

Success Story #6

with Christina Voll, Digital Marketing Consultant +
Founder at Rise Remotely.

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. Each episode we dive into some of the benefits and limitations we face when it comes to remote and flexible work, and take a look at 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 we're joined by Christina Voll, digital marketing consultant and founder of Rise Remotely. Christina has over seven years experience living all around the world as a digital nomad and continues to navigate this lifestyle even in the midst of challenges arising as a result of COVID-19. In Rise Remotely, Christina has built a platform and community dedicated to helping people access a location independent life through mentoring and education.

Hi, Christina, welcome to *The State Of Work*. It's great to have you. I'm really excited to chat to you today.

Christina Voll 01:06

Thankyou. Thank you so much for having me.

Maddie Duke 01:08

Can you tell me first of all, where you're joining from today?

Christina Voll 01:11

So currently, I'm back home in Canada, actually - close to Toronto.

Maddie Duke 01:16

Nice. And you were just saying to me earlier that you're in a few weeks, you're heading back to Spain? Where will you be headed?

Christina Voll 01:22

Yes, so I'm going to be basing myself in Valencia in Spain. I just applied to get a visa for the next year to stay.

Maddie Duke 01:31

Cool. Well, that's exciting. So could you tell us about yourself and about the work you're doing?

Christina Voll 01:37

Sure. So um, yeah, around seven years ago, I started on my digital nomad journey. I started out as a digital marketing consultant, starting out in social media marketing, and then kind of snowballed from there. And then about two years ago, I started one-on-one mentoring. I felt like I wanted to do something a little bit more purposeful. And I started mentoring and it wasn't until discovery call after discovery call that I realized people have a lot of needs and me with just my experience in digital marketing, I couldn't address all of those at the same time. So that actually then brought me to launching and creating Rise Remotely, which is that online platform that you can browse education to either help you go remote or work better remotely.

Maddie Duke 02:26

Awesome. First of all, congratulations...

Christina Voll 02:30

Thankyou.

Maddie Duke 02:31

...and also did you bring some other people onto the team to help you cover those areas of expertise that were less in your, kind of, wheelhouse?

Christina Voll 02:37

Exactly, yeah. So right now we have about a team of 10 creators on the platform. So we cover edge online education. We offer that in the form of ebooks, live sessions, one on one coaching, mentoring and traditional online courses, hybrid courses. Really a wide variety of different education to either help you become an online business owner, a freelancer or get a remote nine to five and we also have a small section for companies also wanting to transition to remote and improve their company culture.

Maddie Duke 03:11

Awesome, a lot of different things then that's great. It sounds like you've got a lot going on.

Christina Voll 03:18

Always.

Maddie Duke 03:19

You mentioned that prior to starting Rise Remotely you were already working as a digital nomad for some time. What led you to pursuing that lifestyle and what is it that you like about it?

Christina Voll 03:31

I actually started when I was still in university. I had some friends that were actually digital nomads and this was seven years ago so it was like oh what is a digital nomad kind of thing it

was it was really new. So that really inspired me to, you know, chase that lifestyle and being that I was already studying business and university I was already studying marketing. I was getting a little bit of you know knowledge there obviously but of course it was not what you would be learning in field of digital marketing because it's so new. So I was lined up for that but um, yeah, then I actually, when I was in university, I then came back from a trip with my friends that were digital nomads, actually. And then I searched really hard to even find a remote job listing because at that time, it was even difficult to find one. And I applied to a few and actually got my first client then and since then it kind of snowballed. And yeah, the last few years have been really really amazing. I'm really grateful to be able to, you know, have that location independence. I mean, I can talk for hours about the benefits of the lifestyle but definitely being able to, you know, work for yourself and have that location independence, to be able to travel and live different places and meet locals is something that I really, really love about it.

Maddie Duke 04:53

Yeah, great. I think a lot of people see it as kind of the dream life that you get to be, as you say, location independent and experience all these different parts of the world without sacrificing the pursuit of your career and obviously generating an income. So what are some of the more unusual places that you've worked from as a digital nomad?

Christina Voll 05:17

I was working from Jordan, which was maybe a bit unusual, especially for a girl to travel there alone. Also without a phone, that was crazy. And in Israel as well, I was traveling between the two. And also I was in Morocco alone working there. And I worked in a few different places in India, which you know, people often think, oh, India doesn't have the best WiFi to work and everything, but I had great luck and I went to some amazing cafes overlooking beautiful nature.

Maddie Duke 05:53

What kind of tools do you use to manage your everyday work both as a, you know, as a business owner as well as a digital nomad? What are the kind of the ones that you have to have?

Christina Voll 06:03

Yeah, so I'm, I like to collect Google Chrome plugins.

Maddie Duke 06:08

Oh yeah, yep.

Christina Voll 06:09

yeah, definitely a couple of those that I would use is a very simple email tracking one called Bananatag. And it just gives you notifications when people read your emails. So it's really good for if you're negotiating as a freelancer, or if you're, for me, when I was onboarding people to guys remotely, I just kind of was in the loop when I knew when people were looking into my emails, and then I can, you know, if it was a negotiation stage, I can send another email or something like that, or if somebody looked at something from a long time ago, I can kind of

reach out to them. I also like using Notion, that's a really great tool to organize everything. I put my personal, my business, everything in it. I really like it also to be able to send external documents or internal documents to externally so if you know, we have like a swipe file for rides remotely with all of our information in it, which is really nice. I like how simple it is. I love using emojis as well. So it's perfect for that.

Maddie Duke 07:09

And I think also, then you're not sort of tied to the Google suite when you're using something like Notion as a platform to share workable documents.

Christina Voll 07:20

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And there's so many additions where you can embed spreadsheets and YouTube videos and everything. It's really nice and seamless that way as well.

Maddie Duke 07:29

Yeah. Awesome. So what do you think some of the biggest challenges are then of working remotely or yeah, working, I guess it is working remotely like as a digital nomad. I mean you've obviously got a sense of a home base in Canada, where you are right now. But like, when you're abroad and planning your next step, and not necessarily having that sense of a home base.

Christina Voll 07:54

Exactly. So um, yeah, generally, for the last several years, I've been kind of coming to Canada, only in the summer, because I cannot deal with winters. And only for a couple of months just to see my friends and family. But I'm actually the past year, the pandemic was a bit crazy, because it really stopped digital nomads kind of right in their tracks, and we got really accustomed to, you know, traveling every few every few months, and going to a new place, having that excitement, having that routine of traveling. And to be able to not do that was really eye opening, I had a routine for the first time in my life, where I was, you know, working out every morning, eating the same things like not boring or anything, but it was, you know, just normality, what most people normally do. So that was really interesting. And it was a little bit of a challenge to you know, not have that - the pandemic was definitely a bit challenging. But now, you know, things are opening up and it's easier to travel now, which is really great. But in general, the lifestyle as well. Originally, I was kind of traveling and almost doing a fast travel and then naturally I just kind of slow down to doing a slow travel, which is you know, staying three months in a country instead of going, you know, a couple of weeks or one month or something like that. So naturally I was doing that already, just because I was feeling more exhausted from traveling and I wanted to connect more with people. And I found that yeah, being like, even though I was doing slow traveling, it was still a bit difficult to, you know, make that circle of friends in one place. Yeah, sometimes I would go to the wrong places where there wasn't digital nomads, and I kind of mistaken that - I went more for nature and you know, nature is always going to be there but you can't really have nice conversations with trees.

Maddie Duke 09:50

I guess it depends what kind of mood you're in.

Christina Voll 09:55

That's true.

Maddie Duke 09:57

How do you connect typically with other digital nomads around the world, like - are you part of any big communities or groups?

Christina Voll 10:03

Yeah, definitely. I'm part of and I see a lot of Facebook groups that I think are super active. For example, in Valencia, I met some people with just a Valencia - we actually - there's a big Telegram group there with, I think, over 5000 members and a bunch of subgroups. So I've met some people there, through digital nomad meetups there. And there's a few online communities as well Rise Remotely who's actually building one as well. And we're soon going to be launching, which is really exciting. So I'm happy to be kind of facilitating that and getting workshops ready for that. It's super exciting. But yeah, it's sometimes they're hit and miss though, because like I said, it all depends on your location. And at that moment in time, how many digital nomads are in that specific location. And that's something that yeah, I found Facebook groups because it's so open and because they're so big, that sometimes they really, really are useful for that.

Maddie Duke 10:57

Yeah, definitely. I mean, community is such an important thing in any time, like in any kind of lifestyle. I think a sense of belonging and community is important. But then I think, definitely when you're in a new place, and trying to establish yourself for a short amount of time, and then moving on to somewhere else.

Christina Voll 11:14

Exactly.

Maddie Duke 11:15

I've heard of some areas that kind of call themselves a remote work village. Have you ever been to one of those digital nomad villages?

Christina Voll 11:24

No, I actually haven't been to any of those villages yet. I actually saw them kind of progress in the last year and a half during the pandemic, which has been super cool as well, because you know, digital nomads are now realizing, okay, the pandemic kind of stopped us in our tracks. And now we're going to kind of build together - we're going to rise together - in a sense. So I think it's very cool that they're happening. There is one in Madeira that I would love to go to and being that I'm going to be in Spain for a year, I'm definitely going to make plans to head out that way. We have, some kind of like, brand partnerships that we're working on and cross collaborations and everything and I love to promote companies that you know are following the

digital nomad lifestyle and promoting it and giving people opportunities. Borderless Retreat is one of them. And they offer experiences in Madeira as well. And so they're really connected to that digital nomad village as well. Which I think is really cool. Yeah. So I'm always down for promoting them. And I'm excited for the day that I actually get to go there soon.

Maddie Duke 12:28

Have you noticed any other kind of trends or developments in the digital nomad community over the last couple of years?

Christina Voll 12:35

Yeah. So because of the pandemic changed things up so much. I see a huge trend of now digital nomads kind of really focusing on self improvement as well it was already starting before the pandemic, but there was still this kind of mix between the digital nomad backpacker and the digital nomad, kind of, self improvement nut - for lack of a better term. And yeah, and so now I see that that shift really progressed and now people are much more interested in going in maybe a digital nomad retreat or some type of community or even a specific location like Madeira or other digital nomad villages around the world and they're interested more so okay, maybe there'll be partying and stuff there but they're interested in more so and you know, hiking or experiencing nature around that area or, you know, working on their projects and everything. And I see that's much more prominent, like when I started seven years ago, there was that kind of gray area of you know, people that are like, yeah, you just need WiFi to work and they were partying all the time and maybe it wasn't so in alignment, you know, with a lot of the companies that digital nomads are working for, there's a lot of conscious entrepreneurship coming up all over which is really cool as well. So I see that that's a big trend, that's going strong and it's it's all for good reason.

Maddie Duke 14:01

Yeah, great

Christina Voll 14:02

Throughout my kind of digital nomad journey, I've definitely transitioned naturally, because it was a lot of traveling a lot of fast traveling and I kind of almost got burnt out and then I realized okay, I want to focus more on you know, health and wellbeing, I want to focus more on working with brands that also support that also have similar values and more just around, you know, helping other people and you know, really purposeful work as well. So I think naturally people who have been working for themselves for a while now, you can actually pick and choose after a little bit of time as well. So it's a really nice benefit to have as well.

Maddie Duke 14:42

Yeah, definitely. It's a good place to be in and how do you kind of manage things like wellbeing and mental health when you're working from anywhere?

Christina Voll 14:53

So yeah, like, like I said, naturally, it kind of happened out of necessity, to be honest. It was about three or four years ago, I was working for a really cool growth hacking agency. And I also had other clients on the side. So I was pretty overworked. But I was still super passionate about what I was doing. I was learning so much working for this growth agency. And it came to the point where I was working like 10 hour days back to back, because I was in Tenerife and I was in the north part of the island. I I mainly booked a place there because there was surfing there and little did I know it was like super expert surfing. And I only got in the water once and it was way over my experience level. But it happens. But yeah, so I was there. And I was actually really isolated. Because I was just in the wrong part of the island. There wasn't any kind of community there, there was really no one my age even, maybe a few surfers that were my age. And so I was kind of consuming myself and work. And then I realized that, yeah, I'm working too much. So from there, I created pretty strict boundaries, where I, you know, only work actually six hours a day. But I really make sure that it's focused tasks as well I put my notifications off, I really am focusing on the project that I'm working on, instead of hopping around a lot. Of course, sometimes I'm going to be hopping around a lot as well, with work, we all work with so many tabs open. And the thing is yes, it's hard not to sometimes, but um, but yeah, I think just changing like we don't necessarily need to work more time, we just need to work more focused and more on things that you know, we feel really good about working on. So that also helps.

Maddie Duke 16:36

Do you work with clients that are based all over the world? Or are they mostly in a certain part of the world?

Christina Voll 16:43

So for my freelancing, I've worked with clients literally from pretty much all over. Mostly, yeah, at least five different continents. It's been pretty much from all over, but I've done it all remotely. There've been a few times where I've met people and I was working in-person with them, but for their remote brand - and it was just because we were in the same place. But that was only a couple of times. But other than that, yeah, it's been pretty much all over. Which has been interesting in terms of time zones, but also a really great experience for managing time zones and yeah.

Maddie Duke 17:21

If you've got clients based everywhere... what do you do about them when it comes to payment? Do they pay you in your local currency, like how do you go about arranging that?

Christina Voll 17:34

Generally, I always give them the proposal in their local currency just so it makes them feel more comfortable about working with me, so they don't have to convert it. So they don't have to think about it so much. And it was like more home to them. And then in terms of payment, I also want to make it comfortable for them. So I'm pretty flexible. Because sometimes, you know if/ when somebody is, when you're onboarding a new client, you want to, you know, streamline the process as much as you can and make it comfortable for them so they feel good about going

into the agreement. So yeah, I offer a variety of different things. And also, if the client has their preferred way, I generally go with that if it makes more sense to

Maddie Duke 18:12

Yeah, and there are so many options available now as well. Like even things like Stripe where the client could pay by card if they wanted to.

Christina Voll 18:20

Exactly, yeah, cool.

Maddie Duke 18:23

I guess my last kind of question to you would be: what would you recommend to someone who's just starting out as a digital nomad or just about to?

Christina Voll 18:33

Starting out can definitely be overwhelming and it could seem like you are, you know, starting from zero, you have no experience or you just transition into a different career path, you know, where your experience is elsewhere. And it can be super overwhelming, definitely. So something that I would recommend is to you know, use your resources wisely and you know, not be afraid to actually get that extra help to really progress you because, you know, as you start working for yourself, even if you're working for remote nine to five or if you're working as a freelancer or an online business owner, it is your own business in a sense, so you're gonna want to invest into it. So getting you know that extra help, whether it's, you know, there are free resources on many platforms - Rise Remotely being one of them. So you can start out for free and then if you feel like that's working for you, there's also paid resources - Rise Remotely is more or less created to, you know, help you on every single stage of the journey to remote work success. So we're really focused on you know, whatever stage you are on, we're trying to, you know, craft education to help you for that specific stage. So when I started out, I was Googling things like crazy. I spent so much time reading so many different blog posts and really just like scratching Google for all the information I could, basically and I realized that was almost more time consuming than if I met with somebody that inspired me, that pointed me in the right direction and you know, really gave me that encouragement because at the end of the day to I feel like we all can get the skills. It's a lot about the mindset as well that sometimes is overlooked. And maybe that's what's holding you back the most is the mindset and that's why working with somebody is really going to be life changing.

Maddie Duke 20:23

Fantastic. Well, we'll make sure to put the details of Rise Remotely on our landing page for the podcast so that anyone listening who's kind of sitting on the fence or feeling inspired to seek some help with studying or progressing the digital nomad career or remote work career can get in touch. So yeah, thanks so much for your time today, Christina and for answering all my questions. It's been great to have you on the podcast.

Christina Voll 20:51

Thankyou so much.

Maddie Duke 20:53

Yeah, thank you. *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*.