

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

It was like March 2020, and we were just watching COVID hit. And it was just this heartbreaking kind of moment where in the feed, you were seeing all these people by no fault of their own starting to post that they've lost their job.

We started seeing in our data as you had some areas, like maybe hospitality was really getting hit, but some areas like customer service that just couldn't hire enough.

And you think the marketplace would balance pretty quickly. You think, okay, maybe these people will start moving out of their jobs, but it wasn't happening.

And a large reason behind this, people are used to looking for certain particular titles.

And they didn't start realizing how other people could do this job.

So we made a pretty big push in something we call skills-first hiring.

This was the idea that we could translate people's experiences into a set of skills.

And by that, we could help them really start balancing the marketplace with a much different system, right?

And so I think that the job market is rebalancing, but it's being done.

The pathways are being done in a very different way that seems to be maybe a change that holds through these ups and downs.

And that'll be very interesting to see.

Welcome to Lennie'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 Hari Srinivasan.

This episode has a hilarious story.

On Twitter, an account called The Curious PM tagged me with a request to have someone from LinkedIn come on the podcast and talk about how they operate and what they've learned about building products that serve so many different types of customers.

I replied as soon as I saw it,

I replied asking for any suggestions for who he thought I should specifically talk to.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And he suggested Hari Srinivasan
by doing some research on LinkedIn.
So I reached out to Hari, told him about this tweet,
and he agreed.
And so here's the episode.
Hari's been at LinkedIn for eight and a half years
and he leads the Talent Solutions product team
as VP of Product, which is also LinkedIn's biggest business
and includes all of the hiring and learning products
which you'll hear about in this episode.
In our chat, Hari shares what he's seeing change
in the hiring market, what you can do to improve your odds
of finding a job through LinkedIn,
what he's learned about building
and maintaining really complex systems like LinkedIn,
tips for getting into product management
and some lessons from his own course on product management.
Plus, we also talk about how LinkedIn
has been able to become a real source of valuable content
and a lot less cringe over the past couple of years,
which I've definitely noticed and I share in our chat.
What a fun series of events that led to this episode.
Big thank you to Jotun,
hopefully unpronouncing your name correctly,
the guy behind the Curious PM account
for making this all happen.
With that, I bring you Hari Srinivasan
after a short word from our sponsors.
Today's episode is brought to you by Miro,
an online collaborative whiteboard
that's designed specifically for teams like yours.
The best way to see what Miro's all about
and how it can help your team collaborate better
is not to listen to me talk about it,
but to go check it out for yourself.
Go to [Miro.com](https://miro.com) slash Lenny.
With the help of the Miro team,
I created a super cool Miro board
with two of my own favorite templates,
my one pager template and my managing up template
that you can plug and play
and start using immediately with your team.
I've also embedded a handful of my favorite templates

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

that other people have published in the Miroverse.

When you get to the board,

you can also leave suggestions for the podcast,

answer a question that I have for you

and generally just play around

to get a sense of how it all works.

Miro is a killer tool for brainstorming with your team,

laying out your strategy, sharing user research findings,

capturing ideas, giving feedback on wireframes

and generally just collaborating with your colleagues.

I actually used Miro to collaborate with the Miro team

on creating my own board

and it was super fun and super easy.

Go check it out at [Miro.com](https://miro.com) slash Lenny.

That's [M-I-R-O.com](https://miro.com) slash Lenny.

Today's episode is brought to you by Brave Search

and their newest product, the Brave Search API,

an independent global search index

you can use to power your search or AI apps.

If your work involves AI,

then you know how important new data is to train your LLMs

and to power your AI applications.

You might be building an incredible AI product,

but if you're using the same datasets

as your competitors to train your models,

you don't have much of an advantage.

Brave Search is the fastest growing search engine since being

and it's 100% independent from the big tech companies.

Its index features billions of pages of high quality data

from real humans and it's constantly updated

thanks to being the default search engine

in the Brave browser.

If you're building products with search capabilities,

you're probably experiencing soaring API costs

or lack of viable global alternatives to Bing or Google.

It's only gonna become harder to afford these challenges.

The Brave Search API gives you access

to its novel web scale data with competitive features,

intuitive structuring and affordable costs.

AI devs will particularly benefit from data

containing thorough coverage of recent events.

Lennie's podcast listeners can get started

testing the API for free at brave.com slash Lennie.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

That's brave.com slash Lennie.

Hari, welcome to the podcast.

Thanks for having me, been a big fan for a long time.

I really appreciate that.

What a fun story behind this conversation.

Let me just ask you how did you feel

when I called the MD on LinkedIn

and asked you to be on this podcast because of a random tweet?

I felt very honored.

Again, I really have followed your work for a while.

It's been really amazing to see what you've built

and I'm a huge fan of different builders.

And also it was a little bit of an honor

that someone, I know we're gonna get into the story

in a little bit, but that's, you know,

and when you work on something oftentimes

like jobs and learning, it's rare.

I think that it's in the influencer conversation, right?

It's not necessarily something

that you or other people are probably experiencing

on day-to-day.

So sometimes I don't know if we get to tell some

of these stories and I really appreciate you

reaching out for that.

Yeah, absolutely.

So I guess let me just give a big thank you

to Jatin Rajvanshi, also known as the Curious PM

who tweeted about this concept

and then just like, hey, talk to Hari about LinkedIn.

So thank you, Jatin, for making this happen.

It's all thanks to you.

And usually when this happens,

someone tweets a recommendation of someone,

they know each other and I'm like,

I don't know, this is kind of some promotion

of some other person, but you guys don't know each other, right?

I don't, no.

I'm looking forward to meeting you

and thank you again for putting in the word.

Absolutely.

And also thank you to Jatin

for recommending a bunch of questions

that I'm gonna ask you.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

That I didn't know, sir.
Maybe I shouldn't have, that I didn't know,
but thanks again, Jatin, it's very kind of you.
Yeah, okay, so let's roll into some stuff.
So I actually wanna start with LinkedIn
as a platform broadly.
I know you don't work on like all parts of LinkedIn
and don't necessarily know everything
that's going on there,
something I've noticed that's pretty major
is it feels like LinkedIn's really made this move
from being like a very cringy place to post and spend time
to like, it's actually now interesting
and the feed that I see on LinkedIn is interesting.
Oftentimes even more interesting than Twitter,
which is crazy to say.
Also, it's become the biggest source of traffic
for my newsletter, more so than Twitter,
which I never expected.
So my question is, as far as you know,
what is it that y'all did right in the past couple of years
that has allowed for this shift to happen?
Cause this was very rare.
Well, first I'm glad you're having a good experience with it
and that's really, really kind of here.
So first of all, it's very interesting.
You kind of hit on it.
Everything at LinkedIn is a very connected ecosystem.
And so one of the things that we always think about
is how the whole system fits together.
And I'm sure we'll get into it more and more
about how we build at LinkedIn,
but how you make decisions based on
that very complicated ecosystem is actually not very difficult
because we're all here to help people connect
to economic opportunity.
Like every time there's a discussion,
something I'm really, really proud about working here
is everyone knows how that decision is gonna be made.
And it's all about how we connect
to people with economic opportunity.
Now, it was funny.
Just the other day I was driving,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

I was in an Uber with the person who runs the feed is this guy, Kim Rush, who's just phenomenal. And we were just talking about this. And one of the things he mentioned to me was if you think about what a feed is when it connects someone to opportunity, it's gotta do a couple of things really, really well. And we've done a ton of member surveys on this, a ton of thought behind it. The first is as you make relationship connections across the way, that is a real way by which people get opportunity. They keep in touch with those people, they learn. They might follow someone in hopes and getting known to them and getting that knowledge. And we gotta make sure that that content is getting to them. Then when you think outside the network, we have to make sure that the things that people really want, which they keep saying or knowledge and advice and the ability to get the real perspectives they need to get there, those are the things out of network they want. And we've really, really been focused on driving those two systems, right? How does someone connect opportunity both through the people and through the content that they actually want? And as you know, when you do a feed, there's so many decisions to go into that complex system, so many decisions, but we've been really, really trying to make sure that we don't lose sight of that and start tuning all those knobs into that direction. So if we're trying to get even more specific with what has changed, clearly there's been like a focus internally. Is that true? There's just like, hey, let's make this feed a lot more interesting, or is this just like a never ending? And then it's actually started to work kind of investment as far as you know. Well, there's always been a focus on connecting people opportunity, right? There's always been a focus on that. And I think what's happened over time

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

is we've gotten more and more clear
with what our members really want,
which is this ability to feel close to those relationships
and the ability to really get that knowledge that they need.
And as we've gotten better and kind of clear
in that understanding,
and we've been able to dial the knobs in the right way,
I hope it's landing in the right place.
I'm always kind of, I don't think it's any place
near declaring victory in any of our,
any part of this product, right?
I think one of the beauty of working with that vision
of connecting people opportunity,
there is always some piece of friction.
There is always something we could be doing better.
And so I'm always hesitant to say, you know,
we've ever hit that bar.
And I know there's probably people who listen to you
who probably may not have that experience.
And I always encourage you to kind of reach out
and let us know ways we can do better.
But I'm glad you're having experience with it.
And then to your point, I always feel that like,
as long as we stay focused on that,
and each of our decisions start moving in that direction,
hopefully the product will continue to deliver.
Do you know if there's any product changes
that have most contributed to that feed
becoming much more interesting?
Well, there's a couple of things
that I think are very special that we're working on.
And it's hard to say which is most
because a lot of these things obviously accumulate
and compound over time.
But certainly, there's a lot of machine learning
and algorithms that go behind these systems.
And many of them, as we start understanding,
these are things that people get value by.
It's about how do we make sure
that we're giving people that interesting knowledge.
And as we've gotten crisper on what that means,
I think we've been better able to build towards it.
The other one, which is new,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

but I'm just particularly excited about,
we're starting to do a lot of things
which are Gen AI assisted, right?
So you basically can come in and get some prompts
and people can bring their perspective on that.
And I think that combination, it's very early,
but it's very exciting on how we might be able
to help people unlock knowledge
for so much in building people now on the platform,
knowledge of those billion people in a way
that people can find and see.

Awesome.

Again, I know this isn't like the area
you spend all your time on,
but maybe one more question along these lines.

Yeah.

If any sense of the kind of content that works best
on LinkedIn in terms of the algorithm
that you talk about,
like the algorithm is probably one of the bigger impact
things that have changed.

If there's anything with knowledge or advice,
I think that's what a lot of people are looking for.

Every time we run these surveys,
every time we talk to people on what they want,
those are the things that really,
when you connect to opportunity,
that people kind of seek after on our system.

And you're a great example of that, right?
You're able to give knowledge and advice
in an area with a lot of depth.

And I think that maybe that's why you're having
some of the success you're seeing on the platform,
which is wonderful to see.

I think I'm actually not getting as much success
as I could because I don't put in the time.

I usually just kind of post a simple thing
with a link and I think I could be if I really,
like I just don't have time to do this.

I've just like post a lot more stuff within the actual post.

I think that would do better.

That actually makes me happy.

I mean, my guess is what you want to be doing

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

is learning and creating and not spending a lot of time kind of managing the, and so maybe that's actually a good thing and it's actually another wonderful thing to hear.

Yeah, absolutely.

Okay, so let's move to your sweet spot, which is the talent solution product.

Is that what it's called?

Yeah, so it's basically any product on LinkedIn that helps you get a job or learn a skill.

And we have products for recruiters and hires, jobs.

We have products for job seekers, products for art.

We have LinkedIn learning,

and then certainly we run a pretty large creator ecosystem for instructors who post content into LinkedIn learning.

And is it true that this is the biggest business within LinkedIn?

It is a very big business between LinkedIn and it's certainly hopefully something that, again, if you go back to that vision of connecting people opportunity, it's certainly something that I like to think is that very, very core to that, how people get jobs and learn skills.

So the feed gets all the glory and you guys are making all the money.

I would not say that, but again, we joke about those things and I, it's so hard at LinkedIn to separate one product from the other.

It's really kind of the way we run.

It's the way we think about the product.

It's really the way we build.

Let me just give you like a super concrete example of that.

Certainly if you have someone coming in and looking at the feed,

one thing we might do is suggest a job recommendation based on what they're looking for in that feed.

And so part of what we have to do is think about how someone who's looking at something in their interest might be driving their job-seeking experience as well.

And then when they're looking for a job, it's very important that they know

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

how they can actually get connected in that job.
So the relationships of the network you build
are very much part of that flywheel that go into it.
And then, even as we start looking at this,
you might be looking at a subject
and then you wanna go deeper on it
and there's a course that comes into it as well, right?
And so all of this to me is a very, very connected ecosystem
on how those items work together
in order to give people opportunity.
And so we certainly have,
I think of it from the outside as very different things,
but inside, even the way we operate it
and the way we think about it,
it's a very, very connected ecosystem.
What are the components again of this part of the org?
We think about it as two different marketplaces.
There's a hiring marketplace,
which is how do we connect job seekers
and recruiters and hiring managers.
And then there's a learning marketplace,
which is how do you connect learners to instructors?
Got it.
And then within hiring, are there sub-components?
Yeah, so again, we really think about it as a marketplace
where we're generally organized around seekers and hires.
And so there's a team that's kind of working on recruiter,
which is probably one of the more kind of flagship products
that LinkedIn is always better at.
A team working on jobs,
which is if you ever post a job on LinkedIn,
and then a team working to always help job seekers,
make sure they connect.
And then on the other side, for the other instructors,
the team working on LinkedIn learning,
and just one of the bigger enterprise learning products
in the world,
and then a team working to help instructors.
And many people don't know this week
should have two large film studios.
So we bring in instructors, we film a lot of content.
We have ones in Europe and ones in Santa Barbara.
It was all through, started with the Linda acquisition.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And so we have a large team of content creators and teams that everyone from, you know, makeup artists to script writers that we get to use over there. Wow, it's just marketplaces all the way down as you talk about this. Hiring marketplace, learning marketplace, the feed itself, probably more I'm not thinking about. Yeah, it's very much, I mean, one model that we sometimes use internally as well is how do we operate as marketplaces inside an ecosystem. And I think it kind of speaks to the complexity again of the product, and hopefully somehow how we might operate it. So I think with your vantage point at being at the center of hiring, a lot is changing within the hiring marketplace in the past, I don't know, year at this point where it used to be very candidate oriented and where they had all the power and the salaries were crazy. Everyone's bidding and trying to get people to join their company. And now it's completely opposite. So many people looking, companies have all the power. I'm curious what you've seen, if that's roughly it or what you're seeing basically in the hiring market these days. Yeah, well, well, first of all, the balance that you're talking about, it is shifting in the sense that there are more seekers in the marketplace now and there are fewer open jobs in the marketplace. And of course that changes how many applications you get for the job and how you have to look through. I think there's a model where people think it's shifting dramatically to exactly the way it was. And I actually think some of the changes that occurred during the last couple of years are actually sticking around. And so let me give you a couple examples

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

of where things I think are really changing.
So the first thing that happened was,
and maybe in my opinion,
one of the big changes the world
that no one's really kind of talking about it
and to my degree is the impact of it,
but there's been a real move to skills-based hiring.
So for the longest time,
and I'll give you actually a really concrete example,
it was like March 2020
and we were just watching COVID hit
and it was just this heartbreaking kind of moment
where in the feed you were seeing all these people
by no fault of their own
starting to post that they've lost their job.
And we started seeing in our data
as you had some areas like maybe hospitality
was really getting hit,
but some areas like customer service
that just couldn't hire enough.
And you think the marketplace would balance pretty quickly.
You think, okay, maybe these people
will start moving on their jobs,
but it wasn't happening.
And a large reason behind this,
people are used to looking for certain particular titles
and they didn't start realizing
how other people could do this job.
So we made a pretty big push
in something we call skills-first hiring.
This was the idea that we could translate people's experiences
into a set of skills.
And by that, we could help them really start balancing
the marketplace with a much different system, right?
But instead of saying, I need to have this talent,
because I need someone who can do negotiation.
And I need someone who can really help me
kind of understand how to de-escalate a customer situation.
And you find a lot of people in hospitality
have about 70% of the skills in your customer service.
And of course you could train up the rest.
And so we started seeing the skills-first hiring
really start taking off.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And at this point, roughly 47% of our recruiters will come in and explicitly use skills when they start looking for candidates. And that's a pretty big change that we're actually seeing whole. So it's not like people are starting to, I know it's early in some of these changes, but it's a change where I think people are still continuing to start looking at skills. Another one was this concept of there's a lot more people who are starting to look for jobs by values. They were saying, look, a minimalist job sites work. You come in and you look for a job and a title, and that's kind of how you navigate the world. And we started realizing a lot of people wanted to come in. And instead of looking at it like that, they may say, look, I really want a job that's aligned my purpose. Or even by an interest. I may want something in AI. And we started launching collections and the way to filter in these things. We're still being some of that used to say. And so I think that the job market is rebalancing, but it's being done. The pathers are being done in a very different way. That seems to be something that may be a change that holds through these ups and downs. And that'll be very interesting to see. What's interesting is it's not like this would change on its own. This is as you're the biggest job as marketplace in the world, right? We have a lot of professional jobs in our platform and a lot of professional seekers. I imagine it is, I don't know. I guess indeed might be a competitor. But okay, let's say it's one of the bigger job markets. Like you influence the way jobs are sought and posted, right? And how people find jobs. So in a sense, designing, sounds like basically there was an internal decision. Let's focus on a skills approach. And what's cool about that is that changes the way hiring happens in the world.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

You know, it's one of the things that I think is so interesting about building products today is, you know, it has to clearly be something people want. Like if we had just said, we're going to go like this and every hire was like, I don't want to do this or every job seekers that this is not care about. I don't think anything would click. We also have to be receptive enough to kind of amplify that signal and allow it to work through a system so that it could actually be easy to use. And so I don't know if it was, I don't think we said that, you know, or, you know, hey, there was some, hey, we got to go and do this value this thing. I think we started feeling it and hearing it from members. And then as we adapted, these things started amplifying as they come through. I do think that's hopefully something that, you know, I think about a lot is, you know, let's just make sure that we keep a pulse on what people want and we make sure that we can kind of get that through a system at a pretty fast pace, because then we will hopefully continue to be a place where people want to go look for jobs and make hires. What I was thinking about as you were just chatting is this open to work feature that LinkedIn has and how I remember days before that existed and there's people used to just like, Jerry Rigg, hey, I'm hiring or I'm looking for a job. And there's always the sense that if you're open to work, you're not as good, because why would you be amazing and open to work and not hired? And I'm curious if you were even part of this experience, just like, what was it like to come up with that approach to how to communicate that you're open to work? It's been through phases. And I think those phases really reflect on kind of perception of how it's changed. I mean, in the beginning it was, you could say you're open to work, but it was a secret signal to recruiters, if you will. That certainly still exists, but now we said you could more publicly say it,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

it maybe would be a feed post.
And then we kind of started launching it,
we were around COVID when a lot of the stigmas
of unemployment changed dramatically
because everyone started understanding,
you're in this different situation.
And we started putting the frame
and that's kind of the more iconic way
I think people are associated with now.
It's funny, just this week, we tried something new
and I feel like it's almost the same journey.
There are many customers that, as you can imagine,
have LinkedIn learning and LinkedIn learning
is typically an enterprise product.
It works across your employee base.
So we're trying to do open to internal work
where you can say I'm actually at the point
where I may want to next play internally in my role
and an internal recruiter can see you.
And as you can imagine,
I would actually maybe argue more stigma
about being concerned about setting your manager
and certainly there's different cultures
and companies about this.
And I have a feeling in, sometimes we like to think
five, 10 years out,
I think it's gonna go on the same journey.
That's kind of one hunch I have
that it'll also be an employment-driven kind of way
internally for people to find their next play.
And it'll be interesting to see how it plays out,
you can feel a little bit of that tension
right when we launched it and kind of knowing,
I hope, let's see how this goes.
You're talking about how hiring is changing.
I'm curious how PM hiring specifically is changing.
A lot of people listening to this podcast
or product managers,
is there anything unique you're noticing there?
Maybe a couple of stats that could be very helpful.
If you're having a hard time finding a PM role,
let's start with this, you're probably not alone.
We publish it, you can go to our economic graph data,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

this is all public, we publish this.
But if you look at tech,
it's down about 50% year every year
and we look at kind of hires
who over a total population on LinkedIn.
You can go to our economic graphs
and you can see the how it compares against industry.
And we don't look at the functional data as much,
but as you can, the PM data seems to be trending
just slightly even maybe below software engineers
and that as well, which is maybe a cop for this.
And I know not everything is perfect
industry to function kind of cuts.
So it is a difficult place,
but I'll give you a couple of tips
because I imagine that may be helpful
for a couple of the listeners.
And it's certainly one of the larger
imbalance of things I get.
The first is in those kind of markets,
you do want to make sure that the more you can do
to kind of form relationships and kind of say
that this is, you know, we can, which is always helpful.
Now, I know that not everyone has relationships,
but you can always try to develop those
at different places in across LinkedIn as well.
But that's one thing I would really, really start to look for.
The second thing I would really do
is we have launched the way now to come in
and kind of signal obviously that you're interested in a role.
We have those open to work capabilities,
but then each of job has a set of skills
that they're looking for under it.
Like we talked about in skills versus hiring.
And against each skill,
you can actually add different kinds of credentials.
And I would really encourage people to add work products
if that's something that they're actually building,
if they add different kinds of recommendations
or other things that can associate with that skill.
And those credentials against it,
I think are becoming much more interesting for people to say,
oh, this is someone I'm actually looking for.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And then the third thing I would really encourage kind of PMs to start looking through is, I think in every, this is probably more personal than anything in kind of data, but every PM job is different. And if you have experience in that industry and you're able to kind of show that you have experience in the industry or some kind of understanding of it, I think that's a way to separate. And so I'd really start zoning in on roles where you might see that kind of the, if you don't have the functional experience, kind of the industry experience. And I think that that would kind of go a long way is how to help you differentiate from, yes, what's probably more candidates or more applications going into each role. And when you say industry experience, what's an example of that? Imagine that you are applying for a PM role, but that particular software is in, I don't know, automotive tech. If you happen to have worked in automotive before, have a knowledge about cars, that's a very helpful way to get in. And I think if you're able to show that, you can show an industry knowledge and understanding of it. I think it's a real nice way to think about how to position yourself against some of the other candidates. What else can that a person looking for a job do to improve their chances of a recruiter basically finding them? I feel like that's probably the best tactical thing they can do because a lot of LinkedIn has recruiters reaching out and finding you. There's two things that anyone who's hiring is always gonna look for. They're gonna look for your skills and capabilities and they're gonna look for your intent and interest in the role. And a lot of our products and the pathways we try to do are making those things simpler.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

So maybe we'll just start with interest and interest
and we'll move back to skills in a minute.
A couple of things we've launched recently
and I think they're symbolic of other ways you can connect.
If you go to a company page
and you're looking at the company
and I think they have to opt into this in some degree
and you say, look, you can say you're interested
in that company even though they don't have roles.
And when the next role comes up,
they'll have a signal that this person
is actually very interested in this role.
And that's an easy way to kind of signify
from the early stage that you have interest in them.
And that way when they open up a role
as you can imagine, they start looking through,
they'll have a spotlight and recruiter
and they can click on and come through.
Certainly you can go into open to work
and say that this is something that I'm open to work right now
and you can signify to the whole population
that this is an area that you want to go for as well.
And I would encourage both of those in some ways.
If you're looking for a role, be open about it
and tell the companies that you're looking for there.
Those are really high signals of intent.
The other thing you can do on LinkedIn
is you can actually go through when you say open to work
and you can specify like particular kinds of jobs
and things you're looking for.
And I think that more detailed intent helps make sure
you're showing it to the right place.
On the skill side, we kind of talked about a little bit
but I do think there's a big change.
When you were just looking at title,
I think you only had one way to really prove
that you had the skills.
You had to have that title,
which is very hard to break in.
In a world where you're looking at skills,
you can go through and say,
look, I can do these things
and you could put evidence behind it.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And I'd really encourage people to do that.
If you just go to account of any job post,
you can see the skills, you can say add
and you can see all the evidence and now you can add it.
And I would really encourage people to do that
because when people in recruiting,
they're looking for skills, profiles pop up
and you can scroll over a skill
and you can actually see all those evidence
and you can basically a recruiter can say,
oh, this is why I'd recommend you to this hiring manager.
And I think you will find that that's
hopefully a very useful way of doing it.
I'm gonna lob this question like a fishing line
to see if there's catches anything and if not, we'll move on.
Are there any stats that you've seen of just like,
if you do XYZ, your chances of getting hired
or getting people reaching out
or just go significantly higher?
Open to work certainly has a high signal to noise
as you can imagine, when someone's looking to fill a role,
that's one they want.
We are early in company commitments,
but we are seeing some signal there
that we gotta move through.
Skills has a pretty high signal as well.
When you're able to come through
and show and demonstrate your skills,
we're seeing some correlation
to basically people getting a role.
And then the final one that is harder for us to look through,
but it's certainly important.
I do think we show the hiring manager
on a lot of the roles we show these people through
and it's harder for us to kind of trace that
because of the way the outcomes kind of work,
but I would really encourage people to look through that
and see if you can get in touch with those people.
Is there a max seniority that you find works effectively
on LinkedIn to find a job?
Like I imagine like CPOs aren't finding jobs on LinkedIn.
Is there just like, if I'm looking for a job,
do you have like a rule of thumb of like,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

if you're at this level,
maybe you're not gonna have a lot of luck
if you're below this level.
We certainly have CPO jobs that are posted,
but the difference often is job posts versus recruiting.
And more and more senior roles are often recruited.
And so we find that people will use LinkedIn
in order to connect to a CPO and many people who are senior
will say, oh, I got a message on LinkedIn and that led to this
or they made a long-term recruiting contact.
But it may not happen through you finding a job
and hitting the application button.
Let's talk about LinkedIn as a company to work in,
culture maybe for a bit.
You told me that you have a story
about your first product review when you joined LinkedIn
and how that was wild.
Can you just tell that story?
I haven't heard this yet.
Yeah, so I came through a small acquisition
that they made of our company
and I thought it was such a telling moment
in this first product review.
I went in and as you can imagine,
when you join a company, there's a lot of advice
on kind of how you should make that product work.
And I didn't know anything, I've never been a PM.
And I remember kind of taking a lot of that advice
and putting together a presentation
and just getting destroyed during that review.
I think Jeff was the head of product and CEO at that point.
And in a very kind way, it was basically like,
this doesn't make any sense.
And I just remember driving home
and kind of calling my wife and like,
I think I might be fired, I'm not sure if I was fired.
But he was very kind about it.
He's like, just come back and exit,
I think it's like five or four weeks.
And I remember at that point, I was like,
if you're gonna go in and yell at one more shot,
just do something you believe in, right?
And kind of make sure it kind of works.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And we started from that point
and we worked backwards from there in this concept of,
hey, I do believe that the most important thing
is connecting opportunity
and we should really understand how to do that.
And let's just start from there.
And it went very well.
And to me, it was another way of you,
you're in these large systems,
you're in these large companies, you're in these large,
I think LinkedIn is very special
because no matter what it is,
it's got a very good North Star.
And it was a moment for me to kind of really hammer that home
that like, as long as you get that North Star
in, you know, ahead of you, you're gonna be just fine.
And I think it's a, you know,
I'd never worked at a place like that before.
And I think a lot of times people wonder,
we imagine we have, the way we're talking about,
we certainly have an engagement ecosystem,
we have the hiring business
and we have a marketing solutions business,
we have a big premium business.
You can imagine when you're trying to make decisions
across that, it could get very, very complicated.
And I think one of the people asked me to describe LinkedIn,
I often start with that story
because I feel like it, you know,
it helps cut through how decisions are made
and kind of what is seen as success here.
And just to clarify, so that North Star is that phrase
that used of just connecting people
to economic opportunity, right?
That's it, that's it.
And it sounds, I know it sounds bigger than it seems,
but I can probably, you know, time example again,
you can understand when someone's driving
and I haven't been here for a little bit now,
you can understand when someone knows that,
when someone doesn't, it's a hard thing to lose track of.
Yeah, it does sound vague and like a nice fuzzy warm thing
that people can say.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

What you're saying is it's actually like, it's brought up in meetings constantly in product reviews. Like you're saying in this product review, everything changed when you came at it from that one perspective.

Yeah, I mean, this was, my first product here was the profile, you can make a profile that does a lot of different things as you can imagine. You could, you know, you could think about how identity could be used in many different phases and what you should prioritize or not. But if you can explain why this is the thing that you should do that would help someone, you know, really do what they want to do.

Maybe it's, you know, have an incredible podcast and send that out there.

Maybe it's helping them connect to a job, but if you can understand intent and how this unlocked and why you want to prioritize that item, all of a sudden the world gets a lot simpler.

How does that actually get operationalized at a company?

Is it just the leaders remind people of that?

It's like painted on the walls.

How is that a thing that people come back to over and over?

I do think it's a lot of repeat, repeat, repeat.

I do think that's it.

I do think the culture has a pretty high immune system now in the sense that when you aren't operating by that, people can see it and they operate against it.

But I also think it's probably the,

I think when, you know, in Jefferson and Ryan and they are just exceptional at continuously repeating that.

And it's been so consistent for so long that I think it's just kind of the DNA now.

And I do think it's exceptional.

I think it's exceptional leadership and I've learned so much from kind of watching it and how it gets operated.

Is there a metric associated with that when people use it in a way of like, no, that's not actually what we mean.

Is there some way of making it even more concrete in goals, metrics, ways to understand

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

if people are actually achieving that?

Yeah, totally.

So I think at the next level of operation, what we think about is, you know, when we run these marketplaces throughout this ecosystem to connect people out to me, what are the outputs that they matter?

So I'll just give you mine.

For example, we think a lot about number of hires, converted hires, how many people did we match, which is a real tangible way of looking at opportunity. And then number of people who learn to skill, which is usually in this world measured more by time than anything.

If you learn, spend time for X amount of minutes, we kind of do that skill.

Oftentimes skills don't have a direct outcome as you can measure it.

And so we basically look at those things more than any other to say how successful that we are operating that marketplace.

Got it.

That was make total sense to me.

Are there other core values of LinkedIn that are public that you can share?

I mean, you can Google them too.

And so they're very, very public, but probably the one that I think is most important to talk about in this world is, there's this concept of members first.

And I think anytime you run an ecosystem, as complex as we do, and you think about it, even if you're trying to connect people opportunity, there's two people, how are you gonna decide right now who needs it?

I think having clarity on which piece of the ecosystem is gonna be where the focus is.

It helps us make sure we establish a relationship, a trust first, make sure to understand who's getting access to data, make sure we understand our decisions that are being made.

And I always love that as a principle that we've stuck by.

Yeah, I see it on the page here.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

We put members first.

Okay.

So.

Great, checks out is what you're telling me.

What's interesting is the connecting people to opportunity, economic opportunity is not one of these values.

It seems like it's even broader mission of the company basically.

Got it.

Okay.

I love that.

This episode is brought to you by Epo.

Epo is a next generation AB testing platform built by Airbnb alums for modern growth teams.

Companies like DraftKings, Zapier, ClickUp, Twitch and Cameo rely on Epo to power their experiments.

Wherever you work, running experiments is increasingly essential, but there are no commercial tools that integrate with a modern growth team stack.

This leads to waste of time building internal tools or trying to run your own experiments through a clunky marketing tool.

When I was at Airbnb, one of the things that I loved most about working there was our experimentation platform where I was able to slice and dice data by device types, country, user stage.

Epo does all that and more delivering results quickly, avoiding annoying prolonged analytic cycles and helping you easily get to the root cause of any issue you discover.

Epo lets you go beyond basic click-through metrics and instead use your North Star metrics like activation, retention, subscription and payments.

Epo supports tests on the front end, on the back end, email marketing, even machine learning clients.

Check out Epo at getepo.com.

That's getepo.com and 10X year experiment velocity.

You've kind of touched on this idea of a complex system and I want to spend a little bit more time there.

LinkedIn is, as you said, very, very complicated.

There's all these marketplaces within marketplaces.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

There's so many customers you got to make happy.
They all have to work together.
I'm just curious what you've learned about building
and maintaining a complex ecosystem like that.
It's a fantastic question and it's,
first of all, I just openly think,
first of all, just career-wise always been drawn to that.
I think there's many kinds,
we talk about product as a whole, right?
We always talk about it as a whole,
but there's many different things you can build,
many different types of things and then we kind of go,
maybe there's hardware and software, consumer goods.
I actually try to kind of think about products
by their complexity curve a lot.
I think that the skills you need to manage
a complicated kind of ecosystem
versus maybe the skills you need to design,
something that's less interconnected or quite different.
And I will get to the details,
maybe what I mean in a minute,
but I do think LinkedIn is a particularly complicated place
and I do think that the skill sets that you think through
and you try to manage are in a complicated ecosystem
are quite different.
So maybe some tactics that can help if it's something
more complicated.
Yeah, let's do it.
You know, one of the things that I often think about
is this concept of cause and effect, right?
Like if you have non-interconnected things,
it's actually quite easy not to have to think about that.
You made something people love and you know,
I wrote a children's book not too long ago and it was fun.
It was awesome to write.
Once it was done, it was kind of done
and it was out there and it was able to go.
And that's a little bit different than here, right?
If you kind of make a change, like open to work,
all of a sudden you're thinking through the perception
of someone on the other side, what is that going to do?
Are they going to use the platform less or more?
You're thinking about customers.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

What are they going to do with that data?
Are they going to, to your point,
perceive someone in a different way or not?
You have to think through a second and third
and maybe even fourth order effects
and kind of manage that as you go through.
And I think that is something we really pride ourselves on
is how do we start thinking through these different things
and how do we start measuring them as we go?
And that is one.
The second thing I actually think is
it does lead to your point a lot.
You need a different kind of decision-making mechanism
because there's a lot more ties in the ecosystem
and a lot of people who just need way to break it.
And we've kind of put in things like,
we have something called Rapid,
which is a really easy way to know
who the decision maker is.
Just, you know, you line up,
who's your recommender, who has to agree,
who's a decision maker.
We have something called a five-day escalation rule,
which makes sure that those items are in.
And I think you lead a lot more of those fuse,
you know, I don't know what they're called, fuse limits,
or just systems in place in order to manage that complexity
so that things get done.
And I think that those processes are actually
really, really important to make sure
that the ecosystem can run.
Let's talk about these two processes.
Rapid and what was the other one?
Five-day?
Yeah, five-day alignment.
And they've both been around LinkedIn for a little bit,
but they're great.
The Rapid is just a question of, you know,
oftentimes to your point,
if you're running two, three marketplaces,
several different business model here,
there's a question of who has the decision, right?
Who can make the decision, the situation.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And so making sure that you have a single person's name with a decision, and that person is, you know, you know, that is really, really important because it gets a clarity real fast.

I mean, it's more of a personal role, but kind of one thing I love to say is, you know, if you had three back and forths of an email, you got to pick up the phone.

And if you're been on the phone for 20 minutes, it's time to just write that decision maker and go.

And that way you can make sure the concept of an hour, you should be able to get a decision.

It doesn't always operate like that.

I'm sure there's many PMs at LinkedIn who are operating who may have some feedback from me on that, but that's kind of the intent behind it.

And then a five day alignment is, you know, you should hold your managers accountable that in five days, if someone has something that they haven't been able to escalate and solve, that's probably then on the next level of person.

But as you run that ecosystem, there's so much complexity around it, I think you need some of those processes in place in order to start answering some of those type records, if you will.

Oh, I like that five day rule.

Basically puts the clock on a manager to get to unblock basically.

Yeah, yeah.

And with Rapid, I don't know if I totally understand is that an acronym for something or is it just make decisions rapidly?

No, that's a great question.

The D stands for decisions, but the R is for who's recommending it, the A and permanent has to agree, the I is for other people who may be able to be putting in an input.

And so it's basically a list of people who need to be in the decision chain.

Got it.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

I would argue the most important thing is to have a single name on that decision line because that usually makes sure that you can get a decision very quickly. Are there any other really common frameworks or processes along these lines at LinkedIn that you find really helpful? The third thing is just in how we think about talent, especially in the product organization. And I often really do try to suss out during interviews or in how we prevent people or just their ability to see systems. Because I do think it's again, I do think it's a different skill set and a different capability of how we kind of map those things out in a complexing group. And so oftentimes I think those talent systems will, those who are able to see the whole make decisions at the whole, that's kind of rare actually. I think most talent systems are hate. How did your division grow or your product grow? Your error grow? And we've tried our best to understand if it's not just about that. I mean, you want accountability in the ecosystem of course, but how well does this person work across? And I think as we've created telemetry around that or organizational understanding of that, how we've understood ourselves kind of just, hey, this is the skill set that's really important here. I think that's quite rare in driving that kind of complex system as well. One more question along these lines. Yeah. It's linked in for a long time. It feels like historically linked in, like as a product team, the external impression was it's very optimizing oriented and everyone there is just micro-optimizing all the little features of linked in, like everyone I've worked with from linked in, they're just really good at just optimizing things.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

And it feels like a lot of new stuff is happening with linked in these days.
And I'm curious if that's been like a real intentional shift of like let's not focus so much on making emails work better and like all the click through rates of everything and more just let's innovate more, let's do some bigger bets.
I do think there's two things that to kind of acknowledge. First, it's an incredible growth team.
And I think a lot of people that go on from linked in and incredible roles are growth.
So I think there's an influencer chain that's, a lot of people you meet might be a growth oriented.
The second thing is, especially when linked in started, I'm not like you said, I've been here a little bit of time, but growing the network is probably a very, very important thing to get the scale out.
So I think a lot of things people interacted with at first were maybe more growth mechanisms than other systems.
I do think there's always been at least for the last, less several years, an underlining line that values what's going to carry this ecosystem and values ultimately what makes the day.
And to your point, I like to think that, they may not be the most, I don't know the glittery items, right?
But I'm really proud of what we've done with skills.
I think that's like one of those invisible systems that no one really knows.
Like, oh my gosh, that's a huge disruption that people can now get, that's a huge language that people have created.
That's a huge way that people have changed.
Really proud of what we've done with kind of values, even open to work and commitments.
These are major social systems that we've kind of worked through.
I'm really proud of what we've done with LinkedIn learning.
I would argue it's one of the bigger creator systems in the world.
It's these incredible instructors and the ability to take someone who teaches, maybe he's not great kind of on camera

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

and move them to the studio
and give them that capability
and take their voice out there.
And I think there's a lot of different things we've done
that maybe because they're more invisible, if you will,
or they're hidden in a marketplace that necessarily,
maybe a lot of the influencer voices
may not actually need an access every day.
I don't know if they get as much visibility,
but I like to think that's been part of the DNA for a while
and we've been really thinking through it.
Let's actually talk about LinkedIn learning.
So I know this is a big passion of yours.
You have your own course within this
that I want to talk about,
but broadly just what is LinkedIn learning?
Just so people understand,
because I don't know if a lot of people know
this exists within LinkedIn.
Great question.
LinkedIn learning is basically a way
to learn professional skills.
And so we entered the business in 2015
and the thesis was it's kind of,
we think about it as a marketplace again.
You have seekers and job,
and oftentimes seekers may not have all the skills
in order to get the job.
We had this long kind of,
we're moving now towards the skills model,
but with that question,
this out of second order impact,
I don't think any of us wanted to kind of,
if you will, like,
Uberize the world.
Like, I don't think any of us wanted to make,
you know, everyone there,
we wanted to make sure everyone had the skills
in order to learn the skills in order to get there.
And so getting the learning business
is really, really important for the vision and the mission.
And basically the idea was
that we'd have ways to teach people skills

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

that was very much tailored to professionals.
Now that was kind of the vision.
The way the mechanism works is we go
and get the best instructors in the world.
We will bring them into a film studio,
and we'll do it at home.
Or in a way that makes the content extremely,
we help write the scripts,
we obviously have incredible graphics,
or just in a way that makes a teacher,
and someone who's an expert,
who may not always have the capability
in the sense of the time to go
and make their own online course
and get them in the studio and go from there.
And then the vast majority of people
will probably have access through their company.
The vast majority of the usage and kind of the business
runs through enterprise
and is a large enterprise learning product.
Awesome, like just as a quarter,
I don't know, armchair quarterback strategy person,
I could see where this came from of
we're trying to help people connect
to economic opportunity and find jobs.
How do we help them?
Oh, they don't have the skills.
Let's help them build the skills.
Makes a lot of sense.
Okay, and so within this,
you have your own course on product management.
Well, it's funny.
So I mean, I've been thinking about a course for a while,
but largely it was, you know,
it was this concept of I wanted to make sure
I tried our own product
and I understood the instructor pain point.
But it's a very scary experience.
You know, it's like, first,
I don't know if I had anything to teach
my own concerns about that.
But about four or five years ago,
one of the things we started at PM internally

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

was product university.

We had our own internal university, which was basically we got some survey, like we sent it down.

I think everyone told us, well, you know, like literally like the most negative one was we didn't, people said, I don't have the skills to do my job.

And I remember looking around like, well, it's pretty obvious.

We hired a bunch of people.

There's no PM degree and we've done nothing.

And so what we started doing is internally creating a product university was a bootcamp coming in.

You know, we try to get from different models.

And one of the things we really learned was you can't teach this just through frameworks, right?

You need it to have a series of case studies.

You need to have a real serious examples, but luckily we had a bunch of things we've done at LinkedIn.

So we started putting a curriculum against that.

And then just recently a few of us got together and we filmed the actual course for it.

So it's basically taking our product university bootcamp and kind of opening up to the world.

And you opened up some of your internal use cases as a part of this course?

We do.

Yeah.

That's awesome.

I always say that one of the things you don't realize you have as an advantage working at a bigger company is access to tons of strategy documents and vision documents and like stories of this.

Cause once you're out, no one's going to be able to share those with you cause they're so private.

Like I don't have access to any of these anymore.

So that's a really cool perk of working at a company like LinkedIn.

Question about your course.

What are some of your biggest lessons that you teach?

Can you just give it a preview of some of the tidbits that you might learn in this course of years?

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

Well, again, a lot of it is case studies and use cases in the same way we teach it here. But a couple of things that we do talk through, you know, when we started doing kind of our own product university, we realized a couple of big pain points that people hit. The first was it's actually really hard to know how to validate and what the bar is for a new idea in any organization. I think it's really hard to kind of say that. So we provide a lot of frameworks. Kind of simple things from, hey, you know, you got to prove to the world why there's duct tape in here, right? There's someone actually physically going out and trying to do it. How you can prioritize a list of ideas against a pain point, like how to kind of make a simple expression and how to kind of look through, you know, what's an acute pain point and what's a wide range of people use, how we'd expect data in order to be used in order to validate this. So kind of tools you could use to kind of say if this is a good idea or a bad idea, more importantly, tools to make sure you've went through the process and how you communicate it. That's kind of one framework set that we kind of talked to. The other is, you know, a lot about Damien who leads our growth team comes in, he starts talking a lot about leading, kind of thinking in loops. And so how do you make sure that when you're building something, you can have the fuel and really cascade and grow. And I think just the framework of doing that, how you measure that, how you monitor that is also something that, at least when I was starting and doing my startup, it was, it was quite something I wish I had had access to. And so those are maybe two good examples of frameworks and tools that we come through. And then of course, trying to overlay that with real cases, not always successful ones, of course, too.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

We talk about a lot of the failures we've had and where we probably went wrong if we had to diagnose them and post-mortem them. A lot of people listening to this are people that want to get into product management at RNPMS yet. I imagine you get asked this a lot, how do I get into product management? What is your advice that you often give? Yeah, well, let's start with kind of how we looked at the world, which is, you know, this idea of skills. You know, we had a kind of, we have a diagram that I think about, which is skills are kind of on a triangle. You might have heard this one before. I don't know. Skills are on a triangle. I think you need three different skills to be a great PM. You need to be kind of a Steven Spielberg type creator. You, something around data science and the ability to really look at data and see patterns and kind of see the future. And then, you know, especially to get more senior, I think it's a lot of general management, right? You have to basically be able to shine that innovative across the team, understand that budget, or understand how companies don't work. I've actually never seen a great PM who's in the center of it. I find the great PMs live on the edges. Like there's a, you know, there's always someone who's like this exceptional data science and the ability to maybe be a great GM and lead inspire, or maybe someone who's so creative, who can, you know, lead a team in a different way. And I think that one thing I would really, really encourage people to do is understand where they fit on that graph and gravitate towards those kinds of roles. Because a lot of times I think what people do is they think they have to make up for the other pieces of that graph and it leads them to a path where maybe

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

they're not playing to their strengths.
That's one thing I was encouraged people.
The other thing I would say,
and I know it's a little bit of luck in how this works,
but I think about my journey,
one thing I've really found was really helpful
is I was lucky to have, I was on the first team
that did a hybrid kind of SUV in the US.
It was at the time, it was a hybrid escape at Ford.
And I came from the Midwest and it was, you know,
one of those products where people would really drive out
for hundreds of miles and see and really kind of,
a community kind of gravitate around
because it was a very special product.
And being able to work on something that people loved,
I really loved early on and see what that felt like
and looked like and that success was,
it kind of created a bar
for what I would hope my products could do, right?
It would, and if you're able to get into something
that people really love and feel that and experience that
and really understand what that looks like
and what it takes to get there,
I think that's actually been a really valuable lesson
throughout my career,
because you can understand the whole path on the way up.
And I look back at that as really something
that I would hope other people, if they can do it,
I know you're making role decisions
on many different criteria,
but try to find something people love
and really experience it, what that feels like.
To kind of build on that with PMs that work for you
and work with you, when they're looking to get better
and build their skills, other than, you know,
go take some courses on LinkedIn learning,
what do you often recommend they do
to help become stronger and better at their job?
So first, it is that feeling of,
you got to own your product
and you got to speak up and say,
this is where I want to drive it.
Because a lot of times I think people are scared to do that

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

or worried about doing that
or don't feel that's their actual role.
So one, it's like extreme clarity on,
hey, this is your role is to own this
and take this to the next level.
And, you know, when you start kind of molding the clay,
people want to come and help
when you start building something cool,
people are like, oh, you did kind of gravitate into it.
But until you can start doing that, that's really tough.
So one, it's letting people know
that's kind of what's expected them.
And then two, I would tell people to just build.
As crazy as it sounds like,
I spent a lot of my time kind of on the side
just trying to build different things,
try to, I mean, they try different clay,
think through different ideas.
And I think that is a really important skill to have
to just being able to say,
okay, I'm going to start with the blank sheet
and make some art or whatever it is you want to do.
And I encourage people to do that
because it's a muscle like anything else, right?
You can get a kinetrophy.
And I really do think no matter what people,
kind of the heart of PM,
it is that ability to be a builder
and you do have to make sure you can keep doing it.
Yeah, that's actually a great segue
to where I was going to go next,
which is you say you build and you like to build stuff,
but you're like legitimately building a lot of stuff.
So you have the site, mindofharry.com
where you share all these side projects.
So can you just talk about what's going on there
and some of the stuff that you've built?
You know, are people,
the only thing I've ever been good at in my life
is just building things and creating things.
And I get a lot of energy from it.
And yeah, I have a site that's called Mind of Hari
because it is really whatever is top of mind.

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

I try to do my best to completely separate it from business.
I know there's always a draw as a good PM
to kind of say, there are business here,
but I try to keep it as art,
just like it's completely art and it's what I want to build.
And I take on new subjects and I have two little kids
and it's fun to kind of,
one of them was a book me and my oldest wrote.
And it was kind of a set of bedtime stories we did.
And then one day I was like,
hey, we should just make this a notebook and we did it.
I think it's got about half a million readers now.
So it's been fun to kind of see it,
take some life and go through.
We made a board game recently
that I know Stanford Design School
where some professors there have been using
and it was called Parallel Universe.
And it's how do you kind of have a card
and then be able to see like,
maybe the card says there's no windows in this world anymore.
And then what would happen in that world?
You got to list 10 different things that would happen.
So kind of that ability to kind of think ahead
and kind of a fun sci-fi.
I make kind of healthy gummy bears.
I just try to take something completely new
and have that, I don't know,
it's probably one of the more fun moments in this world
where you can sit there and just create something
and have some new clay.
And yeah, that is what that website is about.
Wait, so you made actual gummy bears?
Yeah, we are doing some with gummy bears.
So Lenny, I know you're expecting a new edition
a little bit in congratulations again.
Well, one of the things I found when I had kids
is no matter what I was trying to do,
there was like candy and sugar everywhere,
like any Halloween and birthday party, et cetera.
So I wanted to just create, you can't get rid of it
because like, you know, it was just hard to do.
So I, you know, we were like,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

hey, we're gonna sit down and make our own gummy bear.

What I found is this is just a fun tidbit

for your readers.

If you open like a Twizzler or one of those,

about 80% of what's in there is sugar

because they're optimizing for shelf life, right?

They're optimizing what's in the store.

And so what we were able to do is basically create

a gummy bear, about 40% of it's sugar.

It's just got five ingredients, honey is the sweetener

because I don't want to give my kids

some alternative sweeteners.

But yeah, we have a small commercial kitchen

and we produce some gummy bears.

And if you ever want to try them to any of my,

to any of your followers,

I'm happy to send some gummy bears

and hopefully you can check them out.

Wait, how do people, is there a way to buy them somewhere?

We can go to Mind of Hari.

We stock them seasonally.

And there is a, one of the things that we found out

is there is different kind of laws on how

who can be shipped and obviously we're not optimizing

for long storage.

So, but they'll be on Mind of Hari

and you can always reach out to me and I'll find you

and tell you where, which farmers market we're at

or whatever, and you can come swing by.

Well, I don't see it on Mind of Hari.

So maybe by the time this comes out,

put it on here or if you're trying it.

Put it on there.

Yeah, it's under, it's on the homepage.

And then when they're stock, we put them in the shop.

Okay, so that means they're out of stock.

All right, we're gonna sell you out.

Let's get all your gummy bears.

With that, we've reached our very exciting lightning round.

You ready?

Yeah, let's do it.

What are two or three books you've recommended

most to other people?

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

The first one is called Thinking and Systems.
It's the one I give kind of the team every now and then.
It's just a, yeah, it's just a really good book
about how I think a lot of people say systems are,
you know, can we kind of talk about it, can be abstract.
I think it goes into real detail
and how people can, you know, intervene at various parts
in how to take actions at different systems.
I really enjoyed that book.
Directly, maybe a book I recommend,
but a book that I just read that I thought was phenomenal,
just to give readers want something good.
It's called Tomorrow, Tomorrow, and Tomorrow.
I was recommending it to my friend.
Have you read it?
You read it?
Yeah, I honestly didn't love it, but I liked it a lot.
I really, I, for some reason, I've been,
I thought it was very well done.
And there's a couple of chapters I've reflected on it.
I just finished it on, I thought it was well done.
So that's one that I'll throw out there.
Yeah, it was very sweet.
I feel like I got, it got hyped too much for me.
I'm like, okay.
Oh, I didn't know, I didn't actually know
it got such publicity.
Okay, that's it.
The third one that I just downloaded,
cause I finished, I'm actually gonna open up my,
my audio book and tell you, cause I'm about,
I don't know, an hour into it and I'm really enjoying it.
It is an immense world.
I don't know if you read that one yet.
It is about animals and how animals have different senses
out there and it goes kind of through a set
of different animals, like, and kind of how they see the world.
One of those reminders that, you know,
we're so limited sometimes in our own interception
than kind of how dogs, for instance,
say, you know, they can breathe in and take in sense
even when they're breathing out.
And so they're constantly, it's like vision almost,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

and it's just phenomenal to me to kind of think about all the things they're probably sensing as we're going out of my dog and I are going on our walk. I've learned dogs like shoot air out of their nose first before they smell to kind of clear things out.

It's, I mean, it's not wild.

They kind of, they can probably see so much more of what happened in the history of like a little walk than we're able to just because of that.

Incredible.

Next question.

What is a favorite recent movie or TV show?

So one thing we try to do is watch TV as a family.

It kind of brings us together a little bit.

So we, we are doing Star Wars with the kids, which is for the first time,

which has been a really enjoyable experience, just being able to witness it through them.

And then we've been going a little bit back in time.

So we watched E.T., which is, you know, we kind of, it's fun, it jobs in memory.

These are phenomenal movies that we go through.

I think your question is on recent TV shows that probably came out more recently.

Those work just as well.

Yeah. I, the other one I did like, it's not a TV show, but I, God, what was it called?

Case, it was that podcast that came out, case 63, I think it was called.

And it was, I hope that's the right name of it, but it was like a, it was a sci-fi podcast.

It was like 10 minutes short.

And the premise of it is someone comes from the future and there's a little bit of speculative fiction and is at a psychologist.

And it was a, it's just a phenomenal piece.

I'll have to get you the real name.

Maybe I can get it for you after for the show notes.

Yeah. Well, edit your words and add that.

Yeah, exactly.

Whatever's in the show notes, that's the way it meant.

What is a favorite interview question you like to ask?

I do like to ask people what kind of the most complex thing

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

they ever built was.

Right. I just love to understand most,

mostly kind of what, what do they gravitate to?

Like, is that something you're actually doing too?

Are they able to simplify it?

And, and I think those are two really important skills.

What is it that you look for in their answer

that tells you it was a good answer?

Both of those things.

So first, did they take on something that was super complex, like really, really hard?

Because I think there's only a particular group will gravitate to those kinds of realm.

And I do think more and more,

I mean, hopefully I think that's a lot of kind of the,

a lot of the, in my opinion,

the ways the world is going to get better

by the things that are really, really hard to solve.

You can think about kind of the intimacy doesn't scale, right?

So when you think about how people are going to feel more connected,

it's going to be kind of a lot more difficult to solve.

When you think about healthcare,

it's going to be very, very difficult to solve.

Education is a very difficult interconnected space.

And so I think people who gravitate to then know those problems are hard,

have a very special kind of gift

and kind of a, it's hard to replicate that passion.

So one, did you do that?

And then two, I think people who really kind of understand systems are able to somehow,

this truly special people probably way smarter than me,

they're able to simplify it and they're able to explain it

and say, this is how I looked at it,

if here's how I modeled it and here's kind of the levers

and how I went after it.

And even if it's non-linear, they're able to say,

this is how the cause and effects works.

And I'm really looking for, once you did it,

did you really understand them?

Were you able to crack it?

Or at least did you understand why you weren't able

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

to crack it?

And I usually find this to be also the most kind of rewarding conversations.

Awesome, thanks for sharing all that.

Next question, what is a favorite recent product that you've discovered that you love?

I'll give you one more dead one.

So my youngest just hates brushing his teeth, it was always the same.

And there is, I should actually find the name of the toothbrush, but you can just Google or Amazon this and you'll figure it out.

It was basically, it's like, it was this baby shark toothbrush, but it's a game and you played that game for two minutes and you can try to like pick up different prizes, you brush your teeth and it turned what I loved about it because I think it's what all great products do.

It turns a moment of like, annoyance to a moment of joy, right?

It went like, not even just like you saw the pain point, it was like an unreasonable experience of like, now he loves it and like, you know, it was just so well done.

It's like 10 bucks and it was 10 bucks extremely well spent, so much light.

So whoever made that toothbrush, thank you.

Damn, and is it playing baby shark?

I hope not.

Well, it can, it has that feature and has that capability, but it is a small price to pay for me to get out, you know, to enjoy.

Good times.

What's something relatively minor that you've changed in your product development process that has had a big impact on your team's ability to execute?

I do like to change things, you know, relatively, like every quarter or six months, kind of sit down and kind of say, what can we get better at?

And the two areas I find myself innovating, if you will, innovating or tweaking the most is,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

when is around planning, right?

I think every company's starting to struggle with this and you get bigger, it probably becomes a more kind of different, especially we talked about the complexity of the ecosystem.

And we started this thing where just basically, we call it like orange and red priorities, which is there are a lot of times what people do is, teams will plan bottom up, they'll come into a manager or a leader and then the leader may shift things around or say this way.

I think we've really started shifting it in a different way.

We said, these are the big rocks we got to get done.

We're going to get those things done first.

We're going to be upfront and honest with you

and these are the things and these are the priorities.

And then you can kind of plan from there.

And that's been, I think it's relieved a lot of the progress.

So I think there's an honesty that comes with it

and that's been a big change.

The others just are kind of the way we review products.

That's always been a kind of thing.

My read is when we keep a product review process

live too long, it gets a little institutionalized

and people start making long documents and stuff, right?

So you always have to change that every quarter.

And basically, I think it always comes down to the same thing,

which is how do you get their problem statement quickly

and then how do you kind of design from there?

But the lever that we basically put in place for that

was really short in the time.

So like, I'm trying this thing,

I don't know if it's going to work,

but could we get to like 15 minute reviews

basically instead of an hour

and see if that kind of alleviates some of this.

I'll let you know how it goes when we chat up next,

but I'm very curious to see if this is going to be

a different kind of system where we might be able to get

to clarity quicker or realize we're not in clarity

and then break and come back.

Reminds me of a tweet I think I just saw,

maybe it was Instagram post of teams that do standups

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

while doing a plank to keep the meeting really short.
That's interesting, I haven't tried that one yet,
but it might be nothing we try next.
Last question, you've been at LinkedIn for a long time.
I imagine you use LinkedIn a lot.
Is there just a pro tip that you can share
of how to be more successful with LinkedIn,
find more value in LinkedIn and enjoy it more?
The first is I do think, certainly there's ways
and the majority of ways that skills work
is we infer skills, but I wouldn't,
I think that there is a skills section on the profile.
I think a lot of people ignore it
because they don't realize that there's value in it.
And that's changing, but I'm not sure if it's changing
for everybody and I would pay more attention to skills
because we kind of get in more into skills for stuff.
The second thing I would probably do,
I don't know if it's that hidden,
but I would check out LinkedIn Learning.
I do think LinkedIn Learning is a gem
and I think because it's sold largely through enterprises,
a lot of people miss it.
And I would hope you check it out,
but more importantly, tell me areas
that we could get better on there as well.
And I hope that people will find value there.
What's the best way to find out about LinkedIn Learning?
They just Google LinkedIn Learning and they'll find the...
Yeah, or go to LinkedIn.exe.learning, yeah.
LinkedIn.com slash learning, okay, great.
Hari, I feel like we've opened the mind of Hari up
on this podcast.
I appreciate you being here.
Two final questions,
where can folks find you online if they wanna reach out
and how can listeners be useful to you?
You can find me on LinkedIn, that's an easy one.
And the, you know, I do really, really, really
appreciate product feedback.
Like I promise you, I take it well for those listening
and two, it is, you know, going back
to the kind of the heart of this conversation

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / LinkedIn's product evolution and the art of building complex systems | Hari Srinivasan (LinkedIn)

around complexity, it is really hard to know sometimes whatever its experience is because you're living in a very kind of abstracted ecosystem. And so the more you could just say, hey, this is working or not, and the intentions are coming from a good place. And if you, if you have a moment and you're not having a great experience, who are having a great experience, you can write it. I really would appreciate it to hear your perspective. Amazing, Hari, thank you so much for being here. Thanks Lenny, it's a great meeting you. You too, bye everyone. Thank you so much for listening. If you found this valuable, you can subscribe to the show on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast app. Also, please consider giving us a rating or leaving a review as that really helps other listeners find the podcast. You can find all past episodes or learn more about the show at lennyspodcast.com. See you in the next episode.