

One Knight in Product - E154 - Bob Moesta

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight



Jason Knight 00:00

Hello and welcome to the show and an episode where I'm honoured to speak to one of the creators of the often misquoted but still thoroughly important jobs to be done framework. Speaking of jobs, this episode is sponsored by one night consulting head. Yes, yes, yes, that is me. But listen up. I started one night consulting because I've seen variations of the same problems plaguing growing startups scaleups and larger, digitally transforming companies again, and again, these problems can cause friction between teams, so product development, lacklustre sales and ultimately lead to constrained growth. So if you're scaling your product organisation, struggling with cross team alignment, or having trouble executing your product strategy to support your business goals, you can go to [one night consulting.com](https://www.one-night.com) To book a call with me and see if I can do a job for you. That's [one night consulting.com](https://www.one-night.com) You can check the show notes for more details. Anyway, enough of that, if we could bottle up innovation and sell it, we'd all be millionaires. But in the meantime, we can at least try to build our core skills and give ourselves the best chance of success. So if you want to find out what these skills are, and why they're important, stick with us.



Jason Knight 01:13

So my guest tonight is Bob master. Bob's a builder, teacher, entrepreneur, author and founder who once worked as Head of Sales for housing construction company, which is making me think of overly aggressive sell at all costs coffee for closer types. But I promise you, that's not Bob. That's not Bob, because he was one of the CO architects of the jobs to be done framework with a team, including the legendary Clayton Christensen, and is an expert in understanding not just what you can sell, but what people really want. Tonight, I've hired Bob to do a job for me, tell me all about his new book learning to build, which promises to give us all the skills we need to be effective entrepreneurs. Hi, Bob, how are you tonight?



01:46

Hi, Jason. Thanks for having me on.



Jason Knight 01:48

No worries. It's an absolute pleasure. So there's lots of things to talk about tonight. But first of all, I want to start with you. Yeah. So apart from writing books, you're the founder and president, CEO of the rewired group. Yep. So what are you doing on a day to day basis with the rewired group?



02:03

Yeah, so So to be honest, I'm a couple of things is I run a small, I'll say design consultancy where I help people develop and launch products, I've been doing less and less of that we used to do about 40 products a year we're down, we do about 20 by choice. And so I handpick kinds of clients. And then I'm teaching more. So I teach at the Kellogg School at Northwestern in Chicago. And then I'm writing some books and getting some of those things. And then I'm, I'm actually building some two software products. And so I'm in the midst of kind of building some of my own products around jobs in the analysis and things like that. And then I've got three new books I'm working on as well. Now well, so part of this is about paying paying it forward is again, remember, I'm dyslexic, and I have you know, I can't read and I can't write. And if when I was 18 years old, I was told to be a baggage handler at the airport. But you know, fast forward 40 years, and I'm, I've now done over 3500 products and services and innovated in many different industries. And I have to pay it forward, because there's so many people who helped me along the way. And so that's really kind of what I'm writing books about is kind of passing what I learned along to the next set of innovators and entrepreneurs.



Jason Knight 03:13

Oh, no, absolutely. I think that kind of thread of mentorship for me is really important as well. It's something that I tried to do too. You know, it's important when people get to a certain point in their career to try and help bring them along on the journey as well make sure that they can have all of the successes that you got to accept for that one. But three books, there's a lot of books to be writing at the same time, like how are you apportioning your time between those?



03:36

Yeah, so one of them is so I've been studying basically people why they switched jobs for the last five years. So pre pandemic and what causes them to say today's day, I'm leaving this company to go to that company. So I've done all the research, we've actually prototyped two processes and building some software around it. But then I partnered with Michael Horne, who I wrote a book called choosing college with and then Ethan Bernstein, who is a very good friend. He's a professor at the Harvard Business School. And we're writing a book around the helping people navigate their career. And so for the most part, my research is done. And now I'm in the midst of kind of building product for it and then letting as they write to make sure that I'm adding the graphics and kind of the key, some of the content behind it. But for the most part, they're they're writing most of it. That's one and then the other two is I have I have writers,

mostly ghost writers who I speak to and then they actually go off and start writing the book for me. So most of my books are 10, two hour sessions of me talking about topics and then somebody taking those transcripts and putting them into a book for me.



Jason Knight 04:36

No, absolutely interesting there. But I think one thing you touched on was the graphics which I noticed throughout demand side sales and learning to build as well this that there's quite a lot of graphics and diagrams. Is that something that you then do yourself that you say you're dyslexic it's something that helps you to visualise some of the stuff that you want to get across as well.



04:54

Yeah, so the one of the ways so I had the lucky opportunity of being able to sit with clay for four hours. was a quarter for almost 27 years. And what we would do is we would draw one or two pictures and then talk for four hours. And so part of it was is that most of our thoughts come through in pictures or the dynamics of the picture, or the evolution of the picture, and then allows us to kind of put words to kind of what we mean and, and hone and refine language. And so everything for me starts as a picture for sure, or a math equation, one of the two.



Jason Knight 05:22

Now, there you go. But let's touch on the dyslexia for a second, because in demand side sales, relatively early in the book, you call out your unique worldview, which has helped you look at things in different ways. And you've just touched a lot on the visual ways that you might look at things, for example, and obviously, how much of your life has been shaped by your dyslexia, which you talk about very openly in the book as well. Now, I'm assuming that comes with a lot of challenges. But what powers is that unlocked? Aside from the pictures that have helped you to tackle some of the complicated issues around customer motivations?



05:50

Yeah, that's a great question. I think the really cool part is that I always think of whenever we have a disability, it actually helps us create a super ability somewhere else. And so my, my super abilities that are in two areas. One is questions I like I learned through conversation, not through reading. So it's very, very different, I think. And so I've gotten, you know, 40 years, 50 years of asking questions and getting better and better at it and, and admitting, I don't know, I think that's part of it. Yeah, I think the second part is I'm a pattern recognizer. So I can see patterns that most people can't see without large numbers of things. But but because I have a very deep seated understanding of cause and effect, and I see cause and effect everywhere, it's about being able to frame things and see patterns. And so my, as I always say, my primary language is math. And so I think of, you know, things and relationships and and how things play over time. And I'm always seeing things dynamically through pictures.



Jason Knight 06:47

Well, speaking of pictures, I mean, you've touched it yourself, you've launched 3500 products of all different shapes and sizes, over the years now, for me, that's an unfathomably large number. But yeah, is there anything that really sticks out in your memory and still sticks out vividly for yourself? Or does it all start to blow into one after like, number 3000?



07:06

Clay would always ask me the question, you know, what's your favourite innovation? And I always say, my next one, because it's like, again, I'm a builder by heart. And so I will think, like, well, the stuff I did is good, but like, I can't wait for the next thing. And so everything's kind of there. I think clay always challenges me every once in a while, he would say something effective, like, well, if you were dead, which what would be the innovation that would get you into heaven? And this like? The one that I came up with on that one is one of the things I worked at at Ford was we worked on, basically, what's the arrow on the gas tank gauge that told you what side the filler cap was on? And it's one of those things that most people don't know it's there. But it's like, it's a struggling moment. It's, it's not that big a deal. But it's one of those things that if you can forget it, like it's easier for you to just kind of forget it and just look down at it every once in a while. So that's one of the innovations I always talk about is kind of like, it's simple. But it's it's, it literally is taking time to understand struggling moments and kind of coming up with solutions.



Jason Knight 08:00

Yeah, I think one of the most interesting things I find is when you find a very obvious thing to hand, which, yeah, you'd never noticed beforehand, like just something on the edge of your seat or something like that. That's just, yeah, that's where you always put your hand or something like that. And people that have actually done the work and spent the time to go and work that out. I think it's like you say, kind of unheralded to some degree. And I'm sure you don't get any kickback from any of the cars that gets sold.



08:23

No, no, no, no. I think one of the one of the I think the coolest ones that, to me that I saw was at base camp, when they they created the looped in feature, which is they have this whole struggling moment around people being able to log in and put stuff into the into the account. And by actually building a way in which I can send you an email and then you respond to the email that can put it right back into the into the project without ever having to log in. Again, it's a very creative way in which to kind of think about that struggling moment and different ways to do it. And most people would think about, well, we just got to make it easier to log in. But it turns out that there was many ways in which to solve this problem. And so I think that one is, is another good example of just some really kind of ingenious, really paying attention to detail and making a simple solution that's user friendly.



Jason Knight 09:06

There you go. So all my listeners are almost certainly using something that Bob's done. You can send thanks an email. Yeah, but let's talk about Clayton Christensen for a second. Because, yeah, obviously, you work with him for a long time, as you said, and yeah, you built not just with him. I know you've built with a team, the whole jobs to be done framework, which permeates a lot of your thinking. So both of the books that we'll talk about tonight. Yeah, both pioneers in many ways. But in learning to build you described yourself as a practitioner, who was the practitioner to his academic. Yeah. So how did that manifest itself during your work together?



09:41

Yeah. So I think part of it would be is is, again, a lot of the job stuff came up as my hack for not being able to read market research reports. So I would spend a lot of time saying like, well, let me just go talk to a few people about why they did what they did or why they bought what they bought. And instead of So it'd be it's very kind of, I would say proud It's research based, as opposed to market research base. And I would share it with clay of what I was doing and then eventually over time, so probably shared it with him the first time in 9596. Yeah, maybe 94. But then we talked a little bit on it. And then over time, he basically said, we need to turn this into a theory. And I didn't really understand what he meant. And eventually, he's like, Well, this has universal applicability across many, many different areas. And so for me, I thought about it as my hack of who I how I, you know, kind of figured out what to go build. So I didn't really think of it as a theory, I thought it was like a tool. And so over the over time, basically, he showed me how to use it. And to abstract it to a point where I can apply it to, you know, I'm doing it one of the other books I'm working on is religion is what what job does God do and understanding the studying people who switch religions to say, what progress are you making by changing the way you think about God? Wow. So it's a very controversial one, but at the same time to realise that there's way more overlap, and that, you know, people are getting closer and closer to a religion because of that, trying to make some progress. And so I never would have thought of applying it there without kind of Clay's help of turning it into a theory.



Jason Knight 11:10

That's super interesting, just again, as you say, almost moulding the law clay that you come up with, no pun intended, yeah. And then bringing that into an actual thing that could be used across everything is used in design, it's used in product, it's used in sales as well.



11:25

Yeah, my latest one is in HR, I've literally studying why people switch jobs. And now all of a sudden, I have have a way to which help understand why people are leaving your company, how to redesign the work. So it actually fits people how to actually help your employees actually decide how they want to make progress and what things you can negotiate on. It's, it's kind of amazing, because some of the places it's taken me so pretty excited about it.



Jason Knight 11:46

Well yeah no that's very interesting obviously keep an eye out for those books But jobs to

well, yeah, no, that's very interesting, obviously, keep an eye out for those books. But jobs to be done is almost like these days, a product manager or designer bingo card phrase, it's one of those things that probably gets misused, not necessarily 100% understood by everyone that uses it almost like using the word agile, or MVP that also gets similarly sort of misused, and, you know, bastardise, to some extent, but I'm speaking to one of the masters. So on an overall level, what's your elevator pitch for the jobs to be done framework?



12:17

So the basic premise is this is that people don't buy products, they hire products, to basically help them make progress in their life. And that a struggling moment is the seed for all innovation. And that what we need to really do is, is if you were to ask me, I said, I've been studying struggling moments for 40 years, where do people struggle, because it's way easier to actually build a product to fit into a struggling moment than it is to build a product and then go try to find the 8 billion people in the world who can actually go by. And so jobs is really flipping the lens and trying to understand what we say, why do people pull product into their lives, as opposed to the lie, which I was told as an engineer, which is build it and they will come? It's just a lie. So so that's kind of the the, the essence of it, and studying those struggling moments and understanding there's forces and that nothing is random, but everything is caused. And when we, when we actually unpack random, we start to realise that it's the subtle domino effect of something's very small, can actually end up causing something very large.



Jason Knight 13:17

But speaking of something small versus very large, was there like a light bulb moment, you know, sitting in a bath and jumping out shot and Yuvika? Or was that very much a, an evolution of ideas over a long period of time?



13:27

It was an evolution of ideas over time, I think the the notion is I started with things like, you know, it was situations that put people into it. And then it was not, it was the problem side of it. And then it was no, it was aspirational about the outcome they wanted. And then I realised it was both sides of it. And so it was really kind of the, like, the the way I actually think about is one of my biggest mentors was a guy by the name genichi Taguchi, who was Japanese and he, he would talk about ying and yang all the time. And that, to me, everything has duality. And it was ultimately when I found the duality of like, there's a problem and an outcome. And basically, it's a combination of those two things that cause value. It's like, oh, okay, I get it. And so I think I felt like I nailed it. When we started. See the duality part come together.



Jason Knight 14:09

Oh, there you go. And hundreds of books and talks and seminars later and everyone's still misusing it for you. But hopefully we'll get back on track. Yeah,





14:18

I think I think the hard part The hard part is though is if I tried to protect it too much, what happens is then not enough people want to learn it. Yeah. And by sharing it, if you will, with the world again, I'm a little flatter that so many people have picked it up. But at the same time it's it's almost the natural evolution of any method or tool if you look at six sigma, or lean or agile, like they all have go through an iteration they all have a life cycle like a product, this will have to have another version soon. But at the same time, the reality is like it's it's, you know, the foundations are still very valuable, but at some point, they have to be kind of cleaned up and fixed a little bit, if you will.



Jason Knight 14:58

Oh, that'd be the next book. Yeah, but in demand side sales, your book before the latest book, you talk a lot about understanding customer needs the five Why's the jobs to be done? Yep, give an entire framework around concentrating on the demand side, rather than just trying to force products down people's throats. Yeah, which you've kind of touched on already as well, it's actually trying to work out what people want. Now, one of the first things that I have found very interesting, certainly from my world as a product person is, it feels like jobs to be done is very much been co opted and protected by the designers and the product managers of the world. Because they're like, oh, that's, that's our game. Yeah, we're the ones that go and find out what people need. But it feels like actually, from a salesperson perspective, for example, is one of the most immensely valuable things that they can have in their armoury. Would you say? That's fair?



15:46

That's right. That's right. I think the difference is, is that what happens is is the designers and the the idea people, if you will, they're trying to figure out what to do next. Right. Yeah. But ultimately, salespeople are doing the same thing. They're trying to help a consumer or customer figure out what's next for them. And so they're actually in the same business, whether they know it or not. And so part of this was one of the reasons why I wrote the book was, I realised that when I went to business school, there were no sales professors. I'm like, How in the world can I go to business school, and realise that like, you know, nobody's going to teach me sales. And of all I've done seven startups and multiple businesses, and you start to realise that at some point in time, it's like, like, sales is one of the hardest things ever, and we start to realise that sales is very different than buying, it's kind of like teaching is very different than learning. Yeah. And we start to realise that when you actually look at the sales process, right, a lot of the sales process is actually run by marketing, and by finance, not by sales, right, and sales has been relegated down to an order taker, as opposed to trying to understand the context and the outcome and shape the product or service that people need. And so you start to realise that we actually need marketing sales and customer success to be one as opposed to being separate.



Jason Knight 17:01

Oh, I can imagine there's a few VPS all of those functions gritting their teeth at this moment sitting there saying I want to keep their kingdoms but



17:10

this is the point is that part of this is that if you look at some organisations, there's more energy put between the handoff between sales and marketing and sales and and customer success. And they feel like they're they're the enemy more than the reality is like the enemy is competition. Yeah, we're not making progress at all. And so the more we can actually align around the customer, and realise that I need marketing's help on onboarding and and to be honest, later in the process of any customer success, input actually early in the process to help shape the project or shape the the implementation. The reality is like, we're actually all one team. And so how do we actually get people to align? And yeah, part of this is because I think we've, we've gone to make things too efficient, but not effective. Yeah, right. And we have the wrong metrics. And we end up having, you know, lead metrics versus sales metrics versus customer success metrics, as opposed to trying to figure out how to align all three of them to be helping the customer make progress.



Jason Knight 18:05

But how did that land with salespeople I mean, the book but also the theory, because of course, it's aimed at salespeople. So



18:11

in the beginning, to be honest, I was a little afraid, because I figured that people like challenger sales of different people in the sales industry, that sales training business would be like, This is ridiculous. It turns out that this is actually everything they've been missing. So I'm aligned with virtually every sales organisation or sales kind of training firm as the this is what the customer side looks like, which we never really talked about. And so it's been it's been fairly open to that. And to be honest, the Kellogg School, Craig Workman, who is the head of the Kellogg sales institute, has made this book the foundation of the entire programme at Kellogg's around basically sales and teaching sales. So it's, I was pleasantly surprised if you will, I wrote that one as a prototype for kind of like, does the process work? Can I get my thoughts out? How well accepted is it? And to be honest, it's it's been fairly, I would say I consider it successful.



Jason Knight 19:02

Oh, well, there you go. So people listening, if you've ever been sold anything, you could thank Bob.



19:07

Yeah, well, I think you sell yourself. And part of it is to realise once you learn jobs theory, you start to realise there's places where you're stuck. And you're stuck because of usually friction. And so can you find ways to get yourself unstuck? So one of the biggest comments I get from demand side sales is they said, not only did I learn sales, but it made me a better consumer.

Yep. Because now I know why I'm trying to buy something or why I shouldn't buy something because I'm not going to use it. And so it helps people take a step back and see the bigger picture as they look at the progress they're trying to make to do something.



Jason Knight 19:40

So that sounds like there's almost a general life usage of jobs to be done as well like something that you could use not just in sales or product, but just to help you with your entire life. Do you think there's a grand claim or something behind that



19:54

summit? Somebody asked me at one point like what's your like, what's your bucket list? What's the thing that you really would like to have? And I said Ultimately I say, I said, I would love for people just to become better consumers. If we're better consumers, it actually makes it easier for us to build products. It makes it easier. We waste let there's a whole bunch of things around it. I think a lot of times people are buying things because they don't actually know why. And so if we can actually get to the why first, it actually makes it way easier to figure out what we can do and what we can't do and what the trade offs are.



Jason Knight 20:22

Now, maybe you should have given the book to Elon Musk before we bought Twitter.



20:27

Very funny. I think Musk is a he's got a he's he has a huge opportunity to be honest in front of him. Because I think the reality is, if you look at most social media, it's gotten very, very muddy, right? It's like it's it's not it used to be like in the early days, it was it was it was very interesting, and basically being able to connect, but it's gotten so much other things into it. Is that how do we actually start to understand kind of what to really use it for and what progress you make by doing it. And I think it's evolved, almost like naturally, and I think the algorithms have to be adjusted to help people make progress, as opposed to just entertain.



Jason Knight 21:03

Yep. Well, we will keep an eye on what happens. For sure. But you've got a new book out now learning to build which came out in September, yes. promises to help you not you personally because you wrote it, but you the royal you develop the five fundamental skills. Yeah. Every successful innovative practices to do their best. Yeah. So what problem? Is the book specifically trying to solve? Or do I put it another way? What job? Is that book trying to do?



21:29

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Yeah. So in the book, I actually have the four jobs of why people hire the book in the back end, right. One of them is, is basically those people who just want to learn one or two new things. They're almost like I read a book to basically, you know, make me feel like I'm sharpening the saw, right? Yeah. And so and this one is really about helping them kind of see one of the one of the different skills that they want to double down on and the way to double down on it. Right. And the other one is, I've got a team that basically, we've been doing all the right things, but it doesn't feel like we've actually, you know, we've got all the right steps, but it doesn't feel like it's all coming together. And so this is, these five skills are more than just science, right? They're a little bit of the art part of, of innovation as well, and entrepreneurship. And it's really about kind of being able to understand things from different people's perspectives and being able to see cause and effect etc. And so it's really about helping my team kind of move faster, right. And then the last one is really about this notion of being able to get a universal language to talk about tools and how we use tools and what to use tools for. Yeah, and so in skills, if you will. And so that's really kind of, for those people who are want to be a startup or basically are in startup and they're they're kind of they're feeling a little friction, or they're feeling like they're stuck a little bit. Or basically, if you're been doing innovation, and you want to learn something new, you know, relearn something, I'm sure this isn't really new to you if you've been studying innovation, but it's a different slant, right? The primary reason why I wrote it is my youngest just graduated from college and has moved to San Francisco and working in a data analytics firm. And yep, so I have, I went to go start to clean up the attic. And in the attic, I found 847 volumes of notebooks going back to when I was almost 15 or 16 years old of all the ones that I worked on. And so it was gone through work at NASA and Ford and Kraft and Borden and all these different companies. And as I turned through it, like I was I was talking to my wife about getting a dumpster and she's like, don't get a dumpster, she was like look through the books and see what you can get out of it. And so out of it, I basically realised that these four mentors here that you can see here, these are my four mentors, they basically poured you no into an illiterate and dyslexic, young, 18 year old all of their knowledge. And to be honest, I practice as hard as I could. And for them, they've changed my life to be able to pour that knowledge into me. And I feel this obligation to kind of pass it forward. And so I feel like you know, between Dr. Deming and Dr. Taguchi and Willie and clay, I think all of them taught me so much. And what's interesting is you reflect on the relationship and you realise that like Dr. Deming would never have, you know, I'm pretty sure he wouldn't even know my name, but clay, who I was very close to where we were friends. And so you start to realise mentors can take on different roles and different positions. Sometimes you meet them, sometimes you don't. But the reality is, they're my mentors. And they helped me basically learn these skills. And so I felt like it's I had an obligation to kind of wrap them together and kind of say, like, here's what they taught me. And oh, by the way, I've worked with 1000s of people in the top innovators that I've worked with are also good at these skills as well.



Jason Knight 24:35

Oh, absolutely. And again, can only echo the sentiment of wanting to thank and no give credit and carry on the mission of all of the people that have helped all of us because I think is a very important thing to do. Definitely a personal value as well. Yep. But let's talk about then some of those skills as you as you call them. So there are five in the book. Yeah. And obviously we're not going to go for Everything in excruciating detail because we want people to buy the book. But let's talk about some themes. So, yeah, one of the first things you talk about in the book are first skill is having an empathetic perspective. So I mean, this sounds obvious, but some people are very convinced that they just know all the answers and just march forth to the beat of their own drum. Yeah, these people wrong.



25:20

Yeah, well, what's interesting is in the book, I contrast it with what I call young Bob versus enlightened Bob. Young Bob was very, very aggressive, very ambitious was like, felt like I knew all that, like, again, I think in engineering school, they kind of brainwashed you to say you're the smartest, and you're the greatest. And you need to convince everybody else in that too. And, and what I realised very early on is that I was actually probably one of the stupidest people, not one of the smartest people. And so part of this is empathetic perspective is really good innovators and entrepreneurs can see things from other people's perspective, and see it empathetically meaning detached from their agreement or disagreement of what that person is thinking, they can tell you how they're thinking and what they're thinking. So they can actually see problems or conflicts that are coming up. The other thing is, they can see things, they tend to go from a very macro perspective to a micro perspective very quickly. Or they can see something in the past, and then they jump to the future. There's this notion of that they can almost surround something. And they can see things that other people can't, because most people are trying to convince everybody else of their perspective. But ultimately, they're playing the role of here's what the investor is going to say. And here's what, here's what, here's what his co founder is gonna think. And here's what the bank is going to say. And here's what a customer is going to think about this. And they can actually hold all that in their head. And so one of the reasons why I talked about this as being both art and science is the only place you really learn about empathetic perspective is in the theatre. And in art class. Yeah, but not at not an engineering school. And so you start to realise that part of this is we need to bring in some of these other other skills to actually make us better entrepreneurs, the sciences have really good foundation, again, there's way more unknown than there is known and so and Dr. Taguchi would always say had never forget it. Right. So part of this is the humbleness of not knowing but the also the humblest of studying other people and knowing their perspective actually makes you a better entrepreneur.



Jason Knight 27:13

Now, absolutely. I think also, with regards to theatre as well, there's this strong argument that the better storytellers are the ones that can actually make the best difference and get out there and make the biggest splash in the market. So again, another soft skill that some people might scorn. But I think we should all encourage everyone to tell their stories a little bit. But



27:32

interesting is I don't know why they call it soft skill. Like I like I guess, we think science is a hard skill. And we think the others is a soft skill. And I think they're, they're both skills equally important. And I'm not sure whether hard or soft is good or bad. But yeah, one is a little bit more about learning the nuances, but it's kind of like, I can teach you how to ride the bike, but you really don't learn to ride the bike till you get on the bike. So it's more about applied applied science or versus basically theoretical science to me.



Jason Knight 28:00

Yeah, well, it's the old quote, that the soft skills that are hardest of all, but yeah, of course, of course, then the second one is all around uncovering demand. So yeah, that, you know, today is the day that people want your stuff and that people thrive, the demand is there. Now, the interesting



28:17

part about this one is the fact is that most people feel like, again, build it, and they will come. And this is actually most entrepreneurs realise, like, no, I need to understand what they're struggling with and how to solve it, and how to do it in a way that basically the struggling moment creates demand, the product doesn't create demand. And so part of this is that we happen to like this is where economics talks about supply and demand are connected. But it's really that demand is connected to supply, and ultimately drives everything and demand is caused by struggling moments in people's lives that they want to do better. If you struggling, you don't care, then you're really not struggling. It's just an annoyance, right? But struggle includes that you care and you want to do something about it.



Jason Knight 28:55

Yeah, but a lot of people are just gonna be they're sitting there crushing a cup in her hand now saying that they can make people care because their technology is so amazing. And their solution is so wonderful. And so customer focused, and it's it's the leading edge of this and it's like, are those people ever going to be able to make a big difference? You think like, just for the iron force of them? Well,



29:14

so here's the thing is like somebody asked me like, what's, what's the greatest invention of all time? And I said, Well, I have two. I said, one is the internal combustion engine and the other is antibiotics. Yeah, like if you look at those two inventions, like I don't think the person who invented the gasoline engine or the or the internal combustion engine realised like how much it would help the world grow from less than a billion people to 8 billion people and how much antibiotics has actually helped basically cause basically people to live longer. Yeah, like that's how we've been able to make these big gaps or make these big things. So I don't think you can see a lot of innovation at the beginning like the transistor radio, it wasn't that big of a deal. But in the end, the transistor radio cause basically more radio stations, it caused rock and roll, it actually got us all the way to Spotify, and to Apple Music and all these different things in between. But the transistor radio was actually the explosion of music because it was at the low end. And so part of it is to realise that a lot of things end up coming because of these domino effects and understanding every innovation solves one struggling moment, but it always causes a new one that then has us innovate again,



Jason Knight 30:27

the chain continues. Yes, but after that we get deep and meaningful with causal structures like this one, because there's a lot of systems thinking in there. Yeah. So that might start to sound a little bit esoteric to these fact paced results. Now startup founders out there. So why should

little bit esoteric to these fast paced results. Now startup founders out there. So why should they spend some time evaluating the system and understanding this stuff more deeply?



30:47

So causal structures, and it used to be systems thinking, but I took it back to causal structure, because some people didn't have like a formal understanding of systems, right. But they actually all have a curiosity of how things work. In wanting to know how things work in a predictable way, and being able to break things down, and how they work in a predictable way. And what you realise is, that's a very important thing. And I think that's the difference between the people who make it who make things that that really go big, and things that kind of are one hit wonders where they go big, and they crash. Yeah. Because the causal structure is the underlying notion of what causes somebody to buy. But what do we do that helps cause the progress? And it's the causation that's actually really most important and taking the time to understand that?



Jason Knight 31:28

No, absolutely. I think also, for me, I mean, systems thinking is a bit of a mind bender, sometimes, but I think it's absolutely important to understand how all of this stuff fits together. Because, you know, you can't just change one bit without changing the restaurant.



31:41

Yeah, I just, I just took a class with Joe Norman, on complexity sciences, just to kind of review some of the basics behind it. And I love it, because it's all math based. But in the end, it's this notion of like, there, again, there's way more unknown than there is known. And that we need different ways in which to articulate kind of the anomalies, I always say, anomalies of the past, have the DNA of the future in them. And so we should be studying anomalies more and more. And really, that's where I think understanding cause and effect is so important. And the relationship between things is what's really what I'm talking about when we talk about causal structures.



Jason Knight 32:17

Absolutely. But then we move on to prototyping, which starts to get more into lean startup territory, MVP, and all that good stuff. Yep. But one of the problem is you call out a prototyping is that people try to use it to prove rather than disprove a hypothesis. So they've already got an idea. Yeah, they just want to go in and tick the box and move on. But yeah, why shouldn't they do that?



32:35

So the way I was taught, it was about building a house of cards. Right? So what's interesting is that this is, this isn't one of my notebooks from 1990. Right? 1990. Right. And if I go in here, one of the major differences, it says basically, that the West, we try to prove hypotheses that

have something we already know. And in Japan, they say we test because we don't know. And so a lot of the prototyping to learn is to basically again, being dyslexic. One of my advantages is I knew I didn't know. Yeah. And so how was I going to learn? Well, I had to go build something and test it. And so most people test things that they already know, to be better, as opposed to me as I use orthogonal arrays, and, you know, design of experiments to actually let the system tell me what's best, let me that let's let the software tell me what's best. Let me let the engine tell me what's best. As opposed to me hypothesising, and that all new theories come up from anomalies of the past. And so again, I want to cause it to fail, as opposed to wait for it to fail.



Jason Knight 33:33

You know, if it works, after you've tried to make it fail, that it might have something to do than just trying to prime everything to just do everything you say, right?



33:42

That's right. But know where the limits are. I think the other thing is, is that a lot of times we don't actually understand the unintended consequences. Yeah. And so we don't test enough to know what could go wrong. Yeah, by almost only building it in an ideal condition. But when we get, you know, 10 million users on it, what's going to happen? Well, how do we simulate that? How do we see what it looks like? What's the loading look like? And so learning how to actually think this way is really, really important to realise, to frame the unknown. Like, I think of innovation, and entrepreneurship is way more about answering the unknowns than it is about answering what we know. And, you know, really, I'll say simple entrepreneurs, they literally say, Oh, we got to do this. And we get this. And we get that. And you could just see that they're going to run into five different problems. And they're not going to know what to do. But the entrepreneurs who actually know how to frame the unknowns are the ones who will learn how to pivot and learn and build a great product.



Jason Knight 34:31

So it's all my listeners be one of those kinds of entrepreneurs. Have was Bob will come and get you.



34:36

Yeah, I get I get a lot of people who come to oh, I have this idea. And I always say ideas are the cheapest of all of us in entrepreneurship ideas are the cheapest of all of it because they're actually free and easy, right? Yeah. And I always say good ideas will always come back. And so part of this though, is the hard part is actually how do we develop it and scale it and make it work in the real world as opposed to in ideal world and That's That, to me is all about prototyping to learn?



Jason Knight 35:03



Jason Knight 35:05

No, absolutely. But finally, we talk about trade offs. And this is where the product managers list in their ears are going to pick up because as product, people love prioritising stuff, but it's also something that company leaders can struggle with. They want it all they want it now. Yep. So what are some of the ways that you've managed to persuade these, let's call them through Ruka sought types that they can't have it all if they really want to succeed? So



35:23

the reality is, is is that anytime somebody has tried to do at all, they've actually never done it. Right? We I mean, you can come back with example, after example, after example. And the really good companies actually know what not to do. Yep. And so trade offs is more about in some cases, just saying, we're not going to do this, or this is not what we're worried about. And being able to understand, like, it's easy for people to say what they want to do. But it's actually really hard for people to say what they don't want to do. Yeah. And so my example here is in the, in the US, we have an airline called Southwest Airlines, it's the number one airlines in the US in terms of profitability and, and how it's used. But look, they don't care about snacks, nobody's not going to fly southwest because of the snacks, they fly, because it's on time, it's the lowest fare. Yeah. And it's literally goes to places they want to go. And so you start to realise, like, they're not worried about snacks, and they allow you to bring on any snacks you want. So the fact that at some point in time, like, we're not going to spend any time worrying about snacks. And so this is the kind of thing of identifying the things you choose to suck at? Or what are the things that you're willing to be okay, at, but what are the five or six things that you got to be really good at in order to help people make progress?



Jason Knight 36:31

Yeah, well, you get people trying to do it all. And then they basically kind of suck everything, which is the sad, sad story of entrepreneurs around the world,



36:39

because they can't make the trade off. So this is actually one of the, I think one of the key skills and when I look at kind of the some of the top entrepreneurs I've ever worked with is, they're very decisive about what not to do. Yeah, very decisive. And to be honest, they can see, like, okay, we're not going to do that this time. But over time, we'll add this. So it's like, you know, when they did the iPhone, right, it didn't actually have any messaging in it. It had the internet, it had the phone, it had music, it had a PDA, but it didn't actually have messaging. And so they added it later, knowing we could add it later. But the fact that they didn't wait for it to be there, and they still killed it, because they had the five, you know, the five or six things that really made it one, you know, impressive is what people bought it for. And then once they had it, there was no struggling moments. And so they add messaging, they had a larger screen, they add more battery life, they add a camera, etc. Or make the camera but



Jason Knight 37:27

yeah, I like to go back to that original unveiling video where Steve Jobs went out there and did

his old dog and pony show showing it to the world. And it really is testament to that whole idea of storytelling again, like, obviously didn't say any of that stuff. But at the same time, they created such a compelling story around it as well. Exactly. It was just it was it was inevitable,



37:45

but how your life can be better. That's the I think that's the important part about the storytelling is that I think of jobs to be done as the story extractor. Yeah, I do. I extract the story of transformation, when you bought went from Product A to product B. And if I can extract that story in a way and make it compelling, then I can actually understand the requirements, I can understand what to build, I can actually understand what not to build now. Absolutely.



Jason Knight 38:07

Right. So we've read the book, we've drunk the Bob master Kool Aid. What's next? I mean, I'm assuming there's no guaranteed success. But how can people best take this framework on and use this stuff to start their own journey?



38:19

Yeah, so one of the things I talked about in the book is, I think everybody has these skills. Yeah, whether you're planning your go to the grocery store for the week, or you're gonna plan a vacation, you've got to use all five of these skills, right, and we're all good at some portion of them good or bad, but real entrepreneurs tend to be better, almost 10x better at all of them. And they don't necessarily, they're not gonna say better at all, all of them collectively, but their team is actually represented in all five of them. And so a lot of times, you find that this is about actually doubling down on your skill set, and figure out which one do you need to get better at? Or which one are you good at that you want to take to the next level. And ultimately, I use the five skills as a way to kind of look at my business partners and say, Alright, I'm good at this, and this and this, how's my business partner gonna bring this, these skills to bear to help us build a successful organisation?



Jason Knight 39:08

Oh, absolutely. And again, I think it's really interesting then to sort of map that out and just sit there and try and boost up the bits that you're not so good at. And, obviously, then try to learn from those people, although, of course, some entrepreneurs, they just again, they just know what they know. Right? And they don't learn from anyone. But yeah, for the rest of them, try and do that.



39:27

The interesting part to me is that I think when I talk to entrepreneurs who know nothing about jobs, and I talk about to them really good entrepreneurs ago, like they have some notion of they they're almost say, like, you put words to something that I've been thinking for a while.

Yeah, so like, I don't think of jobs as something new. I just think it's about making explicit with really good designers and entrepreneurs have been doing a long time and to be honest, good salespeople have been doing really good salespeople know how to actually understand the progress that people are trying to make and realise. It's about trade offs. It's about actually understanding kind of the timing of it. It's about understanding that causation. It's all those things. So it's an extension of demand side sales in the sense that I wrote it for innovate, because most innovators aren't picking up demand side sales, right? At the same time, if you want to know how to think about jobs, it's really the foundational pieces of how I how we got two jobs to be done.



Jason Knight 40:16

Absolutely. Well, hopefully some people can take some inspiration from all of that. Yeah. But where can people find you after this, if they want to find out more about the book all of your new books, or get some inspiration about demand side sales or jobs to be done



40:28

best places, you can get the books, I have both audible, paperback, audibles coming and Kindle, all on Amazon. So all the books that I have are on Amazon. And then I have a podcast called circuit breaker, where it's me and my business partner, literally talking about each one of the skills or different aspects of each chapter, the book around kind of real world examples and things that we do. It's almost like you're a fly on the wall and our conference room or design centre, right? And then if you go to the rewired, group.com, that's basically where where you find my, the business side of it. And then for the most part, I think LinkedIn is the best place Twitter I'm also on Twitter at V mesta. B. mov SDA? Sorry, that was too long.



Jason Knight 41:13

No, that's good. I think it's important to have a number of different ways. I'm sure you'll be on Mastodon soon. When you work that out as well. And we can all start the slow, long migration away from Twitter. Yeah, well, I'll make sure to link all of those into the show notes. And hopefully, you'll get lots of new fans heading in your direction, and maybe picking up a copy of the book.



41:32

I appreciate it.



Jason Knight 41:33

No worries. Well, that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously really glad you could spend some time to talk about some deep and meaningful topics obviously wish you well with book. Hopefully we stay in touch. But yeah, as for now. Thanks for taking the time.



41:44

Thank you. Thanks for having me.



Jason Knight 41:47

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to [white knight in product.com](https://whiteknightinproduct.com). Check out some of my other fantastic guests, sign up to the mailing list or subscribe on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good nights