If you are skilled with either SEO, email list building,
you know, D2C customer acquisition, this is a business in a box that you can start.
I would love to see somebody start this.
If you're going to do this, email me, Sean at SeanPurry.
I will invest in you, advise you, whatever.
What's up, everybody? Sean here. And no, Sam, we have a pinch hitter, but it's going to be like when Tom Brady took over for Drew Bled, so I don't know if everyone gets the sports reference basically when the sub comes in and outperforms the starter. That's what I'm expecting here. So, we have Steph Smith here. You work for the hustle. You also are just one of the more interesting people out there on Twitter in our space of business stuff. So, Steph is here.
You were telling me you're nervous. Are you done being nervous yet?
I'm a little nervous. I feel like the pot has grown so much since I was on a year ago,
but hopefully I'll live up to the hype.
Well, it doesn't matter how many people listen. It's the same experience either way.
That's the good news for you because it's just us talking. So, you did a bunch of research, and I had a bunch of topic ideas because that's kind of your job for the hustle and trends and whatnot. And I just see bullet points. I want to just call them out the ones I think are interesting. I don't know all the details. So, what we'll do is I'll look at your notes here. I'm just going to call out a name. You introduce it. Tell me why it's interesting, what it is, and then we'll react to it and we'll see what we'll just brainstorm off that. All right. Quick break to tell you about another podcast that we're interested in right now. HubSpot just launched a Shark Tank rewatch podcast called Another Bite. Every week, the host relived the latest and greatest pitches from Shark Tank, from Squatty Potty to the Mench on a Bench to Ring Doorbell, and they break down
why these pitches were winners or losers, and each company's go-to-market strategy, branding, pricing, valuation, everything. Basically, all the things you want to know about how to survive the tank and scale your company on your own. If you want to give it a listen, you can find another bite on whatever podcast app you listen to, like Apple or Spotify or whatever you're using right now. All right. Back to the show. So, let's start with this one, the FSA Store. What is this? Okay. So, the FSA Store, if you're like me and you're not originally from the States, you're like, what the hell is an FSA? And it's a flexible spending account. So, it's basically a health account. There's also HSAs where you allocate some amount of money and you allocate that pre-tax, I believe. And so, you're basically saving tax and allocating this money only to certain products, only certain products related to your health. These products range from actually seeing a doctor to getting a COVID shot or not a shot, so I should say a test or band-aids. There's a whole range of products that you can use it on. But the interesting part about an FSA that's different from an HSA is that it expires. It's basically the only expiring money that I can think of. Even gift cards, you're actually legally not allowed to expire gift cards anymore.
And use it or lose it with FSA. Exactly. And so, there's something called the FSA Store.
It's fsastore.com. And if you go to that, one, it gets millions of pages a month, which you might say it's just millions. That's not so many, but they're so high in tent because basically what happens is at this cutoff period, you get millions of people going and saying, I have hundreds of dollars. You can get up to $2,700 in your FSA per year. So, you have a decent amount of money

that you're like, this is expiring. I have to spend it. And I've done this before. I don't know if you have. I end up buying 10 bottles of sunscreen or something ridiculous. And I think there's a couple different opportunities here. So, the first is there was this really interesting brand called Welly that I noticed when I was going to splurge on my FSA dollars. And all it was, we've talked about some of these topics on my first million before where you take a really boring business like band-aids and you go, okay, I see band-aid brand and no one's really doing anything interesting around band-aids. And why don't I just create a really cool D2C version of band-aid? So, if you go to getwelly.com, you'll just see it and you'll be like, okay, one, this is such a beautiful site. And two, I'm into band-aids. You're like, I kind of want some of these band-aids. And so, what I found interesting about this is there's all these other kind of product lanes that you can just like walk down and CVS or something like that and be like, oh, that's boring. That's boring. I haven't seen that reinvented. And actually, one of people have probably heard
of Eric Ryan. He's the founder of Welly, but he's also done Ollie Gummies, which people are probably familiar with and Method Soap. So, he's basically doing this. But I think there's a lot more room for other people to do the exact same thing and use the FSA store as almost this like really interesting acquisition house. If I go to FSA store and I just click shop at the top, the number one, like the first product is a Welly pack of bandages, but it has other things like, you know, Xeritec medicine, sunscreen, icy hot, you know, a Theragun type of thing, you know, contact solution, whatever. There's a whole bunch of things you can pay for this.
So, I actually think you just brought up two separate but interesting ideas that can be combined, like this example. But let's talk about, first let's talk about the Welly example. So, at Husslecon, that guy, you were talking about Eric Ryan, I think he came and he spoke. And he was talking about how I started Method Soap. And he's like, all right, Method Soap, it's now this big company, whatever. I forgot how much he sold it for, I think $100 million or something like that. Exact numbers don't matter. A lot of money. And it's like, how do you create a soap brand? And he described his method that he's used for Method Soap, for Oligummies and for Welly, which is he goes, walk down any aisle. What you're looking for is what I call a sea of sameness. And so he put up this photo of the soap aisle and it was just like all a bunch of green bottles. It was like, every bottle, every house cleaner was green and a bottle and it looked exactly the same. And their names were even kind of the same the way they're like, whatever they were called, like Windex and like Spray Fast or whatever, right? Like this is kind of a certain type of name. And he goes, that sea of sameness is your opportunity. And so in a sea of green bottles with boring names and ingredients that are crazy chemical names that you can't pronounce, we're going to make a different shape bottle with a different color, with a different name, with ingredients you can pronounce. And that's what they did with Method.
He's like, then you go down, walk down another aisle, the vitamins and supplements, they all look the same again. They're all saw that sea of sameness, boom, came out with Oligummies and did a couple things. Instead of saying vitamin C, he put immunity or better sleep on the label because that's the benefit you get out of the thing instead of needing to know what, why do I want Omega 3 fish oils? What is that going to do for me? Omega 3 fish oils, not that motivating, better hair and nails, way more motivating. And so use that insight, made a better bottle, better name and rolled it out. By the time he did the third one, he already had the partnership

with Target lined up because Target was like, oh, this guy's the hit maker. So you basically get kind of like a record deal with us. Whenever you come out with your next thing, you're going to get shelf space from day one instead of having to build up to get there. And so that's what he did with the Welly Band-Aids because he looked down the Band-Aid aisle, was like, wow, every Band-Aid is the same. They all have this like skin color like look that's like, it's not actually anyone's skin color, but it's like meant to kind of like blend in. And we're going to make the most fun looking Band-Aids that are like your cuts, your bruise, your scar is a badge of honor. And you should have like kind of like a, it should be a story worth telling. And so let's make it stand out. And he could tell by just the way this guy described something as boring as a Band-Aid, why he's successful because he's able to see, he sees the Olympics in a Band-Aid and that's why he's able to approach it very differently. So I think that's one interesting thing you talked about and where else could you do that? And we've talked about that before. I think one of the last ideas that came out of this was with the founder of David's Tees. And he said, I think it was like Duraflame basically, like the log company. Like if you can make just sort of like the modern, you know, the Welly Band-Aids of Duraflame logs because there's, you know, a quite a large amount of sales of that product, but it's like a very sleepy category. Did you see the one, it was like KFC smelling Duraflame logs? No. That's hilarious. And they're like, make your house smell like Kentucky Fried Chicken. And it was amazing. So there is a, there is a brand for that? I don't know if it's a brand. I saw it on Walmart. So I think they actually just partnered with KFC. But I love this idea of actually speaking of David's Tea. If anyone's listening, I know sometimes we talk about like really broad topics, but something you could actually start today is this thing called Butterfly PT, which is basically, I used to drink this stuff every day in Thailand. And it's this tea that probably costs like 10 cents to actually make. And you put it in your tea, it makes your tea bright blue. And then you're sitting there and it actually tastes pretty good. You add a little bit of lemon juice and it turns bright purple. And it's just this like kind of quirky viral thing. I think someone today could go source a bunch of Butterfly PT from Thailand or wherever you originally get it, create an Instagram focused business around this. And it would be just like the KFC log where it would just be like this initial thing, you get a quick hit and then you build out a tea business around that. Right. Yeah. This is great. I remember back in the day, I don't know how old you are, but we used to do like, there was this drink, I don't remember what it was called, squeeze it or something like that. And it had the same thing where you could put a little capsule in and it would change colors. And so like, you know, the kid at the lunch table who had the squeeze it thing and it was blue and then he put it in and it turned, you know, crazy pink or red or whatever. That was like, you know, just five seconds of entertainment where everybody's looking to see what is that fizzing thing and why is it changing colors. And so I love this model of basically looking at very Instagramable products. So TikTok, Instagram, what will work well here and then how do I work backwards from that and actually say, is there a business here and tea is like high margin, high retention, if you can do it. So I kind of like that idea. You said you used to drink this when you were in Thailand. Is that right? Yeah. I mean, when I traveled, there was just so many different products that, you know, you think we're in this completely digital distributed world and you're like, okay, if something exists here, it's obviously going to exist over here too. And I was just constantly surprised by how many products I would run into in one place that just don't exist in the rest of the world. I can give you another example. Just even right now, I'm living in California. I walk down the alcohol aisle in California and I see beer, I see wine, I see seltzer, you see that everywhere else. But in California, you also see hard kombucha. If I got to Florida, I went home to Toronto recently, I don't see any hard kombucha. And if you actually just go onto Google Trends, you search hard kombucha. One, you can see the search volume trending up. It's a hockey stick. But interestingly enough, Google Trends shows you the pockets. It shows you where search volume is happening. It's only in California. It's only in Colorado. It's only in these kind of in the expected places that you would find hard kombucha. And I think it's just, it's going to take off. And so someone in Wyoming, go start a hard kombucha brand. I think you're going to kill it in the next three to five years.

Yeah. Hard kombucha is a good example. There's a whole bunch of others, but the principle here is the future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed. There's a great quote. Now, normally people say that about very high tech stuff. Somebody's using this advanced AI technology is just not available for everybody yet. And in this case, what you're saying is actually, there are localized products that have kind of like cult followings in a local area, and humans are not that dissimilar to each other. So if it's working in California, it's only a matter of time until that spreads throughout the rest of the country.

Now, once it's working in the US, it'll spread elsewhere. And you could be the one who, you get rewarded for being one who is ready as that spreads and helps accelerate that spread.

Exactly. I wanted to do one more idea from this FSA store, which I think is actually really interesting, which is when you go to the FSA store, or if you just search, how can I use my FSA or can I use my FSA for a TheraGun, for example? You mentioned you saw that on there. There's this whole list of products where the answer is maybe, meaning you might need a doctor's note. You might maybe be able to expense this and it, you know, a certain type of this product might count, but there's all this fuzziness around it. And I think you could create a business that basically it could do one of two things. One of them is go work with companies where they're on the fringe. They're kind of medical related things like float tanks, things like red light therapy. And you say, you know, you have this huge amount of people that could be spending their FSAs in ways they probably would rather, right? I'd rather go to a float tank than buy like 10 bottles of sunscreen and say, here, we're going to help you get, make sure that all your products are included in the FSA store. So it's just really easy for you to get this business.

The second, I was going to say, the second is just you could do the opposite for the consumer, right? Where you could basically say, look, there's a bunch of these products that you probably would rather buy, but you might need a doctor's note or you might need this prerequisite. And we're going to make that really, really easy so you can spend your 2700 bucks on stuff you actually want.

Yeah, there's basically paperwork as a service. And so like, do not pay is a good example of that. So you could do it for the customer. You could also just potentially like, could you just create like a, so I think a huge amount of this money just doesn't, just doesn't get used. And, and so I think, you know, one thing you could do here is you could actually basically say, look, most of this money doesn't get used. Why don't we create a subscription box? We're just going to shove it with

cool, interesting stuff. You don't have to even think or visit the store or try to spend the right amount. It's just going to show up at your door. It's just free stuff for you. We will spend your account for you. If you basically, you know, I don't know exactly how the, the mechanics work of authenticating in and giving your account so that they can spend for you. But basically, I think somebody could create a subscription box on FSA and provide free stuff to everybody and just take your middleman fee for being in the middle and stuffing these boxes.
I love that because as I was trying to spend mine, I was on all these listicles being like, it takes hours. What's interesting, like what can I spend my money on? And I was just, it's so funny. It's like expiring money. And I'm like, what possibly can I get that's worth anything to me? And I ended up buying just junk, right? Sunscreen, these sunglasses I didn't need. So yes, I think that could absolutely work. If someone did the work to find out what are the best things you can spend an FSA on and create some sort of subscription box or business that helps people access that stuff. And do you know how much money is in FSA? Like how much money is
available in FSA? So the max an individual person could put in is like 2600 or something like that. But how much, what's the total pie here? Do you know? So I was trying to research this before and I couldn't find a number for FSAs. But I think I found a number around, I think there was 20 million HSAs and they're similar vehicles. So imagine that the average contribution is 1000, right? You can put up to 2700. Let's imagine the average is 1000. That would mean that there's 20 billion dollars in time capped money every single year waiting to be spent. Yeah, that's crazy. I'm looking at some article and basically says workers forfeit as much as 400 million a year in unused account cash. This is pretty good. So I think this is like of many of the ideas that we have on here. This is one of the best ones. If you are skilled with either SEO, email list building, you know, D2C customer acquisition, this is a business in a box that you could start. I would love to see somebody start this. If you're going to do this, email me, Sean at SeanPurry. I will invest in you, advise you, whatever, because this is one I would make time for because I think this is like a slam dunk sort of idea here where if you're going to take a shot, this is the type of shot to take a shot on. You can build kind of like a local monopoly, but it's big. It's a niche, but it's big enough where you can get big in this category. It's a not so niche niche. Yeah, exactly. All right. So you have some more on here. Let's do the better swag company. What do you have
in mind here? Okay. So if you're like me, events and conferences, you go to a conference and you get shitty pens. You have like 10 water bottles in your cabinet. You have all these things that companies give you because they want you to care about their company or they want to reward you in some way when you join a company, but it's all stuff you never use, right? And so I imagine a better swag company, a better, especially conference swag company, where you're giving things out that
you want people to use and to remember you buy. And it's crazy to me that this doesn't exist, right? There's only a couple of different products that you think about when you think about swag, again, pens, notebooks, sweaters, water bottles. And I think someone needs to go out there and figure out what are just like cool things people are stoked to have. So even if you think about it, a Yeti water bottle, which a lot of companies are giving out for free is something like $50, right? So it's not cheap. You instead could, let's say you get a branded Polaroid camera,

one, someone would be stoked to get it. They would use it in front of other people.
And I'm just wondering what those other things are. So maybe they get a pair of like really cool sneakers, Air Jordans, if you're really willing to splurge. I remember one company I worked at before had just this would cost 50 cents, but they had one of those laptop video covers right there. That was branded with their, their logo and people would always be like, where'd you get that? There was also, they also gave out like screen cleaner. So this little spray that you'd use on your laptop, but it's things that you would actually use, things that people would be excited to get. And I think just someone needs to go create this. And the one company I wanted to call out, they're kind of doing this, but I still don't see them really, you know, someone should just go hire a team to go scout all the really cool products online and say, this is stuff people want and build that into a swag company. But this company swag up, they started in 2017. They did 5k of their first month, 3.3 million in their first year. And today they're on track to do 55 million in sales and the founder is 26 years old. So I'm bringing this up because I think this is actually just a pretty simple model, pretty simple also because these businesses have money to spend, right? You're doing a, this is a B2C operations, you just go to HubSpot or any of these companies and say, look, I know swag is like tiring for you. I know you probably have someone in your company that doesn't want to do this, but it's like kind of enforced to do this in their role. We're going to do this for you and we're going to do it so much better. Yes. Shout out to Michael, the founder of Swag Up. He also hooked me up on my, I needed to swag for my course and he got me my swag and a rush delivery. So I appreciate that. And you're right. So, so they do a great job. They're pretty awesome platform, but that's not the market that we're talking about here. We're talking about there are brands that are willing to pay way more for something that's way cooler and way cooler. It doesn't actually make it way more expensive. It just makes it a little bit more expensive. So now you get this great trade. I will raise my budget a lot for something that's a lot cooler, but it only costs you a little more. And so things like that, like for example, we were at Twitch and if you think about the culture, like we might want to reward, let's say our top partners, right? The top streamers. Now these streamers, they, they make good money. They can have it all and we try to give them the VIP treatment. Same thing with like FanDuel or DraftKings. They want to give their high rollers VIP treatment. They want to give them branded swag, but if you give them the pen and the T-shirt, you know, you sort of get lost in the shuffle. It feels a little bit cheap.
Why wouldn't they do custom sneakers? Why wouldn't they do like a jersey of some kind? Why wouldn't they do like, why wouldn't Twitch do like a custom kind of like gaming console or case or controller, right? Something that is a branded PS5 controller. That would be something that you could do that you could, in many cases, you're not even making a thing. You're just buying the retail thing or buying it wholesale ideally. And then you're adding like a vinyl sticker or wrap around it so that it becomes a branded thing. And so I think you're right that basically, if there's somebody out there who has taste and or if you have some like ad agency that's like, you know, sort of struggling, this is the pivot for you. You're tired of your good ad agency, but you're tired of client services. Here's what you do instead, right? You just keep rotating through unique hot products that you can customize just enough for the company. And then you go charge

basically five times more, right? If I'm going to spend on a T-shirt, $5 a piece,
I'll spend easily, and maybe even 10 times more, I'll spend $50 a piece. If you can give me something that's unique, going to stand out, be memorable, because my business value with these high rollers or my VIPs is very, very high. Yeah, I love that you were like prerequisite is taste for this business. It has to be taste. It has to be identified with these products. Yeah, totally agree. Yeah, and taste is something, by the way, that like a lot of things need that you nobody talks about because it's like everybody thinks they have it, but very few actually do. And so it's good to call out one because if you're self-aware enough, you're like, oh, that requires taste. Okay, cool. I'm maybe not the one for me. FSA store, no taste required. Cool swag company. Yeah, that takes some taste. And by the way, if I did that, I would do it like Supreme. I would do it like limited edition drops. So today, companies just come up with swag whenever they have their conference. But what I would do instead is I would have a list of like the key buyers inside all these companies. And then every month, we would drop one new custom piece. And it's like, put your orders
in now if you want that piece. And we're never going to make that again. And then next month is like a new one. This is the video game controller. Next month is the sneakers. The next month after that is, you know, whatever, like the laptop, camera cover thing, whatever. And so doing that might actually get people to buy more often than just their once a year kind of like annual swag purchase because it'll become like shopping for the company. The company will start to stockpile cool unique things that they have to get it before it's gone. Exactly. All right, you have some other good ones on here. Let's do... Okay, I heard you say this and I thought it sounded smart, but I'm not sure exactly what it would be. But you said something like,
companies should have a chief automation officer. Or you drew some parallel. You said the way they have this today, in the future, they will or should have chief automation officers. What does that mean? What did you mean by that tweet? Yeah, so this title is a little silly. It's just like, you know, a neat title that you could assign to someone whose job is something that I don't see enough in companies today. So you have people who are responsible for setting the goal, setting the strategy. Then you have a bunch of people who are actually focused on going and deploying that strategy. What you don't really have in companies is someone who is solely responsible for making sure that we do that effectively. As in, you know, are we automating the right things? Do people have VAs and others that they can delegate to? Are we operating this company effectively the same way that you would have a pilot that, you know, uses an airplane to get to a destination, you also have someone checking if the machine is working properly, right? If the airplane is operating as it should be. And I think this would, you know, again, the title is a little silly, chief automation officer, but someone whose sole responsibility is to go find things that can be automated or delegated within a company that should be, and then their responsibility, maybe they have a team of, you know, automation experts, or maybe they just do it themselves if it's a small company. And they just do that. And I think you could, I think you would see the ROI on this role immediately, right? So they would easily pay for themselves and more. And I think it would be really simple. I mean, I think maybe in 10 years, this will be more sophisticated. They would just literally shadow people in their role for a day and be like, okay, so what are you doing? And why are you doing that? And have you ever thought about doing this? And they'd probably just be like, oh, no, I didn't think of doing that. Like, I've just been doing it this way because

like that's how I was taught. And so I think that could be just like a really simple version. And I don't even think you need a chief X officer, it can just be someone in your company where that is their sole responsibility is to improve processes. Right. So you have already inside companies, you have a couple of roles like this that are internal facing, they don't face the customer, the customer is inside the company. So there are like chief people officer and the whole like HR department, and the people, the people team as they like to call it now. Then there's IT. So IT basically says, oh, great, I got to get you the right, the best equipment, the right equipment, I got to make sure it works, make sure you can access all the internal stuff. And they're more like firefighters, they just come in when things are broken for the most part. They're there day one, and then they're there on every emergency after that. And then you have like data scientists that that wasn't super common before, but now you have teams inside companies that say, look, we're going to dig through all this data, we're going to organize it, we're going to get analysis and insights, and we're going to hand those to the execs of all that run all these different functions. We're going to say, with this data, now you can do your job better. And what you're saying is that just like there's sort of a data scientist, there might be sort of like an automation engineer. And the automation engineer might say, hey, we're not digging through data, we're digging
through process. And when we dig through process, we're going to find repetitive, janky processes that are sucking up time that are causing failures and errors and mistakes. And we're going to like free up those problems. And we know how to do that because we are experts of this like set of tools that exists that can be used so that this thing you're doing with Excel should be done on a dashboard. This thing you're doing manually that you set out a reminder to do every night at 11pm, that can be automated or whatever, right? This thing that you're writing this report every day for your boss, that can be a Zapier command and just update the data automatically. So I totally believe in what you're saying right now. It's kind of annoying. I like it more when we disagree. But I totally agree with this one. The question is, what would you do if you knew this like was going to be true? Like, okay, let's say we agree that this should exist. How would you like make this exist? So do you mean within a company or if you were going to build a business around it?
Either way. So you're Steph Smith. And let's say I said this is your mission. You could do it like inside HubSpot. Maybe that's a good place to start. Maybe that would be the end of it. Or you could build a company out of this. How would this like come to life? So I think if I was going to do it myself, I would do kind of what I just mentioned, which is I would go to my boss, I would say, hey, look, I've noticed that there are some processes that aren't efficient in my own role, in other people's role, but no one has the time to actually focus on this. They're too busy, you know, running on the treadmill. They don't have enough time to repair their treadmill. So I'd say, give me this budget to hire someone part-time who just knows a lot about automation. Let me have them shadow me first. Let me have them shadow me. And then in two weeks time, I'll come back to you and I'll tell you all the time that I saved so I can focus on these high, you know, these high performance projects. And then I would say, can I do this for another person? And then, you know, just get that buy-in to show like, oh my gosh, look how effective this is. And then it would spread. If I was going to build a company around this, I would basically create a program. I mean, this is basically just a course to teach people exactly the most effective ways to

use things like Zapier, no code tools, maybe a little bit of code so they know how to implement automation. And then I would go to companies and do the same thing. Similar to what Lambda School is doing, Lambda School is allowing people to test drive their engineers and just say, look, we'll give you a month free. And if you like them, you'll hire them at no, you know, that month is going to be free. I would do the same thing. I would say, look, we've got these bad asses. Your company doesn't have enough time to figure out how to make your internal processes better. So let me give you this person for a week, a month, whatever it is. And I want you to see the returns. And then after that, this is what we're charging for them. So I would do kind of a Lambda School-esque model if I was building a business around it. Right. All right, a quick message from our sponsor. You know, I was thinking about the shortest day of the year earlier. And while we technically have the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight
makes it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected
tools. Our workday is the same length as always. But before you know it, we spent three hours just fixing something that was supposed to be automated. Thankfully HubSpot's all-in-one CRM platform can
serve as a single source of truth for managing your customer relationships across marketing, sales, service operations with multiple hubs and over a thousand integrations and an easy to use interface. HubSpot lets you spend less time managing your software and more time connecting with your customers. Learn how HubSpot can help you grow your business at HubSpot.com.
There's also a UiPath, right, which is a company that basically created a piece of software that's like, I don't know. I don't actually know exactly how UiPath works. I don't know if you know, but here's what I've heard. I could be wrong if you're the CEO of UiPath who I think is based in like Romania or something like that. You know, my apologies. But the way I think UiPath works is actually they install a program on your computer and all it does is watch what you do. They just watch where you move the mouse, watch where you type in, and it sort of looks for this pattern. And it basically says, oh, okay, it's called robotic process automation, I think, RPA.
Basically, the machine will just say, cool, I figured out how to automate that thing you were doing. I figured out what you do every day is you wake up and you copy these 10 rows from this Excel file into this other file, and then you like add this other piece of information, and then you drop the file and drop box. Cool. I just do that automatically now.
And UiPath is a very big multi-billion dollar company. It works with big companies that need more efficiency. And so I think UiPath is probably like the craziest way to solve this problem.
And I'm pretty fascinated with this idea of robot. It sounds almost too good to be true, right? If somebody pitched me this, I'd be like, that's not how it works. Like, a computer can't just watch what I do on a screen and automate me. And the reality is, apparently, it can. And so I would love to actually play with some of these and maybe invest in companies that are doing RPA, but I haven't had a chance to do it much myself. Do you know anything
about UiPath? Yeah. So like you said, they went public recently. I think I just checked they're out of $32 billion valuations. This is not chump change. This is a big company. But like you said, I think they're focused more so on enterprises right now and figuring out

just like the really common things that people do, perhaps it's like customer service or something like that. I think maybe this is just an interim solution, but there's always going to be things that a human can spot more easily by just like literally shadowing someone, like sitting next to them for a day on Zoom or in person. That I think there still is this gap that RPA, there's always going to be a delta between what RPA can tackle and the human exchange there. So I think there's still an opportunity for you to go hire like a chief automation officer. Have you ever shadowed someone at their job? I have. Yeah. Who did you shadow? Well, it was in my first job and I remember it was in like business consulting and the first week they get you to shadow someone in their role. But my favorite part of that is it was like classic business consulting, like your whole day is spent in Excel and they just go, see that mouse over there? We're going to teach you not to use it. And I remember thinking at the time, like what? How am I going to do that? But yeah, it was game changing to just see what someone does because when you're working on your own, you're just like inventing processes and you learn so much by just watching. Yeah. I think that actually there should be more shadowing period. I've learned a ton shadowing. I did it for products. Like we made it before we got acquired by Twitch, we were building for Twitch streamers. And so I was like, well, I'm not a Twitch streamer. I could try to pretend to be one, but like the fact is I'm not a Twitch streamer with a big community with the type of person who we're actually building for. And so I arranged with, I reached out to a bunch of Twitch streamers and I said, hey, I would love to just shadow you. I'm doing this thing. What I think I'm building is going to help people like you, but I bet you've used a bunch of software where you literally look at it and you're like, dude, this person didn't understand what the hell they were supposed to do. Like this thing doesn't work. I want to avoid that. And my way of avoiding that is can I come and just hang out in the room while you stream? I just want to watch you for a couple hours. I know that sounds weird, blah, blah, blah. And I'll give you 50 bucks. And he's like, 50 bucks. Okay, great. Why'd you say all that other shit? And so I went and I would go sit and like Twitch streamer stream in their bedroom. So I'm literally sitting on the dude's bed because there's no other space in the room. Everything else is like a camera or I'd be on screen. So I'm sitting on the bed. I'm like twiddling my thumbs and I'm watching him do things. And I thought I knew kind of like what it was like. And then you see all the nuances. You're like, oh, he literally is peeing in a bottle because he can't stand up because he's going to lose viewers. Huh. Maybe we could do something. Maybe we could build a feature that would let him have a restroom break, but would keep the viewers entertained, right? Like I would have never thought of that feature if I didn't see the guy peeing a bottle under the desk. And so there's just a whole bunch of things like that that you cannot pick up unless you're there, kind of like what they call in situ. You're basically in the situation watching it all happen. And you'll see both those nuances of the customer, but you'll also see stuff that if you just ask them, hey, what are your biggest pain points? And they'll tell you a few things. And then you watch them and you're like, dude, you spent half your day doing this. They're like, yeah, well, you just got to do it. You got to do what you got to do. You're like, no, that's, you don't have to do that. That's, I could solve that. You just don't know. So you didn't tell me when I asked you, but when I watched you, I saw something different. And so highly recommend shadowing for many things. If you want to know if you want to do a job, you want to build a better product, shadow somebody. Exactly. And I think this is actually

why if you had someone shadow you who is focused on automation, they would ask you those same questions like, why do you do that? And you'd be like, I just do it. Like this is the way it has to be done. And they'd be like, actually, no, like this can, I can eliminate this in 30 minutes, and you'll never have to do this again. So I think shadowing, you're absolutely right. Just you think there's all this like really intentional process behind what you do. And as soon as you just start asking questions, like shadow yourself, literally all the things that you do in a day, write them down as if you were leaving the company tomorrow and you had to pass this on to someone.
I bet you there's going to be all this stuff that you're going to uncover where you're like, oh, actually, like, I don't know if we should be doing it that way. Right, right, right, right. Yeah, totally. I've been hiring a bunch of people that are like virtual assistants in the Philippines, basically, to just automate a bunch of things in my life as well as in my company. And when you do it, you're like, okay, if this brand of person who you're paying $5, $6 an hour, how are they going to do this task that like I used to pay somebody in the US this much money to do. So, well, I need to write, I need to create a script, right. And the script is basically like, you know, I'm coding, I'm basically coding a Google Doc for a human to execute this same thing every day or every week, every Friday, say, do this. And so, you know, I can see how you could do the A in software, but B, doing that process for yourself, when you're trying to automate yourself out of something, you're right. It's like the easiest way to see a bunch of like, inefficiency and leaks in your own game is when you try to like, write the script for somebody else to do what you do. And it's like, oh, either you find out, no, this can't be delegated because it's like, no, there's actually just a bunch of intuition and creativity here. Or you're like, oh, my God, why do I even do this task? And why do I do it this way? This makes no sense. Totally. All right, let's do a couple others that I think are interesting. Let's do this. Actually, okay, I'll let you pick. So we can either do the BevTree thing, or we can do expired patents, or we could do the TikTok China factory thing. Which one is most interesting to you? So either BevTri or expired patents. Let's do BevTri really quickly. I don't think there's too much of a takeaway here, but I think it's one of these things that may, you know, if you're operating a company, this may actually be interesting to you. So a lot of the time when you create a product, you go and you create a product. And then after you think, how do I market this product? BevTri was a really interesting inversion of that. So I was in Toronto recently, I'm at a friend's house, and they're like, you want a drink? And I'm like, yeah, sure. What do you have? And they're like, open the fridge. And I look and there's just like a dozen plus of different types of drinks, but only one of each. And I'm like, Alicia, like, why do you have like one seltzer, one cider, one type of beer? And she goes, oh, it's because of BevTri. Have you heard of BevTri? And I go, no. And basically, really, really simple acquisition tactic, you give them your number, you give BevTri your phone number, and then they text you, you're on some text list where they say, hey, do you want our next alcohol drop? And they literally just show up at your house and give you free alcohol, which I was like, no, no, no, like this can't be true. Are you paying for this? Are they like selling your data? And she goes, no, they just like, they just give me free alcohol. And I'm like, how many times have they done this? She's like, they've done it like four times. And basically, it's similar to something like a BlockFi where you can even work your way up a list, if you start referring other users. So I think they have this massive list of users. The reason I find this one especially interesting

is because one, I think they actually get the alcohol for free. That's why it's all like disjointed. You're not getting a six pack, you're getting one, this new drink that some brand is launching. But I also think it's really interesting because they have zero product today. As in, they as a company BevTri so far are not selling anything, but you can kind of see little glimpse of it in the app. So she opened the app and I was like, oh, let me see this. And you can see that they're going to add new products. It almost looks like one of these super apps that you would find in Southeast Asia or something. They're probably going to sell you some food. They're probably going to come up with their own alcohol brand. Who knows what they're going to do with this? But again, I thought it was really interesting because most of the time you create a product and then you market the hell out of that product. And for some companies like Uber or HelloFresh, they're splurging so much money on acquiring these users. And I just thought this was, again, a really interesting inversion where, hold up, what if we actually just figure out the easiest way to attract a large mass of people? And then we're going to figure out the product after. So I don't know if you have any thoughts on that, but that's the BevTri story.
Yeah, I think there's some good and some bad in that. So there's some good is usually there's a lag time while you're waiting for your product to be built or it takes time to get your formulations right or you're waiting for the engineer to make the app or whatever it is. And you can either sit on your ass and do nothing, or you can actually like go and build your customer list, ideally with an experience that is similar to what your product is. So they get to kind of sample it manually before it's like available full time. So I like that. The downside is, let's assume, I don't know, would you know what the actual product is going to be for BevTri? Is it going to be a subscription for drinks? Is it going to be? I have no idea. I don't even know. All delivery. Candidly, if they know. I mean, they probably do have some sort of strategy there, but so far there's nothing in the app that indicates what they're going to sell. Okay, fair enough. So we don't know. We don't know what it is. But the risk is you can build a big interested customer list with samples and tips and tricks of marketing. But the big risk for most startups is that you don't have product market fit. Meaning you're actually not building something that somebody wants, they're willing to pay for, and they're going to keep using it. And so you're kind of working on the wrong problem in a way. You may only need 100 customers to find out if you have product market fit or 1000 customers and you're sitting here trying to build a 10,000 person, 100,000 person list, and you're going to go to them with the wrong product. The other thing is that these lists are perishable. So I've had many, many wait lists. And for every week that the wait list goes by another half of the people on the list forgot what they signed up for and don't care. And so you're like, Oh, we have this. I had at one point, I had a million person wait list for an app that we were building. And because I had this viral video, blah, blah, blah. So one million people on the list, by the time we actually went and hit them up, it's like, I don't even remember what it was, but it was something pitiful, like 10,000 or 20,000 people who actually tried the thing. And it's like, Oh, 10,000, 20,000, I could have just paid 10,000 bucks and got that through direct marketing. And they would have actually been maybe my perfect target market. So this million person list didn't actually turn to be that useful. I've seen this many times. Every wait list decays and value over time. So I would say that's like the downside. But in general, you have to decide how your product, how you're going to build your company. Is it product first? Is it audience first? That's like, let's say for me, I built an audience first,

and then I can launch things like a course or a book or whatever. It's easy then because I have an audience. You could build it community first build a community like, you know, trends or what not. And so you have to decide, oh, you know, it could be partnership first, you have you sign some big licensing deal or distribution deal with someone who has big, big reach. And that's your first move. And then after that, you go build the product. That's a bad. And so I think all these can work, but it's good to be intentional and not try to do all of them. If you try to do all of them, you're going to split your focus. And so, you know, that that's kind of my thoughts on that strategy. No, I think that's spot on. I think you're totally right that these are absolutely going to decay these types of lists and you don't have the same kind of like intentionality in the way that you're acquiring customers because they want free alcohol. You don't know what else they want on top of that. I think one kind of parallel to this, which I think probably a lot of people know is just you're almost doing arbitrage of like, let me find these big companies that have alcohol that they want other people to know about. They're going to give me the alcohol for free. I'm going to use this to acquire customers at basically no cost. Another parallel business that does this is subscription boxes. So a lot of people think subscription boxes are, you know, you're buying a bunch of product at scale and then you're for, you know, margin on top of that selling it to other people. Well, actually a lot of subscription boxes just get their products for free because these companies want to be in it. So anyway, I think that's just a kind of a parallel business approach. Yeah, yeah, exactly. So it's good to see these patterns because you can figure out how to apply it. Exactly. I wanted to ask you, you make stuff, so you make content. You make products kind of sometimes. You probably invest some of your own money, you know, whatever. I saw you put something in here about transfer wise, a stock and just made
me think to step on this stock and what does stuff own? What does stuff like to invest in? So I'm curious, give me your kind of like, give us the rundown on what do you do? So you're building your, the stuff you make and then what do you do with your money? And then how is that different than what you've heard me or Sam do with how we build and how we invest? So I mean, I'll start by saying I'm actually a terrible investor. So it's funny because early on, especially when I was writing for Trends, I look back on that time and I'm like, if I just invested in all the things that I wrote about, I would be really wealthy, which I didn't. I think the reason I'm a bad investor is because I like other people think I'm smarter than the market. And so I make bets and, you know, and I'm not smarter than the market. So I mean, not financial advice, but the best way to make money, right, is just like index funds. That's what Sam does. But I also, I would say that I think in general in the way that I spend my money is that I, especially today, try not to focus on markets at all, meaning that I invest most of my money in just my own projects. And like, I'd rather bet on myself than anything else. And so I know that's kind of a cop out answer, but that's my investing strategy today. Okay, so what does that mean? Like, give me an example of you investing in yourself, let's make it real, because it is kind of a cop out answer.
So on this podcast, we don't list, let it go as, Oh, invest in yourself. That's the best we say, Oh, what are you doing? What did you invest? Well, okay, so the idea of investing in myself is partially like anything I want to buy education related, I buy it, we've talked about this with Sam before, but it's also meaning that I don't spend any time looking at the markets anymore. I think last year, when everyone was looking at the markets, I did the same thing. I made a bunch

of bad bets, shorted the market, heard the story before. And so now I have my money in indexes or a couple stocks that I like, and then I don't touch it at all. I don't I never look at the market these days. And then I just spend all of my time, which I view as like an asset in myself. So learning skills and building things online. So what are you learning? What are you learning? What are you investing in building your own skills in right now? So most recently, I'm invested in I'm taking an automation course. So it's just like a Python automation course, because I believe in this idea of like automating every possible thing in your life that you don't need to be the one doing. Also created a course around this topic. It's called doing time right, which is all about this call this bicycle framework of how people should think about spending their time. And it's just a sequential framework where a lot of people think about how do I move faster on my bike to get to my destination. And the course is all about how to first eliminate whatever the hell you should be eliminating, then automate, then delegate. So it's just a sequential framework that teaches people how to do that. How does that relate to a bike? So basically, the way that I view it is, you know, if you're going to go create some like billion dollar company or just do something
really impressive in your life, those are things that you look back on your like, wow, I did it. Those are like cross country bike journeys. And if you want to cross the country with a bike, it's going to be kind of hard, right? You know, you might not show up every day, you might quit, it's going to be pretty grueling. What a lot of people do when they're pursuing these really audacious goals is that they just get on their bike and they wonder, how do I bike faster? How do I get to this destination faster? Really, what you should be doing is first you lay out your map, right? This is your strategy, these are your goals. Okay, where do I want to go? What am I going to run into? How do I make it most likely for me to actually get to my destination? The second thing is elimination, which means that as you're on your bike, if you just hop on, you probably have all the stuff that you just like thought, oh, yeah, I need this. And you know, maybe you got like a monkey on your back, you've got a shitty bike, and you're just going on your journey. So elimination is get rid of all the stuff that's unnecessary. That includes all these random detours where you're like, oh, it'd be kind of fun to go to this petting zoo or it'd be kind of fun to like go see a movie, but that's fine every so often. But ultimately, infinite detours means you're never getting to your destination. The third is automation, which means basically getting an electric bike. How much easier is a cross country journey if you have something, a machine working on your side to get you still have to hop on the bike, still got a pedal, but it's just going to be a lot easier to get there. Delegation is kind of like the, the like more badass version of automation. It's like taking things that again, you don't want to be doing. And in addition to like automating it with the machine, now you have a human, right? Who's even more contextual. And so that's like upgrading your bike, you know, getting like just like the best electric bike on the market. And then by the end, we have these images that we created for the course. And by the end, there's this image of like someone biking cross journey or cross country, and they're like smelling a flower, it's sunny outside. And they're like, wow, this is actually like, I want to be on this journey. And so anyway, that's kind of the, that's the foundation of the course. And then we actually show people exactly how to purchase their inbox, how to zap the hell out of, you know, they're, they're project stack and, and things like that. One interesting little thing that I tweeted about recently from the course that I'll just call out is we came up with all these little frameworks.

And one of them is expiring to do's. So we all have this like long list of to do's. And some of them are just not that important. So, you know, you come across an article, you're like, I should definitely read this later. I should definitely listen to this later. And then you end up with this never ending to do list. And so I came up with this like super simple notion template, which expires to do's certain types of to do's after 30 days, you could set it seven days, you set it to 90. And I think that's actually a product that someone could build a productivity tool that's just centered around using your psychology for you, right? So expiring to do's, having it so that you can actually see your full to do list until you get the number one thing of the day done. Then you just kind of think through some of those psychological hacks and implement them into an actual productivity tool. Gotcha. I, you don't know this, but I hate productivity tools. I feel like that's the first thing everyone builds is like a better to do list.
Then they do build better invoicing, and then they build better, you know, time tracking and things like that. That's like the engineers like right of passage. And so as a general business rule, I'm like, just don't build productivity tools or build things that don't seem like productivity tools, but are actually productivity tools that works. But if you build something that's supposed to be a productivity tool, I'm like, that's like a death pit. I just love to avoid, but I do think productivity matters. And you know, I just don't like to build tools in that space. But okay, I like that. That's pretty cool. And what about, what, what is it about your philosophy? Do you have anything in your philosophy around either building or, or investing that is different than me or Sam or what you've heard us talking about? That's a good question. Anything different than what you and Sam have talked about? I don't know. I think that, so I basically take the like investing approach of Sam. I also think that like one of the things that I've done, which maybe, I think you did as well, you build the podcast in this way, but I don't see enough people doing is a lot of people think that they either need to go binary in the sense of like, I need to quit my job and build something, or I need to just like do my job and, you know, one day I'll build a company. I actually think that the hybrid approach is possibly the best approach because you have the complete financial stability through your job, right? And so you don't need to worry about that, which means you can go and be really risky, really creative and really authentic with anything that you build on the side, because you're not worried about like, Oh, how do I convert these people today? Or how do I make sure I have dinner on the table? And so that's what I don't see enough creators doing. They think they need to go like full Zuckerberg drop out of school and, you know, scale business right away. And when I see a lot of indie hackers that do that, they burn out real quick because they're like, this isn't even fun anymore. And I also like, I thought I could make money in three months and I can't. I think maybe that's not different to what you and Sam have done, but I think that's different to what I see a lot of creators do. Okay, fair enough. Yeah, I actually think on that, like, I think in general, it's better not to take hybrid approaches because hybrid approaches are typically like kind of compromises or have your cake and eat it twos that you're trying to get. And like, if you just really said what you wanted, the question is, are you doing the hybrid approach because you want to do both things? Or are you doing the hybrid approach because you're afraid the thing you want to do won't work? Or because you're, you know, basically fear, right? You have some doubt about the thing.
And I've definitely done both. So like the podcast I definitely did while I was at Twitch,

and then I'd since quit Twitch and do it now more or less, you know, full on.
So I have done that, but it depends. I think you could do it with hobbies. And I consider investing a hobby. I consider podcasting a hobby. I don't think you can do it with company building in the same. So the same, like, I wouldn't advise it for that. For your company building, it's like, look, you if this works, the price is big. In order for this to work, commitment is full on, you should just go full on with it. Once you have once you have conviction, and like for everybody, conviction comes at a different level. But I'm the type that's sort of like, you know, just default to conviction quickly, and then change my mind once I have evidence that it's that it's not right. So I would say we probably do differ a little bit in that. I'm not a huge believer in the side hustle, even though it looks like I have tons of side hustles. I actually, I think the optimal path is to just know what you want, and then go for it. And then if you, if it doesn't work out, you can sort of always fall back to the job and things like that. America is kind of a great place in that sense where, you know, failure is rewarded here. And unlike any other culture that I've ever seen. And so because of that, you can use that to your advantage, especially the tech industry. Like I did a failed startup is like, oh, good, that's like, you know, solid experience that you have, you know, screwing it up. And I don't think that's true for most industries and most cultures. Yeah, I think there's a couple of examples where I think often people, I so agree with you, if you're going to go create the next like, billion trillion, even people are talking about company, then I think, yes, you got to go all in. But there are tons of examples where like, the Google founders, like they made sure they, they finished their PhDs before actually going all in because they wanted almost like that stability. Same thing with the Spanx founder. I think she was, I can't remember if it was her or someone else like selling printers to make sure that she had like the long term vision in order to build Spanx. But we can agree to slightly disagree on that one. But why don't we do, why don't we do one more? Yeah, I'll do the expired patents one. Let's do, hold on, let me look at this list. I think there might be a better one than that. Because I think that one we might have talked about before. Let's talk about this financial, the fidelity rule change and what that might mean. So talk about the fidelity thing that you had here at the bottom. Yeah, so fidelity recently launched creating accounts for 13 to 17 year olds. So before, I'm not sure if they just didn't have them or if it was illegal. I'm not sure you've talked about how rule changes are game changers and they unlock innovation. So basically now teens can open accounts. They do need to, I believe that they actually need to have like a parent open the account for them. But basically there's this new wave of investors who've seen the same thing with Robinhood that are able to trade, able to make deposits, able to buy ETFs, all of those things. And so I think that you have this new huge cohort of people and that'll continue to be true. Someone needs to create some sort of financial education game for these children
because the parents are going to be way more likely to allow their children to go trade these stocks if they've had that. But also I think you can make it fun, right? Like we've talked before about how education is really boring most of the time. And so I think like TikTok generation, someone go create a financial education game for these kids. Yeah, there was an idea that on the episode we did with Elaine, she said that has stuck with me. She goes, why isn't there fantasy sports for trading and fantasy football for trading basically? And I was like, that's kind of a great idea. And this sort of reminds me of that trend, which is there's already like Robinhood

kind of like captured this opportunity that was kind of hidden in plain sight, which was that more people would trade if you lowered the friction, right? Put it on their phone, make it no fees for every trade and make the UI simpler where you can just like, see pretty charts and push buttons. And they would give you a free, you know, share of Apple or share of Tesla or whatever at the time when you signed up, if you referred friends and all that good stuff. So they kind of Gen Z did up and did a good job there. But and then now there's this whole wave of like every version of stock trading app. It's like a stock trading app, social network, a stock trading app that's like super hardcore for options traders. And I actually think somebody should go into the other quadrant of the chart, which is basically like, you're not doing it to get rich, you're doing it for fun. And what does that mean? And I think the fantasy trading game is kind of interesting here where if I could do this with like, let's say, if I had a teenager, and it's something that a teenager could do with their friends or with their parents or their family, and everybody creates almost like daily fantasy, you basically create a monthly stock game. And the way it works is everybody gets the same budget. And and then you get to allocate that into different stocks, and everybody sees what everybody invested in, and then it sort of plays out over the course of the month. And every day there's like trading news. So there's kind of like ups and downs as you go there. And then you basically create some kind of fantasy sports game around the stock market. And I think if you did that, you could definitely like fantasy sports, I think there's like 50 million plus players of it. I think that you could create a fantasy version of trading that may not have 50 million, but I think you can get into the millions of people who are participating in this. And that would be very valuable. Those leads would be very valuable because you could upsell them into actually trading, because they're going to have seen their fantasy portfolio crush it. And they're going to think, Oh my God, I should go play the real game. So those leads are extremely valuable, whether you build it yourself or you sell it off to Robinhood or whoever else you partner with them. Or you can even have like a premium version
of this where it's like, Oh, pay extra and you get, you get, you know, whatever, some advanced like charts metrics, like saved, we save your history, whatever it is. So what do you think this fantasy sports idea for the stock market? No, I love it because as I said, I think a lot of the time people try to acquire users, like, you know, let me just like do this promo or something. And really the easiest way to acquire users is to make something fun, right? So you would acquire all these users through this game. And the beauty of acquiring, you know, maybe some people would think this is a little predatory, but acquiring users from 13 to 17 is that in five years, they're going to be 18. Right, first job, you know, exactly to 22. And then, you know, even past that, they're just going to be scaling in net worth. And you're acquiring them when they're really cheap. And when it's easy to acquire them through things like a game, right? And so you don't really see many banks doing that like stuff the shark. I love it. The predatory stuff comes out no more, no more nice stuff on Twitter. This is the real calculating cold-blooded killer.
Why do you think YouTube and Instagram want to create versions for kids? I mean, it's so that they can acquire users easily and then kind of stick with those users for the next 5, 10, 20, 50 years. And I think, I mean, again, it's predatory. So if someone does this, please, you know, do it well and do it, you know, with good intentions. But it's true that, you know, this is a rule unlock, right, where these people are coming online, they have access to these

products. And if you can do it in a smart way where parents feel good about your product, unlike, you know, perhaps how parents feel about something like an Instagram for kids, then I think you're going to get a huge swath of users that will carry through with you for a long time. Love it. Okay, great. Where should people get more stuff? Because I think a lot of people are going to listen to this and be like, oh, she's amazing. How do I get more stuff in my life? So the place I'm most active is on Twitter. My handle there is StephSmithIO because my website is StephSmith.io. And obviously, I work on trends so people can go to trends.co if they're interested in that. And then we mentioned the productivity course earlier. I know productivity can be a really fuzzy thing, but if people are interested, that course is at doingtimewrite.com because my original book was doingcontentwrite.com. And I think you're supposed to be helping with
the podcast now. Is that right? What are you doing for the pod? Well, Sam tried to get me to help because you guys are growing so quickly and you need more help. I think you're hiring a growth marketer though. Oh, gotcha. Okay, so you're not helping in the end? I mean, I'm here to help if you need help, but I think I got a couple other projects that HubSpot has me on. Okay, all right, sounds good. I don't know how they could put you on anything, but the most important topic of all in all of HubSpot is this podcast. So we all know the truth. All right, Steph, this is great. Everybody go follow Steph. This is amazing. Thanks for coming on. Appreciate you. Thanks for having me.