

7-MINUTE

SCALING  **SECRETS**

EPISODE 17

**THIS IMPORTANT HABIT ALLOWS
ENTREPRENEURS TO SCALE THEIR BUSINESSES**



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Alvin Poh 0:08

Hey, everyone. Welcome to another exciting episode of 7-Minute Scaling Secrets, where we interview entrepreneurs and learn a secret on how they scaled up their businesses. Today, we have a special guest, Dr. Amiya who started Neurobit. This is a business that actually prevents a lot of diseases that we see in society today. And he does it in a very special way. Dr. Amiya, tell us a bit more about what you and Neurobit are doing.

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Dr. Amiya Patanaik 0:58

Thanks, Alvin. Thanks for having me. So what Neurobit does is pioneering this idea of using sleep as a biomarker to actually predict and prevent diseases. So what is really interesting is that sleep is not merely something that just happens, it is actually strongly connected to your health to your mental well being. In fact, many of our learning, our memory consolidation, our emotional consolidation, our physical health, our immunity is actually strongly connected to sleep.

And what we do at the company is essentially find out small patterns within your sleep and your vitals to actually figure out when specific diseases are going to happen. And our focus right now is on stroke, heart failure and dementia. Three major reasons of death, of early preventable death. In fact, what is shocking is one in every four, death can be prevented. And we are moving towards a world where that becomes a reality. And we don't have to go through these unnecessary deaths.

Alvin Poh 2:14

So you're saying that these three major illnesses and diseases, they can be actually prevented if we knew about them? Just from sleep alone, just from our sleep patterns and what's happening when we sleep? How effective is this in the reduction of like all these diseases and illnesses happening?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 2:33

So I'll give you some specific examples. So there has been research that has seen that even a single hour increase in your sleep can reduce incidence of heart failure by 25%. That's how strong the connections are. Of course, there are other markers like blood markers, and saliva markers. But sleep is actually much easier to measure, especially with the proliferation of wearables and durable technologies, right.

So you can imagine a future where you don't even have to wear a device. You just sleep in your bed, and there are sensors within your mattress that can measure your heartbeat, your respiration, and can figure out your sleep patterns. And from that tells something is going wrong, you have to act on it. And that's the future that we are building at Neurobit.

Alvin Poh 3:25

So what Neurobit does is not just encourage longer sleep, but actually identify problems with the sleep that we are having, right? Whether it's not optimal, whether we are, I don't know, maybe tossing and turning or having any issues? Is that what Neurobit is doing?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 3:42

Yes, we actually capture a lot of different things, including how you are tossing and turning, how your heart rate is fluctuating across the night, how your respiration is changing. Are you waking up in the middle of the night multiple times, which you may not even be aware and use these patterns and then correlate with almost 2 trillion health data points that we have in our databases to actually figure out what is going on with your life? And what can you do to actually improve or change your future health. And more importantly, we are working to develop something called a software as a medical device. So it's not just going to be like a consumer device, consumer device or consumer software.

It's actually going to be a medical system that integrates into existing health care products and actually provide diagnostic and augmentative information for the doctors to act on. So I'll give you even specific examples. So for example, within stroke, those who already had a stroke and survived, which is 1/3 of the people, if you don't really take care of the sleep, the chances of early incidence are almost like two times higher. So this is something that doctors already know. But unfortunately right now measuring those vitals, measuring those sleep signals are not that trivial. So the shifts are slowly happening. But we want to play a major role in that shift.

Alvin Poh 5:13

Nice. This is definitely deep tech, right? There's a lot of research. There's a lot of development work. How do you get in this field? Like, can anybody just like, do this? If like, they are really passionate about maybe sleep or health? How does somebody actually get into a field like this?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 5:33

So we, of course, are a very deep tech company. It took us years to actually develop those AI models that can do this. And specifically, I have been studying sleep for a very long time. I have a PhD in this particular area and have done a postdoc and again, in the same area. I have been working in areas that would sound like science fiction, like we used to produce sound patterns in specific ways that can actually increase the depth of your sleep. And that could increase your memory in a measurable way.

So we have published these kinds of results. But so far, building, I guess, deep tech companies like this, of course, you need the deep tech foundation as well. It's very different from let's say, a software company. But absolutely, I agree that if you are passionate about something, you certainly can change the world if you pursue it long enough and and have the grit and the perseverance to take it through.

Alvin Poh 6:32

Nice. Do you have any co-founders in this business?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 6:35

Yes. So my co-founder is Kishan. And I met him like four and a half years back. He also again comes from a deep tech background. He was studying PhD in core part of cold matter, Condensed matter physics, I guess, and he was very much interested in medical devices and Human 2.0. So there was an actual match between us. And we basically started the company four years back. And we have made some incredible advances. So for example, we are now able to measure sleep at clinical grade accuracy, at a cost that is 1000 times less than one clinical standard, without compromising in terms of accuracy or reliability. And in fact, most of our clinical trials has happened in Singapore. And we have gotten some excellent results already.

Alvin Poh 7:30

Man, I love this. I mean, this boils back down to why people start businesses, and it's all about solving pain points and problems in the market. And the problem that you've identified, I've seen that happen with my friends who have sleep disorders, and they go through so much pain and effort just to get diagnosed like sleep trials. I think you mentioned sleep trials are not a trivial thing where you actually got to go to a clinic or place and get monitored, and it's expensive. And it's not you're comfortable bed at home. And it's very jarring.

So definitely, I resonate with what you're saying. And again, this is something that all businesses should be all about, right? What is the problem that you're solving? So Dr. Amiya, you mentioned that you have a co-founder, it seems like both of you come from a scientific background where both of you are very involved in the technology aspect of things. How do you run a business? Because running a business does require like, you know, the entrepreneurial skill set? How do you guys develop that?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 8:37

I think basically, it's my opinion that founders need to be a little bit of generalist and you have to have the attitude to learn new things and push yourself outside the comfort zone. So of course, coming from very strong, technical backgrounds, it's always initially pretty tough to like, convey your message, run a software team, for example. But we learned over the time, like, we started small, and we slowly pushed it through and learn the art of managing a big team, managing multiple companies, one in Singapore, one in U.S, one in India.

We learned through perseverance. That's what I would say. And I think that's an attitude that is absolutely necessary when you're starting something because you can't know every thing and you need to learn a lot of things to run a company and run a business. So of course we have our own expertise, but we are not afraid to go outside our comfort zone and learn new things. And as we learn also, we also figured out how to hire the right person to actually who has the expertise to run that small narrow area. Right. So I think it's over time that we've learned all these skills.

Alvin Poh 9:56

I agree. I started my business when I was 17 years old. No 17 year old person knows how to

start a business or run a business. There's literally no experience yet. And the best way to find out is really to start, right? You make mistakes, for sure. But I think mistakes are part of the learning journey. And that is the best way to learn. Don't make catastrophic mistakes and I think you'll be fine. I just had to progress that way, figured things out. And I think that's kind of like the scientific or the engineering method as well. You don't want to figure out a solution to a problem the first day. You still find out ways that it doesn't work and then slowly progress a way to a proper solution. Absolutely love that. Yeah. So how big is the Neurobit team right now?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 10:47

So we have offices in New York, Bangalore, and Singapore. At Singapore, we are focused on running clinical trials and research and development. So the team is pretty lean here. We are just two people here in Singapore. We have a team of 15 people in Bangalore in India and team of four people in U.S. and we are expanding pretty quickly at this moment. So we are looking for extremely talented people who have the courage to move out of their comfort zone and build something massive.

Alvin Poh 11:18

That's awesome. You have a team that basically spans across multiple time zones. How do you get everybody to collaborate and be productive together? Are there any learnings that you've got from that?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 11:31

We are actually pretty flexible. What we did is we kind of divided the team in smaller groups, and each group is kind of self-sustaining. And, of course, we have to talk across the groups and we find out time. And ironically, being a sleep company, we lose a lot of sleep. Because you can't like have San Francisco, New York, Singapore and India at one timezone. Sometimes, some of us have to compromise a little bit.

But that's how we are running it right now. We are extremely flexible. We give autonomy to each group. And they know what they are doing, what problem they are solving. And we get encourage them to come up with ideas and figure out how to solve it on their own little pockets. And then we discuss every one week or two week as to what is happening across the team.

Alvin Poh 12:21

Wow. Awesome. I love that. I think that's the future of work, the future of business, to have like a global team. And I'm curious, what is your tech stack?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 12:32

ML part is running on Python TensorFlow. On the back-end side, it's mostly Python Django. And we are fully utilizing all the cloud infrastructure that is built by the giants, so that we don't have to spend too much time doing the DevOps part. Communication happens on Slack. And most of the documentation happens on Notion.

Alvin Poh 13:01

Nice. I personally use Notion as well. Absolutely love it. It's such a flexible tool. So if anybody is looking for, not just a note taking, but collaborative team tool that can also handle project management, Notion is excellent for that. Yeah, cool. Two things that we always ask every guest, Dr. Amiya. The first is, what is the most important habit that you think makes a successful entrepreneur?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 13:33

I think I mentioned this already. But I think the two things which are absolutely essential for success, which may not guarantee success, but I think are essential, is number one going out of your comfort zone. And number two is grit and perseverance. And you have to build habits to build these things. What I'm really afraid of with the new generation is that TikTok, the Instagram reels, they are going the opposite direction where there is instant gratification. You do something, you instantly get the likes, you instantly get the dopamine hits, but life doesn't work it is. It's the exact opposite, right? You may have to work years before you actually see something.

So I think those habits needs to be built and you have to be little aware to push yourself outside the comfort zone, take some risks. Because if you are always comfortable, you can't really achieve anything new, right? If you want to build something new, you have to go outside the comfort zone, you have to be accepting to fail, right. And I think those two are the major habits that needs to be formed for any entrepreneur or anyone who wants to do something new.

Alvin Poh 14:42

I personally feel that one of the things that everyone should do, especially in the pursuit of growth, is to be uncomfortable to leave that comfort zone. And that's how you develop grit. That's how you develop like determination, perseverance and how we actually get growth because that dopamine hit thing is so real like life it's a game but it's not a game like an RPG or mobile game. It doesn't happen where you just do something and you immediately get results or rewards the next moment. It does take time.

This is coming from years of experience as well. I've seen my business takes 17 years to build up. It's a long journey. And that's the thing that we have to be committed to the process, to actually, you know, not want to see results the next day, but to actually be patient enough to let the results compound so that you can get the kind of success that you want. And the second question that we always ask everyone on every episode guest is what advice would you give another business owner?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 15:54

I think, of course, I'm running a deep tech company and as a deep tech companies, probably very different from SaaS or any other kind of companies. So what I would ask or whatever tell someone who's going to start a deep tech company. Probably, they are an engineer, or doctor or PhD or something. What I've seen in these kinds of founders is that they are too much tied to the technology, too much tied to how they solve the problem rather than the problem itself. So I think the first thing I would say is don't have a technology in search of a solution or a problem.

Rather you go out and figure out what the problem is. And then I think the second thing would be to communicate in a way that others can understand to tell the story, right? Because being someone who's extremely technical, you always get stuck with the technical details, which is irrelevant for most people, what you really want to say is how the technology can actually solve a problem. And that communication is sometimes missing, because as scientists and as researchers, we are trained to communicate in a different way, which is kind of doesn't help you in in many ways. So I think those two things, I would say, one has to be a little bit careful about. And I think after that it's outside the comfort zone and grit and perseverance that will take you to success.

Alvin Poh 17:28

I love that. It sounds like you've gone through quite a bit of personal experience. Again, I resonate, because this is what I went through as well. I had to figure out all these things. Because while you might be good at engineering, which is my background, it doesn't translate into like, human interaction and communication. And you realize that we are talking about psychology here, we're talking about, you know, expressing ourselves and being understood.

These are all things that you have to figure out. And as an entrepreneur, I guess the word generalist, as you mentioned, is absolutely apt for this, you can't just be good at one thing, you've got to actually be adept at multiple areas. And so that you are multifaceted, and you're able to handle a lot of things. Absolutely love that. Thank you for sharing that. Dr. Amiya, how can somebody who is interested to find out about you or Neurobit connect with you?

Dr. Amiya Patanaik 18:23

So of course, you can go to neurobit.com. And if you're someone who's looking for building something massive, just communicate with us. And of course, you can find me on LinkedIn, I'm quite active there. So those are the two primary modes you can communicate with us.

Alvin Poh 18:42

Awesome. I'll leave the links in the comment in the caption down below as well, so that people can follow that. Thank you everybody for listening in to another exciting episode of 7-Minute Scaling Secrets. Please like, comment and share this episode if you like this. And we'll bring on more exciting guests as well in the future so that you can actually learn more scaling secrets from other entrepreneurs. Thank you everybody, and I'll see you on the next episode.