

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Spotify Founder: "Spotify Was A Stupid Idea!" How A 23 Year Old Shy, Underdog, Introvert, Built A \$31 Billion Business! - Daniel Ek

I'm an introvert not amazing academically didn't feel like it belonged anywhere average at best, and yet you created Spotify

Yeah

Daniel Peck Spotify founder and CEO. He's not only save the music industry

He's created a 50 billion dollar company and he himself is worth more than four billion dollars

I flunked high school then started on my first company that later got acquired and you retired at 23

Yeah, first month was fun nightclubs sports car 20 or 30 girls throwing around money six months in realized that this thing

I thought I wanted I just didn't want at all. I was just empty

Just thinking am I ever gonna get out of this depression and what to do in life?

What if you can work on something you actually care about what would you pick music, but the industry is going down the drain

I honestly did not think we would succeed

But if we succeed I knew it was gonna be a big thing Spotify is here a one-stop shop for music

I love I read the journey to that success had multiple near-death experiences. It was awful ran out of money

I lost all of the hair gained 30 pounds in the problem was a model myself on the Mark Zuckerberg's of the world around every meeting

I did the best product person and just wasn't me share the burden with someone it is so important

We tend to believe the world is more logical than what it is

But it's based on relationships be the easiest person to deal with and you'd be surprised how many problems it solves one of those problems was Apple

What's your opinion on Apple?

Daniel what is the most important context that I need to know about you to understand the man

That sits in front of me today and when I ask about context

I want to go right back to where you come from and that earliest

Environment that I almost almost it like an oven. I see our earliest context is like an oven that

Baked us into who we are today. What is that context?

I'm a product of a very very strong single mom

a

woman that probably had a ship on her shoulder

Against her sibling her brother the older brother who kind of said you can't do this you can't race a Child to be productive

and I think she kind of

Just well hell bent on making a point of showing that you know, I

Was going to be successful in her definition and successful meant well educated well read and be able to

Handle almost

Anything thrown at me and just to give you an example of that while I was brought up in the suburb of Stockholm

Very much a working class rough neighborhood. One of the big things that my mother did was

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she had me
doing pentathlon and
The pentathlon was like the classic pentathlon. So that means fencing horseback riding
shooting
Running and swimming doesn't sound like what someone basically from the projects in Stockholm
would do
but she thought that would be a good sort of
Wide education for me and and pretty much my entire life has been around that. I was kind of
clumsy as a kid
My my fine motor skills was pretty good. My rough motor skills wasn't very good
So she enrolled me in like an all-female gymnastics group
You know, I'm an introvert. So she enrolled me in a theater group
To have me, you know, learn how to express myself
and and so
An eclectic childhood by one where she heavily influenced me
Brought me along in almost every context with adults
With professors like at a very early age and just had me sit along
Or with just the person from next door who's struggling
Getting to the next paycheck and and I really saw all of those contracts and in life from a very young
age
Did she have any desire for you to become any specific thing because I
I'm honestly not sure but I think she wanted me to be broad just in general
so and and I
Think in many families you kind of have this maybe educational pressure where you have to be a
doctor
You have to be a lawyer and none of that mattered to my mom
The only thing that mattered and she kept repeating this was that you need to become a good human
being
and for her
If I wanted to study sure
She thought education mattered and was important
but
Not like in other families and the only thing in fact, you know probably influenced Spotify later on
was
I very much come from a music family. My my grandfather was an opera singer. My grandmother
was an
actress in theater, but also
Jazz pianist so like music education was weirdly enough like the the
Premier education that was focused on for me and then all the other stuff. She was basically only
important that I showed the effort
I I had a pretty easy time in school and so
She constantly kept pushing me because she felt that I wasn't I wasn't making enough of an effort

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No matter what so it wasn't about the grade I could come home with a straight A
She would still be like well, did you really make an effort?
I don't think so and and
And so for her it was kind of always that thing about like just pushing and making the real effort
So she cared more about less about the outcome and more about how much of your potential you
were realizing. Yeah
very much so
So on school then you reference that she kind of identified you were an introvert early on
But then I think you said you had a good you had an easy time in school. Typically people that are
Introverted that are an only child at the time that they go off to school
Often they struggle a little bit because you know finding friends and fitting into social groups
And I read somewhere else that you don't love small talk
You tend to gravitate towards the people that you know, yeah, what was school like for someone for
a kid like that?
Well, I think you know, I
Think there are many types of introverts
Let's begin with that and I can switch it on when I have to and certainly I think the theater helped
me
You know, I can be very project a lot of things if I like to
And be a force of nature, but it doesn't come easy that requires tons of energy
Whereas others get energy from like the room and they're like very excited. It's just not me
for me anything with anyone I'm not comfortable with is
Really taking a lot of energy
But it but I think the easy time in school was just I loved learning. I've always loved learning. So
You know, you put be putting in an environment where you're constantly
Being forced to learn new things wasn't a very hard thing for me. And I have a very good
I used to have a very good memory
I don't have it anymore, but I was able to memorize very easily the concepts and the things that we
talked about in school
and so I
Think in that end it was very easy for me and then again because my mother tried to make me very
broad
The positive and the negative of that aspect is I could kind of be in any social group
I could be with the athletes. I wasn't the best athlete by any stretch of the imagination
But it worked. I could be in the musicians group as well with any of the people really good at arts
Man, I you know, I probably wasn't the best at any of that stuff either
But it was pretty decent, but I could also be in the math group. I probably wasn't the best of math
but I was pretty decent and
That to be honest is kind of the story of my life you can kind of plug me in anywhere
I won't excel at practically anything
but I'll hold my fort and
That's I think both a blessing and a curse the blessing is in is that it's very easy for people to

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For me to be able to relate to other people enough where I'm
Accepted in the group
But it's hard in the sense the downside with that is that I never really belong anywhere
Because I'm not that one-sided as an individual, you know, I'm not an artist. I'm not a technologist
I'm not a business person. I'm all of that and probably a few other things as well
And and you can see that very clearly with my friend group, too
You'll have artists on the one side and you have entrepreneurs on the other hand
And it's very hard for them to speak to each other most times, but I love it. I love
Seeing very creative people. I love, you know, business people and
Scientists mix together whereas the scientists gets very, you know
Have a hard time. I found speaking to and and artists and quite often they're talking past each other
For me, it's just I love it
And and that's the blessing and curse when I speak to people that know you and work with you
They describe you as ambitious
Now ambition and being ambitious is an interesting word because it's often loaded with this
presumption that someone has a
Desire for a certain outcome. Yeah, like they're trying to get ambitious because they want to be
really successful
Or they want gazillion pounds
Are you ambitious and what does that actually mean to you?
Yeah, I'm I'm I'm ambitious
But I probably am ambitious in the the way my mother taught me to be ambitious, which is the
inputs, right?
Which is, you know, if I see someone with incredible potential that squanders that potential I
I asked myself why why are you doing this and why not strive for the great thing and in so many
cases in life
I found that the difference between, you know aiming super high versus
Aiming just a little bit higher than where you are
From an effort perspective is about the same effort
So you might just as well aim higher, you know this saying of you shoot for the stars and you land on
the moon
That is very much kind of my life philosophy. Why not try to do it bigger?
Why not try to do it even more interesting and maybe you have to settle for something less
But isn't it more interesting and more fun to try to do the really big hairy audacious thing not for
everyone
Maybe maybe not but I don't know that because you'll work with so many people that maybe don't
lean into ambition
Yeah, that that's true
But I also wonder if that's true or whether they're just worried about
Really testing themselves and understanding where their limits are so many people are more afraid
of failure than they are of success
And that stops them from even beginning to try

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Right and and I find that so many times like the amount of people I'm sure came to you
It's like oh, it's really good for you, but I had the same idea. It's like, okay
Well, why didn't you do anything about it?
And and oftentimes it's like well for this and that and that reason and and they talk themselves out of
it
But at the very core I believe it comes down to that
They're actually more worried about failing them. They are about the prospects of succeeding
Your kids then what would you advise them to do if they were say they wanted to follow in your
footsteps in particular a
Start a business at that juncture where we kind of leave high school
Yeah, and we can either go into like work or university would you know, do you think the the
university
System is a little bit outdated. Yeah, I do
But as with many things
You know, I don't I don't think it's bad. I don't think it's good either. I think it depends
There are certain people that do well in that structure and and need that kind of rigor of that sort of
path to go down and do incredibly well
Against you know, the essays and the ace it and they're really good and they're really good with the
lectures and then taking the notes and just have that sort of
Discipline in that area of their life where they do well in that circumstance and then that education
then sets them up for a greater thing
So I think it depends. I mean if your dream is to become a lawyer, then I think you have to go
through that path, right?
Because it's impossible. Otherwise. I think if you want to be an entrepreneur
the single best thing you can do is to
Probably study as many businesses you can and get as much business exposure in that
So what do I mean by that? Well, it can come in by working for businesses
They're great, but more importantly probably working for great individuals
And learning from them, right? So if you are fortunate enough to be able to do
You know, we're talking about this, but you're behind the scenes version
And and and being able to like work for you in that and see you up up close
It's gonna be invaluable for that individual that get to do that
Because you get to see entrepreneurship from the first row. You get to see what it's like
What business aspect what's you know, how do you do that?
How much admin do you need to carry it and even if you're just a fly on the wall
You're gonna learn so many skills that are quite diverse and and that's them
I think that the biggest trick about entrepreneurship is like the the for me
Everyone when they think about the word innovation, they think that it's something entirely novel
yet for me innovation
I don't know of a single thing that just someone came up with that had no prior grounds
Everything is about putting two or more things in together in a new context
So studying many different things

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understanding a little bit about business understanding a little bit about Product and how to make that product Understanding whatever it is that our drivers from that I think is important And that's not to say that university can't do that and it can't be helpful to learning sales and the theory of it But I think that there is many other paths you could take that may even if you're You know if you have enough grits and kind of like are able to put yourself in a situation where you can Get in front of the right person and start working for them so much is in life is around people believing in you and and Giving you the right place to grow And and and it's really serendipitous to be honest And and I'm certainly a product of all that so I think it is not right or wrong It's just I dislike how we're talking about it as it is the way or You know, it's not the way and it's like no I think it's more like it works sometimes For certain individuals and then for other individuals It is not the best use of their time and there are other paths you can take but Educating yourself, even if that's outside of a university and getting a degree concept that I think is invaluable And it's the most important thing you can be doing as a young individual about anything you're interested in I think that's one of the big misconceptions people have about me when they hear I dropped out of university They think I don't like education. Yeah, no, no, no, no I spend all day like an all night till 2 a.m. Learning about rockets and AI and all that stuff I'm a self-educated but the institution of Education that is university for me. I just couldn't stay awake. Yeah in that same same here But for another person it is exactly what they need because they may not even know what they're interested in and They feel like I want to have a foundation that gives me a broad base So again, if a master's of science degree if you know, you want to be an engineer, but you're not entirely sure What type of engineer it's a very broad foundation that will teach you elemental skills that You probably will use at some point in time I'm not saying you can't go outside of that realm too, but it's great stuff And if you're wired that way you do well in that type of environment Great, and there's certain types of people that do that when young People come up to me and ask me this question about what I should be doing with my life at that early stage

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The advice I've started to give and I want to check how you how you would change or add or alter this advice is to try and go and join a Startup so just for context. I'm talking about people that want to be entrepreneurs here Yeah, to try and go and join a startup that's doing something at the very cutting edge of The world or a wave that's currently coming into short So I would say the young kids like go and join an AI startup And the reason I say startup is because you're gonna be closer to the decision-making You're gonna learn more you can have more exposure than like if you went and worked up. I know a Google or something sure And also it's the cheapest way to fail when you're young, right? Like you can observe the company fall into there. Yeah, yeah without there being a huge cost to you. Yeah, I Would agree. I mean, I think that is a tremendous Opportunity to do that But again, I've seen all the paths work, too I've seen people join bigger companies and move around inside of that company and Get super valuable skills and then eventually Kind of break out as an entrepreneur as well. And maybe You wanted to save up some money and obviously if you're doing a little bit of a bigger company You're able to do that and prioritize Doing both and then, you know, once you have that kind of nest egg of sorts you can then break out And so I don't know I it's like the I used to think And you know, we were talking about this before I used to think that you know, hey, I've got all this advice I'm gonna just gonna give it and the more and more I on a personal basis I'm not sure I'm in a great position to give advice on many things And and so I I try to stay away from it. I can't help myself When I feel like people are doing it, but I try to not do it as much as I do And it's actually something I'm deeply conscious about because I don't think that there's one path in life I think that there are many paths in life and Of course, there are really bad ones but but Some some of the more amazing life stories aren't the obvious ones It is not the people even doing the sort of hey, I joined a startup where I did this and that it may be the person who spent Star life life in a lab to only get so frustrated in the end that they end up Breaking out and then forming a company because no one else wanted to do the idea that they had in mind Or it may be the person who Was the least likely to solve that problem

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but had really been spending all this time thinking about it and
Developed this really odd skill while doing their normal day job that then turned out to be really
useful to solving this particular problem. I
Find it incredibly fascinating that when we look at the back end of Spotify and Apple and our audio
channels
The majority of people that watch this podcast
Haven't yet hit the follow button or the subscribe button wherever you're listening to this
I would like to make a deal with you if you could do me a huge favor and hit that subscribe button
I will work tirelessly from now until forever to make the show better and better and better and
better
I can't tell you how much it helps when you hit that subscribe button
The show gets bigger which means we can expand the production bring in all the guests
You want to see and continue to do in this thing
We love if you could do me that small favor and hit the follow button
Whatever you're listening to this that would mean the world to me. That is the only favor. I will ever
ask you
Thank you so much for your time back to this episode and going back to that
First company that was acquired adverts ago
After that was acquired. I read that you retired at 23
Yeah, I'm guessing that made you
Enough money to retire. Yep, and you're 23, which is in 2006 and you're a retired man living
What one can only describe as
I need 23 year old's dream. Yeah, lots of money
Guessing there was some champagne there. I think there was a red Ferrari
How was that for you?
It was amazing
No, all jokes aside, I grew up and as I said, I was kind of like always socially accepted
but didn't feel like it belonged me anywhere and I
I never had an easy time with girls
Not a bad time just
Not as good as if I was widely successful in music or widely successful in sports or any of that stuff
And I kind of had odd interests because I kept as I said, we're kind of moving from group to group
and so I
Had this idea in my head that I wanted to you know, be financially independent
I wanted I thought that once I got to that point
I would start living life and I thought that you know, I
Would be more socially accepted and I would find my tribe
And it's embarrassing to talk about it now
but you know, that was really what I thought so I
Thought that if I was lucky and worked really hard, I might be able to retire in my 40s
If I work really hard, but you know 50s for sure and and so
You know getting to that point when I was 22 actually not 23

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It was just mind-boggling to me and I had that financial target in mind
And I thought well once I hit that I'm just gonna like you know do something else
And and so as you said, I kind of like started frequenting all the night clubs bought a sports car
Try to get the girls I could never get before
Realizing that yes, I could get them
But for all the wrong reasons and they didn't really care about me
And it was kind of a hollowing thing because it was this kind of oh was this what I worked for for
such a long period of time and then
Only to find out that you know, it was quite depressing. Honestly. I had all these new friends. They
weren't really great friends at all
Luckily I was able to keep my old friends as well
But I realized that this thing I thought I wanted I just didn't want at all and
What was the symptom?
When we say realized there's typically symptoms symptoms or
No, I realized it because I
You know, I started getting all these phone calls from people
asking me to come out on Friday evenings and Saturday evenings
And I just I was just empty. I just had no energy to do that
And I thought to myself. Oh, this is odd because the old me thought this was what life was all about
And I had had girls call me and like hey, you should really come out. We miss you all of that stuff
and I realized that I just didn't care and had I thought that that was you know, this magical moment
and in fact
You know putting on my computer or playing my guitar
Was kind of yeah, this is more me
And so something on the back of my head started forming around like who am I?
What do I care about and it's it's actually in that process
I met my co-founder because he was the founder of trade over and
Who bought my company and he too it kind of the company had IPO'd he got kicked out of the
company
he he was like a
hundred times more wealthier than I was like
He had like the biggest success in tech Sweden at the time and had everything going for him
But he didn't know what to do with life. And so that was kind of how we bonded
and you know, we were watching like old Godfather movies eating crisps and
Talking about what to do in life
and and that was like a real
friendship moment a real turning point
and he saw
the same thing that I saw and
And
You know that was when I realized that I've been approaching this all wrong
In fact, I always loved working. It was never about money

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I always liked learning
and I would pay to go learn for someone rather than getting paid for it and
But at the same time I thought work should be hard
That was the thing that I had programmed into me. So work has to be clearly something you not
don't enjoy doing
So I thought well, what if you change all of these parameters?
What if you create an environment where you can come in and learn from really smart people all the
time?
What if you can work on something you actually care about opposed to something that makes
money?
What if you could have a lot of fun while doing it and not take it to series?
and we started talking and
we were bouncing ideas and
Martin my co-founder was like asking me like well
If you really could pick anything like what what what would you pick and I I'm I said to him well
You know, I'd probably pick music, but that's a terrible idea
And he said well, why is that a terrible idea?
And I said well, it's a terrible idea because you know the industry is going down the drains. It just
doesn't work
It's piracy. It's all of these reasons and he said okay
But but if one would fix it, how would one do? Well, it can kind of stupid. They're trying to regulate it
Clearly you need to build a better product. That's the only thing that's gonna work
So he said okay. Well, how are you gonna do that?
And it's like well, I don't know, but maybe you could do this or that. Okay. Well, how would that
work?
It's like well, I don't know
But maybe you could do this and that and how would you make money?
Well, I think maybe you could pay out based on how much people were listening
I don't know and then literally I have to go through why not a hundred times times
I started realizing that yeah, why not and why not give this a shot and I told him from the beginning
you know
That hey, this is probably gonna lose us a lot of money. I have a hard time seeing this ever being a
sustainable business
But I'm in let's do this and it's a great. Let's do it
And while I was hesitating for some reason he wasn't
So he was like this seems fun
Let's do it and that gave me enough confidence where I kind of had found a new purpose again and
instantly
I stopped responding to all the people who were trying to get me out in the evenings
And I said well, I got something to do and then I went back to work again and it was like
pretty much a week from
That moment where I felt like I'm happy again. I haven't felt this happy for

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You know the better part of a year, but this was about a year when I was going through this transition of

I'm just having fun being retired

First month was fun six months in depressing

Nine months in am I ever gonna get out of this depression to then kind of a year in finding something else

That I truly look forward to that

Felt crazy

And I honestly did not think we would succeed, but if we succeed, I knew it was gonna be a big thing

Something really interesting there that I could relate to a lot was this idea that you had a

Hypothesis about your happiness that had to fail you

to know

That it was not a valid hypothesis about happiness and there's so many people obviously I mean this

Assume it was more than half the population are currently pursuing a hypothesis. They have about what will make them happy

That probably and this is the thing I always wonder is does it have to fail them for them to know that that's not the right pursuit?

In my case it did had to fill me

Yeah, I had to fill the anti-climax and then I had to go and buy the the big house

And then was there for nine months and got out of it as quick as I could and

Bought the car and then got rid of the car and then just moved as close to the office as I could in a bedroom studio apartment

Yeah, but for a lot of people I'm like is there a way for them not for it for them not to have to go all that way and have it fail them

Well, I think that there's certain life experiences

That you can't learn from other people

They just have to live live live it and I think it's not so much about sort of the monetary thing or the status thing

Although I would probably say status whether or not you should really seek it

I think is one of those things that we all have to go through

I think everyone could talk about it. Don't seek attention. Don't seek fame. Don't seek all these things

But we're we're human beings. We want to be well liked by other people

And so I think that is probably one of them

But but in general, I think the further away it is from anything, you know and can relate to I think We have to

Experience parts of it. So, you know, one of the most amazing thing that I get to do these days for my friends is

From like back when is I take them on these crazy experiences, right?

You know, I'm I'm fortunate enough that I get to see some of the coolest people in the world whether it's musicians

but athletes and and so on

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That they're able to get a glimpse of my life
And I love it because you know, they're looking at it with this kind of child
A child like imagination and wonder about some some things that I'm going through
But I also see the other side when they're like, is it really that much work? Wow
I would never want to do this and it's it's quite helpful
Because as we started out saying they have this idea what the life is
so I kind of like bringing them along on the journey where they get to see it and then
You can see that there are aspects of it that they like and then other aspects that they would never
ever want to get into
so
You know, I think it might be possible to kind of simulate that experience
But I think you have to experience
It's very much up close
Certainly when you're talking about wealth and if you come from having none
I think almost everyone then would instantly
Need to experience a little bit of it to at least kind of understand whether that's important or not
Especially if you get it like we both did probably in our 20s and so on
Had I had I worked up until my 40s. I may have kind of realized. Hey, this is in life
I'm having children. I having my wife. This is amazing. I got this experience being a single guy trying
to chase girls
And all I'd seen was on MTV. How all of the rappers were throwing around money and
Having 20 or 30 girls at the nightclub and and you know, hey, I wanted that too
One thing I'm really interested in is you said you got to nine months and you were depressed nine
months after the cell
There are so many people now and this is why I asked about what the symptoms of that one
It's hard to know when we're drifting down the wrong path because it creeps up on us like a frog in
a frying pan
Yeah, I I remember a time working seven days a week and this feeling in my chest if I would
describe it as like a
subtle growing emptiness and
That was for me in hindsight. I was lonely. Yeah, and I didn't know I was yeah
So those symptoms that you encountered at nine months in
In a way that someone might relate to them. What were those feelings? I
Think my entire life as I mentioned, I've been struggling to fit in
And I think it's something we probably share and have in common and I somehow thought that this
would help and
When the situation was new it did feel like I found my new tribe and it did feel like they
You know this early excitement everyone's calling you everyone wants you to be part of something
that you
Before may not have been able to enjoy and may not
Get those phone calls and it may not get into the hottest night clubs and and the club promoters
Like putting you on the list plus 10 and all that stuff the social currency

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So it was thrilling. It was absolutely amazing and and it truly was this kind of like wow I've made it kind of feeling
But
after you experienced the 10th time and
I somehow had this idea that it would translate into this continuous feeling of that thing or Translate into something more meaningful. I sort of realized that no, wait a minute It's the same experience again
But it's lost a little bit of a charm and I started now getting the hangarounds that we're trying to get in with me because
You know, they realized that maybe I would buy the bottles
I was seeing people at the table come up and grab a glass and then run away all of that kind of thing and I
It's slowly sort of dawn upon me that
you could replace me by just
anyone else that
had
The money and the connection that I had at that time
Thereby the status and it really would matter, you know, and and
You know, I was I was
Listening to I think it's his name is Morgan household
The author who talks about psychology of money and he kind of talked about it the the Ferrari syndrome
And he basically describes that
everyone
Who aspires to buy a Ferrari
Thinks of themselves and say oh well one day when I'm in this Ferrari everyone's gonna look at this Ferrari
And they're gonna be amazed with me yet what we all do is we look at the Ferrari and we want to sit there
We actually don't care about the individual that's currently sitting in there. So this kind of
You know paradox
So to speak and and that's very much how I felt about my life and as you're right, right?
You push that to a side and say well surely this you know
This is fun and you have all these other people coming out and then you kind of bury it
And then it keeps coming up and then it comes up again and then it comes up more and more and more and
I didn't realize what it was at first because I was like surely
I'm just being foolish. This is this is life and everyone was rewarding me on the outside to say what in life
You live this amazing. How cool is not to be retired and just not having to do anything
But I wasn't learning and I wasn't forming gender in connections with people
I was just being and

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Yes, I got status

But I realized I never did anything for status and I actually didn't care in the end

From being status. I cared about belonging but not in that group

I wanted to be in another group that cared about me for being me

And you must have learned a lot now in hindsight about what the core components of you being

Sufficiently happy are you've used a few of them there like learning was one of them belonging

What are what are the other core components of you think for someone just let's be it's easier to just talk about ourselves here

Yeah for you to be

stable

I

realized

That I

Also need to be my bum be allowed to be by myself

Right, so I used to in prior relationships

Before meeting my wife, I used to think you know your relationship

you constantly need to do something with the other party and it was draining me and

I used to think it was something wrong with me

because I wanted to be by myself for most of the time and

And and

Being comfortable with that. I am that way that I thrive on loneliness

not all the time because I can feel lonely, but

For quite a lot of time perhaps more so than most normal people like being lonely. I

I'm just finding myself in that

Place where I just pursue whatever

It's top of mind for me. I am sort of in my own thoughts

Wondering dreaming scheming

you know

That's been very important too because I used to think there was something wrong with that

And then my wife luckily she's kind of the same she does her thing and I do my thing and we love that

We can do stuff with each other, but we're also perfectly happy doing things on our own

and

That kind of taught me

also quite a lot about myself

In that because again, we are social animals and I am too by the way, I love

Hanging out with my friends, but I also love being by myself. So I think having a positive impact

Not just on myself. I have to feel good about what I'm doing and know that it helps someone

Being able to learn being able to have fun while doing it and

Then be an environment where I can be lonely and then can come back without that being sort of socially awkward

Like one of my favorite things that I can do with my close friends

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Yes, I can literally
Let's say I would host a dinner. I could host the dinner
And I get an idea. It's very uncommon, but I get an idea and I walk away and disappear for an hour and I'll come back
And that's like something that's kind of socially unacceptable in most situation. I do realize that so I try to not do that
If I'm I'm with you know strangers because they would understand they won't won't understand
But my real friends
They know that about me and they're like totally cool
So they just hang out and then when I come back
I love that they're there and I love that they're hanging out with my kids or hanging out with my wife and
Doing other stuff and just being comfortable in
That that for me is like a perfect dinner is one where I would be social
I would get an idea walk away
Think about it for a moment get collect my thoughts get energy write it down and come back
Filled with energy from that and then you know continue the conversation
That's a great example of something I love to do
So that's actually happened where you've been at a dinner party with friends and then you've had an idea and you've left
You and then you've my thing there is if I left so the first thing is that I'm not sure my girlfriend would be very happy
Yeah, she understands that I'm like that she understands that I love being alone
She understands that I get ideas at predictable times and that idea might suck me away. She probably would be that happy
About it probably need to have a conversation about that
But also if I went away, I would need to start working on the idea because I'd get so energized about the thing
That I then spend all night like sorry guys like yeah
That happens by the way, it happens that I like finish halfway through the dinner and just disappear
Don't come back to I will say my friends usually even my close friends are like
Hey, we came to hang out with you not like to see if we're half an hour and then you're disappearing
But it happens
But I can obviously equally be there for all the dinner to and and yeah
I mean, it is one of the social oddities. I think that I do with my close friends
and
Again, I know it's highly socially unacceptable in most situations
But but if you really think about it as an introverts as I said, I'd usually thrive on
I need social elements, but I get most of my energy being by myself
All right, and and so then from an energy balance
Perspective being with people
It gives me a lot of ideas. It's great

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But it also empties my energy reserve then going away filling them up again coming back
It is probably the ideal way for me if you ask me like what would a perfect night look like it would probably be that
How do you then balance?
Romance and relationships and my partner her I think her attachment style and her love language is like quality time
So I often
Violate that love language because of what you've just described
Yeah, we could be Saturday in a park and then I think about something or get an email
And then I'm off away on my own little world. Yeah
Yeah, I mean that's certainly the risk
Again, I'm I'm fortunate enough that my wife is kind of very similar to me in that regard. So she too leaves
dinners and has her ideas and
and
You know do that. So I think we're we're more similar
We try to make sure that one of us stay
Because it gets very awkward. Otherwise
Um, but if you're both like that, do you have to have rules though for when you do? Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's the thing
That's that's actually the harder thing for us is
Finding that quality time. So I mean there's two parts you can either have I like defaults
So you can have like the default is we spend time together or the default is we're in a relationship
But we don't spend time together and so you have to make time
Where you're actively finding something you both are interested in and you want to spend time on together
And I think we're more that and I think most people probably with kids would recognize that because the kids come first
In the relationship anyway, so your relationship to your significant other is probably, you know
The second priority in that relationship and your wants to kids are the first
So I don't think that's uncommon, but I think changing that the fault could be really important
Um, and again, if it's something that's really important to my wife, of course, I'm going to be present
She's really into horse riding
I'm not but I know it matters to her greatly. So not only
Will I try to speak to her every morning when she wants to talk about that?
But I also show up for her competitions or I show up for important practices
That she has as well
and
There are aspects of the horse thing where we can bond and and have great quality time as well
As it is she loves hearing about my entrepreneurial endeavors

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As well and and we find quality time through that and then we have date nights like both couples do and

Yeah, I mean if you're at the restaurants, you don't just really walk up and get away

Of course, you're gonna spend that quality time as well

starting Spotify

when I heard the Spotify story I

I really wanted to meet you because

I consider myself to be ambitious, but there are some challenges that I would just view as impossible and at the time when

You consider how the music industry was

That it's ran by these big record labels predominantly and they own the music

to be a

young kid from sweden

And believe that you could change that for me is a special type of delusion like it's like

It's just an impossible task. It's what I just would have thought. Okay. Some things are the way they are

They're removable objects. That is one of them. Yeah, why didn't you think that was a impossible task?

Well

I think for several reasons, but I think that is the beautiful naivety of an entrepreneur as well, right?

We move mountains. I'm sure elon was you know

Even more insurmountable thing electric cars and they hadn't been a successful car companies for

I think a century or something

Or at least, you know, many many decades in the u.s. And he managed to do that. So I think it's it's part illusion

Delusion, sorry. Um, but but the other part I think

Also is that what I realized is

Before even committing to this idea as the the why not part

I probably spent 500 hours

learning about this problem

and

The scarcest resource we have in the world today by far is time

And when you have high quality people that spend thousands of hours on a problem, you find new solutions

And so the biggest

Thing for humanity. I believe is simply that. Um, I believe we're capable of doing practically anything but

there aren't that many people

That um, can see these multi-dimensional things with that right experience that happens come in at that right time

They're spending thousands of hours of trying to

Needle in a haystack see that opportunity through that very very tiny prism and and um, um

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Even even today when I think about some of my other businesses it kind of worked the same way
So I started a healthcare business about five years ago, but I was spending
Um, I think the first interview when I mentioned it was in 2009
Um, and I started the company five years ago
2018 so I I probably spent a decade thinking about this problem
Um, and I couldn't figure out a solution 2008. Yeah. Yeah
You started the company in 2008
But no, no, I started the company the healthcare company in 2018 18, but I started thinking about it
2008
Oh, okay, so um, so I have a notebook with all my crazy ideas. Most of them amount to nothing
Uh, quite often someone else comes along and dust them and I'm happy and it's amazing
Um, but every now and then um, nothing happens for a great period of time
And I kind of feel that itch to maybe make a difference myself
And I and I say that because like the realization there was um
I had spent up until that point thousands of hours understanding the healthcare system
Why it is for the way it is the incentive schemes and the what the NHS is doing and what someone
else is doing and
The public healthcare system insurance business direct to consumer things the the longevity curves
of human beings
The disease groups the costs curves like all of those aspects
About it similar to how you're describing looking at rockets
Um, but you know
Imagine you're spending a thousand hours a rocket not just kind of casually researching it
I am sure you will find novel ways of how to attack the problem
It may not be because you know, if you're not a physicist you may not come up with the next rocket
engine
Um, but you may find another twist
Uh too on how to attack this problem
And I don't really think it comes down to that
And so in the space of music, I don't know anything about the music industry going into it
Um, but I would argue a few years into it
I was probably one of the most foremost experts on copyright in the world around like the dmca and
What the u.s. Copyright regime looked like and what what other regimes looked like and how
You know performance rights societies label rights and what kind of rights mechanical rights
performing rights
All of those different aspects
The all the different code is are c numbers is bn numbers and how they relate it and so on and so
forth and and um
You know, I find like people either get too modeled in on the details and don't see the bigger picture
Or they stay too top level picture to really see the new ones
And the question is how do you dive deep enough where you see it?
and figure out

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Which problems are solved in what order?
and and I was at that point
by
Probably 2007 having spent a year on spotify
But the team was super small
So it really wasn't a big commit at that time and I wasn't sure at that time
But then I realized that hey, this is actually possible
Because we'd built the product that showcases the technology
Um of what we're doing and it felt like if you had all the world's music on your hard drive
So then the real problem ended up being can we get the music industry to accept this and to that I
had no idea
But I felt like this is so obviously
If this came out in the marketplace
What consumers would ask for
Now the only question is is the music industry going to allow this and that took me another
year and a half 18 months
To learn the answer and it was completely binary and we almost died probably four times
In that process and ran out of money and a record company saying no, this is never gonna happen
until eventually one day
The stars aligned and we were able to launch
But that was not a given but it felt like the right bet to make because
You know, it was a binary outcome either we'd fail the price wasn't all too bad
If we would succeed it was clearly so that at least this would resonate very well with consumers
Was there
Any moments where you thought that it wasn't gonna happen i.e conversations you had with record
labels where someone very high up says absolutely no way
many times, uh, I would say
Probably once every month or two over a two-year period. I thought that this probably won't pan out
Uh, and it was incredibly demoralizing. I I usually joke but like in the beginning of that process
I had hair and then in the end of it. I lost all of the hair
I probably gained 30 pounds in weights
during that period of time
It was awful. Um, but throughout my co-founder martin
Probably a factor of just who uses an individual but also probably because he didn't participate in
these meetings
Uh, kept being really upbeat kept being
Um, you know amazing support and said don't worry about it
You're gonna figure it out and you just kept believing in me and then he also said a few times
You know when that was and he actually said don't worry about it
We'll figure out something else if this doesn't work out
It felt to me like I always had that safety net and it was just the amount the push that I needed to do
this

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Um, and again talking about not giving advice

But the advice that I do give to other people is to share the burden with someone

It is so important. Um, and I know I get most of the credit

for Spotify

But it is really a team effort, uh from the Gustavs and Alex and all those people

But then also in the early days from, uh, Martin in believing in me

and knowing, uh, this kind of supernatural ability that I'm going to pull it off somehow

That must have told you a story which I guess has stayed with you about perseverance

and the power of perseverance the the double-edged sword to that is

Sometimes it's right to quit as well

Yeah

And knowing when to persevere and knowing when you're just wasting your time

Which is as you said the most important currency of all

Yeah

You know

That's where you know art meets science

Um, there is no scientific answer because it depends. It's an art to know

When something is futile and when something is worth doing

But I call it that sort of binary outcome, but uh with uneven distribution, right?

So if you think about it as a curve

Even if it's 50 50 whether you succeed

But on the upside you can win a lot more than you can lose and all you can really lose is one time and the upside may be 100

It's probably worth

Uh persuading obviously it's that's the science part the art thing is okay

Well, is it really 100 times is a 10 times and and have I already lost but I'm just not aware of it

That's the art and also in that I hear an optimism bias from two co-founders

The the constant. Oh, we'll figure it out. We'll figure it out. We'll figure it out

How important do you think that is especially, you know, you hire a lot of people

Is that something you're like looking for in the people that you work with that bias towards we'll figure it out

Um, I think again, it depends on the role you're hiring for you need a team

Uh, I think it's really important that you just don't surround yourself with just yes people or optimists

You need the naysayer in the room as well. You need the people who will balance it out and be the one who says

I'm not sure this is going to work out. Um, and and so often I think that's the that's the important part

We keep talking about it with the CFO or salespeople, but again, you can have a deal making CFO and Salesperson that's happy go lucky

It may not be a great

Combo you may want the the CFO to be skeptical about the sales pipeline and a happy go lucky

Salesperson or the inverse maybe I like really diligent that and the CFO that maybe sort of like don't

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worry about it

We will sort it out

Um, but I but I think so much about that is the subtleties. We we don't have a perfect model of the world

um

and

The more experience I have is it's a cheesy thing to say, but the less I realize that I actually know

And so much of these are actually down in the nuances and most people are

Above the nuances don't really understand the issues well enough or to bog down in the details to understand the bigger picture

and and going that sort of up and down that's sort of super detail oriented

But also being able to go up and see the big pictures

That is um and simplifying very complex concepts

I think some of the most amazing entrepreneurs in the world are experts at

And that is the superpower

And that is certainly one that i'm trying to hone

And work on

But when you see it like a steve jobs when you think very complex things and people say he didn't understand engineering and

Technical problems, it's not true

Yes, he may not have been an engineer

He may not have known how to write code, but he certainly could empathize with what

Made an amazing engineer tick

Empathize with different technical solutions will have different inputs and outputs

um, and he understood it and um

He was brilliant in taking very complex ideas and understanding how to make that resonate for the everyday person

These tales I hear of you sort of being outside record labels and waiting for the ceo to come out so that you could

Catch them or trying to accost. I don't know the assistant outside and asking when the ceo was coming outside

So that you could get a meeting with them. Yeah, are these tales true?

Um, as with many they're probably exaggerated a little bit. Um, whereas the truth

Well, the the truth is that certainly happened

But it wasn't you know, I've heard uh people recounted us that I slept outside of the the

Record labels kind of in a sleeping bag that that didn't happen. Uh, that happened another time in my career, but it wasn't um

It it didn't happen there

But but it certainly happened that I'd book a week flight to new york with no meeting booked

Uh, with basically an open calendar and about 20 phone calls a day just trying to figure out any time to get on this the schedule of

a senior VP or a ceo, etc

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That certainly happened and that taught me another thing too
Which is that these assistants like you better befriend them because they are the keys to the kingdom
And most people don't care about them at all. Uh, but they're very influential. They're very powerful.
Um, and uh
And and you know, uh, that was hard in the beginning, but then I realized that
Um, they got to see me as an individual. I saw them as an individual and eventually
You know, this this is not uh, we tend to believe the world is more logical than what it is
But a lot of it is based on relationships
So eventually some of them started taking a liking to me and
So when there was the opportunity and they could prioritize 10 other things for that ceo to do
But I was there. I was friendly uh in easy to work with show up
But no moments notice even if you know, it was 20 minutes before finding out about it. I would show up
Um, and so I was I was easy to deal with so take away all that complexity in order to achieve the outcome that I wanted to do
And sometimes that is as simple as it is just be consistent
Be the easiest person to deal with and you'd be surprised how many problems it solves
Did you invest your personal capital into starting Spotify? Because I I read again that you'd spend pretty much all of your personal
Wealth to start the company. Yeah, yeah, I did. Uh, so I invested not all of it, but quite substantial amounts of it
And my co-founder invested even more, but he obviously had a much larger sum of money
From the beginning
Hey, yes, so all in all, I think we invested about 10 million dollars
into this
by ourselves
Which was also crazy because you know
Back then today 10 million into a startup just was
Isn't a big number
There are many startups that have done that before but doing that on a seed stage
Back in 2007
That just was unheard of it was usually 500k seed check the sums, etc
What if it hadn't worked out? What would have been the personal implications for you financially?
Uh, the personal implications that I went from not having to have a job to
Then probably having to go back to having a job. Um, so I basically took that security
That I built up that 22. I'm set for life and I gave that up
In a moment's notice
and
Yeah, I mean
I don't know what to say. I think
From a purely logical point of view. It was probably a terrible decision

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But betting on myself and betting on yourself would probably be
Again, I say I shouldn't give advice, but it is probably the
The best advice I could give many people is is, you know
Because especially those that want to invest in various startups, etc
And I all but they may not have a lot of money and then I always say well
Why don't you just better on yourself instead?
Why don't you just try to like work for one of these startups?
Like you said and and maybe take a little bit more equity and a little bit less pay and take out of your cash
Instead because that way you increase the likelihood. Hopefully if you know, you're good of
The company being a success
And it just feels like the more prudent thing to do is so I had a sneaky feeling that that was the right thing to do
Uh, but investing as much probably wasn't the smartest thing to do
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You might have missed that I've come to learn over time
Not all of the products they have are for me
But the ones that are for me have really really changed my life in a profound way
All of the products are designed for different use cases and different people
For me as you'll probably know they're ready to drink bottles are a staple of my life at the moment
And they have been for many many years
But for a lot of other people they have the hot and savory which is a five minute hot meal
That's nutritionally complete and contains all the good stuff that all huel products contain
which is the 23 vitamins and minerals and the
Wonderful balance of sort of nutritional completeness and then you have the bars as well
If you've heard about huel on this podcast you've heard me talking about it a lot
You're aware that I'm an investor in the company. You're aware that I'm on the board of the

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company

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Spotify

Goes on to

Be I mean success is probably an understatement and I know the journey to that success had multiple

Near-death experiences to get there. One of the key things key moments. I reflect on as a Spotify customer

Is when Apple launched their

competing product Apple music in

2015 I believe it was and there was lots of articles saying that this would be the death of Spotify

I think I was even concerned as a very loyal Spotify user. I thought you know, they have all the phones

They have they're kind of like the mafia. They could just squash you. Yeah, most companies when Apple comes into their territory

Shaking their boots. Yeah, what was it like in your office that day when Apple music launched a competing product?

You know, when you live in the thick of the fire, you're not concerned about the things that everyone else is concerned about

Um, I usually say public perception likes about six to 12 months. What's actually going on?

And and so in our case, we'd known that Apple was going to launch something for probably the better part of a year

Because they had the beats acquisition

beforehand and we were hearing all sorts of rumors, etc about what it was so

Absolutely, you have to be worried when one of the greatest companies on the earth with the slides to compete with you

So we were concerned about it. Um

And we were kind of doubling down on what our positioning

Was going to be so you kind of like double and triple check whether or not, um, you know

You were deluding yourself into believing things to be true

and and so

For instance, in our case one of the big things, um, we we had a some strategic pillars that we were focusing on

One of them we call ubiquity, um, because we always knew this would eventually be the case

We we thought that consumers would value the ability to work across all devices and all ecosystems and our bet would be that, um

Any competitor we might have had would actually focus on

Reinforcing their own ecosystem and not care about all the other stuff. So the primary reason they were into

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A music service would be to make their own devices better not
To make the world's best music service
And um, and so, you know, that's why we made such an effort of integrating into cars integrating
into all sorts of
Weird devices smart fridges, whatever you might think. Um, and so so it was kind of like reiterating
that
But I felt pretty good about that position, um and going back
And then there's always the sort of like what if they figured out something that we just
Wouldn't have thought about uh, and I remember we were constantly talking to the product teams
about this
And like what what what if they come up with this and we're literally trying this every game
theorizing every possible angle
um on it, um
But I think at the end of the day we we kind of went through the thousand scenarios kind of thing.
We knew we had prepared as well as we could
um, we um
Anticipated a certain type of product
There was this kind of one percent or ten percent chance, whatever you want to quantify it as
Where we would just be wrong and they'd come up with something that widely superseded any of
our expectations
um, but that very day
Remember we'd been preparing for that day for so long. So the first reaction was kind of them
announcing it
Which we expected them to do
Uh, and then seeing the walkthrough of the product and realizing that okay
Well, we prepared for this we thought about this etc
And so weirdly enough as the rest of the world kind of like gasped for air
Um, we were thinking about it. Okay. Well
This was what we expected
And back to the point
Distribution was the amazing thing. They hadn't come up with something on the product side that
we just didn't anticipate
Um, but it was really just about distribution and there was nothing we could do to guard ourselves
against it
But we felt like we had a superior experience
On the personalization side the fact that you know, if you have a windows machine and an iphone
um spotify would work
but apple music
Wouldn't at that time
So there were many of those things that we um, I thought had a better positioning than they had
I've I've long thought that I've tried both
I mean I tried it when it came out and I couldn't stick to it

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Um, and I think me and my friends who were in my music group
We all concluded that the personalization how spotify understands me. Yeah is really the thing
It's hard to know why you do what you do as a consumer. Yeah, but from analyzing it a bit more
deeply
It just felt like I built there was a lot of investment
I done to my playlists and all those things but spotify just knew me better. It seems to have much
more data than
um data on me and understands me and is more of a bespoke solution to me than
apple was and also the the user experience is not great and I just can't get past that I just so
I tried it and I bounced I I just stuck with spotify
um
Apple are I use the word math you early on a lot of people don't know this but they take
30 revenues on pretty much every new app in the store
They've rejected your audio book app multiple times. Um, there's a rumor going around that they
Even delay how quickly you can release new updates of your app and delay how that reaches phones
What's your opinion on apple and what they do and how they conduct themselves?
Well, um, it's um as a consumer
Let's start off with apple is a fantastic company and they make amazing products
I really do believe that. Um, I've been a mac user since
I can't even remember probably
late 90s when I could first afford one
All the way to now and obviously use the iphone and apple watches and all that
So let's start with that and I think that's hard to square them that there's this other company that's
fiercely
focused on just, um
Itself and constantly trying to do things by itself and not working well with others
um, and um
Those are perhaps two different sides of the same coin
um, but um, you know
The the way that manifests itself, um, I think that it's a company in many cases that still sees itself as
an underdog
But don't realize that they become goliath
And so many of the tactics that made it the rebel kind of thing are now stifling innovation
And it's really hurting consumers to great extent with the 30 you talked about with the fact that
You know a spot if I can't, um
Or any developer if you don't pay the 30 you can't even speak to your consumers. It is kind of absurd
So, you know, there's a ruthlessness, um on the business side of apple
And and perhaps it's always been so I don't know. I never got the opportunity to meet steve jobs, but
um
Where just from an ethos point of view, it's just not me. Um, and um, um
I have a hard time squaring that with me as the consumer and me as the business leader
um, and needless to say I I do believe that apple

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Can and should play fair and I think it would be way better for the world if they did. Um, and I think, um

That it would actually help them in many regards to switch their tactics and realize that they are the goliath at this point and not

David, um, and so yeah

One of the things I want to close on um is your philosophy. So I guess it's the same answer because Spotify's philosophy towards what's made it successful will probably be in many respects a reflection of your philosophies

towards business and and um more broadly towards life

But when I sit here and I think a lot of people will sit here and say, um

There's clearly something unique about you about the way you approach problem solving problems life business all of those things that has been

That has defined you and set you apart

Are you aware of what that is what those principles are?

Um, no, I don't think so, but I think you're right in that. Um

You know the the way I would describe Spotify, um to people you're right that it is scary sometimes watching Spotify

uh

Trying to watch it from a distance and not just be in it because sometimes it's doing things where I'm like

How did how did people know that we were supposed to do it this way?

And it would be how I would approach solving a problem and it's kind of how

You know, we've internalized certain things

But the best way is it's 17 years old now and it is a teenager that's liberating itself

So it's not a hundred percent me

In fact, it is this much broader

different being uh, there are aspects of it that, um, hasn't taken after me at all in

Product development, you know, Gustav is a formidable product leader as an example and alex is a formidable

Business leader and the two of them are now leading more of the day today and they're certainly instilling their personal

Values and their personal perspective of the of the company too

Which I think they're totally entitled to doing having been with the company for 12 plus years both of them

Um, but it is interesting seeing it because we're approaching things now in a way

I wouldn't always do it's not inconsistent with important principles of mine, but

But uh, it's certainly not directed and the other part is I started this as a 23 year old

And the 23 year old daniel

While many parts are the same

the 40 year old daniel with, um, two kids

Having seen that have changed perspectives as well

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Uh, I have a different feeling about
Work and and the importance of that in my life still very important
But may not be the sole most important thing that I do
Just to mention one and so it has similarities
Uh, but there's differences to me as an individual too
But I think if you compare me the 23 year old daniel the 30 year old daniel the 40 year old daniel
um, I've evolved too and
Candy I'm in that period at the moment where I'm perhaps trying to figure out
Who the 40 year old daniel?
Really is
Because it's a different one than the 30 year old one. Um, maybe it's subtleties
But um, I think in quite a
Big way also and just thinking about something like a culture the 23 year old daniel
Um culture was having a ping-pong table
30 year old daniel, uh, would have said yeah culture is important, but didn't really understand why
and the 40 year old daniel, uh, would be
You know the 30 year old daniel would be more strategy than culture actually and the 40 year old
daniel is all about culture
almost to the point where strategy is
Um secondary if not even tertiary to that
40 year old daniel is all about culture. Yeah, uh way more so
What is the culture?
Well, and that's the amazing thing because it is the most scalable thing done right of a company
And it's the hardest thing right because it is everything and nothing
It is every positive action that's happening in the company. It's every negative
Action of company every person that's joining every person that's leaving is impacting culture
and so um in its essence
I believe culture is about rewarding the positive behaviors who want to see in the company and
obviously
dissuade the negative
Where are the positive behaviors you want to see?
Well, one of them is taking risks
Um failing and how do you do that when you have eight or nine thousand people inside of a
company?
Responsibly, how do you uh when the common status quo is we don't like failure?
Um, you don't get promoted based on failure. You get promoted based on being successful
Annie Duke has this thinking in bets. She talks about I love that is thinking about poker ships on the
table
and and she said one time when when we spoke she said to me is like
and a company is like
Everyone has ships at the table. We just don't know how many we have and so the people that have
been successful have way more

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So they have

leniency and allowancy in the culture of any organizations to do more than someone who just started um, and perhaps have a less lesser ones and if you've failed enough times

What's naturally going to happen is that you won't have the same agency in a large organization to impact things too

So then the the counterpoint to that would be well, how do you then?

um

Create an environment where people

Are allowed to take risks and then balance that with say a spotify at this point where we have a huge amount of

Responsibility to we have tens of millions of creators that have their livelihood of them platform

So we can't just experiment with how we're paying out and so on and so forth, right and

550 million consumers

We have to be responsible with their data. We can't, um, you know, put new things in front of them without testing them

and so on and so forth and so

um, there's this constant tension between

being innovative

taking risks

And um, you know at the same time obviously being responsible

and and that's hard

But that's all about culture

I'm absolutely obsessed with the subject of culture because I really think it's an underappreciated factor in

um

In why businesses are the way they are. I think you could basically take

A person off the street and the culture you drop them in determines the behavior you'll get from them. Yeah, and so, um

And having sat here and interviewed like Sir Alex Ferguson's ex teammates. Yeah, you just come to learn that Sir Alex Ferguson's greatness wasn't

Strategy, right? They all say to me

I remember patrice and ever said to me that he walked in on a we were playing arsenal

Yeah on a sunday in london. Yeah, and he walked in and just said lads listen beautiful weather outside

Don't fuck up my sunday and walked out because his thing was management. He just had this culture

The other thing they said to me which has always stayed with me is

Rio Ferdinand said to me how many times do you think he came into the training ground dressing room?

Yeah in 26 years. I don't know. He said twice really didn't need to come in there. The culture was in there. Yeah

And it was self-policing when it's strong, right? Yeah, but you're right sports teams the ones that do

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it really well

um, I was being told an arsenal story that probably can't share but um

You could see bits and pieces of mckell's

You know how he's pushing that team culture at the moment too, which seems very fascinating

With some of the almost antics seems to be doing this all or nothing season that was

I think last season as well

So you can see that and I love studying that with sports teams because you know, it's 11

Players on the pitch. How do how do you make these people gel together?

And form a team

hugely important thing so I agree but but also like imagine if you had 11 new players

Um, you know can't yeah, can you even form or shall see these days? Yeah, right? Um, can you even?

Create a culture that way

Or is it something that should be done intentional?

I mean if you're growing a company and growing the number of employees by 50 percent two years in a row

Most of your employees probably won't have been here even for a year

It will change things. Whereas if you make something where it's more of a gradual change

It will uh, it's easier. I'm not saying it's trivial but to to kind of have the same culture

And I think many founders make that mistake when they override. They don't understand the implication of the culture

They just look at sort of more warm bodies

But it's all these other subtle things that starts breaking

Daniel, we've got a closing tradition on this podcast where the last guest leaves a question for the next guest

and I love this question because

You don't like giving advice. So yeah, this is a perfect one for you. Um

What is the advice that someone could have but didn't give you at 21 years old

That would have made you more successful at the thing you now do

I um

I

Think uh, we we spoke about it. Um, I've gone through iterations of

Trying to learn from other people to model that a huge part of that has been kind of

Optimizing for my strengths and not covering my weaknesses. Uh, and I wish um that I

Um

Realized much earlier on that perhaps my superpower is that I'm

Pretty good all around her and not particularly good at anything

So I used to think for instance that I had this brilliant. Um, you know

I modeled myself on the Mark Zuckerbergs of the world of like I need to run every product meeting

I need to be the best product person in the world

It just wasn't me and it took me a while to realize that and be comfortable. Um saying that, right?

Um

Um, but um

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I I have realized that I do like a lot of different things
I love learning about new things and perhaps that is my superpower
To realize that the person who's doing pr
That's quite an interesting thing to learn about
There are interesting things about employment law how that came to be and trying to understand
that and the list goes on and on and on
I love that. Um, and I wish I would have probably
Understood that earlier about myself
because that would have allowed myself to
not model so much on other people but
but um somehow
Be more introspective and listen to myself
And I think that's really one of the things I I take away from you said very eloquently is that your
proof that
Entrepreneurs can buck a number of different trends
You know and still be wildly successful and that evidence means to someone like me
That there's no such thing as a
entrepreneur in terms of
How they operate what they're interested in
And that there's many ways to be a successful entrepreneur
And it really from what you've just said there the most sure-fire way of becoming a successful
entrepreneur is actually looking inward
Versus looking outwards like oh, how does elon do it or how does Daniel do it?
Which stays with me a lot because it's really changed my thinking on a few really important things
that I think I've been
Yeah, I've been limited. I've been limiting myself on
Daniel, thank you so much. Thank you so much for having me. Thank you for building such a great
business and building a business that that is
um, I guess that even though you're number one
Still embodies the kind of first principle underdog mentality. There's something about Spotify, which
is it feels
I know you probably don't like this word, but I don't know if you do but it feels more like a family
Because I've met a lot of the people there. I know a lot of them
And they're like really nice people that are very open books. It doesn't feel like a big corporate to me
It's very humble in its in its in its approach, but it's also very ambitious
And it strikes that balance really wonder wonderfully well in it's some it's a company and a brand
that I deeply resonate with for that reason
It's a wonderful wonderful thing and I think
Um, you know, you talked about
Wanting to do work that brings good to the world
The good to the world that Spotify has done in my view is
Inquantifiable because I mean music is a

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Is a wonderful thing

But what you're doing now and podcasting as well and how you've really owned and driven that industry forward for people like me

To have these longer for more contextual conversations. I think it's hard to measure the good that's done to the world

But it's certainly a thank you an important one. Thank you. That means a lot to me and you're right You know, it's about being humble while doing it, but

You know ambition and humbleness may not seem like they go hand in hand and so I think you capture the

Essence of what we like Spotify to be at its best, which is super ambition

But yet humble humble with all of its past success all of that stuff that we're still learning

Super curious

I never told the story before but when I went I went on a trip to sweden

And I was there with some of your colleagues so gustov who's head of product, right?

And alex who's head of business everything that makes money

And I was there with Shaquille as well

Who's a good friend and colleague of yours and has been for a long time

And they sat me down at a table for for about 30 minutes or an hour and said

You're a podcaster steve. Yeah, tell us everything we need to know about podcasting

How can we make um Spotify better for you as a podcaster and for the very people at the top of Spotify to sit and listen so intently

To me and then to act upon what I said and then give me feedback weeks later and say okay

We're now you know working on this having listened to you

It's not something

That a big corporate that was arrogant or very sure of themselves or lost that mentality would ever do

That stayed with me because it's hard to do that when you get big to really be curious and humble

And that's exactly what Spotify is

So I wish I wish you all the luck in the world and I'm sure you won't need it because you've got

A wonderful culture of um people and great people around you, but just wanted to say thank you for that

Well, no, thank you. And I mean again. Yes, we listen, but it's also because you are innovating on your side and

With all the aspects even seeing your studio here today

It's kind of like bringing it to the next level

So that's that's amazing to see that you're able to do that amazing to bring these conversations to the world

And we all get the benefit to learn from them as well without

Maybe having the opportunity like you have to meet all these individuals too and that's going to bring a lot of growth journeys

For a lot of people too

So thank you

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