

Hey, my first million fans. This is producer Ben. We're bringing you one from the archives today, and I think this is a really high value episode. Now what this one is about is Sam and Sean talking about their process for how they reverse engineer a business. So if they find a business that they really like, how do they figure out its history, where it's been, and how it works. And so they go through some of their tools. I think you guys will really like it. So please enjoy this episode from the archives on how to reverse engineer any business. Here it is.

I saw this website. My guy Chris, Chris, who's my apprentice right now for content, he sent this to me. And I'm going to actually spend a ton of time on it, but go to firstversions.com. Check that out. And I'm pretty fascinated with this. I think you are too. We both are like internet archaeologists. We like to go find the OG thing. I did this blog post that got like tens of thousands of views once before I had any audience. It just went viral because it was, what did the first web page look like for these 10 big companies? And this is kind of like some common to do like Uber's homepage back in the day, Snapchat's homepage back in the day, the first Facebook homepage, the first eBay homepage, first Amazon homepage. And these things look like.

All right, quick break to tell you about another podcast that we're interested in right now. HubSpot just launched a Shark Tank rewatch podcast called Another Bite. Every week, the host relived the latest and greatest pitches from Shark Tank, from Squatty Potty, to the Mench on a Bench, to Ring Doorbell. And they break down why these pitches were winners or losers. And each company's go to market strategy, branding, pricing, valuation, everything. Basically, all the things you want to know about how to survive the tank and scale your company on your own. If you want to give it a listen, you can find another bite on whatever podcast app you listen to, like Apple or Spotify, or whatever you're using right now. All right, back to the show. You know, so basic and rudimentary and like really just, it makes you realize like, dude, you need to launch. And there's that quote, if you're not embarrassed by V1 of your product, you launch too late. And all these companies definitely like fall into that category. So I thought firstversion.com was a cool little like archive of stuff like this. I think this is so cool. So I actually just sent you a link to an article that I wrote. I think I wrote this in 16, 2016, years ago, 15, October 15. And I, you could, it probably doesn't even work entirely. But anyway, what I love to do, and I've always loved doing this, is I use, there's a few different websites, web archives, the easiest. And what I like to do is I will get a Google doc in a spreadsheet, and I'll map out the, the whole journey of a company. So I'll look at what air, when Airbnb started, and then I'll read all about them of like, all right, here's when they announced they had this many users here where they, here's where they announced

this much funding. Here's where they said they had up their first 50 employees. And then from 50, they actually went to 1,000 in only two years. And then I'll take screenshots of their website. And in doing that, you can actually see what, like how the, the evolution, so progression. Yeah. And I'm just starting, I'm just making this up with Airbnb, but it could be like, it started as air bedding breakfast, and it was about renting cuts inside of a living room. Then, oh, wow, they actually changed their, their positioning to travel like a local, and they started taking higher end pictures. I don't know what it is, but, and when they started actually taking higher end pictures, that was actually right when they, right before they raised their \$100 million funding. And so anyway, you can actually track the progression really

nicely by doing this. And I love doing that. I love it. And so you can actually see, oh, Uber, UberCab.com, they were only black car services. Oh, when they raised all this money, they actually got rid of the black car, the black car became secondary. So actually the black car didn't work. So they switched to this, you know what I mean? And so it's kind of cool. Yeah, you can totally reverse engineer a lot of the stuff. So some of the tools we use to do this, the Wayback Machine, which is the internet archive. So just Google Wayback Machine, that lets you put in any domain name, and then you can go back in time. And they took screenshots of what the website looked like on June 12, 2010. And then that, you can go back, you can see Uber's, what did Uber's homepage look like back then? How were they describing themselves? Another one I do is TechCrunch. I go to TechCrunch, I search for a company's name, and then I reverse sort it by the earliest mention of it. So like you can go Twitter. You can see the very first article is, you know, Mike Errington being like, you know, the buzz at the party this week was about Twitter spelled without the, you know, without the vowels. Basically, it's like the short messaging service was kind of fun. You do do this. But you know, who cares? You know, people are just tweeting about there. They're just tweeting about their breakfast. And it was all through SMS. Like, then you can kind of see what was going on then. So I like that one. That's a useful one. Another one I'll do is I'll go on Twitter, and you can Twitter Advanced Search. So you can type in anyone's name. And you can do things like Twitter doesn't make this obvious how to do it. There's like a format of how you write these in, but you write like, at the Sampar before 2011. And then you say minimum 300 likes. And I can kind of go see your most popular posts at that point in time. What were you talking about? What was working for you? What wasn't? So I've done this with a whole bunch of people. And I kind of like, I really am a big reverse engineer type of guy. And it's not that you can copy it, but it's just data points. It's a way to fast forward experience, because experience the hard way is slow. It takes like decades to get good at things and to learn and to like figure out what's normal, what's not, what's fast, what's slow, what's good, what's bad. And a better way to do it is to like download a whole bunch of data points quickly. And it's not perfect experience, but it's better than being blind and just kind of like going off only your personal experience. So I would actually go as far to say you can copy it. You can, you actually can copy a lot of stuff. And I think you should sometimes. So for example, this first, by the way, first versions.com, this is a wonderful website. This is such a good website. I, this is so cool. I wish they don't, by the way, what they do is not just internet, like what, like what we're talking about is home pages, because that's kind of our knees, but they'll be like, this is the, yeah, this is the first version of Tom and Jerry, like the very first pilot. And like last night, I don't know why, for whatever reason, before I went to bed, I was watching the very first pilot episode of Curb Your Enthusiasm before it was even a show. And I was, I just love seeing that OG OG, the first pilot of Always Sunny in Philadelphia, where they're using the handheld camera. Like I like seeing that because it just, as somebody who is frequently starting things, it's important to go see that your favorite things started with very humble, simple, kind of shitty beginnings. And, and then, you know, you sort of can see how much better they got over time. This is so good. I love this. I'm going to link to you some links up into you. So in 2013, I created this thing I called the CEO doc. It was a stupid name, but I sent it to you and you could actually see that it's so funny that you do this because I mean, where it's, it's so funny that we're similar and we've been doing this for years. So I created, oh wait, is it not working? I created

this document where I would take, I think I had a list of 500 people and I would make timelines for each of their lives. And I would say started there, it was broken into apprenticeships, first hit, and then the self-actualization mode. So for example, Jack Dorsey started apprenticeship at age 22 from 22 to 28. He basically was like this poor nobody who worked as a dispatch service for a taxi cab company. 28 to 31 started Twitter at 28. It actually became a pretty big hit really soon at 29. And so I have timelines and I have average ages, average age for each person. And so I love doing that stuff and it works so good for just seeing like what's possible.

Right. So we're actually quite similar. I've been doing this as well for a while.

Yeah. It's great to nerd out about this kind of stuff. Okay. So first versions is cool. I have another kind of cool thing. Okay. Here's a, here's an idea. I would say this is not a business. It's probably a very bad idea. Maybe this is something that, this is, you reminded me of it because this thing that we're doing is, like the thing we're talking about is extremely nerdy and probably most people don't, don't do what we're describing, like kind of like go back and map out the evolution

of companies or people or whatever it is. So similarly, I, I want a tool that I'm calling business pocket. So pocket is this Chrome extension. It's this app or service where you like, if you see an article you like, but you don't have time to read it, you just hit pocket and it's like you put it in your pocket for later. I think it used to be called read it later.

You think pocket is going well. I bet you it's going pretty badly. I bet you that'd be a cool company to buy. Yeah. I don't think it's going well. It got really big and it raised a bunch of money and then like, it's just been around for so long without like an exit that you wonder, did it just get like become obsolete somehow along the way? But anyways, it was just a way to save articles. Now I actually want something, what I'll call business pocket. So I have this bookmark thing in my Chrome that's called companies to watch. It's basically like, anytime I stumble across a company, I find it interesting. I've been doing it. It's like, this thing is like 10 years old now. I find interesting company and before it used to be, I want to see if this will be successful or maybe I should, if I was an investor, I would invest in this. So I want to like flag this and then I'll come back later in three years and I'll see how it turned out whether I would have made money or lost money on this thing. And so I've just been collecting this for a long time. Now in reality, I hit, I bookmark it and then I like never go back and go recheck those because who's got the time. But I would love a service that's almost like a programmatic newsletter where I can just flag either people or companies that I say, I want to keep a watch, I want to keep watch on this company or this individual and like the CEO or maybe this company, the startup. And then I want it to like, basically take the 10 that I've flagged and send me anytime there's interesting news about them with some filter, like, you know, they raise new funding, they got a new job, they, they announced this thing, they're on TV, whatever. And, and, you know, my 12 that I'm tracking might be different than the 12 that you're tracking, but like we might have three that are the same. And so this company that's underneath that would just need to set up like a kind of like a programmatic way to like watch for the news around certain names and then turn it into an automated newsletter. That was kind of just like a random idea. I don't think it's a business, but I think it would be cool. I think it's a business when we were getting ready to decide if we wanted to launch trends or want to launch something new, I wrote a landing page for this product. I forget what I called it, but something involving the word spy. And I put like the headline was like, where are your secret

spy spies that track your competitors and tell you everything that they do. So you know, and we deliver it to you via email. And I think this actually could have worked wonderfully. And the reason I came up with this idea was I had a friend who worked at Rocket Internet, Rocket Internet, Google it. It's a, it's a guy, it's three brothers named Ali, Alex and something else, Samware Brothers. And they started this thing called Rocket Internet. And basically the way it works right now, it's a large publicly traded company. They had this like guy named, he was like the chief scientist. And what they would do is they would research fast growing companies in America and they would clone them and they would deploy that company in Africa, in Asia, different parts of Europe, things like that. Brazil. Brazil. And so they cloned Uber, but in Mexico, they cloned Pinterest, but for Germany, they cloned Zappos, but for Germany, they did. All right. A quick message from our sponsor. You know, I was thinking about the shortest day of the year earlier. And while we technically have the same amount of time as every other day of the year, the lack of daylight makes it feel so much shorter, which is exactly the same kind of feeling as working with disconnected tools. Our workday is the same length as always. But before you know it, we spent three hours just fixing something that was supposed to be automated. Thankfully HubSpot's all-in-one CRM platform can serve as a single source of truth for managing your customer relationships across marketing, sales, service operations with multiple hubs and over a thousand integrations and an easy to use interface. HubSpot lets you spend less time managing your software and more time connecting with your customers. Learn how HubSpot can help

you grow your business at HubSpot.com. Amazon for Thailand. They own like the Amazon for Brazil, I think. Yeah. And they also own the Amazon for Thailand. And they would pick a variety of companies.

They would do like the Wayfair for Nigeria or something like that. And they had this guy who was called the chief scientist and all the clones of the Amazon of this country, that country, that country, there would probably be like eight clones. And he would send an email every day. This is the story I heard. I don't know if it's true. He would send an email every day and he'd be like, Hey, everyone, Amazon actually just moved on their homepage. They moved the clothing from eight or a hundred pixels to the left. It probably means that a clothing is a little bit more popular now than furniture. So, all right, make sure you move your clothing thing or, hey, they changed their color of this button from this yellow to this orange. Go ahead and do that. And I thought, that's pretty awesome. I would love to have that. I would love to track my competitors because I would do research on my competitors. I would say, oh, which ads are they using? Oh, I wonder why they're using this ad. Maybe they're using this ad for this reason, that reason, that reason. I'm going to go and copy it. And I would use a variety of similar web, Facebook ad archive, HA refs, and a few other things. And I would just, I would be like, oh, here's where they're succeeding. And here's why they're succeeding. I may copy them. I may not copy them. And I just know what's working. And I think that that 100% could be a service that you pay a hundred grand a year for. And you get, and you, and they'll tell you the five nearest competitors. And every month you meet with their team and you say, all right, your competitors, they're doing this, they're doing that, they're doing this. Here's what's working. Here's what's not working. Here's a hypothesis as to what all this means. And I think actually you could charge a six figure annual contract for all of it. And I think it would be a really cool company. Right. Yeah. I told you about my friend who I nudged in this direction to do this for, for

e-commerce. I'll give him another shout out here. He said he got a bunch of sales last time. I mentioned it. So I'll do it again. Shopify sales data.com, basically a way to track your competitors and how much they're selling and what new ads they're running and stuff like that. And just in the niche of e-commerce. And it's, you know, I don't know, 100 bucks a month or something like that. And I pay for it. I'm like, this is great. You know, it's a valuable service. And so you could do it in a niche or you could do it, you know, more broadly, but yeah, I think that's cool.