

ADAM MENDLER

**FOCUS ON THE JOURNEY:
INTERVIEW WITH MASSIMO DE
MARCO, CEO OF REVERI**



I recently went one on one with Massimo De Marco. Massimo is the CEO of Reveri and was formerly the CTO of Depop.

Adam: Thanks again for taking the time to share your advice. First things first, though, I am sure readers would love to learn more about you. How did you get here (to Reveri)? What experiences, failures, setbacks or challenges have been most instrumental to your growth?

Massimo: My journey to Reveri is certainly not the typical path of a Silicon Valley CEO. I grew up in a small town in the South of Italy, learning the discipline of hard work from my parents, as well as teamwork and leadership, while playing semi-professional basketball. Over the years, I developed a passion for technology that, eventually, turned into a full-time career in software development. While an engineer, I was always interested in the *why* behind software solutions and I was inspired by what talented and hard-working individuals could achieve when working as a team. That drove my focus toward leadership, product and business, which culminated my experience with Depop, where I grew a small team to a large and successful product and technology organization, contributing to one of the few European tech unicorns.

Those were four incredible years with invaluable lessons, but, also, due to family losses and other personal circumstances, with an increased awareness of the importance of self-care. I wanted my next challenge to be in the wellness space, potentially helping millions of people. So, when I connected with Reveri's co-founders, everything fell into place. I was impressed with the progress they had made with little to no resources and in such a short time, and with what the users of the original prototype were saying about their experience with the app—not to mention their platform and track record in their fields of expertise. This was the perfect team for me to learn how to become a successful CEO.

Adam: In your experience, what are the key steps to growing and scaling your business?

Massimo: We are an early-stage startup with the potential to help hundreds of millions of people with the power of self-hypnosis. However, that won't happen if we don't build a solid foundation.

Hiring the right people and building a culture that promotes learning and growth is always top of mind. That shouldn't come as a surprise as it is the concern of most business leaders. However, I've seen excellent teams struggle because they were focused on the wrong priorities, and that is something I'm constantly working hard to prevent. As a result, I find that setting the right objectives and measures of success is at least as important.

Adam: What is your best advice on building, leading and managing teams?

Massimo: Probably my most critical learning over the years as a business leader is that no matter what frameworks you use or management processes and structures you put in place, if you are not clear with yourself on what you value, ultimately, nothing will work.

My advice would be to write down a list of three to five points describing your non-negotiable priorities when it comes to people and teamwork. Make that your reference check when hiring, designing and building your teams, managing performance and conflict, and so on. In reality, you will make mistakes and things won't always go to plan. However, when that happens, that list will help you make the right decision and move forward.

Adam: What are the most important trends in technology that leaders should be aware of and understand? What should they understand about them?

Massimo: Nowadays, the list of technology trends is almost infinite and constantly changing. Unfortunately, we got to a point where, in many cases, technology has become counterproductive and harmful. For example, it is common knowledge and the topic of plenty of research that social media can be a source of stress, anxiety, and depression and that our always-on mobile devices and internet connections have affected our ability to focus.

These are critical issues for us here at Reveri and at other startups where there is broad awareness. Can we use technology to help people enhance their well-being and live healthier lives? This question is at the core of our mission and drives many of our decisions. For example, is daily engagement as important to us as to most other apps out there? Or rather, should we be there for our users when they need us, whenever that may be?

In summary, my advice to leaders is that whatever technology trend they choose to go after, they should think about the impact that will have on people and society and strive to make that as positive as it can be.

Adam: What do you believe are the defining qualities of an effective leader?

Massimo: Another topic with plenty of books, articles, and opinions out there. I've learned over the years that what ultimately matters is to always be accountable, no matter what. At the same time, hold the rest of the organization accountable by setting clear expectations and being direct and honest at all times.

Adam: How can leaders and aspiring leaders take their leadership skills to the next level?

Massimo: Based on my own experience taking my skills to the next level and helping others do the same, the most challenging transitions are from individual contributor to leading a team and from leading a team to leading an organization. Both require a fundamental shift in mindset and seeing things from a completely different perspective.

You must clearly define what success looks like for the leader you aspire to become and define your priorities accordingly. For example, what you do as an individual contributor becomes almost irrelevant when you lead a team: it ultimately comes down to the outcomes your team is able to achieve. As a result, things that used to be someone else's responsibilities, like team chemistry, dynamics, and rituals, are now yours.

Things should feel counterintuitive and the journey uncomfortable. If that's not the case, then, probably, you are not making progress.

Adam: What are your three best tips applicable to entrepreneurs, executives and civic leaders?

Massimo: These are worth sharing:

- Don't make the "final prize" your priority. Focus on the journey, enjoy every moment of it, good and bad, and stay true to your values and priorities.
- Instead of fearing failure, embrace it and turn it into a learning opportunity.
- Train for and run a marathon. It will teach you how to endure and persevere through the inevitable challenges and difficulties you will face.

Adam: What are your best tips on the topics of sales, marketing, and branding?

Massimo: I believe that the most successful companies out there are those who managed to build lasting relationships with their customers. They are true to who they are and strive to communicate that at all times. A well-recognized brand, effective marketing, and good sales are the natural results of those relationships.

That is what our team strives to achieve. We know for a fact that we can help hundreds of millions of people, and we will do it by building relationships with our customers based on trust and transparency on what we can help them with and how.

Adam: What is the single best piece of advice you have ever received?

Massimo: It was soon after I moved to London. I was full of energy and incredibly ambitious, but I was approaching this new journey focused solely on my own capabilities. My boss at the time, who then became a mentor and a dear friend, noticed that and told me: "It's great to be ambitious, and I'm sure you'll go far. However, recognizing your weaknesses and learning to leverage other people's strengths will take you farther."

That advice changed my perspective and, most likely, my career trajectory.

[Adam Mendler](#) is the CEO of The Veloz Group, where he co-founded and oversees ventures across a wide variety of industries. Adam is also the creator and host of the business and leadership podcast [Thirty Minute Mentors](#), where he goes one on one with America's most successful people - Fortune 500 CEOs, founders of household name companies, Hall of Fame and Olympic gold medal winning athletes, political and military leaders - for intimate half-hour conversations each week. Adam has [written extensively](#) on leadership, management, entrepreneurship, marketing and sales, having authored over 70 articles published in major

media outlets including *Forbes, Inc.* and *HuffPost*, and has conducted more than 500 one on one interviews with America's top leaders through his collective media projects. A [top leadership speaker](#), Adam draws upon his insights building and leading businesses and interviewing hundreds of America's top leaders as a [top keynote speaker](#) to businesses, universities and non-profit organizations.

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