

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 108: JASON JEDLINSKI

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak, and live all things disruption. My guest is Jason Jedlinski, a digital Product Executive, Innovator and Brand Builder currently serving as Senior Vice President of Product for Gannett Media.

WHITNEY Jason Jedlinski, welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. I am so excited to get to talk to you today.

JASON Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

WHITNEY First question. I know you said you've listened to a few podcasts, so you know what's coming. Where did you grow up and what did you want to be when you grew up?

JASON I grew up outside of Chicago, a Northwest suburb called Palatine. And I wanted to be, as odd as this sounds perhaps, I wanted to be leading a team of people. I vividly remember workbooks called "You're the Boss" that mom found at some educational store to ... to fuel my interests, and filled out performance reviews and all kinds of things like that when I was still like in third grade. I ... I ran a hotel in the basement among a robot factory and other things, but it was always sort of leading people and guiding a team that was what fueled me, even as a child.

WHITNEY Seriously, you had (laughs) ...

JASON It's true. I can't make that up.

WHITNEY That is so cute. (Laughs) So what did you do that your mom was like, "Okay, he ... he wants to lead people. He wants to lead teams," that she found ... is just because you were doing all these entrepreneurial ventures, what did you say, a hotel in your basement?

JASON I ran a hotel. Mrs. Lovelimer was my, uh, my best guest who came every week. Uh, when I visited my dad at his office, I set up a toll booth at the entrance to his ... his office, which I can only imagine if ... if ... (chuckles) if a child did that in my office, but everyone was very patient and gave me candy or a penny or something like that to ... to get past the toll booth. Yeah. I ... I just, I was fascinated with, um, creating spaces and companies and ventures and, I could take our whole podcast listing the number of things that, uh, I started up in our basement.

WHITNEY How many entrepreneurial ventures, did you have as a child? Was ... it sounds like it was 10, 20?

JASON Make believe probably more than 20. In terms of real entrepreneurial ventures, uh, I was tutoring other kids in basic computer skills on the Apple II, uh, you know, things like that, for you know, \$5 or less probably at the time on weekends, things like that. I had some real side hustles and then I had all my make believe ones.

WHITNEY You know what's so interesting about that is and ... is I hear you talking about all that you're doing and it sounds like this would be a setup for you are entrepreneur, on your own, running your own business, and yet as our listeners know, you are inside of a large organization. And so I think that's an interesting tension that we can explore as we get into the conversation of what does it look like when you've got this deep entrepreneurial bent?

So I want to put a pin in that and come back to that. Um, all right, so you're a journalist by training. So what happened? So you're going to run a business. When did the interest in journalism start to surface?

JASON Well I ran a family newspaper as one of the non-make believe ventures from probably second grade through, uh, eighth grade. So, in high school was leaning towards advertising. Spent a week with a family friend at an ad agency in Chicago. They were working on redoing the Olive Garden menu, I think it was, and watching the color correcting and all the painstaking work over the course of the week that was part of this bigger project, made me realize the pace wasn't exactly what I thought it would be or wanted it to be.

And my mom actually suggested, um, TV news or ... or put together my interest in the ... the family newspaper and things like that with, uh, video editing and other things I was doing on the side, and I got an opportunity, through my high school program. One day a week, uh, I went and, uh, it was supposed to be sort of a shadowed internship at the TV station, but I ended up writing copy for the afternoon newscasts one day a week. And that just got in my blood instantly. I think what ... what appealed to me most was knowing about things first, and having the responsibility to communicate that to other people and to do it quickly.

That led me to Syracuse University and the Newhouse School that has a host of famous broadcast journalism alums. That was a humbling experience to show up there thinking I had all this experience and had done all these things, and got there first day of freshman year before classes started, and everyone around me, kind of milling around to get their schedules was, you know, editor of their high school paper, ran a high school TV station and suddenly me thinking I was so prepared. I said, "I'm going to learn as much from my peers as I am from the teachers."

I had the great fortune of coming back every summer to Chicago and having internships at several TV stations, and WGN, home of the Cubs, hired me right out of school after graduation, and I had a wonderful run there, and followed to another affiliate across town for a few more years, and really was having the time of my life, uh, you know, producing TV news in ... in Chicago.

WHITNEY Okay. I have so many questions. There's one little open loop that we've got to go back to, um, and then we'll fast forward. So you were running a family newspaper from second grade to eighth grade? What ... what did that constitute?

JASON Yeah, it is, uh, I ... I still have all of the issues. Uh, I ... I looked at them probably two years ago in a box in the basement. Uh, it was a monthly newsletter. I called up different relatives and h- found out what they were doing and ... and where they'd gone on vacation and what was happening. And it was, uh, anywhere on a slow month, four pages to eight or nine pages on a ... on a busy month, and uh, my mom did graphic design and PR, and so, uh, in ... in the early days I used homegrown software that my father wrote to lay out the newspaper and then later, uh, you know, Pagemaker, Quark, other ... other things like that.

But, uh ... uh, really was into the design aspect as much as I was into the ... the reporting and writing of it.

WHITNEY And so your mom's graphic designer and PR, and your dad software developer? Is that right?

JASON Yeah, sort of. Electrical engineer by training, and uh, he joined our family business, uh, in the 70s to ... to help my uncle with basically all things operations and administration with running the warehouse to building buildings, et cetera. But the ... the part that, uh, he really gravitated to was ... was software design, um, and so I got a lot of my tech skills from him, and my mom actually, uh, had been a journalist until my brother and I were born, an education reporter, uh, for some local newspapers.

WHITNEY Okay, and what kind of family business, because I think it's interesting to know what's in people's DNA?

JASON Uh, you will not guess this one coming.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Religious goods. Wholesale religious goods, uh, everything from, uh, figurines you'd find at Hallmark to rosaries at a church supply store or a church gift shop. Uh, it was my grandfather's family business. Was a small, uh, gift shop, and when my uncle returned from the Navy, he said, "Wow this could be so much bigger. We could be doing this at enormous scale," and my grandfather said, "You're crazy," but he ... uh, he started buying things in bulk in ... in gross and, uh, filled the trunk of his car, and ... and ended up building what ... what became the ... the country's largest importer and wholesaler of religious goods.

WHITNEY Okay, so you come by your entrepreneurial ... it's in your ... your ... your genes. You've got this entrepreneurial family.

JASON I suppose.

WHITNEY Very fun. Okay, so now let's go back to you've got this internship at, um, at the local news station. You think it's going to be advertising, not so exciting. Um, they ask you to write the afternoon copy, you write it, and you're like, "This is the best." You do it, and that gets you into the Newhouse School, which I think you said or at least I knew that it's one of the most formidable or broadcasting universities in the country. Who are some of the famous graduates? You said there were all these really powerhouses. Who were they?

JASON Um, a lot of the big names are in sports broadcasting. Folks like, uh, Mike Tirico and Bob Costas. Uh, I'm actually out of school long enough now that folks like Jeff Glor who anchors the CBS Evening News was a classmate of mine. So my own class has sort of come into their own by now.

WHITNEY Yeah. Oh, that's exciting. You know, you said something that was interesting, um, and then I want us to move to one of your next jobs at The Tribune, but you said when you got there you realized, "I could learn as much from my classmates as I could from my professors." What was that experience like?

JASON It was briefly humbling. Uh, I will admit to a, you know, imposter syndrome, moment of "What am I doing here." But, uh, it was invigorating. I always loved being in environments where I was not the smartest person in the room. I did not have all the answers, and that I could pick up and soak up as much as I could like a sponge. So it was a ... a moment of, terror is too strong, but a moment of gulp.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON And then, uh, just sheer excitement and ... and delight and I was really lucky enough to find that in ... in so many aspects of Syracuse, not just the journalism school, and that's one of the reasons I've ... I've spent a lot of time either recruiting as an alum or serving on boards and committees, just because it is a really special place in that it brings together in a really unique way, um, so many strengths and so many areas.

WHITNEY Hmm. Sounds like a fantastic experience. The reason I raise that is it, you caught my attention when you said that because I ... we have two children. One's graduating from high school shortly, about to go to college. She's getting, you know, she's hearing from colleges right now, and just that experience that you do have when you first go to college, you get your first job of seeing that all of a sudden, you're no longer, you know, the big fish in the small pond. There's lots of big fishes. And just that experience of how can you adjust from being intimidated and having that impostor syndrome to the glee that you felt of like "This is amazing. I'm around all these really, really smart people," and having the confidence to be around those smart people.

It's just, I don't know, any other thoughts on that?

JASON Yeah, I ... I was uniquely prepared for that moment, as well as doing my own laundry.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Uh, by, uh, having gone to a residential magnet school. It was a ... a public school, so no tuition, uh, things like that, but it was, uh, a statewide magnet school for math and science in Illinois.

I went to the Illinois Math and Science Academy. I was only 45 minutes away from home. Um, my roommate sophomore year was six hours away from home, and I ... I can't imagine that at, you know, 13 years old, versus me. At least my parents were ... you know, could come take me out to dinner on the weekends. Uh, but that experience with people who, you know, my internship was writing copy at the TV station. My classmates, before they had their driver's license, were working at Fermilab and ... and particle accelerators and, you know, so I ... I was used to having people around me that, you know, knew more than I would ever learn in my lifetime about astrophysics or ... or things like that.

So, um, that environment was ... I think really prepared me well to thrive in ... in areas where people's strengths complimented each other. That environment, perhaps because people had all come from their home schools where they were a bit of an outcast or the nerd or the ... the weird one, uh, but it was uniquely non-competitive.

WHITNEY Hmm.

JASON That high school was one where everyone rallied behind and supported each other, and you really didn't have the, you know, bullying and other things like that that, you know, marked so much of that age for us. Um, because people just really were genuinely rooting for each other to succeed.

WHITNEY Wow. Sounds idyllic. That's ... that's lovely. All right. You've graduated from college. I know, see, I'm jumping around. You graduated from college. You've had your first two jobs. Um, you've done some working in TV news, TV broadcast journalism. Walk us through a little bit of your career now, and you're ... you know, how you d ... places that you disrupted yourself either changing jobs and then also let's talk about The Tribune where you were seven years, and ... and what did disruption look like for you there, personal disruption?

JASON Well you walked right up to the doorstep of the perhaps quintessential disruption moment for me, which is after you know, having a lot of fun and indescribable experiences in ... in TV news, I, uh, went to the president of Tribune Broadcasting that owned about 20 TV stations around the country, and I said, "There's a more efficient way to do this investigative, special project type work that I'm doing."

"You know, if I'm investing two weeks of effort into something about what are the most dangerous bridges in Illinois, um, this is something that really could be rinsed and repeated in New York City, in L.A., in your other markets. You know, I'm already working with the attorneys and getting the scripts cleared. Why don't I just build a template that other stations can use and help them build templates out of the things that they use to get a big viewership rating and just spread the wealth across the group?"

And so first of all, I still can't believe I went up to the 24th floor and did that.

WHITNEY (Giggles)

JASON Uh, but he looked at me and he said, "Well we're actually, uh, scaling back. We're going to be closing some of our news rooms. It's ... it's just not a good time in ... in the news division for what you're suggesting. But why don't you go down to the basement, literally the basement, and talk to the guys in the internet, because we have no idea what a TV station website should be." And so I went, uh, down to the basement. I met Scott Anderson, uh, who, uh, took a chance on me and hired me, uh, as this, uh, you know, intrepid TV producer into my first management job, and taught me so much about leading people and motivating teams and just one of the best experiences of my life.

So, um, it took me off the path I thought I would be on, put me on an entirely new one and introduced me to the mentor who shaped so much of who I am today.

WHITNEY How old were you Jason?

JASON You are going to make me do math, and I went into journalism, uh, precisely because I was told there would be no math. Um, let me see. That would have been, uh, and I should know this by heart. I was 20, um, yeah, I was 28.

WHITNEY 28?

JASON 27.

WHITNEY Okay.

JASON 27, turning 28.

WHITNEY All right, so I have to say I feel like there's a symbolism here of you went to the basement. Given all of the businesses that you started as a child in the basement, it seems fitting-

JASON (Laughs)

WHITNEY ... that your big shot came by working in the basement of the corporate headquarters.

JASON I never ... I never even thought of that. Yeah, they called it the, uh, the digital press room, and it was actually where the printing presses for the Chicago Tribune had been. They gutted the space down to all the concrete bracing and ... structural steel, power washed it, but left the, you know, tracks embedded in the concrete where they rolled the wheels of paper in from barges on the Chicago River. And in I want to say late 90s, um, remodeled into this gleaming glass and ... and you know, metal, um, internet space.

And so yes, it was, uh, sort of the beating heart where the printing presses had been was turned into the, uh, the digital, um, product and technology area.

WHITNEY So you go down, you go to the basement where all good entrepreneurial ventures start, and so what happens then?

JASON I started on the content side, and you know, what could we do beyond say "a very new Buffy the Vampire Slayer tonight at 7." You know, that's sort of a billboard, but there's potential to do so much more, and so, um, a lot of it was, um, finding opportunity with very little budget. "What can we do with what we've got," classic entrepreneur, you know, challenge.

And so, um, you know, we built, uh, headline feeds from the newspapers because Tribune company owned all of that same content. And so we put national headlines from the L.A. Times. We put, you know, sports headlines from the Chicago Tribune, um, and then we started saying, "Hmm, if we built a green living section, our sales reps could sell that times 20 in all the different stations we had," and that's not really about how many people visited that page, it's about putting, you know, a sponsor's logo, a builder's logo on that page. So KTLA in Los Angeles gets to visit Jay Leno's garage and he talks about, you know, all the, before there was lead certification, all the ways that he made this eco-friendly garage.

We slapped that video on 20 TV station websites, and you know, encouraged the sales folks to promote it and sponsor it as part of this green living package. So, in a way, I was doing some of what I pitched the president on, uh, but just doing it online versus on TV to get a ... a higher Nielsen rating.

WHITNEY So interesting. And just, um, dissecting this a little bit from a personal disruption standpoint, it's ... it's fascinating to me of you in going to the ... the president, you were taking on market risk. You were saying, "Hey, there's a job that I think needs to be done. No one's doing it. Um, I think we need to create it, and so why don't I do it?" And he said, "Well I don't need that job done, but I need this job done," which you may have known about or not, but you created the job for yourself effectively, right?

JASON I did. Yeah.

WHITNEY Yeah. That's what you do when you're a disruptor.

JASON So I disrupted again, the first of several disruptions.

WHITNEY Okay, so what happened next? (Giggles)

JASON It was not long into that gig that I became impatient with, uh, the content management system we worked with, and no one likes their content management system, but I said, "You know, this was designed for papers, and our TV stations will not get engaged or will struggle to get engaged unless we address these things. Um, and so in pointing out opportunities with our technology stack, someone eventually said, "All right, uh, you know, if you're so smart, then go fix it." And so I left the team I had been leading and ... and growing and these were just bright young passionate content creators.

And I said, "You'll do fine," and I went off, uh, into product development, which, later looking back was perfect in so many ways, but I had never known of product management, product development as a career. I can remember the names of the people who taught me what quality assurance testing was in the context of software development or what building a roadmap looked like. So I was learning from, um, a group of people in the department that I was about to disrupt.

There was a VP of product management. There were product directors, product managers and without getting into too much back story, uh, you know, new ownership came into the Tribune. They shook a lot of things up, many in bad ways, some in okay ways. And they basically said, "All right, you know, forget that department. You're going to go help drive this forward for this ... this content management system piece." So I worked with technologists, worked with developers, started white boarding, "What if we did it this way?" You know, asked a lot of "why not" questions, and sort of self-taught down that path until we sort of emerged from that era of ownership, and the people who had made those decisions and put me in that role, um, themselves were let go.

Um, and then I was handed the keys to the whole thing.

WHITNEY Wow.

JASON And found myself, uh, running product management, not only two years from having my first experience with it. And so there were a few disruptions in between in there that I should go back to before I get to that point, one of which was say, all right, uh, we've built this enhanced system that, you know, sort of came to life in the whiteboard sketches, our TV stations were engaged, we acquired a ... another group of TV stations, so now we had 40 stations I was working with.

And in the process we said, "All right, this thing is working, you know, to the point that ... that we're happy with it. Let's go out and sell it." So I stepped away from the thing I had been helping build and design, gave it to one of my deputies, again, said, "You'll be fine, keeping going," and hit the road talking to, um, other TV station groups and newspaper groups saying, "Hey, we've put all this money and investment into building this software. Why don't you buy it and, you know, basically lease it, um, and let us manage your ... your web platform for you?"

Again, never thought it'd be in a sales role, didn't know anything about business development. Found myself making marketing collateral, building pricing models for it. And you know, landing a client and helping onboard the client, which entailed, we were a

media company. We didn't have customer service and training and things like that for a technology platform licensed to other media companies. So, you know, specked out a budget, specked out the org, what we would need to get that done, um, and you know, even within my sort of disrupting the product team from the adjacent seat, had several pivots and disruptions in that path.

WHITNEY Wow. So you start, um, they're like, "Go figure this out." You figure this out. You start and then you figure it out, the content management system. You develop that, you build that. Then there's new management. They say, "You take this over now. Wow, we've really got something. Go out and sell it to other businesses." Did I get that?

JASON The ... the "take this over" came at the end of go sell it to other businesses. So it sort of led to the-

WHITNEY Oh after go ... go sell it to other businesses.

JASON Yeah, I ... I told it out of order. Uh, that led to the next disruption, which was okay, okay, sold it to the first client, got them launched and up and running, and this was dozens of TV stations, radio stations, newspapers, um, and then they said, "All right, now you're running the whole thing." So my scope expanded from our TV stations, the client I brought on to now it's L.A. Times, Chicago Tribune, Baltimore Sun. You're responsible for those too.

WHITNEY Wow.

JASON So I, had been frustrated, uh, and for reasons that are well documented in ... in Tribune's corporate history, um, and had been ... had been in a final interview at Sears Roebuck down the street, uh, about a week before that happened and before I got VP stripes that I was never expecting. And staying the course and not jumping because things were frustrating or awkward or uncomfortable or just what ... what have you, uh, ended up being, you know, one of the best decisions I'd ever made.

WHITNEY Huh. Huh.

JASON So timing is an interesting thing.

WHITNEY Yes, it is an interesting thing. Uh-

JASON But yes, I ... I took the division. I expanded the scope, did that for a bit and then another disruption. (Laughs)

WHITNEY (Laughs) Wow.

JASON But my ... my resume doesn't really capture like just how many of these there were, but this was the time ... uh, where TV stations and newspaper companies were splitting into separate public entities and sort of saying, "Hey, we're not going ... you know, we don't want," the perception broadly, right, "We don't want the newspaper, um, portfolio to be holding back the broadcast portfolio from growth." So, you know, at least half a dozen companies kind of split the properties, split the stock, et cetera.

In anticipation of that, Tribune Broadcasting said, "Come home. Come from the basement up to the 24th floor, um, and chart a path where we can be independent from the parent Tribune company and its, you know, technology stack and assets." So basically the thing

you just spent the last few years designing, building, reselling and adapting for the newspapers, let it go and start over.

WHITNEY Wow.

JASON So January 1st, 2012, I took my stuff in a box up from the basement to the 24th floor, and I remember sitting at my desk looking out the window thinking, "Okay, now what?"

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON And no team. Not a person. Just me, and started quickly building a very startup like skeleton crew of ... of about three or four people. Um, was now responsible not just for the tech and the product, but for the content that went online, for the revenue generated by our websites. It was full P&L responsibility for digital. And I said, you know what, uh, looking to a cue from a ... a friend I ... I respected and a colleague and competitor, as well as CBS who had done something similar, they moved onto WordPress basically saying, "You know what, we're a TV station posting weather and breaking news and stuff like that. We really don't need proprietary fancy systems.

And so I unwound us from everything I had built over the last few years, and ... and move us onto WordPress. Did that within the course of 12 months. Um, moved all the stations over, and managed to, rather than having them take a hit from leaving everything behind, we grew dramatically in that time. That was a wild and accelerated adventure. I think it felt like five years crammed into one, but that was probably the most, uh, startup-y of the pivots within the company.

WHITNEY So were you scared when this ... I mean like you've built this team. How many people on your team when you left to go up to the 24th floor?

JASON Um more ... about-

WHITNEY Like what did you ... what were you leaving behind?

JASON ... about 80.

WHITNEY Okay. So you were leaving behind a team of 80 people. What ... how much revenue were you generating at that point?

JASON We were responsible for the tech stack underneath.

WHITNEY Okay.

JASON So it was really more the ... the platform, the power to, um, you know, uh-

WHITNEY Okay, the content management system. Okay.

JASON Exactly. Exactly.

WHITNEY So 80 ... 80 people, but you ... you've got some type of budget that you're working with, and-

JASON Oh yeah, the ... the overall budget including payroll, you're talking, you know, tens of millions of dollars.

WHITNEY Right. So 80 people, tens of millions of dollars in budget. Say, "Thank you very much. You've built this. You're at the top of a learning curve. Let's go jump to the bottom of a new one," right? On the top floor, which I think is ironic. So you top a learning curve, basement, bottom of a new learning curve, 24th floor. Were you scared?

JASON Sure. Absolutely. (Laughs) I didn't have a plan. I knew I'd figure it out, but I ... I got up there and looked out the window and said, "All right, I've got to figure this out now." Um-

WHITNEY When they approached you Jason, what did you do? Did you ... I mean this one it sounds like you didn't suggest. Like the management came to you and said, "We want you to do this." And what ... what went through your mind? Did you think, "I definitely want to do this. Should I go somewhere else?" What was the calculus that you were doing in your head?

JASON I didn't hesitate for a second. It was a challenge. It was undefined. It was new. It was with people I trusted. The leader who offered me the position, um, was someone who I had observed from afar and really admired. He can run circles around me from an entrepreneurial standpoint.

WHITNEY Huh.

JASON And he really taught me to challenge everything. I thought I'd already been challenging and disrupting and saying, "Why couldn't we ..." If we had more time, I'd give you so many examples of that from a software standpoint, but he ... he challenged me on, you know, just to talk to the CFO in ways of like, "So why is it set up this way? And so why wouldn't we go do this," and to really look at everything as a white sheet of paper. And he gave me enormous air cover to break things intentionally, um, and sometimes unintentionally, and just forge a completely different path.

So the chance to work for him and learn from him, um, as well as to go figure out the next thing, was incredibly appealing, even though it was intimidating.

WHITNEY What's his name? Let's give a shout out.

JASON Steve Charlier.

WHITNEY Okay. Go Steve Charlier. Sounds like an amazing boss. All right.

JASON Yes.

WHITNEY Okay, so let's keep going. Um, we ... let's move you forward and, um, what happened after that? Let's talk a little bit about your startup, and then, um, here you are now at Gannett. So talk us through some of the ... the ... the jumping to new curves that you ... you did during that period.

JASON Yeah. So after getting the TV stations off on their own platform and ready for the companies to split, um, Steve ended up, um, going to pursue his entrepreneurial dreams. And that led me to say, well the CEO of this startup in Atlanta had been recruiting me for a while, and I always said, "Thank you so much, but I've got, you know, responsibilities back here." And I thought to myself, "Well, maybe I should see what that's like."

So Tribune Broadcasting was the startup's largest, uh, customer. Uh, essentially they were disrupting. Go figure.

WHITNEY Hmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON They ... they were disrupting, um, the video content space online. Typically, uh, a publisher, broadcaster would license a video player, pay for bandwidth, pay for stores, pay someone like the AP or ESPN for content, all to sell a pre-roll, you know, commercial before each clip. Well this company said, "We will give you, website operator the content. We will give you the video player and technology all for free. We'll even sell the ads, but you can sell the ads too, and we'll share it, a third, a third, a third." The person who made the content, the person who sold the ad and the startup in the middle.

WHITNEY Hmm.

JASON So I had moved onto them, saving us more than \$1 million. Endorsed it to peers and competitors, um, and said, "You know, there's a ... there's a chance to make this thing even bigger." Um, and so I happened to be at conference in Atlanta where the company was based, and called up the CEO and said, "All right, you know, you've ... you've been hounding me for a while. Let's talk about what this could really look like." And went down there and made a spot decision. Uh, one that, um, I later question if it was the right decision or not, but I ... I think ultimately for me yes.

I made a very just gut decision, uh, without going through and doing math on stock options and restricted stock units or things like that, and just said, "I'm going to ... I'm going to ... you know, I've been at Tribune for a while." I'm quickly becoming the guy who remembers, "Oh we tried that five years ago or we did that once before." I don't want to be the institutional memory guy. I want to be the one, you know, charting new paths and building new things. Um, and so I left and ... and moved to a ... a small apartment in Atlanta and had planned to ... to take my career down that path.

WHITNEY So you said that you ... you questioned the decision later. Um, well actually before we go there, so you just made a gut decision. Do you remember what ... what that felt like?

JASON (Laughs) I remember telling my husband and the expression on his face.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Uh-

WHITNEY What did he do?

JASON Uh, supported me of course, but was just very, uh, surprised. (Laughs)

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Uh, absolutely supported me, encouraged me, but just was like, "You hadn't planned this. We hadn't talked about this." Um-

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Yeah, I just ... I-

WHITNEY That's an interesting conversation, right?

JASON It was. It was. One of ... one of many that you have over ... over time.

WHITNEY Right.

JASON I was feeling, you know, I honestly felt like I was at the top of my game.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON I felt like I had achieved a tremendous amount in a rapid amount of time, learned a ton from a wonderful mentor. Built up a small core team that was doing, you know, what other companies had people, you know, three times the size doing. And had hired, um, some key folks that, you know, knew more than me in sales or knew more than me in marketing, and put them in roles where I ... I thought they were, um, you know, set up to succeed and some of them are ... are still in those roles today, despite several ownership changes.

and just felt like I could, again, in the past say, "You guys got this. Keep doing great stuff." And so I felt confident of what I was leaving behind, that I could responsibly move on, and I saw in this Atlanta startup enormous potential having been their customer and knowing the other end product, we call it jobs to be done, which is, you know, what would your customers pay you to do for them? What would they pay you to solve? And so I knew the pain points I had, and I knew the other areas this company could stretch.

And so I went in confident, overly confident it turns out, about, you know, what we could do, um, and was really motivated also by a team that was mostly 21 to 23 years old, um, that were just eager for guidance and direction and coaching. And that was the most rewarding part of ... of ... of the six months I spent at that startup, um, was ... was growing that team and I still keep in touch with so many of them today, uh, because they were just so receptive and so hungry and so eager.

WHITNEY Interesting. So you stayed there for six months, and then um, you made the decision to leave and go do something else. How did you make that decision and what did you go do?

JASON I made the decision realizing that, um, in my gut move, I had not appropriately evaluated risks or fully considered the peril of a husband and wife owned company with all friends and family investors and board.

WHITNEY Those are good lessons.

JASON It was fine. I ... I learned a ton. I can't believe it was only six months. When I think of all the things I learned and did and other skills I picked up, and I learned from that very green, junior team I was mentoring. I learned from them, and ... and further honed my ... my management skills. I was scouting for what's next, and talked to a high school classmate, uh, who was on the board of an advertising technology startup.

Ad tech was booming and all the rage, and it was very adjacent to content and things I knew well and the publisher space, so much like the startup I went to in Atlanta. It was in a ... part of the industry I knew intimately. And, um, we talked about basically the things I could do, the roles I could play, how I could help that company. I went to New York in another "you can't make this up" story, uh, the day they were ... the day they got the keys to new bigger office space in Manhattan.

So I met the CEO and CFO and a few other folks, um, in an empty office in Midtown Manhattan, uh, as the movers were bringing in the cubicles and other things like that for the team to move into on Monday. And it was in that setting with no furniture standing between the movers that, uh, we had a conversation for a few hours, and then embarked on ... on what became, you know, the next two years.

WHITNEY Okay, what was the name of that company?

JASON 12 Fold.

WHITNEY 12 Fold, okay.

JASON So it was a contextual targeting company. Uh, best way to describe it in a sentence is, um, if you were Claritin or Allegra, we could put your ad on every article about, you know, this is going to be a bad allergy season without you having to call, you know, 400 newspapers and TV stations, we would buy just that article through real time bidding. So while most people were buying cookies and, you know, you look like you're 18 to 34 or you look like you're a pickup truck driver, we would target the content in a really laser precise way and say, "We'll put your ads on pages like this that we think your customers will read."

WHITNEY Oh, okay. That was such a concise description. Thank you. And from what I understand, um, you went from product marketing to leading a \$30 million sales team and all commercial operations, is that right?

JASON I did. I never in my wildest dreams thought I would lead a media sales team. I intentionally went down that path of this company because having been on the publisher's side, having been responsible for digital revenue, I had never stepped foot in a media agency. I'd never called on the folks who were spending money for clients like Toyota or GM or Coca-Cola. Um, and so I went into this somewhat selfishly, uh, as wanting exposure to that side of the business, as much as I knew I could help the company grow.

Um, but I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would actually be responsible for that ... that revenue and ... and leading that ... that sales team. Uh, it happened, uh, about a year and a half in, but there was a need. Um, and I looked around and raised my hand and I said, "I'll figure it out. Let me do it." And, uh-

WHITNEY And you're ... you're good at it, aren't you? I can just tell, you're good at selling. And I mean that as a-

JASON I'm a storyteller.

WHITNEY ... compliment.

JASON I'm a storyteller at heart, and what really appealed to me on the sales side-

WHITNEY Yeah.

JASON ... was Don Hewitt, founder of 60 Minutes said it best. "Every child knows four words: tell me a story." And that is so true in media buying, especially in ad tech, where so much of it was, you know, just made up vapor and not actual real performance like we were able to point to and deliver. I relished the chance to go in and talk to media buyers about how we could help them better serve their clients, and showing a sales team, how to do that as well and kind of being force multipliers for that message and ... and model. I ... I love nothing

more than watching really talented sellers go and take my pitch and my words into market and watch where it worked or didn't work and coaching them and getting their feedback and shaping it.

It was just wonderful.

WHITNEY Wow. That ... yeah, I ... I just get excited listening to you talk about it. So, all right, let's talk about Gannett, and what you're doing at Gannett and, uh, any sort of disruption that you've done personally there and then I'd like to hear about maybe what talent development looks like for you. There's been this thread running through the conversation from the time that you were a young child, that you loved to develop talent, and I'd love to hear a little bit about maybe one or two people at Gannett that you've really focused on, on developing. So-

JASON Sure.

WHITNEY So fire away.

JASON Uh, 2016, uh, 12 Fold was sold. I exited as a part of that transaction. Spent the summer looking at what's next. I had my heart set on consulting. Had some very generous friends from high school and others that had gone high in that field, that, um, brought me inside the tent and showed me what it looked like, and I said, "Eh, not so much." And it turns out that the very first job I had looked at on my search that summer was Gannett, and that's the position I ended up pursuing come the end of the summer.

A very similar role to the role I had at Tribune, uh, when I left the basement, um, it was sort of going back to that, but with everything I had since learned, which I think, I remember in the interview with Gannett CEO was a key discussion point, was that beyond the ... the product background and the tech background, I had been out talking to clients and understanding what the market was looking for. And I think that was one of the things that ... that helped set me apart.

So came into a very familiar environment. Dug in, um, and got to work, and immediately felt at home. I've talked since then with many people who have said there's this roller coaster of those of us who have gone from a big corporate enterprise to a startup and back that you feel like you're always on one end of the teeter totter, craving the immense freedom and speed of the startup, and then the moment you taste that craving, um, the security and the budget of the big company.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON So, uh, I ... I can definitely relate, the struggle is real, and uh, the grass is never greener. It's just always what situation you're in at the moment. Uh-

WHITNEY Right. Right.

JASON So was lucky enough to come into a phenomenal team at Gannett, uh, who in many cases, folks who have been with the company 10 years, 15 years. Um, much like Tribune, and I think the reason that felt so ... so at home, and I remember my husband had this reaction, you know, after my first couple months on the job, saying, "This feels like a place you could stay for another seven to ten years."

So much like Tribune, uh, even despite the downturn in ... in, you know, sort of newspaper revenue, Gannett really, you know, invested in people, invested in talent development, invested in growing leaders from within, and I saw that, um, from the outset, not only the whole C-Suite, largely of sort of people who had forged their career, but even several members of my team.

WHITNEY Hmm. Hmm.

JASON And so, you know, when you talk about talent development, the first thing that comes to mind, um, is, um, Erik Bursch, uh, who's our head of product technology. Um, he was in the technology division, so a peer of mine running our content management system.

WHITNEY Ah. (Laughs)

JASON Something, I ... I know very well. Um, and these teams, my team and his team had once been together under what was called Gannett Product, much like I had Tribune Interactive back in Chicago. Um, and they were split to different branches of the company when, uh, the TV stations and the newspapers split into two separate companies.

WHITNEY So what's your ... so pause for just a second. What's your role now at Gannett? So you're saying Erik does ... is VP product technology. What's your role, just so that people can contextualize?

JASON Good point. I lead our consumer product division. So the websites, the native apps, the ... the syndication and distribution for USA Today, um, large papers like The Indianapolis Star, Detroit Free Press, Cincinnati Inquirer, on down through a portfolio of more than 100 newspapers.

WHITNEY Okay, cool.

JASON So the content management system, the websites, the apps, the ... the consumer facing digital products, um, are ... are sort of my purview.

WHITNEY Okay, got it. All right, so Erik's working with you. Okay, continue on.

JASON Yes. So when, uh, when I got to Gannett, Erik and his team were reporting to our CTO. I was reporting to our chief product officer. And we struggled because we had different priorities, different, um, funding imperatives from above. Different roadmaps that didn't necessarily align. And Erik had built this amazing culture where he had encouraged risk taking, he had encouraged people to, you know, to come up with disruptive ideas and concepts and really just grow themselves and experiment with cutting edge technology and tools.

And so he had had this sort of bubble in a much, much larger enterprise IT organization of intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs and a really thriving culture of "we can do amazing things." But, you know, the content management system, you know, wasn't necessarily, um, a focus for growth or investment in that IT organization.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON So he and I, uh, took us nine months, but together, lobbied for a reorg that would bring us together and sort of reunite these teams behind, uh, a common set of priorities, a common roadmap and were lucky enough to have the support of the C-Suite in ... in letting us, uh, go

do that, and it really led to a year of a lot of value delivery and foundational achievements, uh, last year and in 2018, bringing those groups together.

This was the last of, or the most recent of, um, many, many disruptions that Erik has had in his, you know, 20 years with the company. This was par for the course for him to see an opportunity and say, "Come on, there's a better way to do this. Let's go put our necks out on the line," and ... and we did at ... at the end of the nine months, he and I just got very vocal about saying, "This has to happen for our teams to be successful," and made a lot of noise and ... and made a bet that, um, I'm proud to say, you know, paid off for us.

WHITNEY Yeah. So I want to hear about Erik's, um, career path in just a second. Because I think one thing that you ... you've touched on, a really important and I think potentially very helpful for our listeners is you and Erik had to go make a case to the CTO and the Chief Product Officer of why this made sense to do. And there was a potential loss for them. I mean a loss of territory, potential loss of ego, et cetera. So ... so what case did you make that made it okay and comfortable for them to say, "Yeah, you're right. This is the right business decision, and I understand that it'll ... maybe it'll feel like a little bit of a hit in the near term, but ... but we're willing to do it."

Is there something or a couple of things that you did to make the case and ... and that they did in terms of being generous that made this possible?

JASON We presented, um, a number of situations and said, "You know, here's a scenario that we have presently."

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON "Here's how it plays out in this model. Here's how it would play out in our model." Over those period of months, we got a lot of questions of, "Hey, that's great. Why don't you just go do that, from your respective seats and your respective budgets and your respective teams where you are." Um, so we had to keep sharpening that story.

WHITNEY Hmm.

JASON And, uh, it forced us to be more articulate about what the larger potential was. Not just to solve the pain points and the friction. I mean we ... we've done that until we were blue in the face saying, "Hey, these things would run better, run smoother if." It forced us to ... to step back and think bigger to say, "And we could be doing even, you know, bigger, bolder, you know, larger innovation initiatives if we had, uh, you know, the scenario to work within."

So, it took us from saying, you know, things could ... things could operate smoother, better, et cetera, uh, which was largely met with a "Hey, great, go do that."

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON To these are things we couldn't do without your permission, uh, to structure things differently.

WHITNEY Interesting. So they said, "Great, go do it." Then that forced you to, like you said, go do it and build out a proof point, and then you could come back and say, "All right, here's an ad ... additional proof point, see what happened. Here's what we want to do next," but in the process of starting to execute, you were able to craft a bigger vision and get to the point

where when you said, "We actually do need to do the restructuring," you had the credibility to ... to get them to say, "You know, you're right, and you're doing the work, so let's do this."

JASON Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY Is that ... is that accurate?

JASON That's fair.

WHITNEY Okay. All right, let's talk about Erik. One of the things I want to share with all of our listeners that I think is really interesting is ... is when, um, I ... I put out a call to our newsletter subscribers and I said, "Hey everyone, we've gotten a lot of people who are saying, 'I want to know what lo ... disruption looks like within an organization,' and every time people were raising their hands, I kept getting women, and you know, this isn't a huge sample size, but I had a lot of women saying, "Yeah, I've disrupted myself a lot in the organization." I'm like, "Okay, where are the men? What are ... what are the men doing?"

And so Jason, you raised your hand and said, "You know, I've got someone on my team actually that's done this, and let me tell you a little bit about him." So why don't you tell us a little bit about, you know, Erik's been at Gannett for sounds like about 20 years. What are just quickly some things that he has done in terms of disrupting himself inside of Gannett?

JASON So Erik actually started as a systems engineer for USA Today.com, individual contributor. Grew into team lead, development manager. Shifted to how we actually get content out to the web and ... and the pipeline. So from an operational role to more of an architecture role. Took on more of the ... the proprietary workflow systems that ... that thousands of journalists rely on. And then he switched to enterprise functions within the technology division.

So development operations, um, software deployment, quality assurance, saying, "Hey, we can go beyond the days of manually testing, did this thing do what it was supposed to do, and take some more, um, modern approaches that are being, um, you know, used in ... in startups, um, and ... and, you know, progressive technology shops." Let's introduce those here into, you know, what at the time was, was a ... a fairly traditional organization.

And so building on those successes, um, in 2015, Erik, um, chartered a whole new team, um, realizing that, um, the world was rapidly moving from on premise data centers, of which Gannett had a ... a very profitable and successful division of the company running those. He said, "Things are headed to the cloud."

WHITNEY Hmm.

JASON And so designed a team to accelerate the company's transition out of data centers, into the cloud, delivered millions of dollars of cost savings in the process and built, the foundation of this really dynamic culture of people who were not just executing technology tasks, but really tied to business outcomes and how their work was ... was helping the company and its shareholders.

WHITNEY Hmm.

JASON Erik came to me as I joined the company on the products side, um, delivering things no one even thought they had any right to ask for. So it typically takes, whether you're, you know,

New York Times, CNN, Washington Post, takes about two minutes, two to three minutes, depending these days, for when you hit save on the story for it to actually be live across the internet, so someone in, you know, Paris or Sydney or L.A., you know, can go to your website and see that copy you just published.

Erik said, "I can get that under 20 seconds," and in fact he got that under five seconds. And it's not that our news room said, "I want it faster from the time I hit save to the time it's on the web." They just kind of accepted like, "Yeah, there's all these machines and processes and systems, and it goes around the world, and it takes a couple minutes, because that's what it takes." Uh, but Eric came to me and he said, you know, "I can get this done," and he did.

WHITNEY And what does that do? That allows you to potentially break news faster, right?

JASON Absolutely.

WHITNEY Yeah.

JASON And it gives us a leg up with search engines and Google News.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON Um, just being, uh, you know, especially in breaking news situations, um, that ... that really, uh, definitely, um, helps fuel, uh, traffic and ... and advertising revenue.

WHITNEY Hmm, interesting. Okay, and then ... and then '17, mid '17, that's when you started the ... the two of you joined forces to ... to realign the ... the organization?

JASON You bet.

WHITNEY Yeah. Amazing. So you're his boss now, and I ... you know, one thing I just want to comment to everybody who's listening is oftentimes people want to have a great boss. And the thing that I look at as I'm listening to this, and so just so everybody knows, like Jason sent me a dossier on Erik to show me how strong of a performer he is, and I ... what I would say to everyone listening, I'm kind of stepping out of the interview for just a second, is just this idea of we want to have, you know, have a great boss like that, but I think we can be that great boss.

Like do what Jason's doing. Like write this amazing dossier on your people and really advocate for them because, um, you've been his boss for a couple of years now, maybe a year, but it's just like exciting to see that he's getting to continue to grow and develop, et cetera. So I know I've just kind of embarrassed you, but do you have any other thoughts to share about this?

JASON I just, I think when you're fortunate enough to have people who are so driven and so capable and so talented, it ... it's cliché, but I've always seen it as my duty and responsibility to do everything I can to set them up for success. So-

WHITNEY Yeah.

JASON Um, you know, I think many good managers fight for and advocate and ... and protect their teams. Um, I've tried to take it to the next level of not just playing defense, but you know, offense. Clearing paths for folks to go do things that, you know, no one ever asked for, no

one thought they needed, um, and giving them the space to go, um, show ... show people what's possible.

WHITNEY Yeah. Uh, so exciting. Okay, so, um, I'm going to s ... just a final questions for you. What are you reading right now or listening to or just excited about that just kind of makes your heart sing when you read it? It's just interesting.

JASON I just finished *The Checklist Manifesto* by Atul Gawande. It was like a quick, uh, you know, two hour read, but, uh-

WHITNEY Yeah.

JASON ... that was just at the top of my mind. That's not the answer I want to give, but I just put it down last night. Um, that is a good question.

WHITNEY It's good, isn't it?

JASON Actually I can te ... it is. It is good and it ... the simplicity of the message, and I'd read his stuff in ... in the New Yorker for a long time.

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON But the simplicity of the message, uh, just carried through. I will tell you, this is a much better example that gives people a much better sense of me. I cannot put down and I ... I can't believe it took me this long to ... to buy it and read it, but *The Cubs Way* by Tom Verducci, which tells the story of how, uh, Theo Epstein and Joe Maddon, uh, turned around the lovable losers of the Chicago Cubs and ... and led them-

WHITNEY Huh.

JASON ... to the World Series victory. And the leadership lessons that I am highlighting and underlying and circling, um, are ... are far richer than I ... I even thought possible having followed it as a ... a longtime fan of the team. Um, so ... so that ... that's the thing that really has my mind racing, uh, even as I plow through the ... the, uh, you know, business and leadership books that ... that fill my Kindle bookshelf.

Uh, I keep rewarding myself with a chapter of *The Cubs Way*, uh, in between each of them.

WHITNEY Does one lesson stand out in particular for you? Off the top of your head?

JASON I think the discipline that, uh, Joe Maddon had about how he, uh, deployed talent and how he nurtured talent, um, there's a host of different tactics and things like that, but um, the degree of specificity and consistency, the way he productized and operationalized talent management - that stands out as a theme. And ... and that makes it sound far less exciting than it is in the book, but, um, you know, you think of a baseball coach doing, you know, a lot ... yes, sure, informed by data, but you know, gut and, um, he might as well have had a super computer, you know, written in his hands and in his head, uh, for all the decisions he was making.

WHITNEY Sounds like it takes *Moneyball* to the next level.

JASON It really does.

WHITNEY Yeah.

JASON It ... it ... and the book explains how, uh, you know, some of the ... the folks who were in on the ground floor of *Moneyball* were ... were in the organization, but, um, exactly that. He took what worked for recruiting and scouting and applied it to every pitch and every inning of every game, and the ... just the sheer, uh, discipline that takes is ... is humbling.

WHITNEY Okay, so everybody who's listening, we're going to do a giveaway of this book. I think it sounds so good, and so if you're listening and, um, you just email me at wj@whitneyjohnson.com, you will be eligible. We'll pick someone at random. It's just, sounds like it's a fantastic book Jason.

Um, all right, so last question for you, maybe penultimate, but I think it's the last question, is let's say a few years from now you get to the top of your learning curve at Gannett, they're ... you're like, "Okay, I did everything that I said I was going to do, we did it," and there have been a couple times in your career where you're like, "I did it, and you guys got it. It's time for me to go do something else. It's time for me to jump to a new learning curve."

What does that next learning curve look like?

JASON I think I really want to pursue people management in a bigger way. Um, whether it's my first news room, uh, in television or the way I work with other divisions and other teams at Gannett now, um, I've always sort of, um, built a following through, um, clear communication, through pointing to a North star. Um, listening, genuinely listening with devices down, computers closed. You know, hearing what people have to say and trying to help them make their work environment better.

I don't have any background whatsoever in HR or things like that, but I'm a very operational, run a business type mindset, and so combining that with culture, talent, recruiting, people development, really appeals to me, and that's something that I think would give me an opportunity not only to go to the bottom of a learning curve in that role, but allow me to test the waters outside of media, media and advertising, and perhaps experience an entirely different industry, and uh, challenge myself with two learning curves.

WHITNEY (Laughs)

JASON Sort of the macro industry being different and ... and this being different. And ... and it's funny. Uh, the, uh, absurdity of that. That's not the right word, but you know, the ... the, uh, the intensity of that is laughable. I absolutely get it, um, but that's ... that's something that, um, I really wrestled with before I joined Gannett is I ... I was looking at other fields. I've always been interested in robotics. Um, you know, automation, things like that. And I quickly realized that I would be better served staying in media and publishing because of the network I had built up over, you know, at that time, a ten year career.

Whether it be my knowledge of different vendors, uh, knowledge of talent that I could go recruit. Situations I had solved before and how I would do it differently if put in that same situation. So there was so much, you know, the Rolodex was one thing that just kept coming to mind whether, you know, industry sources, peers I could call on, um, you know, the ... the thought influencers and leaders I followed on Twitter. So maybe I should stick within the industry because that was something that I really weighed and, um, in being deliberate about that said, "I would be setting myself back at a disadvantage by double disrupting myself."

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

JASON Um, and ... and putting myself in a totally new environment as emotionally appealing as that was.

WHITNEY Interesting. Well I think that is so exciting, and ... and obviously there is this wonderful thread running throughout your whole life of, you know, you're the boss and part of me, as I listen to you, you know, that idea of jumping to a new curve and doing something and really doubling down on this people management, there's a piece of me that thinks, "Okay, yeah, go be a Chief Human Resources Officer." Um, but why not also considering being a CEO.

And so that's my ... my challenge, my ... my thought provoking question for you today, and um, Jason, it's been really fun. It's ... uh, you know, we connected a few years ago when I was a ... speaking at Gannett and I've just really enjoyed the conversations and the connection that we've been able to have. And, um, so again, thank you for being here today.

JASON It's my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

From the "You're the boss" workbook Jason's mom gave him as a child, to his current role at Gannett and USA Today, Jason is one of those people who's naturally inclined toward disrupting himself. He sees the leap to a new learning curve as a desired challenge and isn't afraid to take that leap.

For those of us who want to be more comfortable with the discomfort of growth, let's reverse engineer what Jason does, or has done---using our seven point personal disruption framework. Let's basically unpack it.

First, because learning is more important than not failing to him, he's been able to walk into those situations where he is a little fish in a big pond (like at Syracuse) or into a situation where he's doing something no one has ever done before and has been able to take a deep breath, look out the window and think - "I can figure this out."

And then he does.

So often, the barriers to success are in our mind. We talk ourselves out of what we can do before we even try. But Jason - having tried and experimented with lots of things, knows he can accomplish what he sets out to do and then he creates this environment where he can make it happen. Our producer Macy Robison often quotes Marie Forleo when we talk about situations like this - "everything is figureoutable." You just have to decide it's figureoutable, create an environment where you can start figuring things out and get to work.

Jason also embraces market risk, the first accelerant of personal disruption. Going to the executive and pitching new ideas. Creating new divisions and then going after new opportunities created from that work. And though I know he gets apprehensive at times and even had that experience in Atlanta where things didn't go quite the way he had hoped, his overall outlook reminds me of something Erik Orton said in our podcast episode with him and his wife Emily. Instead of always worrying about what could go wrong (if a change comes, if you jump to the bottom of a new curve) ask yourself "what could go right?"

And, finally, Jason is very discovery-driven. Moving from one challenge to the next and letting the path unfold. I found it interesting that - like Dan Shapero learned from his conversation with Jeff Weiner at LinkedIn - tech CEOs not only excel at building great teams, they also have experience building product. In his discovery-driven path, Jason has had experience in both. It's going to be super exciting to see where his path leads next.

Practical tip:

Practice believing that "everything is figureoutable." Is there something you want to learn or try? Reverse engineer what you need to learn. See if there is a free YouTube video or blog post and start experimenting. Whether you're learning to knit or play tennis or to build a website, if you think of it as a project or an experiment and start figuring out what to do, you might be surprised at what you learn and what skills and confidence you acquire.

If you want a little boost in this figureouatable department, some extra courage to jump to a new learning curve, we've got a free email course based on some of the episodes of the podcast to help you do this. There's a link in the show notes to sign up--- and basically you'll get an email each day for 5 days with a link to the audio and a worksheet to go with it.

Thank you again to Jason Jedlinski for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Melissa Rutty, manager / editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Libby Newman, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson

And this is Disrupt Yourself.