

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / Building Anchor, selling to Spotify, and lessons learned | Maya Prohovnik (Spotify's Head of Podcast Product)

We were obsessed with reducing friction.

This was like our constant battle.

And so we hired a couple of college interns and we brought them in and we were like, people are going to push this magical one button in the anchor app.

And they're going to say, I want to distribute my podcast and your job is going to be to do all that same manual stuff manually.

But to them, it's going to feel magical and like it happened automatically.

I still don't know how many people know this.

I think people think that we had some secret backdoor deal with Apple for distribution.

But we just had college students making Apple podcast accounts and then submitting like hundreds of thousands of podcasts through these accounts.

And I think that was a really big part of why we got so much hosting market share so quickly because it was such an insane benefit over the other platforms, which otherwise had been sort of commoditized at that point.

Welcome to Lenny's podcast, where I interview world-class product leaders and growth experts to learn from their hard-won experiences building and growing today's most successful products.

Today, my guest is Maya Prohubnik.

Maya is Spotify's head of product for podcasting, where she oversees product design and engineering teams responsible for building the tools and experiences for podcasters and their listeners.

Maya was also employee number one at Anchor, which Spotify acquired about five years ago, which became the core of Spotify's podcasting hosting platform, which now powers over 75% of all new podcasts created in the world.

In our conversation, we dig into why Maya is obsessed with dog-fooding and why she encourages everyone on her team to create their own podcast.

She's got four podcasts of her own, which are all very highly rated and people love.

We dig into how she stays productive and organized in a very hectic senior leadership role,

what she's done to allow for Anchor to continue to operate like a startup within a larger organization,

also a bunch of really fun early Anchor stories, including how interns uploaded podcasts to Apple and Spotify manually before they could automate that,

plus how to find a balance between using your gut and using data to make decisions, also public speaking tips, so much more.

Maya is amazing and I'm really excited for you to hear this episode.

With that, I bring you Maya Prohavnik after a short word from our sponsors.

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Maya, thank you so much for being here and welcome to the podcast.

Thank you so much for having me.

You and I have been trying to get together for almost a year now.

Oh, man, but it all worked out. It's going to be very worth it.

You had a kid. I took parental leave.

Oh, right. That is true. Man, overlapping kid journeys.

I also have been just really looking forward to this chat, probably because you're amazing and partly because it just feels very meta to have the head of Spotify podcasting on the podcast.

And I imagine many people are listening to this on Spotify, so there's this turtles all the way down situation happening.

I totally agree. I was thinking the same thing when I was preparing for it, where it's like so much of what we have to talk about is so meta.

And then we also have you and I know each other, because you've been sending me feedback about the podcast experience on Spotify.

So lots of circular stuff there.

Speaking of Spotify and podcasting, clearly you've done an incredible job building podcasting on Spotify. From what I've read, it's the number one podcasting platform now.

Is there a stat you could share by just the percentage of the market share, essentially, of Spotify podcasting?

I think we are now officially over a third of global market share.

Of podcast listening, which is pretty insane.

That is insane.

Also, I think on the hosting side, it's an even bigger number.

Is there a stat you can share by just like maybe new podcasts that are launched and how many are hosted on Spotify?

Yeah. So I think at this point, it's more than 75% of all new shows on Spotify are hosted with Spotify for podcasters, which used to be Anchor.

When we were acquired by Spotify,

I think Anchor had already gotten to like 40% of all new podcasts or something crazy.

So yeah.

Insane. Okay. So for these reasons,

I want to spend the time that we have together unpacking

how you operate as a product leader

and essentially what you've learned about product, org, leadership, growth and all those things.

How does that sound?

That sounds perfect. My favorite topics.

Okay. Let's do it.

So as a first question, I asked a PM who actually works for you, Wilma Chu, what to ask you?

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And the first thing that came to mind for her was this idea of dogfooding and how important dogfooding is to your way of operating as a product leader.

As an example, you have three of your own podcasts on Spotify and I checked them out and they're all very highly rated.

So, you know, they're not just like bullshit podcasts, they're real.

People actually listen and enjoy them.

So my question to you is just why is dogfooding so important to you?

How do you actually operationalize it?

And then also maybe just talk about these podcasts that you have.

Sure. Well, I can talk about them forever, so be careful

because I'll take up the whole hour with that.

But I actually have four podcasts.

There's two that I don't update as much anymore.

So my first ever podcast was about Stephen King books.

I'm a big Stephen King superfan.

So when I joined Anchor, and we weren't even fully podcasts yet, if you recall, we were sort of like something else audio.

We were trying to avoid being podcasts for a while and then we decided to just be podcasts.

But when I got into audio and trying to help audio creators,

the first thing I did was make my own podcast

because I was like, I know nothing about production or what it feels to even be a creator in that way.

And so I started my Stephen King podcast

because that is the number one thing

that I just love to talk about every day,

which is one of my tips for podcasters.

If you're trying to figure out what to make a show about, it's what can you talk about forever?

So I did that one for a while.

I actually spent a ton of time editing it.

I spent a ton of time on SEO and marketing it.

And it got to the point, I think at its peak,

I was getting like 5,000 listeners an episode, which now seems small for a podcast, I know.

That's very legit.

But for a test podcast that I was just doing to learn how to do my job,

I was so excited to get that audience.

And I fell off because, well, mostly I had a kid.

I joined Spotify.

My life's really busy.

And that level of production is so hard to do

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if it's not your full-time job.
But I still get emails all the time
from people who are like, please bring it back.
I never found another great Stephen King
because I really got deep into the books
and the connection between the books.
So that was one of them.
The second one I did, I'm still going today.
So my husband and I have this Big Brother podcast,
the show Big Brother.
It's terrible.
I would not recommend listening to my podcast
unless you are a Big Brother super fan.
And I actually started that one
because I wanted to get the other end of the spectrum
where something we were really focused on
with Anchor at the time was first-time creators
really growing the pie of podcasters.
And specifically, we had this theory
that podcast creation of the future would be mobile first.
And we had this really high-powered mobile app.
And so I was like, I'm going to make a podcast
that's fully mobile, not highly edited,
not worry about making something
that sounds like a traditional podcast.
And I really leaned into all the Anchor features.
So it's fully recorded on my phone.
I do almost no editing.
But I think the thing that's kept us going
because it's been like six or seven years now
we've been doing the show,
it's really the community, like the people who call in.
I have no idea who these people are.
I have no idea how they found this terrible show,
but they love it.
They call in every week.
And that, I think, is one of the many things
I've learned from dog fooding,
a podcast creation app is like,
that community piece is so important.
Like, if you don't know if anyone's listening,
if you don't know what they like about it,
if you don't know if they're coming back,

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it's so hard to keep investing the time.
And then I made a show, my least known podcast,
because it only got like 25 listeners for episode.
It's about my favorite book of all time
called Children of Time.
It's actually a trilogy.
And the reason it got almost no listeners
is because there were tons of spoilers in the podcast
and the book is like 800 pages long.
So we were like, do not listen if you haven't read the book.
So it was very niche,
but I think it's a really good podcast
if you've read Children of Time.
And then my last one I just started doing
a couple of years ago is about parenting.
And so I have a son who's two and a half now
and we sort of have been documenting our journey
as parents all the way from, we went through IVF,
so starting with sort of like fertility.
I have a really fun episode about childbirth
if people are interested in that sort of thing.
And then ever since then,
it's just been episodes about the transition to parenthood,
which has not been particularly easy for us.
And now my son's a toddler.
So lots of fun things happening there.
You're not there yet, but you will be.
And then you can listen to my toddler episodes.
Listen to like the next few months ahead to learn.
Yes, I think that's a good tactic.
Yeah.
Before we talk about dogfooding,
have you ever considered going full-time on this stuff?
There's always like an option for people.
And clearly you've done great at two,
like at least two podcasts, you're killing it.
I have not.
And I think it's just, it's so funny
because I, with my parenting podcast too,
and even my terrible big brother podcast,
like I get compliments all the time
and people are like, I love listening to this.
You and my husband also is like a really funny

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and a really good podcaster.

But I don't know why I don't think of myself as a creator.

I think to me it still feels like this exercise

where it's like, I'm making my podcast,

but I'm really doing it so that I can learn about our product

and get in the mindset of a creator.

So I think the problem is I'm just too much of a product person.

It's more, it's a means to an end for me instead of the end itself.

But that is an interesting question

because I know most people who podcasts,

their ultimate goal is obviously to be able to do it full time.

And I, that is interesting that I have.

You have a good backup plan of things, if anything.

I guess so, yeah.

Off the rails.

Awesome.

Okay.

Just coming back to this idea of dog fooding,

where does that come from for you?

What have you learned about just how to execute that?

It's just always been my natural state.

I've had a handful of different product jobs

and I guess they've all been sort of tangentially related

to helping creators or creative people.

And so I think for me, it's like,

I don't know how you can build those tools

if you don't understand that mindset.

I'm not surprised that it came to Wilma's mind

when you asked her what to ask me

because I am constantly yelling at my product team

who do not have podcasts and being like,

I really don't think that you can build the right things.

If you're, you know, they talk to users all the time,

they see the data,

but all of them, once they finally start doing their podcasts,

they're like, I get it, like something clicked.

And now I feel like I really understand what they need.

And I think, I guess like building tools for creators

is similar to building a B2B product

where you really have to understand it's someone's business.

It's their livelihood.

And so I think if you're just looking at a list of feature requests,

you're not necessarily going to prioritize it in the same way

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as if you deeply feel those problems.
And I think for me, I don't know if I mentioned this to you,
but when I first got into tech,
I started in customer support,
like that was how I got into product.
And so I think I just am a very user focused product person.
I think there's different schools of thought for product.
And for me, it's always been about, you know,
making people happy, making their experience better,
solving real problems in their lives.
And so for me, like becoming one of the users,
I think it's made it so much easier for me to advocate
for that being, you know, a pretty big chunk of the roadmap.
Because I think if you don't have that,
especially coming from someone in leadership,
it's so easy to just fall into that trap of like,
well, we're working on the next big strategic thing,
which is two years away.
And then in the meantime, your users are getting no value.
And then they're just going somewhere else.
So I don't know.
I think it's just, it's really important to me.
It makes sense to me.
And I also, I'm not sure how else I would do product.
I've never really not done it that way.
Reminds me that Airbnb Brian was a huge advocate of
on the host side of the product is like,
you need to be a host.
But many people couldn't because they didn't have a place
that could be hosted.
Is there anything you've learned about just how to
make this a thing that actually works effectively
way to operationalize this for people listening that are like,
oh, I should start encouraging my team to do.
I'm constantly reminding our team to do this.
And then we, I think that also comes from the other people
who are doing it.
So like, we really elevate the people on our team
who have their own podcasts.
We help them tell their stories internally.
Whenever we do an offsite or like any sort of team activity,
we'll always incorporate podcast creation or like some way
of making sure everyone on the team is using the tools.

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I think also, I don't know.
I think a lot of it just comes from,
I'm so vocal about this stuff.
Like the other night I was recording a podcast and I
DMed one of the engineers on our team and told him about
this like tiny little iOS bug.
And he was like, why are you DMing me about this at like
nine o'clock at night?
I think I was also supposed to be on vacation.
I can't remember.
But then it's like he got the bug fixed the next day.
And so I do think like making that something that's really
top of mind for the team that we do need to fix problems
that these things matter.
I don't know.
I always listen to the podcast that my team makes.
So it's sort of like, I know they're going to get at
least one listener.
And then I think also, I try to, I think because I
understand a big part of building tools for podcasters
is understanding all the barriers to entry.
Like it's actually a really difficult thing trying to
get someone to put their voice out there,
share their story.
It's a really kind of emotional journey.
And so I feel like I've tried to turn some of the things
that I've learned about podcasting into, I've never
written it down.
Maybe I should, but I have sort of a, like a playbook
that I'll tell people when they're considering making
their own podcast.
So it's just things like, don't try and record by
yourself, find a friend, you know, like that's a much
easier way to get into it.
Or, you know, don't follow a script because then
you're going to feel really awkward and uncomfortable
and not feel good about it afterwards.
Or don't just record a test thing for 30 seconds
in publish it because then you're not actually, you
have to kind of make yourself feel the pain that
we're trying to understand in our users.
What's cool about that is that could turn into just
like onboarding education.

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Like basically your experience of making a podcaster informs how to help new podcasters become successful.

Totally.

Yeah.

And I also, I mean, one of my, this is less about dog footing, but one of my favorite things is like, I'm always just trying to convince everyone I meet to start a podcast.

That's just become my annoying thing.

And so it's like, if I'm interviewing someone for a job or if I'm at a party and mingling with people, it's like somehow the conversation always turns to their passions.

And then I'm like, you should make a podcast about it.

And then they're like, well, I can't.

And then I work my way through all the reasons they say they can't do it.

And then they go start a podcast.

So I'm like one person at a time.

I see how you're growing the platform now.

Yes, exactly.

Very unscalable hand-to-hand combat at parties.

Yes.

I get it.

Okay.

One thing you mentioned about being maybe the only listen of your coworkers podcast reminds me, there's this platform where you could find Spotify music that has never, ever been played once.

And you could be their first play and you just kind of go through.

That is so cool.

It's like very touching, right?

Yes.

I haven't seen that.

And now I'm like, how can we productize that for podcasters?

That's such a cool thing.

Anyway, another area that I've heard you're really strong at and came up with Willmine, a few other people I talked to,

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is you find a really good balance between being very data-driven and also very gut-driven.

And this is something a lot of product leaders try to get better at.

And so I'm curious, just what have you learned about trying to find that balance?

And also, is there an example of something where you kind of went against the data and went with your gut and it worked out?

If you remember the old days of the internet, I feel like there was really this different way of thinking about product development where it was so much more about what felt good and what made you sort of feel something as a user in that product.

And so it's like, we used to be a lot more playful, I think, with software.

I think we used to put a lot more emphasis on things like delightful animations or fun little Easter eggs.

And I'm not sure when or where that got lost, but it feels like as product management as a role has gotten sort of formalized and become a little bit more scientific, I'm generalizing.

But I think a lot of product managers can be so focused on using the right frameworks and making sure that they have the right roadmap and all of this stuff.

And then it's like you find yourself in this cycle where you're just building things to build them and not really thinking about the connection to the end user.

You know, I think data is amazing.

And I'm like, we have such an incredible insights team at Spotify, both my insights team and then the broader one.

I think we are so, so lucky.

And we have so much knowledge about our users and different cohorts and what people need and what they're missing.

And so I think that's extremely valuable.

I think where people get into trouble

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is when they think that they can rely solely on the data.
And so what I spent a lot of time talking to my team about
is how we can balance that.
So thinking about, I guess a couple of general things
I would say are there are right and wrong times, I think,
for both for your gut and for data.
And then there are lots of different kinds of data
and different ways to use that data.
So I think when you're in the trap of just sort of being like,
well, this is like the process we always have with insights.
And we're just going to run this every time we have a feature.
Like, I don't think you're going to have a great time.
I think if you think of it as part of the creative process
as a PM where you're like, you know, I have a hypothesis.
I have some data that is helping me understand
that hypothesis in the first place
or form it in the first place.
Then I'm going to do some user research
and try a couple things and see what works for people.
Then I'm going to make sure that we have success metrics
and that we know what we're looking for when we launch.
Then we're going to follow, et cetera.
So I think there's different times and places
for all the different types of data collection that you can do.
The other thing I would say is something
that I have had to learn as a leader,
especially as part of a larger organization.
You know, when we were a startup,
Anchor was like 20 people when we got acquired by Spotify.
And by the way, Spotify is my first big tech company,
so I've always been at startups.
So I've learned a lot about that.
But when I was leading product at a startup,
it's like we're a small team.
We're really focused on moving quickly.
There isn't a whole lot of stopping to ask
like what data is supporting this
or it's just sort of like we talked to some users
and we're like, great, that's a problem.
We're just going to go and fix it.
And I think at Spotify, there's obviously,
at places like Spotify, I mean large organizations,
there's obviously a lot more people

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that you need to coordinate.
There's a lot of people you have to influence that aren't on your immediate team.
And so I think something that I've had to learn is that being gut-driven isn't the same as just saying to people, I told you so, or like I believe this, so you have to do it. There really is an art, I think, to balancing that. And I think that what I try to do is always still as objectively as possible explain why my gut is feeling that way. So it's like you can refer back to your years of experience or other things that you've done that have been similar. You can talk about your experience as a user, testing this stuff. You can bring in stories and anecdotes from users to help back it up. And so I have found that that works obviously a lot better. And I think that in the times that either I have done this or I've seen other leaders do it, where they're just sort of like, well, we're just going to do it this way, even if you guys don't agree or if the data says something different. Those projects are always immediately doomed from the beginning. They're never going to work. You can't sort of drag all these people through something that they don't believe in. So I think that I would think of your gut actually as a type of data. And I think it's a totally valid one. And it's just, I think you need to be clear that that's what you're working with, but then it should be taken as seriously as any other data point. So I try and think of it that way where it's like this should all ideally kind of work together. And obviously the more data you have and the more types of data you have, the more convincing you're going to be and the more right you're going to be. So I think it all helps.

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There were so many of these in the early days of Anchor because I don't even know, I don't think we had a data scientist until we were part of Spotify. So I think it was just sort of engineers like, running queries, but there were a couple of times where we had to kind of like move Anchor from like 1.0 to 2.0, and then from 2.0 to 3.0, we did these like big, I don't like to call them pivots, but sort of like evolutions, let's say, of our product or our strategy. Terminology also very important when you're trying to convince people of things. So I think when I was thinking about those big transitions for us as a team, I think both times we had these sort of like big moments with our teams where we had to get everyone on board with making these big changes. So with Anchor 1.0, I don't know if you remember, but it was like actually similar to what Clubhouse I think just rebranded to, like more sort of like voice messaging and short form and like more about connections between people. And that was the first thing we ever launched. And people loved it. Like people were very excited about it. The data was all good. Like we had extremely retained users. We anecdotally, we were hearing all this stuff from users all the time that they were like staying up all night to use the app. People were meeting each other and falling in love and getting married on our platform. Like all of these really kind of magical things. And we were seeing like the user base was growing consistently. But I think we had this feeling and then when I say we, I mean mostly like Mike and I at the time, Mike was our CEO, that it just wasn't ever going to be big enough. And so we had this really interesting moment

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where the users were all telling us,
there's no problem.
Like we love this product.
They were using it every day.
They were coming back.
It was slowly growing.
And we were just like,
this just isn't going to get us to where we need to be.
Like our original goal had been,
we wanted to democratize audio.
We wanted to make it something
where anyone could easily tell their story.
And we were like,
if we keep sort of digging ourselves into this niche
that a small number of people really, really love,
that's great.
But that's not really like the mission
that we sent out to solve.
And so the 1.0 to 2.0 transition was,
I think actually pretty painful
because for all of those people who had been invested in 1.0,
like 2.0 didn't work for them.
2.0 was much more about like content creation
and making more of like a radio station.
And it was less about telling your personal story
and sort of close relationships
and more about kind of projecting
and using different tools.
Anyway, so we made that call,
I think pretty much just on gut.
And it was like, this is a business decision.
Like this is where we think the next phase needs to be.
When we built anchor 2.0,
it was a lot more like the tools that we wanted to use
even though it wasn't what the user base was asking for.
So I think that's one example of like,
sometimes your users are not gonna,
it's that whole like users don't always know what to ask for.
They don't always know like what problems
they need you to solve for them.
And so I think you really have to be able to like hear
what's behind it or really like,
even if the data is looking okay,

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think about if it's heading to where you need it to go.

Before you move on,

that's actually such an interesting story

because it's so hard to have a product

that's working that people love

and decide to change it completely.

Many founders are probably stuck in this

where they're just like, hey, this is sort of working.

We're feeling some fit.

Is there anything else you learned from that?

Because that's a really interesting insight

and it worked out in your case clearly.

It absolutely worked out.

I mean, I think it was a terrifying transition.

You know, it's like it takes,

it took us at the time,

it took us like a few months

to build a whole new app.

It takes longer now,

but the whole time we were building it,

we were like, we weren't sure if it was a mistake,

you know, and we would like go back and forth

and we would feel guilty

when we were talking to our users

about what they wanted us to be working on.

But I think it was one of those things

where as soon as we launched 2.0,

it's like our numbers started shooting up

and we started seeing like more kinds of people

were using it

and people were suddenly using it

in the way that we had always imagined,

like sort of as a replacement for the old school,

you know, like very difficult

to make traditional podcasts.

I don't know, I guess the lesson is

you have to be able to sort of tell the signal

through the noise

and even if you've got lots of vocal users

asking for something.

We used to have this rule, the 80-20 rule,

where it's like you can't just build for that 20.

I don't think we made this up, by the way.

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I think this is a common thing,
but we would always refer to it
and say like we want to be building for the 80%.
And even though the 20% are going to be more vocal,
that's just going to like get you deeper
into that whole of like that problem
of you're not really building for everyone.
And I think particularly when you're trying to build
a creative platform,
you're trying to democratize something
and your target user is everyone on the planet,
I think you really have to be willing to kill your darlings
and let things go
when they're not getting where you need them to be.
That's probably the most common case,
is something is working,
but it's not working incredibly well.
What do we do?
And so that's really interesting.
I feel like the first thing you said there
is really important of just like,
we had a much bigger mission and vision.
And even though this is working,
this is never going to get there.
Like there's no path to building a massive business.
I do think that's so important.
And I give a lot of credit to Mike and Nir,
our co-founders I think were,
they really knew what they wanted to do
when they started the company.
And they were very firm on that
and never never varied that throughout the years,
throughout the acquisition.
And so I do think not everyone's goal
is to build like a massive,
you know, multi-billion dollar world changing business.
Like that's okay if that's not your goal,
but if that is your goal,
you know, you have to stick to it.
And you have to,
it's really hard,
but you have to keep pivoting to get to where you want to be.
You're darlings.

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I love that phrase.
I use it all the time.
I think you had a second example.
I have a couple of other questions that were anchor,
but did you want to share another example?
I can just quickly,
my second example was,
so we actually had to do it again.
So we went from anchor 1.0 to 2.0.
We were like, that was totally the right call.
And then anchor 2.0,
we were still in this phase where we,
we would always joke about it
because people would be like,
oh, it's kind of like making a podcast.
And we would be like, it's not a podcast
because we're trying to be bigger than podcasts, right?
Because we were like, at the time, 2015,
there were still so few people podcasting.
It was still so, so hard to do.
And so we originally were really stuck
on this idea that podcasting was going to be limiting
and that we wanted to be the next thing.
In the early days of anchor,
we had all this nautical terminology.
So we would call them waves.
And I don't remember what else,
but we had cute nautical terms for everything
because we were trying to resist podcast
and podcaster in those things.
And when we launched anchor 2.0,
we started getting all of this really great traction.
And the number one feature request
that we got from people is they were like, great,
I love using these tools.
And then I want to export it as a podcast
and publish it and get people listening that way.
And we resisted it for probably,
I don't know, six months or something.
And we were like, absolutely not.
That's not what we're doing.
And I think that one was such an interesting lesson
because we had just sort of learned

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that we did the right thing
by not listening to our users.
So for a while, we dug in and we were like,
that's not the direction we're going in.
They don't know what they actually want.
And then when we decided,
I think we started with like, oh, we'll do a little test
and let people export as podcasts and see what happens.
And when we look back at our data,
that's the moment when we saw
the beginning of that hockey stick growth
where it's like, we had been growing.
We had been doing well.
And then you zoom out and you're like,
okay, that was very clearly the thing we were missing.
Yet again, we had to sort of like stop what we were doing.
We rebuilt the entire app.
We built it around RSS and podcasting
and being able to export.
And we actually did some really cool things
to make it really easy for people
to publish their podcasts everywhere.
And yeah, so I think that was really the moment
that it took off.
And I think it's so interesting putting
those two things together
because it was kind of the opposite thing the second time
that we had to give up on a piece
of what we had thought was so inherently true
about our business.
And so I don't know what lesson
to tell people to take away from that
other than like, I think you have to just stay,
especially in a startup mentality,
like you have to stay willing to be flexible
and like take in new information and new data points.
Like as your product matures
and as your user base changes,
there's gonna be new things that you learn
that are gonna change how you think about it.
And I think again, like the one thing
that was unwavering for us was our mission
and everything else was kind of mutable for us

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where we were like, whatever we need to do to get there, we'll work.

And I do think looking back, it's kind of astonishing how brave we were that like we kept sort of finding some product market fit and being like, nope, that's not enough for then moving to the next thing.

And I think that obviously, yeah, worked out really well for us and meant that we were able to do what we set out to do and really democratize the medium and make things a lot easier for a lot more people.

I think another lesson there is just like try stuff.

Like you said, you tried this export thing.

Let's just see what happens.

No, we don't think this is where we need to go, but let's just try it and maybe it'll work.

And clearly that became the core of the product platform.

And you also like, you never know which of those tiny product changes are gonna end up being this existential moment for your business.

Like you really have to kind of keep your eyes open and be ready for that to happen anytime, especially when you're still trying to figure out where your place is gonna be.

You mentioned there was this feature that made it easy to distribute your podcast and this touches on a question that actually asked Mike, Mignano, the CEO of Anchor, what to ask you.

And he's like, ask her about the story of how you made that actually possible to distribute the podcast to platforms.

And it ended up being like a very unscalable solution.

One of our principles from the very early days of Anchor was build things that don't scale, where we were like, we're a ridiculously tiny team.

We're trying to do this really big thing.

We had raised very little money.

And so we were always just trying to figure out how can we sort of hack into whatever growth we're trying to make happen.

So when it turned out that people wanted

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to distribute their podcasts everywhere,
it's gotten a little bit easier.
But at the time, I'm sure you remember
what podcast distribution was like,
where it's like there's all of these different
podcast platforms.
You have to manually distribute to all of them.
Apple podcasts in particular can be really difficult
for people who aren't tech savvy,
because there's this whole like,
you have to prove that you own your RSS feed.
You have to know what an RSS feed is.
You have to sometimes deal with 301 redirects.
There's just all this stuff that's deeply technical
in a way that we were just like, it doesn't need to be.
And so one of the steps there was to submit
your podcast to Apple podcasts.
You had to have an Apple ID.
And there are a lot of people in the world
who don't have iPhones.
And so we're building for everybody.
So we were like, how can we reduce that friction?
We were obsessed with reducing friction.
This was like our constant battle.
And so we had this idea to,
we hired a couple of college interns
and we brought them in and we were like,
people are going to push this magical one button
in the anchor app and they're going to say,
I want to distribute my podcast.
And your job is going to be to do
all that same manual stuff manually,
but to them it's going to feel magical
and like it happened automatically.
I still don't know how many people know this.
I think people think that we had some secret door,
like backdoor deal with Apple for distribution.
But we just had college students
making Apple podcast accounts
and then submitting like hundreds of thousands of podcasts
through these accounts.
And that resulted in lots of interesting technical
and relationship situations.

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It was a really interesting thing.
And eventually like that didn't scale.
Eventually like we stopped doing that obviously.
But I think that is such a cool example of like,
the importance of how you're packaging
what you're offering to people
where if we had said like, you request distribution
and we'll have one of our team members
get back to you in three days
and let you know when you're on Apple podcast,
that doesn't feel very magical
or like it's really saving you any time.
If all you see as a user is you're hitting a button
and then 24 hours later,
you're somehow magically on Apple podcast.
Like that was so much easier
than manual distribution was at the time.
And I think that was a really big part
of why we got so much hosting market share so quickly
because it was such an insane benefit over the other platforms
which otherwise had been sort of commoditized at that point.
So it's funny now to think back on that.
But I think it's also related to,
we were so good at being willing to humor
what seemed like stupid ideas and try them.
And so that is something
that I definitely recommend to product people
is like, let yourself have the silly ideas.
We always talked about yes and like when someone has an idea
like how can you build on it
and think about how it might work
instead of saying no, that can't work because
and so we had a number of those things
where it was like nobody understood
how we were doing things so differently.
And it was just because we weren't afraid
to do the silly unscalable thing for a while.
I love that story touches on two things.
One is I was just doing an interview
around how to drive word of mouth growth
and make that a big driver of your growth.
And the main message there is just make something remarkable
and knock people socks off that they're just like,

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oh, wow, this is crazy.
I'm going to share with my friend
and that's such a good example of that
where everyone's like, wow, that was easy.
I'm going to tell all my other friends
that are launching podcasts.
The other is I wonder just how much of tech
is built off of college interns,
like the beginnings of companies
or like how important college interns are
to like technology and innovation.
Feels like there's always an intern story.
Yeah, I know.
I think they must be.
And for the record, we paid them very well.
These were not unpaid interns just to be clear,
but no, I think it is amazing.
And I think it was also such a cool opportunity.
Like one of those interns actually
is still a PM on my team today.
She ended up converting to full time after she graduated.
And I think it's, I remember, you know,
like I had a lot of cool college internships
and it's such a cool way to get exposure
to industries that you otherwise wouldn't get to.
So I would definitely recommend
that college kids start with like, you know,
it's okay if that your first job
is sort of like a repetitive, not very exciting thing
because if you do a good job,
it will lead to something very exciting.
I love that.
Imagine a place where you can find
all your potential customers
and get your message in front of them
in a cost-efficient way.
If you're a B2B business, that place exists.
And it's called LinkedIn.
LinkedIn ads allows you to build
the right relationships,
drive results, and reach your customers
in a respectful environment.
Two of my portfolio companies,

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Webflow and Census, are LinkedIn success stories.

Census had a 10x increase in pipeline

with a LinkedIn startup team.

For Webflow, after ramping up on LinkedIn and Q4,

they had the highest marketing source revenue quarter to date.

With LinkedIn ads, you'll have direct access to and can build relationships with decision makers, including 950 million members,

180 million senior execs,

and over 10 million C-level executives.

You'll be able to drive results

with targeting and measurement tools

built specifically for B2B.

In tech, LinkedIn generated a 2-5x higher

return on ad spend than any other social media platforms.

Audiences on LinkedIn have two times

the buying power of the average Web audience,

and you'll work with a partner

who respects the B2B world you operate in.

Make B2B marketing everything you can be

and get \$100 credit on your next campaign.

Just go to LinkedIn.com slash pod Lenny

to claim your credit.

That's LinkedIn.com slash pod Lenny.

Terms and conditions apply.

So we've been talking about Anchor,

and I think what's really interesting about Anchor

is it's one of the very rare success stories

of an acquisition working out incredibly well.

Like, it was a small startup now powering

two-thirds of all new podcasts.

It's pretty insane.

So I want to spend a little time

on just what worked in making that possible.

So let me ask first around the integration piece,

just like how you integrated successfully.

And then I want to talk about just operationalizing,

making it continue running successfully.

Totally.

Yeah. So on the first piece, just like,

what did you do right to integrate

Anchor into Spotify to make it effective

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and continue working?

I think it's sort of a combination of luck and hard work because Spotify is genuinely an amazing...

I mean, you've met now a bunch of people who I work with at Spotify, including my boss Gustav.

It really is.

It's an incredible company.

They're Swedish.

So like just their mindset about everything in the first place is kind of amazing.

But they're also...

Like, I have been so impressed that they are the type of company that can still move quickly and make really big strategic decisions and strategic shifts.

Like, it never feels like they're slowing down.

And so I think our way of working sort of worked with them.

And then I think the other thing that we had to our benefit was they really saw the same vision that we had.

So it was like,

they also wanted to change podcasting and make it more democratized and make it more two-way and bring it into the future.

And it was so interesting because when we started talking to them, we had...

Both of us had this chicken-or-egg marketplace problem where we had this critical mass of creators.

They had a critical mass at that point of consumers.

But if you don't have both on the same place, then you're still stuck with the limitations of RSS feeds.

And so I think we were both coming at the acquisition with the same frustration just from two different angles.

And so both of us really saw that benefit in joining up.

And so I think one of the big ways we were lucky is that what I've seen happen in a lot of acquisitions is you have sort of an idea of what you're getting acquired for

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and you get excited and really attached to that vision.
And then when that vision doesn't end up
fitting into the company strategy,
there's nowhere else to go.
And I think in a lot of ways,
Anchor did really well fit into Spotify's culture
and their roadmap.
But there were many things that changed
around that initial vision.
And I think we were really good at making sure
that we stayed valuable to Spotify.
Like that was one of our goals when we got acquired
where we were like, we're tiny startup people
and we're like, we're not going to get lost in this big sea.
When we came in, it was like,
we were very vocal about everything that we were doing.
Like we did lots of internal marketing
and made sure people were excited.
We built a lot of really strong relationships.
Like we made sure that every team at Spotify
knew about us and what we were doing.
We were constantly asking how we could help other teams.
And when the strategy shifted,
which it has dozens of times
since we've gotten acquired almost five years ago,
we were not like we just sort of blindly followed,
but we were always like,
willing to get excited about whatever the next thing was
and willing to be helpful and figure out how to make that work.
And I think it actually goes back to the,
like sticking to the mission in the first place
where Spotify and we want podcasting
to be able to be a huge business for the industry.
Like we think it's been held back
by a lot of things for a long time.
And so we've had various hypotheses
about how we can get there
and we try things.
And if something doesn't work,
we go on to the next thing,
but that goal hasn't really changed.
That makes a lot of sense.
And I love the idea of just like staying excited about

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what is happening.

I think a lot of founders join and are like, so annoying to work in this big company.

Oh man, we have this original plan.

It's just like not happening.

And I think, and even if you're probably not, even if you're not excited,

I think it's effective to communicate that you're excited and like be on board and then shift things in the direction you think maybe you need to go instead.

Totally, yeah.

Okay.

And then in terms of operating within Spotify, from what I understand, your team is still very startup-y and there's this like really fast moving mentality.

What have you learned and how do you do that?

How do you make that happen within a larger company?

We've definitely slowed down a little,

I will say.

I'm always joking about when we first got acquired,

I remember we had to do this spreadsheet outlining our roadmap and like estimate, are things like small, extra large, whatever.

And Spotify's definition of small was something like a quarter.

And I was like, we've never built anything that took more than three months.

And now it's like,

now we've built lots of things to take more than three months.

But the first thing that comes to mind,

so when we were a startup,

like one of the first things we did

when we were only a few people,

we decided what our core values were going to be.

And I think they maybe very trivially

have changed over the years,

but we essentially still have the same four core values that we decided on seven or eight years ago now.

And when we got acquired,

we had a conversation with our team where we said, you know, we're going to, of course,

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embrace Spotify's culture and Spotify's core values,
but we're not going to forget who we are as a team.
And I think part of what really,
and one of our core values,
by the way, is move fast.
So that's something that's like very deep within our DNA.
But I think one of the things that helped with that
is Daniel when we got acquired,
came and talked to our team,
which was so cool and like so motivational.
And one of the things he said to us was,
you know, we had a reputation at the time
for moving very quickly,
even compared to other startups.
Like we were shipping a new feature every two weeks.
It was sort of insane.
And Daniel said to us,
not only do I want you to not move slower,
like that's part of why we're acquiring you
so that you can like move quickly.
But he said,
I also want you to help me teach the rest of Spotify
how to move more quickly.
And I found that so motivating,
because I think I definitely had that feeling
going from startup to larger organization
where I was like,
I had this fear that it was just going to be bureaucracy
and things moving so slowly.
And I really loved that that was one of his goals,
was that he was like,
I want to make sure, you know,
Spotify also grew really quickly
and he was trying to figure out how to help them
keep moving as quickly as they used to.
And so I think that's something that I really took to heart
and that I've continued to remind my team of
even to this day where I'm like,
that's,
I think of that as part of my job here
to help people think about
how we can move quickly
and what really matters.

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And I think at any large organization,
there's obviously a lot more complexities.
There's a lot more stakeholders.
So to some extent,
it's necessary to like slow down and be thoughtful.
But I think the things that I always try to push people on
is like the unnecessary things that slow you down.
So I think that's what we spend a lot of time on
both within our team
and when we're collaborating with other teams at Spotify
because we work with basically everyone at this point.
So I think that was really cool
that he sort of gave us that mission when we joined.
On that note,
is there anything that has been a real challenge
or become really annoying
just like real talk about the flip side of that?
You know, everyone's always like,
oh, it's all working out great.
Is there anything you could share that just like,
oh, wow, that was really hard and we ever came it
or real challenge that we didn't expect?
I think that the downside of Daniel's advice.
So one of the things he said to us,
he was literally like, say no to all the meetings.
Like you're going to get invited to all these like off sites
and meetings and everyone's going to want to meet you guys
and they're going to want you to come to all of these events
and whatever.
And he was like, just keep being anchor.
Like just keep doing what you're doing
for like at least the next year.
Don't worry about what Spotify is doing.
And on the one hand, of course, we loved that
as startup people were like, cool,
we're going to get to, you know,
stay us within this larger organization.
But the downside that we didn't really realize
until like a year later was that we didn't really,
we weren't really able to like build relationships.
We had some culture problems where our team
started to feel like because they weren't part of Spotify,
they had sort of some existential,

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like they didn't feel attached to the work that we were doing.
And so for like a year, we operate on our own.
We moved really quickly.
We were able to get a lot done.
But then I think our next phase had to be like really deeply incorporating into Spotify.
And so like we stopped calling our team anchor internally.
We started collaborating more with other teams.
And I think that is the necessary trade-off is like the more deeply you're embedded, the slower things are going to go.
But I think that has been really amazing for making sure that our team actually like felt like a part of the larger mission that Spotify was doing.
And the one other thing I'll say that I found pretty striking.
So Spotify, as you know, did a lot of podcast acquisitions soon after the anchor one.
And so I got to know a lot of the other founders and early employees who have been acquired by Spotify.
And something that I've found with them and just with other acquired founders who I've talked to since, I don't know.
I feel like people don't talk about this enough publicly.
Maybe people are somewhere and I just haven't seen it.
I think that people who get acquired, especially founders, actually go through a relatively deep sort of like depression and existential crisis after getting acquired.
And I never would have thought like, when you're talking to people about getting acquired, it sounds like such an obvious positive.
Like you said, it's like this amazing positive exit.
And it was like, it was objectively so good for our team and for us and for our users and for, I think, for the industry.
And I personally did not expect to go through that because it's like, of course you want an exit.
That's what you're working towards that whole time that you're a startup.
And I've talked to a lot of these founders and I think it is sort of a process.
I think that everyone has to go through because either you decide, I'm going to stay here and I'm going to do this for a long time and I can make this work for me.

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Or you're like, I'm just a startup founder
and this doesn't really work for me and I'm going to go do my next thing.
And so I think to some extent that does sort of,
some of the things we were talking about,
I think do help shake out whether people actually want to make those investments
and figure out how to make things work at a big company.
But I think the other thing that I've found is just like,
I think there isn't enough support for that transition.
And I think that for me, I've definitely landed on the side of,
I love working at Spotify.
I now am so excited to be part of a large organization
and building things at this scale.
But I really would have loved to have been able to talk to someone about it
or understand that there were other people going through that kind of thing.
So I don't know, if you want an example of how it's not all rainbows and sunshine,
I definitely think there were some dark times there.
And I've since learned everyone goes through that just because I think just by definition,
all the reasons that you start a company are like,
that means your personality is someone who wants to be having that direct impact
and having your own ownership and being able to make things move quickly.
And that is just so different once you join a large organization.
Yeah. And those are amazing examples.
I think what's interesting with startup life is eventually if things work out well,
you will either end up working for a larger company.
Like that's a likely scenario if things go great.
Or you're running a public company, which is also extremely painful and stressful.
Yes, exactly.
Yeah. So the paths are hard, no matter what you end up doing,
as much as you love that startup time.
I actually went through the same thing when we sold our company to Airbnb.
I was just like, man, I had this life goal of starting a company.
And now I've done it. And now what do I do?
And it was just like, huh, okay, I guess I gotta figure it out.
Right. It's like, who am I?
And I think the thing that I think for me, and it sounds similar to you,
I think I didn't realize how much value I put in the actual day-to-day of survival
that comes with being part of a startup.
Like that becomes almost your reason for being is like,
I gotta make this work and I gotta keep the team motivated and you're just like going,
going, going, going. And then when everything is suddenly stable,
you're like, wait, what? What is my job now?
I saw a tweet actually recently, I forget who tweeted this, that
CEOs that exit and go on vacation end up being more stressed and less healthy

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than running a really high stress, high growth company.

That is wild. I get it though.

Although I will say when I joined Airbnb and was just like the PM of our team working on one thing, it was like, this is really cool kind of story about everything all the time.

I know.

But there's a really nice relief to that.

But yeah, there's like a life existential question.

It was just like, wow, we did the thing.

What am I?

Totally.

What else?

There's usually not like a goal beyond that.

Totally.

What was it for you? Was it that?

Was it the feeling of I had this thing that I was running and now I don't?

I think it was a little bit the fear of being sort of like a cog in a wheel, which is not actually how I feel like now that I work at Spotify.

And I think the other was like, we were doing great.

Like we already were killing it at podcast hosting.

And I also, it was just so fun.

You know, like I really valued that like small company.

Everyone knows each other.

We're like doing really hard work, but we're also having so much fun.

And I think it felt like I couldn't translate that to a large organization where I was like, okay, now I have to do things how they do.

And then I think what actually ended up happening is like,

I actually love how Spotify runs their company.

And I'm still able to run my team the way that works for me.

And so I think it just goes back to like knowing what you care about sort of like being really solidly attached to your own core values and being able to take that with you.

I think we're both examples of people that were started people and then realized it's not so bad working at a big company.

Like I stayed at Airbnb for seven years.

I was like, no, no way I'm going to be here for more than a year and a half or a year or two.

How long have you been at Spotify at this point?

I'm going on five years.

Yeah. So it's like, I think this is just an example of it's, you think you're not going to enjoy working at a larger company, but oftentimes it's actually pretty great for a lot of different reasons.

Shifting in a slightly different direction, just kind of thinking about leadership and what you've learned to lead teams, lead large orgs, build products.

Is there any just like, I don't know, frameworks or tools that you found to be effective?

The big one for me is Radical Candor.

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And this, I'm just, I know my team watching this is going to laugh at me because I talk about this every day. They're tired of hearing it, but have you read it?

I have. I love it.

It's, yeah, it's like my all time favorite book.

And I think it just, it really shifted for me how I, honestly, like how I relate to people in general, but I think especially with managing, giving feedback, being able to collaborate and sort of like push back in a direct way, direct and constructive way on peers and that sort of thing. So I make all of my managers on my team read it.

We talk about it constantly in our team.

And I think that the general concepts for anyone who's not familiar is you need to care personally and challenge directly.

And if you're only doing one of those things, you're not giving feedback in an effective way.

And the book just talks so much about the importance of feedback and how feedback is a gift, which I have now come to completely agree with.

It's like anytime I've given someone effective feedback, it's always well received, even if it's tough to hear. People want to get better and they want to know, they want to know how they can improve. And so I think anytime that you can give them specific feedback in a way that makes it clear that you care about them and want them to be able to reach their goals, I think it makes them stronger, makes your relationship stronger.

And I also think the one other big thing I took away from Radical Candor was when it comes to people not underperforming, it really reframed how I think about that because it's like people are not generally inherently bad or lazy or ineffective.

It's almost always because the role they're in is the wrong fit.

And so being able to approach the conversation in that way means that you can come at it in a caring way that lets them know you actually want them to be successful.

And what I found is when you have the conversation in that way, they're much more receptive to it. And then you're able to either actually resolve the issues or you're able to help them figure out what the right fit is for them, which I think as a manager is so inspiring to me because that means that you get to keep mentoring them beyond. You're not just saying, this isn't working. I'm giving up on you. See you later. You're saying, I'm committed to helping you throughout your whole career and let's help you find the next step, even if that isn't on my team or at this company.

Awesome. Yeah. I love that book. And you talked about the two. There's this grid that yeah, it talks about. And just to reinforce what you just said, the core is that when you want to give people direct feedback, but you want to make it clear, you care deeply about them.

And I love that she talks about if you do one of these wrong, here's what happens, like if you challenge directly, but it doesn't feel like you care deeply. You're just an asshole and they're just like, yeah, god damn it, you get really defensive. I should get her on this podcast. How cool would that be? Oh my god, that would be my, she's like my, if I could meet one tech celebrity, it would be her. Okay. I'm going to work on it. If you're listening and you know, Kim Scott, let me know. I will try to get to her. Anything else in that bucket of frameworks or tools, things that you find really helpful in leadership?

The only other one, I'm not, I'm not a huge framework person. I think this goes back to

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my gut thing. But the one other thing that I refer to often is I love the Eisenhower matrix, which is also known as the four D's. So it's like, do defer, delegate, delete, like you have also quadrants. Maybe my brain just works in quadrants. I don't know. But I totally subscribe to that. And I, that's how I do everything where it's like, I write everything down at the end of every day I go through and I either do delegate, defer, delete, and it really helps you clear a lot of stuff out of your brain. Interesting. So do you, so you kind of don't even use it as a grid necessarily. It's more make a decision and all the things on your plate. Yeah, I do. I just use, I tried using the grid view and it didn't work for me for some reason. So I just use a to-do list. And then I don't let myself finish working until I've gone through anything I didn't get through that day. And then I know what I have to do the next day. So that touches on another area I wanted to touch on, which is productivity. I hear you're very good at being productive and making the use of your time. I guess one, where do you think that comes from? And then two, just any other tips, tactics, tools you find to be really effective in staying productive?

Yeah, where does that come from? I think I am sort of OCD. I think I'm an overachiever. I don't know. It's really important to me. I think when my team says that I'm very productive, the feedback I hear from them is they're impressed that they send me a doc and then I always read it.

I think that's more about kind of prioritizing my team and making sure that they're unblocked, which I take very seriously. I don't know. Other tips that I would give people, I write everything down because I think I'm one of those people. I remember things best when they're written down. And then I obsessively put things on my to-do list, like anything that anyone asked me to do goes on there. And then I have that method for organizing it later in the day. After this, or do you write it on paper? I use to-do list. I think you can use any, but it's the one that works best for me. I love using paper, but then if I don't have it with me, then I can't remember anything I have to do. So I've had to go digital.

Awesome. So it sounds like a big part of your process is just getting things out of your head and writing it down somewhere. Yes, I think that's huge. And I also think if you're in any sort of job, I think most PMs have this where it's like so much of your job is actually like deep thinking and problem solving. I just cannot get that done if I'm like running through my to-do list in my head. So I think that was a big unlock for me when I realized that I just needed to like, anytime I'm stressed, honestly, if I just sit and make a list of all the things I have to do, I'm like, oh, it's like four things. I can get those done. It's okay.

Man, that tool of just making a list when you have things you're stressed about all the things you got to do, just making a list of it on paper, I find it's so helpful.

Works every time.

Have you read Getting Things Done by David Allen?

It's on my list. I haven't read it.

Okay. Like that book totally transformed how I think about productivity. And you're already doing a lot of what he recommends. It's like this very old book. And now he's just, I don't know, this very, he's like a public speaker dude that just goes around consulting.

Yeah.

But this one, it has like very simple approaches to being productive. And it really changed the way I operate. And you're already doing a lot of it. So I don't know how much value you get out of it.

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I'll read it. I love this stuff.

A core concept is this idea of mine like water, where you don't want to have anything in your head. You want to get it all out. And then there's these systems for how to process all the things you're getting out.

Totally.

Maybe we'll get David Allen and Paulia. So we got a whole line.

I know. We have a whole hit list.

Maybe it's just a final question. You're good at so many things. Another thing you're really good at is public speaking. I was watching the last Spotify launch event and I was just like, holy moly, she's incredibly good at speaking. And this is something I want to get better at. And something I think 100% of people want to get better at. So I'm just curious, what have you learned about being an effective public speaker? Anything that you could recommend to people if they're trying to get better at this?

Well, first of all, thank you for saying I'm awesome at so many things. This is my favorite podcast I've ever been on because you're just complimenting me the whole time. So I'll take it.

True.

I think with public speaking, for me, the first thing that I had to do was decide that I didn't hate public speaking. Because I think it's just, I think it's human nature. Like it is, it makes sense that we do not want to be in front of a crowd and we don't want to be performing. And it's just sort of an unnatural thing that humans, I think, make ourselves do.

I remember I actually, when I was in high school, I had to give a presentation and I was like, I had so much anxiety. I couldn't sleep the night before. And I remember I was getting ready for school that morning and I was like, I'm just not going to hate public speaking. I just can't get through my life feeling this way. And so I just got up there and I had fun with it. And it felt so much better to not feel worried about it. So I think ever since then, I've been okay at it. And then I have gotten lots of opportunities to do big, scary public speaking things for Spotify. And so I think I've had to get even better. I think my tips would be, my biggest one is probably reframing. It's like everyone has this anxiety before they have to perform or they go on stage, reframing that anxiety to understand that the thing your body is doing is surging you with adrenaline to help you. And so letting that feeling wash over you instead of fighting it, I think has been so effective for me because otherwise it can feel like a panic attack. And so I think you have to be like, cool, my body's getting ready, we're excited, we're going to go do this on stage. Like that has been really helpful. I practice like a million times anytime I have to do public speaking. So I think everybody has different memorization tactics, different ways of doing speaker notes that work for them. And so I think part of it is you have to do a bunch of public speaking to see what works for you. So some people work best with no notes. Some people, I almost read like complete sentences because I'm a good, like I can enunciate in things while I'm reading. So that works best for me. Some people like bullets, and then they go a little bit off the script. But I think once you figure out what method of speaker notes works for you, I rehearse probably like at least 10 times all the way through once the speaker notes are final. And it's like, you can practice your exact delivery, you can practice where you're going to put jokes in, you can figure out what doesn't feel natural or where you're going to trip it up and then you can change the words that you're using. And so I like to get

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to the point where I can, where I can remember like adlib at least half of the notes that I have in there. And that way I know I'm going to feel confident like coming off script. I make a lot of eye contact with the audience, which I think makes them think that I'm not reading speaker notes. So I think, I think that's really important. If you can stand it, which I can't record yourself or watch yourself in a mirror, I just like it messes me up more. But I think for a lot of people that can be really helpful to figure out where your sort of issues are. I think the biggest thing for me honestly is that like the unfair advantage I have is if you really give a shit about what you're talking about, you are going to be such a better presenter because people are going to tell that you, they're going to be able to tell that you care. And so I think even at a larger Spotify event where it's like I'm reading off a teleprompter and I'm reading sort of, you know, I'm marketing, but I'm helping write those words. And then the way that I'm saying them matters because I'm like, I'm talking to podcasters and I'm like, my mission in life is to make things better for you. Not everyone gets that benefit, I guess. Sometimes you have to do public speaking about things that you're not very passionate about, but I certainly think that that helps. And I think leaning into that, so like when you can, telling personal stories, letting the audience get to know you, I like to work some humor into my presentations. I think that can really help as well. That is awesome advice. I especially love the letting the stress kind of wash over you because that's like most of this challenge is like your body's just doing all this shit that's just like going to stress the shit out of you up. And so the idea of just like embracing it, just flowing with it. Yes, it's a superpower. It's like, that's so cool that adrenaline works that way. Yeah. Okay. I'm going to try that. Try that one. Also, if you're nervous, you can put your hands above your head. That'll help the blood. I don't know. It helps it go into your head or something. I don't remember. Well, there's this whole power post thing that apparently... Yes, exactly. I think it's been disproven. People are like, no, there's no data that shows that. But the blood thing, that's really interesting versus like psychological benefits. Yeah. I think there is a real physiological thing that happens. That's cool. Okay. Amazing. Okay. Maybe as an actual last question, what's happening in the future of the Spotify podcasting platform? Anything you want to share about where things are going? A lot of the things that I talked about at Streamon, for anyone who saw that this year, I think are still very much our strategy. So I think for us in general, Spotify is really focused on making sure that we can... We have a massive audience. We have 500 million, more than 500 million monthly active listeners. We want to help podcast creators reach that global audience. And so it's really important to us. I always tell my team the biggest problem that I want to solve for podcasters is discovery and audience growth. And I really think we can be the ones to do it. So I'm really excited about that. So discovery, monetization, we're really focused on making sure that creators of all shapes and sizes can make a living off of their work. And then I think in general, we're working on so many cool things at Spotify to make podcasts a more interactive format, something that allows you to get to know your audience and connect with your fan base. We talked about a couple of features this past year. I definitely can't say anything specific, but what I can say is there is lots of really cool stuff coming next year that I'm very excited about. And I would say for anyone who wants to learn more, definitely sign up for Spotify for podcasters. It works whether you're hosted with Spotify or not. And you can start to get a sense

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of some of those features that we're opening up to everybody, but there's lots more cool stuff to come. Amazing, mysterious and exciting. With that, we've reached our very exciting lightning round. Are you ready? Yes. What are two or three books that you recommend most to other people? Children of Time. And I guess I would say It by Stephen King. I recommend a lot of Stephen King books, but that's my all-time favorite. Very on brand with your podcasts. Makes sense.

What is a recent movie or TV show that you've really enjoyed?

TV show. I'll just say I guess Poker Face was the last one that really blew my mind. Movies.

I mean, Barbie was so good. And then I'll just give you a lesser-known one. I just watched this crazy movie from the 80s that was made the same year Home Alone was. This just got featured on a podcast, so I think everybody's talking about it now, but it's a horror movie about a kid who's Home Alone and then he has to fight Santa Claus in like a home invasion situation. It is so good. It has a bunch of different names, but if you look up either Game Over or it's like Code, Pair, Noelle or something, it's like an old French horror movie. So good.

Interesting that the other Home Alone is the one like that did well. That's when no one's ever there. Well, there was apparently a whole legal thing over it. Oh, wow. Yeah. They didn't have Macaulay Culkin. That's their missing piece. What is a favorite interview question that you'd like to ask candidates when you're interviewing? I have one. It is, if you could make a podcast about anything, what would it be? And it is the best. Honestly, you should ask people that even if you don't work in podcasting because it tells you so much about candidates. And one thing that I feel very strongly is that the most important thing is that you're hiring passionate people, not people who are passionate necessarily about the thing that you're doing, but about anything. If they can't think of anything, that's a red flag for me. That's awesome. It's like a variation of the question of teach me something or tell me about something that you've learned recently. Really interesting tweak on that question and very appropriate. What is a favorite product or something else that you've discovered recently that you really like, digital or physical?

Okay. Very unsexy answer, but I love 1-800 contacts. They have, I'm so impressed with their product team. If you need new contacts, even if you need a new prescription, you can do the whole thing online in like five minutes and it's so well thought out and so thoughtful. I just, I love them. And then the one other one I'll give a shout out to since becoming a parent, Love Every. Do you subscribe to them? Absolutely. I think they're good. I don't know anyone that doesn't have one. I know. It's so good. They've cracked it. Yes. Yeah. We're missing some of the toys and so we're trying to find where they went because he's ready for them. He's ready for the rattle. Yes. Awesome. Yeah. Love Every is amazing. Their ads are really great. Oh man. Yes. They're so good. What is a favorite life motto that you come back to often, share with folks, anything there? Only a fool wishes time away. Even if you're having a bad day, even if you're doing something boring or you're stressed because you have to do public speaking, that's still your life and you should enjoy it. I love that. There's this phrase of just like, I'm just killing time right now. And I always think about that just like, oh, but you don't have that much time. Yeah. Maybe

you shouldn't try to kill your time. Yeah. Don't. Even though sometimes things are boring. It reminds me of another quote of just like, most of the world's problems are caused by our inability to sit in a room for 10 minutes quietly. Yes. And also, if you're bored, have a baby because you'll never be bored again. Yeah. Yeah. Indeed. Speaking of parenting, what is a valuable lesson that your

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mom or your dad taught you? My mom always told me that my generosity would be rewarded. So anytime

that I was like, nice or thought of someone else before me, she always made sure that I got like some little reward or got to go out for ice cream or something. I think that really worked on me. I love that. Final question. I saw somewhere that you raised back your chickens. Is that true? I'm so happy you asked me about my chickens.

So maybe just why did you decide to do that on any tips for someone that may want to explore? Oh my God. Well, we should have started with this because I can talk about this for an hour and a half, but I love my chickens. I have eight of them. We've got one rooster and seven hens.

I am just, I think that all of us should be a little bit closer to nature, to the, I was going to say the food that we're eating. I'm not going to eat my chickens, but they make eggs for me.

But I just think there is something very lacking in our modern lives, that like connection to nature. When I feel stressed at work and I go outside and I hang out with my chickens, I go,

I like pet them and I give them treats and we talk to each other. It's like,

nothing makes me happier and like feel more grounded than hanging out with my chickens.

So I think everyone should have chickens. I would say they're pretty low maintenance. So if you're thinking about it, I would recommend it. And if you get chickens, my favorite thing that

I did for them, I got this monthly subscription box for chickens called, I think it's called coop crate. Love every for chickens. Yes, it's love every for chickens. And every month, they send me like chicken treats, but also like fun little things for crazy chicken people.

So it's like clothes or like a sticker, like something funny. It's like, I'm very into the whole chicken thing. So yeah. Oh my God. Maybe just a tactical question. How much space do you need

in your yard for chickens? Not that much. So we let them free range. We have a pretty big yard,

but I think they're actual, so there's like their little coop and then they've got a run

that's fenced in. The run is maybe like, I don't know, five feet by eight feet or something, but

you can go a lot smaller. If you go to Home Depot, they actually sell like pre-made coops and runs.

I think if you have a decent sized backyard, they'll be fine. I've known people with pretty small yards and you just let your chickens out and they're happy to just, they'll find worms in a few yards, you know. All right. New project to look into. Maya. Please get chickens. Do it.

Okay. Maya, we've talked about chickens, dog fooding, gut level decisions, radical candor, so many things. Thank you so much for being here. Two final questions. Working folks, finding online if they want to reach out. And how can listeners be useful to you?

I'm on threads, I guess. And I'm on LinkedIn. I'm Maya Fish on most social media. And then I'm on LinkedIn. And then what was the second one? How can people be useful to me? Exactly.

Uh, listen to your podcast on Spotify and then send me your feedback. I would love to know either as a podcast creator or as a podcast listener, always happy to hear what Spotify can be doing more of or better to help you out. Amazing. Maya, thank you so much for being here.

Thank you so much. Bye, everyone.

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