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Greetings and hello. Thank you for tuning into the 57th episode of the Banking on Digital Growth podcast, where I, James Robert Lay, your digital anthropologists, continue to coach and guide you along your digital growth journey so that you maximize your digital growth potential. Today's episode is part of the Inside Digital Growth series, and I'll be answering a question from Mark, who is the CEO for a community financial brand in the south. Mark writes, "I felt like we were just struggling to survive in 2020, and we didn't make any real progress towards the plans and goals we had to start the year because of COVID. Where do you think we should focus our digital growth efforts and energy now that we're moving forward into 2021?" Well, that is a great question, Mark, and one that will help all of us to continue to move forward and make progress along our digital growth journeys in this new year.

In fact, this is a question I think we should take time to stop, pause, review and reflect on more, because it is so easy to get stuck doing digital, to fall into the trap and into the cave of complacency, to get lowed into a false sense of security only to have an external force like COVID come in and wake us all up. When I think about all the opportunities available for financial brands in this new year, I have framed my thinking around three key areas of focus that I'm calling the Three Rs for Digital Growth in 2021. And no, you can relax. This is not about reading, writing, or arithmetic, and it's not about reducing, reusing and recycling, although all three of those would for sure help make this world an even better place for us all. No, the three Rs that I've been thinking about for financial brands to maximize their digital growth potential in 2021 are refresh, renew and refocus.

And what I'd like to do is break down each one of these to share, number one, why they're important, number two, what you can do with each one of these elements, and then number three, how you can apply these elements at your own financial brand with some pretty practical actions. And so, when we think about what we should do next, where should we start? What I'd like to first focus on is the need for many of us to just simply refresh in this new year. And this idea of refreshing will be such a strategic important element for digital growth in 2021, and really beyond, as many of us are already starting the year tired coming out of 2020. It's like 2020 has just been one long blur of days blending together. And much of this has been because there's really not been much separation between our personal life, our family life, our kids' school life, our work life. Time just blends together.

And this has been an interesting area of study as a digital anthropologists. In fact, the word blursday, which captures the way days, weeks, and even months blend together, blur together, blursday made Oxford languages, who's the publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary. Blursday made Oxford's 2020 words of the year. In an article from wired.com titled, There Are No Hours or Days in Corona Time, makes the case that COVID has really created its own clock as time has become a stand in for everything that we cannot control. Time is both the bottleneck, not the bottleneck, time is the breakneck of speed at which everything is changing. And time is also the burden of how much things are perceiving to stay the same in this post COVID world. So why do I bring up the need to refresh as the element for digital growth in 2021?

Yes, I get it, blursday posts on Facebook or Insta, they might be funny to scroll through. But in all seriousness, blursday is a very dangerous place for many people to be for an extended period of time, especially if they are struggling financially, emotionally, mentally, as so many are right now in this post


COVID world. Blursday, even without the threat of a highly contagious virus, along with the compounded stress from financial stress, or emotional stress, mental stress, blursday can cause all of us to feel anxious, to feel depressed, to feel hopeless about the future. And remember, people are looking for two things from your financial brand. They're looking for help and they're looking for hope. And hope, specifically hope that things will get better for them must come long before they are ready to receive help from you.

Looking internally, blursday is a killer for any future growth potential for financial brands for teams, as well as for the account holders, because when you're stuck in a repeated cycle of blursdays, you're unable to see beyond the threats of the present moment, beyond the stress, beyond the chaos, beyond the crisis. And it is my hope for you that you're not stuck in blursday to start 2021. But what about others around you, others on your team? What about the account holders at your financial brand, how are they doing right now? How are they feeling? Could they use a refresh to maximize their own personal growth potential in 2021? The good news is that you can help both yourself and others around you escape the deadly grip of blursdays by creating space and time to just simply refresh. This is about intentionality. This is about habits. This is about the structure.

In fact, according to Abraham Maslow, healthy structure, something that many of us lost in 2021. I know I did for sure with four kids being at home, not traveling, things that they were my normal routine. My structure went out the window. But according to Abraham Maslow, healthy structure breeds security, and a sense of security is necessary, not only for our survival in the present moment, but also for our future growth. And the easiest way for you to get started or to help others get started to create that structure, to create that space and time needed to refresh your mind, to escape the dangers of doing digital, or just simply doing life for that matter, to come out of the cave of complacency with courage, I'm going to give you a simple exercise, an easy exercise that you can commit to do every single day in just five minutes or less. And all you need is just pen and paper.

This is, in fact, a transformative exercise that I have those in our Digital Growth Program do for themselves, as well as for their team, to help them escape the doing of digital as this exercise create space and time for them to review, for them to learn, for them to think about everything that has been going well for them. So what I want you to do is to save this podcast episode so you can refer back to it, or email it to yourself, email it to your team so that you can commit to do this exercise, not only as individuals, but also together. Make it part of your daily routine personally, as well as your weekly routine and quarterly routine as a team. So grab a sheet of paper, and what I want you to do is write down the letters W-E-L-L.

Write those four letters W-E-L-L vertically down the left side of the page. And to help frame your thinking for this exercise, ask yourself this one question every day you wake up in the morning and every night before you go to sleep, what's going well? Just that one question, what's going well? You see, well, W-E-L-L, that is an acronym for winning, exciting, learning and looking. And each one of these points is an important question to ask yourself that can be framed around a specific time, a day, a week, a month, a quarter. So for example, if you were to ask yourself this question in the morning, what's going well? Write your answers next to the W for winning to the question, what are the biggest wins you experienced yesterday? Then next to the E, exciting, write your answer to the question, what are the most exciting things that you are working on right now that have you energized and they are building your confidence?



Moving onto the first L, learning, write your answer to the question, what are the biggest lessons you learned yesterday and how can you apply those lessons to make today even better? And finally, on to the last L, looking, write the answer to the question, what are the biggest roadblocks that you need to eliminate? What are the opportunities that you can capture as you look ahead to the next 90 days? And you see, that's going to be a growing list that you can come back and reflect on every single quarter. Ask yourself these four simple questions framed around the larger question of what's going well every single day in the morning or in the evening, and you will create a structure to refresh your mind in 2020 and escape blursday, or prevent you from getting into blursday.


And you can teach your team to do the same, because at the team level, this is an exercise that you can deploy in your weekly stand-ups by simply focusing on one of the letters each week over the course of a month. For example, in week one you focus on your winnings, in week two you focus on what's exciting, in week three you focus on what you've been learning, and then week four you focus on what you're looking ahead to. And as you do this, this one simple exercise ensures that you measure progress, not perfection, as you move forward week after week, month after month and year after year along your digital growth journey. This simple exercise, thinking and writing about what's going well, builds structure into our day to escape the blur of life. And as a result, feel just a little bit more secure about where we've been, where we are and where we're going next on our own journeys, by focusing on what is good in life.

And this is important, because the brain can focus really only on one thing at a time, one thought, one emotion. It can either focus on the positive or it can focus on the negative. And as we know in this post COVID world, we have been bombarded with negative, after negative, after negative, particularly if we've been watching the news. And when you're stuck in a never ending cycle of blursdays, lost on the sea of COVID chaos and confusion, blursday is not a very safe place for us humans to stay for a long time. And since we have no control over COVID, and thankfully we have a vaccine that's coming out and being administered, but we still have no control over that, over the lockdowns at work, for our kids' schools, we must take hold of what we can. We must protect and guard our minds.

That's what we can control to gain peace of mind and a sense of security, because security is necessary for both, not only survival, but also our future growth, and really even more so during uncertain and scary times. And as we move through this age of AI, COVID is just a preview for the things to come. And if you want to make 2021 even better than 2020, you must become even better yourself. And to become even better starts right now with you, with the thoughts you think, by making it a habit to keep coming back and focusing on what's going well every single day.

Now let's move on to my second R in my theme for 2021 of refreshing, renewing and refocusing. Let's look at how you can renew your commitment to digital growth by briefly exploring my top 12 trends and predictions, opportunities that I see for 2021 beyond. But first, let's explore what it means to renew, as to renew can be defined as to begin again. In 1786, Robert Burns wrote an apologetic poem titled To a Mouse, where he tells of how he, while plowing a field, turned up a mouse's nest in that field. And what better way to sum up 2020 than through one of the most famous lines of the poem that reads almost as a proverb. Quote, "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." Think for a moment about your plans, the plans that you had to start 2020 a year ago. Now think about what you had to stop working on in 2020 when the best laid plans went awry because of COVID.

But you adapted and you shifted to the new realities and of a digital first world, because we saw five years of transformational progress being made at both a macro and a micro scale really in just three to



six months from the start of the pandemic. But now as you begin 2021, now is the time to renew, to start again, particularly with the progress that you're making on your digital growth journey, but this time with much more clarity, with much more focus based on the lessons that you gained and learned in 2020. And if there's one lesson to take away from 2020 to apply to 2021, it is the need for financial brands to continue to humanize their digital experience, because people will still continue to do business with people, even though people may no longer be coming into a physical branch location like they were before. COVID has reshaped patterns, behaviors, habits for consumers, specifically when it comes to banking.

And even in this post COVID world, there's still a strong need for the human connection through digital channels and experiences. In fact, through our research, we have found that the human connection, even if that connection is just made through email, or chat, or video, the human connection is the most influential source in a consumer's decision-making progress and process when they're shopping for a loan or a new deposit account. And to help you with your renewal for humanizing your own digital experiences at your financial brand, I want you to recall the 12 areas of focus, or the 12 trends, the 12 opportunities I see shaping up for 2021 that I shared in episode number 55, and consider committing to just three of them. Once again, in brief review, here are the 12 trends that I see, the biggest opportunities for financial brands to maximize their digital growth potential. But I do recommend going back and listening to episode number 55 as I dive deep into each one of these, and will dive deeper into each one of them in future podcast episodes.

So trend number one will be to focus on employee experience as EX will have a direct impact on humanizing your financial brand's DX, or digital experience. Trend number two is the opportunity for you to unlock the digital growth potential for small business, specifically small businesses hurting in this post COVID world. Trend or opportunity number three is found through financial coaching that will become a key revenue driver for future growth potential. Opportunity number four is finding FinTech partnerships to bridge capability gaps to create even more value for account holders. Trend number five is for marketing teams to transform and become media teams that put a key strategic focus on content production and promotion alongside sales teams, as content will be the fuel of your digital growth engine going forward. When thinking about content, that brings us to trends and opportunities 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Number six will be for video, to humanize digital experience for both sales and marketing teams. Number seven will be the opportunity to get inside people's heads literally with podcasts. Opportunity number eight will be to systematize and operationalize your content production strategies so that you can maximize your organic SEO efforts, as the efficacy of digital ads will continue to decline thanks to the rise in ad blockers and ad fraud, along with the demise of third-party cookies. Opportunity number nine, thinking about content, whether that be videos, podcasts, or articles, will be that content will become the glue that begins to build digital communities and whole digital communities together. And then number 10, operationalizing and systematizing content promotion through personal brands will become just as important, if not more important than content promotion through the corporate brand alone.

Opportunity number 11, trend number 11 will be to maximize your future growth potential through digital reputation management with a focus on systematizing and operationalizing ratings, reviews and referrals. And then finally opportunity number 12 will be to mind your mindset, as AQ plus EQ, or adaptability quotient plus emotional intelligence will be far greater than IQ alone in the age of AI. Once again, for more context into each one of these trends and to learn how they're all interconnected, I strongly suggest you go back and listen to episode number 55. And if you're thinking that you have to

focus on all 12 of these, you don't. Just commit to focus on three and I guarantee that you will make progress humanizing your financial brand's digital growth experience with renewed energy.


As we get ready to wrap up, I want to come back to Mark's question as he asked, "I felt like we were just struggling to survive in 2020, and we didn't make any real progress towards the plans and goals we had to start the year. Where should we focus our digital growth efforts now going forward in 2021?" That brings me to the third R and my theme for 2021, my three areas of focus for digital growth of refreshing, renewing and refocusing. Up to this point I've given you quite a few things to think about, to consider, to commit to doing going forward, which is why I want you to refocus now, because a lack of focus is brought on by a lack of clarity. And a lack of clarity is caused from confusion, from complexity, from overwhelm it, all of which we have COVID to thank for his gifts of 2020. But once again, let's leave the past in the past and move beyond the present to refocus and begin to create the future.

Because one of the biggest questions that I get repeatedly from financial brand marketing sales and leadership teams is very similar to the one that Mark has already asked, where should we start our digital growth journey, or what should we do next if we've already started on our own? And before I used to rattle off a series of possible steps based on almost two decades of advising and coaching financial brand marketing sales and leadership teams around the world. I just gave you 12, for example, that you could focus on for 2021, but are they the right ones for you? And I don't know, and that's why my response now, when I get this question of where should we start? It's all about refocusing. Or what should we do next? It's all about refocusing. And so I use a very simple set of questions to help financial brands gain clarity into the future that they can create by asking them one question framing all three. And that one question is, how do you want to grow?

And I want to ask you the same thing as you refocus for 2021. How do you want to grow in this new year? Grow is another acronym, G-R-O. And this is made up of three key elements to help you leap ahead and see the future you want to create. This exercise is one that I use to kick off diagnostic studies in discovery sessions. And you can use this same exercise with your team, and even your account holders. In fact, we have a few financial brands who are in our Digital Growth Program that are starting to use this framework as part of a pilot coaching program that they're building and optimizing for post COVID world. That's a conversation for another day. I want to come back to focusing on this one question for you. How do you want to grow in 2020, or in 2021? Once again, I want you to get another piece of paper and write down the letters G-R-O vertically on the left side of the page. And what we're going to start with the letter G, which will focus on your goals for growth.

So let's assume that you and I are having coffee just 12 months from now, and I ask you what's been going on over the past year? And you have this huge, big smile on your face when you think about all that you've done to get to this good place. What I want you to do is leap ahead in your mind and look backwards and think about what has to happen between now until then for you to feel good about all the progress that you have made along your digital growth journey over the last 12 months. Leap ahead 12 months, look backwards and think about all that has to happen between now until then for you to feel good about the progress that you've made along your digital growth journey. Now let's come back to the present moment and move on to the R, which is all about starting to identify roadblocks. So what road blocks or challenges must be eliminated over the next 12 months for you and your financial brand to make progress along your digital growth journey?

What roadblocks and challenges might stand in your way? Might trip you up? Need to be eliminated to ensure that you make progress and move forward towards the goals for growth that you just identified?



Finally, let's move on to the O, which is focused around opportunities. What new opportunities are available for you to create or capture in addition to what strengths do you currently have today that you can further capitalize on over the next 12 months as your financial brand continues to make progress along your digital growth journey, moving towards the goals for growth you've identified, with this one simple question, how do you want to grow? And the answers that come from it, you'll begin to gain clarity in the future that you can create through the goals for growth that you've documented, the roadblocks and challenges you must eliminate, and the opportunities that you have available to either create or capture, along with the strengths you have available to further capitalize on as you move forward in 2021 and beyond.

When I think about the future, I'm more excited than ever before, because I truly do believe that the future is bright, that the best is yet to come. So what does this future look like for you? What does the future that you want to create for yourself, for your financial brand, for your marketing sales and leadership team? I want to hear from you. And maybe you have a question like Mark that you'd like for me to answer, maybe it's about an opportunity you see or a roadblock that you need to eliminate. If you do have a question, now's the time to text me that question that you've been thinking about that you'd like to get answers to on a future podcast episode. Text that question to (415) 579-3004. That's (415) 579-3004. And remember, the only bad question is the question that goes un-asked.

Until next time and as always, be well, do good and wash your hands.