

Clay Deal – Point of Pride Transcript

[00:00:00] **Clay:** My career path has been a long and interesting journey, but it's a story that I love to tell. From being a non-traditional student with no true marketing experience, to working my way up — exploring new opportunities and building confidence — I now know I'm where I'm supposed to be. I'm proud to be a Simantelite.

[00:00:25] **Misty:** Hey there friends. Thanks so much for checking out our Point of Pride series. In celebration of our 40ish anniversary, Simantelites are sharing stories about what makes them proud to work at Simantel. A lot of people say one of the best things about working here is the people. I agree, and as an owner of the company, it makes me proud to hear stories like the one you're about to hear from Clay Deal.

[00:00:45] Clay is our Associate Media Director. We're thrilled to have him on our team, not only for his media expertise, but also for his efforts to lead and help shape the careers of other Simantelites. Give it a listen for a little glimpse into the people-first culture we've honed at Simantel.

[00:01:08] **Clay:** My point of pride is working at Simantel. I love this company, I love these people and I love the culture of helping each other succeed. I'm Clay Deal, I'm the Associate Media Director, and I've been at Simantel for about a year and a half. I've had a long, interesting journey to my current career that involves bartending, managing bars, selling cars, flipping houses, testing and fixing Cat® on-highway truck engines and a few other odds and ends.

[00:01:31] I went back to Bradley University as a non-traditional student at 33 years old and I graduated with two degrees at 35. I knew I was going to stay in the Peoria area because this is where my family is — we're rooted here. Coming out of Bradley with my newfound passion for marketing, I knew there were two places that I wanted to work at some point in my professional career: Maui Jim, or Simantel.

[00:01:50] Throughout my time at Bradley, I've heard great things about both companies, so I knew I'd worked for them at some point. I applied for a few positions at both companies and didn't even get an interview. I had no true marketing experience at that point, just a bunch of real-world experience. I continued to apply for both places for the next four and a half years for about every role; account planner, project planner, sales, reindeer walker, zombie protection team — just about anything, I put my resume in for it.

[00:02:16] Finally, in 2016, there was a position for an associate digital strategist. I applied once again, and finally, I got that interview. I had my first phone interview with Misty, and I'd never been so nervous in my entire life.

[00:02:27] I knew I wanted this job. I did well enough in the phone interview that I was asked to come in and present an assignment to Misty and a couple of the other leaders. I put forth my best effort, mocked up a cool ass Prezi deck and put my suit on — I think that was probably the last time I've ever worn it — and I headed down to Simantel.

[00:02:43] I walked into that building for the first time and knew that this is where I was supposed to be. I pitched my ideas from the homework assignment to the room, and I did well enough to get an offer a few days later, which I immediately accepted. At my time there, I moved from Associate Digital Strategist to Digital Strategist to honorary media team member to Social Media Strategist — all in the span of about three years.

[00:03:05] I worked with a bunch of cool people and a bunch of cool projects, and I made a ton of friends; many of those have lasted what I think will be a lifetime. I learned more about marketing and strategy in those three years than I have in any other time in my life. And then I left.

[00:03:20] I was approached by another company for a unique opportunity in marketing, and I took it. I took it mainly because it was an opportunity for me to prove to myself that I was good enough to do marketing on my own. See, at Simantel, you're surrounded by so many awesome, kind, fantastically smart people, sometimes you don't know where your efforts stop and the team's efforts actually begin.

[00:03:40] I started to ask, "am I successful because of the company and the people around me, or because of what I actually know and how I approach the work?". In my exit interview with Misty, she made a statement that would go ahead and stick in the back of my mind for the next two years.

[00:03:54] She stated she was sorry to see me leave. She wished me nothing but the best and all of the luck in the world. Then she said, (quote) As owners, we can't promise employees' advancement or career path, but I don't think we ever quite articulated what opportunity we saw on you well enough (end quote). That sentence absolutely froze me.

[00:04:14] It made me think of myself differently from that moment on. It has made me think differently ever since, and it has given me more confidence than you can imagine, and my confidence continued to grow. In a whirlwind of happenings, I came back to Simantel almost exactly two years after I left. I came back because this is where I'm supposed to be.

[00:04:34] My career stops and the two-year absence were just to show me the truth of where I belonged. The companies were great, the jobs were fine — the last stop was even at the second company on my list that I discussed when talking about Bradley: it was at Maui, Jim. But something was missing.

[00:04:50] Simantel pushes me. It pushes me to be me, to lead, to fail, to think outside of the box, to be brave, to accomplish, to be my best and to help others be their best. So, in all this, I don't have a single point of pride for this company. My point of pride is being back here, being welcomed back, being part of something that is more than just great marketing efforts but being a part of a great group of people who I believe genuinely want to help each other succeed and do the best work possible.

[00:05:20] **Misty:** I always hate to see good employees go, but I only want what's best for them. I want everyone to love what they do and have passion for their work. I'm grateful Clay has found that here at Simantel and couldn't be happier to have him back. I look forward to many more years with him on our team.

[00:05:36] If you liked Clay's story and want to hear more, head over to marketing.sweats.com and check out our very special season six, where you can hear my full interview with Clay, and other Simantelites, as they share their point of pride in celebration of our 40ish anniversary.