

Lauren 00:00:00 Everyone's talking about efficiency. And to me, that conversation is played out, and, really, we should be talking about how people will discover brands in the future. It's not just an efficiency gain. That's actually just like the very, like, tip of the iceberg, and there are so many more interesting things.

Matt 00:00:19

To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up. Welcome to the Speed of Culture.

Up today on the Speed of Culture podcast, we are live here at the Possible conference in South Beach. I'm thrilled to welcome my friend Lauren Weinberg, the Chief Marketing Officer at Supergoop!. Lauren brings over twenty-five years of experience building and transforming brands across B2C and B2B with a deep expertise in blending data-driven strategy with powerful storytelling. Lauren, so great to see you today.

Lauren 00:01:00 So good to be here.

Matt 00:01:01 Thanks so much for coming back. We don't have many multi-time guests here on the pod, but you're one of them. So consider yourself honored and, obviously, it is well-deserved.

Lauren 00:01:09 I do. Thank you so much.

Matt 00:01:10 Yeah. So you just very recently joined Supergoop!. What was it about the brand and the opportunity that made you believe this was the right next move in your career?

Lauren 00:01:19 So I've been a Supergoop! user for probably ten years. So I discovered Supergoop! in Aspen, okay, and have loved the brand ever since. I love to dive into just new industries and places that I've never worked in before. And so I met the CEO, Melis. We were in a board training program together, and she called me and told me about that she was going to Supergoop! to be the CEO, and just all of the goals and aspirations that she had for really growing and scaling the brand. So I think that, coupled with just my own love of the brand, felt like a really great, fun thing—something I've never done before—opportunity to jump into.

Matt 00:01:56 And for those in the audience that don't know what Supergoop! is would love to hear about it.

Lauren 00:02:00 Supergoop! is a sun care brand. We've been around for twenty years, which is crazy. I think a lot of people don't realize that, but they're really known for a few really iconic products. One is the Unseen Sunscreen.

Matt 00:02:12 Mhmm.

Lauren 00:02:12 It's a completely invisible sunscreen that just, like, rubs into every skin—

Matt 00:02:17 You don't have, like, the old white mask or pink cast.

Lauren 00:02:20 It's not sticky. It's not greasy. It has no odor to it, and it's just something that completely revolutionized the SPF category. And they're really known for products that are sunscreen that are just incredible skin care products—really high-quality ingredients that people will wanna use every day. And the goal is to get people to use sunscreen every single day. It's the most important thing you can do for your skin's health.

Matt 00:02:43 Absolutely. And when you look at the brand, what's the channel strategy? Are you going direct-to-consumer? Is there a big retail footprint that you have?

Lauren 00:02:51 It's both. So we have direct-to-consumer, and we have a retail footprint. We just recently expanded into Target. I would say, historically, we were really more of a beauty brand in Sephora and Ulta. So in February—at the end of February, actually—we launched to Target. So it's still really new for us, and I think there's also some opportunity for us to scale on TikTok Shop. We have some really fun product SKUs that are great for TikTok Shop. So lots of opportunities for us to grow across really all of our distribution channels.

Matt 00:03:19 And, of course, somebody with your background comes into a brand like this and immediately sees opportunities and areas to go into. What is the onboarding process like for a CMO role? And what are you looking to get out of that? How long does it take? And at what point do you get to a place where you have confidence and conviction and say, "Okay. I'm ready"?

Lauren 00:03:38 Well, I would say it's usually really insane, and that period is much shorter than you would want it to be. And so I think as a CMO, you get there, and pretty much the expectation is, like, almost immediately that you are—

Matt 00:03:50 The honeymoon phase is over.

Lauren 00:03:51 It's over. And it's really about making decisions, and especially coming into Supergoop!. I got there, we're launching in Target within a matter of weeks, we announced a PGA sponsorship, we were launching campaigns. Our high season is from April through August, and so you combine all those things. I also already had my first board meeting.

Matt 00:04:09 Wow.

Lauren 00:04:09 And so it was a really intense onboarding period. I personally like that. I think just throw me into the deep end is the best way to really learn the business. It feels a little intense in the moment, but I think it's just a good way to really kind of understand all the facets of the business. And one thing that's new for me in this role is that I also—I'm responsible for product innovation. And so—

Matt 00:04:32 "That's amazing!"

Lauren 00:04:33—it's been really fun, but a lot to learn there. I think for me, that's the area where I just, like, really have to understand how that process works, how long it takes, how do we develop formulas as a brand, what kind of testing do we need—

Matt 00:04:45 Also you have to flex, right?

Lauren 00:04:46 Yeah. And so it's been fun to learn that. I did have, as I mentioned, my first board meeting, which was six weeks into my time in the role, where we had to present marketing strategy and the three-year product roadmap.

Matt 00:04:59 Wow. I mean, what I like about the product innovation add-on for you is if you think about the best products that have taken off the facets, it's normally not because they had great advertising. It's because they had a great product. And I think a lot of the best products are building marketing into the product—whether it's features, benefits, language you use, the packaging. There's so much you can do on the product that will then enable you to market through consumers versus to them—i.e., word-of-mouth. So I would imagine with your deep marketing experience, I think it's gonna be intuitive to you to unlock opportunities in the product piece to make your job as a marketer much easier.

Lauren 00:05:35 Yes. I think when I spoke to a lot of people about moving into this world, since I really have been in mostly tech—

Matt 00:05:41 I know. We'll get into that, yeah.

Lauren 00:05:43 —categories, a lot of people said, "If you're gonna go and do this, make sure that you own the product roadmap, because it can be very challenging to be a marketer where you don't have some agency over the product strategy." And, also, for me, I wanted to do something that I've never done before. So it is really fun, and I think it's been, so far, a really great partnership with our Chief Innovation Officer on where do we go? What does the future look like for us? What are the places that—what are the white space opportunities, and where do we also either have the right to win, or where can we earn the right to win?

Matt 00:06:14 Right. It's far more of a strategic, even entrepreneurial-type discussion than how we're gonna deploy this marketing budget.

Lauren 00:06:21 Yeah. It's been fun.

Matt 00:06:22 Yeah. I'm sure. So, how much time are you spending in the early days of your journey there really trying to understand the consumer? Now, you have been a consumer, it sounds like, so obviously, it makes it a lot easier. But are you going into more deep immersions to understand the competitive landscape and what are the benefits that consumers are gravitating towards?

Lauren 00:06:40 Yes. Um, I want to know more about the consumers. I think I walked in, and there's a pretty decent high-level understanding. I feel like that's never, like, enough to scratch my itch; I always wanna go a little bit deeper. So, in a lot of ways, I am the consumer, so that makes it a little bit easier. But I think that—that we have an opportunity to go even deeper. And what's interesting about our brand is that it's for everybody.

Matt 00:07:03 Right.

Lauren 00:07:03 There's a lot of very young girls—

Matt 00:07:06 The sun shines above us.

Lauren 00:07:07 —super fans of the brand, and all their moms tell me that, "My daughter won't go to Sephora without buying something from Supergoop!" But we're also now at the PGA, and my dad uses Supergoop!. And so we have this really broad audience. So I think for us, honing in on the target audience that we need to stay focused on as a brand is something that we have our eyes on, who that is, and I'm kind of eager to dig in and learn more about those people over time.

Matt 00:07:32 And as you learn about them, obviously, a key part of paying that off is then to be able to reach them. And as you know better than anyone—especially given your background at places like Square and Peloton—is that content rules the day, right? So predating you, how has Supergoop! been able to build its brand, and what are some of the new ways that you hope to impart on the brand strategy in terms of building awareness and engagement?

Lauren 00:07:56 Yeah. So I would say Supergoop! is a brand that really was built on this idea of being relevant in culture, and it really was a change-the-category in a lot of ways, because our whole mission is to get people to use sunscreen every single day. And it's really important for people to do that. And part of that is coming up with products that people will actually want to use, as they kind of debunk all the myths or the things that people dislike about wearing sunscreen.

Matt 00:08:21 Which is like white smears on your face.

Lauren 00:08:23 Yeah.

Matt 00:08:23 Right.

Lauren 00:08:24 All the things—

Matt 00:08:25 —is burning your eyes.

Lauren 00:08:25

It's burning your eyes, sticky white cast, doesn't rub in with skin tones, causing breakouts, doesn't go with your makeup—like, you name it. We've figured out a way to solve for all of those things. So that was basically the brand's mission, and they did that by showing up in moments of culture. I think over time, they've gotten away from that, and we wanna bring it back. I think it's very important for us also to think about just the role that creators play.

And so I think for the first time, when we're planning campaigns, we're really thinking about the role that creators play in every single stage of the funnel, and how much money we wanna spend against our message versus the creator message. Because there's a lot of education that still goes into our category in particular. We have a lot of different products, and I think creators can help people navigate our assortment better. And when we talk about creators and influencers, we're talking about everybody from, like, beauty and lifestyle voices to chemists to dermatologists—you name it. And so, really getting a myriad of different types of voices to complement the storytelling that we do.

And then also just showing up in culturally relevant moments. Like, at the PGA Tour, we have an Alterra Mountain sponsorship that we do as well. And so if you think about any place where people are outside for long periods of time in the sun, we could show up there as a brand, and we're trying to be built to—

Matt 00:09:45 —play there.

Lauren 00:09:46 Yeah. We've got to play there. We wanna be thoughtful and intentional, and I think the skiing and golf is a nice booking because it keeps us in the conversation, all year round. And so we really like it for that reason.

Matt 00:09:57 Yeah. I mean, this year, the average age of a first-time mom in the US for the first time is Gen Z. So if you think about that, she grew up in the TikTok era, right? So she is not tuning into linear media at all. You know, kids who are going to college right now do not have TVs in their dorm rooms. So it still amazes me that so many CPG companies look at creators, like, after they've planned their traditional media.

Lauren 00:10:19 Yeah.

Matt 00:10:20 Because the reality is that is not in line with the new consumer who's over time becoming the consumer. Not just like this edge O young Gen Z kids. These are moms. These are—

Lauren 00:10:30 I'm always buying stuff on TikTok shops, so I get it.

Matt 00:10:33 Yeah. Totally. And in that regard, when you talk about TikTok Shop, live shopping, and some of the more emerging areas, what are some areas that you have your eye on?

Lauren 00:10:42 I mean, I feel like all of those places can be really relevant for us. It's really a matter of us thinking through the strategy and which products we want to market on those channels versus where we feel like a more traditional distribution channel, like a Target or an Ulta, or Sephora, is better for us. And so, for some reason, there are certain SKUs that we have that just do so well in that social selling type of environment. And so I think there's more—I mean, I've been in the role for not even three months.

Matt 00:11:11 Right. Doesn't seem like it.

Lauren 00:11:12 I still have a lot to learn about how do we think through that and what are the right, like, bundles and ways that we can really just get more people into the brand. We have very high retention, and I think there—it feels like a lot of people know us and love us, but the reality is is that our awareness is still pretty low. And so we have a lot of work to do to just introduce more people—

Matt 00:11:32 Yeah.

Lauren 00:11:32 —to the brand to help them understand why it's gonna be a different experience for them, and also why they should be thinking about their sunscreen every day.

Matt 00:11:40 Yeah, for sure. So just to, like, turn back the clock a bit—so for our audiences to know, Lauren and I both grew up in the same neighborhood together outside of Philadelphia. And then when we first reconnected in the professional world, you were at Yahoo. And then over time, we had you on the podcast when you were at Square, which is Block, I guess, the parent company. And then you went on to Peloton. And as you mentioned earlier, those are all very technically oriented companies, technology companies, and now you're a CPG company. Was there a lot that went into the decision to make this leap versus just staying in a domain that you were so established in?

Lauren 00:12:13 Yes. There was a lot that went into it. And I think part of it for me was just I always like the idea of doing something that I've never done before, and so that was—this was exciting to me for that reason. The beauty industry is really fascinating. I would say as someone who's always been an end-consumer of beauty products, I've never been in beauty. And it can be very hard to get into beauty, and I thought, "I just wanna be in. I wanna be in the space." I've been in tech or tech-adjacent businesses my entire career. If I wanna go back to that, I feel like I always can.

Matt 00:12:45 Right.

Lauren 00:12:45 And I was just ready for something different and to do something that was new. And then I think there were other just—I only have a few years left with my kids at home. And I wanted a company that's headquartered in New York.

Matt 00:12:57 Right.

Lauren 00:12:57 And so when I was looking, there were a lot of opportunities on the West Coast. And—

Matt 00:13:01 "Been there, done that."

Lauren 00:13:02: And I feel like I just didn't wanna spend really any time traveling or a lot of time away from home when I have so few years left with my kids at home.

Matt 00:13:11 Yeah. I'm sure that's—that's a decision you will not regret. What are some of the learnings you had from the tech sector and some of your prior roles that you think are really gonna be applicable in your current role?

Lauren 00:13:21 So I think tech is really good at just this idea of an experimentation mindset. Just constant testing and learning, which is not something—iteration. I think iteration and this idea of just, like, moving fast but learning and having data behind decision-making. And our CEO at Supergoop! comes from Amazon. And so I think the two of us together really wanna bring that kind of mindset into the brand, which is: if you don't know, test.

Matt 00:13:45 Yeah.

Lauren 00:13:46 Test, get data back, continue to iterate and evolve, and that just to be a little bit scrappier and agile with an experimentation mindset, because the world, as we all know, is never been changing faster.

Matt 00:13:58 Totally.

Lauren 00:13:58 And so we have so much to figure out, and you can't wait too long to make perfect decisions. And so I think tech does a beautiful job at that, and it's built into the DNA, I would say, of Silicon Valley in a lot of ways that I think brands like Supergoop can really benefit from bringing that type of thinking into their organization.

Matt 00:14:22 Yeah. And it's definitely—tech has been more of a bottom-funnel, performance-based mindset, where CPG companies and beauty have been much more about brand and storytelling. And I think, to me, you obviously need the marriage of both in order for it to work.

Lauren 00:14:30 Yes. Agree.

Matt 00:14:31

We'll be right back with the Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors.

So I follow you on LinkedIn. I know that you went through a period where you weren't working—you took, like, a little bit of a hiatus. One thing I really admired was your transparency and how authentic you were about telling your story of figuring out what was next for you. And

we just love to hear—because a lot of people are gonna be faced, already are, and, unfortunately, I believe will be continually faced with just disruptions in their career based upon AI, based upon layoffs. Your former company famously cut 40% of its staff, right? Um, at Square. And it's gonna happen over and over again, and many people will find themselves in a position where they have to reinvent themselves. And I would just love to hear a little about your journey, how you spent that time, and why do you think it was beneficial for you to take a little bit of a break.

Lauren 00:15:17 Yeah. I mean, I think it was the best thing. It was really great for me. It's something that I think I didn't realize I needed.

Matt 00:15:23 Right.

Lauren 00:15:24 And I felt really good about how I spent my time, so I'm happy to talk about that more. But I went into that time off with an agenda of things that I wanted to do, and some of them were personal things.

Matt 00:15:34 Mhmm.

Lauren 00:15:34 A lot of it for me—I felt—I talked to a lot of people that are, like, just mentors, people that I trust, and they said, "Just spend as much time as you can with AI." And I felt like as an operator at Peloton, it was so busy. And, yes, we were integrating AI into our work streams. I did not feel that I had a really good understanding of truly how LLMs work,

Matt 00:15:57 most don't.

Lauren 00:15:57 what it means for brands. And so I felt really lucky to just have this period where I could learn, and I took a lot of courses. I was in an AI study group; we met weekly with this group of people. Someone on LinkedIn said, "I'm starting this group. Who wants in?" Someone I hadn't spoken to in twenty years—I said, "I want in." I did a lot of other courses, and then I just played around with all of the tools. And then people asked me to talk about what I was seeing and what I was learning. And so that was really incredible because you don't get that kind of time when you're in a full-time job—

Matt 00:16:28, you react to what's in front of you.

Lauren 00:16:29 Yeah. And so that gave me a chance to just form my own point of view about AI. But outside of that, I also just wanted to start doing more hobbies. And so I had a whole list of things, and I feel like I did almost everything that I wanted to do. Like, I took up new sports.

Matt 00:16:47 What's your favorite new sport you took up?

Lauren 00:16:49 Pickleball, for one. And I was just trying to catch up to my friends, who are amazing pickleball players, and I was having anxiety about going to pickleball birthday parties because they were so good. So, I feel like my goal was when I go back to work to be able to

hold my own at a pickleball birthday party. So that's been really fun. I planted a vegetable garden. I just did a lot of stuff that I normally wouldn't be able to do. I have a senior in high school; I got to be the soccer team mom—something I've never done in my career. I got very involved with different non-profits. So Project Healthy Minds is one I spent a lot of time with. I also got very involved in Birthright Israel. And so I really, as my kids would say, I was the busiest non-working person that they know. And I also spent a lot of time talking to founders and CEOs and doing advisory work. And that is probably my favorite part—of just getting enough time that when random people reach out to you on LinkedIn, that you can actually say, "Yeah, I'd love to have a conversation with you." I love hearing what people are building and what they're doing, and if I can be a part of their journey in any way. So it was really fulfilling in a lot of ways. I was happy to go back and sad to go back.

Matt 00:18:01 Yeah. And I think, you know, there are a lot of takeaways from that. But one is: don't wait until you're not employed to have that network to tap into mentors, to join courses, to do things, because then you already kinda have a rolling head start, and you really wanna take control of your own destiny, right?

Lauren 00:18:18 Yes. I think that's a good point. I felt very fortunate to just have so many people, because I was thinking about some things, and one of my really good friends said to me, "Don't do any consulting. Take the time and learn AI. It'll just make you so much more valuable when you go back to work." And, you know, I think when someone you really trust tells you that, I thought, "Know what? You're right. I should do that." And to make it your job to actually learn something every day is something that I think when you're really busy, you can always put it off to the side. So I'm really grateful that I have.

Matt 00:18:46 So now that you've been through that and you've enriched yourself with all this knowledge in AI, what are some of the things you think you know that you see many other people don't really know yet about AI and its capabilities to really transform work, especially as a CMO on marketing?

Lauren 00:19:01 I think it keeps changing so rapidly, to be honest. But my first thought when I first started doing this—again, that was eight months ago, right, when I... or maybe actually more than that now—which is—

Matt 00:19:11 —ages ago in AI.

Lauren 00:19:12 Yes. So, and my first thought was everyone's talking about efficiency. And to me, that conversation is played out. And, really, we should be talking about how people will discover brands in the future. And now brands are having that conversation, but I wrote an article for *Adweek* early in my time off saying, "Why is nobody talking about this?", around how consumers will discover brands, and what are the things that brands need to be doing—

Matt 00:19:38 —to drive growth versus just cut costs?

Lauren 00:19:39 Yes. Because I think just—it's not just an efficiency gain. That's actually just like the very, like, tip of the iceberg, and there are so many more interesting things. And it actually made me feel really excited about AI because as a storyteller and somebody that comes from that background and loves brands, it's an amazing time for brands, because you have to be doing that stuff authentically, organically, showing up in credible places like third-party publications—that's what the LLMs are picking up. And so I think it's a fun time to be in marketing, because you have to have a really clear point of view as a brand and know what your tone of voice is. And I think that's a more fun place to be than the previous decade, where we were really focused primarily on performance marketing.

Matt 00:20:33 Yeah. How do you feel as a marketer about AI-generated content? Do you think that's gonna be taking off and that consumers will widely accept content that's created by AI?

Lauren 00:20:53 I think there's a place for it, but I don't think—like, from my point of view, I don't think that it can only be AI-generated content. And I have some very strong points of view about things that I really believe need to at least start from a human—which, the brief to me, like... and I know a lot of people will use AI to write the brief, and it's one rule I have for my team is that, like, the first—use AI to improve it, but the first version needs to come from you directly, from a human, be based on human insights, be based on something that's credible and differentiated and unique. And, to me, I think there's a place for AI to help scale and create more velocity, but not to be the, like, incubation of the idea for the company.

Matt 00:21:18 Yeah. It's interesting. My company, Suzy, as you know, operates in the market research space. And one of the big trends a lot of people are talking about right now is synthetic panels—instead of asking real humans questions—

Lauren 00:21:29 Yeah.

Matt 00:21:29 —who, let's be honest, don't like filling out surveys, so there needs to be a different way. But the way that some companies are approaching is: we're gonna basically simulate the way humans respond with AI agents. And it reminds me of what you're saying, because AI agents have never fallen in love, or broken their leg, or got a promotion, or had their heart broken, or all these things. And it's in that human emotion where insights, I think, are born. And I don't know if the AI agents would be able to really replicate that.

Lauren 00:21:57 Yeah. So I think there's always a place for it; it's just figuring out where it is, and I think for leaders to have a point of view. I've said to my team, "Never have AI write." Right?

Matt 00:22:05 Right.

Lauren 00:22:06 Because I just don't think you'll ever get to an idea that really, like, is rooted in consumer insights or even in our brand DNA that comes from it.

Matt 00:22:15 Yeah. And you wanna break through. And if AI is trained on AI, trained on AI, yeah, you're gonna start to look like everyone else.

Lauren 00:22:21 And I think younger—like, my kids in particular, I think, are just, like... their discernment and ability to say, like, "That's definitely AI," right? I mean, I think, like, they know. And—and sometimes... but they know, right? And so, like, they're excellent at spotting it. And sometimes they don't care, and so maybe some of it's okay, but I do think that's interesting, too—it's just they can spot it immediately.

Matt 00:22:41 Yeah. I mean, it's interesting because people, kids watch animated movies, and those aren't real actors. People listen to electronic dance music, and that's music that's not made by real instruments. Like, if you actually start to look at a lot of the areas, it's not... and—and people eat a lot of synthetic flavoring in their food and—and, you know, processed stuff. So it's not like natural is the way that, especially in America, we're heading towards; we actually have been heading towards consuming synthetic stuff for a very long time. So to me, we're gonna continue to go in that direction until one day we wake up, and we are gonna be seeing so much AI content. But I think there's gonna be a premium placed on the human insight, on the human-generated content.

Lauren 00:23:21 Yeah.

Matt 00:23:21 And it's fascinating times. And as you said earlier, like, things have never changed so fast.

Lauren 00:23:26 Yeah.

Matt 00:23:27 And it's just so hard to keep up. But what are some of the things, besides—I love your point about creating briefs—what are some of the things that you think stay the same, more so when it comes to attributes of somebody who's successful in a role like yours?

Lauren 00:23:40 I mean, I think that AI is an amazing tool for me, right? I'd be lying if I said, right, it didn't, like, help make me more efficient.

Matt 00:23:47 Yeah.

Lauren 00:23:47 But I also always write the first version of everything that I write, right? And it—it has to. I do like to write, and I just think it has to come from me and be my point of view. And it clouds my judgment and my thinking if I take the shortcut—

Matt 00:24:03 Yeah.

Lauren 00:24:03 —and go AI-first. And so I think for me, like... I send—I try—it's been a little hard in this new role to send a weekly newsletter, and I write it. And everyone said, "Why don't you just have AI write it?", and I said, "Because it's my opportunity to connect with my team, for

them to see me on a human level." And so I can put it into Claude after I use it, and it can make it better, right, but it still has to always come from me.

Matt 00:24:26 Well, it's almost like also going through the thinking process of what I'm gonna write about, essentially also allows you to go through the thinking process of, like: what's most important? What do I need to focus on? There are other things that come out of the writing process that aren't just the writing, which you lose if you don't do the writing.

Lauren 00:24:41 Yes. And I think just as leaders and brands, people are craving connection—

Matt 00:24:46 Yeah.

Lauren 00:24:47 —and being together. And so I do think that that's fun and interesting to think about, too, especially for a brand like Supergoop! that could show up in any moment in culture where people are exposed to the sun. What role do we play in just getting people to put their device down and encouraging them to just connect with each other—

Matt 00:25:06 —and yeah, go to the beach, go ski,

Lauren 00:25:08 Touch grass, and do all those things. And so I think there's just a big role that we can play in finding opportunities to create moments that bring people together, or just showing up in those moments and giving people product samples so that they can enjoy themselves and not have to worry about getting sunburned.

Matt 00:25:24 Yeah. I read that Bruno Mars—his concert, he wants you to put your phone in a bag. Like, I think you're gonna start to see a big gravitational pull towards in-real-life.

Lauren 00:25:33 Yeah. I think people are really craving those, yeah, like that—like, human connection and, yeah, for fans to really disconnect from technology.

Matt 00:25:41 Right. Now more than ever. So you mentioned a bunch of times, which I admire during this conversation, your team. And, obviously, greatness is in the agency of others, and I know that you really pride yourself on your ability to be a leader, and you talked about the newsletter you're sending your team. What do you look for in a team member, and what are the attributes when you're either during the interview process or when you first start working with someone—that make you know, "Okay, this person is the right type of person I wanna be working on building a business with"?

Lauren 00:26:06 I have a couple of things. I would say one is: I really want people who are curious,

Matt 00:26:11 Yeah.

Lauren 00:26:11 Who are just gonna ask questions and not be scared to challenge me.

Matt 00:26:16 Right.

Lauren 00:26:16 But I think curiosity, number one—my least favorite answer anyone can ever give me is, "We've always done it this way,". Especially for some brands that I worked at where they weren't even a decade old when I joined, and people are saying, "Well, we've always done it this way." And so I absolutely hate that answer. I think also just having a lot of conviction. Marketing's so interesting because everybody thinks that they can do it, and so everyone has an opinion about what you should be doing. Creative feedback is very subjective, and so I'm looking for people that have conviction—conviction in their ideas. It's always gonna be my job to pressure-test their ideas a little bit, and I like people that have that conviction to kinda come back and really say, "I don't think you're thinking about it in the right way."

Matt 00:26:59 Get behind something.

Lauren 00:27:00 Like, get behind it. I'm gonna say what I don't like about it, and it's your job to prove me wrong.

Matt 00:27:05 I like that.

Lauren 00:27:06 And I always tell people, that's how I wanna work. I don't know everything; I want you to challenge me. So I also need people who are, like, courageous, who are not gonna be scared to say to the boss, "Hey, I think you're not thinking about this in the right way," and I'll always say, "Yeah, tell me more. Say why." And sometimes they're right, and sometimes they're not right. But either way, I appreciate that and do not wanna surround myself with people that are gonna say yes to me. And so—

Matt 00:27:32 —that's what AI can do. AI can say yes to you.

Lauren 00:27:34 Exactly.

Matt 00:27:34 If you want people to follow orders deterministically, that's exactly it.

Lauren 00:27:37 AI is great at being sycophantic. That's great, right, you know.

Matt 00:27:40 Exactly. Right.

Lauren 00:27:40 And so I want people that are gonna say, "You're wrong. I think you missed something." And so that's how I like to work, and it's my job to create enough psychological safety on the team for people to feel that they can work with me in that way. It takes time, but I think, usually, we get there.

Matt 00:27:56 Yeah. I mean, it's two sides of the same coin in terms of not being afraid to challenge you and to have conviction. Both of them need to create an environment, to your point, where they feel like they can do so, without fear of repercussion.

Lauren 00:28:08 Yeah.

Matt 00:28:09 And I think, template, a while ago, we had this campaign, HIPPO—the Highest Paid Person's Opinion, right? And so many companies operate with the HIPPO, like, no one has a point of view. They're all looking towards the end of the day. And I think companies like that, in a world where there are so many different points of view and you're trying to really understand the consumer, that's not a path to success.

Lauren 00:28:27 I mean, especially for me in this role, I need people that I don't come from beauty, so I'm gonna hire people that come from beauty in some roles. And I want them to tell me the things that I don't know. I mean, I try to hire people that are smarter and better than me in specific areas so that we can complement each other.

Matt 00:28:44 Absolutely. So to wrap up here—and I knew this would be a great chat, and I'm so thankful that we got you right on the heels of this new role—when you look back at your journey and all the places you've been, what are some of the areas that you think you leaned into fortuitously in the rearview mirror that put you in the position of the CMO role today? Because so many people come into the workforce, the advertising industry, and wanna be a CMO. You are one.

Lauren 00:29:08 Yeah.

Matt 00:29:09 You're a second-time guest on this podcast. You're obviously doing something right, right? What are some of the things that you think you did right along the way?

Lauren 00:29:15 I'll start by saying that I didn't know I wanted to be a CMO. And so I think that always surprises people, but I didn't start off on a specific journey. And so for me, I like to describe my career as like a happy accident. And so I genuinely was something that I was interested in doing next, where I would raise my hand and say, "Can I try that? Can I do that next?" And I just did that all throughout my career. I also started working in 2000, and so that was a really crazy time. And—

Matt 00:29:47 —the beginning of the .com boom.

Lauren 00:29:49 Yeah, and then the bust. The bust, yep. I think during the bust, I remember saying to my boss at the time, "I don't feel like I can do this job that you want me to do." And he said, "Sink or swim, because there's literally a million people that would take your job tomorrow."

Matt 00:30:03 Right.

Lauren 00:30:03 And so I started off working in this idea of being comfortable being really uncomfortable, which I'm so grateful for. Looking back, I think that gave me the mindset of: when I feel comfortable, I'm ready for something else. And so whenever I take a new role, I

always try to have it grounded in something that I believe I can be successful in and something I've never done before.

Matt 00:30:25 Right.

Lauren 00:30:25 And then you continue to just, like, gain skillsets along the way. And then, at one point at Yahoo, somebody said to me, "You'd be a really good CMO one day." And I said, "I've never really thought about being a CMO."

Matt 00:30:37 Why do you think they said that?

Lauren 00:30:39 I think at the time, I was running almost all of marketing at Yahoo.

Matt 00:30:43 You're acting as one person.

Lauren 00:30:44 And, also, because I think my point of view is: come to the table when you're invited and bring value, and you'll get invited back. That's always my career advice for people. Young people—they hate that, but it's the truth. Do a good job in the job you have. And when you get invited to the table, bring value so that people wanna bring you back again. And so I did that. That's what I tried to do all throughout my career, and I think that gave me the permission when I raised my hand and said, "I know I've never done that before, but can I try it? And if it doesn't work, I'm still happy in the job that I have." And so I just started to, like, accumulate skills over time. And I was at Experian for six years, and during that time, I went from B2B to consumer and started taking over media buying and planning. And then there were all these things that I realized that I really loved that I'd never done before. And so when I went to Square, I wasn't the CMO initially, but I went there and I said, "I really wanna run marketing one day, and the thing that I need to learn the most about is creative." And so that wasn't in my team, but I said, "I wanna shadow all of the creative feedback sessions for a year." And at the end of the year, the head of creative said, "I would like to report to you now." And so I think, like, for me, I've always just thought: what do I need to learn? What's next?

Matt 00:32:01 And not always with the quid pro quo, like, "I'm gonna learn this; was it, do I get a promotion or something?"

Lauren 00:32:05 No. I just thought, "This is the area that I've spent the least amount of time in, and I don't feel that comfortable always giving feedback. And I just wanna be a fly on the wall to see the process unfold for a long period of time." No agenda other than, "I'm here to learn." And over time, then they would always say, "What do you think? What's your opinion?". And I think for me, that was a really great way to get into it, but I went there and said, "This is the thing that I wanna spend more time getting to know." And I think if you can be intentional about the skills that you wanna get and what you wanna go do, your organization—especially in large companies like Square and Yahoo—make it really easy for you to go and do that, just shadow.

Matt 00:32:48 Yeah. For sure. I think it's great advice, and I think too many people... I think the whole Instagram generation of seeing everybody kill it, and it takes away people's patience and it makes them just wanna get to what's next so fast and not go through the proper development that you need to get there. And I think it makes people make short-term decisions, whether it's like, "Oh, it's a better title," or "Oh, it's a better role." It doesn't matter if I'm taking a step back in how I'm gonna develop myself. And I think that may work in the short term, but long term, you're probably gonna be unhappy with where you ended up.

Lauren 00:33:20 I also think being a CMO is a very hard job. So sometimes people come to me and say, "I wanna be a CMO," and I'll say, "Do you know what I even do, right, in a day?", because I actually don't know if you really even do.

Matt 00:33:32 And so—it's not just going to Cannes and having rosé, right? Right.

Lauren 00:33:36 I know. My kids are like, "I wanna go into marketing." What? "You get tickets," right.

Matt 00:33:39 Exactly. Like, right.

Lauren 00:33:41 The least, like, important thing.

Matt 00:33:42 Sometimes you get tickets that you have to sit next to people who you don't really wanna sit next to either.

Lauren 00:33:46 Yeah. But there's a lot of other really hard things that go into it, and it's a really hard job. I mean, I love it, and I think that it lets you use your left and your right brain and all those things, but you're constantly on and getting polled—dealing with people, relationships. You're at the center of almost everything that happens in an organization, and a lot of times, you're responsible for growth. So there's a lot of pressure on CMOs, it's definitely not for everybody.

Matt 00:34:11 Yep. Awesome. Well, this has been a great chat. Our last question that we ask our guests always is: there's a saying or mantra. You probably don't remember the one that you gave us a couple of years ago, so if you repeat it again, we'll forgive you. Given all your personal growth and everything that's happened since then, I imagine it'd be something new, so—

Lauren 00:34:28 I think right now, for me, it's to have fun. And for Supergoop!, which is this brand that has just this—such this, like, joyful personality, that if you're not having fun at work, I don't think that people feel that sense of joy from your brand. And Peloton and Supergoop! are two brands that I think just bring a lot of, like, joy and happiness to people's lives. And so my mantra is: have fun. Yes, there's serious work that has to be done, but I want the end consumers to feel the joy and the fun that goes into making the work. And I think you actually have to be having fun for them to feel that.

Matt 00:35:04 Awesome. Well, this podcast has a lot of fun, too. So, um, I thank you for that. But thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule here at the conference to tell your story.

Lauren 00:35:12 So good to be here again. I'm—I feel honored to get a second invite.

Matt 00:35:16 Absolutely. You definitely deliver, so we'll have you back again. On behalf of Suzy and the Adweek team, thanks again to my friend Lauren Weinberg, Chief Marketing Officer of Supergoop!, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review the Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. We're here in South Beach. We'll see you soon. Bye-bye.

The Speed of Culture is brought to you by Suzy as part of the Adweek podcast network and Acast creator network. You can listen and subscribe to all Adweek's podcasts by visiting adweek.com/podcast. To find out more about Suzy, head to suzy.com. And make sure to search for the Speed of Culture in Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or anywhere else podcasts are found. Click follow so you don't miss out on any future episodes. On behalf of the team here at Suzy, thanks for listening.