

Karen Zelnick:

Advice for creative talent practices on the internet abounds. How can you know if these practices are a fad, or if they'll generate success? To answer that, we're talking with someone who has adopted several unique initiatives for his team, including the famous 4-day workweek. Join us in today's conversation with Jamie Baxter, co-founder and CEO of Quick, and investor, Curt Roberts 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. Jamie, in 2017, you co-founded Quick, a staffing platform that serves the hospitality industry. And before Quick, you worked for an impressive 18 years at Willis Towers Watson, a financial services company. You enjoy outdoor activities, traveling, and hiking with your wife, and you have earned your private pilot's license. That's amazing. What else should we know about you?

Jamie Baxter:

I'm almost complete with my commercial license as well. So, aviation is probably one of my biggest hobbies. I actually wanted to be a pilot when I was growing up and my dad told me, "No, son, you're going into computers." He was in the Air Force, and so he's like, "You're going into computers." And so, that's the way my household ran. So, I went into computers. But, I loved flying, and so I got my pilot's license about six years ago. And, try to get up and whenever I can.

Karen Zelnick:

That's amazing. My grandpa had a runway in the back of his house. I remember going up in his plane with him and it's so fun. That's amazing. That's really cool. And, Curt, it's always great to have you back on the show. We'll have a link to your bio in our show notes at [kickstartfund.com](http://kickstartfund.com). And you're known at Kickstart to be a collector. We've talked about your shoe collection, we've talked about your book collection. Is there anything else you collect?

Curt Roberts:

Well, part of the challenge with me is that when I get passionate about anything I find myself collecting. So, I collect watches. I probably have 50 or 60.

Karen Zelnick:

Oh my gosh. Okay. Yeah.

Curt Roberts:

Yeah, I'm passionate about cycling. So, I'm now up to five bikes. I'm passionate about skiing, I have four pairs of skis. Photography, I have five camera bodies and probably 12 lenses. So, yeah, just watch what I start to get passionate about and the goods will start to pile up.

Karen Zelnick:

You'll know that a collection is forming.

Curt Roberts:

Yeah, it's forming.

Karen Zelnick:

Well, if Jamie did that, he'd have a collection of airplanes, so probably best that-

Curt Roberts:

Yeah, mine are cheaper.

Karen Zelnick:

... Yeah.

Curt Roberts:

Yeah, they may not be a lot cheaper in some cases, but they're cheaper.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, that's amazing. Well, I'm excited to dive into the discussion today. And Jamie, as I read through your professional history, I was surprised to see that you don't have experience in the hospitality industry. I don't know why I assumed that you would have, what triggered your switch from your 18 years in the financial industry to founding a tech startup in hospitality?

Jamie Baxter:

While I don't have experience in the hospital industry, what I do know really well is how to build HR tech, human capital technology. That's what I spent 18 years doing at Willis Towers Watson was basically being an entrepreneur for them, developing all sorts of HR technology products from concept to revenue. Before that, I started two other companies, and went in 18 years as an entrepreneur. So, I really wanted to get back out and do another company on my own, but I didn't know what that was. So after taking time off, after leaving Willis Tower Watson and exploring a lot of hobbies, that's when I got my pilothouse license and tried to learn how to surf and was quickly reminded that this body was built more for computer keyboards than surfboards. That's when I was like, "Okay, maybe it's time to go in and get serious about starting another company."

Ultimately, I ended up meeting Chris, my co-founder. And, he's like, "Oh, well I have an idea for you." And he described this idea of Quick. And, it was solving his problem with the hotels that he owns. And so, he was struggling with all the staffing at his hotels, people not showing up to work, constant turnover. And, he was using all these temporary staffing agencies. They all were charging exorbitant fees and were unreliable themselves. And, I said, "Well, it sounds like a human capital problem." You need to manage performance management. You need to manage recruiting. You need to manage compensation. Those were all three systems I had built for Fortune 500 companies in the past. But you're right, I didn't know anything about hospitality.

So, I thought about it, I think it was eight or nine months later after we had this initial discussion. I flew out here to Arizona, I was living in San Diego at the time, and I said, "Chris, I want to take that idea and I want to make it into a company. But, I don't know how to do it exactly within hospitality. So, will you go in with me and be part of this company?" And, I always love an unfair advantage in anything that I do. And so, I thought a great, unfair advantage would be to incubate the company inside of his hotels and to learn exactly from his management team.

So, I sat down first and foremost and just talked to people on his leadership team, talked to the people that were working in the food and beverage industry, talked to the struggles that they were having,

talked to the struggles that the managers were having, and just learned as much as possible about it. And then, we did all of the initial shifts with his hotels. And so, that's where I learned about the actual problems. I knew I could build the HR side of it, but you have to know exactly the customer you're building for. And with us, we have two customers really. We have our freelancers on one side that are the bartenders, and cooks, and servers, and dishwashers, and then we have the business partners on the other side. So we had to learn about both in a lot of depth. When we started building, we knew exactly who we were building for so we could match what they needed from a value proposition, but also their pain points as well.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, and that's something we've talked about a couple times on this podcast is the importance of obsessing over your customer and who you're building the company for, that is really understanding that and getting into the trenches, so to speak. So, I love that you highlighted that again. And I also really appreciated your ability to pinpoint like, "Hey, I actually think the problem here is this human capital thing. It's a staffing thing. Let me actually solve it from this angle, instead of what might traditionally be thought of as a way to fix that." Curt, I would love to hear from you. What about Jamie assured you that there was a founder fit with Quick and addressing the hospitality industry?

Curt Roberts:

So, I met Jamie in late 2018. Does that sound right, Jamie?

Jamie Baxter:

Yes. It was late 2018.

Curt Roberts:

Yeah, and Jamie was in the process of raising his seed round. I went to meet with Jamie. And, a few things were evident. One, just in the process of conversation, it was clear that he knew the business, he knew hospitality customers, he knew what problem he was trying to solve, he knew how to segment the market into different customer types. He had thought about how to do labor acquisition on the supply side. And so, there were almost no questions that I could ask of Jamie that he didn't already have the answers to, or that he hadn't already thought about. And that's always a good sign, right? Whether someone has a background in the industry or not.

The second was that Jamie already had at the time on his team, some ex-Uber people. And, as I thought about building a marketplace company, having folks on the team that have done it before, and have seen one of the world class operators actually pull that off, felt to me like another thing that stacked the odds in Jamie's advantage. We talk in this business about funding entrepreneurs that have experienced the problem they're trying to solve firsthand, and that certainly can be a factor that stacks the odds in the favor of the entrepreneur succeeding. But we've interviewed on this podcast before, Frank Wooten, who was a hedge fund manager who built a company to herd cattle using an internet of things device. And so, Jamie's leap from what he was doing before into this business was nowhere near as large as the leap that Frank made in doing that. So, you're assessing a bunch of different factors in assessing an entrepreneur. And, direct experience in the industry is only one of those. It's not the only one that we emphasize.

Karen Zelnick:

And, Quick has rapidly become the leading staffing platform solely dedicated to serving the hospitality industry, which is amazing. And there are so many lessons that we could learn from your success. But I want to dive in to the culture that you've built at your company, because success like that doesn't come unless you have an amazing culture and having the background that you've got in human capital, I would love for you to tell us about Quick's culture and the intention with which you built it.

Jamie Baxter:

I was very fortunate in my 18 years at Willis Towers Watson to work with just some incredible people. A mentor in particular, Tom Keebler, that taught me a lot about people leadership. And also, during 18 years, I think I switched into different products. I think I had eight different roles over that time. So, unfortunately, I had a couple bad managers through that time period as well. But I think, the amalgamation of all that is it taught me a way of thinking about motivating people to not only get the most out of them, but to get the best out of them. So, I took and said, "All right, what are the things that I didn't like around some of the managers that led me in the past? What did I like about the people leaders that really inspired me to do my best, most creative work?" And I tried to put all of that together when we started Quick.

I knew that that wasn't going to be the right thing for everybody. I think if you've created something that is the right thing for everybody, then you really created nothing at all. You have to be somewhat specific and somewhat polarizing in whatever you do in order to be different. I wanted to create something that was very different. And so, our culture at Quick, I don't want it to be the right thing for everyone. I want it to be a very unique culture that serves really smart, innovative people that want to do their most creative and innovative work, that are self-motivated to put their entire self into their work, that are grounded with good values and integrity that also have a good amount of grit to them. They're not afraid to fail and make mistakes and get up and try again.

And I think if you find that type of talent, then you can create a unique culture that doesn't rely on having a lot of rules and policies. You get rid of the red tape, and the governance, and you don't clip people's wings, that allows them to actually move really fast and innovate without necessarily needing permission. We've actually approached it in saying, "You know what? We're going to create this loose environment without lots of rules, hire the best caliber talent that we can possibly find, and then let them do their most creative work without necessarily a fear of failure, nor restrictions of, 'Well, I've got to get my manager's approval to do this.' Or, 'I don't sure if that's going to get approved.' Go out there and try and if you fail, that's okay, try again." And I think, by creating that environment, it attracts not only more people that want to do the same, but it gets more out of people and we quickly weed out the people that don't.

What we want to do is hire rock stars and give them a platform to do their best work. And as soon as you find out that you may have hired someone that's not a rockstar, they're not in the culture, they're not performing, you have to curate that talent on a constant basis and get rid of the non rock stars so that the rock stars keep being rock stars. And so, we're very conscious around how we manage the team, and ensure that we're always expecting high performance. And, we can dive into different ways that we do that. But, that's the core foundation and the basis of the culture we've created at Quick. And I think, it's not only brought us amazing talent, but it allows us to out-innovate our competition and move really fast with a lot less capital than a lot of our other competitors.

Karen Zelnick:

When you're talking about that loose culture, that loose framework, what does that mean? What does that look like? Because, I think every founder or potential founder listening to this wants people with

integrity and with grit and who are innovative. And, they might be like, "Okay. So does that mean I just have no rules whatsoever?" Could you maybe give us a couple of concrete examples of what you mean by that?

Jamie Baxter:

I'll start with a real simple one. Our expense policy. You would be surprised in lots of companies how much time is spent wrapped up in just analyzing, "Am I spending the right money on the right things?" And, you spend more time and money analyzing the actual expense policy than the expense in question itself. So, our expense policy is, act in Quick's best interest. You better be ready if our CFO comes to you and says, "Hey Karen, what was this charge?" You should be able to justify that, that's in Quick's best interest, but we're not going to set boundaries on what you should spend money or not spend money on. It's always in Quick's best interest.

If you want to experiment with something new, you submit a product idea, and then it goes through some type of approval process, and then ultimately it gets on the roadmap. If you want to try it, go try it out. You don't have to get permission, you don't have to get approval. It doesn't have to go through a process. Go try it out. And, don't try it out next month. Try it out this afternoon. Take 15 minutes, experiment with something, try out this new messaging campaign and see if it works. And if it doesn't work, then we've learned from it. But, the more things you try, the luckier you're going to become, the more successful you're going to become. So what we want to do is enable people to try a lot of those things. And so, when you hire really smart people that have that good integrity, and good communication, and all that foundation, then you can remove those rules.

Same with PTO. We don't necessarily track how many days of PTO you take, but we also don't track how many hours you work. Why would we track one versus the other? What we expect everyone to do is to get their work done. And, you're accountable for actually moving the needle and getting the projects done you need to work on. So, I think, allowing for that framework and more self-governance and ensuring that every manager, every people leader is actually in the role of serving the people that are reporting to them, versus monitoring and managing their work per se, allows people to step up and rise up and actually do their best work without necessarily, "Well, my managers said to do this." No, I want people to use their own minds and think outside of the box and challenge the status quo. Just because we're doing it this way today doesn't mean that we have to do it that way tomorrow.

I think when you remove that red tape, that governance, and just say, "Go try it." Even if your manager disagrees with you, it doesn't mean that you can't do something. What we do encourage you to do is if it is a big idea that you're going to try. And, if it fails, there are some severe consequences, we encourage you to go and actually seek dissent. So, go farm for that dissent and actually get people to challenge your idea and poke holes in it. It doesn't mean that you need that approval, but it helps you think through it more thoroughly and ensure that you've thought through it in all angles.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, so you're really creating this culture of very strategic thinkers. Curt, what have you noticed about Quick, about its culture, about the way Jamie has set this company up?

Curt Roberts:

I've spent a good chunk of time in the Quick offices both during due diligence, during board meetings, we did a strategy session together with the executive team. And I get the chance because of the number of companies we support to spend a good amount of time in a lot of different offices. And you get a

pretty good sense of the culture of a company from what you see and observe, if you're paying attention. The energy of Quick is different than I think any place else I've been. And it isn't just walking around seeing smiles on people's faces or having a well-stocked snack area. The office always had a lot of people in, and that's very unusual I found, at least in the current environment. There's so much default remote work these days that to see so many people that were actually in and almost every desk full, it was just impressive to me that people wanted to be around each other and work off of each other's energy, and be more productive and creative as a result. That's the sense that I've had from having observed it firsthand.

Jamie Baxter:

I get asked by other founders as well like, "How do you get everyone to come into the office?" And again, it's not a policy thing, it's when you get really smart people all working on really hard problems on a mission that they really believe in and an environment that they feel like they're actually contributing to and are adding value to. And, they like the people that they're around and feel like they're of the same caliber and mindset, they want to be together. They want to come together and actually spend time together and work on those problems together. Because that's also where real relationships were built.

You don't have to force it. You just have to create the right environment and platform and the right people, give them the ability and empower them to solve really hard problems on their own and a mission that they know that they're working towards. And I think that's one of the things I love about the strategy session that Curt did with us, is it enabled us at every layer of the organization to know that what you're working on is moving the needle on this particular area and that's how it's affecting our North Star.

Karen Zelnick:

As you're talking, it's very clear how passionate you are about the culture that you've built and the team that you've put together. And I'm sure that your energy is contagious to the rest of the team. I'm curious to know, is there anything that you tried while building the team or as you were establishing this culture that you found didn't work?

Jamie Baxter:

I think the core foundation of what I've described doesn't work when one of those components is missing. If you hire someone that is really hardworking and incredibly brilliant, but doesn't have the integrity or values or communication skills to operate in this environment, it's a disaster. I don't believe in or subscribe to the brilliant asshole philosophy, you can't have someone on the team that isn't a productive member of the team that isn't communicating and playing well, or doesn't have the same integrity. Someone really smart and hardworking without good integrity and communication can sink the ship faster than anything.

So, I think you've got to make sure that when you're hiring that you focus on all those aspects. You don't get too caught up with just the brilliance or just this particular skillset. And you make sure that you're thoroughly vetting people out. And then when you get it wrong, you have to correct it right away. We say that we treat everyone like family at Quick, but we don't run the company like a family, we run it like a sports team. And, when someone isn't working out, we trade them to a different team, and get them out of your culture, and out of your company, and find someone else that will come in, and perform at the highest levels that we expect with the integrity, with the communication skills, and all those things combined. You can't just do part of it.

Karen Zelnick:

Curt has talked before, a couple times actually, on the importance of hiring slowly and firing quickly. I appreciate that you brought that up again, and the impact that it can have on your company culture. And Jamie, obviously the way we work has drastically changed since 2020. And you've switched up the game even more by introducing a 4-day work week. We hear about it a lot, but we don't hear about a lot of companies who have actually done it, especially in the hospitality industry. So, why did you make that change?

Jamie Baxter:

We went through a really rough period with COVID and ended up having to lay off 70% of the team. Our revenue dropped 80% overnight when COVID hit. It obviously affected the hospitality industry, who we're serving in a drastic way. And, early 2021, the exact opposite thing happened. The light switch turned back on just as fast as it turned off. And, we were 54 people pre-COVID, we went down to 19 people. And then all of a sudden, we found ourselves with 19 people doing way more revenue than we were doing when we had 54 people. We've always been grinding really hard over the last five years. But, the level of work effort that was going on in 2021 was just not sustainable. We were burning people out seven days a week just trying to keep up with the volume. And, we knew that something had to change because I could see it in people's eyes that we were wearing them down, and this wasn't going to be able to last forever.

But, I was also seeing it in the work product. I was seeing people feel like they just had to get this thing done, because there's so much else to do. And so, they would take a shortcut, or just get it done just good enough, versus being able to come at it with a really creative solution. And, we kept telling ourselves, "All right, if we can just hire this person, or if we can just get this team to 20 people, or if we can build out this team, then everything will be better." And, we kept doing those things. We kept hiring more people and we kept building these teams. But then ultimately, we came to the reality that, "It's not going to get better. No matter how many people we hire, it's never going to get better if we continue at the growth rate that we're on."

We've had 10000% growth over the last three years. If you continue that pace of growth and you get a group of people that are so energized at solving these problems as we have, it will never stop. You'll always find yourself in a position where there's so much more to do, than the time in the day that you have to do it. So, we said, "Let's look at this as a way to solve this long-term." And, one of our values is hustle responsibly. We're going to hustle really hard, but we expect people to actually take time off and recharge and energize. That wasn't happening either.

And what we were really seeing is, well, maybe you're hustling for six months and then you take a week vacation and you come back recharged, but what about the six months, you come back and then you're working again, and then you're just burned out, and you're tired, and you go all week, and then try to catch up on all the work that you didn't get done on Saturday, and then try to get your life together on Sunday, just to the show up Monday exhausted and without a fresh brain?

So, we said, "This is not one long sprint. This is a marathon of sprints. And, what we have to do is to find a way to get the most and best out of people, but in a way that they can do this ongoing and hustle every single week."

And so, my chief of staff brought this idea to me of the 4-day work week, and said, "Imagine if people could come in every Monday with the same fresh brain, and energy, and charge, and motivation to go and just bust down any wall that's in front of them as they did when they come back from a week long vacation. Imagine if we could do that every single week." I was like, "That would be incredible. How

would we do that?" And she said, "I want to talk to you about the 4-day work week." I immediately dismissed it and I said, "There's no way. We can't get done what we have done to do in five days. How are we going to do it in four?" And then she presented the data to me of what other companies have done. And, increases in productivity, increases in creativity, increases in customer satisfaction, increases employee wellbeing and engagement both mentally and physically.

And, the data was really compelling. And so, I said, "We'll do it. But we're going to do it as a pilot and see if this actually works." And it took several weeks, maybe even a month before we felt like we were getting our hands around it. We set up a lot of measures to ensure that, "All right, let's do a control test of what this looked like before the 4-day work week and what it looked like after." But also do a control test of say, "What does this look like for employees that were with us before the 4-day work week started and what does this look like for our new employees that are joining when we've hired them into the 4-day work week?" Across the board, we saw improvements in employee wellbeing engagement. We saw improvements in people's attitude and their mindset. They come to work on Mondays and every day ready to hustle and hustle hard, but in a creative way.

We also saw over a 200% increase in job applications. And all of a sudden, we are not just picking the best candidate that we have applied for pick a role, we get the pick of the litter now. We get the cream of the crop. And, we were getting great talent before, but this is even opening up even more talent. We've also seen our customer satisfaction scores increase. We've seen our fill rates increase, we've seen all of the metrics go in the right direction. So, we ran it for a pilot period and got great results across the board. All of the things that we measured all went in the right direction. And I think one thing that Curt taught me is goodness is always in one direction, right? So, some things we wanted to go down, some things we wanted to go up. And, every one of them went in the right direction for us.

And so, the thing we didn't have enough time to see is how does this actually play out over a year? Well, we look at revenue and where we're at on a weekly basis. And so, until you can compare week 42 of one year to week 42 of the next year, you don't really understand, because there's seasonality that's on demand. So, we've decided to extend it for another year. I think we may end up making some small, minor tweaks to it.

But, this is something that has incredibly changed everyone's perception of the work that they do, and allows them to be energized and feel like they can do this at Quick, but also maintain a life outside of Quick. And, that's the true longevity of this, is that, you can do both and feel like you can do both in a long-term way, and then you get the best out of people, both at Quick, but also they can give their best at home. And I think that's another big aspect of this is, a lot of our employees are doing a second shift when they get home. They've got kids, they have family, and this actually allows them to have more time with them, maybe even not even pay for daycare now on Fridays, right?

Now, even if you do have to catch up some work on Friday, you still have a full Saturday and Sunday that you can fully re-energize and recharge. And so, we've actually figured out how to do this and still support the hospitality industry, because while it's a 4-day work week, we actually operate seven days a week from 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM every single day. So, some people have different staggered schedules, but it's something that I think has dramatically changes for the future. And I'm super excited about this being part of our DNA in the years to come.

Karen Zelnick:

The company results and the impact that you've show on the culture are so, so impressive, Jamie. But one thing I really appreciated as you were talking, you said that you really wanted to make sure employees will be able to give their best to the company, but it's clear that you as a leader want to make sure your company's giving your best to the employees. And I think that is also something that really



impacts your company culture. Something also that you mentioned in the beginning was making it a culture where managers are there to serve their employees and help them become better. And it's clear that you embody that as a CEO, so it's really impressive to me. Curt, what were your thoughts when Jamie proposed the 4-day work week?

Curt Roberts:

One of the things I've noticed in board meetings is that nothing will light up Jamie's energy level more than talking about the culture at Quick and policies or practices that he is passionate about. I remember when this came up in a board conversation once. And, I was panicked, not because I necessarily had a strong belief about whether a 4-day work week was a good idea or not, but because I've always experienced that once you give something, it's almost impossible to take it away. You have to be very cautious and careful when you decide to do something like this.

It was positioned as a pilot and I'm sure it was communicated well inside of the company that was going to be the case, but I still suspected that if they ever decided to withdraw it, they would have some noise. So, I'm glad that it's actually worked and that the company's seeing good results from it. I'm not sure this would work everywhere. Company cultures differ so much from company to company. And so, it's hard to know how translatable it is. I think for other CEOs that might consider something like this, I would just encourage them to take it slowly, be careful. Know that whenever you give something that is perceived and believed to be a benefit, pulling it back away again is always difficult and will have consequences that you might not like. And so, just be super careful to other CEOs that might try doing the same.

Jamie Baxter:

That was a thought of mine as well. We talked a lot about that when we roll this out that, "Hey, this might not work." That was an important piece was to run as a pilot and be very upfront about it. But I think it's also part of our DNA, where our employees have a lot of tolerance for knowing that we're moving fast and we will make some mistakes. But, they're willing to forgive each other and us as a company when we get it wrong.

And I'll be the first one to get on a rally, is what we call our all hands, and say, "Hey listen, I screwed up." And it caused a lot of consternation, and questions, and I could have done a much better job of actually preparing the materials, thinking through some of it, having something to follow-up with, and I didn't do it. And I admitted that I was wrong. And said, "Listen, I didn't get this right. I know it caused a lot of angst. I didn't prepare all of our managers to be well equipped to answer these questions. And, we're going to revisit this. And, we rolled it out two weeks later. And, it went amazingly well." So, I think, you have to have an environment that allows both for the 4-day work week, but also for a place that you can try something and pilot it and if it doesn't work, you can pull it back.

Karen Zelnick:

And Curt, what other things should a founder keep in mind as they're considering a 4-day work week?

Curt Roberts:

Well, Jamie's company, Quick, actually would've been one of the hardest ones I think to do this in. The reason that's the case is because it's a very customer-service oriented enterprise. And, you could logically guess that the highest volumes probably of shifts actually being posted and filled are occurring on Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. So it's a business where the natural cadence of a work week

doesn't fit quite as well, even to begin with the cadence of where the volume actually occurs in the business. So, that's even a compounding factor for Jamie and his team to very carefully think through who would need to be available, what types of roles in what quantity, at what times in order for either the freelancers or the business partners to have access to someone when they need that person in real-time? So, more complicated than most companies. I think, a lot of companies can operate on a standard business calendar, software developers, whatever, can be on and off the clock at different times with greater degrees of flexibility than I think would be the case in most companies.

But, it's a long way of saying, make sure you really, really understand your business and when the customer demands hit and in what form. Because if you know that, then you can at least staff with precision for the times in which those folks are needed. The other thing I would think that is really important to take into account is the question of who needs to collaborate with whom to get their work done. It's one thing I think to do a standard 4-day week, let's say, it's a Monday through Thursday, that's probably easier to coordinate other than with the customer support staff we talked about not to overgeneralize there. So, let's say you allow a person to say, "I'm going to choose the 4 days of the week that I want to work. One week, I might want to take a Wednesday off. Another week, I might want to take a Friday off, and so forth." It makes the coordinating challenge I think for meeting scheduling and teams and critical interactions significantly more difficult. And so, I think the way you design it also matters a ton.

Jamie Baxter:

I 100% agree with that. And, our core team at HQ is all Monday through Thursday. And, we went through the exercise of what would that look like if it was flexed. But, we have to have everyone together the same days in order for that collaboration to happen, so that someone in marketing can collaborate with someone in product with someone in sales all in the same meeting. And, in many ways, the 4-day work week has actually made that better, because now what we actually do is, "All right, you have a doctor's appointment. You can now do that on Friday." Yeah, everyone does that on Friday, where other times, "Well, Karen is at a doctor's today and Curt's got dentist tomorrow. And then, I've got this meeting that I've got to take with someone on Thursday. Well, I guess the meeting's now going to be next week, because we can't actually align all of us that are together this week to get it done." Now, all of us are doing that on Fridays. So, Monday through Thursday, wow, we get 110% of everyone, because we're all locked in on the same schedule, and we can just move so much faster.

Curt Roberts:

I have one question for you on this though, Jamie, is the executive team exempt from this policy? You and your direct reports?

Jamie Baxter:

We're not exempt from it. And, I think, if we were, then it would quickly be known that it wasn't really a 4-day work week, it was a 4-day work week with a flex day on Friday. The same goes with PTO. If the executives don't take PTO, and openly demonstrate that it is okay to take time off, you don't take vacation, right? Because if they don't see the CEO taking vacation, is it really okay to take time off? If I am working every single Friday, I'm role modeling that that's the behavior I want. So, we're not exempt from it. Do I work on Fridays sometimes? Absolutely. That is something that I do share openly with people. I use it as a catch-up day sometimes. But then, I'm actually able to fully take off Saturday and Sunday. But there's times where I'll take all three days off as well. And, if I don't role model that behavior, it truly isn't something that we're actually supporting.

And so, if I am working on one of those Fridays, I make it known that, "Hey, I'm working. But just because I send you a message Curt, doesn't mean that you actually have to respond to it." And a lot of the messages that I may end up sending on a Friday, I'll actually schedule for a Monday to go out. Then, I'm not setting the expectation, because as soon as you get a message from the CEO, sometimes people expect, "Well, I should actually respond."

Curt Roberts:

I think that's logical.

Jamie Baxter:

Yeah. And so, I've got to make sure that people know, "Listen, my timing and availability to get caught up on something may be different than yours. You may have Tuesday evenings that work really well for you when you want to catch up on stuff. I might be Friday mornings. But we all have our own times."

Karen Zelnick:

I cannot be the only one who's leaving this conversation, Jamie, with a renewed desire to be more like you in really practicing the policies, or practicing what you preach basically of how consistent you are with being intentional about your company culture. And that is something that I really admire about you and about Quick, no wonder your applications have increased 200% and you're able to draw really great talent. You have really created an amazing culture. And, we like to end these podcasts by asking everybody the same question. So I'd like to now ask you, 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?

Jamie Baxter:

Not being afraid to have the hard conversations and knowing how to do so with the right amount of EQ, right? That you can do so with good intent and face something that's really challenging without having the other person think that you're just completely tearing them apart. But, I don't beat around the bush. I say exactly what I mean, and I do it in real-time. And, I think it allows for people to truly know where I stand on something. And, knowing that I expect the same back from them. And that it's okay anyone in the organization to come to me and say exactly how they feel and talk to me and tell me if I've done something wrong, and let's have a conversation around it. I love Brene's saying, and dare to the lead, it's just like bull riding. It's eight seconds. Just get through the first eight seconds of that hard conversation and the rest of it's going to be just fine.

And so, I go into those conversations knowing, "Yeah, this is going to be uncomfortable for about eight seconds." But then, what comes out of that? My gosh. Not only do you clear the air, you have great communication around what was bothering you or what happened, but then anytime you have those, I find that it brings you closer together. So, tough conversations, I think, that's the thing that has personally, professionally, my wife and I practice a lot of having those tough conversations and having them in real-time, so that we can work through it.

Karen Zelnick:

I'm sure that creates such a foundation of trust for you, for your team, for your entire company. And thank you for sharing that insight. Curt, do you have any reaction or thoughts on that?

Curt Roberts:

I do. I am certain that Jamie is much better at this than I am. I found over the course of my life, I was going to say career, but what Jamie just described applies to every relationship in life. And so, it's not just career, that I am far too hesitant personally to allow the gate to open for the bowl to come charging out and for me to have to survive those eight seconds. If you ask me to go back and think about circumstances where I have gotten it right, were those eight seconds worth it? Every time. Jamie is reminding me of something I need to do better.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, basically did that the entire podcast like, "Oh, I need to be more like Jamie." And something you said, Jamie, actually reminded me, you said that it actually draws people closer together. And there's a really fascinating study done on when people make the strongest connections and it's when they're feeling a little bit of apprehension and a little bit of fear, just chemically your brain bonds and builds stronger connections to people that way. It's actually science too. It's as much of an art form as it is a science. And so, thank you for that reminder. And, it's really been fascinating to talk to you today. Thank you for the insights that you've shared and for being with us today.

Jamie Baxter:

Thank you so much for having me. It's been a lot of fun. Always good to sit down and chat with Curt. And, love being part of the Kickstart family. So, thank you very much.

Karen Zelnick:

Yeah, well, we love having you, so thank you. And 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 Curt Roberts from Kickstart, or our CEO Jamie Baxter from Quick, we'll have a link to the company and a longer bio in our show notes at [kickstartfund.com](http://kickstartfund.com). You can listen to more episodes of Perfect Pitch wherever you listen to your podcast. And if you like what you're learning, leave us a reviewer rating. We'll be back next time with more entrepreneurs and the investors who fund them, so be sure to subscribe so you don't miss a thing.