Success Story #2

Sebastian Gellwitzki, Head of Global Partner Management & Production Hub, simpleshow.

Maddie Duke 00:01
You're listening to *The State Of Work*, the podcast by Lano. *The State Of Work* is about finding your place in the changing world of work as an individual or an organization. In each episode, we dive into some of the benefits and limitations we face when it comes to remote and flexible work. We talk about how we work, how we hire and manage people, and how we live in this increasingly global workplace. I'm your host, Maddie Duke. And today's Success Story comes from Sebastian Gellwitzski, Head of Production Hub and Global Partner Management at simpleshow. Simpleshow simplifies complex topics through the power of video and Sebastian talked about his experiences working with a pool of almost 300 freelance partners across the globe.

Hi, Sebastian. Thanks for joining me on *The State Of Work*. How are you today?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 00:53
I'm very good. I'm very excited for our little session here.

Maddie Duke 00:59
Where are you joining me from today? You're based in Berlin, right?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 01:03
I'm based in Berlin, yes. I don't know if you're familiar. So I'm located close to the Volkspark Friedrichshain, which is very nice. It's a very, I would say more silently part of Berlin. So it's not like super cool and trendy and tons of people hanging around. But it's nice. I chose it because well, obviously, because I got the chance to get the flat. Because you probably know that getting a flat in Berlin is not always easy. But it was also because it's so silent. And I love to sleep in silence.

Maddie Duke 01:44
I completely understand that, I'm with you there. Unfortunately, I'm not in the same situation. It's very noisy, so yeah. We're gonna be talking about your role at simpleshow today and about simpleshow and how simpleshow is working and structuring their team. So firstly, could you tell me, what does simpleshow do? And what is your role there?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 02:08
Okay, that's an interesting question because what simpleshow does today is a bit different from what simpleshow was doing, like, six, seven years ago. So today, I would say we are, as well, a platform provider for Do It Yourself video creation - explanation videos, but also a full service agency for explanation videos and e-learning is also part of what we do. So we have like, as you understand, maybe different kinds of products that we offer and services.

Maddie Duke 02:50
Cool. So you can do kind of the full suite, someone could hand over the entire e-learning, kind of, video project to simpleshow or have a bigger role themselves and use the platform.

Sebastian Gellwitzki 03:03
Exactly. And the platform... maybe what what is interesting, because I don't know, if people know that, it's really like super sweet, you can like put in a text into into the software, like an online software, where you just, for example, put in your your text into a field and the AI of the software, creates then a video for you puts in like, creates the pictures based on keywords that were tagged in our now…. I'm really missing the English word….

Maddie Duke 03:47
What's the German word?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 03:49
The German word would be a database. I got it! So like a database with like, a lot of illustrations in there. And then if you for example, type in car, it finds automatically like tons of cars, and then puts in the one where it's things is the best for your for your choice. And then you can change them and remove the pictures on the canvas if you want. But it's very, it's very smart.

Maddie Duke 04:19
Yeah, cool. Cool. And your role there is Head of Global Partner Management and Production Hub. What does that involve?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 04:26
I'm responsible for let's say, like, two different kinds of teams. So one team is responsible for recruiting and onboarding and quality assurance of external staff, external partners, and some administrational work then with the people. And the other team (which is teams) there's a team for DACH, there's a team for the UK, and there's a team for Asia Pacific and they are doing quality assurance. They support with onboarding of freelancers. Yeah so there's a lot of

communication and supporting external people. Especially because we have a lot of very high standardized products that we offer to customers. So it's very important that you guide and support the partners who are working for you, right?

Maddie Duke 05:27
And when you say I mean, when we think about what kind of products you're offering at simpleshow, and like these teams that you're working with, I imagine you're working with a lot of people that work in production, video production, and design and illustration, what sorts of different creative roles are there?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 05:45
Usually on a normal project, you would have, like a concept writer/project manager. It's one person that we have who does both, like the communication with the client as well as the concept writing and also like the visual….like the visualization (tricky word!) of the storyboards. And then you have, like a motion designer, you would have an illustrator, you would have voiceover artists, you would have a sound designer. So that's basically a general setup for a project.

Maddie Duke 06:29
How big would this pool of talent that you're working with be and are they mostly remote? Like? Are they independent freelancers? Or are they based in different offices around the world that that simpleshow is managing? How is the whole team structured?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 06:45
Yeah, they are. They're located in different places all over the world and our remote working independent freelancers.

Maddie Duke 06:55
Do you know roughly how many freelancers you have on your database?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 06:59
I would say, around 300.

Maddie Duke 07:02
Wow, okay! What are some of the challenges that you've faced along the way when you're growing and managing the team? And how have you overcome them?

Sebastian Gellwitzki 07:11
I would say number one is communication issues/language barriers. For example, in our case, you have like a German creative writing a script and creating a storyboard and then sends it to a Latin American illustrator to get the illustrations you need. The problem was the communication issues in terms of language barriers, but as well as like, timing, you know, they're a bunch of hours before or after us. So if you write something you don't at a, you know, how do you say... urgent situation? Yeah. And maybe the person sleeps?

Maddie Duke 08:00

Yeah.

Sebastian Gellwitzki 13:08

How did we overcome it, we provided some documentation. So we put a lot of focus in general on onboarding and onboarding means mentoring the people, setup courses for them, providing them with documentation, even little video tutorials now. And then also have our partner managers. So each individual group of partners have their own individual contact person, like the manager for illustration. And I just call it support with excellent onboarding and PSM (partner success management). Another thing is, is the overall organization I mean, everything is related to each other. What does organization mean? Yeah, it's like setting up the right processes for the people. Now, as we have these standards, and always repeating kind of tasks, you need to set up processes, which works for everybody. So everybody knows what to do, knows who to talk to, knows all the technical kind of things. And therefore also you need to focus on your partner managers. And another challenge was definitely the change of already proven production processes. As for many, many years, we were working with internal staff. You know, after 10 years or seven years, we had so many processes and clean ==line things== that we now had to change, to make the partners able to give us the same kind of quality in the same time. And also, we needed to set up a team of managers, which then developed clean, high performance processes for the partners. That was really crucial.

Maddie Duke 10:14

Would that tie into any specific pieces of advice you would have for other people who might be, you know, at that point where the team is rapidly growing globally, and they're faced with all these challenges of timezone, cultural differences, language challenges...

Sebastian Gellwitzki 10:30

Yes definitely. Number one, I would say number one is: set up a good team of partner managers. That's the key. That's really the key. And the second is the onboarding - onboarding people. I mean, it depends on what kind of industry you are, or whatever service or product you provide. I think this is really crucial to set up a good onboarding plan. Well documentation, I'm a big fan of learning by doing so I would also recommend taking experienced p people and let them help the newer people. Be patient and nothing goes from one day to the other.

Maddie Duke 11:20

One final question. How does your team use Lano

Sebastian Gellwitzki 11:25

We use it mainly, I would say, as a partner platform, as a project management tool, and also for invoicing and for organizing our invoicing. The key function is really the project management of projects. So we have like a special case, we have this we have an external partner, who's also managing other partners himself. Yeah, so he has a special role with special rights within Lano, a special account where he then can create tasks on projects and assign or request other

partners. For us, it's awesome because we don't need to do that they can, we can give them a project. And he really remotely can do everything the whole project process with him alone. Request other partners work on it, and we are just in the background, then approving invoices and checking everything goes smooth. Yeah, filling in the information that the people might need. So partner platform, so all our partners are in there, project management, which is super important for us and invoicing. Last, but if you think about having, I don't know, 300 partners worldwide, there's something going on with invoicing, believe me. Different currencies, cost centers and, you know, invoicing coming in daily, and you have to make sure that everything goes correct and, therefore it helps a lot. If I imagine like a bunch of years ago, when we use like regular PDF, invoice, where you can't just change something on it, if something is wrong, for whatever reason, you have to write the person or call the person, hey, blah, blah, blah, blah, then the person has to change have to resend it. And this is way easier in Lano or if something is wrong, or about the date or the amount of the fee, just easily change it. And also we have different approval stages. So we have more eyes checking on - is everything correct? And also definitely an advantage for the partner because not just from our side, but also from the partner side. And I know that some of the partners are using Lano, not just for us, but also for other clients. And the feedback I have is that's helping them a lot.

Maddie Duke 14:25
Cool. Well, that's really good to hear. I mean, we're, it's I mean, we want to understand as well how Lano clients and customers are using the platform and it can be in different ways. So it's great to get an insight to that. So that's pretty much all we have time for and everything I wanted to ask. Thanks very much. It's been really great talking to you today, Sebastian.

Sebastian Gellwitzki 14:50
It was a pleasure. It was really fun talking to you Maddie.

Maddie Duke 14:55
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