# **Scaling Up Services**

Episode 241 - Robert Juul Glaesel www.scalingupservices.com/podcast/241-robert-juul-glaesel

# Robert Juul Glaesel, Partner at 24Slides.com

Robert Glaesel is a Danish Entrepreneur living in Delray Beach, Florida, building the US side of his company 24Slides.com.

He is a dedicated family man and father of 4 boys + a big dog. He is constantly trying to find the right balance between fulfilling his purpose as a family man and a dedicated entrepreneur trying to build businesses that people love to work in.

Outside of running the Global sales and product team at 24Slides, he has just started his podcast BigMindsCamp to learn the best way to build businesses in which people love to work.

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## **EPISODE TRANSCRIPT**

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# 0:02

You're listening to Scaling Up Services, where we speak with entrepreneurs, authors, business experts and thought leaders to give you the knowledge and insights you need to scale your service based business faster and easier. And now here is your host business coach Bruce Eckfeldt.

## 0:22

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#### 0:57

Welcome everyone. This is scaling up services. Andras Eckfeldt. I'm your host. Our guest today is Robert Glaesel. He is Managing Director at 24 slides, we're gonna talk to him about the work that they've done, not only as a service company, but working with his service companies tackling this whole issue of decks and slides and presentations and brand guidelines, and really making sure that you're presenting not only great content, but well designed and well branded content, and how they've kind of navigated the market and found opportunity, and really grown a pretty impressive business. Also a little bit about the bigger picture. They've done a really interesting job in creating a community creating an ecosystem. And Robert and the team have some bigger ideas, which I'm excited to talk about. And I think they've have some opinions and approach to entrepreneurialism and where the world is going and where business is going that I think are really interesting and exciting. So with all that, Robert, welcome to the program.

## 1:52

Thank you so much for having Bruce, I really appreciate it.

## 1:54

Ya know, it's a pleasure to have you on before we dig into 24 slides and everything you're doing today. I'm curious on the backstory, how did you get into this? What was your professional background give us the story of how chromophore slides came about? Tell us more,

## 2:07

I'll give you the short, the very short version. So here was my partner to be us actually was doing a different company back in the days of focusing on doing templates. And he had a lot of people starting to request, you know, I don't want to, I don't want to use this template and spend time on it, can I just send it to you guys, and then you can do it. So the idea of basically having a group of designers where you can send really ugly slides in and they can look at them, trying to figure out what you're trying to say. And then custom design that presentation to just be really nice. It kind of Dawn back then. And then for some years, he just worked on the business. He's a did some markets here. So he did some SEO work, got it up and running, found our core team in Indonesia. And then at some point, there was some businesses that started coming back to him and then saying, you know, we would like to always work with the same group of people. And he said, okay, but then you have to pay on a subscription. And they said, Yes. And then the idea of talking more to businesses and selling this as a service where you streamline how businesses work within this area was born. And he didn't do a lot about business to business sales. And then I can talk to him for in the beginning advising, I was the CEO of another startup. And then because of the purpose, and because of what drove him back then and what still drives the core of the company I kind of decided to join, and that was seven years ago now. And we've me, him and another person in Denmark 25 People in Indonesia, and now we are a lot more 300 Yeah, 200 in Indonesia, team in Ukraine, through big now in the US as well. Right. So it's really nice. It's been going really, really well. Now.

## 3:49

And what I'm curious what really motivated you to join, like, what did you see in the opportunity? What was there kind of an accompany or what was nascent for you that thought, you know, you can make a difference and be part of something significant?

#### 4:02

You know, we all have our own journeys, right. So it's at that point in time in my career, I had a rough patch of not being able to find a home where I both had, I both had like a purpose that was kind of more than just having a job, while also having a job where, you know, you could learn stuff, and you could do stuff and feel like you're creating value, right? So it was it was that combination. So I was looking for a partner. Basically, I was looking for somebody who I could help build a business with in all aspects. And then of course, bring my skills to the table. And one of the unique things when I look at founder teams with the experiences I have at least 99% of the cases when founding teams kind of break up and you have all of this dysfunction and all of our stuff is happening right? What's happened to my world? Yes, exactly. Which happens to a ton of them. It's really either because it is ego driven, or money driven, right. So it's normally because you fight about it. Who needs the biggest name on a plaque somewhere? You know, somebody, it's an ego thing, or it's disagreement about money. And the unique thing about to be as was that he was not really driven by neither ego, or money. he was very driven by the purpose of basically what we're trying to do is, is to say, if we look across the planet, and we look on in different markets, what he found when he started working with our team in Indonesia was that he could find people that were super talented, they were really humble, willing to learn and like on all aspects, that should define your opportunities and success in life, they were like peeking our dentist, right? So but they did not have the same opportunities. And that fundamentally bothered him. So he set out on a mission of saying, okay, it has to be about effort and skills, purely, they put in the effort, and you have the skills, you need to have the opportunities. And in the world today, that's just not the case. So you know, and he was driven by building a company profitable company, where we could accumulate capital, and we could basically create, you know, jobs for our team members that would enable them to live great lives, not just in the West, but also in Indonesia, in Peru, in those markets, it really next level type jobs. And that just that just spoke to me to be honest, I there was a it's very clear, in my mind, I asked him at some point, because I really pushed him on, you know, why, why, you know, why 24 Slide, why does it matter? Right? Yeah. And, and he looked down for a minute. And then he kind of looked up, and he said, I just want to hire 1000 People in Indonesia. I was like, Okay, I'm sold. Let's do it. Right, though. That was all me. And then we kind of figured it out from there. And then now we're much bigger team. And you know, so many awesome people. That is just because that purpose is shared by him by me. And then by I think everyone else we've Yeah, we've hired ever since I'm sure is kind of aligning towards that. So now it's just a bigger and bigger group of people all pulling in the same direction of how can we do this was really cool.

# 7:07

Yeah. And why? Why Indonesia? I mean, was this, you know, something specific about sort of design skills and culture and services, or, you know, was happenstance or strategic? Or what was the story that

# 7:19

in the beginning, complete coincidence. So to be a state of design competition on 99 designs, there was one person that was way above everyone else. And that person lived in a place called their Milan in Indonesia. So he was like, Oh, gee, I better go to Milan to see if there's more like him. And there was an it turns out, I've never been to Indonesia before. But I mean, their culture is amazing. I mean, humble, happy. And then it turned out, they had some really good universities that just some super creative people, like our team, they, from a pure creative standpoint, it's just not they're so good. I mean, there's, so we find super creative people. And then, you know, we teach them how to kind of funnel that into presentations. Yeah, but like, they have art projects and all kinds of side hustles, where they do all kinds of stuff. That's just really good.

# 8:14

Yeah. So my two questions kind of come out of this one is, I mean, do you think it is something part of the culture right, and just kind of an attitude towards life and appreciation for things that makes them Indonesians just more design sensitive or aesthetic, sensitive and appreciative and kind of more creative in that way?

## 8:31

I just don't know, to be honest. And I don't know, maybe other markets i i have that I have to kind of use on this one is, I think, general in the West, really underestimate how big outside Well, there's right. There's so it's Indonesia is 250 million people. Right? Yeah, exactly. My Nisha, and it's it. There's just so many talents. I do think also, I met some other people that have business, Indonesia, and they had been working much more without sourcing in different markets. And I've tried, and they said, Yeah, there's, there's a lot of gaming companies that are kind of starting to set up teams, because there for some reason, I don't know why. But I've heard other places that the Indonesians are, on average, just really creative people, and whether or not that cultural or where they come from, but I heard that but I also have to say, our team in Peru is like, crazy go to and I'm pretty sure if you if you look for it, I mean, you have those pockets everywhere, right? Everywhere. All countries. Yeah, I'm sure

## 9:31

there's gonna be a percent of percent of every population that's, that's gonna have kind of the skills and capabilities. You also mentioned that, you know, a lot of your folks do other creative things, either, you know, Formula side hustles or just other interests and stuff. I'm curious how important you have found that people have other kind of creative outlets or creative initiatives to keep them you know, thinking and sharp or, I mean, do you find people who kind of crank through slides like all day, every day, kind of lose an edge or what's What's your kind of strategy on keeping people skills sharp

## 10:03

to do different things in turn? Yeah, I think if we look at side hustling and that I, we haven't really talked about it to be honest. But I think we just let it you know, if somebody wanted to run a web shop, where they do some creative things next to work, it's like, you know, that you would just allow them to do whatever, as long as they don't, you know, have, you know, doing presentations? Then we might challenge it, right. But other than that, that is like, if you do your job, and you do well, it's like, we're not gonna tell you to kind of have that if we look at from a company standpoint, what we do, I would say, actually, most of our designers, even though they are, you know, it can sound like a design machine. There's such a variability from industry to industry, from market to market, on what styles colors finally, when different ways that people like designs. So I actually think that even though we're very focused on just doing presentation work, and making sure that, you know, people spend less time on that and can spend more time on on other stuff, that the variability is it's more complex than people think we have a really big training program on how to do it and work within it.

## 11:16

I'm curious on the service model, how, what is the actual kind of engagement with a client look like, given that you're gonna have to, you're dealing both with, you know, I'll guess I'll say like translating creative services, to business people, which can sometimes be a challenge. But you bet you're also dealing with offshoring and cultural kind of challenges, like how do you interface with clients and effectively kind of get, you know, information back and forth? And, you know, make that fluid and successful and communication work? What's What have you learned about that?

#### 11:46

That's one of the things where we see what differentiates us is, remember, we've been doing this for 10 years. So yeah, there's a lot of learnings. Yeah. But one of the things we've done is that we've spent a lot of resources involving our team and understanding both how we think as a business in the West, but also building context about how our customers think, and why that is important. So what we've managed to do is that our team, on average has a deeper understanding than most of our customers expect, basically. And what that means is their ability to you know, when we when you submit something our way, we build a piece of software that is sitting on top of our product process, right. So basically, what we're doing is we have a really strong process and understanding about if you have some of the slides you want done, we ask you some questions, we get some input from you, then we get the slides. And then we get some indication about what do you consider great design. So that can be brand guidelines. It can be some examples you point to or some other guidelines. And those three things together, like who you are, where you're from, what your company is, the questions and the answers, we get to the questions we ask you the files you send our way. And what you're trying to say, along with some indication of what you believe is great design is enough for our team to kind of sensitize that, and then understand who are you? What are you trying to say? And how do we wrap the slides in a design that makes it easier for people to understand, you know, what it is you're trying to communicate? To? It's about having a strong process about getting the right answers to the right questions, getting the right files, and then we kind of build a piece of software on top to make sure it's it's smoother, like feedback back and forth. And there's a lot of smart stuff, payment and all kinds of stuff. Yeah,

#### 13:37

and where do you draw your lines of kind of services? Or what you do and don't do I mean, I can imagine just kind of taking one individual slide and figure out okay, let's clean this up. And you know, put some good design around and things like that. And then there's kind of taking this whole presentation and saying, Okay, what are you trying to communicate? Let's figure out really a strategy for the presentation. And let's move this card here. And let's tell the story then the story like how I guess how far down the actual presentation strategy do you go versus just on the kind of the slide actual design.

## 14:08

So we found that when we can add most value is in the if we focus most on the design part. So in general, let's say that you are presenting something, you're going to an event or whatever, and you have something you want to present then you have to think about what is it I'm communicating what is the story I'm telling, right? Then Normally people would sit down and they'd say, I would need these different keywords in a certain order. basically. So I will take some slides and I would add some keywords in that would prompt me to say different things at different times. Once you have that most people in their head kinda understand what story they're trying to tell. And then after that, it's matter of saying okay, we take this story and then I want to wrap it in a design that makes it beautiful, nice to logo on brand and easy to understand. That's the part that we take and focus on. So we don't help out customers with the story creation process. Let's put it that way. So a good example I had one day. I had a PhD in microbiology, calling me up. And then he said, Hey, I have this dissertation I've done no, I'm going to, I'm going to present it. Sure for the professional so I can the board, whatever a PhD is presenting to. So I was wondering if I could just send my dissertation and you can kind of just compress it into like, 10 slides, take the most important stuff, make it really nice and then then be on your way. Yeah, yeah. How exactly is you? You You think I'm going to be able to point out the 10 most important stuff? Yeah. I have no chance. Right? And he was, he was so sweet. Because he was like, oh, yeah, yeah, I see. That's a problem. I always, I always use this example. Because it's the same thing that happens with presentations if we start fiddling around with the wording. And yeah, the bullets very quickly become I had

some lawyers as well. They're infamous for having too much cheese and content on this. Like, yeah, old school. And you know, we need to write everything down. And instead of having like, a key word, and then talking around it, they need to write everything up there. And I've had many times where like, Can you just help us compress this, unlike I have no chance, nobody has a chance. I mean, you either have to be you, or you have to be some lawyer that knows almost exactly what you know. And it just very quickly becomes a super strategic talk. We know some companies that are really good at doing that. But it's more like a it's like almost a management consulting service. Right? It's like, yeah, okay, so what is important? Like, what, what is the, what is your place in the marketplace? What is your audience, you know, what, what key attributes you have of this product, and it quickly becomes this very, super strategic talk about how is it that you want to position this in the marketplace to be successful? Right? Yeah. And we had, we haven't found a way to online find online if I that, right. So we speak to taking whatever story our, our people, our customers wants us wants to present. And then we understand what they're trying to say, who they're trying to tell it to. And then wrap that in a really nice design. Yeah, that works really well.

#### 17:28

Is like someone giving you the Bible and saying, Can you can you reduce this to like, 10? slides for presentation?

#### 17:33

Yeah, and I can't, but it will be my version of what is right. And the chance is exactly the same 10 slides at us produce? Zero, right? Yeah, exactly. That do that. They do it all the time. And then they do it in person, but then they go out. And it can be two, three day workshops where they walk through, you know, a lot of stuff. Yeah,

## 17:55

exactly. I'm curious as you've scaled, where have you had to make kind of big kind of operational decisions or service decisions in terms of I mean, you mentioned that one of kind of going to the subscription, like, I want to be able to work with the same team. Okay, well, now I've got to figure out how to how to put that together and how to kind of, you know, pick the right staff or negotiate with staff saying, Hey, you're gonna work with the same company all the time. Is that an issue? Right? Like, how have you kind of had to evolve and transition the operations and kind of the design of the company as things have changed, and ground and services have evolved? I mean, we've changed

#### 18:27

a lot, right. So I can talk a little bit about that. But I think probably the best decision we've made very early on, we made the decision that we would not from Copenhagen, just make decisions over the head of our team in Indonesia, meaning that if we had an issue, and I think this is probably if there's one thing I could mention to being the key thing, why we've been successful, it's because we've invested time in this. So basically, let's say something happens. And it's a problem for the company, whatever situation arises, instead of sitting in Copenhagen saying, we have a problem, we understand it, we have a solution, and then calling up our colleagues in Indonesia, and then saying, Hey, guys, here's the problem. And this is how we're going to solve it. And we need your help, go go go ahead and do this. We've never done that. We've always called up our team, and then said, Hey, team, we have this problem. Here are the potential consequences. Here are the potential upsides. We don't know how to solve this. We need your input. We need you to go back and figure out how do you want to deal with this. And then we've given our team time to go back, talk together, ask more questions, and then come back and say, hey, you know, this is what we think we should do. And every single time almost, they have brought input to the table that we missed, and they've enabled her to just make much

better decisions. But more importantly, whenever we then roll out that solution, they feel ownership right And our team feels like you know, we're a part of this company, we've actually been asked input and when the input is given, it actually changes the decision. And now so many times they will present something. And we would say that, that's awesome. Yeah, that's what we do. That's exactly what we do. Imagine the motivation you have if you have an outsourced team in Indonesia, and you're like, wow, right. Yeah, you know, and that's what we've been doing. Like, I won't say 1000s of times, like, but but many, many, many, many times over. Yeah. And I think that's one of the key reasons why our core team in Indonesia is just they're so aligned with the business, they feel such a sense of ownership. And they are so motivated to keep our culture and to keep what we've built and the passion for us to be successful. That when we need stuff to happen, when we need stuff done. It's like everyone just moves on it. Right? I get if I went, if I look back, I think the decision to do that, and not just roll it over people's head, but involving them pulling them in, I think is like by far the most important thing that we've done, it enables us to kind of really push people get shocked when I talk about what level of decision making which is pushed way down to the frontlines. I mean, to our design teams in Indonesia making decisions on, you know, what do we do? How do we get back to customers? What do we say without anyone being involved outside of Indonesia, and just delivering, like, a really good service? I mean, I talked to people who's been working in different outsourcing setups, many years, they did they, they don't believe it's like the what, what we've gotten out of it, and the way that that we operate and work. And I think that's, that's a key reason is one is that one run. So I would say that that is a key thing. For our success, there's no doubt the difference maker for us, is the quality of our people and our ability to retain super talented people. And I think a key reason for that. Is that investment, right? That involvement that motivation? Yeah,

# 21:59

you know, that's a lot of trust in your team. How, you know, beyond just raw kind of creative design skills, what else do you look for? Or what what are kind of key indicators to you in terms of when you're hiring, you know, someone's going to be, you know, not just a kind of a quality design fit, but a real cultural fit, and is going to be, you know, someone that you can give that kind of trust and that kind of power to

# 22:21

me to show the shorthands? I don't know, instead, that's one of the things Yeah, but it's like, I was asked once, you know, how's the hiring process in Indonesia? Yeah. And we were not in details. For for big part of the time we we didn't details know exactly what does the hiring process look like? Because that was one of the things where we would talk to our team, and we would say, Oh, guys, we we need to hire more people. And they would say, okay, they will do it. And you know, then we have our head of our people success in Indonesia. And then bear in mind that the core team in Indonesia, the core group we have down there, they've all been with us from the start. So we took them people we've been working with for 10 years, right? So there's so much context and so much knowledge and so much understanding on that core group of people that that, you know, we trust them? A lot, right? So I would say it's, we look for when we hire designers, it depends is it as a partner as a designer, right? So if the way in our terminology, we have people who have much more customer interaction, so for them, we of course test on English level, because they need to be able to speak and write fluent and all of that stuff. So that's a key aspect. There are some personality tests, of course, you need to be more extroverted than introverted, and there's a full system on how do we do that, then if we're looking at designers, it's primarily creativity that we're looking for. And actually don't know if they change the process, but not that long ago, what we did is we did hiring events, so they would bring in people and they would basically be doing tasks, team building exercises, all kinds of different things in a big group together with people in our office. And they would do it as I recall it for a couple of days. And then everyone who interacted with the the all of these candidates would then rate them. And then based on that combined rating, whoever floated to the top

would be the one that would be hired, then they would be hired to come into our training program. And back in the days that training program was insane. I think in the beginning, when I started it was from we hired until the touch the first customer project, your three months job shadowing training, like never touching Costco prime, we brought that down, but we still have, you know, a good good period of time where they are full classroom sessions, like a really big curriculum, where we we just drill them on, on how to be a really good presentation designer. And then once they kind of graduate from that they graduate to become a junior designer, which means that they come into a design team where they have a design manager and some senior people and then they start working on customer projects first with a lot of oversight and then they kind of switchover as they progress through and become better, right? Yeah. So those that's kind of how but did they the influence of how that works, it has been highly influenced and highly built by our own team and our own group of people in Indonesia and Peru, which I think is theirs. Back to our strength, right?

## 25:18

Yeah. I want to make sure we talk a little bit about some of your bigger ideas, because I know that this experience has sort of, you know, taught you a little bit about entrepreneurialism and kind of the future and what's possible, particularly with, you know, working with kind of enabling folks in other countries that don't necessarily have all the opportunities that that other people have. Where I guess, where do you see this going? What are some of the ideas or visions that you have for you know, where you hope to take this and the impact you hope to have on the world?

## 25:46

Yeah. So what do we hope? What do we hope to do with this, I personally is thinking a lot about what we managed to do so far is create a company that is profitable, and can work, where we can offer jobs to people that are really enabling, enabling them to live a higher quality life than if they worked anywhere else. So now we've we've managed to do that, then the next thing is, you know, how can I how can you get to a point where I can hire as many people as possible, right? Because the impact per person who hires? So I've spent a lot of time thinking about how do we do that? Right. And I remember I read a book called faithfulness once where he talked a lot about demographic development worldwide, right? And I think back then, the amount of people on planet earth were supposed to bow out at around 9 billion people in 2050. I think it was, I think the statistics are a little bit different now. But around 9 billion people in 2050, and around 8 billion people would then be in Asia, in Africa and South America. So let's say that we are incredibly successful with 24 slides, and we hire 5000 people, or even 10,000 people, like that's just, that's a drop in the bucket. Right? That's, that's nothing. So how can we how can we make sure that the culture and what we do and the model we have is like spread more. and the only way that I feel we can be able to do that is if we design some sort of Train the Trainer program or find a way to kind of expand to other companies. So what what we're doing is thinking about how can we take what we're doing internally, which is like we call it 24 Academy, but it's an internal University, where we, today that's, you know, the training program I talked about before, for designers is in 24. Academy. And then we've become really good at making sure everything you need to learn to be really effective as an employee 24 slides is in the academy. But now we're also building more general skills. So emotional maturity, personal finance, you know, a lot of the other things that you need to be successful in life. But that also adds value to you as an employee and 24 slides. So we're kind of both building out what is possible to learn about in the academy, then actually, this month, or next month, we are launching the first course and the Academy where we open it up to people outside of 24 slides. Oh, interesting. So the idea here is to take those resources we spent on that, how do we take that value that knowledge and then we expand it so we can generate just value for other people outside of 24? Slides? And where where I would personally like this to go than to say, you know, how can we keep building the curriculum at the academy to a point where we can teach everyone in the

company what they need to know to start being able to found their own companies. So imagine you have like one of our super good designers, and they could learn how to be even better on the academy, they could learn all of the extra critical skills, leadership, all of that stuff. And then they could also learn about how do you raise funds? How do you do marketing? How do you do ideation and come to a point where they're like, you know, I can actually open up my own company. Yeah. And then where we would like to take it is to then say, okay, would it be possible then for us to help them be successful in that either investing them, you know, help them with talents in from Copenhagen and around the globe, but basically, help our own team then quit 24 slides, find some problems that they could solve, building a business in Indonesia and Peru, then kind of build out basically ecosystems, right? Yeah. And that kinda, that's why I see so much opportunity there. Because there's lots of problems to solve. And fundamentally building businesses that solves them, it's just a really good way. And then if we can make sure they kind of take our culture and the way that we kind of work with people as a part of that, maybe you could then be able to create environments where you would get a lot of sustainable companies being built that could hire many, many, many more people, right? So that that for me is like when you look at the like the entire the huge arc of what we do. Do then you can talk about systemic change, right if we manage to get to that level where we can inspire people to do that.

## 30:05

Yeah, I think so many ways to go and we're out of, well, let's do another episode, I'd love it as a couple in a couple of ways. When you're sort of a little farther down the path there are over a dozen flutter at people want to find out more about you more about 24 slides with the best way to get that information.

# 30:21

Go to 24slides.com is number one, so you can see a haze there. And then if you have any questions, follow up, whatever my email is Robert@24 slides.com, or otherwise, just the only social profile I'm on is LinkedIn. Okay, but I'm quite active in there. So if you go look for Robert Glaesel, I will pop up at LinkedIn. And otherwise, if you go to 24 slides, Robert, I think I'm the only one this far. That is Robert@24slides. So you can always look me up on LinkedIn. And don't be a stranger. Just write me if you have any questions.

## 30:51

Awesome. I'll make sure that the info on the handles everything in the show notes so people can get back. Robert, thank you so much for taking the time today. It's been a pleasure.

#### 30:57

Thank you, Bruce, thank you so much for having me.

#### 31:00

Thank you for tuning into today's episode. Be sure to subscribe using your favorite podcast app so you don't miss our future episodes. See you next time.

## 31:09

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For more information, please visit <a href="http://www.eckfeldt.com/">http://www.eckfeldt.com/</a> or email us at <a href="mailto:info@eckfeldt.com">info@eckfeldt.com</a>.

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