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Mr. Ratliff

ISM 2A

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## **Research Assessment #7 - Interview with Ron Kinkade**

*I conducted this interview in person on Tuesday, October 18th, 2022.*

It was one of my favorite interviews, and I believe it gave me a lot of confidence going into future interviews. I was excited that we could meet in person and that we met in the office. When I arrived, Ron gave me a small tour of the office. My favorite part was all the founding principles put up around the building and hearing all the core values and how they implement into daily work.

For the interview, we started by discussing the company itself, considering all the posters and slogans I had just seen during the tour. Ron talked a little about the founding of the company and the growth it has reached now. Text-em-all was created in 2005 and was initially called call-em-all. With this name, only 5% of their clients were using their texting platform, while the others were unaware of this feature. Their competitors were stealing clients simply because they didn't know the company offered automated texting. Along with other reasons, they decided to change their name to the current title, Text-em-all. Over 85% of their clients now use the automated mass texting feature.

When Ron talked about the company, he constantly returned to its mission, purpose, core values, etc. Simply, it is ingrained in their culture. Everything they do, from putting nicknames on their website to having bright painted walls and an open floor concept, go back to the four founder's visions of a communicative working environment. I found it very interesting how their website uses the Japanese art form Wabi Sabi. My Aunt is an art fanatic, and she gave me a book on the art technique. The main point is that it is imperfect and represents nature in its purest form. I love the marketing aspect behind this idea and didn't realize how much detail went into the thought process of their website.

After talking much more about the company and its goals, I focused the interview on Ron himself, how he got there, and why he chose marketing. Ron originally went to

Illinois State and graduated with a business management degree. Post-graduation, he worked in retail jobs for several years. After that, Ron moved to a marketing position at a travel agency and enjoyed it, but eventually left due to his boss. In all his past jobs, he took on a lot of different roles and learned many skills along the way.

In this regard, I asked him what he believed to be the essential marketing skills, and they are as follows;

- Communication: written and verbal
- Organization
- Being initiative: essentially, don't ask stupid questions—if you can find the answers yourself, take the initiative and do so
- Emotional Intelligence: ties back into the company's core values of communication
- Storytelling: a form of communication, but fundamental to enthrall audiences
- Digital marketing: graphic design, social media, website, etc
- Some Tech knowledge: Hubspot, MTool, HTML, CSS
- Data Analytics: statistic knowledge, AB Testing

I know there are a lot, but his most prominent note was that in marketing, soft skills are—in most cases—more crucial to companies, as they are more complex to learn than hard skills.

The last thing Ron and I discussed was concluding advice. He told me the best thing I could do for my future is to have a vision. Specifically one that aligns with my core values. I must find what's most important to me and come up with goals to abide by—truly envision where I want to be 1, 5, or 10 years from now. He recommended writing it out down to minute details and then coming up with a plan on how to execute it and get there. It is ironic because we just completed SMART goals in ISM, so it was perfect timing.