

Small But Mighty Agency Podcast

Episode 46: How this SEO strategist made consistent \$10K months by keeping it simple

Speakers: Audrey Joy Kwan, Ray Wang

Audrey Joy Kwan

If you're a consultant or marketer who hasn't hit consistent \$10,000 months yet, this episode demonstrates it's possible by keeping it simple. It requires effort, of course, but you don't need to make it complicated. It's all about being persistent. Why are we talking about consistent \$10,000 month on the podcast today? It's the launch pad to grow in a service business with a team. \$10,000 months allow more cash flow to do things like getting more support in your business. It opens your mind to making consistent \$20,000, \$30,000 and beyond months, so tune in to hear the organic methods that have led this strategist to consistent \$10,000 months.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome to the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you're a creative consultant, or agency owner, who wants to know what the roller coaster ride really looks like to grow your business from one to many, you're in the right place. My guest and I pull back the curtains on the realities of growing and running agencies of different sizes, and what it takes to build a team. And if you're anything like me, you want more than the highlight reel. You want to learn from the mistakes of others so that you can stop short of making the same mistakes. I'm your host, Audrey Joy Kwan, I spend my days as a coach and consultant and multiple six and seven figure agency owners. For the last seven years. I've been behind the scenes helping people grow, lead and operate small but mighty agencies. Here at the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast will uncover what works. And equally as important what didn't work to get these business owners to where they are today.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Welcome Ray. This year, I've been speaking to marketers as they transition from solopreneur to agency owner, and I'm looking forward to diving into your story and highlights. Before we dive in, tell us a little bit more about you.

Ray Wang

Hi, Audrey. Thanks for having me today. So, my name Ray and I'm the owner of RW Digital. We're a digital marketing agency based in Metro Vancouver, BC, Canada, we focus more on the technical aspect of digital marketing such as SEO, Google ads, Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager. So, my story, so I started as a kid, my favorite brand was Nike. And I just really love the creativity of their products as well as the commercials and print ads. And then fast forward to university. I study at SFU,

which is a university in Metro Vancouver. I studied marketing and finance. And while I was in school, I kind of learned more about the advertising space, like advertising agencies through a career fair. So right away, I was kind of attracted to the idea of an ad agency. And then after university, I joined two agencies, a digital agency in Metro Vancouver, with the hopes are learning the ropes and just the understanding of the ad world. And then I work in an in house, in automotive space, for a little bit as a digital marketing manager, and then back and then in 2019, I decided to, to go on my own, I started my agency. So, when I started the agency, I had the intention of building a very community focused agency and as well as a very positive work environment for the team.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Thanks for giving us your background. Today, I want to explore your journey from deciding to strike out on your own to getting to consistent \$10,000 months and how that number has enabled you to start contracting out services to build your agency.

Ray Wang

So, when we, when I started out, I already had like 10 years of experience. So, there was pretty strong network and or when I started out like I had a pretty strong connections in my network. So, off the bat, we were quite fortunate to gain quite a bit of referral projects for pretty some pretty established businesses in organizations in Greater Vancouver. So, we're quite fortunate for that. And then we also did some LinkedIn outreach. So, one of the bigger accounts that we gained, like couple months, a couple months into the business, was an automotive group in in Richmond, so they carry luxury brands such as Audi, and Jaguar. So, when we first pitched to them, they were actually not thinking about switching. But a couple of weeks later, they said they're not really happy with their current agency. And then they just spoke with me and kind of liked what I had to offer and then we, they decided to switch over. So that was a quite a large account for us at the time. And then we're quite involved with a lot of community engagement and webinars so and so I'm very involved with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, like we were a finalist for Richmond Chamber of Commerce New Business of the Year Award back in 2020. We're also involved with a big chapter of the American Marketing Association. And then we also done like webinars for, for Richmond, Rotary Club, Prep Council PC. And then we also done a lot of like kind of publications for Small Business BC, as well as other business organizations. So, I think collectively, that really helped us gaining more clients,

Audrey Joy Kwan

It sounds like you hit the ground running with lots of visibility activities targeted to your warm network and, and just really getting out there and letting people know what you're up to. You mentioned LinkedIn being your social media channel of choice, tell us about your approach to LinkedIn.

Ray Wang

For us they are certain industries, we kind of we want to target. So previously, we've done work, a lot of work in the automotive space. So, we were just trying to find like, decision makers as a general manager, dealer principals. So that's kind of what we reach out previously, when we've also done some engagement through, for businesses in the hospitality industry. So, hotels, convention centers, and things like that. So again, so those are also we're trying to find their decision makers, so general manager at a specific hotel or at the hotel as part of a Hospitality Group. So, you would, we would

reach out to, like their director of marketing for that group, that manages that specific photo or multiple hotels. So, LinkedIn obviously is a little bit colder, the conversion rate is a little bit lower. But it's just the overall kind of a diverse outreach program that we engage with, like we have an account manager whose job is, part of their job is to outreach to businesses. And they would follow this technique of outreach into decision makers and industries that we want to target.

Audrey Joy Kwan

At a given point in your business, you tap into your warm network, and you've got to lean into new ways to reach people. Tell me about your account manager's role in your outreach? Did you hire someone with a track record in cold outreaches? Or is this something you were already doing like you had a formula that worked for you, and you train someone to support in that formula?

Ray Wang

So, I would say a combination of both. So, they have experience in this kind of outreach, kind of outbound sales field. But we also have gotten consultation from like, kind of outbound managers from other companies, like in tech companies, or other kind of SaaS companies that does that like that do a lot of outreaching. So, we've gotten consultation from them. And we kind of help from them regards of the kind of like the template that we would use to outreach to, to businesses, and what are some kind of like pitfalls that we should look out for when we outreach and how customize our messages should be, when we reach out to businesses.

Ray Wang

Of the strategies you've used in your first year, as you mentioned LinkedIn outreach, referrals, webinars, and joining community boards and networks, what has paid off the most for you?

Ray Wang

So, I will say referral has been the most effective, I will say that, during the last two years, I guess, through a pandemic, everything was locked down. So, I would say, almost 100% of our work was, was based on referral. So, it has been the most effective because A) like there's already a demand, if somebody is a referral than that person's already, or that business is looking for a specific service they most likely have a budget in mind, and they know exactly what they're looking for. So, a lot, but in terms of the sales process, like half is already done, they're just looking for compatibility, they're looking for competitive rates. So that's something that can be discussed. But half of the sales, kind of the processes are already done, because, you know, there's really a demand, and they're kind of being introduced to so typically the leads are a lot warmer. So that's kind of my experience so far, like it has been the most effective. Community engagement is also in a way, it's also part of that referral kind of approach, because like you build a network, and then maybe six months, a year down the road, like somebody that you know, like talked to a while back knows a business who's looking for digital marketing services. And they will make that introduction. And then yeah, so LinkedIn is kind of additional work that we do like just to kind of build some connections and interactions with some businesses, like a lot the business that we actually outreach to, they're actually on the East Coast because we physically cannot meet those businesses here. So, a lot of the businesses here like on the West Coast, a lot of them is through referral, or just like kind of inbound leads is the businesses that we don't we cannot physically see like the businesses in Toronto and just on the East Coast, actually,

those are the ones that we're paying LinkedIn to get their contact information so we can contact them. Or we even do Google ads to run campaigns specifically, like just say in a downtown core Toronto or sort of like more business kind of centric areas, because again, like we cannot physically see these individuals, so we will need to rely on digital marketing to gain traffic and leads to those areas.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Did you know that I have a coaching program called the mighty pod model? In the high touch program, we help our clients go from solopreneur to an agency owner, so they can gain more freedom by having a service business where client work isn't dependent on them to scale. Maybe you started as a solopreneur with zero people in your business, eventually you bring an assistant and contractors, but you continue to hold on to the strategy in direct communication with your clients. Before you know it, you're at capacity. So, what happens if you want to grow bigger? Meet the mighty pod model, the money pod model isn't just a business model. It's a high touch coaching program that helps you go from solopreneur to agency owner with a profitable streamlined and strategic roadmap. If you're feeling was the bottleneck in your business, download our free mighty pod model cheat sheet, go to [Audreyjoykwan.com/freeresources](https://audreyjoykwan.com/freeresources). That's audreyjoykwan.com/freeresources or click the link in the show notes right there in your podcast app to get the free mighty pod model cheat sheet. Back to the show.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Ray, tell us about a hard time you faced when you started the entrepreneurial journey. Did you ever consider giving up, what got you through?

Ray Wang

I was at the very beginning of the pandemic was it April 2020. I think that time like things were kind of locked down completely. So, at that time, we were only like 11 months into the business. So, at that time, there was a lot of uncertainty in the in the world and obviously in just in digital space. So that time, I wasn't very confident in terms of pursuing. But for myself, I pursued it just because, like for me like I guess it's a little bit more of a personality thing. Like if I made a decision to start a company like I'll probably go all the way and which I did. And then in terms of like persistence, I think it just a lot, again, a lot of support within the community. So that also kind of add fuel in me to push me to continue my agency.

Audrey Joy Kwan

So how are things going today? How did your grit and resilience lead you to the present day?

Ray Wang

I think right now like it's, we're still kind of in like a startup phase. So, I'm still very involved in the implementation and kind of like account management aspect of, of the business. So yeah, so we're still kind of kind of in a growing as growing stage. But yeah, so but overall, we like we have a small team now. So, we can, I can offload some of the work to rest of the team members. So, I think then, in terms of work life balance overall, it's still I would say for a person starting a company is pretty good. Like we get weekends off. So, we like we like we don't have to check email all the time. And stuff like that. So, I think for myself, like it's still quite healthy, like not really burning any late-night oil or pulling any all

nighters. So, I think it's quite well rounded. Like right now, right now, like quite satisfied with the quality of life, because it's quite rounded. And like we're not, you know, spending 120 hours on the business. So, yeah, pretty healthy. Yeah.

Audrey Joy Kwan

What does your team look like? What are you focusing on right now?

Ray Wang

Yeah, so right now we have an agile team of four. So, there's account manager, and graphic designer, a copywriter and myself. So, myself, I'm more hands on the Google kind of product. So, Google, setting up Google Analytics 4 for clients, creating dashboards and data analytics for clients and other businesses, oh sorry, other roles, they fulfill what like, like what copywriters and graphic designers have to do. So like kind of in terms of, for me, the team like, like I intentionally made it more very specific. So, there's a lot more efficiency in terms of what they have to do like so a graphic designer that will only do graphic design, or copywriter only does copywriting. And then in terms of, and then the project we take on is very similar. So, everybody takes on very similar work for their specific role and then they've just gained a lot of efficiency in terms of what they have to deliver. So overall, I think we run a pretty efficient team right now at this point and then not really looking to grow at this point, just want to make sure that everything is kinda running efficiently, all the quality, like the work is delivered with good quality. So, we can continue to retain our clients and gain more referrals and testimonials, which can help, you know, continue to build the business further down the road.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Yeah, when you start a service-based business, there are different phases of growing it into an agency, you start doing all the work, it's only you then you reach capacity and bringing implementation support, you hit capacity again, and you begin to build out what I call a pod. That's your first team of people who take service delivery, account management and eventually strategy off your plate. Right now, you're overseeing all the strategy and still doing the service delivery. At what point do you see yourself stepping away from that? Is that in the vision, and if not, I get it, you will entrepreneur, you built the service that fits your life.

Ray Wang

I think I need to do some number crunching at that time. So right now, I think we have maintained a pretty good margin, like profit margin, at this kind of pace, and this like model. So if we were to add another person, like full-time or increase hours, then obviously that we need to bring in more clients or build the same clients higher if we want to maintain the same profit margin. So, and obviously, that's another person kind of to manage, another stakeholder. So, for myself, I would need to do some number crunching, and some, I guess, some business modeling to see how that would pan out. But yeah, so for me right now, like the modelling right now has a lot to do with kind of like the profit margin and like what we're able to keep at this point, especially, you know, at this time of, quote, unquote, like recession or uncertainty, like preserving some sort of cash flow is quite important for all businesses.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Ray, may I ask, what is your margin right now?

Ray Wang

Yeah, like I would say, after you pay off everybody, you can retain, like, 20%. So, the business keeps 20%. So that healthy margin.

Audrey Joy Kwan

How are you keeping your margins healthy during the startup phase in your business?

Audrey Joy Kwan

You have a service niche, and you stick to that service niche rather than branching out into scopes of work that require new expertise that costs time and money to learn. When you stick to your service niche you can optimize and streamline your processes and workflow. And that isn't just efficient, but leads to a better product, that's a productized service agency model. And I'm a champion of that model. So, what's next for you Ray?

Ray Wang

Yeah, so we keep it by A) having a remote team. So that definitely helps. And I think we also have, we have received grants for some of our team members. So, we'd like this is a government subsidy. So that also helps with our overall, like minimizing our costs and or, or, or maximize or increasing our revenue to help pay for staffing. And then other I think, aside that, like, I think referrals have, like we don't have to spend a ton of money on business development or, or other forms of like paid advertising, because we're getting a lot of work through referrals. And then I think just getting more efficiency within with the type of work that we deliver so we can maximize the number of projects that we do within a specific timeframe. So, like we don't do like I said before, we do a lot like SEO and like kind of Google Ads, Analytics, type of services. That's the type of services we offer, like, but we don't do any branding, or social media. So, it's not like so all the projects that we take home is very similar by nature, so we can deliver good work. So, but if we like to say if we were to do SEO and do branding, like I think there'd be a lot more learning curve, then I think the work will be a lot less efficient, and that we would deliver fewer projects within a specific timeframe. So, but right now, kind of everything is very similar, like we have remote team. So, we're just keeping everything very kind of bare bones, trying to try to maximize our profit margin.

Ray Wang

I think in my head right now, like I think we'll still continue offering this very similar type of services. And then in terms of the caliber of clients or the set of clients, we hope to increase and we're hoping to working with some national brands. So, a lot of the brands that we work with are regional but their overall quite established kind of up on the West Coast. But we're hoping to expand to more national brands. In terms of team size of the team I'll hire whatever needs to fulfill like the tasks, but I don't really foresee myself kind of like expanding too much like too quickly. So, we'll still keep everything quite minimalistic. So that's kind of what I see then, like kind of the next two years.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Thanks for sharing that, Ray. Before we wrap up here what keeps you inspired and motivated?

Ray Wang

So yeah, I follow like quite a bit of like advertising, websites and social media. So like Adweek, like Strategy Online, which is Canadian publication. So kind of seeing what other agencies have done accomplish is quite inspiring for me, while even though I'm not necessarily a creative person, but when I see what other agencies have done for their, like creative projects, what they have delivered for their clients, and keeps me motivated to kind of deliver, although different types of service like deliver quality work to our clients, and then overall right now, like our clients are, I think overall quite like nice people, like the managers and like the CEOs and overall like they're quite nice people and I like them to do well in their, in their business and their industries. So that kind of keeps me motivated in terms of delivering good work.

Audrey Joy Kwan

And Ray, where can people find you?

Ray Wang

Yeah, so people can find me on Instagram as a personal they can find me at theraywang. And then our company IG is digital.RW. And then on LinkedIn, they if you just search for RW Digital, you'll see our logo and you can connect with us there.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Thank you so much, Ray.

Ray Wang

Thank you, Audrey.

Audrey Joy Kwan

Hey there. Thanks for hanging out with me at the Small But Mighty Agency Podcast. If you enjoyed this episode, it would mean the world to me if you hit the follow or subscribe button in your podcast app and share it with a friend. I'll see you in the next one.