The Social Entrepreneur: Building Business for Good

Auto-transcribed by https://aliceapp.ai on Friday, 20 Sep 2024.
Synced media and text playback available on this page:
https://aliceapp.ai/recordings/5_TF7t2v30glROox4yYcJA1dXasLVzWj.

Words	6,605
Duration	00:45:30
Recorded on	Unknown date
Uploaded on	2024-09-20 01:16:44 UTC
At	Unknown location
Using	Uploaded to aliceapp.ai

Speakers:

Speaker A - 16.44%

Speaker B - 61.2%

Speaker C - 22.36%

Notes:

- Edward Norton and Robert Wolf, co founders of the company Zec, will speak at Salesforce. The topic is social entrepreneurship. It's all about how we build businesses with deeper purpose.

- The nonprofit sector in America is really unique in the world. Most organizations spend $0.40 on every dollar that they raise. What online social fundraising was doing, especially when we moved it over. We created the most efficient flow of money from people to charities that has ever existed.

- There are two and a half million in the United States alone. Crowdrise is now doing 5 billion and. GoFundme. Now. I think there is a kind of capitalism that can be moral capitalism and sustainable. And that's thrilling.

- Zec is a board governance software platform. The company is also a Salesforce ventures portfolio company. Founder says it aims to improve the quality of board meetings. He says many organizations suffer from toxic board dynamics.

- Zachary: What the AI and Zec does is it takes your data inputs, which you're just syncing to your sources of truth. And the AI builds you really executive ready content. What we hate most is building charts and graphs. The next version of the AI will automatically build those.

- Thank you both so much for joining us today. I'm so glad you could be here to talk about your journeys as social entrepreneurs building two generational companies. Thanks for having us.

Speaker A

Well, hello. Welcome, and thank you all for joining this special Dreamforce session. I am so thrilled to be here in conversation today with Edward Norton and Robert Wolf, co founders of the company Zec. We'll be talking about a topic that is near and dear to my heart and to Salesforce, and that is social entrepreneurship. Um, it's all about how we build businesses with deeper purpose, and we'll definitely get into more definitions in just a moment. But for now, I thought we would take a step back and probably address what's on many people's minds in the audience. So I'm looking at you, Edward. Everyone here knows you as an award winning actor, but I would suspect that few people know you for your roles as an investor and an entrepreneur and a board member. And I was doing some research on you and listened to a recent interview you did, and you talked about the art of storytelling and how that craft actually really ties together the worlds of acting and entrepreneurship. So I'd love to hear your take on that and how you have come to wear these different hats over the years.

Speaker B
00:01:22

Sure. Um, I think you said it. You touched on it. I don't think it's accurate to bifurcate the idea of creative work and entrepreneurial work in kind of some narrow definition of that. Like that the arts, writ large are the only way that people are creative. Creativity takes a lot of different forms, and, um, absolutely is intrinsic in the idea of problem solving on a social level, on a business level. Um, everybody involved in building businesses is in some sense, being fundamentally creative, and especially at the inception stage. Um, but I think it's also true, and especially in american life, that building any kind of a business is fundamentally about telling a story. You've got to. I mean, some people maybe are lucky and have a business selling widgets that we never really understand what they are or what they do, and they're just inside everything. But most businesses need to be able to tell a story, to connect, um, to create a connection between themselves and the people to whom they're bringing a product or a service that's ostensibly going to make life better or easier or make their work easier. And, uh, I don't think any good entrepreneurs are not good

storytellers.

Speaker A   00:03:09

So, bringing you into the story, Robert, I'd love for you to walk us through how you two met and how you two ultimately became business partners.

Speaker C   00:03:18

So we met running the New York marathon. Uh, so we did a charity limping.

Speaker B   00:03:24

The New York marathon.

Speaker C   00:03:25

Well, so my primary goal was to beat Edward in the race, which I didn't do. But I did train to the point that not only did I get shin splints, this is entirely reflective of my personality. Not only did I get shin splints in both of my legs, when the doctor told me to ice it, I ice my legs to the point that I got frostbite on both of my legs, which, again, is. I, um, think that that's just indicative of me. Uh, but. So we did a charity campaign for the New York marathon, but we tried to do it very differently, and we wanted to make giving back fun. So if you think about what charity looked like in 2010, it was actually tactless to tell people how you give back. And we wanted to make it fun and interesting and ultimately social. And Edward would never admit this, but he was really the first celebrity to go out on social and try and incentivize people to participate, which was a very different take on it. And for that campaign, which we called the Maasai Marathon, so Edward ran the campaign with five maasai warriors. Our goal was to raise $75,000, and we ended up raising, what I think.

Speaker B   00:04:38

It was a million and a half.

Speaker C   00:04:40

Yeah. So it was just. This is an incredibly notable charitable campaign. And we decided that was great. That was the best part. I feel like we should go. Um, we decided to take this and turn it to something more notable. And that became crowdrise, our, uh, first company we worked on together. And so at Crowdrise, we wanted to make giving back fun. And the idea was, if people actually like giving back, they would do it more often and tell their friends about it. And Crowdrise ultimately became the biggest platform to raise money for charity in the US and was acquired by GoFundme.

And I think, um, there's something worth noting in kind of that story Robert was telling. I think we didn't actually set out to build a company together that it was not the. It wasn't even the first, 2nd or third conversation we were having at that time. We were. Robert and his brother was our other partner, had, um, built a family, um, outdoor gear sales company into a great online platform called Moose Jaw. And they were. And had this incredible reputation, uh, at being innovative in creating a, uh, deep customer relationship, like a real customers of moose Jaw. Loved being in the moose jaw community, dreamforce, and it was fun, and that's what they were doing. When we met, we weren't talking about businesses or anything, so we just.

Speaker C   00:06:20

When I was.

Speaker B   00:06:21

But I knew these wouldn't let me take a. How to engage people when I was, um, charitable agenda wouldn't let me take a business class my junior year. Involved in the genesis of the conversation was, how do we. It really flowed. What I'm getting back to is what I said before. Sometimes the best things come out of your own personal experience of something that's not working or that's frustrating you. And instead of just being frustrated, having the impulse to say, could we actually solve? Could we work on this problem? Could we do anything? And you sort of have to say, why would I do that? Well, in this particular case, what we felt was we were looking at the then software platforms that one could use for raising money online, and they were beyond garbage. Absolutely rudimentary. You know, early nineties vintage pages. Um, they had no interactivity with social media. They didn't have anything. And so what became crowdrise was actually just the bespoke thing that we built. We built our own team fundraising site for that New York marathon, tied it in to what became the. The functionality of crowdrise. And so we basically did a, uh, we did it just for ourselves to try to solve a problem, which was our dissatisfaction with the tools that were available. And it went so well, and so many people came at us and said, our God, our organization, we wish we had a page like that. And that's what led us to say, well, what if we built this as sort of. What if we built this as something anyone could use? And, um, it kind of embarked us on a journey that was much, much longer and more involved than I think we had anticipated even going down. But it was very rewarding in the sense that, um, we built a real business. It worked. Um, but we felt we were part of a kind of an emergent moment where Kickstarter on the project creativity side, uh, us on the side of raising money for nonprofit organizations, and GoFundme in the like, peer to peer I'm helping my friend in need, was addressing something that was needed, which was a more efficient way for people to mobilize together to do good things. And, um, and I think that today, crowdrise is part of GoFundMe. GoFundMe today is transacting close to $5 billion of charitable transaction a year, more than the Gates foundation moves per year, still in average increments of under

$100, which is an incredible testament, I think, to the durability of this shift toward the idea that making it easier for people to assemble en masse to do good things has been a really positive, long term, durable evolution in charity. And the whole idea of charity. Um, and I think it shows too, that you can build businesses that can do well while doing good, you can have. You can have authentic, kind of double bottom line businesses. And something I admire about Mark, he was Mark Benjoff. I've known Mark a long time, and he was one of the first people that I heard talk about the idea of not just shareholder capitalism, but stakeholder capitalism, and that companies need to redefine what they are around, not just how are we doing for shareholders, but how are we doing for our community, our environment, and our employees, story places and jobs. I think that's great. I think that there's always more of a sense of purpose within how many people, um, very possible to service. And I think that. I think when you root your feet as an entrepreneur in that idea of what are we actually doing that's good for anybody other than ourselves, it tends to match the hard work here. More enjoyable at the time we were talking.

Speaker A   **00:11:10**

As it turns out, also in those.

Speaker C   **00:11:13**

Days when this industry is completely open.

Speaker B   **00:11:15**

Thank you so much for not taking my money. I just wanted appreciate that.

Speaker A   **00:11:19**

An exciting way to engage people grateful to you, and, you know, basically just augment, um, philanthropy and other ways of giving back that, you know, was totally new.

Speaker C   **00:11:32**

Um, and you put into dilla. Phil M. We work with Kiva a little bit, but I also. I think, Edward, what you were saying made me think of this. Uh, it shows you we were also a little bit crazy, and I think that was a category. Now there's no one to. And it shows you people find creative ways to give back. So I remember the very first email we sent to our list. This was totally inappropriate. You probably couldn't do this today. Just guess what works. Um, we're now accepting donations in the nude. And there was a silhouette of a man and a woman, and there was a lot of vitriol when we first did that. But then a couple years later, there was the ice bucket challenge. And so I think people found more interesting ways to make. Cause not just something that was in addition to their life, but something that, um, was a part of their life. And I think Kiva was also significantly representative of that.

And I think in these days, this is when we first started hearing the term social entrepreneur. So I'm curious if you two thought of yourselves as social entrepreneurs, then if you had a sense of that term in the cultural zeitgeist. Um, and today, how do you think about it, too? How do you define it?

Speaker B   **00:12:49**

I mean, I think. I don't know if we were using that phrase, per se, but we. But the idea was fundamentally, in some sense, about trying to upgrade an important, you know, the nonprofit sector in America is really unique in the world. Like, if you travel the world and you actually kind of poke into this, nowhere in the world has developed a non governmental, nonprofit sector that's anything close to, on the order of what that is in the United states. Two and a half million nonprofit, registered nonprofit organizations in the United States now, and growing fast. And if you think about what that means, that's almost getting back to, like, Alexis de Tocqueville's democracy in America. You know, observation that people self organizing to solve problems as opposed to make as much money as they can is a really. It's very inspiring that, that many people in our society have dedicated themselves to that idea of purpose driven organizations and to problem solving, uh, without the back end motivation of profit. And I think, um, and I think building, working anywhere adjacent to that to try to actually bring a, uh, service or to support that is gratifying, you know, and we enjoyed it. We enjoyed working with it, because not, you know, you think about nonprofit organizations. The horrible under the hood truth is that most organizations spend $0.40 on every dollar that they raise. To raise the money. You know, you go to some dinner, and they say, we raised a million dollars tonight. They spent 400,000 on the catering. And the, uh. It's incredibly inefficient. And what online social fundraising was doing, especially when we moved it over and we were a part of this, when we moved it into a truly free model in which there was no deduction, no platform fee taken from the donation flow. Um, we created the most efficient flow of money from people to charities that has ever existed in the history of the world. Like on GoFundMe, today, a dollar donated moves to the organization with no deduction from it other than about 2.5% for the payments providers. And that is extraordinary. I mean, that's saving organizations incremental, an incremental 20% to 40% on every dollar that's donated to them. And so, you know, so that's the kind of stuff that you can get up in the morning and feel good about, I think.

Speaker A   **00:15:57**

And I think what you're also hitting on is something that might be a common misperception still in the market, that you can't build a big business selling to this end market, selling to nonprofits. But when you just named, there are two and a half million in the United States alone. It's a big business. And then you said, you know, crowdrise is now doing 5 billion and.

GoFundme.

Speaker A   00:16:20

Yeah, sorry. GoFundme. Now. Yeah. Which require crowdrise.

Speaker B   00:16:23

GoFundme. I want to be clear. Go fund me is not making $5 billion. Go fund transaction. 5 billion of charitable donation.

Speaker A   00:16:30

Yeah. That's massive. Yeah, that's a massive market. Um, and I think sometimes the term social enterprise can have connotations of it's. It's only for the mission, and it. And it's divorced from the other flip side of building a big business. And what you two have clearly shown here is that the two can go hand in hand.

Speaker B   00:16:51

Yeah, for sure. And I think, um, we're in an incredible era right now, moving outside Internet technology of transformative innovation in renewable energy, in energy storage, in clean tech, uh, emission capture and control and carbon capture and creative reuse and electric aviation. There's so much stuff going on that for all the things that are very dire about our country, our political divisiveness, our global environmental crisis, there's a lot I'm buoyed by how many people I see working on important, hard problems that are actually going to, you know, really significantly remediate, uh, the challenge, you know, meet the challenges that we have in changing the way we consume things and the way we produce energy. And people are going to build historically big businesses, you know, that they're going to build. They're going to build global businesses doing things that are legitimately great for people and for the environment and all of it. And that's. It's thrilling. I think there is a kind of capitalism that can be moral capitalism that can be, um, sustainable, you know, environmentally sustainable capitalism. But, you know, uh, and I think all that stuff is the rebuttal to the version of capitalism that's entirely about financial maximilization, um, and treating people as the feedstock of that. Uh, so I think we've got to focus on that model and lean into it.

Speaker A   00:18:55

Totally agree. So you two started crowdrise together, and now you've come back together to start a new company, Zec, which is also a Salesforce ventures portfolio company. We're very excited to be partnering with you. We'd love to hear you talk about what Zec is and how you came to the problem that it's solving and maybe how it connects back to your years building what you did.

Well, it definitely, it. You know, I have, again, going back to. I've had many, uh, many probably with this one more than anything else I've ever done. I've had family and friends say, you have a very compelling day job. That you don't even have to do day in and day out. Why would you get involved in a board governance software platform, you know? But again, it really genuinely flowed out of decades of personal experience, um, of the pain and suffering of board dynamics sitting on boards where the dynamics was terrible. And when we maybe.

Speaker A   00:20:04

Can I interrupt you for the audience who may not be in board meetings? I know what you're talking about, but we'd love for you just to share some examples.

Speaker B   00:20:12

Well, I'll get, uh. So we were with friends on vacation, and Robert had to go away from, like, a love, a lovely sunny afternoon with fine tequila and, uh, friends and family and children around. And Robert left that happy scene to go attend a board meeting of a company. He was on the board, and he came back and said something to the effect of, I think that was the single worst experience I've ever had with any company I've ever been involved with. And I'm pretty sure that as soon as we all hung up, the CEO of the company went and started beating himself in the face.

Speaker A   00:20:58

He, um, won't share the name of the company.

Speaker B   00:21:02

And it was sort of like producing church giggles. Like, we were laughing inappropriately at his narrative of how awful it had been. And, um, it did get us talking about this. It got us talking about. And we were with other people who were software investing veterans and people who, you know, knew of this. And it led to kind of, first we were laughing, then we were talking a little more seriously, and then we got to saying, well, if it's this bad, and if it's so pervasively this bad, it means that across all organizations, companies, and nonprofits alike, you've got lots and lots of people who. The quality of their working life is being degraded by this kind of toxic dynamic between m the entrepreneurs and the people who are ostensibly supposed to be there to support the organization, but who, more often than not, turn into hall monitors, you know, people who are protecting their investment, or, in the case of a nonprofit, protecting their donation. And what ends up happening is this inevitable situation where both sides of the table resent each other and where one side feels like they're always showing up for an exam, and the other side feels like their time is being wasted. Um, and we started feeling. We started feeling that this was reformable with software. Well, we started thinking, um, when we started saying to each

other, what is the nature of the problem? The one that everybody really cares about is the qualitative problem. It's sort of, like I say, like, ride hill. Like, if you think about the early days of Ride Hill, Uber and Lyft and everything, it, uh, was an extremely efficient mechanism, instead of standing on a corner and holding your hand in the air, hoping to run into an empty cardinal. But what I think was actually has been a durable improvement for my deal is, on the whole, the qualitative relationship between the passenger and the driver improved radically. And I say that as someone who's lived in new York City for 30 years and nearly had fist fights with taxi drivers, people can say whatever they want, but Uber and Lyft radically improved the quality of human interactions over the taxi cartel system. And I think that, and I think that. I think that we felt that mostly what people really want improved in their organizational experiences are the quality of the conversations, the quality of the relationships. They want to feel supported, uh, the management wants to feel supported by the board. The board wants to feel trusted by the management. Everybody wants to look forward and not backward, and everybody wants their time not taken for granted. But we felt that part of what was making it very difficult for the qualitative to be as good as it could be was the quantitative and board meetings and the way that materials are platformed. The inefficiencies of the way that both sides are able to interact with each other through the materials still are. In most organizations, people are still writing 90 page PDF's and sending them out 48 hours before the meeting. Board members either don't do their homework, but the management doesn't know who's read it and who hasn't, or they do, and then they show up. But because management doesn't know what's happened, they read the 98 page presentation back to people.

Speaker A   **00:25:18**

I've been there.

Speaker B   **00:25:19**

Yeah, it's awful. It's just everything about it is awful. And we realized, like, in an era in which cap table management has moved into the cloud, and legal documentation and workflow has moved into the cloud. It's insane that in 2024, most companies are not operating this critical function, um, of their board and many other dimensions of how they communicate with investors or whatever, on fixed slide presentations with no interactive capability, no penetration or transparency in terms of what people's engagement with it is, no analytics, no AI assistance in writing the fucking thing. So Zec really was us trying to solve, genuinely try to solve a pain point that we were really sick of ourselves, and we knew that it also wasn't. It's a niche experience, but it's not a niche problem in the sense that we think it's something that's pretty omnipresent across corporate and nonprofit life. And so it came from that desire. And I think what we've had, if you were to sum it up, what we've tried to do is take all these kind of obsolete, fixed, non interactive components of how companies tell their own story on a regular basis and make it so that the wasted time is crushed out and the quality of the conversation is improved.

I mean, again, you're preaching to the choir over here. I'm super excited about what you're doing. Um, I'd love to get a little more in depth on the product itself. And Robert, Edward already talked about AI. He mentioned the magic word. Um, obviously it's something that's top of mind for us at Salesforce and all over Dreamforce this week. So no surprise I want to chat about that topic here on stage today, too. We'd love to know how Zec is currently incorporating AI today, the platform, how it's making the experience better for people who are both receiving board ducks, but also creating them, and then where you see AI helping Zec in the future.

Speaker C   00:27:35

Yeah. So I actually think, Zach, it's a really good use case for AI, because even if you think about, I know we've talked a little bit about nonprofits. If you think about the nonprofit space specifically, let's just say there's 2 million nonprofits. They are mandated to have at least four board meetings a year. That's, let's figure out, uh, someone here could probably figure out the math on that. So 2 million nonprofits at four board meetings a year, at 4 hours per board meeting. All of those board meetings are bad, right? So we can figure out a way to make them better. And what the AI does is so few organizations, they don't have the map. The communication between the leadership team and the board is so bad that you end up building on 150 page deck because you're not certain what your board wants to see. What the AI and Zec does is it takes your data inputs, which you're just syncing to your sources of truth. So excel or Google sheets, you're literally clicking a button. And the AI builds you really executive ready content, so highlights, low lights. What's keeping me up at night in a very concise way. So you're going from, let's just say, per section, a 15 minutes read to a two minute read. Now, you can go deeper, but we built a significantly more modern version of an appendix. So if you want to go deeper, you can. But what the AI really does is it turns everyone from an author into an editor. And it makes it so much easier for you to spend 15 minutes sort of editing or finessing the content that the AI generates instead of, quite literally, days coming up with it from scratch. So that's live today. The feedback we got from our customers is, this is amazing. What we hate most is building charts and graphs. So my guess is there are plenty of people in this room who build infographics. It is a monumental waste of time. The next version of the AI will automatically build those charts and graphs. So when you build, when you put your data in, the AI will suggest to you, okay, this would look good as a, as a pie chart, and then you can iterate on it. It's so, it's mind blowing. It's super, super cool. Yeah, go ahead.

Speaker B   00:30:00

No, I would say too, just to note, because it's interactive with another thing that I think the AI ultimately is interactive with another sort of feature in the platform that I, that I really love personally, which is that the management has the capacity to see how much read time anyone who read and opened the Zach spends in each section. Now, there's something that has nothing to do with the I management teams absolutely love this,

because do board members love that they do not notice they're going to have to deal with it, because it creates reciprocal obligation. It means if you think you're going to sit aboard and be dead weight and not do the work and show up and ask the questions that you wouldn't have had to ask if you had read the damn thing, that's over with this. Because a lot of CEO's have reported to us that one single meeting in which the board members realized that the management knew how much time each of them had spent in the thing, it went to 100% engagement across the board the next meeting, because they're called out. And when you apply, uh, that reciprocal obligation is important. We've had capital managers, VC's, people like that say they love it because they are pros and they don't like the occasional independent director who doesn't do the work and then spends an hour asking questions, so on and so forth. But as this evolves, what it allows the AI to do too, is actually get to know the board of your organization and know in a very specific, data driven sense, where are they spending their time, what do you need to lean into more and what do you need to not spend nearly so much time with, et cetera. Um, and I think, you know, to me, when you get around to that sort of philosophical, holistic idea of like, software as service. One of the things I think about a lot is, like, nobody, there's not one single person who graduates college and writes down their aspirational goals for themselves and says, I hope to be a kick ass builder of decks. Like, nobody has the aspiration to be the person who builds presentation materials in a great way. It is a necessary evil that always falls on someone. It gets delegated to someone or some team, and they have to go pencils down on the part of their job that interests them to do that. So to the degree that you are taking that drudgery off of someone, making them an editor versus a writer, as Robert said to me, uh, that's actually like, it goes beyond the quotidian, kind of boring. It's like you're improving somebody's daily work experience, uh, at their job, because they don't have to do this shit work.

Speaker A   00:33:14

And it connects back to the storytelling theme from earlier in our conversation. Right? Like, um, whether you're the CEO of a company or the executive director of a nonprofit, you are constantly telling the story to customers, donors, your board members. And this software is a really powerful way to help them tell that story better in a more compelling way, and also in a more efficient way. Their time is so precious, we know, and any efficiency we can give them on that front is a huge win.

Speaker B   00:33:45

Think about the fact, too, that in 2024, should adult people who ostensibly have a lot to do in their lives, have to spend an hour approving minutes of prior meetings or employee stock option packages or all this stuff, when it could be put as it is in ZEC, into a whole section of pre authorizations that can be handled prior to the meeting. There's no reason that the governance function, other than major debatable decisions, needs to take place during people's valuable time around the table. Together, we have stripped out, we've

stripped out a minimum of, we think we've knocked preparatory time for the management down by, some people are telling us 80%, and we know we've taken out of the average four hour meeting, at least an hour.

Speaker A   00:34:45

That's incredible.

Speaker B   00:34:46

Um, in some cases more, uh, because the other thing is, since there's an iterative capability in the platform, a board member can query back to the management privately or openly to the rest of the board. You ought to be able to get a lot of the iterative clarifications and questions and everything that suck up people's time done before the meeting. The goal is how much can we, how much can we take care of such that the conversation on the day can be forward looking, um, and promote the idea of the positive forward agenda as opposed to, you know, the hall monitor, final exam review. Feeling that so many of these meetings have, um, in which people waste each other's time with all kinds of things that could have been taken care of in the airport terminal while you're waiting on your flight.

Speaker C   00:35:40

Yeah. Zec is not a deck. It's really, it's a collaborative workspace. And if you think about the tools we're using today, whether it's salesforce or, um, going from ink and paper to docusign or Excel spreadsheets to Carta or Asana for task management, all of these platforms, you're engaging instead of getting a one dimensional, flat presentation. And that's been transformative for the companies that are using ZEC for not only their board meetings, but very organically. Companies and nonprofits started using it for investor updates, fundraising pitches. We, for our first fundraising round, we obviously, we despise a slide deck. I mean, the idea that you're sending someone something that they can't read on their phone, it is impossible to read a PDF on your phone, is just crazy. So we built a squarespace site. We were not using our own product for our own fundraising site until we saw other companies start to do that. So it's, again, very organically taken on these other use cases where collaboration is so meaningful. So when you're in your, even your own company's leadership meetings, the idea that you get into the meeting and scroll through a deck that everyone already read, which we quite literally were doing at, ah, our prior companies and at Zach for the last 20 years, until we started racing this more collaborative approach. And it's been game changing for us. The meetings are actually fun. People don't dread them, or at least they don't tell me that they dread them. I suppose it's a better way to say it.

Speaker A   00:37:17

So it's clear to me that you two, from crowdrise to Zec, have been drawn to problems and spaces that had not changed a lot prior to you coming in. Um, in spaces that were, frankly, kind of maybe sad. We talked about this backstage, Robert. Um, the fundraising space, very traditional in nature for the last hundred years, um, obviously, how board meetings have been run, that has not changed much in decades. And so you too seem to like problems that a lot of other people have shied away from solving. Um, or maybe you've just accepted this is the way it is. So this is how it has to be forever. I'm curious, um, as you think about what's ahead. Obviously, you're both building Zack, and there's a lot more to do on that front. But is there anything else on your minds, um, as you think about the future, any other, um, difficult, challenging problems you want to tackle?

Speaker C   00:38:13

I need a booster chair. That was one problem. I thought of if anyone could bring one out. Um, now, I think that this is sort of repetitive, but my kid goes to Michigan and he called me and he went to this, um, seminar where there's all these clubs. And every single time when he left, he got, uh, slide deck that he couldn't read on his phone. And he called me and he said, I can't believe. Not only can I not see this on my phone, but I can't ask questions. I can't interact with it. I have to find a text or an email. And so to me, finding solutions that are driving engagement, particularly through AI, that's what excites me.

Speaker B   00:39:07

As we're sitting here wearing black and gray, matching unintentionally. I'm, um, thinking that we should put something in Zec where management can share with each other what they're intending to wear them eating so that they don't walk out on stage like we just did, unintentionally looking like Devo or something.

Speaker C   00:39:26

Just to be clear, I did leave my belt and my shirt at TSA in Detroit this morning.

Speaker B   00:39:32

It is kind of a good idea, though, that management can wardrobe plan without the board necessarily seeing it.

Speaker C   00:39:39

Uh, we started sending cookies, um, to companies that are having their board meeting just as sort of a Zec present. Because part of our idea here is to make this fun, right? If you actually look forward to your board meetings, they're going to be more productive. And I think one of the cookies said something like, this cookie is to eat a or to whip at an unproductive board member. And there's a. We obviously can't say the names of our customers, but there's a giant public company that uses Zec. And they just texted us

yesterday saying that they chose to whip it at the unproductive board member. So that was success for us.

Speaker B   00:40:15

On the flip side of that, I don't now I'm going to get down in the weeds, but I have, I think the funniest television show ever produced in Canada is called Letterkenny. And there's a spinoff of it about a hockey player named Shorzi. And in Shorzi and all the locker room scenes, they sort of vote on who gets the game stick. And they give a coronet ice cream cone to the player of the game. And I think maybe Zec should encourage that someone gets the coronet on the board. You know, most valuable, most mvp of the board at the meeting gets something, right? Um, I don't know, just an invisible medallion. The problem with Zach is, like, people take their organization. This whole enterprise is offering far fewer opportunities for Robert to be funny than Crowdrise did. But we're trying.

Speaker C   00:41:13

Um, there are very few boredhouse sites where above the fold, we're quoting wedding crashers. So if you go to Zec app, you'll see that.

Speaker B   00:41:23

Yeah. Um, I think, you know, the things that are sort of upsetting to me most right now that I actually don't like, I don't. I'm desperately hoping we get better at, and people figure out more robust versions of problem solving around, or just like, my kids are eleven and eight and they are really, really blissfully device free. But I've never been more attuned. I've never been more attuned to how much my own device addiction is compromising the quality of my presence in the moments that I'm in, not just with them, but in life. And I think that, you know, if you see, like, Jonathan Haidt's recent incredible wave of, you know, his new book on the anxious generation, but the, uh, or the distracted generation.

Speaker A   00:42:26

The anxious generation.

Speaker B   00:42:26

The anxious generation.

Speaker A   00:42:27

Yeah.

Speaker B   00:42:29

I think that we have to acknowledge right now that for all the good that and productivity

and everything that we have shackled ourselves to an addiction complex that is having profound negative social effect. Um, and forget the disaster of antisocial media, the devices themselves are seriously compromising quality of life at, uh, levels that we're just only beginning to barely acknowledge. Like, how you reform, that is a really big question and problem because it's like the snake that can technology actually help unshackle, um, us from that opioid addiction of the device itself? Or is this like a non technological. What's the problem? I don't know, but I think that. I think we need a lot of meditation and serious thought, even within organizations themselves, about how we're going to cultivate better mental health in terms of our relationship to all this stuff. And that's one of the spheres. I'm like, I see it, I see its effect on me, I see its effect on people around me. And I think it's a very enormous puzzle that we're going to have to, adjacent to, and in parallel to our ecological sustainability challenge. I think we really have to figure out how we do not become coppertops in the matrix, um, you know, because of these supercomputers that we're carrying in our hands that are designed to hold our attention into them and not into the faces around us, you know?

Speaker A   00:44:34

Well, yeah, I would love for you two to tackle that one next. No big deal. That one. Um, but I also think that there's a connection to what you're doing with Zach. Right. Is using technology as a tool to ultimately ensure that the human interaction, at the end of the day, is human and as fruitful and productive as possible. Um, and really using it as a bolster as opposed to a crutch. Um, and so you can figure that out, um, for our personal devices, um, once you finish what you're doing with Zec. Thank you both so much for joining us today. This is a really wonderful conversation. I'm so glad you could be here to talk about your journeys as social entrepreneurs building two generational companies. And, uh, we're really glad that we could have you here. Thank you.

Speaker B   00:45:24

Thanks for having us.