

[Transcript] The Tim Ferriss Show / #686: Dustin Moskovitz, Co-Founder of Asana and Facebook — Energy Management, Coaching for Endurance, No Meeting Wednesdays, Understanding the Real Risks of AI, Embracing Frictionless Work with AI, The Value of Holding Stories Loosely, and More

This episode is brought to you by Roka, makers of the world's most versatile eyewear. I am incredibly impressed with Roka, actually, the quality is outstanding. And a lot of my friends who are lead athletes also wear them. That's how I was introduced to them. I like to stay active. A lot of long term listeners will know this. And my eyewear has to be up to the task. Brands that make everyday eyewear sunglasses and glasses, don't generally build them for people who are really on the move a lot.

So you have to wear clunky shades on a run, deal with glasses that slip off your face or buy some kind of sport specific frames. Roka has fixed all of that by packing the same features used in eyewear for Olympic gold medalists and world champions into stylish everyday sunglasses, eyeglasses and reading glasses.

So you get more with less. It's an elegant solution with Roka. One pair does it all. You can go from work to a workout to dinner with friends without ever needing to switch glasses. I never have to interrupt a hike, for instance, to take my sunglasses off and wipe my nose or frames because Roka's no slip feature keeps my shades right where they started.

If you wear prescription glasses, which I will probably end up wearing pretty soon as you get older, you know, these things happen, you can finally ditch the contacts and have no slip fashionable frames that keep up with you and your active lifestyle.

Personally, I've been using their Rory blue light glasses after sunset and I can feel the improvement in my sleep quality. I'm falling asleep faster.

During the day, I've been loving the Falcon. This is Roka's ultra lightweight titanium aviators. I've been wearing those say when I go out on nice sunny days in Austin for long walks.

I also enjoy supporting Roka speaking of Austin as hometown heroes is they are based in my backyard right here in Austin, Texas.

Roka's ultra lightweight no slip fit and advanced lens coatings combined with their exceptional style. I actually have many other styles. I just mentioned to also make these a favorite for a lot of my friends.

You may have heard about them from Andrew Huberman and many others. There are a lot of people wearing these things. The quality, as I mentioned before, is really outstanding.

They are very, very durable and with more than 19,005 star reviews. Can't wait until they get 20,000. That'll be a celebration, I bet.

But with more than 19,005 star reviews, Roka has created a solution that active people love. Plus, they hand build their glasses, sunglasses and reading glasses all in the USA.

Check out my favorite frames and get 20% off of your first order using code TIM20 that's TIM20 at Roka.com. That's code TIM20 at Roka.com R-O-K-A.com.

This episode is brought to you by Shopify. Shopify is one of my favorite companies out there, one of my favorite platforms ever.

And let's get into it. Shopify is a platform, as I mentioned, designed for anyone to sell anything anywhere, giving entrepreneurs the resources once reserved for big business.

So what does that mean? That means in no time flat, you can have a great looking online store that brings your ideas, products and so on to life.

And you can have the tools to manage your day-to-day business and drive sales. This is all possible

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without any coding or design experience whatsoever.

Shopify instantly lets you accept all major payment methods. Shopify has thousands of integrations and third-party apps from on-demand printing to accounting to advanced chatbots, anything you can imagine.

They probably have a way to plug and play and make it happen.

Shopify is what I wish I had had when I was venturing into e-commerce way back in the early 2000s. What they've done is pretty remarkable.

I first met the founder, Toby, in 2008 when I became an advisor, and it's been spectacular.

I've loved watching Shopify go from roughly 10 to 15 employees at the time to 7,000-plus today, serving customers in 175 countries with total sales on the platform exceeding \$400 billion.

They power millions of entrepreneurs from their first sale all the way to full scale, and you would recognize a lot of large companies that also use them, who started small.

So get started by building and customizing your online store, again, with no coding or design experience required.

Access powerful tools to help you find customers, drive sales, and manage your day-to-day.

Gain knowledge and confidence with extensive resources to help you succeed, and I've actually been involved with some of that way back in the day, which was awesome, the build-a-business competition and other things.

Plus, with 24-7 support, you're never alone.

And let's face it, being an entrepreneur can be lonely, but you have support, you have resources, you don't need to feel alone in this case.

More than a store, Shopify grows with you, and they never stop innovating, providing more and more tools to make your business better and your life easier.

Go to [Shopify.com slash Tim](https://Shopify.com/slash/Tim) to sign up for a \$1 per month trial period.

It is a great deal for a great service, so I encourage you to check it out.

Take your business to the next level today and learn more by visiting [Shopify.com slash Tim](https://Shopify.com/slash/Tim).

One more time, [Shopify.com slash Tim](https://Shopify.com/slash/Tim), all lowercase.

I'm a cybernetic organism, living this year over a metal endoskeleton.

Hello, boys and girls, ladies and germs. This is Tim Ferriss.

Welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show, where it is my job to interview and attempt to deconstruct world-class performers from all different domains,

whether it's military, chess, art, music, and in this case, entrepreneurship and technology.

My guest today is Dustin Moskovitz.

You can find him on Twitter at [Moscow V](https://twitter.com/MoscowV), so M-O-S-K-O-V.

Dustin is co-founder and CEO at Asana, a leading work management platform for teams.

Asana's mission is to help humanity thrive by enabling all teams to work together effortlessly.

Prior to Asana, he co-founded Facebook and was a key leader within the technical staff, first in the position of CTO and then later as VP of engineering.

Dustin attended Harvard University as an economics major for two years before moving to Palo Alto, California to work full-time at Facebook.

There is a lot more to his bio.

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We do explore a lot in this conversation, but before I get to that, you can find Asana at asana.com. As mentioned before, you can find Dustin on Twitter at [Moscow V, M-O-S-K-O-V](https://twitter.com/MoscowV).

I should just mention a few of the things we touch upon.

We dive into energy management.

We talk about coaching and really performing for endurance.

We talk about no meeting Wednesdays as part of energy management, understanding the real risks of AI,

the real existential risks of AI and its counterpart, which is embracing the benefits, the frictionless work that might be possible with AI,

current integrations, what that looks like, the value of holding stories loosely, how to communicate and resolve conflict more effectively,

the 15 commitments of conscious leadership.

We get into a lot in this conversation.

We also talk about self-care, physical and otherwise.

We touch upon pretty much every facet of work-life balance and work-life performance.

In addition to all of that, we've added a number of resources to the show notes, which you can find at tim.blog.com.

Including Dustin's book recommendations and time-budget template.

This is a spreadsheet that you can use yourself.

I don't believe he has shared these things publicly before.

There's a lot to dig into and without further ado, please enjoy.

A wide-ranging conversation with none other than Dustin Moskovitz.

Dustin, nice to see you and nice to reconnect.

Thanks for making the time.

Yeah, absolutely. Great to be here, Tim.

I would like to begin with a device in common.

It's a manipulation tool.

It's actually sitting right next to me.

I have this anywhere I might happen to be.

For those who can't see it, it looks almost like an S made of hard plastic.

It's about two and a half, three feet long, with all sorts of knobs and odd-shaped things sticking out of it.

What is it that I'm holding up?

I have you to thank for introducing me to it.

Let's explain to folks what we're talking about.

Yeah, of course. This is the back buddy.

It's a massage tool.

I have my own right here as well.

Similarly, wherever I go, I have them in home, in the gym.

I travel with a collapsible version.

This is something that I first found maybe 10 years ago,

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I think literally just by trying to look at the highest-rated Amazon products. I was like, wow, this thing has at the time 45,000 ratings, and it was near a five-star rating. I got one, and it's been almost a love affair ever since. I've really gotten to just know it better and better over time. I think last night, I found a new angle that really got into under my shoulder blade in just the right way. I've really appreciated it. There's other products like this, like the Theracane. I've tried them. I'm sure some of them are almost as good, but this is the one I really love. They're also, they're really cheap. I think they're about \$30, and they're completely indestructible. I still have the first one I bought 10 years ago, in addition to probably nine others. It's my favorite among many of these kind of tools. I've been very impressed just last little bit on the back, buddy, using these two very close together knobs for the back of the neck, the neck extensors. I've been shocked how effective it is for not just relaxing my neck for extension, but even rotation, spending 30 seconds on it is surprising. For 30% off, use backbuddy.com slash Tim. No, there's no affiliation or anything with the company, but it is a good tool. Now, before we started recording, I was mentioning some lower back pain that I'm contending with, and you had responded that I think you've written an article on addressing back pain, and you mentioned specifically lidocaine patches. This happens to be the second time lidocaine patches have come up in the last 24 hours for the first time in my life. Would you mind expanding on that just a little bit? I spent a lot of my 20s doing the classic throughout your back thing in innocuous ways. One time I did it while sneezing, and I had been tying my shoes so I had my legs crossed. This is very frustrating, you throw out your back and you're sort of laid up for three or four days. Definitely went deep on just trying to get advice on what to do, and that can lead you in a lot of directions, including to psychological mechanisms, like the Dr. Sarno stuff. Also, I just became very acutely aware of it. I could sort of feel my back feels a little tweaked right now. That's usually what it feels like a couple of days before this injury happens, this acute thing. I learned that when that happens, I need to address it. I need to relax or I need to do yoga or something like that. Eventually, I found these lidocaine patches. First, I bought the biofreeze ones, which are menthol based. They work great too. They're basically equivalent, but they have a smell, and my wife really just likes it.

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The lidocaine ones have the same impact, but they don't have a smell, so I really like those. Basically, if you feel this tweak, or just now I use them all the time, like after a workout, just slap it on my lower back, wear it for six or seven hours, usually that just helps things really release.

Even if I'm still sitting up during that six or seven hours, not doing anything special, and usually I'll have a pretty good back crack at the end of that or something like that.

I also love to put them between my shoulder blades again for the neck tension, and it just feels like this incredible hack.

It's totally topical, so it doesn't mess with your head or make you drowsy or anything like that.

I just really love them. I buy them probably 20 a month or something like that at this point.

I want to explain also for folks who may be listening why most likely we are not sharing video.

Maybe we'll share video of me and some animal avatar that is of your choosing,

but the reason I bring this up is, in prep, your team sent me a fascinating document

that I almost certainly am going to try to emulate because I have been in the process of hiring recently.

This is a guide to you. It's like a user's guide for Dustin.

I just want to read a few of the line items on the table of contents briefly, if you don't mind.

How I view success, how I communicate is an example as a subcategory.

Under that, writing is thinking, meetings, one-on-one, group meetings, scheduling, etc.

We might come back to this Enneagram type 5 introversion motivation, management style, hands-off, candor underneath that, miscellaneous, what gains and loses my trust, revisiting past decisions, holding stories lightly, and then things Dustin hates.

It almost looks like a mood board, which I really appreciate.

On the page of things Dustin hates is included being videotaped.

Could you please give some context on when you first created this document and for what purpose you created this document?

I think there was a phase where a lot of people were doing this and publishing them online, and it coincided with The Real Catalyst for me was a book.

I can't remember the title. I think it's The Making of a Manager, but it's by Julie Zhu, who's an old colleague from Facebook at the time, and she was one of the design leads there.

A great tactical book on how to be a manager, and it includes Julie's guide to Julie.

In the book, it's framed as, this is for your immediate reports.

I originally wrote this doc for them just for my team.

They said, hey, this is great. We'd really love for the whole company to actually be exposed to this, and so now it's included in onboarding.

I don't really know how many asanas actually go through the whole thing in onboarding, but I tried to make it fun and interesting to read, so hopefully some of them would.

Part of the reason we did that is because I have some quirks.

I'm an introvert and a CEO role, and I care a lot about managing my energy and what I think of as this extraversion budget.

It's almost like a video game energy bar for me that drains down.

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Especially Anna Bender, who's the head of people here at Asana, just really encouraged me, hey, it's just a lot easier for everyone to manage your budget if they understand how it works. The more people know about you, the better.

I put it out there.

The things I hate less, I originally also created that.

That's a screenshot of Asana board.

I originally created that just for fun with my team.

A few of them also have one, and they were also just like, this is a great insight into your personality, so you should include it.

In the actual Asana board, you can click in.

I've got some snarky comments about each of the things.

Yeah, just for fun at the bottom there.

But it does include some things that happen to be energy trains as well, and videotipings in there.

Let me, if you don't mind drill into just a few of these, that I'm very fascinated by that I am going to highlight for myself, just in terms of revisiting systems in my own company.

Under management style, you have coach for endurance.

Would you mind explaining what that means, what that item describes or covers?

Generally, I think a lot of what I've learned as a leader over time is just how much of a marathon the work really is.

And I think that a lot of culture in the tech industry encourages you to sprint just as much as possible and really focuses on short-term productivity measures.

And the consequence of that is people burn out.

And so definitely something we experienced with Facebook, and I've seen Asana as well from time to time,

is when people leave the company, they're not necessarily going somewhere else, they're kind of retiring, or they're taking a long sabbatical.

They've sort of decided in order to have a good break,

I actually have to quit entirely.

I can't just do a two or three-week break and come back, and it'll be too stressful to even have the mental overhead of what's waiting for me.

And so when we were setting out to do Asana, we knew it was a big project.

This enterprise collaboration software takes a really long time to build a business around not only a new product, but in our case, a new category.

And so we knew it wouldn't be a three or four-year thing, and they'd flip the company or something like that, and it would be in it for a long time.

Now it's been 13 or 14 years, and I still have a really long runway in front of me.

And so a lot of my mentality is just I've got to be able to keep going for as long as possible and not burn out, and I want that for as much as my team as possible,

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because I really heavily value institutional knowledge and the strength you get from having high-trust relationships. And so I really try and coach my team around that, and I encourage them to do that with their leads and so on throughout the organization. One of my favorite phrases is like, don't let the long breaks get in the way of the small breaks. So sometimes people are like, oh, like a year from now I'm going to take a sabbatical and kind of get in this mentality of I'm just going to work really hard for the next year. It's like, no, you should still take like a three-day weekend, maybe a heat vacation or so before that, and just like breaks during your day as well and take your nights and your weekends, and all of that is important. It's almost like a fractal of the balance between rest and work, and I think you have to actually coach people to do that. They don't necessarily do it naturally. Yeah, that's actually been one of the biggest challenges for me personally is that I tend to hire very hungry go-getters and sometimes even despite my encouraging to embrace self-care of various types, they burn the candle at both ends and burn out. And I've experienced that personally, but it's easy to, I suppose, take for granted that people will automatically do that, which is in my experience not always the case if you get someone who's really a hard driver. On the topic of energy budgeting or thinking about energy management, you've listed a lot of lessons over the years, and there's a lot on wavelength.asana.com that I'd encourage people to check out. One I wanted to ask you about is not letting decisions linger for too long, which can be energy training. So let me just read something so that you don't have to feel like you're on the spot at a congressional hearing or something. And here's an excerpt from one of those posts, and here's what it says. I've learned a lot over the years, but here are a few key learnings that I employ regularly in no specific order. And I may come back to a few of these, so I'll just read the five. One, not delegating enough is bad for me and bad for people who could be getting more autonomy and learning more skills. Number two, acknowledging that everyone else is a partner in what you're trying to do and not an enemy. Three, recognizing that you agree with people more than you think you do, where you disagree is probably a difference of input assumptions and not a real conflict. I'll certainly, I think, come back to that one. But the one I want to ask about is,

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four, avoiding paradox of choice and making decisions, even if you're unsure of what strictly is the best one at that very moment.

Letting a distinction linger for too long is energy draining.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of good.

And then the last one is making sure there are regular checkpoints for reflection, and there's time to think at a high level and not just be tactical all the time.

That's extremely important.

So would you mind expanding, if you can, on what that ends up looking like in terms of avoiding paradox of choice and making decisions perhaps more quickly?

Because that is something I think I'm pretty good at,

better than the average bear maybe, but I still have a lot of room for improvement.

And my team is so small that the more open loops we have, the more exhausting it is for everyone, especially me.

So I'd love to hear you say more about that.

Yeah, and some of this is aspirational,

like I think we get in these long decision loops as well, especially at work.

First, maybe I should explain the paradox of choice too.

Do you think your listeners should be safe?

Please.

Part of the paradox of choice is just this idea that if you have a choice between two things, the longer you consider them both, or even being exposed to the second choice, kind of makes you devalue either outcome.

If you choose path A, you're always thinking about what could have been with path B and vice versa.

And there's some really interesting psychological research people have done sort of proving this in controlled settings.

And so you kind of don't want to indulge that mindset if you can avoid it.

And I think the easiest way to do that is to just pick your battles.

So at my level, that involves often maybe just saying, I don't care.

I don't have a preference.

Certainly in my personal life, I try and do that as often as possible.

My wife has always shown me art for the house or something.

And it's just like, if I don't have a strong opinion,

I don't express any opinion at all, which it's worse for her.

Often she'd want me to, but I prefer not to kind of like bind my preference if I don't have to.

And the other flip side of this is often the choices that are hardest matter the least in exactly this way, where the outcomes are going to be really similar.

It turns out you didn't have a strong opinion.

And so you shouldn't spend too much energy on that.

So pick your battles is sort of the first wave going about it.

And then the second is delegate where possible.

And so it doesn't have to be my choice in the first place.

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And it's good to empower people.

You have to be a little careful, though, because if it's one of these, the outcomes are similar.

You have to coach that person too, because they might end up locked in the same sort of trap of thinking about it too long

and getting drained and things like that.

And then the third is, you know, being really clear about your goals.

We try and start every meeting with not only what are the goals of the project we're talking about, but what are the goals of this meeting?

What decisions are we trying to make?

And being as clear as possible about what those decisions are and when they need to be made and putting deadlines on them.

I have to praise, I saw the best slide I've ever seen in a meeting the other day.

That was just a list of key questions.

And it was like, these questions need to be answered by August 15, these by September 1, these by September 15.

And they had recommendations on the first set.

And I was like, great, let's just answer the first six right now in this meeting we did.

We got through some of the September 1 ones as well.

And if every meeting could have that slide, I think we'd be in really good shape.

I guess that strikes me as sort of a really helpful proxy for what are the goals of this meeting.

If people somehow have difficulty translating that because it seems to abstract, then just asking what are the key questions we have to answer in this meeting.

Sort of seems to perhaps get to a lot of the same ground.

If we come back to delegating for a moment, and this is going to be looking in the rear view mirror probably,

it could be current day, but I'm wondering since this is also a growth area for me,

if we're taking something that could be viewed as a problem and trying to paint it as more of an opportunity.

This is an area where I feel like I can still improve a lot.

Were there any particular examples, any concrete examples you give of things that you found hard to delegate at any point

that ultimately were very valuable to delegate?

Could be any type of example.

Could be a category.

Could be something specific just to maybe illustrate overcoming that type of friction.

It's a tough question.

I think that in some sense it's just an evolution of at the beginning of Asana,

I just owned everything and I had to consciously decide to delegate and often did it too late

and needed to sort of hit a breaking point and need to just kind of declare bankruptcy on something.

But looking back, a lot of those just ended up being effective and good to delegate.

But I used to do everything from guiding and presenting it almost every all hands,

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like all that presentation content was me and now I'm most often in the audience or I've got like a short bit or I'm showing up for the Q&A.

I used to do kind of like the year in review and try and read about what happened with kind of like every goal outcome and every project.

And just as the organization scaled, it just was too much and kind of have to do that more different levels of abstraction where I'm kind of doing the very highest level one.

And I hear these stories about a lot of startups with like a thousand people and they say, well, the founders in every interview to make sure this person's a fit and things like that I gave up on long ago.

Part of it just takes, I love to make these little spreadsheet models and I have one that's just sort of showing me how I use my time based on what the recurring meetings are and some things I know are going to happen week to week or month to month.

And I try and go back to it on maybe an annual basis and that can sort of help me see, here is a big time suck and it's just sort of out of proportion.

Can I somehow reduce this to be a more appropriate use of my time or give it to somebody else and that kind of helps me each step of the way?

I don't know if there's anything in particular that felt like a, you know, sort of ripping it out of my heart or something like that.

How do you create or populate the spreadsheet?

It's one of those things that, in theory, to me, for instance, sounds so appealing, yet I would worry that because of tasks switching or just the number of things floating around in my life that the simple act of inputting into a spreadsheet would consume a vast amount of time.

How do you fill in that spreadsheet?

What does it look like in terms of just formatting?

I actually made it into a template we can share in part of the episode notes.

Oh, amazing. That'd be great.

Yeah.

It sort of starts with here are the hours for work, here are the hours for home, here are the hours for sleep.

So I got that sort of biggest pie chart.

And then for work, I have a tab that's like here are my recurring meetings.

This is how frequently they happen. This is how long they are.

In some cases, I have prep time.

For example, we have a board meeting quarterly.

It is a three and a half hour meeting.

I need two hours of prep.

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There's also some committee meetings.

And so this sort of amortizes out to something like two hours a month or something like that, or like 30 minutes a week.

So it becomes a part of the chunk.

And those things don't change very often and are really kind of the bulk of it and we're the most leverages in changing something.

So, you know, I think that those end up adding up to like something like 30% of the work time.

And then I have another tab that is more, you know, more abstract.

It's like responding to things in Slack.

And I just sort of like swag an estimate for how long I spend on that per week

or, you know, interacting with customers and those come up on the customer's cadence.

I don't have like a sort of set block to my calendar for that.

But I look back maybe over the past month or two,

and just sort of like estimate looking backwards how much time I spent.

And then what's left, I just sort of count as this is desk time.

This is focus time and try and sort of gut check.

Does this feel right?

Or am I kidding myself about something and look for other sources of time?

And that led me to add in my lunch hour and like coffee breaks and stuff like that.

And, you know, it's hard the first time,

but then every year I'm kind of just like tweaking it and that part, you know, only takes 20 minutes or so.

Now, are you setting, I'm going to get fancy here just so I can sound smart.

Are you using OKRs or are you after reviewing spreadsheets saying, you know what, for the next month or next quarter, I want to hit these percentages?

I guess I'm wondering what the assessment looks like.

If you have questions you're trying to answer when you review the spreadsheet, just what that process looks like for you.

I don't think I'm quite that quantitative about it.

We do have OKRs at Asana.

And one thing I do with the help of my assistant, Lauren,

is I look at my coming month and I try and organize it under the company objectives.

And so some of the objectives are about financial management

and that includes all my time engaging with investors and with the finance team here.

Some of it's about the product, some of it's about engaging with customers.

And so if I do have customer meetings, that's kind of slotting in there.

And I think that's a good monthly checkpoint for,

am I personally contributing to the goals where I think I'm leveraged?

Sometimes the sections look too long, sometimes they look too short

and can kind of course correct from there.

But I try not to have too many fixed rules other than my sort of energy gauge

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and my trending towards burnout or not.

Do I have the energy to do the things I need to do?

And a lot of that more is sort of day-to-day and week-to-week management.

And again, my assistant does a big part of that in making sure I don't get overloaded too much.

God bless your assistant.

Yeah, people think of me as an extrovert,

but I am very, very introverted in terms of energy management.

I also have to budget for that, but I am such a dancing bear on stage

playing extrovert that I sometimes commit to things that are sort of antithetical to my actual programming.

But I want to come back to a few things.

So the first is just a definition of terms for folks.

So OKR stands for objectives and key results.

If you want to take a look at that, John Doar has a book about it.

Google also uses OKRs extensively,

and you can find a lot written on the paradox of choice.

If people want to look more into that, Barry Schwartz wrote a book called

The Paradox of Choice, and there's the aspect that you described.

There's also the consideration of too many options, right?

Considering too many options and the decision fatigue that that can produce or just creating an excess of decision-making.

And it seems to me that number five on the list that I read earlier,

I'm not sure there are regular checkpoints for reflection.

There's time to think at a high level.

Requires some type of strategic or tactical move to actually implement, right?

Or the small things will just crowd out the big things.

So I have a few questions around that.

The first is, do you still or do people at Asana still follow No Meeting Wednesday?

Or is that sort of case by case?

And even if it's just past tense now, if you could perhaps just explain why that existed,

I think that would be helpful for folks.

For me, I still follow it quite religiously.

It is a bit case by case throughout the company,

and that often results in people trying to schedule meetings with me on Wednesdays.

And I'm like, what are you doing?

Why aren't you doing No Meeting Wednesday?

And yeah, it comes from two places.

One, maybe, I think it was 2011, Paul Graham had this really famous blog post, the Maker Manager schedule.

And it was just kind of pointing out that meetings end up on your calendar

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kind of at the behest of management and team leads and project managers.
And that is their entire day.

So they're just kind of stacking their calendar end to end.

But I see these really, especially in software,
really need these long focus blocks to get into their work.

They need to kind of load up the context and their short-term memory,
get into flow, and have a good 90 or 120-minute session to get useful work out.

And so if you don't interfere,
the natural thing that happens is kind of your calendar gets chopped up
and you don't have any of these two-hour blocks.

You just have these half-hour and hour blocks,
and you get a little bit of work done,
and it's just overall suboptimal for individual productivity.

So No Meeting Wednesday is sort of a hack of just,
we're going to synchronize everyone's calendar
so that they don't have meeting blocks on Wednesdays.

A lot of people at Asana go further.

They'll add additional blocks, maybe Tuesday and Thursday morning,
try and find a couple other, maybe a half-day or a third of a day segments
where they can try and keep their calendar clear.

And everyone else tries to respect this as much as they can.

Of course, things happen, customer meetings happen.

You're not always in control of that, but we try and do our best.

So partly it's just about having those focus blocks,
and partly it's about having long enough blocks to get into some deep thinking work
and be able to have these longer periods of reflection.

And, you know, I just find even as a manager,
if I have just a half-hour, an hour, I'm going to do something small,
something tactical, just so I can feel productive.

It's hard to get into that deep thinking state.

So that's really what it's all about.

Yeah, totally.

And I want to just mention, for people who may want to look it up,
again, the Makers Schedule Manager Schedule by Paul Graham,
who's, I guess, Farron is co-founder of Y Combinator.

People may be familiar with that.

That article, as well as, or I should say essay, I guess,
as well as the top idea in your mind are two that I have bookmarked to revisit constantly.

I really appreciate how concise and clear his thinking.

And as I also want to confirm, you did get the book title right for Julie Jo.

I'm not sure how she pronounces her last name, The Making of a Manager.

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I think it's Zoo.

Well, you actually, I think you speak Mandarin or something.

So maybe I should...

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah.

It could be sound.

It could be any number of things.

So Julie, apologies if I'm getting your name wrong.

But the title is The Making of a Manager.

And the No Meeting Wednesday brings up a question for me of weekly architecture.

I find that I do very well if I have some semblance of a weekly architecture.

So for instance, we're recording on a Friday.

I tend to record podcasts if I record podcasts Monday and Friday at 10 a.m.

wherever I happen to be or roughly 3 p.m.

wherever I happen to be.

And I found that just reduces so much complexity.

It makes communication much more smooth.

It makes planning in the long term much easier in terms of blocking out time over a month, a quarter, et cetera.

And then there are, say, for instance, for me, team calls and everything happened on a Tuesday and that's all formatted in a certain way.

Do you have a particular weekly architecture that you aim for or that during periods of high productivity that you've followed?

Well, I think that the weekly cadence, including No Meeting Wednesday, really defines a lot.

A lot falls out from that.

So Asana has an office-centric hybrid policy.

So we're Wednesdays since they have no meetings.

You can work from home, totally fluid.

Fridays are also pretty fluid.

And I'm here on a Friday, but relatively low attendance.

And so Monday, Tuesday, Thursday is when a lot of our meetings are going to happen, including my team meets Tuesday afternoon.

And I'd love to say I designed that for a particular reason, but really that's when our calendar is aligned in the right kind of way.

And then I mentioned I have the kind of Tuesday, Thursday morning work box for getting more stuff done.

And between those and Wednesday, that's sort of the me time, the IC time.

And then most of the rest of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday will be meetings.

IC is individual contributor?

Yes.

So I think of it as you can be an IC in your manager role as well.

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It's like when you're not in meetings or producing things and coaching people.

And then Friday, partially because I really prefer in-person meetings, ends up being pretty light as well, even though I'm here, just like a couple of meetings and a lot of work block time as well.

Why do you prefer in-person meetings?

Well, it's partially for the same reason I don't like being video recorded.

I find that part of my attention is lost in a video call.

And it depends a lot on the quality of the connection and the audio and the video.

I don't know what your experience is like, but you're quite pixelated for me right now.

And so it's like a little harder to pick up on your body language, your emotional cues.

And I just find after a video call, I'm so drained.

And if it's a team meeting, I find the control flow very difficult, very difficult for people to interrupt or interject.

They literally raise their hand to sort of put themselves in the queue.

I just find it a lot less efficient than being in a room

and having the more sort of natural cadence of dialogue.

And again, the AV issues pop up in the team meetings too,

and it's a disaster every time.

I don't know how we're three years into the pandemic

and all the same problems from 2020 are still here.

But they are.

And I just like, I can't look past it to feeling like it's good enough.

Yeah, I didn't really consider the energetic cost of what you're describing, but it's true.

It is something as much as we try or hope that it will be natural,

that is unnatural about looking at the Brady Bunch on a screen

and trying to coordinate body language and cues.

There's an energetic cost to that.

I want to come back to number three in the list that I mentioned,

and it's going to be a jumping off point.

So recognize that you agree with people more than you think you do,

where you disagree is probably a difference of input assumptions and not a real conflict.

I think this may tie into a question about conscious leadership,

which I would love to discuss.

And in your book recommendation list that you sent me,

I do want to talk about the top recommendation at some point,

but there are two books that begin the list.

We'll leave the first as a cliffhanger for now.

So Top Recommendation is the Beginning of Infinity by David Deutsch,

who I had on the podcast with Naval Ravikant.

And I do want to ask you about that,

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because that is not an easy book to read necessarily.

Very interesting.

And then right below that is Leadership and Strategy.

And the first book is the 15 Commitments to Conscious Leadership.

How did you get introduced to conscious leadership or this book?

So I think it was almost 12 or 14 years ago.

I went to an event in Southern California.

I can't even remember where.

And it had some great people there, including Diana Chapman and actually Jack Cornfield, who you had on the show last week.

And it was kind of my first exposure to some of those people.

It was a pretty small group.

I think there were 15 people in the group.

And so really got to kind of know them and ended up deciding to work with Diana as a personal coach.

And that led to more and more.

I think this was even before the book was published.

And then, you know, as we were starting Asana,

it became just kind of the framework that we wanted everyone to learn.

I think 15 Commitments is really great.

I also think it's very similar to other frameworks, but it's nice to have a similar set of language.

And this idea of holding stories lightly and understanding the other perspective more, it also relates to something Jack brought up with with Byron Katie.

So she loves to preface any thought with, I have a story that these are all kind of related ideas.

But having the 15 commitments is something very concrete and language like being above the line, below the line.

It's really helpful for everyone in the company to know what those terms mean so that you can shorthand them.

And so now you'll go into a meeting and somebody will be in a bad mood and frustrated about a decision we're making and they'll just voice out loud.

I'm below the line about this.

I'm expressing some frustration, but that doesn't mean stop what you're doing or I'm like throwing my body on the tracks.

It just means that that's where I'm at right now.

I'd love to shift.

Maybe you can help me shift, but just be aware.

And so that's very useful.

And it comes up all the time in my one-on-ones with how I coach people.

In fact, I start all my one-on-ones just with how are you feeling?

Because often it will emerge.

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Well, they're feeling below the line or just something going on in their life and that's going to affect our conversation and I'd rather know about it than not.

I can't tell the future.

Nobody can, but I can tell you about a great place to earn more on your savings and that's Wealthfront.

Wealthfront is an app that helps you save and invest your money.

Right now you can earn 4.8 APY.

That's the annual percentage yield with the Wealthfront cash account.

That's more than 11 times more interest than if you left your money in a savings account at the average bank according to [fdic.gov](https://www.fdic.gov).

So why wait?

Earn 4.8% on your cash today.

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How have you worked with Diana, who's great?

Spent a decent amount, not as much as you have, but a decent amount of time with her.

She is one of a kind and very, very good at what she does.

How have you worked with her, if you're open to discussing it to whatever extent, one-on-one?

What does the format look like or what were you hoping to accomplish in working with her?

Were you working with her mostly because you were basically test driving language and shared concepts that you hoped to put into Asana?

Was it mostly individual in the beginning and out of personal interest?

Yeah, it's interesting.

It's changed over time.

I don't have a one-on-one coaching relationship with her at the moment, but a lot of it, when I first started, I was a total novice on the commitments and I had a lot of stories I was holding tightly and they were impacting my energy because I believe them and she really helped me a lot with that.

Part of the reason I don't work with her anymore is like,

I kind of know what she's going to say every time and so I'll do the back and forth on my own.

Are you open to, and if not, that's okay, and it could be a hypothetical, but sharing a story that you held tightly and I think that would be useful.

Yeah, I mean, I think the one that has been most difficult for me and I think is maybe universal for entrepreneurs in general

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is just this sense of huge responsibility to keep going and endure and persevere and do well by your employees and this sort of thing.
And it's very easy to feel like you're trapped and that there's no other possibility.
You're kind of just, you know, Sisyphus as a leader.
And I don't want to scare my place.
I'm not thinking about leaving right now, but I think going through the coaching of this really helped because she would just constantly deny me on anything that I really believed.
Like, it would be terrible if Asana had a different CEO.
It's like, well, how's that story true?
Maybe a new CEO would bring in fresh perspective and like they'd have more energy and like, you know, things like this or be terrible if Asana shut down and all of our employees wasted all this time and part of their career doing it.
And she'd say, well, how's the opposite of that story true?
What about the experiences they got building Asana?
What about the value your customers got while Asana was alive?
And obviously I'm still there.
So it's not like this coaching led me to think I should leave Asana or shut it down.
But it helped me understand that I was choosing to be there and every day is in some sense a new decision.
I can't just walk away tomorrow.
Like, that has other kinds of consequences that I choose not to accept.
But in the longer arc of time, I have agency here.
The Asana employees have agency.
Our customers have agency.
And it's much more productive for me to engage with the problems from above the line rather than from this place of fear and scarcity and anxiety.
And, you know, there's time and place for that.
You also need to feel all feelings in the commitments framework.
But it's bad if it's just like always a call every hour of every day and every decision.
And you want to not grip around those things.
And so it's useful sometimes to indulge in how is the story not true.
And, you know, with Diana, she'll go all the way to fear of death.
And like, you know, imagine your own funeral and like whatever your deepest anxiety is and just try and loosen your grip on that.
And for people who want maybe a name for the technique, there's more to it.
And Diana has her own flavor and approach.
But the turnarounds that are often associated with Byron, Katie,

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people can find the work online and worksheets that are really helpful for this if you aren't able to work with someone like Diana.

The 15 Commitments is also an excellent book and an excellent book, not just for companies.

It's a great book if you want to improve your communication with your significant other, particularly how I used a whole large portion of that book with significant others.

I just want to add to the other thing.

It's a lot like his cognitive behavioral therapy.

So, you know, if you want to take a more Western approach,

I think it gets at the same ends with very similar methods.

Yeah, totally.

One particular aspect of what Diana Chapman and Jim Detmer have both been on the podcast is to embrace that I have always...

Well, this is a story.

It's part of this whole training.

It helps you to identify the stories.

But my story is that I have long struggled with having incredibly uncomfortable clearing conversations

when there is a conflict or you feel some resentment or whatever it might be.

And I think historically, there's been a lot of fear for me around the consequences of trying to have an open conversation about these things.

So, my question is, how do you handle that if you implement it at Asana, those types of clearing conversations?

Or broadly speaking, if this is easier, just disagreements, tension between or among employees and so on.

Yeah, it's a big company.

So, I don't think it happens the same way everywhere.

But what I try and coach people to do and what I experience with my immediate team is that we do try and get into this mode.

It's a little bit conscious leadership.

It's a little bit nonviolent communication,

but very speaking unarguably, reflecting back what the other person said to make sure that they feel understood.

I've definitely, over the years, my biggest takeaway with conflict is people want to feel heard more than they want the decision change.

A lot of it is just you got to make the space for that.

And if you're going to do some difficult change management, you just got to accept that there's going to be some of that.

And it's important to do it at the right times.

Can't have everyone get involved before the decision is made, but the people who especially need to be bought in and need to help you,

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the change management after, they kind of need to be heard before it's finalized.

And then even after it's communicated,

you're going to have to really listen to people on why they're disappointed

or unhappy and reflect that back to them,

not just be a literal sounding board,

but actually be engaged in empathetic conversation.

I think that goes the longest way.

And sometimes people use conscious leadership as a literal clearing script.

The facts are, when this happened, I generated this story or I had these feelings.

And this is meant to explicitly get away from language like,

you did this and that made me feel angry.

The whole idea with conscious leadership is you're responsible for your own feelings

and you're going to have a reaction that doesn't necessarily mean

the person was trying to hurt you or that that's really what happened.

Often it has to do with, you know, stuff from your past,

your childhood or situations like that,

that you don't want to experience again and your body is bringing them up again.

And so just trying to bring some awareness to that, bring it into the room.

There's two people in the conflict and they're in different positions of power

or different positions with respect to the decision being made,

but they each need to play their role in a mindful way

and be as above the line as they can and be present.

And that's really what we're going for.

The conscious leadership scripts are outstanding.

You do need some shared vocabulary to play that game with someone.

So they kind of need to be signed up for the same set of rules,

but can be super effective.

And I wanted to underscore nonviolent communication by Marshall Rosenberg.

I listened to the audiobook, which I think has a peace sign,

and making a peace sign on it.

So don't necessarily be put off.

The cover's a little bizarre, but the format itself,

that plus conscious leadership in some of the scripts,

I'd say over the last three years,

have three to four years,

really changed how I approach communication in general.

And what I've experienced personally,

I'll try to keep this short,

but is having some type of structured way of thinking about

how you're going to open a conversation also gives you

a chance and maybe a catalyst to de-escalate

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whatever emotion happens to be running really hot or really hard.
And the simple act of saying something inarguable.
Starting with what I hear you saying is ABC.
Did I get that right?
Is there more?
And then having when X happened as a video camera would record it,
when you wrote this sentence in this email,
I felt this, the story I have around that is this,
would you be willing to agree to this having a request at the end?
It's remarkable what you can get accomplished,
especially if you have a history of being
a bit of a bull in a china shop like I do.
The transformation is quite something.
Sometimes when you're talking about this,
you get the sense of like,
everyone kind of has to be a Zen monk
and like totally in control of their emotions.
I also just want to really emphasize,
one of the commitments is feel your feelings.
And sometimes that means like,
purposely going for those lines as far as you can.
Getting on the drama triangle,
making it playful and just like hamming it up,
really making that person like the biggest,
scariest villain monster you can.
I really think that's an important part of it
and everyone's going to have like a different way of doing it.
But you know, I think if you try and,
you've talked about struggling with anger management in the past,
I think I do that too.
If you try and solve that by withholding
and containing all that anger,
you end up with lower back pain.
And it still comes out anyway.
And it comes out in the wrong,
for a totally different situation
that's unrelated to the thing you're really angry about.
And so it's really important to like go through that.
And part of the way I do that
is maybe I'll just write it all out.
I'll have like a Google doc or a sauna task

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and just kind of go crazy,
just stream of consciousness,
sometimes move your body, hit things.
I really want to put that in there too
as an important part of doing this well.
And then once you've processed your feelings
and like move them through your body,
then you can have that about the line conversation.
Yeah, I appreciate you saying that.
It's a good reminder for me also that,
you know, swinging from one extreme to the other
and neglecting to express that stuff
might very well contribute to my mysterious lower back pain.
So I promised listeners
that I wouldn't leave them hanging
with the cliffhanger on David Deutch.
And I just wanted to remind,
explaining why that book features so prominently
in your book recommendations.
And for people who want the title,
it's the beginning of infinity,
subtitle explanations that transform the world.
It's been a while since I've gone through it myself,
but I've read it probably three times.
First of all, I find it just really fascinating
and enjoyable.
Before reading that book,
for a long time I said that
Girdel Westerbach was my favorite book,
but I had never finished it.
It's tough.
But it's really entertaining.
And some of the ways that it's entertaining,
I think also feature in beginning of infinity,
like he has these, you know, sections in between the chapters
that are more narrative and fun
without nearly as much math.
There's a little bit, but it's not like GB,
where you have, you know,
you have to have advanced math degree to get through it.
But the big lesson from it

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is this idea that problems are soluble.
We build on knowledge,
and no matter how immense a problem seems,
as long as it is possible to solve
within the laws of natural physics,
it generally can be solved.
And over time, you know,
we've had all these crisis moments in humanity
where it's felt like that's not true.
There was a resource running out,
there was an irreconcilable conflict,
and people just couldn't see the way to the future.
And what happens is the pressure builds up
and you get more and more attention
on solving this problem
and knowing the whole to get solved.
And sometimes the reason it's so scary
is a form of, you know, status quo bias.
So people think everything will be exactly like it is now,
except we won't have this important resource.
I think there's a story about
a particular element that's needed,
that was needed for TVs in the 50s,
do you know what I'm talking about?
I don't know, I don't know that example.
The price of oil and oil supply
would be another example.
Yeah, totally.
So like, you know, for a long time with energy,
people thought, well, we'd run out of oil at some point,
and that would be the end of energy.
Of course, we have all these alternative sources now
that can supplant it.
And, you know, these are also solutions to CO2 problems.
The TV one is nice just because there was a while
people didn't think you would be able to have
the sort of cathode ray tube TVs anymore
because the silent was going to go away.
And then now we have liquid crystal displays
that don't involve the element at all.
And so this is an example of status quo bias

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because people couldn't imagine a different way to accomplish the goal of getting a crisp video image, you know, to people in a broadcast format. And so he just goes through a bunch of examples like that and gives you this sense of, like, you know, how powerful humanity really is and what the power of compounding knowledge really is. All right, let's leave people to explore that book. And certainly if they want an overview, they can listen to the podcast with David Deutch and myself and Naval Rabakan. I'll let Naval do the heavy lifting on that one for a million and one reasons.

Yeah.

But I do feel like the premise that problems are soluble or many problems are soluble is a good jumping off point to effective altruism. You're one of the largest funders of effective altruism. And I'd like to explore this and discuss it a bit. Could you begin maybe with just explaining for folks who don't know the term what effective altruism is and then you can take it wherever you like. And I can also certainly help hop in. I feel the need to preface this with there's some disagreement about what it is. So I'll tell you my perspective, which I think it's really, it's an idea and some people call it a movement, but it's really, it brings together people who are interested in asking the question, how do we do the most good? And that can take the form of philanthropic donations. It can take the form of how you spend your career, like maybe which nonprofit you would work for. Or in a lot of cases, they're part of what's called earning to give. And so they just choose a sort of normal career with a high-paying job with the plan to then donate some of their earnings as effectively as they can. And so that leads you to a certain set of ideas.

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So as a philanthropist,
I think of effective altruists as defined by cause agnosticism.
So that means rather than coming to philanthropy
with what I care about is education
or what I care about is climate.
You're coming with just the point of view,
I'd like to do the most good.
And that leads you to different places
that sometimes look very strange,
because it turns out that when you're
the next philanthropist on the margin,
the thing that does the most good
is often something that's important
that other people aren't doing for whatever reason.
It doesn't have enough attention or it's not as sexy,
or it requires really kind of going deep
on the logic of why this is important.
And so you end up not doing the things
that most other people are doing.
And so the overarching framework that we use
for choosing cause areas is it has to be important,
hard to do too good without working on important things.
It has to be tractable,
so it has to be possible to make progress.
And then it should be neglected
so that you're doing good because
this is the good that other people aren't doing.
So it's a form of sort of comparative advantage.
What would some examples be?
I can imagine if I'm acting as a stand-in for the audience,
they're like, well, how do you figure out
what is most good or the greatest good
for the greatest number of fill in the blank?
Is it biased towards and measured in human lives?
Is it some other metric?
How do you determine what is good?
Would you mind giving a few examples
of cause areas or specific projects
that you've ended up landing on
based on the type of vetting you're describing?
And this is where I think some of the subjectivity comes in,

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because I don't think there is a one answer to what that metric is.
So the one that is sort of easiest to understand is global health and well-being.
So we do a lot of work, particularly in the developing world, particularly around malaria, it's probably the single largest destination for our grant money.
And there it is often just measured in the number of lives saved or the equivalent.
So it's this idea of a quality-adjusted life year that kind of lets you convert the value of helping somebody avoid a debilitating disease or maybe takes years off their life or even increases their earning power.
How might you make that equivalent to helping a child make it past their fifth year because a malaria bed nets are helping them avoid a fatal infection?
And so in global health and well-being, that's where you kind of have the most similarity in the goals and can kind of trade off the different opportunities against each other in a fairly clean way.
Though it can still get, you know, it can still involve a lot of judgments.
So there's a lot of debate about whether the goal should be about mortality or perhaps subjective happiness or perhaps earning power, which is kind of like proxy for economic empowerment, giving people as much choice in the world as possible.
But often you're debating things that are very similar. You're going to help avoid a child death through malaria bed nets or perhaps through iodine supplementation and they have pretty similar.
Well, maybe that's not a great example for avoiding a death. Avoiding intestinal worms, like something that would really mess you up.
So that's an easy compare.
Second big category is animal welfare.
And there we work especially on factory farm animal welfare

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because that's where a very large amount of the animals with either full consciousness or a great deal of consciousness live and die in the world. I think I was reading a stat that is something like nine chickens are slaughtered every year for every human on Earth. So it's something close to 100 million chickens. And so if you can improve the welfare of those animals a little bit, you can reduce quite a lot of suffering. And that gets you to a very clear subjective point about the good because a lot of people will say this doesn't matter at all. You should spend infinite money on helping one human before you think at all about these chickens or these cows. And I think that's a judgment call. I think it's fair that people have different points of view on that. But from the perspective as a single funder in the space, it's something that we feel sympathetic to. And then the last category is global catastrophic risks. So these are just been a debate about the name recently. But I think the clearest definition is these are things that actually cause extinction or cause modern civilization to be set back 2000 years, something really catastrophic. And this gets debated for a lot of reasons. The philosophical point is sort of whether you care about the seizing of life or if you just care about suffering. You know, you could take the point of view that it's great that the people are here and we don't want the ones that are alive now to suffer. But if kind of the lights went out for everyone else tomorrow, maybe you're fine with that. Or maybe you don't care at all about the people who haven't been born yet or things like this. I don't like to go too far into the future generations because I think in practice it doesn't matter that much. I think the threats are quite soon and affect the people that are alive today. But there is a set of EAs that, you know, are putting a lot of the weight on the sort of, I think it's like 45 trillion theoretical future human lives and making sure that they get to actually experience the world and that something doesn't stop it before we get there. And so that's where we work on things like pandemics and biosecurity risks as well as potential risks from advanced artificial intelligence. All right, we're going to dive into a couple of follow-ups related to these. And the first is related to animal welfare and suffering,

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which I think a lot about.

And I read that you are directionally vegetarian.

And I would love for you to explain what directionally vegetarian means.

I always feel a little sheepish about this because from a pure ethics perspective,

I sort of feel like vegans are right.

But I also, you know, I know a lot of vegans and vegetarians

and I see how they struggle with some of their eating decisions

and I know what the experience is like for me.

And so I just feel better when there is a little bit of meat in my life.

But I've cut way back.

I probably was somebody 10 or 15 years ago that would have some kind of beef meal every single day or chicken meal.

And, you know, now there are many days where there's no meat in my diet

and I'm very interested in the alternative meat products,

especially the ones from Impossible Foods,

where the foundation is actually taking an investment.

And basically I'm in a place where if the alternative is even like half as good

or three quarters as good, I'd much rather have that.

And it gives me the same sort of, you know, satiation that real meat does.

And mostly I feel limited by availability.

At Asahana, I've like pushed for the culinary team to just like serve it more often

and we had Impossible Burgers earlier this week.

I was like, great, definitely going to eat that one.

And, you know, we have some home cooked meals and try and incorporate it there.

And in San Francisco, it's in a fair amount of restaurants, but it's still pretty rare.

But I definitely seek those restaurants out and I found a few like great takeout places.

And I'm just like really eager for this future where that's in our diet.

And I feel ready for it, but for the availability.

It's kind of how I think about it.

If we hop from some of those cause areas to perhaps forward looking perspectives,

is there anything that you've been watching and particularly interested in funding

or considering funding that is outside of the cause areas that you mentioned?

Well, those are pretty sweeping buckets.

They are broad.

Yeah.

On the global catastrophic threats, I don't know if I'm getting that phrasing correct.

But on the pandemic side, it seems like the effective altruism community was focused on pandemics on some level even before 2020 came around and COVID.

How do you think about, let's just focus on that before we get to AI?

Because I know that AI is going to be a whole different kettle of fish.

On the pandemic side, what levers do you try to pull?

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What are most important in terms of high leverage or important, perhaps neglected or under exploited, underfunded, and so on with respect to pandemics? How do you think about trying to, I suppose, help with preparedness or other aspects?

So we've been in the space since 2016.

And so in those early years, it was partially just trying to make people understand that this was a real possibility.

There really hadn't been anything since, I guess, the first, we don't call it the Spanish flu anymore, but the 1919 pandemic.

And so we'd sort of fallen to this complacency, but we could see that there were a lot of things like globalization that were increasing vulnerability for a global scale pandemic and that it just felt like a matter of time.

So partially raising awareness now, of course, COVID-19 has dramatically increased that, but it hasn't increased the preparation.

So it's been really disappointing to see not only has there not really been budget for sort of cleaning up this pandemic,

but there's very little money going into preparation for the next one in terms of government scale funding.

And so we still feel somewhat defenseless.

I think people are a lot more aware.

They kind of know what some of the playbook will be if there's another pandemic.

And I'm really encouraged by things like a focus on indoor air quality, I think, is a huge deal.

What do you mean by that?

Well, during COVID, and especially if you live through the California wildfires, people got into the HEPA filters and things that are sort of processing the air.

There is some research right now with FAR UVC.

This is kind of like a ultraviolet light that can kill bacteria and viruses in the air.

And the only reason we're not deploying it everywhere is there are unknown long-term health side effects.

And so I think we have some grants in this area.

I know some people are funding research into exploring that.

One of the biggest ones I think we could have is just if a technology like that was as commonplace as air conditioning or water filtration.

Water quality is something we already have sort of caught onto.

This is really important and we have municipal scale and also personal scale devices that help us with this.

I think doing the same with air quality would go a long way.

But I think the biggest thing that we push for is just more surveillance of what's circulating in the wild.

And there was a point in time, you know, I'm sure you remember all these debates about how much COVID actually is there.

Is there a bias in who's testing and are the tests accurate and all this?

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Sure.

But there's a shortcut.

Well, there's two shortcuts.

One is what's called a sero survey.

And so you just kind of, you try and get a random sample of people in a local population.

You do a blood test and you just like sequence everything in their blood and see what's there.

And if we were doing this in every major metro all over the world, even with relatively small samples, you would catch pandemics like COVID-19 well before they become these global scale outbreaks.

In this case, maybe it was being done in China and hidden or who knows, but by the time we actually became aware of it, it was just the cat was out of the bag.

It was probably like three months after the first infection.

It was too far gone.

But if you were doing this systematically, just looking for an emerging pandemic, you'd be much more likely to catch it.

The easier way to do it that I think is really interesting is with sewage samples.

I don't know if you've seen any of these sites.

No, I have not.

There's a great one in the Bay Area and they're literally just looking at sewage runoff and sampling for the concentration of COVID.

And now they've extended it to, you know, monkeypox and various types of flu.

And you can literally just look at the Bay Area cities and look at, you know, a two year trend graph of how prevalent these things are.

And so I was actually just this morning, I was reading a news article like COVID spiking in the Bay Area and like, you know, these sort of scare stories that come up from time to time.

And I said, Hey, this is my trusted source.

I'm just going to go see if it's really spiking.

And you know, there's a little, a little increase and maybe it'll become something more.

But this feels like something that he removes all these biases from how people test and everything and can just be trusted as something real.

All right.

So Dustin AI, let's uncork this monster and talk about AI.

Not saying monster in the pejorative sense, but this might be also a tie into effective altruism because there's been a lot of attention and purported attention given to AI.

Where would you like to begin?

Because this is of course a topic that could go in many different directions.

Where would it make sense to start?

Lately, the place I've been starting is kind of getting more into the nuance of the positions.

There's been this part of the discourse that's emerged that really paints everyone into two extremes. You're either entirely pro AI or you're sometimes you call them doomers or Yuddites, if you've seen this term.

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I haven't even seen a Yuddite.

Yeah, well, it's a Yuddite.

Well, it's a reference to Eliezer Kowski.

So Luddites.

Yeah.

But what is the Y?

Well, for Eliezer Kowski, who's sort of...

Okay, I see.

I get it.

Took me a second.

Yeah.

I feel bad even bringing up the term and making it more popular, but also I love puns so much.

And I'm like, wow, people really nailed that one.

But he kind of represents the other end of the pole of like he's the most worried about AI.

And is just really worried about it as a global catastrophic risk like we were talking about earlier, something that could actually cause human extinction or destroy civilization.

But even with Eliezer and even more so with me, it's much more nuanced than that.

He's not an actual Luddite.

He's a technologist and really believes in technological future.

He believes in the power of AI.

He started out enormously pro AI.

And then as he got into it, sort of came to understand some serious risks that felt like he needed to be addressed.

And I think the risks are very serious.

I don't think they're quite as likely to occur as he does.

And I have more optimism around humanity's resiliency and ability to address the problem for the conversation about beginning of infinity.

And I'm also just really enthusiastic about AI at the same time.

You know, I wake up every day and I'm like, this is amazing.

There are so many cool things I can do.

Oh, and also I hope it doesn't kill us.

And I'm like always kind of like having a hold of this story.

Yes, don't kill us.

Yeah, exactly.

And so I try and, you know, give this analogy of like when you get into a car, you expect to go to your destination,

but you put on a seatbelt.

You follow the rules of the road.

And there's a regulatory system and licensing system for drivers that helps ensure sort of mutual safety for everyone, including the pedestrians.

And so I really think about AI safety like that.

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Like we are heading towards something really awesome, but there are some serious risks we need to address and that requires some concerted effort.

And the reason it relates to effective altruism is, especially until the last year, a lot of things have been changing.

There's so much nobody was working on this partially because they thought AI was very far off, partially because they didn't agree that the risk would manifest even when we got there.

What are some of the risks?

And I couldn't help but imagine in my mind, I was thinking, you know, when I was 12, for a very long time, I wanted to be a marine biologist.

And I'm thinking how much of the people in AI are like 12 year old boys who have a pet great white shark that knows a bunch of cool tricks.

But man, you got to be careful with the great white shark.

What are the risks?

I am particularly excited to hear you describe them because you are technical.

I am not technical to be clear.

I'm not an engineer.

I don't play one on the internet, but I appreciate perspectives on AI from those people who are able to immerse themselves in some of the more technical aspects.

So what are the risks for a lay audience?

You could get into the weeds a bit.

We do have technical folks listening as well.

What are the risks and how do you assign sort of probability to those risks if they haven't yet come to pass and maybe some of them are already current?

Well, I'll start with the one where there's a lot more agreement.

So we're talking about part of our GCR work is on biosecurity and we talked a lot about pandemics, but we also worry about bioweapons.

So somebody purposefully engineering a pathogen.

And there are people in the world who are trying to do this now and they have various resources available to them.

Some of them are successful.

Governments try and stop them in various ways and there's been no major bioweapons.

But language models, especially or even more purpose-built AI's can change this and create more of an offense, defense and balance.

So there's been some research recently and Dara Amade, who's the CEO of Anthropic, recently testified to Congress about how this works where you're basically trying to solve any problem and use language model to help.

But in this case, a sort of malicious goal if you're trying to engineer a bioweapon and a language model can help you not get stuck along the way, work around problems and just figure out step by step.

And right now what's possible, the language models don't help you that much.

They help you a little bit, but they're not at a power level or this is a serious threat.

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But the worry is in another generation or two or three, they will get to a place where it becomes really enabling for people who have this goal to kind of work around these problems and figure it out,

especially if they already have a background in biology, but even if they don't.

And so maybe you're just enabling a lot more people to come up with this.

And usually when I have this conversation, people try and relate it to nuclear weapons and they're like, what's the equivalent of uranium?

You got to regulate that.

And it just turns out with bioweapon, there is nothing like that.

We may just be in a place where it's more like 3D printed guns, where you can get commodity hardware and this thing's helping you and you can do something really dangerous with it.

And then you have to think about, are there other ways to stop this?

Again, the surveillance can help, even with a bioweapon that we talked about.

But also, are there ways to create safeguards around how the language models themselves work that could make this situation safer or at least buy us more time to set up better defense?

Could you say more about this particular example, because I think about the sort of cost asymmetry and offense versus defense.

And maybe there isn't not understanding the specifics personally.

Maybe I'm misthinking this, but I think of let's just say micro drone, like swarm drone attacks.

And if you have a target, let's just say there's a tank, that's the target.

And then you have 100 drones released with explosives or a pack of drones.

It's relatively inexpensive to launch that offense, but it could be very, very expensive.

Or even if it's like a very targeted attack using bioweapons against an individual, but with some type of distributed attack, the defense seems really tough.

What are some of the most promising avenues of defense?

Because I'm sure you have and I have seen examples of circumventing the restrictions placed on some of these large language models for making something they shouldn't make.

Or breaking into a neighbor's house where there are ways that you can circumvent it.

I don't necessarily want to give people a how to guide in this conversations, but there's some clever ways to circumvent.

What are some of the most promising avenues for establishing some defensive capabilities with these types of things?

There's constraints and there's defense.

So if you go and ask OpenAI chat GPT, how do I create a bioweapon?

It will tell you it's not going to help you.

And as you said, there are ways to jailbreak this.

So the first thing you can do is try and improve those, right?

Cut off these sort of backdoors.

And there's a lot of research going into that right now from the big labs, from academics.

And I do think we'll get iteratively better at this over time.

We'll get sort of an anti-fragility effect of people are trying to hack these things.

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We're figuring out all the hacks and getting better at it.

But the other thing I would point out is when you have a hosted service like chat GPT or Anthropic's Claved,

you can also just know your customer, monitor what they're doing, have terms of service, cut them off.

Law enforcement can get involved.

And I think those are just important conventional measures.

But notably, they don't apply to the open source models.

So whatever you do to try and prevent jail breaks or try and prevent certain types of questions from being answered,

once you have an open source model, those may as well not exist.

It's extremely easy to kind of remove that safety protection.

So when I think about the overall AI risk landscape, part of what I'm worried about is just how many different actors there are

and varying degrees of concern about this and varying degrees of control.

When I think about an individual lab like OpenAI or Anthropic, I feel pretty good.

I think they're doing responsible things.

I think they're doing great safety research, but they're not the only ones out there.

And so a lot of times when people talk about how will you improve the safety of these or how will you solve alignment,

which we'll get to as well.

I'm sure they think about this kind of idealized lab that's like doing all the right things and they're keeping the untested AI in a safe box and it's not connected to the internet or not embedded in critical infrastructure.

And that'll be how we iterate into a safe place.

And I'm like, yeah, I believe you.

And there are 10 other actors at least that are also doing things.

And there's a penalty for doing the safety work, costs money and time

and means you're not going to have the latest, greatest, most powerful model on the market.

And that sort of like game theoretic dynamic is more the thing I'm concerned about

and that I think creates a lot of risk.

How do you incentivize them, this might not be the right way to think about it,

but sort of the closed system players, the proprietary shops, again, might not be the right terminology.

But how do you incentivize them to allocate a lot of resources to safety

when you have other players who may not play by those rules or open source options, which I've seen in some discords creating things that you would not believe.

How do you create those incentives?

I think it's a really hard problem.

And even if you solve it in the short run, you may just get to a place where the sort of race dynamics kind of take over.

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I think we're really fortunate in who runs the current big labs.
You know, I know Sam Altman very well.
Adam DiAngelo, who's a board member at Asana is also on the OpenAI board.
I know the Anthropic team really well, closely involved with them.
And those leaders are just true believers in the safety issue.
And they care, right?
It's like their own lives at stake and their family's lives at stake.
I think that's a really powerful force.
And I think it's served us well so far.
And I think this is also true of many of the leaders inside the other labs that I know less well.
And I think that's the thing that we most have going for us right now.
And part of what we've been trying to do is just convince more of the rest to care as well.
And just have as many people as you can care and then try and make sure those organizations are a little better resourced.
And I don't know how long that will go on for, but it's a good place right now.
But there have been some new labs that have been founded very recently where I'm more concerned about this.
And in some cases, they claim to care about safety.
They've got a certain approach that sounds good on paper, but I don't know where it will really go.
But just trying to get the labs to communicate with each other and to engage with the research and to just care about the issue in the first place, I think is the best thing we have going for us.
So in addition to bio weapons, which at least as I listened to you describe it, seems to highlight smaller groups or probably individual players, but maybe not state actors.
I would imagine as a layperson that disinformation campaigns and really sophisticated campaigns run by state actors will become more and more of something to contend with.
But in your mind, what are some of the additional threats that are potentially catalyzed or enabled by AI outside of the bio weapons?
The other big one we worry about is just the alignment issue.
So as you have more and more powerful systems, you discover that it's harder than you would think to get them to adhere to human values.
We care about the things that we care about.
And sometimes that's because we've sort of poorly specified what we care about.
If you just step back and forget AI and talk to humans about philosophy and fairness and equity, there's no sort of consensus answer right now.
These are still philosophical problems.
So we can't even really well define them for each other.
But we're also trying to instruct this kind of alien-like human system to care about and incorporate, in some cases, what are like paradoxical goals, but also are very nuanced and have to do with trade-offs.
Whereas what they naturally want to do is maximize, like achieve a goal as well as possible.

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And so this idea of instrumental convergence, which is no matter what goal you give a system, if it's trying to maximize it, it eventually gets to a place where it wants a lot more resources, it wants control, and it wants to not be shut off.

And that's when you get into concerns about the thing that is most likely to shut off the computers as the humans.

And so if you have a sufficiently powerful system that has gathered enough resources, it might decide to contain that threat just as part of achieving some other goal, which maybe we gave it in the first place, or maybe it came up with on its own.

And I don't think any of this story requires consciousness, by the way, if you will get in a rabbit hole when they engage in that part.

But it's just, you know, you got to keep in mind this thing sounds human because it's a language model

and it's meant to sound as human as possible.

We've asked it to maximize that goal in itself, but it is not human.

It is very alien-like under the surface.

We don't know how it works, and we can't even get it to do some simple constraints, like not threaten to kill the end user in a chat script, or like not give the recipe for napalm if you coax it out in the right way.

And later, more powerful systems are going to need to incorporate more important, more nuanced constraints than that.

And so there's a bit of a, you know, again, this sort of offense, defense arms race of like how good will we get at constraining and aligning the system compared to how fast will it progress.

And by the way, this is a place where I disagree with David Deutsch.

He's very much an accelerationist, you know, once there'd be no constraints on the AI.

And I think the crux of the argument is speed.

I basically agree with him that our normal sort of iterative processes can solve all these problems. They are solvable problems, but I don't know that we'll have enough time.

Usually we have many decades to solve very hard problems.

And the nature of AI development is you could have very fast takeoff.

This is what part of why all the years are so concerned, literally like maybe next year, all of a sudden there is extremely powerful AI.

Or even if it's more moderate than that, maybe 10 years from now, we have this extremely powerful AI.

That isn't obviously enough time.

There isn't an obviously enough attention going to the defense side to align things before we get there.

And we also don't know which actor will produce it.

Maybe it will be antagonistic state or maybe it'll just be somebody who doesn't care about the safety issues

or is trying to maximize commercialization or something and is like stripped out the things that are

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slowing down the system that costs safety.

And all of that just feels very chaotic and like a lot of things could go wrong in unpredictable ways. So I would love to ask you just so people don't curl up in the fetal position under their desk after this.

As a very close friend of mine said, he almost did after listening to a separate episode that I did with Eric Schmidt,

my second conversation with him where we talked a lot about AI, could you make the optimistic case or give us some of the upside and paint a picture of what things might look like in, I know this is very hard to do and impossible to do accurately

unless you're some type of soothsayer and can peer into your crystal ball.

But what might the future look like in three, five, 10 years if we're able to manifest some of the promise of AI on the positive side?

Oh man, this is so fun. This is the part I like to talk about because there's so many good things.

I recently published a piece in Fortune actually that's kind of looking at this through the work lens because I think that even a lot of the things we've talked about so far in the episode, I think can be really amplified with AI.

So for example, we're talking about how people's schedules get chopped up.

And part of this is just we have these very coarse ways of trying to solve the multifaceted problem of like there are five people with different work streams and schedules

and you want to get them together while disrupting the focus blocks as little as possible.

And really, we do this just by kind of like looking at everyone's calendar and like looking for the open slots between them

and sometimes you'll move one meeting to make an extra space and, oh look, often no meeting Wednesday is often clear on everybody's calendars.

And you end up chopping up everyone's calendar, but an AI can do that really well and give you, you know, ideally sort of do like a defragmentation on everyone's calendar

and just keep iterating until it's as perfect as possible, honoring as many people's preferences as possible.

It can also eliminate the need for meetings in many cases.

You know, one of the things we're excited about in Asana is sort of identifying more proactively when you even need to call a meeting,

when you have a decision that needs to be made, when there's a conflict and in lieu of having intelligence around that,

you just do coarse things like we're going to get together every week and share status updates and kind of re-sync and see what decisions are coming up now.

And I think that, you know, having AI serve more as sort of like air traffic control,

looking at the work overall in the organization can just lead to not only better business outcomes, but much better sort of individual subjective experiences of how your work happens.

And, you know, that's sort of just the tip of the iceberg on work.

And then, you know, I think the thing that people talk about a lot is sort of, you know, automating a lot of work that is wrote to repetitive or,

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and just that also coincides with the work that humans don't want to do.

There's a lot of knowledge work that looks like that.

There's also a lot of physical work that can be automated with robotics.

And I think every time that's happened, we just get a little closer to the Jetson style world where, you know, you're living your best life

and spending as little time as possible in the stuff that you don't want to do.

And additionally, I think there's this thing that's a little less explored of having just like a really great, you know, coach and cheerleader, both on an individual basis and for the team.

Like, imagine you have like the world's greatest project manager that's integrated into every team.

It knows all the best practices from everything and it knows the context of the specific project you're working on.

And that means you can kind of let go of a lot of things that cause continual partial attention disorder of like, did we really get to a concrete next step here?

You just said partial attention disorder, right?

Yeah, yeah, continual partial attention.

Oh, that is amazing. That is such a great phrase.

Okay, I'm going to write that down.

Yeah, it's a David Allen thing from Getting Things Done.

It's David Allen.

Yeah.

Okay.

Yeah, I didn't realize I was an acronym from that.

Okay, got it.

Yeah.

Continual partial attention deficit.

Yeah.

Well, in general, I mean, this is part of the reason we built Asana is like people carry around their task lists in their heads or that's in their email inbox and they're re-scanning their email inbox all the time.

And if you can get into a system that you trust to show you those things at the right time or sending reminders at the right time, you can let go of it in the active memory and get more space for presence.

And I think AI can be doing this at a much higher level of abstraction for entire teams and entire companies.

So you don't have to worry about, you know, is there a dependency that's going to affect the critical path on this project we're working on that's going to eventually mean that a deadline slips.

Like right now, that's a lot of what managers are doing is looking for these problems.

But I think an AI can be doing it for you, doing a lot more effectively, helping focus the managers on where they'll be most useful.

This is the actual blocking dependency that you need to fix.

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You need to resource better.

You need to scope down.

You need to do something to change this.

And it can even be doing softer stuff like, hey, marketing and sales are fighting.

We can tell just by looking at the text analysis of the conversations they're having.

And I think that can just go so much further and get rid of a lot of this work about work that we do a lot of manual processes to try and work around these problems and have the systems in place that we can catch things some of the time.

I think all that can go away so that people can focus much more on the creative, productive work that really drives the business forward towards its goals.

Yeah, my team and I use Asana we have for years.

We also use more recently chat GPT and I'm sure we'll experiment with more language models, but it is remarkable.

I'll tell you what's in the hopper for my follow up questions so it can gestate with you for a minute.

But the AI integrations into Asana that you are most excited about.

And part of the reason I ask is right now we use a number of different tools, but to really focus on Asana we're using it not just for tracking the work of other people, but tracking our own work.

So trying to take these open loops and put them into a repository such that we can see what is kind of green, yellow, red, and at a glance, keep track of all of these things.

I shouldn't say especially, but on a small team, the problems that are created if you don't do that, it's true for a large team as well.

But a lot of people are self-directed. Everyone is self-directed largely and everyone is a direct report of mine effectively.

So it's proven to be a critical piece of our infrastructure and process.

On the chat GPT side, I'm just imagining how these things are going to be integrated in the future.

And there are already these integrations with chat GPT and I'm imagining when it gets to sort of the WeChat point where you can say,

I want to make roast pork tonight with these parameters.

This is what I like. This is what I don't like.

Have all of the ingredients delivered to me within the next three hours and A, B, and C, right?

Turn on my oven and preheat it to whatever.

I mean, it's going to happen quickly.

And I mean, there's the downside to that with the napalm example too, but the integrations are really interesting to me.

And I'm wondering what you're most excited about with respect to AI integrations into Asana.

You know, I think I've been talking about some of the longer term versions of like, we almost sort of conceptualize it as AI is an extension of your team.

And I think a lot of what we've seen in products today is, you know, the sort of co-pilot mentality of like, there's one person trying to accomplish a specific thing,

you know, make a dinner tonight and it's helping fill in some of the steps or, you know, explode small details into a complete plan.

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We will definitely do that kind of stuff.

You know, we've already launched in beta like a writing assistant to help you draft tasks.

You know, we can take a task and break it into sub tasks.

We've written the sort of summarization tools that I think are very powerful.

Like you come back to a thread and 50 people have kind of gone back and forth and comments and be really great.

If something just sort of said, what were the key points who was doing most of the speaking kind of catch you up really quickly.

That stuff will be really great.

But the things that I think are going to be really powerful are about, I like to frame this as sort of like push versus pull AI.

So what we've got now is pull like the user is always deciding this is when I'm going to use the writing assistants.

This is when I'm going to use the summarization tool.

First push would be more like what you already see with like news feeds today where it's like the intelligence has decided this is important for you to see.

And it's like putting it in a queue or sending you an email.

And then, you know, these ideas like helping to identify the open loops in the first place.

So something that happens in meetings and comment threads is people will identify a decision and they'll sort of like,

give some thoughts about it, but they won't necessarily like decide it.

And I think it would be really powerful if you just did the language analysis of like, hey, actually, this is still undecided and maybe even like assign it to somebody to follow it through to completion.

Or you said these three things needed to be done, but you didn't actually assign them to anybody.

And so like that would be so helpful.

I'm going to admit it's embarrassing, but some of these things are very aspirational for me still.

It's not a perfectly oiled machine.

Yeah, exactly.

This would be incredibly helpful just to identify what got lost in the shuffle.

Like during the offsite, you guys captured a million different things and you prioritize them or made an attempt to.

But for whatever reason, you forgot four out of the, you know, 12 top items and dropping that into a system with some visibility would be super, super helpful.

Yeah.

So I wanted to take that responsibility off the user's hands so that they can relax into doing the work, but feel like Asana itself is this super diligent project and goal manager and even do sort of longer arc things.

Like often you'll be in a kickoff meeting and you'll identify key risks to a project.

And the idea for this is that somebody will remember those key risks and kind of like to come back to them and notice when they're manifesting.

You know, you may or you may not do that.

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You may forget about them, but the system ideally could remember them and say, oh, hey, here's that thing happening that you talked about at the beginning.

There's a production delay or the guest was unavailable.

I don't know how to translate it to podcast, but in sort of like just be always watching for you as well as helping you celebrate accomplishments and recognize people for doing great work.

You have to not do that in a creepy way, but I think that there is a way to have it feel really, really positive and feel like it's truly helping you see more.

You don't have to like go through every single task everyone on your team is doing to see when they do something really great.

There are so many examples I can think of of where push AI would be helpful assuming that it doesn't create an information deluge or paradox of choice issue, right?

For people who are maybe confronted with options that they weren't prepared to select from, but I'll give you an example.

Recently, I like to organize trips with my very close friends and get them on the calendar well in advance because everybody's busy.

If you don't do it, it's just not going to happen.

And I'm considering a fishing trip, like a river trip with friends.

And all of my full-time employees right now are experimenting with chat GPT for basically rough drafting different tasks.

And for something like that, you could very easily imagine a world in which that's in a sauna and it's a bit of a clumsy, large task.

So it's not quite the what is the next physical action, you know, I'll David Allen.

But if you had, you know, to draft an itinerary for a fishing trip in a mountainous region, blah, blah, blah, blah, parameter, parameter.

And then it could very easily, as chat GP did, draft a pretty compelling rough draft.

It's not going to be the final version, but it provides you with enough to save a lot of time on miscellaneous searches

and calling through sponsored versus organic versus this versus that content farm versus, you know, individual author blog that has some higher page rank or whatever.

It just saves so much time on the front end.

It could very easily see that auto-populating somehow in a sauna task.

Absolutely. Or even whole projects.

So, you know, right now we live in this world where you either get the building blocks of a sauna and you fill it in all yourself,

where you use a very abstract template, like, you know, I want to run a marketing campaign.

But as you said, you can be very specific, like not only I'm going to do a fishing trip in Montana, but like this exact city.

And like, you know, have it fill in all the tasks and like tell you what like the local stores are and like how you're going to get there.

And it could really bridge this gap between, you know, nothing in template to giving you customized, you know, bespoke projects.

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And as much detail as you give it at the outset, it will engage with all that detail and do a great job. That'll really help people a lot in particular with, you know, one of the complaints we get about a sauna a lot is just like, I don't know if I'm using it well.

I don't know if I'm like using everything I should be or organizing this in the right way and having that sort of assistant that is an expert on a sauna and an expert kind of on everything in the world can really help give you the confidence that, you know, you're using all the building blocks in the right way.

And then you kind of take it from there.

I want to, if you don't mind, zoom out to maybe some of the philosophical level and ask you a question that ties together the energy management we were talking about earlier with time blocking and ensuring that you do things that nourish you, nourish your soul.

However you want to think about it, like this trip that I'm considering taking with friends.

And the reason I ask is that for at least 100 years, maybe longer, many writers have postulated that with A, B and C technological advances, we're going to reach a level of such efficiency and effectiveness that the real question will be how the modern worker takes advantage of this vast amount of leisure time.

But somehow humans being humans, we've managed alongside that generally to, I don't want to say squatter, but you find ways to fritter away time, often using many sort of parallel technological advances.

I think the net net that I perceive in my audience, at least, is that we have the tools to be more efficient than ever, but a lot of people still feel a sense of time scarcity.

And I'm wondering what you do personally, or how you think about that type of time blogging, making sure the big things or the items that really nourish you find time in your schedule.

Maybe that's a lazy question, but I know it's one that comes up directly or indirectly a lot for people in my periphery, so I'd be curious to hear anything that you might have to say about that.

First of all, I'd just say I'm a work in progress on that, so it's something I'm always trying to get better at. And over time, I've just learned there are some things that are sacrosanct for me, and they get fixed in my calendar.

And things happen, they won't necessarily happen every week, but if maybe two weeks go in a row, then I'll find a new block for it and make sure it happens.

This includes, of course, sleep exercise, spending time with my wife. We do a date night every Saturday, but sometimes we're on a trip, or we do something with friends on Saturday, and so we'll find a different night of the week for that.

And just try and be mindful and intentional about it rather than just, I think maybe 10 years ago, would be more like, well, I've got all these things I'm doing, and if I feel done enough by a certain hour, then I'll go work out.

And of course, then you fritter away your time and you never get to it. And so I've become a lot more regular and scheduled, and I think that serves me well. And there are longer arc versions of this.

I try and go for a solo hike once every three months. My wife and I have certain vacations we try and do. Some of them are traditions with friends, some of them are just us.

When you say solo hike, is that like an afternoon stroll? Are we talking about a long vacation? You

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said every three months, what is a solo trip like that look like?

I mean, I live in the Bay Area, which is just phenomenal for hiking. So usually it's a day trip.

It is incredible. Yeah, it's incredible.

But I'll do like a 10 mile hike or something in a day. I love the Mount Tam area, for example. And I find that very restorative. And I'll tell people about it after and they'll say, you should have invited me. I live in that area. I love going on hikes.

I'm like, no, no, you don't understand.

That's not how it works.

This is for me. And I've just tried to be reflective on what those things are and at what cadence I need them and what works for me and what doesn't and what's taxing and what's restorative and just try and ever iterate towards better balance over time.

If I may pull us back to your book list, which I do not believe is publicly available, but maybe we can share some of them to the extent that you're comfortable.

I'm wondering what of these books you've revisited in times of uncertainty or duress or stuckness.

You have a lot of great books and they're categorized in all sorts of different ways. You have psychology, mindfulness, you have leadership and strategy, epistemology and philosophy. Are there any books that you've returned to when you're like, you know what? I feel like I need a refresher or a reminder in maybe high stress or high stakes periods of your life if that question makes any sense at all.

I'm a little bit of a type A person with this where I'm usually going for a new book. But I guess the way I think of it more is like a lot of the books are very similar to each other.

And so I think of it more as I'd like to read a book about mindfulness every six months or something like that. And there are authors like Jack Cornfield is extremely prolific. He has many books. I have one in here that touched me in a personal way, but there are many that are quite good.

Which one of his books?

The one I have in here is The Lamp in the Darkness. It's particularly useful when going through grief. He has just a lot of great books on day-to-day living. And so I think I'm more likely to sort of look for which one haven't I read yet that a lot of it will overlap and he'll tell some of the same stories anyway, but it'll just be like a different angle on it.

And so, you know, it's usually I'm sort of cycling through like mindfulness and like leadership, those books, you know, business books all rhyme with each other as well. And then sort of more intellectual stuff like beginning of infinity.

If you had to reread a biography that you have read, let's just say, you know, in the next few months, you had to sit down with something you've already read or a person for whom you've already read one biography, you could read a new biography of them. I'll allow that.

Who might you choose or what book might you choose?

I think if I was going to reread a biography, it would be Churchill and there's there's a few different ones, but walking with destiny happens to be the one I read and his life is just extraordinary and it feels like fiction to go through it. And in terms of biographers, you know, I think Chernow and Carol are a cut above.

And so anybody they're writing about, I will become interested in.

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Yeah, their dedication to the craft is just unbelievable. If it took it with you, Dustin, let's ask a few more questions and then we can we can land the we can land the plane.

And if these are dead ends, I will take the blame, but I'll ask just a few of my common questions because I like to ask them that's rather common. So one is the billboard question.

And that is if you could put a quote, a phrase, word, an image, anything on a billboard metaphorically speaking to get something in front of many, many, many, many people. What might you put on that billboard?

I don't know if I have a pithy phrase for this, but oh, no, I do actually the title of my medium posts is, you know, live well to work hard.

I think people create this false dichotomy of work life balance where they think of it only in terms of like the number of hours you have for work and what's left for for life and don't really think about the quality of those hours.

And I just like over time, just come up a lot in this conversation, but just more and more an appreciation for I have to rest really well to be able to do my job well and perform well during the hours that I'm working.

But also all these other parts of life, you know, exercise yoga, using the back body, spending, you know, spending time with my wife and family and friends.

It's still all part of me and, you know, part of being a whole person.

And I think particularly in the tech industry, particularly in your 20s, people think of it more as like, yeah, I'm going to work hard right now and like later I'll live my life and later doesn't come unless you're intentional about it.

And I think you'll be more effective than just the sprinting.

Live well to work hard. I'll link to the medium piece in the show notes as well.

And one more book question, because I love books as you can pick up.

If I were to scan this camera on the room, you'd be horrified by the number of stacks of books that I have here.

But I tend to accumulate, there's this term tsundoku, which is like a Japanese term for accumulating stacks of books that you have not read.

That's very much highlighted in the room that I'm in right now.

But what book or books have you gifted often to other people if you've gifted any books?

Could be recommended.

Yeah, I'm an audible guy, so I like never give a physical book to people.

Something that's come up a lot lately is this book, The Road Back to You, which is about the Enneagram.

And I'll just say up front, it's written by a former preacher, and he's got some religious tones.

That doesn't really appeal to me, but I just found the descriptions of the Enneagram types to be just really spot on,

especially the one of my type type five, and just really felt like reading my diary.

And I've recommended it to a few other people who had similar experiences.

I'd read a bunch of about Enneagram before, and it was like, oh, this sort of fits, it sort of doesn't.

And then this one really spoke to me.

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I'll check it out.

Yeah, the conscious leadership folks use Enneagram a lot.

I don't want to speak for all of them, but at least Jim and Diana do.

And I know that I believe when Toby of Shopify and I last spoke on the podcast, he also mentioned, I think they may type everyone in the company who works at the company.

Do you guys do that at Asana, or is that more opt-in for you and a handful of folks who may be interested,

or is that systematized throughout the company in any way?

I think it depends on the team.

I've done it for my directs.

We've actually done it for the board as well, because it's often useful to kind of understand the interactions between two types.

But I don't know how far in the company it pervades.

Quite a lot of people do know their type, though.

Yeah, for people who want to explore that, check it out.

Does the road back to you, is that a suitable starting place for people who have no familiarity with Enneagram?

Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Yeah, great.

Okay, perfect.

So I will link to that as well.

Can I give one more recommendation?

Oh, please, absolutely.

This one hasn't come up in a while, but it was talked about a lot when it was first published by Scout Mindset.

It's a book by Julia Galliff.

And she's a rationalist, and she's near the effect of altruism community.

And I think it's just like a good way of getting into that way of thinking.

And I think it's very related to conscious leadership.

A lot of it is about kind of challenging your stories and just like being open and curious in how you think about ideas and learn about the world and something I've come back to a lot.

Perfect.

Well, Dustin, we have covered a lot of ground, and I'm sure I could go for hours and hours more with all of the many notes.

And they still have around me.

But is there anything before you wind to a close that you'd like to mention closing comments, requests of the audience, anything at all that you'd like to add?

I think we got it all out.

Probably as soon as I hang up, I'm sure I'll come up with something.

We could do a voice addendum, a PS from Dustin, if need be.

But it's nice to see you and thanks for making the time today.

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I really appreciate it.

I have lots of things I'm going to follow up on.

I am going to get the road back to you because I've been meaning to reboot the Enneagram for myself.

I've had everyone in my company typed.

I do find it helpful, even if not necessarily an interaction, but even so that each person can be perhaps more aware, myself included, of strengths and weaknesses and how your predispositions can show up as handicaps that you may not recognize off the bat.

Find it very helpful.

So I'll revisit that.

Can you say what your type is?

You've been typed?

Yeah, I can.

I am a self-preservation six.

And that'll make a lot of sense to people.

If they read the description, they'll be like, oh yeah, shocker, not surprised.

And it's also fun.

It is a fun exercise and I have found at least practical in more ways than one might expect.

There are some people who develop or have severe allergies to the Enneagram.

One of my very close friends is one of them.

So it's not for everybody, but it's one of the tools, one of the many modalities that can be helpful.

And I really appreciate you being so open and willing to dig into a lot of the specifics and cover so much ground.

I feel like we got a lot into one conversation.

So thank you, Dustin.

Yeah, thank you.

I highly recommend the experience.

And for people, actually, you know what, one last question.

I keep giving these like second goodbyes and third goodbyes, but is there anything that you would like to see me discuss more on the podcast?

Or whether that's topics to explore particular people.

Does anything come to mind that you think could be fruitful to explore on the podcast?

Well, you know, I'll just say I was very delighted that the last episode I heard was Jack Hornfield.

And, you know, I thought that was one of the best that I've heard over the years.

I know he's been on more than once.

But yeah, I feel like you could go a long time on sort of the mindfulness and the self-care and, you know, you do.

So it's not something you're not doing already.

But I think that's usually my favorite kind of content.

Great. Yeah, thanks.

I think of that personally as I think it was a camera who first used this phrasing with me.

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But like, put your own oxygen mask on before helping others.
Like just that the importance of self-care if you actually want to do a lot in the world.
So I will.
It's a good reminder for me and I will, I'll be sure to have Jack back on.
He's a prezip perennial favorite.
And to everybody listening, we talked about a lot.
We made many references.
We talked about books, people, different principles and so on, including the template for time tracking that you mentioned.
Which we will put into the show notes as per usual for everyone to peruse at timduplog.com.
And in closing, I'll just say to everybody out there, back buddy.
Don't miss it.
Should have been my billboard.
Exactly, back buddy.
And be just a little bit kinder than is necessary to others and to yourself.
And until next time, thanks for tuning in.
Hey guys, this is Tim again.
Just one more thing before you take off and that is Five Bullet Friday.
Would you enjoy getting a short email from me every Friday that provides a little fun before the weekend?
Between one and a half and two million people subscribed to my free newsletter, my super short newsletter called Five Bullet Friday.
Easy to sign up, easy to cancel.
It is basically a half page that I send out every Friday to share the coolest things I've found or discovered or have started exploring over that week.
It's kind of like my diary of cool things.
It often includes articles I'm reading, books I'm reading, albums perhaps, gadgets, gizmos, all sorts of tech tricks and so on.
They get sent to me by my friends, including a lot of podcast guests and these strange esoteric things end up in my field.
And then I test them and then I share them with you.
So if that sounds fun, again, it's very short, a little tiny bite of goodness before you head off for the weekend, something to think about.
If you'd like to try it out, just go to tim.vlog.friday.
Type that into your browser, tim.vlog.friday.
Drop in your email and you'll get the very next one.
Thanks for listening.
This episode is brought to you by Shopify.
Shopify is one of my favorite companies out there, one of my favorite platforms ever.
And let's get into it.
Shopify is a platform, as I mentioned, designed for anyone to sell anything anywhere, giving

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entrepreneurs the resources once reserved for big business.

So what does that mean?

That means in no time flat, you can have a great looking online store that brings your ideas, products and so on to life.

And you can have the tools to manage your day to day business and drive sales.

This is all possible without any coding or design experience whatsoever.

Shopify instantly lets you accept all major payment methods.

Shopify has thousands of integrations and third party apps from on-demand printing to accounting to advanced chatbots, anything you can imagine.

They probably have a way to plug and play and make it happen.

Shopify is what I wish I had had when I was venturing into e-commerce way back in the early 2000s.

What they've done is pretty remarkable.

I first met the founder, Toby, in 2008 when I became an advisor and it's been spectacular.

I've loved watching Shopify go from roughly 10 to 15 employees at the time to 7000 plus today.

Serving customers in 175 countries with total sales on the platform exceeding \$400 billion.

They power millions of entrepreneurs from their first sale all the way to full scale.

And you would recognize a lot of large companies that also use them who started small.

So get started by building and customizing your online store again with no coding or design experience required.

Access powerful tools to help you find customers, drive sales and manage your day to day.

Gain knowledge and confidence with extensive resources to help you succeed.

And I've actually been involved with some of that way back in the day, which was awesome, the build a business competition and other things.

Plus, the 24-7 support, you're never alone.

And let's face it, being an entrepreneur can be lonely, but you have support.

You have resources. You don't need to feel alone in this case.

More than a store, Shopify grows with you and they never stop innovating, providing more and more tools to make your business better and your life easier.

Go to Shopify.com slash Tim to sign up for a \$1 per month trial period.

It is a great deal for a great service, so I encourage you to check it out.

Take your business to the next level today and learn more by visiting Shopify.com slash Tim.

One more time, Shopify.com slash Tim, all lowercase.

This episode is brought to you by Roka, makers of the world's most versatile eyewear.

I am incredibly impressed with Roka.

Actually, the quality is outstanding.

And a lot of my friends who are lead athletes also wear them.

That's how I was introduced to them.

I like to stay active a lot of long-term listeners will know this.

And my eyewear has to be up to the task.

Brands that make everyday eyewear, sunglasses and glasses, don't generally build them for people who are really on the move a lot.

[Transcript] The Tim Ferriss Show / #686: Dustin Moskovitz, Co-Founder of Asana and Facebook — Energy Management, Coaching for Endurance, No Meeting Wednesdays, Understanding the Real Risks of AI, Embracing Frictionless Work with AI, The Value of Holding Stories Loosely, and More

So you have to wear clunky shades on a run, deal with glasses that slip off your face or by some kind of sport specific frames.

Roka has fixed all of that by packing the same features used in eyewear for Olympic gold medalists and world champions into stylish everyday sunglasses, eye glasses and reading glasses.

So you get more with less.

It's an elegant solution with Roka.

One pair does it all.

You can go from work to a workout to dinner with friends without ever needing to switch glasses.

I never have to interrupt a hike, for instance, to take my sunglasses off and wipe my nose or frames because Roka's no slip feature keeps my shades right where they started.

If you wear prescription glasses, which I will probably end up wearing pretty soon as you get older, you know, these things happen.

You can finally ditch the contacts and have no slip fashionable frames that keep up with you and your active lifestyle.

Personally, I've been using their Rory blue light glasses after sunset and I can feel the improvement in my sleep quality.

I'm falling asleep faster.

During the day, I've been loving the Falcon.

This is Roka's ultra lightweight titanium aviators.

I've been wearing those say when I go out on nice sunny days in Austin for long walks.

I also enjoy supporting Roka speaking of Austin as hometown heroes is they are based in my backyard right here in Austin, Texas.

Roka's ultra lightweight no slip fit and advanced lens coatings combined with their exceptional style.

I actually have many other styles.

I just mentioned to also make these a favorite for a lot of my friends.

You may have heard about them from Andrew Huberman and many others.

There are a lot of people wearing these things.

The quality, as I mentioned before, is really outstanding.

They're very, very durable and with more than nineteen thousand five star reviews.

Can't wait till they get to twenty thousand.

That'll be a celebration, I bet.

But with more than nineteen thousand five star reviews, Roka has created a solution that active people love.

Plus, they hand build their glasses, sunglasses and reading glasses all in the USA.

Check out my favorite frames and get twenty percent off of your first order using code TIM20.

That's T-I-M-2-0 at Roka.com.

That's code TIM20 at Roka.com R-O-K-A.com.