

Business Beyond Borders Episode #14- Rob Rawson, Founder & CEO, Time Doctor

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Guest: Rob Rawson

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Cynthia Dearin: Rob, welcome to the show. It is great to have you here.

Rob Rawson: It is nice to chat with you.

Cynthia Dearin: Now, you are joining me from Sydney. What does a typical day for you, as a founder of Time Doctor, look like?

Rob Rawson: Well, I have a team in 28 countries so it's completely remote and atypical day. Actually, I don't work odd hours. I work some mornings, like two or three mornings. I work a little bit early. I work Wednesday evenings but a lot of times I am working on strategy. I have 10 hours of meetings a week with all of my team leaders. We got over 50 people working in 28 countries. Not sure that it is super typical, a certain amount that is standard, maybe 20 hours a week is those meeting that I do every week and then the other 20 is strategy and those new things and so on.

Cynthia Dearin: And what do you like to do when you are off duty?

Rob Rawson: I spend a lot of time with my kids, I have a three-year old and a five-year old and I like bush walking, it is a big thing in Australia, well some people like it go to the bush and get bitten by snakes sometime. No, I am just kidding.

Cynthia Dearin: This is going to be very interesting because a lot of people think "Ugh, there is no way I can run an international or global business and have a young family". We'll talk a little but about that a little on today, but that is a great thing to start with, to say that you got children three and five and you are doing this

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anyways. Where I want to start though is to understand a little bit about your early life and for context, you are a doctor, or you were a medical doctor. You still are a medical doctor, and we will talk about that in a few but now you are an entrepreneur, so I want to know, if we look back into history was there always this entrepreneurial bent in your personality? What were you like as a kid?

Rob Rawson: I was a little bit entrepreneur as a kid. I did do some coaching as a kid and I was experimenting with pricing, actually. I remember trying to increase the prices of my math coaching and I went up from 30 dollars to 35 dollars and I was just see where people would drop off, so that was like an entrepreneurial thing when I was just, I guess, 17 or 18. I was not truly entrepreneurial until I went to a few different personal development seminars, I think that kind of sparked my idea of being entrepreneurial and wanting to be successful in business.

Cynthia Dearin: When was that? Was that as a teenager or older?

Rob Rawson: Yes, about 17/18 and then even during med school I was doing a lot of entrepreneurial things. So it was taking time off, I took a whole year off medicine to be a marketing consultant because I read all this stuff from Jay Abraham, I am not sure if you have heard of him, he is like a marketing guru.

Cynthia Dearin: Yes.

Rob Rawson: So I thought I am a marketing guru now so I am going to go and put an ad in the paper saying "I can double your business, guaranteed!" and then a lot of people responded to the ad, I tried to double their business and kind of failed. So that was my first business venture.

Cynthia Dearin: And this is really interesting because I think what you did is pretty unusual for a doctor, and I say that because my dad is a doctor and he knew he wanted to be a doctor from the time he was eight years old and that became his vocation and that is what he has done ever since. That is often the way with medicine.

So tell me, how did you wind up in medicine and how did you balance the demands of doing the training of a medical doctor, which is intense against, starting marketing businesses and doing all of the other things that you did?

Rob Rawson: I didn't have a desire from the beginning to go into medicine. I actually got the marks in school to do medicine but I did a year of electrical engineering. I did not really know what I wanted to do. I then had a sudden inspiration, "Yes I am

going to do medicine!" and part of the reason was I thought this is on the cutting edge and there is a lot of interesting stuff about it, I had not considered before. But to be perfectly honest and it is going to sound weird but I thought "Man, maybe it will make me more attractive to women"

[laughter]

Rob Rawson: To be really, really honest, I know it is a really crazy thing to say and it's a little bit embarrassing. Medicine is amazing and I actually do miss it. I think it is one of those things you cannot do half of the time. A lot of doctors are complaining like "Medicine is terrible, it is awful" and I think that is not really correct. It is a really amazing profession but you really have to dedicate your life to it, you cannot be half a doctor.

I think once you go down an entrepreneurial path, I just got really excited about that and I wanted to live and work from anywhere in the world. That was my initial goal to be financially successful and to be able to work from anywhere and to travel around the world while working which I did do. At that point I was sort of out of medicine for like five to 10 years and it was very hard to go back, there is so much to learn and know.

Cynthia Dearin: How far did you get through? Did you complete your training?

Rob Rawson: Yes, I completed the training. I did a year of internship and then I did 2-3 years of working in hospitals, country hospitals, very challenging and very hard stuff. Like you deal with very difficult things there.

Cynthia Dearin: And where were you? Which bit of the country were you in?

Rob Rawson: I was in a town called Kempsey, which is probably not the best social/economic area. A lot of people are unemployed, a lot of people have problems with alcohol. I would estimate that 50% of the people in the hospital was from self-inflicted things and when I say self-inflicted I mean, they got drunk and they fell over or very basic things like that, not that they ate a lot of food and got a heart attack, a lot of junk food.

That was something that I probably did not like in terms of medicine but what I did like is the challenge and the interesting nature of just very interesting problems and also meeting people and things like that.

- Cynthia Dearin: Tell me, you did your time as in intern and then your time in rural hospitals, what was the catalyst that really pushed you out of medicine and into a new space? Walk me through the story of that, how did that happen?
- Rob Rawson: I had a goal to have the ability to work anywhere I wanted to, so on the side, I was doing different businesses. I was doing internet businesses, so I was working one week a month. As a doctor it is actually quite good because you could work double shifts for one week and you could earn enough money and the other three weeks I could work on business, so that was what I was doing. I only really quit medicine when I was earning more in business than a doctor so financially it was not a hard decision but in retrospect, at the time, it wasn't hard also from the point of view leaving medicine, because I didn't value it as much as I would now where I think "Wow, it is an amazing profession" but I really I can't do both. Ultimately, I do not regret leaving because I know I cannot do both and I really love being an entrepreneur.
- Cynthia Dearin: What was the time gap between leaving medicine and starting Time Doctor?
- Rob Rawson: I was already doing other internet businesses before Time Doctor and I was doing it at the same time as medicine. As soon as I was earning more money than as a doctor, I thought "Oh, I am just going to travel around the world and do this internet business and leave medicine" so I did that. At that time I was not 100% sure I was going to leave medicine forever so I did that for a few years. Time Doctor came later as a product that I developed for my own team because I had a team in the Philippines and I went over to the Philippines to build up this team and to kind of outsource it and have the whole team of developers, etc. I then wanted to get rid of the office there and I wanted to have software to make sure that everyone was productive even if I wasn't there in the same office and never kind of meeting people in person so that is how I created the software.
- Cynthia Dearin: So let's talk about how Time Doctor got started because you have a co-founder Liam Martin, right?
- Rob Rawson: Yes.
- Cynthia Dearin: Now, where is he at the moment? We are speaking in Sydney. Where is Liam today?
- Rob Rawson: He is in Canada, he is in Ottawa, Canada he is in the other side of the world, and surprisingly it is working fairly well I would say.

- Cynthia Dearin: How did you guys meet?
- Rob Rawson: We met actually at a conference called South by Southwest which is a conference for technology and we met through another friend. Actually, I did a podcast, how this all happened it comes from a podcast. I did a podcast, then I met this lady who was also a friend of Liam and then she introduced me to South by Southwest, we went to South by Southwest and we met him there. So it all came from a podcast.
- Cynthia Dearin: Wow, that is amazing. So, you guys got on and went and established the Time Doctor? Or?
- Rob Rawson: I had already started and Liam saw what it was and it was in the beginning stages before we were making money. So he joined actually after I had already started, but before we were making money.
- Cynthia Dearin: And just tell me, you said you were doing other businesses and you went to Thailand...
- Rob Rawson: The Philippines...
- Cynthia Dearin: So sorry, what am I saying? To the Philippines...
- Rob Rawson: That is right.
- Cynthia Dearin: So you actually created Time Doctor, which is essentially a software, because you wanted to shut down your office in the Philippines but you still wanted to manage your team who were working there. Is that right?
- Rob Rawson: Yes, I wanted everyone to work from home. I did not want to go back to the Philippines anymore. I was sick of living on the Philippines, I wanted to continue having the team, to travel around the world but not have to constantly be drawn back to the office. Because you have the office there you always kind of want to go there. So I wanted to get rid of the office. Plus, it is expensive. Right? It was quite expensive.
- Cynthia Dearin: So when did you decide to do that? That was a pretty new thing at the time. I am thinking that there probably wasn't a lot of software around at the time that could do that.
- Rob Rawson: No, that is true. I think we were probably one of the first software that was designed around that need.

- Cynthia Dearin: And how did you do that? Because as I understand it. You have a background with some engineering, I know you have medicine and you did marketing but how did you actually do it? Who did you work with to actually do it?
- Rob Rawson: We started with a lot of trial and error and a lot of mistakes. We started, or I started posting on these different sites like Upwork or the precursors to Upwork and freelancer.com. So I tried to multiple times, like five or six times to try and find somebody who could actually build it and most of the time it was complete failure. Sometimes it was half, like they could build a little but it was very slow. Eventually I found someone who was able to build it and then I just took it from there and then just started building a bigger team and grew from there.
- Cynthia Dearin: So, just paint a picture for me of what the first few years were like with Time Doctor. What did it look like?
- Rob Rawson: Initially, I was building it for myself. I was initially building it so I could use it for my team. We had a small number of developers and I started doing some blogging, some content marketing, so we got more people to use it from the content marketing. Then it started to be used as a free user base and we decided, well we have to start charging. We started charging and then it just built up slowly, really steadily and slowly from there. We started charging in 2012, so that is like six years ago. Then I just continually worked on trying to improve the product, hiring, and improving the team. Constantly building on the team and working on how do we hire really great developers in our team, so that is a very big focus. Also, responding to the needs of the customers as much as we could. We had our own needs that we were actually using the software but also responding to the needs of the customers, constantly asking what do they need? What else do you want to do? But we certainly made a lot of mistakes in all areas like in terms of the product development and hiring developers, etc.
- Cynthia Dearin: So there are probably some people listening to this show right now thinking "I don't really understand what this software does." So for these people, can you explain for us in a bit of detail, what does the Time Doctor software do?
- Rob Rawson: It is for people that are working, usually fulltime, but on an hourly basis. When you are paying someone on an hourly basis and often or usually they are remote so they are not next to you and you want to have a way to track their time and also accountability about time so you know that they are really working at the time they say that they are working. For example, you have Upwork, if you have heard of Upwork, it has kind of a software like that. This is

a way to actually do that without using a platform such as Upwork. So at Upwork, you can do all this, you can hire all these remote people but it cost 20% of the business salary and a lot of people just want to hire the person directly or they have a contact and need the software like ours to feel the person is productive. It is time tracking but also accountability about productivity.

Cynthia Dearin: From what you are saying it seems that one of the advantages that your software has is that it offers a competitive advantage over a platform like Upwork, I am wondering whether if maybe using Time Doctor software is less expensive than in terms of hiring someone through Upwork in terms of percentage of salary that you would then have to allocate.

Rob Rawson: Yes, definitely. A lot of people are directly hiring people around the world now so they might have an assistant in the Philippines, they might have a team and this is a common thing in Sydney or more expensive cities. If you wanted to hire a developer in Sydney you are looking at \$100,000 Australian Dollars minimum and that is if you can find someone. That it is a big "if" because it is very hard to find someone good in Sydney and \$100,000 is actually a low salary, so you really need to have the skills. And this is where hiring remotely is so much more effective because you are expanding your network to the entire world. So imagine Sydney, 5 million seems like a lot of people but compared to 8 billion people, I am not sure how many people there are in the planet, but it is a lot more than 5 million. It is just insanely more people that you could actually hire, this is so much more talent available. Whether it is hiring at the same salary and just a better level person or hiring at a lower salary, there are all sorts of options that it is just an incredible advantage to do that.

Cynthia Dearin: We are going to come back and talk a little bit more about global teams in a little while. Before we get there though, I wanted to talk to you about how you grew the global footprint. I guess in a way because of the kind of company that you are, and because of the kind of product that you are offering, Time Doctor is really a born global company, isn't it?

I mean, you set up the company up specifically so that you could put you, as the end user, as the client, as well as the founder could be in one country and the people who you wanted to work with were a couple of continents away.

Rob Rawson: Yeah, that is definitely the case. It is really connecting people across countries but in terms of how they have a global footprint is really when we post a job at certain places and when we look for people, there are places that are more appropriate for hiring globally and don't look at the person's country. Except

now we do look a little into that time zone so we might not want certain time zones because sometimes time zone is an issue. For example, if I want someone in the general Australian time zone then, the whole of India, the whole of Asia is all OK. We just look at the talent we don't look at all of the other. We just look at the location. We look at what can they do? Can they pass our test? We have very rigorous tests for each job position and I don't care where they are from. I don't care what colour, what race or what religion.

Cynthia Dearin: Can they do the work?

Rob Rawson: Yes.

Cynthia Dearin: Absolutley.

Now your supply side, if you'd, like is international. What about your client side, is that equally as international? Do you have clients from around the world?

Rob Rawson: We do as well, #1 is the US and then Australia is up there. We got the UK. Also, we got a few clients in the Philippines, in Russia and other countries like that as well.

Cynthia Dearin: How did you go about actually getting those international clients? I think that a key hurdle for many micro-to-medium sized companies is looking to expand overseas or looking to sell internationally. It is this question of "Oh my God, how do I actually get those customers?" especially at the beginning. How do I get those initial customers in all these countries? How can I do that effectively? How can I do it in a way that does not break my budget? What do you do?

Rob Rawson: Well, when you are doing content marketing for example, by default you are targeting the whole world because anybody can find your content. Only if you are doing some kind of marketing which is specifically targeted in a country, when you have an online business, you are actually targeting the whole world. We have more recently translated our website into three languages which is a huge effort and has paid off a little but quite difficult I would say. So the globalization is not dependent on getting the language or the translation. I think the translation is more of a latest stage thing, I think we did it probably earlier than we need to. Really the globalization is just getting out there on the internet really because if you have the product that people want in different time zones, in different countries. It depends on your product I guess.

Cynthia Dearin: Now, I have had conversations recently on this show where they have said, "If you want to go international, you have to have roots on the ground, you have to be there yourself, you cannot do it remotely, you can't have clients remotely." Would you offer a counterview to that? Because it seems to me that you have done most of what you have done through content marketing, is that close to the truth?

Rob Rawson: I think, content marketing is a big thing, also integration with other softwares. So, for example we integrate with Basecamp, Asana, Trello things like that. If someone is looking at the Trello directory or the Asana directory, someone might find us on there, so that is good part as well. But In terms of, "Do you need to have roots on the ground?" I think that it depends on your sales model. If you want to have sales people actually in the country, then I think it is much better. A lot of business models do require having a person that is actually selling.

We are moving more into that or just or actually hiring a sales person in South America. So in Portuguese and in Spanish and it is a little bit unproven, we just started it so it think that is another evolution. I don't think there is a "You must do."

I think if you are doing sales, it is quite hard to do sales remotely, that is just my experience. We are doing sales remotely so we have had some success from it but I think that it is more difficult because for sales people they need to constantly be calling people and they need to be motivated to do that and if they are doing that from home it is a little but more difficult. I don't think it is impossible. None of these things have absolute rules, there are very few things in business that have absolute rules.

Cynthia Dearin: I just want to dig in a little bit to what you did initially. You did content marketing and you did integration. On the content marketing piece what did you actually do? I mean, did you do a blog? Did you do podcasts?

Rob Rawson: We haven't done podcasts until more recently. We did more blog articles and some articles on other blogs. So, for example we tried to get on to business.com and other sites like that which was effective. Generally content marketing is very, very long term. A lot of our traffic actually came from referrals and people just looking for a solution and they referred someone or the present article about us, which is very organic, it just takes a long time.

The content marketing was the spark. So you put out some kind of article and they find that and then they cite you, then they refer it, etc. Those two are very big. The other big marketing angle is the sales which we are just starting which is having an internal sales team, which is a course. Our leadership didn't really do before and the other thing is the split testing. [Inaudible 22:20] optimization it is not likely generally rating the lead it's huge and important for, it is probably one of the most important things that we have done, it is constantly improve our website and then the conversion of when people go there, do they actually sign up? do they actually use the product?

Cynthia Dearin: Okay. So those are your top channels for getting people to come to you?

Rob Rawson: Yes.

Cynthia Dearin: What kind of clients and industries do you usually work with? I mean, is there a trend in a direction or another? Or is it very diverse?

Rob Rawson: Actually, number one is marketing agencies, more digital agencies, and also development houses. They might have an offshore designer or developer that works on their team or a bunch of people, they look towards our product because of that. Often the number 1 use cases is somebody in Australia, they have a digital agency, and then they have five developers in Ukraine and they use our product for tracking efficiency of their team. So, that is number one the market and then we have all other kind of online businesses like e-commerce and all sorts of things

Cynthia Dearin: How similar or different have you found your clients in the different markets where they are located? I mean your Russian clients are very different in terms of your Philippine clients, and your American clients in terms of what they expect?

Rob Rawson: I don't know if I have a proper answer for that. I'd love to know that. It is probably something I should know more about, is how different they are and I think there are some differences between the different countries. For example, I thought in the beginning that the companies and India or the Philippines would want a lower price and wouldn't accept the pricing. But based on the sales calls we have been able to get a person to accept our full price in India, so that is actually not something that was necessarily true in our initial thoughts. There are some management styles that might be different as well. The management styles of westerners is a little bit more open and a little bit more kind of accepting, and the management styles of the people in more developing countries might be a little more didactic so that may come into it.

- Cynthia Dearin: So we talked about the difference, for example the Time Doctor and Upwork, but since you started Time Doctor there has been a proliferation of companies that do similar things to what you do. What are the strategies that you use in this very competitive global space to differentiate yourself from the competition?
- Rob Rawson: I think that is very true about the competition. When you're doing a SAS business, a global SAS business, SAS means software-as-a-service, it is an amazing business model because you can get people from anywhere in the world and you can hire people from anywhere in the world but you are also competing with every single business in the world so that is the downside, right? In order to compete what we try to do is focus on the core of our market, which is for people who really want to understand that their team are being productive. We can start doing more invoicing, more project management type stuff, but we are really trying to focus on what is the core need and we are trying to make our product as good as we possibly can by focusing on marketing. And then, even though there is a lot of competition, to be honest it is not that competitive in most online markets. You said that it is competitive but at this stage it is not as competitive because it is a relatively, it depends what Market you look at because if you look at time tracking it is more competitive than tracking with productivity which is more of a niche a market.
- Cynthia Dearin: Yes. When you go on an entrepreneur journey there are some pretty big highs, but usually in my experience there are some really hard times as well. Can you just pick one of the times that you found really challenging, with running this global business and just tell me about it and how you faced up and actually dealt with it?
- Rob Rawson: Recently it hasn't been quite as bad because I have gotten used to it, but before it was quite a lot of times when if you've heard this term "Champagne and then razor blades." Like 1 minute you're like "This is the best thing, we are going to be the best business" and then literally the next day, like not weeks away, the next day you are like "Oh no! We are going to die. The business is dead." That is how crazy it is when you're doing a startup. It is really funny but one example would be when the site goes down and, I am not a system administrator so I can't do anything about it. So it is a very frustrating thing when the site goes down and then people really rely on us for the service. That has happened multiple times in the past and I think we have better procedures for dealing with it now, but still it is still very, very difficult and

nerve-racking kind of experience to try and deal with it and when I literally have to depend on other people

Cynthia Dearin: Yes, that must be really hard when you have a company you just want to get in there fix it and make it right.

Rob Rawson: Yeah. I have tried to do that, I have tried to log into the Amazon webserver looking at the console and no, there's no way. This is just way above my head.

Cynthia Dearin: That is an experience that resonates with me, I have to say. I want to segway right now into talking about the global team's aspect of the business. I guess I want to start with a question about how you run this business with Liam seeing that you are in Sydney and Liam is in Canada. How do you make that work?

Rob Rawson: So we have two meetings a week, and there they are about 1 and 1/2 hours of meeting and the other one is usually only 30 minutes. I actually find that it is perfect, to be honest. I actually don't like the constant kind of meeting throughout the whole week. Because you're really interrupting each other, you're not really getting focused, so in that perspective is really good. It is also good that he is in North America and there is a lot of stuff that he can do in terms of networking and meeting people and do things over there that I cannot do, so that is a good thing as well having people in two different time zones. I would say having my co-founder be in a different area, and we have completely different responsibilities it has not been an issue. It is an issue if people in the same team are on different time zone and you have to constantly collaborate. I have 5 or 10 people in the product team or design team and if they are in different time zones that is hugely problematic because they do need to communicate more often and they need to be updating each other and that really does slow things down. Two timezones and a little bit of part is okay but as you start getting Europe plus North America plus Australia it is a disaster, three people on the team, in those three time zones is not a good idea.

Cynthia Dearin: We have a finance team in Chennai, we have a team in United States, we have a team here we have people in other places as well, but just for that example we find it very difficult because we need my general manager to be in a finance budgeting meeting but getting Sydney, Chennai and San Francisco all on a call, at the same time is actually quite difficult.

Rob Rawson: Yeah. And I think also that because people are working from home they are generally more flexible than when they working out. So most people in

Canada are working evenings, one or two evenings a week, and that is to coordinate with the people in Asia. So they do need to work, if you work in an office 9 to 5 and the people in Canada are working 9 to 5 and the people in Australia are working 9 to 5 in an office that doesn't work because there is not enough overlap. But if you have some overlap where people are willing to work nights. It depends on the culture and how overall it works.

Cynthia Dearin: Lets talk about managing a remote team because this is a field where you have a lot of experience. What do you think some of the big mistakes that you see people make when they are trying to manage a global team. What is the recipe for having a very awful global team?

Rob Rawson: I think that lack of communication is very common because when you are not there in the same room talking to each other, a lot of businesses are run by bumping into each other "Oh I just remembered I have to do that." Or "Oh, I just remember I have to tell you something." But that doesn't work if you are in the other side of the world, you have to have a strategic approach. And the other thing is, you need to of replace some of the feelings and experiences, so videos are absolutely essential. We demand that everyone is on video when they are on calls and if you are within a team really it should be daily video calls. A little stand-up meeting, 5 to 10 minutes, and that is kind of to replace the feeling that you get when you are in the same office. When you're working away by yourself and then you talk to someone on video it feels more connected. It's the meeting with them thing that is very important so I like the weekly meeting where you have a one-on-one with different team leaders or I have a weekly meeting with each team member that is directly reporting to me and they kind of build all the issues that they want to talk about for the week and we talk about strategically there, so I don't need to meet with all of my team leaders daily, but within smaller teams I think it is great if they can do it daily.

Cynthia Dearin: Does that mean you're a fan of Patrick Lencioni and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Do you know that book?

Rob Rawson: I have heard of the book but I have not read it, recently at least, I have read a lot of books, I don't remember if I have read that one.

Cynthia Dearin: I mentioned that one because he really advocates about what you are talking about even when you have a team in the same place you have a rhythm, a daily stand-up meeting, a weekly meeting, a monthly meeting and then a quarterly or every 4 months meeting, and then an annual meeting. There is

this constant sequence of meetings happening which keep the team in the same page and in touch with each other.

- Rob Rawson: The other thing is you can have a conflict if you have some of the team in offices and others remote. Because what happens is the people in office will say "Let's have a meeting" and they are all get in an office together and then the people who are remote are excluded. Or even if they are included, they don't feel the same because they are not actually in the same environment. One group is in the office and the other is alone. So actually companies that do this very well, even if they are in an office they each sit in front of their computers to have the meeting which is kind of weird because, "Why don't they all get in the meeting room?" but it actually makes a lot of sense because now everyone is in the same level for that meeting.
- Cynthia Dearin: Now everyone can see each other too, which is a big plus.
- Rob Rawson: Yes.
- Cynthia Dearin: What about cultural mistakes that you see people make. There must be some of these when you have people working from all over the world together.
- Rob Rawson: I think there are cultural issues in certain countries that we work with, where they might not speak up, they might not have as much of an opinion, or they might not be as proactive on getting things done and that is something that we can slowly change and improve as they kind of adjust to a more Western culture. So that is one thing. It is very critical that people don't have any conflict about religion. We have on our team people from multiple different religions and it is an unacceptable thing, any kind of discrimination about religion, race, gender or sexual orientation, or things like that. That is a core fundamental value, which we have a list of values and this one of them. We haven't generally found this problem though. But there is a problem. We have had a problem with people not really communicating effectively, they are not being connected, that kind of thing. So that is something that we are still improving and working on. And when you meet in person the first time, this year in Bali. It is going to be amazing and every time we meet in person as a team it really builds a much deeper level of connection. I think it's very important to do that as much as you can, as well.
- Cynthia Dearin: So if you are going to by the best practice tips for managing a global team to down to, I don't know, top five...

- Rob Rawson: I can give you a few specifics as well, because there is some details. Zoom, which we are actually using for this right now, is incredibly effective for meetings so I basically recommend Zoom now for all meetings. And having video on for all meetings. Having a meeting probably once a day but definitely several times a week via video, each person should be participating via video several times a week. Also, using a project management software to optimize your tasks. Really, is very important not to have your things all over the place. Another one that is very important is actually recording your screen, so having software such as Snag It on Zoom and they both free, you can use them for free and they actually record your screen while you have your video and you can explain and if you can do that, you do that. And it's actually kind of nice sometimes to share screen and to coordinate the time but you can record a video and you can actually use that for training as well. So those are some of the things. Obviously systems and procedures is another thing. So having a checklist for when you're hiring people, those are types of things. And then probably the most important thing is your hiring. Which is the same for any business really but it is critical for remotes. We generally try to hire two people for every position and some people, because they don't have the kind of discipline of coming into the office and some people are not as reliable or they don't really have what it takes to be disciplined and to actually follow through, so you find that if you are hiring they sometimes to drop off and that is one of the advantages if you could have more than one person training for the same job it is easier to do remotely. So there's a lot of things you can do that adds up.
- Cynthia Dearin: Do you tryout people who you want to hire before you interview them? Can you tell me about that really quickly?
- Rob Rawson: Yes, so each type of job is different but we have a software that we use, Breezy, that I highly recommended, I am not affiliated with it but it is amazing and that software actually has a pipeline that you go through and one of the steps is you interview people with video and you actually go through and each step is calculated depending on the person that you want. For example, we are hiring a project manager and the first that might be to send us a questionnaire and one of them is the salary and one of them is like "Send us the project departments you have been in before" so we can look and see if they have detailed project requirements and the next step is a video to see if they can communicate clearly, etc. Then the next step might be an interview after that, in this case the next step would be actually two or three series of tests that they would do, which are paid test because our principal is that if it's less than one hour you can ask a person to do it for free, but if it's more than one hour we pay for every test that the person does because it is kind of unfair to us. I

know Google probably makes you do five hour test for free but we are not Google and that is not a fair thing to ask.

Cynthia Dearin: How do you build a company culture given that you are all around world and what is the company culture like?

Rob Rawson: We do have a culture, it is something that I am still working on. We do sometimes have a problem with it. I would say our culture first and foremost is the remote thing, right? We have this thing with values that I am doing right now which is to have the values that are our mission and our vision printed out and everybody is going to have it on their desk. It is actually going to have a photograph stand, which is on their desk and they're going to have it next to them all the time. That includes things like the remote thing, the acceptance of other people. So those are the things, we are not 100% there. For example, being proactive is one of the cultural things, as a team is being productive so that is something that we are working on. So culture, we also have things like a water cooler or a coffee chat once a week which kind of works, we can ask the team how we're doing. Game nights once a week, they actually play games. Once again, they are not really meeting socially so that is another thing that they do. Cultural is sometimes hard to define, isn't it? It's a little bit hard to define. One of the problems is because people are not there all the time, you don't necessarily know if they are following the culture or how they are. That has advantages to that whole lifestyle of operating.,I talk to a lot of business owners and they would go and say that they are constantly barged and they are constantly interrupted. That doesn't happen because literally here I have no employees or rather people in my company in my offices, it's just me so it actually just gives me a lot of space and freedom. It has a huge advantage for the business owners as well

Cynthia Dearin: There is a flip side to that it is that you have to motivate yourself to get out of bed and make sure you don't wear pajamas to work everyday. Because nobody is looking at you. What keeps you motivated to get up in the morning and keep on running the show?

Rob Rawson: I like the overall vision of doing something big in the internet. I am actually exploring that right now, I am part of a entrepreneur organization so I think what I am exploring is, what is my real vision? because I am kind of at the stage or very close to the stage where I don't need to work up for money. So if you don't need to work money, what are you working for? So that is a very good question I think my overall answer is that I want to do something that makes a difference in the internet that I really enjoy and that is a very successful company, and that I want to give money away to charity. So that is

my long-term Vision that is more than myself but part of it, like if I am really honest, is like I want to do big, I want to do successful. I don't know if that's the right answer but it's kind of true. That's why I want to have a very successful business and I want it to be meaningful so there are certain decisions that I am making. Certain elements that our company has like this "employee monitoring" aspect to it and I want to actually change that because it is not an inspiration for me. So it is that element, what is it doing in the world? I really like how Time Doctor is really helping people to be able to work remotely, so I am working towards that vision a bit.

Cynthia Dearin: I like it. So we have talked about motivation, what about inspiration? You said you like to read lots of books, are their favorite books that you've come across over time whether they are business books or fiction or nonfiction or cartoons, whatever it is, favorite books that you have come across that really made an impact in your life or got you to see things differently or giving you a moment inspiration?

Rob Rawson: I have been doing podcasts at the moment rather than books because of the time to actually read. And by the time I read it is kind of a sassimilated and I kind of forgotten it. There is Burning Harnish, the Rockefeller Harvest which is one that I recommend in general to the business owners and any Lean Startup if you're doing a startup Erik Larson. Any kind of Lean Startup kind is very very powerful I think so those are two things that come to mind also Getting Done by Robbie Allen is another one.

Cynthia Dearin: And we will list all of those in the short show notes afterwards so that people can go and check them out if their interest to do that. And, what about people? Are there any people that have made it a particular impact on you?

Rob Rawson: I really like Warren Buffett, the reason that I like him is because he is very both folksy and lives in the same house, even though he is one of the richest people in the world. He loves what he is doing and he has high integrity and has kind of the simplicity of being super wealthy and not having to have expensive Yachts or that kind of thing. Or the fact that he is giving all his money away to charity that he is making a huge difference in the world. So, those things are really inspiring to me, I really like that concept.

Cynthia Dearin: So we talked a bit about what you would like to do a little bit next. What is next for Time Doctor?

Rob Rawson: We have a goal to get 1 million paid users, so we are about 30,000 now so we have quite a long way to go. We're working towards making the products

really much more effective and have better dashboards, and just a lot of product improvements and just slow and steady improvement over the many years. There is a bit of technical data, there is a whole bunch of the product that we are working on.

Cynthia Dearin: How can people get in touch with you?

Rob Rawson: If you want to contact me via the contact us from in the Time Doctor website. You can also connect with me on LinkedIn as well although I don't always necessarily read my LinkedIn emails I think I filter them out.

Cynthia Dearin: We will put the details of that contacts page and, if you like and we can put your LinkedIn on to the show notes and if you decide to look up LinkedIn and people can find you there.

Rob, it has been really fascinating and really fun having you on the show today. Have you got some final thoughts for business owners who are listening to this podcast and thinking, "I wonder if this going global thing is really for me?"

Rob Rawson: One thing that I would say is that, just to really have a thoughts about doing something that is 10 times bigger than every thought you dreamed possible before because, as soon as you have that in your mind it might set you down in a much more successful path. And we can limit ourselves, we I have limited myself multiple times eventhough I am a big thinker I still limit myself and as soon as I start thinking and a bigger direction even if I don't achieve it, I think it gets me a lot further towards my goals so that is something that I am always thinking about how 10 x or how to blow things out of the water and see much more, take ten times more action as well. How can you take 10 times more action towards something you're working, just keep doing it a lot more than you are right now so those are my final thoughts

Cynthia Dearin: Those are excellent final thoughts.