One Knight in Product - E126 - Radhika Dutt v3

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Radhika Dutt

Jason Knight 00:00

Hello and welcome to the show. I'm your host Jason Knight and on each episode of this podcast, I'll be having inspiring conversations with passionate product people. This episode is sponsored by Skiplevel, who've posed this interesting question. Do you struggle with communicating with dev teams and understanding technical terminology and concepts? On episode 98 of this podcast I hosted Irene Yu, founder of Skiplevel, an On Demand training programme that helps professionals and teams become more technical in just five weeks, or without learning how to code. You can learn the knowledge and skills you need to better communicate with devs and become more competent in your day to day role with the skip level programme. Go to https://skiplevel.co and use code OKIP75 to get $75 off the programme by the 15th of June 2022. That's https://skiplevel.co, code OKIP75. Check the show notes for more details. On tonight's episode, we complete the podcasts first ever trilogy and speak to my radical product thinking guests for the third time, we get deep into product ethics and the importance of having a compelling vision. We talk about why revenue can never be your product's Northstar metric, what happens if it is and talk about the competing priorities of vision versus survival. We also consider why it's not just about product vision, but the vision you have for yourself as well. For All this and much more, please join us on One Knight in Product.

Radhika Dutt 01:27

So they say the best things come in threes. And we're gonna test that theory tonight as I work on for the third time product consultant, author and radical product thinker Radhika Dutt. Radhika's an accomplished artist who says cityscapes look calm to start with, but if you look deeper, you start to see the apocalypse within. If that's not a perfect analogy for the chaos of product management, I've no idea what it is. We've already spoken about radical product thinking and the Hippocratic Oath. But radicals here tonight to triple down on some of those concepts to make sure we will ask the right questions and apply good first principles when building out that radical product vision. Hi, Radhika, how are you tonight?

Radhika Dutt 01:59

Radhika Dutt 01:59

I'm great, Jason, thank you for having me on again. I'm so excited to be your first guest to be on for the third time

Jason Knight 02:04

For the third time. In fact, you're also the first guest to be on for the second and third time. So I'm pretty sure I'm gonna get some angry letters after this for my other guests that haven't even been on twice yet.

Radhika Dutt 02:14

I'm truly honoured.

Jason Knight 02:16

There you go. They've got a lot to live up to. But also no pressure for you either. Now, before we start, I wanted to check in on how things are going with a book. I mean, that's been out for a while now. So we don't need to linger too long on it. But obviously, it's been around for a bit, it's still kind of circulating around and people are picking it up and presumably getting their own meaning from it and getting their own or giving their own feedback about that. But another thing that I understand is, you started to go international with a book now technically speaking, I guess anyone go on Amazon and buy and pay for international shipping, but you're actually getting into international stores. Now. Is that Is that correct?

Radhika Dutt 02:50

That's right. And I'm thrilled that Penguin Random House is publishing it in India. So it's available to the Indian market. It's also being translated into Japanese and Chinese, which thrills me. So I'm actually gonna give a little bit of a talk in Japanese in June.

Radhika Dutt 03:05

Excellent. Have you had to learn Japanese for the occasion? Or did you already speak Japanese before that?

Radhika Dutt 03:10

No, I already spoke Japanese. But I'm excited for the for actually giving a talk a little bit, at least in Japanese.

Radhika Dutt 03:17

Yeah, that's amazing. I will talk about that again in a sec. But I guess before that we need to try and work out, you've got the Indian release coming out, you've got the Chinese and the Japanese, which is fantastic. And obviously massive markets over there that you can go into, but have you got a big international plan that you're kind of mapping out and have your own radical strategy for that. Or you kind of taken it as it comes based on sort of feedback from the market and interest that comes from certain areas.

R Radhika Dutt 03:43

I'm really taking it as it comes, you know, like my instinct would be world domination? No, I really want to do this in a very mindful way. And that's something that I'm bringing in to all of the products that, you know, what we are all about is creating the change that we want to bring to the world. It's not about just the end results and the outcomes, and just the the revenues, etc. So I've really been practising that when it comes to my book as well.

R Radhika Dutt 04:13

You got to live by your own principles. But one thing that actually occurs to me from that, and it's a discussion that I've had in some of the mentoring discussions that I've had recently is this whole idea that that whole thing about market expansion is something that of course can happen in product circles as well like actually building out SaaS products, for example, and either internationalising them or going into new markets and trying to get customers in those markets. And it's fair to say that not everyone has a great plan over that. Like sometimes it's just like just chasing money down the road because a client for example that's got a particular interest in a particular market. Is that kind of an analogy there that maybe you should be really careful before you go into a strategy like that and make sure that you kind of tick some boxes before you actually go full pelt for something that you might not actually be able to make back to a difference in price.

R Radhika Dutt 05:01

Exactly. You know, I hear this so often from organisations as well, that a company often has the vision that they want to be a billion dollar company by doing something, or, you know, they say, Oh, our strategy is to acquire 20% market share in blah, blah, right. And it frustrates me because something like 20% market share is neither a vision nor a strategy. And revenues is not a vision either. All of these are things that you want. But we have to come back to first principles in terms of what's the problem that you're going to solve in the world. And the analogy, you know, I want to give is, imagine you walk into a doctor's office, right? And this doctor's office has this vision statement that's plastered, that says, To cure patients ailments, and give them the best health care and in the process, build a million dollar practice into this practice, right? There's something intuitively that just doesn't quite sit right with the vision, and you may not be able to articulate why is that. But here's what happens when you have such a vision statement. I like to think about, you know, vision, being the North Star and kind of where you're going. This does not mean that, you know, revenues, or the monetary aspect is not important. So, you know, even when it comes to a doctor's office, you know, that they're not running a charity, you know that they have to make money, that doctor has these student loans, probably that they're still paying off, right. And so that is important. But a doctor who

says that that's part of their vision, that revenue is part of that vision, what ends up happening is it kind of collapses your decision making matrix into a single dimension. Because let's think intuitively about just how we make decisions, right? We're constantly trading off the long term against the short term. Whether you were in school thinking about partying tonight, or studying for an exam, or you're thinking about, you know, a feature that's going to help your users or make more money for the company, everything that you're doing is a trade off between the long term in the short term. Now, that really means it's a trade off between your vision and survival. Yeah, and the moment you have revenues, or survival in your vision. Now, it's all just a single dimension, your vision, survival, it's all, all you're thinking about and making decisions is that one dimension of revenues, and this is why revenues or your desire for market share, that's never the primary driver for what you're going to do. It can never be your Northstar.

R Radhika Dutt 07:51

But on the other hand, you could argue that, well, we can never deliver on our vision, if we don't survive as a company. It's not exactly that controversial, you know, I mean, there's a certain runway that a company has, there's a certain amount of money that they're going to be burning every month. And those are going to come to a head if you don't make some of that revenue. Of course, we all know that. Of course, the thing around like even the classic sort of Marty Kagan style, bacon, a product that customers love that works for the business like that working for the business is a really important part. So we can't ignore revenue. But I guess what you're saying is that making that an explicit goal leads to some either bad decisions or some bad behaviour.

R Radhika Dutt 08:29

Exactly. I like the word she used, which is that if you don't survive long enough, you never get to your vision. So we absolutely cannot ignore survival. We have to think about survival and vision, like the yin and yang, the to bring balance to the Force, right?

R Radhika Dutt 08:49

It was Star Wars Day yesterday, you can't bring the force into it.

R Radhika Dutt 08:53

Exactly. Well, so if we have to think about this as their balance the yin and yang, and how are we bringing in the vision together with survival? How are we bringing those into balance? So the way we think about that is, you define your vision by the problem you want to solve in the world and the world as you envision it when you can say mission accomplished. So this is truly centred on the problem in the customer. And then the survival is where you think about your revenues, and how do you survive long enough so that you achieve your vision. And so the way we make decisions, right, if something is helping you to both vision and survival, well, that's of course, the easy stuff. That's the ideal decisions. But, you know, when I think about us wanting market share, if we're thinking about that, and let's say we're building a feature that's just helping us with the market share, you know, we're gonna, what we're essentially doing is we're

then building vision debt. So it's helping us survive on the short term, but it's not good for the vision. So it's that vision debt quadrant. And then the other quadrant is investing in the vision which is where it's good for the vision But hey, it's not helping you survive in the short term, like when you're refactoring code. So the thing is, when we're finding this right balance, I like to give this example of Snapchat, right? Let's think back to 2017. At the time, Snapchat was doing really well. Yeah. And what happened, then I don't know, if you remember, there was this one disastrous release that Snapchat put out. And that was kind of the beginning of the end for Snapchat, it was this one disastrous release, where there was so much backlash from users, there was all this change.org petition that was going on, when people were saying, bring back the old Snapchat UI, people hated that new release, right. So what happened, the entire release was just a set of features that was going to help the company make more money. But it was not good for the vision, it wasn't actually making the user experience any better for the users. And so what they ended up doing in that one release was they added a lot of vision debt. Yeah. And so this vision debt is where, you know, once you start thinking so much about survival, you forget about the vision. And by the way, this is what happens when we have revenues as part of our vision, right? All we're thinking about is survival, that single dimension. So when you start adding so much vision debt, that's what pissed off customers, and they said, Okay, no more with Snapchat. And so finding that Yang and Yang balance is finding the balance across these quadrants and being able to invest in your vision, sometimes being able to do things that help both your vision and survival, and then occasionally having to take on vision debt. And just it's recognising even which features fall in different quadrants. That is really important. And that's why revenues cannot be part of that vision statement. Because if you have revenues as part of that vision statement, you stop recognising what is a good vision fit, what is a good survival fit, but not a good, you know, Vision fit, that all sort of blurs together into just a single dimension.

Jason Knight 12:09

Yeah, but also, the thing that kind of occurs to me with this concept of vision debt is it's something that's very similar, and you've kind of touched on it yourself around technical debt as well. And there's a lot of thinking out there around the fact that some level of technical debt is fine. In the same sense that I imagine that some level of vision that is fine, but you've got to pay it off. And I think maybe that's the thing that as we'd like a credit card or something like that, if you keep spending on it, then eventually, you're never actually paying any debt off anymore, because all you're doing is servicing, the minimum repayments, just to kind of keep basically alive and you just end up never, I think there's been like charts drawn that show that the, if you just pay the minimum payment, then like, it basically takes you 20 years to pay the card off or something like that. So I guess the question, then, based on that vision debt idea is like, what is the acceptable level of vision debt? Like, is there a kind of rule of thumb? Or is it really just dependent on the type of company and the appetite that you've got to carry that debt?

R Radhika Dutt 13:06

You're exactly right, that it depends on the company, there's never any right answer. So you have to discover what is that right balance for your own company. And that happens through conversations. So I'll give you an example. You know, if when you're a bootstrap startup, you kind of have to take on more vision debt, because you don't have enough funding. Yeah, every

time the customer says jump, you just kind of have to ask how high. And so the important thing, though, is that you even recognise what is vision debt, and then you're telling your whole team, you know, we're going to have to do this because well, we don't have the money, we're just going to have to accommodate what this customer wants. But at least when we recognise that this is vision debt, people realise that it's not a top down loss of confidence in our vision in itself.

R Radhika Dutt 13:54

Yeah, that's interesting. And I think also, kind of China's with the do things that don't scale kind of approach from Paul Graham, where you're sitting there saying, well, sometimes you do have to, especially as you say, in an early situation, just try some stuff. And you don't have to build everything as perfectly as you can. And they're going to be kind of experiments that you can do to try and work stuff out. And obviously, if you go to the sort of lean startup approach, and building experiments and doing prototypes, and kind of fighting MVPs, and stuff like that, and yeah, again, I guess the problem that you find is when you never get out of that, when basically you for example, do something that doesn't scale, you get some kind of something ready and done and you wave it in front of some people and they start to give you some money for that because you know, it's good enough for them to give you some money for but then what you find yourself in a situation where maybe you just naively think that that's the thing. And then you just keep building on top of that, on top of that on top of that, and then one day you've got this much bigger business that never remembered the scale, the thing that didn't scale into something that does scale. And then after that you find yourself in a situation where it's difficult then to get back on that vision because you're spinning So much time servicing the clients that bought into this thing that doesn't quite scale properly.

R Radhika Dutt 15:05

You know, I love what you said, because we very often just say that we need to be customer driven. And so we try to delight customers and follow whatever it is that customers want. The analogy I like to give is that when you're being lean and agile, that that's like getting into a fast car. And when you stop and ask for directions, that's like asking your customers for feedback. And so before you get into this fast car, and before you can stop and ask for directions, you really just need to know where it is that you're going. So you still need that clarity of your Northstar. And that's not revenue. So it's really about what's the problem that you're solving. And this is not to say that, you know, customer feedback isn't important. I think customer feedback and understanding what they need, it helps you define that Northstar. But we can't just judge success by saying, Are we delighting customers, that's often where we go astray. Because what's delighting customers may be something that helps with short term survival, it may not always be their long term thinking even.

R Radhika Dutt 16:13

Yeah, and sometimes you've got to take people along for the ride, just to extend that analogy slightly. But on the other hand, all these product managers are expensive, these developers are expensive, the designers are expensive, takes a lot of money to run a company and build

products, or at least to do it well. So isn't it fair enough for people to want to measure the return on investment of our product efforts in some way? And bake that in?

Radhika Dutt 16:36

Oh, absolutely. And I think we should be measuring the return on investment. But how do you measure the return on investment? One way is, we can just look at it in terms of the monetary aspect. But often, that ends up being short term focused and completely short term driven. That part is important. But I think it's important to have a more holistic picture of what are all the elements that you will measure to really determine success. And that part has to be derived from your vision, and from your strategy. So your vision and strategy together, like if you look at every element of your vision and strategy, and you create, let's say hypotheses that say, Okay, how do I know if my vision and strategy? Am I getting closer? What elements of my strategy are working or not working? What will I measure to be able to know whether it's working? Those are the elements that we need to put together along with the ROI? And together that tells you, you know, am I going to survive long enough? Am I making progress towards the vision?

Jason Knight 17:42

But a lot of business leaders aren't product people, they've not read your book, they've probably not read any other product book. And whilst I'm always going to be in favour of people reading lots of books, and making sure that they read widely and get all these different opinions. At the same time, people are busy, and I'm sure that not everyone's going to do that. So are there any ways that you're aware of that product managers or product leaders can successfully go and persuade, maybe more business focused, financially focused leaders to just kind of scrub out that revenue, bit of the vision and help make them understand the benefits of everything that you've just said in a way that would resonate with them?

Radhika Dutt 18:19

You know, the way I do this is often I use that vision versus survival in meetings to talk about, you know, any particular opportunity or whatever we're working on, you know, where does it fit on the quadrants. The other thing is, you know, I think storytelling really helps, right? And I feel like even so far, we've been talking in a more abstract level, I want to maybe illustrate this with an example. So I want to talk about an example where the danger of really just focusing on revenues shows up in terms of the end results, right. And the example I want to really go with, is this one of DC vs. Marvel. So if we think about DC, that owns you know, Batman, Superman, and all these big names, right? And if you think about how they've approached their movies, they've really tried to just go after having like, one big blockbuster every summer, that's been their focus. Yep. So they did Batman, then they did another reboot of Batman and another reboot of Batman. And then they thought, oh, what can we do differently? So they said, oh, let's try Batman and Superman together and see how that goes. Well, the answer was, it didn't go that well. Right. It was a huge flop. Yeah. So all they were focused on was that short term revenue driven approach. Let's look at Marvel. They were also on that same path. So Marvel Comics, there were people just who were ardent fans of Marvel Comics, right. But then a lot of the Marvel characters and the movies that were coming out, it wasn't necessarily always true

to this approach, like Marvel was kind of losing its path. Even the comic books, they were all about just quantity. And at some point even there, they were just going after revenues, revenues, revenues, they were trying to up the prices of comics, it was all about collectibles and blah, blah. The whole market crashed

Jason Knight 20:14
NFTs as well, no doubt.

R Radhika Dutt 20:17
Exactly, exactly like that. Right. So, Marvel was in dire straits in the late 90s. And they were kind of scraping the bottom of the barrel, they had sold off some of their big characters like spider man and X Men. And this is when, you know, they really needed to do something differently. So what ended up happening was they realised, you know, they needed to go back to kind of what made people really come to Marvel Comics, they had to go back and be true to their vision. What made people true to just true lovers of Marvel comics was that there were all these characters, their stories were intertwined. There was this whole universe and an experience that Marvel comics was bringing together their movies, were not being true to that. And so what Marvel decided was to go back to that picture, and so they came up with Iron Men, which, you know, a lot of comic fans will know that iron men was actually one of those characters that was a B list character, the most hardcore comic fans really knew about, right, nobody knew about Iron Men, but they took this character developed him, this was part of their phase one, Marvel actually talks about the different phases of their growth. So phase one was building out some of these B lists, characters, phase two was adding more of these phase three started to bring all of these characters together into the universe. And there were intertwined stories. And now Marvel talks about them being in Phase four, where it's this much more built out and have gone back to the truth, storytelling, and how these characters are representing Issues in society. Like the last one, which was Falcon in the Winter Soldier talks about, you know, what, of Captain America was black? And how hard would that be? I mean, this is what being true to comics was about. And going back to that has now made Marvel this multibillion dollar company. And after the strategy started to come together, Disney ended up acquiring them for 4 billion, whereas Marvel was had been a company that had declared bankruptcy at some point.

Jason Knight 22:31
And just for everyone's benefit, we should say that there was talk of us superhero theme in this episode. And you can thank both of us for not going through that. But I think that's fair enough. And one of the things that I do think is very important, I mean, for product people in general is absolutely trying to find a way to tell that story in a way that resonates with the people that they're telling the story to that haven't read the books and aren't up to date with all this, what we might call classic product thinking, because as soon as you start to say things in those terms, then people kind of shut down a little bit. I think so. Yeah, trying to use as many analogies and as much supporting evidence in a way that resonates with them, I think is really important. And I guess you just have to hope that they're comic book fans as well. And then they're not like DC loyalists, because otherwise they might take offence. But switching tracks,

we also talked recently about this ethical line in the sand. And I think we've kind of touched on that more like I saw, you know, Batman and his guns or something like that, and you know, things that Batman wouldn't do. And that obviously speaks a lot to the idea of, say, the product, Hippocratic oath that we've talked about before taking responsibility for your product decisions. But he also called out that, even with the best intentions, it's possible to kind of accidentally cross that line, not just all in one go, but to kind of basically iterate over it by making a bunch of different smaller mistakes and smaller missteps. Now, it makes sense to me that that could happen. But do you have any specific examples where you've seen that happen, either from your career, or maybe just in the news in general, that kind of leads you to make that statement?

R Radhika Dutt 24:04

Yeah, before we even get to the example, I just want to talk about kind of how this all relates to heroism, right. I think all of these hero movies, superhero movies coming out. I think we even have really internalised this idea that ethics and being ethical is about heroism. We've started to think the whiffed delude ourselves into thinking that ethical and being ethical means taking this heroic approach where you recognise this line in the sand. And you then bravely say, you know, I'm not going to cross that line and that's heroic Ephesus. Whereas the reality is, in most organisations, you're never going to see such a firm line in the sand, those very rare occasions where you have these opportunities for heroism, because the reality is, you know, most companies aren't asking you to do something blatantly horrific. Like oral legal. So there isn't this obvious line in the sand. What ends up happening instead is we slowly become accidental villains. And it's more because, you know, it's all the small trivial decisions that we make that just seem completely inconsequential at the time. Yeah, so I'll give you an example. You know, this was in the news recently, where a Russian anchor was saying that she quit the state TV. Because what had happened was she realised that what she regretted was all the small decisions where she had been helping spread Kremlin propaganda. But every such small newscast that she was on where she was spreading Kremlin propaganda at the time, it seemed inconsequential. It was all these small falls, she didn't really even for grant all of this until the Russian invasion. Yeah. Her point was, you know, that you don't recognise how far you've fallen. It's all of those small falls. So the big thing is, right, in terms of us being ethical in terms of building products, we have to really ask ourselves, how far are we falling? It's those small, inconsequential decisions, and how do you keep track of them?

Jason Knight 26:23

Well, that's the next question, then, like, it's easy to sit there and say, Oh, God, you know, we've just done this horrible thing, or we're being asked to do this horrible thing. And we're gonna take a stand and not do that thing and make a fuss about it. But what we're kind of saying in this situation is that those inconsequential or seemingly inconsequential sort of butterfly effect type decisions are not very obvious. So I guess the question is, whether there's any, I guess, either a framework or some kind of method that you can use to try and make sure that you're not drifting off course, by mistake. I mean, it reminds me of some old Mythbusters episode, where some guy was blindfolded and asked to walk in a straight line across a field. And within a few steps is like 45 degrees going completely the wrong way. Because there's so many kind of individual small adjustments that you're doing to yourself all the time that as soon

as you lose sight, you're not able to make any more. So it kind of speaks to the fact that you can go off track very easily. But how do you stop yourself doing that? If they are such small steps? Like what can you use to guide you?

R Radhika Dutt 27:27

That's such an interesting analogy of the small self corrections that you do. And in many ways that we justify to ourselves all these little decisions, and that's what makes it seem inconsequential at the time, right? Yeah. So I was actually just having dinner with a friend of mine from university. And so this friend of mine works at Facebook.

Jason Knight 27:48

Meta, Meta, come on, thank you. Thank you. It's called Meta. That's right.

R Radhika Dutt 27:54

Should I ask him? Well, you know, after all these years, you've seen what what's happening around the world, how do you do this? And he was, he was like, well, there's just too much money for me to let go of and quit. And then he goes, that's true. Right? And, and then he goes, Well, you know, I also realised the fact that look, you know, it's a tool after all, it can be used for good or for bad.

Jason Knight 28:22

Oh, that's a cop out. This smells like a cop out anyway. I mean, no offence to anonymous, Meta friend, but that does sound a bit like a cop out.

R Radhika Dutt 28:30

Exactly. Okay. So that's, that's the first thing I think we have to be intellectually honest about, right? So let's take this vision versus survival. And think about this vision versus survival for yourself. Yeah. So think about the vision for your product. And don't do a cop out where you describe the vision for your product as being a platform. Talk about truly, what's the change that you want to see in the world through your product. And again, if you say that you want to see a world that's open and connected, that is also a cop out, that is not a vision, like talk about the problem you want to see solved. It really has to be a problem. And it has to be a solution that you will be happy to see this solved in a world looking like this, right? So describe it in detail, and that's your vision. Then think about survival. This friend of mine was telling me about you know how much his house was worth, right? Like it was in the many millions. And so

Jason Knight 29:35

This sounds like the guy from The Big Short that Steve Carell has an argument with!

Radhika Dutt 29:40

Well, yes, you know, I was trying very hard not to be judgmental, because this was a dear friend from school, but this is how

Jason Knight 29:46

Emphasis on "was"!

Radhika Dutt 29:49

Okay, I still hope he's not listening to this podcast. No, actually, I take that back. It's okay. I'm happy if you listen to those podcasts, you know, I I really do care about my friends making the world more like what they want to see? Yeah. And I actually had this conversation with him. So there's nothing in this that he has not heard before. So, you know, we have to think about this vision versus survival, right? Even in the survival, you have to think about, what is it that you need for survival? And then think about how often are you going to do things where you stand up and invest in the vision? What I mean by that is, it's good for the vision that you want to see of what the world looks like, maybe it doesn't help you survive in the short term. Maybe that means you end up quitting your job and finding something else and eating out in your savings for a few months, right. But yeah, when you're working at meta, you have choices of where else you could be working. So yeah, it's not that big of an investment. But you know, here's where there's honestly, no judgement. And this is the part where you might be in a situation where that survival is a very hard thing. So for example, in the case of the Russian journalist, maybe survival was literally physical survival, and you couldn't afford to invest in the vision. You could be a software developer, and maybe you know, you're on an H1B visa, and an immigrant, you cannot afford to quit your job right now. And you cannot afford to invest in the vision. But instead of a cop out, I think what's important is acknowledging truly, what is your vision? What do you need for survival? And then thinking about your decisions, in terms of where you're working, even the everyday features that you're building? Is this truly contributing to the world that you want to bring about? And thinking about how often are you investing in the vision versus taking on vision debt? And at some point, you know, if you start to take on a lot of vision debt, even for yourself, that is telling you, how far are you falling? And so the big question for you is, how far are you willing to fall? And how often are you willing to take a stand and rise to the occasion, there's not an occasion for heroism. But to avoid being an accidental villain, we have to be willing to take a stand sometimes.

Jason Knight 32:18

But that's interesting, because of course, taking a stand isn't always easy. And there's lots of people that have tried to take stands in the past and stand up and speak out against some of the practices that they've seen in his companies. And I'm aware of stories, for example of Apple as a good example, there's a well known developer on Twitter, who's been sharing quite a lot of stories about how she was basically pulled to pieces by Apple, as soon as she tried to stand up for, for example, some of their labour practices, and took quite a while for her to basically clear

her name and get a new job. Like, there is a risk there. Right? And I guess, to your point, sometimes you've got to make a stand. But it's not easy, right? Like, is there any support that people can get in these situations to kind of help them to do that without actually just blowing up their entire life? Or is it almost like, well, you know, great power, great responsibility, someone's got to take the bullet type of fare.

R Radhika Dutt 33:15

And this is where I think I go back to there is a judgement in terms of what's the right answer for you, your life situation might be such that you cannot take a stand and go public with such information, right. And so there is no obligation that you have to do something like that. But I think what happens most often is that we do cop out. And we don't actually think about, we don't have the sort of a framework or a visual framework in our minds, for how often are we taking a stand? And how often are we taking on vision debt? We tend to very often go with the flow because life is busy. You know, you have to keep delivering on features your job like there are expected outcomes. And we're just kind of going with the flow. I think the most important thing is to just step back and say, How often am I taking a stand or taking on vision debt? And just even thinking about that is a great first step, right. And once you have actually thought about that, you may discover that there are ways in which you can stand up and invest in the vision that doesn't require going public, and maybe, you know, you don't have to do what Edward Snowden did. That was that was truly taking a stand in a big way. And you know, thinking about investing in the vision, right, that was in the far quadrant of investing. But you don't have to maybe go that far. But like, you can decide where you want to work. The very first step you could take is investing in the vision by voting with your labour and deciding where you want to work.

Jason Knight 34:53

No, absolutely. I think it's completely fair enough. And there certainly are various types of companies that I don't think I'd ever work for. I guess the tricky middle ground is when it's a company that at least on the face of it has a good mission or something that you feel like you should get behind. But they have some kind of shady stuff when you get in there. And of course, no one ever tells you that before you start. So I guess that's, that's the magic of jobs.

R Radhika Dutt 35:19

That's true. And you know, you yourself kind of change over time, right? Yeah. So for example, something that might have been okay for you a few years ago, as you grow older, and you're mellow, and you kind of see you become more Zen, you start to discover that those things are not okay with you. Yeah, important thing is just to have the sort of a framework in your mind, and get into a habit of thinking about, you know, what is your vision versus survival. And over time, as you change and you think more deeply about the world, you'll find your, the right balance for you, you will be able to find the right thing and Yang for yourself.

Jason Knight 35:57

Absolutely. But we chatted before this about whether there are any examples of companies

Absolutely. But we chatted before this about whether there are any examples of companies that maybe have started to slide down that slippery slope and started to go down some ethical, blind alleys or just problematic directions that maybe they need to pull that off. And maybe they were doing that step by step, or maybe it was completely obvious. And they did it all in one big bang. But the basic question was whether we could think of a good example of any company that's kind of gone down that ethical, bad path, and managed to kind of bring themselves back. And you said before this call that you were struggling to think of one, what does that tell us about? Companies

R **Radhika Dutt** 36:35
basically, should not? And this is a profound question, though some really racking my brain around the fact that, you know, once companies go down this path, that it's really hard to see these turnaround arc stories where, you know, they make a wonderful and miraculous recovery and find their ethical way back the fact that it's so hard to find such stories, it really talks to the issue of corporate responsibility. Yeah, because we often, you know, think about companies being ethical as a matter of corporate responsibility, right? Like, somehow we even the words corporate responsibility, like when you just delve into that a little bit, you realise that the very word corporate, the corporate entity, that entity is a musical structure that was created to limit liability of people behind it. Yeah. And so, for us to really think about responsibility, we have to start thinking about who is behind this corporate entity. And it has to come all the way from the top of the organisation, but it has to be held accountable by everyone, people at a grassroots level as well. And so turnaround stories are hard, because I think it's often cloaked under the idea of corporate responsibility. And maybe that's one of the first things that we have to kind of pull the curtain aside for.

Jason Knight 38:11
Absolutely. I think that holding people to account, even if they're not legally, the Accountable people, at least ethically, that the Accountable people, and pressuring those people to do the right thing, I think is definitely very important. And I propose that I'm very hopeful that the friend that you went out for dinner with was Mark Zuckerberg.

R **Radhika Dutt** 38:33
Unfortunately, not.

Jason Knight 38:35
Now, I probably know the answer to this, because I've asked you twice already. But just in case anything's updated. Where can people find you after this, if they want to talk about vision versus survival, or any of the stuff that we talked about tonight, or find out which language they have to learn to hear you speak next.

R **Radhika Dutt** 38:51

So they can get the book from any bookstore that's around you. You can also find the free toolkit on https://www.radicalproduct.com. It covers a lot of these concepts and the framework that we talked about today. And then finally, you can also feel free to reach out to me on LinkedIn. You know, one of the things that I just love to hear is how people are applying this approach as they think about building products as they think about you know, how they are being more deliberate about creating change in the world.

Jason Knight 39:20

Absolutely. Well, I'll link that all into the show notes as well as the links to our other two episodes, and we can hopefully round out the first of the doubtless many radical product trilogy's with the Stan flair they deserve. Well, that's been a fantastic chat, as always, so always good to dig into some important topics and get ourselves thinking about how we will might be a bit more radical. Obviously, you and I will stay in touch but as for now, thanks for taking the time.

R Radhika Dutt 39:46

Thank you again, Jason, for having me on. This is such a pleasure again.

Jason Knight 39:51

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to pop over to https://oneknightinproduct.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 with your friends so if 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 night.