

Theresa:

Well, hello and welcome to another episode of the Locally Grown Podcast, and our weekly LinkedIn live show. I am here with my friend, my colleague, I've been working with Jake for a while. This is Jake Adams. And he is the owner and founder of, I'm going to get it right this time, Simplified EDU, right?

Jake Adams:

It's Simplifi, but yes, it's basically-

Theresa:

Simplifi. Okay. I keep calling it Unified. I'm renaming your business. Simplifi. And Jake's business-

Jake Adams:

I'm sure in time we'll need to rename it as well.

Theresa:

It's going to be called Unified. I'm pushing it.

Jake Adams:

All right. I'm taking notes.

Theresa:

But yes, I've been working with Jake for this whole year now. And his business is a tutoring business, but it is much more than a tutoring business. I mean, when I was younger I had a tutor, and people typically have an idea about what a tutoring business is or what a tutor does. And Jake totally takes the industry, and flips it on its head. And does things, has carved his own path, and has a unique way of really helping kids. So I wanted to bring him on here and just talk with him about his story, because he does have a fascinating story, as well as a little bit about what he's doing to change the face of tutoring and the education world. So Jake, welcome.

Jake Adams:

Thank you. It's great to be here.

Theresa:

I'm glad that you're here. I'm glad that you're here. I wanted to have you on the podcast for a while. And I finally said, "Hey, you want to join me?" You're like, "Sure."

Jake Adams:

Yeah.

Theresa:

So tell us a little bit about your background. How did you get started with your business?

Jake Adams:

I guess, getting started with my business was a little bit born out of necessity, and also just finding what felt like was a path that, I think a lot of the best things in my life I fall into. And it's kind of one of those things where in college I had already gotten most of my college credits out of the way. I could have graduated in maybe two years or less. And I decided to stretch that out into four years. And I needed to, at the same time, pay for college. I went to Pepperdine University, did international business and marketing, and that was not an inexpensive degree.

And degrees, for the most part, are important. I have an interesting relationship with education because I think it's really important, but also I was not exactly the best student because I always found that I would rather be a student of life rather than a student who's tasked with some arbitrary task that doesn't necessarily apply to what is in front of them as their problem to solve. And my problem to solve was how do I make a living, and how do I use what I'm learning, and find people that will help me on my path as an entrepreneur?

And I had about five jobs at one point. And in that process, I mean I don't know how many jobs you count a tutoring job as because you have multiple students or whatever. But I was doing that, and tutoring just didn't seem like work. That's kind of what drew me to it. It seemed like it was a natural fit between my talents and abilities and the things that I cared about and the work that I had been doing before. Because before I was a tutor, I was a swim instructor. Before I was a swim instructor, I was a bootcamp leadership instructor. Had always taken on these sort of leadership teaching roles. And so when I got to tutoring, I was pretty well prepared for that. And then it just felt right, I guess.

Theresa:

And that was how you ended up opening up your own tutoring business.

Jake Adams:

Yeah. I guess I started tutoring there. But then the business aspect of it came along. I would say the defining moment was actually a phone call with my dad. He asked me, "Hey, what are you going to do when you graduate?" And I in the moment had no real idea as to how to answer that question, but I blurted out, "I'm going to start a tutoring business." And then I got off the phone and I was like, ah, okay, now I got to go do that thing that I said. And I guess that's another part of it is being someone who wants to do the things that I say I'm going to do. And so had that relationship with my dad of, okay, I need to do this thing that I just told him I was going to do in response to his question. And then I just started putting one foot in front of the other and putting that together.

And there was also this other aspect of it, which was in the background, I had been giving away jobs. All the tutoring that people wanted me to do. My phone was constantly ringing. And I was like, oh okay, let me ask my friend Bill. He's good at science. Let me give him a tutoring opportunity. And just going around and finding as many friends as I could who could take on these different jobs that were coming in. Because I did want to be helpful. I wanted people when they called me to have a solution to whatever problem they had on the other end of the phone line. And then I realized I should probably... Well I ran out of friends, first off. Second, I should also probably be vetting these people and making sure that everyone's qualified and going to do a good job and do the job in the way that I feel tutoring needs to be done.

Theresa:

Awesome. So when people think of a traditional tutoring business, typically they think, okay, my child has a problem in a specific subject, I'm going to get them somebody who can help them and teach them

that specific subject so that they can get a good grade. But I know you're about much more than that. So what makes you and your tutors different?

Jake Adams:

I would say it's this focus on mentorship. Just tutoring and academic subjects are there, I think, as a tool to teach us that whatever we're doing is a process. And we need to see that there's a challenge and then work towards it and invest in ourself along the way. And I think that's what a good tutor or mentor should be there to do is to help you realize, okay, you have this goal, you have this. I've been there before and I know it's hard, but we're going to go step by step, one step at a time. And that's honestly, Theresa, what you do for me as well is you've been on that path, and so you show others the way.

And that's what tutoring is. You do that through the lens of an academic subject. But there's a lot of other things that slip in along the way. When you're there, the reason why a student's there to work with you as a tutor sometimes is because maybe there's aspects of the executive function, or understanding how to study or plan or manage. Maybe they are super high achieving and super high performing, but it's like how do you manage all the stress of an entire day just filled to the brim with things? And how do you get through that more efficiently and work through that and have someone who's done it before also be there to point you in the right direction? Or just be there also to listen to what's going on and to also bring you back to Earth.

Because a lot of times students come and they're like, "I have a test and it's going to be the thing that makes or breaks my grade." And then you have to remind them, "Okay, yes, that might be true. And we can do the best that we can do, and we can only do the best that we can do in this moment with what circumstances we have. But that's not the end of the story. Your grade on your midterm isn't the end of the story. It's about, okay, if things don't go well, what do we do in response to that? And how do we keep going and keep moving forward in your education?" Because education really is just about teaching you how to get where you want to go.

Theresa:

No, I mean it's true. It's true. And I know that they say teachers, you can just have one amazing teacher that makes the difference, a huge difference in a child's life. And many times over, I know for me, I didn't really have that one teacher. I had a teacher who really helped me with Spanish, but I wouldn't say I had one that really changed my life. But I know that your philosophy is, and what you believe in with your business, is that that's what you want to do. You want to be able to help kids not only learn, but learn how to find that self-confidence and that courage and determination and whatever through education, which I think is so amazing.

So let me ask you, what happened? I know COVID, schools were shut down, everything was shut down. And kids, I mean they were studying and learning remotely, but also, there was a huge impact, I'm going to say, from a mindset or from an emotional standpoint, because now these kids are out of school and there's all this stuff going on in the world. And so what did you see during that time in your business?

Jake Adams:

Yeah. I think to be completely honest, I have a very unique experience having come from the area that I was working in because it was an in-person business before, and geographically we're situated in Malibu, West LA area. But a lot of the business is Malibu. And it's a small beach town, but it actually has quite a few natural disasters and fires and other things. And so I think I had learned a little bit of

resiliency there because, I guess, two years back the entire area just burned to the ground. A lot of people weren't able to go to school for about a month.

And all that had made me aware of the fact that crazy things can happen, and then we still have to find a way to keep going and move forward with what we're doing. And education is one of those things that is super important, especially in the years that we're working with students. They're in their high school years. And that's really that launch pad for where they go with higher education. And I mean for the college students, that's the launch pad for where they go with their career.

And so I guess what we saw with COVID was just we had to learn how to adapt. But then also I think it was just a very big lesson in learning how to adapt and deal with stressful situations and finding ways to continue moving ahead. But at the same time, being mindful of what we're all going through and not just pushing through to the point where we're breaking ourselves.

Theresa:

That's definitely, I mean, that's a lesson. That's a lesson that adults have to learn. And we were just having this conversation about the way my week's been going, the way that your week last week was going. And yeah, that's what people, adults have to learn that lesson of that you can't push yourself to the point of breaking, like you said. And I know my niece and my nephew, particularly my nephew, because at the time he was in ninth grade, and he was just having so much stress. Because he going from, I guess, he was had just started high school, I guess. Because they have middle school and then their high school starts at ninth grade.

And it was like he had all these tests to prepare for and all this stuff that was going on. And they were at home because schools were closed down. And it was just, I remember, they had huge challenges just from trying to get the content and learning. And then at the same time, I want to say, that mental, just that mental fatigue and stress. Yeah. And I remember at the time he said to me, he's like, "I hope we go back to school soon." He's like, "Because I can't keep doing this, Aunt Terry."

Jake Adams:

I think him and everybody else are on the same page with that experience. And I think it was an experience that kind of transcended age. It was like we were all having our own unique struggle that was actually it was unique but it was largely the same. Largely the same, that it was genuinely a period where it was not great. And in terms of paying attention to, I think, that kind of gave me a lot of perspective too as well, and gave that space to reinforce tutoring is this place where we go to learn and stuff, but there's also aspects of life that are more important than the classroom, and you can learn there as well. Which is like, okay, you have these things that you need to get done, they're important, let's work towards doing them into the best of our ability, but also take care of ourselves along the way and really keep things in perspective.

Theresa:

That's so huge. I mean, it's funny because someone said to me, and I didn't even realize it, but the kids that were graduating from high school when we went through COVID were the kids that were born during 9/11. And what these kids were going through. I know the kids that were in school when we went through 9/11, there was a huge traumatic impact because of what was happening in the world when all of that happened. And then the same thing with the kids that were in high school and going through COVID. And just like I said with my nephew, that post traumatic stress that happened or is happening because of what they went through.

So I mean it's, as you said, helping the kids, and it's the same thing with adults, to just be able to understand that there are challenges that happen in our life, in our school, in our work, and whatever. And we have to learn the skills and have those people around us to help us to get through those challenging times.

And speaking of, right now, you're a small business owner. And with everything that's happening, we went through COVID, we went through all the shutdowns, we went through all the businesses closing. And now we're going through the war in Ukraine, and what's happening with inflation and our economy, and people talking about the recession. Do you see any impacts on your business? Or as a business owner, what do you do to handle and manage all these different things that are happening? What is your thoughts on that?

Jake Adams:

Yeah, so this is actually borrowed from one of my mentors. He would always say everything is a dance. So when your partner moves, you need to move with them. And in order for you to enjoy it, you have to coordinate with what's going on. And also being in the moment. Just in the same way that driving a car, right? If you take your eyes off the road or you don't pay attention to what's happening in the moment, you find yourself in a car accident very quickly, and that's a disastrous outcome.

But I think that a lot of that can be avoided by being in the moment, trying to focus on what's in front of us, and just being open to those experiences and seeing what's there, and then doing our best to adapt and look for opportunities. And for me, with what happened with COVID, we turned the whole business that was largely an in-person business into an online business. And thankfully we were able to do that. But we've also adapted to now being completely online. That's opened up for us the opportunity to work across the United States, and now internationally as well.

And so we're taking what was a problem and looking for what opportunities existed within that. Because there's always something outside of, the immediate problem smacked you in the face, but just to the right or to the left, there are opportunities. And being around to look for those opportunities is an important part of being able to survive, I guess.

Theresa:

No, that's so true. And since I've been working with you, I've always known you to be a very optimistic person. I mean, no matter what's gone on, and things that we've worked through in your business, no matter what, you are always very optimistic. And I think that definitely is what has made you such a success. So right now you do one to one private tutoring with students. And you also work with different school districts that are out there as well for district tutoring. Okay. And then I also know that you do test prep and you have other offers that you do as well. So where do you want to take Unified? Where do you want to take Simplifi? What's next?

Jake Adams:

What's next? I think just getting to a point where we're reaching more people with what we're doing, and then going deeper in the work that we're doing, which is to have more that we invest in our tutors in terms of making them more emotionally intelligent in the work that they do and giving them more tools to help students and mentor them into doing more of what I do, but on a broader scale. That's the vision for the future. But then also at the same time, getting more people involved in what we're doing in terms of getting more customers, getting more tutors.

And I think within the work that you're having me do, which is figure out what do I want to be the best in the world at? And I think for myself, it's fulfilling that vision of being somebody who goes around and looks for talented people who have a passion for education and mentorship, and then giving them tools and the collective learning of the group as well as myself, and giving them all of those things to expand their reach and also the platform as well. If we have people from all over the United States or internationally who can work with more tutors that they might not have had access to, that's something that for me is like, yeah, that's awesome, let's do that.

Theresa:

So do you consider yourself a CEO, or do you consider yourself something else as far as the head of your business?

Jake Adams:

I have to go with the CEO title now, and that's something that I have to step into. I mean, I've always thought of myself as more just the owner of the business, like owner operator. But I really can't continue to be in that role because then I don't get to actually work on these bigger plans. Because then just, if I'm in that owner operator role, then I'm always working to do something myself and not leveraging the skills of those people that I'm going around and collecting. If I'm going around and finding awesome people who have talents and skills, I have to be, I guess, humble enough to say they're really good at that thing. Probably 10 times better than me because that's an area where they focus their time. And if we can work together, then we can do more than I could ever do on my own.

Theresa:

I love that. That is such a big lesson that so many small business owners have to learn. And it takes forever for them to learn it. You have to surround yourself with good people. And yeah, I've worked with business owners who think, oh, well that person does it better than me, so I'm just going to control things even more because I can't have somebody do it better than me. And it's like, no, no, no, you want to surround yourself with good people because if they do it better than you, great. That's what you want. But that's so, so, so good that you said that. Because like I said, I think that's one of the hardest lessons to learn when you're taking that next step, going from business owner to CEO, is letting go of control of a lot of that stuff and building that team. So I think that's huge. That's huge.

Jake Adams:

Yeah. And something I read this morning that, it's simple but it's just something that strikes me as, okay, that that's my job. Which is my job is to create jobs. To create jobs that other people can step into and express themselves, express the talents that they have, and work productively towards something that serves other people. And I think that's the other thing that I've always been about as well, is anything that we do, we have to serve other people because that's how you get a business to work. It has to do something that is valuable to other people, otherwise it probably shouldn't be a business.

Theresa:

Yeah. No, most definitely. Most definitely. And I always tell people, if you're in it just to make money, you got to have something deeper. Exactly like what you just said. So this has been awesome. So good. So many gold nuggets that you're sharing. Just so, oh my gosh, so many. And I'm excited for people. If you're watching this, I sure hope you were taking notes because I was taking notes as you were going, as

you were talking. So I want to switch gears a little bit. So I know one of the things that you like to do, because you sent me something, is writing.

Jake Adams:

Yeah.

Theresa:

I know you have some things that you're also working on. In the work that we've done together, you've told me about some of the things that you're building and that you're developing for the tutoring world, but you also are an amazing writer.

Jake Adams:

Thanks.

Theresa:

What is it that you like about, and I was just looking as you're talking, I was like, dang it, I know I have the printout of the thing that you wrote. So what is it about writing that you love so much, or that inspires you?

Jake Adams:

I think everybody has it, which is this creative aspect of themselves, where you take something that wasn't there before and then you've created something. And for me, I guess writing is the easiest way for me to do that. I'm never going to paint anything that anyone wants to own, but I can do that with words. I can create things that are useful to other people or express myself. And so I guess that's the draw for writing. It's also, yeah, it is one of the easiest ways to create something I think. Or I guess that's probably not true for everyone.

Theresa:

It's true for you.

Jake Adams:

It's true for me.

Theresa:

So if you think about it, I mean, you write-

Jake Adams:

It's true for me. For me.

Theresa:

We write every day. And somebody told me that, because I'm writing a book, so they said the more you read, the better writer you'll be. I know you read a lot too. You're the same way. But somebody also said, we write every day, why not write something that matters? And I just thought that was super powerful. And the more you write, the better you get at it too.



Jake Adams:

Yeah, it's definitely a muscle that you have to exercise. And I would say that, from what I sent you, that that's a muscle that I'm still barely getting started on. As far as writing things that I've taught before, that's something that is cool to me because it's like, okay, I'm kind of distilling something that I've spent a really long time refining, and I get to put it in a format that other people can consume on a mass scale.

Theresa:

I love that. So I know we talked a little bit about what was next for Simplifi. What's next for Jake Adams? What's your vision? Where do you want to go?

Jake Adams:

Where do I want to go? I'm not entirely sure. I would like to get to a point where I get to operate the business, but do so more sustainably and do more of the things that I'm interested in, which I tend to be athletics. Really like cycling and I just started learning judo and jujitsu and learning-

Theresa:

Ooh, my world.

Jake Adams:

Yeah, yeah. So do doing those things and doing a little bit more in the way of travel or vacation. But those are the goals that I'm working towards. And something that I like about, I guess athletics, is that it kind of, in the same way that entrepreneurship is putting everything together, with martial arts or cycling, whatever, you have to be in the moment. You have to work on timing, you have to work on getting better incrementally. I think all those things are a different practice for me to practice entrepreneurship.

Theresa:

Learning how to pivot. You know I studied Tae Kwon Do and I studied jujitsu as well. And yeah, learning how to pivot was like, you had your strategy, but if your opponent was coming at you a certain way, you had to be able to pivot very quickly. And that's the same thing with entrepreneurship. You have to be able to pivot and course correct sometimes very quickly. Oh wow. That's cool. I didn't know you were going to study jujitsu. Yeah. Oh my gosh, I did it back-

Jake Adams:

It's fairly recent.

Theresa:

I did it back '95. No, I lie. '97, I started. And I'm only five feet so I'm short. And it was me and this other lady and a friend of mine, and 10 men. Big men. I mean, because you learn falls and throws and all that stuff. And I used to say to my master, I was like, "You really want me to throw this guy?" And he's like, "Yeah." So yeah, I learned very quickly that, even if you're small, you have such an advantage because you can get in and out of stuff very quickly, and knock somebody who's bigger off their feet because they don't have the same center of balance or center of, whatever, gravity. Yeah. That's awesome. Ooh, I'm excited for you.



Jake Adams:

And then I guess one other thing that I've always done in always getting into different new sports is kind of embracing just what everyone else has to teach me and always being a student. And I would say, to your point of other people flipping you, I've been flipped more times than I can count now. And one of the things that surprises me sometimes about myself is I just get back up off the ground and I'm laughing. And I'm like, I just got myself handed to me. But I can laugh about it and go on to learning how to do something better.

Theresa:

Yeah. No, I remember I was practicing my takedowns. And I didn't have a fake weapon, so I had a kitchen knife. And I said to my husband, I said, "Here, take this." And he's like, "What do you want me to do with it?" I go, "Okay, pretend like you're going to stab me, attack me." He's like, "I'm not attacking you. What are you crazy?" I was like, "Come on, I want to throw you." He's like, "Forget this, I'm not doing this." So no, I mean, oh my Lord. In the beginning of our classes, we used to have to, I mean I think we practiced, there were nine different falls, and I think we did each one 100 times one time. And I was like I went home and I had so many bruises it was insane. But no, oh, you're going to have to keep me posted when we meet how it's going. I did not know that, but now I'm super excited.

Jake Adams:

I'll let you know how it goes.

Theresa:

Yeah. All right. Awesome. One more question for you before I let you tell everybody how to find you, what are you most grateful for?

Jake Adams:

I think I'm most grateful for just the help that everyone around me has given me. For my parents, taking the time to give me the opportunities that they did with my education. It was very unique and something that they spent a great deal of time trying to make possible. And then also, I mean, your help, right? You're helping me as part of SCORE Mentor and I've had numerous people who have offered their help on my path. And I guess just really realizing that, as much as it is a struggle and I have to do certain things on my own, there are a lot of people who have invested their time in helping me and supporting me. My wife for example, she's helped me with my business, and has been in there in my corner helping me get through things, and vice versa.

Theresa:

Yeah, she's an entrepreneur too.

Jake Adams:

Yes.

Theresa:

Yes. She has a yoga, right? Is it yoga?

Jake Adams:

Acupuncture.

Theresa:

Acupuncture.

Jake Adams:

She has an acupuncture practice that she has here in Mamaroneck.

Theresa:

Okay. So let's give her a plug. What's the name of her business?

Jake Adams:

Concentric Acupuncture.

Theresa:

And where can they find her?

Jake Adams:

Mamaroneck, New York. If you Google Concentric Acupuncture Mamaroneck, you'll find that she'll come up as an acupuncturist in the local area.

Theresa:

Awesome, awesome. So for everybody that is here and listening, or listening on the replay or just listening to the podcast, how can people find you? Well before I ask you this question, what are three tips, or what is your biggest tip? If somebody's looking for a tutor for their kids or even for themselves, what would be your biggest tip when finding one?

Jake Adams:

I would say look for somebody who is very well qualified in their particular area. Look for somebody who is willing to meet you where you're at, and speaks to you with respect. And makes you just feel that you can ask them anything and they'll walk you through the steps to where you need to go from where you're at. And then also somebody who's dependable. You are looking for somebody who's going to help you along the way. And it's not great if you maybe feel like they're good and then they're gone.

Theresa:

No.

Jake Adams:

Yeah. So yeah, I think those are the three tips that I can think of right now.

Theresa:

Awesome. Awesome. So tell everybody how can they find you on the internet, on social? How can they find you?

Jake Adams:

If you Google Simplifi EDU online tutoring, you'll find us. We're the first result that comes up. That's us. And we're on Simplifi EDU, I think we try to make it very easy. On Facebook at Simplifi EDU. Same thing for Instagram. And then you can find us on LinkedIn too, because I guess we're live on LinkedIn. So yeah, if you search Jake Adams Simplifi EDU, I'll come up.

Theresa:

Awesome. Awesome. Well, so thank you so much for joining us. This was so great. I mean, like I said, so many gold nuggets about education, about business, and just about life. Because people always say, "Well, in my personal life and in my business life," it's all life. And you just have, like I said, such an optimistic view of things and such a great perspective on whether it's challenges or hurdles, or just seeing things differently. And like I said, there's a lot of amazing things on the horizon for Jake and Simplified... I keep calling it Simplified EDU. Simplifi. I'm making up name for it. There's so many amazing things on the horizon. So we're going to have to have you back here so you can fill us in as stuff starts to unfold. But thank you again. I'm so grateful that I got to connect with you and I love working with you. And anytime we chat, we laugh, and laugh at ourselves, and talk about so many cool things. And I'm just super excited for what's ahead. So thank you so much for joining us here and for being on the show.

Jake Adams:

Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure. And thank you again for all of your help in helping me with my business.

Theresa:

Awesome. Hey, I'm just the guide. You're doing all the work. You're doing all the hard work. All right, well thank you very much. Just hang here, Jake, but I'm going to tell all of our listeners, I hope you have a wonderful rest of your day and your week, and let's all try and take care of each other a little bit more than we already do. All right, I will see you all next week.