

[Transcript] FYI - For Your Innovation / Breaking Down Classroom Walls with Saturn's Dylan Diamond

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This show offers an intellectual discussion on technologically-enabled disruption, because investing in innovation starts with understanding it.

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Hi, everyone, and welcome back to another episode of For Your Innovation.

A podcast by Arc Invest on all things related to disruptive innovation.

I'm Andrew Kim, research associate covering consumer internet and fintech, and I'm joined by Nick Groose, associate portfolio manager at Arc.

Today, we have the great privilege of speaking with Dylan Diamond, co-founder and CEO of Saturn.

Hi, Dylan.

Thanks for joining us today.

Hey, guys.

Thanks for having me.

Before we get into the weeds of all things consumer social, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what Saturn is?

Yeah, for sure.

So I'm Dylan.

I grew up in Connecticut, went to school at Penn and started Saturn originally as a high school project, and then later at college evolved it into more of the platform it is today.

But in short, Saturn is the first social network built around the calendar, and it is the only calendar built for young people, and right now we're in high schools, and we're going to evolve that later.

But I think the intersection of social and utility best describes Saturn.

It shows you the three things that as a young person, you care about.

Where you have to go, where your friends are, and what's going on in the community.

And I started Saturn as a high school student who was stressed out and had the anxiety, like many of you guys and everyone, of not knowing who was in my class.

You guys might remember getting the piece of paper in homeroom that would have the list of your classes, and maybe back then you would post it on Facebook or run around the hallways and try and write down in a notebook, which of your friends were in your classes.

And that problem was something that I was not the first to encounter, but I thought that there had to be a better solution.

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So originally started off building a web application where you could input your classes, your teachers,

your periods, and it would spit out the list of your classmates.

They made it a mobile app and then built a calendar around it, because the calendar products that we used, well, one, young people, they don't use them.

They use the notes app, screenshots, memorization, or the other set of products which are built for enterprise.

And no one was really focusing on me at the time as a young person, and now millions of others that share the same problem.

So over the last couple of years, we've taken that product, that idea that started just at my high school in Connecticut, 2,000 person, big public high school, and now it's live at thousands of high schools serving millions across the country.

Dylan, you mentioned that it started as a web application, now it's mobile.

Were there any other product pivots along the way?

You've been working on this for quite some time.

And then also my second question here is you mentioned the social nature of this application.

Can you elaborate a bit more on that as well?

Yeah, for sure.

So the first point, it started as a web app.

I think back when I was in high school, I was more proficient at the time it was a Ruby on Rails application than Objective-C when it would become.

So just based on what I knew, built for the platform that I could at the time.

And I was by no means the first kid to build a schedule sharing web app.

There had to be hundreds across the country from some other AP computer science nerd who wanted to build a project that their school could use.

Making it an iPhone app, though, made an everyday use case.

And that to me was to unlock where you could go from something people would use passively to something they relied on.

And once people rely on your product, you have a responsibility to keep innovating on it and to make sure that it's something that they really need.

And in the beginning, it was a seasonal product.

You would use it at the start of the semester, the end of the school year, to know who was going to be in your class for the upcoming year, maybe click on a friend and see what their schedule would be.

But another problem I faced was the calendar, right?

If you guys were like me, you would put your maybe school block schedule in the top sleeve of your binder or set it as your iPhone lock background.

And you were constantly comparing those black and white images with the schedule sharing app to see, OK, I'm going here, but who am I going to encounter?

Or, oh, which of my friends are going to be after school today?

What events are going on?

I miss the PA announcements, and I don't know now what to do after school and the last bell rings.

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And I thought about all of those problems and combining it with the existing database of the schedule sharing web app created iStaples, which I went to Staples High School in West Port, Connecticut.

It was the first app, but it was now this daily use case and really a network for the entire school, not just the schedule sharing app.

And the second part, maybe getting into that on the social side, I think that users, typically you come for the utility and you stay for the network.

That's how Instagram started with photo filters and Snapchat was really a faster way with the shutter speed to capture a photo and send it, then sending it over SMS or iMessage early when it was launched.

And with Saturn, you come for the utility.

There is no calendar period that works for high school students today.

And we have now supported 17,000 plus public schools in the US.

And building that infrastructure took four years to make it so that you logged into Saturn.

It had your exact schedule, your events, your friends, your graph and high school schedules are a mess and typical calendar products can't work for them.

So you come for the utility, but then you stay for the network because the second your friends join, your calendar gets super charged.

You can see in real time where people are.

And I don't mean where they are on a map, latitude and longitude.

Those are proxies for what event you're at and who you're at that event with.

People being stacked up on SnapMap or find my friends doesn't give you quite a good picture of where they are.

On a college campus in a high school building, you have this concrete building on a satellite map.

You don't know where they are in the building.

And you don't know more importantly where they will be.

And Saturn is the only platform that can tell you with full accuracy where people will be in the future.

And thus, that allows you to spend your time with those that matter.

So if you open Saturn, it's not just where my friends are, but it allows me to better spend my time.

And we always say that time is the most valuable resource.

You physically cannot buy more of it.

So the products we use should give us time back in our day and allow us to spend time more valuably than those that just take time out of our day.

I feel like Saturn was the first app that made me feel truly old because I wanted to see what the app was like.

But you can't actually figure that out without being in high school, right?

Guys are probably my age, like what, 24 or 25?

So I hope that doesn't mean I'm old too.

Well, the first time I got barred out of an app because of age, I guess besides lying about my age when I first got my Facebook, right?

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But maybe just for people who haven't interacted with Saturn directly, I think it would be helpful.

I mean, you gave little glimpses of core offerings within the app, but just like the core views of Saturn and what the onboarding process looks like, like importing the schedule and yeah, what the app just generally looks like would be super helpful for us.

So Saturn, since it started and we have not changed from this, it opens to a calendar.

And that might be atypical.

You might expect most social products to open to a feed of content, browsing, wanting to just suck time out of your day.

But we want to give time back in your day.

And in order to do that, we open to a calendar.

But there was no user research team when the company started.

There was no Figma, there were no pixels.

It was just me and Xcode building.

And I would just tweak the code to make the functionality that I thought was most important top of mind.

And going back to the three points I said earlier, where I am down to the second because myself included, but young people can't read analog clocks.

So you need a big countdown to show them where to go and how much time is left, where your friends are, and where to go next.

And then you can abstract away all the other parts of the calendar for later, right?

Those proportional time boxes and seeing what you're doing at four PM.

You don't care what you're doing at four PM.

When you're groggy waking up in the morning at seven AM, you only care about where you have to go now, who you're going to see and where you have to go next.

So Saturn opens to a calendar.

And this is not just a typical calendar.

It is fun.

It is emojiified.

It is real time.

It shows you your friends.

And I think, you know, if you look at the product, you get this sense of calming when you see it.

And most calendars give you a sense of anxiety.

They're just all these colored boxes on the screen and people literally use the phrase at work.

Let me grab some time, throw some time on your calendar.

Can I steal some time?

And Saturn aims to give that time back.

And, you know, in the midst of your school day, whether you use Saturn or not, you have to go to class, you have after school commitments, you have to do.

And you want to be social.

And, you know, people are social beings.

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You want to know who you're going to see and when you're free and who's in that free period.

So Saturn, you know, it opens to what we call the now tab.

So it used to open to just the calendar.

We now open to a now tab.

You can think of it like Jarvis for the calendar.

It's this heads up display, it has the countdown, all these different widgets that show you progress of your day, where your friends are, where you're going next, what events are going on, and it really changes to the second.

So even the aesthetics, you open it in the morning, you have this beautiful sunrise and then throughout the day, even as you get to the final, like, you know, 30 seconds of class, the timer turns green and you're about to get out of class, or in the five minute passing time between periods, it's red to show you, hey, you got to hurry up and get there.

And I think these color cues, you know, people color code their binders and really want that emotion in the product.

And the enterprise calendars, people use, they're just emotionless.

So opening to the calendar, you can then jump around and, you know, from the now tab, you can see full calendar and you could go into the future.

You can make tasks.

These can be homework to do's in the future.

We're going to let you share those with friends, but the tasks are integrated right into the calendar.

So it's not a to do app and it's not a calendar, but you literally can make that task and you don't even need to say when it's due.

You don't need to set a time.

You just say, do next time this event meets and it will automatically embed it into that event.

And back to the onboarding question, you don't need to input anything regarding times.

You don't need to say math meets from nine, 17 a.m. to 10, 12.

You just, well, now you just take a picture of your schedule and with GPT forward automatically extracts that and builds your calendar and we're rolling that out right now.

So the onboarding flow is 30 seconds.

You take your paper, high school schedule or a screenshot of your school portal and automatically you're in class chats.

Your friends are connected and your calendar is built out that you'll use for the rest of the school year, but you just pick your school or, you know, if you receive an invitation, as most of our users do, we automatically know your school from who invited you and no teachers, no classes.

It's all already in the system.

And that's what we mean by, you know, we support 17,000 plus schools and no

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other product, you log in with one tap and all the data is there.

It's fun.

You literally, you log in and it zooms in and lands like a spaceship landing on your school.

And then the other tabs in the app, you have chat because before Saturn, you would have to go look people up on other social media platforms.

If you want to message them in school, like a lab partner or a study buddy or something, and it's just not the most, you know, it's kind of an awkward experience or using school email and school email is not fun at all.

We also have a directory.

So you can search people.

You can see people by grade or who your friends are.

You can just search people and get their real profile.

So not who they pretend to be on a different platform, but really, you know, who is Andrew within his high school?

And these are your classes, your friends, your clubs, your sports.

And it's this real identity and the incentive to keep that real identity up to date is because it impacts your calendar.

Let me use Venmo as an example.

With Venmo, you pay somebody because you want to make the transaction.

And then the byproduct of that is the social feed.

With Saturn, you keep your calendar up to date because you need to know where to go and it makes the utility better.

The byproduct is status and your profile stay up to date.

And we never wanted to be a status product that required constant updates as there's no benefit to doing that.

And a lot of other, you know, companies have tried to build standalone status products and people fail to update them because there's no single player incentive.

What have been some lessons learned as you've built out this application and then also just some unique user behavior as you've rolled out this app?

Maybe some ways that students have interacted with the app that you didn't really predict, but then, you know, kind of ran with it as you saw that user behavior picking up.

Yeah, for sure.

So the first part about lessons, do the unscalable things first.

And when Saturn started, it was a blue app with a white S for Staples High School called I Staples.

Then it was a red app with a G on it called I Greenwich, that an orange app, I Ridgefield and all these towns in Fairfield County, Connecticut, where I grew up, we built these apps and we had 50 apps in the apps store at one point. We did not use continuous integration, continuous deployment.

So we were submitting manual builds to Apple and hoping that they would get approved in a fast turnaround.

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And that was the timeline to when we would launch a school.

But it was not scalable.

Max and I and my co-founder, you know, at school of Orton, we were inputting manual calendar data into Postgres databases in real time to keep up with the user demand.

If there was a snow day, we would manually update the times in epoch format and there was no dashboard, no crowd sourcing.

And we just did that to drive the retention because if the calendar was correct, people would trust it.

And if they trusted that they would use it socially and they would then use that behavior every day.

And that was not scalable at all.

But we thought the app must feel homemade.

It needed to feel like it was built by another maybe version of me at that high school and it could not feel like this conglomerate of a social networking app that had everything from the news to your grandparents, to just all this junk that nobody wanted.

It needed to feel like it was specifically built for your school.

And we just didn't know any better at the time.

There was no Saturn, right?

And then we eventually morphed the apps into one because we had all this demand and we couldn't launch the schools fast enough.

Saturn, the Roman god of time thought it had a nice ring to it.

And then, you know, even though it's one app today, it still feels super personalized.

You log in, your school color, your school mascot, it lands on your school, your school's graph, all the, you know, academics and extracurriculars at your school.

And it took, you know, years to get to that point where now, again, at most of the country's public high schools, it feels that way, but it needed to feel the same experience that it did at Staples High School to now say the 17,000 school that launches in the Midwest on Saturn today.

And then, sorry, what was the second question?

Just in terms of, you know, as this app has been rolled out, have you picked up on any unique user behavior that you didn't expect?

So when the app first launched, there was no notion of status and status today in Saturn is where your friends are in time.

You can favor people and pin them on the home screen of the now tab on the product.

And we've partnered with Snapchat to build this really magical Bitmoji experience.

So if you are in percussion class, your Bitmoji is playing the drums.

If you're on the football field, you're running to the touchdown and it

updates in real time and you don't need to do it because it knows your calendar.

And then the social value is you can swipe up on someone on Saturn and you can say, Hey, you're in free period or Hey, I see you're here.

And that's typically what starts the conversation, similar to swiping up on

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a story on a different platform because you see, Oh, this person's in next location and I can swipe up and, you know, talk to them.

We do it through time and through the calendar.

And people were hacking that behavior.

In the beginning, you would go to someone's profile and say, Oh, they have, you know, free period, period three.

And I see on my calendar, I have period three.

So let me, let me go message them.

And, um, on a different app because we did enough chat back then.

And, you know, we, we could start that conversation.

We saw that profile viewing throughout the school day, really profile viewing.

I mean, viewing people's calendars, their schedules was extremely, uh, or retentive behavior and we did a lot of user research and we said, Hey, maybe we could take this to the home screen and make it so that to the second, you can see where people are.

Uh, and of course, you know, you have a friend graph on Saturn.

So it's very private.

If you want to not share your time location with people, you don't have to.

And Saturn does not use your physical location.

We only do it through the calendar.

So it's actually much safer than a lot of the other products out there, which track your location 24 seven.

We don't do that.

We might use it once in onboarding to pick what school you go to.

But other than that, uh, it really doesn't rely on physical that long.

Got it.

And just going back to launch, just moving from Staples High School to your first, like 10 schools, can you just talk through how you guys thought through the cold start problem and how, how you scaled in the first place?

So the, uh, it's important to mention that the app I built at Staples,

I graduated Staples and I went off, I went to go work at Tesla.

I was there from 2017 to 19 launched model three, built a lot of the, um, AI around supercharging and the internal and external tools for that and loved that ride.

So the point I'm making, I wasn't focused on this app.

It was in the background.

It was a high school project I had built.

I was at Tesla.

I was doing a dual degree at Penn, uh, and this was just a high school app.

But when, uh, I think, um, there was an article written in the daily Pennsylvania in the school paper about, um, the different project I had built and my now co-founder max messaged me on LinkedIn and reached out and said, Hey, you're doing full-time Tesla and you're, you know, doing tech and I'm doing

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full-time marketing for all these big companies.

Maybe we can team up and see if there's something worth building here.

And we were trading ideas back and forth and he noticed the Google analytics dashboard for the I staples app.

And he saw that the first year, maybe 35% of the school was active daily by the second year, 50% by the third year, 85%.

And he said, wow, that's step function increase in Dow over enrollment daily active users over all the students at the school was really going up year over year.

And that trend was something that was only continuing, but what was more interesting to him was this was two years after I had left the school.

So it had nothing to do with me.

And by no means was I the coolest kid in the school.

So I didn't think it had to do with me anyway.

Uh, but he said, why don't we try launching this at a different school and see if this is a phenomenon because you rather an anomaly that because you launched it at your high school, or if this utility would provide, uh, value to people at other high schools.

So for the first, you know, three weeks of, of kind of working with max and wanting to do that, we reached out to my cousin, Weston high school, uh, neighboring town, and he had already graduated, but he gave us his friend who was a current senior at the school and we worked with her for three weeks to understand how their calendars work, what was different, uh, how the app would need to change and some of the social dynamics in the school because we wanted to make sure we had a good idea of the environment we were getting into.

And a funny story now is that, um, original ambassador now works for Saturn four years later full time.

So we, we hired our first user and you know, she's amazing, but I think back then it was, it took three weeks to get the second school off the ground.

We had to cut a new build, duplicate the backend environments, make the whole app scalable.

It was all hard-coded for one school, the minute to Apple.

And once that got approved, she would market it to her friends, text the app and group chats and whatnot.

And 50% of the school got the thing in the first 48 hours.

And that to me was like, okay, this is something worth pursuing.

And then two weeks later, she gave us her friend at Greenwich High School, bigger high school, and the same thing, 50 plus percent in 48 hours.

That school grew faster.

Uh, and now, you know, Greenwich is one of our earliest and best schools on the platform, but it was, it was very motivating to see that this utility I

built for myself originally that was at Staples was now live in two other schools.

And we quickly expanded to maybe 10 other schools.

And then quickly after that 50, and that's when we said, Hey, if this thing

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might have some legs, we were flooded with demand at other schools.

We could not keep up, you know, at any remote sense.

And we wanted to create Saturn so that we can launch schools over the air without needing to one-off build them.

And then, you know, long story short, as investors got excited and we, you know, left school and haven't really looked back since.

Gotcha.

And now I guess fast forward to, to, uh, today, Saturn hit, uh, number two on the app store within social networking, right?

In early August.

And I think you guys maintain the top 10 positions since the outside of, you know, just strong execution, uh, what led to the surge?

The biggest thing that led to that surge was we, we really learned the user for four years and that is not something that I think a lot of other companies can say a lot of other companies, you have adults trying to guess what would be the next hot thing for young people, but I didn't want to start a company.

I just built a tool for myself and my friends wanted it and then the whole school wanted it and then other schools wanted it and then thousands of other schools wanted it.

And that layering up was, was how it happened.

But I think a lot of people, they just want to start a company and they want to do XYZ and talk to investors and this, none of that was the case.

We were even working full time.

So we didn't need to raise money until, you know, the demand got more exciting.

But we started off just with a couple ambassadors as they would later become.

These were friends and then friends of friends.

Then we built an ambassador program.

The ambassador program was critical in the early days because each school was different and at that point, each incremental school that we launched, we had to make hard coded changes to the app to support their school, whether it was as simple as letter days versus number days and then colors and other strings and whatnot, because the product would not support it.

And after we made all those changes and we started scaling more and we got to this point where each additional school no longer required those changes, then it was, we were able to grow a bit faster.

And, you know, the demand led, the organic word of mouth started taking over and we moved over, you know, the first two years from an ambassador led model where we were reaching out saying, Hey, you haven't heard of us.

We're this thing called Saturn.

Please launch our app at your school to kids pounding down the door in hundreds of thousands saying, Hey, we need this thing at our school.

Can you bring it to us?

And it was a fire hose.

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We could not keep up.

We had an ops team and we were doing everything manually.

And then over the last year, what led to the more accelerated growth is we made a few decisions.

We decided to build every school in the country before the school year started so that users would land literally land in the Saturn app on a live school that had all the school's data in it as opposed to going to a waitlist.

If you go to a waitlist, you churn, it's boring.

But if you log in and everything's there, you can invite your friends.

You can share your schedule.

You can set up your calendar.

Then it's really fun engaging.

And there's a pretty good chance you'll stick around for the whole year.

So that was what was different this year.

We also invested heavily in a lot of, you know, growth tooling in the product and making it really slick.

And then the team, the team is amazing.

I think we have a best in class consumer mobile team.

We just hired our VP product, who is a director at Snapchat.

We have growth leads from Uber and really the data science and taking the same data science approach we had at Tesla to a space that no one would expect data science to be in, which is more, you know, high school calendaring and kind of a this, you know, social network around the calendar.

That's what led to the flywheel this year.

And I think that the, as the product gets better, the word of mouth coefficient gets better, and we wanted to make something where anybody could use it, whether you are in the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, soon international.

And then going to college over the coming months is our next big milestone.

But very proud of the team for the growth that we've experienced.

And, you know, with that growth, we have to change the product a little bit and we have to make sure that it is just as valuable at one high school as everywhere.

But that's been the mission for the last four years to make sure that now every incremental student that joins gets the same experience as the first couple that did and, you know, as I did as the first user.

It's an amazing story and journey you've been on and congratulations for all your success. We should have said that up front.

I want to circle back when you were talking about uploading schedules into the app, you mentioned it's as easy as taking a picture and that was the result of embedding GPT for.

And so I'm curious how you're thinking about the application and the development process, given the ubiquity of AI tools out there today.

And, you know, if you've, it sounds like you've started to embed some, you know, AI features, but what else is on the roadmap there, given, you know, how

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profound this generative AI trend seems to be.

So our take on AI is we only want to use it to solve real problems or to widen our moat to do things that only Saturn can do better.

So we are not going to be the company where you will type in a prompt and it will generate a picture for you or it will make, you know, some animated video or whatever. Like I think those are great applications, but it sounds simple when I say it, but we use AI to build and maintain the largest network of high school calendars in the world.

You can think of it like ways for calendars.

So ways right now, they don't have an API, maybe that tells them where all the police are, the traffic accidents, it's all crowdsourced.

And we do the same thing.

That is how our network is able to stay up to date at scale.

And AI gives us data points faster.

You can literally take a picture of the modified schedule on the whiteboard, a screenshot of an email, as well as your personal class schedule.

It automatically gets into Saturn.

It accelerates the pace at which we collect that data set.

And then we have different polling mechanisms to pull the network to make sure, Hey, is it actually this day?

If enough people say yes, it then pushes it to the whole network.

You also don't need to sit through like an eight minute ad class flow where you're typing in, I have this class with this teacher and when we have auto completed and we made it easier, but now you just snap a photo of your schedule.

And we're rolling this out now.

We're still working through some of the kinks, but you will be able to just take a picture of your schedule and you're, you know, it's pretty magical.

Photo of your schedule, black and white piece of paper to, you know, digital class chats and a calendar that is magically set up and ignore the AI piece.

You can't even input your class schedule into another calendar because it's rotating, it's changing and it's not social.

If you go into a different calendar product and you try and type in a friend's name or the phone number, it will flash red.

It won't work.

You need to do an email.

And I think it's so archaic that the way we manage time still runs on email when I personally don't have most of my friends' emails.

I have my work colleagues' emails, but I don't have my friends' emails.

They're contacts of my phone, of phone numbers.

And I think that our longterm vision is to enable time together is to build the first network where everyone is on the same calendar, the same time graph, equivalent to how it worked.

You guys are on the same arc calendar and at Saturn, we're on the same Google

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calendar, but you should be on the same calendar with your friends because then you can know where to go, how to spend time together.

If one person's going to be near you tomorrow, you should know you get a little push and that's what we want to do.

We want to just reduce the entropy in the world a little bit and create those interactions, that spontaneity.

But back to the point around AI, you could also use it to take a picture of the school court board, the bulletin board in the building, and it will create structured events and share them with the whole school immediately.

You can use it to theme events.

You can use it to know who to hang out with and we can look at patterns based on who's free when and what events people are going to, to suggest how you should spend your time.

I think that will be the most profound use of AI we have, which is using it to give you just a little bit more information, just a little bit of an edge against the chaotic world we live in, to be in control of how you spend your time versus having others take it from you.

And then I have the bulletin board comment just sparked another question because you've situated this app and you've really targeted the student body, but there is the other side with faculty.

And so I'm curious how you think of the app and the use case for faculty, especially when it comes to messaging.

You, this is going all the way back to one of your answers, but you talked about snow days when I was in high school.

I'm a bit older than both of you, not by much, but a few years.

It was, you know, you, you went, you watched the local news and you just prayed that your school showed up at the bottom, you know, ticker.

My guess is, you know, Saturn is perfectly situated.

Just, you know, push, push notification.

Is that in place today or how is faculty responding to the app?

Are they using it?

Yeah, I would love, love to hear about that.

So first of all, as a high schooler today, you can be rest assured.

Saturn is the first place we'll find out about for snow day and all that functionality is built to get little, you know, snow angels in the app.

But then back to the point about the school, we took a bottom up approach because school is part of your day, but it's not your whole day.

And high school is part of your career and part of your journey, but it is only the beginning.

And we wanted something, again, to be your first calendar and also your last.

So you get Saturn, right?

When you, you know, become a freshman and now we onboard over 50% of US incoming high school freshmen every year.

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And as you get older, we want you to take it to college and we want you to take it beyond college.

And if this was some top down ed tech product, two things.

One is you wouldn't do that because the data would be owned by the school.

And just like any other ed tech product, you'd have zero loyalty to it.

And the second you are done with the school day or you leave high school or change schools, you'll be done with it and you'd use whatever boring system the school has.

The second is, you know, on the business side, the sales cycles and kind of, it just takes a long time to work with these IT departments and get into the schools.

So all the data we have is available publicly that gets in the app, course directories, you know, a list of teachers and all that stuff.

And then it's crowdsourced, right?

The students give us the first party data and they maintain that first party data.

So we have zero integrations with any learning management system.

And that allows us to build at our own pace and build for the user, not build for the school.

Now there are, you know, many teachers that use the product and get the same value out of it because they have to navigate the same chaotic school day as their students.

However, the main stakeholder, of course, is the student.

And we do a lot of work to make sure that only students are in the app.

So that means, you know, parents not on the app, outside members of the community, not in the app, teachers sometimes can have the same student email so they can verify and get in.

We're not actively doing work to remove them from the product, but at the same time, the feature set, the roadmap, the user stories are entirely around the student.

You talked about aging up with your students, right?

And just to clarify, are you present in any universities today?

Not today, but come, you know, first semester, end of first semester, second semester next year, we will be testing our college product.

Gotcha.

Gotcha.

Because I'm just thinking about my own freshman year experience, especially thinking about all the email in bounds, right?

That you got for all these different extracurriculars and events, right?

And.

Oh, yeah.

Box.

Good luck using it.

It was just a mess.

All those emails, job recruiters and teachers and those black and white newsletters and you couldn't manage anything.

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If you wanted to know what events were going on at Penn, for example, I could search my inbox and find an email at 100 bullet points and there was no website. And I didn't know if they fit with my schedule who was going to them. So I think Saturn's going to do better in college than it is in high school today. The reason we're focused on high school is we want to build a base. We want to learn.

I think when we get the user young, we really become a retentive product that they depend on and an integral part of their lives.

We take that responsibility seriously.

We want to build something that you form habits on and that you use from when you're 13 to when you become 18 and graduate.

And then, you know, when you go to high, when you go to college and then when you graduate college.

Yeah.

And there's certainly like incremental value in aggregating like more heterogeneous schedules, right?

In college.

If I have a friend in like a totally different major than me, then I definitely don't have a good sense of their schedule, right?

So could totally see it going viral in universities.

I guess in terms of just on the topic of user acquisition, just continuing on that.

Can you just talk about organic versus like paid user acquisition?

How Saturn has thought about that?

I'm assuming like majority organic, but any like, like, have you experimented with paid acquisition at all?

And like, what are some lessons learned there?

We do a tiny bit of paid.

We do it just to see the schools because we've moved off of ambassadors and it's more effective and also more, you know, cost effective to do a little paid versus trying to scale an ambassador program across the entire country.

We are a technology company.

We don't want to be, you know, managing hundreds of thousands of ambassadors across the country.

And, you know, we do maintain a core group of around maybe a thousand ambassadors for user research and, you know, on our test flight for quality assurance.

But we do a little paid to see paid is not bad.

You just need a very good ratio of paid performance acquisition to organic acquisition and Saturn has a very viral flywheel, you know, can't get the levels of user growth that we're spending and, you know, to be feeding top apps in the app store if you don't have that flywheel.

So we just use paid to see the school.

And then once the school is seated, users tend to, you know, invite their friends and it grows from there.

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Gotcha.

And I think this was made clear in when you were first introducing Saturn to, but I think it's quite unique that we have, you know, both utility and social in one, right?

And in certain ways, like I would certainly feel less, you know, guilty of spending too much time on Saturn, right?

As opposed to me spending too much time on Tik Tok, for example, because there is that productivity angle to it.

I'm just wondering, like, what does the competitive landscape look like for just in general, like social platforms with added utility?

What does that look like today?

And how do you see like social media evolving in the future?

Do you think they're all going to have to offer some sort of utility beyond entertainment?

I won't justify the existence of those platforms.

I would just encourage you to think about why some of those apps you mentioned, why they need to exist.

Is it to cure boredom?

Is it so that creators can monetize, right?

But, you know, I can't tell you with, you know, a certain level of confidence why a product like that needs to exist.

I can tell you why Saturn needs to exist in that you have to go to school, like until you're 16 in the country, you have to go to school every day.

And then, you know, most people tend to stick around for a little bit after.

And you need to manage it.

You need to know where to go, get to class on time, who to talk to.

And Saturn makes you a more productive individual and a more connected member of your community.

So I really feel strongly that the product needs to exist and that users are better citizens and better members of the workforce and the world because they use Saturn. Now, going back to the point about if every product will have a utility, I think, of course, they will.

You think about the social networks that we use back when we were in high school.

Those are not the same social networks we are using today.

And they are certainly not the same social networks that the current high school generation and young people are using today.

And I think that people, they're getting more savvy with technology at a younger age.

They're getting access to technology, getting their phones at a much younger age than when we had them simply because smartphones did not exist at the same level when we were in elementary school.

Imagine being an elementary school kid and getting access to all of the world's information, dangerous products, productive products, any, you know, myriad in between.

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And that's a lot of responsibility that those companies have.

And I think that parents and others are more turned off to just that firehose of news and information and misinformation and spreading that.

And what Saturn is, is it opens to a calendar.

It benefits you first and foremost.

You are the customer and we want to make sure that you get to class on time more and you have a more productive day, not that you click on X ad or that you see X piece of content.

And we are also seeing business models of companies that I really respect, such as say Snapchat or Discord, move to a utility based product where they offer single player value that is quite compelling.

And apart from the very dense and saturated social networks that launched a decade plus ago, you talked about the cold start problem.

It is very hard for a network without a single player hook and single player utility to get off the ground and that reverse K factor phenomenon, meaning if you have a product that relies on a graph of say one to small many.

So that's one to one, one to sub five.

You know, you tell me to join, I'll join, I'll use it with you.

But if you stop using it, I'm pretty likely going to stop using it as well.

And we've seen that happen to a bunch of the photo sharing apps over the last couple of months and years.

And we don't want to be that.

We don't want to take over the country in a night and we don't want that fast growth because it also means fast churn.

And what we've done over, you know, four years is we've had, we call it fast and steady growth and that we take over campuses very quickly.

And in the first year of a campus's life cycle, you might get, you know, a quarter of the school than half the school and it builds because it's an enduring utility.

And I think that it will be quite difficult for new companies and new networks to start with, you know, without solving that cold start problem that they don't offer the single player utility.

Now utilities typically don't grow virally.

Think of a calculator, right?

There are a dozen calculator apps out there, no proprietary data, no network, no moat, and they don't grow virally.

And think of some of the social networks out there that may create toxicity and don't have single player value.

Those may grow, but they certainly won't retain.

And it's always a lever in our product development process.

What is the single player mode of, you know, a new product initiative, new feature we want to build and what is the multiplayer mode?

Because you need that yin and the yang to really keep the product balanced and

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make sure we're not, you know, just using it for growth and that it does have enduring utility.

That's really helpful.

Thank you.

I guess maybe just one thing on the multiplayer mode.

I think we focused our conversation around intra school, communications and socialization and utility rate.

How is Saturn thinking about like inter school communications?

So in high school, your life revolves around your campus.

That is the intra school communication and features.

And Saturn started off and still does best in large public high schools in suburb communities because you're not hopping between different communities. You know, you're after school activities, your classmates, those are your friends, those are your groups.

That's where you're going to spend all your time.

As you go to college though, you're going to have all your high school buddies and you're going to want to talk to them.

They're going to be across the country.

So how do you make sure that you can share time with others and interact with anybody and inter school connectivity will be a big milestone that we will encounter and build functionality for as you grow up.

And the benefit of that too is as you age up, we can relax the security a little bit on who you can interact with because your graph is naturally going to be larger and you are more informed and you are in control of your data.

At the high school level, we do take privacy very seriously and we don't want anybody outside of the community to be able to interact with you.

Gotcha.

Maybe it's too small of a market, but I mean, I did go to high school in Manhattan and I always found, you know, those like mixers with like other schools, just so incredibly awkward.

So if a platform like Saturn could facilitate some sort of friendship on an inter school manner, um, probably would have found that really useful back then. But yeah.

You know, I remember I went to, you know, public school in Connecticut, but I had friends in the city from sleepaway camp and whatnot going to the city and go to those and yes, if you had a way to click on that event and see who was going there and see who you guys knew in common, uh, a little bit of what Facebook maybe used to be, but not that they're using that platform today.

Um, we certainly want to build that.

I think getting the core mechanics within the school really good.

And then doing the bridge.

So we want to densify the sub graph within the school.

So not just the school, but the groups, the clubs, the sport teams, get all

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that right within the school and then open it up between the schools.

So that is a little tease of, of where we're going to be going next.

Dylan, I have a one last question.

It's, it's a fun one.

Saturn, the name, where did it come from?

So Saturn is the Roman God of time and time again, most valuable resource.

You cannot buy more of it.

And we are a time company at our core.

Uh, and I think that the name reflects what the product does.

It also, I think is kind of a fun name.

Uh, and you know, we actually have a team internally called Jupiter, which I don't know why it's most ironic thing, but at Tesla, we use timekeeping software called Kronos, which is the Greek God of time.

So Saturn is the Roman God of time.

Gotcha.

Awesome.

Well, Dylan, this has been a really, really fun conversation.

And we're so excited to see what you and the Saturn team have in store as the platform continues to grow, whether it be through college or through, you know, school to school communications going forward.

Um, so thank you again for your time.

And, uh, are there any last comments that you'd like to leave, uh, for our listeners on Saturn?

No, I mean, Nick Andrew, thank you guys for having me.

Um, and yeah, I think that the last thing I'll say is we believe truly that products that augment existing behaviors rather than fabricate new ones need to exist in this world.

Uh, and that's true to our mission.

And I just would encourage people to, uh, use products that they think need to exist in this world and, you know, treat the time of young people very valuably as I think a lot of times, uh, business incentives and other companies are not always aligned with that.

And I truly feel that giving people time back in their day and making young people live more productive lives is, uh, I believe in it.

It's, you know, I wish I had this more when I was a kid.

And, uh, I think that all companies should, uh, should treat that responsibility, uh, pretty seriously.

Great.

Thank you so much, Dylan.

Thank you.

Thank you guys.

ARC believes that the information presented is accurate and was obtained from sources that ARC believes to be reliable.

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