Undocumented Voices of Bouncing Back with Peter Drucker

I imagine a world where everyone is empowered to make their voice count, inspiring others to speak up, communicating the shaky moments in their life and feeling brave to admit that you can't do it all. You need to hack your way. To show up (even if it hurts). To reinvent, pursue and carry on. That at the end of the day, you're prouder to say: you don't just sit; you act on it.

And if I write a podcast show for Peter Drucker, this will be it.

Sound On.

Episode 1: Admit that you can't do it all
🔊 Listen to the full transcript here

After roughly ~10 years of corporate work experience, I took a pause, entered graduate school to learn about startups and innovation. I got my Masters degree last 2020 and graduated at the time of the pandemic. With no regular monthly income for a year when pandemic hits, I felt I'm doomed. I admit that I can't do most of the planned opportunities - a lot of freeze hiring, downsizing & layoffs and businesses are shutting down. I clearly remember that I have been staring at my laptop with a blank mind. I asked myself what to do next?

"To do the most good requires saying no to pressures to stray, and the discipline to stop doing what does not fit."
The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization by Peter Drucker

I grab my notebook, write what I'm good at, what I love doing and how I can earn. A very simple table with three columns that help me to focus and look at my real situation. I started involving myself in food & plant-based projects (*as a continuation of my thesis that aims to promote food literacy in communities), and provided branding, communication and events marketing to startups and non-profit organizations. During this time, I felt that I have been sharing my story and expertise whenever I can through hosting and mentorship programs. I just felt the world needs more and more content creators, storytellers and narrators that will spark change and movement. Last September 2021, there's a product innovation role opening from a podcasting company and I took a "long-shot" chance to get this role.

Episode 2: Show Up

When the HR representative browsed through my resume, she asked: why join a podcasting company?

As a marketer, storyteller and food visionary, I felt that my interests and expertise are evolving, diverse, squiggly and spontaneous. In a Harvard Business Review article by April Rinne written last October 13, 2021, "Why You Should Build A Career Portfolio, Not A Career Path," I was struck on how you can show up and build your life and career through a series of portfolios - each of the work experiences representing your individuality. In another HBR article written by Nate Bennett, G. James Lemoine from a magazine dated 2014 "What VUCA Really Means For You," felt I was a generalist - and in a way it's a skill to learn especially when everything is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. I told myself I just need to show up and share my story - what motivated me to be part of the team. I told the HR representative: I love to design and solve things. I also love to host and talk. As a product manager, I can build a product because I'm the customer.

"History has been written not by the most talented but by the most motivated."
-Peter Drucker

I accepted the job offer last September 2021 and viola - I'm a product manager for a media tech company that has been empowering creators and influencers to edit and grow their shows, across South East Asia and the rest of the world. I have been learning a lot as to what and how it takes to be a content creator:
- Why do they want to have a podcast?
- What do they need to create a podcast?
- Why do they do what they do?

These questions have been my everyday agenda. I dig deeper. I talk to the users. I talk internally with my colleagues and check each business unit - Production, Creatives, Marketing, Customer Success and Sales as to what we do to help them with their podcast and how each of the business' units output contribute to the success to acquire and maintain a user. My first 6 to 12 months have been learning and unlearning the customer my company has in mind. It's also about challenging our processes.

Everyday, I tell myself - I will show up with my camera on, a smile and a coffee to perk my mood. We're all remote and I tell my team - I want to see their faces, I would love to

feel what they feel. Work for me is to show up also that you care and you trust your team.

Episode 3: Hack Your Way

"Plan, organize, integrate, motivate and measure."
The Effective Executive by Peter Drucker

If Peter Drucker is still alive during the pandemic, he would have made a part II for The Effective Executive book. Working remotely has been a big challenge. The Internet might be the culprit - but the energy of your team is at most always at stake. Few of them have good working environment conditions. Most of them - you just see in a video call. We're getting complaints from our customers, and we're experiencing churn (users stop subscribing). How do you then work together? I started to experiment and hack my way to deal with my colleagues:

- Plan: since I work with developers, their KPI is shipping features on time. Daily meetings are trimmed down to 15 minutes so they can devote their time in coding.
- Organize: I let the customer success team and sales team share their insights to steer the business decisions on what we should all do together with a "We mindset." The roadmaps are made by the team. Each of us is accountable.
- Integrate: The team should be in sync, in good and in bad times. We can't work in silos. We then practice an open - delegation for each business unit. Every team leader basically sees what the other teams are working on. We share the smokes and fires so everyone knows we have a problem and we also open the line for anyone to suggest what we can do to resolve.
- Motivate: For me this is the important skill that I'm proud to execute with the team. I love to ask my colleagues if they have breakfast already if the meeting is in the morning, or have they taken lunch if it's lunch time. For me, we can't skip meals. As a foodie - eating food at the proper time is important for your health. I love listening to short chit chat & family stories. These little sweet gestures can compound over time, making each team member feel they belong.
- Measure: We know our metrics, we discuss it and cascade to everyone in the team. We don't need to sugarcoat our data - especially if we're losing money and the business needs to make harsh, radical decisions.

Episode 4: Reinvent, pursue and carry on.
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"Of all the important pieces of self-knowledge, understanding how you learn is the easiest to acquire."
Managing Oneself by Peter Drucker

It was March of this year that my company announced we needed to retrench. We lose one of our big clients and the leaders need to communicate the hard decision - faster. Almost half are laid off. I'm grateful to retain my current role but my work setup was greatly affected, the tech team is reduced to ~2 people and we can't just ship features on time. Product bugs have been showing up. We can't even do experimentation and try testing ChatGPT. I really felt helpless. And then I look back. I remember the momentous times when we hit our MRR (monthly recurring revenue), when we got commendations from our customers, when everything seemed to be working fine. I told myself - this is just another multiverse and I can reinvent, pursue and carry on.

I started to have a chat with my developers. We evaluated what we can do in a small amount of time. That we can't ship it all, but we can still do something, one at a time. It might take longer development work and sprints but we're still doing something every single day, we're making progress.

For each business unit, I talked to them and started hard conversations. I would love a tech team to support their needs but since we're outnumbered, we'll have to make do with what we have now. We share our priorities and manage expectations from a top-down approach. Everyone knows the bruises of each team. Everyone acknowledges the limitations and existing capacities. We try to comfort each other, laugh together and send memes & gifs. We make our emails, meetings and Slack messages lighter - to express we all feel bruised, but that doesn't mean we can't laugh or smile. We can choose the way we react.

Episode 5: Don't just sit, act.
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So we don't just sit, we act. We walk the talk and try to solve one problem, one metric at a time.
We can't focus on too many metrics. Every Wednesday, we have Customer Calls where we discuss the status of each podcast show and what causes users to stick with us or churn. We zoom in on retention metrics. Every business unit shares insights on how to

contribute to retention. After meeting, we cascade to our fellow colleagues what we agreed and we implement. We check if the decision is the best decision. We keep on iterating our solutions. We don't stick to one and try alternatives. We just keep on moving.

"Managers are action-focused; they are not philosophers and should not be."
Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices by Peter Drucker

Given we're a very lean team, we've been practicing not to be demanding with each other too much. We act not to be pushy with our work deliverables with one another, but to help and care for each other.

That's a wrap for our 5 episodes.

To bounce back, you have to have your team with you.
To be resilient, you have to show your bruises, look up to the sky and show up.
To move forward, you have to enjoy and trust the process.

Thanks for tuning in and listening to: **Undocumented Voices of Bouncing Back with Peter Drucker**

Sound off.