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Oral History Conversation with Jason Buys

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JAY BUYS (VISCERAL)

with Akira Bannai, Devon Parikh, Jason Mendes, and Mimi Wallace

Mimi: In class, we discussed how important childhood or formative experiences help shape a person's values. I noticed on your website that you began programming when you were just eight years old. What did this fascination mean for your childhood, and how did those childhood experiences instill some of the values that you brought into Visceral, or the values that you're promoting through it?

Jay: Good question! So yes thanks for taking a look at my website. So I am 38 right now and so I started programming about literally / exactly 30 years ago. And I remember being in class like first grade—or no, probably second grade at that point—playing with a dongle called Oregon Trail. I don't know if you've heard of it. It's a cool and retro thing now. At the time that was like cutting edge technology…Wow this is cool and computers were this new cool thing that no one really knew what they were, what to do with them. They can be entertainment; they can be education. We didn't really know. I remember being fascinated. I don't know what this is. I want to learn more about that. My parents were very supportive: "we don't understand this but we're happy to sort of indulge your intrigue there". They bought me a computer called Converse 64 and I immediately just…I took it apart, put it back together, and started programming… literally just…I originally wanted to make my own video games…that was like the cool thing, right?

And all throughout my formative years and then through high school, I was just a computer nerd. I just loved it. I knew from a very very early age that I wanted to do something with computers. I just…it always fascinated me and then so I went to high school, then college. Certain peers in college, again, was like…let's do some videogame thing. That's a lot of work, and it takes the fun out of the gaming. So this was around '97, '98. I was in college. The Internet or World Wide Web that was the new cool thing…I'm dating myself a lot here, but that was this new interesting thing again, that people didn't really know what it was going to be. It was news…potential for commerce. There's gaming itself there too. It was this just this really interesting thing and so I switched my major from computer science to what they call 'media arts', which was the Internet. And then I decided I wanted to make a career out of that. I went to finish college, got a job in Washington DC — working, building websites. At first it was amazing. I really enjoyed it but I worked on a lot of stuff that I found really not fulfilling. So I really discovered that my love of computers, technology, and the internet just like wasn't enough!

So to bring it back [to] my childhood, I grew up in a very small town. And you know my parents were both really hard workers and they both did…my Dad worked a full-time job for General Motors and always worked overtime. And then at nights and weekends he was always fixing cars for people in our neighborhood. My mother worked as a seamstress, making clothes for people in our neighborhood. So I got the sense of like hard work and community and the fulfillment of actually providing services for others and doing something for your community. And so I thought the internet now has created this global community: how can we

use this tool to promote good ideas and good messages, support good organizations? And so that's really what led me to start Visceral...I wanted to have some autonomy over the types of clients that we work with and in the types of stories that we told. I didn't want...I was in DC at the time...I didn't want to do government work. I didn't want to be supporting causes I thought were, you know, in some cases negative. We wanted to focus on stories that matter so I don't know if that answers your question. So that's just a little bit about my childhood and how it got me to where I am now.

Akira: On the first day of college my mom gave me this book 'Conscious Capitalism' and since then I've used it to contextualize and help interpret my college experience. The School of Business Mission Statement actually has 'building socially responsible business people' in there. Can you talk about one experience that changed your life? Or if it has been more of a set or series of experiences...and then would you mind walking us through some of those?

Jay: Experience that changed my life! Oh man, I can go a number of different ways on this one. That's tough! The most recent one, I would say, meeting my wife. I moved to San Diego from Washington DC because as happy as I was with Visceral, which was about five years old at the time...DC is a wonderful place to visit. I don't wanna like totally just crap on DC here, but it is an intense area to live. It's fiercely political as you might imagine but it's very agenda oriented, which in some cases is good if you work in government but in some cases it's not. It's very much this mentality of like 'what can you do for me?' So I moved to San Diego 'cause I came out here to visit and I really just loved the area here. And I loved the sort of philosophy that people live here tend to have, which is a lot more open, a lot friendlier, I think, a willingness to have sort of just an open and honest conversation that's not in the interest of, you know, 'how can you be better my career' or like 'who do you work for' and 'can you give me an in in this Congressman's office'. So I think San Diego is a huge change in my life for the better. And when moving out here, I met my my now wife. We got married last year and so she's been a transformative experience for me as well...'cause I've always been a computer nerd as you might have gathered. I'm sort of like an introvert and like a loner kind of person just sitting in office writing code all day in the dark with headphones on, you know. She's an amazing person. She's a writer and she has an enormous capacity for love. And she has this respect for the arts and humanities. And so we sort of, you know, balance each other out a little bit. She surely helps me see the bigger picture of things, and that was absolutely a life-transformative experience.

Businesswise, I think just starting the company. I mentioned this to you just real quickly. I started Visceral like without really any business background 'cause I'm a programmer by trade. I can tell you anything you want to know about code and databases and servers and stuff like that, but from a business perspective I don't have an MBA. I've never even taken a business class. I literally googled how to start a business, which I hope is encouraging to you guys and to anyone who hears this. I don't wanna say it's not hard because it is, but it's certainly something that if it's something you're interested in—the entrepreneurial life or the freelancer life—it is...it's totally possible. And a business degree certainly helps. I don't want to discount that or anything that you guys are learning, but you know, we live in an era with like the greatest access information in the history of humanity. So if there's something you want to know, I mean you can find books, you can find YouTube videos, entire channels of free information that you can use to help better yourself. And so, you know, starting Visceral was sort of a moment for me where I'd really just like took control of my life, and I decided I'm not really happy with where I'm working and I want more control over my destiny. I know that sounds super cliché but it's...it's super true, like I really just, you know, I wanted to be sort of be in the driver's seat. And so that was absolutely terrifying but enlightening experience.

Akira: How has meeting your wife, and her being in that different background, a diverse background definitely from your own...has that affected the way you approach your business at all, or changed how you handle things?

Jay: Yeah absolutely! I think we've always tried to be sort of socially conscious and as we've grown as a business we've gotten more so. When we started the business—I have a business partner; his name is Matthew—and we were just two guys that freelanced together right. It was like we had like a tax number. So we were a business—but I'm using air quotes here for listeners—it wasn't really...it didn't feel like legitimate until we moved to San Diego. We opened our first office, we hired our first employee, we set up healthcare plans and retirement plans, and things like that. So it felt a lot more real and Sarah, my lovely wife, she's really helped us to really figure out like how we want to tell her story and the types of organizations that we want to be involved with. And sort of through conversations I've had with her and she knows the people that work with me as well, like you know I think she's been instrumental in just sort of our overall business philosophy and she's really good at taking the nebulous weird ideas I have in my head and helping me make sense of them a little bit sometimes. I'm like: 'I want to to do this thing and I want to, you know, I want to be better at this'. And she's like: 'Okay well...' She's really just...like having a partner that's really willing to listen to you and help break things down and sort of put things in context for you. I think this is a hugely transformative thing.

Jason: As the co-founder of Visceral and the co-author of a book, could you describe your relationships with the other co-founder, and kinda, if there was like inspirationally, conversations or experiences or series of events within the departments you worked with. Could you maybe talk through those things?

Jay: Sure! I have one official business partner. His name is Matthew as I mentioned. And so really Visceral started out of sort of a candid conversation. We both worked for a big public relations / digital agency in Washington DC, and for anyone who's not familiar with the digital agency / PR agency lifestyle, it's very hectic. It's very...I mean you juggle a hundred different things on any given day and it's very demanding. And so we had finished, I don't know, like an 80 hour week, which was typical. You sort of, you pretty much lived at work through most of your 20's. And we...it was a Sunday...we were on our way to a Washington Redskins game. We'd gotten tickets from our boss 'cause he got it from a client originally. He's like: 'You guys should take a Sunday off'. And we're like: 'Great! Thanks!'

And so we were on our way up to the game and we'd been friends for a couple years 'cause we worked together and he's a fantastic graphic designer, which is a skill I do not possess. And I'm a developer. So we work really well together and we're just sort of just going back and forth, really you know, just kind of complaining about work, as people tend to do. You know: 'Oh man, I worked like eighty hours this week, and I still have to get up like 5 AM on Monday. I got so much stuff to do and it was sort of just—'Oh man screw this! We should just quit and start our own company. And it was sort of like: 'We could do that!', you know. I was like: 'I've done some freelance stuff...do you want to do freelance stuff together?' And so really it was just...it was born just out of that conversation. And then so we made it a next step to have a meeting to have a more official conversation—Ok cool! What would it look like? What would we call ourselves?—and that kind of thing. Matthew and I are very different personality wise, you know. He's actually the more laid-back and sort of introverted than I am, but fiercely intelligent and incredibly creative in a way that I am not. So we worked really well together, like I can do I can do logic and analytics and code all day, but you know, beautiful design and

experience kind of stuff, that's just...it's not what I do. And so having someone who is different enough for collaboration but the same enough...like we have the same values and same ideals and we both kinda wanted the same thing and we wanted to have movement, more control over our life, we wanted to work on cool stuff but for clients that we cared about, and you know, wanted to build something together. And so I think that's...yeah, he's been a terrific partner! Did I miss anything?

Jason: No, that's actually...perfect. We appreciate it!

Devon: In class we discussed this venture for electric cars called 'Better Place', and the founder, Shai Agassi, was convinced that he was doing like a really good thing, but the company completely failed. And the title of your book is 'Repurpose: Be Good at What You Do & Do Something Good'. Could you elaborate on what that means—to be good at what you do within the context of driving social change, or working with people or organizations that do drive social change?

Jay: Sure! Be good at what you do and do something good. So I mentioned before—I'm a programmer. It's always come very naturally to me, it's something that I very much enjoy. I also think you're just better at things that you enjoy, right? Like, you all seem like very smart people, but you know if you worked for me and I put you in a room doing something that you absolutely hate to do, like, I'm sure you could figure it out, you could do it, but you're not gonna thrive in that scenario. Whereas if I put you doing something that you absolutely were super psyched about and love, that's a much more conducive environment to...to thriving. And so I think finding something that you're good at, and that you want to do is important. I mean you're going to spend half of your life working, right? We spend a significant portion of our lives employed in some capacity. So you should like it and you should be good at it. And the other half that is: to do something good, I think— you know not to get completely off topic—we live sort of in scary times, right? And there's a lot of stuff happening in the world, whether you're like a climate change believer or you know, there's social justice, income inequality...there's a lot of big issues that I think we as a society need to tackle. I'm not entirely convinced we can tackle them at the government level anymore and so I think there's an opportunity for business to fill that gap. And movements like the B-Corporation movement, conscious capitalism, there's real opportunity for people to drive change, you know, and create jobs in the process, make a profit in the process. We are a certified B Corporation and I'm not gonna tell anyone here I don't care about money 'cause we do. I got bills to pay and I got employees to take care of and what not, but we want, you know, to make money for the right reasons. Like, I don't want to be filthy rich while people that work for me make, you know, next to nothing. That model just doesn't make sense to me, and you know—I don't know the numbers off the top of my head—but the CEO to the average worker pay rate in this country is wildly off-base. It's like 300 or 400 to 1!

Jason: It's 425 to 1.

Jay: Perfect! Backing me up with stats. I love it. It seemed to me, it just doesn't make any sense. And so, you know, 'do something good' in that part of the question can be a number of things. And for me it means we work to support organizations that we care about or causes—I am a believer in climate change. I think it's a huge problem. So we support clean energy organizations, conservation—we have wildlife conservation client, which is super awesome 'cause they're doing really great work. So I like to support those things, and I think the internet

can tell those stories, and we can help raise awareness, raise money, get people involved in causes, things like that. But for me personally it also means like, you know, the people that work for me. We're a small team, you know, we're seven people but those people are my family, right? Like, we want to offer better than standard benefits for them and things like maternity and paternity leave, you know. We want our policies to be such that everyone that works with us feels that they are part of the team, that they feel like their input is valid, that they can contribute to the direction of the company. And they know that the people that own the company, or our owners, essentially aren't just name only, you know. Like, we will go to bat for any of our employees. We're there to be supportive in any way that we can. And so I think do something good is a little bit nebulous by design. It can mean different things to different people, but I think for us, I think you know it's working for good causes and also like taking care of the people that we work with, both internally and on the client side too, and building these long-term lasting relationships around doing something, anything positive in the world.

Akira: May I ask the next question? So I don't know how familiar you are with Milton Friedman.

Jay: A little bit, yeah!

Akira: One of his main arguments, in one of his more widely regarded essays, is that shareholder maximization should be the single purpose of corporations, that managers or owners have neither the competence nor the training to tackle social issues. In Visceral, you've been dealing mainly with executives at philanthropic foundations or non-profit corporations. How would you compare them with the government officials and corporate executives with whom you've interacted over the course of your career?

Jay: That's a fantastic question! So first of all I think they're a lot more fun and a lot more engaged. Working with some of our clients—like family foundations and nonprofits, you know—you get a sense that everyone is very quickly like on the same page, and we're all working towards the same goal, whether that's to raise money for like wildlife conservation or to tell stories about climate change or population reproductive health in Third World countries, things like that, whatever the issue is. Everyone's very much invested in the success of the project where—in my experience 'cause I don't I want to speak for anyone else...in my experience, in the corporate world or the government world, it's not really a case at all. You have a lot of situations where people are there for the paycheck. They don't really care where the money comes from, where the money goes. I spent a year of my life, give or take, building a Facebook app, back in the time when Facebook app were a thing, that's essentially designed to sell ringtones when ringtones were a thing. And you know, in that particular project, everyone that we worked with on the client side, no one really cared about anything, you know. The goal is essentially to make money, right? Sell ringtones and that way we get the profit. But it's this large massive project and the people, in hindsight, they're so far removed from, you know, like the CEO—who's if it makes money, that's the person that's making all the money, right—like, they're still making their same salary. It doesn't really matter to them if it succeeds or fails. And it didn't really matter to us because we were working for an agency. So they're like: 'Do this!' 'Ok, great! (Or whatever, you know?)'. So no one's really invested in the outcome, and so there's all these projects on the corporate level or on the government level, sometimes even on the philanthropic level—the bigger organizations...I'm not gonna name names but there are some big ones and you can, you can Google, look for some cool NPR stories there—that like you donate money to and it doesn't really go to where you think it goes or where you really want it

to go. And so the biggest difference that I've seen between corporate and government and the smaller organizations that we work with is just the passion that people have in trying to affect social change.

And to your question whether or not they have the training or the capacity to do so, I absolutely think that they do. I absolutely think that everyone of us has the capacity to do whatever we put our minds to, and I think that when you're that invested in it, yeah, like you may not get 100% of the way there, but the goal is just to make progress everyday. So for me, in Visceral, I don't really know anything about running a business...I mean, and I've been doing it for 11 years! So it's...yeah...there's a lot of people that, you know, when I decided I was going to start Visceral, were like: 'That's crazy! Do you know how to run a business?' And I was like: 'No, I'll figure it out!'...you know. And they're like: 'Can you...?' I was like: 'Probably? I don't know'. But I guess it's...it's worth trying, right? And so with regards to social change and a lot of these important issues, it's worth giving it a shot because the people that are often times at the big corporations or the big government level, some of them, their hearts are in the right place, but like, you know, I would argue that they're not in the position to actually make the change either. So I think all it takes is really committed dedicated passionate people on any side of the spectrum. So if you can get enough of those people in a room together, then yeah you can make a hell of a lot of change.

Akira: Do you see yourself eventually expanding Visceral to maybe something a little bit larger...to be able to help more people at the same time, right?

Jay: Yeah absolutely!

Akira: But then...you kinda have that balance to make: like 'Ok how big do we want to get 'cause we still want to have that same group of core...really passionate people?

Jay: Yeah absolutely. And so we've had a lot of discussions about that. And so 'do we want to grow'—yes!. 'Do we have plans for the future and vision for the future?'—absolutely, I'd like to...there are certain things that we do really really well...we do, like, new logos and branding and design and storytelling and website design development and that kind of stuff. There are certain things in my industry that we don't really do well in-house yet, like search engine optimization, social media management, things like that. We have partners that we work with on those kind of things, but would like to expand so we can offer more services and better services to our clients, and things like that. And I'd like to grow our team just so we can do more good. But for me I think that we sort of top out at around like 20-25 people. Like, I don't want to be a big agency. Where I came from we had probably like a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty people in the DC office. And I think you reach a certain point—and I'm sure a lot of people would disagree with me—but for me, in my comfort level, I think you reach a certain point where it sort of becomes untenable. Like, there's just...if you try to manage a hundred people or a thousand people, there are people far smarter than me that I'm sure can do that. But for me I like having my close knit of confidants that I know and trust, and I think we're on the same page and I can...you know, I don't want to ever get to a point where I don't know the names of the people that work for me...like, that's just...yeah, it doesn't make any sense to me. But that's just my personal philosophy.

Mimi: Would you mind giving us an insight into how you establish a personal connection with your colleagues and clients? We would especially love to hear any experience that shows the challenges involved in doing this, and how you dealt with these.

Jay: Sure. So a lot of it, I think, comes down to open honest communication, you know. Internally it's sort of pretty easy because when we hire people we're looking for people that are smart in terms of the job we want them to do, like programmers or designers or strategists, things like that. But we also look for cultural fit: we want people that are entrepreneurial and like-minded. And you know, we're very upfront with people: I tell everyone I've ever interviewed, I'm like: 'Ah just so you know, if you're gonna work for me I don't know how to run a company. Like, you're here to help me. That's like, we're all part of the team and that's your job. Your job is to make Visceral better, you know. We can discuss a number of different ways we can do that but this is not a job where I'm just gonna tell you what to do and you're going to go and do it. Like, we're all...we're all on the same boat. We want to grow whatever this thing becomes. We want to grow that together and everyone's input in that. And some people are really excited about that and that fosters a really great connection. Some people are like: 'yeah I don't want to do that. I want to work for a well-established company that's been around for 100 years and has offices all over the world. People just want different things, and that's fine.

So I think we're very open and transparent about what we want for the people that we work with. And that extends your clients as well, like we have served the community of clients that we work with and we're very upfront with our clients as well, you know. Like, this is gonna be—if we were going to do a website redesign this is a very collaborative process, you know. You're not going to tell us what to do. We're not going to tell you what to do, but we're going to figure this out together because you might have some ideas and some of those are gonna be great because you know your business better than we do. Some of those are gonna be terrible 'cause you don't know the Internet as well as we do, you know. And so it's just being honest and open about what we want, about our relationship—whether it's an employee or a client— what the expectations are, and how we're going to measure success. Things like: what does a successful employee relationship look like? What does a successful client relationship look like? How are we gonna measure that? How are we gonna know if we've done our jobs well? And so honesty and transparency is paramount to everything that we do and that's I think something that's missing from a lot of organizations. Yeah...does that answer your question?

Mimi: It does. Are there any challenges, do you think, in trying to get that honesty and transparency? Like, why aren't other organizations like that?

Jay: Yeah. Some of it comes down to personalities, I think. So it works really well for us, just based on the type of clients that we work with, you know. When you work with a family foundation or nonprofit and they're like, you know, it's I think almost refreshing 'cause...So Visceral's got competition in this space now. You know like five years ago or like 10 years ago when we started, if you wanted a website you went to a big agency and they're going to charge you a lot of money and they're going to tell you exactly how to do and they're going to run the show. And so you either couldn't afford to have it done properly or you had to pay a ton of money, or you worked with someone who just you just didn't jive with. And so I think that's part of what is brought on the rise of smaller boutique agencies and boutique businesses in any industry: the smart people that are willing to have those kinds of conversations. And so it works really well for us. But yeah if we worked for corporate clients and stuff like that, there'd be a big clash 'cause there are certain personalities that are like: 'No I'm the boss I'm going to tell you

what to do'. And I'm like: 'it doesn't work for me', you know...'cause like, I'm the boss and I want you to tell me what to do and what you think, I want your input, you know. And so it definitely doesn't resonate with everyone and we've definitely turned clients or projects down: because 'you just don't fit with our culture, with our philosophy, of how we're going to create this thing together, and we wish you best of luck but we just don't want to work in those environments'.

And it's tough because we're a small business and so to turn down people that want to give you money is hard, you know. But you know, there are certain times when we're just: 'we can't do it'. And that's the biggest challenge for us as a small business...like, running a business is expensive, you know. And we want to do the right thing, we want to pay our employees good wages and good benefits, and stuff like that, the same type of perks they would get if they went and worked at a 200-person agency, and what-not. But like, frankly it costs money and so it's always a trade-off: like, 'do we want to take this project because it's not the type of work we want to do, and it's not the type of client that we want to work with, but they're well-funded and there would be money that would allow us to to grow and do the things that we want to do'. And so you know it's a struggle and there's a constant trade-off. But internally we're open and honest about these things, we'll have conversations with everyone on the team, you know, whether you've been with us for five years or five days. We're like: 'Here's a thing that happened. What do you think about it?' I want everyone's input so we can make that decision together.

Mimi: Could you walk us through one of your most memorable projects from start to end? Why was this a memorable one?

Jay: Sure - do you want memorable good or memorable bad?

Jason: Your choice.

Jay: I'll do memorable bad. I got a canned response for that because it's something I still think about to this day. This was one of the toughest decision I've had to make the business owner. We worked with a group in DC—I won't mention their name—but they're a childhood literacy organization, a nonprofit. It's a cause I'm fiercely passionate about. I grew up surrounded by books. I'm an avid reader. Having access to books at a young age was formative for me and there's a lot of children in this country that don't have access to books. And I think that's a terrible terrible tragedy! And I mean, they don't ask other things too—and that's also a tragedy—but like, education and literacy is an issue I care about strongly.

And so we worked with this client. They're super nice people, and their organization is fantastic 'cause they want to give books to kids. But a lot of their internal processes and sort of bureaucracy—like, who is in charge of what—didn't make a lot of sense. And so it came to a a point where they were pushing us to build this new website product that we're building, using technology that we're like—'this is already out of date, and it's going to be obsolete in a year, and you know, your IT team is in charge of your marketing efforts, and that's just really a bad decision, and you're spending quite frankly too much money on this to go in the wrong direction'. We're like: 'you're essentially asking us to do something that we know is going to be detrimental to your organization'. We were like—I don't want to sound overly cocky—but like: "We are the ex[perts]...You hired us for a reason, right? If you could do this in-house you would've, but you hired me for my expertise in website design development...like, everything you're doing I disagree with'. So we fired that client and it literally was...I mean, I

lost sleep about it for weeks because I love everything that they do but—and I don't really have an ego: if it was a better idea than mine, great!—but I was just like: 'I can't in good conscience do this 'cause I think it's gonna set you back in six different ways'. And so I wrote this long e-mail to our client contact there: 'We can't...we can't do this. I'm sorry. We wish you nothing but the best of luck!' But yeah that was absolutely one of the most memorable experiences we've had because we agonized over the decision for days, weeks even, 'cause essentially at the time, it was our biggest client too, you know. They were well-funded, and we were like: 'Man, do we want to just give away like thousands of dollars, and like already secured revenue'. And we were like: 'Crap! Now we went to find a new client to replace that and what not'. It was a difficult decision but you know, looking back right now, I am a hundred percent confident that we made the right decision, as tough as it was. But yeah I will never forget that client...as long as I live!

Real quick, on a good project: we worked with an organization, it's a wildlife conservation organization, amongst other stuff, animals. And they came to us as a small organization. They have an old out-of-date website. It wasn't terrible but it was definitely not modern by any metric. And so we worked with them to update their logo and their brand, and built them this beautiful new website that allowed them to accept donations online, which they weren't really doing before. We built a custom system so that you can donate on behalf of individual animals that you care about to support. There are different partners around the world that are saving, you know, elephants if that's your thing, or are lions if that's your thing. They have 17 or 18 partners now. But they work specifically for these individual causes, and so you could donate to which ones you cared about and get updates on them and what not. And so that to my mind...and they were fantastic to work with! They're just wonderful people who are just committed and passionate about the work that they do! And so it was really fun collaborative thing and we launched this beautiful new website for them, and you know, over the last couple years we've seen them grow as an organization. They're raising more money now and they're expanding to focus on new focus areas—different animals in different regions and things like that. So it's just...I'm going to file that one as a success. It was overall is a wonderful project to work on and a wonderful experience start to finish 'cause as I said before, when you work with just really committed passionate people—like again, I'm gonna sound like a cliché here—but it doesn't feel like work. It's just, you know, it's something that like: 'yeah I'm glad they paid us for it because I do have to run a business but like that's the kind of stuff that, like, if I couldn't get paid to do it, I'd be doing it anyways because I believe in the power of the internet to tell stories and to raise awareness and to get people involved in causes. And in that case we were able to, as I said, take them to the next level. And now we're talking to them about what they want to do now for the next step in their growth process. It's been a couple of years...what can we do now with the new tools that are available to us? The internet changes constantly and so there's stuff that we can do now that we couldn't do a couple years ago, or that's cheaper to do than it was a couple of years ago, like video for example. So yeah...we're still working with them and we're still kicking around like new and innovative ideas to help promote the cause, promote the message, and raise awareness, raise money, and ultimately work towards solving that problem.

Mimi: Thank you for sharing that! Both of those experiences do seem very memorable.

* Everyone laughs *

Devon: I have two small questions. I guess—based on, 'cause you said you were kind of introverted because like, being a programmer is pretty much you have to do a lot of work on your own time just doing computer stuff. So does being introverted tie in with having a small tightly knit group for your business, where you're not as, like, attracted to the idea of having a huge corporation 'cause you don't get to know the actual people's names that you work with. Do you think that personality type kinda ties in to, like, preferring a smaller group that's more intimate or is it more just...?

Jay: I've never thought about it that way but yeah probably. I mean I do, yeah, I mean the people that I work with, I am very close with. They're my friends and when we interview new people, as I was saying, like, we're almost like interviewing new friends, you know. I'm like: 'I'm going to spend a lot of time with you', you know. And like, you know, I want it to be fun. I don't want to come in at work everyday and like: 'Ugh! I gotta talk to this guy!' And so yeah I think being, having that introverted mentality, does play into that, and I think having a closely knit team of people that I know—not only their names, but I know their wives' names and kids' names and you know, what they value out of life and what they want 'cause we want to, as we grow the company we want to be able to reward them in ways that are valuable to them, you know. Some people are like, some people respond to money because they've got kids and things. You know, it cost money to live in this world so to some people that's a motivator. Some people come from a different financial background. Some people value time more, having flexibility in their work schedule, to be like: 'Ah I'm just gonna take like a Tuesday off and go, you know, hang out with my spouse and I'll work Sunday instead or whatever'. We're very flexible in that kind of thing: "Whatever, I don't care: you get your work done; whenever you do it, that's sort of on you, right?" Like, we want to be able to know everyone that works with us to know really what they value and how to bring out the best in them, how to craft the best team. And so I never really thought about the way you put it. But I think yeah, I think you're right.

Devon: And the other question, 'cause I want to start taking up programming just 'cause I like the idea of knowing how everything works in the computer, just the little things we take for granted, knowing exactly how those functions work. But I'm just starting out. So is there—the idea of, like, if you want to start playing an instrument, the piano is a good base to learn anything else because of, like, the way that instrument is set up—so is there a base language in programming that you would say in your opinion is best to start off with to branch out? Or does it really depend on what you want to do and your end goal?

Jay: That's a really good question! I almost wouldn't say it's based on language. Some of it does, depending on what you to do—if you want to build apps versus if you want to build games versus if you want to build websites, you know. There are different languages and things, and different tools that lend themselves to those end goals more than...one more than the other. I think in general though all of programming comes down to the fundamental concepts. So there are things we call them conditionals. You know, so if username equals Devon then display this message, you know, else you display 'you know you need to login'...something like that. So there's that construct: a conditional 'if this...then that' exists in pretty much any programming language you will find. And so there's variables, loops, things like that and there's different resources like Code Academy and things like that, that can walk you through the fundamentals so you can get an idea of how programming works. Now I think that's more fundamental than really learning any specific language. Honestly I've been doing this for 30 years now and I mean I've learned dozens of different languages, many of which are obsolete now. It changes very very

quickly. I'll say that if you're interested in it as a career path, WordPress is a content management system that about 26% of the entire internet is built upon now. About 50% of any website that uses a content management system (CMS) so, like, someone that does no programming can log in and add content or edit content. Any site that has CMS—like, WordPress is now over 50% so it's like…the next closest is like eight, I think; so it's dominating and so and it's in for good reason: it's a free platform, it's open source which means anyone can view any of the code for it, there's no proprietary hidden information and something like that, so it's a great platform to learn and experiment, especially if you're interested in building things on the web, whether it's a website or a web-based application. It's not going away anytime soon, it's easy to work with, and I think easy to learn for developers, and there are plenty of jobs out there for that kind of work if that's something that you're interested as a career path, and it's also super fun. If you got WordPress questions, e-mail me. I can go all day on that kind of stuff.

Devon: I had another question that I was gonna ask earlier. 'Cause you said sometimes the programs that you do, you know, take hours and hours. Was there ever a time you had an end goal or a project that you wanted to finish and then, by the time you got to finishing it, like, the idea was almost, like, either taken by someone else or like, obsolete so you had to like trash half of your work because it wasn't done in time?

Jay: That's an interesting question. I don't think so. 'Cause we do more sort of like marketing kind of stuff, like in storytelling. So like we're going to put up, build a the website, and so there are a million websites out there. We're not in the business of like creating like an application, like a Facebook or a Twitter, whatever you kids are using these days, you know. So I'm sure that kind of stuff happens a lot in the app industry and what not—you have some cool idea and someone else gets it to market before you, which is why, you know, like the rush to market is a big deal in Silicon Valley, like getting out there and just like: 'Shipping! Shipping! Shipping! Just get it out there first and iterate on it later!' Like, Version 1 is crap but then if you look at the stuff we use like Facebook and Instagram and all this kind of stuff. Like the first Instagram, the first version of Instagram was terrible! Right? It didn't do anything: you couldn't even post a photo online like. But now like they've added so many more features to it. And now Facebook owns it too so there's integration and stuff there but that hasn't fortunately been a real issue for us.
	I mean there's certainly been times where I'm like: 'Ah! I spent like a week writing this thing!' and then like, two weeks later, I'm like: 'There's like a WordPress platform…Ah crap! That's way better than what I wrote!' Or like, we're going to do it this way instead. Or you know I'd also advocate for Wordpress, but I also know Drupal and Concrete Five and Movable Type and Sitefinity and Ektron, and all these things that, like, were the cool thing of their time but they're not anymore, you know. So it's like, there's been like: 'I have a whole entire skill set from this!' 'Yeah we just don't use that anymore, like, no one builds sites in those old languages or those old platforms anymore.’ So it does happen and the only word of encouragement or words of wisdom I can give there is just focus on the fundamentals and just, whatever career path you take, like, keep learning and make sure it's something that you enjoy learning and doing and figuring out the next cool thing. Especially if it's anything technical 'cause if technologies are gonna change, it's gonna change fast. So don't, you know, put all your eggs in one thing, in one basket, and then like: 'Oh wow cool! Oh that basket's gone now 'cause someone came out with a whole set of new ones.

And in my career, you know, everything that, I mean everyone in this room probably has an iPhone or an Android phone, right? Or some sort of tablet, some sort of laptop, probably all three, right? Like, those things really didn't exist. Like laptops existed but like, smartphones, for example—we wouldn't build a website that didn't work on a smartphone at all today. Like, that's craziness! But like, you know, when we started Visceral, that was not concern at all. Like, you know, the iPhone just came out like ten or eleven years ago and so everything that we do is drastically different than when we started. And so you have to sort of keep, keep up with it, and so yeah going back to 'be good at what you do and do something good'—like, be good at what you do but make sure it's something that you really enjoy doing 'cause you might have to change and shift and pivot many times throughout your career. But if you enjoy doing it, like, you know, if you know how to play a guitar, picking up base is fine, right? Or picking up piano? Like, the fundamentals are the same: music, you know. And so pick something that you really enjoy and that you're willing to sort of branch out in the different areas of.

Devon: That's really good. Very insightful!

Jason: It's awesome!

— End of Transcription —