# Simon Francis Podcast Transcript

[00:00:00] **Andy Murray:** Hello Simon and welcome to the program, my friend.

[00:00:02] It's so good to have a Brit join us from London. How's the weather in London today? Is the sun

[00:00:07] **Simon Francis:** shining well? Yes it is. The sun is shining both physically and more emotionally, if yeah. It's been a good day, .

[00:00:15] **Andy Murray:** After four years in the uk, I didn't realize until I got there how the weather is almost every part of every conversation, right?

[00:00:22] It's only fitting that we start this with the weather.

[00:00:26] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, absolutely. But then you were up north where the weather's a bit more extreme down south is always sunny. Yeah.

[00:00:31] **Andy Murray:** That's why we tended to go to London on the weekends outside of there was only so much sheep in rock walls.

[00:00:36] We could look at that far north. So let's get started. You've been helping big brands and retailers transform their marketing organizations at Flock four. 10 years. So first of all, congrats on your entrepreneurial journey, and before we start talking about marketing and transformation take me back to that moment 10 years ago when you started this journey.

[00:00:59] What were you thinking and feeling at the time? And did you envision it looking like it does today?

[00:01:05] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, that's a great question. The reason why I set the business up was, that just the world was getting much more complicated. There's the what of marketing and the how of marketing. The what of marketing is, what's my insight, what's my idea?

[00:01:18] What's my media strategy? And that's hard. But it hadn't gotten any harder. The how of marketing had got just incredibly harder. How do I get the right people? How do I organize them? How do I get everyone to work together? How do I get the right agencies and stuff? And so I saw an opportunity in that 10 years.

[00:01:34] And surprisingly the business plans almost worked out, as you see, you rock these things you never really know, but it's been a privilege to work with some great brands and great people to genuinely transform their marketing. And that's what flock associates, my company does.

[00:01:48] You're

[00:01:49] **Andy Murray:** obviously doing something right. 95% of startups fail after the first year, so you've cut through all of those barriers and it's been quite impressive to watch you build this over the last 10. I'm curious as to what you're seeing today in terms of the challenges marketers face as compared to what you saw in the past when you were starting out 10 years ago.

[00:02:11] Yeah, I.

[00:02:12] **Simon Francis:** There's obviously some key sort of just general business trends that, that follow through, the globalization the drive of technology, transforming sort of things. I think they're all well understood. I think really for marketeers and the CMO is their changing role in the board has has been a big difference.

[00:02:31] I've gotta be honest. I say that the level of talent in the industry as a whole, both on the advertiser and on the agency side has changed and I'm afraid I don't see it as for the better. So say some of the sort of macro trends that you would see and then the ones that. Of course you'll talk about, massive changes through both social and influencers, sort of Martin and now the onrushing wave of retail sort of media.

[00:02:55] Yeah. Interspersed with. Economic challenges, covid and the rest of them along the way. So never a dull known, never a

[00:03:02] **Andy Murray:** dull moment for sure. I hear a lot of questions in the industry still around things like, what's the best way to organize or deal with X, Y, or Z? So for example, how much should we be doing performance marketing versus brand marketing?

[00:03:16] Or where should retail media networks network accountability sit in the organization or. Is it in-house better than partnering? I don't know why, but we tend to wanna look for those pat answers. But my experience has been, it depends. It depends on culture categories. You're competing in your heritage.

[00:03:35] And I imagine the work you guys do is a more of an alchemist or a forensic scientist to try to figure out what's best for each company versus pure consultant, Do you feel like it's, there is these pat answers? It's a softball question, but it feels like there's a lot of variables that, and yet we want to find the single best answer for everybody.

[00:03:57] **Simon Francis:** Yeah. I'll be blunt about it. There are lots of other sorts of consultancies who maybe don't understand marketing as well, who say, here's a. You've gotta in-house or you gotta in-house media, or you gotta do a retail network or . And they have these models that they count around and they drop on any company, any culture, any style of organization.

[00:04:21] Ours, because we are marketers, consulting to marketers, we believe in the power of the consumer. So we'll look at what does the consumer need in three years time? What do they need of this brand? What do they need from this sort of business? And then we figure out where the company is now and then fill the gaps.

[00:04:38] And quite often that will be okay, what skills are required first and foremost, right? How are you gonna effectively organize those skills? How are you gonna train and nurture those skills? What are the processes that are gonna make those teams efficient and effective? And that includes the power of the data and the technology that they would.

[00:04:59] And often what some other consultancies forget is the agency resources. They have huge value to marketing. Boys have always will do, their role is changing, but what is the role of the agencies? So we start from a very purist stance really there, which is to organize marketing around the needs of the consumer.

[00:05:16] Rather than against a pat answer or a off the peg model, or, something that serves our business or a technology that we've got to sell. That's not the way.

[00:05:27] **Andy Murray:** I know from my own experience, I think when I got into Asta 2016 and trying to create a vision and move things forward one of the pieces of data I had was about 30.

[00:05:37] If you look at the total ecosystem of marketing that we were doing, probably only 30% of the total FTEs were, inside the company. And so to take on change without really understanding the total ecosystem of external partners is. It's too limiting cuz you're, it wouldn't work. Yeah. And I think probably the

best decision we made back then was to engage you guys to come in and help sort it out and get our in-house in order first before we started looking at agencies and other partners.

[00:06:07] Yeah. And you look at the, your business and what Flock does really, as I've experienced it and how you talk about it under four pillars. And I wanna walk through those pillars and talk about that. And it's people, partners, procurement and process. And it seems like all four of those are going through a lot of change and have some real challenges today.

[00:06:28] But before I ask about the underneath each one of those four, I found it. Curious, you didn't have digital and technology as a pillar. Is that because it's foundational throughout or it's something you don't look at?

[00:06:42] **Simon Francis:** No, it's a hundred percent ingrained in every aspect of everything that we do.

[00:06:47] Along with sustainability and diversity and inclusion, right? You just cannot talk about agencies without talking about technology and data. It doesn't matter what sort of agency it is technology and data will play a role. As soon as you start talking about processes, you're talking about technology, the workflow tools, and the enablement tools that you know, power.

[00:07:09] Processes, but equally sustainability, diversity, and inclusion runs through every part of our work, whether it's about people, whether it's about partners, whether it's about procurement. It's such a fundamental underpinning from all of our work. So we don't call it out as a separate service because we don't really believe in it being siloed from the other component parts of our business.

[00:07:30] And most oftentimes is we have all four of those services working together as. We only broke them out this fall to make us easy to shop simply, people know, oh, you do marketing capabilities in people. So you know, we call it out.

[00:07:46] **Andy Murray:** When you look at people, let's start there. In the right roles, getting people in the right roles, I'd love to hear your thoughts on how the culture of the company you're working with affects that because culture is so important, but how do you get into the cultural element in addition to looking at job specs and who should be sitting where?

[00:08:04] **Simon Francis:** Yeah. CU culture trump's all not, that's a bland statement but pretty much, I could assemble the most talented bunch of people in my organization but without a culture that's inclusive, that can get the best of them, that genuinely puts excellence at the four I wouldn't have a very good business.

[00:08:22] So before anyone, again, some people rush to design or they rush to. Job descriptions and things, and it, once you've defined your vision for marketing, the culture is a key point. So we worked with major advertiser over 12,000 marketers globally, and they came to us to write rewrite all of their global processes to make them more agile.

[00:08:45] And we did our initial interviews and, we've got a skills survey that we use which picks up on culture as well. And we deployed these and we just came back. We can write down a process, we can show it and we can train it into the organization. But your culture's wrong to be able to, for you to move, with agility, there's a fear culture here.

[00:09:05] There's a blame culture here. We have to address this. So we were able to deploy by e-learning facilities and lots of cultural changes. We put the CMO in the middle of the marketing department rather on eight floors higher. We changed the meeting room environments. We banned a certain number of ccs so that people weren't getting copied.

[00:09:26] We changed the way the email was to be used. We introduced teams and then there was a whole bunch of training around risk aversion and failing fast and genuine agility. And the cultural piece landed very well that allowed the process changes that we needed to. To land. But I don't think it would've worked in an organization of that scale without the cultural shift that needed to be made.

[00:09:47] Again, we understand marketing it, it's different from some other departments. In organizations. Cultural applies to every department. Yep. But there's a strong sense of different types of marketing culture that need to be recognized and sometimes tweaked and.

[00:10:03] **Andy Murray:** Yeah. Good for you. I love that.

[00:10:04] I think that's really an important piece that you feel inside a company that may not work here the same way, because our culture might be slightly different in some way. Yeah. Or another thing that's happening obviously in the last couple of years because of retail media networks, when you start looking at

people and roles and getting people in the right roles, Is the lines are getting a bit blurred between a marketing side and the commerce side.

[00:10:27] And are you seeing yourself being pulled into the commercial sides of the house, sales and trade and such in order to help sort how do these functions work in a much more integrative way?

[00:10:39] **Simon Francis:** Yeah. It is one of the big, three or four topics of the moment, right? And people come to us, as you said earlier, they come to us with a problem.

[00:10:48] Either a marketing person comes to us or a salesperson says, Hey, we've gotta fix our retail commerce offering. Can you come and do org design for us? But that normally means in code is there's a punch up between sales and marketing over who ends. Shopper and retail.

[00:11:02] That's right. Marketing. And they're looking for someone independent to, adjudicate between two after warring factions. And we just start in a very different place, which is what's the customer experience that you're trying to build? What are you trying to offer the consumer?

[00:11:17] Now let's peel it back and look what skills that you need to deliver against that. Now let's look at what process needs to operate within that and the tech and the data. And then finally, what do you want do in-house versus out of house with the agencies? By the time you peeled back those different layers, you are almost left with a clearly defined answer for who should be doing what, but driven by the consumer and the consumer experience that you want to create.

[00:11:47] I'll give you an example, is let's just say you might be a retailer and you might wanna do Or retail media, right? , big topic. You wanna pull in a lot of money. It depends on who, who's got that handle. If it's the sales guys and they wanna try and pull it in and just make a letter of money, that's one thing.

[00:12:03] If it's maybe the marketing side and they want to build a seamless customer experience for the consumer, it might be a completely different thing. So you have to start with what the vision is, what the objectives are, and the customer experience, and then work it back into the organization, and that'll.

[00:12:18] Where some of the roles should do, but where isn't as important as the skills and the process is irrespective, right? Org design is not as important as

having a brilliant process so that people can build all these great experiences. Yeah

[00:12:32] **Andy Murray:** I agree with that. I feel like it's often much better to start with the process and what is you're trying to accomplish, what's the objective, and then you work your way through that to get to the other side of it.

[00:12:42] One of the things I'm hearing in the industry quite a bit, Simon, is the growing complexity of MarTech ad tech, and how do you help marketers? Deal with that complexity. It's almost overwhelming. It can be. And if you look at the many different streams of knowledge from customer data platforms and what that might mean all the way through to the MarTech and ad tech do you feel like we're at a point of overwhelm or how are people coping with the demand to develop skills in all those areas?

[00:13:13] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, there's just a lot, right? Everyone's seen the famous sort of charts of all of the ad and marketing technologies that, that exist, and that is completely overwhelming if you look at it in that way. There's no way that either our company or any company could hold expertise across a map and a vista like that.

[00:13:30] And it's a fool's errand to try Andy, right? But I think you can chunk things down in different ways by not looking at the te. If you say, what are the biggest problems I need to solve? Okay. And you start with, or is it targeting or is it loyalty? Or what is it? And then you are saying, okay, what are the kind of the KPIs that are really important?

[00:13:50] What's the data that I need within it? And then you get to last of all the technology that provides the data, that provides the answer to the biggest questions that you have as a market. Whereas I think too many people start at the wrong place. The other thing is, I would say is you have to be cross-functionally agnostic or independent.

[00:14:13] By which I mean is if you've only got expertise in media, the answer's always a media piece of technology. If you are, a CRM expert, the answer's always a new, fantastic data warehouse, right? Where. Is where I think you have to sit above that so you can find the connections between technologies and build these integrated technology solutions and stacks as opposed to doing it piece by piece, department by department.

[00:14:40] Cuz you never get a holistic view and it never joins together. So that's just one other thing that we've noticed a lot is too many companies. Put

the budgets in the hands of too many people's and then it's trying to like knit spaghetti, right? Yeah. You just can't make it all work together at the end of the day.

[00:14:55] Yeah.

[00:14:55] **Andy Murray:** I saw a statistic the other day that only 30% of typical MarTech features are actually used of what's available there. Which you could look at that one or two ways. One is maybe they should be used and the skills aren't there, or maybe that's all that's needed to achieve the objectives of what the organization is trying to do.

[00:15:12] That. Yeah,

[00:15:13] **Simon Francis:** really true. It's a really great point. We've just done a huge project for a global beauty in cosmetic sort of company. And they had two from memory, I may be wrong, but it's in the right ballpark of 286 different taxonomy fields on their digital asset management system.

[00:15:30] And they were like, wow, it's, we're not really getting much traction. We can't find stuff on the dam. We're not using it right. And things. So we had to come up with a new taxonomy that could also fit with their media taxonomy, their PIM taxonomy and their finance taxonomy, so they could work out the ROI on the stuff that they were making.

[00:15:48] I think we got it down to about 35 fields and by able to getting it auto overfilled and optimized by, depending on what you filled in, we were able to, rationalize and improve the uses quite dramatically. Let's put it.

[00:16:02] **Andy Murray:** Yeah, that's great. I've heard the quote, not everything that could be counted should be counted, and not everything that counts can be counted.

[00:16:08] It's trying to sift through that. So important. Let's go to the second big P pillar partners. There's a lot of talk in the industry more recently about the pitch process being broken. I, I've. Seen that and I've gone through that process. You guys led us through that process. But I don't see any change really happening there to do it a different way.

[00:16:28] How do you think about the overall process of the agency beauty show and showing up in all of the work that goes into that? Yeah,

[00:16:37] **Simon Francis:** it's a great question and it is a hot topic, especially amongst the the agencies. I think the first thing is. When someone comes and says, we want a pitch, we go, why?

[00:16:46] And then you do the classic Toyota five whys to get back to what the root cause is. And it might be cuz our sales are flat or something else and the agency may not be actually the problem. Or it may be much better to run a get fit exercise and fixtures we did one once before with yourselves than discarding the agency and doing a pitch.

[00:17:05] So that's the first point. The second thing is you've gotta understand what you are running a pitch. Are you trying to buy a capability that can do great work? Or are you trying to get them to do a bit of work that can run at the end of it? And they're two fundamentally different approaches. We believe in the format, not the latter.

[00:17:25] And sometimes you get lucky and work comes out that runs and that's fantastic. Or a media strategy. Or a PR strategy that that sticks. But that's not ever our intention. It's the buy that human capability and technical competence of the. That can do great work and that leads you down a very different pitch path.

[00:17:42] Andy, we talk about running high humanity pitches. I'd rather put your key account director in a room with you so you can have a one-on-one. So you can assess whether you can work with the lady or the guy. You can assess their general knowledge and their understanding of your business and your needs and their leadership ability that's gonna be far better for you and for them, and you're gonna be able to give better.

[00:18:04] Then a PowerPoint warfare and glitzy videos and things like that. So we tend to run high humanity pitches, which are much more intimate than some folk for sure. And then it then is generally the case. And we tend to do real deep dives on things like technology and stuff. Screen grabs of technology, old PowerPoint doesn't work.

[00:18:23] We tend to roll up the sleeves, give them live tests, give them budgets to play with, and if we want to test. An agency's ability to do things quick. We might throw in a last minute pitch, idea just to see how they can think and react and work to things. So it's much more of a live test to the working relationship than what used to be the siege mentality.

[00:18:43] Now I have to say, there is a huge amount of the industry that doesn't work in that way. There are some poor procurement people in marketing teams, although marketing procurements improved dramatically and there. Pretty average pitch consultants who, used to be an account director in 1988 and still running pitches in that way, just blunt about it. So there is a need for change. We adopt what we think is best. But I think there is a lot of frustration, rightly with the way that they're being. Yeah,

[00:19:15] **Andy Murray:** I've participated as a client in both of those different approaches and in the first approach of the traditional way of looking at, seven, eight agencies or some ungodly number there, there gets to be a blindness that happens where there.

[00:19:30] The pitch decks look a lot alike, and the real information to make a really great choice just isn't there. And I, we've done it the other way where through the more human approach. And I think, if I remember right you guys helped lead that process. And it does give you much richer information about how things really work, the real human side of it.

[00:19:50] And are you gonna get along with these people? Do you respect the. The approach and is there real dialogue and a willingness to pitch back, but push back. I always loved a partner that would actually, you know, challenge and not be afraid of that to share a different point of view. I thought that was really rich.

[00:20:07] You talked about you guys talk about procurement, which I think that's an area that is often inside. Of a brand or a retailer can be almost I don't wanna say an enemy of the marketing department right, as you're trying to go through this process but I found that the procurement team became my best friend really in, in terms of working with them early, inviting 'em in and helping them understand how fast the marketing world was changing, especially looking at what was happening with programmatic and all of the elements with that.

[00:20:37] The foundational elements of procure. How do you harmonize that so that it's, or any suggestions on how procurement could play a much more collaborative role between marketing and the agency and everything else?

[00:20:50] **Simon Francis:** Yeah. We contributed to and support the World Federation of Advertisers projects Spring, which I know Jenny forward thinking marketeer or marketing operations or a deep marketing procurement person to look at, which is moving procurement away from a transaction.

[00:21:07] Just cost focus into driving value into organizations. And some of the, best marketing procurement teams that we work with are bringing new initiatives. They're looking at what's the outcome of the work, not just the cost of it. And they're pushing for ROI on everything. And they're pushing the marketers to be much more disciplined and measured about what they're doing, and they're improving the skills of the marketeers in topics like briefing and processes and things.

[00:21:34] One of our largest, probably our two of our five largest marketing projects, general projects started from procurement where there was a great relationships between marketing, procurement and the cmo. We were introduced because we do things outside of procurement, can fix processes, can fix briefing programs, can do org.

[00:21:56] So for one we were introduced by marketing procurement. We created a new marketing operations and a function called moms a new production operation inside marketing called palms put in place new technology and things of that. And that was driven by marketing procurement in really fantastic partnership with CMOs so that the marketers wouldn't have got there on their own.

[00:22:18] They had their head filled with plenty of other. Whereas the independence of marketing procurement really made the difference in that instance. And in several of the biggest assignments which we've been involved in.

[00:22:28] **Andy Murray:** Have you also worked with finance? Because I, I think one of the areas that I've found challenging at times is the helping educate finance on how measurement works and the different KPIs that are there.

[00:22:41] When I was a CMO at Walmart, ASTA. I'd have 20, 30 KPIs to be looking at from how I was doing on brand attribution to cut through to salience, all kinds of KPIs. And you start adding the commercial side in with the retail media networks it could be really difficult to know, you move one KPI one way and all of a sudden the other KPI goes the other direction.

[00:23:03] So simplifying that world, understanding that world, and really being able to be choiceful about. Does move the needle for you in the right way? Required a lot of work with the finance director because they're, they're measuring budgets, they're setting budgets. They need to, approve budgets and make sense out of that.

[00:23:21] Have you dipped into the finance side in addition to the procurement side on measurement?

[00:23:26] **Simon Francis:** Ye, yes, indeed. Driven from the marketing side. I've never been employed by a finance director directly yet, so I have to be clear. But we've just completed a project in the us It was a large iconic cpg company who had fantastic econometric modeling to show what was happening to their brands.

[00:23:45] They had all the brand tracking that showed that when you invest, the scores go up and every year their marketing budgets got cut and they were going down. And so as a result, actually equity and things were falling. And we had to go upstairs from the CMO to the CEO to agree a project that was gonna look at marketing effectiveness, the skills internally, okay, what was actually happening, and then look across the measures and get them validated independently.

[00:24:12] That they were true, responsible and that they were forward thinking. And we had to take finance on that journey. Because there was no point in us saying, yes, this effectiveness approach is the best way of measuring brands and stuff is if the rest of the time finance director couldn't do it.

[00:24:26] The other thing is, I would I would urge all CMOs or even department heads to think about is how you create budget liquidity. Because very often budgets are set by department, often on an annual basis of often. Based on a year on year calculation, which gives you no liquidity to be able to react and move between departments and shift budgets around, so not just having the measures to be able to do it, but having the facility with finance to either hold budget top side so it can be injected where it's left.

[00:25:01] All the ability to move money between departments with the agility that modern marketing needs. So finance again can be a great ally. But sometimes you need that independence outside of just the marketing director telling you that the results are great to be able to do it, and that takes the winning.

[00:25:19] Yeah, it

[00:25:20] **Andy Murray:** does take some winning over. I know when we brought in market mix modeling for the first time and we had the data and started to do it finance was a bit skeptical to be honest. And we did a two steps

forward, three steps back to go and reeducate and cope. Really co-create together with finance and procurement and marketing.

[00:25:37] So that three-legged stool was the only way we could really get there. And then once we created that collaboration, it really did change the outcome of what we're able to do by having that

[00:25:49] **Simon Francis:** last piece. And the ability, yeah, go ahead. Now, the ability to best test Andy is better than it's ever been, right?

[00:25:54] And yet, so few people have got a really rigorous, test to learn sort of program with controls and things like that. One of our large auto clients had 164 tests that they were running on an annual basis, 164 tests. Wow. To be able to prove different. Types of effectiveness. Not all of them linked to budget.

[00:26:17] Okay. But a lot of them, of course, showed that they were optimizing the budget or that they needed more budget to do different sort of things, and a commitment to that level of rigor. Sometimes marketers don't have, right? Yeah. It feels like more engineering. It feels more science than art. But again, with the ability to measure testing is your best friend.

[00:26:36] Yeah, a

[00:26:36] **Andy Murray:** hundred percent. Especially in this dynamic time. Which leads me to the last of the piece, the process. When you look at process, and I just had this question asked me the other day of when do you Pour down and put, lay down a repeatable process to roll out cuz you need to scale, right? So you're in a marketing team, whether you're in an agency or a marketer and you're wanting to create some scale and efficiency.

[00:26:59] You need to document and have playbooks and be able to. Run consistent processes, but at the same time, everything's changing all the time. And it's, you want to be innovating, you wanna learn something new. As soon as you lay down a process, it can go stale and you can miss out on the innovation.

[00:27:14] So how do you coach people through that tension, that paradox between innovation and process? For efficiency?

[00:27:24] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, I think it's a really good point. First of all, I'd say that most marketers think. Process is a very dirty word. Yep. And they don't give it the value that that it genuinely has.

[00:27:35] The second is, in many organizations, the process isn't someone's full-time job. Many companies now have put in place marketing operations teams, but many haven't. And someone really needs to continue to do it. But in direct answer to your question is you build it in right? You build innovation and creativity in the process and you know when to unprocessed.

[00:27:55] I'll give you an example that we built for a large auto global auto client, their new annual planning and campaign. So it processes and within that there's very clear places where you are prescribed to innovate or certain categories of campaign or activity, which are innovation led, right?

[00:28:16] So you are building it in. It's not like you either do the process or you innovate the innovations. Built in. The other thing, there would be exceptions to the process. And you have to have a means of dealing with that rather than everyone just calling an exception and no one knowing what to do.

[00:28:34] In the old days you would have what I used to call 'em, one of my agencies, a red brief. A red brief was something where all rules were torn up and you just approached it afresh and tackled things in a different. Which might mean you lock yourself away in a house for four days with pizza and beer until you come out with the answer.

[00:28:51] It might be you take everyone for a runaround part to get to the answer might be whatever it might need to be. But you unprocessed to be able to solve certain sort of tasks. And I think a lot of marketers have. Forgotten that they come to us saying, oh, we've gotta work in agile squads, we've gotta do agile marketing, which we've happily put in the discipline and the rigor of the standups and the CanBan boards and all of those sort of things.

[00:29:18] But there are exceptions to that when you need to step outside it and you need to have a means or a way to do it. So reprocessing is as important as process. Yeah,

[00:29:27] **Andy Murray:** and I set up two different marketing ops one at Walmart and one in Azda where there wasn't a marketing ops before. It was done through traditional project management kind of stuff.

[00:29:36] And I can tell you it really was a game changer. But a couple of things I learned through that process is one if you're gonna add a next step, right? So you see a mistake happen, we add another step to the process, right? That's how they get bloated really fast. And so my thing is, if you're gonna add something to the process, something needs to come.

[00:29:55] And try to force a bit of a simplicity cause they, by themselves, they will get complex and more so than they need to be. And the second thing is, if you have, if you want to have a playbook or a work process defined and then you put that out there and you call it success for a marketing ops team to have a process that's not really success.

[00:30:14] Success should be measured if by asking the question. Are the customers of this process using it, and are they happy with it? And does it make their life better? Until you get to that point, just having a playbook is not an outcome. That's just, ticking a box to say, we have a process for this and a process for that.

[00:30:32] The measurement should be, is it effective and does it make my life better?

[00:30:37] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, a hundred percent. And as we say, it has to be built for the real world with, and maintain. So you're gonna have 30% churn, okay. In your team. So just having a playbook means nothing unless you are onboarding people, continually training people on it, adapting it, bringing their knowledge and insight in from the organization.

[00:30:59] It has to be a live living thing, not some monolithic piece. And as we say is the ability to know how to short circuit it when you need to is right. You. One of the ones we've built for a large quick service restaurant operated at three different speeds. You could go through it really quick.

[00:31:18] You could go through it in the middle while, or you could go through it a heavy way depending on what the business demanded at that time. And different pieces are grayed out and different races change and things like that. It included me tell. Ah, included me having to tell a CMO that they weren't gonna see the work for some of these speeds because they just couldn't get across it, to approve everything.

[00:31:37] Which they felt uncomfortable about, but that's what the good process necessitated. Yeah.

[00:31:41] **Andy Murray:** And it can work inside across the agency client side too. One of the things that I really encouraged was asking the agency to not bring six or seven ideas in the first look at it. A new campaign, but, come with the idea that you believe in most and we'll talk through it.

[00:31:57] And if we need to go to a second or third idea, then you know, we can, but I prefer to, cuz you're the agency, you're the expert and boy did that. Did that change things because that change in process allowed them to simplify and have more confidence than just having four or five ideas, because in case one fails, right?

[00:32:16] You would have a backup. And I just think it, it took, it created a lot more efficiency for both sides. Lemme talk. Yeah, you

[00:32:23] **Simon Francis:** make a great point about the agencies, Andy. I think getting the agencies to match a client's process is really important. There's no point having a client process, but then the agency goes off and does something.

[00:32:34] And they can't work to the same level of agility or they're not synchronized into those races and those ways. So again, for the larger auto, when we did the train, the trainers was a hundred people, everyone in Detroit and for a train the trainers sort of session of which half were agencies and half were the marketeers to make sure that the whole marketing machine moved at the same speed and the same pace with the same agility as opposed to you.

[00:33:01] Different speeds and different angles. Yeah.

[00:33:04] **Andy Murray:** Yeah. That's so critical. A hundred percent agree. We have a lot of students we work with with the University of Arkansas and other places. I'd love to hear your thoughts on career advice to Graduates going into the workforce how do you how do, how does, should they think about this complex multi-varied space and what they should be thinking about to build a career, what would you give kind of advice would you give 'em today?

[00:33:28] **Simon Francis:** Hey, it's funny, I did a talk at the University of Baxter in the uk the other day to some students about the similar topic. And I said, first of all, is. Find out about all of the different disciplines that exist within marketing and look at your own sort of skill sets. Very closely because you could be a real numbers person and succeed brilliantly in, in marketing.

[00:33:48] You could be a creative flare driven person, succeed in marketing cuz there's such a broad church of skills. But one, know yourself very well and the other is know the context that you like to work. If you're a sports nut and you're. Let's be real geeky, nerdy data guy. Yeah, look at that.

[00:34:06] There's so many fantastic opportunities in that sort of field. Why go and do a grad scheme, and a general cpg. So I'd aim for the sweet spot of where

you think you are gonna succeed ultimately and in the right place. The second thing is if you're listening to this podcast, you're doing the right thing, which is to learn broadly and deeply.

[00:34:26] There's a lot of great material to. And to access and to gen up with before you go for an interview, before you apply for a role or think about it, just really put in the spade work to do that. It's not gonna find you. The last point I would talk about is pick your boss. Okay? Go find the people on LinkedIn that are doing things that are shaking things in the sector that you've chosen.

[00:34:50] Engage with them, right? To. Try and find someone that, that is doing the best work hustle. I love that.

[00:34:59] **Andy Murray:** I'd also add to that, once you do make a choice and you've entered, there's no, there is no perfect job. So I would relax on that pressure point, and I would also give myself at least a year, personally, I say two years to not look up and second guess because you're gonna go through some hard stuff and it's part of the learning.

[00:35:15] And it's easy today to say, yeah, I don't like, I'm. Passionate about this, I'm gonna give up, change careers, do whatever. But some of the best learning happens when you're going through the hard things that have to learn and go through. So yeah, just give yourself some time. It's

[00:35:29] **Simon Francis:** for the most, it's still the most invigorating thing, not everyone does a marketing degree, and that's what makes marketing fantastic. You'll meet geographers, you'll meet scientists, sports scientists, creatives. It's a melting pot of skills and disciplines and it's incredibly meritocratic. You're not waiting for your next exam. You don't have to go through 10 layers.

[00:35:49] If you are good, you'll fly and you can get to the level that you've got to, or possibly even my own lower, more humble role in the world. But you can certainly. If you apply yourself and you've got the right skills and you can work as a team fantastically, marketing is still as, I think a lot of people that have gone into tech companies are now finding out.

[00:36:11] There's a real benefit to being in in the department of a leading company in, in, in marketing.

[00:36:16] **Andy Murray:** I also think that we do not have in the industry today an abundance of leaders. There's, it feels like there's a leadership deficit and just

because of how things have grown, and it's an opportunity to really apply yourself.

[00:36:28] And if you do have ambition to be a senior leader and you put the work in, it's not like we've got too many leaders.

[00:36:37] **Simon Francis:** It's a fantastic observation. I think for many of the people who may be listening to this who are mid ranking marketers learn how to lead it doesn't tend to be taught in marketing as it maybe is in some other functions.

[00:36:49] You don't just emerge as a leader. And there's a difference between being a leader and having followers. So build your followership, work out how you can get followers because that's the sort of discipline that you are in marketing. It's not command and. If you don't have followers, then you're doomed in marketing, I would say.

[00:37:07] Yeah. Hierarchy will not save you.

[00:37:10] **Andy Murray:** No. You get sponsors that change and I think the only, one of the only reasons I lasted four years in the cmmo job at Asda was the the. Trying to build networks and relationships at the leadership level because you do have to work in a world of influence.

[00:37:26] You have to work with merchants and you have to work with operations. You work well with your agency partners and, finding people that have those leadership skills that work through influence, as you mentioned is not easy to find sometimes. And I think it, it makes a wide open space for those that want to advance a career.

[00:37:42] This is a great place to be. Yeah.

[00:37:44] **Simon Francis:** Very.

[00:37:46] **Andy Murray:** Simon, as you look out the next couple of years as we wrap this up, what do you see is excites you and what gives you hope as you look in this very vuca complicated world?

[00:37:57] **Simon Francis:** Yeah, there's so much I'm tremendously excited about the role of marketing with regards to sustainability.

[00:38:04] And when sustainability, I mean it in the broadest sense of the word. I don't just mean I'm talking about biodiversity. I'm talking about diversity and inclusivity. I'm talking about the power of brands to shape humanity and I think marketing's got so much more to play than perhaps manufacturing or production and some of those other areas where a lot of these conversations have started actually.

[00:38:30] And I think as soon as people really wake up to the power of marketing to. Society and the world at large. I think that's gonna be a fantastic thing. So I'm tremendously excited about that. I'm someone who's tremendously excited about artificial intelligence and the ability to harness it for good and the ability to use it in a smart way.

[00:38:48] I know a lot of people are terrified that it's gonna put, art directors at. Media strategists sat of that everything's gonna get done down and the answer's all gonna be the same cuz it's run through chat. G p t I think it's Ata hogwash, right? I just think it's, they're gonna be the smart leaders that really look at it and say, how can it help me solve these critical problems?

[00:39:08] Look at the people, the organization, the agency resources, the technology that they're gonna need to put in place to harness the power of ai. And then test and test and lay out these programs, they're gonna win big. Cuz other one who's just put their fingers in their ears, it's a bad place to be over the next few years I think so.

[00:39:26] So yeah, lots of things. But those, and then lastly, the power of creativity Ave is we've had a decade of data and tech, and whilst I've just talked about ai, that's a servant to creativity, not a replacement. So I'm excited a bit about creative As brands have to find growth creativity's the force that gives it creativity and innovation.

[00:39:48] So three things really. Andy, I'd say which always excite me, but for those specifically at the moment,

[00:39:52] **Andy Murray:** It's interesting, there's probably a lot of data to back up the importance of creativity. If you look at. The cookie apocalypse that may be coming. And contextual being more important, understanding how message works and creativity.

[00:40:04] It feels like it's taken a bit of a backseat to the performance marketing conversations over the last couple of years. And I'm with you on that. I think for that reason alone we need to put more energy into the creative side of

it. Hey Simon, thank you so much for taking this time outta your day and spending it with me on.

[00:40:20] These very important topics. I've covered a lot in the space of retail media networks and the changes that are happening in that space, but this is the first we could sit down and talk about, what's important in changing, a, an organization inside to prepare for those kind of changes or to maximize 'em.

[00:40:35] I think you've done a good job of outlining How you have to look at people, how you have to look at the process, the partners in the procurement in a holistic way. And I'm not trying to flog flock per se, but I think anybody that thinks that way as a client or a brand marketer is going to find much more success than taking it more one dimensionally as a organizational design problem.

[00:40:59] So thank you for spending that time and bringing that clarity. For those listening, we'll put in the show notes how you can get in touch with sh with Simon, and connect up with him and find out more about what he's doing.

[00:41:10] **Simon Francis:** Andy, thanks so much for your time and inviting me. And thank you to anyone who's listened to the end.