



**Complete Transcript: HALO Talks with Vicki Reece & Dush Ramachandran  
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Pete Moore:

This is Pete Moore on HALO Talks NYC. I have the pleasure straight from Chicago, joy of mom, Vicky and, and we are ready to roll Vicky. Welcome to the podcast.

Vicki Reece:

Thanks for having me on. We are. We love here at halo podcast and are excited to be here and have a release, awesome conversation.

Pete Moore:

Great. So 4.9 million moms and going on Facebook directly through your site, give us the backstory on how this all started and how you turn this into a passion project to a profession.

Vicki Reece:

Okay. This is going to be a bit challenging because I'm going to take one minute and just give you this now. Okay. I, you, bottom line, I've been a mom on a mission. Since I, since I was a mom and I wasn't media worked at WGN radio, lots of sports, love to read children's books, validating feelings had an agency cause one of my clients, Fannie Mae Candy's Fanny Fanny farmer asked me to handle their stuff and did that for about eight ish years, had two miscarriages. Then I couldn't get pregnant. Then I had my first of my three children, height of negative messages, bullying, lots of inappropriate things, bombarding kids and entertainment. And I'm just not one to sit on the sidelines. So 10, 11 at night, till two, three in the morning felt built and not a coder, but did everything in building my first software, music and video wanted to test them in the distribution channels, mass specialty retail, computer bundle, direct response catalog, and had no resources know how, but never, as we know, never underestimate the power of having some naivete and also blind faith and grit and, you know, just perseverance in getting things done.

Vicki Reece:

So built these, tested them, Walmart discovery, toys, zany brainy, gateway computers. I'm sure I'm missing a couple of the main ones. Number one, everywhere. They went sold about over 500,000 units where to have mom. I like to say, but moms wanted to join my club. I didn't have one. They wanted to do you would in today's world call affiliate marketing. Wasn't equipped to do that. They wanted to know if I could distribute their products because beside creating, producing, distributing, you know, it was just from, from conception through onto a mom's front door, if you will. So I thought I'm going to find a

platform looked high and low, and I'm, you know, like most parents, you really reach research could not find one that felt or was authentic, pure built on transparency and frankly earned or deserved moms time, attention and trust.

Vicki Reece:

So I do what I do. I ended up building one, I flipped over a laundry basket in one night in my room. I'm not an artist. I, you know, 10,000 pieces of later that I made in pages, which stuns everybody. Cause they think I'm like a master's in art degree. I don't make con now, but I just messages poured through me, flowed through me. There was something so much higher going on and this didn't just strike a chord with moms, but struck a nerve. So one by one being there day in and day out from celebrations to the unthinkable.

Pete Moore:

When did you realize that you really had that, that it, that this was a business and not just, Hmm.

Vicki Reece:

I love that you say that. I think, well not. I think I went from 52 to 53 friends was two 30 in the morning and I was about to hop in a hot bath and I was doing the happy dance and I was like, I need to live here and be something much bigger is going on. Now. Keep in mind the position I'm in. I get asked, as you can imagine, you know, 20, 30 times a day, every single day to say, love the shampoo, love this. I don't do that. This is about how it's all about empowering moms. It's about moms first. It's about supporting champing them. So I come at it from such a different place. And I knew when they were asking you know, there's there's chat programs, which I, in that program, there's chat groups about what skincare I use.

Vicki Reece:

No one even knows what skin it's like. And I do nothing except work. And, you know, coming from passion in a different place. So I knew early on, but, and I had opportunity among opportunity. There was a, I don't even know if I should chat about this, but I'll leave names out. There was a big shopping app. It was a seven figure purchase order. My first out of the gate, totally tone deaf. And we gave the richest feedback for two months and it was all bud helping improve it. They didn't care. And our moms didn't like it. They said, we love you. That's why we're, we're helping build this. We stopped it after two months. So this is about it's, it's just as much as I'm a mama bear for them. And then for me, we are for each other. So my thing was, which I think is important for any entrepreneur. It would have been very easy for me to monetize, but not in the way that I knew moms needed and moms deserved. I needed to find the right team. I'm sure you've talked about this on plenty of your podcasts. For me. It wasn't easy to do for me to build a community of over 5 million people. It was just natural and organic and beautiful, but to find a team of integrity of experience that was, you know, and it's funny fitting that I'm wearing this shirt today.

Pete Moore:

We'll go video on this. So we'll take a snapshot of that. We'll put that on there. Five speak louder than words. So

Vicki Reece:

Right there with action and most people have words. And when it came to it, it was stunning that people had certain positions that they did. And so when you, and I'd say all the time, I'd rather have a mom or dad on a mission, getting things done than resumes. And you're going to meet in a moment. And we were introduced by a mutual friend just about three and a half years ago. And from our very first call, I knew that he need would need to be my partner and I would need it's everything he said on our first call. We're actually doing now, but I needed to grow it. I needed to keep my, you know, just pour love and intention and do everything I'm doing. And then be able to launch your camp when you're supporting and champion moms. You can't just say here's one sliver, this is what we're going to do. So we are not boiling the ocean when we get into it, but everything is so beautifully and systematically sequenced, if you will. So what unfolds, how it needs to, and this is, if you look at it as a trust-based community and commerce and relation ship, relational marketing, if you will,

Pete Moore:

Now, that's right. That's a great summary. So let's bring in your partner here. Who's been very patient on the podcast. So a a, a, a good part of leadership skills. I'm sure. So do God, should give your background and go from there. Sure. Repeat.

Dush Ramachandran:

Yeah, so I grew up in the enterprise software industry. I grew to head up sales for a fortune 500 software company called computer vision. And I bought the Canadian division of that company, took it private and ran it for several years, grew it and sold it, then started another enterprise software company in the manufacturing space from scratch and grew that, and then the first four years of that company, we already had such blue chip customers as rolls Royce, Boeing, Ingersoll, Rand, Airbus, industry, Polaroid, et cetera. And so we grew that sold that company to a company based here in Boulder, Colorado, and this company that bought my business had a lot of venture funding, but didn't have much revenue. So they saw what we had done with our business. And they said, why don't you come over and run our business? So I went into the acquiring company and ran that business for several years, grew that and sold it.

Dush Ramachandran:

And then that was the time when I was invited by the board at ClickBank to come help, grow and sell ClickBank. Now, ClickBank, if you're not familiar with it is the largest affiliate network in the world. And it's also the largest membership program in the world. And so it's also the largest retailer of digitally downloadable products video courses eBooks membership programs, et cetera. So when I went to ClickBank was a modest sized company, but \$95 million in sales annually. And over time, over the six years, I was there were able to grow it to over 550 million in sales annually. So about 500% growth in six years. We also hit a couple of very interesting milestones. We've paid out over \$2 billion to product and affiliates for their sales through ClickBank. We also increased the membership accounts from about 850,000 when I got there to over five and a half million accounts, which then became the law, one of the largest membership programs in the world.

Dush Ramachandran:

It was a hugely profitable company. It still is. It's still privately held. And while I achieved one part of my goal, which was to grow the company aggressively, make it hugely profitable. I didn't manage to sell it because the original founders who still own the company had a, an expectation of value that outran the market by about 20%. So anytime you put a deal on the table, they wanted 20% more. So at the end of

six years, you know, you beat me over the head six times to eventually get the hint. So at the end of six years, I figured this was never going to sell. And so I moved on and my wife and I, she was also at ClickBank and she was one of the founding team. And she had seen their revenues grow from about a million to over 450 million.

Dush Ramachandran:

She had left a year before I did. So we got together, ran our digital marketing agency. Vicky was introduced to me by a common friend of ours, about three and a half years ago. And when I first met Vicky, I was absolutely amazed, not only at the size of the community at that time, it was one and a half million moms in the community, but also the engagement. So the question that came up immediately in my mind was why hasn't become monetized this massive and highly engaged community. And as we continued our conversation over time, it became very clear. She didn't have the team to do that, and it wasn't possible to do it by herself. So anyway, we continued our conversation staying in touch, you know, every few months until fast forward, about six months ago when Vicki was starting to have more serious conversations with investors.

Dush Ramachandran:

And she said, would you, would you jump on and help? So initially I came on as an advisor and very soon as we started to have these conversations with investors, it became very clear that this needed to be a single-minded devoted effort to take this company forward. And so I decided to jump on as chief operating officer and my wife continues to run our digital agency. And so in the time that I've, I've come on as a full-time chief operating officer in the last six months, we've had some amazing conversations. And while, while we're on the topic, let me just talk very quickly about the size and engagement of the community. This is absolutely staggering. Every post that Vicki puts out gets one and a half billion, annual impressions, one and a half billion people see a post from, by vacate every post, right?

Dush Ramachandran:

When she puts out a video 334 million annual views, that's more than, it's almost a million views a day to every video, right? And you might think, oh, these are videos that people are just scrolling right through. If you look at the engagements, there's 80 million annual engagements, this is engagements. Meaning people who have liked shared or commented on these videos, 80 million a year, and the average monthly reach used to be about 40 million. And now over the last 45 to 50 days, it's gone up to 60 million, 60 million people reached average monthly, right? This is absolutely amazing. And the most interesting part of it is that this is completely organic, not one like, or share or view has been paid for it.

Pete Moore:

That's amazing. So when you look at this and, you know, as we were talking about, and I was the first one to bring it up in our last call, you know, monetize the community, I think that might be a disingenuous term. We're really trying to optimize the community and provide value and get some of the value back to us as revenue in the company. So I'm not going to use the term monetize a community. I was thinking about the people I consider part of my community. I'm not going to monetize them. I'm just going to help them be better. And then I get some value out of that transaction, if you will, right. Our relationship. So, you know, it was funny, Dave and I run this halo academy and we, we had a case study and we, we split everyone into different teams and we said, okay, here's the amount of money you have.

Pete Moore:

Here's the company. And tell us what you're going to do with the money. And, and what's your hundred day plan. There were three teams and there were three completely different strategies that were going to be deployed by very smart people. So how do you look at companies such as this and, you know, is there you're a serial, successful serial entrepreneur? Do you have you know, a methodology, you know, is everything kind of pre, you know, scripted based on, you know probably a balance between your, your gut and your and, and the data.

Dush Ramachandran:

That's a great question. So let me answer it this way. A lot of people have in fact asked me the exact same question. So you've, you've done this multiple times. You've bought and sold companies. You've grown them, sold them. Why are you here? So there are two reasons. One is an emotional reason. The other is a rational reason. Let me go with the emotional reason first. Anything I am today, I owe it to my mom. She, she raised me. She was an extremely strong woman who gave me incredible values of fabulous education. And I'm eternally indebted to my mom. So I'm here primarily as a tribute to my mom and some, some way by which I can give back to the moms of the world, because I do believe that they are the most influential in creating the next generation of citizens of our world and our country.

Dush Ramachandran:

The second is the more rational reason, which is when I looked at the level of engagement and the size of the community. In general, you find that when the community grows engagement drops, because it's hard to keep that level of, with that size of community. The paradoxical thing about Dr. Mon is that the engagement has continued to grow along with the size of the community. So when I look at it and see all the things you can do, and we can talk a little bit about all the various things that we have in plan that we're rolling out, it is, it is an opportunity to give moms an opportunity, a way by which they can have their voices heard. And at the same time monetize their daily activities, to the extent they want to give them an opportunity to unlock their economic value. So, so in looking at this, I S this is a unicorn, this is a unicorn in the making, and I felt like I needed to be here.

Pete Moore:

Okay. So Vicky, you know, as you thought about it and you met three and a half years ago, so probably somewhat of the longest job interview that I've been a part of, but I actually recently thought about hiring someone and we've known each other for 22 years. So that's kind of how, how life goes, you know, how do you think about you know, professionalizing the business, even though you've run it professionally, you know, bring in outside advice and, and voices and still say, you know what, I, this has gotten to the point where I, I kind of have to almost like your, your child leaving your house. Like at some point I've got to let it go and, and kind of let it grow on its own because it's taken on a life of its own. So how do you, you know, we've got a lot of entrepreneurs that listen to his podcasts and there's always, you know, Hey, I want to do everything. I don't want to take an outside capital because I don't want anyone to tell me what to do. At the same time, they're like, wow, if I had outside capital, you know, I can, I can influence 10 times the amount of people. I know what influence I've had on my current community. So let it go because it's going to reach more people, even though if I'm not the ultimate decision maker on every single thing that happens.

Vicki Reece:

I'm very glad you asked me that. And I go, which I'm sure there are a lot of entrepreneurs listening. I couldn't be more delighted and grateful because I can't serve and do everything that I need to do. And, and it's, you know, I, can't also tell you what you can imagine, how many people just see dollar signs when they see moms, but by us having a team and bringing in the capital, and we had one round where we're actually closing it today, we're starting our new one. I mean, it just was like, boom, right? Aligned people. And how, when everything is so lined up, it's like, there's this magnetic energy who will attracting the right people, Josh and his team. And although the other members of the team, the COO CTO, chief architect officer haven't started yet, we're having weekly meetings with them now going on like a month and a half dishes.

Vicki Reece:

And then with the CMO weekly and to see how deeply they care and the rep expertise. So our moms for this is a way that we could serve them support every time we have these conversations, they want to jump off to have deeper ones. One of our things, I don't know if we're going to get into the different areas of joint mom, but we have a mom marketplace, we call it, moms are moms, everything we're launching is what they're already doing. We're just giving them more seamless tools. And when you're in a trust-based ecosystem, which is what we are it's to be able to make their activities more seamless is a dream of mine. So bottom line I have given this baby roots, this has been my fourth child, but I could finally get back to doing my pop-ups and coffee shops. My drop-ins by all those things that I need to do versus wearing every single hat.

Vicki Reece:

I just think it's so important to know, you know, what your strengths and your passions are. And as an entrepreneur, you've got to wear many hats. And if you survive, you get to be very good at wearing those many hats. So it's about the team because they can accelerate and give this wings. And our moms we've done surveys. 96%, hundred percent said they would come to a private platform. 96% will come to a paid platform. And the 4% all wrote personal notes in the survey. You're having tough times. Now, we want to, I mean, it's like you, you can't imagine the, the love and the bond, you know, this is like, you know, they, they refer to each others, their tribe. It's like, I've found my people.

Pete Moore:

That's, that's amazing. So when you think, well, go in 1999, I used to work at a private equity fund. And we were tinkering with investing in the internet and I showed some projections to the managing partner. And he's like, look, this company is not going to grow as quick as you'd think it's going to grow that we were looking at he's like, you know, what did you build something of value? And when you want to sell it, someone's going to pay you for the value that you've delivered. So as you think about this, you know, on your COO role and, and what you're embarking on here, you know, the hardest part is getting the community, right? So you have the community, you nurture that and then kind of see what works without, you know, trying to put the joy of mom on a treadmill, you know, at a level 12. So how do you think about, obviously you've been around the block you've seen what works, you know, fast growth, sometimes kills companies, some fast growth, some comms energizes, probably medium growth is a sustainable, you know, way to think about it and where everyone feels like, okay, we're, we're ready for the next opportunity. So what's your philosophy related to that and how you look at this?

Dush Ramachandran:

Yeah, that's a great question. So in the company before ClickBank of the technology that we had marketplaces, and so we powered a number of B2B marketplaces and in every single one of those situations, the marketplace was built first and they went looking for the community to trade on the marketplace. Now here, the hard part has already been done. It's building that community of highly engaged people that's already there. So the exactly, as Vicki mentioned, just a minute ago, all of the things that we're building on the joy of mom platform, which is mom market, a way by which moms can buy and sell gently use articles of clothing, toys, et cetera, to free up some cash or opportunities for them to sell things of their own creation, right? Which think of Etsy moms are crafters that are quilters. They create jewelry.

Dush Ramachandran:

All these kinds of products can be featured on my market. So there's a revenue model there from transaction fees, listing fees and advertising mom map is a way by which moms can connect on a map in that map based way with other moms to set up playgroups, to have other mom based activities or, or products and services shown to them. And again, their revenue model, there is advertising. There's, all of these things are things that moms are already doing on a one-to-one basis, right? So, and they've all asked us, can you please step in and help us organize this in a more seamless way? Because as the community grows, it becomes extraordinarily difficult for a trust-based transaction to take place. So if we are the trusted third party in the middle, not only do you have the opportunity for moms to engage and connect with one another, but you also have the opportunity for them to unlock their economic value in a trust-based way.

Dush Ramachandran:

So that, so the way we're looking at this is building out the platform in such a way that we offer them incredible value and stickiness where we serve their needs and the valuation will follow. Right. Exactly. As you said, Pete you know, if we're able to deliver which we absolutely believe in, we're absolutely confident we can deliver absolute, incredible value. Then the valuation will be there. That's not the problem. So we're not concerned so much about focused, purely on the monetization, but rather on providing that trust-based value to moms and the value is immense when you have the size of the community.

Pete Moore:

Yeah. I mean, it's kind of you know, to use an allergies, kind of meet up, meets Etsy, you know, meets a good housekeeping stamp of approval. We could probably go on and on and say a word association game here. So Vicky, as you, as you think about this, you know, as we kind of come out of the pandemic here and people start meeting up again, how, how much of there is how much of, is there a need for human interaction? You know, I think th th the meetup and the ability to find someone on a map is, you know, going to be essential for people getting back to some semblance of normalcy and, you know, meeting people in a trusted way seems to be, I don't know where else you would go for that. Besides a joy, a mom type of trusted platform, it's not like you're just getting picked up by an Uber and dropped off, but you're actually fostering real relationships. So how do you think about that is, you know, on the mapping side. Cause I think that's something that really hasn't, it's been tried, but it hasn't really been successful in, in any other category.

Vicki Reece:

What's interesting. We actually tested it and I mentioned it like less than five minutes and we had a slot we had, and they said, it's not fully functional. You know, we're just wanted, and they were, they were connecting based on needs and passions and interests. So what happens? And this Lancer question, when we jump on a live stream, and if somebody is sharing, you know, difficult news, or they just found out their child's on the spectrum or has allergies and has add, or, you know, they have to care for their parents. You it's, they are moms mobilize. Like it's, they're putting their phone numbers and comments on Facebook. They're putting their kids names, they're putting their addresses and I'm like, you guys delete it now. And they're like, Vicky, it's joined mom. I'm like, it's Facebook. You just can't. You know, then the conversations in our private group are, you know, beyond their telling us about their getting divorced before.

Vicki Reece:

And I'm like, are you sure your husband's not listening? I mean, you you've the vulnerability. So anyway, what they're able to connect because whether a mom lives in Sioux city, Iowa, Scottsdale I never say it's Saskatchewan. It's, it's like all over. When I see north Vietnam, Southwest Sweden, you know, Bahamas ma we're mostly domestic, but we're also a global footprint. We're going through the same thing. So they are connecting it, this Jew, what we do here, it transcends anything with politics, anything with like where someone is on their journey, what, what are the ties that bind us together? Our motherhood now through the pandemic, our moms have been saying, I need human connection. How can I, where can I, what do you recommend? I can't believe how much that they're feeling. They're always felt isolated alone, but this was at a whole new level because in addition to all the many hats we wear, we've all had a step up as warriors, including being teachers or, you know you know, all those things. And I think, you know, on our, you know, just how pumped just looks forward. So the need for human connection now more than ever in our base is large enough, but I'm, we're part of, I have deep relationships with other niche communities who we're going to be announcing are going to be coming under our umbrella as well. So it's not just it's mom to mom, but it's moms from one to many, but there's nothing. I mean, moms have named their kids after each other. It's it's

Pete Moore:

It works well. And so in some companies you get to the point where you want to set up a brand ambassador program, it sounds like you already have one where we're living it. Right? Absolutely. Yeah. So, so in closing here, so we're closing around today. So it's going to be a couple of weeks at wa once we publish this out, we what what's, what do you see over the next three to six months? Either from initiatives that you're going to do internally or potential announcements or key hires that we can think about making sure we get the right people over to you. Yeah, absolutely. So

Dush Ramachandran:

The first this, this round closes today, so that gives us the fuel. We need to go build out the platform. We've already built a prototype and much of it has been tested out with the moms and they love it. So we're going to start to build out the platform in earnest bring on the team, the C-suite team, and lots of the, the, the actual players and roll out the platform to a small group of maybe 60 or 70 moms initially so that they can torture test it, make sure that it's beta tested thoroughly, and then we roll it out to the larger community. So we're going to be having furious amount of development and other activities going on over the next little while. And then we have another round we'll, we'll close some point in the future and that's that's to give us the catapult into the second stage.

Pete Moore:

Great, well, we are big fans of what you're doing. We've only known Joe for a couple of months, but there's already been material progress since we had our first conference called deep into the pandemic Vicki. So congrats on the closing, congrats on the team that you built congrats on having Haley involved, which is always beneficial for anyone involved. And we we look forward to being part of helping you continue to grow and getting the message out and making sure that this becomes the trusted community of choice for for everyone globally. So congrats on what you built and look forward to the update calls. Thank you so much. All right, I'll talk to you soon. Thanks. Thanks. Bye-Bye okay. Bye.

Speaker 4:

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