URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/how-to-learn-from-users-entire-talk/

Julie Zhuo is the co-founder of Inspirit, an advisory firm that partners with fast-scaling tech companies to build and scale products that people love. Prior to founding Inspirit, she was the VP of design and research for the Facebook app, and helped scale the service from 8 million users to over 2 billion. She is also the author of The Making of a Manager, a field guide for new managers that was named one of Amazon's Best Business and Leadership Books of 2019. In this talk, she focuses on how to channel user feedback into impactful product decisions, and also shares some powerful lessons about how to become a successful manager.

Transcript

Narrator Who you are defines how you build.. 00:00:06,720 Tina Welcome, Julie.. 00:00:09,250 - Thank you, it's so great to be here, Tina.. 00:00:11,520 - It's such a pleasure, such a pleasure.. 00:00:14,200 So we're gonna do some really fun things today.. Not only am I gonna interview you, but we're gonna pull up some video clips from your past time you were here with us and we're gonna compare and contrast how you feel now and what you've learned since then.. So you're up for that? - All right.. 00:00:33,160 - Great, so you are really an incredible expert 00:00:35,500 and basically mastered the skills of understanding user needs and figuring out how to design products around those, and one of the most important aspects of product design is essentially understanding what your customers want and figuring out how that user experience could be improved.. So let's dive in and use some of the video clips to see what you've said before.. The first one I want to pull up is a short clip about, and this is super interesting, I'm sure, to lots of people of how you respond to user requests for more types of reactions beyond just the like button..

So let's play that first clip about how you thought about this.. - When we talked to a lot of users, we had them go 00:01:19,910 through their feeds and describe to us for each story what was their reaction? What were they feeling? You know, sort of like free flow tell us what's going through their mind as they're going through their feeds, and a lot of times people would say, well, there should be more ways for me to just say something 'cause what I like about the like button is it's so simple, you know? I don't have to go and comment and the keyword comes up and I have to two-handedly type something.. I like the fact that I can just in one gesture kind of scroll through things and then say that I like it, but the only thing that I can do is like and there's gotta be other ways for me to express other emotions.. - So very interesting.. 00:02:00,083 This is fascinating because it's really interesting to think about what the difference is between what people say they do, what they want to do.. How do you ferret this out when you're trying to figure out about new features? - Yeah, that's a great question 00:02:14,130 because there's two different ways to go about it.. So the first is you are at the very beginning stages of thinking about your product, and in this case, what's important is understanding, okay, what are people doing today and what are the problems that they're facing? And oftentimes, there might not be a solution, right? Before there's a technological solution to something, people might be doing things in a manual manner or people might be spending a lot of time going through different workflows, and so oftentimes what we might do is just go and say, we're gonna observe somebody and we're gonna see them in their workflow, you know? And it could be whatever workflow.. It could be helping people figure out how do you put a shop up online if that's what you're doing, right? And in that case, what matters is just watching what they do very carefully.. So you ask them, okay, how do you get a shop up and running, let's say, on Etsy? You know, what are all the steps? Then you sit there and maybe you actually just observe and watch them go about their day and you make observations.. You know, what's taking a long time? What seems like it's a point of frustration for somebody? What is something that actually maybe potentially saves them time or helps them do this thing in a less taxing manner? So that's one thing that we do and it's very open-ended..

It's very broad and it's just about observation and in some ways you can also ask, okay, why are you doing that? Or why did you do this before that? And you try and get a sense of that workflow.. The second thing we can do is oftentimes you go in and you actually already have an idea about something you want to create.. You know, you might have a solution, and in that case, what we try and do is we prototype it very quickly.. You know, maybe that could be using a tool like Sigma or Nod or maybe sometimes you do paper prototypes or sometimes you even just walk somebody through a process and you have someone

come in, you have them react to what it is that you built, and in that way, you can, and the closer it looks to the real thing where they can actually type in their email, they get to tap a button, they can see a screen, they can browse through it, again, if it's a digital UI, the more you can observe, okay, what are they doing and why are they choosing to tap this button instead of that? Or why are they spending a lot of time looking at this particular image or graphic or whatnot? So those are the kind of two, and it depends on what stage of the problem solving process you're in.. That's a lot of what helps us take a step back from not just what are people saying when they're talking to you in a lab, but also how do you get to see them play with either a particular workflow or a particular possible solution in action.. - So as someone who uses lots of different products, 00:05:00,860 one of the things that's often frustrating is when the user interface, though, keeps changing.. You know, I mean, even if it might not work well, at least I might be familiar with it and it's something I'm comfortable with.. Even if though it requires me to reach my arm behind my back and do something that's an unnatural act, I at least know what to do.. So how do you deal with that? I mean, sometimes making things better actually frustrates people.. - That's right, and we go back to where are you 00:05:27,520 at the stage of your product? Because in the very early stages when you maybe don't have that many users yet and most of the users that you have, they're power users or they're people who are very, very dedicated to your product, then actually change might be perceived as a good thing..

You know, in the early days of Facebook, we started out as a college network, and so that meant that all of our users were college students, and so we would change things up all the time.. We would add new features, we would redesign this and that, and people loved it, and a lot of times it was because we were very good at predicting what might be a better thing for them, and since they're college students, they're very used to trying new technologies out.. You know, they all got on Facebook, so we knew that they were early adopters, and so those types of users tend to be very open, and in a lot of cases, excited about change, excited about new features, excited about improvements.. They're willing to invest the time to understand why is this better and why did you do this? And in fact, often they're very appreciative, but what happens is as Facebook grew, we started to move away from the early employee base and it started to be people who came on, you know, maybe they were late adopters to technology or maybe they just got on because everybody that they knew was on the service, and so it started to become, the reaction that we started to get to change became more and more negative because when you have 100s, 10s of millions or 100s of millions or billions of people on a particular service, then we have to manage change exceedingly carefully because it's no longer okay for us to go in and change some stuff up because we're just breaking 10s of millions or 100s of millions of people's muscle memories to your point, and so for us it started to become a bigger process of trying to understand, okay, how can we still create a funnel where maybe in the early days when we're testing this new change it might be something that users opt into and all of those people who were really excited, early adopters, want to try out the new thing can go and play with this and give us their feedback and we can understand how they're using it.. We can do data analysis on what they're using to help us determine whether this change is good or not.. Then when we're really, really confident that this is a good change, we start into how do we roll out and phase out the execution? And oftentimes what we do is we try and break up this big change into as many smaller changes as possible, oftentimes over a couple of months or maybe even half a year, and the reason we do that is because every time a change happens, then it doesn't feel like, oh my God, everything is different, you know? It's like, oh, this one thing is, and then next week, this other subtle thing is and we want to get to the point where it's maybe, you know, the UI has to evolve, right? Because we always find ways to make it better.. So we can't be stuck in a position where it's impossible to make changes, but at the same time, we want to be thoughtful and make it so that it's as least taxing as possible for people so it doesn't feel like one day we arranged all the things on your desk and now we're trying to help you figure out how to do the thing that you normally used to do and that was very well-memorized.. - So it's really funny, I wanted to sometime make 00:08:48,170 a little fake video where my toaster everyday had a different interface, you know? 'Cause sometimes that's how it feels when you're using online tools is that each day there's a new way to do something and you're like, whoa.. Can you imagine if this happened with your toothbrush that all of a sudden it was different? So I'm curious though, when you have that many people who are on your site, I'm sure you get tons and tons of input on what things people want to see.. You know, I want this, I want that..

This doesn't work for me, I don't understand this.. How do you actually frame the problem that you're gonna try to solve? 'Cause you're getting probably an enormous funnel of content.. So let's play this little clip that you talked about sort of identifying the real needs and then listen to you talk about how you actually think about this more deeply.. So let's play this second clip.. - There's a couple things that we look at to make sure 00:09:40,180 that this is a valid people problem statement.. The first is that it needs to be human and straightforward.. So we're not using words like CTR, we're not using words like optimize or integrate.. Like these are not words that people on the street would use, you know? These are not words that people who are outside of the tech community are gonna use to talk about their problems.. The second thing is we want to make sure that it's solutions-agnostic.. A lot of times we start problems by saying I am going to build an app that blank or I'm going to design a website that blank, and already in that statement is an inkling of what the solution is, but what if an app's not the right way or what if it's not supposed to be a website? So a good people problem statement gets away from trying to already constrain it into a particular solution..

- So do people have trouble identifying 00:10:37,180 the problem they're really having? Do you think that people know that intuitively or do you have to actually try to ferret that out by listening to what they say and figure out what's really going on? - It's sometimes very hard for people 00:10:50,620 to articulate the problem, and that's why I think using a combination of observation as well as listening to what they're saying helps you really understand, okay, is there truly a problem here? Oftentimes, people will articulate problems like solutions, like I wish there was a thing that did this or I wish this could exist in the world, right? And maybe the thing shouldn't exist, but through that, you can try and continue to ask more questions..

Interesting, why do you think that would exist? What would that help you do? You know, are you looking to save time? Are you looking to save money? You know, you just kind of keep that question frame going until you get to that root cause, but there are some things, like I look, for example, a service like TikTok, right? Which we all know is big and it's huge and I don't think anybody ever started out by saying, hmm, the problem that I have is I'm often in line and I don't have that much time and I want to find a thing that, like a funny, short video.. I don't think anybody would actually articulate their problem like that, but we do know that there are situations in life where you don't have that much time and you don't want to necessarily get committed to reading a book or watching a 30-minute episode or even like a 10-minute YouTube episode, right? Sometimes you really only have seconds or you really have the mental state where you kind of want something snackable.. Not a full meal, but something snackable, and again, that comes from I think a lot of observation as to what people are doing.. When they use the different entertainment or media services in their life, I think it might look, you might look at patterns for how information becomes digestible in smaller and smaller chunks, right? Originally we had full books and then blog posts became a thing and then we saw the rise of Twitter, and from that pattern, you might extrapolate that hey, there is a market for shorter and shorter content forms, whether it's text snippets in the case of Twitter or in Facebook or whether it's images like in Instagram and it just maybe makes sense that you could theorize that video also kind of has a space in that, right? And so oftentimes, it's also looking at what are the bigger market trends? Where is consumer behavior already shifting? As a way to try and actually find and really articulate those problems, but the other thing I go back to, I talked a lot about the process for people problems, but the other thing I want to keep in mind is you might have different methods depending on, again, what stage you are of trying to build something, and I know many, many entrepreneurs and founders who start a project because they themselves, individually had a problem, and sometimes that works because you have a problem and this problem tends to be pretty universal and there's many people like you who have that problem and you know it very well and you have an emotional pull towards wanting to solve it because it affects you personally and we see lots and lots of great solutions and great products come out of that process.. Oftentimes they can also fail because maybe you are particularly, like the problem you have is particularly niched, and so you're one of just a small handful of people who have that problem, and therefore this isn't gonna be a huge market for that solution, but it's always also fine for you to go and think about, okay, what are the problems that you or the people that you know in your life? And try and extrapolate how universal do you believe that is to be? How many people are similar to you in this bucket or struggling with the things that you're struggling with? - That's interesting.. 00:14:28,210 I spend a huge amount of time in my classes on creative problem solving, helping people frame problems correctly because oftentimes, well, I guess the old adage of if Henry Ford had asked people what they wanted, they would've said a faster horse, right? But really they wanted to get from one place to another more quickly and a car solved that problem.. So there are lots and lots of examples where if you ask a customer what they want, they drive quickly to a specific solution because that's what they think, but there's actually a bigger problem they're trying to solve and if you can crack that nut, if you can figure out what that is, that's where the real innovation comes in.. So I'm fascinated by the question of when you start making these changes, how do you know whether you're successful or not? And what kind of metrics do you put in place upfront? Like when you're deciding that you're, okay, you're gonna change a button from red to blue or you're gonna switch something around on the way the layout of the page, how do you know if you're successful? So let's play this little clip about the way you talked about how you define success upfront and I'd love to dig into this deeper 'cause I think this is very, very critical.. If you don't upfront take the time to think about what success looks like, then when it's there, you don't really know..

So let's play that clip.. - How will we know if we've solved this problem? 00:15:50,870 You know, like what would be different in the world? What would, if we fast forward and now this thing that we've done is out there, how will we know if we should be happy, if we should be excited, if we think it didn't live up to our expectations, what exactly should our expectations be? And I think this is a really, really important question to ask upfront.. Too often, what ends up happening is we have this idea and then we build it and we launch it into the world, and then results come in, you know? We're looking at the dashboards, we're looking at how many people are downloading it, and what they're saying, and there's tons of data points that we're trying to interpret and put together, but it's hard at that point in time to then be very, very objective about did we solve the problem? - So that's a good point, being very, very objective 00:16:42,640 about it whether you solve the problem.. So how do you determine what success is gonna look like upfront? Because that's sort of a little bit of an art as opposed to a science too, and one of the reasons I ask this is that sometimes things take a while to take off.. So you might just early, if it doesn't work early, does that mean you don't keep it there? You know, how do you think about that? - Well, the first question, I think it is very, 00:17:08,120 very personal and it's what is success for you as the creator and as the builder, right? I have lots of friends who go and build things and their expectation is they wanted to solve it for them and for their small group of friends and they're not looking to make this a huge business.. They're not looking to be venture-funded.. They're not looking for this to be millions of people, and that's okay, and if that's what you're going for, then that's success to you and you shouldn't let somebody else tell you that that's not good enough or that's somehow not the way to go about it, right? So the first answer to that question is it has to come from a personal place.. You went and you were inspired to build something.. Why? And what were you hoping to achieve? Is it for you, is it for your group of people or was it for a huge number of people in the world, right? And so that's the first question.. Now, if we are talking about, okay, the answer is it's gonna be broad..

I want it to be used by a huge number of people.. I want it to go and impact and change the world and change the way we do things, then I think you need to go back and look at, okay, what are the benchmarks? And so going into putting something out there, you have to know the context in which it's going to be judged or compared and that means knowing the next best alternative.. So if people aren't using your things, what are they using to solve that problem? And how many people are doing that? You know, how much maybe money or time or whatnot is it costing them? And then you look at your solution and you

should be able to have a benchmark, you know? If I'm making the solution and it's, let's say, a new product for energy, I wanted to cut costs by 30% or 50% so the first thing is does that achieve that for your customer? Or I wanted to save them this amount of time.. Is that what's happening? And oftentimes, you can start to just have a small group of people use your product and you can ask them, hey, this is what I was going for.. Did that solve your problem? Is this saving you time? Is this saving you money? Or is this a more pleasurable experience? Or even at a very base level, would you rather use this compared to the next best alternative or what you were previously doing or what the competitor is doing? So I think having a set of benchmarks is really critical.. I think the second thing to think about is start and set a long-term vision, right? So people, if you wanted to go change the world and you think, okay, it's gonna take me 10 or 20 years, but my mission is something really broad, you know? At Facebook it was to give everyone the power of voice and to be able to build community, and I think you have to ask yourself, well, what does perfect look like? - So can you give some examples of some things at Facebook 00:19:45,170 that didn't pass the bar? That's like, okay, we tried this and you know what? It didn't pass and we got rid of it.. - Well, if you look at the history 00:19:54,360 of apps that Facebook has released, there's been tons and tons of things.. We used to have a program called Facebook Creative Labs and we would do a lot of standalone apps and we would put them out in the world and we would see, okay, was there something, you know, is this gonna take off? And our expectation with a lot of these creative apps were twofold.. The first is we wanted a test bed where we could put stuff out very quickly, test ideas, and if the ideas were successful, sometimes all we needed was enough validation that this was a good idea and we would then take that idea and figure out how to invest more of that into the actual Facebook app.. So that would be one success criteria, but the second success criteria that we wanted was, well, if this was a really great idea, could the app on its own take off and become something big, like another Instagram or another WhatsApp? And we actually went and did, I want to say, like over a dozen of these different ideas and most people haven't heard of them and the reason why is they didn't end up passing our bar, you know? We put it out there and we had an expectation that for this to be meaningful, it had to reach, let's say, n million users within a certain timeframe because that's what we felt that it needed to be so that in three years or five years it was worth the investment that we had of people working on this as a standalone feature and I would say the vast majority of the apps that we tried didn't end up meeting that bar..

So what happened is within a year we would take a hard look, we would figure out, okay, what worked, what didn't? What are some lessons that we would maybe take back to the Facebook app? But other than that, let's wind it down, and I think we were extremely, pretty rigorous with how we wanted to do things or what kind of success we wanted to see, and we constantly actually still do that.. I think Facebook still has a program called New Product Experimentation where again, this is the goal, to have a test bed, and if something works out, great, but in many cases, it won't and that's okay too.. - So I want to turn my attention right now, 00:21:57,687 or our attention, to the book you wrote, "Making of a Manager." First of all, the book is fabulous and it captures so many lessons.. I know you're just a terrific writer.. Your blog is always so fascinating as you're capturing the lessons you're learning along the way.. Maybe you could share with us what prompted you to write this book about how to become a manager? - So I've been writing blog posts, 00:22:21,090 and the way I always describe my blog posts is they're kind of like letters to myself.. It's always been a huge part of my process to sit down at the end of the week and reflect on what am I grappling with? What are some of the hard questions? What are things that feel really muddled in my mind? And to try and write it down because in the process of writing it down, it becomes much more structured, it becomes more actionable, and so they become things that I want to tell myself and I want to remind myself, and so I did this for a while and publishers reached out and they're like, have you ever thought about writing a book? And my answers was always, well no, because I don't actually feel like I'm an expert in anything but it was through the process of talking with a couple publishers that I realized there was one thing that if I were to write a book, I would want to write it now and that was the process of learning how to be a manager.. All of those emotions, all of the anxiety that I had as a new manager and what it was like to be handed the responsibility of helping to support a team and feeling like I had no idea what I was doing, and I also remembered going to the bookstore and checking out all of the books that I could about management and there's many, many fabulous books about management as we know, but there really wasn't that much that was geared towards the new manager, the person who doesn't maybe even know what is the definition of management or what does success in the job look like? And so I was writing, so when I thought about the project of the book, I thought about me at 25 years old managing my first four designers, really not knowing at all what I was doing, and what is the letter that I wanted to write to me then or to the person in my position? - So what was the hardest thing about transitioning 00:24:07,490 from being an individual contributor to being a manager? What do you find the most surprising insight from that move? - The most surprising insight for me was realizing 00:24:22,040 that as a manager, my job wasn't to do all of these things or all the things that needed to get done in the best way or even to know how to do all of those things in the best way.. The job was to help a group of people, you know, my team, the team that I was supporting, was to help empower them to be able to solve these problems collectively and that's a huge transition because my instinct as an individual contributor was like this is my project or I need to figure out what this design is or I need to figure out the solution or I need to do X, Y, and Z, and as a manager I had to let go of that and I had to actually trust people.. I had to change my thinking from how do I solve this problem to who is best equipped to solve this problem and what does that person need? You know, what support structure, what resources, what cadence, whatever it is, what does that person need to be able to solve that problem? And there's a leap of faith that goes into that, right? You have to stop the wheel in your head that's trying to problem solve and instead turn it towards people, turn it towards process, and turn it towards how do we align around a common purpose? - That's so interesting..

00:25:38,710 So one of the key jobs then is to hire the right people, and I know that's one of the major goals.. I mean, the higher you get in an organization, the more people you have report to you and the more people you have to hire.. So I'd love to hear from you about your insights about how do you pick people? What's your interviewing process? What is it that you're

looking for? I'm sure that's really interesting to the students who are watching, but also those people are going to be walking in the world where they have to actually pick people who are gonna be on their team.. - So as a company, you have your values, 00:26:08,870 you have your strengths, you have the thing that you want to do in the world, and what you want is to try and find candidates who are inspired by your mission, who fit in very well with your values, and who have the skills that you need to help do the thing that you want to do in the world, and so from that mentality, it becomes less about selling or presenting yourself to be the very best company in the world or just say all the right things that would woo a candidate over.. Instead, I realized it was just much more effective to be as transparent as possible about who we are as an organization.. What is our team like? What do we really care about? How do we work? You know, what's maybe awesome or the things that we're proud of? But also be very honest about what do we not do so well? And I've realized that the more honest and transparent you can be to a candidate, the candidate will make the right decision, you know? The ones that will be a great fit will opt in and the ones that aren't are gonna opt out and that is perfectly okay because it's much better to have that conversation hashed out in the interview phase than it is to hire that person and then you realize it's actually a terrible fit and then you have to go through a really painful breakup process.. So being transparent, talking about your values, talking about what you need, and learning that about the other person.. What are their values? What are they looking for? What do they want? What does success look like to them? Those are a lot of the questions that I end up asking in interviews that often give me the best signal about how is this relationship going to evolve? - So I'd love to remind people who are watching 00:27:44,900 that this is a great time.. We've got a bunch of students who are watching and you can go and ask questions any time.. We're gonna get to that in a few minutes..

So please don't be shy.. Julie's here.. She is very generous with her advice and her insights, so please ask some questions on the Zoom option there.. So Julie, who did you look to to get advice about being a good manager? Who did you look at as role models and who did you go to for guidance? - Great question.. 00:28:17,380 I felt very, very lucky to have a wonderful support structure of managers at Facebook.. I think it was because many of us were all becoming managers at around the same time, and so there was always somebody who I could talk to when I was in over my head with the particular situation.. I would have groups of people who were also peer managers to me.. Some of them engineering managers, some of them managing data, and I talked to about the things that were going on.. So having a support structure of people who are doing something similar to you, even if they're not managing the exact same function as you, was extremely invaluable to me.. I would say that I learned a lot from my own manager and reflecting on our experience..

In what ways did I feel like I grew because of his faith in me or his belief in me or when he gave me this assignment that I wasn't even sure that I could do? So my managers through the years all left me with invaluable lessons.. I would say that I was also extremely inspired by the management of Sheryl Sandberg and Mark Zuckerberg and a lot of what they stood for and their values, and then in terms of other people, Carol Dweck.. She's the author of the book "Mindset" and I love that book and it was transformative for me and I often, whenever I get stuck in a situation or I feel uncertain or unconfident which is extremely common as a manager, I think about Carol Dweck and I think about how to turn that into a learning moment and how to shift my mindset into a growth mindset, and then most recently, Fred Kofman as well.. He wrote the book "Conscious Business" and I think it is one of my favorite management reads because it talks a lot about the process of management and aligning it from the lens of personal integrity to how do you lead and be able to impact your team with a level of integrity? - Very important, so it's interesting, 00:30:13,210 this sort of having a learning mindset also implies giving and getting feedback.. So how do you think about that? How do you give feedback and how do you like to get feedback? - Feedback is a gift and that's the thing I always, 00:30:26,960 always, every single day remind myself, right? Feedback is a gift, and that means if somebody is willing to give me feedback, again, even if it's critical, even if I don't agree, let me go and search for what is the truth in that and how can this help me do better? I always like to assume that whenever somebody gives me feedback it's because they're helping me.. You know, they're taking a risk, especially if it's critical feedback and that the best thing I can do is try and hear it even if I don't agree with it and take that as productive and actionable for me as possible, and part of the mentality of feedback is a gift is, again, when you feel that way, then feedback is less about, okay, wow, when somebody gives me feedback, it means I messed up or it means something didn't go right.. You start to actually embrace it and look for it, and so I try now after everything that I do to go and ask people, do you have any feedback for me on how this could go better next time? This is the same attitude that I try and think about when giving people feedback.. You know, I think, again, we often don't remember to give people feedback or we only give people feedback when something is wrong and we need a course correct, and in fact, some of the most valuable feedback you can give someone is helping them understand what their strengths are and what they're really good at and what you'd like to see them do more of, you know? That can be as powerful if not more powerful than feedback that just points out what they could do better or maybe where they didn't quite hit the bar.. So everyday I try and think about how can I give one or two pieces of feedback to somebody else that maybe shares and gives them an insight that they weren't aware of that helps them to be more effective? - Right, well, so we have a whole bunch 00:32:09,680 of questions that came in.. I'm delighted, and we have 15 minutes..

So what I'm gonna do is let's do some flash questions and see how quickly we can get through all of these great questions from the students.. Okay, so the first question is that everyone wanted to know, if you were gonna go back to Stanford, I guess implying that going back as opposed to going back now, if you were to go back and be a student, what would you study? Would you study CS again? - I would.. 00:32:37,890 I would study computer science.. I also would love to work and study more about materials.. I'd love to study more history.. I think I would go back with the mentality of instead of figuring out what are all the requirements and how can I check those boxes to ask myself, what am I truly interested in? Even if it doesn't connect to, let's say, whatever future career or whatnot.. I would just try and study what I'm really, really interested in, and I

always remember what Steve Jobs said about him taking a class on calligraphy and that was one of the best things that ever happened to him and had a huge impact on your career.. You don't know what is gonna end up being useful to you or not in your future career, so just enjoy the pursuit of learning.. - Great, yeah.. 00:33:21,800 If people haven't watched the Steve Jobs commencement address from 2005, I actually was there in the stadium watching it..

Totally life-changing.. So it's easy to find it on YouTube.. Steve Jobs' commencement address, really powerful.. So another question is, okay, okay, so they keep moving around here getting voted up.. This one is the top one now.. Without any management experiences, can you solve yourself into a manager position? So can you, would someone hire you as a manager if you actually haven't already been a manager? - Unlikely at most large companies, but oftentimes, 00:33:56,040 you will become a manager if A, you start your own thing, right? Because you work with a couple people and suddenly you are managing them, and oftentimes if you join a company and it's small and it's growing, and as that company scales, oftentimes since you were there you were part of what made it what it is, you will have opportunities to start to grow and develop.. So I wrote the management book because there were so many people in that situation.. Maybe they weren't on a path where they wanted to become a manager, but yet found themselves in a management role because of scale or because they went and started their own thing, and so that is extremely common and many managers I know went through those paths.. - So speaking of making choices, 00:34:42,220 a bunch of the students are wondering do you climb the corporate ladder or do you build your own ladder by starting your own company, right? Do you wait for someone to put the ladder for you or do you go and get your own? - I think it goes, you know, this is a question 00:34:57,050 with very personal answers and I think that those answers will be different for everyone.. The way that I always advise people to think about it is what matters the most to you, you know? What are the set of values? And is it learning? Oftentimes for people who are earlier in their career, they always say, oh, I want to learn..

I want to get more skills.. I want to become more capable so that I can solve bigger problems in the future, and if that is your answer, then ask yourself, well, what specifically do you want to learn? Because if there are certain things that are gonna be easier to learn in a bigger company setting because you'll have a lot of people who can be mentors, you'll have a structure where you can take classes and learn particular skills, but oftentimes, somebody just wants to learn by doing, right? They want to learn because they have this thing and they want to see if it's gonna actually work in the world or they want to learn how to start from scratch and build something new and that's valuable as well.. So I don't think there's a right time or a wrong time or a right answer or wrong answer to whether you should go into a company and climb the corporate ladder versus going and doing your own thing.. You know, I know that for me that answer has changed at different points throughout my career and I wouldn't, for me personally, I feel like at every point, I've made the right decision for me.. - Yeah, so it's interesting.. 00:36:23,280 I mean, I think a lot of entrepreneurs say, listen, you don't go start your own company until you have a problem that you are passionate about trying to solve and it's certainly a great opportunity to go into a big company and learn the ropes so that when you do find the problem, if you're entrepreneurial, you have all the skills you need to actually make that happen, and think of, listen, you got paid by Facebook for however many years to develop all your skills that you can now go out and start your own venture.. So there's a question in here.. There are a whole bunch.. So I'm gonna jump to this one.. You now have a cofounder..

How did you choose your cofounder? 'Cause that's always a big question that people, you know, okay, I want to start something and I want to work with someone, how do I know this is gonna be a good match? - So my cofounder is Chandra and we had the privilege 00:37:11,380 of being able to work with each other for many years while at Facebook, and through that time, I really got to know him as a person, I got to know his working style, and what it came down for me was the simple question of do I trust this person? Do I love working and learning from this person? And do I feel like I have total respect for this person? And all of those was a resounding yes when it came to Chandra.. He was someone that I felt like I could learn a ton from.. He was someone who I felt like I would not mind seeing day in and day out.. In fact, I would be excited to.. He was someone that I felt that there would be no problem that I felt like I couldn't talk to him about and that the two of us would be able to work on together.. Psychological safety I think is really, really huge.. You know, it goes back to trust.. It goes back to do I feel like I can be vulnerable with this person and tell them all the things that I'm worried about or that's keeping me up at night and feel like not only will they listen, but they'll also be a good sounding board and together we will work through these problems? - So there are several questions here 00:38:17,740 that are a little bit sensitive around being a woman and being Asian and how you've responded to that in the work environment and have you found that it's been a challenge or an opportunity and how you have dealt with both of those characteristics in the business world? - I can only speak to my experience as an Asian woman 00:38:40,400 which is not the same as other people's experience either as a woman or as Asian, but I know for me what I always really struggled with was speaking up.. You know, I was trained to have everything be harmonious and to not be the nail that sticks out, and so developing my voice was a big challenge and it was something that many of my managers gave me feedback on, but that was also something where we developed specific action plans on, and a lot of the reason why I ended up writing and starting my blog and taking opportunities to speak was because these things were frankly terrifying for me and were things that didn't come naturally because I didn't want to be the one to say anything controversial or be seen as saying the wrong things, and yeah, I think that because of my upbringing and because of the fact that oftentimes I came from an outsider's perspective, I did have to focus particularly on developing my voice, but I also look at, well, what are their strengths? Because I'm a big believer that everything that you think you suck at or that you are bad at or that you beat yourself up for is also, in its own way, the thing that makes you great, the thing that makes you unique and special and extremely valuable and I think about that all the time too.. You know, I'm coming from an immigrant perspective, an outsider perspective..

Like what can I add to this conversation? And oftentimes, there's tons and tons there too.. You know, my own perspective as a woman, as an Asian, as somebody who didn't grow up with the same cultural norms, that allows me to make my voice something that is additive oftentimes to the conversation and that is extremely important for helping us get to the best solution to any problem.. - So I'm gonna ask the final question here 00:40:30,350 which builds on that.. It has to do with the fact that we all have strengths and weaknesses and you're talking a lot about your strengths.. Is there, do you really believe that people should be really focusing and tripling down on their strengths or should they be trying to bolster up their weaknesses? And how should one be thinking about putting the energy in those two things? - Yeah, that's a great question.. 00:40:52,800 I actually think about this question all the time and I'm not sure that I have a definitive answer.. I think it's a little bit of both, you know? I think if you have certain things that are weaknesses, frankly, sometimes you just need to get to a certain baseline in order to achieve the goals that you had, and so for me, I knew that it was really important for me to grow as a leader, and in order to do that, I had to actually speak up and I had to be much more comfortable putting myself out there and if I wasn't going to be, then I'm just gonna be able to achieve the goals that I have for myself.. At the same time, once you get to a certain baseline, I don't think it's very, I think it's gonna be very, very hard to make the things that you're naturally not that strong at or that you don't find interesting and somehow turn them into your greatest assets, right? Because we are also wired in a particular way where certain things resonate with us more, certain jobs or roles are a better fit for the things that we love to do, and just certain activities or tasks give us more energy than others, and so it is really worth reflecting on what those things are and trying to figure out, okay, how do you reach your goals while being able to play to the things that give you the most energy and that keep you up because you're excited, not because you're worried about failure? I think that the mentality from I'm doing this because I believe in it versus I'm doing this because I'm afraid is huge.. It's a huge difference in how you come across and what the likelihood for success will be.. - Wonderful, I think that's terrific..

00:42:29,572 So I'm gonna ask you my last question and that is we're living in this very interesting time where everything has been thrown up in the air.. I mean, we are running this virtual summer internship program for a bunch of students who lost internships and we pulled something together and they're all actually watching you live right now.. What advice would you give to young people who have all of a sudden been thrown into a situation where there's a tremendous amount of uncertainty? And the world has actually been thrown open in front of them because a lot of the rules have been thrown out the window.. What advice would you give to someone who's in a situation like that right now? - I think if you look at the world, 00:43:12,870 there are so many problems that we see, right? And I think this year, 2020, more than previous years in history has made that clear, and so hopefully out of that where there are problems, there are opportunities, and when there are problems, there are gonna be capable, talented people who are going to rise to the occasion and find a way to put together the 1,000s and millions of different solutions.. It's not just gonna be one thing that solves these things.. It's gonna be many, many of us or many, many of you who are watching, you know, doing your own things to try and make the world better and to tackle these enormous problems ahead of us.. So that's the first thing is there's a lot of opportunity.. The second thing I would say is skills and values like learning and like being proactive about how you learn and how you grow and the curiosity that you have for learning, those will serve you no matter what state the world is in, no matter what situation you find yourself because the things that you learn are gonna be with you forever, and so even now, I know many of you are in the situation where this isn't what you expected, you're doing something and you're not at the company or at the location that you wish you would be, but this is still a time to invest in yourself and invest in your future.. So what can you do to help grow your learning? What can you do? Who can you turn to to, you know, like we talked about feedback, to give you feedback? What can you do to reflect on both what you do well and want to do more of, but also what you want to do a little bit better so that you can sharpen yourself into the right tools to help tackle the world's problems? (upbeat music)..