

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 101: Reid Hoffman, Michael McCullough

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Tim Ferriss: This is Tim Ferriss and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show, ladies and germs, where it is my job to deconstruct world class performers, to tease out the habits, routines, influences, etcetera, that you can apply to your life. And those experts, the world class performers, range from hedge fund managers to actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, to people like General Stanley McChrystal, to chess prodigies, and everyone in between. And in this case, we have a business icon, none other than the Oracle of Silicon Valley, that's Reid Hoffman.

He is referred to as the Oracle of Silicon Valley by a lot of tech insiders, who look at his company building and investing track record, which includes for instance, well, of course, Paypal, LinkedIn, but then Facebook, Airbnb, Flickr and on and on, with awe, and rightly so.

Reid is co-founder and Executive Chairman of LinkedIn, which has more than 300 million users. Before that, he was Executive Vice President at Paypal, which was purchased by Ebay for \$1.5 billion. There, he was nicknamed Firefighter in Chief by the CEO, who is Peter Thiel, who has also been on this podcast. Noted venture capitalist David [inaudible] his is arguably the most successful angel investor in the last decade or past decade. And they are both now partners at Greylock Partners.

He has a track record to envy. In this podcast, he is joined by a friend. He is joined by Michael McCullough, M.D., who is also cofounder of QuestBridge.org, and a successful investor of his own right, with training as an ER physician. Michael is a political professor at UCSF, and previously served as the on-call ER physician for the Dalai Lama. Michael is also a Rhodes Scholar, Kauffman Fellow, and Ashoka Fellow.

He is an avid meditater, and is particularly interested in investing in technologies and companies pertaining to the mind. So we bounce around a lot in this conversation. We cover a ton, including how Reid met Mark Zuckerberg for the first time, and how he decided to invest in Facebook; lots behind that; firefighting

and beyond using board games to develop strategy; Reid's view of what Uber has done well, and what they could improve upon, some or Reid's suggested philosophers for entrepreneurs. We talked about going off algorithm per se in the ER to manage to life and death decisions; the three types of CEOs, and much, much more. It is a very dense, intense and useful episode. And of course, we discuss QuestBridge, as Reid and I are both on the advisory board. QuestBridge – guys, have to check it out – Questbridge.org – currently supplies more exception low-income talent, meaning kids, to top universities than all other non-profits combined. QuestBridge has created a single standardized college application that's accepted by 36 or so top universities, like Stanford, MIT, Amherst, and Yale.

This allows them to do some very, very clever and innovative things, such as give away laptops, and the give-away forms double as college applications. This offers scholarships to many kids who might otherwise not even think of college. So if you want to break the cycle of poverty, QuestBridge is easily one of the most fascinating, effective and highly leveraged tools I've ever seen. So check it out, QuestBridge.org. We will talk more about that.

So please check out the show notes. There are a lot of cool show notes for this episode. Four Hour Work Week, all spelled out, just go to fourhourworkweek.com and click on podcasts. All the book recommendations, etcetera, and you can find a lot more there about everything that we talk about. So without further ado, please enjoy this conversation with the Oracle of Silicon Valley, Reid Hoffman, and Michael McCullough.

Tim Ferriss: Reid and Michael, welcome to the show.

Reid Hoffman: Great to be here.

Michael McCullough: Thank you for having us, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: Oh I'm thrilled. I'm really excited to have you guys on, and I know you've both known each other for some time. And I was thinking about the commonalities that you might have, the common threads, and we'll certainly come back to this. But I had heard Peter Teal had said of you, Reid, that you were the firefighter in chief at Paypal. And I think that Michael, certainly based on our conversations at least, certainly has exhibited tremendous firefighting qualities, so we'll come back to that.

But I thought we could begin with just some basic context for folks, and Reid, perhaps we could start with you. When people ask you the question what do you do, how do you answer that?

Reid Hoffman:

Well, there's the short answer and the long answer. The short answer is that I'm an entrepreneur and an investor. That's when I want to be very quick, and move through the question. The long answer is I essentially build, design and improve human ecosystems through software, either as a creator, or as an investor and partner.

And what that means is everything from things like Paypal to LinkedIn, to Airbnb, each of these things are ways that you craft how people find each other, how they interact with each other, how they establish their identity, and how they make progress in their lives. And that's part of what I mean by building and improving human ecosystems.

Tim Ferriss:

I love it. Michael, what about yourself? You wear many hats, but how would you answer that question these days?

Michael McCullough: Yeah, it's probably pretty similar. I create and I help people create things – entrepreneur and investor as well, but I'm an ER physician training, and I actually began my life in reverse from most people, kind of creating non-profits actually first.

So I made eight non-profits before my first company, including like angel investments and things like Heartflow [inaudible]. I'm currently a partner at Capricorn Healthcare.

Tim Ferriss:

I'd love to bridge just on the medical side of things – Michael, you had a very difficult beginning, so to speak, and that is going way back to birth. I was hoping you could just give us a brief description of your experience at birth.

Michael McCullough: Sure. Yeah, no it's interesting how sometimes small little slips from like an intern or like a resident can alter your life, where I was eight weeks premature with a twin birth, and they squeezed a little too hard on my head, and it hemorrhaged and it was missed for nine years, so I couldn't speak much until I was about in high school.

I couldn't speak as fluently as I am now till I was in my thirties, and even like right now, I have like a speech impediment device, kind of like they have in the King's Speech movie; or I speak in accents if I need to speak more fluently. So for me, I learned how

to like watch people a lot when I was younger because it was harder for me to interact with them kind of verbally.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. And as the lines for both of you started converging, but before you met, Reid, you went to, as I understand it, a somewhat unconventional high school in Vermont. I think it was the Putney School, where you farmed maple syrup and drove oxen. What did you take from that experience that stuck with you, if anything?

Reid Hoffman: Well, I was actually a – at the time – you know, it's funny. It's kind of as you're older, each decade you look back on your life, and you actually in fact, have a different view of your early decades. So, if you'd asked me 10, 20 years ago, I'd say well, it's completely off track. I've become a technologist and an entrepreneur, and none of that stuff was actually directly relevant. And now when I kind of look back at it, I say well, actually in fact, it was very grounding. I had experiences there, everything from blacksmithing to actually a bunch of artistic things.

I had you know, kind of some intensity around cross-country skiing and sports. And all of that actually, I think helped me understand the breadth of human condition. You know, typically Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and investors, and technologists tend to be very narrow focus. And I actually think it's helped me keep a broader focus, as I think about kind of what it is to be human, and how do we increase our humanity.

Tim Ferriss: And I might be skipping ahead a little bit, but do you have then a sympathetic ear for say, non-technical founders, who come in without technical jobs, or how do you look at that?

Reid Hoffman: Well, so it depends on the project. Some are a depth of technology. Usually when I talk to a non-technical founder who wants to create something, the very first, second, and third piece of advice I give them is to find a technical co-founder because it's not so easy to say, "Oh, well, I'm going to hire some engineers in some remote location to build the app that I think of," because actually in fact, you have to be much more detailed, much more specific about how it's evolving.

And so if you're building technology, and you don't at least have a good technical co-founder, you have a problem. Now that being said, there's a number of businesses that the technology is only one – it's an important piece, but it's only one piece, like Airbnb for example.

You know, Nate's very technical, but Brian and Joe are design folks. They're product folks. They're art folks. They both kind of coming out of RISD, and so – and actually that helps fundamentally with the Airbnb product. And so it isn't that everybody in the founding team has to be technical, but if you're doing a technology thing, at least one of you does.

Tim Ferriss: Right. No, that makes perfect sense. Where did philosophy enter the picture for you? I know a lot of people in Silicon Valley think of you in part as a philosopher, at least a thinker along those lines. How did you become interested in philosophy and why?

Reid Hoffman: Well, it's funny actually. I'd say one of the small critiques of Silicon Valley is – and this may actually speak more to you than the people of Silicon Valley. Very few people in Silicon Valley interface with me as a philosopher.

It takes another thinker like you to actually ask that question. But the way that I got to it is I didn't my undergraduate at Stanford University, along with Michael, and my undergraduate degree was called Symbolic Systems, which is in short speak, cognitive science and artificial intelligence. And I've always actually been very interested in kind of what makes us uniquely human, and that's continued throughout my entire arc of my career and childhood.

And so then it was like the scientific study of thought and language. But then what I realized when I was at Stanford, is that actually in fact, even though we were trying to be scientific about what it is to be intelligent, about what it is to communicate, about what it is to have a point of view in the world, the science hadn't really gotten there yet.

And actually, in fact, I should experiment with philosophy to figure out the – whether or not the rudiments of understanding these things I could get out of philosophy, in order to pursue a more scientific view of intelligence. And so – because the modern analytic view on philosophy is it's pre-science. It's like how you think about things with precision, and then sciences births out of philosophy. And so I went to Oxford in order to study philosophy.

Tim Ferriss: Are you currently drawn to any particular schools of philosophy or philosophers in the context of say, recommending someone who has never been exposed to philosophy, or feels that they haven't? What starting points might you suggest?

Reid Hoffman:

Well, one of the things that I – the papers that I read at – because it's – when you do a course, you read a subject. One of them was Wittgenstein, and so one of the things I actually frequently refer people to when they're thinking about kind of how do we think of ourselves as sharing a world, as talking to each other about it, as understanding it –

Matter of fact, I recently, when I was explaining a theory on bitcoin to some fellow technologists, I said, "Look, it's like a Wittgensteinian language game, the notion of how you play." And they're like, "Okay, how do I understand that?" I'm like, "Okay, well, here's some good books on Wittgenstein, and here's a couple of points. But it is – that would be the one that I would probably start with just because I think he is one – one of the fundamental philosophers who is still being understood because the kind of one of the bedrocks of modern analytic philosophy is to think of if you're trying to talk to someone else about some problem, and you're trying to make progress, how do you make language as positive an instrument as possible, and what are the ways that language can work, and what are the ways that language doesn't work?"

And so for example, on that thread, when I wrote my thesis in Oxford, it was on thought experiments because most philosophers actually in fact, analyze and argue through thought experiments, and there's actually more limitations in the methodology than at least many believe.

Tim Ferriss:

No, I find language is an endlessly fascinating topic because you'll find, I mean Silicon Valley and elsewhere, people will debate say, the existence of God without ever defining what God is for each of the parties involved. So Michael, you and I have spoken about – philosophical topics a lot about meditation, and I think people gravitate towards say, religion or philosophy respectively to often face the prospect of death or mortality.

I would love for you to elaborate, if you could, about going off algorithm in the ER, and what that means because I've had some fascinating conversations with you about this. And I was hoping you might be able to just explain that and give a few examples.

Michael McCullough: Sure. Well, I think algorithms protect a lot of people, particularly from if physicians aren't being fully attentive or on top of all the literature. But within a Bell curve, there might be ways to save people or even improve people's lives that aren't in kind of the standard operating procedures.

So like I had a patient one time who came in with head to toe burns, and you can look at him and you would know once you intubate him and have him in the ICU, he wouldn't possibly actually wake up again, but he was lucid enough.

And I thought, you know, I'd want to call a few people before I had to go asleep. So, I gave him my cell phone to use, much to the chagrin of some of the people in the room. I let him make a few calls, but even there, like I had to stop him from making additional calls that he got to call a few people. He had begun to swell his airway shut, so I had to make sure I could intubate on kind of the first try, or I probably would have lost my job.

Tim Ferriss: And by intubate, you mean get a tube down his trachea before it was completely closed.

Michael McCullough: Yeah, because if you inhale hot air, then your – the soft tissue in your kind of mouth will swell up and you won't be able to breathe. Now in his case, it didn't change outcome that much because he was either going to die in the ER or in the ICU. So I thought enabling him to make kind of a human connection ahead of the ICU would be helpful.

Tim Ferriss: And now in your experience then, when you look at – let's just define maybe the use of the word algorithm. So is it fair to say that in this context, one could think of an algorithm as a mandatory checklist, which also excludes certain options?

Michael McCullough: Yeah, I think that's true. And I think a tool – Gawande's work and others show a checklist is profoundly helpful.

Tim Ferriss: *A Checklist Manifesto.*

Michael McCullough: Yeah, yeah, it's a really good book, and even things like washing your hands between patients, or things as simple as that will save a lot of lives. However, sometimes you do know everything on the checklist, and sometimes there are things you can do that aren't on the checklist that actually ought to be done. So, example was also that I had a patient who – in our ER, they have a policy of making sure they call the donor network after the patient has actually passed away, to see if they can – with the permission of the family and the intentions of the patient, help with a skin transportation, or like a cornea.

But they became confused to think well, that means you then shouldn't call earlier to talk about the heart or the liver and things like that. So in that particular case, an algorithm or a policy actually made people not appreciate the more important organs to kind of think about, too. So have I answered your –

Tim Ferriss: No, no, you have. And I just – when we've had dinner before, and I'd love for you to describe, if you could – and it was fascinating for me to hear your description of this. But what is it like to – and I know we're bouncing around a bit – but to stare into someone's eyes, or just look into their eyes as they pass from a life to not a life?

Michael McCullough: [Inaudible] having that happen a few times, and it's interesting because it often depends on the emotional state of the patient, right, so if the patient is afraid, you're trying to give comfort to them as they're dying, and other times patients die and they're giving you a sense of peace and kind of universality that would be hard to pay for, kind of a depth of understanding that they are dying, and this kind of the moment of their death.

And so it's an honor to be there either way, to either like witness it happening from a person who is content with it, or to comfort and hold the hand of someone who's not.

Tim Ferriss: And in that type of context, or just in general, what to your mind separates a good ER physician from a great ER physician? What do the great people have, do or not do, that the good lack?

Michael McCullough: Yeah, I think a good ER physician is thorough. They make sure they don't like needlessly miss anything, or not like wash their hands between the patients. I think if you layer onto that, that you actually care about the patient, you know, you still like laugh with the alcoholic, or to help with the woman the first trimester of her pregnancy feel comfort that she is – you're likely to lose her child, but even if she does, it wouldn't interfere with her being able to get pregnant in the future again.

And so, you can either pay attention to say the odds that she'd lose this particular pregnancy, or to make sure to reassure her what she's actually worried about is, you know, will I ever have an infant? Will I ever have a family? And I think like a lot of people don't know that a third of all pregnancies are actually lost, and that's normal for humans.

Every animal has like a normal rate of like losing one. And that's of known pregnancies, so it's likely more like half. And yet, since we no longer live in tribes with other people, we hide the fact of losing an infant in the first trimester, so if you don't take the extra time to comfort people, sometimes they think they're abnormal, when they actually are not.

Tim Ferriss: Right. No, that makes perfect sense. I think that applies to therapy of all different types, I mean outside of the context of an emergency room. The firefighting that I mentioned earlier, Reid, my understanding was that you had – you wore many, many different hats, and had the role of interacting with a lot of external entities when at Paypal, whether that was regulatory or the credit card processors. Maybe that's not the right description of them, but what makes a good entrepreneurial firefighter in a context like that, or what did your co-workers feel made you good at that job?

Reid Hoffman: Well, the most two relevant factors were Peter Thiel, who was the CEO, feeling that I was good, and solving the problems. Everything else was secondary to those two considerations. I mean on the firefighting side, I mean Paypal had perhaps the most kind of parallel thing to – to date myself a little bit – like Star Wars, you know, flying into the trench and trying to actually hit the target, and a lot of different ways you could fail. And so in the Paypal case for me, a lot of that was building an understanding of what each particular problem – particular threat was, what the key moving variable was, and then being able to solve that, and then propagate that out to all of the places.

So you know, for example, one of the kind of challenges that Peter handed to me was we had thought that Paypal might be a bank. And so we had started the process of applying for a banking license. Then what we discovered and decided upon inference, was that actually in fact, banking regulation is so fierce in terms of not innovating, not building new things, it would be very difficult to build a new company on that basis.

So I essentially had to move to go persuade the regulators that it was okay that even though we had applied for a banking license, right, that it was okay that we were not going to be a bank, and that it wasn't to tell that was just inconvenient for us or anything else, and to give full color to this, the basic statement about whether or not a company is a bank starts with the claim you accept deposits, which obviously if anyone has exposure to Paypal, they say well, you could frame what Paypal does as accepting deposits, right.

Why is it you're not a bank? And so that would be the kind of challenge that was handed to me, and then what you had to do is you had to figure out for this problem, which could kill the company, what were the key moving variables, learn them, talk to really smart people, and then solve that problem, so that it was then fundamentally part of the cornerstone of what you were doing. And it ranged from relationship with Ebay to Visa and Mastercard, to international, right, I mean just a very long list of things.

And each one, the looking at the problem had to be reframed. It was almost like building a kind of a view of the world, and then what are the key moving parts in order to get right, in order to make Paypal succeed.

Tim Ferriss: And when you were defining the moving variables, is that a list of the unknowns where you need to go seek out information, or is it – how would you go about putting together that list?

Reid Hoffman: Well, it kind of starts with what is the end result that you want to have happen? So, for example, in like the regulatory one, the key thing is that you can't – regulators will never tell you that it is not their job to regulate you because there's no interest [inaudible]. What they simply do is say, "Oh, actually, in fact, there's nothing for me here to actively regulate." They won't tell you you're outside of my scope. They'll go, "Okay, fine. You now seem like you're an okay – like I don't need to actually regulate you because you're not in my positive purview."

And so you say, "Okay, how do you get that state of affairs, and how do you propagate that?" And then you start working back from that to say, "Okay, well, how will they make their judgments? What are their key considerations? How can I learn about that? Who would I need to know?" Because those were some of the unknowns coming in. What are the kinds of things that would get them to say, "Okay, I think you're being reasonable, and within my purview of how I am out to help govern society, help protect consumers, help protect other entities, you're good by me."

And that would – and then you work back from that is essentially the way that you do it.

Tim Ferriss: And how did you learn how to do that? Were you part of a debate team? Did you study negotiation? Did you work at a state fair for the summers? I mean how did you develop the ability to not only deconstruct a problem like that, but then to interface with all these various stakeholders at the table?

Reid Hoffman: I think the most fundamental was – I don't know if your audience knows what this is. You probably do. As a child, I played a lot of Avalon Hill board games, and each board game is actually a complex set of rules and circumstances. And essentially, as you're analyzing each one of them, you kind of look back from okay, these goals mean that these are the kind of moving parts and how do you do it?

So it was actually in fact, my childhood gaming for being able to build a model of what a game was, that was the – essentially the fundamental thing that informs my strategic sense, because this all comes out of strategy.

Tim Ferriss: And if you were giving advice to say, someone leaving Stanford undergrad, and they had no gaming background, what would you recommend they do to try to develop strategic ability or thinking?

Reid Hoffman: Well, there's a lot of different paths to it. Most people think they're better at strategy than they are. And so you really have to actually really hold up a very clear – you have to have a very deep self-awareness of am I in fact really good at? Because like having an idea or saying – like for example, you say, “Well, I'll just do this.”

Well, one move – a real strategy is actually built up off a – you know, what are your competitors doing, what is their mindset, what are their assets, how are they going to move, how are you going to move, what are your edges, what's the way that you can make that work? How is it when they're playing against you, you can still play to win? So games are a very good way to do that, and getting a lot of different exposure, not to computer games because AI strategies are usually not that interesting – but against other people is very useful.

I think it's also useful to read some – which I did as a child, you know, military strategy, Sun Tzu, Von Clausewitz, other sorts of folks, more modern folks, and to think about kind of like what are the set of principles, that when you're thinking about how to win a game that's in contention, in conflict. And then a lot of people also of course have some sports knowledge on this, too.

Although one of the things that's frequently a little limiting on sports is that the sports game that a person tends to do – they tend to be like I play soccer, or I play football, or I play basketball. And then they have a very deep sense of what the strategy is there, but

they haven't played enough different kinds of games, enough different circumstances. It's like understanding like well, what happens if I change these four rules in basketball? How would you play the strategy now? That's the kind of thing because actually, in fact, most of the circumstances you find yourself in, actually in fact, you have to figure out what does the current game look like, and how do you play that?

And that's of course, also by the way, the reason why frequently, you know, companies rise and fall is because they learn to play one game, they got good at it, and then the marketplace changes. And now it's a new kind of game, and you have to adjust to playing that new game. And that's actually in fact, part of recognizing when a strategy applies.

Tim Ferriss: Absolutely, yeah. I mean I was just having a conversation about the rise and fall of Kodak yesterday, and of course, this is sort of the disruptive theme that one encounters so much in Silicon Valley. I wasn't planning on asking this, but I'd be so curious to hear, given your experience with regulatory risk and so on, what do you feel, if you have an opinion, Uber has done well, and what could they have executed more effectively or strategically?

Reid Hoffman: So, what they've done well is essentially quickly deploying their product, so that it's clear that there's a bunch of people who are benefitting from it, both consumers and drivers in various circumstances, so that there is an ecosystem of people by which you go, "Look, see, we can actually add a lot of positive to the system."

I think that's been kind of one of the things that they've done most positively within it. On the negative side, the company tends to be very combative, and when you actually think about the mental space in which regulators tend to operate, they tend to have gone into that job because they view themselves as protectors of important groups in society, whether the consumers or workers, or other folks.

And so they don't tend to respond very well. It's not a competitive game with them. It's not you bulldoze through them or over them. They're actually in fact, what they want is they want to know that their concerns are being answered. And it's frustrating of course for the company because the regulators are being triggered by competitive interests, like taxicab companies and other kinds of things, which want the world to stay only exactly as it is, which is not actually good for anyone to just say, you know, the way that

we're going to run is the way that we were running in the 1950s, and that's the way we're going to be running in 3000.

You know, that's obviously not a very good idea, so action packed innovation and change and the pushback is frustrating, but nevertheless, when you're interfacing with the regulators, you have to interface with them with the understanding that they may be conservative, they may be slow to change, they may be risk averse, but their goal is a mission of protecting society, and so you should interface with them on that channel more than on the just get out of my way, I'm innovative, right, and I'll treat you like I treat a competitor. And that creates a lot of unnecessary friction.

Tim Ferriss: Right. No, that makes sense. You are of course considered a company builder. You've had an integral part in building some massive successes, but you're also very well regarded as an investor. And I would love if you could tell the story of getting introduced to Mark Zuckerberg, and how you decided to be one of the first investors in Facebook.

Reid Hoffman: Well, actually I could have told you I was interested in investing in Facebook even before Mark Zuckerberg. I tracked the product. I thought it was extremely well done. When I tracked it, he and his co-founders, Dustin, Chris and others, were in Boston, going to Harvard. And so I was angel investing. It was too much of a hassle. If I was a venture capitalist, I probably would have flown out there, but it was an angel, too much of a hassle. And so I kind of went, "Oh, that's cool," and then went back to it.

And then I got this call from Sean Parker who I'd known from his work at Plaxo, and you know, as a good product inventor, a good systems thinker on these things. And Sean said, "I've just met these really good guys, you know, Mark Zuckerberg and others, who are doing this thing Facebook, that I'm joining, that's really awesome." And I'm like, "Oh, that's really cool. Are you moving to Boston?"

And he's like, "No, no, they're here." And I'm like, "Oh, that's interesting." He's like, "Yeah, and we're looking for investment." I was like, "I would definitely like to meet with them. I'm super interested in this." I tend to think – and one of the things I said, which is I think totally – even though it's the probably the most expensive economic decision I've made in my life – but it all in a good outcome.

I said, “Look, you know, when I led the series A in Friendster, I got a lot of pushback on am I having my cake and eating it too, because even I don’t see any conflict between Friendster and LinkedIn. It just generated all this stuff. And part of having integrity and having a high sense of ethics is not just having it ,but also making some work to appear to have it. So actually I think what we should do is we should have Peter lead – Peter Teal lead the round, and I’ll follow because then Peter can be the board member, and even though I’m super interested in this, I think that’s probably the best thing to happen.”

And so my actually very first meeting with Zuckerberg was at Peter Teal’s office, with Sean there, who I’d known, and with Zuck and then Matt Kohler was there as well, and who was working for me at the time. And that was our very first meeting. But basically the meeting was very confirmatory because I’d already seen the product, already know the product was amazing, already seen it having traction, and really what I learned from the meeting, which is hardly a surprise, especially now in retrospect, was that Zuckerberg is extremely smart, very much of a learning machine, very good at the evolution of technologies.

And so, but I’d already more or less was positive – if he’d said, “I don’t want to meet with you, but do you want to put in money,” I probably would have put in money anyway.

Tim Ferriss: Right. And what was Mark Pincus’ role at that point, or his involvement with Facebook?

Reid Hoffman: Well, actually, so the way – Mark had also – Pincus had also known Sean Parker back from Napster days. Pincus had done an early startup called Freeloader. But part of actually how Mark got involved in the Facebook investment was separately, Mark and I had bought a patent called The Six Degrees Patent, some number, which describes the viral expansion of a system. And again, kind of on the ethics based this. I went, “Look, Mark and I are partners on this. We’re actually trying to protect all of these new Web 2.0 viral companies. That’s our principal goal in this patent, in going and buying this patent. But given that Facebook is also in this, I should actually in fact split the investment with Mark because basically it’s part of being a good partner with him.”

And so, that’s part of how Mark – now he also had known Sean Parker and Sean had talked to him about it as well, so there’s a bunch of different things, but that’s fundamentally how Pincus also became a series A investor in Facebook.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. And on the decision, or maybe it's not related at all, but the suggestion that Peter lead the round, it's the impression of some people that you have actively decided in the past not to be – to take the CEO role yourself. And have you sort of proactively made decisions in your life to avoid being – to taking the CEO role, or having it for a long period of time? And if so, why is that the case, or is that a misperception?

Reid Hoffman: Well, there's kind of three different CEO jobs at levels of scale in the organization; CEO jobs of call it 10, 20, 50 percent organizations, or CEO jobs of hundreds to – like 150 to 500 people organizations, and then there's CEO jobs of over 500 people, like 1000 thousands. I've always known that I'm fundamentally not really interested in the CEO job – the large scale CEO job. When you're doing the large scale CEO job, your primary responsibility, you have to embody the strategy, you have to think about things the right way. But your primary thing is the organization, having the right culture, having the right structure of the organization, the right people in it, the right way of hiring new people, the right way of empowering them, even though you're making kind of strategic decisions.

And there are people like Jeff Weiner who are completely awesome at that. And I'd rather help them, rather than doing that personally. Then you get to the other CEO jobs, so you get to the mid-stage CEO job, I'm okay doing that. It's not the thing I'm most passionate about. I actually prefer to work on product strategies, firefighting things, business strategies, problem solutions, thinking about how to reconceptualize the strategy of the entire business, and either myself, or working with people on that. But I'll do that in order to make it work.

And then in the early stages, I'm actually perfectly comfortable doing it. It's not necessarily a job that I say I want, I must do it. But being the CEO of a 10, 20, 50 – even up to a 100-person organization, I can do that just fine because then you're still all kind of working on the same problem. It's less about how you build the org. Obviously you have to build a very strong team, but it's less about like okay, how do we take the org from 100 people to 100 people.

It's actually much more like okay, how do we just solve these key problems? And that's stuff I like to do, so it isn't really a specific don't want the CEO job, except in the very large scale. What it is, is I am only interested in the CEO job as it's instrumental to

something serious that I want to accomplish, and then as that organization grows, wants not to be the CEO.

Tim Ferriss: And you've had some experience searching for CEOs. What should founders remember when looking for someone to replace themselves, or things they should keep in mind?

Reid Hoffman: Well, so the first thing is generally speaking, founders should try to go – like I'm still very active at LinkedIn – should try to go the entire course of the company, to the degree to which they're passionate and can be useful. Companies are always stronger with founders more in the more connected and committed to it.

But that being said, sometimes you go, "Look, my great skill set is a product, or my great skill set is evangelism, or my great skill set is something other than building the scale organization, in which case, the fundamental way you look at it is – so the former way that Silicon Valley used to look at it, which is – I wrote an essay about this. It's published in my LinkedIn Influencer post, and on my site, ReidHoffman.org.

But the fundamental way that Silicon Valley used to look at this is like you bring in grey hair, an executive, a person with management scale. And by the way, you want those skills, but actually, in fact, I think what you – who you're bringing in as a founder, is you're bringing in a later stage co-founder, and you're bringing in a later stage co-founder, ideally, who has scale skills, who knows how to build scale organizations, is passionate about this one, has their identity as closely tied, or nearly as closely tied to the organization as you do.

It's this specific mission is something that they really care about. They're not just like, "Oh, I'm a hired gun," but actually in fact I'm a missionary on this as well, and then someone who would partner with you very well. And that's actually what you're looking for.

And so that's part of the reason why Jeff Weiner has been so successful at LinkedIn, is because he cares about not just scale organizations, but how do you transform people's careers, how do you demonstrate you can be doing compassionate business, and that compassionate management is a high performing culture of a company. How do you have people who have a culture of we make ourselves significantly better every year. How do you bring all that? That's part of what he actually really cares about, which is deeply tied to the LinkedIn mission. And so, he cares about the

organization, he cares about the way he manages, and he cares about the product, all as essentially a later stage co-founder.

And that's the kind of thing that you should be thinking about when you're a founder, and you're thinking, okay, it's time for me to bring in another person as a CEO.

Tim Ferriss: Thank you. Michael, you mentioned accents a little earlier, and that you use accents in the ER often. And I know you've mentioned to me before that southern is best. And I was hoping you could elaborate on that because –

Michael McCullough: I don't want to get into too much trouble, but no, when I had my injury as a kid, and brain surgery in the fourth, fifth grade yard, it's like looking for ways to be more fluent. So in speeches, I talk like I'm European. It's a good accent for speaking. But if I'm ER, I'll talk like I'm from Alabama or Georgia because it's a good accent for sick people.

You can almost like yell at them, and they don't think you're mad. So you can kind of raise the volume for someone who's hearing impaired pretty loud. They don't make you mad at them. And it keeps the nurses also kind of humorously entertained as well.

Tim Ferriss: And how has the ER experience, or the skills developed or exhibited there translated to the other things that you've done in the non-profits or in the for-profit investment world?

Michael McCullough: The ER particularly has helped a lot with my investing because most of the specialties interface with ER enable me to like reach into ophthalmology or cardiology, like an investment in things like Heartflow, I can just pick up the phone and speak to interventionalists or heart surgeons and things like that.

So I think from a decision making capacity, it teaches you the importance of actually making a decision because you don't always have all the information you need, but the stakes are high. So I think there's a lot of entrepreneurial kind of cross-over there that can also be helpful.

Tim Ferriss: Right, making important decisions with incomplete information.

Michael McCullough: Well, and also just the importance of having actually made a decision as well, right, because if you're always kind of like waffling, it – sometimes nothing actually happens.

Tim Ferriss: And you and I have talked a lot about meditation, but more broadly speaking, the people listening are very interested in morning habits and morning routines, so I'd love to ask you guys the same question. Let's start with you Michael. What does the first 60 to 90 minutes of your day look like, and what time does it start? If we could get into specifics, that would be great.

Michael McCullough: Sure. More recently, I used to fight this kind of hour and a half awake in the middle of the night thing between two sleep cycles. Now I kind of actually just kind of get up and feel like probably half an hour to an hour, like meditation between like 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. in the morning, or 4:00 and 5:00. And that then hands me half an hour of real clarity after that, to kind of think about kind of my day and how I'd like to end up using it.

Tim Ferriss: And what type of meditation do you practice?

Michael McCullough: There are concentration and mindfulness techniques that you can use that are pretty common. I think rather than talk about the type that I do, I think a lot of the debate between types of meditation is kind of like the debate of kinds of weight lifting people do. And I think the important thing is that you actually just lift the weights, right.

So I'm not convinced any one type of mindfulness training is superior to another, but clearly almost any would be superior to actually not actually doing it.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have any opinion of neuro-feedback?

Michael McCullough: I think generally, even as an investor, I think there's beginning to be a commercial breakdown between the interface of the brain, and you see these EG feedback pieces of equipment. I think they're not quite as far along now as they should be, but I think you're certainly seeing some interesting applications with people that are taking interface with the mind out of the realm of religion, and into the realm of science and such.

And I think they're even like prep high schools who are doing controlled experiments on mindfulness to see how it affects homework and performance and things like that.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. No, definitely, and Adam Ghazali, who is also on this podcast at UCSF, is doing some really interesting work with iPad based or tablet based games for quantifying progress in meditation and mindfulness. Reid, what about yourself? What do your

morning rituals look like, in an ideal day, assuming you have control of your morning – the first 60 to 90 minutes of your day? What does that look like if you had your sort of optimal recipe?

Reid Hoffman:

Well, I don't know optimal or not, but – and I also don't know how interesting it is, but you know, most of my days are pretty packed because of responsibilities to Greylock, responsibilities to LinkedIn, portfolio companies, a bunch of other things, so where my morning tends to be most highly tuned to, is what is a creative problem that I've identified, either that is something that was like okay, I want to work on this, I want to think about this the day before, the night before, like this is a key thing that I want to think about, a product design, a strategy, a solution to a problem that one of my portfolio companies is looking at, you know, that sort of thing; or I need to solve this thing creatively for a meeting I'm having later today, like we're making a decision at Greylock to invest in something, you know, a team is going to be pitching me, or there's going to be some kind of business development relationship between LinkedIn, or another of my portfolio of companies.

And so the very first thing I do when I get up, almost always, is to actually sit down and work on that problem because that's when I'm freshest. I'm not distracted by phone calls and responses to things, and so forth. So I'll actually – it's the most tabula rasa, you know, kind of blank slate moment that I have. And so I use that to maximize my creativity on a particular project. I'll usually do it before I shower because frequently if I go into the shower, then I'll continue to think about it as I'm doing it. But I'll get it all fired up.

Ideally, I would have 60 minutes for that. Some mornings I do. Frequently it's like around 30, just because of the press of the day. And then the next things that kind of round out, if it's only 30, are a combination of a quick triage through email to see if there's anything that's an emergency, or kind of something that's temporally, or otherwise important, that I need to get on right away. And then frequently, most of my – during the work week, I almost always have a business breakfast on some project.

It could be anything from a non-profit, like Mozilla to a portfolio company or just a general meeting with someone who has been recommended to me. And then on the drive to that breakfast, frequently I'll do a call that's kind of – because it's one of the – usually the days are so packed with meetings that some of the – typically the only real phone time I have, and so if there's someone

that I need to talk to that is not co-located, that's usually when I call them.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. And when you're working on that first creative problem, is that something that you've put in a notebook the night before? Is it on a laptop? How are you storing these problems, and then working on them?

Reid Hoffman: So it will either be – most commonly because you know, I kind of grew up where I was thinking by using a pen and paper – most commonly I will have sketched a few things, thought about a few things. And usually it's in the notion of how do you solve this problem, like a little bit back to the thing where you're talking about is like setting up that framework, like a strategy within a strategy of a game.

What are the kind of key things that might be constraints on a solution, or might be the attributes of a solution, and what are tools or assets I might have, because part of what I'm trying to do is I actually think most of our thinking of course, is subconscious – is part of what I'm trying to do is allow the fact that we have this kind of relaxation, rejuvenation period in sleeping, to essentially possibly bubble up the thoughts and solutions to it. And so when I've woken up, not only am I kind of tabula rasa, but I'm also possibly primed for that. And so that's the way I do it.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. You've said before, Reid, that your network is your mentor, and that you learn from everyone in your network. I'd love to just tick off a couple of names of people I believe you know, and hear the first thing that comes to mind in terms of what you learn, or have learned from them.

You mentioned earlier the CEO of Airbnb, Brian Chesky. What's the first thing that comes to mind there?

Reid Hoffman: So Brian, one of the things that I thought was an excellent focus from him is that he – he calls this seven star design, which is most review systems are – go to five stars, and so seven stars was thinking about the design at a much broader scope. But the precise way of thinking about it is what he came to realize, that Airbnb is not just an online product. It's not just a marketplace, a website, but is actually the entire experience that you have of going to the room or apartment, of checking in, of staying there, and of leaving.

And how do you actually in fact best design within your abilities of doing a peer-to-peer marketplace, that entire experience. And so

the way – the placeholder he uses for that is this thinking of seven-star design, which is thinking through each step of the experience.

And so I thought it was highly instructive and something I now use myself when I talk to other people because our product isn't just the website, isn't just the mobile application. It's the way that people are embedded in the environment when they're using it, and you should think through that as much as you can, even though you may have some very limited ability to control other aspects of it, or shape.

Tim Ferriss: What about one of your partners at Greylock, John Lilly?

Reid Hoffman: So John is about as deep and interesting as a technologist you get for an investor. He puts together kind of both the aspects of being very deeply technical about platforms. I mean he was the CEO of Mozilla, growing it to being 20 percent of web browsers, with also kind of design experience, like he's a consulting professor at the Stanford School of Design.

And so for me, you know, part of the thing that I get from John, or I've learned from John, is to think about the intersection of kind of user design with deep technology, and how for example, design patterns then shape deep technology patterns, and kind of a set of different questions that you'd ask about look, what's the structure of the design space, and does that inform the structure of your technology space? And so we talk about a whole wide variety of technologies. But those are the kinds of mental and strategy and thinking patterns that I've gotten honed to a fine edge from John.

Tim Ferriss: Also a hilarious guy, very sharp sense of humor. What about your former co-worker, now SpaceX, Tesla founder, Elon Musk?

Reid Hoffman: So Elon, obviously super smart, obviously relentless, obviously thinking like for example the old phrase the sky is the limit, that's too short for Elon, right. Mars and beyond. The thing that I most learned from Elon is actually in fact that – so previous to Elon's amazing successes with Tesla and SpaceX, and Solar City, I had come to learn that part of the business strategy is to solve the simplest and easiest most valuable problem.

And actually, in fact, part of doing strategy is to solve the easiest problem, so part of the reason why you work on software and bits is that they – that atoms are actually very difficult. You have sometimes real material product development risk, inventory risk, material science, you know, all these things that makes atom

products harder. And so if you can work in the bits products, it's a lot more valuable.

It scales more quickly and so forth. And all of that's true in terms of the fact that – it wasn't that that lesson I'd learned was false. But what Elon taught me was actually in fact, if you have a very deep vision for something, you're relentless, and you choose something that really matters, that the competitors are in fact really weak, right, like they're not actually – like for example, all of their rocket contractors were mostly focused on how do they milk government contracts, not on how do they build new propulsion systems, not on how do they take advantage of the last couple of decades of actual progress.

And so that actually gave him a – it's a very hard challenge. What he's done is extremely compelling, and very few people could pull it off, but that gives you a sufficient window, even when you're taking on a hard problem. And that's actually one of the things I learned from Elon.

Tim Ferriss: And Julie Hanna, Kiva.org, share one.

Reid Hoffman: Yep.

Tim Ferriss: What would you say to that?

Reid Hoffman: So Julie – now I knew this already, but Julie is a very good model for this, which is that you can have someone who is a world class entrepreneur, serially experienced with it, is a general learner, has done enterprise companies, has transitioned to thinking about open source, and was one of the early kind of people of how do you apply open source things, can also go and thoroughly apply all of those things into not just the for-profit world, not just her own companies, not just her angel investments, not just her work with areas, kind of incubators and others, but also into the non-profit world.

And where it's one of the things when you say you know, we have a tendency in Silicon Valley to say you know, entrepreneurs are heroes, but one of the things I think is truly heroic and awesome about Julie has done is say, "Look, I can take all these skills, I can take my entire life, only just building economics and enterprise businesses and other kinds of businesses. But actually, in fact, when I begin to think about how do I scale, and how do I change the nature of humanity and human ecosystems, I'm going to take my technology skills and apply them to philanthropic projects with

the same kind of scale, with the same kind of impulse, and I'll put real time into it. I'm not just going to talk about it. And I'm going to do it with the full set of skills that a world class entrepreneur does.”

And so, you know, I've seen – I've taken heart and inspiration from Julie about the value of diving in and getting your hands dirty on projects that are outside of the commercial side for – that are really ones that you can actually in fact get to massive scale.

Tim Ferriss: And last for this list, US Senator Cory Booker, who I actually met for the first time at an event that you co-hosted, so thank you for that. But what have you learned or admired as it relates to Cory?

Reid Hoffman: Well, so Cory is I think a great civic leader. He is entrepreneurial and bold himself, when he was the Mayor of Newark. He lived in the housing projects in order to know what the experience was, in order to be able to be – to understand kind of how does he maximize the happiness and the economic potential, and solve the problems of the people that he is there to help, as a mayor.

And then as a senator, part of what I have found him to be practically unique in, in like – or the leading edge. There are a few others who I think also do this. But he does – he's the leading edge of – I get that Silicon Valley is creating all this kind of interesting technology, and I get that these really powerful commercial models, and I want to learn from them. But when Cory comes out to Silicon Valley, of course he has the interest that every politician does, which is raising money, and there's a bunch of money, in order to inform political campaigns.

But his first, second and third questions aren't about how do I get you to give me a check, it's how do I learn from you in order to solve a problem that's critical for the American people? And in particular, critical for the people who may be being left out, but all people as well.

And so, whether his focus is on – you know, we have a really serious problem with mass incarceration, or whether the challenge is what do we do in order to kind of have a good foreign policy, you know, any of these questions, he starts with what do I learn from you that can then help me figure out how to help us be better as a country? And then, of course, if he ends up with an alignment, and he says, “Look, can you help me with X, Y, and Z?” At that point he's speaking your language, and has understood – and has asked you to participate in helping being a good citizen. And if we

could have more senators like Senator Booker, Cory, my friend, I think the world would be a much better place.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, totally agreed. He's exceptional at asking incisive questions, and not just for the sake of asking the questions, but for actually listening to the answers. Michael, what is the book that you have given most as a gift, or books?

Michael McCullough: Recently, actually, Reid's book, with Ben Casnocha, *The Start-up of You*.

Tim Ferriss: And why have you chosen that book?

Michael McCullough: It has a lot of principles in it for young people right out of college, or kind of in the middle of their twenties and such, to think about how to pursue their careers.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. And what would be your second book, if you had to pick a second?

Michael McCullough: Well, to young people, I often give them a simple book you've probably heard about called *Getting Things Done*, and combine that with *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* because I think the former helps you actually to action, and the latter helps you decide which action to actually take.

So I mentor a lot of young people, and I think those two books together are probably good for them.

Tim Ferriss: Wonderful, yeah, we're going to dive into QuestBridge in a second. I want to make sure that we cover that. Reid, what about yourself, the book or books that you've given most as gifts, besides the ones that you've been involved with directly.

Reid Hoffman: Well, obviously, I tend to give out my two books, *The Start-up of You*, and *The Alliance* a fair amount, partially because you can sign it and you can make it very personalized, and it becomes a very personal touch gift. I'd say the two books that I have recently most given out, one of them is *Conscious Business* by Fred Kaufman. And Fred is I think to some degree, the modern high spiritual priest of capitalist business.

His whole kind of thread is to say actually in fact, how you can express business and capitalism as a spiritual practice of compassion. And I – it's a book that opens with a discussion of Aristotle, and not – you would be surprised on a business book, so

that's one. And then the other one is *Sapiens*, by Yuval Harari, which is a very grand – it's one of the ones I've read most recently – a grand theory of humanity, and kind of how does the evolution's cognition work.

And I don't know enough to know like is it really deep scholarly work or not, but it's exactly the kind of broad thinking book that I think should be more in a general consciousness.

Tim Ferriss:

And Michael, you mentioned mentoring. I think this is a good segue. Could you please describe QuestBridge, and what QuestBridge does, because of course, that's a common thread that ties everyone on this call together, Reid being – correct me if I'm wrong – but Chair of the Advisory Board.

I'm one participant on the advisory board, and very honored to be part of that, but could you describe – and you of course, are one of the co-founders of QuestBridge. Could you describe for folks what it is that QuestBridge does, and some of the results or numbers?

Michael McCullough: Sure. I'll describe what it does and the problem it solves as well. And you said Reid is the head of the advisory board, and we've really appreciated your help also Tim. So QuestBridge is on one level, simply a common application for super smart low income kids, heading to top schools like Princeton and Yale, and [Inaudible] Amherst and such. You can apply to all those schools for free with our application online. The schools help to offset the costs of the pool, so we don't have to raise a lot of money and can focus on execution.

The scale its reached is significant, and where about – at some schools, about half of their diversity, and we put in more low income kids than all the other non-profits in the country actually all combined. But there are a lot more out there. And the interesting thing in America that people don't know is there's actually no shortage of smart low income kids to use up all these kind of wonderful financial aid openings at schools that can afford to pay a full tuition award. It's just they simply aren't handing in applications. And so we're trying to make that process simpler.

But in real numbers, we had over 140 kids accepted to Yale last year, over 100 to MIT were accepted, the majority of those accepted would actually go.

So on the one hand, our numbers are large. On the other hand, we've probably gone from finding and having them apply like one in 14 of the qualified kids, to one in nine. You could fill several times over, every top school with smart qualified low income academic kids for all the financial aid openings.

Tim Ferriss: And I'm sorry, go ahead. I didn't mean to interrupt if you had more there.

Michael McCullough: Oh, no I didn't. My wife and I have been doing this now in some form for about 20 years or so, and are hitting a good scale, but working with people like Reid and others, to try to increase our scale. And also now we have about 8000 students in our schools, you know, how do you bring them into the corporate world and like medical schools and things also.

Tim Ferriss: And for those interested, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal has had some excellent feature pieces recently on QuestBridge. Reid, you get asked for – to participate in different projects, different startups, different non-profits all the time. What is it about QuestBridge that led you to decide to participate, to contribute to it, to be part of it?

Reid Hoffman: Well, it's actually a very similar process to how I actually make a decision to be an investor, not 100 percent, but close, which is roughly speaking, I think the mission of life is how do you maximize humanity, the expression of human potential, our consciousness, our sense of ethics and ethos, our ways of being together.

And when you look at QuestBridge, you say well, here is actually in fact, one very intelligent system design for exactly that because the way that you can change a life of this high talent, low income kid, by providing a path and an understanding, and a way of succeeding through a strong college, is not only a way to change a life, but also to change the world because those – not only do they change their own lives, but then they model for others, they can potentially give back to the community, and also then folks who benefit from elite universities have the knowledge and understanding and compassion to kind of what are the challenges for lower income, and can help participate in really positive ways.

So part of I think if anything, Michael's being kind of socially ept and discreet, and not kind of saying look, it's an application, but not only is it an application, it's a community that helps those kids succeed through college, and then connect with the world around

them at large. And so it was a very quick and easy decision to join and help.

Tim Ferriss:

Michael, what I'd like to do is just give an example of the type of thing that gets me excited about QuestBridge, and please feel free to correct me, because I know this is just a small part, or maybe one example. But for those people listening, I mean I'm involved with a number of non-profits, but it try to apply like Reid, the same level of scrutiny and high expectations to non-profits that I would to for-profits.

And that's – it turns out to be very challenging, but in the case of QuestBridge, you know, Reid mentioned earlier part of strategy being solving the easiest most valuable problem. And I think part of that is identifying of course, the right problem. And as you mentioned, Michael, there's a lot of money out there. There is a lot of money. Colleges will give students more than \$300,000.00 each to go to college. One of the issues is simply the lack of applications. These kids don't apply oftentimes. And they may not have the social support.

It may not even enter their minds to apply. So how do you solve that problem, because a lot of people are trying to solve the wrong problem by throwing more money at the problem, doing it too late, and they miss the window of opportunity. And so what really caught my attention first about QuestBridge was just one small example, which was in these communities where they may not even be thinking of applying to college, doing for instance, an iPad give-away, or a give-away of some type.

And the application or the form to sign up for this give-away potentially and win, just so happens to also be a standardized application that you've convinced 36 top schools to accept as college applications. And so these kids are incentivized in a way that is kind of culturally relevant to them, and then they get a letter in the mail saying, "Hey, by the way, Princeton University here; we'd like to offer you a full ride for four years." And it's just an elegant solution, and it's such an example for me at least, of putting in a – getting a very large result for a small input, a small intervention. And that's why I've been so excited to talk about QuestBridge, and I've been looking forward to this interview for many other reasons also, but to try to showcase it for people to say like not all hard problems have to be hard to solve.

You just have to really surgically focus in the right place. I'd love to ask, just as it relates to QuestBridge, what – for people who

want to learn more, where should they go? And there are many people listening to this show who are perhaps like me, have recognized how they were sent down a very fortunate path by having educational opportunities that are not available to everyone. So for people who might want to contribute to such an effective Archimedes lever like QuestBridge, where should they go, and how might they be able to help?

Michael McCullough: Sure. I think to clarify the problem just so your listeners can understand it, the – before QuestBridge, about three quarters of the diversity was drawn from only [inaudible] areas in the county, so you were more likely to hear about heading to a school like Swarthmore if you had a 2.8 from Harlem, than if you had a 4.0 from a lot of other areas in the country. So QuestBridge recruits in New York, in Chicago, like other people do, but also in like Buffalo and Syracuse and other areas of the country. In defense of the kids, it's not intuitive that a school would give you \$300,000.00 for free.

Tim Ferriss: Of course.

Michael McCullough: So to get their application data, Quest is unique in that we have our own kind of application data set. So as you said, if we create a prize, or if others, you wanted to help us do that, we've had a lot of success in attracting applicants to fill out a college application for a proposition unrelated to the application itself. So if it's a student who wants to get involved, they can simply go to our website at QuestBridge.org. We have an application actually open now for this fall's application cycle

We have access to about half a billion dollars of financial aid from our universities, and we'd like to harvest more of America's latent talent from areas that we haven't reached earlier. I'd say to your listeners, to make sure that your local high school actually uses our application, and that only about a third of the high schools in the country have handed applications in. And then for people who would like to create their own intervention, let's say for low income kids want to do math and science, or low income women, or going to people from the south, or almost any interest, they can even reach out to me directly, and on your blog, you can feel free to put my email if you like, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: Okay, wonderful. And would you like to give that out now, or would you prefer just –

Michael McCullough: Sure. Yeah. It's Michael at QuestBridge.org.

Tim Ferriss: Great. And by prizes, you mean people could offer some type of – what might a prize look like?

Michael McCullough: Yeah, it's really odd. It could be non-monetary, like we'd like to say have like a leadership award at like the White House or something. But it can be as simple as we ran a pilot for Native Americans, where we gave away 20 laptops, hooking the actual university application up to the prize application. And we grew from having only 34 applicants one year, to over 350 year after that.

Tim Ferriss: So for everyone listening, I just want to really encourage you. I am very, very – I have a very, very tight filter, tightness filter when it comes to working non-profits, and this one is worth your time. So I would just encourage you to look at it. Forget about the label non-profit – as an intervention that can better humanity, as Reid mentioned. This is one of the rare gems out there in my opinion, and other organizations that I've worked with like Donor Choose for instance, Charles Best, is a huge fan of QuestBridge, and he said – the first thing he said to me when I mentioned a few years ago that Michael, you and I connected, he said, “That is an excellent choice. That is an awesome choice.” So people, check out QuestBridge.org, and you can reach Michael if you'd like to discuss collaborating in some way, Michael at QuestBridge.org.

So I'll just ask one more question guys, it'll take one or two minutes, and that is let's start with you, Michael. If you could have one billboard anywhere that said anything, what would it say, and where would it be?

Michael McCullough: I'd probably do what you do, Tim, pick something you're afraid of every day, and kind of go after it, and I'd put that on kind of people's way to work, I suppose.

Tim Ferriss: What about yourself, Reid?

Reid Hoffman: Well, this is kind of funny reflex, but it's just something I've been thinking about recently. I think I would take the billboard in Washington, D. C. I think I would target Congress people, and I'd say, “Have you worked with someone across the aisle today?” Because what matters is not partisan conflict, but how do we govern our country to actually have a better future.

Tim Ferriss: Here, here, definitely .Last question guys, do you have any asks or requests from my audience? Reid, we can start with you, and then

where can people find you online, where can they ping you on social networks, etcetera.

Reid Hoffman: Well, on social networks, it's very easy. There's a service that maybe a few people have heard of, called LinkedIn, you know, findable there. I'd say two things. One is I would also echo the fact that QuestBridge is a scale way of changing the world for the better, of actually making us more of the – kind of for us in the US, the American dream, in terms of the ability for talented low income youth to actually live in a meritocracy. So I think it's awesome, and whatever way you can support, whether it's contributing or helping, or you know, pointing the right talented young kid at it, is all great.

And then the second is, you know, last year I published a book called *The Alliance*. Your audience tends to be highly literate, not a surprise, given you. And so inasmuch as they're thinking about how is the nature of employment, and how is the nature of the relationship between an employee and a company changing, I think it might be something that could stimulate a few thoughts.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely, and I have a copy of that book at home, and everybody, highly worth the read, so highly recommended there. Well, gentlemen, this has been wonderful. I've really enjoyed the conversation. And for everybody listening, I will put everything we discussed in the show notes, so we'll have links to QuestBridge, the book recommendations and so on. Just go to fourhourworkweek.com, all spelled out and click on podcasts to find that.

And guys, I really appreciate you making the time. This was a lot of fun, and I have pages and pages of notes just for myself.

Reid Hoffman: Tim, always a pleasure, and always an honor.

Michael McCullough: Thank you for the conversation Tim.

Tim Ferriss: Alright, guys, until next time, thank you, and everyone else, until next time, thank you for listening.