

EPISODE 870

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:00] JM: Software engineers have a wide variety of media to choose from, including podcasts, blogs, YouTube videos, and conferences. The amount of software engineering media that is available is growing and accelerating. Eight years ago, there were not as many options for information about software.

Charles Max Wood founded devchat.tv to create a network of podcasts and other content for software engineers. Today, his podcasts include the popular shows, JavaScript, jabber, Ruby Rouges and Adventures in Angular.

Chuck joins the show for a conversation about software media. This was his second time on the show with his first episode exploring his podcast; JavaScript Jabber.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[00:00:55] JM: ExpressVPN is a popular virtual private network. ExpressVPN is useful for getting a private, secure, anonymous connection for your internet browsing. It encrypts your data and it hides your public IP address. You've got easy to use apps that run seamlessly in the background on your computer, or your phone, or your tablet, and turning on the ExpressVPN protection only takes a single click.

If you use ExpressVPN, you can safely surf on public Wi-Fi without being snooped on or having your personal data or your Bitcoin account information stolen. For less than \$7 a month, you can get ExpressVPN protection.

ExpressVPN is the number one VPN service rated by Tech Radar, and it comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee. You could also support Software Engineering Daily if you check out expressvpn.com/sedaily. You would get three months free.

Everybody needs a VPN at some point in their lives. So, if you want to get your ExpressVPN subscription for free for three months while also trying out ExpressVPN and supporting Software Engineering Daily, you can kill all those birds with one stone by going to expressvpn.com/sedaily.

Thanks to ExpressVPN for being a sponsor of Software Engineering Daily.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:02:34] JM: Charles Max Wood, welcome back to Software Engineering Daily.

[00:02:37] CMW: Hey! Thanks.

[00:02:38] JM: We last spoke three years ago-ish, and we talked in that episode about the software media landscape and software podcasting. How has the world of software engineering media changed since you started devchat.tv?

[00:02:56] CMW: That's kind of an interesting topic. I think in a lot of ways it – I think it's become more ubiquitous. So, essentially, what you see is more people on YouTube, more people on putting out podcasts. Though, I have been actually going and looking to see what is out there in the world of podcasts for software, and I am still surprised by how few there are out there.

But, yeah, Twitch's streaming becoming kind of a thing. A lot more people are putting out courses, the training environment. So, paid media has changed. You see a lot more plural sites and other companies coming out. I have a friend restarting one called thinkster.io.

Yeah, a lot more movement out there, a lot more people doing what you would consider media. Then the other thing that I'm seeing a lot more of is in social media just the general use of videos and things like that. A lot more programmers are getting into sharing media type things on Twitter, Facebook, Facebook lives, for example, Instagram and Instagram TV. IGTV I think is what we call it. So you see a lot more movement that way too.

[00:04:04] JM: Do you see a dividing line between user generated content, user generated software media and more professional software journalism perhaps. Do you see a dividing line there or are these just in the same area?

[00:04:25] CMW: Well, it's interesting, because traditionally there's been this divide between "journalism" and sort of the masses doing blogging and things like that. I don't know that software itself has ever enjoyed traditional journalism in the same way. I mean, there are definitely companies out there that are professional companies that cover technology in the news, cover things like programming in the news. So you see things about programming communities, or programming companies, or programming training companies that come out in the news.

But for the most part, I think those things tend to blend. I think in general, in our news media today, we're going to see more and more of that blending. Not just in technology, but everywhere. So, what independent or nonprofessional journalism, I think we're going to see more and more of that in areas like politics and lifestyle and all of those other things.

I mean, we already see companies essentially coming out in creating media around things like politics who were going on YouTube and having a show or having a podcast about politics or whatever other topic. Politics is just the one that keeps coming up, because it's the one that the traditional news media tends to come back to over and over again. But we're going to see more and more people getting their coverage from other folks. Eventually, I think the line is going to blur. I don't think there's more of a distinction. I think there's less of one.

[00:05:51] JM: I'd sometimes think about what you get out of the monolithic journalism institution, and you get copy editors. You get second opinions on the content that you're producing. You get maybe some improved production quality, perhaps. But many of those things you can get without the esteemed institution. What are the defensible characteristics of these esteemed media institutions?

[00:06:28] CMW: Well, the things you all listed I would contend are things that people don't necessarily care about. I mean, as long as your quality is good enough and the information that

they're getting out of it is valuable or reliable or whatever they want from it, it matters a whole lot less whether or not you have those things.

The thing that you tend to get out of the traditional media that will add some value to your broadcast your message is the media channel tends to have some over arching idea or theme. So, it can lend credibility to you from other people who are part of that journalism network. But beyond that, I mean, people are looking for things that are real, things that are genuine and things that they can rely on or be entertained by in certain ways. You don't necessarily need traditional journalism for those things.

[00:07:22] JM: What's the difference between podcasting and journalism?

[00:07:28] CMW: I think a lot of that really depends on how you define journalism. In a lot of cases, I don't think there really is a major difference depending on the podcast, I guess, because some podcasts are just out there to entertain, right? They're not covering any news or whatever. They're just telling a story, or telling jokes, or things like that, right? So, that, I don't consider journalism. It's entertainment. But the ones that actually talk about real stuff – So, for example, on our shows, we talk about things that are going on in the programming communities. I don't see that there necessarily is definable difference between journalism in our space and a podcast. A podcast is just one way of doing journalism.

[00:08:13] JM: In the world of software engineering journalism or software engineering podcasting, whatever it is that we are doing, do you need to write code to be effective at what you do?

[00:08:29] CMW: That feels a little bit – How do I put it? I feel a little bit like you kind of set me up to confess some things. I'll go ahead and confess some.

[00:08:38] JM: I'll preempt too. I don't write much code at all.

[00:08:41] CMW: Yeah, and I'm kind of in the same boat these days. I mean, I'm working on a system for broadcasters that will manage a whole bunch of stuff for them in their production

process and sponsorships. But at the end of the day, that's probably less than a tenth of what I do every week.

So when I started iFreaks, I wanted to learn how to do iOS development, right? So I got a bunch of other folks that I knew, knew how to do it, and we started doing a show. I was on the panel for like three years. I still don't know how to write iOS apps in Swift or Objective-C.

So, in that sense, I mean, people were getting value out of it, but they were getting value out of some of the experience with some of the other people on the show. So, I guess you don't. But on the flipside, you have to be able to talk about it in a way that provides value to people. So, if you lack a certain level of expertise, then the people that you can help is going to be limited somewhat. Where if you do have the expertise, then you can grow into that, so to speak. But you can also borrow with other people's expertise. I mean, you having guests on your podcast, like you're doing and like we often do. I don't have to be an expert. I just have to know enough to be able to help the other person explain the stuff that's going to be valuable to the people who are listening. So, I have to be somewhat conversant in it, but I don't have to be an expert in it.

[00:10:06] JM: You have the panel format for some of your conversations, and for other conversations, you have one-on-one interviews. How does the utility of the panel format compared to the one-on-one interview format?

[00:10:23] CMW: So the thing we shoot for with the panel, and I think this is something that a lot of people identify with. If you go to a conference or a user's group or some other in-person meet up, most of the time you're not having one-on-one interactions with any given person at the conference. I mean, sometimes you are. Sometimes you'll sit down next to somebody and you'll wind up chatting with them.

But for the most part, somebody else will walk in, come along and go, "Hey, how's it going?" They know them or they know you and then you have three people in the conversation or four people in the conversation. You go to dinner after the conference and you have that conversation there or you have a bunch of coworkers that you work with that you get along with

that you just kind of have a conversation amongst the four or five of you. That's kind of what we're aiming for with the panel discussion, right?

I mean, we are specifically talking about a specific topic. Sometimes it kind of leans a little bit more interview-ish, because only one or two of us have real expertise besides the guest that we have on the show. Sometimes we just have people on like David Heinemeier Hansson or Brendan Ike, where we just want to let them shine. It's like, "You know what? I'm just going to shut up and hear what he has to say, and then I'll ask my question and I'm going to shut up and hear what he has to say."

So, you kind of get that a little bit. But for the most part, that's kind of what we're looking for. The other thing is, is if you have a panel of – We usually shoot for four or five people from the panel. It may be a guest on the shows. What that does is it allows several people to share their stories and experiences. Often, you get a counterpoint from somebody, right? So in one episode, we were talking about how the framework mentality is ruining the web, right?

Chris Ferdinandi was kind of the impetus for that. He mentioned it to me a couple of times and I said, "We need to talk about this on the podcast, right?" So people had different takes on the same idea. So he got in and he said, "Well, my experience is –" and then he kind of explained not only what his theory was, but also what he had run into and what he had seen.

Then we had a few other people on the call who would use frameworks and gotten a lot out of them. So, we kind of worked our way through the issue, right? So, we kind of got a couple of opinions there. But, yeah. So, sometimes, everybody agrees. But we all agree for reasons. So, what happens is somebody like maybe Aimee Knight on JavaScript Jabber, she'll say, "Well, I was playing with this particular technology and I really thought that this and this and this really shined." Then somebody else said, "Yeah, we converted an app from jQuery to that framework, or to the tool, and it turned out that it also solved these other problems for us."

So you get different perspectives on why something is useful or handy or important without actually necessarily everybody agreeing on why they agree on that particular thing. So you just get this breadth of experience and knowledge about a specific thing, and that also often pays off.

[00:13:19] JM: How has the podcast advertising market changed over the last three years?

[00:13:25] CMW: So, I'm trying to think of about where in my journey three years was, because Ruby Rogue started eight years ago. Before that I had another show that I ran for a couple of years. When we started eight years ago, a lot of folks just sponsored us because they thought podcast were cool. They were excited to see a podcast like ours in the Ruby space or JavaScript space. So they just gave us money, and it was essentially very much more like a sponsorship and very much less like an advertisement deal.

That's change some. A lot more people understand what a podcast is now than they did eight years ago or even three years ago, and that changes the landscape some too, because then instead of explaining "Hey, this is our show. Go check it out. This is how we distribute it, etc., etc." We have to do any of that work anymore. We just say, "Hey, we have a podcast. We talk about these topics. We reach these kinds of people," and then they figure that in as to how they think they can get an ROI from it.

The other thing that's changed, there are a couple of other things that have come along. One is, is that the big players have started to get more involved. I mean, some like NPRs had their stuff on podcast for a long, long time. But a lot of the other media companies have now come out and started putting their stuff on to podcasts.

So, a lot more traditional media has been aware of podcasting, and that means that their advertisers are as well. So, there's been a little bit of a movement that way as far as traditional media advertisers being willing to support podcasts.

In niche areas like ours, where we're talking about software – I mean, the pool is different, right? Because it's companies that want to reach developers and offer them tools or things that are going to help make their workflows easier or their lives better in some way. So, that's a different thing, and that market has changed some in the sense that they also are more aware of podcasts. A lot of them have tried sponsoring podcasts in the past. A lot of them understand some of the payoff of being involved in this kind of media where they weren't really looking at

traditional media like TV or radio, because it didn't make sense for a general audience, but it makes sense to get in on a niche audience.

The other thing is, is that a lot of things are moving back-and-forth between things like YouTube or Facebook or some of these other things. So, that market has changed too, because we're competing with different types of advertising opportunities. So, anyway, it all comes down to, basically, that level of awareness and what people are able to do with it.

I think more companies are more willing to consider sponsoring podcasts than they were in the past, because they don't have to be sold on the value of podcasts anymore. But, yeah, other than that, I think materially the rates have gone up some. I think they're going to continue to rise as podcasts become more of influencer or – It's essentially influencer marketing, right?

So, it's not just, "Hey, we're going to put your ad in the middle of our show, but we're going to actually endorse your product, or we're going to give a testimonial of your product." So, I run into that too where, essentially, I wind up – I'll get a sponsorship from a company I like, and part of the deal is, is that I actually mention their show in the show as a sponsor. But then I actually tell people, "Oh, this is why I like it. This is why I care about this product." So, it adds that value that you don't get from some of the other media. So, some of the companies are also looking at that.

The last thing I think has changed over the last two years is that people are more aware of how to do sponsorship on podcasts. So, often, what they'll do is they'll talk to the sponsors and they'll actually work out a deal where they do a mix of in-podcast advertising plus a banner on the website, plus mention in the newsletter, plus whatever, maybe YouTube or some other channel that they have as well, social media. So, they're getting kind of this package deal with their influencer marketing. That changes the equation some as well, because it's more personal in a way.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[00:17:40] JM: DigitalOcean is a simple, developer friendly cloud platform. DigitalOcean is optimized to make managing and scaling applications easy with an intuitive API, multiple

storage options, integrated firewalls, load balancers and more. With predictable pricing and flexible configurations and world-class customer support, you'll get access to all the infrastructure services you need to grow. DigitalOcean is simple.

If you don't need the complexity of the complex cloud providers, try out DigitalOcean with their simple interface and their great customer support, plus they've got 2,000+ tutorials to help you stay up-to-date with the latest open source software and languages and frameworks. You can get started on DigitalOcean for free at do.co/sedaily.

One thing that makes DigitalOcean special is they're really interested in long-term developer productivity, and I remember one particular example of this when I found a tutorial in DigitalOcean about how to get started on a different cloud provider. I thought that really stood for a sense of confidence, and an attention to just getting developers off the ground faster, and they've continued to do that with DigitalOcean today. All their services are easy to use and have simple interfaces.

Try it out at do.co/sedaily. That's the D-O.C-O/[sedaily](https://do.co/sedaily). You will get started for free with some free credits. Thanks to DigitalOcean for being a sponsor of Software Engineering Daily.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:19:42] JM: With the podcast ad sales market, there's always this question about metrics. So, the way that podcast players work is you can download, you can listen, and those are basically the same thing on the analytics backend. But the problem is that many people download tons of podcasts and then listen to maybe a fifth of them. The podcast players don't report back to the analytics backend with the exception of Apple Podcasts and maybe a few other podcast players, perhaps.

On the other hand, on YouTube, you have deep analytics, and some people republish their podcasts to YouTube. I think you're in that category. I think I saw you tweeting about republish.io or whatever –

[00:20:33] CMW: Repurpose.

[00:20:34] JM: Repurpose.

[00:20:34] CMW: Yeah, repurpose.io.

[00:20:35] JM: Pretty good tool. For anybody who's looking to republish their podcasts on to YouTube, that's a pretty good tool. Repurpose.

Then there's also like the subscribers number, which is a really dubious number, because that varies from podcast player to podcast player. So the thing is what makes this really tricky is that you're often selling to an advertiser who has never bought a podcast ad before and they say, "Okay, how many listeners do you have?" You're like, "Well, I don't – I can't really give you like an honest answer. I can tell you how many downloads there are. I can guess at how many subscribers there are. I can guess at how many monthly uniques we have. But, really, the only thing I can tell you is how many unique downloads for a given episode there are. Maybe it's in the tens of thousands," and they're like, "Really, only tens of thousands? I can go to YouTube and get hundreds of thousands. I can go to some written content site and get hundreds of thousands, or millions. Why on earth would I go with you?"

There are so many arguments you can make for them. Like, "Well, first of all, this is long-form content, as supposed to a lot of the other platforms. It's short-form content." Then you can make the argument. Also, there's plenty of bots that are surveying these other content sites, and maybe there are bots downloading podcasts, but it seems less relevant. Maybe there are. Maybe they're downloading the podcast, doing transcription or something.

In any case, it's such a hard sales process still. For me, personally, it's taught me a lot about how sales works. Where, in many cases, I think – And I've seen this in other, like talking to other software products. You don't close a sale sadly, in many cases, by illustrating why this product is worth something. You close a sale by saying, "These 10 other people have used this product, and they were happy with it."

[00:22:37] CMW: Yeah. I mean, there are some of that. It really depends. I do work off the case study example so to speak a bit, right? These people have this payoff in this way. It is, it's tricky.

The analytics going back to that point, and, boy, I could rant on this, right? How do you measure a listen? Well, yeah. I think Apple Podcast and NPR1 are the only two apps that I can think of that actually track how far in people got, or where they stopped and where they picked up again.

So, that's hard, right? Modify gives you some stats too, but their stats are essentially who started playing it and who got more than 60 seconds in, right? So, you can go look at that and you can get some idea of what percentage of people are even listening admitted in. Which I don't necessarily find this helpful, because – I mean, the content for us anyway on our shows, we do intros first. So, they're going to hear us introducing ourselves. If they can't get past that, well, it wasn't anything that necessarily turn them off, I guess. Maybe it was just that there wasn't anything that got them excited, which it did make me rethink a few things. Maybe we should put in a quick intro that says, "Hey, in this episode, we're going to talk about blah-blah-blah."

I was just looking at those stats yesterday, which is why if you listen to our shows, you probably haven't heard just change anything yet. But, anyway, yeah, the analytics are not great. Then the other thing is, is that you've got companies like Libsyn and Blueberry and some of these other companies that are involved in the National Association of Broadcasters, standard for measuring podcast traffic, that they keep changing the rules as far as what they deem to be a duplicate download, right? So some podcast apps, they come in and they make six requests starting at different places within the file so that they can download simultaneously and get it faster. Somebody starts downloading at home and then they go get in their car and their IP address changes. So, how do you track that?

So, yeah, the analytics numbers are really tough. Then, as you said, there's no real good way of knowing how many people are actually listening to the episode at all, or if they're dropping off at a certain point, or things like that. Yeah. I could give caveats about that upfront, right? Basically, what I say is, to the best of our knowledge, this is how many people listen. This is how we're kind of figuring that out, and we could be wrong.

Most of the time, most marketing people, that's about the level of detail that they want. So, then they can take that number, they can adjust it if they feel like what you're calculating isn't exactly

spot on, and then they can make a decision based on what they think they're going to get out of it.

But the other thing is, is I also tell them, I'm like, "Look, I recommend you sponsor four or five episodes, and then we can get back together and we can talk about what's working and what's not working and what numbers you're seeing on your end as far as how many click throughs you're getting and how many people are buying and what the ROI has been and see if we can make it work for you."

I really try and work with sponsors, and I think this is the real difference between just saying, "You know what? I'm going to sell you the ad space. Hopefully it works for you, and then we're done." Is that a lot of these folks, if you come to them and say, "Look, if it really doesn't work for you – I'll work with you to a certain extent. So, if it's working, we can look at it and see what we could do to make it better. If it's close, we can look at it and see what we can do to make it work. Then if it just completely tanks, then maybe we try something different." I'll usually work things out and give them a deal on the trying something different, because I want to make sure that they're getting an ROI if I can make it work. Then, if it just bombs and then bombs again, then it's essentially like, "Look, we did the best we can. Maybe the market is just not ready for your particular solution."

But the other thing is, is that I also tend not to take companies. I've had several sponsors come to me or potential sponsors come to me and tell me they wanted a sponsor, and I either didn't like – Didn't know enough about or didn't think it was good match for my audience. So, I just basically told them no. I'll only take stuff that I feel good promoting on the shows. So, that's also a thing to keep in mind, is that I feel like if you keep the sponsor quality high, then the ROI tends to follow a little more naturally, because people trust what you're putting out there.

So, there's a lot that goes into it. Ultimately, I don't give them a guarantee per se, but I definitely make it clear that I'm willing to work with them to make sure that they're getting a good ROI, and then I also just explained the whole process as like, "Look, this is what we do. This is how we do it."

Of course, the other thing is, is a lot of times I also tell them, “Look, if we do the ad in the podcast, you’re going to get a certain level of engagement. If we add on social media and email newsletters, then you’re going to get a lot more engagement, because they’re going to get exposed to it different ways at different times. Then when it shows up in their inbox, then they’re more likely to click.”

Sometimes they take me up on that and sometimes they don't, but all in all, it's really just a matter of trying to make sure that they understand what the process looks like. Understand how the ROI actually works. Help them figure out how to track it and then be willing to work with them on the backend to make sure that everything comes through for them, because I don't want to sell a bad product. In this case, it's the podcast sponsorship. That's the product, the exposure to the audience. So, again, if it doesn't work for them, then I want to make it as good an experience as possible. So that's what I do.

[00:28:18] JM: Last time we spoke, you were excited about voice interfaces. That was three years ago. How have your views on the intersection of voice and podcasting been updated?

[00:28:32] CMW: I'm not sure exactly what you're talking about there.

[00:28:33] JM: I remember we're talking about Alexa and just voice interfaces, and I think a lot of people were excited about voice interfaces and also chat bots and many other things three years ago. Today, it looks like voice interfaces and podcasts are still fairly separate categories. I mean, it was fair to say that back then people were starting to get excited about podcast. People were getting very excited about voice interfaces. It seems that both of these spaces have advanced more slowly and in their own lanes. They haven't really blended with each other.

So, I mean, do you have any perspective on those two? Are we going to see overlap or do you just think these are totally disjoint segments at this point?

[00:29:19] CMW: I mean, something may come about that makes it really click for people. I was super bullish on it. I thought everybody was going to get an Amazon Echo and then basically get their daily briefs. So, you could give a one to two minute segment of your show and then people would go, “Oh! I want to listen to that.” But there are a couple of things that didn't really come

about with that. One is, is I don't think as many people do that as I thought. I mean, it's convenient, because you brush your teeth. You just walk in and tell it to give you your daily brief and then start brushing. But that turns out not the way that people are getting their news.

The other thing is, is that it has been a nontrivial thing at this point to get your shows on to things like the Amazon Echo or Google. It's not necessarily an easy thing. I mean, at this point, you can go on – I think it's TuneIn radio, and if you put your show on their, then you can tell the echo to play it, right? Tell a keyword, "Go play Ruby Rogues," and it will play. Yeah, it's not a super clean interface.

The other thing is, is that if there's like an episodic feature to it, like this show and my shows, the other issue that you run into is that you don't just want to tell it to play Ruby Rogues. You want it to tell it to play the latest Ruby Rogues. If you know that there was an interview within the last few weeks with somebody you wanted to hear from, then you have to figure out how to tell the device to find the right episode and play it.

I mean, my kids, they struggle with having the Echo play the right song that they want sometimes, because they only know a few of the words of the song or things like that, or there's something else that's named similarly enough to where it plays that instead. So, the interface, even though it's really nice for a lot of things, it's a little bit clunky with this, because it's not well understood exactly how people expect it to work.

[00:31:09] JM: What was your perception of the Spotify acquisitions of Gimlet Media and Anchor?

[00:31:15] CMW: That's interesting. That was something that people were talking about quite a bit at Potfest this year.

[00:31:22] JM: You went to Podfest?

[00:31:23] CMW: I did. Were you there? Did I miss you there?

[00:31:25] JM: I did not go. I've never been to a podcast conference.

[00:31:29] **CMW**: Oh, you should try it.

[00:31:30] **JM**: I really want to go. I really want to go to a podcast conference.

[00:31:34] **CMW**: Yeah. I hear this really handsome guy is going to be one of the sponsors of Podcast Movement this year.

[00:31:40] **JM**: Really handsome guy.

[00:31:41] **CMW**: Yeah, somebody I know. I'm super close to him. I wear his clothes actually.

[00:31:46] **JM**: You're going to sponsor the conference.

[00:31:48] **CMW**: Yes.

[00:31:49] **JM**: Interesting. That's for your podcasting product?

[00:31:53] **CMW**: Yeah.

[00:31:54] **JM**: Cool.

[00:31:54] **CMW**: Yup.

[00:31:55] **JM**: That's a podcast host and monetization tool?

[00:32:00] **CMW**: Yes.

[00:32:00] **JM**: Okay. Interesting. Well, maybe you could tell me about your perspective on Spotify and then you can tell me about your perspective on podcast tooling.

[00:32:08] **JM**: Right.

[00:32:09] CMW: So they bought two properties. They bought Gimlet Media, which is Alex Bloomberg and a bunch of those folks that came off of this American life. They have a bunch of shows. You can go check them out. They have a lot of good shows.

Anyway, Spotify bought them, and then they also bought anchor.fm. Now, I'm going to go with the one that I don't know much about, because I can get it out of the way fast. I have no idea why they bought anchor.fm. I can speculate some things, but I don't think any of them are slam dunk, right? It's not obvious to me that any of those would be the reason why they did it. So, yeah.

I mean, the best thing that I can think of for anchor.fm is that they essentially wanted a platform for people to be able to submit content to Spotify automatically. But they have the podcasters portal up, and it's pretty easy to use anyway. So, even that doesn't really connect for me.

As for Gimlet Media, I think what they were looking at there – And I don't think they're wrong. I think they might be a little bit early, but I don't think they're wrong, is that people are moving more and more and more to the sort of original content. So, Spotify is sort of like Netflix for music, essentially. You go when you listen to other people's music who they've licensed Spotify to go and use. So you can go listen to it for free, and then you listen to the ads, or you can pay to get rid of the ads. You kind of get the idea there, but you're seeing a lot of these other companies like Netflix, and Audible, and Hulu, Amazon. They're all doing original content.

The thing that really pays off in audio if you're going to do original content, in my opinion, is storytelling, and Gimlet is really, really good at it. So, by picking up folks who did this American Life and are now doing all of the stuff that Gimlet was doing, you can let them continue to produce their podcasts. They're already profitable, as far as I know anyway. So, they're not a cost center for you, but then you can have them use their expertise to create original content for you. I think that is where it's going to shine.

So, then you're going to have original content on Spotify. You can already get original content off of audible. You can get original content maybe on some of these other places. I think that's the play that they made there. I think it's a brilliant move. I think they're moving first on this to kind of cement themselves as the free streaming service. It's interesting too, because they weren't the

first to market. We had Pandora and a bunch of these other ones. But Spotify really figured out what the recipe was to make it successful. I think they started to stagnate. People kind of got used to who they were and what they were about, and they realized that they could be disrupted, because anybody else can come in now and copy their recipe. So, by having original content, it makes them more sticky.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[00:35:24] JM: When a rider calls a car using a ridesharing service, there are hundreds of backend services involved in fulfilling that request. Distributed tracing allows the developers at the ridesharing company to see how requests travel through all the stages of the network. From the frontend layer, to the application middleware, to the backend core data services, distributed tracing can be used to understand how long a complex request is taking at each of these stages so the developers can debug their complex application and improve performance issues.

LightStep is a company built around distributed tracing and modern observability. LightStep answers questions and diagnosis anomalies in mobile applications, monoliths and microservices. At lightstep.com/sedaily, you can get started with LightStep tracing and get a free t-shirt. This comfortable, well-fitting t-shirt says, "Distributed tracing is fun," which is a quote that you may find yourself saying once you are improving the latency of your multi-service requests.

LightStep allows you to analyze every transaction that your users engage in. You can measure performance where it matters and you can find the root cause of your problems. LightStep was founded by Ben Sigleman, who is a previous guest on Software Engineering Daily. In that show he talked about his early development of distributed tracing at Google. I recommend going back and giving that episode a listen if you haven't heard it. If you want to try distributed tracing for free, you can use LightStep and get a free t-shirt. Go to lightstep.com/sedaily.

Companies such as Lyft, Twilio and GitHub all use LightStep to observe their systems and improve their product quality.

Thanks to LightStep for being a sponsor of Software Engineering Daily, and you can support the show by going to lightstep.com/sedaily.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:37:35] JM: So, your perspective on building products to help podcasters monetize, or what exactly are you building?

[00:37:46] CMW: So, it's interesting how these all came about. So, initially, when I started building it – By the way, you can go check it out at podwrench.com.

[00:37:54] JM: Podwrench, W-R-E-N-C-H.

[00:37:57] CMW: Yup. You can't sign up for it yet. We're working on that, but we're using it right now for devcheck.tv. Once I get it to the point where – We've run into a few snags. So, I can go in and kind of programmatically on the backend massage stuff to where I want it. But other people can't do that. I don't want to have to support them to that level yet.

Anyway, initially, I was just building a system that would allow me to keep track of all these stuff. So what I wanted was I wanted a system that – There are kind of two parts to it. So one is the content creation part. So I wanted something where I could keep track of the schedule of podcasts. As we grow the network, this becoming more and more of an issue.

So, we can schedule the podcast and make sure that all of the resources that the podcast need are available. Then once the recordings are scheduled, provide the host with information they can use to prepare for the episode. That's usually provided by a guest. If, if there's no guest, and it's just a topic we're discussing, then we can kind of have a preliminary, "Okay. These are my thoughts here, and then we can kind of work through that as a team. Okay. What about this? What about that? What about this?" That way we can have thought it through a little bit before we actually get on the show and still have kind of a free-form conversation about it.

Yeah. So, then there's the prep information. Then once it's prepped, then I wanted essentially a screen for the host to be able to go to to look at the prep information. See who the sponsors are for the show. I'd like to get to the point where I can offer live ad reads. So, then whoever's running the show, essentially, they would just get prompted periodically to do an ad.

Then once it's done, then they either upload the episode or, in some way, the editor would be informed that it's done. Maybe they just know where to go, right? We're using Zoom and it records to the cloud. So, they would just know go log in to Zoom and get it, or we'd have somebody else who would go into Zoom and upload it to this app.

Then the editor, it's just an all-in-one interface. They just download it. They go to their editing however they do it with Audition or Audacity or whatever, and then they just re-upload it. As soon as it's re-uploaded, then it notifies the show notes people. The show notes people come in and write the show notes. That, when they would just do write in the app with a WYSIWYG editor, and then when they are done, then it would schedule it to be released to the website.

So, we would use WordPress APIs or I'm – I'm moving devchat.tv over to a statically generated site. So, you know it would just basically upload a markdown file with all of the information in it. Then it's done, right? So then it's just ready to go. Then once it's released, then it would notify somebody on the team to go do all the social media stuff.

Then on the other – What was that?

[00:40:51] JM: No. Go ahead.

[00:40:53] CMW: I was just going to talk about the sponsorship next. But if you have feedback or thoughts, I'm happy to hear them.

[00:40:58] JM: Well, what I was going to say is, I mean, where we are on the same page. I think this is something where it's like a problem that would only be identified by software engineering podcasters, basically. You look at the infrastructure for software engineering and you look at the infrastructure for podcasting and just say to yourself, "What on earth are we doing? What is this?" We upload an audio file to one place. We put it on WordPress. Except WordPress isn't made for podcasts. There's nothing that was made for podcasts. We put on a statically generated site, whatever. It gets turned to an RSS feed. There's just like the whole – Then, there's not a good way to do dynamic ad insertion. There's all of these proprietary platforms that take way too much margin in exchange for the dynamic ad insertion services.

The whole ecosystem is just – I mean, it is kind of a collective action problem where you have podcasters. You have the people building the podcast infrastructure. You have the people building open source software. You have people selling ads. You have people selling the dynamic ad insertion technology. You have the people selling the analytics technology. It's like the reason the podcast industry feels completely static relative to something like YouTube is because it is this carnival of different players. It's like you can't orchestrate the entire carnival to work together like a musical, know like a single orchestrated musical, because it's a carnival.

[00:42:35] CMW: Yeah. That's a good way to put it.

[00:42:36] JM: YouTube is more like the musical. YouTube, it's centrally orchestrated. So it just advances. But then you have the problems of the central orchestrator, where because you have the central orchestrator, you somebody to blame. So, you get these kind of centralization problems where you have creators saying, "Hey, I'm not getting monetized on YouTube. Why is that?" YouTube says, "Well, your content wasn't up to snuff, or whatever," and then they say, "But my content is fine." Then YouTube says, "Yeah. Actually, it was our algorithms and our centralized oversight committee," and like, "Well, okay. That's kind of a problem too." But there must be some middle ground that is better than the status quo for what we have of podcasting technology.

[00:43:20] CMW: Right. Yeah. That's kind of where I was aiming to get is, essentially, you can go manage your accounts on iTunes and whatever, which is kind of the central authority, so to speak. But as far as just building the content, that's what I wanted. Then, very similar on the sponsorship side, I wanted something where I could essentially keep track of current sponsors. I could keep track of potential sponsors, and my sponsors could actually go in. So, instead of emailing me and saying, "Hey, we want to update our banner or update what you said on the show," or whatever, and then I have to go remember to upload it to WordPress or whatever or go record the new thing. I will just have a system where it's like, "Hey, they updated the talking points or the ad script for the podcast." So it would just prompt me until I essentially said, "Okay. I've done it." If they uploaded a new banner, it would just update the banner, right? They could just upload it to the web instead of uploading it to their email client. So, there was a lot of stuff there.

But then, ultimately, where I wound up at this year was I was talking to a few people. Johnny Winn from Elixir Fountain, which hasn't produced a show in a while, and a few other people who had shows that quit. I was talking to them and I realized that a lot of these folks, what happens is, is they get in because they want to make the content. They love doing the content, right? They love recording. They love talking to people, but then it's like, "Okay. Well, writing the – Pulling together the editing and everything like that is a pain," and I either can't afford it or I can't afford it because I don't have time or know to find sponsors. So then I do it myself, but I don't actually have time for that either. I feel like it's kind of a shame that these shows are shutting down, because they don't have the resources to keep rolling.

So, ultimately, what my offering is going to be is – Or at least the main offering will be – I mean, you can use it for your own team. If you have room production team, just come in, plug it in, pay for it. It's just going to be a flat monthly fee. But if you're one of these shows, then what I want to do is I want to set it up so that it's just like, "Look, we'll go find you sponsors. We'll use the sponsorship money to pay a production team for you, and then we'll split the rest of it. If there's any money left over after that, we'll split it." That way, it gets all of the production headaches out of the way. It gets all of the funding headaches out of the way. It gets all how do I pay these people issues out of the way. As long as you're producing content and you'll allow us to help you find sponsors and do the production for you, then we'll just get it done.

[00:45:56] JM: Interesting. So, you're thinking of like a – It's almost like a capital – It's like you're issuing kind of a loan to these podcasters to get them off the ground. Then, in return, they kind of let you handle the podcast monetization side of things.

[00:46:15] CMW: Yeah.

[00:46:15] JM: It's an interesting model. I mean, what I like about it is there should be way more podcasters.

[00:46:23] CMW: I so much agree with that. I can't even tell you. I so much agree with that.

[00:46:27] JM: I mean, I'm just shocked people still perceive podcasting is hard, and it's just not – Of course, there're things that you can get infinitely better. That's why I love it. It's like every day I'm just like, "Okay, I did a terrible job in this interview. What can I do better?" It's the art of conversation. How do you get better having a conversation? So you can never max out at how good you can get at a conversation.

Now, that said, how hard is it to get to level zero of podcasting? It's just not hard. I mean, how hard is it to start a blog? It's very simple. But people don't really see that, and because – I mean, first of all, it probably used to be a lot. It used to be hard. I mean, we're using Zencaster right now. This is a great – I love Zencaster. It's maybe better than Skype. We haven't had Skype for too long. Anyway, I'm a fan of the idea of more people having podcasts. I still get the podcast inbox zero. I know a lot of other people don't have this experience, but I still run out of podcasts that I'm happy to listen to. I don't know quite why that is. It seems like I should have infinite, like good podcasts that I want to listen to. I don't think I have that problem with YouTube. I never run out of good YouTube content. I don't know. Do you run out of good podcasts to listen to or do you feel like you're just infinitely deluged?

[00:47:42] CMW: So, it's funny because, what I tend to do on my listening habits – Hang on. I want to go back to the there should be more podcasters out there. So, I was at NG-Conf this year. That's the Angular Conference. It's in Salt Lake. I live like a hour from Salt Lake. So, I just drove up every day. Of course, I also drove up every day by virtue of the fact that I had to take my kids with me to the conference every day. But they had a kids track. So that worked out.

Anyway, I was talking to a bunch of people and I realized that there were a handful of communities are related to Angular where they didn't really have podcasts. There isn't a good content out there for them. I also talked to some people who especially liked Java. So, the .NET community has .NET Rocks! and they've been around for a while. There are a bunch of other podcasts around the Microsoft ecosystem. But I was talking to some Java developers and they were complaining that there wasn't a podcast out there that they really liked and that there wasn't great content out there for them that would help them stay current. I was going, "Java? Really? Because there are still a zillion Java developers out there." I'm sitting there going, "Why doesn't every freaking community have a podcast?" That's when it hit me.

So, devchat.tv's mission before April, which is when – Or May, when NG-Conf was, was to help software developers liberate themselves and build the career and software that's going to make a difference in the world. Now, our mission is to make sure that every programming community has a podcast, and it's just because it is. It's insane. These people need some content that's going to help them get where they want to go.

I actually talk to some people who started a Coldfusion podcast, and I'm like, "Great! There's content out there for these folks." Right?

[00:49:27] JM: Yeah.

[00:49:28] CMW: Exactly. I mean, it's just – It drives me absolutely crazy that there are people out there that are trying to do better and learn, and that there's nothing out there for them. I mean, that to me is wrong. So, that's what we're after these days, is just getting that content out there for these folks.

Anyway. So, I completely agree with you that there should be more podcasters out there. The other thing is, is yeah, people kind of have this idea that podcasting is like radio. So you need studio level blah-blah-blah stuff. I don't even know. But, ultimately, what you need is you go on Fiverr and you pay somebody to make smart work for you and then you get a microphone. It doesn't even have to be a great one. It just has to be a decent one. So, you can spend 30 bucks and get a decent mic. You can spend 60 bucks and get a nice mic. You can spend \$300 and get a professional mic. But get a decent mic. Plug it into your machine. If you have like AirPods or the Apple ear headphones – I mean, those mics are decent. Just make sure they're not rubbing on your shirt. But then do a show. Just talk. I mean, that's it. Podcast done. Put some intro music on it if you really want to get fancy. But that's all there is to it to get started. Yeah. So, I'm just like, "Why aren't more people out there talking about this stuff?"

[00:50:46] JM: Agreed.

[00:50:47] CMW: I forgot what I derailed off of.

[00:50:50] JM: No. It doesn't matter. I want to ask you about – Because we are observants and participants in the world of software media, did you see this stuff about Medium and freeCodeCamp and the practical dev? Do you know what I'm talking about? Did you see that?

[00:51:13] CMW: I think I heard something about it, but just in very, very general details. I don't know much beyond that.

[00:51:21] JM: Okay. All right. Well, we don't need to discuss it, I guess.

[00:51:25] CMW: Now I'm curious.

[00:51:26] JM: So, it was basically – So, freeCodeCamp had a Medium blog that people –

[00:51:31] CMW: Yes. They've had one for a long time.

[00:51:33] JM: Rights. So people could post to the Medium blog and then freeCodeCamp was in an interaction with Medium, and they felt that Medium was behaving in a hostile manner. I might be paraphrasing it. People who want to see the verbatim discussions about this can find them.

But, basically, user generated content that people had submitted to the freeCodeCamp Medium was migrated to a freeCodeCamp source blog. Then the people from dev commented on that, and it was just a big discussion around what the rights of user generated content submitters are and how that relates to open source software. How it relates to content production. How it relates to the monetization of companies, like Medium. I don't really have a strong opinion on it. I was curious about your opinion, because you're in the media landscape. I thought it was quite interesting deliberation, but maybe I should just talk to the people involved or people who are more intimately familiar with it.

[00:52:48] CMW: Yeah. I don't know the specifics of this case. So I'm not going to even pretend to talk about it.

[00:52:53] JM: Okay.

[00:52:54] CMW: I did have a conversation with an attorney a few weeks ago. Essentially, it's because I'm talking to a fairly large well-known development training company. I haven't finalized the details. So I'm not going to talk about who exactly they are.

Anyway, we were working that out, right? Because if we're producing content for them and the podcast is called The Big Company Podcast. But we're distributing it on devchat.tv, then who owns it, right? Because it's branded with their stuff, but we're producing it.

So, we went through this and we're actually putting together a legal agreement so that both of our interests are met. But at the same time, I talked to him about my hosts and I said, "Okay. I'm never really worried about this before, but who owns the content. Who owns the intellectual property?" Essentially, what he told me was that if the content was produced with my infrastructure, then I own it. So, devchat.tv owns, legitimately owns. There's enough court precedent to back up my claim that I own it.

[00:54:03] JM: Meaning like if you record it on your recording equipment.

[00:54:07] CMW: Yeah.

[00:54:07] JM: Fascinating.

[00:54:08] CMW: Right. It's all been recorded on my Skype channels that I set up. It's all been recorded on my Zoom accounts that I set up. My team produced the episodes, edited them all down. So, there's no dispute that we have the legal right to it.

Now, that said, I'm still putting together an agreement that my hosts can agree to and the guests can agree to that says we can use the content and use their name and things to promote episodes that they're on. So, it's kind of an interesting thing, because most of the time, yeah, people do own the rights to their own likeness, their own voice, etc. So, it's just the nature of the way this is put together that we've done things in a way that have covered us legally, mostly by accident. Yeah, so that's one aspect of that.

But then, as far as freeCodeCamp goes – This is where it gets a little bit interesting, because they moved all of the stuff off of Medium and on to their own blog or whatever, right? So, did freeCodeCamp own the rights to that content? I don't know. But, yeah, generally, if you publish your content to somebody else's platform, then there's some implied consent to ownership or distribution. But I don't know where the line is.

All in all, I'm in favor of less restrictions on content. The reason is, is because the fewer restrictions there are, the more content people are willing to produce, right?

[00:55:49] JM: Yeah. I'm with you. Also, one thing that perplex me about it was why not just mirror the content, or maybe that's what they did. Maybe they just mirrored it. I actually don't know the details.

So, I write music, and when I publish my music, I don't really care if – I mean, I know this is a luxury, but I don't care about making money out of it. I care about maximizing distribution. The thing is, if your content reaches significant distribution and people actually want it. The money takes care of itself. I mean, it might take a long game, but like you probably know this. At least this is my experience. You do not win the content and the media game through nickels and dimes. You win it right through building a long-term brand, building a long-term presence. It's not like one single – I mean, I remember in our last conversation, you talked about the importance of the – The episode you did with Brendan Ike . Like, yeah, sometimes you have like a blog post that smashes through or you publish a book and that's really important. That's why people still get paid for books. But it's a war of inches. So it's just like I always feel like, yeah, I want to cross-post everything. I want things on multiple channels. Anyway, this is definitely a conversation I should have with somebody from one of these outlets.

[00:57:19] CMW: Yeah, and I would also – I would be really curious to just know sort of what the default position is on a lot of these stuff legally. But, also – I mean, I hate to use the word moral, but there's some sort of, I guess, judgment of what's right and wrong to do with it. I mean, if they put it on freeCodeCamp's Medium, they did essentially consent to freeCodeCamp distributing it. But maybe it didn't go – Having it on freecodecamp.com or.org/blog or whatever it is, maybe that's not exactly how they expected it to go out.

So, I can kind of see both sides of this issue. But, ultimately, at the same time – I mean, if somebody publishes something to freecodecamp.org Medium, and I'm not trying to pick on them. I'm just using them as an example, because it came up. Then the experience doesn't go exactly how they expected, because freeCodeCamp moved it over to their own website. It'd be really sad if they quit trying to blog or quit trying to produce content.

[00:58:26] JM: I think anybody – Nobody would ever do that. Nobody would ever say, “Oh! My content got moved, then I'm going to quit blogging.”

[00:58:32] CMW: Yeah, but it didn't get as much traffic, because blah-blah-blah.

[00:58:35] JM: Well, that's for sure.

[00:58:35] CMW: They're not willing to start their own blog and they just give up on guest posting I guess is what I'm going, right? Then we miss out on any other content that they're willing to produce.

So, I think that's an extreme example. But at the same time, the fewer restrictions we put on people as far as what they can do with their own content, the more likely they are to produce content.

[00:58:57] JM: All right. Well, we got to wrap up. But it's interesting landscape. Interesting media landscape, and I feel like at the intersection of software engineering and media, there are a lot of questions that are on uncharted territory. It's funny. I bet you never thought you would've thought yourself before you started this podcast that you would've been so curious about the legalese of like media. Yeah, I've gotten curious too, because you start to build a business and you're like, “Gees! I kind of want to protect this business. I want to make some stupid mistake.” Then you start to – Yeah, you start to look into the legalese. Anyway –

[00:59:32] CMW: Yeah. That does actually lead to one more thing that's changed in the last three years, and that is, is that I am no longer freelancing in software.

[00:59:39] JM: Oh! Congratulations.

[00:59:41] CMW: I've been 100% on the podcast for the last two and a half, three years. So, yeah.

[00:59:45] JM: That's great. Great to hear. Congratulations. Okay. Well, Chuck, thanks for coming on the show, and continued success. Good luck at the podcast – Was it Podcast Conference?

[00:59:56] CMW: Podcast Movement.

[00:59:58] JM: Podcast Movement. Right. Okay. I will go at some point. Yeah, good luck and let me know the product evolves.

[01:00:04] CMW: Sounds good. Let me just the kind give a roundup of links real quick for people who are curious. So, the podcasting software is going to be at podwrench.com. Today, it is the beginning of June 2019, and I'm hoping to have a usable beta version by the end of the month. Then you can go check out all of our shows at devchat.tv. I've also written a book. So I'm just going to plug that as well, and that's at getacoderjob.com. I'm renaming it. So, you'll probably be able to get it or whatever the new title is, which is going to be something like find your dream developer job. Yeah, that's basically what I've got going on these days. So, definitely go check all that stuff out, and you can find me on Twitter and everywhere else that you're going to go look for that stuff.

[01:00:43] JM: Awesome. Okay, Chuck, thanks for coming on the show.

[01:00:45] CMW: Yeah. Thanks, Jeff.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[01:00:50] JM: GoCD is a continuous delivery tool from ThoughtWorks. If you have heard about continuous delivery, but you don't know what it looks like in action, try the GoCD Test Drive at gocd.org/sedaily. GoCD's Test Drive will set up example pipelines for you to see how GoCD manages your continuous delivery workflows. Visualize your deployment pipelines and

understand which tests are passing in which tests are failing. Continuous delivery helps you release your software faster and more reliably. Check out GoCD by going to go.cd.org/sedaily and try out GoCD to get continuous delivery for your next project.

[END]