

**EPISODE 1411**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:00] KP:** Historically, search engines have made money by showing sponsored ads alongside organic results. As the idiom goes, if you're not paying for something, you are the product. Neeva is a new take on search engines. When you search neeva.com, you get the type of results you'd expect from a search engine minus any advertising.

In this episode, I speak with Darin Fisher, software engineer at Neeva. We discuss the motivation, implementation and mobile experience for searching with Neeva.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:31] KP:** Darin, welcome to Software Engineering Daily.

**[00:00:35] DF:** Awesome. Thank you for having me.

**[00:00:38] KP:** Before we get into our core topic of Neeva, would you mind telling me a little bit about your background in software and technology?

**[00:00:45] DF:** Sure thing, happy to do so. I've actually been a software engineer now for over 21 years, this would be my 22nd year, and I got started back in 2000 working at Netscape. And ever since then, I've just been working on a web browser. So, I was at Netscape through 2003. I was involved then in the creation of Firefox. I was working for IBM at the time. And then I joined Google in 2005, to continue working on Firefox. But about a year or so into it, we made the decision to build Chrome. And so, I was part of the team that created Chrome, and went on to actually run engineering for Chrome at Google up until a couple years ago. And then I switched to an IC role because I really wanted to get back to being more creative and more hands on.

And then earlier last year, I actually left Google to join a startup called Neeva, again, just really hungry to get my hands dirty, be creative, and to have an adventure, again, and very excited about the opportunity at Neeva. At Neeva, I focus on building our mobile app.

**[00:01:56] KP:** So, what is Neeva?

**[00:01:57] DF:** Neeva is a search engine. Neeva provides a search experience that is both familiar but also a bit different. The main difference with Neeva is that it is an ad-free experience, the ad-free search experience. Typically search engines monetize by showing you ads based on the queries that you enter. Neeva, on the other hand, supposes that you'd get a much better search experience, if everything that you see in the results are just results from the web for what you're looking for. And that instead of trying to show you ads, what we would do instead is ask users to pay for the service, they're subscription model.

So, it's a very simple, direct sort of exchange of value there. In exchange for a small subscription fee, users will get access to a search engine that is built for them as the as the customer, versus a traditional search engine where the customer is actually an advertiser or set of advertisers who are trying to get ads in front of the users of the search engine. I find it just a very fascinating change, fundamental change, and one that really opens the door to a lot of forms of innovation that coming from Google, I saw, just were not possible.

**[00:03:14] KP:** That's very appealing to me as a web user that I can search and just get things relevant specifically to what I want. Not that ads are totally irrelevant, but there's some finagling to get them there versus a comparison to what you want out of the organic results. Given that sort of focus, and in contrast, Google is free, Bing is free, there's a small payment here. Are you attracting a particular audience like the very privacy centric people? Or is it really gone into the general population?

**[00:03:43] DF:** Well, I think there's both a question of like the types of users we're attracting now. But also, like how we aspire, and what we aspire to achieve. Neeva being an ad-free search product, it opens the door to a bunch of different forms of innovation, like I was saying. One of those is to really lean into privacy. It's very natural for us to provide a privacy first product because the user is the customer. And everything we do is in service of the user what they would find in their best interest. We're not trying to trick them into seeing things they don't want to see. We're not trying to influence them subtly. We're not trying to collect data so that we can model their behavior and sell ads on that behavior. We have no such incentives.

So, not only is it kind of more purely focused on just what's best for users, it's also an experience that then can lean into that, can lean into providing a private experience. What do I mean by private search experience? I mean, things like when you search on Neeva, your expectation is that the searching that you did is only known to you, but actually contrast that to how searching on a normal search engine works. Like the experience you would have with Google, you search for something, you tap on a link. Not only did Google know what you were interested in, but when you tap on that link, and you land on that site, that site, or any trackers that it might include, knows what you're interested in or knows that somebody was interested in that.

So, with Neeva, what you'll find is it's not only an ad-free search product, but it's also, if you install our extension or you get our iOS app, you will find that it includes tracking protection, strong tracking protection, to make sure that as you not only search, but as you click out onto the web, your activity is not being hoovered up by a bunch of different entities that would then sell that data and power ads that you would then see all over the internet. So, if you search for some product, you don't necessarily want it to be the case that now all the websites you visit are screaming about that product by the ads that are on those sites.

That's what I mean by providing a private search experience. But privacy again, just backing up, is only one feature that gets unlocked when you have an ad-free product. You also unlock saving people time. You see, in a traditional model, like what Google has, and me being a browser engineer, I know this very well, when you type in the URL bar of a browser like Chrome, Google has to figure out and decide. It has to decide or they're going to encourage you to go and see search results, or are they going to encourage you to go and see websites that seem to correspond to what you started to type? If you type face, is it going to suggest that you go to facebook.com? Or is it going to suggest that you search for face or search for Facebook. I can tell you, the vast majority of the time with Google, they're going to encourage you to do the search. Why? Because they want to show you the ads that are on the other side of that and it's this real difficult thing for Google to show you and suggest to you a direct navigation, when it knows it's probably the best thing that you want. But it can't do it. Because it's kind of got a hand tied behind its back at once, it needs to show you ads, it needs to take you to the search results page, it needs to show you that experience.

Now, how does that translate into innovation? Well, if you take a look at our iOS app, what you get when you search and you type into the URL bar is you don't just get search suggestions. You get URL suggestions. URL suggestions based on the searches that you seem to have been – the search query that you were starting to type in. It's almost like that Google I'm feeling lucky experience. But you get to see what it would be before you click on it. You not only do you get to see what it would be before you click on it, but you get to see, like two or three choices. It's like a mini search results experience, but right in the suggest drop down from the URL bar and that's all about saving you time. Because as Neeva, we have no need to send you to the search results page. It's okay, if we send you straight to where you actually want it to go. We help you save steps and cut out steps.

This feature I'm describing is called Fast Tap in our iOS app. I'm excited about it because it's the kind of thing that we just really could never do at Google. We were always limited and always struggling with like, when somebody types in the URL bar, “Oh, we got to send them to the search results page because that's how we make our money.” We need to make sure that there's enough search query volume, and all of that sort of thing. Pretty much at various moments when we were building Chrome, we're stuck with the challenge of will this feature that we think is good for users be good for search query volume? And if we find out that it's not, then we don't know how to ship that feature. There's a variety of examples like this that are just so eye opening.

So, to me, there's this whole world of like innovation and better user experience on the web, that gets opened up when you have a search engine. That's like acting more like an agent for you and not the advertisers. That's like, very much focused on helping you actually get to where you want to go, and saving you steps, bringing information to you that's helpful in the moment and more directly. So, there's a lot more in my mind that's innovative about Neeva, and this ad-free search model than just how it unlocks privacy. It also unlocks helping you get directly to where you want to go more quickly, helping you stay more organized so you can get back into the things that you want to do without having to repeat yourself, without having to search again. Those are like various aspects in which a browser can provide a better experience for users. Thanks to the ad-free search experience.

**[00:09:44] KP:** Is Neeva able to do any personalization for me despite the privacy factors that are also there?

**[00:09:53] DF:** Yeah, this is a good question. So oftentimes, one thing that's absolutely the case is that Neeva has a wealth of interesting personalization features, right? Sometimes this might sound a little odd if people come to it thinking, "Hey, this is a private experience, that means Neeva should know nothing about me." And indeed, you can configure Neeva to know nothing about you. There's a memory mode, you can turn that off. There is various other sort of configurations. But you can also opt in to features that give you some interesting utility, like, you could connect Figma to Neeva search so that when you do a search on Neeva, it indexes your personal content on Figma, or your content on Slack or your content on Gmail, or your content on Docs, or Paper or wherever you have data. That sort of aspect of personal search is actually a feature of Neeva that many users really, really love, because it gives them that one place where they can search, enter a query, and find that document again, that they were looking for.

So, I have stuff on Dropbox, and Drive, and on Slack, on GitHub, on Figma. And sometimes it's just hard to remember which app I need to go to, in which find the search box, it's just kind of less convenient. It's very handy just to be able to go to even type it in and see those results. Now, again, this is something as a user, you opt into, you choose whether you want to use these things. I think that people can have that understanding that given, again, Neeva's business model is one where it's a subscription model, users are not. And actually, it's even now, there's a free tier available for Neeva, which includes all this functionality that I've been talking about. So, users can get access to all of this, and know that it's Neeva, just providing this as utility, as a feature that you can use if you want to, and we have no other motive. We're not trying to collect your data so that we can harvest it or analyze it or do any kind of like tricky things with it. We're not trying to monetize your data. We're simply providing you these optional utilities that people might really like. You can have the peace of mind knowing that, that's something you're paying for. In exchange for that, you're getting value. It's kind of very simple as a value proposition.

**[00:12:12] KP:** The other search engine I'm familiar with that has privacy at the forefront of how they describe themselves as DuckDuckGo. Can you perhaps compare and contrast Neeva to that platform?

**[00:12:23] DF:** Sure. Well, I think that DuckDuckGo is absolutely an interesting product. Unlike Neeva, DuckDuckGo is not ad free. That's an important thing to note. So, when you do a search on DuckDuckGo, you're seeing ads that DuckDuckGo is putting there, based on their customers who are paying for DuckDuckGo to put those ads in front of you. Those ads may be relevant to what you're doing, or they may just be tangentially interesting. But nonetheless, if you're looking for purely ad free search experience, if you're looking for like a pure view on what the web has, based on what you're looking for, only Neeva can provide that.

**[00:12:59] KP:** Well, the concern I could see some listeners having is that maybe your index is somehow inferior to Google. After all, I mean, the internet's a big place, it must take a lot to crawl and index the whole thing. I don't know if there's any firm benchmarks or anything like that out there. But broadly speaking, how do you compare your search results to the variety of other engines that are out there?

**[00:13:21] DF:** Yeah, so important to note that, Google is an amazing search engine, right? In terms of the search quality and the years of investment that Google's made, and making it the product that it is. I think that all of that is true at the same time, it's also true that over time, the experience on Google has gotten progressively worse as the amount of ads on Google Search have increased and ramped up in recent years. So, I think, it's this double-edged sword where I think people value at times the Google's search abilities, but also can be frustrated by how many ads they would see when they first search for something. It depends on the search query, of course.

With Neeva, we are like many search engines that are not named Google, we leverage Bing as a part of how we power the experience. But unlike many other search engines, including DuckDuckGo, Neeva actually has a whole bunch of our own index that we built up that allows us to power the experience and add additional quality, search quality above and beyond what you might find on other alternatives to Google. So, I don't make small of the challenge of trying to compete with the expectations people would have from a Google search experience. But at the same time, I would encourage people who haven't tried Neeva to give it a try, because it's actually surprising how good it is. Of course, I'm somebody saying that who's obviously biased, because I've chosen to work at Neeva, but I'm also somebody who throughout the years have

tried alternative search engines and routinely sort of bounced because they just lacked in terms of depth and quality. I couldn't find what I was looking for.

But I honestly don't have that experience with Neeva as much as I've had with other search engines. I've rarely, at this point, actually, find myself doing a Google search. It's actually kind of remarkable. I acknowledge that, because I'm often searching for like things when I'm coding. I'm working on the iOS app and I'm trying to figure out like, why some API works the way it is, and I'm often finding limited information, and I'm often you know, just scratching and trying to find is there – how do I answer this thing? So, I'm doing some pretty intensive searching myself. At times, I will go and try and see does Google show me something else? It's remarkable how often it doesn't, and that I am completely satisfied with what I'm finding on Neeva.

I even pinch myself. I know how big of a challenge it is. And yet, I also am pretty impressed with what the team at Neeva has actually been able to accomplish in terms of search quality, and there's a long road ahead. But I'd really encourage people to try it out for themselves and see for themselves. And again, know that it's something that we are working hard to improve, and we'll keep getting better over time.

**[00:16:14] KP:** Yeah, anecdotally, I did a fair amount of testing. And of course, for kind of generic stuff like logistic regression, the results are completely solid, even obscure stuff, like a couple of local bands I put in, the results were good for me, and even sometimes related searches, and some of these ancillary features would come up. So, to the best of my testing, everything seemed pretty full parody.

**[00:16:36] DF:** Yeah. I just wanted to add that on top of sort of the basic search functionality, one of the other things that we do on Neeva is provide a sort of what we call – we have this on desktop, this sort of rich, right-hand side where we provide summary content. So, for example, if your query is satisfied by Stack Overflow, you would see summary content from Stack Overflow, which sometimes can save you from having to even click on the article and get into the Stack Overflow articles. So, it saves you some time. Or there's a selector at the top that would appear on tech queries, that allows you to say you want to just look only at the official documentation. If I'm doing a query for an iOS API, I get back, a whole mix of different results across Stack Overflow, Apple's documentation, other forums, various other sites, blogs, blah, blah, blah. Well,

I can just click that official documentation one, and then I get only the results from Apple's reference docs. And now I can click in right to what I want it to do, which in my case, I was looking for the official documentation on something.

So, that sort of like helps me on that journey, and you'll find these moments where you can see somebody give some great deal of TLC to the experience. In the case of like, software engineers, well, we're software engineers, and we use the product and we put that kind of TLC into it, because we know that it makes a difference for our own use. So, I hope that people will notice that and appreciate it for themselves. We do that for a bunch of other kinds of verticals, things like if you search for recipes, if you like to cook, you search for recipes, you'll see a whole bunch of helpful content right there on Neeva that's helping you navigate across all those different recipes, deep dive on them, see summary content, as well as access different information about it. So, it's just really handy. I think there's that kind of stuff, that layer of like additional helpfulness is something that's pretty cool about Neeva, too.

**[00:18:31] KP:** Definitely. I found that right-hand side content to be a nice enhancement to the searches I was doing. But I'm curious, I did all mine on desktop. How does that experience translate to mobile?

**[00:18:42] DF:** Yeah, so on mobile, there's really two ways to experience Neeva. One is through straight up mobile web, where you get the same experience that you have on desktop, but presented in a mobile web context. So, the site is built in a responsive design sort of way it scales down, even see what that looks like on desktop, you just shrink your window. But what you then get is access to that right-hand side content, it's just not on the right-hand side, it's like one click away.

Also, on mobile, though, on iOS, we provide a native app that you can install. And soon we'll have an Android app as well. The difference there, and the reason I should say, an important reason for providing the iOS app is that it's not possible today to configure safari to use Neeva as a search engine. We're just unfortunately not one of the choices that Apple provides to users. And unlike other browsers, which are extensible in what search engines they can support, for whatever reason, Apple chooses to limit those set.

Now, there is an extension you can install for Safari on iOS 15 that will allow you to use Neeva as your search engine. And that extension actually just comes as part of the Neeva iOS app. But the Neeva iOS app is really meant to just make it easier for people to use Neeva on their iPhone. Not only to make it easier to use it as your search engine, but also just to make it easier to use all the other features of Neeva. And in particular, over time to make some of the things that we were just talking about, like with the right-hand side content even more convenient and easier for you to access. But the Neeva app can talk a lot about it, has a lot of really cool features. Neeva, itself, includes features that help you with your searching, things like spaces, which are a form of essentially bookmarks that are stored in the cloud. Spaces are really cool, though, because not only are they lists of URLs, but their list of URLs that you can share out with your friends, that you can share publicly or just privately with a set of folks.

So, for example, if I'm researching a topic, I can be collecting URLs, maybe I'm researching, I was doing this researching baseball glove to buy from my son, collecting those different links to different websites that talk about different baseball gloves I was considering. And then I just shared that space with my wife, and they were looking at it together, and then finally we make our purchase. We didn't always have the time to like, sit down in front of the computer together, do the research. But we could like create that space and I could share it with her and then she could look at it. And then we could come back and talk about it later.

That's just like this useful tool, that's like not search. But it's useful when you are searching or when you're researching, and when you're doing things like this. And Neeva just makes that really easy. The iOS app makes spaces really super easy to use. We also provide features like what I talked about before where in the iOS app with Neeva, you can actually, when you start that search, when you type in that URL bar, what you're getting back is not just search suggestions, but actually search results, actual URLs. And I think that's just a really nice way of saving people time and helping them get directly to where they want to go. So, like sometimes, you don't even need to go to the search results page, you just go to the site. And helpfully, in the Neeva browser, if that wasn't the site you wanted, you could just hit back and it takes you right back into that suggest experience, and then you can pick a different choice.

So, we've been able to kind of innovate around the browsing search experience because of the native iOS app. And so, I encourage people to check it out and give us feedback. It's been a lot

of fun working on it, and there's a lot of new things that we're doing there, and things that we're doing to make it better. And so, I would really love any feedback from folks as well.

**[00:22:22] KP:** So, if I install the iOS app, I know that and also, I give you the permission the OS wants and all that, you can have a lot deeper integration with my phone. Are there ways in which you can use something like the GPS to enhance search experience?

**[00:22:37] DF:** So, if you were using the Neeva app on iOS, and you did a local search, like for example, you typed in something like “show restaurants near me”, what you see is an opportunity to give Neeva your more fine-grained location information so that he could do a better job of answering that query. You can choose whether or not you want to do that. There's a button to press to give that information. And then you would see an OS level prompt that says, “Hey, do you want to grant location information?” The usual sort of prompt. If you haven't done that, then Neeva's best way to answer that question would just be based on looking at your IP address and trying to guess, what geo that might correspond to and where you might be.

That's very typical of search engines that, receive queries that are of a local nature, like show restaurants near me are something of that sort or, querying the weather, things like this, providing location information, lets them do a better job. And with Neeva, it's just completely optional whether you want to do that. Other search apps may be more aggressive about including location information. But for us, it's definitely more of a user opt in. We really want people to feel in control of something as important as your location.

**[00:23:53] KP:** Yeah, I like that opt in model a lot. On the iOS device, and apologies, I'm an Android user, so I'm not as familiar. But I know there's sort of a native search that Apple probably would prefer to power with Safari or their own tools. Are you able to plug into that as well? Are you blocked by the way iOS is set up?

**[00:24:12] DF:** Well, it's it's pretty interesting. So, with the release of, gosh, I think it was iOS 14. But now anyway, at any rate, you take for granted the fact that apps can request what's called the default browser entitlement. So, it's possible for a browser to be set as the default browser. Well, what does that mean? That means that all the different access points on the device such as spotlight search, or the leftmost pane of an iPhone, if you went in there or Siri

initiated search or something like this, it would go, that traffic, that request to load a search results page would be handed off to the default browser.

Okay, so why is that interesting? Well, as I mentioned before, Safari and Apple, they provide a very limited set of choices for search engines and Neeva is not one of the choices. However, Neeva can be the default browser. So, if you configure Neeva as your default browser, if you choose to do that, then what it means is that when you do a spotlight search, that it would invoke Neeva to load a search, that search results, what we can do is intercept that and rewrite that request to be a Neeva request. And that's how the iOS app works. So, as a result, you can go and use the OS level sort of access points for searching and get the outcome that you're looking for, which is that you get to see the results from Neeva. So, it actually works pretty well, just requires users to configure Neeva as your default browser.

**[00:25:47] KP:** I know a lot of different apps, maybe not a lot, but a couple where I've talked to the teams and for improving their mobile app and studying the user experience, they rely on heavy tracking in order to really get a broad picture of how users are interacting with the device. Does your privacy first mandate to put any monkey wrenches in that process? Are you still able to get good feedback from the users of the app?

**[00:26:12] DF:** It's a good question. So, there are several pieces here. One is that Neeva is a signed in service. And as such, we absolutely do know then that you're signed in and that the activity that happens when you're signed in is something that Neeva would then – we treat that as like something we have to be very responsible about. Why is Neeva a sign in service? Well, it kind of fits with the idea that it's a service you pay for. Again, optionally, there's a free tier of Neeva available for people, free, full featured tier. But as a signed in user, you have the ability to use features like spaces, you have the ability to personalize your search experience, connecting other apps that you might want to have indexed, that sort of thing.

So fundamentally, Neeva is a signed in service. It's a service that is both signed in and extremely privacy respecting. And so, sometimes that can throw people for a loop. But I think it's important to understand that these are all things you have control over. For example, there's a Neeva memory mode you can turn that off, which limits, it just says to Neeva, “Hey, I want you to record anything about me.” But otherwise, by default, absolutely, we would want to learn from

user's experience and try to make the experience better. We also encourage people to submit feedback, and share their experience using Neeva so that we can make the product better.

**[00:27:38] KP:** I know there's a lot of reasons why people would want a privacy search engine. A good example, being you are a journalist and you're researching something that could be you know, look a little weird in your search history when it's just a story, and plenty of other reasons to respect privacy and want that in the solutions you deal with. But I've also noticed there's commonly a general sentiment of like, why don't really have anything to hide. This doesn't matter so much to me. Are there common privacy things you think people might be overlooking that they should reconsider?

**[00:28:07] DF:** Well, first off, I just wanted to say that, you know, Neeva, certainly as a private search engine, it also provides a feature a very important feature called incognito mode. So, it's not just incognito mode, you might be familiar with from like Chrome browser. But incognito mode in Neeva means that you get an isolated search session that is completely disconnected from your normal search session. And everything you do in that search session is very temporary and discarded after you close that window.

Similarly, in the browser, you can open an incognito tab. In the Neeva app, you can open an incognito tab, and that will pre configure that tab for incognito search in Neeva. It might sound a little confusing these two levels of incognito, but it's as simple as get the Neeva app open an incognito tab, and now, all the searching and all the browsing, everything there is transient and no tracks will be left behind on the device when you close that tab and nor will any tracks be left behind on Neeva servers after you close that tab.

So, you have, again, the idea you have a lot of control as a user, you can open an incognito tab and get this incognito browsing and incognito search experience. So, it's pretty easy for like a journalist, like you mentioned, or somebody who wants to maybe they share their computer with somebody and they want to make sure that the searching they're doing right now is not seen by other people that they share that computer with. Typical example of searching for an engagement ring or something like this. But at any rate, that kind of feature and functionality and sort of that baseline of having a really solid incognito mode is something that people can assume with Neeva and you can get that experience on desktop using the Neeva extension, it

provides an access point to enable not only to open an incognito tab in the browser, but also to start up that incognito search session.

**[00:30:08] KP:** So, in my own personal experience, I've used a lot of different browsers over the years, I think Mosaic in a Box was the first thing I messed around with before I got onto Netscape. And back then it really felt like a browser was something I install on my machine, just like any other software application. Although over time, it seems the browser has become more and more central to most people's experience. With that in mind, are their aspirations for where Neeva will go in the future?

**[00:30:36] DF:** Certainly. We want to continue providing useful tools to people just really leaning into the users as the customers and focusing on things that they would find helpful and useful to them on the web, both when they're searching, but also, sort of the complete journey of what you're doing. When I think about the Neeva browser, again, it's just on iOS now, coming to Android soon. But I think about like, all the challenges people have with managing all the different tasks they're doing.

Even on mobile, you do a lot of consuming of content, or you might be researching something, maybe later on, you'll get back to it and actually want to complete the purchase, maybe that's on desktop, where you would actually do some kind of action. And so, making it just really easy for people to jump in and out of tasks, making it really easy for them to multitask, making it really easy for them to stay organized, and not lose track of things and sort of fight the clutter. Those are the kinds of things that with the browser we're really focused on. But we're also, really excited about changing up the search experience. Again, sort of working outside the bounds of the usual kind of like, I do a query in a search box, I get a search results page. And thinking more about like how Neeva that's crawled the web and knows all these things about the web, can bring information to you in the moment.

If you're on a website, maybe would be really amazing if you could ask Neeva, "Hey, is there any other discussion about the thing I'm looking at happening elsewhere on the web?" Maybe you're looking again, take a technical example, maybe you're looking at an API on an Apple reference site, wouldn't it be cool if you could like invoke Neeva and it could come back and say, "Hey, look, here's all these Stack Overflow articles about the same API." Or maybe you're

reading the news, and you invoke Neeva, and it tells you, “Hey, look, there's this discussion happening over here about this same topic on Reddit or on Twitter, or on Hacker News, or wherever.” Or maybe you're searching for a product and you invoke Neeva and it tells you, “Hey, that same products available in these other sites at these different prices.” Or look at this other site over here, this is where people are actually talking about this product. There's a thread on Reddit where people are talking about it.

Helping you find these kinds of things, and be connected to things that are on the web that are valuable to you, that's where I get really excited. Because I think about like how the web can just be so much more useful for people, and sometimes it's just hard to even know what search query to even enter. But if we can instead be this helpful tool to you that you know, “Hey, I'm doing this thing, Neeva, tell me more, tell me what's related. Connect me to things that are out there that might be interesting about what I'm currently doing.” That's where things can get really interesting for me and the search experience becomes a bit different from what people are used to, and a bit more helpful. And really, at the end of the day, what really gets me motivated is thinking about how we can make the web a better ecosystem a better place, and tools like Neeva are part of that, and thinking about how we can really lean into that and unlock and make the web work better for people so that it's not just these big head sites that are just going to Amazon when you shop, just go into whatever big sites when you're trying to do X, but instead, empowering the long tail and really allowing people to get the most out of what makes the web so special.

**[00:33:57] KP:** I didn't research a detailed timeline on this. But anecdotally, it seems to be Neeva is sort of the youngest serious search engine out there, like not a pet project or something like that. I don't know if you see it the same way. But in either case, I'm just curious, where do you guys see yourselves on the adoption curve?

**[00:34:15] DF:** Yeah, I mean, it's early in terms of Neeva just became generally available the middle of last year. And we've got this really nice space of users who love the product and giving us great feedback, and we're growing. I think it's certainly a challenge for people to even learn and know that neither is an option for them. So, really encourage people to try it out, and if you liked the experience, share it with your friends, tell them about it too. And certainly, tell us what your experience was like so we can make it better. But I think that the cool thing about

Neeva for me, having been in the industry for a long while, and having been working at an ad company and being in an environment where I got to do cool stuff because of ads, I also saw the downside of that, and the negative side of that. For me, being able to work at a company where the mission is so pure and so simple, again, simple idea of direct value exchange, the users or the customers, how novel is that, right? But to really lean into that, and think about how things can be better. I'm just really excited for that. I think there's just a wealth of ways in which we can make the Internet work better for people. So, I just love that I get to focus on that now, 100%.

**[00:35:34] KP:** So, you have a growing user base, what does success look like in terms of market share?

**[00:35:39] DF:** That's a funny one. So, for Neeva, there's like these obvious things you might think about with a subscription model. So, have to have enough users so that it can support itself, that kind of thing. But really, at the end of the day, it's about making a difference. Making a difference for people, being something that people actually love, and knowing that we are building something that people love is what we're focused on right now, making sure that we are making it better for people, making sure that we're pointed in the right direction and focused on the right things.

So, for us, like there's short term, long term success, and in the near term, it's all just about making sure the product is right, as a company, and Neeva is well-supported, well-funded, the ability to work at this and try to make a product that really resonates with people. And over time, I hope that people find that we are doing that and I hope that people will join in and be part of like helping us do that by giving us good feedback and experiencing the product. So, really, it's about that. As a startup, we're just so focused on making sure we're building the right product for folks, and really trying to , hit it out of the park with that, and grow from there.

**[00:36:53] KP:** We touched on the forthcoming Android app, are there any other recent releases or soon releases that you'd like to tease?

**[00:37:00] DF:** Yeah, I mean, there's there's a bunch of different things that are going on. It's also the fun thing about a startup, as you move so quickly. We are excited to – of course, the

idea of Neeva is US only and we get a lot of questions from people about when will be available be outside the US. And so, that's the kind of thing where we always say, "We're working on it, coming real soon." But being able to make Neeva available to more people around the world is a big one. There are other things, feature wise, again, I'm so focused on the mobile app. I could talk your head off about things that we're doing in the mobile app. But we're investing a lot in things like how we present tabs to you, we have a feature called tab groups that's in there now. But we're actually have a whole new sort of take on it that we're really excited about that I think will work a lot better for people.

Tag groups is fundamentally just this idea of like helping you keep your tabs better organized. And a lot of times on browsers, we think of tabs, as these sort of row tabs across the top. And I think people are familiar with like getting too many tabs. At some point, it just becomes a big mess and it's cluttered, and you kind of feel like you declare bankruptcy and just close a whole bunch of them. So, it's not really working very well. But if you think about tabs, it's really kind of this view on your history. It's like a way of being organized about all the things you're doing. But it's like the historical stuff, right? So, how can we make that work better? On mobile, the problem's even harder, because you're just looking at one tab at a time, right? And then you zoom out and you see this grid of tabs or this whatever sort of presentation of all these cards, and it can just feel overwhelming, like you can't get that bird's eye view on it. And let alone, find your way to the things that you're doing. Invariably, you end up opening the same site in multiple tabs, right? It just becomes even more of a mess.

So, to me, like how we can help conquer that beast a bit, especially on mobile, there's a lot of opportunity and we're working on that. We're working on making it work better for people. If they're really leaning into that idea that your tabs are really this special view on your history, I think there's other folks in the browser community who are doing interesting things with tabs as well. I look to the browser companies and other interesting one with their browser, they're still in closed, invite only. But they're also innovating in that space, on desktop, and so on. I'm excited about just that we're not alone in exploring this space.

But in addition to tabs, there's things like what I was talking about with like making the search journey work better for people. So, we're working to bring out a new feature that really makes it possible for you to invoke Neeva on any page and get back some interesting stuff. I think that's

a step towards changing up the way search works. Thinking about like how the journey starts with tapping on the URL bar, and you end up on a website. Well, thinking about how you can sort of step back, zoom out from that, and see adjacent websites, see adjacent and continue your journey from where you were and explore around the page. I think those are some really interesting ideas.

So, look to us for those kinds of things. And of course, like you mentioned, the Android app coming, we really want to provide a good experience there for folks. A lot of folks asking us for an Android app and yeah, up until last year, I was 100% Android user. I became an iOS user to focus on the iOS app for Neeva. But I have a lot of affection for Android and looking forward to having an app out for Android users.

**[00:40:31] KP:** Definitely. Well, I think listeners should go and check this out themselves. It's pretty easy to do, whether they're on their mobile iOS phone right now or on their desktop, what do they do to see the results Neeva's going to give them?

**[00:40:42] DF:** Yeah, it'd be great. And again, we'd love to hear feedback from folks. Just look for the support option in the app or on the website, and you can send us feedback. We'd love to hear how you experienced the product.

**[00:40:55] KP:** Definitely, I look forward to following it. Darin, thanks so much for coming on Software Engineering Daily.

**[00:40:58] DF:** Thank you so much for having me. It was great.

[END]