

# Transcript of Tanika de Souza

**Hall T. Martin:** [00:00:00] Well, hello, this is Hall Marta with Investor Connect.

Today I'm here with Tanika de Souza, CEO of High Octane Teams. High Octane Teams is an offshore staffing agency focused on systemizing processes to streamline growth. It's focused on hiring virtual international staff to fit the client's specific needs and company culture. Tanika, thank you for joining us.

**Tanika de Souza:** [00:00:20] Thank you for having me. Okay.

So where are you calling from today? I am in Washington D.C.

**Hall T. Martin:** Great. Well, tell us more about your background. What did you do before this?

**Tanika de Souza:** Sure. Um, like most people, I studied one thing in college and did something different in real life. Um, but my [00:00:40] background is in psychology and in professional setting.

I have run my own businesses as well as been a fractional CEO to other companies.

**Hall T. Martin:** Great. So tell us more about starting a business in the area of virtual international staff. What is that like?

**Tanika de Souza:** So I [00:01:00] guess right now, um, the thing to note in the US the job market is shifting so much. Um, in the last few years we've had increase in minimum wage and that just has lots of ripple effect on the expected salary and how, um, I'm gonna say employees [00:01:20] feel a bit like they have more of an upper hand.

Um, you have several industries as well that had a lot of downturn in, their staff, meaning they were in a crisis of needing labor. So starting a business this way is one, taking a lot of relief off of [00:01:40] the companies who need staff. But I will say it's a very demanding job to find and secure the staff at this moment.

**Hall T. Martin:** Great. And so what is the opportunity today, or what kind of demand are you seeing?

**Tanika de Souza:** Um, so I'm definitely seeing a lot of demand as far as companies who [00:02:00] need help. and what I'm also seeing in the marketplace as far as securing the talent, um, The interesting thing that's happening, especially with AI being so popular, is that you really have to source good talent and have really great ways of testing that talent because people are [00:02:20] misrepresenting themselves.

'cause they can go online and just learn all about an industry or position, feed that information to you, and then you have no good way to, Really, weeded through the talent pool. So selection, hiring, recruiting, all of that is a much, harder task, which is why [00:02:40] companies are now leaning and happy actually to pay agency fee to avoid dealing with that themselves.

**Hall T. Martin:** Well, you mentioned ai. How do you see AI coming into it? It seemed like it's coming very fast, but what do you see out there?

**Tanika de Souza:** What I'm saying, I literally, like, I've hired for lots of different [00:03:00] positions. So let's say one person wanted a graphic designer. If we put the job posts out, I will have several people submit the same exact graphic portfolio claiming that that is their, you know, work.

And so clearly I can see I've seen this photo, or I've seen this work, or I've seen this video [00:03:20] editing multiple times. So I know you literally just. Pull this offline. so those are, that's the beginning of what I see, but also when we ask questions, they literally go to AI and sometimes they don't edit.

And so it says this AI language, you know, assumes that these [00:03:40] things are true of the industry and they don't take that out. So as I'm reading through, People are literally just going to AI to have job applications filled out. They don't take the time to actually write job applications

**Hall T. Martin:** Well. So today you're using AI for verification and validation.

Where do you think it might go [00:04:00] next? Would it actually replace part of the worker's job?

**Tanika de Souza:** So for the, um, So for the companies that I'm hiring for, there are definite ways that they can use fewer staff and use AI tools in order to enhance or decrease the workload for that [00:04:20] employee. So for the companies, it's a benefit because they now have several tools at their disposal that will help streamline the work for their staff.

So in a way that's positive, but on the flip side, you then will have. Talent that is looking for position and not being [00:04:40] in as high demand because we're able to now use tools and people versus only people and lots of hours for each of those staff members.

**Hall T. Martin:** I always heard someone say, AI will not take your job, but someone who knows how to use AI will take your job.

What's your take on

**Tanika de Souza:** that phrase? [00:05:00] Absolutely. The person who knows how to use AI will be the one who is in the most demand in the future. Almost every client that I'm hiring for, they tell me the tools in tech that they use, and then I go out to find specialists. Who can use those tools and texts in their industry.

And what I find [00:05:20] is, let's say a video editor or somebody doing transcription, things like that, um, if you know how to use certain tools like a d script or cap cut or whatever it is, you can, you have a upper hand because those are tools that. My client may or may not know, but I know that it allows you to be a [00:05:40] lot more efficient.

The thing that AI is not great at is it's never gonna replace a person, but it will help a person who has expertise be a lot better and advance and do work faster, um, for that company. So they become more valuable because of their [00:06:00] knowledge and use of tools.

**Hall T. Martin:** Well, great. So you started a business in this space and sound like AI is transforming it more and more every day.

Yes. But aside from ai, what is the challenge in starting this type of business?

**Tanika de Souza:** Um, I would say currently the market for this business is, [00:06:20] In a bit of a downswing, we had a huge uptick in 2021. Um, especially 'cause you're talking to investors, right? They wanna get to the heart of where's the money, um, in an industry and in 2021, after we are coming kind of out of the pandemic, you had a huge upswing in.

[00:06:40] Agency use, which was up by 23%, but we are currently slowly going down. So I would say that's the challenge right now. However, if you're looking at this from an investment, they are expecting the market to swing back up and continue to swing up starting in 2024. So I feel like I'm [00:07:00]

positioned well to have a system, have clientele and to continue building so that I'm prepared for that upswing in 2024.

That

**Hall T. Martin:** was great. So what is the potential reward here? How much a company selling for, like the one you're building?

**Tanika de Souza:** So selling and staffing [00:07:20] agencies is really interesting. Um, really only the top few percent of them are actually selling. Um, a lot of ways that people get into this industry as far as owning staffing agency, you can go through franchising.

Um, and there are several options in that category, but the larger companies, if they are going to [00:07:40] sell, they're gonna sell between two and 10 million. Great.

**Hall T. Martin:** And so what are the differences between you and your competitors? What makes you stand out?

**Tanika de Souza:** Um, the thing that I care about the most, or I, I should say, some of the basic things that.

Our difference between me and my competitors is that I do focus [00:08:00] on offshore hiring. Um, that is a very tricky industry, primarily because if you are a US-based company, your assumption is if I hire offshore, clearly it's a lot, lot less expensive, which is true. Um, but then I feel like they, they're. [00:08:20] Their perception goes to, I can pay someone like \$2 or \$4 an hour and dump, like all this work on them.

So I still like, manage the expectation of the, um, US based or other based companies. And then I also make sure that the virtual staff [00:08:40] is prepared to work, um, for us companies. So I do a lot, uh, I, I do a lot in the space of assessment. And, and matching. Um, the other differentiator for me is I, I do believe that people hire for skill and I [00:09:00] hire for fit.

So I think that I can find the skill and I can find it in a hundred people. But what I care the most about is, let's say I'm hiring for you. Um, I wanna make sure this person can work for you. What's, what's the temperament of your company? The pace. What is the company culture like? I really [00:09:20] dig into that and find someone who can fit into your environment and bring the skills that you need.

So I don't, I, I receive a lot of people coming to my agency when they've worked for other agencies, and the match was not what they expected, and they appreciate that. I take that time to find [00:09:40] someone who can really be a great fit for their company.

**Hall T. Martin:** So what advice would you give to someone entering this space?

What do you tell them to do before they jump in?

**Tanika de Souza:** Um, the thing that I would recommend, which I didn't do and have since done, is entering the space of specifically [00:10:00] offshore, um, staffing agencies or any staffing agency at all, is deciding on your niche and really building and developing in that one area.

Um, because staffing agencies are, it's not hard to find. I think what is great and what [00:10:20] makes you, um, stand out is your specific niche and your ability to understand the, the. Client that you're working for. So the company understanding their needs to the point of knowing their language and being able to really talk to them in a way that they know you understand their business, [00:10:40] but then also sourcing and training talent to fit into that industry.

So when you dial those two things in and be very industry specific and the more specific you are, I would say, The higher you can price, um, your staffing and also just the more attention that you get. [00:11:00] Um, so my big thing is your competitive advantage is absolutely in your niche.

**Hall T. Martin:** Great. Well, you see a lot of different businesses out there and business models.

If you could start a business tomorrow in this space, what would that business be?

**Tanika de Souza:** If I could start a business tomorrow? So the, the thing I [00:11:20] have not dived into fully in this space is, More medical, um, staffing. I do have some doctors who have hired for me, but not necessarily in kind of medical, it's been more administrative assistant or project management.

Um, however, the [00:11:40] medical industry as far as staffing has never really declined. Um, so that's a space that has constantly been growing. That's

**Hall T. Martin:** great. Have you ever thought about training people on those AI technologies where, you know, there's people that will hire them?

**Tanika de Souza:** Absolutely. So I would personally love to develop, and this is something I'm [00:12:00] exploring, is a cert uh, certification where I take, I source the talent and they go through my certification process so that when they're done, I know exactly what they're trained on.

And again, that's why niching is important because then I know exactly who would be, Who would be interested in hiring them? [00:12:20]

**Hall T. Martin:** So what's one thing your business did that you didn't expect?

**Tanika de Souza:** Grow rapidly? I kinda expect, I expected that I was going to have a lot of time, like upfront. So I, I started to say, here's what we're doing, here's how we're doing it.

And [00:12:40] people say, great, I need staff. And I thought, okay, perfect. This is. This is working. It's a young company and I have literally been just growing very rapidly to the point of like, systems are being built and structured as I go. [00:13:00] Um, but I was not expecting the growth to be this quick.

**Hall T. Martin:** What kind of growth rates are you seeing these days?

**Tanika de Souza:** So the, so the niching down that I did, I, um, I am a part of, like a mastermind and business community, and so I bring [00:13:20] in all my virtual staff to use the basic principles of that community. Um, therefore, once people know, oh, she has staff, I've staffed a few of the companies there. This is an organization that I would say has less than 500 members, so it's small.

[00:13:40] When we have gatherings, there's. Uh, just over a hundred or so people that can actually show. Um, however, because I have trained staff to work in our system, the way that we are building businesses, it has just exploded. So even just word of mouth, what I can tell you, the staff [00:14:00] knows about your company and the way that you're choosing to build your company.

Um, they instantly have trust and. You know, like, need for that. And then I'm able to place staff. So once they get a placement and they see this person understands my business development system, they refer [00:14:20] me. And it's just been like one after another of placement. So I'm, I'm super grateful for that, but that's also why I gave the advice to niche because Ha, because initially

when I was not just, Focusing on like a business framework or a process in [00:14:40] particular.

Like I literally wanted to hire for you, so I understood your systems and then said, I wanna find somebody who can work in that system versus defining, here is the system that I'm gonna work with and I'm going to only work with businesses who use this system. There's tons of business systems out there.

So I would just [00:15:00] say choose one if that's the way you wanna niche. And then build from there because everyone using that model wants their staffed to also use that same model. Mm-hmm.

**Hall T. Martin:** That makes sense. Well, in the last minutes that we have here today, what else should we cover that we haven't?

**Tanika de Souza:** Um, the thing that I would love is for [00:15:20] there to be more understanding about offshore virtual staff.

Um, the thing that I have. Been really fortunate to witness as the owner of this company is not only how it changes and transforms most of my US-based companies, meaning they can get [00:15:40] staff. I have, you know, found ways to really help with turnover, all of that, and just hiring for fit. But the thing that I am most proud of is the ability to change lives in other countries.

Um, so I do have quite a bit of my staff from the Philippines, so I've built an entire support [00:16:00] system for them there. But even just the small, um, testimonies or them sharing stories of being able to move to safer environments, being able to buy homes where the different parts of their family have their own rooms or being able to buy, like what we take for granted here, like.

One of [00:16:20] my staff is a single mom and she bought a washing machine for her place. It's like little things like that we take for granted, but they don't have, and having a a, a having skill that they can, um, offer to us-based companies absolutely changes [00:16:40] their lives as far as income and their ability to affect their families.

So that for me has been the thing that I have. I kinda enjoyed watching and the reason why we're having the rapid growth is because I want to help more families and I see it more as my investment [00:17:00] into them and the comp and and their growth versus just a placement and a paycheck for me.

**Hall T. Martin:** Well, that's great.

Glad to see the impact and the mission you have there. It sounds like it's changing lives and that's always great to see. Yes. So how best for listeners to get back in touch with you.

**Tanika de Souza:** [00:17:20] Awesome. I am located on LinkedIn. That's the easiest way to reach me. And it's just my name, Tanika dea. Otherwise you can, um, connect to the company page.

We are hi octane teams, um, and then online is high octane team. Great.

**Hall T. Martin:** We'll put [00:17:40] those contact details in the show notes. I wanna thank you for joining us today and hope to have you back for a follow-up

**Tanika de Souza:** soon. Thank you so much for having me. You have a great day

**Hall T. Martin:** and we'll cut it. Fair. Did you have any changes from your side?

**Tanika de Souza:** No, I didn't mention any company names or staffing names, so I think we're good on that. [00:18:00]

**Hall T. Martin:** Yeah, no, it sounded fine to me. I didn't hear anything that needed to be changed. We, we do have an editor that, uh, takes out the gaps and the odds and s and those type of things we do automatically. Yes, we're about a month out on the posting dates.

When we get the date, we will let you know. And then on that day we'll post and market it. You can do with it as you like as well. But appreciate you sharing that with us today. It's quite interesting to see how [00:18:20] AI is changing this industry very rapidly and. Yes. And all the opportunity that comes with it as well, we're, yes.

Uh, I always looking for, you know, who knows AI is gonna be the, the interesting thing in the next phase, and it sounds like it's coming faster than we

**Tanika de Souza:** think. Yes. 'cause I feel like it's already here, so either you're in the know or you're about to be left behind.

**Hall T. Martin:** Yeah. That's good way of putting [00:18:40] it. Well, great.



Yeah. Well, I'll let you get back to it. Thanks so much. And, uh, we'll go from there. All

**Tanika de Souza:** right. Thank you. Have a good one. Bye-Bye. Bye.