

**EPISODE 957****[INTRODUCTION]**

**[00:00:00] JM:** Key Values is a platform where companies are profiled with descriptions of their company values. These profiles describe features such as work-life balance, company culture, daily routines and strategy.

Lynne Tye created Key Values with the goal of building a small business that would make money through connecting job seekers to companies with a culture that matched their own personal value system. Key Values has become highly successful, and Lynne is making enough money from the business to live comfortably.

In a previous episode, Lynne and I discussed her founding story and learning to program as well as the engineering of Key Values. Today's episode picks up a few years later with Lynne having found significant success with her own company shortly after learning to program. Lynne's software business is an example of a growing trend, Indie Hackers. This trend was identified by Courtland Allen, founder of the Indie Hackers platform and the Indie Hackers podcast. Courtland is close friends with Lynne, and Lynne's desire to start her own software company was influenced by her conversations with Courtland.

At a certain point, Lynne was considering raising money and growing Key Values to venture scale. She was accepted into Y Combinator, but she decided to stick with the Indie Hackers route and grow the business independently. Lynne joins the show to talk about the process of starting a software business and the pivotal decisions that she has made around financing, growth and her own psychology.

We will be at KubCon San Diego 2019 and also AWS Reinvent Las Vegas, and we're planning a meet up at Reinvent on Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> for Software Engineering Daily listeners, or I guess anybody. You probably only want to attend if you're a Software Engineering Daily listener, otherwise you'll be very confused as to why you are at this meet up. But if you want to register for that, there is a link in the show notes. I'm not sure where we're going to have the meet up

yet, but we'll let you know. It will be Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> somewhere in Las Vegas. I hope to see you there.

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**[00:02:23] JM:** This podcast is brought to you by PagerDuty. You've probably heard of PagerDuty. Teams trust PagerDuty to help them deliver high-quality digital experiences to their customers. With PagerDuty, teams spend less time reacting to incidents and more time building software. Over 12,000 businesses rely on PagerDuty to identify issues and opportunities in real-time and bring together the right people to fix problems faster and prevent those problems from happening again.

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I'm really happy to have Pager Duty as a sponsor. I first heard about them on a podcast probably more than five years ago. So it's quite satisfying to have them on Software Engineering Daily as a sponsor. I've been hearing about their product for many years, and I hope you check it out [pagerduty.com](http://pagerduty.com).

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:03:50] JM:** Lynne Tye, welcome back to Software Engineering Daily

**[00:03:53] LT:** I didn't know you were going to start just now. Hello.

**[00:03:55] JM:** When we last spoke you had just gotten your business, Key Values, off the ground. It's a platform where companies post their values. It allows people to apply for jobs that fit their own personal values. We actually did that interview two years ago. Does it feel like time is moving faster when you're running your own business?

**[00:04:15] LT:** It's both. It's like so much has happened in two years, but it also a lot hasn't changed, or a lot has happened and hasn't happened at the same time. Time is weird for me. What is time?

**[00:04:26] JM:** What's the biggest change that has occurred in the last two years?

**[00:04:29] LT:** Funny enough for Key Values, the business, the way it's set up, the idea, the direction, the vision is pretty much – The product is identical, but I feel like I'm – It's actually funny. I think the thing that makes me know that time has passed is I was so nervous the first time that we did. I think you were the first podcast I'd ever been invited on to. I've probably done – I don't even know how many.

I've lost count since then, and I think I feel like I've formed my opinions in this new world of like entrepreneurship or like in tech or business, which I was so new before that I didn't know. I think that's like – I'm just like more confident in general, but I remember I was really nervous the first time. I was like sweating bullets. I don't think you knew that, because we weren't in person then, but –

**[00:05:18] JM:** I didn't know that.

**[00:05:19] LT:** I was just so nervous. I don't know.

**[00:05:21] JM:** Is software easier than you anticipated?

**[00:05:24] LT:** What aspect? Like the writing of it?

**[00:05:27] JM:** Writing software.

**[00:05:27] LT:** Yeah. I think I thought it was going to be a lot harder than it was to learn. That said, I wouldn't say I'm like a good software engineering. I wouldn't even call myself a software engineer at this point.

**[00:05:38] JM:** Why not?

**[00:05:40] LT:** I code very little.

**[00:05:41] JM:** Join the club.

**[00:05:42] LT:** Yeah. I feel like if I have looked for jobs right now, I would be junior.

**[00:05:46] JM:** Do you think software engineering is about writing code?

**[00:05:49] LT:** To some degree, yeah. I mean, it's like definitely – Oh! Well, that's what I was asking. What part of software engineering? If you're about writing the software, then yeah, I think it is – You have to know how to code.

**[00:05:59] JM:** I don't know. I mean, let's break down the word. Engineering, that word just means building something, right?

**[00:06:04] LT:** That's true. Yeah, you have to have the tools to build things. That's a funny conversation. I just had a really heated debate with a couple of girlfriends who went to MIT with me and they studied mechanical or civil engineering and they're annoyed that here in San Francisco when someone is like, "Are you technical?" They're like, "Yes," and they're like means that you know how to code. It's like the meaning in San Francisco is that you know how to code. Whereas a scientist is technically technical, but it's just definitions.

**[00:06:34] JM:** But don't you think that's a fair assumption for people to make? Because everybody who considers themselves a scientist I think should have some rudimentary ability to code.

**[00:06:45] LT:** Oh! I don't think that's true. I mean, anyone who's listening who's a scientist is like, "I hate you. It's not true." I didn't know how to code when I was a scientist. I mean, I barely did. I would like fake it. I would actually memorize – This is so embarrassing. I would memorize all of the characters. I'd be like, "Space, space, dash, colon." I'll just memorize the characters. I didn't understand what I was writing though.

**[00:07:08] JM:** If I recall, your career in science was widely successful both personally and academically.

**[00:07:14] LT:** Well, I think it was like I didn't finish the story, or I don't know. I felt successful at the time, which is why it was weird, because I think things were going well. I had a paper that was published and passed quals early in my class of like 12 people at UCSF. This is 2012. But then I just dropped out anyway. So I don't know. I guess that's a failure to a lot of people, but –

**[00:07:39] JM:** Just to me, it seems hard to be a responsible scientist either academically or as like an applied scientist, which is kind of what engineering is without having a sense of what the state-of-the-art can do in terms of processing large sample sizes.

I mean, science is all about getting as close to the truth as you can, and getting close to the truth generally requires having a large sample size. Processing large sample sizes these days is kind of about being technical from a software perspective.

**[00:08:13] LT:** That's interesting. You can think about like other, like more cognitive studies where it's a lot of – The sample sizes are obviously the bigger the sample size, the better. But maybe it's like a sample size of like 20, because you have to do experiments with 20 monkeys over a year and there just aren't – It's like it's harder to collect that data. Whereas if you're doing like experiments with *C. elegans*, which are basically little worms or flies, it's like you can have a huge sample size because they're just easier to have.

I mean, yeah. You just can't kill – I feel scared saying this, because people who are in science get nervous. Yeah, the lives of the monkey are a little bit more valuable than that of like a fly. The sample size is actually you don't necessarily need to do that. There's like a lot of experiments where it's like even like with infant and childhood psychology studies. That's all science I would say. Then there's the hard science versus soft science and people – I don't know. The boundaries are always – They're polarizing. I don't think you need to know how to code to be a scientist.

**[00:09:14] JM:** Okay. Is entrepreneurship easier than you expected?

**[00:09:19] LT:** Ooh! That's a tricky question. I would actually say it's not, but I think I've been lucky in a lot of ways too. I also don't view – Ooh! This is a good question. I mean, it's definitely challenging, but at the same time the way that I got into it was I was freelancing first as like a consultant and I was charging an hourly base.

I think in a way I just wanted to scale that process rather than like build an empire and like takeover big giants or anything like that. I think it's really good that people stretch and have these really ambitious goals. But then of course when you shoot for the moon, it's hard to make it.

I was a like a little bit more conservative and risk-averse to some degree. Maybe not even deliberately just as what I like. So it didn't feel like a huge leap from what I was doing before. If that makes sense. I don't know. That does make sense?

**[00:10:18] JM:** Well, it does. When I think about your story, and I hear what you say and I read some of the stuff that you tweet and talk about and so on. My sense is that you have really found in the world of software entrepreneurs a group of people who you can align with. A group of people who you can get along with well. I mean –

**[00:10:46] LT:** I hear that.

**[00:10:47] JM:** I feel that way, and I think that has made things much easier than in previous domains, because I feel like there is a kind of unspoken tribalism that I get along with people on. I know other people have found this in religion or art or something, but I'm like, "No. This is mine."

**[00:11:07] LT:** You found your family. You found your tribe in entrepreneurship.

**[00:11:09] JM:** Seriously.

**[00:11:09] LT:** Yeah. Well, I think that makes sense for anything that you love a lot. If you love something, you will usually, I would say, find other people – You are excited about other people

who are also passionate about the same thing. That does make things easier for sure. I mean, the whole idea of doing things alone is doing it wrong is definitely true. If you want to start a business doing it in isolation by yourself with no help is kind of – I mean, power to you, that's going to be extra hard, but it will make it harder.

**[00:11:38] JM:** That is basically what you're doing though, right?

**[00:11:39] LT:** Working in isolation? No. Not at all. It's weird. I think I define – Yes, I'm a solo founder. I have no employees. There's no one else working on Key Values. I actually have one of my best friends from childhood is helping me part-time like a few hours a week when she can with just like – She's a copyeditor. She's a really good writer. She helps me a little bit here and there. I've been trying to get her to come on more. Yeah, Key Values is mostly me, but for sure I'm not doing it by myself. I have so much help from other people, whether it's like emotional or just like strategic advice or marketing.

I hired someone, a sales coach guru. I call him a sales guru, who like taught me sales. Yeah, I guess I have a lot of friends. We just help each other, I guess. In some ways it does feel like we're on the same team. But instead of us all working on the same thing together, why does a team have to be defined as like you're all working on the exact same thing? All of us have a goal of building our own successful businesses and we all have our own, but we still help each other. Does that make sense? I don't really feel like alone. I've never really felt alone in that regard.

**[00:12:42] JM:** Well, let's take the sales thing for example though. I assume you pay this sales guru.

**[00:12:47] LT:** Oh, yeah. For sure. An hourly rate. Yeah. I think that's – He's on my team. I'm on his team too. I encourage them hardcore to start his own consultancy. I was like, "Do you know how many founders needs sales help? Tons. You should run with this." I sent him at least 5, 6, 7 clients, customers, founders who need his help.

**[00:13:06] JM:** Do you think that the idea of people needing equity in your business in order to give their best work. Do you think that's true? I feel like that's kind of an axiom that –

**[00:13:23] LT:** I don't think that's true, and I say that confidently because it wasn't true for me. Before I even thought that I was ever the type of person to start a business, I was under the impression that equity is just a lottery ticket and I don't actually buy lottery tickets. I would rather have the cash now. I would much rather have money today than the hope for more money later.

I would negotiate for less equity. I mean, everyone's different. I don't think that's the only way to get someone to care, because it wasn't for me. I don't know. I mean, if someone wanted equity in Key Values, I'm not like, "It's all mine. I need it." I don't think like that.

**[00:14:03] JM:** But that would be a total lottery ticket in your case, because you don't have any plans to be acquired or –

**[00:14:07] LT:** Well, that's the other reason. I'm like I don't even know if that would make sense for you. If you were like, "Lynne, I want in." I would say I don't know if that's – I don't know if that's the exit plan for that to be something for you in the future. I don't know. But I don't think equity – This is like an interesting conversation, because I wanted to write this blog post about this, and people have really strong opinions about equity, especially in this city.

But I do think there's a spectrum and it's definitely like everyone has a very different view of it. Granted, I think that's colored by the fact that most people don't understand it, myself included. It's complicated.

I interviewed a bunch of founders, and when we got really into the nitty-gritty, I think pretty much every founder was like, "Can you give me a second? Let me just look this up real quick." It's not just something that's common knowledge. I think without a really, really good understanding of how equity works and just what factors in and contributes to how someone should value that at a company, then it's like conversations about how much it matters is kind of like hand-wavy.

Yeah, even just like walking on the street and people are talking about like, "Oh! Stock options, Stripe price," blah-blah-blah, and you're like, "I don't know even know if they – Who knows?" That was me when I first started. My job in tech, I was like, "10,000 shares!" But like what does that mean? I was like, "10,000 sounds like a lot," which is like –

**[00:15:20] JM:** My impression is that there is a stage at a company where it actually is totally pivotal. Maybe it's –

**[00:15:26] LT:** Pivotal for who or for what?

**[00:15:28] JM:** Pivotal to have this kind of equity situation. If you imagine like a company that's poised to IPO and it's sort of like can we sprint to make the IPOs big of an awesome event as possible, the Uber employees in the 2 to 5-year run-up to the IPO or where Stripe is now, or where Airbnb is now.

**[00:15:50] LT:** Yeah, I agree. I agree.

**[00:15:50] JM:** Then the equity seems to really count, because if you're a VP there, you really have a lot of control over how well the company is going to do in that run-up to the IPO, in that run-up to the liquidity event. It really matters there.

**[00:16:05] LT:** I agree, and that's because there's like more of a sure thing. Stripe, Airbnb – You never know, but I would say it's a sure thing.

**[00:16:13] JM:** Yeah. I guess what's interesting is like that makes it – If you need for the equity to be structured well in that situation, that probably means you have to have the equity structure correctly from the get go, otherwise you're not even going to have things correctly aligned once you get to that pivotal moment.

**[00:16:28] LT:** Yup, I think that's true. Yeah, as you know. For me, that doesn't really apply.

**[00:16:34] JM:** Nor I, really.

**[00:16:36] LT:** But, yeah. No, it's interesting. The skin in the game – I mean, this is totally analogous with just doing sales. I think as long as both parties feels like they're getting value and it's fair, then that's what you should do. There's no other rules around that. It's like it's good – If you're doing this podcast and I was like, "I will pay you for this podcast." By the way, I'm not

paying you for this podcast. But I thought it was really valuable because of something for my business. Maybe I'd pay you \$10,000 for it. Maybe someone else would be like –

**[00:17:04] JM:** We charge more than that.

**[00:17:05] LT:** Oh! Okay. Yeah, or like maybe it should be like \$100,000. I'm just saying it depends on how we value it. This is why – I think this is the art of sales that I've learned. It's just like the value add is totally different depending on who you're talking to. It's like I don't know if tiered pricing, at least my case, always makes sense. But that is definitely true for employment. As an employee, when you interview at different jobs it's not like you should – It totally depends. It's not just like you as a person, how much should you make? It's like how is the company doing? What stage are they at? How is your skillset going to benefit their business at this particular time? It's like there are so many other factors that go into that. It's like – I don't know. As long as it's fair in both sides, that's how you should decide.

**[00:17:43] JM:** Well, here's what I love about software businesses, frankly, media businesses, is people have no idea what anything's worth. I have no idea what anything's worth. You have no idea –

**[00:17:53] LT:** No idea. We're winging it.

**[00:17:55] JM:** We're totally winging it, and I assume that was one of the – Actually, I think you even mentioned that in your interview with Courtland, the Indie Hackers interview you did with him, where you are talking about sales and your sales coach gave you some advice. I think it was related to the idea that nobody knows what this is worth. You threw out a price and you just kind of like wing it.

**[00:18:14] LT:** Yeah, totally. You just price test. You just say some random numbers and see how people respond. That's also tricky, because I think in the very beginning I was like, "Okay. I'm going to pick five company," or not even. I was like, "The next five companies that reach out to me, I'm just going to say different numbers and see what they say."

But I was stupid and didn't think about what things were like from that perspective. If like a big company like Airbnb reached out to me, it'd be different than if a two-person startup that just like is pre-revenue hasn't found product market fit reach out to me. I can't price them the same. I mean, that's an exaggeration of that. But like I didn't consider some of the other things, like how much they're going to be hiring, the types of roles the GO that they're hiring in, the amount of money that you would pay for a service to help you hire is totally proportional to how much money you're going to spend on these hires in the first place.

If you're going to hire 10 people in San Francisco versus 10 people in Europe or South America, it's going to be different how much you're spending total on those 10 hires. Therefore, the pricing is going to be different for me. Yeah. Does that make sense? I don't know if that makes sense.

**[00:19:12] JM:** Give me some more – You sell a hiring product, basically.

**[00:19:16] LT:** Sort of. I would say I sell employer branding more than anything. It's actually funny. I wouldn't even consider Key Values to be software like as a product. It's not. The code is – There's nothing complicated about it. It's static site. It's the content. It's also like a media, I guess to some degree, business.

Yeah, companies pay a flat fee for a yearly subscription. I'm doing air quotes. That includes the content creation, where I work with them to articulate who it is that they are and help answer a lot of the questions that candidates will have and kind of just give people an insider look into what life would be like at this company should they join. That way they have that information before they even – I mean, before they even have to do a call or even fill out an application or write a cover letter.

It's really the content that companies are paying for. Then of course there's the added part of then being listed on Key Values that has its own audience and I will continue to list and promote it throughout the year. But, yeah.

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**[00:20:22] JM:** Looking for a job is painful, and if you are in software and you have the skillset needed to get a job in technology, it can sometimes seem very strange that it takes so long to find a job that's a good fit for you.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[00:22:12] JM:** The business is if I go to Key Values, there are companies listed and I can look through their values. If I have my own set of values, I can find companies that align with those. Then on those different pages, there are job links. So are you getting a referral kickback on that or is you literally have a fixed cost that people pay as a subscription? Oh my God! That is a good business.

**[00:22:38] LT:** No, it's funny, because everyone's like, "You're an idiot," because it's so – Recruiting is a very, very juicy pie. If you wanted to make more money, I should charge by placement or hire. It's like I should have a contingency model. This is crazy. Recruiters at this point are charging anywhere between like 25% to 35% of first year salary, and if they're placing people that are like making 200, 250k a year, it's like – I mean, that's a good business.

For me, it's like it was never really about the money, one. Two – Well, maybe there are three reasons. Two, I genuinely think the problem with recruiting is this contingency model, because if my job is to stay at your company just long enough to hit the 90-day mark. That's when I get paid out. Then it's like, "I'm not really aligned with you or the candidate," because I'm like, "You should just like it enough for three months."

Then in some cases, this is really sneaky, is that if I placed someone at your company for 90 days and then you pay me and then they're not happy. I'm like, "Oh, yeah. That was my bad," but I have these other companies I can place you at. I can get paid out twice from the same person. Do you know what I mean? Even three times if you really think about it. I mean, I know this happens, because I've met people who've done it. It's like – Yeah, anyways. I don't want myself to be incentivized by anything that isn't fully aligned with everyone, because I just am in the business of making good relationships and – Yeah, I don't know. I just think that feels bad. That's the other reason why I don't do contingency. But the last reason is just that I'm not a recruiter. That doesn't sounds fun to me. I only really do things that sound fun to me.

**[00:24:15] JM:** But that's pretty savvy. That makes it such that instead of having a referral-based business, which is a grind and probably becomes more of kind of more operationally – I mean, how operationally-intensive is your business?

**[00:24:30] LT:** There's a lot of those questions where it's like I think it's just all relative. To me, it's not operationally-intensive. I work with all these companies, but I love doing that. It's like fun for me. But I guess for some people they're like, "Wow! You spend like an hour or two or three with every company just talking about this, like putting together a profile?" It's like, "Yeah." But that's like it's so fun.

**[00:24:48] JM:** It is fun.

**[00:24:49] LT:** Yeah, and I like writing, and I like helping people write. I really, really, really – And this is true for – This has always been true. It will always be true for me. I like love finding hidden gems and then telling everyone about it. That's like basically every company. They're so much cooler and more interesting and nuanced and have so much –

**[00:25:07] JM:** What's an example?

**[00:25:08] LT:** Okay. Well, I'm scared to call, but I just published this profile, Mode Analytics. If I was me two years ago, I'm like, "Mode analytics. Hmm, that sounds like – I mean, okay. Interesting." Yeah. I'm like not just that interested. Their product is cool. Their space is cool. Then when I started talking to their team members, it's like it is just grateful out of stereotypes that I have, and I'm sure other people have where like if you think someone who's like really analytical thinker, like data-driven. You just imagine a certain type of person and they're like the complete opposite. They're very thoughtful, super high EQ.

They've grown and developed all these processes to be thoroughly inclusive from their interview, to how they run meetings. They have a transparent performance framework so that compensation is tied to titles and levels and it's just like – I wish I could demo it, but like you can just go and click on what you need to do if you want to get promoted. It's just like there's no questions asked. If someone gets promoted, you can literally just go look, pull it up on your browser and see what they had to do to get to that stage and how much they're paid and it's just likely completely transparent.

I'm like, "That's really cool they do that." Also, they have – I talked to someone and they were like, "Oh, yeah. This is the first time in my entire career where I've reported – An engineer, who reported to a female who reported to another female. So three – Yeah, three links in the reporting chain of female engineers. I was like, "That's also –" I don't know. I just wouldn't have – I jumped to conclusions when I heard the name Mode Analytics, right? So it's like there's just so much that's interesting about this group of people. I think that's kind of my point.

Two and a half years ago when I was looking for jobs, I probably would have just kept scrolling. I was like, "Next." I'm like looking for flashy logos or like I don't know what I was doing. I was just

like there're just so many companies you could work for. How do you know which one to learn about? It's like – What is it? Option process? Twist process? There's just too many choices. Yeah, you pass up on lots of good stuff as a result.

**[00:27:04] JM:** Yeah. I mean, you're describing the same kind of thing that I like about what I get to do every day is talking to people. The thing about software is I think my dad has this – My dad is a doctor and he –

**[00:27:17] LT:** What kind of doctor?

**[00:27:18] JM:** Family practice.

**[00:27:19] LT:** Oh! Okay.

**[00:27:21] JM:** He sometimes is like he'll be discussing like, "Oh! I have this patient one time, and they were an engineer and you know how engineers think." I'm like, "What do you mean by that?" He's, "Oh! You know, they're so mechanical in their thinking. They're so cold and rational." I'm like, "I don't think that's a correct description of engineers. Engineers are actually this bohemian, artistic group of people that happen to often times have some analytical bent." But seeing the large enterprises that these people are able to build and what they do when they have resources, it often is like this expression of their creativity at scale.

**[00:28:03] LT:** For sure. I mean, I do think there are some trends in terms of like who's drawn to the type of lifestyle that is and the type of thinking. But it's true. Especially today, and maybe this is just because I have – Maybe the times have changed or maybe I've just met more software engineers, but I think there's no one main box. There's like every type of flavor and kind of personality that is drawn into software engineering. Yeah.

**[00:28:30] JM:** What's the hardest part about being an Indie Hacker?

**[00:28:33] LT:** Oh man! Lots of hard things, and also I don't even know how do you define Indie Hacker. Are you asking what's the hardest challenge I've had in the last two years?

**[00:28:42] JM:** Whatever Courtland's definition is.

**[00:28:45] LT:** I don't even know. Can you recite? By the way, you're wearing an Indie Hacker shirt, so I feel like you should be able to repeat –

**[00:28:51] JM:** Courtland gave it to me. Wonderfully-fitting, comfortable t-shirt.

**[00:28:56] LT:** I think the hardest part is the funniest part, which is just that – Actually, this is perfectly aligned with what you just said. When I started, because I was just so brand-new to this world of entrepreneurship, indie hacking, whatever you want to call it. Just doing something on your own. I felt like there were steps I had to learn.

Once I get to this, then I get to graduate and learn this next step. Then once I tackle that, there's this next thing. I thought it'd be really ordered, if that makes sense. Kind of like schooling, like normal classes. You're like, "Once you do algebra 1, you do algebra 2," or whatever. But I really, really, really now more than ever think it's like you have unlimited resources, make art. Go.

**[00:29:37] JM:** Absolutely.

**[00:29:38] LT:** The hardest part is just, A, realizing that there are probably – I mean, there's definitely lots of wrong things you can do, lots of mistakes you can make. But there're also tons of right, good options and none of them – They're all right. There're multiple right answers, which is weird especially for me as like an Asian girl who like was A+ student and was an academia. I thought there was one right way of doing things, and there just isn't.

That I think too me a long-time to just understand, because I was constantly scared. I wasn't doing things the right way or the best way. Truly, there just isn't – I really don't think there is a best or right way for anything.

**[00:30:14] JM:** Absolutely.

**[00:30:15] LT:** That part was really tricky and hard, and I think stressed – The hardest part is just dealing my own emotional, psychological issues and just having a lot of pressure in myself.

It's fine if I don't – It's like if this was a class, it'd be fine if I got a B+. It's fine. Who really cares? But for some reason I'll stress myself out trying to get an A+. I'd go with that, but that was probably the hardest part.

**[00:30:38] JM:** This is why it confuses me that Courtland likes chess, is that chess – You have to memorize all these openings to just get to like level one in chess.

**[00:30:46] LT:** What is that? The guy – Oh my God! Magnus? Is that his name? Yeah! Well, I'm sure he does memorize quite a bit. Unlike [inaudible 00:30:55]. I might be butchering this. He like actually memorized all these different scenarios and different outcomes following different moves. I feel like Magnus wasn't – He was just kind of like feeling it. I feel like he like spoke chess.

**[00:31:07] JM:** He derived to them you mean?

**[00:31:08] LT:** Yeah, he spoke chess. I mean, it's why everyone always like, "He's from another planet," blah-blah-blah. I think that's – Who knows. Maybe Courtland likes memorizing it though. I don't know. I'm just really happy that Courtland has a hobby. He's going to hate me. He won't listen to this. He definitely won't listen to this, but he thinks it's like dismissive or something when I say something like that. But I think it's good that he he's doing something.

**[00:31:27] JM:** It's not a hobby. It's a sport.

**[00:31:29] LT:** Okay. Well, that one I don't know. Fine. It is.

**[00:31:33] JM:** That difficulty, that sounds like a pallet of options. That sounds fun. Why would that ever make things difficult if you just have this expansive realm of creativity to explore?

**[00:31:45] LT:** Well, I think it's fun once you know that, once you think about it that way. But it's because I didn't know that. So it got confusing when I was weighing two options and they seemed both really good, and I was confused. So I would just like advice shop and then people would basically fall into two camps and I was like, "I trust this person. I respect this person. This person knows what they're talking about. I should listen to them, but they're disagreeing, and

that's really confusing." Yeah, I mean the answer is that they're both right. It was just like – I was like confused how there wasn't a clear winner, I guess. Then extrapolate that, there's like actually 10 different options, and that gets really confusing.

**[00:32:21] JM:** Absolutely. Can you give me an example? I mean, I can think of so many. That very much rings true to me.

**[00:32:24] LT:** I think I know that – Well, I may or may not have talked about this in my podcast, in my episode with Courtland. During YC, it was really, really, really confusing, because before YC, I was by myself. Figuring out – I was like a brand-new baby wondering around, exploring what things felt like. I knew nothing about the world. Any piece of advice was helpful, because I just had nothing. I'm starting with zero. Then I get into YC and there's like a dozen YC partners who've literally built companies themselves and have seen hundreds and hundreds of companies. They have so much information. They're really, really experienced and they also have strong opinions.

When one of them would tell me something, like that is gold. I feel like I just won the lottery because this really smart person just helped me skip 10 steps because they knew something I could not have seen myself. I talked with someone else, and they also had really good insight into something, but it wasn't the same as the first person. Then I talked to a third person and I'm like, "Wait. That person said that the first two ideas were really – Actually, they were not thought through."

Then I started having this thrash problem, and then of course it's like, "Okay. Well, who cares who said it? Let's just look at the idea." I'm just going to make it up. One of them was like Key Values should be an ATS, because the whole part of hiring –

**[00:33:40] JM:** Applicant tracking system.

**[00:33:41] LT:** Yes, sorry. Applicant tracking system, like Greenhouse or Lever. It's useless unless an applicant go to your site, fill an application and then you actually know –

**[00:33:50] JM:** For reference, your site doesn't even have a log in.

**[00:33:53] LT:** Correct. Exactly. That's another good idea. Someone had suggested. Right now it's like how do I prove to companies that I'm placing people or that people are applying unless I'm capturing the information myself? Right now, if I send someone off of Key Values domain, then I have no idea what's going to happen. It was like that's true. If I want to actually own the metrics, then I have to build something to capture them. That's one idea.

Another idea was like, "Oh! Key Values should be –" Actually, this one was interesting, which is like it needs to be self-served. Companies needs to be able to do this themselves so you can scale. You need to streamline the whole process. It should be a month – Like a normal job board. You go, you can pay by month or like maybe three months at a time, but you don't need to interface with anyone. You don't need to do sales. These aren't necessarily opposite things, but selling an ATS requires integration. Then you wouldn't be – They weren't necessarily saying something different, but I was like trying to merge all the good advice. I was like, "Wait, these don't make sense."

Someone else was like, "You're thinking about the whole thing wrong. You're building a community. It should be a network and people should have to join." Then also the value of building a really valuable network of like senior engineers is that you have access to them. Therefore, you need to require them to fill up a profile. You need to know their names. You need to know their background, their experience, maybe their gender, where they live, all these basic things. That's like also a very different direction.

I don't think any of these are wrong. I think all of these products could have been good, but I just didn't – Yeah. I mean, there's literally – I think I wrote down 12. Every single was a new idea, and that was really confusing. So it is a stressful time.

**[00:35:26] JM:** One way I can relate to this is I used to play poker a lot, and I played poker online. One thing people often did back in those days was when a hand gets done, you get something called a hand history. So you get the history of what happened in the hand. Because a poker hand is relatively short. It's not as long as like a chess game, for example. You can very quickly digest everything that happened in a single hand of poker.

On these forums that I used to participate in, the 2+2 forums, the biggest poker forums, you would copy+paste your hand history, except you would cut part of it off because you would say you would not tell the audience the conclusion, because you want to get their opinion. You would say, "Okay. Here's what I did up until this pivotal moment in the hand, and I could have gone all-in, or I could have folded. I could have bluffed or I could have just folded."

You would post your hand and you would get divergent responses. The first response, you'd get it from some pro and you've looked up to this pro for years and you trust their opinion and they're like, "Oh! I definitely would have folded." You're like, "Oh! Damn it!"

**[00:36:31] LT:** I should have folded.

**[00:36:33] JM:** I should have folded. Then the next response is like somebody else who you really trust and look up to who's been doing really, really well lately and they're like absolutely not. Go all-in.

**[00:36:44] LT:** Go all-in. Yeah, or whatever.

**[00:36:44] JM:** Then you'll get a response from somebody else who's like why are you even playing in this game? These people are way better than you. Then you're like, "Oh God! I'm de facto wrong. I'm wrong than I even thought I could have possibly been."

**[00:36:58] LT:** Exactly.

**[00:37:00] JM:** Overtime, I didn't realize this in poker. But overtime you realize that there are many things that humans engage in that are too subjective. Nobody can tell you, "Look, you should be following this objective function. You should be optimizing this thing," because they cannot take into account all of the factors that are in your life. Ultimately, those things, those bigger –

**[00:37:25] LT:** Probably more true for other things like finding a job than poker, But, yes, still true.

**[00:37:30] JM:** Absolutely. That's my point, is that if it can be true even in a microcosmic example, like playing a game of poker, it's absolutely true in these things that have like 50,000 times the variables that a game of poker does.

**[00:37:46] LT:** Yeah, and the stakes – Well, I guess I don't know how much money was on the line right there. But the stakes are bigger. It's like – I mean, I'm constantly looking through the lens of Key Values, but like finding a job is huge. Deciding where you're going to spend most of your time for 2, 3, 4, 5, years. Even if you only work there for a year, a year is a long time. Time is our most valuable, limited resource. It's just huge.

Then like having a year working at a company that you hate and you dread every day really takes a toll on you. It impacts your health. It impacts your relationships with your loved ones. I mean, it's like a huge decision.

I literally just wrote a newsletter yesterday where I wish people took it more seriously than they do. I don't think a lot of people – The way that I spun it was that some people will compare it to investing, but I don't really buy that, because with investors, the whole point is to diversify your investments instead of investing money or investing time. In a way, it's if you want to think about this, you're an investor but you only get to make one bet. You can only really be employed by one company one time. You should do way more due diligence in betting than an investor would. But a lot of people don't.

**[00:38:55] JM:** Or just don't play that game at all. I mean, that's what I ultimately decided. I was like, "This is a dumb, false narrative. I don't want to do only one thing in my life."

**[00:39:04] LT:** I forgot who I was talking to. Yes. The other choice is – This is a weird thing also. Okay. Rewind real quick. If Key Values was – If I've got paid based on hires, if someone was like, "Oh! I don't know if I should start my own thing, if I should get a job." I would be incentivized, but like maybe you should get another job if you're not sure yet, because that's how – I mean, I'm not saying I would actually do that, but a little bit, because that's how I get paid.

But today when someone is like – When someone reaches out to me and they're like, "I'm just confused about what I should do next in life. Period. Should I get another job? Should I travel? Should I change careers? Should I start my own thing?" I'm a huge – I push people to start their own things.

**[00:39:37] JM:** Me too.

**[00:39:37] LT:** Yeah.

**[00:39:39] JM:** And it breaks my heart when they don't. It really does.

**[00:39:41] LT:** Well, I mean some people, they'll figure it out. It took me some time too. I guess, yeah. I mean, you're never quite fully ready, but I understand if there's like financial reasons or confidence reasons.

**[00:39:55] JM:** No. I think people get ready eventually. You get fed up. You get fed up with the status quo.

**[00:39:59] LT:** That's true. It's just the question of when the breaking point is. Don't get sad. Maybe in two years they'll do it. You planted the seed and it just needs some time to sprout.

**[00:40:06] JM:** I hope so.

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**[00:40:15] JM:** As a company grows, the software infrastructure becomes a large, complex distributed system. Without standardized applications or security policies, it can become difficult to oversee all the vulnerabilities that might exist across all of your physical machines, virtual machines, containers and cloud services.

ExtraHop is a cloud native security company that detects threats across your hybrid infrastructure. ExtraHop has vulnerability detection running up and down your networking stack from L2 to L7 and it helps you spot, investigate and respond to anomalous behavior using more

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[00:41:49] JM:** The YC experience for you. I want to talk about that a little bit.

**[00:41:54] LT:** Sure.

**[00:41:55] JM:** You went through YC, Y Combinator, and you got money. You got the accelerator money. But typically what most people do is after they got the accelerator money, they go and raise a seed round or they go and raise a series A and they basically take a one-way ticket to the investment rollercoaster. You got off the rollercoaster before it started.

**[00:42:20] LT:** Yeah. That is correct. Yeah. Not a question. I can respond though. I think – This is an interesting thing people ask me and it's funny because I still don't know how to talk about – I don't want to say anything on behalf of YC mainly because I'm not confident. I know what YC's messaging is around this.

When I got into YC and then was deciding to accept to do it or not, I like obviously asked around. I just wanted to know what I was signing up for, because that's what you should do before you sign anything. My understanding was that you didn't have to do that. YC does – As one example, YC also invests in nonprofits. I just knew that it was like a wide variety, there're no rules. I knew that there are lots of companies that didn't raise after YC. Just as a statement.

Then I went through YC, I started getting confused and started looking around and I started feeling more and more like everyone was planning to do this one thing and I wasn't and it's like I felt really like I got lost in the wrong crowd or something. So I felt a lot of pressure to fundraise, as if that was the goal. That was the only reason why you would do YC.

A bunch of people were like, "Why did you do YC then?" I was like, "I don't know. I don't know. I just didn't know that that was like a thing I had to do." I don't know if I misunderstood from the beginning or if these other people during YC when they were saying things like that didn't understand that I didn't have to. It's still confusing. You can look at like Paul Graham's essays. There are lots of YC material that says if you don't need to fundraise, then don't. I can definitely – I don't know. Maybe include some links.

I'm sure we can find some links to things that YC partners and PG have said where it's like you should not fundraise if you don't have to. I thought that applied to me. So I thought it was totally fine, but then I felt really challenged by my fellow batch mates and from some partners.

**[00:44:15] JM:** From the partners.

**[00:44:16] LT:** Yeah. I mean, some partners. It was also a mix. Same thing, it was like mixed advice. But during the time, basically, the only two partners I talked to felt really – It was pretty clear and I think at least one of them said it explicitly that they were very disappointed in me for not –

**[00:44:33] JM:** We are disappointed.

**[00:44:35] LT:** Yeah. That was really heartbreaking for me, because I care a lot. I care probably too much.

**[00:44:39] JM:** The Silicon Valley puppet masters are mad at their puppy.

**[00:44:43] LT:** Well, to be fair, the thing that was weird is like it would have been easy for me to be like, “Uh! These people don’t know what they’re talking about or they’re like –” It’s easy to just dismiss advice from someone that you don’t agree with or someone that’s like has nothing.

Some of the thinking was that if you want to fundraise later, it will never be as easy and it’s easy right now. So you should do it as like a safeguard. One of them had an example with a company in the past. A previous company of theirs where they were planning to fundraise and then did the whole fundraising gambit and then they signed papers and the money was supposed to be wired. The day before the money hit the bank – Everything was signed. Everything was – It was all good to go. It was the 2018 crash and it was just like it’s totally out of their control, and that just like –

**[00:45:28] JM:** You mean the 2008 crash.

**[00:45:30] LT:** Oh! Yes. Sorry. 2008.

**[00:45:32] JM:** I was like, “Are you talking about cryptocurrencies?”

**[00:45:33] LT:** No. Sorry. 2008. Yeah, 2008. That just wasn’t going to happen, and that scared them because they’re like, “Well.” Once I understood that, I was like, “Oh! I understand that.” Then it’s crazy, but then the next time they went to fundraise, another thing that happened, basically – They’re building something off of Facebook, and then Facebook changed one of their policies or something overnight unannounced, and that totally changed their business. Basically cut in half their revenue or maybe even like more. That just like changes the game entirely when you’re in the middle of fundraising. Everything that was promised based on these metrics is like no longer and it’s like another example where it was out of their control.

I understood the thinking of like you don’t need it now, but you might someday. Since you can, you should. I actually understood that and I think it was coming from a good place but I just didn’t apply it. I don’t know. Anyways, the whole point is just like I think there’s no right or wrong. It just wasn’t for me, and so I didn’t, and I don’t blame anyone and I’m glad that I went to YC anyway. It was a lot more comfortable than it had to have been.

If I could do it again, I would have – Again, I was new. So now I have stronger opinions and I have more information that I can kind of stand on. But at the time I was just like didn't know and all these people are trying to help me and I wanted to be helped, but it just felt bad.

**[00:46:49] JM:** When you told me about – It might have been Courtland or somebody told me about like the fact that you decided not to go that route after you got in. You went through it. I thought it was just the funniest thing ever, because I felt it was almost like Shakespearean, because Courtland had like endowed you with the skills that you needed to succeed as an indie hacker. Then the Silicon Valley monoculture eclipsed you in a way that was even more compelling than Courtland's initial tutelage. So you ended up going into YC.

Then I imagine almost this like cinematic moment where you're sitting on the pier and looking into the sunset and you're like getting back in touch with your Indie Hacker roots and you decide to – Actually, I can imagine a montage of you running back home and sending an email to Y Combinator and saying, "I've decided to opt out."

**[00:47:51] LT:** I mean, it's funny, because I do think there was some of me like doing runs on a [inaudible 00:47:56] and then thinking about and then definitely –

**[00:47:58] JM:** You [inaudible 00:47:59] too?

**[00:48:00] LT:** Well, I would work out of Oliver's – Oliver is my husband. His office is in [inaudible 00:48:03] and I would go running there, because it's pretty.

**[00:48:04] JM:** It is. I love it.

**[00:48:05] LT:** I would literally run back to the office and then probably had like a moment of clarity. I remember sending the email saying like I don't want to do demo day. It was like three sentences, but it took me an hour to write, because I was just so scared to say it.

Yeah, it's funny to hear you say that because it was really dramatic. Now with the passing of time, it's like a blip on the – It's just like one of many stories. But, yeah. I mean, it was a big deal at the time. I think I was just afraid that I had wronged them.

I love relationships and people. I'm not like into burning bridges or holding lots of grudges. I don't like living that way. So I didn't want – I felt really bad that I was going to walk away from YC and have disappointed people. So that was like really difficult.

**[00:48:47] JM:** Totally validly.

**[00:48:49] LT:** But two years later it's like I think it's okay, and also it turns out the world – There are hundreds of other founders that have come and gone. So it's like they don't really think about me every day. It's fine.

**[00:48:59] JM:** The other thing that's funny about it is I don't think PG would care, right? I bet if you told PG the situation he's be like, "She made the right decision. She's totally fine." It's just funny that it doesn't surprise me at all that they were partners and that there was kind of a culture that you would feel the pressure to go in the opposite direction because – I mean, you become what you hate, and it's funny because YC was kind of started out of this resentment of the traditional VC ecosystem and it reimaged what the VC ecosystem should be and it turned it into something much, much better.

But unfortunately, it set the bar. It set the bar at something that now when you rebelled against it, it's almost like the question of, "So what is the next thing? What is the thing that rebels against that?"

**[00:49:54] LT:** It's so funny you just said that. I had a conversation with my friend, John Palmer, who is also in my batch and he was saying that – This was a long time ago, but that like in the beginning, YC was like this is the non-traditional thing. You're going to buck the trend and do this thing that's kind of wild and different and you're rebelling against it. Now it's like its own track and it's like really just interesting that it's – But the point is, in the general, the beginning ethos of why YC started is that you don't have to do anything anyway. That's kind of like the take home for me.

Anyways, I do think it goes in the same thing of like there just aren't – There isn't just one right way, and it also makes me circle back to your question of what's the hardest thing. I forgot,

because I've just kind of like pulled myself out. We were joking before we started recording that I'm just like I feel like I'm an alien orbiting around this world, and sometimes I visit, but I'm not really – I don't really feel like I belong in it in some ways.

But I think the hardest thing is peer pressure, which was like interesting to me because I thought I had grown out of peer pressure, because that's the last time I really felt peer pressure was like high school, middle school, high school. But I don't think anyone grows out of peer pressure. I think just as we get older, we have more agency to say who we hang out with and we just like pretty much avoid any situation where we feel immense peer pressure.

YC was the first time where I was like, "Oh, yeah. Adults definitely still feel peer pressure. This is real. It is so real." So that was really interesting, and I still – I spent the last – Basically, April 1<sup>st</sup>, beginning of Q2 is what kicked off this weird thing for me in the last many months. I've been in this weird headspace. But I think part of it was just more peer pressure, and it wasn't YC this time. It was just like in general I felt like I was getting so much peer pressure. I don't know if it's peer pressure or just like advice from people, but it was like all advice that didn't feel good to me and it made me go a little crazy and made me not like SF or tech or it made me want to –

**[00:51:44] JM:** Wait. From what peers though?

**[00:51:48] LT:** Everybody. I mean, long story short is that I had some revenue goals and then I hit them and that was really exciting. That was Q4. Then Q1 I was like, "I'm going to do better." I basically doubled what I did in Q4 and I was like so excited. Then Q2 started and I was just like, "Okay. Sat down to like plan the quarter and just sit down and have a strategy for going forward." I just realized, "Oh! It's my whole existence for this just outdo my previous – Am I just like constantly competing with myself to just make this number go up? What is the meaning of this number?"

Then it just kind of made these weird things, "Why am I doing any of this? Why is anyone doing any of these? Why do we work so hard? What is the goal once we get to our goal? Do we just choose another goal?" I don't know. It was just this weird thing that happened. Then as I was telling my friends about this and I have a lots of founder friends now, I think everyone just like

had lots of advice. They're like, "Well, you should hire. Maybe it's a good time to fundraise now." There're all these stuff.

I was just, one, kind of strange that everyone had the same advice and then that it just didn't – None of it was really resonating or making me feel excited. If anyone knows me or anything – My whole thing is just like you should only do things you're excited about, and that was scary to me that what seemed like all of the possible steps forward were things I was not excited about.

So then I started to get worried, because I was just like – The whole point of starting a business to me is that you get to set your own rules, create your own world and it should be the best world. If you're going to build the business that you hate, it's like why did you go through all that trouble? You could just work out another company that you don't like. There are all these other prisons that other people have made. You didn't have to go through all the trouble of building your own prison. It's like the same outcome.

I was just worried that I had built something with no future for that I could get excited about. That kind of spun off into this whole other – I don't know. Maybe I was like burnt out or maybe I was just – I've never said this, but I was so happy to be on the Indie Hackers podcast, but I think I actually also wasn't prepared for the response, and it was really positive, and I used to respond very thoughtfully to any email or DM that I would get. Then it just got really overwhelming, and then a lot of people felt like they knew me because they listen to the podcast and then they were like sharing these really personal stories that I actually really do care about, but I just did not – It was just like hundreds.

**[00:54:04] JM:** Whoa! Hundreds?

**[00:54:05] LT:** Yeah. Over the month after, it was like definitely at least 200 emails, messages, which is awesome.

**[00:54:13] JM:** Now you got to start a podcast. I told Courtland too. Now you got to do it.

**[00:54:17] LT:** You told him too? You wanted him to? Really?

**[00:54:20] JM:** I don't mean to diverge you.

**[00:54:23] LT:** No. The whole thing with that was like overwhelming too. I don't know. It just got to like what is the point? What do I want? Am I the type of person that doesn't want to be able to have these real connections with people? Because that was like what I lived for, but then it got so overwhelming that it started to feel like a chore.

**[00:54:39] JM:** I'll tell you, podcast do it pretty well. That's one reason I like podcasts.

**[00:54:43] LT:** What do you mean?

**[00:54:43] JM:** Well, I mean if you like connecting with people. Anyway, it's just a good –

**[00:54:47] LT:** That's true. But it's so funny. You're like very encouraging. Courtland is like, "Don't do it. Save yourself. Run! Run! Save yourself." He's like, "Don't get into it."

**[00:54:58] JM:** Because he doesn't have ad sales. If you have ad sales, it gives you the – It gets you on the treadmill.

Okay. But I want to tell you a story.

**[00:55:07] LT:** Okay. I'm ready.

**[00:55:08] JM:** I'm really glad what you said, because – I have this story that I kind of stopped telling. I don't tell most people, because they don't quite believe me or they don't understand.

**[00:55:16] LT:** Oh! This is going to be good.

**[00:55:17] JM:** Back when I played poker, the reason I actually stopped playing power is – I was doing really, really well.

**[00:55:24] LT:** How well?

**[00:55:25] JM:** I mean –

**[00:55:27] LT:** You're making a living on it?

**[00:55:28] JM:** Much more. There was a boom, and I was playing high-stakes and making good money.

**[00:55:34] LT:** Are you not going to tell me how – Are you going to – I get it. I feel nervous about sharing stuff like that, but it's in the past. Why not?

**[00:55:40] JM:** It was a lot.

**[00:55:42] LT:** More than you make now?

**[00:55:43] JM:** Well, yeah, and certain times. I mean, it was very good. But it was a boom. It was just a boom. There were a bunch of bad players. If you remember, poker was really popular and it was just a lot of bad players. But I had a total existential crisis, because I was 18 or 19. Power was all I did. All I lived for was to have the number increase. Have that number in my poker stars, full tilt poker bank account. The numbers. You just want the numbers to increase.

I know that it's a total cliché, but it's one of those things that's a cliché, because it's true. I mean, that becomes the only thing that you're focused on. You will lose your mind, especially –

**[00:56:28] LT:** Yeah. It's empty. Totally empty.

**[00:56:31] JM:** It's totally empty, especially in the digital sense. I imagine if you're a banker, at least you get to go and hang out with people at your bank. This was like literally a solitary existence. My closest friends were those people that I was talking to on the forums who are actually my enemies. Those were actually the opponents that I had at the table.

**[00:56:51] LT:** It's not even in person.

**[00:56:53] JM:** It's not even in person. I basically – I lost myself and I had an existential crisis and I lost a ton of money, because I eventually –

**[00:57:05] LT:** Oh! It impacted your playing?

**[00:57:07] JM:** Absolutely, and then there was a negative spiral. There's a negative spiral, because – Don't let this ever happen to you. There's a negative spiral where I didn't like what I was doing. So I would like sit down to play and I would lose money and then I would be like, "Well, that wasn't fun." But then I'd be like, "But I don't have anything else to do, so I'll just open full tilt poker again and play more."

Whenever I tell the story to people, sometimes they're like, "Oh! So you were a gambling addict." I'm like, "Not really. I was more like addicted to the thing that I was good at." I felt like it was the only thing that I was good at.

**[00:57:42] LT:** That part – Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

**[00:57:45] JM:** No! That's it. That's the story. Then I totally blew up and I had to find something else in my life.

**[00:57:49] LT:** Oh! Support yourself into.

**[00:57:51] JM:** But this is something that like really jives me about the Indie Hackers movement, is it is about independence. It's about independence. It's about creativity. It's about this positive-sum mentality, and I think it is – Wrapped up into the movement is overcoming these kinds of psychological snafus and figuring out how to make a sustainable lifestyle out of your business.

**[00:58:20] LT:** I think that's my definition of lifestyle business. By the way in the last year, I have learned that there are like a billion different definitions and some people like – It's really analogous to Key Values are like you have a term and you assume everyone agrees on that term and then you move on, but it's actually like – To me, lifestyle business means that you have found a way to monetize something that you enjoyed so much that you would or used to do for

free. It's just integrated with your life. I would say that's my definition. Of course, can support that lifestyle.

To me, it doesn't mean not working. It doesn't mean it's passive. People have all these ideas of what that is. But I was going to say that I'm glad – You should have asked this question after. But the other thing that's really hard is the whole thing with identity. I've learned how powerful that is and you can use it to your advantage, but it can be dangerous. If a lot of founders tie the success of their business with their own self-image or self-worth and their identity becomes so entangled with the health or like how well their company is doing, that it's very dangerous, because – I mean, I just think you should not tie those things together. It was a total coincidence, but lucky, and I know this is like a weird – Yeah.

When I started Key Values, I also decided to do an Ironman, and I know – Everyone was like, “That sounds crazy.” See? I didn't plan it this way, but it was actually really good, because if things weren't going with Key Values or I was frustrated, it wasn't all that I was. I was also really focused and really determined and pouring myself and energy into something else.

If training wasn't going well, it's like, “It's okay. I have this other thing.” I guess it just like help me break up who I was. I wasn't either of those things. I was a person that happened to be doing both things, which kind of like really gave me good armor for all of the hardships that were going to come through. I think it's really important that people – Again, Courtland is going to hate me for saying this.

But that's why I'm glad he is like a hobby, because it's like work is great even if you love it. But unless you're very, very careful to not tie that with like your entire being, yeah, it kind of just happens that way. I don't think that's a bad story, poker one. I think that's really interesting.

**[01:00:22] JM:** No. I stopped telling this. People didn't believe it.

**[01:00:24] LT:** What's not to believe? You were that good or –

**[01:00:27] JM:** No. The existential crisis part where I'll be like, “Look, I really had my existential –” Literally, it destroyed me. Total ego death.

**[01:00:33] LT:** Oh! I have existential crisis every two years, mini ones, different degrees. I'm like, "That's normal." I think it's when people don't have more existential crisis. To me, I'm like, "Ooh! It's going just bottle up. It's going to be really big somehow if you don't let them out here and there." Yeah. I believe it. For sure.

**[01:00:52] JM:** We're almost out of time. Tell me about producing EDM shows.

**[01:00:56] LT:** It was like fun. It's basically you have a lot of money, so you rent the venue and then you book the talent and then you pay for marketing and then you make money –

**[01:01:06] JM:** Oh! So you naturally write music.

**[01:01:08] LT:** No. No. No. Producing EDM concerts, it's like the production. You have to have like the visual aspect. You have to have the talent and you have to have – It's like organizing the event and then you make money based on ticket sales. You throw the best party and then you basically pay upfront and hope that you make that back plus more by selling it.

**[01:01:26] JM:** Right.

**[01:01:27] LT:** That's all I got though. Oh! I don't make music. No.

**[01:01:28] JM:** Oh, okay.

**[01:01:29] LT:** You're like, "Boring. Next."

**[01:01:32] JM:** More or less.

**[01:01:34] LT:** What else we got? Three minutes.

**[01:01:36] JM:** What business would you be building if you aren't building Key Values?

**[01:01:39] LT:** I don't know. That's a good question and I probably won't think – Yeah, I have no idea. I'll be completely honest. Part of my existential crisis was like what I'd be doing if I wasn't doing Key Values. It wouldn't necessarily be building a business, first of all. I don't think I'm the type of person who's like I can never work for someone again.

I'm actually fine working for other people. That's not like a problem for me, but I do like to reinvent myself and I wonder if my next thing – This is like totally half-baked. Should or can be something related to fighting climate change, the whole – I feel this is new for me, but I was just talking about this with a couple of my girlfriends while commuting here. I just have been having a lot of cognitive dissonance about – Because I do think it's important and I do think it's real, but I'm not really doing anything about it and it makes me feel – I need to resolve that I'm either going to decide that it's not that important, or I need to actually do something with it. But right now, what my actions and like how – It's just they're not aligned and it's causing some friction, but possible. Who knows? I can also become a landscaper. Anything. Who knows?

**[01:02:44] JM:** All right. Lynne Tye, thanks for coming on the show.

**[01:02:45] LT:** Yes. This is fun. Thanks for having me again.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[01:02:57] JM:** Monday.com is a team management platform that brings all of your work, external tools and communications into one place making cross-team collaboration easy. You can try Monday.com and get a 14-day trial by going to [Monday.com/sedaily](https://Monday.com/sedaily). If you decide to become a customer, you will get 10% off by coupon code SEDAILY.

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