Rob Henderson ([00:01](#)):

Hi there, and welcome to this latest installment in the Science of Talent, which is Bio Talent Canada's series of podcasts where we explore the attraction and retention of the best skills and talent available to Canada's biotech industry. My name is Rob Henderson. I'm the president and CEO of BioTalent Canada, and I'm joined today by a true entrepreneur and disruptor. Ronen Benin is the founder and CEO of Glissner, as well as Right Blue Labs and the Avail app. Those three different companies., He attended Ivy Business School at Western University and the University of Western Ontario right here in Canada. He's adaptive, he's results focused, and he's a strategist who enjoys working on disruptive projects. He's built, scaled, and sold multiple ventures across the spectrum, including the acquisition of Tradyo Incorporated by Metroland Media, which is a division of TorStar in 2014. So it's my pleasure to welcome Ronen Benin to the podcast series today. Welcome, Ronen. How are you?

Ronen Benin ([01:09](#)):

I'm doing great. Thank you so much for having me.

Rob Henderson ([01:11](#)):

Oh, no, it's great to have you. I'm going to get into, because we're going to have to get into you and to the companies that you're running here, because you yourself, I think the background that you bring is equally fascinating. So first of all, you win, we have Metroland Media, you did some acquisition work over there with Tradyo, then you're going into Glissner, which is all about clean phones and reducing waste fill landfill from phone wipes and all of that. We've got Right Blue Labs, which is a biotech company and Avail app, which is a wellbeing app. So tell me a li, okay, so we'll get into the businesses in a minute. Tell me a little bit about yourself and h how you decided to become this entrepreneur in so many different phases.

Ronen Benin ([01:54](#)):

Happy to do so, and that's a great question. So I'll give you the sort of two minute version of my story, but I'm an immigrant to Canada. My parents are immigrants. My mom was an architect, my dad was a mechanical engineer, trained in the former Soviet Union, and when they came to Canada, they were looking for work and unfortunately, their degrees were not recognized. And so they were like many immigrants trying to figure out how to build a life for themselves, for their kids, and they were forced to start a business. And I have a younger brother, so we grew up watching my parents build their own business and through all the ups and downs, what they told us over the years was that you never know what's going to happen in this life. Make sure you are always building something for yourself because you don't know where you're going to end up. So make sure you always build something for yourself. So that's how I became an entrepreneur.

Rob Henderson ([03:00](#)):

So it's in your DNA, essentially, right?

Ronen Benin ([03:03](#)):

In my dna. Absolutely.

Rob Henderson (03:05):

Absolutely. And okay, so we're going to get into, so I want you to remember that the being an entrepreneur and everything else and then managing a company of people, many of whom are not entrepreneurs. So I'm sure that that's a challenge as well. But so let's get into some of the companies that you run right now. Tell me a little bit, we'll talk about Right Blue Labs and everything else, but tell me a little bit about Glissner.

Ronen Benin (03:25):

Absolutely. So Glissner is a biotech PropTech company. It was founded in 2020. My wife is actually an emergency room physician. And early in the pandemic, she came home dressed head to toe in protective equipment, and she had her phone in a biohazard bag. I looked at her, she had four heads and asked, why is your phone in a biohazard bag? And she explained to me that our phones are one of the biggest vectors for a disease spread. And in a setting like a hospital, it is the one item that staff bring with them from home use in the hospital, inpatient rooms, and then take home with them. So she was looking for a way to be able to clean her phone before she left the hospital because she didn't want to be bringing germs back home. It's not only a covid issue, it's an issue with any germs, period. If you're in a setting where there's a lot of disease spread, you want to make sure that an object that's comes into contact with those diseases is sanitized. There was no effective way of doing that. So we decided to build the world's first clinical grade phone sanitizer that uses UV light to kill all viruses and bacteria on any phone in a couple seconds,

Rob Henderson (04:50):

Uses UV light, but it's completely safe for fingers and toes and everything else that go on to a phone, obviously.

Ronen Benin (04:58):

The way UV light works is UVC light. UVC light breaks dna. So UVC light is not safe for if it comes into contact with skin, it's not safe for the person, but we've built a device that encapsulates that UVC light inside the sanitation chamber when a person's sanitizing their phone. So there's no light that's permeating outside of the sanitizer. It's completely safe for the user's phone, their phone case, and the user, but it's not safe for the viruses and bacteria on their phone.

Rob Henderson (05:33):

So it goes after even non-DNA viruses, right? Like vector viruses and Absolutely.

Ronen Benin (05:38):

Stuff like that. Absolutely

Rob Henderson (05:39):

Right. Oh, very cool. Wow, that's really, that's awesome. I can't tell you how many entrepreneurs and innovators that I know are either married to or have family members in their family member who's is in the medical field, whether it's a nurse or physician or veterinarian or everything else. I think it's just great. It just inspires, I think, really good dinner table conversation and gets the wheels going. Right?

Ronen Benin (06:02):

Absolutely. Absolutely. Lots of conversations around healthcare, around medicine, never a dull moment in this house.

Rob Henderson (06:11):

We've also got you're CEO of Right Blue Labs? Yes. So what does that have to do with Glissner, and did that come first or that part and parcel, or what?

Ronen Benin (06:20):

Yeah, so Right Blue Labs is a company that I founded in 2014, actually, right as Tradyo was sold. It was founded originally to provide services for high performing sports organizations. So think about national sports federations, Olympic level athletes, and we were building a way for athletes to be able to document how they were feeling day-to-day to identify trends that were causing them to become sick, injured, and burnt out. We built this in preparation for the Rio Olympics, actually, and that's how we got our start.

Rob Henderson (07:14):

Okay, so you got right, blue Labs, you're going along, right. And we haven't even gotten to the Avail app yet, so we'll get that in a second. So you're going along here and then you decide to branch out because you have this fantastic idea on how to sanitize phones for not only, I'm assuming the medical institutions, but also for people at home so that they can feel safer around their family. So how does one come out of the other here?

Ronen Benin (07:38):

They're completely separate businesses, so I'm very fortunate to have over the years, built a team that's multidisciplinary that is able to focus on multiple projects at the same time. And so yeah, businesses are completely separate. Right Blue Labs is a software company, and Glissner is a biotech PropTech company, so they don't really have anything to do with each other, but a lot of the core team members who are overseeing the various projects we have are the same.

Rob Henderson (08:15):

Oh, okay. I was going to ask you that. So a lot of the core team you actually have working in both Glissner and Right Blue, correct? And Right Blue Labs? Correct. Okay, awesome. So let's get into the avail app and then we can finish the triumvirate here of the things that you're in charge of the Avail app, which I saw it's a wellbeing app, and I saw it over on the iPhone, was it, what do you call it? The app store and everything else, and taking a look at seeing what that's, tell us a little bit about where that came from. So Right Blue Labs, I just want to get the chronology of events here. You started right, blue Labs right after you finished Tradyo correct. And then Glissner came in and you said around 2020, right?

Ronen Benin (08:49):

Yes. So Avail we founded Avail. So Avail is actually a product built within Right Blue Labs, right? So right Blue Labs built Avail is an app. It was built starting in 20 17, 20 18. What we were doing with Right Blue Labs is we were servicing high performance sports organizations with a product called Logit, and we eventually reached market saturation within Canada. So we were servicing over 80% of the national sports federations, and we were looking for opportunities to grow and realized that there was a lot of growth opportunity if we were to go outside of performance sports, if we were to focus on

organizations that wanted to have high performing teams. And that's where a veil was born. So Avail was inspired by our original product Logit from Right Blue Labs, and effectively is a wellbeing app that helps people understand why they feel the way they feel and provides them with resources to help them feel better and allows 'em to build care plans to help them feel better over time. So

Rob Henderson ([10:15](#)):

In terms of why they feel the way they feel, is that understanding your own psychology or your own psychosomatic reactions to external stimuli?

Ronen Benin ([10:24](#)):

Exactly. So we're doing psychometric psychosomatic analysis Oh, fantastic. On user generated data. So they're answering a series of likerd questions whenever they do a checkup, and then based on those questions, we give them insight into areas of their life that may be imbalanced, and then they're able to dig in a little bit further and then consume resources to help them.

Rob Henderson ([10:49](#)):

Great. And is the app now, obviously it's for individuals because it's for individual health and wellbeing, I can understand that. How do organizations tap into it or can they?

Ronen Benin ([10:57](#)):

Yeah, so we are enterprise only. We have a free version of the app available for anybody if they want to understand their wellbeing. But we monetize through organizations. For organizations, this is a tool they make available to all their employees. And then what we do is we bubble up insights to administrator. So we don't share any personal information about any individual within the organization, but we say within specific geographies, within specific divisions, these are the trends that are forming, these are the challenges that your employees are having. And we build recommendations for administrators to build programming to help their staff feel better.

Rob Henderson ([11:48](#)):

So that's interesting. Where did a veil come from? I mean, again, we've got talking about tangential businesses here. Now you're talking about psychometrics. We're not even necessarily talking about viruses or bacteria anymore, right? We're just talking about psychometrics and everything else. And by the way, Bravo, you're probably the only second person I've ever encountered that used the word psychometric and understood what it was. It's sort of a very niche kind of thing. We do it a lot because we do labour market intelligence and a lot of surveys. So we bandi about the term quite a bit, but I don't hear it very much out in the marketplace. So tell me a little bit of where a avail came from. Where did that come, does that, that came out of your mind?

Ronen Benin ([12:26](#)):

It came a bit out of my mind, but it came mainly from market feedback. When we were building logit originally, we had lots of companies, larger corporations that saw our product and asked if they could use it. They weren't sports organizations, but they said, look, we're having challenges within our workforce. We're having retention challenges, lots of burnout. You're solving this for sports organizations. Can you solve this for us? And then it was very serendipitous. We actually met an individual who ended up becoming an investor in the business who has lots of experience. He, he's a

social worker and a psychologist. He has lots of experience in helping build high performing teams with a focus on working for first responder organizations. So some of this investors, clients in include the Ontario Provincial police, York regional police, various paramedic associations. And in partnership with this investor, we started building out functionality that would service the first responder market. And as we started building functionality for the first responder market in a lot of corporations said that they got enough value from the product to be willing to pay for it. And that's how we went on our path.

Rob Henderson ([14:01](#)):

Wow, okay. Wow. Again, three really, very radically different business lines that you're in touch with. So something I talk to a lot of when I get to talk to someone who launches a small and medium size enterprise, let alone several of them, is that entrepreneurial mindset where we, we've, we've just talked about three different business lines. So a lot of entrepreneurs sometimes have, and I'm, I'm not making light of it, sometimes they have a mild case of adhd, sometimes not diagnosed, and sometimes they can harness that as an advantage, whether it's an actual neurodiversity or not. Right. But do you find that the fact that you have to divide your attention amongst different business lines Now you mentioned that some of the teams are in common amongst, I'm assuming some are devoted as well dedicated to, to one of those business lines. Absolutely. Do you find that dividing your attention that, or having multiple business lines, is that a challenge or an advantage in terms of managing teams?

Ronen Benin ([14:58](#)):

It's both. It's, there's definitely challenges, right? Because there's opportunity cost every minute that you spend on one project you're taking away from the other. But it's also a great source of inspiration. There's been lots of lessons learned from my businesses that have applied to the other businesses, and I find that it speeds up sort of the feedback journey. I'm able to get a lot of insight on things that may not be working and then apply those insights to my other businesses without having to have made those sort of errors in those ventures. It's really, really important to have a core stable team that's able to help you manage all these various things because it's impossible to do it by yourself. And so I'm grateful for my team. Of course, we have individuals who are dedicated to one of the companies at a time, but the fact that I do have my core team focused on the various businesses and knowing how much resourcing and energy is required for each business is really, really important because they hold help, hold each other in check as well as hold me in check, because I am quite ambitious and I do like to take on a lot of things.

([16:25](#)):

And so my team always helps temper that a little bit.

Rob Henderson ([16:31](#)):

So they have to say, okay, Ronan three businesses is enough. Exactly. We don't need a fourth or a fifth right now. Is that it? Exactly, exactly. And I'm assuming the core team, these would probably be the individuals, your senior individuals probably. Yes. Right. You're talking about some of those, I would think what we call industry agnostic skills like sales, marketing, finance, management, maybe hr, all of that stuff.

Ronen Benin ([16:51](#)):

Some of those for sure. But, but being a technology entrepreneur, most of my core team is actually made up of scientists and engineers.

Rob Henderson (17:03):

Oh, wow. Okay. So that's interesting. In radically different business lines,

Ronen Benin (17:06):

Radically different business lines. So I'm fortunate to, my co-founders in the businesses have mechatronics degrees, so they're trained as engineers, but understand various areas of engineering. And did

Rob Henderson (17:25):

You say mechatronics? I just wanted

Ronen Benin (17:26):

Mechatronic. Yes.

Rob Henderson (17:28):

I think that was a toy I played with when I was about, that's the one that turns into the robot, isn't it? The car that

Ronen Benin (17:34):

The transformers, you're thinking about the transformer.

Rob Henderson (17:37):

That's it. Exactly. That's right. Exactly. So what's mechatronics? Tell us, just enlighten us

Ronen Benin (17:41):

First. Mechatronics is an education where you get exposure to everything from software to hardware to systems engineering. You get the whole sort of gamut of different things that you could build, whether they be tangible goods or software. So these are very multidisciplinary skilled individuals who have a technical mind and are able to apply their skillset to a variety of different types of projects.

Rob Henderson (18:15):

So by nature, the education is one that lends itself to multiple business lines.

Ronen Benin (18:19):

Exactly.

Rob Henderson (18:26):

By 2029, there will be four jobs for every one candidate in Canada's Bioeconomy. This is great news for those looking to pursue a career in the industry for sure. But such a talent shortage could spell doom for employers, especially the small to medium sized enterprises that make up 94% of the industry bio talent. Canada's newest labour market information study dives deep into the issues and makes evidence-based recommendations to help secure the BioE economy's future. Download your copy today at biotalent.ca slash lmi study.

Speaker 3 (19:04):

Now,

Rob Henderson (19:05):

How did you attract such great talent to you, Ronen? I mean, besides the fact that obviously you're entrepreneurial and successful, all of that. How did you find people with mechatronic educations or these kinds of people that would be able to follow you along different intellectual streams here?

Ronen Benin (19:20):

It hasn't been easy. It hasn't been easy. And I've built many businesses. I've sold businesses, and it took me many iterations of my core team to find these individuals who I could see myself building multiple companies with. The thing that, the competitive advantage that I think I had in terms of finding these folks is that I'm a visionary and I do a good job of being able to sell the dream, sell a vision, and gather people around that common goal, that common vision. And this current group, they bought into that they really believed in what we were doing. Fortunately, I already had traction, so I started the company with a different, I started Wright Labs actually by myself, brought in a several teams before these folks, and then I eventually found them, my chief technology officer, inright Labs. I had hunted actually because I had such a difficult time finding, oh, a technological leader. And then once he was brought in after a little bit, he said, I love this. I've worked. I would love to bring in folks that I've worked with over the years that I know are rock stars that I think you'll like as well. And so one by one, he started introducing them. We met with them. We did technical and non-technical interviews. Most of them fit the bill. And so we started building our team, rebuilding our team from that point.

Rob Henderson (21:10):

So much like science itself, a lot of trial and error, right?

Ronen Benin (21:13):

Absolutely.

Rob Henderson (21:14):

Absolutely. So what do you think your own vision on, let's talk about your people now because we're talking about this whole thing is about talent, it's about team building and everything else. What is your approach? What do you think you brought to the table to attract some of these best and brightest minds that you wanted to have go along your entrepreneurial jour journey with you? Where was your vision and how did you implement it or impart it to some of the key people in your teams?

Ronen Benin (21:38):

Great question. So I am a visionary, but I know what my weak weaknesses are as well, and I'm not the most operationally focused individual. And so I was looking for people that wanted to take the reins and really drive, really put their stamp on what we were building. I wanted them to feel like this was theirs as well. So beyond offering generous equity compensation in the various projects, it's been really important that every person that gets brought on board. So this is not just the leaders, but every employee that gets brought into the company, I wanted them to want to have impact. If an individual is just wants to do a job and has no sort of drive towards making a true impact, then they're not a good fit for our company because I want everybody to be hungry and to be building and to be disrupting current

industries. I've no interest in reinventing the wheel. I want to build new wheels. And that's, those are the sorts of people that I'm looking for regardless of what role they're in my companies.

Rob Henderson (23:15):

And how do you That's, well, and that's a fantastic attractant, I'm sure, but it's a heck of a responsibility because it's also means if you're getting people in here that are making a difference, it behooves you that you're going to have to prove them, prove to them that they are, and you're going to have to be the level of communication and transparency so that they see the difference they're making. How do you achieve that? How do you go? Because if you're talking about everybody in the company, that's a lot of people to make sure that they stay informed as to what your progress is and the difference that you're making.

Ronen Benin (23:46):

Absolutely. So we have some ongoing events as a team where everybody in the company, regardless if they're an employee, if they're an investor, if they're a manager, an advisor, we have these town halls every month where every manager of each division provides an update as to what's happened over the last month, what were some of the biggest challenges, what did we learn from those challenges? And based on those learnings, what do we believe that the next little while looks like? What are we doing from those learnings? I found that format of doing those monthly town halls has been really impactful. Obviously during the town halls, there's lots of food. We do prizes, we, after the town hall is formally done, we often do a games night, right, and just a hangout and make it a bit of a social. It was a bit challenging during the height of the pandemic to do those sorts of things, of course. And I'm very grateful that chapter is over, but we try to keep it light and give people the opportunity to ask questions and share.

Rob Henderson (25:21):

And how many people are we talking about here, Ronen, in your three companies?

Ronen Benin (25:25):

Across the three companies? There is about 40 staff right now.

Rob Henderson (25:29):

Wow, okay. And how many work in more than one? How many are overlap?

Ronen Benin (25:33):

There's 12 that work in more than one.

Rob Henderson (25:36):

Okay. Well, so we talked about, you were also, earlier you're talking about compensation where of course you have to be competitive in the compensation, sometimes overly competitive in the compensation, depending on the technical acumen or the specific skill that you want to get. But that's not, and you and I both know, and I can tell by the way you're talking, that's not going to be the stickiness that keeps, there's always going to be somebody that has a deeper pocket than you. So beyond the transparency, beyond the feeling of belonging or tapping into buying into your vision, is

there a secret sauce that you found in your culture that really has resonated amongst your people as both an attractant for really good talent as well as a retention mechanism?

Ronen Benin (26:19):

That's a great question. So to be completely honest with you, that attractant for good talent needs to be that vision. It needs to be that vision, and it also needs to be the colleagues that that individual will have. We're looking for a very specific type of person to work in. Our companies and the people that come to work for us know that their colleagues, the people that they're going to be surrounded by are going to challenge them. They're going to be innovators in their own, they're going to be disruptors. They're going to be trying to move that needle every day. And so we tend to attract a specific type of person, a person that wants to make a difference. Compensation is very important, especially with wages rising on an ongoing basis, on an annual basis. People have lots of different choices where they can work, but seldom is the determining factor, right? The culture of the company, the types of problems that the companies work is working on, and the ability to have an impact is what we believe sets us apart.

Rob Henderson (27:40):

And do you feel like, sure, I totally can understand that, but also, do you feel that the visions of your companies like what they do, you're talking about an app that helps people, men, people's mental wellbeing and allows to better inform companies so they can make choices that are going to be reinvigorate their team as opposed to being something that's debilitating. You're also talking about a UV light mechanism to clean your phone and to reduce the amount of clean wipes in landfills so that there's a green or climate change awareness of that. How do you manifest that in your own company? I mean, it's not assuming, it's not just about the stuff that you produce, whether it's a software as a service or the Glissner mechanisms or the products, but you also have to obviously show that you want to show some leadership within with your teams. How do you do that? Or what do you do in order to show that you're living, you're what you preach?

Ronen Benin (28:42):

Absolutely. So we use our own products. We don't build anything that we don't want to use. So I mean, there's a camera behind me. There's a clean phone behind me. I remember, this is a bit of a tangent, but I remember when we were developing the clean phone, my wife came home one day when the clean phone was out getting updated, and we only had a couple of prototypes. And she had gotten used to sanitizing her phone and the clean phone. And the clean phone wasn't here because it was out for updates. She didn't know what to do with herself. She's like, I have this dirty phone. I know I can't use wipe chemical wipes on it because one Chemical wipes are horrible for the environment, but beyond that, they destroy my phone. What am I supposed to do? And so I recommended that she washes her phone with soap and water, and that was not acceptable for her. So we are building products that we ourselves want to use. We're solving problems that we intimately understand, and the types of technologies that we're building are technologies that are built for a better tomorrow. That's what we're focusing on. We're not trying to build gimmicks to make a quick buck. We're trying to build the infrastructure for a healthier, more sustainable cleaner tomorrow. And in terms of the types of employees that we attract, they're employees that have that vision, that interest, that goal as well.

Rob Henderson (30:23):

And how do you as a disruptor, a person and a company that's managing these three different product lines that are disrupting the industries that you go in, in terms of making the thinking, how do you harness that or also control it within human resource management? Because let's face it, I mean, innovation's all about breaking the rules. We all know that you have to break the rules in order to really be truly entrepreneurial and innovative. But human resource management is all about following the rules. It's all about compliance and policies and stuff like that, which is sort of a dichotomy. You got to sort of manage your company one way, but at the same time, your company's doing all this, really, your companies are doing all this really incredible disruptive stuff. So how do you bring the team in line? So, but being a disruptor internally, I suppose, could be sometimes rather distracting. So how have you manufactured your culture to feed that disruptive mindset?

Ronen Benin (31:22):
That's a great question. So we, culture is integral to what we're building. You want to have that culture that sort of breeds innovation, but we're also very disciplined in terms of process. So we have managers at all the companies that meet with each one of their team members on an ongoing basis, set goals, track goals. We do daily standups to understand what people are working on, and we meticulously log and document all of

Rob Henderson (32:05):
That. So you're following a lot of best practices that have already been established Absolutely. Within HR and incorporating that into a company that even with it has a disruptive mindset.

Ronen Benin (32:15):
Absolutely.

Rob Henderson (32:16):
Right.

Ronen Benin (32:16):
Okay. Yeah. There's a reason that they're best practices, right? Because they're tried and true. And I wouldn't say that we haven't innovated on some of those best practices. We've identified certain meeting cadences and structures that work better for our teams than what the industry norms are. But for the most part, in terms of the sharing of information, opportunities for accountability, those are in place and those are essential for us to be able to not only make sure that everybody's focused, but also to be able to document our progress over time, which is important for all of our stakeholders.

Rob Henderson (33:10):
Right. Understood. Yeah. Now, and speaking of stakeholders, I mean part of your background, as you mentioned, we said that entrepreneurialism is probably part of your dna, but so is the immigrant experience, the newcomer experience as you mentioned as well, how do you think that's, that has affected your approach to attracting and retaining talent?

Ronen Benin (33:31):
Wonderful question. So we believe that number one, diversity is essential to well functioning, high performing teams. And so if you look at the makeup of our team, it's extremely diverse. We have folks of

all different ethnic backgrounds, different industries that they've come from as well. Lots of times when a company's operating in an industry, they look to hire talent from within that industry that has experience in that industry. We believe that culture fit is the most important thing. So we look for culture first and a base skillset, but industry experience is a lot less important for us because we believe that those sorts of skills and insights can be learned. And that's one of our actually secrets, I guess, to being able to find really, really good talent. We don't look where everybody else is looking. We look outside of our core industry and in terms of immigrants, so I'm sure we'll get to this at some point, but there are a lot of immigrants to Canada. Canada is a country made up of immigrants, and a lot of these immigrants are extremely skilled, but they lack opportunities to show their skillset. And so we're actively looking for those underrepresented groups and giving them opportunities to shine.

Rob Henderson ([35:16](#)):

So do you think, I just want to extrapolate that. So you're doing something, I mean, let's face it, for the success of your businesses, you've got to be doing something different. That's the whole point of disruption. And also, I mean, as you may know, we did a labor market survey that showed that the bioeconomy itself is not really going down the diversity PLA path. We only have 33% women that are employed, even though most of them, most of the STEM graduates are women. We're only employing newcomers and internationally educated professionals. About 10 or 11% of the time we're even. And we're dismal on Canadians with disabilities and indigenous Canadians. So, and you're also talking about something that's even more radical within the industry, and that's not looking for a PhD in molecular biology In order to work in your biotech company, which is along the lines, a lot of times in academic bias, there is an academic bias within the organization. So is it, do you think that in biotech, in the biotech industry, which is uneducated, we think a rather enlightened, you said all of the things about in being the diversity enhances innovation. It's true. All of the studies have shown that psychometrics as well as shown that it enhances innovation, enhances access to different markets. Why do you think so many employers within the Bioeconomy are not grasping that concept that not only is it the most readily available talent, but it's the talent that's going to make your company shine?

Ronen Benin ([36:49](#)):

That's a really great question, and it's something that's baffled me as well. As a founder, I see all this talent out there that hasn't been claimed, and it shocks me that somebody that's so skilled, so educated hasn't been given an opportunity. It's really sad. It's great for companies like ours because we get our pick of the litter sort of thing in terms of the talent that's available. But unfortunately, I think a lot of it is because, and I don't mean to poo these individuals, but a lot of the folks running the more established companies are scientists that were educated a while ago when diversity wasn't as big of a thing. And so what they know, they know how to a certain profile of employee and they target those types of employees because they're safe, they're comfortable, and historically it's worked for

Rob Henderson ([37:57](#)):

Them and the current labor market, but the current labor market has obviously changed the game. The pandemic and the labour market has changed the game because right now, it used to be capital investment was the number one need of everybody just get the money in the door. And now as everybody's experiencing it's talent, they've got to look under rocks for this kind of talent. To your point, because I think how you described it, this is exactly right. We've got scientists trying to be people experts, which is getting a plumber to do your taxes. It's not something that they've been trained

Ronen Benin ([38:30](#)):

For. Not for,

Rob Henderson ([38:30](#)):

Exactly. That explains my return a couple of times a couple of years ago, but for sure. So how have you changed that I, I understand your personal vision, but how have you changed it practically within your own organizations? You said you look elsewhere. Where do you look, I mean, I don't want to give away your secret recipe, but at the same time, how do you impart that to your team and to your human resource managers that this is the vision that you guys need to impart, that you guys need to follow to be successful?

Ronen Benin ([39:02](#)):

Great question. So we look, I mentioned that we don't really care about industry. Usually there are certain hires where industry is important because we're trying to get insight for that specific industry, if it's a growth, a sales growth role within that industry. But for the most part, we're looking for skillset. We're looking for personality. We're looking for drive and willingness to learn. We are always hiring even when we're not hiring, right? And so we work with a couple of companies. One that we work with quite a bit is a company called Hired Hippo. And what they do is they keep an rolling Rolodex of people regardless of whether or not they're currently employed that have the skillset, the personality, because they do interviews of all the staff there as well, the types of things that we are looking for. And we're looking for potential culture matches that will be our employees of the future. They could have jobs right now, that's fine. But we know that there's this candidate pool that has all the things that we're looking for where when it's time for us to grow, when we need to fill a specific role, we now have this Rolodex of individuals that we know fit our culture that we can go after.

Rob Henderson ([40:49](#)):

How do you reconcile, because I understand that what you're talking about, a culture match and some employers they say, well, we hire for fit, we want to hire for fit. And we understand that. But the problem is that of course, unless you're diverse to start with,

Ronen Benin ([41:05](#)):

Yes,

Rob Henderson ([41:05](#)):

Fit doesn't help you enhance your diversity because you're just looking for people that look right, because a lot of times these scientists who are middle-aged white guys like me are going to hire more middle-aged white guys, and that doesn't do so how do you make sure that diversity stays a priority while you're looking for that cultural match that you mentioned?

Ronen Benin ([41:35](#)):

The diversity bit is, I think in the core DNA of our business. I'm not a technical founder for instance, and I think that gives me a bit of a unique cleanse as well. And so one thing that, one skillset that I've developed over the years is understanding through conversation with somebody through a series of conversations, usually what their goals are, how they handle challenges. And oftentimes if I'm looking for hire for one of my companies, I see that what this person has a skillset that would be really valuable

in another one of the companies. And so we end up bringing them on board in the other company because they offer a specific type of skillset and a unique lens that would be valuable for that business.

Rob Henderson (42:47):

So listen, before I give you the opportunity to give some advice to some of the small and medium sized enterprises on what you've learned and how they can build a team that's resilient and diverse and disruptive and all of those things that we and entrepreneurial like you talked about, I wanted to give you an opportunity to give us a shameless plug for the Avail app because I wanted to say, you say you're consumers of all of your stuff. And what's very interesting about I found about the app when I took a look at it in terms of that wellness feeling and everything else, but that organizations that you're saying that obviously the consumers, the economics for is our enter at the enterprise level. It's for the companies to know. How does the avail app empower companies and how do you use it within your company to empower your people to make wellness a priority for the company?

Ronen Benin (43:34):

Great question. So it's really important first and foremost for when an individual, in order for an individual to continuously engage in an app, in anything for it to be sticky, that they get value from it. So we are very focused on making sure that we keep a close eye on utilization. We understand what features our users are using or not using, and we're always trying to simplify. We're always trying to remove more features than we add to make sure that the user experience is elegant and it encourages more utilization. And then the equally as important thing is for the organization when they get these insights on their employees, when they understand the challenges that different groups of employees are having, it's we give those employers the opportunity to react to what's really going on within their workforce to show that they're listening. So rather than at the beginning of the year building a plan, so January is nutrition month and February is exercise month, they're looking at what the challenges are within their organization and they're able to allocate their resources, bring in professionals according to the challenges that their employees are having. And so what happens is when the employees see that their employer is seeing insights on the challenge areas and they're actioning on them, they're encouraged to continue using the app because they understand that not only is this helping me get insights on my wellbeing, but the challenges that we're having as a group, our companies listening to and they're doing things to try to help us address those challenges. So it becomes what's that virtuous cycle?

Rob Henderson (45:54):

And you and I, it must be an advantage to know that your employees coming on board know that the company is created an app that is specifically focused on their wellbeing. So I mean, that must be an advantage in terms of being able to get their heart and mind knowing that you care about them, you care them so much that they invented us an application that monitors their wellbeing and gives you feedback so you can treat them well.

Ronen Benin (46:18):

Absolutely. We use the app inside our organizations religiously because we believe it's really, really important to understand. Sometimes it's a lot easier to hide behind the screen, and if you're not doing okay to tell the app that you're not doing, then it is to just vocalize it, right? So

Rob Henderson (46:42):

Absolutely no understood. And it sounds like an absolutely wonderful tool, not only for the marketplace, but for your own organization, for cer. For sure. Ronan, one of the things that when I've encountered a lot of entrepreneurs and a lot of organizations, the vast majority of the companies in Canada's biotech industry are small and medium sized enterprise. They are run by visionaries and small who may have limited knowledge, as we mentioned, of people and culture and how to breed that. What would you give as a piece of advice for these organizations that may not be as people focused as they may be, or they may be distracted by venture capital, by technical, all of that stuff, that's the thousand opportunities that are opening in front of them. What kind of advice would you give based on your experience with your three companies and the team that you've built in terms of me meeting the talent, the skills and talent challenge.

Ronen Benin ([47:42](#)):

So you need to invest in people every single day. It's not one of those things that you do one once every couple of weeks when you pay their paycheck, because employees today have lots of options with where to work. This is why we have that labor shortage. So it's really, really important to understand how your employees are feeling and what they're struggling with, areas where you as a company can help support them. So yes, at certain stages of a company to the executives need to be focusing on trying to bring in resources so that the company can survive and thrive. But it's very, very important that there's a way for them to monitor what's happening with their staff, with their employees, because hiring is a lot more expensive than retaining. To have all of that knowledge and insight lost every time an employee leaves the company is extremely detrimental. And so we encourage that employers pay attention to what their employees are doing. We encourage, frankly, employees, employers use apps like the Avail app to get an understanding of how their employees are doing, what areas they're struggling with, so that they can be proactive and help them, their employees feel better.

([49:24](#)):

And in terms of hiring decisions, we encourage employers look for diversity hires, number one, there are a lot of them available right now, extremely talented, many of them. And these employees will like if you're hiring the right employees, they're going to be able to self-manage as well, which is really, really important for growing teams, employees that are able to make decisions, good decisions by themselves to keep things rolling while a good chunk of the executive team is out looking for funding or doing whatever else.

Rob Henderson ([50:12](#)):

Right. Absolutely. That's fantastic. Ronan, thanks so much for joining me today. I was joined today by Ronen Benin, the founder and chief executive Officer. I think you should change your title to Chief Disruption Officer, C D O instead of CEO. I think that would be better for you of Glissner, Right Blue Labs and the Avail app. I'm so glad that you were able to come here. I thought it was excellent to learn so much about your three companies and about the team that makes up all of this innovation and disruption across the industries. Thanks so much for joining me today.

Ronen Benin ([50:45](#)):

My absolute pleasure. Thank you for the opportunity. It's great to be here.

Rob Henderson ([50:53](#)):

This is Rob Henderson, I'm president and CEO of Bio Talent Canada, and you've been listening to Bio Talent Canada's podcast, the Science of Talent. Join us next time. Thanks.