

Success Story #5

with Fernando D'Imperio, Data Engineer at Lano

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 that we face when it comes to remote and flexible work. We discuss 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 in this week's Success Story, I'm speaking to someone who's not just working from home, but working remotely in the truest sense of the word. Data engineer Fernando D'Imperio, lives in Brazil and works remotely for Lano. While most of the Lano team is based in Europe, Fernando was hired and on boarded remotely and is yet to meet any of the team in person. Fernando shared his career story so far and his experiences of working remotely. Hi, Fernando, welcome to *The State Of Work*. How are you today?

Fernando D'Imperio 01:10

Pretty good. Thank you. Nice to be here.

Maddie Duke 01:12

Thanks for joining us, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your job?

Fernando D'Imperio 01:17

So I'm Fernando. I'm from São Paulo. And I'm a data engineer at Lano. But I graduated as an environmental engineer,

Maddie Duke 01:27

Ahhh.

Fernando D'Imperio 01:28

This migration from environmental engineering to data engineering, it was a step by step process. So at first, when I graduated, I was an intern at Monsanto in the Business Intelligence team. And that was my first contact with data,

Maddie Duke 01:49

Right.

Fernando D'Imperio 01:50

And I found it very interesting, like working with data gives you a lot of flexibility and a lot of power to do really cool things. After this internship, I decided that it was a good moment to start my own company. So I started a company of electronic waste recycling.

Maddie Duke 02:12

Wow

Fernando D'Imperio 02:14

There, I did a bit of everything, including building a system that was a control system for my storage. I did this system purely on Excel and VBA. Because this was the technology that I knew at the time. And during that period that I noticed that I really do like data, working with data, figuring out ways to represent reality in data, create good data sources, and create reports on top of it. My company wasn't going so well. So I decided to close and look for a job. And at the same time, I thought to myself, I was an intern, and then entrepreneur. So I need to show to the market what I want to do next. So I started a master's degree at FGV, which is a university in Brazil, that was related to its name was business analytics and big data. So how to connect business with data.

Maddie Duke 03:35

Exactly your thing.

Fernando D'Imperio 03:38

Because that's what I like to do. So I signed up for this master's degree. And at the same time, I got this job at SumUp, which is a card reader, company and payment processor. So my challenge there was to work purely with data. And I stood there for three and a half years. And then I got fired.

Maddie Duke 03:50

Oh no! Yeah, tell us about that.

Fernando D'Imperio 03:53

Yeah, actually, I started at the payments team, then the payments team was disbanded. And then I became the leader of my own team, that reconciliation team. From time to time, they did this reshuffle thing, which is picking the right person that delivers the person that delivers most and putting on the most important project,

Maddie Duke 04:16

Right? Yep

Fernando D'Imperio 04:18

So they picked me and say, do you want to do CRM on marketing? And I said, yeah cool. It will be a different challenge reconciliation. It's kind of getting boring now. So I moved to CRM, and started lots of stuff from scratch, creating data sources, creating reports and so on. And I was doing that for I think, one year and a half, and then SumUp did this massive layoff worldwide, so 200 people were fired, and me included.

Maddie Duke 04:53

Sorry to hear that was that. I mean, I'm laughing only because you seem to be totally fine with it.

Fernando D'Imperio 05:00

Yeah, actually, it was pretty good because I was kind of tired of working at SumUp, because it was the only company that I've worked at besides my own company, and when I was an intern, so I was already looking for others.. for my next challenge, for other companies. So it kind of just sped up the process and pushed me off the cliff, maybe.

Maddie Duke 05:26

You can say you were offered a redundancy or something? It sounds a bit nicer than fired..

Fernando D'Imperio 05:32

Yeah.

Maddie Duke 05:33

Because it sounds like you didn't do anything wrong.

Fernando D'Imperio 05:34

Yeah. Anyways, so I started looking for a new job. And I've had fairly good relations with some people from Europe or at SumUp. And the people that were fired in Europe, got together and built this Google Sheets with names, emails and skills and that he sent this person that I knew at SumUp Europe sent me this and said, put, put your name there. See what happens.

Maddie Duke 06:08

Yeah, yeah.

Fernando D'Imperio 06:09

And the next day, I started to receive lots of job proposals. And most of them I started a conversation with: I'm based in Brazil, I am a Brazilian, I won't go to Europe. Is this a deal breaker for this opportunity?

Maddie Duke 06:26

Yeah.

Fernando D'Imperio 06:27

And for most of them, yeah. But for Lano, it wasn't, right? Because it's the purpose of the company.

Maddie Duke 06:34

Yeah, absolutely. What an interesting story, I love it.

Fernando D'Imperio 06:37

Yeah. And at first, when we talked, I wasn't expecting anything like it. I was talking to many people at the same time. But the talk was so good. Like, the idea of Lano, the idea of providing a solution for remote work seems so, so interesting, and so on point with what was happening to the world at the time. So it was like a perfect match. It was pretty cool. And I'm pretty happy right now.

Maddie Duke 07:09

Yeah, that's great. What a really interesting story you've got, yeah, maybe tell us about your job at Lano and what your function of your role is there.

Fernando D'Imperio 07:19

Okay. So I am a data engineer at the BI team. And what does that mean? Imagine that when you have a business, you have lots of business questions that need to be answered, right. And the way that you start data is not necessarily the way that the data needs to be structured, to be consumed to answer these business questions. So part of my job is to get all this amorphic data blob that has everything, organize it and create useful data sources, so we can build reports on top of it. And we can start creating KPIs, measuring our business, and also answering business questions and creating insights. So as a data engineer, and responsible for creating this stuff, we call it a single source of truth, which is creating a source of data that is easy to consume. And it's very immutable and very easy to use, and so on, build the reports on top of it, and build pipelines of automations to bring data from somewhere else, work it and push it to the other place. So one thing that was pretty cool that I've built - we recently changed the email platform that we use to communicate with our clients. So I built the whole data integration of this new platform that we are using. So how do we put data on the platform so we can send emails. How do we fetch the result of those emails? How do we fetch data from the platform to our data warehouse? And how do we put everything together? So we can create KPIs and reports. So we know that the email campaigns, the CRM campaigns that we're doing, are performing the way that we think it should? So I think this is good materialization of what a data engineer is.

Maddie Duke 09:29

Yeah, for sure. Well, to me as a not really a data person, your role is to, in some ways, tell a story to other parts of the business, you know, in a way that makes sense. And then also not just telling a story of what happened, but providing insights and predictions about decisions and things that could happen or should happen and it's all backed by something solid and real.

Fernando D'Imperio 09:53

Yeah, part of the job is telling the story, building the analysis and so on and part of the job in this same idea of telling stories is creating the book.

Maddie Duke 10:04

Right?

Fernando D'Imperio 10:06

Yeah. Because the data must be there.

Maddie Duke 10:08

You mentioned earlier that you worked remotely or almost remotely for a period of time when you were at SumUp. Was that the only remote work experience you've had? And is that kind of what led you to deciding, like, this is what I want and that this is a value of mine that I want to make sure is there in any future job.

Fernando D'Imperio 10:27

Yep. So what happened in the summer, at late 2019, when COVID was starting, the company said, this will be a problem for quite some time. So we need to move remote now. And then everyone started to work at home. And at first it was kind of painful, you know, because no one knew how to work remote. So we needed to get used to it. And at the same time, I was not enjoying it so much. But mostly because I was fully isolated from everyone. So I was not even seeing my parents or, or anyone. I was just seeing my girlfriend. So I was feeling that I wasn't liking remote work. But then I learned that was for the wrong reasons. I wasn't liking it, because I was working remote and living remote as well. And when the time passed, and things weren't as bad, I started seeing my family again. And I learned that working remote is actually pretty great, you know, so I started new hobbies, because I gained almost like two hours every day, which was cool.

Maddie Duke 11:56

What are those hobbies? Coding. Just kidding.

Fernando D'Imperio 12:02

Actually, it is. Yeah, I'm just the classical nerd, you know. So I really love games like video games, and so on, and PC games as well. But working remote for Lano. It's very different from working remote for a company that's in Brazil, for instance. It's very interesting, because since we're working in different time zones, I can talk to people or working in Europe, on my timezone until 2pm. tops, right? So the morning part of my day, it's meeting slots. So if I want to talk to someone it needs to be during the morning. And in the afternoon, it's where the actual hard work starts. Yeah, having this forced structure because of the time zones, actually, it's very good, because when you need to create stuff and put efforts on something, you can do it without interruption, which is amazing. And also the cultural thing. It's very, very cool. Like, I never worked with such a diverse team in a way of culture.

Maddie Duke 13:22

What was it? What's it been like joining a team fully remotely? So as far as I understand you haven't actually physically met anyone from the team at Lano?

Fernando D'Imperio 13:30

No, No, I haven't.

Maddie Duke 13:31

Yeah. What's that been like?

Fernando D'Imperio 13:34

The starting part I think it's the hardest part. Because when you start to do something, it's very common that if you have a colleague on your side, and you're doing something and say, hey, how do I do that? Can you help me on this and and, and it's like, since we are remote, you don't have this distinct that it's very immediate and very informal, of asking the person next to you. And if you're not, if you are a very shy person, like myself, you kind of I'll put all my questions together and advocate once, you know, because I don't want to bother them. Yeah, yeah. I don't want to sound dumb - not on my first week!

Maddie Duke 14:19

I mean, I think everyone is familiar with this, though. And I think it would be very rare that someone is judging you on your first day about about questions like that, but definitely that's that thing of the change in communication platforms like face to face and then written,

Fernando D'Imperio 14:35

I think the most important thing when you start working remotely is that you have a safe environment to learn. Sounds like a basic thing that should exist, but I don't know if it's a reality for everyone.

Maddie Duke 14:50

Yeah, that's a good point. It's definitely really important and probably a really important thing to a remote workplace culture, to cultivate that kind of environment. It does have to be done consciously by those leaders and onboarding managers. And they should probably explicitly say it, you know, not just assume that, you know, yeah, yeah, Would you say that's one of the most challenging things about working remotely, especially if you have a tendency to be a little shy or to not want to bother someone likes having to put everything in writing. And also then in a, in a second language.

Fernando D'Imperio 15:24

I think one of the most challenging things if you are remote, and you need to work with someone, sometimes you type lots of messages and the person answers, then you get on this back and forth forever. So this part is quite challenging. So when to call the person when it's, it's necessary to do a video call to, to explain something that it's very fast to explain by talking, but not as much as typing. And if you were in the office, probably, you would just get up, go to the person table and say, let's grab a coffee and talk about I don't know if this is a cultural thing outside in Brazil. But in Brazil, if you need to discuss something, it's like, let's go take a coffee —at least 10 coffees a day— can get added to it.

Maddie Duke 16:17

Do you have any tips for other people who are aspiring to join their team remotely? Or else people who have already started to work remotely?

Fernando D'Imperio 16:26

Go for it! Yeah, at first, it will feel strange, but you get used to it, and the social part of the work, if it's not something that's very valuable to do, like seeing other people, and so on seeing other people in real life, then, then it's okay, because you won't work alone. You will work with people, but it will be video calls and, and messages, and so on.

Maddie Duke 16:57

Yeah. And make sure to see other people.

Fernando D'Imperio 17:02

Yeah, and make sure there are real people. And if you're working in different time zones, learn how to do it. So learn that you can send a message by the end of your day. So that when people wake up the next day, in the other timezone, they can answer you. And when you wake up and you look at your message, they will be there. So learn to work in a synchronous way.

Maddie Duke 17:29

Yeah, absolutely. Does that slow things down? Sometimes when you have to wait the next day to get an answer, or how do you find that?

Fernando D'Imperio 17:38

I think No, because sometimes it's a blocker but never you're working on a single topic on a single thing. So when this one depends on some external information, then you can focus on the other. And it's like that even if you are in the office or not. Because if it's a complex thing, you need to write it down and send it to the person and this person could be in a meeting, which is the same as not being there.

Maddie Duke 18:07

Yep, that's true. All right. Well, I think we've definitely used up our time. So thanks so much for joining me on *The State Of Work*.

Fernando D'Imperio 18:15

Yeah, it was pretty good, too. I had a great time.

Maddie Duke 18:22

The State Of Work is brought to you by Lano. The Lano platform has everything you need to grow your global team, find out more at lano.io

Thanks for listening and see you next time on *The State Of Work*.