

Mike Shields (2s):

Hey guys, this is Mike Shields. In this week on Next in Marketing, I got to talk to Aaron Braxton, who is VP of Business Intelligence and SEO at Complex Networks, as well as GM of Complex Collective. He talks about the advantages he founded having almost no media or advertising background when he joined the company a few years ago. And how kindergarten pickup actually played a crucial role in his recruiting process. Let's get started.

Narrator (26s):

Everything we know about the media, marketing and advertising business is being completely upended. Thanks to technology and data. We're talking with some of the top industry leaders as they steer their companies through constant change. Welcome to Next in Marketing, presented by AppsFlyer.

Mike Shields (43s):

Hi, everybody. Welcome to Next in Marketing. My guest today is Aaron Braxton from Complex Networks. Hey, Aaron. Thanks for being here.

Aaron Braxton (51s):

Hey, Mike, how are you? Good to talk to you.

Mike Shields (54s):

I'm good. I'm good. Give everybody your title. You're Head of Business Intelligence, right?

Aaron Braxton (58s):

Yeah. So I've got two titles. I don't know if that's common or not in media practice, but certainly common, you know, a bit.

Mike Shields (1m 4s):

I think it's quite common.

Aaron Braxton (1m 5s):

Common enough it, yeah. So we covered enough for Complex. So I am a VP, Head of Business Intelligence and SEO. I'm also second title, GM for Complex Collective, which is our research arm of Complex Networks.

Mike Shields (1m 20s):

Your LinkedIn is pretty different. You do not have a classic media background. Maybe, can you please talk about like what you're doing before Complex and how you got here?

Aaron Braxton (1m 30s):

Sure, yeah. And that's right, I come from a very non-traditional background for data practitioner for media professional marketer, researcher. Really, however, you might want to frame it. You know, I cut my teeth

early in finance in prime brokerage, which is like a service function for hedge and private equity fund clients within institutional banking. And then I went on to run trading and partner operations within alternative asset management. Same general space, but you know, that's sort of where the analytics starts to focus in. And then eventually, I went on to management consulting. Focused on those same clients, but just in a widening sort of functional areas. First, you know, it was Ops, and then it was analytics and Ops.

Aaron Braxton (2m 11s):

And so when you think about like, that landscape, it's AI banks, it's hedge funds, it's private equity. And then sort of quickly applying that skill set to a widening client focus. You know, I've worked with manufacturers, media companies, tech infrastructure, cards, as well. I probably work with every top five Global Bank, Amex, Google. I'm thinking of Barnes & Noble. We did some really interesting things with. And then a ton of companies you probably don't know and never heard of. And so along that path, I taught myself how to code and because I needed the skill set. And starting with the SQL and then moving on to Python and R. You know, when you're starting until sort of layer on the data engineering, it's the parts of the analytics sort of skill set as well.

Aaron Braxton (2m 54s):

And then when you mix that up all with statistical analysis and the operational finance, then some of the innovation work I've been doing over the years. You've got an admittedly weird, but probably strong set of skills that I like to apply across a number of areas at Complex. We talk a little bit about that. Those are, again, Business Intelligence, SEO, audience research, and then sort of assorted special projects. skunkworks, if you will.

Mike Shields (3m 16s):

Right. So when you're working for companies like Bank of America, are you helping them essentially trying to digitize their business and apply more analytics broadly and build that more efficiency? You're trying to help them come become more operationally efficient? Like, was there a common thread to what you were doing before you got here?

Aaron Braxton (3m 33s):

Yeah. You see, those are the cool projects at a BFA, right? That means, there are admittedly some less exciting work there. You don't deal dealing with capital constraints, SICAR, dealing with back-end operations, sort of like trading functions, blackbox systems, algorithmic trading systems, actually, that's sort of cool. And so that it really ran the gamut, when you're talking about working with banks. It can be like just lightly operational, and more process oriented tasks versus some of the more interesting stuff when you get into like trading systems, and derivative tracking, and that kind of thing.

Mike Shields (4m 4s):

It's funny, when you were describing your background, I could almost see you ended up working for like a big

programmatic Adtech company. Was there any ever consideration you go into that world when you start talking about applying trading, algorithmic analysis?

Aaron Braxton (4m 19s):

Honestly, no. Programmatic was probably the <inaudible>. While I had come and going, working with media companies, some understanding of what programmatic exchanges were, and how programmatic ad layers sort of deliver, and what that sort of structure and architecture looks like? Something, I know that much better now. Really had sort of a good entry point. I mean, it was a bit of a crash course for me to go deep on the way that Complex viewed, sort of revenue diversity and add layer, to the point where I could go and start to innovate within that framework, you know. I had some pretty good guidance though. Scott Cherkin, who's now at Warner. Dan Ghosh-Roy, who's at Professional Fighters League. Now, Jonathan Hunt, who's Head of Audience at Complex, and of course, Christian Baesler, who's brilliant.

Aaron Braxton (4m 58s):

And maybe most of all, Rich Antonello, who's an icon in this world.

Mike Shields (5m 6s):

Okay, so how did you end up here though? We're like, where they talk with it? Because, you know, lots of publishers and the last, let's say five years more. We've got to get better Business Intelligence. We've got to like apply our moneyball formula. But I think, I don't know, they always know how to -- where to get that talent from? Like, how did they find you? How did you end up here?

Aaron Braxton (5m 24s):

They didn't find me, I found them. I was looking to make a shift. You know, I'd identified amongst my sort of favorite projects and clients that media companies were way more fun. And I was at that point in a career where I could have gone sort of partner track, and but at within management consulting, but really wanted to like keep it, keep it fun and interesting on a day over day basis. And maybe not end up in like Tulsa, Oklahoma on random Sunday nights. So that led me to something like, thinking back to some of the client work I've done with your the Amex of the world, some of the Googles of the world, and thinking about. You know, it'd be really interesting to try to lean into the analytic space, leaded analytics practice and stuff.

Aaron Braxton (6m 6s):

So I started combing job sites and doing research deep into, who was doing what within analytics? Who may be needed some help from an uplift standpoint, with regard to like, BI, which identified as, like, sort of a -- that's a nice through line for most publishers. Most publishers had that point, had a business intelligence function. But there was a lot of variants into how well it looked like they were executing. And so I started looking around, as it happens, and I'll tell the story, if you don't mind it.

Mike Shields (6m 32s):

Please.

Aaron Braxton (6m 33s):

My daughter, when she started kindergarten here in Brooklyn, one of her classmates in that year, her dad happened to work at Complex. So I offered to take him for a beer. And we hit it off. And I started talking about, why we were having this conversation. And we ended up being really good friends to this day. And he was nice enough to introduce me to Complex and the the fit was right. The need was right. There BI team at the time, was a little bit back office, and pretty isolated. But they had a desire to make sort of data analysis and data decisioning much wider and better practice throughout the company, and so that was my task. So we've done a good job of that so far. I think we've got to sort of move beyond that the idea that Business Intelligence specifically it's back off.

Aaron Braxton (7m 20s):

It's certainly much more front office, and it's certainly much more embedded in the culture of what we do.

Mike Shields (7m 24s):

This is the ultimate like networking industry. And it's usually the deals happen over cocktails in the cab and not a kindergarten line, but that's cool story.

Aaron Braxton (7m 32s):

Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Shields (7m 33s):

Okay, so you hinted on this, most publishers were realizing, "Okay, we've got a Business Intelligence." You've mentioned, not everybody was doing that great with that or getting the most out of that practices they could. Have you seen that across the board in the industry? And where where are the gaps, that they're not being filled right now?

Aaron Braxton (7m 53s):

Yeah, I think you asked a really interesting question. Because, you know, BI means a lot of different things to different folks. And a lot of what gets implemented at companies from a Business Intelligence standpoint can really be shifted towards maybe one or two different operational areas within a company. You know, it can be both focused on content. You can have BI application, it's really just about sales and optimizing CRM, more or like optimizing against paid media. And, you know, it can be fairly isolated. And so a full BI augmentation, there's like a maturity cycle that you look at, from a data analytic standpoint on an enterprise level. You're either coming up front and stuff, and just helping to inform, right?

Aaron Braxton (8m 34s):

Not necessarily making the decisions for folks or really even necessarily, like really even driving a decision,

but making sure that there's a piece of data applied to most of the decisioning that's happening, that's pretty early on and maturity. Later on, you move into doing projection, right? You talk a lot about your podcast, as I dug into some of your archive about deterministic versus probabilistic. And deterministic comes in a Business Intelligence standpoint as well. You can do projection algorithmically. You can do projection based on just like flat projection from correlation, and apply some of those things to both business processes, as well as content generation. What we've done at Complex, I think, is a really good way of injecting data layer and decisioning all the way across most parts of the company, right?

Aaron Braxton (9m 22s):

So that's everything from strategy to content production. We're really really closely with sales, and sales strategy, finance paid media, e-comm events. What we try to do is create a data and insight interface, as well as be a business operations guider. As additionally to that were a sort of an audience interface for behavioral and that extends out to building like insight narratives, right? So it's a pretty wide map, but it allows me and my team to sort of contribute to most everything we create in some way, whether that's from ideation to all the way out to like realization.

Mike Shields (9m 52s):

You hinted at my next question, I was gonna ask you. Are you strictly, the kind of work that you do, we might think you're on the business side, that's it. But you're able to apply this across editorial and business. Can you talk about how that works especially because I think the editorial side, every editor will say they want to have lots of data, they want to know where their audience is coming from audience development. But they get a little nervous when somebody from anywhere from biz that dev gets in their space and makes them feel they're gonna dictate what they do. How do you work across both sides?

Aaron Braxton (10m 23s):

Interestingly enough, I feel like we're a bit of a buffer between the biz dev folks and the editorial folks. I meet with in and work with our editorial teams on a daily basis. We build out the modeling for them from a traffic expectation standpoint. So like, you know, projecting both the volume of content as well as what the revenue of the RPMs are going to be from that specific content, even down to advising on staffing. And you know, and how many people would be required in order to build out some of that. Now, this is not necessarily directed, right? It's about helping them to do their best and set them up for success. You know, on the layer on top of that comes from the SEO side, where we're looking at content type and affinities, and what channels these things should be deployed on from the editorial standpoint, to most effect on audience and to see the most benefit from.

Aaron Braxton (11m 16s):

And so it's a really bi-directional relationship. We always try to make sure that we leave room for creativity, right? I'm not a writer. And I would never tell anybody what to write. But I can tell you, where what you write is going to do the best, and what social platforms that should be, like deployed on as support. And so we

weave all those things together in support of our editorial practices. And we do that as well for our other content types.

Mike Shields (11m 38s):

So is it, you're not sitting there saying, "Okay, don't write that article, because the ROI is gonna stink. It's not worth doing." But this beat might be worth doing moreover. This things are really popping on Facebook and the subject matter versus Tumblr or something.

Aaron Braxton (11m 52s):

Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, you know, again, we're sort of trying to bridge the idea that there are audiences are diverse, and there's a multitude of them. But they're all very different and on their various distribution channels, right? So our Facebook audience is super different from our Twitter audience, versus our TikTok audience, versus our general direct on site audience. And so the orientation of what we build needs to make sure that it's aligned to where it shows up to like where the audience is going to find it. So there's a difference between the content, even editorially, that we're going to push in a link posts from Twitter versus what we put on Facebook. And it's my team's job to let the editorial teams and the social teams as a support engine as well, know what like, what the best course of action is there.

Mike Shields (12m 34s):

That's interesting. I may not have expected that. I understand the differences between the viewership patterns or consumption patterns on the platforms. But I would always think your audience is the same. I should start off by saying like, how do you describe or define who the Complex Networks fan is, and then maybe we can get into how it's different on TikTok versus Facebook, versus your site?

Aaron Braxton (12m 56s):

It's actually a really difficult question to answer. One, because there are so many different versions of that fan, right? The Complex Networks consist of complex which is streetwear, and music, and fashion, and pop culture rolled up into one and spoken about at this almost at the same time, right? So it's convergence, that goes deep. Now, the first we feast audience is food first, but it talks about food within a pop culture lens. And then we have soul collector, which is, and I'm talking about the three sort of tentpole arms, there are a multitude of others, that sneaker focus first, right? And so it talks about sneakers, it's about sneaker heads. There's pop culture influence within that, but it's a much more sort of like niche topically, but also goes very deep.

Aaron Braxton (13m 39s):

And so all of those audiences are very different. So when we think about the question of, who is the Complex Network fan? It fragments really quickly. Now we've scale it all those two, because we managed to do that over the last 18, 20 years of existence. But the idea for us, and it is to make sure that we understand which targets were supposed to address and which ones were hitting. So the Complex Network fan if in

short, I know there's a long answer there for a quick question, is a core 18 to 34 male-female US-based that lives in metropolitan area, or desires to live in a metropolitan area, and wants to find the thing that's next and coolest in the world.

Mike Shields (14m 19s):

They want to know about cool stuff, they want about style, and music.

Aaron Braxton (14m 21s):

That the comment early, yeah.

Mike Shields (14m 22s):

Right. Interesting. What are you working on lately at Complex? What are you building products? Are you mostly trying to unearth more insights on sales, become more efficient on revenue? What's going on lately?

Aaron Braxton (14m 36s):

Everything all at once, but like the most recent project that we just completed was ComplexLand. And so, you know, we've done something called ComplexCon over the last three years out in Long Beach, and then also Chicago, which is like 60,000 people attending centrally like the Super Bowl of streetwear, and fashion, and pop culture, all rolled up into one. And so that's like 60,000 people over a week. And it's kind of incredible. I can't wait to the world goes back to normal. So we can go to a Complex kind of

Mike Shields (15m 5s):

Yeah.

Aaron Braxton (15m 5s):

But in a world that's quarantined, we wanted to bring an offering, that's more of a digital space. We've seen a lot of that out in market. But I think that our approach to it. It was actually a sort of redefining for digital events and of in itself. What we built was a WebGL interactive site, that a user could go to an experience this world interactively, right? And so you can actually explore the world, and almost a video game style, but have interactive content, have purchase opportunities, have a chat with its interactive, a theater, an art experience. And I mean, I'll be honest with you, I built a flagship of monitoring metrics to look at this thing over the course of the week that it was live.

Aaron Braxton (15m 48s):

And we crushed it. And, you know, we had a deluge of traffic over the course of that week. A lot of content opportunities, a lot of brand integration. It was pretty amazing actually. I think it was a bit of like sort of a career-defining, company defining moment. And you know, we're already looking forward to 2.0. So that's the most recent thing I think we've done that's like super impactful, at least outwardly facing. We got to remember --

Mike Shields (16m 9s):

Right, with that though, sorry to interrupt you. Like you kind of described it, you can't just throw together -- Oh, let's just throw a Zoom together and get some people on there, and we'll recreate the convention, or the panels that we were going to do. Like you had to imagine, you had to investigate all kinds of new different cutting edge technologies for virtual events. And how did you figure out how to do that?

Aaron Braxton (16m 29s):

Well, yes, it's a good question. I mean, I can't pretend to be the one who came up with this or, you know, between our CTO, Aleksey Baksheyev, and our Head of Events, and our Head of Sales, Edgar Hernandez. They came up with what they thought would be an impactful pivot against the desire to have a ComplexCon. So and looked at all the technologies that one might be able to accommodate that and decided that this is the one that would resonate the most with our audiences, and then even beyond our audiences. Because, you know, the big difference to between a ComplexCon and a digital event is that digital event is more easily global. Right? You don't have to travel obviously. You can roll out of bed and do that. And you know --

Mike Shields (17m 6s):

Yeah, and it actually opens more, opens it up to a wider group theoretically.

Aaron Braxton (17m 10s):

Yeah, exactly. I mean, we had visits from 198 countries.

Mike Shields (17m 14s):

Wow.

Aaron Braxton (17m 15s):

Yeah, we had people in Japan rolling out of bed at 8 am and logging in. You can see that traffic blip day over day, over day. It's kind of amazing.

Mike Shields (17m 21s):

With your title, you're the Business Intelligence person. You've also got a secondary title. You're the GM of Complex Collective. What is Complex Collective? Why did you launch it? When did you decided to do with that?

Aaron Braxton (17m 34s):

You know, we talked a little bit about that sort of roadmap of how I came to understand what Complex did and get deeper insight into like, you know, some of our business practices, and also like our revenue diversity. And one of the early things I identified at Complex was that we needed a closer look at behavioral and qualitative insight against our audience. And we didn't have an engine to do that. And so Complex



Collective was launched about a year ago, were a year and change in now. And it's become our, and it is. It's our primary audience insight research engine. So what we do is we offer a direct line of insight to 30,000 qualified sort of high intent diverse young people from all over the world.

Aaron Braxton (18m 16s):

And so it was a research platform that allows for us to dig into that both qualitative and then match that with the quantitative behavior that we're seeing from all the other sort of metrics that I also get pulled together from the BI side. We offer this internally to our business units. And we also offer it as a product to our business partners, both to enhance sort of their positioning and market to get a better understanding of, you know, how either their brand is perceived, or how they want to sort of take their roadmap. And we've been working with like a number of clients over the last year and doing just that.

Mike Shields (18m 47s):

So is that more it came to like having your own little mini Comscore? Like we know what these people are doing online? Or is it really like a giant focus group where you can ask them questions and get sense of what they how they view brands and things like that?

Aaron Braxton (18m 59s):

More it came to a giant focus group than it is a panel for Comscore. You know, we, obviously we keep demographic tracking for all the folks who have opted in, and we maintain that over time. And so we have a really good understanding of who both who they are and what their interests are. And so we looked at some of the things that you can pull down from a Comscore from an affinity standpoint, when we want to understand, you know, what we wanted to be able to track and speak about, from the insights that we were generating. But we use surveys and panels, where right now we're isolated. So, from a quarantine standpoint.

Mike Shields (19m 32s):

Sure.

Aaron Braxton (19m 32s):

So, you know, we can't pull people into the office but we would certainly be doing that. But you know, we do insight exercises on various research topics over the course of the year both for our own usage, as well as, you know, directed and or sponsored by clients.

Mike Shields (19m 46s):

What do you make of -- because that sounds like I'm sure it's not every publisher would love to recruit 30,000 people and have them on speed dial. But it's not easy to even... it's not easy to have a direct relationship with any of your readers. Like what do you make of, I guess how challenging was it to build that? And what do you make of the market right now where everybody's trying to become a direct to consumer

brand? It's not there, either you're through subscriptions or memberships. It's not easy. And it's not easy to do across the industry, and across categories.

Aaron Braxton (20m 14s):

Yeah, it's very difficult. Amongst my challenges, you know, I spent a lot of time worrying about maintaining that 30,000 and trying to expand on it. The attrition audit is really high, right? So you've got to keep people interested.

Mike Shields (20m 26s):

Yeah.

Aaron Braxton (20m 26s):

But we identified pretty early is from a community management standpoint, these people really want to be heard. And so, but they also want to participate in the community where that's happening in a more engendered basis. And so, you know, we have private social channels, private groups, that we go back to them with the insight that we're generating, and we all talk about it, right? And so, you know, we use sometimes, occasionally, we use lag incentive for survey participation, but what we found is actually, people are, this community specifically, is much more incentivized by being in a community that is discussing active topics.

Mike Shields (20m 59s):

They're into it. They like their ability to influence a little bit.

Aaron Braxton (21m 2s):

They totally do. You know, they want to talk about COVID. And they want to talk about politics, and they want to talk about the future of sports. So when we go to them with topics, it's about something that both they want to speak about, and that's something also that they want to tell everybody else.

Mike Shields (21m 17s):

Now, does that help you -- obviously, this group doesn't exist for you to just to remarket to you or to use for ad targeting purposes. But does it help you -- because every publisher, while they're also trying to build more of a database and relationship, they're also trying to figure out the future of ad targeting with past post cookie, post IDFA. They want to be able to have the permission to market to more people. Does it just give you an advantage in this universe? Are you still trying to fight the same battles everyone else is?

Aaron Braxton (21m 46s):

Well, listen, we're definitely fighting the same battles as everyone else. I mean, it's always gonna be a challenge to fragment your attention when you're dealing with like an increasingly closed and isolated ecosystem, like you know, your Facebook or your Google. I think, maybe where the difference is for us is

like, you're not gonna find me complaining about a group on Facebook is ruining the industry. It's for sure, more difficult to manage campaigns and project CPMS. But there was a very robust marketing industry before attribution became turnkey. So you know, it's sort of time to roll up your sleeves. I think I'd much rather focus on adapting to that change. And so when we think about visible attribution, that's been on the client for a while now. And good marketers and publishers are already actively adapting. So the way we tried to address that.

Aaron Braxton (22m 27s):

It's about a year ago, more than a year ago, through like, just a year in change, we introduced a cookie lists, first party attribution to our ecosystem. And so that in itself and pushing out to market or monetizing that out to market. You know, an anonymous segments that's returned, that's a seven figure big business for us right now. You know, it's been great about applying assurance to brand partners didn't give me our internal leverage depth of sight. You know, when you take that attribution, that segmentation, and you marry it to the qualitative that we're building out of our first party research, it's pretty powerful. So I like our positioning. Certainly, there's a lot of challenge. But I actually like a lot where this fragmentation so that it takes us from a differentiation opportunity standpoint.

Mike Shields (23m 9s):

So as you , you can turn it into an advantage, if you've got a solution that others don't, on this front.

Aaron Braxton (23m 15s):

You know, listen, it's gonna be a challenge for folks who have to build scale into it, because that's hard enough to do in of itself. But if you have a little bit of scale, or at least a decent growth strategy, then applying, getting out, trying to get out ahead of it is a good idea. I think we've seen some aggregation of various publishers coming together through like a trade desk kind of situation, and trying to sort of the build to mass speed. But, and I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but I think that your larger publishers, with very decent scale and very decent time spent can attack this themselves. It takes a little bit more work, but certainly they're capable of doing it.

Mike Shields (23m 55s):

Yeah, but that is going to be the trick, isn't it, with any of these big consortium is whether it's a trade desk, or us, or whoever big publishers are going to have to wrestle with what do I want to help the whole industry? Or can I build my own thing that will be that much more powerful and useful for me?

Aaron Braxton (24m 10s):

Yeah, I think that's completely right. I mean, yeah, I think the initial question should be, can I do it on my own? If I can't, then yeah, I'm gonna throw back in with you know, some other folks and try to build mass speed. Nobody wants to lose their business because they can't see their audience.

Mike Shields (24m 24s):

Yeah.

Aaron Braxton (24m 25s):

By the same token, there are technologies out there right now that you can begin to address this. And it's a moving target for sure. Absolutely. And not everybody is in a place where they can build their own research arm. But you know, if we can do it, other folks are capable as well.

Mike Shields (24m 42s):

How do you apply that? I always wonder, this is challenging, I think before with the dawn of, the declining visible attributes that you've described yet. But how do you apply these principles to more and more. I'm sure you doing lots and lots of branded content, whether that's video series underwritten by a brand or special events will maybe not a lot of events these days, but lots of different special virtual events. How do you apply those attribution principles well, to that kind of stuff, if you can?

Aaron Braxton (25m 10s):

Yeah, I mean, you're bring it up interesting point too, right? Because we're only limited by the, like, in signal generation, by how thoroughly I can apply a tagging architecture to my content, right?

Mike Shields (25m 19s):

Right.

Aaron Braxton (25m 19s):

When I think about content it's, to me, we make all kinds of content, whether an event is content, whether it's editorial, or a podcast, or video, and branded, like branded or organic, all of that, really. My ability to bring it back to who is experiencing it really a bit depends on how well I can tag it. Now, I can't, some of that stuff gets deployed out to other ecosystems in a distributed manner. And so my ability to tag it is limited. But if I'm pushing it out from one of our O&O's. And you know, in our O&O platforms, then I can tag it to my heart's content truthfully. And that allows me to to apply that attribution, that we apply on site, and then bring a more persistent identification to those platforms as well.

Aaron Braxton (26m 5s):

And so we do a lot of testing in order to try to maintain that attribution. And additionally, and we apply that to our branded executions as well.

Mike Shields (26m 15s):

What about, what measurements? Same kind of issues where you have to be a lot more creative and use a whole lot of new technology because of all the changes? Or is that going to be a little bit more easy to navigate?

Aaron Braxton (26m 25s):

I don't think it's easier. I mean, similar technologies can be applied to each. I mean, brands are interesting, because you know, specifically when they're coming in through agency, agencies are very facile, and you know, and want to be able to validate campaign metrics to a really high degree. So that there's a lot of QA within that. And so, certainly we've had to step up our game with regards to like, campaign metrics in that kind of tracking. Our RevOps team does a really good job of pulling that all together. And we assist them as well.

Mike Shields (26m 55s):

Anyway, I want to come back to where we started. And maybe to wrap things up in this kind of question. Is that you're -- all the kind of things you're describing the stuff you're building, again, it's not the typical media and advertising professionals, it's kind of have tasks or skills they've come up through typically. Are we get to see or are we got to see more Aaron Braxton's not that there's another one, but do publishers agencies have to start recruiting from the kind of places you worked and start pulling in more different kinds of talent and data science? Is it gonna be hard? Is that happening?

Aaron Braxton (27m 26s):

Hard, it's hard to answer. I mean, first of all, it's flattering. So thank you. Um, you know, I don't...

Mike Shields (27m 32s):

You're a unicorn man.

Aaron Braxton (27m 34s):

Yeah, let's talk to Jonathan about that. He's a unicorn himself. I think, in a lot of respects. So I don't necessarily know that you need a Business Intelligence function, or a research function matched into all of that coming from the same person, right? Like you can execute these things. You don't need a unicorn to do them. Is it a nice to have, I suppose. So I don't know. I'm a little red sheet right now.

Mike Shields (27m 59s):

But I do wonder if you will just start seeing more attempts at recruiting. I think you are already seen this. Let's try and get two people out of consulting. Let's try and get people out of these think tanks in places that were not. You know, the kid with a marketing degree that we just went into an agency right away. It's gonna be really hard to see how that plays out over time, the towers.

Aaron Braxton (28m 16s):

Yeah. I think there's a lot to be said for looking outside of industry in order to find expertise that, you know, could be applied to a lot of these situations. You know, I mean, the nice thing about consulting is that you get a wide skill set because you're asked to do all kinds of different things. And being able to apply all of those to

one enterprise is actually a nice thing for me because one, it keeps it interesting, but two, I'm never bored, right?

Mike Shields (28m 38s):

Right.

Aaron Braxton (28m 39s):

That just never happens. I haven't woken up a day and been bored at a Complex because we are doing all these new and interesting things and and there's always something new on the horizon.

Mike Shields (28m 49s):

Yeah.

Aaron Braxton (28m 50s):

But it doesn't require, you don't have to go to management something just requires a curious and sort of flexible mindset.

Mike Shields (28m 56s):

Right. And plus, the wardrobes got to be better than musical taste is cooler. I think all those things probably help.

Aaron Braxton (29m 1s):

Yeah, I definitely had to step up my shoe game for sure.

Mike Shields (29m 5s):

Absolutely.

Aaron Braxton (29m 5s):

I'm still an amateur with respect to that as well.

Mike Shields (29m 8s):

Quarantines working for that front.

Aaron Braxton (29m 10s):

Yeah, I know, for sure. Exactly.

Mike Shields (29m 12s):

Anyway, Aaron Braxton terrific conversation. Thanks so much for taking the time out really interesting stuff. And hopefully we'll talk to you again down the road. Thanks a lot.

Aaron Braxton (29m 18s):

Hey, thanks, Mike. Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Mike Shields (29m 23s):

A big thanks to Aaron Braxton, VP of Business Intelligence at Complex Networks, and of course, my partners at AppsFlyer. If you liked this episode, please take a moment to rate and leave a review. We have lots more to bring you, so be sure to hit that subscribe button. And we'll see you next time for more on what's Next in Marketing.