

MoS Episode Transcript: Whitney Wolfe Herd

STEVE SPOHN: When you have friends that are beginning to become young adults and they want to go out to the club and the only club in your area has one step in order to get into it and you're in a power wheelchair... that sort of doesn't go well together.

I found video games to be that outlet where I could take my Super Nintendo into my friend's garage and we could hang out for hours. We'd be playing our *Street Fighters* or *Streets of Rage* and that kind of fighting games with my guy pals that were super into beating each other's butts.

REID HOFFMAN: That butt-beating virtual street fighter is Steven Spohn, COO of the non-profit AbleGamers. His love affair with video games started on that Nintendo in his friend's garage. But it was online gaming that sent him head-over-heels.

SPOHN: I found the deeper I delved into the world of gaming, the more I felt like I was just like everyone else. We're all the same. We're all just gamers.

HOFFMAN: Steve got into competitive gaming, which requires quick reflexes and precision timing in order to win, but he was facing a far greater challenge.

SPOHN: So my disability is spinal muscular atrophy, which essentially means that over time my muscles get weaker and weaker. What happens is I lose abilities as we go along.

HOFFMAN: At the same time that Steve's muscles were weakening, video game controls were getting more complex. But Steve was determined to game on.

SPOHN: My hands started getting weaker. I had to find a way to continue to do what I was doing without being able to do the same physical movements. And I am a technology guy, so I knew there had to be technology out there somewhere that could bridge this gap between my abilities and my desire.

HOFFMAN: During his research, Steve turned to AbleGamers. At the time, it was a blog aimed at helping disabled gamers continue to play.

SPOHN: There was an article that the founder Mark Barlet had put up about "you can't play *World of Warcraft* with only one arm." And I knew that that was bologna.

So being the adolescent 20-year-old that I was, I was like, "Haha, Mark, you're wrong. This is why I'm right. And you suck."

Instead of turning me away like the snot nose little kid that I was, he was like, "Oh yeah, you think you can write better? Write better."

And I'm like, "Oh yeah, well I will. I'm going to do better than you."

HOFFMAN: Despite that adversarial beginning, Steve and Mark soon hit it off.

SPOHN: Mark and I got to work and we created a guide for developers to be able to make their games as accessible as possible.

HOFFMAN: Many of these measures were simple tweaks that would have huge impacts for millions of disabled gamers. But the biggest stumbling block was the classic game controller. Picture it: Small buttons clustered close together, teeny twin joysticks positioned to fit under each thumb. It's a design aimed at amplifying the smallest of movements into on-screen glory. But for disabled players, it can be a frustrating, alienating obstacle.

SPOHN: Not everyone's abilities include being able to grab a standard controller with both hands in order to play.

HOFFMAN: One day, a giant of the gaming world came calling: Microsoft.

SPOHN: So AbleGamers got to work in secrecy with Xbox for over three and a half years. They basically said, "You need to see the super cool thing that we're doing and we think you have some amazing advice for us."

We went, "Yeah, cool. This sounds awesome."

HOFFMAN: That super cool thing was called the Xbox Adaptive Controller. It was quite literally a game-changer for disabled players.

SPOHN: These kinds of adaptive controllers allow you to capitalize on your abilities. Maybe you have only one arm or maybe you don't have the ability to rapid-fire push your pointer finger. Maybe you just need everything on top of the controller. Our assistive technologies can take those controllers and change where the buttons are.

We can take technology, we can change them just a little bit, and we can make them better for everyone.

HOFFMAN: The adaptive controller is just one example of how small but thoughtful tweaks can change everything. I believe the smallest feature can make – or break – your product.

[THEME MUSIC]

HOFFMAN: I'm Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn, partner at Greylock, and your host. And I believe the smallest feature can make – or break – your product. The challenge is recognizing the impact of that feature – and making sure it's actually positive.

As a founder or a product manager, you should always be on the look-out for small changes that can have an outsized impact. While small changes typically lead to incremental improvements, every so often the impact is exponential.

I wanted to talk to Whitney Wolfe Herd about this, because both of the products she's launched are known for a single distinguishing feature that set them on the course for massive growth. She was a co-founder of the dating app Tinder – famous for letting users “swipe right” on potential matches. After leaving Tinder, she founded another dating app, Bumble, which has grown to 50 million users and \$200 million in revenue.

Bumble's success also lies in the seemingly small tweak Whitney made to the established dating app format. Like Tinder, users swipe through profiles of potential matches. If they like what they see, they swipe right. If not, they swipe left. If two users swipe right on each other's profiles, they can message each other. But here's the key difference: On Bumble, women have to make the first move. This tweak doesn't just change how dating apps work; it aims to change how dating works – period. It rewrites our cultural assumptions about how people connect.

And connecting with people – understanding what makes them tick – has always been Whitney's drive.

WHITNEY WOLFE HERD: I remember telling my father right before I went to college, "I wanna go into advertising. I wanna go into marketing. I wanna connect with people."

And I remember my dad saying, "I don't know if that's advertising and marketing that you're saying that you're passionate about. I think you're passionate about something else."

HOFFMAN: As it turned out, her father was right.

WOLFE HERD: So I show up at university and I try to apply to the advertising department. Well I flunked the exam. Bombed it. I did not get accepted. And it was shocking to me, because every question on that exam lacked empathy and emotion. There was no human connectivity involved. It was all about eyeballs on the commercial that you played.

HOFFMAN: It was clear from the cold hard numbers staring out from that exam paper that Whitney wasn't cut out for that type of marketing. She wanted something with more heart and soul.

WOLFE HERD: I ended up going into humanities and studying global studies. So the classes I took were globalization: What's the impact of putting a smiling Ronald McDonald versus a frowning Ronald McDonald in different countries? It changes the game. It's all about humans and emotions and connecting with the individual, wherever that individual is. It's hyper locality – and that's marketing.

HOFFMAN: Whitney is remembering here a famous corporate case study. It turns out that certain cultures mistrusted the broad smile of Ronald McDonald. When Ronald offered a more subdued expression, customers poured in.

This learning – from McDonalds of all places – stuck with Whitney. And there's a lesson in it for all of us. If you recognize both the universals of human nature and the hyper-local nature of human culture: You can literally turn a frown upside down for millions of potential customers. Whitney brought this ability to read a room – and a market – with her to Tinder.

It was 2012, and Whitney was visiting college campuses to promote the app.

WOLFE HERD: Strangers connecting was not something that that group of people, millennials if you will, wanted to touch. I was really taking it and convincing my peers that it was great to connect with people you didn't have access to.

HOFFMAN: Whitney visited dorm rooms and student unions, convincing people to give the app a try. Her persistence and persuasion pulled them in. But what kept them using it was Tinder's secret weapon: the swipe.

WOLFE HERD: And it's fascinating to see that you can take a virtually similar product, because let's be real with each other, Tinder was not the invention of dating apps. They'd been on the market for a very long time – and not just one or two, I mean there's a full app store of them and have been for a very long time.

HOFFMAN: Okay, the famous Tinder swipe, that wasn't actually in the very first versions of Tinder. But the novel mechanism that required users to both like each other was there. People tapped a green heart for yes, and a red "X" for no.

It was this "tweak" to the dating experience that set Tinder apart from the other dating apps that filled the app store. And this small "tweak" soon had people swooning for it.

Nowadays, you can swipe for just about anything: shoes, apartments, tweets, dinner options, baby names, when you want to adopt a pet – or even a child. The swipe has become as much a part of our shared user interface as the double-click or the desktop trash can.

The swipe made Tinder hugely popular. Within two years of launching, it was processing a billion swipes per day. But the swipe also contributed to a darker side of the Tinder experience. It was a side Whitney and her Tinder co-founders had not foreseen.

WOLFE HERD: We had this product and we were getting all of these people to basically get on it and then go free: "Match with each other. Talk to one another. Go as you will. You're on it now, do as you want."

But no one had really been able to imagine just what could come. I don't think at that time we were thinking, "Wow, people are gonna get married and have babies." Or "This is gonna end in a really dangerous date."

HOFFMAN: Small changes to a service can amplify behavior – for good or bad. And it's hard to rein in once this change has caught imaginations and become part of what your users love about your product.

Although these small tweaks can be the key to hitting massive scale, they can also have unintended consequences. People loved the new approach to finding matches, like a pompous monarch, a simple flick of your finger could decide the fate of a person. You could select someone as a potential suitor or banish them from your life forever.

Many of those matches were based on nothing more than a profile picture and a brief self-introduction. There were worries that the casual flicking through hundreds of profiles was desensitizing. It encouraged people to dismiss other human beings in milliseconds. At worst, it encouraged people to be shallow and insensitive, predatory and vain. And this affected how people viewed each other. And how they interacted.

"Tinder" soon became a by-word for meaningless hook-ups. The platform was also rife with reports of misogyny and harassment.

WOLFE HERD: No one was thinking of the consequences. And I think what I learned from my time at Tinder was the minute you encourage someone to use a piece of technology, you are inherently responsible.

And so I think that always lingered with me as I was there and then as I left: What are the consequences of this technology? And I think what we've seen with this explosion of tech dating or tech meetups is there is a dark side to it.

HOFFMAN: Whitney got first hand experience of this dark side when she left Tinder following an acrimonious departure. After leaving, she filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against the company. As part of the settlement, Whitney is very restricted in what she can say about that time. But she can talk about the aftermath, and the very public attacks she was subjected to.

WOLFE HERD: I became under attack by strangers. And so I was on the other end of what it might feel like to be exposed on the internet to people. When I was being bullied online, I just couldn't understand why this was the place that young girls and women were meant to be all day long. And I think that was really what started to shape the next thing for me.

HOFFMAN: It was a dark time for Whitney. But it also helped shape her resolve to try to make a change to how people talk to each other online.

WOLFE HERD: I really started thinking: How can I approach this from a unique perspective and take my experience that I've had in building a brand, building a user base – and then my understanding of data and technology at this point – how can I really rethink social media in the context of kindness?

And I understood that just like bad behavior can become addictive and viral, good behavior can also be contagious – and kindness can also be contagious. This is proven psychological theory. That was really the beginning of rethinking that.

HOFFMAN: Note how Whitney wasn't simply throwing up her hands and saying the technology itself was the problem. Rather, the optimistic product creator in her believed there were good aspects to social networking. We just needed to tweak the technology in such a way that it amplified the good, while mitigating the toxic.

But you could claim that altering the entire way discourse on social media was conducted was a lofty – and perhaps foolish – goal. Even if well-intentioned. However, lofty goals do not necessarily fail because they are too ambitious. Rather, they can sometimes fall apart because the methods to make them happen are too forceful.

Imagine the options for saving the Earth from an imminent asteroid impact. The most forceful – and spectacular – way would be to launch a barrage of nuclear warheads and blow it out of the sky.

However, while that might “solve” the problem, the resulting debris cloud could create a whole bunch of new things to worry about. Goodbye satellite network, telecoms, and GPS systems; hello radioactive rocks raining down upon us!

A safer approach would be to detonate a carefully-calculated amount of explosive. Do this close enough to the asteroid, and we could tweak its orbital path, nudging it off its collision course with our planet – and avoid blowing that asteroid to smithereens.

Similarly, Whitney didn't want to explode the norms of online behavior. She wanted to nudge them in the right direction. Her idea was a social network named Merci that had one small but impactful difference to all the other social networks that had gone before:

WOLFE HERD: The caveat was you couldn't just leave a random comment. No comments, only compliments. And this was in an effort to engineer and to create contagious digital behavior.

HOFFMAN: Note how Whitney pictures the cascade effect that this small tweak could have.

WOLFE HERD: Instead of just a simple "like", it would be a like attached to a compliment. And those compliments were going to be very much focused on non-physical compliments. So instead of saying somebody looks thin or somebody looks beautiful, it was going to be, "You light up my day," or, "When you walk into a room, people feel happy."

It was going to be compliments that were very much focused on the antithesis of what society has really focused on – which is beauty and weight, and a lot of these more superficial accolades, which I was trying to get away from.

HOFFMAN: Whitney was caught up in this idea. She was certain that making the right tweaks to the standard blueprint for social media could change things for the better. She was also certain of one other thing:

WOLFE HERD: I never wanted to hear the word "dating" again, when something out of the blue happened and the dating world came knocking on my door. And it was my now-business partner, who has been instrumental in Bumble, he is a pioneer of the dating space – just not so much domestically, very much overseas.

HOFFMAN: That partner is Andrey Andreev, founder of dating network Badoo. He was excited at the prospect of applying the Merci model to online dating. But at first, Whitney wasn't interested.

WOLFE HERD: I said, "No, Andrey, I don't think you understand, it's not gonna happen." And we basically spent days and days negotiating over how could I change the internet for women and girls and how could he be happy by working with me.

Andrey and I got very fortunate to run into each other, because had I sat in a room with any other entrepreneur – particularly any other male entrepreneur – I just don't know if they would've seen what I was trying to say. He understood so clearly because he'd been dealing with data and insights of user behavior for a decade. He knew firsthand that if you can't get women, you really have a lopsided experience.

As he heard me really speaking passionately about this concept of making a safe digital ecosystem for girls and women, I think he had his own aha moment, which was, "Wait a second, this doesn't mean we need to go our own ways and we can't work together. If I

can convince her to do a dating app, maybe she can find a way to build this mission into dating."

HOFFMAN: Whitney found herself back in the dating app game. It was the last place she had expected – or wanted – to be after Tinder.

She just had to hit on the feature that would set Bumble apart. Discovering this small tweak would reignite Whitney's passion for an industry that had burnt her out. And it just might change the entire way online dating worked. We'll hear all about Whitney's journey back into the dating app world, right after the break.

[AD BREAK]

HOFFMAN: Before the break, Whitney took the unexpected leap back into the world of online dating apps with her new business partner, Andrey Andreev. And they were determined to find a way to break from the rampant toxicity that was becoming the norm.

WOLFE HERD: We were sitting around and kind of banging our heads against the wall and saying, "Okay, what's this going to do? What's this going to do?"

I was sitting there and I said, "All right, I need to understand dating. What's broken in dating? What's broken in dating?"

All of a sudden I just had this somewhat hurricane moment in my mind. I said to him, "Okay, I think I've got it. What if we take the standard dating platform but there is a catch. Once the match takes place, only the woman can initiate conversation."

This is basically like a woman and a man locking eyes at a bar, but he has no way to contact her. She understands that he's interested because that match or that lock eye has taken place, but it's on her. The only way to have contact is that she has to unlock it.

I said, "Women must make the first move. This is going to reduce harassment. This is going to reduce bad behavior. Women are not going to be spammed. And women will be empowered and encouraged to actually be in the driver's seat."

HOFFMAN: The more Whitney thought about it, the more she saw the potential to rewrite the rules of not just dating, but social interaction. It was another small "tweak" that could have a massive effect.

WOLFE HERD: And so we essentially made very subtle design changes in the sense that the user flow was very familiar, right? We weren't trying to re-invent the wheel, we were just trying to reverse it.

And so everyone was familiar and comfortable with the experience, yet there was that caveat of once that match was made, the woman had to speak first – which is so contradictory to what the expectation had been the past hundreds of years of dating, and then of course the past few years of digital dating. And so it truly was such a small product change, but with such an interesting social impact.

HOFFMAN: But even such a simple concept explained in such a simple way was hard for people to grasp.

WOLFE HERD: We have to really reshape behavior, because women are taught not to make the first move. Women are taught not to speak first. They're taught never to send the first message, never to initiate. And men are taught to be very aggressive and really beat down that wall until she says "yes." That's Disney. That's everything.

HOFFMAN: "Beauty and The Beast."

WOLFE HERD: Exactly. "Cinderella." The carriage, you know, is gonna turn into a pumpkin at midnight. And I said those words, I said, "You have 24 hours to make the first move. Otherwise your carriage turns into a pumpkin." And we have to take such a simplified notion of these gender dynamics, quite literally, down to "Cinderella."

HOFFMAN: Trying to convince people to do things your way is a problem familiar to anyone introducing a new product or a new way of doing things. Especially as people might not even consciously know what it is they want.

This is something Marissa Mayer came up against in the early days of working on Google Search.

MARISSA MAYER: We did a test where we did 10, 20, 25, and 30, because at the time Yahoo was serving 20 results per page, and some people were serving as many as 30 results per page. And we wanted to see what the optimal number of results per page was.

HOFFMAN: When Marissa and her team asked users how many results they wanted per page, there was a clear preference.

MAYER: I'd ask people in some of our user studies, "How many results would you want, 20?" "Great."

"Twenty five?" "Even better."

"Thirty?" "Best of all."

HOFFMAN: However, when Google tried serving different numbers of results per page, they found quite a different answer.

MAYER: The answer was 10. It was fascinating actually, because one of the key measurements was how many searches per user would be done, how many times did they have to revise, how many pages deep would they go, things like that.

Each page deeper counts. So we looked at first page search results requested per user. Basically, it fell off dramatically between 10 and 20; 25 was even worse; 30 was worst of all. The results were really dramatic.

HOFFMAN: It turned out that the perceived benefit of having more results per page was offset by a different factor, one that was barely-perceptible yet extremely important to users – even if they didn't realize it consciously.

MAYER: The thing that popped was it actually took Google longer to prepare more results. One of the things I've always talked about is that latency and time matters a lot more to people than they can usually articulate.

Part of it was that people just didn't want to wait that extra split second. One of the big advantages of Google was it was just that fast, but waiting longer for more results was just something people generally didn't want to do, especially given the first 10 results were generally good enough.

HOFFMAN: Google didn't need to convince their users that fewer results were better. They could just serve up the optimum number – 10 – safe in the knowledge that this was what people preferred, despite what they might say.

However, Whitney faced the challenge of trying to change the way people interact. This is especially difficult when it's something as personal as dating.

WOLFE HERD: A lot of women that first heard the idea, "Why am I gonna text first? I'm not... What do you mean? Why would you ever do that? That doesn't make sense."

HOFFMAN: Building the new system was the trivial part. The really important thing was working out how to make these new and unfamiliar ways of behaving become second nature – and make the users delight in the new approach.

HOFFMAN: So how did you start building that new norm?

WOLFE HERD: Well, that was really hard.

HOFFMAN: Yes, I suspect.

WOLFE HERD: That was really tricky. Especially, you have to understand where I was at that time.

HOFFMAN: Whitney was still dealing with the radioactive fallout surrounding her Tinder departure. Getting people to follow you down an unfamiliar path is tough even when you're not a pariah.

WOLFE HERD: I had a scarlet letter on me. No one wanted to talk to me, nobody wanted to work with me, and nobody wanted to download anything that I was telling them to download.

It was a trying time and there was not a lot of supporters. And that's why that early team that I gathered, they're still with us today. We had to push really, really hard.

HOFFMAN: So what was... Was it persistence? Was it techniques, the surprise and delight? Was it addictive kindness? What were the set of things that start moving that norm?

WOLFE HERD: So back to the smiling Ronald McDonald – or the frowning Ronald McDonald – it was all about the way you position this. So you could say to a group of guys, "Hey, download this platform. You have to behave. If you are disrespectful, you're going to have consequences and women are the bosses. They're in control and you have no power." They might run for the hills in 2014.

Or you could say, "Hey guys. Aren't you tired of constantly being the one that has to reach out and just getting rejected, time and time again? I mean, that has to be hard for you right? That must be tiring to constantly have to put yourself out there and get turned down, nine out of 10 times. Well there's this new product where when you mutually like somebody, they come to you."

HOFFMAN: By reframing the Bumble approach as being positive for everyone, Whitney hoped everyone would embrace it.

WOLFE HERD: And it is refreshing, because it alleviates the rejection from men – but it does something really special on the other side. The whole notion of Bumble is really to recalibrate these norms right? You think about pre-Bumble connecting online. Or even connecting in general, the man starts with the power, the woman is meant to be a damsel in distress.

And so that creates this imbalance. It sets up a very dangerous, toxic framework. And so the whole effort is to take some of that pressure and that aggressive nature away from

the man and to infuse confidence, respect, empowerment, equality, accountability – and this lifts the woman up. And it really balances it out.

HOFFMAN: The internet can be seen as a distorting mirror that emphasizes and compounds the uglier aspects of human interaction. However, it can also be a prism that refracts new ways of relating to each other back out into society.

WOLFE HERD: So where you think about whether it's catcalling on the street or on a digital platform; men constantly trying to get someone's attention and being rejected at all times, this fuels aggression. This fuels abusive behavior. This creates toxic behavior.

And I'm not saying bad behavior cannot happen on Bumble, trust me, you know, we know, everyone that has scaled a business to any extent – even to 1,000 users – you can never control humans. But what you can do is try to point them in the right direction.

HOFFMAN: Unfortunately, we can't make a Bumble-like rule for interaction in real life. Putting an end to the cycle of abusive behaviour will take more than a few nudges, a few tweaks, a few new features. And it will need years to take effect.

And this is part of the huge power of technology: We can build interaction on the terms we choose. We can also experiment with the rules of engagement. And in doing so, maybe the norms we adopt will eventually filter out into wider society.

But there is always the danger of unexpected consequences, even in the controlled interactions like those on Bumble. Initially, Bumble gave women 24 hours to send the initial message to men they had matched with. If they didn't, then the chance was gone. However, men could take as long as they wanted to respond. They might take a day. They might take a week.

WOLFE HERD: And so here we launched this product. We have the best intentions in mind, genuinely. We really have a northern star of: How do we end misogynistic behavior in relationships?

Okay, well let's start by empowering women but not in an effort to destabilize men but to invite them in and make everyone nicer. Well what we realized was by giving women this time restraint but letting men respond at their own free will, this was actually going backwards, and this was not doing anyone any favors. And so we needed to hold both parties accountable.

HOFFMAN: Bumble added in a requirement for men to respond within 24 hours or lose the chance. It was another example of how even a small tweak made with the best of intentions can have an unforeseen negative effect. How do you avoid making these mistakes or, when you make them, how do you course correct as rapidly as possible? For Whitney, the answer is through keen observation and a deep understanding of your users.

WOLFE HERD: The users are what give us every move we make – except for the very first move. It started somewhere but then they took it. They took it and they drove it. And so women came to us and they're like, "Hey listen, we get why you're giving us a 24-hour time restraint. We like it, because it kind of makes us move, but I don't think it's fair that he doesn't have to respond to me."

We heard it once, totally recognized it. Heard it twice, it was in development. We moved fast. And we personally apologized and thanked them: "Thanks for helping us tweak this."

HOFFMAN: This is an approach the Bumble team has brought to Chappy, its dating product for gay men, which launched in 2016.

WOLFE HERD: So when you think about gay dating apps, they've actually been incredibly non-inclusive to gay men. It's been very much engineered toward anonymity and very hyper-sexualized behavior. But there's never really been a product that actually facilitates dating, love, true relationships. Why would we offer that to the straight community? And why are gay men alienated from that? It makes no sense. And so the true goal of Chappy is to be an inclusive platform that allows men to be more than just a casual fling.

HOFFMAN: How does Chappy aim to achieve this? Another ingenious tweak, of course.

WOLFE HERD: So the beauty of the new Chappy is that we have this sliding mode that allows men to really get what they're looking for, whether that's something casual with no commitment, or if that's something more serious in the romantic perspective, or in fact, they might be looking for friendship, in which we give you a dedicated mode for that.

So it's really the first app geared towards the gay community that allows gay men to really go after whatever connection they're seeking, not one that they feel has been imposed on them by the product.

HOFFMAN: Chappy features a subtle yet highly impactful change that users loved – in the same way that an original tweak set Bumble apart from the dating app pack, transforming the norms of online dating for the better.

And for Whitney, dating is just the start. She's expanding the Bumble effect into other unexpected realms. The Bumble rule of interaction – that only women could initiate contact – appealed not just in finding dates, but in finding friends.

WOLFE HERD: Our users started behaving differently. I started noticing – and our team started noticing – young women and men alike saying, "Not here for dating. Husband

just got a job somewhere." Or you know, "Looking for this new life thing," right. But it had nothing to do with dating.

HOFFMAN: Whitney and her team were smart enough to follow where their users went.

WOLFE HERD: Our users were basically hijacking our product to use it in a different way. We were hearing success stories. We would meet people and they would say, "I just found my roommate on Bumble." "You found your roommate on Bumble?" So we built Bumble BFF and that was platonic friendships.

HOFFMAN: But dating and friendship aren't the only areas Bumble users have become interested in. Including one that's particularly close to home for me.

HOFFMAN: In our discussion, this is particularly entertaining because I recall seeing a headline that goes, "Bumble CEO takes aim at LinkedIn."

WOLFE HERD: Well this is awkward, in the LinkedIn office.

HOFFMAN: Yes, exactly. And so what was the decision to expand beyond and what was the theory of it?

WOLFE HERD: Okay, well for the record, never wanted to take aim. Don't think we could. Love LinkedIn. Big fan.

HOFFMAN: Just for the record, I feel exactly the same about Bumble – though my dating days are long behind me.

WOLFE HERD: Interestingly enough, low and behold, inside BFF, they start networking with each other. They don't want roommates. They don't want friends. They don't want to go to yoga. They want to build a business. They want to meet someone that works in HR recruiting or whatever it was.

We went, "Aha, okay. Platonic friendships is not necessarily the appropriate place for business, let's expand beyond this." And so it was really just letting the users operate as they wanted and going with them.

HOFFMAN: Note how Bumble's users latched on to that original small tweak, and began using it in ways Whitney and her team hadn't imagined. This is a gift that every smart leader knows they should make the most of.

Whitney has become a master of understanding what her users want, and then making the small changes to Bumble that help them achieve their goals. And as Bumble expands

internationally, she is already on the lookout for the tweaks that will allow Bumble to scale in different cultures.

WOLFE HERD: Bumble is not some crazy new idea that shows up and changes everything, it's just giving people something that has already been within them. And so going into India, a place where women now are more empowered than they've ever been, their voices are finally being heard.

They've always had their voice, Priyanka says that – Priyanka Chopra who is our partner in going to India – but now it's a moment where India is really listening to women and it's been fascinating to see women gravitating to this product. We've only been live there for a couple short months and I think in the first few weeks we had a million first moves.

A woman making a first move in India is so culturally unheard of that this is really an interesting moment, not just for us but to see how this can really shape out. It will be interesting to see how it works.

HOFFMAN: Well the degree to which you can become a force by using these kind of communities of communication, of belonging in participation, coordination, the dance as you were – if you can improve gender relations in multiple cultures, that will be simply awesome.

WOLFE HERD: It will be. Let's hope we can have some small role in that.

HOFFMAN: I think it's absolutely the case that small, simple things can change the entire dynamic of how interaction works, how we see ourselves and our place in society, and the importance of mutual appreciation. We just need to open our eyes to find these tweaks – and open our minds to where they might take us.

I'm Reid Hoffman. Thank you for listening.