



Stanford eCorner

The Birth of Twitter

Jack Dorsey, *Square*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/2639/The-Birth-of-Twitter>

In this clip, Square and Twitter Co-Founder Jack Dorsey shares how Twitter came into existence, while he was working at Odeo, a consumer podcasting company. Dorsey joined Odeo to gain a greater understanding of the consumer Internet market, but eventually learned that few people at the company, including him, were interested in podcasting. Dorsey says the Twitter project began at Odeo, when at the company's urging for new ideas, he suggested the concept that would become Twitter.



Transcript

So, just random contract jobs until I discovered this company called Odeo, which was run by Evan Williams. Biz Stone was joining in a few months. It was a consumer podcasting company. I had never written a resume before. I had no interest in podcasting whatsoever. But I was a really good programmer and I wanted to understand the consumer side of the Internet. A lot of what I was doing was in the back end. While it would touch my mom and her life, it would be so in an indirect way. My mom may take a taxicab in New York City and may touch my software or buy a ticket to Alcatraz and may touch my software. But it wasn't direct.

I wanted to learn about being more direct in interaction. So, I went to work with Ev and Biz. I quickly learned that no one else there enjoyed podcasting, either. So, no one was really excited to build the product or build the tool and they weren't consumers of the tool. So, we weren't building something that we loved to use. So, quite an interesting situation which allowed for other ideas to bubble up. In late 2005, early 2006, we all broke up into separate groups. We were given an assignment to come up with an idea of something you'd like to work on. The first thing that came to my mind was this idea back in 2000. But now in 2005-2006, we had the SMS.

I could actually send an SMS message from Cingular to Verizon. That was very, very new to the United States. I was in love with the technology. It degrades gracefully to every single device, even the cheapest devices. And it has this beautiful constraint of 160 characters. It doesn't really work all the time. It's really rough around the edges. I love stuff like that. So, I brought up this idea, "What if we could just use SMS? You could send what you're doing. It will go out in real time to all the people who are interested in hearing it.

And then, it would be archived on the Web. You could also enter it from the Web and it would be device-agnostic. It would be a whole thing. It would be awesome." My two other people in the park, we were on a playground, said it was a good idea. We presented it to the company. It took about a week. But then, the company finally got behind it. I was given two weeks and one other programmer in Biz Stone to write the software. And we did it. At the end of that two weeks, I wrote the first tweet, which was inviting coworkers.

And then, all the Odeo coworkers came on; they loved it. And little by little, we took from that company and we bought them on the Twitter project until we spun it out as a separate company and sold off Odeo. So, that's how that sort of visualization and early desire to see the world led into Twitter, which is still a desire for me. Now we have more and more people using it all over the world. And it's even faster to see what's happening and what's unfolding in the world. But it really comes down to that

curiosity about what's happening right now everywhere and really being the pulse of what's happening right now everywhere and being able to point to every single medium.