...that someone asked him like, "What is the one thing that you could do or what is the one thing that you could attribute to your success," and he said that.

Al: Yeah.

Paul: All I did was focus on hiring people smarter than me to run my businesses.

Al: Yup and I got that from the first company I worked for here. The CEO, that was one of his things, he's like I'm bringing on people that are smarter than me because we're not going to be successful if I'm the only one with answers, right?

Paul: Yeah. Fantastic. Well listen, we're just at the end of the show Al. I know you got a massively busy day. I just want to say thank you so much for coming on. I really enjoyed today's conversation. If anyone wants to get a hold of you, how can they reach you?

Al: Yeah just al@Embarke.com is easy enough or go to the Embarke.com website. Yeah, happy to chat with founders, get you plugged into the system if you're here in San Diego or whatever, I'm all about that.

Paul: Brilliant. Thanks again Al, I really appreciate you coming on the show.

Al: Yeah, no, thank you so much. This was awesome.

Paul: If you enjoyed the show, you can get the show notes from disruptware.com and if you are not a subscriber and you're listening to this in the iTunes store then please visit disruptware.com and sign up. That's it for this episode, look out for next week's show. I'm Paul Clifford and thanks for listening.

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