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Jaime Masters: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I am Jaime Masters. And I am so excited to have my good friend on the show, Greg Mercer. He runs Jungle Scout. And if you haven't heard of it yet, you have to go check it out. Plus, the growth of his company is insane. Thanks so much for coming on the show today, Greg.

Greg Mercer: Jaime, thank you very much for having me on. It's gonna be a fun time chatting with you.

Jaime Masters: Yeah! Okay, so – because I have a million questions. I told you this before, when I was hanging out with you guys. The growth that you've created was insane. So, take us from the beginning of Jungle Scout to where you are now, and so everybody can also have a jaw-dropping moment also.

Greg Mercer: Yeah, I used to work a real job. I quit that to start selling physical products on Amazon. And I started Jungle Scout as a little bit of a side hustle or a hobby project. My Amazon business was doing quite well. And I wanted to be mindful of not getting distracted. But I did have this need in the software space. So, I was like, why don't I just try to create this? If I could sell enough of this to break even on the cost to get it developed, I was gonna consider it a win.

Fast forward all the way to today, about four and a half years later. We have, like, 225,000 customers. There are 125 people that work here at Jungle Scout. And yeah, it exceeded my wildest expectations. But of course, there were a lot of challenges and bumps in the road in that middle part that we just fast forwarded through.

Jaime Masters: Right. That's why I love interviews like this. It's like, yeah, it was great! Everything is fine! No big deal!

Greg Mercer: Yeah. Easy.

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: So, of course we're gonna break that down.

Greg Mercer: It just happens naturally.

Jaime Masters: No stress at all! It was great! And that's, I guess, my point. Because when people are really going in and going, "Oh! I wanna create a little software thing too! Oh, I'm gonna dabble in this," and you hit on something, fast growth can also be insane,

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especially if you don't have the skill set. So, can you walk me through a little bit when you realized that it was a big deal and started taking off a little bit more?

Greg Mercer:

Yes. The day that I launched it, I just built a really small email list of, like, 100 people. And 12 of those people bought it. So, it's like, okay, 12% conversion rate from a not-really-that-well-qualified list. It's like, all right, that's actually pretty good. But I don't know if I can really get anyone else to buy this thing.

And I acquired a few more customers from a few different marketing channels. I think the first one that started to pick up a little bit of traction was doing, actually, webinars and teaching people about essentially these algorithms and this data that I created around Amazon, how they could use that to help their business. That was the first one that kind of started to pick up.

And I'm telling you that part of the story because it was very – for the first six months, I was trying to be really mindful that my physical products business was doing quite well. It was growing quickly. It was profitable. I had a clear path ahead of growing that into the business of my dreams. So, it was like, man, I have to be pretty careful with this stuff.

So, I was working five or 10 hours a week maybe on Jungle Scout. And each week, we were starting just to acquire more customers and more customers and more customers. Then it got to a point where it's like, man, maybe I should start taking this a little bit more seriously. And I remember there was kind of two aspects of that for me. One aspect was, at the time, the monetary reasons. Like, okay, I wonder how much this could grow or how profitable it could be?

But then probably what was more important for me at the time actually was, what sounds more fun for me? And I'd been selling physical products on Amazon at that point for, like, five years. It was just pretty easy for me. I knew what to expect. I've developed a system that I could easily replicate for launching new products. And it wasn't very challenging. Whereas this whole software thing, I'm not a developer, never created software. The marketing was totally different. So, it was this cool, fun, exciting challenge.

So, I think about six months after launching it is when I was like, okay, instead of working five or 10 hours a week, I'm gonna devote 50% of my time, or 75% of my time, to this for a few

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months and see what happens.

Jaime Masters: All right. I love all of this, especially because software is not your main thing. But you have a background in civil engineering. Did any of that transfer over? Were you geeking enough to do software? Because some people jump in software, and they – I mean, I came from that world. And to see people jump into it that have no clue, they get smacked around a lot. So, tell me about your experience.

Greg Mercer: Yeah, so, definitely very analytical and data-driven type person. Part of that was kind of the engineering background. I also, in college, took a few programming-type classes. But we're talking about MATLAB or Visual Basic or creating macros –

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: Oh, yeah!

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: – or things like that.

Jaime Masters: Sorry, I get excited. MATLAB, yeah!

Greg Mercer: Nothing like building a web application or anything like that. So, maybe I knew the very fundamentals and basics enough that I could kind of talk to developers in an educated way, but definitely unqualified to build any type of software product.

Jaime Masters: So, how did you deal with it? Because I mean, that's the other thing too. A.) You're like, okay, I'm scratching my own itch. How much should that cost? And then how much when you started realizing, oh, we've got a lot of customers, and now we have to probably be more of a software-type company instead of a dabbling-type company, right?

Greg Mercer: Right.

Jaime Masters: Tell me about that.

Greg Mercer: Yeah. So, one thing that worked out really well for us – in hindsight, I can identify some things that led to kind of like the success of Jungle Scout. In the time, I would be lying to you if I said that I kind of like knew what I was doing, or I did these things

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on purpose. Some of them kinda happened by accident, and they worked out well.

But one was – the first tool that we built was a Chrome extension. And essentially, what this Chrome extension did was kind of just automate the process of filling out a spreadsheet, which I used to be doing manually. And a little bit of the secret sauce there was I had developed algorithms to estimate how well every product on Amazon sells. So, it's quite a valuable thing to understand how well any product on Amazon's selling.

So, the Chrome extension itself was quite simple and basic. So, I put together a real good kind of like specification sheet, scoped it out quite well. Because I knew that was gonna be really important. I hired a – let's call it, like, a ... intermediate to senior developer. I had a few projects before that where I tried to hire these pretty junior developers in low-cost countries that didn't work out as well.

But even hiring a more expensive developer, I think I still only spent a few thousand dollars on the first MVP of the Chrome extension. But we're talking about extremely basic. It was ugly. It was buggy. It just barely got the job done. But it was convenient enough, and it gave people the numbers that they were looking for at the time, which was the sales numbers for Amazon, to create a little bit of demand.

So, in hindsight, the thing that I did really well is, I created something very, very simple and basic to start. I sold that, and then reinvested profits from Day 1 into doing more work on it and continuing to grow it. Because yeah, in hindsight, it's pretty clear. But that's why most software companies have to raise money or do raise money, is because they're trying to build something fairly complex right from the get-go, where my thing was really simple.

Jaime Masters: And your secret sauce was really the algorithm. Why even share the algorithm? Wouldn't people be like, "Oh! Now you have better data than somebody else!" Or sell it for a lot more money, or – you know what I mean? Why do this?

Greg Mercer: Yeah. I think in my whole entrepreneurial life, I've never really had the mindset of keeping my business secrets or anything like that. I'm a very just transparent and kind of like open person. And at the end of the day, I think that is the best way to go. Because the fact of the matter is, all these businesses, they're difficult. They're

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real work. Sharing a few little secrets or whatever, that's not the one thing this person needs for their business to beat mine. The reality of it, it's a lot of hard work and grind and challenges associated with it.

So, I don't think I was too concerned about sharing it. Looking back, if I would have sold the data just to bigger brands and bigger companies that had more money, we probably would have made a lot more money. And the business would probably actually be bigger than what it is today. But to be honest, I didn't know how to do that. Never been in sales. These sales cycles through these larger companies are much different than anything that I knew or was used to. So, yeah, I just wasn't smart enough.

Jaime Masters: I love that answer, just so you know. I don't know what I've laughed out loud about. Because most people would be like, "Well, there were reasons why we didn't go down this –" You're like, "Eh, didn't really know. I just kept going."

Greg Mercer: Yeah, I didn't know how to do that. It was too hard.

Jaime Masters: It was too hard. Everyone hates you right now. They're like, "You suck – 225,000 customers? Oh, it's too hard."

All right. So, take me along the way on some of the challenges. Because I know everybody, when they hear the beginning, they're like, "Oh, he sucks. Great. Go, him. It was easy! I just did whatever I knew at the time!" Right? So, tell me about some of the really crappy times, especially with that fast of a growth trajectory. I know everybody wants that, or says they want that. And then when you're in it, you're like, "Ho! Okay!" Fast growth is about personal growth also. So, tell me about that.

Greg Mercer: Yeah. I'd say the two buckets of the majority of my sleepless nights would be – the one bucket was concerns about Amazon and what they thought about this and our relationship with them. So, that caused a lot of sleepless nights. And the other bucket would be people problems, specifically, employees at the company. Because back then, I was a pretty poor people manager, as a lot of entrepreneurs are.

And I'd say in the early days of the business, we were hiring a lot of individuals that are really scrappy and generalists and just figure out ways to just get things done, but maybe didn't have any specialist skill sets. And we also weren't really hiring people with

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people management experience. And that actually works quite well when it was a half dozen people, maybe even up to 10 people. But after that, not having any good people managers, and me not being a very good manager myself, it caused a lot of problems.

So, it was just very disorganized, and no one really knew what to do. There was poor accountability. And I mean, we were making stuff happen, but it was just this very just chaotic situation that just – we were just figuring out ways to make things happen, but it was last minute, and it was thrown together or whatever else. So, I'd say that, I think, was a little bit of a challenging point. Let's say, like, 10 or a dozen people.

I remember this happening again when it got to, like, 30 or 40 people. This time, it was the same thing. It came down to management of people. But this time, I started to need a little bit of a different caliber of leader or manager inside of the company. So, at that time, we started to hire some people with management experience. They had managed two or three people, and still fairly young or inexperienced.

And then, so, when it got to, like, 30 or 40, again, kind of the same thing started to happen. And that's when I realized I needed to kind of like up-level my leadership team to these individuals that – they're more like proper VP or C-level leaders who have managed teams of 50 or 100 people before and had a lot of experience doing it.

And then that's kind of what got us – we wouldn't have been able to get to where we're at today without kind of like taking that step. So, yeah, a lot of just the sleepless nights were in regards to, yeah, these people management things.

Jaime Masters: I'm so glad you said that. Because we're gonna unpack that for a while. Because as an entrepreneur, at the beginning, you just care about sales and marketing. You're just like, can we just make some money here? Can we just –

[Crosstalk]

Greg Mercer: Yeah, totally.

[Crosstalk]

Jaime Masters: – make some money here? And even then, a handful of people, it's

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like, okay, we're one quick team. There are only so many communication paths between them. So, even if you kinda suck at it, it ain't too bad.

So, tell me, as you went through those trajectories, what books did you read? Did you listen to any podcasts? How did you actually start to get better and know what to do on those lines?

Greg Mercer: Yeah. I don't know if I had any great podcasts for this. I listen to a lot of podcasts, but I don't know if I necessarily have a go-to one as far as leadership or management goes. I had some mentors that helped me quite a bit, including my dad, who is a successful entrepreneur. I did a lot of reading. So, a few of my favorite ones are *Scaling Up* or *Radical Candor*, or – there are tons of books in that area. But they ... yeah. I think those helped a lot. But probably more so, actually, the mentors in my life.

Jaime Masters: Tell me about that relationship, especially if your dad's done this. But any of your mentors. Do you hire them? Do you be like, "Hey, guys! I have a question." Are they partners within it? Tell me a little bit more about how you found those mentors specifically.

Greg Mercer: Yeah. So, I don't have any – it's something that I'm open to. But Jungle Scout doesn't have any formal advisors that, say, have shares of the company or anything like that. So, these would all be informal relationships, people that I'm friends with or I look up to quite a bit, that have been willing to give me some of their time to help with things like this. Of course, with my dad, it's a little bit different. I'm his son. I can call him any time. But there's a lot of other people too that I – yeah, I would just meet up with. "Hey, would you mind getting coffee? I wanna talk to you about this type of thing."

I also went to a number of different MasterMinds or kind of like off-site meetups for that type of thing. And a lot of it, I think, was just interacting with other people in similar situations and hearing what's worked, what hasn't worked, how they got through that. So, it was just a combination of all those things I just named.

Jaime Masters: That's sort of what it is, right? It's all this, all over the place. Who knows what thread went where and how we actually got it to here, where we are now? When we go in hindsight, it makes it more difficult. But I bet – and I'm wondering – when you grew up with your dad, who is a successful entrepreneur – and one of the things that we've found on this show is that you're more successful

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younger if you had entrepreneurial parents, right?

Greg Mercer: Mm-hmm.

Jaime Masters: So, you failed faster? Tell me about your journey growing up as a kid whose dad was a successful entrepreneur. Did you always know you wanted to do it? Did you learn from him when you were little?

Greg Mercer: Yeah, great question. I think I've had the entrepreneur spirit my whole life. If you asked my mom that, I think she would tell you the same thing. I grew up with two brothers, and neither of them started their own businesses or are entrepreneurs. And I think just my whole life I've just had more of this entrepreneurial spirit. I was always wanting to sell things. Or I started a few little businesses when I was younger that are kind of interesting. But –

Jaime Masters: Ooh. What –? Wait. What are they? What were kind of interesting? I wanna know –

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: Well –

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: – what you did.

Greg Mercer: – my favorite one was, I was ... 14 years old. And before there were electric scooters, there were these motorized scooters called GoPeds. I don't know if you ever remember these or saw them. But I couldn't drive yet because I was 14 years old. So, both myself and a lot of my friends had these GoPeds. And they're gas-powered little scooters. And I was like, man, it'd be really cool if there was a way to put a key on here so no one could just walk up to it and start it and ride it away.

So, I built this little key system. And it worked. I sold a few to my friends. And like I said, I have had this entrepreneurial spirit. So, I was like, man, I should start selling these to GoPed stores. So, I was 14 years old. This is why I love this story, is my marketing channel was, if you went to GoPed's website, they didn't give you – I mean, this was kind of before email was very big. But there were no emails on the site. But there were phone numbers, fax numbers, and the address.

So, I actually, I put together a one-page flyer advertising my goods. And I faxed all these GoPed dealers, one by one, this one page. I was sitting at my parents' fax machine, and I would type in the phone number, then put the sheet through. And then I'd type in the next one and put the sheet through. But funny enough, in the first day or two, I had sold I think it was, like, 200 or 300 units of this little package that I put together.

And then I had to figure out how to fulfill these orders. So, my mom drove me around to all the RadioShacks. Because I needed these different parts. So, we would buy out a whole RadioShack of the parts I needed. And she would take me to a different one; I'd buy all those out. And so, a 14-year old. I was packing these. And yeah, it was pretty interesting.

And it was funny. Like a year ago, I found – my website that I had built was still on the Wade Back Machine or the Internet Archives, PedKey.com. You can check it out.

Jaime Masters: Okay. That really was way more interesting than I thought it was going to be. Because usually, it's like lemonade stand or like – I mean, there's typical. So, you've been finding random markets your entire life.

Greg Mercer: Yeah, I think that's accurate.

Jaime Masters: Wow. Okay. That's really interesting. So, tell me a little bit more then about failure. Because I know – especially fear of failure. When you're a kid, it seems like, oh, let's just give something a try. But as you've gone through, did you always have that? Was it innate? You just tested things like nothing? Or have you had fear of failure also?

Greg Mercer: I'd say mild fear of failure. So, for example, when I ... so, I got a job working as a civil engineer. I ended up quitting that to run my physical products business. And well, I remember I was pretty terrified when I quit. So, my business was making more money than what I was making as an engineer. And so, I spoke to my wife about it. I was like, "Man, I'm ready to just take this thing full time. I hate my job. The business is doing quite well."

But I remember it was still pretty scary. I think you have a lot of irrational fears, like, oh, if I quit and I don't work as a civil engineer for the next year, I'll never be able to get another job as

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an engineer. I was like, man, that's not true. You could easily go back and get that job if you want it.

So, I think I definitely had some fears. Most of them were irrational. But I would say it wasn't enough to stop me. Or I just wanted to be a successful entrepreneur so bad that I was willing to take that.

Jaime Masters: How do you counteract those fe –? So, they come up. What do you do? Just be like, shut up? What do you do internally? Or just keep going and ignore them? Or what's your basis?

Greg Mercer: Now what I do is, I try to think about, what's the worst-case scenario? Because oftentimes, if you think about something that you're scared of or that I'm losing sleep about or whatever else, and you actually think, what is the worst-case scenario there? And it's like, oh, actually that's not really that bad. Maybe it'll cost me a little bit of money. Or maybe it leads to something that's a pain. But actually, most of the worst-case scenarios aren't even really that bad.

So, I think that's how I do it now. I don't think I was good about thinking about that back then, towards the beginning of starting this business. But yeah, that's how I think about it now.

Jaime Masters: So, I do this too. I remember when I quit my job. And I was like, I'm gonna end up in the van by the river, right? Because that's what the thing is, right? And then you go through the 17 steps and go, my mom would probably let me stay at her house. I probably don't have to sleep in the van by the river.

Did you actually write it out? Or you just went there in your mind? I just wanna break it down because when people get stuck in that, it seems so simplistic for some – not simplistic, but seems easier for you than it is for most. Most people get stuck in a loop on what that fear of failure is. And they keep going to that. And it seems like you can get past it really quick. So, that's why I'm asking what you –

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: Right. I think that's probably a little bit of my personality type. I'm fairly optimistic about most – oh, yeah. I would say actually, I'm very optimistic about just life and everything kind of in general. I don't write the fears down. It does help me to talk to someone

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about it. But to be honest, I'm not really that good at that. A lot of times, I'll just think about it through loops in my head. But I do know that if I speak to someone about it and try to describe the fears to them – even actually just saying it out loud actually, probably if there even wasn't someone that you're saying it to, that's probably when you were like, oh, actually, these fears aren't that big of a deal.

Jaime Masters: So, you seem like you know yourself really well. So, when you're going through that much of a tremendous growth in your company, usually, there's shifting of roles, right? And it's like, oh, well, Greg is the this guy. I'm not totally the CE – so, what are your strengths? And how did you learn them as you went through? Because we know you're good at finding niches or **[inaudible]** **[00:20:33]** in random places. But do you even do that right now? What is your role right now? And how have you learned your strengths along the way in the last five years?

Greg Mercer: Yeah, in the past, let's say years, when I feel like I stepped into a proper CEO role – and a big piece of that is hiring a full executive team. So, I have a full C-suite or VPs underneath me that run their respective areas. I definitely wasn't always like that. In the early days, I was a one-man show, did everything. So, I still know every aspect of the business quite well. And I'd say I was very, very involved, even probably to the point where I was making a lot of employees upset with kind of everything that was going on, up until it was probably like 25 or 30 people.

And then after that, I started to get a little bit better at stepping out of the areas that I wasn't good at or didn't enjoy in the business. And the two areas that I would say that my skill set's best for, and that I enjoy the most, is with the product and the marketing stuff. So, I don't like all of the operations. I actually really enjoy talking to customers, but it's too repetitive for me to do customer support. There's areas of the business that I just don't enjoy as much or is not as good at. But yeah, I like the marketing and the product stuff the best. So, that's what I would still be the most involved with today. But I try to be really careful about not getting involved too deep. Because otherwise, I would usually turn it into a bottleneck.

Jaime Masters: So, okay, let's break that piece down then too. Because what I see happen a lot, especially with quick growth, is going all in and then micromanaging almost, being like, "Oh, yeah! But I like being needed! I really want you to know what my opinion is on these things!" Right? Especially because you're the owner of the

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company.

So, how did you learn to sort of step back and not micromanage and let go? Not only for the stuff that you know you're not good at, because that's a little bit easier – sure, you're better at it than I am – but the stuff that you know you're kind of pretty good at, or you want your flavor in it. How do you actually let go? Because I feel like letting go is one of the hardest thing for entrepreneurs to do, even when they know they're supposed to.

Greg Mercer: Right. I think a big piece of that comes down to hiring people and working with them, who are really smart and really good at whatever craft they're doing. And then just building up enough trust with you that it's like, wow, this person can do it either 80% as good as I can, or maybe even better. And at that point, I think it's not that difficult for me to let go.

Looking back, the times it was most difficult for me to let go, I think part of it was, I didn't quite have the right person in the role, or they just kinda weren't trained well enough. And now, I think it's easier. Because I'll be talking to our Chief Product Officer, and after an hour, I'm like, "Damn, actually, most of your ideas are quite a bit better than mine. Let me just get out of your way."

Jaime Masters: Repetition. You're like oh – oh –

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: So, that makes it a lot easier.

Jaime Masters: – yep. Nope. Not as smart as I thought I was. Okay, that's it. Thanks, sir. But –

Greg Mercer: So, I think that's a big piece of it. I'd say the other thing, real quick, is ... the other thing that I realize is, there are some things that I would do differently if I get a little bit too involved with the weeds. But the other thing I have to remind myself of is, just because I would do it differently doesn't necessarily mean that that's the better or that's the right way. Most of these decisions you're making, you don't really know the outcome or whose idea is better anyway. And so, I think that's part of it too. I think, like, man, I would have done that a little bit differently. But actually, I have no idea if that was even the best way to go about it.

Jaime Masters: Right. We just think we're really smart in our heads. "No! I bet

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mine would have better! Of course it would have been better.” That makes my ego feel really good.

So, tell me about the hiring. So, I feel like that’s another key piece that you’ve learned a massive amount on. Because when people come to me, they’re like, “Well, is it me because I’m a bad manager? Is it my employee because maybe I hired wrong? But maybe it’s them. Maybe I’m not giving them enough training.” There’s so many nuances and gray area. So, can you give us any tips or anything that you have, to be able to help somebody listening going, “I feel you. I wish I could trust the system and back away and know that they’re better. But we’re not there yet. What do I do?”

Greg Mercer:

Yeah. I think so much of it’s about the recruiting and the interview process, right? And ... it’s an easy trap to fall in. I’ve been very guilty of this in the past too, being like, oh, I’m too busy, so I don’t have time to do more interviews or more recruiting or whatever else. But that’s really kind of the make-or-break point, when you’re doing the recruiting and the interviewing.

So, I’d say just be very diligent. Be very just methodical about it. Make sure you’re doing plenty of interviews, that you have enough candidates. Because most of my, I think, poor hiring decisions or the people that didn’t work out, sometimes, actually, I just thought the person was gonna be better than what they were, or for some other reason didn’t work out. But a lot of them were probably just too rush. We really need someone in this seat right now. We’re underwater, whatever. And we would try to kinda like rush someone into that role. Whereas the ones that have been much more methodical have a much higher percentage of working out.

And then the other tip I’ll give to this is – this is applicable for the listeners who have a small business and only a few people working for them. But another real game changer for me was hiring a in-house recruiter. So, prior to that, most of the time it was me. But otherwise, it was the hiring manager. So, our marketing manager would be doing the recruiting and the interviewing. They would have to do their own recruiting, and that was a big piece of it.

And what happens is, same thing. They’re busy. They’ve spent 20 hours doing recruiting or going through resumes and doing the interviewing, whatever else. And they’re kinda just like a little bit burnt out. They’re like, man, I don’t know if I’m gonna be able to find someone better.

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But the reason that hiring a recruiter really changes the game is, now, for any job opening we have, there's just an endless pipeline. We actually have two recruiters now. They're both really good. So, no one ever feels like, oh, if I turn this person down, that there won't be more coming. It's like, you can just say no 100 times in a row, and they'll send you a 101<sup>st</sup> candidate.

So, it just is a huge game changer because then people don't just kind of settle for someone because they're kind of sick of recruiting people.

Jaime Masters: I'm so happy that you said that. Everybody that's listening is like, "You suck again! You have two recruiters!" But the point of the story –

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: Yeah. Life's a lot easier with two recruiters.

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: – right? How amazing is that? The point of the story is, to me, for interpretation for all the people that have a lower level, is that's exactly what happens. It sort of gets put on the third piece of your priority list. And because you start going, uh, I don't know – right? – the idea of always having someone on –

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: It's exhausting.

Jaime Masters: Exactly! And you've got a whole bunch of other stuff going on! It's too much, right? And so, because even though you know that the person you're gonna hire, if they're good, will actually help you, it's the massive up-front cost – right? – of time and energy and that sort of thing.

Greg Mercer: Right.

Jaime Masters: But your attitude of going, can you just imagine just having qualified candidates just coming through the door? And you can systemize a lot of that, people, so you don't need a recruiter. You can systemize so much more than what they're probably doing on their own right now, just so you guys know. But it's freeing to

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know that you can build the company in the way that you want instead of going, well, I can take what I can get because that's all I can afford or find or whatever it is. Because there's amazing people in this world that I'm assuming you realize, right?

Greg Mercer: Right. Even if I were to do it all over again, back when we were three or four people, I think – especially for a little bit more important roles, even just like a marketing manager that I was gonna manage my – three people on the marketing team or something. I would actually probably, if I were to do it all over again, hire a recruiter even for some of those roles.

Recruiters are quite expensive. I'm talking about a contract recruiter. Because they usually take 20, 30% of the first-year salary. So, it actually is a lot of money. But it's just so important to get these good candidates, and they save you a lot of time.

Or the other thing that I would do, if I were to do it all over again, is hire kind of like more of like a VA-type role in the Philippines or wherever else, that was relatively low cost, and just have them do kind of like the recruiting or the outreach for me. Because that really is a very important part of it. And you don't obviously have to have a full-time, in-house person to do the recruiting.

Jaime Masters: I love this. And I just feel like people just sort of, because it's not their strength, put it on the back burner. And then as the company's growing because they're focusing on sales and marketing, they're like, "Yeah, this is great. Oh, shoot!" And then hiring is just sort of – is the last thing. And that's the huge fuel that, I mean – 225 people, you said, over four and a half years? Or no? Two hundred –?

Greg Mercer: Oh, there are 125 people –

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: A hundred and twenty-five.

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: – that work at Jungle Scout now. But –

**[Crosstalk]**

Jaime Masters: Two hundred and twenty-five thousand customers. That's what it

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was. A hundred and twenty-five people in four and a half years!

Greg Mercer: Right. So, yeah, we've probably hired maybe 175 – yeah, between 150 and 175 people probably.

Jaime Masters: Thank you for saying that.

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: That's a lot.

Jaime Masters: And you're saying, "Oh, we didn't get it right every single time." Good to know. Honestly.

**[Crosstalk]**

Greg Mercer: No, we definitely didn't.

Jaime Masters: How did you learn to fire fast then? And were you the guy that was always going, "Yes, they need to go," and were you good at firing fast? Or give me some tips on that.

Greg Mercer: I think I'm better about it today. But I'm still a little bit of a softie. I just care about people's feelings and emotions too much. And these people become my friends quickly. And I feel bad about it, about their families or whatever else. It's a really hard thing to do, right?

I think a little bit of the turning point for me was, we fire one person, and people were like, "Oh, yeah, no surprise." And then two and three. And then after you kind of like get down the road a little bit, it's like every single time, the rest of the team is essentially like, "What took so long?" Or, "Yeah, I saw that coming from a mile away."

So, it's like, wait a second. Everyone else on the team thinks they should be fired. And I'm so worried about them being, "Oh, now this is an unstable place to work" or whatever else. But what it comes down to is, high performers don't wanna work with people who aren't carrying their weight or are low performers. It's like, for one minute, they're like, aw, that person was fun to go to happy hour with. But thank God, we'll get someone in here that actually does their fair share of work. And everyone gets over it so quickly.

And I was like, wow, there's actually nothing I have to worry

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about here, that all the best people in the company don't mind at all about people getting fired. And they actually like it. And that's actually how we retain them.

So, after I kind of made that realization for myself, I think that's when I – now, a little bit more critical about it. And I'm more easily able to put my feelings and emotions aside about it.

Jaime Masters: I love this. Okay. Give me process or tips on what you're actually looking for in the deciding factors of hiring. Do you do key indicators? Do you do reports, quarterly reports? Give me a little bit more about how you make that decision. Because if everybody else knows, how do you find out as soon as they do, right?

Greg Mercer: Yeah, that's a really good question. And it is fairly difficult, right? I think that's one of the challenging things is, it's like, man, is this person gonna be good, and they're just learning a little bit slower? It feels easy to always kinda make excuses why it's just not quite working out yet. Because also, there's been a few instances where it was just very, very clearly it wasn't a cultural fit, or for some other reason we screwed up. And we knew it within the first week. There's been a few of those.

But most of them are, this person's decent. They're just quite a bit worse than other people doing a similar role. You know what I mean? Those are the little bit harder ones. Because the others are just clear cut. So, yeah, I'd say it varies quite a bit by the role or what the person's doing. Now, we definitely lean on the managers to kind of be thinking about those things or making those decisions.

Let's see. How else do we kind of –? I'm trying to think how else I've kind of like thought about it in the past. Yeah, I guess have multiple people doing the same role. It usually becomes really clear. It's like, wow, this person is able to get twice as many backlinks as what this person is. Or like, wow, this developer gets three times as many stories done as the other one. But when it's only one, it's a little bit harder, especially if you're not great at that particular skill set.

So, I don't know if I have any secret tricks or hacks or something like that. I think a lot of it just comes down to judgment and working with them.

Jaime Masters: How much of a chance do you give them? If it's not that clear cut,

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where you're like – I know I'm asking questions you're like, "Crap, Jaime, I don't know!" But when you look at how much time you give them, are we talking about a month, two months, three months for the training side to be okay? Or are we talking six months to a year by the time you're like, okay, this is not really a fit? What's your "fire fast" metric?

Greg Mercer: Honestly, right now, it's probably three to six months. But I would say that's not very good, that. Looking back, out of all those people, we really knew it the first month or two months. We were just ... yeah, just kind of soft or worried about – yeah. Yeah, you're just worried about the emotion or the friendship side of it. I think that's why they go on. That's why it feels like every time, people are like, oh, what took so long?

Jaime Masters: Well, and people wrestle with that in their head because they care about – and that's an amazing thing, to care about a human, right? And it's so cool to hear you say. Because there are people right now listening to this going through that stuff. And every time in hindsight, usually it's like, why didn't I fire them a lot faster and just bring in the [inaudible] [00:34:24] people? Let's listen to it right now.

I mean, I had to have my bookkeeper tell me three times before I fired somebody. Because I was like, "But I love her!" But I don't wanna just – I know, right? – slap somebody around. So that way, it actually can take the leap to be able to do it. Because it does take a while. But it sounds like you are right now – you get good at it. Not that you want to, but you get good at it. You get good at both sides, the hiring and the firing. And therefore, you can have a company that has a stable culture that you've built over so long.

So, before we start wrapping up – I know I have to ask the last question in just a minute – but what one thing has really made a huge different in your growth trajectory, do you think? As a software, as a service company, you've – I mean, it's insane growth. What one thing really made all the difference?

Greg Mercer: If I were to try to distill it down to just one thing, I would say it is the persistence and the drive to shoot for a goal and just not stop at anything to achieve it. Because I had no idea how to build software or do the marketing or whatever else. One of the only attributes that I'd say I am good at is just this persistence that – never take no as an answer; run through any obstacle; if you tell me it can't be done, it just makes me wanna do it that much more. And I think

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it's really that drive, especially in the earlier days, that got it off the ground. And I'd say I think I've done a pretty good job of instilling that same culture all throughout Jungle Scout.

So, yeah, I think everyone has the mindset of, no, we can definitely do that. Maybe it doesn't look like it's feasible on paper or whatever else. But we're just gonna find a way to make it happen. And I think that's a really special thing for a company to have and really important. Because the human spirit is really an incredible thing, that you are able to just make things happen when it doesn't seem possible, if your back's up against the wall.

Jaime Masters: Okay. I have a follow up question to that because I liked it so much. Okay. So, was the initial goal this big? Was it always 225,000 or more? Was it always huge? Or did it get incrementally get bigger and bigger as you saw the future?

Greg Mercer: Incrementally got bigger. I think I've set a goal and achieved it for Jungle Scout success a whole bunch of times by now, which just goes to show that I guess I need to set my sights higher.

Jaime Masters: That must be an awesome feeling, being like, "Oh, let's create another big one! Okay, let's create another big one!" That's really, really cool.

All right. So, I know we have to start wrapping up. So, the last question. What is one action listeners can take this week to help move them forward towards their goal of \$1 million?

Greg Mercer: If you have that person that you've been hesitant to fire but you know it's the right thing, I think you should go ahead and just pull the trigger. It'll hurt for an evening. But drink a glass of wine, go to bed, and you'll feel better the next day.

Jaime Masters: Best advice ever. Seriously. That's exactly what I tell my clients. And I totally, totally agree. It's the little Band-Aid that feels a million times better the next day. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom and your fast growth. Where do we find all that Jungle Scout and everything that you do online?

Greg Mercer: Yeah, if you're interested in selling on Amazon, or have an Amazon business you wanna scale it up, check out Jungle Scout. There are a lot of free resources. We do a whole bunch of cool case studies and tons of free content. So, the place to do so. If you wanna follow me personally, the best place to find me is on

Instagram, G\_Mercer. I'm pretty active on there.

Jaime Masters: Awesome. And we'll definitely link up everything so that way, everyone can follow you. I hope you have an absolute amazing day. And thank you so much for coming on the show.

Greg Mercer: Thanks so much, Jaime. It's been fun.

**[End of Audio]**

**Duration: 38 minutes**