

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / Scaling Duolingo, embracing failure, and insight into Latin America's tech scene | Gina Gotthilf (Latitud, Duolingo)

communication is constantly underrated. And communication isn't about being able to convey a message. It's about being able to convey a message in a way that the listener receives it and understands it and remembers it. And that's really hard to do. One of the things I've helped employ at Duolingo that I think is still there today. It's definitely not just me. It was an amazing team. It's a unique voice. And what that means is not just another language learning app where we give you instructions and you follow directions. There is always a quirk. Like it's unexpected. The way we talk to you is a little bit funny. It doesn't take ourselves too seriously. And it makes the person receiving this message feel something. And it's about how you make people feel. And you feel like either you giggle or you're like, wait, what? They just did what, you know, and using that to your to your benefit. Today my guest is Gina Godhill. Gina is most known for leading growth and marketing at Duolingo, helping take them from 3 million to over 200 million users, primarily through organic and non-paid growth channels, which we explore in depth. She also worked on the Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign where she oversaw a historic digital ad budget and she shares learnings from that experience. She also led growth in community for Tumblr in Latin America. Currently she is the co-founder and COO of Latitude, which is a company dedicated to helping build the next generation of iconic tech startups in Latin America. In our wide ranging conversation, Gina shares a ton of new insights and tactics on how Duolingo grew early on, how they grew today, and most interestingly what they did to become one of the very rare successful consumer subscription businesses. We also talk about how every life and career has an A side and a B side. Also why PR and brand are way underappreciated by most startups. She shares a bunch of stories of failed experiments and also some of her biggest wins. Also why Latin America is so interesting right now as a hub for startups and for innovation. Also there's a bit of philosophy sprinkled in and a bunch of real talk. This was such a fun conversation. Gina is delightful. I am excited for you to learn from her. With that, I bring you Gina Gotthilf after a short word from our sponsors. You fell in love with building products for a reason, but sometimes the day-to-day reality is a little different than you imagined. Instead of dreaming up big ideas, talking to customers and crafting a strategy, you're drowning in spreadsheets and roadmap updates and you're spending your days basically putting out fires. A better way is possible. Introducing Jira Product Discovery, the new prioritization and road mapping tool built for product teams by Atlassian. With Jira Product Discovery, you can gather all your product ideas and insights in one place and prioritize confidently, finally replacing those endless spreadsheets. Create and share custom product roadmaps with any stakeholder in seconds. And it's all built on Jira, where your engineering team is already working, so true collaboration is finally possible. Great products are built by great teams, not just engineers. Sales, support, leadership, even Greg from finance. Anyone that you want can contribute ideas, feedback and insights in Jira Product Discovery for free. No catch. And it's only \$10 a month for you. Say goodbye to your spreadsheets and the never-ending alignment efforts. The old way of doing product management is over. Rediscover what's possible with Jira Product Discovery. Try it for free at [Atlassian.com slash Lenny](https://atlassian.com/slack/Lenny). That's [Atlassian.com slash Lenny](https://atlassian.com/slack/Lenny). This episode is brought to you by Hex. If you're a data person, you probably have to jump between

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different tools to run queries, build visualizations, write Python and send around a lot of screenshots and CSV files. Hex brings everything together. Its powerful notebook UI lets you analyze data in SQL, Python or no code in any combination and work together with live multiplayer and version control. And now Hex's AI tools can generate queries and code, create visualizations and even kickstart a whole analysis for you all from natural language prompts. It's like having an analytics co-pilot built right into where you're already doing your work. Then when you're ready to share, you can use Hex's drag and drop app builder to configure beautiful reports or dashboards that anyone can use. Join the hundreds of data teams like Notion, Altrails, Loom, Mixpanel and Algolia using Hex every day to make their work more impactful. Sign up today at hex.tech slash Lenny to get a 60-day free trial of the Hex team plan. That's hex.tech slash Lenny.

Gina, thank you so much for being here. Welcome to the podcast.

Lenny, I'm so excited to be here. It's been awesome to see how you've built this and just how far it's gone. Thank you for inviting me. Really appreciate that. I'm more excited to have you on the podcast. And I know you just came off hosting a massive event somewhere in Latin America. I think you had 5,000-something people. You had Ben Harwitz keynoting. And I wanted to start with the talk you gave. I think you described it as people having this A-side and B-side to their life, kind of like a record has an A-side and a B-side. So could you just share what it was this conference and then to kind of just briefly share this concept as much as you can?

For sure. And thanks for that, Lenny. Look, I think for us, for those of us here in the U.S., I became an American last year. I love the U.S. I've been here for 19 years. It's hard to imagine just how much is going on south of the border. There's actually 660 million people living across Latin America. And it's an economy of \$6 trillion. And Brazil is a huge market just in terms of sheer size over 200 million people. And also in terms of where the ecosystem is. I am Brazilian. So I am Latin American, even though sometimes Brazilians are not sure if they are Latin American because we speak Portuguese. And so the future of the region really matters to me. And helping people get the opportunities that I've had in terms of access to information and resources that could help them build scalable, very successful startups can really change the economy across the board. I believe in that much more than I believe in government and like whether we're going to vote this guy or that guy next. And so that's sort of the impetus for the company. The conference was a conference put together by my company. I'm a co-founder with three, Brian, Yuri and I. We put this conference together to bring together the top entrepreneurs, operators and investors across Latin America, but also people who are interested in investing in the region of which there are more and more here in the U.S. and abroad. More than 5,000 people came.

We had over 70 speakers. It was across two days. We had amazing people like Ben Horowitz who never gave like a talk or like did a fireside specifically for and about Latin America and the opportunity. But we also had incredible founders who you, you know, in terms of like U.S. operators may not be as familiar with, but if you've ever heard of Rapi, it's a really important delivery company in Latin America. So the founder of Rapi flew down from Miami for that. And then we had, you know, VCs from like a lot of the top names that you've heard here in the region as well. And then a lot of unicorns. We've had a lot of unicorns in the region. So they were all there. And the idea was to share learnings along the way successes and failures so that people can skip

by not making the same mistakes as others. And I was asked to open both days. And then the first day that the opening talk that I ended up giving was this concept that I really like, which is the A side and the B side of a story, which is that if you are old like me, and maybe you and me, I think we're a similar age, you remember what a CD or like or what a what a what a mix tape was like. And we had the A and the B side. We are very encouraged in our lives, especially professionally, to talk about our A sides all the time, because that's what impresses people that that's what opens doors. That's what allows us to keep growing. And it's so important. So it means that a lot of what you hear in podcasts and on on stage ends up being the Instagram of both version of someone or a company or a country's trajectory. It's just the highlights, you know, and when I talk about my A side, it's very impressive. You know, I did things like we'll talk about, I met President Obama, I worked on the Mike Bloomberg president, Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign, I helped

doing those skills from three to 200 million users, I worked with Tumblr, helping them scale Latin America. Andreessen Horowitz invested in my company, etc. But between all of those highlights, there were so many B moments that get sort of like shoved under the rug, because it's just easier for me and it's more impressive for others. But I really like to highlight those because I think that most of us have a lot of B moments every day, every week, every month and every period of our lives. And it's easy to think that things aren't just not going to work out for us because we're in one of those B moments if we don't recognize them as moments. And the story I ended up telling was how, you know, much like I have this these A and B sides that I don't talk about my B side so much, Latin America also has A and B sides, because it's really easy to focus on like, it's dangerous, like, we're behind, you know, the governments are a mess, there's like financial insecurity. But there's a lot of A side in there and a lot of the side is the opportunity we have in terms of tech. Because in terms of percentage of GDP that tech occupies compared to other markets, it's very promising. We're at like, one third of India, one 10th of China, one 30th of the United States, meaning that like, tech companies can grow a lot so that they occupy that space in the GDP in terms of the GDP, which is believable. So that was the concept of the talk and the reason for this conference. I love this concept. We're going to talk as you expected about a lot of your A side stuff. Is there any example of a B side story of your life that would be interesting to share? Look, I think those are the most interesting because they're they're funny or ridiculous, you know, but I'll just say that I had a lot of B sides and I still do. For example, I, you know, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I actually wanted to be an I thought I wanted to be an actress. I either wanted to be that person in SeaWorld who goes like this with the dolphin. This is before SeaWorld was canceled, or I wanted to be an actress. But then my parents convinced me that it was I was probably not going to succeed because the odds weren't in my favor. I applied to schools. I didn't get into any Ivy League. I didn't get into any of the top schools I wanted to go to. When I got to college, I actually ended up dropping out because I got so depressed, like incredibly depressed, couldn't get out of bed depressed. Ironically, I dropped out of Reed College, which is the same college that Steve Jobs dropped out of. So, you know, I was just destined for greatness. I knew it at that moment. It all makes sense looking backwards, as he said. Totally. I was dropping out being like, yes, this is exactly the path. No, I was I was miserable. I thought there was no path forward. And when I finally went back and graduated the college counselor, look at my curriculum and said, whatever you even done with your life, there's

nothing to show for. And it was shocking because I was always like the overachiever who wanted to do the maximum curriculum and ace all of my classes and do whatever, you know, like I did three diplomas in high school, the internationally American, the Brazilian, my one learning there that has stuck with me and I think can work for other people too, is that it's not just about doing things that actually matter and like and learning. It's about being able to tell a story. And it's about understanding what other people perceive as valuable. I'm not talking about net value, but I'm talking about if you want to grow in the world, it's understanding that psychology of how humans react to what you're showing them. So that was one lesson. But then I went on to, you know, I applied to 100 companies. I didn't hear back from most of them. I finally got an internship at kind of like a tier B slash C digital marketing agency in New York City, because I wanted to live in New York so badly. And they forgot to apply for my visa on time. So I lost my visa and had to go back to Brazil. And then I ended up leaving that organization to go work for another one. And like, I won't even go into the details of the shadiness of that company that I worked for. But then they ended up playing me off. So I lost my visa again, had to go back home, found another opportunity, got fired that time. So there's just a lot of rockiness in my start that I don't think he would imagine when you see someone up on stage like leading a conference

for 5,000 people that I think is important. And even when I started working for Tumblr, I was like, this is it. Like, I made it. This is a really interesting company. This is going to work out. That was super rocky because it was an early stage startup. So for example, you know, they couldn't figure out how to wire money to Brazil. So I was not paid for six months. And at one point me and like my colleagues were trying to get money out of the teller to pay contractors because we had no money to pay them. And like we borrowed money from people. And, and finally, they also laid me off because they decided to sell to Yahoo. And then I had to figure out like, what am I going to do? No one's going to hire me. I've been fired and laid off so many times. So this is all before I started like an agency to help US based tech companies and startups grow in Latin America, because I figured I wasn't like this really great place to make that happen. And it eventually worked for well known companies such as Duolingo. At the time, they weren't well known. They were a tiny little startup. They didn't have an Android app. And that's how I started working with Duolingo, because their head of marketing connected with someone they had worked with at Flickr and said, I noticed Tumblr grew a lot in Brazil last year. Can you recommend like a company or an agency to help? And they said this girl, and I was 26. And so that's how they connected me with Duolingo. And I started helping them grow in Brazil as a consultant. They were like, this is great. Can you help us grow in Chile, Argentina? And I was like, yes, they were like, how about Mexico? And I was like, yes, you know, I did I know anything about these places, Lenny that I know people there. No, but like you can figure it out. And then they ended up asking me to come on full time, do that across the world, Japan, China, Korea, Turkey, Spain, France, etc. And then to own growth, which ended up meeting communications, social media, government partnerships, anything to grow. And then a lot of and then eventually became an AB testing growth engine with engineers and PMs and designers of which I knew nothing about. And, you know, even after that, like, I left Duolingo five years later, didn't know what to do with my life, you'd think, oh, wow,

you have it figured out. Now you left Duolingo, you have the world in front of you. And I'm like, maybe I can finally go work for nonprofits, which is what I actually wanted to do in the first place. Try to handle that, like had a couple of experiences before going to work for the Mike Bloomberg campaign. Working for the Mike Bloomberg campaign is impressive. But you know what, Mike Bloomberg didn't win. He's not the president. So that was not a successful campaign, you know, if you really look at it. And yeah, latitude seems like it's a really promising path. But there's A days and B days. So it's just a lot of that and just staying resilient and believing in yourself and getting back on the horse when you fall in your face.

Amazing. That's such an important message. I think one of the threads from what you're describing, something that I think about a lot is people kind of underestimate how long their career is. There's just so much time to do stuff and for things to start to work. This is gonna sound really fancy, but I think Marcus Aurelius has this quote about how our life is actually very long. We just use it really badly. And we just waste a lot of our time. I think you're so right, Lenny. And I love that because people are going around being like, life is short, life is short. But that's so true. We waste so much time. But also, I think we don't, we don't recognize how much opportunity we have in front of us. And as a 26 year old, I definitely thought my career was over. I was like, I blew it. And then looking back, it's funny, you know?

Yeah. I know exactly what you mean. I spent nine years at my first job at a random company in San Diego and a startup. I was like, what am I doing here so long? And then it turned out that was really useful for the thing I did next. And then eventually, a lot of things started to really take off. So I think that's a really good lesson for people. It's just a little long time. This is my fourth career. I switched careers many times. I was an engineer. Then I was a founder. Then I was a product manager. And whatever this is, whatever you call this thing. Okay, cool. Yeah. Yeah. I guess me too. I was an operator. I was a consultant. Well, I was an employee. I was a consultant. Then I was an operator, which is a fancy way to say employee at a startup. And then now I'm a founder and a VC and an angel. And whatever this is. Awesome. Awesome. So I think, I think that's a really important takeaway. It's just there's a lot of time to do stuff and don't stress if things aren't moving as fast as you want. I want to try to bounce around between A side and B side in this conversation. That'd be a cool framework. And so we're going to definitely talk about Duolingo and a little bit more about Latin America. I wanted to touch on this Mike Bloomberg story. So what I understand from your experience there is you deployed a historic amount of money into paid ads as a part of that campaign. I'm just curious what you learned from running paid ads at that scale for a campaign or just broadly? So I, you know, we deployed a historic amount of money in the campaign. It wasn't me, Gina, personally. Yeah. I think that's important to share. So, so Mike, the Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign was spending roughly a million dollars

a day, which is crazy. And you can do a lot with a million dollars a day. It's good to be Google. It's good to be Google. But yes, it's good to be Facebook. I, I'll share, you know, what I think is most useful here. And also what my experience ended up being, which is, you know, they, they brought together a lot of great talent from across the US in terms, especially in terms of tech. This is an organization called Hawkfish that they started working with the Mike Bloomberg. Basically he created it. I don't know. It was like embedded in there. There were a lot of us who had

large egos and had been like sharks in our previous organizations who had to figure out how to come together and work. And in a very short amount of time, that was a very interesting experience because it's hard to do that. It's not just important to be great and smart, but it's also important to understand how to most effectively, effectively deploy your resources and talent across an organization. And that sort of takes a little bit of time to, to happen. And for a presidential campaign, that's, you know, I find that very hard to do from that one experience. That said, it also meant that when you're looking at the paid ads and the fact that we were deploying this massive amount of money, there were a lot of cooks in the kitchen when it came to figuring out exactly what we were going to do with those ads and like how we were going to target them and what are the campaigns we're going to run and what's the copy and what's the design. And after, you know, maybe a few days there, I realized that my, my, my best bet in terms of actually adding value was not to be another cook in the kitchen, trying to figure that out, but to move into the next step of the journey, which nobody was paying attention to, which is once you click on an ad, you land somewhere and then whatever happens there is super important because if people then take the action you want them to take on that landing page or don't is definitive, but everyone spends all of their effort and money on the ads. And I think that this is true of almost everything. We forget to think about the step by step and growth and what that experience looks like. And even just the second or third screen in an experience are as if not more important than the first one because that's where your quote unquote leaky buckets can happen. So if you're able to 2x the effectiveness of a landing page, you are able to like actually in a compounded way increase the effectiveness of that first ad. So I spent a lot of time kind of going rogue and figuring out how to make landing pages because like the designers and the copywriters were all allocated to the actual ad. So I was just there being like, I'm going to do copywriting and design and figure out how we can increase these conversion rates. And the cool thing about that level of dollar deployment is that you're able to reach statistical significance very quickly. Whereas like in a company like Duolingo, where you already have a lot of users and you can reach statistical significance on an A/B test within two weeks at the Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign on a landing page, we could see that three times a day, you know, so like four times a day. So I would be able to like do something and be like, oh, wow, this has had 3% conversion rate and then like get approval for like a new version and deploy it and then be like, okay, we're at 6% now. And then actually improve three, there was one day where like I brought one page from three to 12% conversion rate with statistical significance. So that's I think the biggest benefit of having those dollar amounts. I think the the drawback and that's the same for startups that have a lot of money to spend is you start going a little wild in terms of like, oh, like the money's are the the world's our oyster, we can do whatever we want. And you lose sight a little bit about effectiveness, which is where growth is so magical.

What was that change on the landing page? You did that increased conversion so much, you remember?

None of this is going to blow anyone's minds, I think, because it's very best practices, but it's easy to overlook when you're so focused on so many different steps of a process. The first one is making it mobile optimized. So people really like people who are working are working on their computers on desktop computers, even today, we forget that most people

are looking at pages on our phones. And that has been the case for a while. And I think it's just increasing. So you need to make sure that that experience of looking at something on your phone, whatever your phone is, is great. And what that means is, like from a landing page perspective, super simple, like, first, it has, you know, the the core copy, the message and button need to be above the fold. Or if you're not going to keep the button above the fold, which I still recommend, but if you're if you're not going to do that for whatever reason, then you need to have a very clear indicator that like it's that there's something to scroll towards on your page. The second thing applies to both desktop and mobile is people skim and copywriters don't like to believe that much like journalists don't like to believe that people just read headlines. It's just how it is people are busy and lazy, myself included. So you can write all of this beautiful messaging that you thought through, but if people are not going to read it, it doesn't matter. So you have to approach a landing page with that perspective and as much as possible. And so for me, what makes

some things particularly skimmable is first, you know, restricting copy a lot and even even copy that seems short is probably not short enough. Second, so people normally like to have like a title, some sort of like subtitle, and then like an image and a button, those are kind of like core pieces of like some sort of landing page experience. Having the title and the button speak to each other is really cool, because if people only read the title and the button, they got it. Like it can't be like, wouldn't you like the next president of the United States, blah, blah, blah, and then like a whole explanation of what and then the button is like, I don't know, apply, whatever, right? Like it's like a pie for what now I have to go read the thing and I didn't get it. So just keeping those two things super speaking to each other. And then of course, making sure that that landing page speaks to the ad experience. And that's something that I think people do pay some attention to. Finally, there's a there's an element of emotion to it, which I didn't get super deep in, but just very basic, right? Like my job was to create a landing page that made people so it was actually funnily enough before COVID hit the US. And then and then COVID

hit the US half the people in that campaign got COVID on our like sad, like goodbye, Mike Bloomberg

Party. And I had already bounced and I left New York, because I was scared. I was like, the city is going to be a Petri dish. And I spent months trying to convince the whole United States as much as I could that COVID was going to hit the United States. And there were going to be a lot of deaths unless we had a different president. And so I of course convinced myself very effectively that like we were in grave danger. And so to do that, like we had images in the background of different sorts like Mike Bloomberg and like whatever, like, but what is fear, you know, fear really inspires people. And that's just a truth about human psychology, especially when it comes to like a presidential campaign. So having dark colors like black, like having Trump in sort of like a black scenario, kind of looking down and looking a little menacing is more powerful than having Trump looking ridiculous, for example, in the context of we need to take action, otherwise there will be deaths because of this, right? So it depends on the concept, but don't underplay the importance of understanding how people are going to feel when they see something and whether that's going to lead them to take action, keeping it super, super simple. Because also the other thing I see is like a lot of images, you know, it's like, no, the image can't distract from your

core message. It just has to be a background thing that aids in the digestion of that message. I feel like all these startups are going to start adding Trump menacing Trump to their landing pages because it works for you guys. They're going to alienate 50% of the American population. True. There's a few other things I wanted to dig into. One is obviously Duolingo. So let's just spend some time here. So it's really interesting. I've written, with my newsletter, I've written over 200 posts. The number one most popular post of all time did not expect this was about the story of Duolingo and the way that the team reignited growth after it started to plateau. This was by Jorge Mazal. Okay, cool. Yes. Okay, there's the right pronunciation. And so clearly there's a lot of interest in the Duolingo story. And you were there before Jorge. You were there really early. I think you were there from three million users to 200 million. That's kind of what I hear you describe it. That's my claim to fame. Okay, great. That's a large, large growth trajectory. So one thing I wanted to ask broadly is it feels like B2C subscription apps like never work. They never last. There's so few success stories of consumer subscription apps. There's like Duolingo, like Calm maybe, but it's, I don't know, it feels like it's slowing down, Headspace, Grammarly sort of. There's like always, they're like, okay, and there's a few that are okay that most die. I guess I'm mostly curious. What is it that you think Duolingo did right to make it basically and continue to thrive even these days? Very few people really believe that we were going to make it, not surprisingly, right? Even though we had like this amazing team, et cetera, now it looks almost obvious. It's like, yeah, B2C language learning just like seems so niche. And plus education, there's no money in education. Like, you know, it's been stuck for so long. So, you know, and what I kept hearing, you guys, did you hear about Rosetta Stone? Like this solution already exists. So I think that there are a couple of things that really made Duolingo's success, which are very hard to replicate. Number one, an obsession for the mission that sounds cliché. I think a lot of founders and started people like to talk about the mission and I get it. And I think it's real. But I really mean it because this obsession for solving a problem for hundreds of millions of people. And the problem wasn't just a vitamin. It was a problem in the sense that if you don't know English in today's world, your opportunities to get out of your social economic zone are very diminished. More specifically, you can double or triple your income potential by learning English in a developing market like Latin America. And there are lots of those around the world. That belief that education should be free and that people should have access to that opportunity, not just in developing countries, but of course, also in the US, really drove the organization in a way that drove how we built our marketing, how we spoke to our users, how we designed the experience, how we put barriers in front of taking decisions that would actually impact that mission. It helped our users rally around the business. It helped us hire the best people even if we were based in Pittsburgh and couldn't necessarily pay the Google dollars. So it's really hard to measure the importance of just really being obsessed about that mission. But I speak to a lot of education founders, ed tech founders. And I'm very biased probably because of this experience. I will say that I had one of those, what's the called the experiment where they had like, they looked at all of the shots that some plane got when it came back from war and then started fixing the plane. There's a name for this, right? And then they realized that they should be pictures. Yeah, the pictures with the red spots because if they got back, they survived, they're like

missing the plane that like felt right. So I, I got to ride in a plane that survived. So I have a, oh, it's called survivor bias. Maybe that sounds, that sounds right. Yeah, survivor bias. But I really believe in this survivorship bias. So if I, if I speak to a founder and I can tell that they're speaking, they're building an ed tech because they believe that they will be able to make money from it. There's nothing wrong with making money. Nothing. I want to make money. You know, I think it's a capitalist world that we live in and it's fine. But just that drive and is what brings people to you. And it's what leads you to make long-term thinking decisions that really end up mattering. And it's what allowed us in many ways to grow organically versus with paid ads, which I think is crucial for an early stage tech startup. It's not the only thing, but I think it's one of them that's super important. Just to follow that thread, that's something that I actually found. I wrote a post about this looking into of the ones that made it. What did they do consistently across them all? And one is just stay very lean and scrappy for a long time because to your point, it's so hard to build a big business and you can't afford, like you said, the best people. You can't pay them as much as everyone else. So essentially, it's just like a long time of just being very lean and scrappy. That was the most consistent pattern across all you'd be to see subscription apps. Agree. And that's number two. When I was hired by Duolingo as a consultant and as an employee, my mandate was make Duolingo grow. Here's no budget. I had no budget and people are shocked. Like they're like, oh, but when they just start, when you just turn on the ads, we're like, we just didn't because I know, like this is between you and me, Lenny. I actually am quite bad at paid ads. It's just not like a muscle that I ever developed. I'm only good. We won't tell anyone. Okay. Please, please keep this a secret. I've only been good. I think I could develop that muscle if one day I need it. But I'm particularly good at thinking about organic growth because I've had to because that's what Tumblr and Duolingo required of me. And the logic behind it was, listen, with Duolingo, we started monetizing the platform very late and it was a luxury because we had so much venture capital money to sustain us for a while. But we had some bets that we made in the early days that we thought we're going to help really sustain the company like translations that didn't end up panning out. And then we, you know, the Duolingo English test that we started developing really early with Burr Settles, an amazing guy who basically was, you know, developing this test, we realized that was going to be super long term. We didn't start really like charging for subscriptions or having ads and I don't know exactly, but something like year three. So we didn't have an LTV, which meant that having a cat made no sense. So that's number one, like having like, you need that cat to LTV ratio that everyone, you know, talks about that's an important thing, but it's more than that. First, I think there's a cat to LTV ratio thing. The second thing is that even if you have a low cat, I was just talking to an entrepreneur this morning, he was like, oh, we were able to hit a 10 cent cat. And I'm like, yeah, but that grows. Like as you start like targeting more people, the low hanging fruit kind of dry out and you end up having to pay more money. And then once you have those users coming in because of those paid ads, you can't cut it off because you still need that growth because you're trying to prove to your investors that you're growing or you need those users in order to continue AB testing or whatever, like then you become completely dependent and it's really hard to turn it off. So it's almost like an addiction that as much as you're able to like limit in the beginning, the better. And the third thing is that I really believe that I don't believe. I think we all know by at this point that the most important

thing for the growth of anything tech or maybe in general is retention. Of course, you need acquisition, but retention is important. And I simplify it a little bit because I don't think retention is like, I don't think it in terms of like, wow, I must retain this user. It's like, is this thing valuable or not? Like that's what retention is to me. Like either it's actually providing real value or it's not. If it's providing real value, people stick around. It's as simple as that. And if you don't force yourself to pay attention to retention and finding the users to whom this is the most useful really early on, you risk convincing yourself of metrics and kind of like glossing over some of this other important stuff, which means that even if you succeed at acquisition, you're just not going to succeed long term because those users fall through and you won't really understand why because you were building retention based on acquired users that weren't the ones who were necessarily going to, you know, and I don't mean to say that I don't believe in paid at all. I think paid has its value. I think especially when it comes to testing, sometimes you don't have as many users as you need to run statistically significant tests, but with paid users, you could or you could just use paid ads to understand like messaging and images and even value prop on a landing page like that super valuable, or you find an amazing niche and you know exactly who your target users are and you figure out a way that makes sense. But then again, I would argue that if you found your perfect user and where they are, you should go figure out a way to get them organically because if you can really provide them value, they would come and they would stay. So far I've heard be really focused around a mission. Be very clear about what you're trying to achieve. Two is just very low spend. Try not to essentially don't expect to grow this into a venture scale business. Focus on a sustainable profitable business for as long as you can and like constrain your spend basically. And then third is this focus on retention, which I think is a really important point just like, and this is true for any app you're building, but I think especially true for consumer business where people just like, this is cool. Okay, what's next? Okay, let's check out Snapchat. Totally. And you know, I was going to have a different three, but I think it's related. So maybe we can add it as 3B or four.

3B, let's do it.

An obsession for the product. Again, sounds obvious, but isn't. When we look back to products that existed, you know, before the internet, before I did that, the app store, you built this thing, you made it, and then you tried to convince people to buy it. That was that kind of it, right? So like, look, I made a chair. This is a beautiful chair. And then you spend all this money trying to like get it out into the world and people buy the chair and you like hire all these sales people and you hire an amazing marketing agency and they try to sell the chair. It's no longer at all that because products are constantly in motion and evolving. And like, unless you're able to own that data and understand what it can tell you, you're never going to win. So I hear a lot of people come to me and say, Gina, Gina, we built Duolingo for this. And I'm like, okay, cool. And then they show it to me and it looks exactly like Duolingo. And I'm like, okay, cool. And then I'm like, how did you get to this design? They're like, oh yeah, we use Duolingo something great. So like, but then as I started talking to them, I understand they didn't actually, they don't have the engineers and PMs, they're looking at Mixpanel or whatever it is that they're using every day, understanding how every single change is leading to other changes that enables them to ask the questions and come up with the hypotheses that allow them to get to the next step. So it's almost like they just like copy-pasted something. It's, you know how I think of that? It's like, those

students who are able to copy their like the best students answer on the math test, and then they get frustrated that they didn't get an A because the work wasn't there, but they copied the answer. But if you don't know how to do the work, you get another math question and you're not going to get it right. And so that I think still misses in a, in, I would venture to say most early stage tech startups out there, it's certainly the case in Latin America, where people think they can outsource like the code or outsource the growth. And they're not just like looking like hawks at like the quality of the data and statistical significance and like running hypotheses and like questioning them. And that rigor is a culture at Duolingo that was there from day one before me and continues to be there today. Amazing. So I think if a listener is trying to build a subscription consumer app, I would suggest just rewind and listen to that again. I think there's so much gold there. And in my experience, I get a lot of decks because I do a bunch of angel investing. I just, I kind of just discount consumer subscription apps because they never work, except when they do once in a while. And so my advice is if you're building something in the space, just like listen to exactly what you just said, there's a lot of important stuff and like actually internalize it, like stay really lean, stay really focused, obsessed with retention, obsessed with making sure the product is solving the problem you're going after. So I'm so glad that you agree, Lenny. I've, you know, I really admire you. So it makes me very happy. Well, we're both happy then. I wanted to switch to the B side. And I'm curious, what's like a mess up or a big mistake maybe that you made or your teammate that was like, oh, wow, that was a big waste of time. Yeah, look, a lot of things didn't work out, more than 50% of our AB tests didn't work out. We made bets that didn't make sense. I will say though that like in the spirit of A and B sides, I, and I think in general, we are really good at forgetting the B stuff. Like I, I talk so much about all the stuff that worked that it's hard to remember like all of those moments that didn't actually work. And the, and the moment, and the thing that I tend to talk about, which is like this mistake that we made as the growth team is almost like one of those, like when you get asked in an interview, like what's your, what's like your biggest weakness and you're like, I'm a perfectionist, you know, it's like one of those things that actually makes you sound good, because it's the story about how my team really wanted to implement badges. We spend a lot of time playing all the games that were popular at the time, trying to understand how those gamification growth hacks that we could find in, in those apps would potentially overlay onto Duolingo and how, you know, we would do that. And badges was just pervasive in all of the top games. And so it seemed like a no brainer. But since we ranked all of our experiments in terms of ROI and return being like how many users we think we're going to get from this, the AU's and invest time investments, it was never, it never made sense to focus on this because we thought that the time sink would be too high. So I actually ended up not letting the team run this experiment for like six months so that we focused on lower hanging fruit. So that's like a mistake on my end. Then we decided to, we decided to run this experiment in the most lean way possible. We're like, you know what, like there's MVPs, there's like minimum viable experiments, we don't have to run a whole badges thing, we can just like do something more simple and actually see if that like leads to growth in an interesting way. And then we'll know. And we ran this very simple experiment that was like, you signed up and then you get a badge and it was like, this girl with a balloon, I don't know, she was like happy or whatever. And of course, of course, in retrospect, it led to no results because no one is proud of

signing up. It's not an exciting moment. And you don't even have badges to collect. You can't show it to other people. Like none of the things that make badges compelling were there. But we were like, okay, well, we decided it didn't work. And then we moved on. So we moved on for like another, I don't know, eight months. And we didn't look back. And then when we did look back, first of all, at that point, we discovered that we hadn't been dogfooding, okay, which also was embarrassing looking back, we hadn't been dogfooding in the growth scene, we just come up with hypotheses, we'd like, we were super careful about prioritizing them and making sure that we were doing the best

possible like write ups and all these things. But like the dogfooding piece, it just, I didn't come from a product background. I was a marketer. And I hadn't even, I didn't really understand the term dogfooding. But when I, when we thought of, we had a conversation, we were like, you know what, if we had just tested that, we would have all known that this was a super lame badge. And I was like, why are we not testing our experiments? And so like that became part of our, of our practice. It's still relevant. I just had a conversation yesterday with engineers at latitude. I haven't explained what we built yet where we're building it, maybe we'll get there. But I was talking yesterday to engineers at latitude, and they're awesome. Like, in terms of our product team, we have like the number eight employee at new bank, you might have heard of new bank, but it's this like massive banking like fintech in Latin America. And we have people from like other fintechs. And then we have this guy who was a lead PM at Twilio. And I was explaining to them why we should be dogfooding. And they were all like, Oh yeah, we should dogfood. It's just like easy to forget stuff like that. So, so that was a mistake that, you know, we could have probably gotten to the growth that we got to with badges much earlier, earlier on. And not only did we get to growth with badges, but it became like this amazing treasure trove of opportunity, because once you have badges, and people want them, you can now ask people to do anything, like go find friends, go buy things like, you know, whatever it is. And so like we had, we impacted almost all metrics across the company positively, but including some we hadn't expected.

But it's like easy to talk about a mistake that ended up being a win. So that's why I compared it to the interview thing in the beginning. But, you know, we tried making Duolingo a social app really early on and failed. It was called duals, dual duals, like you could dual, you know, very clever. Yeah, I know that we were we were clever, but people didn't use it. And we didn't figure out why we we tried making a Duolingo for schools platform, like we couldn't get it to pick up. I went and launched Duolingo in China, and it got downloaded by a million people in the first day. And then the app got blocked. And we, you know, because of the government, and then we couldn't figure out what to do. And then everyone rated the app like one star because it didn't work. And so then we had a really, like a lot of trouble actually recovering from that.

We launched Duolingo in India and didn't realize because we couldn't have unless we went there, which we finally did, that most people set their phones, phone UI in India to English, because typing in Hindi is hard. And of course, there's a lot of languages throughout India.

And we were making it so that when you downloaded Duolingo, whatever UI you open your app, your

phone was set to, we offered not that language for you to learn that was your base language. So we were telling people learn French, Spanish, German from English, and they were all trying to learn English. So they didn't find what they were looking for, they left. There were so many

mistakes, you know, and luckily, I think we were able to bounce back from most of them in terms of how Duolingo is doing today. Man, there's so much there. That was awesome. I like you're like, oh, I don't remember any of my failures. And then like, oh, here's all these awesome stories. That was great. Just one thread there that comes up again and again in this podcast is the dog fooding piece, especially I think people don't trust their gut and personal instinct enough. I think a lot of times PMs are just like, I need to do user research to understand what we should be doing versus just use the thing, see what feels wrong, and keeps you from being excited and really trust that I find that more and more like, I don't know, when I read a thing and when I'm writing, I'm just like, oh, I don't like that. I should change that. I don't need to like run this by three people. So I think that's a really good lesson there. Just don't underestimate the power of you just using it and relying on instincts and feelings you have when you're trying to use it. Totally. And that's so hard to do, especially when you're young. And I think it, you know, I will add that especially when you're female as well, or maybe, you know, maybe other minorities, it's just really hard to trust your instinct because you're constantly telling yourself like, what, but do I really, do I really know anything? Or like, am I just being lucky? But you, you have to, and I think that forcing yourself to pretend that you know answers and just finding out what this like pretend person who would know all the answers would think, like, is really helpful because it helps you develop your point of view, your voice, and to trust yourself. Even when you're working on something that you don't fully understand, you know, as an, you know, we're, we're building a banking platform at a latitude that was looking at it. And I was like, they were having trouble understanding why people were having problems with wires. And I told them all about how I'm an idiot when it comes to wires. And I make these mistakes ABC because like, I don't match like the line, like whatever, there's like all this information you're supposed to input and sometimes the information you get is not in the same order.

And they're like, wow, you know, and I'm like, this is just me as like a user making dumb mistakes. But that is our forte when you're able to understand that when you don't get something, probably other people don't get it too at scale. Absolutely. It's like the, if you're, if you're thinking about asking a question in class, many people are thinking of that same question and they will appreciate you asking that. The other thing I stood out there. So the Hindi mistake you made, I actually made the same mistake with my podcast recently. I was noticing that the second biggest market of listeners is in India. So I'm like, how do I lean into that and help people in India find this podcast even better? So I added subtitles in Hindi to a number of the episodes and tweeted it being, oh, look at me go, I'm going to make this so great for people in India. And everyone's like, we don't need this. We prefer English people in tech in India. We know English. This is even harder. They're like, I can read a lot faster in English. So please don't do this. So that was a really good one. And there's so many languages in India. Like that too. Really, it's, it's, it's crazy how many, like how people don't speak the same languages across the whole country. But also it means that people in India are very, are fluent, are fluent in so many different languages. We live, we learn. I want to go back to the A side and just a couple more questions about Duolingo. You said that most of the growth was organic and you basically had to grow it organically. Is there anything that you can share that worked really well? Because everybody wants to grow organically through their mouth.

Is there anything tactical you did that really helped Duolingo that other startups can, can do and try? Absolutely. So first of all, I would actually say that AB testing and product led growth is organic growth, because you're not spending money on it. And so first thing that you can do, no matter what stage your startup is, is make sure that you are not overlooking the importance of people in your product team who really know how to evaluate data and how to use that and learn. And if you're too early stage, you're not looking at 5% growth, you're looking at 20, 30% growth opportunities. But I think that's number one. Number two, actually, this is something

I might have said is like something that Duolingo did really well, but I think it, it goes hand in hand with mission, but you know, throwing the mission thing aside, brand and PR. So the importance

of building a lovable brand that really resonates with people and makes people feel something and, and want to stand behind an idea that's bigger than, than themselves is not easy to do, but possible and core to being able to, to increase word of mouth. So at the bottom of this is the mission, which is we, you know, Duolingo, the mission was always doing for originally to bring free language education to the world, then, you know, to build the best education to make it accessible to everyone that don't know how they're wording it today. But that's something most people can get behind. It doesn't matter if you think Bloomberg or Trump should be president. Do you think everyone should have access to great education? Like most people would say yes.

And so that's much more powerful than do you want to download an app and learn a new language? You know, so if you're able to have that and things that you really believe in about what you're building, that's changing lives or impacting the world, even if it is just helping business people do their jobs better in a way that's going to improve their lives and their ability to make a light, like a living or a company, it's going to improve company's ability, whatever it is, like the bigger, the bigger idea behind it and focusing on, on creating something that people like, or whichever your audience is, it might be a more serious audience than something like Duolingo. But for Duolingo, it meant like we have this owl, the colors, and then the way that the owl talks and the notifications and the emails that you get and the product experience, all of that ties back into how people feel about your brand, which makes it so that people are more likely to talk about it, which makes it so that you are much more likely to get a reporter to write a story about you. If you have something that's meaningful outside of like, hey, like TechCrunch, did you know that my app grew by 20% last month?

They're like, I don't care. You know, but if you're able to tell a story about people whose lives are completely transformed or, or something like that, that's much more interesting and has played an important role in, honestly, my work at Tumblr, at Duolingo, not the Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign, but definitely latitude as well. Okay, that's amazing. I was going to ask, what does that actually mean and how do you build a level brand? And so what I've heard so far, is there's this like personality and voice that was really fun that you all lead into to make it like not just a generic translation app. It's like, Oh, this is really fun and interesting. And then this other piece is these stories of transformation.

Yeah, there's more, there's more. So I think a brand that stands for something that, but truly stands for something, that's where the mission piece comes in.

How do you communicate that? Like, how do people even know that the brand stands for that? So that has to be into a part of your communication. Like in the early days, like we tested a lot of stuff on social media, we made mistakes. Like at one point, we were, we were posting photos of our team on Facebook, being like, check out the behind the scenes, guess what? No one cares. But like, but making the mission, we had like a calendar. This is very tactical, but like a social media calendar where like one post a week is about effectiveness, because we knew that like proving that Duolingo was an effective way to learn a language and actually having data behind that moved the needle. So making sure that was part of our communication in terms of our social media calendar, in terms of like PR pitches that we were making in terms of, you know, whatever we were able to like communicate out into the world, and then make sure that one post a week was something about the mission and what we were actually trying to accomplish. But it also got embedded into a lot of things. Like for example, when we were testing screens to get people to convert into paid users on Duolingo, we found that including something like by paying for Duolingo, you're making language learning accessible to millions of people that actually improved the metric people cared enough to make the payment, you know, so it really can be anywhere. In addition to that, I love copywriting, and I believe that communication is constantly underrated. And communication isn't about being able to convey a message, it's about being able to convey a message in a way that the listener receives it and understands it and like remembers it. And that's really hard to do. And one of the things I've helped employ at Duolingo that I think is still there today, it's definitely not just me, it was an amazing team, but I've helped employ that I've used at latitude and other places is a unique voice. And what that means is exactly what you said Lenny, like not just another language learning app where we give you instructions and you follow directions. There's always a quirk, like it's unexpected. The way we talk to you is a little bit funny, it doesn't take ourselves too seriously. And it makes the person receiving this message feel something. And it's about how you make people feel and you feel like either you giggle or you're like, wait, what? They just did what? And using that to your benefit. We use that a lot at latitude today as well in terms of especially our newsletter, just self deprecating humor and that's what's helped us grow so quickly in Latin America in such a short amount of time. People identify with it, they see themselves as part of that again, much like the mission versus like you're a company and I'm a consumer. This episode is brought to you by Mercury, who I also happen to use for my business checking account. I've tried a lot of business banks and there is nothing even close to the experience you get with Mercury. I moved cash over from another bank and it literally took less than half an hour to set up the account and wire money over at no cost. They kind of make you want to use the site more often, which I've never felt with another banking site. Mercury is banking engineered for the start of journey, a modern solution to help your company become the best version of itself. And Mercury isn't just a place to hold and send money, it's software built to help you scale with safety and stability, whether you're a team of two or a team of a thousand. Mercury also goes beyond banking to provide you with access to the foremost investors, operators and tools. Visit mercury.com to join over 100,000 startups on Mercury, the powerful and intuitive way for ambitious companies to bank. Mercury is a financial technology company, not a bank. Banking service is provided by Choice Financial Group and Evolve Bank & Trust, members FDIC. Is there an example of that

kind

of like a message you remember for either from Duolingo or from even Latitude, something that worked that was really funny or different? Look, I think for Duolingo, we constantly looked at every copy we wrote and asked, could this have been written by other companies? Like what could this have been any other company or is it Duolingo? Like what makes this Duolingo? And it was tough

because the more people you hire who come from other backgrounds, they're not used to that style and they might even think it's unprofessional or whatever. You're like, nope, this is a Duolingo way. So it helps figuring out like, okay, exactly what is that voice? What does it sound like? What are some voices? What are some words that it tends to use? Why yes, why not? What's too much? What's

too little? In terms of specific examples, this is something that I didn't write myself, but I wrote a lot of notifications for Duolingo for the passive aggressive message that I'm sure people have received, which started and then became a meme and then and then Duolingo used as well. But like the whole like, this doesn't seem to be working. We'll stop sending them for now message, which like you got after five days of inactivity. In addition to that message is around the same time we decided to send an email to people in New Year's because that's when people make a resolution

to do things. And we wanted them to make learning a language a resolution for the year. So we created

an email and it had like sad Duol, you know, because there was a, I don't know if the screen is still there, I haven't used Duolingo in a while, but there was always a screen of Duol really sad when you fail something. And like, and that is the owl, the owl, Duol is the owl, sorry.

The green owl will cry and and we AB tested the size of the puzzle, the size of the puddle, and the number of tears that came out of his eyes in terms of effectiveness. So we used that Duol and like, you know, you know, in one of those emails, and then it started, you know, someone picked it up on Twitter and the message, like the passive aggressive message and this like sad Duol, they started making their own versions, which was like, study now or Duol will eat a poison loaf of bread, or like the next email will be a funeral invite, things like that.

Right. And so that's an example, I think to me, which can now be seen very much throughout the Duolingo's brand, where we could have just said, Oh, no, this is a PR disaster. We need to go back to being this friendly, like nice little fluffy thing that everyone loves.

Instead of being like, no, like, we get that people think this is funny, and we're just going to run with it. You know, because being using the Duol voice, it gives us the permission to do that, because we're not just like, we're not square, we're not going to do that thing that you read in the textbook in school, we're just, we're kind of going to play along with it.

That's an incredible lesson. It reminds me of this famous Duolingo meme that I'm sure you've seen where someone shared these, they got these two notifications in a row, I just pulled it up here where first they got this Duolingo push notification. Looks like you forgot your Spanish lessons again.

You know what happens now. And then the next push was from their security system intruder alert, backdoor proceed with caution. And I imagine Duolingo even linked into like leaned into that, I think when this started spreading. 100%. And it wasn't an easy decision, you know,

because of course, a lot of people in the company were like really concerned about the brand image and like, what are people doing? And what, how do we revert this, that kind of thing, right? So it was like a, it was a, it was a bet that we made where we're just going to like, no, we're going to lean into it because that's what having this unique voice means. It's about getting it. It's about being part of something bigger. It's about, you know, connecting with people outside of just teaching them a word a day or whatever it is. And with latitude, I think we do that. We do that all the time in our newsletter. And it's a lot of like self deprecating humor for Latinos. And using expressions that like could be almost offensive, but they're not not in terms of Latinos only, but also the tech world, making fun of like being a tech founder and like the things that we do that we think are okay. And like, it's just a lot of that where I think I would call it irreverent, but it's, it's a, it's a tough line. It's a lot easier to be, I think a copywriter in a place that doesn't want to do that because the lines are a lot clearer and you don't have to take as many risks, but it's so less fun, which I think makes it so less fun for the user because people are used to getting emails from their banks with corporate lingo that you don't understand. But if they get an email from their bank, that's funny, ironic, but also very informative, like that's, that's a bank email I'm going to read, you know. I think that's a really good lesson. Part of this is just taking a risk. I think that's one of the big takeaways here. Just take some risks. We had Lulu Cheng on the podcast, who was a huge advocate

of that. She's a PR comms person that's worked at Substack and Blizzard now. And that was her advice to people. Take risks, do things that are a little, little controversial because that'll get attention. I definitely want to talk about latitude, just a couple more questions on Duolingo. One is today feels like one of the most interesting, interesting things about Duolingo is their TikTok presence and feels like they're doing so well, kind of leaning into exactly what you're talking about, just being really silly and different with the owl especially. I guess the question there is just, what is it that you think allows for that? Is it just this like very special social media person they hired that was just like incredibly good at this thing and being irreverent as you said? Or is there something else that contributes and allows a company to win in social media the way that Duolingo has? Look, I haven't met the person who does the TikTok and they're fantastic. Definitely

to want to demerit their work. It's awesome. I don't think it's easy to do, especially on a consistent basis. So I think, yes, finding someone who gets humor, who gets the platform, who's able to produce content quickly, but it also reacts to learnings. All of that is not easy to do. However, I do think that everything we just talked about is at the bottom of that, because if Duolingo didn't have this unique voice and leaned into the humor and wanted to be irreverent

as a brand and was so focused on connecting with people where they were and ready to take risks that might seem maybe an orthodox especially in terms of education, then an opportunity to build a TikTok like that wouldn't exist. So it's both. And I think it goes back to the brand DNA, it goes back to the culture of the company and to the attention, as I said, to every single text that was published and whether or not it wasn't the right voice or not. It has to do with having those conversations with the executive team where you talk about who is Duol and what are they like

and how do they talk and what do they sound like? And is this a Duol thing to say? Is this not a Duol thing to say? And committing to this idea that you're going to be remembered, that you're going to do things that are sometimes are going to rub people the wrong way and you're not just going to sit squarely in one place. I think that opens the possibility for a TikTok like the one that Duolingo has today to exist. But again, whoever is running the TikTok, you're amazing. That's such a good lesson. A lot of people are looking at Duolingo right now. We need to find that person at our company. And what you're saying is it takes a lot more than that. That person is not going to have a good time if the culture of the company isn't set up to have that approach, to try to just take risks and be irreverent. So that's a really good point.

One final question. Around internationalization, you said that you help drive internationalization of Duolingo. And I read somewhere that one of the learnings you had there was essentially treat everyone the same, almost across countries, which I think people think is the counter.

Like they should often be like, no, we should be super personalized for every country. What did you learn there? I think this is very controversial because not only is it the case that when you're working in the regulated industries, maybe in more B2B situations, looking at specific countries is important. Looking at specific countries and elements of these countries are important, especially when you're looking at like, I don't know, laws. And if you need like legal differences and finance, there's a lot of things that make countries different is where I'm trying to get.

However, humans are very similar. And we think we're very different. I don't think we're that different. I think that maybe we were brought up differently. And like, so for example, in Brazil, we like to dance fohho in Mexico, we like to dance salsa in some places, it's okay to hug in other places, not okay to hug. Yes, there are cultural differences, and it's important to love everyone and to adapt, etc. But a lot of these differences when it comes to like core human behavior are like that, like final like 5% of getting people of understanding people. And if as a startup, whether it be early stage, but as a startup, you focus too much on those marginal differences between groups of people, you can run the risk of making big mistakes, which is making too many changes too soon, and learning very little and adding crazy amounts of code complexity and overall organizational complexity to what you're building. And with Duolingo, because it was a consumer app, because we weren't dealing with a lot of regulatory issues, except for like China, where we had to like, watch out for certain words and phrases. In general, people want to learn a language, and people learn a certain way, and people use apps a certain way. So there's a lot of commonality. We just found that by treating the world as one, and whenever we deployed, you know, a B test or tried something new in terms of marketing, we would just look at it as like, okay, well, this, if this works here, it will work there. And we should just try it out everywhere, which meant like, you know, every time I went and launched Duolingo new market, I got the same feedback, whatever country it was, here, it's different, people are different, you don't understand. And what you're doing is not going to work. And here's why you need to change.

And if we had actually listened to that, it would cause all kinds of problems. Like, in our country, we think that green is is a negative color, like owls are like poorly seen as an animal. Or here, people think that free things are actually of low value, they like things that are expensive. Oh, people here really like free things. I'm like, everyone likes free things. They're like, Oh, in this country, we whatever. So yes, I think that countries are different. But it's more important to realize that people like to think they're different and

people like to think their countries are different and like highlight those because it makes them feel special unique. We're all special and unique in all of our amazing ways. But this is not necessarily it. And when you're trying to be super cautious of your resources, you have to ignore some of that because then you're able to roll out things once, which is important. But that in addition to that, every new A B test you want to run or every new hypothesis you have, if you now have a version of your apps that's different in Mexico and China and India, whatever, you're going to have to run that test and whatever change you have in all of those versions. And then you just start having all of these different versions of the app everywhere. And good luck managing that in terms of code, in terms of processes, in terms of personnel, in terms of costs. And most importantly, in terms of time, because now every single experiment or hypothesis is going to take you way longer to be able to deploy. And time is almost more important than money when you're a startup. So it's important to keep things super simple. And this was something that we did that actually ended up paying off with few exceptions like India and China.

That is such cool advice. It reminds me of a quote that I think of that a friend of mine shared once, life is maintenance. Anything you add to your life is just something you're going to have to maintain from that point forward. And similar in products, anytime you add new code, you're going to maintain that code forever. And the more you can not add anything new and not make

things really different, the easier everything gets. Like people forget that. It's like, oh, we're just going to spend a bunch of time to make it awesome in China or Brazil. And then, oh, they have to maintain that forever. And every feature has to. And it's an 80 20. So, you know, like, I just focus on what will get you the 80 and not the 20. And then when you have the luxury of focusing on the 20, then you can. Okay. So speaking of different cultures and people being different, but not that different, you pivoted your career basically to focus on Latin America. First of all, why did you decide to do that? That's a pretty unique path. And what pulled you there? So Lenny, I don't see it as a pivot, because as we were joking in the beginning, I, you know, I've been an employee. I was an operator at early stage startups. And now I'm a founder and I'm a VC. So I'm still kind of like in this little like stack of like roles that we have in our little tech ecosystem. And in my time working with Tumblr and my agency in Duolingo, I had the, the pleasure of speaking with entrepreneurs all over the world, in part, because, you know, I started getting some media because of the work that I've been doing at starting at Tumblr. So a lot of entrepreneurs reached out to me, but also because I became a mentor for an organization called Endeavor, which is global. So I started working with entrepreneurs in Japan and like in Brazil on my free time, just mentoring. And I know that the opportunity for growth in terms of tech in Latin America is huge, because first of all, the opportunity for growth in tech is huge all over the world, meaning there's just more, just more and more to do. There's more pieces of our lives that can become more efficient or better or cheaper by making them digital in some way, shape or form, because digital products scale.

We are behind when it comes to that in terms of Latin America and our economy is also not, you know, like doing super great right now. There's a number of things that make it tougher to succeed in Latin America, but make the outcome of potential success much higher. And simply put, there's a lot of low hanging fruit because a lot of what has already been digitized and

productized in the US and where developed markets just hasn't in Latin America. And every time I took these calls, I would think like, well, you know, this is not very efficient for me to be doing this one to one call. It's I feel very good about myself. Like I feel great and this entrepreneur learned a lot, but I wish I could do this more at scale. And also it doesn't seem like this is what's going to help this entrepreneur succeed. Like maybe it's a little bit of advice, but it's like, and not only that, but I had a lot of experiences where I would mention something about growth that I had learned and that would blow the entrepreneur's mind. And I would think, why do I know this, but not this entrepreneur who honestly is smarter and more ambitious than me? Oh, it's because I've had a career in Silicon Valley. It's because I've gotten to work with some of the best people in the world and I have access to this information just free flowing in my way all the time. And that's, you know, we take it for granted. So how can we make this more accessible to Latin America's entrepreneurs so that they can have access to that? What else is hard to get access to that could really get in the way? Oh, like access to capital. Okay. So what's, what's the VC and the angel ecosystem looking like? And what can we do that can actually impact that at scale? And then there's other pieces of the ecosystem that are missing. Like if you're going to start a company, you have to incorporate it sounds super boring, but like in Brazil is one of the countries that takes the longest time to incorporate a company in the world. But then if you're going to get investment, you probably can get investment in your Brazil entity because investors are like, I don't know anything about Brazil. And sounds like a lot of people, employers get sued by their employees and lose, which is totally true. And there's all this liability. I feel much more comfortable investing in a Delaware company. So then entrepreneurs are like, Oh man, like now I have to create this entity in Delaware. I'm never, I don't even know where that is. And like, what's a secor, you know, what's this other thing? Like, so there's just stuff that needs to happen for Latin Americans that we don't think about here until like, quote unquote, Silicon Valley, talking about it as in the cloud, in the US in developed markets, but also like, okay, then you're able to raise money, how do you get money down to your country? That's not simple at all. Like how do you think about like the FX transactions and not get screwed in the process? And who's going to do it? And so anyway, there's like a number of these things that make it super hard. And so that's the some of the problems that we wanted to solve, why it matters to me, I'm Brazilian, I'm Latin American, and I know that I had all of the opportunities in the world. I went to an American school, I got to go to school in the US, I got to work with some of the best tech companies in the world. And 99.9% of people in Latin America will not have these opportunities. And so for me, if I don't use this privilege to somehow make a huge impact where I came from, that will last, then I kind of wasted my life. So that's why this matters so much to me. And I met my co founder, Brian, records at on deck. If you've heard of on deck before, I'm a big fan and wearing wearing on socks right now. Yeah, I am. I love their socks. And I just had a conversation.

I just had a conversation with them yesterday. I really like I'm a big fan of what they built. I met Brian doing on deck. I actually was thinking of starting a completely different company, but also focus on community as we were talking about like people want to find connection. And I think that there's a lot of business opportunity there. But I met my co founder and he was working with our third co founder, Yuri, who was actually the guy we joke. He's the guy who builds things. He's the CTO. He actually knows how to build and started talking about what it is that we can do

to make an impact in the speed at which tech started to succeed in Latin America. Because we think we can have a huge impact on the GDP of the whole region, developments, job opportunities, and so on and so forth. So to me, that's what motivates me. It's figuring out how I can use my time as leverage to make the biggest impact possible in terms of social economic mobility for people in the world and focusing on the part of the world that I came from made the most sense. So you referenced this company. They started latitude. Maybe just describe briefly what it just broadly, how do you pitch what latitude does to folks that you might find it useful? I will. And I still do a pretty bad job of pitching it. But the pitch is basically like we're building the operating system for Latin American early stage tech startups. And what that means is that building a startup is hard anywhere, but it's extra hard in Latin America for some of the reasons that I outlined. Some of the things that we decided so far are one, it's super lonely to be a founder. And if you're able to meet great founders who are just a step ahead of you in anything, be it in product or growth or marketing or incorporation or finances, you can save yourself so much time from trying to like read books and Google, if they can just tell you what to do or connect you with the right person, that if we were able to connect these people, meaningfully, we could make a huge impact. So that's number one, it's lonely. And number two, you build a startup in Brazil and you're like, wow, this is working. I'm going to go to Silicon Valley. I've seen this happen a lot in the past decade. And Silicon Valley is a completely different place. The US is a different place. The competition is different. 3% of people in Brazil only in that varies in Latin America speak English. So the likelihood of you being taken seriously is low. But your chances of success are low. But at the same time, Latin America has so much in common as a region, but we don't actually see that if we're Latin Americans. We just think we're countries, especially Brazilians don't think that they're part of the arrest. And Mexicans don't think about Brazil. It's so far. Look at it on the map. In the US, you're like, oh yeah, Latin America. But if you're there, it's just like not at all connected. But the opportunities of growth are huge. And dependent on whether you meet the right people are able to open doors and understand that our problems are so similar, that a solution for one part of this region could potentially be great for another part of the region. I'm not doing a great job of fishing. But in addition to it being lonely and it being difficult to find the right resources and really trustworthy knowledge, it's really hard to raise capital. And it's really hard to do things like incorporate and and bring your money down, etc. So that's what we do. First, we have a like a fellowship program. We have 1500 entrepreneurs who got in. We've we run four cohorts a year, about 600 applicants per. And so you get in and you get access to all of these resources we put together, you get to find out what everyone thinks about other investors in the region, because I think it's important to disseminate that information, you get access to introductions to investors to each other and advice and events. In addition, you we have a fund. So we've invested in 100 startups and we were raising our second fund now it's going to be around \$25 million with a \$30 million cap. So that's another thing. So we invest you figure out your investment game, but we might you might become one of our investments as well. And in addition, we have products that make it a lot easier to navigate the super in my opinion, boring and frustrating stuff behind starting a company that you don't want to think about it as an entrepreneur, because you're trying to solve

a problem and build a team and build a product. You're not trying to figure out what's the best incorporation method and what how to open a bank account in the US and how to figure out like the foreign exchange prices and bring the money down and how to manage that money or how to stay compliant in your country and then into other jurisdictions if you have a Delaware and a Cayman. So we do all of that for you and make it easy through like a dashboard we built a bank that we built and and so on and so forth. So it's it's not an easy to describe business because it's kind of an ecosystem play we're elevate we're trying to elevate the tech ecosystem in Latin America and it's it's a lot of moving parts. You basically help them do everything, which is what I'm hearing and it sounds like you'd be a fool not to take advantage of this. The customers essentially are founders in any Latin American country. Is that right? Founders in Latin America, but we also have a lot of US based founders who are building for Latin America because they understand that the opportunity there is huge. Awesome. And then how is what is the arrangement? Do you take equity if they join the program? Is it free? We don't joining the program is free. You just have to be able to get in. We we don't for a number of reasons. We just don't want to like deter anyone who's amazing from being part of this community. And so that's why we made that decision. If we invest, we take equity. If you choose to use our products, that's a paid thing. So, you know, you can you can choose what makes sense for you. Something I want to ask about is what is it that you think is that Latin American founders and companies are uniquely good at? Is there a kind of a thread across Latin American startups that are like, oh, this is they're so good at this area. Pay attention here. In general terms, startup founders have to be really scrappy and resourceful and resilient. Latin Americans tend to be very scrappy resourceful and resilient because of just the realities in which we were brought up in. We have words for that that we don't have any English and Portuguese and Spanish, which is like dancing around things and figuring out things when like you don't have other solutions. So I think that's something that we see a lot in terms of what we're what we're really good at. I would say, first of all, there's opportunity in every single vertical in Latin America because it's such a wide open field. So there's opportunity everywhere. It's not that we're particularly good at fintech, for example, but if you look at the fintech opportunity in Latin America right now, it's so hot and there's like so much money and there's so much happening because of the huge problem of people not having access to bank accounts or access to credit or just like all of the bureaucracy that exists in trying to get those things or to make payments and so on and so forth. So there's just huge opportunity there. Trying to think what else I would like highlight. Blaine, you talked about like B2C, I think again, because there's so much open field, there's so much opportunity when it comes to B2B, especially when you're talking about SMBs, there's a lot of like small and medium businesses doing things on paper. So figure out what they are and how you can make them not on paper and deploy them effectively. So I think that's an advantage we have. Other than that, I wouldn't highlight anything in particular. I think that there's amazing people all over the world. It's just a matter of what are the opportunities that exist and because there's so many opportunities that are Latin America specific or that are emerging market specific, which means that if they work in an emerging market in Latin America, they could work in other emerging markets. And you know what, most of the world is not developed markets

and understanding what it's like to not have access to amazing Wi-Fi and like iPhones and all the things that we have access to, that can be a huge advantage because that's the reality that most of the population lives in and that's a huge tam.

Yeah, that makes me think about WhatsApp and one of the reasons they made it is they were just obsessed with making the app incredibly small and fast. And they started, I think, with international markets and then they just ended up being an amazing app because it's so fast and so easy to use. And still, and now there's things being built on top of WhatsApp, like we just invested in a company called Lead Sales and they basically turn your WhatsApp into a CRM, which is amazing because so much business is being done on WhatsApp and that's not the case here in the US. So you want to understand that you can build something for that and there are other markets that are using WhatsApp for which that's also going to be useful. And the other thing is I think that emerging or developing markets tend to sometimes skip over things because we're so quote unquote behind. So for example, there's examples of these like in India and in some countries in Africa or like, I don't know, the desktop was skipped, you know, people just went straight to mobile. I think we can see these catapult opportunities because then when you start building something and you already and you didn't even build for the previous version

of whatever it is that was being used because, you know, in the US or more developed markets, you had access to them, then you are in a way at an advantage. So I'm excited to see how that plays out in the next few years. And I'm particularly curious to see how that plays out when it comes to AI. One last question around Latin America. It's going to be kind of a broad question. What do you think people should be paying attention to, whether it's specific companies you want to call out, big companies that have done, that are doing great, or just trends or patterns? What do you think people should be paying attention to anything you want to shout out? Lenny, the truth is, you know, I would love to call out all of our portfolio companies because I believe in all of them and there are some of them that are growing incredibly impressively. One of them is Pomelo, which is like a fintech platform for fintechs that, you know, it's just grown incredibly. It's, to me, it's more about paying attention to Latin America. I think for the West, that's already a lot. I don't think people know what's going on below the border. I have no idea what Brazil is like, but paying attention because it's not just a place that's behind and trying to catch up. It's a place where the opportunity to make a lot of money exists. It's a higher risk region because of all the political and economic instability. But given the scenario that we're in right now, which is that we're still going to go behind in terms of all the solutions that we know will be built to give people access to health, to education, to financial services, et cetera. But we actually have a lot of money flowing into the region in terms of venture capital. We have the best talent we've ever had because now we've had, I forget how many, but like a lot of IPOs that came from Latin America, like and unicorn companies. People who have worked at those companies or who have worked at places like Dual England are coming back to build now know what they're doing. And so there's a number of things that have come together that make now a really exciting time to build a startup in Latin America and to scale it. So from an investment perspective, I just think that there's a lot of hot opportunities. Now, in terms of knowing what's a good opportunity versus not, I think the same rules probably apply to those anywhere else, which is most importantly,

the entrepreneur. Does this person know what they're talking about? Do they have an unfair advantage in terms of knowing what a problem exists and knowing how to solve it in a way that others couldn't? Do they have access to the best talent in the world, not just in the region, that will actually join them and build the best thing possible? And yeah, what's the TAM and not just what they put on the slide, but what do you actually believe the TAM to be? So that's what I would say. I think everyone's looking at fintech in Latin America right now. It's hot, it's profitable, money is where the money is. But I'm super excited about what happens with health and education in particular, because I think that that has the power to truly transform the region in a massive way. At latitude, like I think I mentioned, in addition to fintech, we tend to invest a lot in B2B SMB platforms that are helping businesses scale and work more effectively, because there is a huge need for that and there's an opportunity to build. And I think that that can have an impact on the region. So I think that would be my advice. It's a little broad, but other than that, if not, I would just now sit here and tell you like 15 companies that we love a lot of it and I won't. Well, we can point people to your portfolio page on your website. I would love to highlight our portfolio companies. Maybe I'll just send you a list or something. I don't know. Perfect. We will figure out a way to share that. With that, we've reached our very exciting lightning round. Gina, are you ready? I'm ready, Lenny. What are two or three books that you've recommended most to other people?

The one book I recommend because I truly, it really changed the way I think about things. It taught me a lot about a discipline I had never really thought much about, but also because I think it makes me sound smart and it's a really short book, so it's easy to get through, is the design of everyday things. For me, that was the first time that I realized that design wasn't just this sort of like cool thing that some people were into and they had to get and it made things beautiful. It was about understanding how everything is designed and how to think about design and usability. For someone like me who didn't have any experience in product before, I think it could be transformative. Then the second book has nothing to do with what we do. I recommend Victor Frankel's *Man's Search for Meaning* because at heart I'm a philosopher and I tend to think a lot about life, the meaning of life and what differentiates one life from the next and how to live a good one. No matter what profession we choose, that continues to be important. Those are my recommendations. What is a favorite recent movie or TV show that you really enjoy? First of all, I love *Succession*, but I don't think we have to go into that.

One that was recommended to me by a friend who I very much admire, Mike Krieger, co-founder of Instagram, is *How To with John Wilson*. It's a really weird TV show that I would have never found if it wasn't for him, but the premise is basically this guy, I think he's a filmmaker and he's awkward and it's cool that he's awkward. It's just his style and he decides to make a TV show about creating to help people who are really worried or scared of doing something and helping them prepare for that moment in their lives. For example, someone is really scared of telling their friends that they lied about how many college degrees they had or whatever. They said they had a master's degree, but they didn't and it's now been five years and it's not the debate club, but it's something that requires some sort of intellect and he doesn't want to confront the group. He recreates everything that could possibly happen that day in order to make this easier or another one about having kids and was really scared about making the decision about whether or not they want to have kids. It's kind of a documentary, but it's not, it's awkward,

it's weird, but it's so good. Then I would say White Lotus, just like, oh, so good.

I do that song to my new child often because it's so funny.

White Lotus is a recurring favorite on this podcast. We had a short drinking game where every time someone said White Lotus, we drank, so I'm going to have some tea here real quick.

Okay, I'm sorry to be predictable, but you know, like I said, we humans are a lot more similar than we'd like to think. You know what's amazing, Lenny? It's just my realization more and more of how much this is true because I like to think of myself as unique, much like everybody else. Then I start seeing that all of these really creative decisions I made are what all of the other millennial white girls did. It's just fascinating, like, oh, I like, you know, whatever, mid-century modern furniture. Oh, you know what? Actually, I'll tell you what movie is my favorite one, Bo Burnham's Inside. I love, I don't know if that's a movie, but I just, I'm in love with Bo Burnham. My husband knows about this. I know all of the songs and White, White, what is it? White Girl's Instagram? White Woman's Instagram, such a good song. That's what I'm talking

about. Yeah. Also, I've been re-listening to How Is The Best Case Scenario? Joe Biden.

They're going to make me vote for Joe Biden. I was seeing this and my parents, they didn't get it.

It's amazing. We'll link to that video, that movie. It's even after COVID, it's incredible.

Anyway, I was also going to say that first show you mentioned, I think it's called The Rehearsal. Maybe there's like a different title. Oh my gosh, you're right. So he has two shows, and one of them is called How To, and the other one is called The Rehearsal. And you're right, I am recommending The Rehearsal. I have also seen How To, which are shorter episodes where he films

in New York, and he just goes like, how to find a parking spot? And then it takes him down a rabbit hole of how cars are made or parking in the city, but it's also very good. But I prefer The Rehearsal. And Nathan Fielder is the guy behind all this who's incredibly hilarious. He has a new show, actually. I think it's on HBO with John Wilson or something that he's producing where it's this other guy just going around talking about stuff in New York, and I think he's a producer. That's the one I'm talking about. That's How To with John Wilson. Oh, there we go. So I think he's pretty behind that. Okay, look at us. We're figuring things out. We are figuring things out. So I think he has maybe a new season. I think season two. I haven't started that one yet. Anyway, here we go. We're going to keep going. What is a favorite interview question that you like to ask candidates that you're interviewing? Why do you want to work here is what I really like to ask, because it tells me a lot. Of course, everyone wants a job. People could just be like, because I want a job, and it seems like you guys pay well and whatever. I think this is a good next step in my career. But I want to know if this person knows what it is that we do, if they did a minimum level of research, and if they actually, and if they connect with our mission, because we're going to talk about mission a lot, and I don't want them to gloss over it and to make decisions that are short term thinking that go against our mission because of the reasons I mentioned with Duolingo. So I think that's one that's not very unique, but I think gives you a lot of information. And then I would say, what are you world-class at? And how do you know that you're world-class at that? And the second part is almost more important. What are you world-class at? It's okay if someone says, look, I'm working on becoming world-class at whatever, and this is like why I think I'm better, I'm great at it or whatever. But the second part is important,

because it tells me if people actually care about metrics. And I don't care what the metrics are, but just how do you know this to be true? It has to be more than like, oh, because my boss loves me or because my mom told me because I gave a talk or whatever it. I want to hear because I'm proud of having accomplished this, and maybe if you have some numbers to show, that's also really important.

What is a favorite product that you recently discovered that you really like?

I have not been trying any products, I would say. So nothing to recommend. I would say, though, that I am very curious to try these like gut health tests that are out there now, or like microbiome ones. I'm really interested in how little we know about our body and how tech can actually help democratize this information. And going on a tiny rant, I'm also feeling very resentful of doctors right now because we've always lived in a world in which doctors are sort of like these authorities, and we must just believe whatever it is that they tell us, and we rely on them for information that is crucial to our survival, who are now in a world where we can Google things. And that's even more scary because you have to know how to filter that information really well, and you don't find explanations to things. But doctors don't like you Googling because they say it's scary, but also because they don't like being questioned. I think we're finally coming to a place where a lot of these devices that can give you great information about your body so that you understand your nutrition and very core things about ourselves that we don't today are becoming accessible to a lot of people just to the population. It's still expensive what we're getting there. And I think that will be magical. So I will call out the company levels by my friend Sam Korkos because I think that what they're doing is awesome. Next question. What is a favorite life motto that you like to think about, come back to, share with other people? One is this too shall pass. And I will tell you this one right now is particularly meaningful to me right now because I'm going through a really tough moment because I have long COVID and lost my taste and smell. And it might be long term. And so, but I think it applies

to AB thing that I was talking about, you know, when like, everything in life is moments, except for, you know, a couple, a couple of diagnoses. And so this too shall pass is something I'd say to myself a lot. The second one is also not particularly motivational, but I really believe in it, which is fake it till you make it. That's something I've held on to for a long time. And even today, I don't mean, I don't mean lie. I don't mean pretend to be something that you're not. But I mean, it's almost like a way to overcome imposter syndrome and by opening rooms for yourself to be who you want to become so that you enable opportunities to become that. And I'm not saying lying, but early in my career, I did fake it till I make it from the point of view of like not saying no to things when companies were saying to me being like, Hey, can you help us grow without a budget like Tumblr? Right? I was 25, 26. I was like, Yeah. And then we'll figure it out. You know, and when Duolingo turned to me and said, Hey, can you be ahead of growth? And I didn't know what growth was. And I had to Google and find Andrew Chen's blog. I read it and I found out and I just said yes. And then, you know, kept going with that. So fake it till you make it is kind of that for me. But even today, I have a lot of imposter syndrome, which I actually think is not imposter syndrome is just acknowledging that I don't know a lot. My team says I have too much self deprecating humor that actually puts, you know, that's puts the company down, it puts me down. So fake it till you make it to me means like standing knowing how to stand in front of your team

or or or reporter or or Lenny in a podcast. And almost like being that person that you would like to be or being your best self, you could call it whatever you want. But I think it can really help you get out of the little hole that you would put yourself into and limit opportunities for yourself. Amazing. This question elicits so many interesting insights and stories. I appreciate you sharing all that. Final question. You majored in philosophy, if I'm not mistaken. I'm curious, do you have a favorite philosopher or someone that most influenced the way you think about the world? You know, I use a lot of philosophy in my day to day, but it's not because I have deep knowledge, it's because I have light knowledge that I draw and that helps people like think I'm smart and relates to ideas. Like, I often talk about thesis is ship to me, like that allegory is like one of the most interesting ones because it's about identity and building and whether you know, I don't know if the allegory is like, you know, the ship lit. So thesis is on this on this journey, I think he leaves Crete and he's going somewhere else and he's on a boat. And then over the course of the trip, like so many things happen, they've hit so many waves and they have like storms that they have to replace like planks and we sew the sail. And by the time they arrive at the next port, nothing on the ship is the same as it was before, like they'd replaced every single plank, they replaced every all the masks, they've replaced all the sails. And so the question is, is this the same boat that left the dock? And to me, that's a really interesting concept around transformation and what it means to have an identity that exists over time, even when so much of us or so much of a company or so much of a country changes and what is that core identity. And, you know, so to me, that shapes, I think, a lot of ideas because it's a cool allegory and it resonates a lot. But yeah, so I would say at this point, I embarrassingly have very cursory knowledge of philosophy. I could probably remember a lot of it if I if I went back to it, but I don't use it in my day to day. And I would love to take time off at some point and go study. But I'm also embarrassed to admit that I'm not a person who just like finishes work is completely depleted and then wants to like bury my face in a philosophy book. I don't I would like to, I would like to acquire all of this for the philosophy knowledge, but I write I want to watch white lotus. Or if I'm going to force myself to like work out, I'll listen to an audio book like that makes me feel good about myself. And it's a fiction one. I think this is actually a great example of exactly what you're talking about where we change and we are not necessarily the same person we were, right? That makes sense that you're not obsessed with philosophy, having finished that a while ago and now working on something totally different. Yeah, I think I still am like because I'm, you know, I consider myself to be very like existential. I'm an atheist. So I like to find meaning it's it's not so like it doesn't exist so much for me. And I think about the big questions and and I am interested in philosophy, I'm just not interested enough to make time and effort for it in my life right now. As a hidden gem at the end of this episode, I'll share I'm also an atheist and I actually ran a website called atheistspot.com. It was like a Reddit for atheist news. I went to conferences. We didn't see God again today. Still no God to be found. Yep. The funniest thing is we had Google ad words on there and the ads were based on the stories around like different religions and it says all like christianmingold.com. Anyway, Gina,

[Transcript] Lenny's Podcast: Product | Growth | Career / Scaling Duolingo, embracing failure, and insight into Latin America's tech scene | Gina Gotthilf (Latitud, Duolingo)

we covered so much ground. What an amazing episode. I learned a ton from you. I'm so excited for people to hear this. Two final questions. Where can folks find you online if they want to reach out and how can listeners be useful to you? Yes. Okay. Thanks Lenny. So people can find me online. If you want to see just ridiculous posts, that's where my Instagram is and my Instagram is impressive because I'm Gina on Instagram. Yes, I am just Gina. Wow. So that's super impressive. You won't even find it when you look for me because you'll see all these other genus, but it's just at Gina. That's me. I do share some professional things as well there too, but I think it's my more entertaining channel. You can find me on LinkedIn. I'm a little more serious on LinkedIn. I have a photo with Obama, which will certainly impress you. So find me Gina Gotthill on LinkedIn. So many stories. I know. I'm Gina G on Twitter and that's probably, you know what? I did a Harry Stubbings podcast and then that got me 600 followers on TikTok, but I've never posted. But maybe at some point, I'm just, I feel self-conscious, but I think I could be a good TikToker because I think I'm amusing. Well, you're not going to get followers by saying there's nothing good there. So I think if you want people to follow you, you should tell them it's going to be great. Come here and see my amazing content on TikTok. I will definitely start posting it soon and you can influence what kind of content will be there because I'm listening to my followers right now. And then how you can be useful. Look, if you know of an amazing founder in Latin America, if you are an amazing founder in Latin America, or if you are in touch with VCs who are interested in this, then definitely tell them about latitude. You go to latitude.com. Do not misspell latitude. It doesn't have an E at the end. That's because latitud in Spanish is latitude. However, it's also because we couldn't buy latitude.com with an E. But now that's what it is and it's grown in time. So get in touch, join the fellowship, join our community. We're particularly useful, by the way, to US people who are interested in getting plugged into Latin America because if you get in, you just meet all the top people in one fell swoop. And that helps you make friends, relationships, find clients, find your business partners, and understand the ecosystem in a hacky way. Amazing. Gina, thank you so much for being here. Bye, everyone. Goodbye, 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.