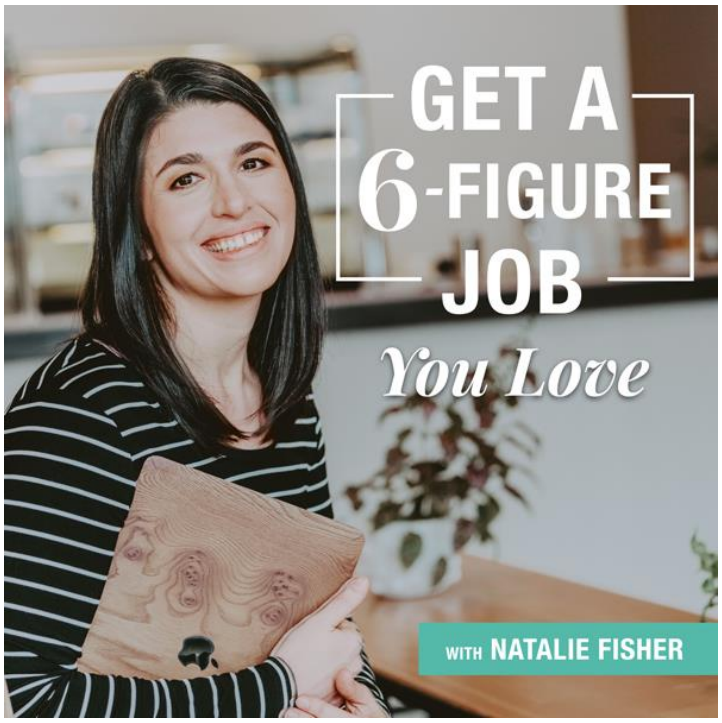
Ep #21: You Win or You Learn:
A Client Success Interview with Heather



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Fisher

Get a 6-Figure Job You Love with Natalie Fisher

Ep #21: You Win or You Learn:
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Welcome to the Get a 6-Figure Job You Love Podcast. This is episode 21: Client success interview with Heather.

Hey there, welcome to the Get a 6-Figure Job You Love Podcast. I'm your host Natalie Fisher. I'm a certified career mindset coach who also happens to want to skip all the BS and get to what it really takes to create real results for you in your career. On this podcast you will create real mindset shifts that will lead to big results and big changes in your career and your income. No fluff here. If you want to get a 6-figure job you love and create real concrete results in your industry and make a real impact you're in the right place. Are you ready? Let's go.

Hello, hello. So, welcome to the podcast today. I've got another one of my amazing clients, Heather on to share her story about what she's been able to achieve. And without further ado, Heather why don't you let us know a little bit about you?

Heather: Hello. Thanks for having me on. It's been a long road to it but it's been so worth it. I started out as a therapist for – a general therapist helping special needs children with severe forms of autism and [inaudible] dystrophy, learning how to communicate with the people around them, and their family, their classmates, things like that. And prior to that job included reading up on the current research and I was seeing gaps that I was like, "I think we should really study that more. I think I would integrate more of this into that study." I think they took a very one-sided approach.

So I actually decided to go back to school, started studying biology. And my mentor then introduced me to a friend of his at USC and I wound up going to work managing his lab and working in experiments. And found my

master's program then in regulatory and quality sciences. And I got to build up my lab experience across a wide range of techniques while I was studying the regulations and things like that. And ultimately that combined with my first degree which was in English of all things, I know it sounds [inaudible].

Natalie: Yeah, we're going to talk about your background a little bit and the story you had blocking you there.

Heather: And that all came together and came into my realization that I think I can do the most good by helping translate the science from the labs into terms that make more sense to the review boards, the regulators, the patients who might join a clinical trial, or eventually take this treatment whenever it hits the market.

Natalie: Yeah. Okay. So that was your most – the job that you just – well, that you're still at but just left basically for the new job, right?

Heather: Yes.

Natalie: Okay, awesome. And so a little bit about where you were when we started working together as far as your position in the current company and kind of what had happened there where they weren't really giving you the advancement that you knew you could do?

Heather: So there is a unique qualification system for research centers that are funded by the NIH. We weren't actually directly part of the university. It's kind of its own little [inaudible].

Natalie: I'm not sure that our listeners will know all of the acronyms, so you used, so UFC, NIH, maybe could you clarify what those mean?

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Heather: No worries. So the National Institutes of Health, it's a large government entity that has multiple centers focused on different types of disease and treatments that need to be developed. And they help fund research at say the universities, like University of Southern California which is where I was for the last nine years. And they fund large centers as well as individual investigators.

So our job as a research center is to support those investigators with the smaller grants, the smaller labs by providing the services they can't necessarily do themselves, like processing their tissue samples and creating slides, or having the massive or extremely expensive equipment that would blow an entire small grant out. So they can have those resources as a support system.

Natalie: Yeah. So that's where you were working and what you were doing, and you've been there for nine years. And you've kind of done everything that you could do in the position?

Heather: Literally. I had just reached the top with what I could do. I had grown as much as I could. I've learned so much. And I'm still extremely grateful for that. It was an amazing opportunity to learn a huge range of techniques. And that really will help me long term because what I want to do is translate what's coming out of labs like that into terms that will actually get new potential treatments into clinical trials and things like that, and then onto the market.

Natalie: Yeah, absolutely. And so for someone like yourself having been in a position like that with having learned everything and having this bigger vision for yourself, it just wasn't going to be somewhere that you were going to be able to be long term. And nine years is already a long time to be somewhere where they are – and I recall that they had said that they –

they'd promoted you a couple of times. And they have given you as much as they said they could give you. And then that was it, they weren't willing to kind of advance you any further.

So that's when you decided, okay, you were kind of like, "Okay, I need to make a career move." And that's when we kind of started working together. So do you want to talk a little bit about how you first approach the job search and how you kind of thought about it when we first started?

Heather: Yeah. So when we first started I actually hadn't done a formal job search and interview in more than a decade. Honestly, I don't think I have ever done a formal intense job search. I was always introduced to something or someone and it happened to line up. This was the first time where that wasn't really possible because my entire network was based in LA. And I was trying to also make the shift to Orange County and spend more time with my family in that regard. So this was the time when I was like, "Okay, now what?"

And then I started getting into networking groups in Orange County and I would rush down there after work to go to these things. And then Covid hit, so that was gone. And I had to learn how to network more online. And that was where you helped me a lot with learning how to approach people because it's kind of hard to just say, "Hey, I want to get to know you and this", when you're cold calling basically. You're cold emailing, I was not used to that. I needed those initial scripts to get me going because it wasn't that I was being disingenuous.

And I didn't want to just come out and be like, "Hey, do you have any openings?" I was looking for advice, I really was. And just it's hard to figure how to put that [inaudible].

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Natalie: Yeah, and you had a huge value and skill set to offer. And it's just when we approach it from that viewpoint of I have to cold call, or I have to go ask people for help that it makes it difficult to know what to say because you feel like nobody wants to do that. So yeah, and you did a lot of it. I know you took a lot of action to get to where you are now. So yeah, and I didn't know that. I mean it makes sense, a lot of my clients actually when they do – and doing the interviews they're like, "I hadn't done an interview in or 10 or 12 years because, you know."

And it makes sense, because you're busy doing your job, you're working in the field you're working in and you're focused on that every day. And there would be no need to focus on how to interview. And it's a skill that you wouldn't really – you don't need it until you need it.

Heather: Yeah. And literally my first interview for working at the university, my mentor from where I was studying biology, actually introduced me to my first boss at USC. Because they had been friends in the grad school and he knew he needed a new lab manager. So he said, "Let me introduce you." He drove me there, he introduced me. We all had lunch together. It was a very laidback experience. It was not like interviewing in the industry at all.

Natalie: Yeah. Well, that's how – you had actually networked before, you didn't really know. You were kind of doing it unconsciously but the mentor and then that all happened because you met one person. It wasn't applying for a job posting. It wasn't trying all the things. It was just organically happened and that, yeah, and that can just easily happen every day for people. So it happened to you then and now you had to learn how to recreate that for your next move basically.

So yeah, so the question I guess I have for you next would be, there's always a shift that happens. So sometimes it takes everybody a different

amount of time, a different amount of interviews, a different amount of connections to make before they get to their results. And then when they get to their results then there's a shift that happens. And for you it was particularly big because you ended up going from having no offers for a while to having two offers at one time.

So if you were to kind of pinpoint what you think that shift was that you made what would you kind of attribute that to in your thinking process?

Heather: So we spent a lot of time on this particular block. It was I had been raised to think if you're your own toughest critic you'll grow the most. But it's a double edged sword because then you've also got all of that negative self-talk kind of giving you things like the infamous imposter syndrome. So when people are like, "You've got this, you know what you're doing. Just go in and sell yourself." And I'm sitting there going, "I'm not a salesperson. How do I sell myself?" And it was a much more formal and intimidating situation going into an industry interview.

So I had to really work through that negative self-talk and learn to embrace my curiosity and my resourcefulness. Because you kept bringing me back to, "Those are your strengths, you are resourceful, you can figure out anything. You had to figure out this, you had to figure out that." So the exercises where you had me write down my major achievements and helped me monetize or come up with a solid way of demonstrating how much of an impact that had, whether it was I by saved time or money to have some kind of evidence.

Because I am a scientist as well, I'm a writer and a scientist. The scientist side of me needs evidence. That side really helped, that helped from that. And then the other things were adding, like ThinkUp with the affirmations to

also go with my planner and journal with the morning mindset and the evening journals.

Natalie: Yeah. And that's something that I wanted to commend you for, really just staying committed every day to this goal that you had and just bringing yourself back in practices that were doing that. But also you mentioned something really important about how, and I think a lot of people think this is we're raised to be our own self-critic and then we'll be the most successful if that's the case. And we do kind of think that sort of thing. So you said it perfectly. And really it's the opposite of that. Because I think I'd thought about how to say it.

If you had a small child and you kept criticizing the small child every day, the child isn't going to be more successful because they're being criticized. And you probably know this, but studies will probably show that children are going to be more successful when they are told what is working, what they are able to do. Starting from a place with what is, what they already have, what they can grow from. The place they can grow from instead of kind of putting them down as far as like, "You should have been able to do it better, or you should know more than this, or you should know this by now."

If you think about talking to a small child in that way and then how they would probably progress in life. And then thinking of course we would never do that. We would never think of talking to a child like that. But then we talk to ourselves like that. And we think that that's going to be useful. And that is how kind of we're taught in society, exactly as you said. So that was definitely a big shift.

And also me as a coach being able to just see that because of all the stuff that you'd actually done already, the results that you'd produced, the

concrete things that you'd thought through to get these results for where you were in the company that you were. And it's great that they kept saying, they kept giving you positive feedback verbally and kept appreciating you that way. But when it comes down to it, you wanted to make a bigger impact and it was going to require looking outside the organization to do that.

So would you talk a little bit about how you kind of saw yourself before versus how you see yourself now as somebody who's been able to get two jobs offers and in the end have your old job raise your amount of money to keep you?

Heather: So beforehand I struggled really hard with the idea of considering myself an expert.

Natalie: Yes. I remember you didn't like that word.

Heather: And I struggled with it. But then you helped me keep coming back to the fact that if there's one thing I am an expert at is research. That's my resourcefulness, that's my curiosity, those are my strengths. I genuinely love to learn and I feel like – well, I was raised by two professors, I love to learn. I think learning is growth and that is life. If you're not growing you're decaying.

But that really helped me because then I could finally shift gears to just thinking about these interviews as I'm meeting a new teammate, I'm meeting a new colleague. And I am genuinely curious about who they are, what they're up to and what they need help with which is exactly what I have been doing as a research specialist, consulting with all of these different investigators and teams on getting protocols up and running and

troubleshooting this issue and that. And so then I felt more like I was in my professional expert mode.

And it circumvented that now I've really got to perform, now I've got to sell myself kind of thought that would trigger the self-doubt and that helped a lot.

Natalie: Exactly. And yeah, the research was like, because once we pinpointed okay, you're really good at research. And you were able to identify what you knew you were good at. It was just kind of owning it and then finding all the evidence to support it and focusing on that. And then being able to be like, see, that's the proof that this is all the value that you're able to add. And then a key really well said thing was focusing on them and getting curious about them. And that kind of supersedes the self-doubt when you get into the habit of doing that.

So I think you did a really good job with that and obviously the results prove it in the end. What do you think your main blocker was along the way? If there was a thought that was blocking you and then a thought that kind of cleared everything up for you what would you say those were? Was it something about your background? I remember your background as well. You kind of thought people are not going to think my background is appropriate for what I want to do.

Heather: So when I first got into science my original degree was in English. And I got a lot of pushback on that, a lot of comments and a lot of sideways glances. But then it proved that I could do the research, I could sort out a protocol that three other people hadn't been able to do. I could do the experiments with proper technique and get good clean results. And over time then they also realized that my English degree allowed me to edit things far more effectively.

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And suddenly, because one of my favorite things about working at USC was that we had such a diverse group of people. I mean we had people…

Natalie: Just remind us what the UFC acronym is?

Heather: University of Southern California. And when I was working there we had people from all around the world. And so I got to learn about different cultures and work with people who had different backgrounds, different educations, different lines of work, even, that got totally different perspectives, which really helped when we were trying to work through what might be going on in this particular instance.

And because of that they wound up realizing you know what, her ability to write clearly and edit effectively is an asset. And they finally embraced that and I started helping people by editing articles and grant submissions and things like that.

Natalie: Yeah. So then not only research but editing and then you became kind of known for that skill as well. And I do remember that another piece of your self-concept that you owned or that you identified was that you were able to deal with all these different types of personalities and different people. And that's also a strength because we're going to have all sorts in every job that we have. So yeah, just identifying all those things and being able to bring them to the surface and focus on them. So yeah, that was a really good thing that we identified and uncovered with that.

And yeah, I think that kind of, that definitely answers the question as far as the blocks before and then the breakthrough after, just kind of reframing the same thing. Because your abilities, your education, your background, it did not change, it was just simply the way that you thought about it, therefore the way that you were able to talk about it. And the way that you were able

to project it for other people to see it as valuable because really the value was just the results that you are able to produce for someone else and having them believe that.

Yeah, so what would you say advise somebody else kind of in the position where you were of being in a position where they weren't able to grow and knowing that they were meant for something bigger, had a bigger mission? And I want to talk a little bit about your mission for your future and what you'll be capable of now.

But what would you kind of advise somebody who's in that position right now where they aren't able to grow, they know they have reached the maximum that they can contribute in that organization but they're afraid to kind of take that leap because it's a secure position?

Heather: Yeah. That was another major one here after was letting go of security. If you know what you want to do the way I did, don't be afraid to focus. And I got a lot of conflicting advice in the beginning from different mentors and so forth. Some said, "Don't cast your net too small. Don't be too narrow in your search. Cast a big net, keep your mind open."

Natalie: Do you think that was good advice now?

Heather: I think it's good advice if you're starting out and you're really early on in your career. But I was far enough along and working full-time that in order for me to do an effective job search I did need to narrow my focus. And I knew what I wanted to do, I wasn't searching around and looking and weighing options and just exploring what might be available. I knew where I wanted to go. And I needed to focus and that was a major hurdle that helped to overcome when I finally did just focus on what I was aiming for.

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And the other thing I would say is once you know where you want to go, the best way, especially if you're trying to – if you don't have an immediate network that can help you. Because you want to move to a different area or you're trying to shift gears completely to a different field, the LinkedIn networking groups were a really good place to start.

Natalie: Yeah. I like to kind of think of LinkedIn as like a big party and there's a bunch of different rooms you can go into the groups.

Heather: Once you learn how to navigate it gets a lot easier. At first I was trying different keywords and so forth. But once you find a couple of good ones that really fit, then you start getting more suggestions that fit closer to those and the parameters aren't so hard to find and a good place to click.

Natalie: Yeah. So that's another thing I wanted to highlight that you did really well. So, a lot of trial and error happening in the process that you just described, but also your willingness to keep trying. So I feel like you're one of my clients who dealt with setbacks the best. We coached one time and then we never had another call where you were in, like thrown out of the game. It was just like okay, this is what I did. This is what I'm going to do next kind of thing.

So do you want to talk a little bit about your mindset when you had a setback or when something didn't work, what was your thought process to move forward versus letting it kind of throw you out of the game?

Heather: So there were a couple that were more disappointing than the others. But overall it's a matter of okay, you win some, you lose some. But you don't really lose unless you fail to learn from it, that's true value doing it.

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Natalie: Yeah, you nailed it.

Heather: So you win or you learn, that was the mindset that I needed to hold onto to get me through those and make me more resilient. And it's my love of learning that makes me think that way.

Natalie: Perfect, we should call this podcast episode that, something around winning or learning. I love that. Yeah, because honestly I talk about failure a lot but we just think that that's what we should call it. But it could just as easily be called learning. We could just remove the word 'failure' from our entire vocabulary and it could just be learning and apply it like you were doing it.

Heather: Like Thomas Edison, right?

Natalie: Yeah, exactly.

Heather: I wouldn't fail, that I've found 10,000 ways that don't work.

Natalie: Exactly, yeah. And so when you were – because LinkedIn is a very powerful tool, it has all these different groups, all these different features, and all these different ways of using it. And I feel like you really tapped into that really well. And whenever something didn't work you adjusted because you were able to move forward and make some breakthroughs on there. Any tips on that?

Heather: It helped me to refer to some of your sample intro dialogs or messages. And then when I wanted to be more specific and start reaching out to individuals that I met in certain groups, or the HR people from the companies that I saw things I was interested in applying for. I would go through their profiles and find either something uniquely interesting about

them, or their background, or a shared point of reference where there was a common connection, or group, or experience.

And focus on that to tailor the message more specifically to show what I would do in a normal conversation at a networking event. Try to get to know them a little bit and connect as a human being which I found really hard to do at first because I wasn't used to the cold intros via an instant message basically or an email.

Natalie: Yeah. And not many people are. We think that there's just this one way to do it and there's a job board and you apply for the jobs and that's it. So yeah, it's not something that you would necessarily know how to do. So I think that what you said there was really important in personalizing the message and targeting it to the right person. And really putting some thought into what you want to say to connect with this person. Because I've had a lot of people tell me that they've reached out to a 100 people and nobody's responded.

And that's what you just said is the difference is the intention, and the energy, and the thought that you put in behind the message to reach out to specific people is what really makes the difference. So I think you did – and that was an iterative process. And the scripts that I have are there to take people out of confusion. But really it's the mindset behind what you're doing that's actually going to drive the results that you're going to get which is something that sometimes isn't very tangible to understand. But I think you just kind of summed it up really well there.

Yeah, so tell us about your new position and what you're going to be doing and how it's different from your old position. And how – I think you mentioned it was pretty very close to the exact thing you wanted.

Heather: Yeah. It is called medical, legal and regulatory specialist. And I will be doing a lot of editing and quality control for the documentation throughout the development process. For the therapies that they're developing, for the papers and reports that are going to go to the internal review board, to regulatory bodies like the FDA, all of the clinical trial files or packets that will go to the investigators, the doctors running different sites for the clinical trials and all of the documents that the participants will see.

And my job will be to streamline that process so we can get things filled in correctly, completely and accurately as quickly as possible.

Natalie: Which is one of your strengths.

Heather: Yes.

Natalie: I remember we also coached on that, your strengths being that you're very structured, and very organized, and that you kind of see something and you know how to put it in order really quickly. And yeah, so that sounds like the perfect thing for you. So as far as the clinical trials, you'll be working directly on those documents to submit to the FDA or how will you be taking part in that?

Heather: I will be pulling it together, putting it into the system and making sure that it is accurate. I'll be doing the quality control.

Natalie: The editing?

Heather: The editing basically, pulling together all of the stuff that the medical team wants, all the stuff the legal team wants, and all the stuff the

regulatory team wants. To make sure that it turns into one clean, clear narrative.

Natalie: Yeah, definitely sounds like it brings all your strengths together in perfect harmony.

Heather: Thank you, I agreed. I was like, “Yeah, this is exactly what I was looking for.”

Natalie: Yeah. And so you were able to communicate that to them, you were able to get them to believe that this is my exact background is right for this. This is the exact right fit for me. This is exactly what I’m good at doing. And that’s why I’m really aligned with doing this. And by doing that, and the way that you were able to do that was you had to believe that you had value to offer in the first place. And then hone in on exactly what that value was to find the best match for you.

Yeah. So tell a little bit about – talk a little bit about how you were able to get two offers after a long time of not getting any offers? I mean I feel like it takes everybody a different amount of time, but when something clicks it clicks. So tell us about that.

Heather: So that was when I stopped trying to think of okay, I need to ask them questions in order to be able to demonstrate how I could or would attempt to fix this. But more just being curious about them as people and getting to know them as potential new colleagues and what they were up to and what they needed. And that put me more into my comfort zone because that is something I’ve done a lot of throughout my career and done it with a lot of different teams. So that took a whole lot of my nerves, my fear out of it.

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Natalie: Yeah. So what was kind of your thought process around that that was a shift?

Heather: That came from just remembering to go back to what are my strengths? My strengths are curiosity, research, a love of learning and sorting things out.

Natalie: Yeah, organization.

Heather: Creating a method to the madness, sorting the chaos. And that was what really helped. I went more into my comfort zone. I felt like a confident professional and expert when I went into that zone. And in that way it was just a matter of these are colleagues, whether I end up working with them or not, they're colleagues within the industry. And if nothing else, I'll stay in touch with them, build my network.

Natalie: Yeah. What a great attitude to have. There's no downside to thinking that way. Yeah. And then the results speak for themselves. Absolutely. So what would you say your experience was of interviewing in general before and now? Your predominant thoughts about going into an interview before and your thoughts about now, if you had to interview again for something else and you were going to go on the job search again? What would your thoughts be different?

Heather: So in the beginning my thoughts were about okay, this is a far more formal and structured line of work being in the industry. And they're going to be expecting me to check certain boxes and fit a particular formula. And trying to – being told, "Just sell yourself." And the person – well, the people who kept giving me that advice they're like, "You are your product in this case. You know your product better than anyone else. If

anyone's going to be able to sell it, it's you." And they thought this was a pep talk to me but I'm not a sales rep.

Natalie: Yeah. And you didn't really fully know your product. That's what I feel like we do the most is just pull that stuff out, the specific things that you were good at were research and dealing with a whole bunch of different kind of people and organizing things.

Heather: And contributing in all that, yeah.

Natalie: And all the specific, and the results that you've created too, because you've saved a lot of money for the company that you worked for and done a lot of really impressive thinking to arrive at impressive solutions. And that's just not something that you were paying attention to because you were too busy doing it.

Heather: Yeah, it was hard. It was hard for me to keep track of that kind of stuff and appreciate those achievements, because I didn't have a means of quantifying. And when we went over it and you were like, "You've probably saved them this much by saving this many hours. You've probably saved them this much by organizing that."

Natalie: Yeah, hundreds of thousands.

Heather: Yeah. And then of course negotiating through machines and things like that, and coverage for them and so that helped a lot, being able to quantify it. And when you're in a position where you don't get - like a sales rep's got all of their stats, I didn't have stats. I didn't have any system there to keep track of things other than how many articles have I gotten out? How many abstracts have been published? How many posters were presented? Stuff like that.

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Natalie: Yeah. And that's kind of what I think is the most fun thing about me and what I do is, is being able to bring out the person's brilliance that they didn't even see because there is so much there. And now that you can see it you're like, "Okay." And then it's easier for you to kind of own it and go and create with it. Yeah, so tell us what you kind of want to do from here, your why, your main driver, the reason why you got into this field out of any other field you could have chosen?

Heather: So when I first started at the University of Southern California I went to a conference. And they had two sets of talks. There was the preclinical people and then the clinical people. And I went to two talks that I read the little blurbs for. And I was like these will pertain to what we are doing in our lab. One was non-clinical, one was clinical. They were basically talking about the same thing; they were just using very different terms. The non-clinical side was talking in terms of molecules and signaling pathways.

And the clinical people were talking in terms of symptoms and treatments. And I was like, wait, you're saying incredibly similar things here. And you don't seem to understand that you're saying the same things. You need a translator and I can do that. And then I started my master's program and I learned that the shift from the preclinical studies, the research and development phase to the clinical phase is known as the valley of death for medical treatments because it's so hard to translate.

Natalie: Yeah. And that's where your English and science came together in perfect harmony.

Heather: Exactly.

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Natalie: Yeah. And I remember that we even talked about that because you kind of, yeah, I wanted to talk too on other people's opinions and how you handled them because other people had opinions about your background and how it was unusual. And how they maybe thought it wasn't ideal. And really now looking back it's like well, of course it was the perfect set of skills and the set of background to have. But versus before when you saw people kind of raising their eyebrow or making a comment about your background versus now, how do you feel differently about it?

Heather: So you mean when I first started at the university or when I started interviewing around right now?

Natalie: Yeah, whichever, whenever the shift happened. And I know we had a coaching call on it, on this particular topic, but whenever you feel like the shift happened.

Heather: So there were a couple. The first one was when people at the university started actually coming to me to just ask if I would edit something for them and that helped.

Natalie: Yeah, then your thought was maybe this is useful.

Heather: Yeah. And then when I was interviewing I had a few of them kind of make some snarky comments, "Gee, what do you want to be when you grow up?" And stuff like that.

Natalie: And what was your thought at that time, what was your thought at that moment? Was this an authoritative figure that was like that you valued their opinion?

Heather: No.

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Natalie: Okay, well, that changes a little bit…

Heather: And so somebody who clearly came across snarky from the beginning. And I was just like at that point that particular interview I knew I did not want to work with that person, being had already been so rude and dismissive I was just like, "Okay, I'm just going to finish this because I want the practice of getting through this interview. And get a feel for more questions that might come my way."

And that was something else that I had to be willing to just say, "Okay, clearly this is not someone I want to work with so I don't care if this person wants to work with me." But they could teach me something throughout this process, so I'm going to stick with this until I learn as much as I can."

Natalie: Great mindset.

Heather: And then that helped me too when I finally really zeroed in on committing to finding what I wanted to do. And searching for the right kind of company that wasn't so big that they wanted somebody who already had at least 10 years experience doing it, or a company so small that they also needed me to do quality control investigations and do all of these updates twice a year on every single document, over 500 documents. And help with new submissions and things like that.

And when I found the right fit they were thinking the exact same thing and they would actually willingly say it, "That's perfect, I love how that fits there."

Natalie: Yeah, they were like, "Where have you been?"

Heather: And I said, "Looking for you."

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Natalie: Yeah, awesome.

Heather: So yeah it will eventually click.

Natalie: Yeah. So when you align with really clear on what you want to do and what your strengths are. So I think one of the last questions I have for you is how you saw yourself as a professional, as a contributor then and how you see yourself now, what's the difference? What are the difference in how your mind works and what you think?

Heather: I used to kind of see myself as a jack of all trades, a master of none, because I got used to people being like, "I have no idea how to do this. We need somebody to figure this out, okay, Heather." And it could be something in the lab, it could be something related to moving a lab from point A to point B, construction, space, safety, whatever it might be, teaching people how to read the blueprints for a potential lab renovation. But because of that I had this, like I never specialized in one thing.

I didn't have, you know, I wasn't specifically training just on doing HPLC High Pressure Liquid Chromatography. I wasn't just doing microscopy. I wasn't just doing histology. And because of that I would always go back to my notes because I'd do something every day for six months and then I'd shift gears and I'd do something else for a few months.

And when I had to go back to the first thing I'd have to go back to my notes. And that's not a bad thing, you should always go back to your notes, you should always double check and go back over to make sure you are doing it the same way with the same things. Because that's how you get reproducibility a lot. And it took a lot of effort to reach the point where I realized I am an expert in research because I can find the information and learn how to do anything.

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Natalie: Yeah, absolutely. And I mean there's nothing wrong with being a jack of all trades. There's nothing wrong with being like for say a general surgeon. But it's like you get to choose, you get to be like, "Well, do I want to be a general surgeon or do I want to specialize in something? Is that what I really enjoy and want?"

And I think that that kind of brings me to your why and your mission and what you want to be able to accomplish moving forward. And that is going to involve some specialization, so definitely on the right track for that. Why don't you tell us a little bit about what you want to accomplish moving forward?

Heather: So I see the fact that having done so many different things in the lab and kind of being a jack of all trades gives me a wider background to understand more of the results and the studies that I'll be translating into terms for review boards and so forth. But what I really want to do in the future is I want to get to the point where I become an expert in getting all of the documentation in order and submitted. So that I can focus on helping companies better developing new diagnostics and treatments specifically for pediatric groups.

Because what sent me down this path was my work with the special needs children. And while I was going down this path I discovered how few treatments actually have proper pediatric labeling because it's really hard to – even if you can get a pediatric clinical trial funded, it's hard to enroll the patients. Because you have to have parental consent and depending on the age you have to have the child's assent. And it's really hard for a lot of parents to consider making that kind of a decision for their child under a lot of different circumstances.

And it's easy to understand why because a lot of the diagnostics and the treatments are developed for full grown adults. And if you need to get results from a neonatal newborn patient you can't take an entire vial or three of blood, they just don't have the blood volume, it's not there. So you have to come up with new techniques and more sensitive diagnostics. And there are groups that are working on it and I would love to be able to help them because that's the first hurdle.

Natalie: Yeah. And this new experience that you're going to be gaining in this next position is going to set you up with the experience to be able to go and do that. It sounds like it's aligned really well with your future vision. And yeah, this is the stuff that we change the world, that changes the world, that changes lives of newborn kids. And yeah, sometimes we have to go through that difficult period in order to create the result that we want. And that's kind of where you're like that's what I want my work to be. And that's so powerful and so meaningful.

And if you had let your self-doubt get in the way or your lack of self-confidence get in the way, imagine what could be kept from the world if you continued to focus on your self-doubt and beating yourself up with all this stuff that you are going to now go and create. It's just, you know, it seems really unfair now when we look at it that way. So that's why it's so important. So yeah, summing up the way that you think about yourself, the way that you thought about yourself before versus the way that you think about yourself now and specializing in how important that is.

And also your capabilities, what you thought you were capable of before, which you hadn't really paid much attention to. How did you kind of think about yourself before? You were like, yeah, I do a good job, I'm good at my work, and versus now you're like I know exactly what I'm good at. I know

exactly what I can help with. I know exactly what my mission is. How would you kind of sum that up?

Heather: I would say before I kind of felt – it started out more like I needed to prove myself. So I was striving to learn and achieve, you know, make whatever I could work, whether it was a new protocol or something else in the lab.

Natalie: And that's how you became such an effective jack of all trades which that could work, but not for your bigger vision.

Heather: Yeah. And now it's more a matter of okay, so to make the next step toward my goal this is what I need to learn. This is what I need to focus in on and get down pat. And that is really learning the nitty gritty of getting all of the documentation in order and filling in all of the little gaps that might come up and getting it through the system effectively. And being at a place that focuses on central nervous system issues, that's a great place to do that, because it's got to be very detailed, and that will get me much closer to where I want to go.

Once I can get that system down pat I can apply it to pretty much any kind of treatment development. I just have to then refocus and make sure that I pay attention to the additional things because for pediatrics there are additional considerations. And I've studied that and I will hope that they continue to evolve and get better with new regulations and so forth.

Natalie: Yeah. And it's a highly regulated industry and all the things that you mentioned are going to be very essential to you moving forward into your mission and vision that you have. But I think that it is necessary for – this whole process of growth was exactly the right path for you to take, even if at times it seemed like it wasn't. It was the exact place that you

needed to be to be where you are now. And then to set yourself up for what you are going to do moving forward.

Heather: Yeah, it seems circuitous but I had the inspiration from working with the kids. And then I studied biology and developmental immunology at La Verne, which then led to wanting to go into the liver, which is what – because that's the main thing for toxicity. So it's a major thing for all development of all new treatments. And then getting the master's, finding the right degree and then going into this so I can really get the system down and learn the ins and outs. It's not as haphazard as it might appear to a lot of people.

Natalie: Yeah. And I think also just cleaning up your mind about yourself and what you were capable of in the end definitely fast tracked it over the long term of your career. And having this clear focus and then now being able to drive forward towards is going to make a big difference for the organizations that you work for in the future and the one that you have now and everything that you've done has led you up to this point. So it makes perfect sense.

And one last question I have for you, I keep saying that, I'm like, "This is the last question." I'm going to have another one. As far as coaching goes, for someone who had never experienced coaching before, who didn't know what it was, how would you describe it and how would you say it benefitted you?

Heather: So I would say you helped me – you have a different perspective. And I always appreciate getting a different perspective. And you helped me think a little more outside the box when I was struggling to find a new route. For example, I struggled with figuring out how to do the cold emails. And

you said, “Well, I’ve got some scripts that you can start with. And then you can try searching this way and you can try searching that way.”

And because you had more expertise and experience with how to find the people, and the connections, and the information, that helped me. You were a really good resource in that regard. But it was also a matter of having that negative voice and all of those well worn pads in my brain, having someone to help redirect me back to the positive pads that I was trying to create and that helped a lot.

Natalie: Absolutely, rewiring your brain from what you thought was helpful, which was being your own self-critic to realizing that being your own self-critic is not helpful at all.

Heather: Yeah. I had spent decades wearing those same pads into my brain. And you need help to get out of those ruts, they’re deep.

Natalie: Yeah, because you’ve been practicing them for years, right?

Heather: Decades.

Natalie: You’ve been telling yourself for years these same things, absolutely, yeah. Well, I think you’re a huge inspiration to everybody listening. And I really appreciate you coming on the podcast and it’s been an absolute honor to work with you. Is there anything else that you would like to add or anything else you’d like to leave people with?

Heather: If you’re like me and you had a hard time focusing on your achievements and your strengths, the exercise you had me do where I wrote down my biggest achievements I also added to that my strengths and

affirmations. And I really tailored my affirmations to reinforce those strengths and achievements because it needed to ring true in my brain.

And then I not only used the Think Up app, but I printed those things out and I kept them where I could review them and go back to them when that doubt started to come up. So keep those things in your mind, keep them visible to you. Find your evidence and go to it, so push yourself.

Natalie: Yeah, it's just where you focus your attention, right? Yeah.

Heather: Yeah, your focus determines your reality because it's all about perspective.

Natalie: Very well said. Very well said. I'm going to put that on an Instagram quote. Your focus determines your reality, it's all about your perspective. Love it, so well said. Alright, Heather, well, that was amazing. Thank you so much for generously sharing your experience with everybody. I'm sure it's going to help a lot of people.

Heather: Thank you very much. And thank you for all of your help Natalie.

Natalie: Absolutely.

Heather: You made a huge difference.

Natalie: It has been an honor.

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