



## Stanford eCorner

### 'What Would Different Look Like?'

Carlos Watson, *Ozy Media*

May 24, 2017

Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/5408/What-Would-Different-Look-Like>

Carlos Watson, co-founder of the daily news site Ozy, explains how his vision for reimagining news coverage began by asking himself what he disliked and what would delight the audience. The entrepreneur also talks about observing how innovators in other business sectors — ranging from transportation to technology — managed to enter and dominate already-crowded markets.



#### Transcript

whether you were listening to it, watching it, reading it, as a way to expand your sense of what you could do. When he would read something in the paper or hear something on the news, he would translate it to that conversation you were having with your buddy Billy, or that school project you had, or that thing you told him you wanted to do. So I started to think about where the news was at that point, which was a couple years ago, and I found that I didn't love it as much. I found that it had become a little, a little predictable, in a lot of cases. Meaning that whatever the handful of big stories were around the world would be the same story you'd see in most publications. Even though I had more choices digitally, in terms of where I'd get my news from than I did as a kid, I found that often they were repeating or emphasizing the same four or five stories. I started to think, what would different look like? What would magical look like? I started on a journey of talking to folks at HuffPo, and Fox, and BuzzFeed, and the New York Times, and NPR, and other places. But then, in LaGuardia Airport. I bumped into a wonderful guy named David Neeleman? Any of you ever hear of David Neeleman? You do? - [Audience Member] He spoke here. - Did he? David Neeleman, founder of JetBlue, and also, I guess, Azul now.

Any of you guys ever fly JetBlue back in the day? I loved JetBlue when it first came out. I remember meeting David Neeleman in the airport and saying to him, "Mr. Neeleman, how did you make "an airline that I have an emotional reaction to, "that I actually loved, that I looked forward to, "that I go out of my way to fly you guys? "I'll change the time I'm going to fly. "I'll change the location from which I'm flying. "How did you do that?" He said, "Carlos, I spent a lot of time "studying the business." In fact, he'd started an airline before JetBlue that he'd sold to Southwest Airlines. He said, "And I kind of trusted my gut "and what I loved a little bit." Here was a guy who was kind of slightly tall, not super tall, tired of having his knees banged, and made sure that everyone had a little more room. I can't remember how many kids he had. But he said, "Carlos, you know what happens?" Ten. He said, "Carlos, you know what happens "when you have that many kids? "You know what you want more than anything else?" I said, "What?" He said, "TV time." I don't know if you guys remember, but JetBlue was the first to put TVs on the back of everyone's thing. I say that only to say that part of what David Neeleman did for me was say that, as I started to think about trying to reimagine the news, as I started to say that as much as I loved the New York Times, or NPR, or USA Today, or any of the other places I'd gone a lot to, if I really was going to think about trying to creatively reimagine it, it wouldn't just be doing a McKenzie competitor research review.

That in part it would be following my heart and asking myself and maybe others I trusted, "What would you love? "What would make you break habits "and start to try something new." So as much research as we did, my partner Samir and I, a wonderful guy named Samir Rao, decided, okay, let's stop and actually ask ourselves that question. What would it take for us to fall in love with a new and different kind of news site? What would it take for someone to do what, and we were inspired a little bit, I have to tell you, by Apple and HBO and Tesla, what would it take for us to reimagine a space that already seems plenty crowded. I say that meaning that for those of you who don't remember, the computer space was pretty crowded when

Steve Jobs returned to Apple in the late '90s. It wasn't immediately obvious that anyone needed a new and different computer company. And yet still with that little colorful iMac and a lot more, they managed to reimagine what was possible there. For those of you, who like me, give credit to HBO for kicking off this golden age of television, many of you remember that when HBO finally started getting hot with *Sex in the City* and a bunch of others, it was not at a time where there were three or four TV channels already by then. I had dozens of choices. But HBO still kind of colorfully reimaged what TV could be. In our mind, we thought, as crowded as this space may be, there may be a chance to think about this whole thing differently.