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# CLOUD REALITIES

## CR043

How technology democratisation
drives innovation with
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[00:00:00] Joe, what have you been looking at this week? Let's do this one, let's, let's You best do that again! I love it, I love it That is an absolute, oh yeah Anyway, I'll be quiet for 30 seconds Sorry Joe, what have you been looking at this week? I really hope that you guys, I'm sorry

Welcome to Cloud Realities, a conversation show exploring the practical and exciting alternate realities that can be unleashed through cloud driven transformation. I'm David Chapman. I'm Sjoukje Zaal, and I'm Rob Kernahan.

And today we're going to be talking about a wide subject, technology democratization in society, but also how that translates into modern organizations and [00:01:00] actually how that very thing can help you innovate faster as an organization.

But before we get to that, Rob and I talk regularly and generally there's something confusing him about the world. Sometimes he might even have a point. Rob, what's confusing you this week?

Well, Dave, the second… Time is coming around for glasses with basically video recorders in them. So if you look at the, um, if you remember back to Google glasses and the societal car crash that was, uh, and nobody could really accept that they might be recorded all the time, Facebook and Ray Ban have got together and they're launching one that you're always online live streaming.

Your life. And although you can with technology and I'm sure, and it looks quite cool and they've integrated it well into the glasses and it's all, you know, ergonomically designed, I'm not convinced society is ready for this technological. invasion into our lives where [00:02:00] everything's live all the time. And I will be watching with popcorn and confused about, will this become a thing or is this just the second time society is going to have a fight over it?

And these things I understand this time around don't even have like, you know, that attempt to put like Google maps on the inside of the glasses or anything like that. This is purely like recording everything that you look at. Yeah, basically, you can take a phone call, listen to music, and record your life and broad.

Instantly connected to social media, I think, is one of the taglines, and I'm like, I don't think lots of people would like to be in a room with loads of these glasses with everything being recorded, so I'm, I'm suspecting a fair bit of friction from their, um, reception from the wider world. I'm not a fan.

No, no. Can you turn off the notifications?

I think we established on the smartphone confusion episode that that's an absolutely critical factor of doing these sorts of things. But just, just a, I remember last time there were [00:03:00] videos online of people having fights in like restaurants and things about people wearing the original version of them from Google.

And I just don't think society's moved on. So I'm like, that's why I say I've got me popcorn out ready to see the reception. Cause you know, people are going to buy them and try them. And then I think there'll just be some, some interesting conversations about. The, um, the experience, well, let's see how that one goes.

I must admit I'm with you. I like that. I actually could get behind the idea of smart glasses in the sense that they're almost sort of augmented reality style things. I can see immediate leverage of that, you know? Um, but yeah, no, just, just constant recording. Yeah, well that use case where the map's projected onto the lens, so you know where you're going, so you're navigating in the city, that's unintrusive and highly valuable.

So augmented reality glasses, I can see a market for that, but record everything and live stream it. You know what that is? That's confluent technology. It is, it actually does. On [00:04:00] that note, let's get on to our main subject today, and I am delighted to say that Nabil Bukhari, the Chief Technology and Product Officer for Extreme Networks is with us.

Nabil also writes a lot for Forbes and other publications, and we're really looking forward to talking about the subject with you, Nabil, so welcome. Do you want to introduce yourself and say a little bit about what you do? Yes, absolutely. Well, thank you so much. Uh, I really appreciate, you know, you guys inviting me on to this and I'm really looking forward to, you know, the topic at hand because that is something very near and dear to my heart, but just to get started and having your listeners get acquainted to who I am.

Um, I work for Extreme networks. So a little bit about extreme, we are a networking technology company and we are a networking technology company that has a very interesting and a specific outcome in mind. And that is. Thank you so much. To give everybody out there new ways to better their lives and the lives of everybody around them.

And how do we do that? Obviously, we do that through a lot [00:05:00] of technology related to networking, but we are not a technology company who just is there to create more technology. So that's an introduction to the company. I play multiple different roles in the company. A couple of them you mentioned. I'm the chief product officer, I'm the chief technology officer, and I'm also the general manager of the subscription business or a portion of the business.

Of the company, but I consider my role to be that of a jump and do a lot of things and help guide the chaos that we have created. And later, of course, we'll, we'll talk a little bit more about that. So, so I'm the guider of chaos, if you would. Uh, so yeah, there I am. That's my role. And I am very excited to be here.

Uh, maybe let's start with, uh, Nabil just. Just having a little bit of a longer version of your route to now. So just tell us a little bit about your career and how you've got to, uh, to where you are today. Yeah, absolutely. And, you know, rather than starting from the start, [00:06:00] maybe we'll, we'll go backwards from where we are right now.

Why not? Why not? It's like when you start all the biographies, isn't it? And you always have to wade through the first three chapters of like of childhood and you're like, yeah, it just gets the good stuff. Yeah, yeah, exactly. You know, it's just like, I don't, you know, when I was two years old, I taught that, you know, I got my first computer when I was six.

Yeah, exactly. No, I, I think my journey is, is, is, is a collection of on the spur moments, half luck, half courage, you know, mostly chance. Uh, you know, I don't believe in a lot of people, or maybe they are true. Maybe it is true for them where they think that they crafted this path and then they followed it.

And, you know, they knew this is where they're going to be good for them, more powerful than for me. It was a lot of, uh, you know, opportunities presented themselves. And at times you just. Yeah. You know, jumped at it and it took you into a different path and then a different path and here we are. So, so currently right now I worked with extreme networks, um, you know, and, and, and Austin company, and I'll tell [00:07:00] you a little bit about extreme because that will tell you a lot about me as well.

So extreme has been around, you know, one of those Silicon Valley companies that started, you know, in late, early nineties, uh, so been around for like 25 years, sometime about. Just like most of the Silicon Valley companies, it started and it was like amazing and it was like,

boom, it went up and then it kind of lost relevance a little bit and became a niche and a company that survived, but didn't really have much of an impact right after its introduction.

And that's where it stayed for a while, um, to like call it like an. Five or six years ago, six years ago, and that's when we said that this is just not a place to be at, right? If you're not having an impact. And this was the conversation I was having earlier that it was not just about building more technology and, you know, having more business or increasing the revenue was about impact.

It was like, okay, the way we are, if we stay here, we're not necessarily going to have an impact, not on our people. Society not on our [00:08:00] industry and not around customers partners and so on and so forth and we went on this trajectory of transformation and you know we acquired a bunch of companies on the way we kind of really narrowed down you know our view we created a vision of the future which was based around the human condition rather than the technology and the result of In the last five, six years is that we are five times bigger than what we were.

We are valued at 20 X of what we were valued at that time. And we are one of the fastest growing companies in the networking space. So specifically in that, in that purpose shift that you just described there, what, what, what were the main elements in that purpose shift? That's, that's, that's now sort of taking you to another level in terms of your performance.

Yeah. So. You know, I would say there were two, three main things on this. The one was why you were doing the thing that you were doing. And if you look at a lot of technology companies, um, you know, they struggle with that. Most of the times you say like, oh, well, you know, why are you creating? We were [00:09:00] laughing about it, the toaster, the internet connected toaster.

Well, why are you? Creating the internet connected toaster. Well, I'm doing it because that's the hype and I could do it, right? So there's a lot of it. So creating the best product. I mean, that was obviously a tongue in cheek kind of an example, but there are a lot of great companies that create great products and engineering excellence or technology or advancement in technology is kind of like what drives them.

And then, you know, it works and that's, you know, where they are. But for us, that was not working, and we felt that we need to stop trying to create the best product and start trying to create technologies that have the most positive impact on humans. And if you notice, we said humans and didn't say just customers and users or partners, we said all humans, whether they use our technology or buy our technology, or they are on the receiving end of our technology.

And I think that was a bit, a subtle, I know when we did it like five years ago, everybody was like, uh, yeah, whatever. That sounds [00:10:00] like a marketing trick, but it wasn't, it was a core fundamental shift in who we are and, and, you know, now we say, well, why do we do everything that we do? Because we want to give you more ways to better your condition.

That is the purpose of the company. It's not about technology or networks and stuff. Now, of course, that's the way we accomplish that. And I think that shift really put us on this path, you know, uh, that I just described. And when you were doing that, to make such a shift in your ethos at the top of Your company was that was that an easy and obvious conversation to have at the shop.

I suspect there was probably some uncomfortable shifting in chairs as the ethos was being. We need to work and we need to think differently. We need to operate differently. We need

to present ourselves differently. We need to think differently. All those things that that must have been quite a challenging time pivoting.

It is, it was a very challenging time because first and foremost, that now in the [00:11:00] hindsight, I can say that, Oh, we sat together and we said, well, we need to have a new ethos and we need to find why it doesn't work that way, right? It evolves organically. The first conversation is not bad. The first conversation is something entirely different.

And it's, it's a lot of, it's a lot of chaos. Right. And this kind of, now I said, I just said that as you talk about exchange, I will tell you a little bit about me as well. Um, I really believe that a lot of innovation comes from chaos. Um, you cannot structure innovation, um, and, and chaos, not in terms of like, it's crazy and nobody understands what that is, but chaos is really, you walk into a room full of a lot of things without perception, that's chaos as well.

Uh, you add a lot of people, a lot of diversity without really knowing how you're going to organize them. That's also chaos, right? So I think chaos is where it all starts. So it was very chaotic. It was a very chaotic time and it was two years, two and a half years, three years in [00:12:00] some ways, I would say we're still on this journey.

The journey never really ends. Um, so it was challenging. It was chaotic. Um, it meant some people would align with it. Some people would not align with it. And there was no single person that. Need it so there's nobody that stood up and say this is how it should be it was kind of an organic creation but it was not complete mayhem either where it's just like okay here's five hundred people you get in a room and come to a conclusion well that doesn't lead you anywhere either so what i'm trying to get to is that it really is a guided chaos that's the process through which we got through this and that shift from say using the word customers.

In your purpose statement to a broader. Humans, what would you, how would you characterize the difference that that makes now in business on a, on a day to day basis, because I agree, like some people could think that would be a is a relatively small shift. Other people might [00:13:00] think that's actually a very large shift.

So how does it manifest itself on a day to day basis? Do you think so? That is a brilliant question. And to think about it this way, right? If you're saying that I am going to Create something that is focused on the buyer and, you know, that's it. They want, I want to create something that they buy the most, right?

Okay. You create something and it will be very flashy and it will be interesting and the customer would buy it, but then your focus pretty much stops there, right? So you continue to add to things that are really attractive at the start of a buyer's journey, right? So that's kind of where the focus becomes.

But if you say that. We want to create a technology that has a positive impact on every human that touches it throughout its lifespan. Then two things happen. One, your focus is not extremely short term. You are not just talking about the first time somebody sees it and buys it. It elongates [00:14:00] across, you know, the lifespan of the technology.

That's one big shift. The second shift is that now you're not just thinking about the buyer, you're thinking about the buyer, the operator, the user, you're also thinking about, you know, who's on the other end. So we are on the networks, right? So networking, pretty much all of us, every entire, the entire humanity, entire.

Planet is on the receiving end of the network, right? Even this, what we're doing is through the network. So network touches or networking technology touches everybody, but indirectly it might be that I buy the thing I put it in my company. Well, you could be working

in that company. You could be a customer of that company.

You could be the family of the customer of that company, no matter who you are. That technology in some way or another impacts everybody. And when you start thinking that way, it's a very different way of creating a product. It's a very different way of dealing with technology, right? So those are big shifts.

Well, maybe actually [00:15:00] let me use that framing to maybe introduce one of our major topics today, which is your position on technology democratization and how and how. An expansive view on the use of technology can actually deliver better results. So let's, let's just start with a, a baseline of technology democratization and what's your particular spin on it?

Right. Uh, yeah, that, that obviously the topic very near and dear to my heart, right? But at the start of it, let's just define what we mean by democratization, because I feel most of the times when we read about democratization, especially in the context of technology, we are, most of the people talk about accessibility.

I love you. I would say that there are three aspects to democratization of. Of technology. One is availability, so which is the better that technology is available or not. Now that availability takes into account, you know, whether somebody can actually get it, whether it is within their reach, what's the pricing of it, what's the cost of it [00:16:00] and all sorts of different aspects.

But that really determines whether a technology is available to the masses. Then comes the accessibility of it and accessibility. Think about is that Actually. Can they actually do something with it? Is it, is it easy enough for them to wrap their minds around it? You know, let's say for example, and I'll give you an example of these two stages and then I'll go to the third one.

So think about, you know, big computers like super computers either computing or AI or this and that pick whichever hype cycle technology you want to take about. The first thing is whether it's only available to companies that are a hundred billion dollars or above or can a mom and pop shop You know, at the corner, you use it.

That's the availability part. Pricing plays a huge role in that. The second part is that even if it is cheap enough for the mom and pop shop to buy it, that mom and pop shop that does not have a separate IT people or do not really have the ability to go hire technical minds, can they actually put that to use?

[00:17:00] That to me is accessibility, right? How easily somebody can take that technology and drive it towards a value for them. So that is accessibility. So availability, accessibility, and the last one in democracy is control, right? Who has the control on it? And by the way, when you, when you listen to it this way, this is no different than our political democracy, even.

It's like, can you vote, right? How easy it is to vote and what is the value of that vote, right? Uh, and, and I won't take it in that direction. That'll take us into a different conversation altogether. But those three aspects. That's a wholly different podcast. That is a totally different podcast. I think we'll be immediately out of our depth.

Exactly. And, and, and I don't think I am well versed enough to talk about that, but, but the analogy still holds that for technology. So when I talk about democratization of technology, Our goal is to make sure that technology is available, accessible, and the user has [00:18:00] a certain degree of control on it. Um, and that together is what I consider the democratization.

If you just give one out of the three, That's nothing. But that does not translate into democratization. That could be, Hey, we have made our technology more available. We have

made our technology more accessible. But when you add all three, that's when I consider that you really democratized that piece of technology or product or whatever that might be.

So in the outcome of that then, so the, the level of importance of having to take all three dimensions in your mind, uh, is what then beyond say. The societal need to get technology to the disadvantage or make sure technology is available in a ubiquitous way that makes sure that. The areas of society not cut off from an increasingly digital world you know what what beyond some of those of more societal and maybe third sector concerns are going on in your mind in terms of the advantage.[00:19:00]

Around democratization, I'll keep it very simple because I believe things, the simpler they are, the more people can understand it and actually accomplish that. So when you do these three, that goes back to the core of what we talked about, that technology should be for the betterment of humanity to improve the human condition.

And I think these three steps get you there. Right. So think about if a technology is not even available to large portions of society or large portions of humanity for that matter, because you can talk about it in a geopolitical sense as well. You can talk about it from a, from, you know, resources point of view, but if it is not available to large portions, then what it does is that it creates the haves and have nots, right?

Right. Obviously that does not translate into, you know, betterment of the general humanity one could argue. Now, if it is not accessible, then It creates those, it creates have and have nots in terms of knowledge. So think about it this way, if I can understand the [00:20:00] technology, but you cannot, right, then obviously that is not going to have a positive impact on everything.

By the way, internet and social media and stuff, they are a great example of that accessibility, right? There is no, like from a kid to, you know, a grand grandparent. Everybody can actually use it because we have made it so simple, so that is a good example. And the last part before we move on is that is the control part of it, which is always like at what point the user becomes the product, right?

So at this point in time, you know, look at our data and stuff like who is the product and who's the actual user. If you do not have control on it, then you're not empowered. So that's where when all three kind of fit in together, that's what then we have the control here. Maximum potential of a broad uplift of human condition.

So that's, that's how I think about this. And just thinking there, what you said is, the big surprise with social media was that the older generations [00:21:00] embraced Facebook as an example, didn't they? And shocked all of the younger generation, saying, my parents are now on Facebook and they've connected with me.

Oh dear. You know, and it was that, but it shows that accessibility point that it was made to a point where, um, Anybody could use it and you didn't get any disadvantage from the generation gaps. It was it was simple and easy. I'll bring it to our tech like our networking technology. You know, for the last 30 years, it was like, Oh, you needed to have these degrees and you needed to have these certifications from this company.

And Yes. You know, there was this thing like, Oh, these network people are, they see that they live in these crazy caves and never come out, but black magic is a black magic. Yes. And, and, and that held the industry back the most and still is to a certain extent, progress really happens. Not when a few gather in closed rooms and figure out how it goes, progress really happens when.

Most of the people become part of the process and I know I'm [00:22:00] again kind of talking about this concept that is applicable, not just to technology, but to everything. But that's really what my ethos is that we have to think about humanity and all of these things are what humanity. Uh, considers important, so they have to be pulled into technology.

So it cannot be just bits and bytes and, you know, machines and this, those are just ways on how to deliver it. So, um, so I know we started from like, you know, how did I get here? So that'll give you an idea that my path came through a lot of, you know, um, studying in. I came from a family where, you know, my parents and my two older sisters, you know, they all studied literature in philosophy.

I was the only one who went towards, you know, engineering and they were like, what's wrong with you, ? I love it. Yeah. Still have that conversation at Christmas dinner you're, I still, they still say you made the wrong choice, but, but you know, that was, that was a [00:23:00] big into that, you know, when. Studied engineering, but then I studied fine arts and then I studied business.

Um, I, you know, some would say that maybe I got so bored in my life that I went back to school like 18 different times, but, but to me, these are all now you're weaving it all together. Exactly out of necessity. Now I'm like, Oh, I need to look like I knew what I was doing right after the fact, but that's really where it comes from.

So to me, and we were having this conversation a little bit earlier that. This whole thing that, oh, you know, there's technology leaders and then there are business leaders. And then, you know, here's a separate HR person who thinks about people. That's just all ass backward. In my opinion, every leader must have a view of technology, business and humanity.

Right. And that's the triangle of leadership. And I, and I believe in, and this triangle looks different for every leader, but. As long as your triangle looks like a triangle, I feel you are [00:24:00] on your path, but probably on a path that leads to betterment. But when it doesn't look like a triangle, it looks like a line or a point, then I feel there are problems that could happen.

Will we talk, we talk actually reasonably often on the show about the fact that digital needs to become part of everybody's Kit bag as a leader these days and the example I often give, um, which I'm reflecting on quite a bit as you as you were saying there is that you don't really have that many business leaders that can't manage their budget.

For example, it's kind of it's table stakes if you're running a team or you're running an organization. You better be able to get your budget in hand and you better be able to understand your performance. And then I was adding digital to that as an important core skill, but actually I very much like your triangle route there because the humanities element of that becomes extremely important, especially as we're kind of moving into a.

You know, into an age [00:25:00] now of, let's face it, very sophisticated technology without official intelligence on the horizon. I understand. I will, I will add one point to that is think about, you know, how many times in the last 20 years we've gone out and you've heard something to the effect that, Oh, that, that's so and so is an engineer, that's my engineering team.

No, no, they're like socially awkward or, you know, they don't like to mingle or whatever. You're like different people. I think that's all. Bullshit, if I can say that on this, it is, they're all humans, whether you're from marketing or from your business and from engineering or technology, whatever the case may be, you are a human, humans by their nature are

supposed to be rounded, right?

And all these aspects of bring all of those aspects to your job and engineer should think about. You know, the person that's going to use a marketing person should understand the technology and the business person should not just think about only numbers on an Excel sheet because that's what makes companies go wayward [00:26:00] when you isolate these functions and isolate humans.

You only do this. You only do this. You only do this. So anyway, that's, that's my view and my philosophy around leadership. Yeah, well, that's a very good point, isn't it? So if you put a group of diverse thinkers in a room together, you will fundamentally get a better answer than putting all like minded people together and they'll just create bias associated with their world's viewpoint goes back to the sort of fusion of everybody has to come together in a network and think about the answer as opposed to, as you say, this linear sort of pass it from team to team and it gets worse as it goes down the chain where actually if everybody just had a chat at the beginning, you'd probably get a much better answer.

So yeah, so you kind of bring up another one of like topics that are really near and dear to my heart. You will hear a lot about diversity and, and, you know, racial diversity, ethnic diversity, cognitive diversity. I'm like, there's like, I think 17 different kinds out there at this point in time. I'm not an expert in there.

But to me, it is, it is definitely the first step. So once you, once you pull all that [00:27:00] diversity into a room, then what? I will tell you just having diversity, in my opinion, my humble opinion, I'm not saying that's true for everybody, but, but in my opinion, in my experience, just having diversity does not necessarily lead to a better outcome.

It is having the diversity and that creates chaos and then guiding that chaos. Yeah, I like it. Guided diversity. Yeah. With a, with a hand steering. Yeah, absolutely. It has, it has. And this is where the leaders, in my opinion, they only do the first half of their assignment, which is like, okay, I hired all of these diverse people.

Okay, great. I hate the percentage target. Yeah. Yeah. So, so, so then, so now as a leader, you have to do the second part. You have to Guide that diversity where everybody has an ability to speak where, you know, and there's a thousand voices, which is awesome. But at some point in time, you go from that divergent [00:28:00] phase to a convergent phase and get to an outcome.

So that, that guiding of diversity is in my opinion, as critical as. Accumulating diversity, right? So, so again, you will notice that my entire philosophy is around don't just do the first step, always knew what the next step is as well, because if you just do the, you know, I give this example to my team a lot and I said like, Oh, if you get 90 percent of the way.

You still didn't get there. So it is better to do a fewer things and get 100 percent of the way there rather than being too ambitious and only getting to 60 70 80 percent of their right. So anyways, yeah, but but that that permeates through a lot of what we talk about, which is the almost the servant leadership style where you're preparing the ground.

You're allowing everybody to thrive, but you're also providing the guidance to say you need to get to an end point. Thank you. It's roughly over here, but you're empowered to work out how we do that and everything else. I think we [00:29:00] liken it back to the digital transformation where the leadership says we're digital now and then they turn around and walk off with absolutely no guidance whatsoever.

Everybody just goes, what do we do now? Oh, a hundred percent. I mean, like I've been in

so many meetings where in my career where like, you know, you gather together. Oh, this is a select group of people. You gather the select group of people and then whoever is there. You know, the leader or the title depends.

Sometimes it's the same people. Sometimes it's not. They come in and they said, like, well, thou shalt innovate. And you're like, OK, or from tomorrow, as you said, you are digital. I mean, to me, that that is lazy leadership, that that that is leaders where they don't really know. Where they wanna go and where do you want, do they wanna take their organizations and stuff?

And then what they do is, rather than recognizing that and putting in the work, they're just like, okay, I selected smart people and they should figure it out. Right. And you'll hear a lot where like, oh, I do not micromanage my people. A lot of leaders. [00:30:00] Use that as an excuse to be an unavailable leader. You have to be absence.

Exactly. Right. You're just absent. You're like, Oh, well, I do not micromanage. You go figure it out, right? So that's just not the way you have to be present. You don't have to tell them every step of the way you have to create this diversity and then guide that diversity, you know, not control diversity, but guide diversity.

So those are all things in my opinion come together and which really brings me to the point I was making that In order to do that, whether it's a bunch of salespeople or marketing people or ethics people or technology people doesn't really matter. You are dealing with people, right? So that's the human factor.

My strong belief is whether you're talking about business, whether you're talking about technology, whether you're talking about marketing, whether you're talking about politics, whatever you're talking about, as long as it is anchored in humanity, You know, the human angle, I feel that that that has a higher [00:31:00] probability of success.

Well, I want to bring, if I can, maybe by way of closing today's conversation out a little bit, a couple of threads together from our conversation this afternoon, both the multidimensional humanistic view of how organizations should function with technology, democracy, and There's a lot of talk in an operating model and technology delivery circles at the moment of things like data democratization and things in the organization which effectively de perimeters IT, passes development tools out into organizations.

I'm getting from the sort of conversation we've had that that's a philosophy that you're, Aligned with but i wouldn't mind it you know just hearing your take on it yeah i am aligned with it there is no doubt about that but i again i'll bring it back to you they're just doing the first step is is not enough right so think about uh data democratization right so that most of the times when we are talking about it a lot of [00:32:00] people are talking about the availability part of it.

Right. Okay. Well, we made data available to everybody. It could be within an organization. It could be within an industry and stuff. Uh, okay, great. But it is so difficult to do something with. I mean, I'll bring you back into the networking world and the networking technology industry. You know, people have been talking about like, oh, you know, streaming data and APIs and dah, dah, dah.

This is all like we are democratizing it. But they're only making it available. Good luck trying to do anything with it. Because it is so darn difficult and impossible to get value out of it. So, my thought on this is that when we talk about these tools, and we talk about this, you know, um, Availability of data, we need to take the next step.

We need to make it accessible. And then we need to take the next step where we need to empower, you know, the user to do what you want to do with the data. And I, and I'm going to skirt away from that topic because that is also a different podcast. But, but my philosophy is that whatever [00:33:00] aspect it is, whether it is data, whether it's engineering tools, whether it's products, whether it's marketing, whether it's packaging, whether it is go to market.

Whether it's user experience, whatever it is, take the three steps, make it available, make it accessible, and then empower the end user so they can choose the value that they want to, you know, accomplish from that. And that really is, I mean, that's kind of the core tenant of my, so I would say that if you put this together with that guided chaos, you know, me.

Shouk, what have you been looking at this week? So each week I do some research on related ideas and transformation and tech. And this week I thought we should take a look at eight tactics for leaders to innovate in a successful way. So successful tech companies make innovation a priority, commit investment and talent to it, [00:34:00] and have an innovation system to transform ideas into results.

However, technology is not one of the main drivers of innovation. Of course, you need technology to support the innovations you come up with, and the technology itself needs to be easy to change going forward. So what are eight essential ingredients to successful innovation? And these are also more focusing on the human side of it.

The first one is keep an external perspective. Second, be ready to take action. Assemble the right team of people, have a willingness to change, cultivate a culture of embracing risk, show courageous leadership, make sure you follow through, and lastly, treat innovation as continuous. So a question from everyone's experience here, do you agree that these are the ingredients for successful innovation?

The big one for me in that is risk, right? So the whole test, um, maybe fail, make sure you learn cycle, test, fail, learn, test, fail, [00:35:00] learn. A lot of organizations really struggle with the concept of failure and getting their head over the fact that you might try something. It might not work, but as long as you learn.

There's value in that. And then keep going, keep going, keep going. It's right. It's right. It's right. And I think there's this corporate culture is we can't fail. And it really, uh, screws up innovation because nobody wants to take a risk on trying something. And maybe it might work. It might not unless there's a, you know, uh, a circumstance where you have to because you're forced into it.

But that for me that embracing risk and understanding that the first time you do it, it might not be perfect, but then you can iterate is a key learning that I think lots lots struggle with. And for me, that's the just got to get your head around the fact that you won't get it right all the time first time.

And don't worry about the KPI report. You've got to send up every week to management. It's about getting towards a result in in stages. Yeah, so, so I agree. So I think the eight steps that were there, um, I think that's, I think of it as a [00:36:00] pantry, right? So I love cooking and you open up the pantry and you stand in front of it and they're all these, you know, spices and condiments and all that kind of cool stuff.

And then you say, okay, what am I going to cook today? And, um, what happens is that you don't just use all of them and sprinkle them into a pot of water and, and, and think that, you know, it will, it will come out well. So I think those all are ingredients, but a leader who is

trying to, you know. Get his or her organization to innovate has to know the recipe or has to come up with the recipe.

So how much of which one and I'll give you this example now recipe could be a framework. I'll give you the one that we use, right? So we came up with this over this framework. I still haven't named it. So if anybody has a recommendation in terms of naming it, I'm, I'm all ears. We said that the cloud reality is innovation framework.

There you go. There you go. [00:37:00] Copyright and right here on the show. Wonderful. Uh, and the recipe or the framework is such that. You don't just sit down and say that, okay, well, now we are going to innovate and you don't create a separate team, you know, and say like, Hey, are you five, you're going to innovate and you go into, you know, your cave and come back with this amazing, innovative idea.

First thing is that innovation is the state of being and it's true for everybody innovating or should be innovating at the same time. Then the second thing is again, bringing back to my guided. You know, chaos theory. Look I've made it into a theory now. Um, It's evolving. The last 45 minutes. It's really taking shape.

Yeah, we might have to write a bit, like, you know, paper on it. Uh, so the guided chaos theory, what it is... You have to know what you want to innovate around. So, that brings us to the framework. The framework is that the first thing [00:38:00] that you do is you determine the outcome. Now, what would be the outcome? If you were to innovate, what would happen?

Like, what would it do? And most of the time, as you can see, things are kind of coming together. It has to be human centric. It must improve the human condition. And then you say like, okay, well, it will improve this condition for this set of humans. So that's the outcome. Don't think about how it would be done or not.

Right. So once you do that, then, then that outcome really is the guiding factor for the rest of the thing. Next is you come up with a strategy, right? So what the strategy is, and I know strategy is one of the most butchered word in the entire history of humanity, right? It means like different things to different people, but to me, it is like the big building blocks.

Okay. Well, my outcome is I really want to, you know, Reduce my blood pressure by being in nature more, right? Okay, well, or reduce my blood pressure. Strategy would be, oh, well I can take medicine, I can go take a walk in the green every day, you know, I can go to sleep a little bit earlier, use less, [00:39:00] so those are the strategic elements to figure out what the strategy is.

Then next in an organization, there is no single person that does innovation. As I said, the entire organization has to do innovation. Then you go towards how would you operationalize it? So that's where resources come in. That's where operationalization come in. That's where organizational design comes in.

That's where getting the right amount of people into the right room. That's where, you know, Rob, your point that, you know, you give them the permission to fail, but not. On paper, you have to provide them air covering. You have to do what you're saying. That's the operationalization. Remember, we have still not gotten into the execution phase yet.

So you do these three iteratively, and then you go into an execution phase and then you do all four of them intuitively and hopefully outcomes, innovation, or sometimes. Outcomes nothing and that's perfectly okay, because then you do it over and over and over and over [00:40:00] again, um, and to me, that's taking those eight steps, putting into a framework,

and then building a conveyor belt on it.

Um, I know I said a lot of different things, but that's how. You know, we have done it. I believe in that every company that I've worked for every organization that I've led, I kind of move them into this framework. And I'm not going to say it's 100 percent perfect. Nothing is innovation is not 100 percent perfect.

But I feel pretty confident at this point in time that this is a good place to start, or one of the good places to start. And then everybody puts in their own flavor to it. Well that was much better than my answer that's for sure i mean my sense of it as well and i think i think much of it's been said but what i really welcomed in this conversation was this notion that innovation isn't the separate thing in a kind of a hokey.

In inverted commas, funky room with, you know, some sort of astroturf [00:41:00] on the wall or something like that. Cause it's, you know, crazy and it will get everybody to think a bit different. More that innovation is part of everybody's day job. It is part of, um, it is part of. Almost why you go to work is like, you know, if you're in a particular role, there is nobody better place than you to innovate that particular position, whether that's you're in charge of a product or maybe it's just in charge of a part of a process or whatever it might be.

Everybody should be in a position to innovate and be positioned to do that. And the only thing I would add that the innovation I've been involved in in the past has also rarely felt like a lab like environment and a very clean process. It's actually felt. The analogy that always popped into my mind when I was doing quite a lot of it at the time was, it actually felt more like a blacksmith's forge than it did a sort of a very clean lined laboratory sort of circumstance where you're really hammering things out and you're really experimenting with things and getting your hands [00:42:00] dirty and, and moving forward and innovation for me feels, feels quite a bit like that.

But I love this idea of democratized technology. Improves everybody's skill set that you then allow that to happen within your organization and then corral that to drive sort of bigger mind innovation. Fantastic. So thank you so much for all of your insight and time this afternoon, Nabil. It's been a, it's been a genuine pleasure talking to you.

Likewise, it was absolutely brilliant. Thank you so much now. We end every episode of this podcast by asking our guests what they're excited about doing next. And that could be I've got a great restaurant booked at the weekend, or it could be something in your professional life. So, Nabil, what are you excited about doing next?

Oh, gosh, you know, continuing on this journey. Obviously, at extreme, we have the saying that we're not here to just be a successful company. We're here to change the industry. Thank And then change society. So we continue to take the next step. But on a more practical note, I will [00:43:00] actually be down at a conference in Silicon Valley and essentially giving a talk very similar to this.

And I'm really excited about that because. To me, it is not the giving the talk part, it is receiving the feedback part. So when I have like a hundred, you know, people who are in similar roles like myself, they will listen to it and they will throw darts at it. And I love that part. So I'm super excited about that.

Yeah. Yeah. That's the, that's the messy fun bit, isn't it? Where you actually get into the grid of comms off a little bit. Yeah. Yeah. A hundred percent. We wish you huge luck with that and, uh, and look forward to hearing the outcomes. So a huge thanks to our guests this week, Nabil. Thank you so much for being on the show.

Thanks to our problem solving producer Marcel, our sound and editing wizards, Ben and Louis, and of course, to all of our listeners.

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See you in another reality next week

[00:44:00]

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