Todd Laire (00:39)
Hey everyone! Today's podcast episode is called, *Beyond the Basics, Exploring Responsible AI Usage in B2B Marketing and Beyond*. And my guest today is Jessica Hreha. Jessica is the Head of AI Strategy and Transformation at Jasper, an AI content creation powerhouse. With a 20-year career centered around the convergence of technology and marketing, Jessica has consistently challenged industry norms, pushing programs, and organizations beyond the limits of the status quo. Having a diverse experience in telecom, healthcare, software, and AI applied marketing, she founded VMware's Marketing AI Council in early 2023, leading responsible generative AI education and adoption across a 750+ global marketing team at VMware. With a background in field marketing, Jessica realized her passion for understanding products, customers, and the crucial partnership between sales and marketing. Her work emphasizes outside-in customer-first marketing, underscoring the importance of authentic customer interactions to inform strategy. With more than a decade in leadership and management, her hands-on approach champions fresh strategies across functional collaboration and the transformation of vision into measurable results. Believing in extreme ownership, she prioritizes team development, mentorship, and a culture that values the whole self. Beyond her work, Jessica builds community and empowers others, particularly women, through board service with the YMCA Camp Thunderbird and as the founder of a local chapter of FIA, which stands for Females in Action, in Lake Wylie, South Carolina. Jessica, welcome, and thanks for coming on the Married2Marketing podcast.

Jessica Hreha (02:28)
I'm so excited to be here today. Thank you for having me.

Todd Laire (02:31)
Awesome, great. Well, we've been connected for a while and I've watched your career trajectory as you've moved from position to position and moved up your career ladder, so to speak. And you're very active on LinkedIn. I highly recommend everyone follow Jessica on LinkedIn. She puts out really great content and a lot of it is centered around AI, but I think more so than, contributing to the noise of everything that AI is, you put out really interesting perspectives and inflection points of where we are with AI. And one post in particular that I wanna mention is you had posted or shared just natively a digital marketing agency's AI usage guidelines. And basically it was a customer-facing, customer-forward policy, no different than a privacy policy or a usage policy, data usage policy. This one was centered around AI. And the first thing I thought of was, I know this agency and we don't have one. And so we probably should work on this. But moreso, I really liked your input on it, and really it sparked me. I was like, I think she'd be fascinating to interview, and so that's how we arrived today. And of course, it's been a labor of love and it's taken months of you and I communicating and working towards this day.

Jessica Hreha (03:55)
Hahaha.

Todd Laire (03:57)
But I'm excited for it. And yeah, that's what stood out to me.

Jessica Hreha (04:03)
Yeah, you know, usage policies, I feel like, are sometimes so esoteric or it's hard for people to figure out how to do them. And I know that we're gonna talk a little bit about that today, but the more examples you can see, just like the more use cases you share, it all inspires the next thing that will resonate with you to take action and move forward. So I think it's important to share what "good" looks like. And that was one of them. So I appreciate that you caught up on that.

Todd Laire (04:29)
Yeah, absolutely. So Jessica, I think we all have kind of have an interesting path towards how we were introduced to AI and what got the initial ball rolling. So what's your story? What was that "Aha!" moment for you? What was that kind of like, "What is this?" moment? And then what happened after that?

Jessica Hreha (04:50)
Yeah, so I've been thinking about this a lot because, well, people ask me and the other is, we talk about a lot, you don't have to be a data scientist or an AI expert to step up and even lead the marketing transformation. And so I like to share that it was only in spring of 2022, I was having lunch with a board colleague and several other board members and we were talking about our next meeting. And it turns out that he wasn't able to attend the next meeting because he was going to be in Cleveland for a marketing AI conference. And it was at that moment that I was like, "A marketing AI conference? A whole conference around AI and marketing?" And he was like, "Yeah, it's a thing." And I was like, "Wow, I had no idea." Then fast forward a few months that summer, I took the Kellogg Exec Ed digital marketing course on AI data and automation. And Jasper was a case study. We watched a video on Jasper, and then of course we had to tell how we would use it or something like that. And I had texted one of my startup friends, and I was like, "You have to use Jasper for your content creation. I will never get this approved at VMware." It was like, this is so powerful. I can't believe it helps you write all this content, right? And then it was in September at VMware, and I was in a Head of Demand Gen content strategy role. So nothing to do with AI, but all to do with content strategy within the realm of demand gen. And I found out that our product-led growth team was trialing Jasper. And shortly after that, the product-led growth team dispersed, and a lot of that work came onto my team. And so now I had the opportunity to build the business case for Jasper, kind of from scratch all over again, if we wanted to move it forward.

And I couldn't believe all of this lined up, right, stars aligned, and so we started building this use case for Jasper because for us, I was working through a content operations process where I was realizing we had to streamline the process, we weren't meeting our stakeholder deadlines, we weren't getting our promotional kits, our campaigns, in market fast enough based on all the things, we were missing media briefing deadlines, so we had to figure out how to streamline this process and frankly we were always so behind that the content we would get from agencies

we would just push on, right? Or, you know, people weren't getting the review cycles they needed. So I felt like we had an opportunity to draft that content in-house and spend more time

on editing, which would then improve quality and save us time and money. So it was this hypothesis, which I encourage everyone to start out with when you're looking at a use case, which is, "What do I think this is gonna do for me?" So I started to build this use case around improving quality, saving time, and then reducing agency fees. And that was ultimately how we got Jasper approved at our first use case, which was only eight. Chat GPT happened, I started hearing conversations from different functions in marketing. Everyone's going to the brand team saying, "Can we use Chat GPT to write blogs?" And the brand team is like, "Hell no," and quickly having to figure out what their POV was, there was a lot of fear. I call these silos of swirl. So, I pulled everyone together, because somehow I was having similar conversations with different people on a Friday afternoon, and I called it the Marketing AI Council. And the literal first bullet was like, "Is this a good idea?" And then it was, "Do you want to be a part of it?" And then we had to figure out what was our charter, what we were gonna do. We created guidelines, and that is really what built, then, that whole program from there. And that's kind of how I got, I just felt like it was a huge opportunity. I like to push innovation and if I can just do this on my team, this is great. But then when it became a broader opportunity, it was like, we gotta bring people together, we gotta figure this shit out for our department because this is gonna have huge impact and let's be a part of driving that.

Todd Laire (08:55)
Yeah, that's awesome. That's great. And that's a great segue into like my next question for you and that is, AI usage guidelines. Similar to that statement that caught my attention that you shared. From a high level, I guess, and I don't wanna stay high level, but I think it'd be helpful for listeners to understand why AI usage guidelines are important, and how do these guidelines align with broader corporate governance principles in your opinion.

Jessica Hreha (09:26)
Yeah, so you have to give people direction and guardrails in order to understand what they can and can't do and in order to protect your brand. There's a lot of data risk, privacy, right? And for example, we found out through a very, manual state of AI gathering, data gathering, that people were using ChatGPT to summarize internal emails and summarize internal newsletters. And the point of the data gathering wasn't to get people in trouble, but it was very clear that that's not okay. But also we needed to tell people that and give them guardrails on what they could do instead. Right? So you know your corporate level AI guidelines and should be if you don't have them right around more ethics and a lot of times they're more risk-oriented and they're driven by CIO/CTO and marketing should be a part of that. But we had AI ethics at VMware for years because we're a software company with AI built into it. But we felt very passionately that, and everyone should do this, right, that you have to create AI usage guidelines to tell people what to do. And it can really be as simple as, "Do this. Don't do this." It's like, "What do you want people to do, in what tools, with what use case?" And then conversely, what are we not going to do? What types of data are we not going to share with certain AI systems or not, right? What use cases will we absolutely not use AI for? And then you want to give them the best practices. But that's very do's and don'ts. It's like the first place to start. But every single department could have their own set of AI usage guidelines too, right? Like HR's is going to look very different than marketing, than IT, which is more code-based and development, maybe, or the engineering

team. And so marketers have to do this for themselves to know how to write. But you want to encourage experimentation, but in a safe and responsible way. So that's where you're coming out through POV on, we want to be supportive. We want you to experiment and try these tools, but we want to do it in a safe way. So do's and don'ts, first place, very high level to start. But then you want to continue to iterate from there as new tools, new tech's coming out, something that didn't work two months ago works now, you need to let people know about that. But at the same time, you can go deeper on your AI usage policies and guidelines. You can create an AI mission statement. What is the purpose of AI for you in marketing? You can create core values, And you need to be really close with your legal team and stay close to your attorneys and they're involved in all of that along the way, as well.

Todd Laire (12:11)
No escaping legalese. We know that as marketers.

Jessica Hreha (12:14)
Make them your friends, your two best friends in marketing, legal and IT, and finance, maybe three.

Todd Laire (12:18)
Yeah, and know that you have very little in common with any of them, but they are your best friends. It's something that stood out to me too, a milestone in your career, and I mentioned it earlier in the intro, was you formed the AI Council at VMware. And so taking a step back from that, what is an AI Council, Jessica, in your words? And why is it important and important for whom?

Jessica Hreha (12:51)
Yeah, so your company should have an AI council in general, broadly across all departments. Like I said, a lot of times it's CTO/CIO level, but if you don't have one, you should start one at that level. And it is really setting direction on creating those AI ethics, maybe creating your AI vendor checklist and requirements. And again, those AI guidelines. For marketing specifically, though, you need a separate marketing AI council. Our marketing AI council started actually a few months before the corporate AI Council. And then we also folded into that as well, and the reason is this group of people is what I like to say, they're your AI enthusiasts, your hand raisers. It is not a CMO-appointed VP-level COE. The goal is to foster a culture of innovation and learning. And this council, besides setting direction, setting the guidelines, is the one who is going to push your use cases. So they're going to drive your use cases, they're your constant continuous experimentation. It's cross-functional so that you have at least one person from every function. That way, when the time is right, you have use cases coming out of each function that they can then take back to their teams and scale from there. VMware, our charter was to enable responsible AI adoption and literacy across global marketing through education and tools and training, really. And it was very grounds up, doer-oriented. And that's something that my former CMO still talks about with all the organizations she speaks to today. You know, the first thing you need to do is start an AI council, a marketing AI council, and look for the volunteers, look for the hand raisers. You want the people who are hungry, who are enthusiastic,

it is on top of your day job, to swivel chair and go into these systems and figure out what to do. And you have to be excited about that, right? And excited about the opportunity to impact change, but also the opportunity to have increased visibility and leadership. I mean, it's a huge opportunity for leaders to get involved with, and we saw that in our RA Council as well.

Todd Laire (15:19)
That's awesome. That's great. I shared this with you earlier, and I think this comes more of an AI guardrails, I guess, and I could see this application in so many different instances. But I'll share this example, and you've heard this before. I was following this meme, like we always do. And it was somebody using ChatGPT or something of the like, and they were trying to create this extreme CrossFit, workout, you know, or workout of the day. And the funny thing is, make it even harder, make it even more difficult. And so then AI kept iterative output with even harder things to do. And then the prompt was, "Make it even more difficult that no human would actually be able to complete it." And then there was this prompt that came up and it was kind of just, I don't know, part of the meme, but it actually was like a warning. Like, you know, we don't recommend that someone actually do this exercise. This can cause bodily harm and even death. And I thought that was interesting because then I kind of took my focus off the humor of the meme and saw like, wow, this is, in my opinion, responsible usage. This was programmed, this came up. But I thought of that specifically with so many applications, specifically in marketing. "Hey, AI, build me a lead gen strategy using Google PPC where my expense is a dollar a day, and I'm going to make a million dollars in sales in a month." And AI coming back saying, "Okay, here's a strategy but know that you have next to an impossible chance of this happening." And I actually love that because it creates guardrails and it creates better expectations around what you can expect if you try something that AI recommends. What are your thoughts around that?

Jessica Hreha (17:25)
Yeah, I think that's really interesting. It reminds me outside of marketing though, back to the healthcare thing because lots of people, I won't name names, not me of course, but using ChatGPT as the new Google doctor, right? But you can actually put in all of your symptoms and it's actually really helpful, but it always has those disclaimers, right? Like call your doctor, you're like, thank you, I know. But yeah, I think that's really interesting from a marketing perspective too. I think it feels like kind of red teaming-ish, right? Where you're just pushing the systems to see what it can do. And I would expect an output like that. And I don't know if you've actually put that in there, we should try that and see what it says. But it's like, you almost want to have that, and I think maybe there are more companies that will spin up this way to say almost like caution, right? Or wouldn't it be great if it noticed that you copied and pasted the entire thing? And then went to publish because that's absolutely against the policy, right? You need to have human review, even if you're training it on brand tone and voice, you'll get there, but it's still 80% best, right? And even if it's perfect, you want the human eyes to make sure before it goes out the door. And so I wish we all had those warning buttons before we send those emails or publish those ads sometimes too. So maybe that's the analysis side of it will get more automated. I don't know.

Todd Laire (18:46)
Yeah, we'll see, right? Let's shift gears to more furthering education as well as securing buy-in. I'm sure you had some buy-in struggles as well as some efforts to get buy-in and get endorsement around doing more and being more innovative with how you're going to use AI and even implement your own AI. How do you involve C level, but also anybody that raises their hand, which I think is important, and that could be anybody that has an interest. You want interest, passion, and participation, but how do you involve them? It's on top of their day job, it's extra time. How do you get that started? How do you get that involvement to build towards buy-in and full endorsement?

Jessica Hreha (19:35)
If I'm hearing what you're saying too, it's how do you get over the barrier that a lot of people have if they don't wanna get involved because everyone's busy? We saw that a lot. I think there's multiple levels of that as well. So at the VP level or the heads of your marketing function level that sometimes are also too busy with strategy and a lot of other things to figure out what AI can do. And a lot of times there are more hands-off because they're not hands-to-keyboard creating. So there's more potential for disconnect in terms of really just the sheer impact that AI can bring to what we do in marketing. We put together a marketing leadership AI summit about halfway through the year last year, and the whole goal of that was to make sure that our marketing leadership team was all aligned on this being a huge opportunity for us as marketers, for our teams from a professional development perspective, and for impact on our business and our strategies.

And so we brought them all in on site. We did some kind of hype and rah-rah to start, kind of just broadly like where we were in terms of the opportunity with AI. We reviewed our guidelines, we reviewed our early use cases. We had them log in to Jasper, which a lot of them hadn't done yet. But then we had them do things, even after lunch, there was a fun, "Create a song for our upcoming trade show in the style of blah blah blah!" And then we shared that. It's just to get people to log in and use and see the power of it, too. And then in the afternoon, we had a use case workshop. So we trained on, what makes a good use case? How do you find them? We split up into four categories and then, old school sticky notes, right? Everyone uses Miro boards now. It's kind of fun to actually use sticky notes and create use cases. And then we prioritized use cases. We came out of that then with top three use cases per category. We presented that to our marketing leadership team, and then that became our second-half roadmap for use cases.

So it was definitely multifaceted in terms of the outcomes we were trying to get out of the meeting, but it was also, people are looking to you for leadership and we need to embrace the AI enthusiasts on your team, make sure that we're promoting these guidelines, but then also lead by example as marketing leaders. And I think that's a lot of it. When people ask, "How do I get people to log in?" A lot of creating that culture is, is talking about AI, bring AI into every meeting. How did you use AI in the last week? Maybe it's at the beginning of the meeting or the end of the meeting. And you're like, "I'll start," right. "I did XYZ at home and I created a pitch deck for my boss and I had AI analyze you know what I might be missing from the perspective

of my boss." But what you're really saying is, "I used it and it's okay. And I want you to use it, too, and I want to hear how you're using it, both in successes and in failures because we're all in this together. No one's an expert. We can all learn from each other. And all of that is really cultivating trust, transparency, which drives culture. Like that's what it is, but you have to participate. And leaders can have a lot of impact participating in that too, to make it that safe innovative space for the doers to continue to share.

Todd Laire (23:05)
Wow, that's awesome. And I think too, like marketing, you're a marketer and you know trends change all the time. It's hard to stay on top of the latest things and latest groundbreaking usages for digital marketing and obviously AI, and marketing has spun that even moreso. How do you stay on top of training and furthering your knowledge? And I assume what you're saying, too, with the council and lead by example, how you're using AI. But specifically with ethical AI usage, what role does ongoing training play to ensure that it's being used in an ethical manner?

Jessica Hreha (23:51)
Yeah, and even back to helping people embrace AI and creating the culture and getting over the barrier, according to the Marketing AI Institute's report last year, the number one barrier to AI adoption was education and training. It was like 80% of the organizations surveyed had no formal education or training provided. So that goes hand in hand then with responsible ethical AI adoption as well. So you have to give people the education and access, right? So the number two barrier was awareness and understanding. It goes hand in hand, right? We have to train people on what generative AI is. AI has become such a blanket term, used for everything. But AI is a discipline of which machine learning is a subset, which has been around for a long time. And a lot of traditional AI systems we use in marketing are actually just machine learning. Deep learning is a subset of machine learning, of which generative AI is a subset of deep learning, right?

So that's what's new. That's what's different. Even when you talk about AI, you need to know what kind of AI are we talking about here? And what are we focusing on? Adobe, they've had AI for a long time. We're using marketing automation, platforms have had machine learning in their systems to create dynamic – that's not new. What's new is generative. And so that's the new use cases, but it also creates this culture of innovation to bring in maybe traditional AI applications that we didn't do before. From an ethical standpoint though, it's really talking about making sure people know that there is bias in AI and if you're not providing education if they don't know that, if they only read the headlines, they might not understand that, right? But why Why is there bias? And we won't go through all those reasons on here. But like, that's a thing. And how to look out for it, which is why we need human review, right? And why we're continuing to have, and if you have concerns, it's just around AI literacy, and it kind of all comes back to that. And really AI literacy is the foundation for responsible AI adoption.
CMOs have a responsibility to upskill their workforce. At the same time, it's an inspirational moment. It's a professional development moment. Can you imagine anyone in marketing doing their job without the internet? We had people initially say, when I used this example of digital marketing, like before the internet, we didn't have digital marketing. It created all of these new

roles. And I had somebody tell me that they don't do anything with digital marketing, they just create messaging. So I've brought in the example to the internet because you email all day long, even if you create messaging and you're using SharePoint to write your Word docs. But that is how much it will proliferate our jobs, and that is why it's not marketing ops' job to figure out AI. It's not just a content job to figure out AI. We all have to figure out how it can streamline our work and we should want to, right? To be able to become more efficient and push off some of those routine tasks and figure out what do we like to do and what do we not like to do as much that AI can really help with.

Todd Laire (27:15)
Yeah, that's fantastic. Let's dive a little deeper into marketing-specific applications with AI, and this is more so from Jessica's desk, right? How are you seeing some really great applications and marketing for AI kind of above and beyond what we already know, you know, chat GPT can come up with some customer headlines that might be interesting based on persona input that you give it. But what are you seeing kind of next level or how are you using it for marketing?

Jessica Hreha (27:47)
Yeah, I'll share a couple examples. And it goes along with the line that, whatever you're an expert in, you will be able to push AI systems that much further. So writers who use AI will be able to get exponentially better outputs than non-writers, because you understand writing and storytelling, and you're asking the right questions or pushing the system. Same thing for designers. Designers will always be able to prompt better in image generation systems and video because they understand all of the nuances of design. And think about this from a content strategy perspective. I'm not just uploading an asset and have my brand tone and have all of the parameters in there where it's going to give me what I need for my social or campaign bill of materials, promotional. But I'm also having to still prompt for which stage of the buyer journey is this in, what's the goal? So an advanced use case that we have is we helped a customer, a content strategist who actually used to be on my team, so I'm very partial to this example. But we trained Jasper on the back end, basically content marketing best practices. So now the AI system knows your specific buyer journey and the purpose of each stage, like what we want to happen at each stage, and the persona, and the specific pain points of that persona, and the types of campaigns that we run, awareness, engagement, acquisition, and the type of writing that we want, active voice, human, all the brand things. And that's exactly what happened with this. We basically, it was things that she was doing, we were doing that only content strategists or content marketers or writers would do anyway. But we trained the system to do all of that. So I thought that was pretty next level and an example of how you can really specialize and then push AI systems that others may not be able to. I think all of the API examples are next level. So for example, Adidas. They have an API into their EPAM system, which is like very product marketing, CPG, retail focused, but then they push out all of their content into Excel or Google Sheets. And so they were able to write 7,500 product descriptions in 24 hours on brand, all automated, all into the format that they needed to get it to move forward in their production cycles. You know, integrations, so that at a click of a button, it's analyzing the account, all of the information with your value prop, and it's creating emails automatically on brand in the format that you need for sales to review for one-to-one. But then it's also doing that for any

one-to-many. And we have a customer who has a set of contacts that never get touched, which is like a marketer's nightmare. And now this automatically creates an email for them, and they can send it out, of course, after they've reviewed it. much closer to what marketing would want them to say from a brand perspective. So, I think, everyone thinks about content creation, but the use cases that are before content ever happens that are – think about the research phase, right? Going from weeks and days of research to minutes and hours of research to better inform the creative and content brief upfront to post content creation, right? Where you're actually analyzing content that's already been created in the view of the persona that you're targeting for what's missing, how content can be optimized, all of that kind of stuff. Like I love the – I watched a customer last week in Chicago figure out, they just weren't doing it the right way for Jasper, but figure out how to upload their Meta campaign data for a client and have it analyzed with insights, all of the data. The light bulb moment in the room. There were a bunch of people in the room. I was so glad that it worked. You know, live. They were like, "This is incredible. I cannot wait to go back and tell the media room how much time we just saved." Imagine that though right now instead of spending all this time getting insights, putting together the insights, you're taking those insights and spending your time optimizing the campaigns. Like we're not doing that enough as marketers because we're spending so much time just combing through the data on a regular basis, right?

Todd Laire (32:25)
Wow, that's awesome. Those are pretty unique examples, and I think that could inspire a lot of listeners to, like you said, kind of push it further, and I interpret that as, don't be satisfied with what the output is. Take the output, and then, like my example about CrossFit, even more, or dive in more here, or ask for more from it, because the output's only gonna be as good as the input. So keep iterating.

Jessica Hreha (33:20)
Exactly. And one more, as we're talking about the advanced use cases or advanced customers, a lot of people are thinking about, "How do I integrate AI into my existing workflows?" And the API use case too, is, "How do I stay in the systems that I'm already in today while leveraging my AI who hopefully knows everything about my company has my brand built in. I can give it all this additional context and it's using marketing templates." The more advanced thinking, too, is, "What will AI do to create new workflows?" So it's kind of going back to what we were saying before about that. Like what can I do today that I couldn't do before, but what new workflows will AI create? And I'll tell you an internal one that we're trying to figure out at Jasper is on the hyper personalized one-to-one ABM. Like we've been trying to figure this out as an industry for the past 10 years. Right.

But this is an example of an entirely net new workflow. So you have your list of customers, like accounts that you're going after, let's say, in an automated run that pulls data from all of your third party systems, ZoomInfo, everything like that, plus the customer's website, plus maybe the people that you're going after from LinkedIn. And it's specifically creating your email sequence in HubSpot, your BDR sequence, some LinkedIn ads, and all of those CTAs go to a very hyper-personalized landing page, like, "Hey Todd. Here's Jasper, but here's three blogs we

wrote about your company we think would help." Just very, very personal. But all of that was automated. And it's not just in a Word doc, it actually built the landing page, coded for you to move forward with. We're testing those right now, A/B right now too, and very, very early. But obviously the hyper-personalization is starting to work. So that's an entirely new workflow. That's not bringing it into an existing ABN workflow. So I give that example as something brand new that AI created.

Todd Laire (35:29)
Yeah, wow, that's amazing. And I'm seeing some of that too, just the hyper personalization and it's giving us that extra thought that we either will eventually have or didn't even think of in the first place. You probably laughed and you're like kind of the opposite example of this, but Jessica is AI coming for our jobs?

Jessica Hreha (35:44)
Ha ha ha. Okay, sorry, I didn't mean to laugh on cue like you thought I would but that was natural. Here's the thing, I think that it's easy to go to a place of fear from this. But the opportunity is to lean in and say, "How can I enjoy my job better with AI?" But I will also say, let's talk about, people are talking about jobs in the past, right? History is a series of events that repeat itself, but like, the ATM, right? Did the ATM entirely replace bank tellers? No. Did it create the need for less of them? Yes. Another one is travel agents. We used to have to go to travel agents for everything. But with the internet and online booking platforms, for those of us that want to, we can do that all ourselves. My parents still use a travel agent for every single trip that they plan. I use a Disney agent. They are worth their weight in gold, right? That same Disney agent planned my friend's adventure theme trip in Mexico. So we still have a need for these roles, but the routine, the automated, the like, or we wanna really get in their hands on and do it ourselves, I don't know. I think that's where AI can come in.

Todd Laire (36:52)
Mm-hmm. Yeah, agreed.

Jessica Hreha (37:09)
But if you want that really expert level, customized, complex itinerary, like human element, creative problem solving, plus the interpersonal side of it, where you like to talk to somebody about your trip and like to have that back and forth.That's kind of how I look at it. I think marketers will need to specialize. What are you good at uniquely? What do you like to do? I think even college graduates will have to specialize because the marketing generalist is, that's the stuff, the production side, that's what AI is gonna be really good at doing. But hopefully we'll be spending more time on the strategy side, which is normally reversed, right? We're not spending enough time on the strategy side. We're not thinking enough about why we're creating this asset, for who, for what purpose, how is it threaded into the broader scheme? Like in what ways will we replace organic traffic? Like these are the types of things I think humans will be really good at on the strategy side. And I think, agencies too, it's a time to rethink what your value add is. If you're just a content production shop, you've got to figure out something else, or

how to add value on top of what people can do in-house, you know, and generally your business model. So that's kind of how I look at it.

Todd Laire (38:25)
Yeah. And I think going back to your career journey, you could have been somebody that said, Oh, no, I fear AI, what am I going to do? Woe is me. And you did the exact opposite. You jumped ahead of it, in front of it, embraced it, I think embracing it is the biggest part of anything, right? When it comes to potential threats or perceived weaknesses. And you said, I want to be strong in this. And so I'm going to be an early stakeholder in this. And I admire that about you, but I think that's what it takes in general.

Jessica Hreha (38:58)
Think about the people, and this is a story straight from my former CMO too, who once got asked if she wanted to go to a class to learn about the World Wide Web, right? And she's like, and then I became for a while the only one in the company who knew about it. So then everyone's coming to her for the information. Think about those people who are very early into marketing automation, into social. There's benefit to being early and jumping in and figuring it out. But I also think right now, the pace of acceleration of the technology is so fast that we need to get it. Like you can't wait. It's not a wait and see moment. It's an adapt or fail moment. You've got to jump in and figure out what's working for you. But surround yourself with other people who are interested in this as well so you can learn from each other. And that will also scale your experience and your opportunities and like inspiration to apply even more.

Todd Laire (39:53)
Yeah, that's great. You've mentioned some tools. And so for some tool geeks like myself, and I'm sure you're probably a closet tool geek, or maybe not, but what are some of your go-to AI tools? I know obviously you're partial to Jasper, but would love to hear why Jasper, but what are some other new tools that have kind of popped up on your radar that you're embracing and think are really cool or helping you?

Jessica Hreha (40:21)
I will say, I focus, because of Jasper, I focus on the content side mostly. I actually sometimes go to people to say like, what's your video tool again? Or what's your, we really liked Beautiful AI last year for a while at VMware. I suck at creating PowerPoints and like the time it takes to redo like the org chart type thing, like it just, it kills me. So that's a really cool tool that you could just very easily move stuff around, but it was really, It's not an enterprise tool yet. It was hard for us to actually put into production from a brand perspective, because our brand is so complex. But if you're creating a PowerPoint, external presentation or something where it doesn't matter, I think that's a really cool tool. And that's not generative actually at all. Now they have an API into Chai-Chip-T and OpenAI, which we weren't interested in last year at all, right? So that's an example of something where this innovative thinking is taking you back to say like, there's gotta be a better solution for PowerPoint, that caused you that. My other my bookmark bar I'll share with you and because I encourage AI enthusiasts to do this and this is what you're your working AI council should be doing too, is kind of like working within all the platforms, but it's your typical,

I have GPT-4 that I pay for, I have Gemini, I have Claude, I have Perplexity, I love Perplexity, I have Meta AI, I hope everyone, by the time this podcast comes out, has played with Meta AI. Have you, Todd?

Todd Laire (41:59)
A little bit, yes.

Jessica Hreha (42:01)
So for anyone that's new to this, it's the Llama 3 model. They've just broke it this week, but on the left-hand side, there's new conversation and then there's Imagine. And if you've played with Dolly inside of ChatGPT, you know that you say, create an image that blah, blah. And it takes a minute or so, it circles and then it creates your image. And then if you edit the image at all, like say actually add this or add that, it kind of creates an entirely new image after circling for some time. Imagine in Meta, you click on the button and then you start to type "imagine" and you use words and it real time creates the images as you're going through it. So like you're like, imagine a capybara and it automatically, you're not done with a sentence but it shows you the capybara. And then you're like on the moon and shows that so the image evolves as you keep typing So you're actually able to I feel like get to where you're trying to go better because you can see how it's going along The way and then like you hit enter it gives you four examples, but then you go to edit it, like I actually wanted a flower It is really good at editing just the one thing you're asking without losing the integrity of the whole image, and it is lightning fast, so I'm very impressed with this.

Todd Laire (43:13)
Wow.

Jessica Hreha (43:16)
Image generation I think, it's not something your brand is gonna do externally, necessarily, but it's good for internal presentation decks. I think external presentations, I think it's great for storyboarding from the creative side of things. You can communicate better between creatives and the non-creatives in terms of like, where you're trying to go with something for people who don't understand like the creative language and all of that. And I also used it in my elementary school career day which was a blast. And now I kinda wanna go back and use the Imagine feature with Meta.

Todd Laire (43:55)
That's cool. Yeah. And that's so that's still new. I mean, I think a lot of people don't know about it. I know about it because I'm in there and I'm like, Oh, this is different. Now people are writing about it, and that's an interesting illustration that you shared. Let's talk about the future. I mean, what do you see? Obviously, you don't have a crystal ball and can't predict the future yet, and if you can, let me know because I have questions. But what as far as what do you see jobs being that are centered around AI

Jessica Hreha (44:05)

I think of the emergence of revenue operations, right? Like before, it was marketing and sales, and they're siloed. And now there's this huge push. And really, there are roles that you can get jobs, you can get a job being a revenue ops manager, even chief revenue officer. I see this happening with AI, chief AI officer, let's say, or AI implementation team, and even outsourced opportunities, creative and agency space, let's say. But what are some roles you are definitely seeing, like right around the corner with AI that I think Brands

and companies, organizations in the marketing space need to just finally dedicate the full-time headcount to this AI transformational, AI program management role. It is being shouldered by, or like off the side of your desk, you might call it too, by marketing ops and by some business owners. And it's not being given the type of attention that it would in a full-time job and the level of transformation that it can have in terms of like its advisory role and helping your CMO think long-term about impact on the organization, about how it could change your hiring, about how it, you know. If you think about the upskill opportunity and where AI is automating some of the roles, like how can we re-skill? What else could we be doing, right?

With this new freed up time, like what are we going to do? There's a lot to think about. And I think it's a lot of, it's happening right now and people who are moonlighting. That was me. That was the AI council at VMware last year too, is like, we were all moonlighting in this role. We were all working on top of our day jobs to do it. And it is not sustainable. And so I think we have to get to a point where this is real. And we're seeing it more and more in companies now where it may not be an external hire, but it's an internal, you know, leveling or promotion. And so that's where I think this opportunity again for leadership, you know, there's a wide open opportunity for marketers to step up and lead. And CMOs are looking for leadership and direction.

So that's kind of one that I see coming up. I asked Pi AI from Inflection in the elementary school career day what types of jobs would be here in 20-25 years depending on who I was talking to. And it was like space tourism and AI ethicists. Like if that if you are passionate about ethics and AI, there are people who need to lead in that space. And there's ways to get involved. But even like robot caregivers, I thought was a good one. And empathy, personality, like creators, stuff like that. But from a marketing perspective, I actually went back and forth on this a long time, because I feel like, like the internet, like digital marketing, it's a part of all of our jobs. So at what point is this AI transformation? What point, think back, what point is the digital transformation over? But it's still a lot of culture and change management and ongoing efforts that I don't think you would need to have that conversation about if the role is around in five to ten years because it's that important that the resources need to be dedicated to it now.

Todd Laire (47:46)
Yeah, wow, fascinating. And I think too, that leads to a bigger question around the future of AI. What are some trends that you're seeing as we live in this current evolution? It's evolving and changing, and there's more tools coming out. What are some trends we've talked about, like the death of prompting, you know, like similar to marketing deaths, you know, like, "Email marketing is dead." Well, no, certain types of email marketing are dead, but actually email is still very

strong. In an AI example. And maybe, you know, we could dive into the death of the prompting phenomenon, but what do you have to say about that or any other trends that you're seeing?

Jessica Hreha (48:29)
Yeah, I mean, I think traditional marketing is having a renaissance, right? In-person events are back and people are very excited about that. And so like we're back to networking and creating real relationships with people. And like word-of-mouth marketing matters, you know, in ways that like the, that we're all craving that kind of genuinely authentically human interaction. From a prompting perspective, I don't think prompting completely dies. And remember, there's like the very engineering, coding style, back-end prompting, which is necessary. But like marketers as prompt engineer experts, more and more tools are going to be prompting us for the information and context it needs to give you a better output. And that's what Jasper does, too, in a lot of its create flows. It's like, what are you trying to create? Okay. What's the topic? Who are you targeting? What's the main message? What context do I need to know? Like what's the format? So it's asking you these questions and allowing you to really make sure that you're putting in all those inputs to get the best output.

I think everyone hopefully is hearing, agents are around the corner. And this is the idea that there are automated tasks. What, what most people are talking about right now too, is like the travel side. Like I'm planning a trip to the city and AI is going to automatically book my Uber and my restaurant reservation and my walking food tour, you know, in the afternoon, but I still think like, we will have the ability to say yes or no.

So humans will still have agency over their decisions but like Dario Amodei was on the Ezra Klein podcast a couple weeks ago saying that agents are 3-18 months away, which 18 months sounds normal but three months away? If that's the case like that'll be here before we know it and so I think it's kind of prepping for like what does this more automated side of marketing even look like right Paul Raitzer talks about this one in HubSpot all the time like it's 23 clicks to do anything in HubSpot. But what if we were able to say, here's who we're targeting, with what solution, right? And you don't even have to say what style campaign. What if it created the whole campaign strategy brief for you?

I know we're talking about strategy too, right? But it's like, it gives you that starting place and then you decide what to do with it. What if you woke up in the morning, imagine, right? You woke up in the morning and on your desk, so let's say it's like digitally a push notification or something, right? You're getting traffic analysis from last week on your website and keyword analysis of what's happening on the website. And you're getting insights into why those things are happening. And you're getting actions, recommended actions that you can take to optimize, leverage that information. And it went ahead and wrote those six things for you already. Now you just decide whether to say yes or no, right? Or review them. I think that's kind of where it's going from that type of pushed perspective. But then humans, we are marketers, we are the orchestrators, you know, the ultimate strategist inside of that. But like now we're directing the campaigns instead of creating them from scratch.

Or waiting until the end of the month or QBR time to finally pull all those insights, put them together, and then you don't have time to implement anything. That's the cycle we live in right now, right? We never actually get to optimize in real time. So I think there's a lot of promise and benefit to that.

Todd Laire (52:06)
Yeah, me too. That's amazing. And I guess too, I would love to know if, if you were talking to your younger self, like one of those questions, what, from what you've learned incorporating AI into marketing strategies, like what advice or best practices would you offer based on the type of successes you've had?

Jessica Hreha (52:45)
That is a really good question. I wanna think about that for a minute because things that I wouldn't have already done, right? Like I think my advice to anyone looking back is like, don't hesitate, step in the water, dive into the waters, and start figuring out how you can apply this to your job and what that means for you and the marketing team. And get an executive sponsor, but don't wait three months for them to figure it out. Start piloting. Just start doing, because your leadership team will thank you, because they aren't sure how to get started or what to do.

But you bringing them these results, even half-baked ideas, but you've partially tested it, that's better than not bringing them anything at all. I think that's kind of how I look at it. Honestly, I wish I'd started in AI sooner. I wish I was at that marketing AI conference that my colleague was at that I didn't know about, all of that kind of stuff so that I kind of, I feel like there is a, while it's a small group of people, people who knew this was coming, like GPT-2, 3, was out years ago, right? This has been happening. The Attention Is All You Need paper came out in 2017. Like, AlphaGo happened around that time. Like, why IBM Watson? Like, why weren't we paying more attention? I think people were. I remember sitting at a, I think it was a SiriusDecisions conference years ago, and IBM Watson was speaking. And it was interesting, but it was like that when the AR/VR people got up there five years ago, and you're like, yeah, we are so far away from this, right?

Todd Laire (54:05)
Mm-hmm.

Jessica Hreha (54:34)
It was like it needed to have that ChatGPT moment to democratize what this could really mean for us. It's almost the technology that's like seeing is believing and I feel like that's the leadership thing too. Like with CEOs, with leadership, showing them how it works and that it works. I still have agencies. Somebody just last night told me that their CEO was like, "You made all that up, that was pre-baked. I don't believe it," you know type of thing. It's like you've got to show people how it writes. And so, but the time is now. Jump in.

Todd Laire (55:06)

Yeah, that's great. Stop telling, start showing. I love that. Well, this wouldn't be a Married2Marketing podcast episode without asking you specifically about communication and relationships. And just in a general sense, what advice does Jessica have around fostering really great communication and strengthening and solidifying relationships, whether personal or otherwise.

Jessica Hreha (55:35)
Yeah, I mean, I think in general, it all comes down to trust and transparency. But I was thinking about this in terms of marriage advice from a married to marketing. And because I'm also in the thick of parenting, my kids are six and nine. And I think it was a Brene Brown thing we saw a while ago that was like, you only have so much capacity throughout the day, right? And to like, be open with your partner in terms of where you're at. Like I'm at, at the end of the day, you know, hard day, like, I don't know, something happened at work, stressful, whatever it is, and you tell them, "I'm at 20%." That's all you have left. But even just telling them that, having that open communication to say, there are times when, and I feel like there's always one of you that's more annoyed at the kids than the other. And so the other one steps in. But having that openness to say, we acknowledge that this is a thing, that we aren't at full battery at all times in our patience level with the kids.

Because we had that conversation, the other night, my husband came home from coaching baseball and I was at the game and all that stuff, but bedtime is very stressful for any parent. And he was just like, every single thing was like up here, you know, like at an 11. And I looked at him and I was like, you are excused. But because we already had that conversation initially, like I knew he knew where I was coming from and I knew where he was coming from. And he said, okay. And he left and I got bedtime and everything was better because he was just out of capacity. And I feel like acknowledging that, having those types of conversations allowed that to happen. But had we not had that upfront, he would be like, what do you mean? Like, I can't parent. Like I'm not, you know what I mean? There's a different way that he could have handled that. So I felt like that was really good advice. I don't know what article it is, but it was a Brene Brown parenting thing. And battery levels and just being open with each other about where you're at throughout the day, I think has been really helpful.

Todd Laire (57:29)
That's awesome. That's great. Are you the resident AI expert in your household? Is your husband coming to you asking you how he should use AI? Or is he, you know, self-sufficient? Or is he like some people, just not even like, that's her thing? I do not mind.

Jessica Hreha (57:44)
No, he is in it. And in fact, I think me being in this like has just opened up his mindset where he's tried to talk about it at work. He's in a, they can't even log into any AI. He's at a financial company. But he's talking about it now. And he actually found a workaround in that he could use Bing chat, which is now called Copilot. And he would like blow people's minds throughout the day by telling them that they even have access to Bing, they could use it, but he uses it for like, Excel formulas, he's analyst. So, instead of banging your head against the wall trying to get the

formula right, he will ask Bing or even before he discovered that he would use ChatGPT on his phone, right. And it's not data information. It's like helping you with your job. And so he's able to get things done a lot faster because of AI and he's like the evangelist in his group at his company as well in terms of how they could be applying it. So it's kind of cool to see.

Todd Laire (58:39)
That's awesome. Awesome. Well, Jessica, this has been an amazing, amazing episode. I've learned a lot and I hope this is the first of many that we do together as we watch this movie play out in real time. So I wanna thank you personally for coming on and sharing your expertise and your knowledge. And let's do this again sometime.

Jessica Hreha (59:05)
Yeah, look, no one is exactly an expert. We are all in this together. The more that we can share is the rising tide, you know, that we can shape the future of marketing, but it's also like what an opportunity we have right now in marketing and, you know, in our personal lives too. So I'm optimistic about it and excited and happy to be a part of it. And thank you so much for having me on today. This was super fun.

Todd Laire (59:30)
Awesome. Jessica Hreha, thank you. We'll keep watching your journey as it unfolds. I'm excited to watch.

Jessica Hreha (59:38)
Sounds good. Yeah, please connect with me!