

## **Semir Ajsic**

ENT(601) - Entrepreneurial Creation, Western Carolina University  
Masters of Innovation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship – 2020

My name is Semir Ajsic. I am a graduate student at Western Carolina University, pursuing a master's degree in Innovation, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship. In the Entrepreneurial Creation setting we are learning and designing different marketing strategies, evaluating and selecting media for our hypothetical businesses, competitive advantage, and analyzing the works of Michael E. Porter, PhD.

One way we express the understanding of the concept at the end of each section/class is by conducting peer interviews with other students, as well as SME interviews with professional like yourself. I would love an opportunity to interview you as my Subject Matter Expert in the marketing industry to get a better feel for what your agency offers to entrepreneurs like myself as well as what recommendations you have for entrepreneurs who are just starting out.

### **Introduction:**

Today I had the privilege to interview Mariam Jameel, the SEO Manager for LinkedIn Talent Solutions and her direct manager. Mariam works with Ledger Bennett, a full-service marketing agency, specializing in Marketing Strategy and Planning, Marketing Automation, B2B Marketing, Social Media marketing, and more. With less than a year of working at Ledger Bennett, Mariam has been able to excel in her field and achieve impressive results, resulting in here current role.

#### **1. Tell me a little about yourself and how you got into the marketing industry.**

My current role at Ledger Bennett is Search Engine Optimization Manager for LinkedIn Talent Solutions. This role is unique in that I am part of Ledger Bennett, but partner with LinkedIn as an extension of their team. As SEO manager, I work with multiple teams across LinkedIn (Web, UX, Acquisition Marketing, Brand), and other members of the Ledger Bennett Media team, to ensure that LinkedIn is getting the highest volume of organic search traffic to the site and ranking above competitors. I previously worked as a high school Spanish teacher, and got into this role with no prior industry experience. In order to make the switch, I found three clients who allowed me to work on their websites. I tracked the results over a 6-12 month period, and highlighted the digital marketing best practices I applied to get those results. I've been working full time in the industry for a little less than a year now.

#### **2. What educational background is needed to pursue a career in marketing?**

Digital Marketing is a rapidly changing field, and focuses more on knowledge of current trends more so than educational background. Companies typically only ask for a bachelor's degree, but it doesn't have to be directly related to Marketing. Although I do have an undergraduate degree in Marketing, the digital marketing space looks completely different than it did 5-10 years ago. My company focused more on the relevant certifications that I had, such as Google Analytics and AdWords, versus my four-year degree.

#### **3. What have you done to improve your Market research knowledge in the last year?**

In order to improve my marketing knowledge, I've taken online courses related to my niche and received certifications, like Google Analytics and others. I've also had the opportunity to work on other client projects to practice new skills that I gain from these courses. For example, I recently set up Google Analytics tracking for a local company in my area.

#### 4. How do you stay on top of current marketing trends?

In order to stay on top of marketing trends, I'm subscribed to Google's newsletter, plus other popular Digital Marketing newsletters (Search Engine Land, Neil Patel Digital, Backlink.io, etc) that send out daily and weekly updates on changing Digital Marketing trends. This is extremely important, because one small Google algorithm change can alter our entire Digital Marketing strategy.

For example, Google recently rolled out its new algorithm update called "Bert," which is focused on "user intent" and better understanding natural processing language. The search engine is now taking into account prepositions, like "for" or "to" that can add a lot of value to a search query. It is a slight, but big difference that completely altered our SEO strategy. Rather than focusing on just ranking for specific search terms, we had to think about what questions our potential customers could be asking and how we could rank for those.

This is part of the reason why I love the Digital Marketing space. The trends are rapidly changing and no two days are the same.

#### 5. What is your agency's value proposition?

Our agency's value prop motto is 'connecting the dots' –

- From a tactical level, that means ensuring the entire user journey is seamless from the moment our ad serves, the user clicks through, enters the pipeline, and is added to the company's bottom line, we thrive and optimize on that visibility.
- From a ten thousand foot view, that means all departments, stages of the funnel, and capability is as polished and high quality as possible. We put experts in places to push each area forward on their own, but combined with other capabilities, bring everything together with the end user in mind.'

#### 6. What sets you apart from the competition?

What sets us apart is the average agency is the innovation, collaboration, and complete suite of offerings. Another is the experience and deep knowledge into specific B2B industries. We don't try to spread ourselves across B2B and B2C + all industries, we stick with what we know and become the leaders in that market. We strive to find the largest company in each space and try to drive highest quality leads.

#### 7. What are some of the most effective marketing strategies you recommend to entrepreneurs?

It is so easy to answer this question with, "it depends". I think every entrepreneur should invest in SEO for its long term, technical benefits to reach the highest intent audience. If your targeting is tight enough, Facebook and Instagram will offer you the most visibility for your money. And if you want the

most powerful targeting for the B2B market, LinkedIn (while more expensive per click) will drive the most viable audiences based on career demographics.

**8. Do you have any suggestions for someone that would like to pursue a career in marketing?**

My biggest advice for anyone who wants to pursue a career in marketing is to show that you can produce results. This doesn't only apply to Digital Marketing. For example, if someone wanted to become a content marketer, I would recommend they produce a few pieces of content for a client and track the engagement of that content. Did this piece of content help convert readers into customers? What was the conversion rate? In a field that changes so rapidly, the most important thing you can do is to show that you can add value to the company through knowledge of best practices and prior results.

Thank you, Mariam, for taking the time out of your busy schedule to converse with me and for providing me and the readers your story and your journey to becoming the SEO Manager. I have learned a lot about your role and your agency. I wish you the best in future endeavors and many more achievements and accomplishments on business as well as personal levels. It was a pleasure conducting this interview and conversing with you. I appreciate your kindness in accommodating this interview, please let me know if I can ever return a favor in helping you in some way!