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Billie Loewen [00:00:02] Hi! Welcome to Room for Growth.

Billy Fischer [00:00:04] A WillowTree podcast about growth marketing hosted by Billy Loewen and me, Billy Fischer.

Billie Loewen [00:00:09] Whether you're an industry expert or just getting started ...

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Billy Fischer [00:00:20] You ready, Billie?

Billie Loewen [00:00:21] I'm ready, Billy.

Billy Fischer [00:00:22] Let's go.

Billie Loewen [00:00:23] Let's f***** grow.

Billy Fischer [00:00:28] Today we're talking to David Leiberman, who is a smart guy. I think the thing that we loved most about the podcast is how he starts to break down Web3 for anybody in the marketing space trying to figure this out. So, we're excited to have David Lieberman today on the podcast. He also has built a lot of really cool experiences for children — and for just general users — that have achieved some pretty impressive milestones.

Billy Fischer [00:01:01] Billie, on your phone, what app are you using — not Instagram, not the popular ones — but what's the under-the-radar app that's on your phone that you might feel uncomfortable sharing with us?

Billie Loewen [00:01:15] Oh, I thought you and I were vibing so hard, because I'm so excited to talk about Spotify and Taylor Swift's new albums and how she's marketing them and how brilliant that is.

Billy Fischer [00:01:26] That was your weekend?

Billie Loewen [00:01:27] That was a bit my weekend. I was sick this weekend, so I was mostly laying on the couch watching scary movies or listening to "Midnights". But I was going to say, I listen to Spotify constantly because it's both a desktop app on my computer, it's on my phone. It's ubiquitous, it's everywhere. It's constantly on in my house. I guess that gets the most hours. But what were you thinking of? When I think of embarrassing? I don't even know if I want to admit.

Billy Fischer [00:01:53] Not embarrassing, but I was thinking of David's launch of the Disney Frozen: Karaoke app.

Billie Loewen [00:01:57] Oh, yeah.

Billy Fischer [00:01:58] And back in the day, you know, before anybody was using Triller. You know, thing you probably use for fun. I think the most embarrassing thing that I've recently done is, my daughter and I downloaded the SimCity app, which is like something I did. I played like, in like 1992.

Billie Loewen [00:02:21] Like the desktop version? Oh, my gosh. Yes.

Billy Fischer [00:02:24] But like on my phone, the iPhone version. So, like as David was talking, I was thinking about like, what makes an app sticky? And somehow they got me for like a one

month period — I've kind of phased out of it — where I was logging into that thing every day and building my city as a grown, 40 year-old man.

Billie Loewen [00:02:45] Which is so good.

Billy Fischer [00:02:46] And so I was thinking that they do a great job at notifications like, "Hey, there's going to be a natural disaster in your city that you spent so much time on. You better come in and clean it up." And so certainly enough, I would click that push notification.

Speaker 3 [00:02:57] Totally.

Billy Fischer [00:02:57] So yeah. Do you have anything like that?

Billie Loewen [00:02:59] I've been using the Impulse app. So the Impulse app is — there's a paid version and a free version — all different kinds of brain games, is how it's marketed. You can do things almost like a Wordle, or you could do these games where you have to trace a shape without crossing over any other lines, or you have to make patterns. I've been using that infrequently, but they do have a pretty good push strategy. They send two or three pushes a day, reminding me to take a break and do some brain games. It's a really simple push strategy, but it hasn't made me mad yet, which is pretty rare for a brand that they would send something not personalized and I still say, "Oh yeah, I should use that app."

Billy Fischer [00:03:39] That's a much more mature version of me and my SimCity example.

Billie Loewen [00:03:44] SimCity, or RollerCoaster Tycoon.

Billy Fischer [00:03:47] Thank you. Yeah.

Billie Loewen [00:03:49] It is just like playing a game, but I feel like it's a little healthier than just mindlessly scrolling Instagram. So I've been doing that. I have to tell you, I have two obsessions right now. They're both very girly. So we're going to go back to Taylor Swift. I promise you, we have to talk about it.

Billy Fischer [00:04:02] Yeah, let's do it.

Billie Loewen [00:04:05] One thing that I'm obsessing over always — because it's so funny — is email season. It's picking up. Inboxes are starting to get more and more emails. It's starting to be the release of holiday items. Shout out to Reformation. Reformation is predominantly female clothing and a beauty brand e-Commerce experience. Their subject lines and pre-header text is so funny. Their email content is hilarious. They have things they'll show, like tiles of their clothes, and they'll say things like, "If he's going to serenade you at Coachella, Harry Styles needs to be able to find you in a crowd."

Billy Fischer [00:04:43] Oh, nice.

Billie Loewen [00:04:45] That is funny. Their subject lines are almost always in all caps. They're just absolutely screaming at you. They'll say things like, "Ignore your therapist, think about the past in vintage inspired things." They just have these really quippy, funny content pieces that are really close to their audience and it's through their marketing too. And it's fun.

Billy Fischer [00:05:07] How did you come across them? Instagram ad?

Billie Loewen [00:05:10] Well, no Reformation has been around for a long time. Their Instagram is great. They use influencers pretty heavily for their clothing. They're very famous for their dresses and for sustainability and how they ship. But their email and the content of it is just absolutely top-notch. I've been loving that.

Billie Loewen [00:05:26] Okay. Talk to me about Taylor Swift. You obviously listened to the album this weekend, Billy. What are you thinking?

Billy Fischer [00:05:30] I listen to the album. I'm much more of a "1989" Taylor Swift guy.

Billie Loewen [00:05:34] Okay.

Billy Fischer [00:05:37] I could listen to "Welcome to New York" on repeat. So I was struggling, but I'll give it another go. You know that first time you listen to a new album, it sometimes it doesn't stick and you've just got to give it two or three more times. So I'm not against it.

Billie Loewen [00:05:49] You are a Swifty, though. A little bit.

Billy Fischer [00:05:52] I like Taylor Swift. Probably a lot more than the average 40 year-old male, I kind of overindex towards Taylor Swift. Yeah, for sure.

Billie Loewen [00:06:02] Okay. I love that for you. I think I'm almost not a Swifty. I have a lot of respect for Taylor Swift and her music. Her business acumen is, of course, great. I don't know that I'm a huge fan. I would say, if anything, this album reminds me of Wes Anderson's "Grand Budapest Hotel". It is the Swiftest of the Taylor Swift albums I've ever heard. It just sounds like quintessential Taylor. Every song I listened to sounded like another song.

Billie Loewen [00:06:26] But, how she released this album is what I've been obsessed with. She teased it and then she released "Midnights", which is 12 or 13 songs. Then, she released 3 a.m. version, which has an additional four songs. Then, she released an album version that has a bonus song you can only get if you pay for the album alcohol. I think that is brilliant how that's going to drive streams, drive downloads, drive how people interact with her music and listen to it.

[00:06:55] When we think about stickiness in the music industry, Taylor Swift is so brilliant at how she gets people to become fully obsessed and have her songs stuck in their head — whether or not they want to. I was just reflecting on how interesting it is that the whole world kind of stops to listen to a Taylor Swift album. Whether you like her or don't like her, everybody knows it's here.

Billy Fischer [00:07:16] I definitely saw a lot of content, which drove me to say "I'm just going to listen to this and see what it's all about, because I'm seeing every other friend of mine on Instagram posting about it, so I've got to be with it. It definitely captures people on Spotify. You talked about that. They continue with video content they incorporate when you're just casually listening on Spotify. Everything just continues to make it.

Billy Fischer [00:07:37] We've used that word "sticky" today a couple times. Spotify launched this new application within the app where you can create a playlist based on what you're wearing that day — your vibe. I don't know if you played around with this. For example, today I'm wearing blue and I'm feeling sad. And it creates a playlist based on your past music preferences. It's pretty cool.

Billie Loewen [00:07:59] The collaborative nature of Spotify, too, is going to continue to grow in popularity. I don't know about you, but I think stalking people on their social media is out. Find them on Spotify and dig through their playlists a little bit. Create a collaborative playlist or make one together: that is what tells you a lot about people.

Billie Loewen [00:08:21] And to quote of an Internet meme, "Spotify Wrapped is coming," so there's still time to binge-listen to music so you're not embarrassed when your Spotify Wrapped comes out.

Billy Fischer [00:08:31] I actually was just thinking, "Oh no, this song that I've listened to 100 times in the past month is going to show up and everybody will know."

Billie Loewen [00:08:39] Yeah, they're going to weaponize it. The best form of personalization is when they weaponize their own data against you and all the things that you've done on the internet that are slightly cringe.

Billy Fischer [00:08:49] Everyone will know. Yeah. Awesome.

Billie Loewen [00:08:53] With that, we have a guest who is not only a serial entrepreneur, but also somebody who constantly has big ideas, brings them to market and makes them successful — which I find super inspiring. But, a lot of what we're going to talk about is the music industry, and some of the experiences that have led to the advent of the TikToks of the world, and how we consume media — particularly around sound bites and how that changes how we experience the world when it's happening, and repeated loops, and how we can interact with that ourselves.

Billie Loewen [00:09:21] So without further ado, we're excited to get to our guest, David Leiberman.

Billie Loewen [00:09:31] Alright everybody, we are super excited to get to our guest interview today. Our guest today is David Leiberman. He and his cousin Sammy Rubin created the Triller app. For folks who don't recall that experience, it was a viral app and had over 250 million downloads, hit number one overall in the App Store in about 50 countries, and then was acquired by Proxima Media in 2019. And then since that time, David and his cousin have also developed the chart-topping Disney Karaoke: Frozen, which was highest-grossing iPad app in music in 100+ countries, and the number one highest-grossing iPhone app in music in 35+ countries.

Billie Loewen [00:10:09] He's also worked on the acclaimed Mibblio kids music platform, which is featured in The Wall Street Journal and Mashable. David is on to his next project, which we're excited to learn more about today. David is about to launch Console, which is a solution for Web3 communities as they build, grow and thrive. The Console app is a chat platform designed specifically for decentralized organizations. Think Web3 Discord. We're going to untangle some of this for anyone who's already in over their tech heads for a Wednesday morning, or whenever you're listening. Some fun facts, though: David owns The Lorca, which is a Catskills retreat and Adirondacks mid-century motel. He's also a cyclist, a Yale grad, and he works with Habitat for Humanity. David, welcome to the show.

David Leiberman [00:10:57] Thank you. Happy to be here.

Billy Fischer [00:10:59] David, what an intro. All I'm thinking about is, do you know every single song from Frozen? Surely, if you're building a karaoke app for Frozen, you end up memorizing every single lyric. Is this true?

David Leiberman [00:11:12] This is true — all to well.

Billy Fischer [00:11:16] What a sneaky life skill. So glad to have you and thanks for joining us on "Room for Growth." How on earth did you get started in mobile app development?

David Leiberman [00:11:27] I was couple of years out of college and was a little bit tired of working in management consulting. My cousin Sammy called me on one of our routine catch-ups. We were getting to know each other. We grew up together, but he was a few years older. I was out of college, we were living in New York City together and building a cousin relationship. He was telling me about an idea for a new format of a not-so-much music album and not-so-much storybook, but a new multi-modal experience for kids. I remember I was biking. I just had come over the Manhattan Bridge and come back to Park Slope, and Sammy was describing this general idea to me, and I was into it. Fast-forwarding a little bit, we pencil some ideas down and traded some brainstorming, and that was our first app, Mibblio. It started with an idea and we took it from there.

Billie Loewen [00:12:35] David, let's get into the marketing side of app building, because you're good at building apps and successful there. Both Mibblio and the Disney Frozen: Karaoke app were huge in the App Store. How did you not just create a great product? Mibblio Biblio has been described as akin to GarageBand for toddlers and it hit the top of the App Store charts within a first few weeks of launching.

Billie Loewen [00:13:03] And then your second app, the Disney: Frozen Karaoke app, that was number one highest-grossing app in the music category on the App Store in over 100 countries on iPad, and over 30 on iPhone. We know a thing or two about launching an app into the app store and it is not easy to drive that number one position. You have to be really thoughtful about

your go-to-market strategy, the technical launch of the app as well, and then how you market it. What are your marketing skills? How are you successful at this?

David Leiberman [00:13:33] I think we got a little lucky at a couple of points. And, we did a couple more things. Sammy and I always tried to remind ourselves was how important a good quality product was. Before any traditional or growth marketing, we would always be obsessed with product and iterating to get to exactly that experience that he and I loved — and we thought kids would love after that. With Mibblo, it was a little bit more traditional marketing than growth marketing. We concentrated more on PR and partnerships that really drove awareness around the app. Those in turn helped us turn some heads at Apple who wound up featuring Mibblo. That was awesome for acquisition. A lot of our marketing was focused on acquisition and our product development was really focused on retention.

Billy Fischer [00:14:43] Are you guys musicians? The apps's success was in the music category. Are you guys musicians or builders? How did you guys get this inspiration around music?

David Leiberman [00:14:56] Sammy and I are both musicians. Sammy is more of a trained jazz musician and took most of his college courses at Eastman. I am a bluegrass, untrained musician.

Billy Fischer [00:15:11] That's where those skills come in. I'm sure that came in handy as you guys were building these experiences.

David Leiberman [00:15:17] Totally.

Billie Loewen [00:15:18] You said that you were more focused, especially on acquisition of users, of course, but then PR partnerships to get the spotlight on the app that you really needed in the App Store to drive those downloads. But, I am curious if in those first builds you were doing some growth marketing. Were you trying to understand the behaviors of your user base? In this case it was children. That's especially interesting to understand how children, as users, are really different than adults. Do they have different expectations for UX patterns, or do they consume differently? What did you learn about the difference between how children use technology versus what you might expect with adults?

David Leiberman [00:16:00] I have to be honest with you, I think for a variety of reasons. This was our first app and I didn't know anything about Mixpanel, Amplitude, Localytics, or any of this stuff. Also, this was the a young kids's app. There's COPPA and other laws to abide by with tracking data. To be honest, we didn't really know of all of the product and marketing analytics that could be so helpful in app development and growth. I don't have a good answer for you.

David Leiberman [00:16:31] We were largely building from intuition and our empathy towards little kids. We would watch kids play with the app, but that was about it. One of the principles underlying Mibblo was that kids didn't need to have a musical, entertainment app or educational app be so prescriptive that they weren't able to improvise. With a little bit of what we came to call structured creativity, you can have a musical app for kids that's not totally cacophonous. It can be for kids to explore music and for parents to listen.

Billy Fischer [00:17:29] Getting featured in the Apple iOS store is a big deal. How did that happen? You mentioned you got lucky. Was that one of those lucky areas, or was there something that you did to develop a relationship with Apple?

David Leiberman [00:17:44] No, we were super green. We didn't even know that that was a thing.

Billy Fischer [00:17:48] Okay. Awesome.

Billie Loewen [00:17:50] As you're talking, I'm reflecting on how fast apps have matured from this new technology into something that is so ubiquitous and so adopted by society that there's no doubt that apps are going to continue to dominate how we experience the Internet and how we experience life on our phones in the future. But, it is crazy how in just 15 years, it's gone from the Wild West of what can be created and into what are now total norms compared to even a few years ago. The notion that you'd release an app and not track its analytics, or you'd be

developing out of research that felt more intuitive rather than based in metrics of how people interact with each feature — is pretty wild to me. It's been such a fast learning curve for all of society and in terms of how we've developed norms and standards around how apps are developed.

Billie Loewen [00:18:39] I love your point that you're said, "Nope. The App Store was just a surprise and a lucky break and it happened." Talk to us about that day. When did you find out you were going to be featured in the App Store? What did it feel like to understand that was going to happen? The growth must have been precipitous. What were you doing in those days?

David Leiberman [00:18:58] We didn't even know that that was going to happen. We woke up one day and noticed that we had 70,000 downloads that day. We said, "Something's going on." We went to the App Store and saw a big banner for Mibiblio that had our very indie Brooklyn illustrator vibe. It was really fun to see.

Billy Fischer [00:19:20] That's awesome.

Billie Loewen [00:19:21] That's so awesome.

Billy Fischer [00:19:22] Triller, the third app that you launched, started as a music video maker and became a popular social media app that hit number one also on the App Store in over 50 countries, which is a really impressive. That's amazing. And it's been downloaded over 300 million times. This has become a whole industry. When you talk about Triller, it's now commonly accepted today as a type of application. But, it sounds like when you were launching, this concept of making videos was very early on. So, definitely need to talk about this. Can you tell us how you came to this idea?

David Leiberman [00:19:56] Yeah. Again, Sammy's idea not mine. I'll tell you what was happening. We had just done Disney Frozen: Karaoke and we were thinking about what to do next and ways to leverage that video karaoke experience. In the Frozen: Karaoke app, kids can overdub their vocal performances to actual footage from the movie, so it's fun. You wind up seeing tens of thousands of videos or more. The videos look the same, but you hear a karaoke performance. That might get a little tiresome, especially for the app developers.

David Leiberman [00:20:38] We were thinking, how do we make this a little more interesting? We wound up an intermediate step of talking to a bunch of medium- to large-sized record labels. We thought that we had struck upon a new format here. At the time, Pharrell Williams was coming out with a new single that would be on iTunes and there'd be the music video and so on. In this case, we imagined an interactive "Pharrell Video Karaoke App," or something along those lines. Everyone was pretty psyched about this. We almost wound up building that product with Warner, Sony, or Universal Music Group.

David Leiberman [00:21:34] We ended up abandoning that proactively ourselves because Sammy called attention to how tiresome watching all of those videos would be. We ditched that product because we just weren't excited about it. Although we had somewhat already sold it to big partners. As we were thinking about what to do with video karaoke, Sammy thought, "Oh, why don't we invert the audio and the video?" So rather than layering audio on top of video, let's layer video on top of a master audio track. That's basically how music videos are made. That was where the idea for Triller came from.

Billy Fischer [00:22:30] Love it.

Billie Loewen [00:22:31] When history textbooks catch up to technology and start trying to make sense of the advent of social media, how do you think they'll talk about Triller in relation to TikTok? It strikes me that you were one step away from the big idea of TikTok, or an early player to what is now such a huge and overwhelmingly present experience. How do you make sense of that?

David Leiberman [00:22:58] Well, I'm curious if the history books will get to Music.ly. Do you remember Music.ly, or no?

Billy Fischer [00:23:05] Only from my children. And that was pre-TikTok. My kids just made me aware of that.

David Leiberman [00:23:10] Music.ly was the precursor to TikTok before it was bought by ByteDance, the Chinese company.

Billy Fischer [00:23:18] Were Triller and Music.ly in the same time frame?

David Leiberman [00:23:21] Yes. Music.ly and Triller launched at about the same time. We was very focused on a younger demographic, like 9 to 11 year-olds.

Billy Fischer [00:23:33] My children at the time, yeah.

David Leiberman [00:23:35] Mostly girls, to be honest, were the music community. Triller was a little bit older population. Snapchat skewed a bit more high school age and hip hop, as far as like genre. So, while we were both in the short form video space and used music as a go-to-market strategy, it was really very different communities. We also were trying to democratize how music videos could be made on a phone, so we invented that auto-edit. That is part of the magic of Triller. Those are a couple of ways in which we viewed ourselves as different products and different communities.

Billy Fischer [00:24:25] Interesting. Tell us more about what you called the "magic" of Triller.

David Leiberman [00:24:30] The auto-edit. yeah. We wanted to make it really easy to make a music video that looked like, a real MTV video from the 90s or something more contemporary. The hard thing about video and music video — or even video on a phone in general — is that it's unlike photos, where the answer is simply a filter. That's what Instagram realized. With video, it's really the edit that is so challenging. We wanted to be able to make that as easy as possible. The Triller experience is very similar to how a music video crew might approach making a music video, where you shoot one take — at the park — and then you shoot another take over the exact same song from start to finish — on the yacht or something — or the third take, out by the fountain. And you go from start to finish over the song. Then, you'd send those various clips to an editing house to decide when to go to take one, one to go to take two, back to take one. You following me? We just made that one tap instantaneous on the device. We try to simulate the decisions that a human editor would make in cutting that footage together.

Billy Fischer [00:25:55] Wow. How long did it take you to build Triller from an idea or conception, to launch in the App Store?

David Leiberman [00:26:02] From idea to launch, it was about six months.

Billy Fischer [00:26:10] Wow. That's impressive.

Billie Loewen [00:26:12] That's so fast.

Billy Fischer [00:26:15] As you're talking, I'm thinking about Music.ly and TikTok and Triller and all these app experiences. Our expertise is typically in building apps for brands that are very product- and commerce-driven. But as you're talking, I'm thinking that there are some core attributes. People want to either express themselves artistically, to laugh or have fun, and maybe sometimes all three of those happen at the same time. As I've consumed all these videos, I'm generalizing pretty heavily. But, those seem like the three areas where you focused, and more on the artistic creation part — that expression of art. There's so much on TikTok today and maybe it's hard to put it all of it in one category, but a lot of it I'd characterize as funny — at least from what I see most often. It sounds like you're more in that expressive area. What do you think?

David Leiberman [00:27:07] For a long time, we kept the OG landscape video, or the gritty black-and-white filter that kids could use. We were thoughtful with the filters that we gave users. And that was always a big thing that people talked about when we asked them what they love most

about Triller. We were interested in the quality of the videos that our users could make. I do think that was a bit of the difference that the history books might think matters.

Billy Fischer [00:27:44] And you spared us all from listening to people sing bad karaoke to Pharrell's "Happy." It's a lot more fun to see people dance to that song than to hear them sing it. Your intuition sounds like it was probably right.

David Leiberman [00:27:56] Again, that was Sammy's idea.

Billie Loewen [00:27:59] One more question on this front. Triller went from being a music video creation app to a social media platform. How did you use growth tactics to increase the number of users, e.g., Triller Famous?

David Leiberman [00:28:17] Triller was part of a new generation of creator-focused apps that benefit from built-in, viral word-of-mouth marketing. We made the decision to initially only enable Triller videos to exist outside of the app. There were no videos to watch in Triller. It was simply the tool to make the videos — most of which would wind up living on Instagram with a little beautiful Triller watermark. So in that way, we built the flywheel into the app.

David Leiberman [00:29:03] Once we got the party started, we added the social network and the ability to watch videos make it more like a destination. But, we didn't want to drop people into an empty room. We wanted the experience to focus on creating something meaningful and invaluable to them. It was only later when we built a Triller tribe. We started experimenting in building a social network within the app. After doing that massive product transition to a social network, we wound up ripping out the social network awhile after going back and doubling down the tool utility. And then fast-forwarding again, the social network came back.

Billie Loewen [00:30:00] That's so interesting. Now you're building Console, which is a Discord for Web3. Let's pretend for a moment that you've never heard of Discord. You don't know what Web3 is. Let's start there and then talk to us about what Console is. Let's make sure we're keeping everybody with us. I think on this podcast, we try to make sure we don't use tech jargon too frequently — and without at least stopping and saying, "Alright, let's break our tech bubble for a minute and make sure everybody's coming with us." So talk to us about Console. What does it do, and what are you most excited about?

David Leiberman [00:30:38] Discord is a chat app, much like Slack. Initially, a lot of tech companies — and now all companies — use Slack to chat. A lot of people around the world, especially in the last few years, instead of using Slack — particularly for hobby projects — we chat in Discord. Discord is similar to Slack, except it has a black background and it's where a lot of chat is going down. Initially it was also where gamers would chat.

David Leiberman [00:31:15] Increasingly, the last couple of years, Discord is where a lot of Web3 projects are chatting. So Web3 is a vibe. It is an extension of the Internet, quite simply. I heard someone describe it as merely an extension of the internet. It's a new movement that — depending on who you talk to — is changing the way the Internet is architected. One of the principles of Web3 is decentralization. So rather than a couple of big tech companies owning your data, you own your own data.

David Leiberman [00:32:00] I see you smiling, Billy. Is this something you've been thinking about?

Billy Fischer [00:32:04] Yeah. Keep going.

David Leiberman [00:32:07] So owning your own data is a big thing. Right now, think about just your log-in and your password to Facebook or Instagram. So often, you know, you forget your password and you need to contact someone at Facebook to get your password again. Facebook or Instagram or any Web2 application, you know, has a database of all of your information. A Web3 application would not have such a database. At Console, which I'll tell you about in a second, we don't have your log-in data. You control your identity. You control your data.

David Leiberman [00:32:51] You can imagine taking this a step further. This is where it's very interesting and still very nascent. If you decide you don't want — for whatever reason — to be on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook anymore. But, you've spent so much time building a brand there and building a following. You should be able to take not just your handle and your name, but all of your followers over to another identical a competitor — let's say maybe a upstart in Brooklyn who came out with a cleaner Facebook or Instagram. You should be able to take you and your family and followers over to another application. Today, that's not possible. In a Web3 world, that would be.

Billy Fischer [00:33:39] Wow.

Billie Loewen [00:33:41] Tell us more about Console, now that you've given us the full Web 3 explanation.

David Leiberman [00:33:47] If you've used Discord in the last couple of years, or you may be heard conversations on Twitter about it. There have been outcries for a better Discord for the last couple of years. When I tell someone that my co-founder Chris Catig and I are building a Console — which is a better Discord — people say, "I've been waiting for this."

David Leiberman [00:34:19] Console is an improvement to Discord in a couple of different ways. Number one, we don't own your your data. We don't own your identity. You do. You connect with a web wallet. And it is more designed for the use-cases that we see people trying to use Discord for, but hitting walls. We really designed it for those use-cases in mind.

Billy Fischer [00:34:55] That was similar to my assumption that Slack is for the business community and Discord is for maybe all other things. I've used Discord for a couple communities. It's all similar to like you said — hobbyist. Is that the same type of audience you'll be targeting, or is that yet to be determined?

David Leiberman [00:35:10] Discord was and in many ways still is great for gamers. It's not great for Web3 communities like projects that are trying to build in that new Internet vision that I was describing. Console is really for them. It's really for Web3 communities, decentralized teams, "DAOs" or decentralized autonomous organizations, and other NFT communities. That's really the focus of the early Console product.

Billy Fischer [00:35:42] If you haven't already, you should probably consider the "Web3 as a Vibe" t-shirt, because I think you've got something there. I encourage you to make that quick Shopify store. I bet that would work.

David Leiberman [00:35:55] Love it.

Billie Loewen [00:35:56] David, you said you're getting close to launch. When is launch? What are some of the behaviors and the indicators that you're looking for to know whether you're successful at launch?

David Leiberman [00:36:06] Well, we have our first community using Console and as we speak, we are doing a closed beta. So we're just gradually adding more communities and iterating on the product with each new community kind of a la Slack in the early days. We don't have an immediate date to open Console publicly yet.

David Leiberman [00:36:31] We're not there yet, but go to Console.xyz and drop your name and we'll keep you posted. As far as metrics we value and score, we're aiming for a certain target NPS score. With an app like Console where people are chatting every day, there's a lot of anecdotal data there. It's great to immerse ourselves in the chats and get a sense for the vibe. As far as quantitative metrics, NPS score, daily active users — the standard North Stars. We also want people to be happy there and we feel like we can get a sense for that from the conversations.

Billy Fischer [00:37:20] David, you obviously have a lot of experience building sticky applications. Our listeners are typically folks who are charged with helping their company not just build an app, but continue to grow all the things that you have experience doing — from the stickiness, to daily

active users to time spent within the application. You have a knack for building sticky applications. Can you talk us through that journey? Once you build and launch the app, for the ongoing grooming of it — was it through features or was it through customer feedback? How did you continue to optimize the experience to make it more sticky?

David Leiberman [00:37:58] We tried to remain as focused as we could on one or two North Star metrics, which might at many points not have been daily active users. Oftentimes, going after DAU growth really causes you to sacrifice something or other that affects retention. Sometimes it's being a little bit more patient with daily active user growth and really focusing on doubling- and tripling-down on what your users love.

David Leiberman [00:38:38] How do you know what your users love? The best way is to be a power user of your product yourself and to be in a WhatsApp group or a Telegram group with a lot of your evangelizing users and early users, and be talking to them all the time. Occasionally, do a survey. Get a sense for what people love most. Not necessarily always prioritizing growth was something that we always tried to remind ourselves of.

Billie Loewen [00:39:13] David, when a few big tech companies changed how tokenization and cookies could be tracked and how other companies could track their users based on their footprint across the web, it threw most of the private business world and all of paid advertising into a total tizzy. It was a total tizzy about how these changes would impact marketing and marketing spend, or how companies could expect to draw users into their app, retain them, and re-market to them.

Billie Loewen [00:39:47] It was a huge cause uproar, but all in the name of user privacy. Web3 to me feels like a very similar shift. It's a rejection of the notion that businesses have not been fundamentally trustworthy enough with user data. And so now, many users are saying we can create this more private experience outside of an owned platform. I'm curious how Web3 could shift common technologies and how they're used today on things like customer data platforms or attribution tracking, etc.. I'm curious how you think about what Web3 might do to marketing, to marketing technology, and to how private businesses think about reaching and retaining their users.

David Leiberman [00:40:37] In many cases, it could enable more interesting opportunities for targeting. That remains to be seen. Fundamentally, today I really enjoy the targeted Instagram ads — I do. I love when Instagram gets me and shows me something that I totally didn't know about. Maybe I'm somewhere else on the privacy spectrum from my friend. My digital identity to me, you know, might be a little bit more comprehensive.

David Leiberman [00:41:09] The point is, it's up to me and it's up to you in terms of what you want to share. I might be more of an open book on the internet, and I will happily tell WillowTree and your clients like what I'm about. It's just more about tapping into the new technologies that are in many ways, more data comprehensive and interesting, than trying to pry what you can from various APIs.

Billie Loewen [00:41:42] Yeah, I'm totally with you. To anybody who tells me, "I just hate advertising. I hate remarketing," I'm like, "Really?" It makes life so much easier if you're not a person who's searching for something that you want more information on, and then immediately leaving that search and waiting for answers to come to you. For example, do you want a red rain jacket and do you want the Internet to decide, and are you a person who typically purchases in this range of these types of brands or this quality?

Billie Loewen [00:42:07] I think of that as a bit of a service and I understand the blurred lines between privacy. But it is so interesting, this notion that it's not just about the nice experience of brands getting to know you, or the Internet getting to know you and feed you content. That's not the end of it. That's really not the point of Web3. The point of Web3 is to change that experience so that you have more control over how that's functioned.

David Leiberman [00:42:30] Yeah. 100%.

David Leiber [00:42:31] Alright, this is my favorite closer question. So, David, thank you for being with us today. It's great to hear from you. I wish we had another hour to pick your brain about where technology is going generally and which experiences you'd be investing in and that you think will be table-stakes in the next 10 years. But I have one question that I love to ask: I want to invite you to talk positive trash about a brand that you truly love. Who do you love right now? Who are you loyal to? What do you like about them? What quality do they bring you? What makes you a loyal fan?

David Leiber [00:43:02] My favorite brands are small brands. Small businesses like a restaurant that feels like it's got an innovative take on a menu and great branding. I'm going to give a genuine positive plug for honestly one of my brands, which we haven't really talked about, which is The Lorca. And I attribute that to my amazing friend and co-founder Julian Darwell of Lorca, who I think is a branding genius. I would encourage you to check out what we're doing there. It's very much like a family operation. It's a small business that's growing pretty nicely. We're trying to create a wilderness brand that has a diverse audience of consumers who have frequented the Adirondacks for years, and then Brooklyn kids who have never been to the Adirondacks before. It's interesting to walk that line.

Billy Fischer [00:44:01] Cool. Where can we find The Lorca?

David Leiber [00:44:05] TheLorca.com

Billy Fischer [00:44:11] Right now we're talking in October, and I have to imagine those areas are at their prime, right?

David Leiber [00:44:19] Totally. Yeah. Leaf-peeping season.

Billy Fischer [00:44:22] Oh yeah, love it. Awesome. We'll make sure to check that out. And David, thanks for giving us your time. Best wishes on launching Console. And we'll look forward to see what you're up to in the future.

David Leiber [00:44:33] Thanks so much. It's been fun. If you're interested in Console, go to @ConsoleDAO on Twitter. And if you're interested in connecting with me, I'm @DLeiber on Twitter.

Billy Fischer [00:44:53] Great. Thanks so much for that, David. We'll talk to you soon.

David Leiber [00:44:56] Awesome. Have a good day.