EPISDOE 19

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00.8] DT: The former rock star turned designer felt his palms sweating as he was about to sign the loan, he could hear the robotic squeaks of papers printing just above the sound of the Barcelona mid-day traffic outside the bank. "I must be crazy to take a loan like this, but it's about time," he thought. He knew he was onto something big and the past year of working on it as a side project only increased that confidence. Just how big he never could have imagined.

A few years later, he'd be partying with 130 of his employees at a weekend retreat for the same company that was once his side project.

[0:00:31.3] SS: Hello hackers, thanks a lot for joining us for another episode of the Hacking UI Podcast where we hack our way through design, development and entrepreneurship. I'm Sagi Shrieber.

[0:00:39.1] DT: I'm David Tintner.

[0:00:40.3] SS: Our guest today is the co CEO of Typeform, one of the hottest young startups out there. In this conversation, we discuss his journey from being a rock star with a record deal to owning a design agency and eventually building a product that transformed from being a side project into a massively successful startup.

[0:00:56.6] DT: Ladies and gents, it's our pleasure to present to you David Okuniev.

[0:01:01.3] SS: Let's get hacking.

[INTERIVEW]

[0:01:13.7] DT: All right everybody, we are here with another episode of the Hacking UI podcast. Today we're joined with David Okuniev. Hey David, how's it going?

[0:01:20.8] DO: Hello, yeah, great.

[0:01:23.6] DT: Awesome, thanks for joining us.

[0:01:24.5] DO: Thanks for having me here.

[0:01:25.0] DT: So you're in Barcelona, right?

[0:01:27.6] DO: I am indeed.

[0:01:29.2] DT: That's the Typeform offices are located there?

[0:01:32.4] DO: Yeah, actually we're all here in Barcelona. We haven't dared to have anyone further afar yet.

[0:01:37.6] DT: Okay, cool. So before we get started David, why don't you give everyone a little bit of your background and explain who you are?

[0:01:45.4] DO: Okay, I was born in Belgium in 1976, the year the concord took its first flight. I don't know if that's relevant at all. I'm a bit of a plane fanboy. I moved to England when I was around 12 years old, was sent to a boarding school, left that boarding school when I was 18 and then started attended University in London. At the time I was a musician so I studied music and then launched the career in music when I was around, how old was I at that time? Around 20 something? Got a record deal, started touring, started recording an album with my band and then eventually like after years of doing that, I ended up leaving England because I met someone and got married to them in Columbia, South America.

So when I went out to South America, there wasn't many options for me workwise for music. I had always been doing bits and pieces with design for like my music, like with my album covers or like the website and stuff. I started a small design agency called shop Fat-Man Collective, which I eventually moved to Barcelona when I had finished my time in Columbia. Yeah, built a small company there in Barcelona. We ended up being nine people and that's where I eventually met my co-founder, Robert, in a cooking space. We were both, we actually both of us

were running small creative agencies and we started collaborating together and that was the kind of my first encounter with them.

[0:03:14.7] SS: Nice, what kind of music were you doing and what role?

[0:03:17.9] DO: What kind of music? So I started as kind of a guitarist/songwriter in the band I was in and then eventually I just was a sole producer, composer. I was sort of playing the instruments on my record and so forth.

[0:03:36.5] DT: That's awesome man. Sagi and I checked out a couple of your YouTube videos, you have some music videos they're, great.

[0:03:43.1] DO: Which ones did you see? Because I think some people mashed up some of the music and put some other visuals on top. Did you see one with like black and white footage?

[0:03:50.8] DT: Yeah, the one I saw was *Ripe for the Devil*.

[0:03:53.5] DO: Okay, all right.

[0:03:54.1] DT: That's an original?

[0:03:55.9] DO: It's an original.

[0:03:56.7] DT: All right, cool.

[0:03:58.0] DO: We took old archive footage and put it together. [Inauddible] Michael, Robert Chandler, put that one together.

[0:04:04.0] DT: Awesome. You and Robert who your cofounder today met in a cooking space in Barcelona that is, right? Okay, so can you take us through how the idea for Typeform kind of came together?

[0:04:17.5] DO: Sure. So Robert had a client called Roca, which is a bathroom manufacturer. They make sort of high end toilets and they asked him to produce an application that would sit in one of their showrooms and part of that application was a form that collects leads in the show room. So he brought me onto the project to help me with the design part and we knew we could just like build the kind of simple odd forms so we got inspired by the film War Games.

I don't know if you know there's a scene where Matthew Broderick is talking with the computer and it's very conversational, it's one question at a time. There's no like boxes for inputs, there's not check boxes and so forth. It's kind of very natural and we kind of took a que from that and thought, "Hey, why don't we make like the kind of conversational form?" So that's exactly what we built for Roca and once that project was finished and we'd successfully like seen that it worked in that showroom, we thought, "Hey, why don't we do this for all our clients?" We were both running sort of creative digital agencies we thought this would be a good thing to sell on to them.

Then, you know, we started building a small back end for this and then we thought, "Hey well, actually way, should we limit this to just our clients? Why don't we just open this up to anyone?" So that's what we set off to do and we put out, six months before the launch of the other beta, we put out a video out there where you could see clearly what the product was going to be like and we put that out and we started collecting email addresses and by the time the beta came along, we had a kind of listening audience and people ready to kind of build Typeforms.

We launched the beta, people started building Typeforms, those Typeforms got exposed to their audiences, people within their audiences wanted to build Typeforms and it just kind of snowballed from there and then we suddenly got traction pretty quickly.

[0:06:11.6] DT: Wow, cool. Okay, so before we get ahead to exactly what happened once you guys got traction, but walk us through, it was like a side project at the beginning.

[0:06:19.7] DO: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah sorry, I didn't give enough context but actually we were running as a side project for roughly two years until we got to the beta. We were both still very busy with our agencies and what we were doing is in our down time and down time of the

engineers or designers in the company, we were working on this thing called, well it was called Quickieform at that time.

[0:06:45.2] DT: That was the first name of Typeform? Quickieform?

[0:06:47.2] DO: Yes.

[0:06:49.3] DT: I like Typeform.

[0:06:52.7] DO: To answer questions with it, but it obviously has all the sexual connotations. But yeah, it was totally a side project because, you know, we didn't have a clear — in fact, we weren't even entrepreneurs as such. We didn't know about running a startup or anything. We were just like, "Yeah, this is something cool that we're doing in our spare time and you know, eventually we'll release it as a product and then if it catches on, we can give up our day jobs."

I think both me and Robert at the time shared the same feeling that we were kind of fed-up like providing services for other clients and we actually wanted to have something or something of our own and personally I was really kind of tired of just making puddles on the internet like releasing little projects here with a short lifespan, since it was very project based and I actually wanted to do something, which would have more long term impact. Coming across this idea of making forms much better was obviously something that we realized that it could have a lot of impact and I remember thinking back at the time like, "Yeah, this is a side project but actually, this could be huge."

[0:07:56.8] DT: That's really, really cool. I think a lot of us can relate. I know Sagi and I can relate to that to just like, having an idea or something that you want to take and wanting to go full-time with it and you guys did it. I mean not only did you do it like Typeform is now a hugely successful company that almost every entrepreneur knows and uses. I mean it's incredible. Okay, so at what point did it really go from being like, "all right, this is a side project" to all of a sudden "holy crap, this like a gigantic company that we're going to have."

[0:08:25.0] DO: There was a point where me and Robert went full-time on it. Once we were about to release the beta, we started not taking any more projects from clients and I had just

wound down my company, Fat-Man Collective and Robert had given his company to someone else to run. Around that time it was like, I think two months before the beta and around January off 2013 where we just went full time and then a few months later we actually got our first round of investment, which meant that we could actually live.

[0:08:58.3] DT: Were you making any money at the time, like from Typeform, at the time when you decided to go full time on it?

[0:09:03.5] DO: No, we didn't make money for like a whole year.

[0:09:06.9] DT: Wow.

[0:09:07.9] DO: So we ran it as a beta, completely free. We didn't implement any payment model until a year later. Robert and I took a loan actually, I remember around the time of the beta, so we could sustain ourselves through to getting our first round of investment. In fact actually when we got the first round of investment, part of the agreement with investors that we wouldn't take a salary and we would just like pay ourselves form the pool of money that we had borrowed.

[0:09:33.5] DT: Oh okay.

[0:09:34.9] DO: That was the testament of how much faith we had in the project. Well maybe how nervous we were about having investors for money.

[0:09:41.5] DT: Yeah, definitely.

[0:09:42.8] SS: Yeah, investors is like the biggest loan ever, right? The biggest interest.

[0:09:48.3] DT: Okay, so how much time are you spending on it? Like at the beginning you're still working on this just I guess nights and weekends, right?

[0:09:54.1] DO: I think it was, let's just say that mine and Robert's headspace was like super occupied with it all the time. The engineers that we had in what principally in Robert's Company,

they were working on Quickieform between projects. For example, there might be a time where a project came in and everyone was full time on that and then there were some silence and then we could all get back to working on Quickieform or Typeform as it's called today.

[0:10:27.1] DT: Cool.

[0:10:28.0] SS: Typeform is known for its UI and it's kind of like the fresh kind of look and feel for forms that it brought into the market. So I want to ask you like, how did you plan that? I know that you are the designer, your partner was a designer right? You say you were inspired by War Games, can you tell us how you got kind of like UI going…

[0:10:51.9] DO: Final thing? Yup. First thing to say was extremely iterative and I think we were able to iterate so much because we had so much time in our hands. There were no pressures from investors, it was a total side project. We were just kind of hacking at it day after day at the design. Eventually like, there was a point where we stopped designing, or designing in code and such. I was working very closely with a Carlos Sánchez who is still in the company actually today. He is one our lead front end guys.

Just, you know, it was just trying things, seeing how it felt and iterating, changing things like going back to drawing boards, we actually didn't do any kind of lean methodology as afar as like testing with users, it was just like iterating for a long, long time just to perfect it, getting it feel as natural as possible. I would say it was a game and just balancing elements, balancing animations and just getting the right feel and eventually we got to the end of it.

[0:11:52.1] SS: Cool, and so you went the Apple way, not the whole Silicon Valley way?

[0:11:58.2] DO: I don't know what way we went, but it was just like the natural way to us at the time. It was just kind of, let's just chisel at this until it's just perfect and I think, we had some principles obviously that we had a good base to start from. We knew wanted to go one question at a time, we knew that we wanted to make sure that the scrolling of the question is particularly on a desktop or laptop was continuous and you could scroll thought very quickly. We didn't want it to make it feel like they were just separate pages. Actually, that would have been much easier to do. The challenge and, you know, making a form which feels continues but you can actually

scroll through the whole thing is more challenging than you think and then positioning over questions and the right place after you animate, there's a whole bunch of things which there is the control to get the experience just right, which we had to spend a lot of time t.

[0:12:51.8] SS: Yeah, it makes sense coming from a product design background, I can understand those iterations.

[0:12:58.7] DT: So you said you guys, it was just kind of a feeling right? Every iteration was based off a feeling. So can you talk about that? How did you know it was right? How did you know that this was…

[0:13:06.1] DO: You mean the final thing or?

[0:13:07.6] DT: Yeah, exactly. How did you know, when you put something out there when you iterated, without and sort of data or something to back it up, that this was…

[0:13:14.5] DO: I think we just loved what we were doing. I guess that's the easiest way. We didn't have any data to back it up. We did one bit of user testing I remember, but it wasn't anything more, we just took it out with some friends and recorded, kind of playing with the form. The form was actually the really advanced stage at that point. From that point we didn't change much. There is one thing to be said, I think if we had done plenty of user testing like very early on with a very early concept, we might have been put off to investigate in a certain direction.

So for example, if we couldn't pull off the one question at a time at the beginning because we found like with user testing it wasn't working, we might not have continued down that road and chiseled at it until we got it just right so that we could pull off that concept. I don't know, that's just my feeling on it. Who knows how it would have turned out, how did we done a lot of user testing early. I mean, there are some things that we've improved over time. We didn't get everything right from the out. I remember we did some changes to the form later down the line, particularly on submit button.

My memory is not that fresh on this but I do remember that you know, what we put out first as a beat, it wasn't completely the final thing. There were some kind of tweaks. Some things that

we've done, we've kind of flattened the UI also a little bit over time. I remember when we put out Typeform in the beginning like all the buttons were super rounded, there was a lot of gradients and shallows and kind of like turned down things over time.

[0:14:42.1] SS: I think also what you said about you know, not doing user testing, kind of like trusting your gut, I think it's something that is a great take away for a lot of designers out there because we are living in a world which drives you to do user testing and do all the research needed and it is needed. I mean but also, sometimes we designers forget the emotions and the gut feelings that we have.

Like a previous guest we had in the podcast, BoB Baxley from Apple, we were also talking about this as well. People sometimes need to get in to the room and do their own thing. Because I mean, you have emotions and you're building this out of your emotions. Because you want to create emotions in other people that use it. Therefore, user testing in that case will just bring other people's subjectivity in it and you just want sometimes to have it with your character.

[0:15:32.9] DO: Exactly, that's why I say, bring, maybe just try and resist doing user testing too early, because then you might be put off like pursuing certain paths.

[0:15:44.1] SS: Yeah, I totally agree. If you have a vision and you have something that you're kind of like locked on, I say, yeah, go for it. I mean, it goes against like, we're talking something that goes against what a lot of what others are saying, like professionals in their fields. Bu I totally agree with you.

[0:15:59.4] DO: Maybe it goes against convention and maybe in many cases if you don't do your research first place, it can become disastrous. But maybe out of not doing all this user testing, there can be some flukes out there.

[0:16:12.9] DT: Okay, yeah, it's awesome. I think that that's also a nice advice for people who are starting out with something today, to then realize that they don't necessarily have to go ahead and do crazy extensive testing and that it's okay trust their gut, like you both said. I'm curious, now that you basically have locked on to what the vision was and you've developed an

awesome product, has this changed? Are you now doing extensive testing or anything different than you were in the past?

[0:16:38.2] DO: Actually yes, we are know. Actually now we have a pretty formal UX process. We still design on gut but then we validate everything with user testing.

[0:16:49.6] SS: Cool.

[0:16:50.8] DO: Means we have a good base to go along now but we need to really understand how things are working better.

[0:16:58.6] SS: Cool. How are you seeing your competition going? I know it's kind of interesting, it's like a very small field. You have, I think, at least two competitors that I know I don't know anymore.

[0:17:09.8] DO: Who are our competitors?

[0:17:11.8] SS: I know Google Forms and SurveyMonkey, you know?

[0:17:13.9] DT: There's also FormKeep, right?

[0:17:16.3] SS: No, but FormKeep is more kind of like code based, no?

[0:17:19.7] DO: So there's literally hundreds of companies doing dates and collection out there, across different used cases. Some of them are focused on surveys, some are more focused on forms some are focused more — some are more horizontal like ourselves. We see forms or surveys just as another type of work flow. It's a job to be done, you want to get data, you want to get an insight or you want to collect a certain piece of data.

We don't actually look at SurveyMonkey particularly, or Google Forms as a competitor. Many people say "yes". I mean we are definitely an alternative but internally, we kind of trend to have a kind of principle that we're just competing against ourselves and we're trying to make the best possible version of Typeform for Typeform. So that means that, for example, we don't look at

SurveyMonkey and think, "SurveyMonkey have got really in depth analytics and they're really strong on that front, we need to be there." No, we're much more on the user experience of collecting the data in the first place because we're assuming that many people can analyze the data by just, you know, dumping it into Google Spreadsheet and using their own software in order to get their own insights. That's for example on surveys.

[0:18:32.2] DT: That's a nice insight though, that basically you're saying like, "Let us do what we're good at and it's okay that we're not going to cover every single thing that could possibly be done on the field."

[0:18:40.7] DO: Sure. I mean, we don't even categorize ourselves as a form company.

[0:18:46.1] DT: How do you categorize yourselves?

[0:18:47.7] DO: Surprisingly enough. Even though we're called Typeform. That's a good question. We're actually going through the process of trying to understand this because the things people are creating with Typeform, you'd say that like, you would never use a normal form to do. Essentially, people are creating entire workflows or products for Typeform just to get specific jobs done. So I would just sort of more go in the direction of saying, we're a communication tool. We're a tool that people can put together conversation, and on the back of that conversation, get a specific job done.

So be it collecting insights, or doing a registration for an event, or sharing in music playlist and getting feedback on that or whatever kind of like conversations a human might want to have with many people at the same time, Typeform is a tool for that. What the name of the category is, we're still trying to figure that out. So if you have any suggestions, if anyone wants to get in touch with me from hearing this podcast, please let me know.

[0:19:44.2] SS: Yeah, the kind of like concept of, you know, conversational interfaces is also kind of peeking right now and we use Typeform for registration for the Side Project Accelerator that we have going on. So it's kind of like, you know, a mixture of a form to tell us who you are and what your project is and then it's connected to a payment gateways.

[0:20:03.9] DO: Sure, exactly. I'm sure you've come across a user case where you've said, or a job that you have to be done, and you say, "Oh, we can use Typeform for that."

[0:20:12.7] SS: Yeah, sure. It's like, I can understand what you're saying when you're saying complete websites. Plus people can create an entire website form Typeform. So like we saw for example like Hubspot what they did to make user personas. So can you maybe give example of what people can do with Typeform that you've already seen or what do you actually, let's say what you've already seen and then what you vision people doing like let's say, I know in the near future.

[0:20:44.1] DO: It's pretty wide but let me just give you an example that comes up to the top of my head I mentioned before was, for example on Friday, someone at Typeform sends out a playlist to everyone. They use a Typeform, they put together a bunch of options like what kind of — so the playlist is split into different jars, so you can pick a jar and you go down one jar and you can watch a video or hear a piece of music. Then you have a follow up question, you can give some kind of feedback as well. That's one use case of someone that just wants to communicate a playlist and instead of building a website or writing an email, they can create something very quickly and push something that's interactive out.

[0:21:25.8] DT: That's awesome, I want to follow up with that but just before I do that, I want us to take a quick break and give a shout out to our sponsors for this episode.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[0:21:33.2] DT: Hey guys, I want to tell you about our sponsor, An Event Apart, because they have some of the best conferences for both designers and front end developers, and if you haven't attended one yet, you're really missing out. The events are extremely professional and always cover the most cutting edge technology and latest developments. They bring in the best speakers and biggest names in the industry every single time.

I'm talking legends like Eric Myer, Jeffrey Zeldman, Rachel Andrew, Brad Frost, Dan Mall, you get the picture. It's just about the talks, they do an incredible job of making the conference social and encouraging people to meet a network. If you've been to this kind of conferences before

you know that designers and developers aren't always the most social crowd but at Events Apart, they take special care to make sure it's fun, inviting and that there's never a boring moment.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:22:36.4] DT: Actually, we had a cool use case of one of the members of the Side Project Accelerator this batch, Limor Goldhaber. She started out by, before her website was up, she wanted to start collecting email leads and she actually created — she built a Typeform just to start collecting leads for her newsletter to see if there was a following and if there…

[0:22:53.1] DO: It's like a landing page, right? So you put a landing page and then you ask a few questions on the back of that? I guess, what I would say is it's a very frictionless way to put some kind of interactive experience or put some kind of presence online very quickly. Because if you build a website or build an app, there's a lot of thinking to do, a lot of investment. But everyone knows how to have a conversation and Typeform allows you to kind of like, let's say encapsulate that conversation of digital format and you can send to many people at scale.

[0:23:23.9] DT: You just triggered something that I read a lot about and I've seen that you guys are doing is exactly that, that conversational interface that you're trying to promote. So can you talk about why you think that the conversational interface is so important?

[0:23:37.7] DO: So I don't think conversational UI is for everything, but I think we all, you know, it's a very natural thing to do, ask someone a question and get a response back. So it's naturally that conversational UI is starting to pick up because it has much better engagement. I can just say from our experience going from a form which is not conversational to a form, which is conversational like Typeform, you can expect around a four X improvement in engagement and we have the data to back that up. We've looked at benchmarks, industry benchmarks, from form

companies and the average completion rate, you'll get all the form, across all use cases, around 15%. Our average is 55% at the moment. So it really goes to show…

[0:24:23.6] SS: It's fairly high.

[0:24:25.5] DO: Yeah, it's crazy. Sometimes like I have to pinch myself almost, and I think it's very simple; you give people an experience and not a laundry list of things to do. They feel like someone is talking to them, they feel like their opinion is important because they're asking an important question and people respond to that. But people don't respond to you know, a bunch of boxes to fill in and something really cold, which doesn't have much design or much effort. They don't feel that there's a human on the back of that. With a Typeform there is this kind of, almost like a metaphor that there's someone behind there really caring about the answers that you're giving. That's kind of what we want to promote.

[0:25:06.1] SS: Yeah, I want to bring you back to the last question because you gave an example like one Typeform that you've seen, but what about the future? So now that you mentioned the conversational interface and UI and what you can do and how you see it. What's your vision on how Typeform will be in the future? Will it have AI in it or how will it function?

[0:25:29.6] DO: So on the form front, what I would say is that we're not tied down for Typeform to be consumed in, you know, a mobile or desktop browser with the current experience. What does a conversational experience look like in an augmented reality setting? What does a conversational experience look like for Typeform and like a box situation, for example, in messenger or in Slack.

We don't want to be tied down by the current UI that we have, we want to keep doing, keep on promoting conversational UI. So I guess for us it's also a bit about how we're going to help people build conversational UI. So we're actually in the process of a big rebuild and what we're building is going to be helping people create conversations much more easily. So that is done in two ways, one is by removing a lot of friction out of creating that conversation in the first place and the other thing is providing the right tools for them.

So that's a richer set of question types, which we call blocks. So components that can go into Typeform and also making those components much more connected. So that can mean pushing data to other services based on the answers that you collect in the Typeform. So currently today you can do this through our third party center called Zapier, but integration is going to be a key part of what will be available on Typeform and, you know, looking further down the line, I can definitely see that we can do natural language processing or even machine learning in order to help people write better questions or have richer conversations.

Then also, you know making the flow of the type in much more connected as well. So for example, if I answer a particular question some of the logic being inside of the Typeform. Right now, all the logic is encapsulated within a Typeform and there's no external request in order to input, in order to change the logic within the Typeform. So that means if I wanted to find out what the weather was in your location today and change the question based on that, I can't currently do it because everything is contained within the Typeform. But I can see in the future us opening that up and making conditions external as well.

[00:27:47.5] SS: Yeah, if whether is high, then ask question, yeah.

[00:27:51.0] DO: Exactly or if social security number is valid, carry on to here. So we just want to give much more power in the hands of our creators in order to create work flows and in essence we want to give the power to people, to give power to creators to do stuff which you always need a developer to do. And actually it's really interesting because there are app creators out there but obviously building an app, you need to think about a lot of things like how the app flows, what screens there are. But the Typeform, what we have to think is how does the conversation aspect go?

[00:28:29.5] SS: Yeah, totally.

[00:28:30.7] DO: It's really interesting for us.

[00:28:32.7] SS: What about like other sources of input like voice? Do you have that in mind?

[00:28:37.4] DO: Yeah, those are all things that we could experiment with.

[00:28:41.4] SS: Cool, awesome.

[00:28:44.0] DT: So I would like to ask you about the company itself and the culture that you guys have. So the office is in Barcelona and you're about, is it 60 employees now?

[00:28:53.1] DO: No, 130.

[00:28:55.4] DT: Wow, okay. So yeah, I think I was reading an article that was pretty recent. You've grown pretty quickly, right?

[00:29:03.0] DO: Yeah, I think in a year we've added a 100 people. Sorry not — from a year ago today, I think it was around 100 people.

[00:29:15.1] DT: Okay and so something that's pretty cool is if you go to the website, you have all sorts of little I guess employee created side projects on it. Like the Typeform Space Invaders Game and stuff like that. So can you talk about this? How do projects like this come out?

[00:29:30.9] DO: Well we do like a monthly open source day for engineers so they can do some side projects. A lot of times, they're just doing like they actually contributing to open source projects which are external to here but sometimes some people do some like fun things. The Space Invader Game wasn't done as a side project in particular, but we've done some little things. Like for example, we created a Typeform which would serve as a template for collecting charity donations and based on the donations that were given that was like powering a website.

[00:30:11.3] DT: Wow. Oh wait, that was powering a website? The donations were?

[00:30:15.7] DO: Yeah, it was powering it. Yeah the donations. It was like a feed of the donations coming to in the comments that were written into the Typeform.

[00:30:22.4] DT: Very cool, okay and do you guys also spend a lot of time on I guess not just creating like the side projects but also creating content like your blog looks beautiful, and you have awesome articles.

[00:30:33.0] DO: Yeah, we put a lot of effort into that. We've put together a team of really talented storytellers and writers. We really love content marketing, something that we really want to do more of with Typeform. We see it, we also see it as a kind of very organic and natural way to spend a product. So it's not just actually writers involved in it. We have a creative team, which is spending a lot of time just creating really beautiful imagery for it to support the articles.

We recently did an article called *The Star Wars Guide To NPS* and if you check it out just search for "NPS Star Wars", you'll find a really elaborate article. Obviously great content but also really great visual to accompany it.

[00:31:21.6] SS: Nice.

[00:31:23.3] DT: So why do you guys invest so much in content like that? I mean it must take a ton of time and resources and money?

[00:31:29.6] DO: Well, I think we just did it because we thought it was a great thing to do. But it's working well for us. It's a new channel. It's bringing new users also to our platform. A good branding exercise to really get an insight in how we think, how we feel. So it's our voice.

[00:31:50.6] SS: Yeah. In terms of like the company, you are a co-CEO along with Robert, right?

[00:31:56.6] DO: Yeah.

[00:31:56.8] SS: And how do you guys find that coming along? Like as partners being now CEO's?

[00:32:01.8] DO: Yeah, it's still working well. The thing is we split responsibilities. Now he's more on the business side and I am more on the product side. So it also means that we can be more hands on. I mean I am still designing and I think if I was sole CEO, I wouldn't have time to do that.

[00:32:22.3] SS: Really? So you are actually designing, like really hands on?

[00:32:27.6] DO: Yeah.

[00:32:28.6] SS: What tool do you use?

[00:32:29.0] DO: I work with Sketch.

[00:32:30.8] SS: Sketch. All right cool.

[00:32:36.1] DO: Yeah. No, I love designing. If I couldn't design, I wouldn't have any [inaudible] at Typeform. For me it's very cathartic.

[00:32:44.8] SS: Yeah, wow that's crazy. I mean you're the highest level, like the president of the company that I heard is designing. Because a lot of like, back when we did the first season of this podcast it was called Scaling a Design Team and we talked to a lot of design managers and almost all of them said, "If you're managing, you should be managing and not designing," and one of the things that I as a design manager back in my previous company, SimilarWeb, I really wanted my time to design as well. Because I said I really want, I mean that's my meditation in a way. So I can really connect to this as well.

[00:33:22.7] DO: For me certainly, design always has a, and the product, has a top seat at the table. It's a way to ensure also that at the top level is not disconnecting from the small details.

[00:33:38.0] SS: Yeah, totally and it's also kind of bringing I guess a bit of fun into it. It's like the other side of business, right? I mean you've got business and then you've got the kind of — I mean, they are connected but still the design side is always pushing for more playfulness, I guess.

[00:33:54.5] DO: Yeah, I think in the company, to have a balance between the business and also the innovation part, that's where design comes in. But there's of course also a culture but it's important that a business is not run for the sake of running a business. Sorry I'll rephrase that, you know, a successful business can't be successful unless there's innovation inside it. So

making sure we're always thinking about new concepts, and it doesn't mean just designing new interfaces. It's also thinking about how we design the organization and so forth.

[00:34:31.6] SS: Nice, an organization is a design experiment. Yeah, totally. And can you talk about, I want to ask you about the culture but I want to also ask you about your time management. Because we got into you being a CEO and designing. How do you manage your time? What does your day look like?

[00:34:49.3] DO: So it's becoming increasingly difficult. I'm increasingly being sucked into new things. So I have had to reduce my responsibility as far as designing. I'm still acting, for all intents and purposes, as the VP of Design. So the whole design team reports to me, I sit on all design reviews, on all design workshops and so forth. But across the organization, I'm finding myself sucked into a lot of meetings. So I don't have that much time as much time as I like to actually sit down there and spend a whole day designing. So I am doing less of that and more of design reviews actually.

[00:35:33.5] SS: Okay, all right.

[00:35:36.5] DO: Although I still find some time to design, but it's definitely not as much as I used to.

[00:35:43.0] SS: Yeah for sure and going back to mixing this with the culture. So how do you see the culture that you are designing in the company right now? I mean what's your vision or do you have any stuff that you think, "Okay, I'm going to do this and that"? Or I don't know, specific events or specific principle that guide you when building the culture in your company?

[00:36:09.5] DO: Yeah, I mean we have values, which help guide the culture but culture is not something you create. Culture is something that happens out of the attitude of the people in the company. But if I had to sum those up into certain words and I guess this is related to value, I think we've created a culture of openness, of fun, of empathy. So moving forward, we try to build events, we'll do things which supports those values.

So we just did, for example, our offsite the other week and we're constantly doing events every quarter to make sure that we're all as connected to each other as possible. But what I would say actually more important than that is we face a really big challenge, right? You start a company and there's a certain culture because you're small and everything is very personable and then you start getting bigger and you go beyond 100 people and things become a bit more serious as they do, and your challenge is, how do you maintain that culture with rapid scaling?

Not just like the new people coming into the office, starting working at Typeform every week but just the sheer scale of it. How do you — I ask myself questions like, "How do things that we do not start becoming a parody of themselves?" So just to give you one example, like we have this thing in Typeform where people would just randomly applaud all day. That's kind of quietened down a little bit but early on this always used to happen.

People will just randomly applaud and the whole office would stand up and cheer. We even have that almost like a value. Like "celebrate randomly" I think it was. But obviously as the company scales and new people come in, it's hard to keep all those things going. So you have to be careful that you are not forcing people to adopt a certain culture. So if you tell people "applaud", then you're telling them what to do and then it doesn't become natural.

[00:38:26.4] **SS:** Although it could be really fun with 160 people.

[00:38:31.2] **DO:** Yeah, it happens from time to time still but it's not like before. Especially in the [inaudible], it was kind of like everyday. Like, "Hey, let's just applaud."

[00:38:39.4] **SS:** Applauding across three or four floors.

[00:38:43.6] **DO:** Yeah, right. People are really happy to be here. I think we've created a culture of happiness where we really put people first. I mean at least we try, that's the thing.

[00:38:55.0] **DT:** And it sounds also like a culture of leading by example, going back to how you're designing and you're really into the work. I guess it doesn't sound like a culture of telling people what to do, you're actually part of people doing it.

[00:39:08.4] DO: Well we try. I always say that we're not perfect but our ambition is to always make things a little bit better. So actually the company's vision is "make things a little more human" and that applies to everything we do not just to the product but actually the organization and what we want to create. We are just try to be better than ourselves all the time.

[00:39:32.1] SS: Yeah, cool.

[00:39:32.9] DO: Without pretending that we achieve everything and we're the best at everything.

[00:39:38.6] DT: I love that slogan, "Make things a little more human". Because it goes back to how you're trying to take the users voice out when they are asking questions in the Typeform and also goes back to I guess your whole content strategy that you're not just like other companies, not just writing about updates of what the company is doing but you are actually writing good content that's real thought leading content.

[0:40:03.2] DO: We want to help people have a more human experience and product and organization. So if we can inspire other organizations to do the same thing then I think we're kind of on the right track.

[0:40:15.6] DT: Okay, awesome. We only have about five more minutes left so before we wrap up, I want to ask you specifically if you have any sources of inspiration that you can recommend, maybe books or podcasts or things that inspire you on a daily basis.

[0:40:32.3] DO: I would say that of all the CEO's I know, I'm probably the person that reads the less kind of CEO material, even design material and my inspiration just comes from the people around me. I'd say from the things I see, I don't know, just living life in general. I mean I do come across some good books once in a while. Right now I'm reading a book called *Play Bigger,* which is all about category design. It's about how you can create a category for your company that doesn't just definite you as better but that is completely changing the game and how you can own that category and be that king of that category.

[0:41:17.5] SS: Nice.

[0:41:18.9] DO: I'd recommend that book for anyone that has a product, which it can be differentiated in the market.

[0:41:26.4] SS: Cool, we'll link to it in the show notes.

[0:41:29.1] DO: Yeah, Play Bigger. Other sources of inspiration?

[0:41:32.7] SS: If you don't' have any, it's good.

[0:41:36.0] DO: Nothing comes up to mind, I'm sure there though because there is stuff that inspires me everyday.

[0:41:41.0] SS: All right, sure. Any last advice to anyone right now working on those side project or starting their businesses?

[0:41:49.9] DO: I would say make sure that you're designing something that really connects with people. If you're probably an engineer that's building a product, make sure that you can partner up with a designer and that that designer really cares about the journey that the user is going to take.

[0:42:11.9] SS: David, good for you.

[0:42:14.1] DO: Yeah. What else? I don't know, just as far as building a company, just build it from the heart and not from the head. You'll make a lot of mistakes on the way but eventually you'll come up with something that you're already proud of.

[0:42:35.7] SS: That's great. That's awesome advice.

[0:42:38.2] DT: Yeah, definitely.

[0:42:38.8] SS: Yeah, so thank you so much for being on the show.

[0:42:42.7] DT: Yeah and how can people get in touch with you or reach out to you? Where can they find you in the internet?

[0:42:47.5] DO: I'm on Twitter, @okuiux is my handle if anyone wants to DM me or follow me, I'm happy to chat.

[0:42:56.6] SS: Nice.

[0:42:56.8] DT: Awesome.

[0:42:58.3] SS: All right, David.

[0:42:58.7] DT: Yeah, David, thank you. Really appreciate your time.

[0:43:02.0] SS: Been great.

[0:43:03.1] DO: All right guys.

[0:43:03.8] SS: Good luck with Typeform and everything you do.

[0:43:06.1] DO: Thank you very much.

[0:43:07.4] SS: Bye.

[0:43:08.4] DO: Bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:43:21.4] SS: All right, so that's a wrap. Thank you hackers for joining us today. We hope you enjoyed the show. You can find all the links and resources from this conversation on hackingui.com/podcast. Just before we go, we want to share with you something that you might find useful.

[0:43:36.4] DT: As you know, we are veracious readers and consume a ton of articles, books, podcasts, and videos about design development and side projects. We curate the hell out of everything and each week, we send a short round up email of our favorites. If that sounds like an email you'd enjoy getting, then we'd love to have you join our awesome community, which already has more than 20,000 happy members from all over the world. You can sign up on hackingui.com.

[0:43:58.4] SS: By the way, on hackingui.com, you'll also find some other cool stuff like the Side Project Accelerator, our eight week online program in which we teach everything that we learned in the three years working and scaling Hacking UI as a side project before we quit our day jobs.

[0:44:12:.4] DT: And, you'll also find our resources page which reached top of the week on Product Hunt Tech. Our events section which is filled with conferences and meetups for designers and developers.

[0:44:20.4] SS: Hey D, don't forget the T's man. We've also got some cool T-shirts for designers.

[0:44:24.4] DT: Sagi, again with the T-shirts?

[0:44:26.4] SS: Hey, I designed those. But really, last thing, if you enjoyed this, we would really love to hear from you. Either by tweeting us at Hacking UI or by reviewing the podcast on iTunes. Those reviews really go a long way and help us and even make our day.

[0:44:40.4] DT: All right, we'll see you next week hackers. And remember to keep hacking.

[END]