

MoS Episode Transcript: Joi Ito

JOI ITO: Chicago in the '80s: It's the middle of the AIDS crisis, house music was kind of just peaking out – but it was a very vibrant period for nightclubs. I discovered that on the North Side of Chicago there was a really interesting, vibrant club scene.

REID HOFFMAN: That's Joi Ito, director of the MIT Media Lab, describing his former life as a DJ in Chicago in the 1980s.

ITO: Our club, it's in the basement. They used to put sawdust on the floor because it would get pretty grummy.

HOFFMAN: That vibrant and grimy nightlife scene was very different from where Joi spent his daylight hours.

ITO: I was studying physics at the University of Chicago, which was – I wouldn't call it a monoculture but a lot of people with very similar values, very focused and intent on getting a good education, competing with each other.

HOFFMAN: The contrast couldn't have been starker. Despite its intellectual pretensions to openness, the university felt like a world closed off to new ideas. But the nightclubs felt like a constant vibrant culture clash of people, styles, and values. An open house that anyone could enter. And they did.

ITO: We had people like Iggy Pop and Run DMC and Madonna. You had the city alderman, the drug dealers, the mafia, the Goths, the bartenders. So really a community.

HOFFMAN: It was an unlikely, chaotic group of people.

ITO: There were always fights going on. You know, Iggy Pop would come and throw a bottle at one of our bartenders.

HOFFMAN: It was the music that kept everyone in balance.

ITO: The music at the time was everything from techno to industrial music to house music. The manager would say: "Those kids on the dance floor, get them over to the bar to have a drink. And those college kids, get them onto the dance floor. And see the Goth kids in the corner? Get them out of here. They're way too drunk."

HOFFMAN: And as a DJ, it usually fell on Joi to get the people to do what the manager wanted. Want the hip-hop kids off the dancefloor? Play something by The Cure. Want the house fiends to pick up the pace? Put on Farley Jackmaster Funk. Want to ruin everyone's night? Joi was the puppetmaster. And his records were the strings he pulled.

ITO: The DJ, by playing the music, could get people to drink, could get people to come in, could get people to leave. And then you'd get the last call for alcohol and the DJ was in charge of getting them all out of the room. And what I realized was that the music that you played was an essential component to the atmosphere of a club, and also the culture of the club.

HOFFMAN: Actually, puppetmaster is the wrong term. Joi was more like a conductor. And his unlikely rotation of music maintained the harmony between the very different groups of people who felt at home in his club.

ITO: There was a loving community that was trying to protect the runaway kids, that were trying to make sure that the drug dealers didn't sell drugs to the people who had AIDS. And it contrasted starkly with the competitive monoculture of this community I was in, in university.

HOFFMAN: This nightclub was the opposite of the kind of monoculture you see in a university — or any kind of members-only club. A members-only club is exclusive, it keeps other people out. And the “privileged” few who can get in know what to expect. That's the attraction. But it's also the weakness. Those members will never be exposed to truly new ideas.

And many scale companies seem like staid members-only clubs: set in their ways and closed to the world. They have a lot to learn from the wild diversity at Joi's nightclub. I wouldn't recommend scaling that nightclub — that's a recipe for chaos. But the vibrancy? The openness? The sharing of the dance floor? Every company needs to take these ideas to heart. I believe no organization that's entirely closed — or entirely open — can scale as successfully as an organization that combines both.

[THEME MUSIC]

HOFFMAN: I'm Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn, partner at Greylock, and your host. And I believe no organization that's entirely closed — or entirely open — can scale as successfully as an organization that combines both.

Many organizations — businesses, government agencies, universities — are essentially closed: Top-down. Hierarchical. Members-only. Speak out of turn and you'll be asked to leave. You have to be part of the in-crowd to contribute.

However, in organizations and communities that are open, there is no in-crowd. Anyone can join and contribute. Ideas are judged on their merit. Think of open competitions, open-source code, or even the proverbial town square.

Openness always invites a bit of chaos. You run the risk of losing control. But it's a risk well worth taking. Because openness also breeds innovation. New points of view can surface from anywhere and bring novel solutions to problems.

Knowing precisely which aspects of your organization should be open and which should be closed – and to what degree – will set you on a path to rapid scale.

I wanted to speak with Joi Ito about this because Joi has been instrumental in the growth of my own ideas about networks and openness. Joi is an entrepreneur, investor, and theorizer who spent much of his career championing radically open systems, from Creative Commons to cyber currency. Joi also railed against established, top-down institutions, from governments to banks to universities.

Six years ago, Joi accepted a role inside one of these famously closed universities. As Director of the famed MIT Media Lab, Joi has evolved from a staunch believer in radically open communities to a nuanced advocate for bringing openness to previously closed organizations.

Joi and I come at the idea of openness from different angles. But both our approaches aim to drive innovation at scale, and involve many, many people along the way

The way that I normally introduce Joi is “college dropout, director of the MIT Media Lab.” It’s a quick way to help people begin to understand him.

ITO: I dropped out of college three times. Well actually, I dropped out of college twice and a doctorate PhD program once. It felt like there was more I could learn online than I could learn in an academic program.

HOFFMAN: Joi dropped out to become immersed in that nightclub community. It was not the first radically open community that Joi had become involved in. As a high school student back in Tokyo, Joi had worked in his father’s research lab. It gave him access to computers and the early internet.

ITO: At night I would program video games – and also break copy protection on software on the Apple computer.

HOFFMAN: Yes, you heard him right. Joi’s teenage years were spent breaking copyright on software. But the thing that really excited Joi about these new technologies were the communities that were forming around them. Online bulletin boards were just emerging, and people from across the world engaged in conversations they could never have in their everyday lives — with people in other countries of higher social status. These communities cut through hierarchy; they flattened the playing field. And it’s fair to say that not everyone appreciated that. Joi tested this newfound access in his Tokyo high school.

ITO: Once I got into the university networks I realized that a lot of these professors who wrote the textbooks that we were using would answer email if you said, “Oh, I’m a high school kid in Japan, and I just read your textbook, and I have a question about this thing.”

And my physics teacher hated it, because I would come in and say, “Well, but I talked to the author of the book and he says you’re wrong.” And so I got a C in physics.

HOFFMAN: He may have barely scraped through his physics class, but Joi took a lot of lessons from those open online communities. After fully immersing himself in Chicago’s club scene, Joi returned to Tokyo to open a nightclub of his own. But technology kept creeping back in.

HOFFMAN: And you go to Tokyo, but then you start thinking, “Ok, I should maybe think about the technology business.” What led you to start thinking startups, venture capital? What led you into that direction?

ITO: I want to just establish for the record that I am not even close to the level of strategic that you are. I just kind of stumble around, you know. And so...

HOFFMAN: Geniusly stumble around, but yes.

ITO: Well, I’m aware of my opportunities; I just don’t plan them. And so I went back to Japan, had a nightclub, was doing events, was interested in media. So I was working for NHK, the broadcasting company, and was just kind of just running around. And I did computer networks, but just out of curiosity.

HOFFMAN: Joi’s curiosity and his open collaborative network of like-minded tech pioneers meant he soon had skills that were in great demand, particularly from big companies finding their way in the new frontier of the internet. Joi would need to speak the language of business if he was going to work with these top-down, prestige-driven organizations. He set up a consulting practice.

ITO: I didn’t know how to run a company, but I set it up anyway. And at the time, I remember going to negotiate an office lease and they said, “Well what about the security deposit, and dadada?”

And I was like, “I’m gonna have to talk to my lawyer.” And I was like, “Mom, what is a security deposit?”

HOFFMAN: Joi may not have understood the fine details of office leasing but he and his hacker friends were landing contracts with big clients like IBM and Sun Microsystems. Their open community had accelerated their learning, and they were among the few people with the skills that the big institutions needed.

Another company they worked with was a fledgling internet listings site called Yahoo. Joi and his team offered to set up Yahoo’s Japan service.

ITO: And we went over and people were like sleeping under desks. And I got a deal. It was a verbal commitment that I would get 50 percent of Yahoo Japan in exchange for setting it up, doing the servers.

HOFFMAN: Joi told his friend, SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son, about this verbal commitment with Yahoo.

ITO: I was telling him about, “Oh wow, there’s this Yahoo thing that’s really cool.” And this is when I learned about sort of Masa’s style. He was like – he immediately flew to California and said to Yahoo, “We’re gonna invest in your company. And if you don’t let us invest, we’ll invest in your competitor.” And I don’t know if there were any competitors. And he came back to Japan and said to me and my gang, “You’re clearly not gonna get 50 percent of Japan. We’re gonna fund it. But we’ll give you one percent.”

HOFFMAN: Hearing Joi tell this story, you might believe “Masa Style” consists of winning at any cost. But Masa may also have realized that Joi would have trouble making the Yahoo deal work on his own. Joi knew how to build a nightclub community, and he knew how to forge a loose alliance between brilliant hackers with big ideas. But he also needed his Mom’s advice on a security deposit. The fact that he was satisfied with a verbal agreement from Yahoo underlined this naivety. As did Joi’s next move with Masa....

ITO: And I looked at them and I said, “You guys are a bunch of software distributors. You don’t have any technical people. How are you gonna build this thing?”

He said, “Well, you guys can build it.”

And I said, “Okay. Well, screw your one percent. I want...” – I think, I can’t remember what it was, like — “\$20,000.” And he was like, “Okay, fine.” And so we built the first Yahoo Japan beta server. It took us a long time to get paid, which was annoying. But then, Yahoo made a ton of money.

HOFFMAN: That missed opportunity taught Joi at least two lessons about working within the established hierarchy of large, closed organizations.

ITO: I realized later I should have taken the one percent! But I also realized that without capital and without the ability to execute at a corporate level, I’d just be that kid with the ideas.

HOFFMAN: For Joi, it wasn’t enough to be “that kid with the ideas.” He wanted to take his ideas and shepherd them into becoming a reality. The best way to do that?

Learn to harness the power of the closed, corporate world that Joi and his hacker friends had scorned.

So Joi set up a consulting business that would tap the freewheeling new ideas that were burgeoning on the Internet — ideas about engaging a wider audience, communicating freely, and making them accessible to all. And then present them in a way the closed business world could understand and run with.

ITO: We built a bunch of businesses. I would say that if it weren't for the fact that I was working with a guy who had been in business for ten years who knew how to operate a business, it probably would have taken me a lot longer before I actually had something that made money at scale.

Alongside his consulting practice, Joi both joined and created some of the online communities that emerged in the 1990s. Many of Joi's early communities skewed heavily towards complete openness – with anonymous users and a rule-free ethos. Joi thrives in this kind of chaos. But even he experienced the downside.

ITO: First of all, it started with a mailing list called NetSurf where we would all share our links about interesting websites that we'd found. And at some point, some slightly troll-like people were hanging out on the mailing list.

And I said, you know, "You guys, this is like my living room. Get out of here. Don't behave like that."

They said, "This isn't your living room."

I said, "It's on my server."

They said, "We don't care. This is a public space. I can say what I want."

And I thought, "Ah, that's kind of weird, because I created it. I'm running it. But all right, fine, whatever. I've lost control of this mailing list."

HOFFMAN: So to escape the trolls, Joi set up a channel on Internet Relay Chat, or IRC, a network of servers that allowed users to chat in real time. It was still open, but he could kick out the trolls.

ITO: I said, "You know what? I'm gonna call the channel Joi Ito, because then there will be no doubt that I am in charge." So we created a channel called Joi Ito. And it was just my friends.

HOFFMAN: But while the troll problem had been solved, it was clear Joi wasn't quite as much in control as he thought he would be.

ITO: But I remember a time when somebody came into the chat room, and they said, "So what does Joi Ito think?"

And I said, “Well, I think that...”

“No, not you, the channel.”

Then I realized that even if you name the thing your name, it’s still not your place.

HOFFMAN: What Joi learned was a classic lesson about the limits of radical openness. When you create a very open, lawless system, you foster open conversations – but you also create a safe place for trolls: People who act in bad faith to disrupt a system and drive others away from using it. It’s a phenomenon that almost every open platform grapples with today – from social media channels to Wikipedia.

But the trolls on the Joi Ito chat room didn’t deter the real Joi Ito from his love of all things open. He saw the risk of opening up: People will express their own views. You may lose control of the conversation. But he also saw huge benefits: innovation, inclusiveness, the wisdom of crowds. And we’ll hear how Joi leaned into the movement toward open platforms right after the break.

Before the break, we heard how Joi established himself as a go-to Internet consultant in Tokyo in the 1990s, building Yahoo Japan, among other websites.

After a series of ups and downs familiar to all founders, Joi was in a position to make investments of his own.

It was the early 2000s, and blogging had just emerged as a disruptive force in media and politics. Joi saw in blogging the same radical, open ethos he had seen on the bulletin boards of the early internet.

There was an unfettered sharing of ideas that anyone could participate in. And it was around this time that our paths first crossed. I was at PayPal at the time.

HOFFMAN: That was when you were saying, I’m convinced that there’s this entire new kind of web 2.0 revolution, a kind of revolution of communities, of networks, of social identity, I had thought a lot of about social identities, but I hadn’t thought about the open network side of these things. You were like, “Well, there’s this really great company, SixApart. We should invest in this one together.” And I was like, “Sure, why not?”

ITO: The key word for me – and probably why you ended up building more successful companies than me – was really community. So I was into chat rooms, into bulletin boards, into social media, but from the perspective of a bunch of people having a conversation.

Hoffman: Blogging leveled the playing field between everyday people and the closed world of established media companies. New voices emerged from unexpected corners. There was an

unfettered sharing of ideas that anyone could participate in. And it was around this time that our paths first crossed. I was at PayPal at the time.

We met because I had been trying to figure out what to do with PayPal Japan. And then a bunch of people said, “Well, the person who’s both a massively good innovator, massively good technologist, and willing to try to figure out how to navigate these kinds of things is Joi. You should meet him.”

So we met on the phone. That was when you were saying, “I’m convinced that there’s this entire new kind of web 2.0 revolution, a kind of revolution of communities, of networks, of social identity.”

I had thought a lot about social identities, but I hadn’t thought about the open network side of these things. You were like, “Well, there’s this really great company, Six Apart. We should invest in this one together.” And I was like, “Sure, why not?”

Healthy communities foster open conversations. And I did think about community in this respect. But Joi is right: It wasn’t a focus on openness that helped me build scale with LinkedIn. Rather, it was my belief in the value of building networks that are open in some respects, but closed in others.

LinkedIn was an open community in that anyone could join, but it was also a collection of closed communities: We required real-name signups and we only allowed you to connect to people you know and who agree to the connection. We held to the balance of open and closed that we believed would foster trust in a business community. It’s this trust that attracted more people to contribute, and fueled scale.

In any company or community, you have to strike this balance between open and closed. Another organization that has famously struck this balance is TED. For years, TED was an expensive, elite, invitation-only conference. So when they first put their talks online for free under a Creative Commons license it was a radically open move.

June Cohen, one of the Executive Producers for Masters of Scale was previously the Executive Producer at TED. She led the charge to put TED Talks online. And June also launched TED’s Open Translation Project, which allowed volunteers around the world to subtitle the talks. She has a story that perfectly encapsulates this balance between open and closed systems. I asked her to share it.

JUNE COHEN: When you talk about “open” systems, people often picture them as a mosh pit – where everyone chaotically does whatever they want. But the most effective open systems usually have a lot of hidden structure.

Our translation program at TED was very open – but it wasn’t a mosh pit. We put a lot of structure in place to support great work, and also to prevent mischief.

HOFFMAN: The potential benefits were clear to June from the start. Still, it was a scary move.

COHEN: It's one thing to believe hypothetically in the power of crowd-sourcing. But it's a totally different thing to put your speakers' words in the hands of people you don't know, who speak languages you don't understand.

The day the translation program launched, we got a panicked message from one of our Polish translators. He told us that the Polish subtitles on five talks had been mis-translated. They were just gobbledy-gook. Well, it turns out that those five bad translations were actually done by a professional translation house we had hired to help us launch. It looks like they had just run them through an auto-translator. They probably figured: "It's Polish. They'll never know."

As it turns out, the only truly bad translations we ever experienced came from professional translators. They were caught and corrected by our volunteers within 36 hours of launch. Why? Because the volunteers were in it for more than just money. They cared. And that's the power of openness.

HOFFMAN: TED's Open Translation Project scaled to more than 20,000 volunteers working in more than 120 languages. It paved the way for TED's international growth – including a TV show in Japan, hosted by none other than Joi Ito.

And to me, that story – in which the scary-sounding volunteers save TED from the paid professional translators – encapsulates so much about the way open and closed systems can join forces and play to each other's strengths.

These ideas about openness were gaining momentum in the early 2000s. Wikipedia launched in 2001. Creative Commons issued its first license in 2002.. And Joi was one of the earliest commentators on the movement.

In 2003, Joi put out his famous essay, *Emergent Democracy*. It described how loose networks of individuals were using blogging and other online tools to effect change in society and politics from the ground up.

ITO: It was really this idea that we would see an emergent ability to cause action, to think as a community, this kind of collective action and collective intelligence. But back then it seemed very rosy. Like if we could just connect everybody and get everybody the opportunities to everything they want, we'd have direct democracy and the world would become peaceful, and everyone would realize that all people are good – and then game on.

HOFFMAN: Joi saw the evidence all around him for the benefits of collective action and direct democracy. And he became the champion of all things open. He joined the boards of Creative Commons, the Mozilla Foundation, and the Open Source Initiative.

As an investor, Joi placed bets on startups that championed bottom-up initiatives: Kickstarter, Flickr, Twitter. You can probably see why Joi's path and mine kept crossing. We co-invested in a number of companies, and we agreed in the opportunity of open platforms. But we had a fundamental disagreement, because I believed the biggest opportunity lay with closed networks – or mostly closed networks – ones that required a real identity, and connected you only to people you know.

Our views on open versus closed networks have evolved over the intervening years, as some of our expectations have been confirmed, some confounded, and some exploded. And as you'll hear from this exchange, it is a subject we can still talk about endlessly.

ITO: I think that your notion of having closed networks and trust as a key piece was prescient of the issues that would come.

HOFFMAN: I think the obvious truth is to create innovation, you want to have as much breadth of allowing innovation, e.g. open networks, as possible. But then the question as a business creator, and as an investor, and as a capitalist, you want to actually capture as much of that value. So you want to tend to be more closed. We were just in constant conversation. And I think mostly we kind of said, "Look, we'll both bet and invest on both sides, and we'll see how it, see how it plays out."

ITO: Yes. And we know how it turned out.

HOFFMAN: Well, the tightly bound networks had a faster growth towards equity value. Although, maybe impossible without the open systems.

ITO: I think the open protocol lowered the barrier to competition, first of all, and allowed a kind of scaling.

HOFFMAN: Well, you wouldn't have been able to create those new companies without having the platform be sufficiently open that they could all go create. So anything from Google to Netflix to Facebook wouldn't be created unless the internet was open.

ITO: That's right.

HOFFMAN: And so you need that baseline open system to create all that value, which is the value of the open systems.

HOFFMAN: One of the reasons we still talk about this is because the dynamic between open and closed systems is constantly shifting. Open systems are great for idea generation and

evolution. But if you're going to scale rapidly any of these ideas, a closed system – or at least tight rules – often works best. And the organizations that stand to gain the most by embracing some openness are those that are traditionally, and staunchly closed: corporations, universities, government agencies.

So what happens if you're working in one of these closed systems? How can your company harness the power of radical openness, without descending into a disorganized free-for-all?

An expert in this area is Megan Smith. Megan was Chief Technology Officer for the White House under President Obama. She has a number of tactics that harness the power of radical openness. And she's put them to great effect in some of the most complex organizations on the planet.

One innovation close to her heart is the "Solutions Summit" she helped plan for the United Nations. The Summit aims to un-earth solutions for the UN's sustainable development goals.

MEGAN SMITH: And so we said, "What if we just put up a web page and say: 'World, what do you already have that solves these goals that's either working now or promising?'"

And so we posted that on the UN's site. And then we blasted an email pointing at it, through lots of ministries of science and technology; and through all the fellows like Ashoka Fellows, TED Fellows; all our colleagues – and out went the word. And in came 800 submissions from 100 countries in two weeks.

HOFFMAN: The results that came from opening up this traditionally closed system were astounding.

SMITH: And we saw extraordinary things: a team flying drones to plant a billion trees a year; a team teaching law in prison in Uganda because thousands of people had gone to jail with no representation, now lots of people, in fact thousands, are getting themselves out of jail.

There's a guy named Beno Juarez building a floating Fab Lab in the Amazon. We have 400 indigenous tribes that come, indigenous people, who are there with their incredible capabilities around bio information and indigenous knowledge that could merge together with modern machine tools and capabilities.

And the only rules were: We want breadth of ideas and we want breadth of humans because the world is full of lots of talent. And so we got that.

HOFFMAN: It was Megan Smith who invited Joi to apply for the position he now holds: the director of the MIT Media Lab. The Media Lab was founded in 1985 by Nicholas Negroponte, and for decades, the Lab has been a hub of cross-disciplinary innovation. The Media Lab also

had an unusually close relationship with the corporate and startup worlds – which means that MIT-born innovations frequently make their way into the hands of consumers. Technologically, it was right up Joi's alley.

ITO: I didn't know anything about Media Lab, and I really had no intention, ever, of being in an academic institution. But I came here to do an interview. And we spent two days just meeting students and faculty and staff. And it turned out to be, still, probably the most interesting two days, series of conversations I ever had. And I said, "If I can hang out with these people every day, I'll do anything to do that."

HOFFMAN: This was the kind of institution Joi could fully embrace. A place that described its work as anti-disciplinary was always going to appeal to Joi. It was almost like coming home. Just like the clubbers in Chicago or the voices from far flung corners of the globe in those early days of internet bulletin boards, the Media Lab was a community of open voices freely sharing ideas.

HOFFMAN: How much did you see that in that first two days in the Media Lab, that it reminded you of the DJ dance floor?

ITO: So that's really an interesting question, because I'd thought of the parallels. Actually the reason I dropped out of college to go to the dance floor was because I loved the community. And this is a community I want to be in. This is the lost tribe that I've been looking for. And if it means doing operational stuff that I never really thought was my forte, fine.

HOFFMAN: The Media Lab melded the powers of the closed institution with the powers of an open network. But Joi wanted to make the Media Lab even more open. He wanted to crack a door and bring the world in.

ITO: I realized, coming from the internet, that there are people doing cool stuff all over the place. TED was publishing their videos all over the place. It was very counterintuitive to me to have something be closed. So it felt like a computer that wasn't connected to the internet.

HOFFMAN: Joi set out to connect the metaphorical computer of the Media Lab to the internet of the world. He knew that any closed organization would run the risk of stagnation. So Joi started stirring things up at the Media Lab with a series of open programs, including open competitions, open classes, and an Advisory Council and Directors Fellows program that brings outside voices regularly into the Lab.

ITO: Instead of just being a closed community, trying to make it an open community was one of my areas of focus. A lot of that also is about a culture change in the Lab. But I think the students already had that intuition. And I think they were already kind of

breaking the rules and posting stuff onto YouTube. So a lot of it was just unlocking stuff that just wanted to happen.

HOFFMAN: Joi was taking his philosophy of radical openness, and supercharging what it could do by harnessing the power of a top-down institution. The irony isn't lost on him.

HOFFMAN: You said to me, I remember this conversation when you said, "You know what my career is? My career is breaking monopolies," right? Like, it was kind of going up against the monopolies, because the telcos actually didn't want an internet. They wanted a "No, no, we control everything and you pay us for it" – versus permissionless innovation.

ITO: We were fighting against some pretty awful institutions like the telcos, who were, to me, trying to prevent this dream of open access to everyone at low cost.

HOFFMAN: This tension – between the radically open and the radically closed – does not need to be a zero-sum game.

ITO: And we were beating up mainstream media like they were the evil empire. But then we realized, "Wait, we're killing – they're about to die." So, the reason I'm on the *New York Times* board is kind of like you're jumping in to do CPR: "I didn't mean to really hurt you that bad, you know. We were just punching you."

But now in retrospect, this kind of institution bashing that we were doing? Now I'm on the institution side realizing that we need institutions. And so there's this kind of interesting healthy balance.

So I feel I'm spending almost as much time trying to protect our important institutions, while at the same time – I guess we often call this a radical flank – but using the somewhat radical disruptive people to make sure that the people in the institutions are thinking about innovation and about the future, and not sitting on their laurels.

HOFFMAN: Getting the open-close balance right is the key challenge, and it is different for each specific situation. How do we tweak the level of openness in any organization to ensure the greatest impact? Here's Joi's view, from his seat at the Media Lab.

ITO: It's a very complex system with all these parts interrelated. But I think the key point is that you need to be in conversation across engineers and social scientists, across Silicon Valley businesses, and the regulators. You actually, in fact, have to work together.

Not only to think about and understand the problems, but to forcefully come out with things like open letters, with going to companies and questioning their work, and actually building examples of things that work properly.

This is what I learned from the Arab Spring: “Hey, yay, finally emergent democracy is here!” “Oh no, a lot of people are suffering.” And so this time around, we have to be a bit more intentional in trying to get the arc to bend towards justice rather than just to leave it up to the market and a whole bunch of hackers.

HOFFMAN: Only by continuing to have these open conversations can we keep pace with the shifting challenges we face in our companies, our institutions, and our societies. It is a conversation we all need to be radically open to having – and no one should be closed off from.

I’m Reid Hoffman. Thank you for listening.