Twitter Thread by Chris Hladczuk



Chris Hladczuk
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Can't get a job at Facebook?

You can always sell your startup to Zuckerberg for $19 billion.

Here's the crazy story of WhatsApp■

Jan Koum met Brian Acton in 1998.

They spent 9 years working together at Yahoo and became good friends.

But in 2007, they both left Yahoo with some cash and no plans.

At first Acton and Koum applied to Facebook

...and failed

they were proud members of the "Facebook reject club"

In January 2009, Jan Koum bought an iPhone and thought,

"Wow, this new App Store could be huge."

At the time, the App Store was 7 months old.

So he met with a friend named Alex Fishman to brainstorm app ideas.

Koum thought it would be fun to put statuses next to friends' names in your address book.

So he went to RentACoder..com to hire a guy to build the 1st version.



WhatsApp launched and got a few hundred downloads.

But it kept crashing.

After a few though months, Koum wanted to quit and look for a job.

So he asked his friend Brian Acton for advice.

Acton said,

"You'd be an idiot to quit now.

Give it a few more months."

Then, Koum got lucky.

In June 2008, Apple unveiled push notifications for iPhone apps.

Koum added 1 feature to WhatsApp:

Every time a friend changes their status, you get a notification.

Some early WhatsApp users started using statuses to make jokes with friends.

These statuses turned into fun messages.

He had accidentally created a messaging service.

Koum quickly built WhatsApp 2.0.

It had 1 main feature: Messaging

2.0 took off like a rocketship and hit 250,000 users.

At the time, Acton was unemployed working on other dead end projects.

Action realized that this SMS platform had potential and joined the company in November of 2009.

He secured some funding, joined as the 2nd co-founder, and got 20% of the business.

The next 2 years, they worked out of a cafe and then an office with no sign.

Koum had an obsessive focus:

"No distractions. No bullsh*t".

By 2011, WhatsApp was top 20 in the U.S. app store.

Sequioa invested $8 million and then later $50 million at a $1.5 billion valuation.

Then Jan Koum got an email from some guy named Mark Zuckerberg.

The subject line?

"Get together?"

Zuck was impressed by WhatsApp after seeing them hit 90 million users in only 3 years.

It had grown faster than early Facebook.

Over the next 2 years, Zuck wined and dined Jan Koum while the business grew.

In 2013, WhatsApp was adding 1 million new users...

PER DAY.

In February 2014, Facebook bought WhatsApp for $19.3 billion.

WhatsApp had...

• 450 million users
• only 56 employees
• only $20 million in revenue

Today, WhatsApp has 2 billion users and $5 billion in potential revenue if fully monetized.

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> Here's the crazy story of WhatsApp\U0001f447
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> — Chris Hladczuk (@chrishlad) June 7, 2021

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