

One Knight in Product - E137 - Chris Mason

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight



Jason Knight 00:00

Hello and welcome to the show. This is the second of a two part series about how to get a job in product. My last episode, I spoke to a career coach about how to get your resume in order. But what happens after that? Tonight, we're gonna find out. But before we do that, make sure you pop over to one night in product.com, where you can find fantastic episodes with fantastic guests, sign up to the mailing list, subscribe on your favourite podcast app, and most importantly, make sure you never ever miss another episode again. So yes, on tonight's episode, we'll be talking to a recruiter about all things recruitment. How's the job market these days? What are some of the things to think about when going for that next product leadership job, but when you're hiring for it, and how can we make sure that companies hire diverse teams. If you want to find out whether the gender pay gap is getting better or worse? Stay tuned to. So my guest tonight is Chris Mason. Chris is a Liverpool Football Club fan avid mountaineer and former typist for Weetabix. He has now moved away from inky ribbons and Tippetts into the high altitude world of executive recruitment. When he left uni, Chris worked on ocean liner, but he's now charting a course with candidate pipeline and aiming to place VPs and C level executives at the captain's table across scale ups and blue chips, including some of our very own VPs of product and long rumoured to exist, but infrequently spotted in the wild Chief Product officers. Let's hope they've got their sea legs. Hi, Chris, how are you tonight?



01:29

Very, very good. I had no idea you were going to say all of that I'd actually forgotten that we had all of that on our website. But all of its true all of Institute.



Jason Knight 01:38

I like to make sure that everyone has the the full view of everything about you and see beyond the recruitment consultant. So first things first, you're the co founder of intelligent people. We talked about that a little bit in the intro, but specifically, what problem does intelligent people solve for me? And I guess also, importantly, how are you solving it?



01:58

So if you're hiring or looking for a product team, or a product leader, we specialised in that space for more than 20 years. So not a lot of recruiters really understand that space, we've got a huge network a strong brand, very strong footprint. And that means that we can, we can solve recruitment problems very quickly. So we can search for engage and deliver very quickly. So for contingency recruitment, usually we we know people straightaway. And we can deliver certain search projects within four to five weeks, which is very, very rapid for a research project.



Jason Knight 02:33

Yeah, that sounds really good. But I guess one question that comes off the back of that, and certainly some of the people that I've dealt with in the past when I've looked for jobs, is sometimes you get like the almost like the dumb pipe recruitment agent who just kind of just passes you through to people. And then you get almost like your full service. Almost there, the hiring manager themselves trying to do all of the work and actually really consultatively Go and take their clients on a journey. Are you more in the latter camp? Yeah,



03:00

I definitely say that. And the reason we're like that is because we get better outcomes. And, you know, that means that we win as a business and our clients win, and our candidates win. So we fix a lot of problems on the way. So right from the outset, we're helping to understand how big the candidate pool is, we're giving advice around that around the brief around the process around the price point and try and work with our clients to make sure that everything's realistic and achievable and deliverable. So, yeah, very much. So.



Jason Knight 03:31

Excellent. Well, hopefully some people feel inspired to come your direction, but I noticed you're concentrating on leadership roles. So the aforementioned VP of product, CEOs, directors of product, not much love for the individual contributor cohort there, though. So is there a specific reason that you've kind of stuck to the top end and the executive end of the market? Is there more for you to do there? Or have you had bad experiences with individual contributors in the past or some other reason?



03:57

Yeah, so we do help with experienced hires as well. So we grew up as a contingency recruitment business. And, you know, we do help with experienced hires, but we're increasingly focused on executive and leadership. Often, it's a really big pain point for our customers. So usually, they're looking for a very specific impact from a leadership hire. It might be that they're looking for certain type of experience, or they're going through a scaling journey, or

there's a problem that they need someone to come in and fix. And because it's the top of the triangle, it's a smaller candidate pool, the way that you approach and engage candidates like that, turn their heads, get them excited about the opportunity is, you know, has to be done in the right way. Otherwise, things could go wrong. And actually, you don't solve the problem.



Jason Knight 04:44

But that's interesting when you're talking about turning heads though. So as a lot of what you do then headhunting or have you also got, like a book of people that you kind of just call on whenever there's good opportunities that you think match, like, do you do both of those things?



04:56

Well, both but even with our network, I'd argue that we're still had Hunting, because we might know people, and they may actually be happy, happily engaged in something. But our role is to go in and position an opportunity and get them excited about it so that we can, we can get them in play. And we can we can start to talk to them and, you know, assess them and make sure that there's a match your skills match in a kind of a desire match from the candidate side as well. Excellent.



Jason Knight 05:22

But I know my boss listens to this podcast from time to time. So I'm going to choose my words very carefully here. But how is the product leadership job market out there right now? I mean, are there lots of jobs go in?



05:34

So the last 12 months has been incredible. You know, it's been the busiest market I can ever remember in my entire recruitment career since I left the ship. But right now, the last two, three weeks, it's it's probably the strangest period ever. And we're obviously going to go into a recession, there's a cost of living crisis. There's lots of macro economic problems, there's a war and some fuel poverty coming. And that's bound to have an effect. And we've started to see some of that with tech firms laying people off. But there's still a lot going on. And there's a lot of action there. I think right now, we've got the biggest holiday season for years. So Oh, yes, yeah. So if you think if you think about 2020, no one went on holiday 2021, we had a lock down in q1 in the UK, many other parts of the world were locked down, some people ventured abroad. But this year is the time when everyone, this is pent up kind of frustration. And people are desperate to get on a plane. And it's happening right now. And we've seen it across the board. So all of the campaigns that we've got ongoing, you know, they're all being impacted by it, because people are away. So it's a very strange time right now. But we know that there's huge demand there, and our clients talking about what they're going to be doing in 234 weeks time when everyone's back in place. So it's still good. It's still it's a good market, I would say,



Jason Knight 06:57



Jason Knight 00:17

Oh, excellent. Well, that's hopefully inspiring, because some people out there when they get back off the beach, but you've personally been in the game for around 20 years now, like you say, and I know that you don't just concentrate on product roles, but it's obviously a big part of what you do. I think it's fair to say that product management has changed a lot over that 20 years. I mean, I'd say 20 years ago, books like inspired with barely a twinkle in Marty Kagan's eye level and all the other great thinking that's come out ever since then, and the way that product management as a practice has evolved. So how have some of those changes manifest themselves for you? And your company from a recruitment perspective? Like, has it changed things a lot? Or are there some kind of universal truths that have remained the same throughout?



07:38

Yes, there have been huge changes. I mean, right. From the very early days, we, when we first started to come across our first product manager roles, they were probably people that were repurposed and maybe reported into someone in it, or possibly someone in marketing. Yeah. So I think the big change, and it's been a gradual change through the years. And, you know, it's been supported by incredible podcasters. And no, I've heard of those, you know, like the product movements like mine the product with their product tank meetups, and jam, London and women in product, there are lots of them. Now, I think the big change is that the profile of product management and the impact it's making, and that that's affected the kind of the triangle of leadership. So, you know, there are increasingly more and more senior product managers and product leaders. And if you will, so it's created this kind of new, new senior category, that's been a gradual thing of product leadership, and organisations now, you know, they described themselves as product lead, where product thinking should be front and centre, where they're questioning what they're doing, and what's the purpose of what they're doing, and what customer problems are they solving and how are they developing business cases? And organisations didn't think like that 20 or 30 years ago, you know, it's often it driven and yeah, very, very different. So that's one of the main changes and the elevation of product as a discipline. And increasingly, it's becoming a strategic leadership role, with a team delivering beneath it. So I think that's one of the main changes that we've seen.



Jason Knight 09:12

That product lead thing is really interesting, though, because you don't have to go too far on the social media sites, Twitter, specifically to see lots of people complaining about how not product that they are, and how much of the old thinking is still there and how they're struggling to make an impact. Is that something? I mean, I guess you're working with the companies ideally that do something that in a way that you believe, enables the candidates that you send across to make an impact, but I'm assuming are people coming into you like on the inbound pipeline that maybe are working for some of those companies? Is that true? Like are there loads of people coming in looking to you to basically get them a better life and an actual company that's doing things quote unquote, properly? Or is it a real mix?



09:56

Yeah, it is a mix and there you know, there are lots of drivers for people looking for new

opportunities. But if we look at it the other way round, sometimes we have organisations that they say they're looking to go through a transformation, they want to become more product lead, they're looking for a product leader, and that product managers reporting into, say, a chief technology officer, and candidates hate that. Oh, yeah, it's really difficult. So, products should be a standalone function, driving the agenda with technology as a partner and a stakeholder. Yep, plugged into the CEO and the commercial leadership above them, and ideally, a part of that group. So yeah, it's really interesting. I mean, if you look at what's a West Coast, US companies, often you see product, you know, a chief product officer is one of the very, very senior leadership, when they say a lot of change happens there first, and then it kind of ripples across the globe. And increasingly, we're seeing that across Europe and across Asia and other parts of the world. So yeah, products definitely being elevated, and product, culture and product thinking is becoming more prevalent, I would say,



Jason Knight 10:58

also of size, would you say that a company that's maybe trying to get that first VP or CPO role into the business? Like, what kind of size is that in your experience? I mean, we talked about how you're looking at scale ups and blue chips. So that really rolls out maybe early startups, is that fair, that you're working with the scale ups, as they've kind of got past that first tricky phase, they've maybe found product market fit. And that's the point that you get these senior hires in?



11:24

Yeah, so there's usually I'd say, a couple of drivers. Because if you think about it, the founders of business are usually the, you know, they're the product leaders, aren't they from the ground up. So they're the ones that build out the product and test it and have all those early learning experiences, and try and figure out the product market fit. So there's usually two drivers. The first is the founders are just being pulled in different directions. And they recognise that they can't do a good job. And they need a, you know, a product leader to come in and really take over the reins. And that presents different problems. Because we were in that situation, we're talking to the founder of Business, we're always saying, you really ready to handle, you know, the reins, you know, so. So that's, that's the first thing that often organisations when they go into a funding round, that they're kind of told by investors investors, it's conditional that they, they appoint a product leader, because maybe they recognise that the CEO is going to be pulled in different directions. Or maybe that's not their core strength they might be there might be strong in other areas, and, you know, a product leader would come in and to be frank to do a better and more effective job at the phase of growth that they're going into. And so that means different things for different organisations. It depends how, you know, how much traction they're getting, how much revenue they're getting, how much funding they're getting. So it's not necessarily linked to headcount. But But yeah, it's usually one of those two reasons, you know, the founder, recognising or being told that he needs to, he needs some help.



Jason Knight 12:47

But we said early on that from a product perspective, you're concentrating on that top end. And these days, obviously, that includes people like scipios, maybe even see BTOS, depending on the organisation. But if we consider that top position, then historically, product teams have

often found themselves kind of underrepresented at that top table. And when they get there, they don't always seem to have the relevant chops to make a good impact. Now, you kind of touched on it a little bit about how that's somewhat changing, and how there's maybe more than appetite for that senior level role. But do you feel that there's a good pipeline of, shall we call it product practitioners making it into that role? Or do you feel that it's, as you see, in many companies still this almost non product, but pretty good strategy, person, industry expert type that's coming in to lead it from the executive level?



13:40

Yeah, so we definitely see some of that, and, you know, strategy, people maybe coming into product management is usually not their first role. So usually, they come in and get some experience, they get some domain experience and develop their product skills before, you know, moving on upwards. But if you get to the point where there is a, you know, fairly sizable organisation, and there's a very, very, you know, senior product leader, usually, they're arguing for massive and scary levels of investment, you know, so. So they're trying to take commercial stakeholders and investors and internal execs on a journey where there's behind a business case that they've developed. And sometimes the stakes are really, really high. So it's a very important and big role. And that type of role, you could argue is a little bit different to a product leader who's leading a team who's building stuff. So we see two profiles, we see people that come up through the ranks and you know, they've got this ability and affinity to do that more strategic influencing business case, high stakes, kind of product leadership. I think that's why sometimes we see people coming from strategy backgrounds in into product and if you look at them and think how did you get there, you know, you haven't built up your trade and but yeah, you could think of them as, as kind of different roles because it's more strategic and stakeholders and we're showing people that this huge investment is the right thing to do. And then you've got product because product people, I think they just love building stuff. They like doing stuff that's impactful and taking it to market and seeing the impact and the effect of it. And did it work? You know? And do we need to improve enhancing kill or test or whatever? So, yeah, there's perhaps different types of profile.



Jason Knight 15:20

Yep. So we should all care a little bit less about what we're building and a lot more about our stakeholders is the long the short of it there.



15:27

If you want to get into that role, which you might not enjoy, you know, I'm sure it's not for everyone.



Jason Knight 15:31

Well, that's the thing, like if you spend so long wanting to get into the room, and you get in the room, and you realise that you didn't really want to be in that room in the first place. So it's all about picking where it is you want to play?



15:41

It is and that's really difficult, because that takes massive self awareness. Yep. Because often people are just hugely driven. And they think that's the next step for me, what's my progression? What's my progression, as opposed to pausing and thinking, actually, what do I enjoy? You know, what do I love, and it's really challenging to recognise when you kind of need to stop. You know, they often say that people get promoted to their point of maximum incompetence, and a pizza principal. Yeah. And, and that's really difficult. Because you should be happy at work, and you should do what you love and recognising when you're at that point, you know, it's a good thing. It's not a bad thing, that you're not continuing to move up.



Jason Knight 16:17

But I think it's fair to say that product management job titles are more or less a car crash, or they certainly they can be I mean, one person CPO is another person's VP is another person's Director of Product is another person's head of product, isn't everyone's Chief Product Owner, or whatever you get to see out there and the job specs these days. But based on what you see, and the types of roles that you look at, and the types of positions that you hire for, is there any actual rhyme or reason to this? Or the people? In your opinion, just pick whatever job title sounds best, or that they feel that they could pay the minimum amount that they want for that role?



16:53

Yeah, I'd say a bit of both. So some organisations that try and yeah, sorry, I'm trying to trying to be politically deliberate,



Jason Knight 17:00

you sound like a product manager yourself, there will be it depends as Bukal.



17:03

I've been in the environment too long. You know, large organisations, they have to have a grading system, probably because they have to show progression and reward people for success and so on. And there's got to be a label attached to that, probably, for some organisation. So you just look at a job title and think what you know. So what we try and do is just boil it down to what do you need them to do? What's the scope of the role, what impact you're looking for? You know, another good question is how big is the team because that dictates the level of person and the type of person. So if it's a product leader with a team of four, they're still really close to the detail, and they're getting their hands dirty. If it's someone with a product team of 20 or 30, then that's getting into a different type of profile, and more strategic and more influencing and stakeholder management sort of thing that some people would love. But other product, people would just hate that. Yeah, we're just amazed with job

titles. Sometimes. If you look at the big Fang companies, the guys there, they just tend to say, Hey, I'm product at Facebook. Yeah, they don't tend to, you know, we've done a lot of work with those types of organisations over the years. And a senior product manager is like a director somewhere else. Yeah. So yeah, there's no sense there. Isn't this industry standard? Definitely not.



Jason Knight 18:15

Yeah, I think it was stripe where basically, every single level is just call Product Manager, which I think is definitely an interesting one. Because on the other hand, you have people may be traditionally thinking people, but you still do have people that kind of want to see some kind of job progression and some career ladder that they can move up. Right. And I guess, whilst they're a great to know, money, and there's responsibility, you've still got this kind of, almost, maybe it's like a show title in a way, like, yeah, it's something that can show what you are, but it's still important to some people. And I guess that's really my next question. Because some people will say that job titles don't matter. And that it's all about what you do, and the level of impact that you have, and all that good stuff for now. I would love for that to be true. But I've personally been in interview processes before, where titles seemed very much to matter. Like they'd be interviewing you for a particular role. And they'd say, Oh, well, you've not had that role before, or something along those lines. And that's me, a middle aged white guy that's never been discriminated against in my life. Because it's that's not possible. Yeah. Let alone what it must be like for someone from an underrepresented minority that's trying to get ahead and prove themselves in an already hostile job market. Yeah. So from your perspective, do you think the job titles do matter? And I guess I'm specifically thinking about when you're job hunting for that next role?



19:32

Yeah. So again, you know, there are two sides to this coin. So yeah. So some people are less bothered, like you say, they're focusing on the scope of what they're doing, what the challenge is, what's on the roadmap, what impact are they going to make other people that progression really matters to them? And if they feel that outwardly, maybe on LinkedIn, they're taking a more junior job title that bothers them. And I'm not going to say there's a right or wrong decision. challenge that we often have. And some organisations have strict titles and some less a bit more flex, and we can shape them to mould around the candidate a little bit. But I guess, talking about, it's interesting with salary, you know, you're talking about job title and salary. And we're seeing this more now with women. And it's been in the press a lot about how women maybe shouldn't reveal the package that they earned previously, because you're potentially perpetuating historical, gender based salary discrimination. And we ask the question, but we don't, we definitely don't push for that. And we really try and focus on actually, what are we looking for in this role? What experience do we need? Does this candidate have it? And then we will urge our clients to interview candidates alongside other people without that data point, if we think the candidate is right. And the thinking is, if the candidate can do the role, they should be paid a fair salary, we shouldn't think about what they've had before.



Jason Knight 20:55

No, absolutely. Although that's an interesting point there. Because, of course, I completely

understand and agree that, of course, if a woman has been paid 10%, less, or whatever the percentage is, these days, I'm sure it's not pretty whatever it is, but if they're being paid less, and then they're saying what they're paid, then maybe certain types of employer may well be tempted to just continue to pay them less. And I guess the question there is, from your perspective, is there any moral obligation for you to for example, if someone does tell you that they're earning X, and you know that the role is going up to why to basically, for one of a better word lie and say, hey, they're actually being paid somewhere between x and y, or even all the way up to y? Like, how much would you feel comfortable? Effectively misrepresenting someone's salary to get them a fair deal at their new place?



21:47

Yeah, so we'd never do that. So we all we always say that's the official line, right? No notice is genuine. So I always say people should live clean, because, you know, you might end up getting a job with a regulated business that does forensic background checks. So always live clean. Yeah, but I do think it's okay to say, I don't want to reveal that information. I'd like you to look at my experience and interview me and assess me against competencies. And if you think I'm the best candidate, you should offer me the salary for the role. And it's difficult for us, you know, we say, recruitment companies, on the one hand, they get panned, because employers always think we're talking about salaries, because marginally we make a bit more commission. But I would say genuinely, we're not bothered about that, it's more important for us to solve the problem and place the person and from our perspective and the fee. So we try and bring the sides together. But it's difficult when we see that someone has been underpaid. And if they do reveal salary information, and we supply it to client, because we're asked to the clients trying to squeeze them saying, Oh, that candidates a bit cheaper. Yeah. And that's not how it should be. So yeah, it's definitely I think this is changing. The ground here is changing quite quickly. And I think it's a really good thing. And I think we'll see more and more women refusing to reveal their salary. And maybe that's a good thing, maybe we should just look at people's experience and just think, what's competitive? And if a candidate doesn't want to accept a job at a certain level, then they'll look elsewhere.



Jason Knight 23:19

But will you share, for example, the range up front as a matter of course, with these people? Or is that something that varies a lot between companies as well? So for example, if a woman's coming in at 20%, lower or whatever the again, very unpretty percentages, would you advise them off the bat? About what that range should be? Or what they should be going forward? Do you very much leave that up to them?



23:42

Yeah, we did. So we do leave that up to them. So we never we never try and talk people up with their expectations. But we listen to them and ask what they're looking for. And then we introduce them on that basis, if we think that they're a good match, and they're at the right, price point. Fair enough.



Jason Knight 23:56

But I guess one question, though, off the back of that, obviously, you've got a lot of inputs, both from the hiring side, and from the candidate side. So you know, at least when the information is revealed, what the pay of the different candidates that come into the company, you know, what they're currently on. And you also, of course, know what the roles that you're matching people up with what they're paying, I'm going to hopefully not naively assume that the roles that you're hiring for aren't, for example, advertising, different pay rates for different people. But I'm sure you've got lots of data points from the candidates that you do get that information for, to give you a really good strong sense about how the gender pay gap specifically is going like, as far as you're concerned, you say it's changing. Is it getting better at all? Or is it so variable or so random that you can't even really make a decent judgement or was it even getting worse?



24:50

No, I think it's getting better. I don't think we're there yet. And I think we're getting better because organisations have a, you know, an increasing flow. focus on DNI and there are DNI requirements that come from the top down. So it's driven by, you know, for listed business, it's a requirement. And increasingly private businesses that take on investment. When they pitch to investors, they have to have a slide on DNI. And for medium and larger organisations, it's really challenging for them, if they have people who are doing like for like work, and there's a big pay disparity. And you look at that person, and it's, they're from a minority group. So that's something I think is changing. I think with smaller organisations, that's maybe less transparency. And but I think it definitely is changing and it is improving. Although I wouldn't say we're there yet. Because we still see, we talk to candidates and they reveal their salary. And they're like, really? Wow. Yeah, we need to we need to help you.



Jason Knight 25:44

Yeah. Well, hopefully in a few years time, we'll be a little bit better. I mean, if any idea, gut feel how many years until we've substantially better or is it again, really difficult to same?



25:55

Question? It's a good question. I don't know. I don't know. I think that, personally, I think that the law needs to change around things like maternity paternity leaves, I think we need to find a better balance there. Because I think that that creates a challenge, where one parent takes time out of work for a period of time, and they're their career is kind of effectively paused. And I think we I think it's a cultural change as well, I think it should be more acceptable that after a period of time that you know, the Father, if it's, you know, shares in the parental leave in a bigger way. But that's part cultural, it needs to there needs to be legislation. And I think that will help gender pay disparity as well. No, absolutely.



Jason Knight 26:36

The struggle continues. But we can't talk about job specs without considering some of the

general unconscious bias, aside from pay, the general unconscious bias there can slip in. Now, there are obviously loads of wild claims out there about AI and applicant tracking systems. And I saw something today about facial scanning that happens in interviews to make sure that you're engaged enough and all of that stuff and scary. Well, yeah, but I'm sure some of that does exist. But also humans have proved through time immemorial, that they don't need technology to discriminate against people that is perfectly possible to discriminate against candidates without any AI at all. I guess the question from that is, from your perspective, what are some of the approaches that people and by people, I mean, hiring managers, the companies themselves? Like, what can they do to make sure that they're actually developing a good diverse, inclusive talent pipeline, and not just getting the same old possession of old faces that they would have always got back in the day?



27:35

It's a really good question, I think there's two things I'd say the first is, you've got to know what you're looking for, and what you're measuring in your candidates. So that starts with reflecting on what you need the person to do and what impact you're looking for. And then you have to draw up a list of competencies. So competencies that relate to experience or skills that you're looking for in the person. And then you have to grade against that. So you have to use data. So that's the way of getting more to, to a more scientific way. And you know, it's not perfect, but it's more scientific than using gut feel, and having a chat seeing if you like someone. The other thing I'd say is, there's a movement now towards hiring for not fit, you know, it's been written about quite a lot. And if you think about historically, organisations would say, We want someone who's a good culture fit. And that can be really bad. I mean, that what does that even mean? Yeah, does that mean, we want people that are like us? So if you've got a room full of, you know, middle aged white men, does that person have to fit in with you? So I think recognising that from the start, is really, really important. And I think, you know, there is data, I'm trying to dig into this so I can get something more concrete. But I think there's data starting to emerge that diverse product teams get better commercial impacts. And the theory is you've got a more diverse group, you've got a bigger spectrum of ideas. By its very nature, you should have more conflict, which is something you know, it's a challenge for a product leader, because you have to encourage people to listen as well as talk and recognise that sometimes they won't always have the best idea and manage that conflict. But you'll be more creative if you've got people with different backgrounds with different perspectives.



Jason Knight 29:22

Yeah, absolutely. And there's kind of the two arguments there, which have come up on this podcast before there's the one that it's the business right thing to do. Because again, as you say, you get better outcomes, and you probably make more money and can serve more people and scale the business and all that good stuff. But it's also just the morally right thing to do as well, which I think is something that's really important. But do you feel then based on the candidate pipeline that you see the people you're talking to the candidates you're placing that the general mix of the types of people that are getting into these companies is becoming more diverse? I mean, I guess you can only speak for the countries that you serve, but But even within those countries, or even if it's just this country, how is that going? Is it? Is it on the app? Or is it still? Is there still lots of work to do there as well?



30:09

Yeah, I would say it's definitely on the up. And, you know, one good indication is that we're told by clients often that they have a diversity challenge with underrepresented groups. And that's great. You know, it's great to hear that now. You know, we always try and shortlist the best people, of course, but the good thing is product is it is more diverse than, say, tech. So, you know, you have some really great, strong women, product leaders and product managers, and people from different underrepresented groups as well. So I think it is improving. And we're certainly asked about it a lot. We're asked to present diverse shortlist. So, you know, we actually sponsor and support women in products and try and think about our channel to marketplace, when we're trying to engage candidates and how we can make sure that we're engaging every group across the spectrum to try and be diverse in the work that we do as well.



Jason Knight 31:01

Excellent. And as we say, the struggle continues. Right. So to wrap up, then I'd like to get some advice, two pieces of advice from you, actually, and I'm sure some of the stuff we've talked about already could be construed as advice. But let's get specific on two pieces of advice from you. The first piece of advice is some advice that you'd give to a hiring manager, company, Founder and Executive within a scale up this considering their next big product higher. The stakes are pretty high, as you touched on earlier. And of course, it's difficult to be generic. But what's one key principle or one piece of advice that you think that person should hear from you?



31:40

Oh, that's really mean. So if you're gonna make me pick one, yes, I would say



Jason Knight 31:44

so about prioritisation, you said you're a product manager. That's what I'm saying. Okay,



31:48

so the one piece of advice I'd give, and it's because I think that it's something that organisations struggle with is understand your candidate sentiment. So whoever it is, that's doing that, whether it's a recruitment partner, or an internal talent person, or someone within the product team, stay close to your candidates and understand this sentiment, because if a candidate for whatever reason, is leaning in a different direction, because there's something else that appeals to them elsewhere, or they feel they've got a better opportunity, you've got a problem. And we see time and time again. So it's something that we obsess about, when we see time and time again, that a candidate might be incredible, they might be really relevant, the client loves them after a first interview, say, and the candidate just has other things they prefer. Now, in our experience, that candidate will not accept, you know, an offer, but the client

tends to fast track them and park anyone else that's in process, get to the final stage. And that's when they waste a huge amount of time. So be realistic and understand your candidate sentiment is the thing that I would the one piece of advice, I'd say, if you maybe pick one.



Jason Knight 32:54

Well, that's, that's good advice on that angle. But then from the other flip side, I want one piece of advice that you would give a candidate, so maybe someone who's trying to get that CPO role or just get that next good looking Senior Product role. And again, difficult to be generic. And again, you do have to choose one, one piece of advice for that person to help them make a splash when they're trying to get that next senior role.



33:19

So I would say this is the thing that's going to get you started in the process, which is LinkedIn. Classic. Yeah, I would say make sure that you're continually updating and engaging on LinkedIn, whether you're looking for a job or not. In fact, you should do it all the time. Because if you do it when you're looking for a job, it's a massive red flag, you know, so whenever you do a new project, whenever you, you know, you change roles or do something else, make sure you're updating LinkedIn, make sure it's rich in content, because your network and people who are targeting you, as a candidate will be able to find you more easily and see the things that you've done and what you're interested in. If you're quite sparse in the data that's on your LinkedIn profile, it's very difficult to understand what you've done. And you'll either be targeted with stuff that isn't relevant, which will annoy you, or you just won't be contacted at all. So make sure the data is right, make sure the data is rich. And I'm coming to the one piece of advice. Now,



Jason Knight 34:14

you're trying to slip more than one and I know you're doing it's make



34:17

sure your LinkedIn profile sets whether you're open to opportunities or not. So when the time is right, your LinkedIn profile is up to date, switch that to open to opportunities. And then that should get you organic opportunities from your network from ex colleagues. And then from organisations that are targeting you as well. Get that pipeline flowing. Definitely. But we on both of those points. You've been very mean making me pick one for each. We've got lots of advice on our website. So in various areas, so have a look at



Jason Knight 34:45

well, that's gonna be my next question. In fact, so you've talked about your website. So including your website, where can people find you after this if they want to chat about recruitment, get some of that advice, talk about their next move, or maybe even try and find

out if they can beat your typing speed. Ah,



35:01

yeah, they'll definitely be able to do that. I got kicked out. So website is intelligent people dot code at UK you can see our latest opportunities there. We've got lots of candidates and hiring advice. We've got information on interims interim rates i are 35. And what that means, or you can connect to me on LinkedIn, I really love connecting and talking to people. So just drop me a note and reach out. My email is Chris Mason at intelligent people. Dakota, UK.



Jason Knight 35:27

There you go. Hopefully, competing recruitment agencies won't start signing you up loads of mailing lists.



35:33

I wish you hadn't said that.



Jason Knight 35:36

Well, I will link that will link in the show notes. And hopefully you get a long line of people queuing up to find out more and keep that pipeline as flowing as it needs to be. Well, that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously, really glad we could find a time to hopefully inspire a few people to think about hiring or going for jobs slightly better. Hopefully, we can stay in touch but yeah, as for now. Thanks for taking the time.



35:59

Thank you, Jason. Great to talk to you.



Jason Knight 36:03

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to one night in product.com Check out some of my other fantastic guests. Sign up to debate missed or subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so if you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good night.