

Karen Zelnick:

Confused about the future of work? So were we, until we talked with a founder who has advice for how entrepreneurs can bring their startups up to speed. Join us in today's conversation with Dan Bladen, Co-Founder and CEO of Kadence, and investor, Kat Kennedy, as we bring you both sides of a Perfect Pitch.

Perfect Pitch is a podcast from Kickstart that reveals the minds of both investors and entrepreneurs throughout a startup's journey. I am your host, Karen Zelnick, and I'm excited to introduce you to today's guests.

Dan, you graduated with honors from London Saint Mellitus College. You earned your BA in theological studies. Before Kadence, you were the Vice Chair in the Leadership Committee of Air Fuel Alliance, where you worked to rethink the way we use power in the mobile age, which is fascinating. You enjoy skiing, reading theology, and running after your three small children which [inaudible 00:00:52] an amazing, amazing pastime. What else should we know about you?

Dan Bladen:

Since moving to California, I've gotten really into California wine and California beer. That's probably shouldn't talk in too much detail about. I'm really into wine.

Karen Zelnick:

Oh no, you can talk about wine. This is a safe space for wine.

Kat, it's of course great to have you back on the show. This is your first time as our investor expert. We've had you on the show to [inaudible 00:01:18] before, which was amazing. We have an entire introductory episode with Kat, so check that out and then we'll link to her bio in our show notes. You're still kind of new to our listeners. What's a fun fact that we should know about you?

Kat Kennedy:

I'm color blind. It's actually hilarious because earlier in my career, I did front end development and a little bit of product design. I got hired at a company, and it wasn't until about six months in where I had apparently made quite a strange color choice that I revealed to them that I am color blind. They're like, "And you do design?" I was like, "I mean, I passed for six months without you knowing that I was color blind." But just yesterday I had on a skirt, and I was sitting in a meeting. I looked down and I realized what for years I had believed to be a brown skirt, is green.

Karen Zelnick:

Oh my.

Kat Kennedy:

I stopped the meeting and I was like, "Everyone, what color is my skirt?" They were like, "It's green. Why?" I was like, "I thought it was brown." Only about 70% of the meeting knew that I was color blind, so they just thought I was kind of quirky. So yeah, that's what you know about me is, I will interrupt a meeting on a whim, and that I am also color blind.

Dan Bladen:

At least your designs are probably accessible design.

Kat Kennedy:

Exactly, yeah.

Dan Bladen:

Otherwise.

Kat Kennedy:

Yeah, built in accessibility design when you've got me on a project. It's really quite handy.

Karen Zelnick:

That's amazing. Speaking of vision issues, growing up I saw double all the time. I was always running into things. I still run into things. Going up the stairs, my mom would be like... She'd hear a thump and she'd be like, "Oh, Karen guess the wrong stair again."

Kat Kennedy:

That's so sad. It's like little Karen, "Oh, no."

Karen Zelnick:

Shoot. Yeah, vision. It's important. Dan, tell us about Kadence, because it used to actually be Chargify. How did you go from Chargify to Kadence?

Dan Bladen:

In 2013, my wife and I went traveling around the world for six months, from South America to India. We spent a ton of time in coffee shops and restaurants. In the weirdest places in the world, we'd jump into a Starbucks and we were treated as our little Western Embassy to escape the chaos that was going on. We realized quite quickly that we weren't really going in for coffee. I was going in for WiFi and for power to recharge and connect with friends and family back home.

When I got back from traveling, I was finishing off a degree I was doing. I had this idea about combining beer mats... if you've been in a bar you know what a beer mat is, you put your drink on it, et cetera. I was like, "Can we combine wireless charging pads," which were only one Nokia phone at the time, "Can you combine them with advertising and put your phone on a Budweiser wireless charging mat," or something. That kind of kick started this idea that became Chargify, which essentially to do for power what WiFi had done for connectivity, and to try and build this global network of wireless charging devices.

I founded that, as mentioned, in the summer 2013, and ran that through to the summer of 2020 when our world completely changed. We'd raised about \$17.5 million for Chargify, and we had customers in 21 countries. Our world changed when the pandemic struck.

Karen Zelnick:

It's such an interesting pivot, because yeah, you were Chargify. You were really changing the game on wireless charging. But now, you're changing the game on the way people work, which is quite a pivot. I would love to know, how did you get your Board to agree to that pivot? What conversations did you have to have? There's a lot of learning here.

Dan Bladen:

Yeah. Yeah. I've learned probably more this year than I have done in the last eight, nine years of running Chargify. Our wireless chargers were being installed in offices, like [inaudible 00:05:26], Accenture, and Hewlett Packard. And surprise, we had a pilot going with Uber. You'd put your phone on a wireless charger, and the Chargify software that was running on it would recognize you and check you into that hot desk, or recognize you and check you into that meeting room and automatically launch the Zoom call so that you don't need to touch anything and you can just have all that setup time happen.

When the pandemic struck, we had one customer cancel a 1000 order, for example, very early on. We were hardware-enabled SaaS essentially, where we had real costs, real tangible hardware that we needed to deploy and buy months ahead of time. We were essentially left in a lurch. In the spring 2020, people were talking about returning to the office in a sense September 2020. So, nobody really knew how long this would last. We knew that we had to change. We were speaking with one customer in New York, a Fortune 50 company, and they said to us, "Hey Chargify," this is in May 2020, "We're never going to use our offices in the same way again. We're going to go from three buildings to one building, and we're going to reduce desks in Manhattan by 49%."

"You've got wireless chargers, or about to have wireless chargers, on all of our desks. Essentially, you've got this network map of our desks in our workplace. Can we use this to manage a hybrid workplace?" To tell you the truth, I wasn't particularly interested in building desk booking software for the next 10 years, and pivoting almost a decade's worth of a deeper tech IoT play into it. A desk booking app just didn't seem that interesting. What we were all fascinated with as a team were all the different moving parts, what we call the coordination layer of hybrid work, which is who should be where, when should they be there, who should they be there with, what should they be working on. All these moving parts of work that were shook up and thrown in the air when the pandemic struck, and everybody's kind of been trying to put them back together in a new order for this new era.

One Board member said, "This isn't a pivot. This is an acceleration into an adjacent scene." Another Board member said, "It's a pivot. Pivot hard, and go now." That was when we made the pivot. We really made it in the summer 2020, going from a deep tech IoT play into a B2B SaaS play.

Karen Zelnick:

We're going to have to put an image of what that charger looks like, because it is so cool. I love that you talked about "Hey, I wasn't actually particularly interested in it, but I found a component of it that I was." I would love to hear what you had to do to align your team to this pivot. You mentioned a few things, but I'd love to go a little deeper on what you had to do to align them to this new vision after the hard work that you've already done, and then where you went from there.

Dan Bladen:

As a management team... It's this funny joke we have internally, that if you join Kadence you basically get married and have kids. That seems to be happening across our team. We've actually had two marriages, one this month, one last month. We've got two more folks going off for maternity shortly. We are all trying to figure out how do we flourish at home, and how do we flourish at work.

One of the questions that we've always asked in interviews when people are coming on is, "Hey, you're in the late stages of your career. You've just retired and you're looking back on your career. What are you proud of? What have you achieved?" It's trying to e-count the... I think Bezos calls it the Regret Minimization Program, is this person wanting to leave everything on the field and invest everything in

doing the best work of their career here or not? Or, are all they do is come in here to pick up a paycheck?

We as a team are really, really aligned to the purity and the flow state of doing great work. We also feel like that personally as well. We just want to win in every area of life, and flourish in every area of life that we possibly can. That all sounds very benevolent, and "That's really nice, Dan. Kudos," et cetera. But I think the interesting thing that Kadence/Chargify was that we were really head with Chargify and wireless charging. There was one phone, it was a Nokia Lumia in 2013, that had wireless charging, and it wasn't until September 2017 when the iPhone came out. Maybe it was in 2018 now.

The iPhone came out with wireless charging. So, we were five years before the iPhone had wireless charging. To be quite honest, I still believe that the Chargify business will work. It just has never had its must-have moment. It was always a vitamin, if you've heard the analogy, of are you selling a painkiller or a vitamin. It was always a vitamin. It was a nice to have. It was a, "We're doing a building refresh. We need to upgrade our spaces. We might throw some wireless charging in because that's a cool new thing."

As a team, we were really desperate for meaningful traction. The total addressable market for hybrid working and the coordination of hybrid, is just absolutely colossal. We launched V1 of the product late December 2020. We had our first sale in late February 2021. Now we're over 300 customers on the product. As a team, not only were we zeitgeist aligned to flourishing in every area of life, we were also really hungry for commercial attraction.

Karen Zelnick:

I love that you highlighted that everyone on your team, but also just in the world, they're really trying to figure out how do you be successful at work and at home. There's so much application for the work that you were doing. I want to get into that, and the future of work. But first, Kat, we've talked on the show before about sometimes entrepreneurs just need to hang up the towel. They need to know when to do that. How does a founder know what path to take, hang the towel up, or pivoting?

Kat Kennedy:

First, I just want to rewind to the first moment where I met Dan. I hadn't actually officially started at Kickstart yet, but work feeds me. And so, I begged the partnership to let me come in to start to get a feel for the work. Given the nature of the buyer for Kadence, and just the type of sale that it is, it was a really nice fit for me to hear about it, just given my background. As Dan left, I turned to Syd, who is one of our senior associates at Kickstart, and I said, "I love Dan. I love Kadence. We have to do this deal."

Why was there just in an effusive energy and excitement around Kadence and around what Dan was doing? First, you hear it in everything that he has said up until this moment, a resilient founder, high integrity, knows how to build a team, knows how to retain a team, knows how to recruit a team. Those are essential elements in a founder and in the team that surrounds the founder that you look for at all stages, but especially in the early stage. And why? Why is the founder even more critical at early stage? It's because things are going to evolve. You're going to have those moments where you have to decide is this idea going to work, do we actually have product market fit, do we need to adjust it/evolve it in order to find that? Or is it just not going to get the type of return that we need, and maybe we should wind it down?

I think those moments aren't binary. It's not a moment of, "Hey, this idea doesn't work. Therefore, the business is dead." It can be all shades of gray in between there. I think the intellectual honesty of sitting down and asking yourself those questions of, where are we within the gray? Is it a slight alignment? Is it

a hard pivot? Is it we just don't have the team or a market opportunity in front of us? I think that is what is most important. I don't think it's a binary, "Hey, our original idea is the be-all-end-all versus if it's not we have to shut it down." I think it's pivot and evolutions, and learnings that happen.

What I heard is Dan articulated his pivot story from Chargify to Kadence. Within that was years of learning around how organizations work, how people interact with their officers, how people interact with each other. That founder market fit, founder opportunity fit, which we always talk about on this podcast and in general at Kickstart. That means exactly what you've heard from Dan, to understand the opportunity in front of them, both in the solution that they're bringing to the table, but who they're bringing that solution to.

If you're a founder whose in those moments, I think it's understanding the world is not binary, understanding that there's a lot of nuance. All of your learnings to date are going to be what help you understand where you are within that nuance.

Karen Zelnick:

I love that you shared that it's not binary, because I think being a startup founder in those early stages, it can be so demanding that it's easier to think of the world as binary. That in some ways feels a lot safer to be like, "It does or it doesn't work." As a startup founder, I love that you pointed out you're signing up for a lot of gray area. Dan, you really danced in that gray area, and it's really fascinating to see what you accomplished with that. You've gotten some new capital. What will that new capital accomplish for you?

Dan Bladen:

Yes, super excited to have Kat and the team come in alongside some other amazing investors for this [inaudible 00:15:44]. We really think we've got an opportunity to become the category-defining brand for the hybrid age. Essentially, we're finding ourselves in quite a competitive market, but it's flooded with companies that have built [inaudible 00:15:58] booking solutions and are trying to make their solutions fit for a hybrid schedule. What we're really excited about is building out tools that can help people discover their rhythm for work.

We've grown very quickly to about 300 companies. It really spans. We've got governments on board, but we've also got crypto companies on board. About 90% of organizations are going to a form of hybrid working. What's super interesting about this opportunity is that hybrid looks different not just in every company, not just in every office and every company, but also in every team and in every individual. My version of hybrid looked slightly different to Jamie in RCTO's version of hybrid, and we're in the same management team.

What we're really, really excited about is building out tools that can help people optimize what we refer to as their cadence. Cadences are essentially people plotting their schedules or their flight plans of when they're going to be in the office, where they're going to be, and then trying to align that with who is best for them to be with in those moments. Imagine a little bit if I were to drive from the Bay Area to see you guys in Salt Lake City today, 15 years ago I would have slapped a Tom-Tom on the windshield and it would have told me how to get there, but it would have been void of context. It would have not shown me that there was snow up head, or there were police up ahead and I needed to watch my speed or whatever.

Whereas now, you and I would load Google Maps or what have you, and it would tell us and give us as much context as possible to get the best route, the best path for that journey. The same is going to be true of, and is already true in some part, we'll become richer and richer of cadence. So you come onto the product, you plot your cadence into the product, you convert desks, meeting rooms, but most

importantly you can discover where your colleagues are going to be and you can start to evolve and adapt. It not just orientates around "Am I booking a sit/stand desk? Am I booking a meeting room? Am I booking a room with a view?"

It's actually, "I'm working on this project in a sauna with these three people," and Kadence might have told me that those three people are going in tomorrow, "Why don't you move your Kadence from Thursday to Wednesday so that you can go in with those people?" For example. The same might be true on the other side of things. Those three people might have canceled their booking for tomorrow, so Kadence might update you and say, "Hey Dan, those three people have canceled. Why don't you stay remote today?" We've just been included and played a key role in two of our largest customers' ESG reports as they've been looking at the environmental impacts of hybrid.

I think one of the big meta themes that's happening in the world right now is this push to optimization and this push to getting more out of what we have. I think that is going to be true of not just teams, but spaces as well. One of our customers has just reduced their real estate by 68%. That's their second largest cost being reduced by 68%. Then their first largest cost, their people are now coming into the office 25% more regularly than they were before. So, they've got a 25% increase on how many people are coming to the office regularly.

There's this optimization at play. The investment's helping us to build more intelligent features like that, as well as the obvious expanding out our sales and marketing reach as well.

Karen Zelnick:

Kat, how did your experience at Degreed, which from the get-go was a fully remote company, how did your experience impact your perspective on Kadence?

Kat Kennedy:

First, just the realities of what is necessary behind working either in a fully remote or a hybrid environment. At the heart of that is human connection. If you're fully remote it only works if you know who's on the other side of that Slack message. I have a tendency to be quite terse in Slack. If you had only met me via Slack, you would find me to be a very different human being than I am when I'm in person, your impression of me.

Karen Zelnick:

A person who's like, "What color is my skirt?"

Kat Kennedy:

Exactly. My early learnings from Degreed drove home the reality of working together, and working well together especially, requires a deep appreciation for humanity and everything that it means to be humans together. The organizations that we sold into ran the gamut from SMB+ to the largest enterprises across the globe. Whether it was 5000 people, or 700,000 people, how those people get to know and work, and connect with each other is ultimately what determines the product.

I was lucky to be in conversations with the most complex global organizations in the world as the pandemic happened. And as they decided what they were going to do, very few of them had a remote policy at all, let alone a hybrid policy as things started to come back. I had endless discussions with these complex, sophisticated, exceptional organizations, and none of them had a strategy, let alone a solution that would bring them a strategy.

As Dan sat down and articulated not just the vision but the execution they had done to date, I heard every single one of those companies articulating their problem to me. I saw the meeting in which Dan is pitching these organizations, and bringing them immense relief because not only is it a technical tool, but the thought leadership and strategic guidance that Kadence brings alongside that solution is quite magical. Technology in and of itself is rarely the answer. It's technology plus strategy and thought leadership that can enact change, and that's what I see in Dan and his strategy, and in the entire team who I have been lucky to meet.

Dan Bladen:

We honestly believe that companies will die if they don't get hybrid right. Hybrid is the operating system, whether they know that or not. It's not facilities management. It's not how many square footage are you managing? It is the lifeboat, it is the OLS of a company. We just think that there's this, we call it virtual distance, affinity distance, operational distance and physical distance that happens if you don't get hybrid right. They contribute to retention issues, and inefficiencies like wasted commutes, or coming to the office when folks that I thought were going to be there aren't there.

If that happens, you're paying more on office space than your competitors are, who are then putting that back into R&D. You're then not performing. You get [inaudible 00:23:10]. There's this domino effect of not getting hybrid right, which is going to what the bookstores would have felt in the early 2000s when Amazon started eating their lunch. I honestly think that companies that don't hybrid right just won't survive. We feel pretty passionately about that, as you can tell.

Karen Zelnick:

In addition to using Kadence, which everyone should do, Kadence is offering a discount for all our listeners, which is really amazing. To take advantage of that, just email Dan at Dan@Kadence.co. That's D-A-N@Kadence.co. Mention this podcast, Perfect Pitch.

In addition to using Kadence, what strategic guidance can you give founders who are setting up their hybrid strategies for work? Can you give them any tips?

Dan Bladen:

I mentioned earlier, I think there's this macro drive towards efficiency right now. We've got a great company, there's a customer here in the Valley called Misty Labs. They're a crypto company. They were all remote until January this year. I met with the founder. I said, "Hey, how's it going? What are you doing? How's your new year going?" He said, "It's really great. We're back in the office." I said, "Oh interesting. Why are you back in the office?" He says, "We're making decisions faster."

I said, "Oh, that's really interesting. Are you in every day?" "No, we're not in every day. We're in two or three days a week. We come in for white boarding, for team time, et cetera. But it's quite challenging. We've got about half the desks as we do have many people." I said, "You should use our tool." They signed up 24 hours later. It's knowing what season of work you're in and being able to choose the right tools for the job that needs to be done.

Someone once said, "We shape our tools, and then our tools shape us." I think the future of work is going to look awfully like an operating system on a computer work. Right now, we're recording this on Zoom and the graphics process there is being sent the video by the operating system, and chat on the side, and email, and Slack messages that we're all trying to ignore on the right-hand side are coming through, and the CPU is doing that. The operating system is sending the right tasks, or certain tasks, to the right places to get the best outcomes. We think that should be true of work as well.

We've built this little pyramid that I would be happy to share with anybody that wanted to get in touch. They pyramid basically thinks about why am I working? That's the bottom layer of the pyramid, why am I working? What's your mission, your vision, your values? The next layer on top of that is, what am I working on? That's your OKRs, your tasks. So, why am I working? The next building block is, what am I working on? Then there's this "how" layer. We call this the toolkit layer, where you've got Slack, and Zoom, and Microsoft Office, and Google Workspace, et cetera. These are the tools of the trade.

It's the HR teams that Kat knows super well that are now becoming the purveyors of the toolkits. Their job is to give the people/the employees all that they need to do their best work. So, what am I working on? How am I going to do that work? Then, when, where, and who? That's the coordination layer, figuring out when you should be where, a bit like the operating systems. What we companies is, "If you've got heads up time, or where you've got a start of a new project, you've got a sales team kickoff, you're trying to land that account, you're building a new website, you've got something that requires that creativity, come into the office."

There's data now that's showing that if you do those types of meetings face-to-face, you're going to increase innovation by 15%. The same is true once you know what you're doing, once you've got your tasks, once you know what you can crack on with. You can do that remote if you're able to. Some people can't, if they don't have space, remotely. That's fine. But for a number of people, they're going to be able to do that. Heads up, come on in to physical space. Get the meta energy off of each other. Feed off of that. That will be a competitive advantage for you.

When you've got your to do lists, crack on, do that at home, do that remotely, if you offer remote as part of your hybrid strategy, then you can also decrease resignations by up to 35%. Regardless of what all the newspapers are spilling ink on, whether it's all remote, whether it's in person, or whatever, the truth is, and we're seeing it, is that there this very, very large gray area. That's where we're encouraging people to discover their cadence.

Karen Zelnick:

The gray area is messy. It requires facilitation. Recently, I guess recently in the past three years... time is nonexistent now since we've been through the pandemic. Dan cited it, that we see the press and the news, and analysts trying to decide if everyone's going to go back in the office, or everyone's going to be remote, which is binary. That's not the reality that we live in, but why do they do that? It's not because they're not logical or well intentioned human beings. It's because the nuance and the gray area is hard, and it requires facilitation.

That's where Kadence steps in, is facilitation of that gray area. Because the polarities very rarely work. That's not reality. Instead, we have to find a way to operate within the gray, and that's why I'm so excited about Kadence, is because life is gray. Life is hybrid. There are days where we need to be home with our kids. Today's a snow day here in Utah. I planned to be in the office. Guess what, last minute, not there. I had to move some things around.

With Kadence in play, everyone who was going to go to the office because I was there, now knows I'm not. Kadence accounts for the reality of life. It provides a technical layer on top of that, which then can facilitate consumption of that very complex nature of life, which is what these organizations crave.

Yeah Dan, you're nodding. Any other thoughts to add to that?

Dan Bladen:

I think this is all about shared intuition, how can you create shared intuition across a team? Is there a way to map that into the tech that enables you to out-perform competitors? When was the last time a

quarterback threw a ball and the players didn't know exactly where they needed to be? My team, it happens more regularly than not. I think this is part of the ply of optimization to performances that you've got a quarter of a million dollar employees. You've got a six figure salary. [inaudible 00:29:55] employees that are hazardly navigating hybrid.

That doesn't happen in any other arena of life, but it's happening in on 9:00 to 5:00, or whatever it is, these days for [inaudible 00:30:09]. The 2010s are all about on demand. "I want my food. I want my entertainment. I want it on demand." I think the 2020s, now that we're kind of properly hopefully getting into what we would hope the 2020s might be, I think to move from on demand to orchestration, it's the things that you want when you want it in the way you wanted it, even if you didn't actually know he wanted it.

I would like my house to be heated because it's snowing, but I don't want it to be heated if I'm not going to be there. Is that shared intuition that I think the world is moving towards, and we're seeing that as well with stuff like TTP3 happening right now. I think the intuition part is the big piece to crack to add real, real value.

Karen Zelnick:

That's fascinating. Kat, what other trends are you noticing in other companies?

Kat Kennedy:

What the pandemic did for all of us, is forced us to embrace the reality that we're human, that we can't cleanly separate our lives from who we are at home, who we are with friends, who we are at work. Instead, those things are intertwined. It's not a work/life balance. It's a work/life blender. That organizations have a part to play in accounting for that blender, that they no longer have the privilege to just assume that employees, as they interact with them, they're only interacting with the work side of that employee.

As we led individuals through the pandemic, no matter the size of your organization, if you were a people manager, those one-on-one conversations were not, "How's your work coming along?" Those one-on-one conversations were, "How are you? How's your family? Do you have any loved ones who are in danger? What can we do for you? Are you stuck in a location where we need to get you out?" It forced organizations to account for humanity. We survived that moment through the very nature of accounting for humanity.

Across the board, I think we saw organizations wake up and appreciate that that was something very necessary to empower the individuals in their organizations to create the outputs that are needed for that beautiful, beautiful bottom line. Those things are so ingrained and intertwined. Doing that is hard. That's hard to do at small scale. It's exponentially harder to do within the enterprise. But the need remains the same. So, how do we empower organizations to account for humanity, to account for the entirety of a human being?

We have to bring visibility into it. We have to bring visibility about what it means for that individual to be human, the different parts of the life that they are accounting for, and the moments that we can plug in for them to do their most productive and exciting work. Because research has shown, and McKinsey is my favorite when it comes to future of work research, they say if I have passion, if I am fulfilled at work, great things happen. If you do the employee engagement surveys and everyone is feeling empowered, that tracks right to how well that organization is performing.

As we look to the future of what work means and how do we create better organizations, and more effective and efficient organizations, we have to account for humanity. We cannot do that simply by being empathetic in one-on-ones. It has to be data-drive, and it has to be action-driven on top of it.

Dan Bladen:

Some people might be thinking, "Oh, that sounds fluffy." This is not fluffy. It saves so many cycles. A live example would be, in my profile on Kadence it says I'm a family guy, which means that some days up to 8:30 AM in the morning, I might be doing a school drop. So, please don't get narky with me if I'm not responding synchronously in Slack. It's kind of like a cue. We had it when somebody's family member dies, like "Where is Person X?" If you have the context, which I think Kadence provides, then it just saves you so many CPU cycles of wasting time on needless things. All of this comes back to alignment.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, I love the alignment and you said optimization. Kat, I love the research you were citing. There's also that study done by Google Project Aristotle, where they talk about the psychological safety needed at work. I think having visibility into how you like to work, and when you're working, whether it is knowing that you are accounting for you as an entire person helps create that psychological safety which is a number one driving factor for the success of companies.

Dan Bladen:

Yeah.

Kat Kennedy:

It's also so critical... We talk about diversity and equality, and making sure that organizations map to the population. We see women drop out of the workforce at an alarming rate as they grow their families.

Karen Zelnick:

Oh my gosh, why? Isn't it like 45% or more? Something like that.

Kat Kennedy:

It's alarming. As you dig into why, it's because the nature in which they work and the moments where they can be productive change. That's true until we see the burden of management of families become more equal across the partnerships. We have to account for the reality that it can't be butts in seats 9:00 to 5:00, that there will be moments where we are more productive. As we create and orchestrate that capability, I am excited because it creates and opportunity for women and others who may have dropped out of the workforce because they did not have the ability to do their best work in the manner in which it was available to them.

With Kadence, now they do. Because I can do school drop off. My team is aware. They know that I have soccer practice coming up at 4:00. They also know that my best work happens from 7:00 to 9:00, right? As that becomes data-driven and it can be orchestrated and plugged into the broader network of an organization, magic happens. I am no longer in a position where I feel like I have to make a sacrifice, it is either my children or my career. Instead, we blend them in a way that is natural and unique to every individual.

I don't mean to cite women in the workforce as the only example in which that matters. No, it matters individually for everyone, because everyone's cadence looks very different. The beauty will come as we orchestrate the cadences of individuals in a manner that's beneficial to the organization at large.

Dan Bladen:

Yeah, the platform for work has changed from the office. The office is now a part of that toolkit layer, a place that can help you do your best work. It's no longer the platform. The platform is time. This is about how you arrange your work. Going back to the football analogy, you don't let your quarterback do the kick. You put on a specialist. In the same way Kat works best 7:00 to 9:00, that should be encouraged in some way because that's when she's going to be performing at 100% rather than the other way around. The trick is, is there a way to do that where actually humans flourish as well. I think if you do hybrid well, it can.

Karen Zelnick:

Dan, as we have everybody on this podcast, we like to ask everyone the same question, and that is what's an effective practice you've implemented in your work or personal life that you think has had a great impact on your success?

Dan Bladen:

The single most important thing is changes regarding what season we're in. I think there are areas in which when you're fundraising, it's absolutely fine and okay to being stretched to every limit, whether that's hours of a day, whether that is shutting other parts of your life off if you have to, there are seasons of wartime and there are seasons of peacetime. I think one of the tricks to longevity is knowing when you're in a season of peacetime and trying not to turn into a wartime season if it's not the right season.

I think other things kind of practically, we're really good at Kadence at having weekends. We're really good at it, in terms of Slack is pretty much dead on Saturdays and it's very much dead on Sundays. I try and not work at all on Sundays. I'll be checking in and preparing for the week once the kids are in bed on Sunday nights. Kat sent me a book recently, *The Practice of Groundedness*. One of the really great things that stuck out for me was the example of an athlete, that instead of taking his strength reps to the extreme and to failure, which is what people tell you to do when you're training, this guy decided to take himself to 85-90% every day, and then give himself some breathing room.

The difference it made was that he could train every day, whereas his competitors went to 100% and failed, and they could only train three or four times a week. These subtle different things is, I think we move seasons from seasons of excess to now a season of optimization and longevity. I think things like Sabbath are going to become increasingly in vogue as people look how to do things over the longterm.

Karen Zelnick:

I love that. Kat, any thoughts on that?

Kat Kennedy:

I was nodding my head right along, just cheering visually. I agree that life in general is a marathon, not a sprint. Especially life in a venture-backed startup, or a family, or anything. You have to find a way to maintain energy and peak performance over the long run. I'm lucky to be coached by Brad Stillburg, and the center of the work that we do together is that, how do we maintain excellence through the entirety

of our life without exhausting ourselves? It comes down to understanding what season you're in, understanding what the moment requires of you, but also what your life requires of you and how those two things need to meet each other.

If you are repeatedly exhausting yourself, you will injury yourself to the point where you can no longer compete. That is true both in athletics, and it is also true in work. I think it's true in relationships as well. You have to know yourself and your capacity, and how to blend everything together for the sake of longevity because excellence happens most often in longevity.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, and recovery is [inaudible 00:41:54]-

Dan Bladen:

It's so hard.

Kat Kennedy:

It so hard, yeah.

Dan Bladen:

It's so hard. It's so hard. [inaudible 00:41:58]. Everybody on Twitter is telling me to work all hours every day, which sometimes it's absolutely right to do. But having that longterm mindset is a lot sexier part, I think.

Karen Zelnick:

Thank you so much for that insight. Dan, thank you for being our guest on this podcast today, for all that you've offered, and all the wisdom and guidance as we enter the future of work. It's been a fascinating conversation. I really appreciate it.

Dan and Kat, thank you so much for joining us today.

Dan Bladen:

Thank you. Great to have you guys, and great to be partnering with you.

Karen Zelnick:

Of course, thank you for listening as we dive deep into what it takes to create the Perfect Pitch. If you want to learn more about our investor, Kat Kennedy from Kickstart, or our CEO Dan Bladen from Kadence, we'll have a link to the company and a longer bio in our show notes at [KickstartFund.com](https://kickstartfund.com). You can listen to more episodes of Perfect Pitch wherever you listen to your podcast. If you like what you're learning, leave us a review or rating. We'll be back next time with more insights from entrepreneurs and the investors who funded them, so be sure to subscribe so you don't miss a thing.

Kat Kennedy:

[inaudible 00:42:58].

I didn't find out... I do want to talk about Kadence. I didn't know until I was prom dress shopping. I said, "I just really love the maroon dress." My mom was like, "What maroon dress?" There was no maroon dress. I was like, "The maroon dress." No, it was an emerald green. Anyways.

This transcript was exported on Dec 12, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Karen Zelnick:

Oh, wow.

Kat Kennedy:

Let's talk future of work and Kadence.