The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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0:00:30 Jacob: Well thanks, everyone, for tuning in. My guest today is Don Tapscott. He's the co-founder and executive chairman at the Blockchain Research Institute, best-selling author of... I've lost count of how many books at this point, but the most recent one is Blockchain Revolution. Don, thank you for joining me.

0:00:50 Don: Happy to be here.

0:00:52 Jacob: So I don't know if you remember, but you actually wrote the afterword, I think it was, to my first book that came out in 2012 called, The Collaborative Organization.

0:01:03 Don: Shocking.

0:01:04 Jacob: Almost a decade ago. I have...

0:01:06 Don: That's a good name.

0:01:08 Jacob: Yeah, I have known you almost longer than I have known my wife.

0:01:13 Don: I'm not even gonna go there with that.

[chuckle]

0:01:17 Jacob: Well again, thank you so much for joining me. And before we get into all the blockchain stuff, I'm really interested, how did you even get involved in the stuff that you are doing now, building your own personal brand, running your own business? How did you get to all this?

0:01:36 Don: Whoa. Well, I graduated as a psychologist in Edmonton, Alberta. And I moved to Toronto, and I had two job offers, or openings. One was to be a school psychologist, doing IQ testing on kids in the schools. And the second was to run a group at Canada's Bell Labs, trying to figure out how the internet would change the world. And I didn't get the school psychologist job. So this is 1979, we were doing controlled experiments, where half of the company worked the way people worked back then with pens and pieces of paper, and typing pools with the typewriters, and the physical diaries, and meetings and all the rest.

0:02:32 Don: And the other half had essentially, we created Microsoft Office for them in 1978, '79. And the group that had the technology that used the computer directly, and nobody used computers back then except programmers, performed better and they'd work differently. And the main thing is that they communicated differently. So we came to this radical conclusion that not only was

everybody going to use a computer, but they'd become a communications and collaboration tool. And so, I wrote a book based on that, that nobody read. But I decided, "Let's do it." So I left the company, and I took my main collaborator, a woman named Del Langdon, with me. Sorry.

[music]

0:03:25 Jacob: It's all good.

0:03:28 Don: It's probably a spam call, too.

0:03:31 Jacob: Me, I love the spam calls, I get those 10 times a day.

0:03:34 Don: Well, they're coming in fast and furious these days. Apparently, I'm about to go to jail and have my house exploited, and 'cause I didn't pay a parking ticket, something. But anyway, but we decided, "Well, let's just do this." So we left the company and we took a dozen people with us and created a company that was consulting on the internet, easily a decade, almost 15 years before anyone had ever heard the word.

0:04:08 Don: We didn't use the word back then, it was the ARPANET, and I've never looked back. Being an entrepreneur is a pretty awesome thing. And that was my first book, and I wrote another book in the '80s that nobody read. And then I wrote my first bestseller, and that was Paradigm Shift in '92. And I wrote The Digital Economy, which was, they say the first bestseller about the web in business, in '94. And there've been a series of books, 16, some of which my mom came up with before me, but many of them that are big books.

0:04:42 Jacob: Yeah, Wikinomics, Macrowikinomics, Blockchain Revolution. I remember, that was, I read many, many of those books. It's been quite a fun journey.

0:04:52 Don: I wrote the first big book about your generation.

0:04:56 Jacob: Oh, that's right. You did. I remember that.

0:04:57 Don: Yeah, Growing Up Digital, that was 1997.

0:05:01 Jacob: I remember, I remember, yeah, that was one of the many books. Well, very cool. It sounds like you had a fascinating, fascinating journey. And I gotta ask, I know you... I'm sure I know the answer to this. You prefer working for yourself and creating your own businesses versus full-time employment for a company like so many people are today.

0:05:23 Don: I sure do. There were two brief periods during that last geez almost 40 years now, where I sold my company, and I was working for another big company. And I was a team player, and I did my best to fit in, but it's not really something I enjoyed. And having a boss who referred to me as, "One of my people," and he would tell me what to do. I don't know, that didn't work out so well. And I don't think it's because of me, I think it was the nature of organizations and how they function.

0:06:07 Don: They were just quite stifling, really, and they had incentives against innovation and change. And so, I've always been an entrepreneur. I was asked to describe once the best decision I ever made in my life and I thought about it for a second and... Professional decision. Best personal

decision was to marry the woman I married. But professional, it was to leave the company and to create my own company.

0:06:43 Jacob: Yep, I totally agree. That was probably the best professional decision I've ever made as well. And I remember I was reading an article that you wrote for the Globe and Mail or maybe you were interviewed for it, and it was your best advice for college graduates. And there were two things that really stuck out for me. One was you said, "Don't get a job, consider starting a business instead." And the second one that you said was, "Always be a lifelong learner."

0:07:14 Jacob: And so I loved those pieces of advice and a lot of people always ask me for the podcast, they say, "You talk a lot about what's going on today but what advice do you have for the younger generation?" People who are just entering college or graduating college, but it seems like your best piece of advice is consider to start a business first before you go kind of down that full-time job path.

0:07:36 Don: Well, I'm just recalling that article. And the article came out of a speech that I gave to the convocating class at Trent University. And these convocation speeches are always full of motherhood.

0:07:57 Jacob: Yes.

0:07:57 Don: Real conventional wisdom, work hard, turn lemons into lemonade, what doesn't kill you will only make you stronger. So I start off joking about that saying, I have some more advice. Floss, you can't overestimate the importance of flossing. And don't ever show up to a job interview drunk.

0:08:21 Jacob: That's good advice. It's very good advice.

0:08:25 Don: There was a lot of ridiculous opportunity. But what I said is, "Let me... " There was a business graduating class, and I said to them, "Let me take five things that you're told that you should do, and give you a counter argument." So number one, you're supposed to go out into the workforce now and get a job. And I said, "Well, there's always a role for working for somebody else. You can learn lots of stuff about project managing, organizational politics, and so on. But consider being an entrepreneur". And I described that whole experience, I actually done the research and how it was a great choice for me.

0:09:10 Don: There were some other things too, like don't have work-life balance. It's one of the things people always tell you. I said that that paradigm is wrong, it sort of implies there's a period in your day where you work and a period in your day where you have a life. Or worse, there's a period in your existence when you work, and then you retire, and then you get to have a life, if you don't have a stroke, or something else.

0:09:38 Don: So I said, "No, make work interesting, do something you really enjoy and care about. So it's part of your life. And after work, give a damn, don't just go out and go fishing or something, or just watch TV, be consequential in your family and in your community and so on." So they were basically a whole bunch of assertive things like that, that I tried to shake them up as being just ideas that you might do differently.

0:10:17 Jacob: Yeah, and it was great advice. Great advice. Well, let's talk a little bit about what

you've become so known for in the past few years, which is blockchain. And I know there's a lot of discussion around this, a lot of debate around this. But what if we start super high level? How would you explain blockchain to a 10 year old?

0:10:39 Don: Okay, but just before I do that, let me finish up on the others. The other things that I told them and we can come back to that, too. So I said, they all are graduates in management, right? I said, "Don't be a good manager, be a great leader. When things are stable, that's when you need good management. And of course, manage people well and so on. But what we need today is not just good management, we need good leadership."

0:11:11 Don: And then I said, "Don't seek happiness." And then people looked at me like I was nuts. But I find that happiness is a byproduct of living a principled and consequential life. Do meaningful things, have meaningful relationships, love. It's like that old Buddhist thing, have something to do that you care about, have something, someone to love and have something to look forward to. And I always find it so sad when people say, "I'm doing my best to be happy." Don't... Happiness is a result of other things. And I said, "And you're all hoping you're gonna get lucky. Don't, don't. Don't wish for luck." That for me, good fortune has always come about, it's sort of the intersection of preparation and opportunity. Get yourself prepared, and the opportunities will come along.

0:12:12 Don: And anyway, the other one that was quite controversial, they're all going out to create shareholder value, and I said, "Don't." Shareholders are one of a number of stakeholders. In the world that I'm leaving, that my generation is leaving, your generation, is a difficult one. It's too, it's a terrible one, it's too unjust, it's too conflicted, it's too unsustainable, and the problems in many ways are getting deeper.

0:12:45 Don: And by all means, go out and be prosperous, and make lots of money, but the world needs more from you. It needs you to step up. You're being called forth by history to do something very important and very extraordinary. And within the firm, or within whatever company you're creating or you're working for, don't just think about shareholders. You have other stakeholders. Focus on your customers, focus on your employees, focus on the communities within which you operate. And care about the world. 'Cause business can't succeed in a world that's failing. So I don't think anyone... I think they were all kind of shocked when I give them that advice. [chuckle] But anyway...

0:13:30 Jacob: It's good advice. It's good advice.

0:13:32 Don: You hired me to give a speech to young people. Actually, I wasn't paid. [chuckle] It was my closing address as the chancellor of the university. I'd been chancellor there for six years, so I thought I'd go out guns blazing.

0:13:47 Jacob: Go out with a bang. I like it. Yeah. No, it was very nice.

0:13:49 Don: Okay, blockchain.

0:13:52 Jacob: Yes. How would you explain it to a 10-year-old?

0:13:57 Don: You know about the internet?

0:14:00 Jacob: I do, yes. [chuckle]

0:14:02 Don: You don't look 10. You know about the internet? It's about information, right? But now we have an internet that's about things, money, music, art, votes, things that really matter in society. Assets, and now we can move and manage all that stuff around just like we do information.

0:14:35 Jacob: Simple explanation.

0:14:37 Don: Well, I had to be brief, didn't I?

0:14:39 Jacob: Yes, yes. So how does it work? Because I know that even I get asked this question a lot. What's the practical aspect of how blockchain would work or do you have an example, something that just anybody can relate to and understand, as far as the impact that blockchain might have?

0:15:01 Don: Well, yeah, at the Blockchain Research Institute, we're studying hundreds of cases and stories, looking at 15 different industries. And if everyone who's listening to this podcast wants to go for it, we can go for a few days right now, just make a Guinness Book of Records or something like that. [chuckle] But let me, beyond the 10-year-old, describe what this thing is. So when I joined Bell-Northern Research in '78, we were dealing with the ARPANET, but it really kind of became the internet. And it was about information. But even today, if I send you some information, a PDF, a PowerPoint, an email, I'm actually sending you a copy, I'm not sending you the information. And that works great for information, but when it comes to assets... Oh geez. I gotta turn this stupid thing...

0:16:00 Jacob: You're a popular guy.

0:16:03 Don: It's just Fisher. He's trying to get me to do something really bad. When it comes to assets, things that really matter in the economy, like money, or security, stocks, bonds, things like contracts, deeds, the data in our identities, intellectual property, carbon credits, synthetic natural assets like that, it could be art, or music, or votes. Votes and assets, something of value that belongs to somebody. Copying those things is not a good idea. You don't want someone copying your identity or your vote. And if I send you a $1000, it's really important that I don't still have the money. Now cryptographers have called this the double spend problem for a long time.

0:16:57 Don: And the way that we manage this problem in our economy is through intermediaries: Banks, stock exchanges, transfer agents, brokers, credit card companies, governments, social media companies. They perform all of the business and transaction logic for every type of commerce. They identify that you are who you are, they identify the asset, they clear and settle all the transactions and communications, and they keep records. And overall, they do a pretty good job, but there are growing problems. And we document these in Blockchain Revolution, the book, extensively.

0:17:40 Don: They're all being hacked. The are two kinds of big computer systems, those that have been hacked and those that will be hacked. But there are other problems, too. That two billion people are kept out of the global financial market. They take too long. Why does it take seven days to send money from one country to another? It's ridiculous. And why are you charged 10% by Western Union? Ever heard of cross-border email payments? So, that's where blockchain comes in.

0:18:11 Don: So what if there were not just an Internet of Information? What if they were an Internet of Value? Some kind of vast, global distributed ledger, where anything of value, from money, securities, all this stuff that I mentioned, could be managed or transacted in a secure and private way. And that's where Bitcoin comes in, 'cause it started there. It doesn't end there. And in 2008, this anonymous person named Satoshi Nakamoto wrote a paper where he solved this double-spend problem that had been beguiling cryptographers for decades. And for the first time ever, people could do transactions peer-to-peer. And that set off a set of sparks. It's lighting up a prairie fire, meaning that it's not about Bitcoin, although Bitcoin's amazing because it works.

0:19:06 Don: But the underlying technology for the first time ever, people can trust each other, and trust to do all this stuff and trust is not achieved by an intermediary, it's achieved on cryptography and collaboration and some very clever code. So what are the examples? Pick an industry. In my TED Talk, I gave a number on blockchain I did another TED Talk earlier. I talked about something like remittances is a trillion dollars that moves around the world. People have left their ancestral lands. It's the global diaspora, and they send money back home. They get charged too much, it takes too long. Now, you can do that immediately.

0:19:54 Don: 80% of the land titles in India, 70%, the rest of the developing world, are not enforceable. So you're in Honduras, some dictator comes to power, he says, "You may have a piece of paper says you're on your farm, but the government computer says you don't own your farm. My [0:20:13] ____ owns your farm." And this happened on a mass basis. So you put land titles on a blockchain and nobody can mess with that. So I mean, those would be two of many, many examples, but wherever you are in the economy, whatever industry you're in, whatever hat you're on, there's an opportunity for this internet of value to make things better.

0:20:40 Jacob: So you say Internet of Value. So I understand for something that has an agreed-upon value, like something that you're selling, something that you're buying. What about something that maybe has an intangible value, like an idea, a song, something that you create that doesn't necessarily have a monetary value yet, how does blockchain fit into that?

0:21:05 Don: Value is price, of course, it's determined. It's a relationship between a buyer and the seller, and buyers and sellers have different ways of discovering price. But in the case of music, typically a creator of the music, the seller of the music will assign a value to it. So, Apple says this MP3 is worth such and such or Spotify says, "You pay us this amount monthly and we'll stream this stuff to you." But it's a really good example, because think about what the Internet of Information did to that asset, a song.

0:21:51 Don: If you were... Because it broke our intellectual property regime and it destroyed the value. So if you were a songwriter, 35 years ago, you wrote a Platinum song, a million stream... Sorry, a million singles, you get $46,000 in royalties. Today, a million streams will get you 35 bucks.

0:22:13 Jacob: Wow, that's an actual...

0:22:16 Don: Yeah, yeah, we did this research for the book. So what if there were an Internet of Value? The basic problem is that we treated that asset, something of value, as if it were information. We just copied it, right? We all did this, everybody listening or watching, just... We'd send MP3 files around to people, and the end result was this is very damaging to the songwriters and to the real creators of art. So imagine if you could post your song, and Imogen Heap, the British singer-

songwriter, Grammy winner's already done this. She posts a song on this blockchain platform.

0:23:01 Don: And the song is inside something called a smart contract. And the smart contract protects your intellectual property rights and governs the sale or use of the song. So if you wanna listen to the song, it's free. You wanna put the song in your movie and the song says to the movie producer, "Well, what do you wanna do?" Background music you're gonna... And somebody sings it, it's gonna be the theme song, and the way she describes it is my song acts as a business, protecting my intellectual property rights, and protecting the value that I created. So that's a perfect example of how blockchain can move us towards a world where the real creators of value are fairly compensated for that value.

0:23:50 Jacob: Interesting, okay, so what then happens to all of the intermediaries 'cause like you said, right now there's always kind of a middle man that goes between the buyer or the seller or the person sharing the idea, the person receiving it. So if that can just be done directly peer-to-peer, what's the impact for those intermediaries? They just disappear?

0:24:11 Don: Well, Alex... Alex Toms got my co-author. He's also my son. We do not say the intermediaries are gonna be wiped out, but the value in the middle will change. And there is this thing called disintermediation, and in 1994 in the Digital Economy, I wrote about this. I said, "Now, if you're in the middle, you gotta rethink your value if you're in the information industry, like say you're a bookseller." And I said, "But it doesn't mean you'd be wiped out, it means that you need to re-intermediate, there's the creation of new value in the middle."

0:24:54 Don: Back then I said, "I think the opportunity to create new value, may be bigger than the old disintermediation." And that of course was true. I mean, look at... Barns and Noble suffered, but look at Amazon, it's the most valuable company in the world now. It's in the middle, right in that space. So I said, "The problem is, the leaders of the old middle are not typically the ones to create the new middles."

0:25:22 Don: So what happens to these people? Well, we're of the view the future is not something to be predicted, it's something to be achieved. It depends on what they do. And traditional people in the middle, I'd say Western Union, I wouldn't think that they have a huge chance. I don't know the company very well, but I don't see a lot of signs that they're trying to innovate a whole new model for remittances globally, using this technology. So it's really up to you.

0:25:54 Jacob: Yeah, yeah. Makes a lot of sense. So when we think of the future of work, 'cause that's a lot of what I spend time exploring. The podcast here, The Future of Work podcast. When you think about blockchain and how this might impact work or business, does this have the potential to impact the listeners, the viewers of this, on a day-to-day? Or would we not even know that this is happening and it's just kind of in the background?

0:26:22 Don: Well, I think it affects people very profoundly, more so than the Internet of Information. But it's playing out very differently. Back in the day, anyone who was around in 1995 and old enough to sort of log on to something, all of a sudden they had this thing called the World Wide Web, where you could pull up information. That was tough. It took a long time for a web page to load on a screen, and it didn't do much. I remember when the web came out, I ran upstairs, and I grabbed my kids, and I said, "This is it. It's happening. Look, there's a browser now. It's called... " Excuse me, "It's called Mosaic. And you can go and access all the information in the world."

0:27:09 Don: And so I pulled up Mr. Potato Head. It took about 10 minutes to do this. And I showed it to eight-year-old Alex, however old he was. He kind of looked at it and he's like, "But what do you do with Mr. Potato Head, Dad?", and he wasn't that impressed. Now, over time, that evolved and anybody could put up a website and all of a sudden, you as an end user, we're doing stuff. You were using the first app of the Internet of Information email.

0:27:40 Don: And then after that it became texting, just like the first app of the Internet of Value was Bitcoin. But the way this is happening is we're messing with very big, deep structural things here, like how the financial system works, like how corporations can orchestrate capability to create value, like what happens in a supply chain. So it's gonna take a while for the end user stuff to really kick in. But if you're a Filipino housekeeper in New York and you're sending your money to your mom, that's a really big deal for you as a person. If you're a musician who doesn't get fairly compensated for your work, that would be a really big thing as well.

0:28:26 Jacob: So it sounds like the impact then will start in certain areas and then kind of evolve and grow into maybe more, I don't know if you could call it more established businesses, but kind of mainstream work, so to speak?

0:28:39 Don: Yes and no, because you look at something like Libra, that if Facebook can pull that off, a global currency for anyone using Facebook, that's a big if. But if it would, you have 2.5 billion people, then all of a sudden, well, let's say one tenth of those started using it. This is by far the biggest retail bank in the world. And Western Union's remittances business would be in deep, big trouble if that occurs, so I would think.

0:29:19 Don: And that's something that's a very personal kind of thing. You would bring hundreds of millions of people into the global financial system almost overnight, that could be the biggest boom to eliminating poverty since electrification. Now, should corporations be the ones that are delivering a new global currency? Well, that's a good debate to have.

0:29:43 Don: And nation states are now getting into it too, China being the first one out, their own fiat currency will be a cryptocurrency for the whole country. And then the plan there is to move into Africa, probably. Moving to Africa and start to expand it around the world. And it becomes the currency of record to replace the US dollar. So there's a lot of big stuff, but this is stuff that affects people that's at the heart of the whole financial system. It's not like it's going from the little stuff, the edge is into the core.

0:30:23 Don: Blockchain starts in the core in a lot of ways. Reliance Industries, in India, has 300 million customers on its Jio mobile platform. Their CEO there, Mukesh Ambani, wants to roll out blockchain as a platform to all of those people, bringing them into the financial system. Well, people are saying, "Well, it's not much going on," or, "I don't see anything." They're not looking very deep, 'cause this is really big stuff.

0:30:54 Don: It's one thing to have access to information. If you're a super poor person in India, it's another thing to have the ability to do transactions, and to borrow, and to buy things, and to have your land title protected. This is way more material than just being able to see the equivalent of Mr. Potato Head on the screen.

[chuckle]

0:31:13 Jacob: I was just gonna ask you about that, 'cause I've interviewed probably over 300 guests now on this show in various backgrounds. Some chief digital officers, CTOs, and I get mixed things when I ask them about blockchain. I get some who say that they are excited about it and they're starting to see some potential implications, and I get others. And these are chief digital officers of big companies who say that it's still too early, and they don't see the impact yet, and they're kind of not sure, and it's more of those things that they're waiting for. But it sounds like they're just not going deep enough into the implications of what it might have.

0:31:57 Don: Well, there's some truth to it, in the sense that the technology still is relatively immature. Blockchains don't interact together. You can't replace Visa yet, because of the scalability, the throughput transaction speed is not quite there. These are interfaces, they're still pretty terrible. But there are all kinds of other big impediments that are making this thing move slowly. It's not just the old law that we tend to overestimate the impact of technology in the short-term and underestimate it in the long-term. It's something much bigger than that.

0:32:41 Don: That, with the Internet of Information, you are messing around with the information industries. Which are important; newspapers, books, television, stuff like that. And eventually, that trickled into some other industries like, say retail. But with the Internet of Value, you're disrupting very fundamental things about how the economy works; money, the whole financial system, the nature of the corporation.

0:33:12 Don: And this is gonna take a while, but I think the people who say, "This is taking a while," are right. People who say, "This is not important technology," are making a terrible mistake because I've been at this now for four decades. And I may be wrong, but I'm convinced that the cluster of technologies around blockchain are the most profound technologies, moreso maybe than AI and machine learning, in terms of their impact on the economy and on the way that things work, the way that society works as well.

0:33:54 Jacob: So since we're streaming this live, I'm actually getting a couple questions that are coming in as well. And here's actually a good question for you from David McGrath. And he says, "Bitcoin and blockchain is 11 years old now. Don, what do you see in the next 10 years?"

0:34:14 Don: Well, first thing, compared to the Internet of Information, 11 years old would put us into what? 1988? Seven years before the web, 15 years before Google, 19 years before Facebook and social media. But I'm not assuming that was a pejorative preamble to the statement. It's a great question, and I'm not a futurist, I don't talk about, "This is exactly what's gonna happen in the future." I think the future is something to be achieved.

0:34:58 Don: But if you look around today and you see the way that blockchain is having an early impact, I think that in the financial services industry where it started, it's already disrupting the way that we raise money. Venture capital is, I don't know, maybe $100 billion around the world, that almost half of that, over the last few years, almost half that amount has been raised in blockchain-based crowdfunding events, badly-labeled "ICOs", initial coin offerings. It's a bad label 'cause you're selling a token, it's not always a coin. It can be all kinds of different assets.

0:35:47 Don: In financial services, trade finance, we have trains, boats, and planes, and trucks, and borders, and escrow agents, and tax authorities, and transfer agents and all these different stuff moving around, and sending faxes and emails, and phoning each other up, and meeting and having... Accessing primitive computer systems. Imagine all of that on a shared network state where

real-time, you can see what happens, where there's now three-day settlement period for things 'cause the payment and the settlement is the same activity, it's just a change to the ledger, where you have a single version of the truth.

0:36:28 Don: So trade finance all around the world is moving to blockchain. And there are a number of other big changes that are going on in that industry, but that's one of 20 industries in society. I think supply chains is a big one. Blockchain is in... That's a $50 trillion industry, for the same reasons. Federal, FedEx says they're going to rebuild the logistics industry around this technology.

0:37:00 Jacob: Wow.

0:37:01 Don: And they're partnering with DHL and UPS, their fiercest competitors. An exec at FedEx says to me, "Blockchain's a team sport. It's not like the old days. FedEx, you build a great network, you stick your logo on it, you roll it out to the world." He says, "We're not changing the entire industry, we need everybody in the industry, including our competitors, to cooperate." So a really big one I'm so excited about, is the idea of our identities. And normally, people think all about identification, that's not what I'm talking about, it's the tip of the iceberg. That you think about it, the virtual you. The virtual Jacob knows more about Jacob than you do.

0:37:52 Jacob: It is true. [chuckle]

0:37:53 Don: You can't remember what your body a year ago, said a year ago. Or what your heart rate was a year ago, or what medication...

0:38:00 Jacob: So Don, you're freaking me out.

[chuckle]

0:38:04 Don: Well, and I mentioned what? Four categories of data, of the dozens or hundreds. So the way that Alex and I talk about it, is that we sort of have this digital feudalism. Now anyone that listens and took history, European history, all around the world, before capitalism, pretty much in most countries, there was feudalism. You weren't paid a wage by a company, companies didn't exist in the same way. You were tied to the land, it was all about the land owners. And you had a plot of land, and you created some value, some produce. The landlord took most of it away, but you got to keep some of it. Well, today, the new asset class is data. And Jacob, you create all this data, but it's taken away from you, and you get to keep a few cabbages.

0:39:03 Don: So that means that you can't use this data to plan your life, you can't monetize a data and a handful of small companies are doing that. It means that it's not secure, it's gonna get hacked probably, and your privacy is being undermined. When people say to me, "Well, Don, privacy is dead, get over it." I think that's foolishness. Privacy is the foundation of freedom, and we need to get our identities back, so that we could manage them responsibly for ourselves. And if you look into this, the kind of data that corporations have on us now that are being aggregated together, there is actually the virtual you is a thing, the virtual Jacob is a thing out there.

0:39:53 Don: And if I pay the right amount of money, I can go and I can learn all about you. Well, that's not a problem, right? 'Cause corporations can deliver better service to us. Well, sure. That's true. And corporations too have a legitimate interest in accessing this data. But I don't know. What's

it like for a company or companies to have perfect information about us? Do we ever do things that are not in our interest 'cause companies convinced us to do so?

0:40:27 Don: So that's kind of a long preamble to the bottom line, which is that we can now, with blockchain, have a self-sovereign identity. It's in a black box, we own it, it sweeps up all this transactional data, it's capturing your heart rate and all the rest of this stuff, you own it, you manage it for yourself. So you just got an x-ray, that radiology report is yours. It's in your identity, you can get another opinion or anonymize it and give it to science, or anonymize it, sell it, or do whatever you like. It's not science fiction, this is happening.

0:41:03 Jacob: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it is scary. I mean, I... Yeah, nobody ever reads in terms of service when they log in to Netflix or buy something on Amazon, or use iTunes or Spotify. But the amount of data that we give away whenever we use these platforms is just staggering.

0:41:19 Don: Yeah.

0:41:20 Jacob: And you mentioned earlier sort of like you don't really have a choice. If you want the convenience of Netflix, the convenience of iTunes, of Amazon, then it's like you gotta give it to them. So you're... I don't...

0:41:32 Don: Well, it does raise a big issue about how we get there.

0:41:36 Jacob: Yeah.

0:41:36 Don: And again, it gets back to your question about this intermediation of re-intervention. I think we're gonna see some of these companies and I certainly argue it to them that we'll be more enlightened, and we'll think there's a legitimate consumer and social interest here that we, as a good principled company that cares about our customers and about the world within which we operate, and we're gonna migrate towards a new model where customers have more access, control, and even ownership, of their data, but we're gonna do that in a way that we can benefit too.

0:42:16 Don: Because when they succeed, there's a way that we can succeed too. And big data is not gonna go, it's gonna be tiny data that we're gonna have access to. Now, we might have to pay a little bit for it, but that will be a good investment on our part, and this data is gonna be better, 'cause it's gonna be authenticated in all kinds of ways that we can authenticate data today. If someone says they got a B+ on their biology seventh lab, we'll know that, because on this identity, it will be revealed that that was attested to by this person at this biology professor at that university. So data can be better and bigger in this new environment. How we get there? This is a long complicated story, but I think it's a goal worth fighting for.

0:43:11 Jacob: Would we get that granular? Because when you thought about, for example... Or when you mentioned the biology test, I was thinking, "Can it be also used as a way to evaluate leaders inside of organizations, or an employee when they get a performance review? Does Blockchain have implications in the world of talent and leadership, and how we evaluate talent inside of companies?"

0:43:34 Don: Sure. Well, you have a self-sovereign identity, all your employee and performance data goes into that too. Now, it's up to you what you wanna reveal to your employer, and chances are if you wanna get ahead, you're going to reveal lots if you're a good person. And so what you are

prepared to reveal may in part become a determinant of your success within... Or at least your mobility within the workforce. I mean, these are all tough issues, and I always like to put them in one of two boxes. Box number one, the reason why this is a bad idea, and we shouldn't do it. And then box number two, we call implementation challenges, things to be managed in this new environment.

0:44:25 Jacob: No, that makes sense. And then how does the world of AI fit within this? Because I remember, I think it was either in a talk that you gave or in an article that you were featured in, you were talking about there's gonna be a lot of implications of AI, economies will be disrupted, that massive areas will see job loss. Do you think we're gonna see more of a negative impact from AI, or a positive kind of optimistic impact from AI?

0:44:54 Don: Well, I guess it depends on how you define "negative".

0:45:00 Jacob: It's true.

0:45:00 Don: It's negative if someone loses their job, and they don't have something else to do. It's positive if we wipe out entire sectors of the economy and have a new social contract that frees up those people to do things which are even more important, 'cause there are lots of things to be done. But, you combine Blockchain and AI, this is pretty strong stuff. So you think about... You think about, well, first of all, AI's gonna be distributed. It's not gonna run on some giant super computer. These are gonna be autonomous agents moving around on blockchains, buying and selling things, and learning and then re-programming themselves to do things that they didn't previously know how to do.

0:45:53 Don: Or it could be something really simple, like letting that light bulb purchase some power from a distributed power source, and then re-establishing the reputation of the light bulb as a trust worthy device, 'cause it pays for the power that it buys. Something as trivial as that, to something that in an operating theater that's realizing that something needs to be done here and it's not being done and it goes and does a transaction and purchases a certain medication or something to save somebody's life. But you combine smart contracts with these autonomous agents.

0:46:31 Don: And, well, in Blockchain Revolution we hypothesized that you could eventually have a company that had no management, no CEO, and no people. And we call it a Decentralized Autonomous Organization. It's a bunch of these things moving around on blockchains doing stuff. We almost didn't publish it because it was so futuristic. And then but we did, and then the week after the book came out this... Something was launched called an autonomous... A Decentralized Autonomous Organization, and it was eventually the operative company.

0:47:08 Jacob: I remember reading that. Wasn't it in Japan or Hong...

0:47:12 Don: No, not... Well, it was kind of all over the place, but [0:47:16] ____ in the US. But it was a company with no people, and it raised $164 million.

0:47:23 Jacob: Wow.

0:47:24 Don: By conducting a crowdfunding campaign. And then it went about its business, creating value. Now, it's not a totally happy ending 'cause there was a coding error in one of the smart contract facilities, and the creators of this thing decided to give the money back. But the fact

that this could exist, Bob Dylan, you know, "There's something going on here and you don't know what it is." So you extrapolate that up to the level of the society and top 48 to 50 states in the US, the number one job type is truck driver. And then that's gone, not in a century, in a decade I think, most of it. Number one job type for women is cashier. Been to a drug store recently...

[overlapping conversation]

0:48:13 Jacob: Yeah.

0:48:14 Don: So I've written a lot about this, and if anyone's interested, they can just Google my name and the new social contract. I called it a Declaration of Interdependence. And you can actually go there and I drafted here are the big disruptions and here's what we're gonna have to do to fix these problems.

0:48:38 Jacob: It seems like blockchain more recently is getting a lot more attention than it has in the past. Are there specific trends that are really forcing organizations and leaders to take a blockchain more seriously now than three years ago, five years ago?

0:48:56 Don: Well, it sort of cyclical or it's up and down. I mean for the first few years it was real slow burn up. And then what happened was the whole opportunity to invest in crypto took off. And the crypto tail wagged the blockchain dog for a while, then in 2008 in January the crypto market crashed. And the next two years you saw various pundits and people saying, "Well that was a big scam or that I was nothing." But then crypto came back and more important, we started to see these early implementations of blockchain which by the way can involve crypto. Crypto is not just about Bitcoin, it's about any digital asset. This is the biggest transformation of assets from physical to digital ever. So and right now it's back with... And then the big thing that's bumped it up of courses is first Libra from Facebook.

0:50:01 Jacob: Yeah, that was a huge That was huge news.

0:50:03 Don: And then that accelerated the plans of the government in China to roll out its CBDC, Central Bank digital currency. And then the Feds started wondering, "Oh my God, they're on the way to becoming the currency of record in the world replacing US Dollar." And then you have the head of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, saying, "We should replace the US Dollar. We need to bring all these digital currencies, once they roll out, together," into what he called a "global hegemonic synthetic currency".

0:50:39 Don: It's a mouthful, but this is basically what Keynes was arguing at Bretton Woods in 1944, a global currency. So weirdly the sort of currency issue, not Bitcoin, but corporate currencies and then state-based or fiat currencies is a big driver causing a lot of people to look at this thing again. And then there are... We are getting really good research now too. We've created or are creating 300 research deliverables at the Blockchain Research Institute.

0:51:12 Don: And before we go, I should mention that we've also developed four full online courses through Coursera. And this is in partnership with INSEAD, which I see I happen to be, this is not intentional, but I'm wearing my INSEAD...

0:51:25 Jacob: I see it. It's a good looking vest you got on there.

0:51:28 Don: This is not an INSEAD branded thing, by the way, I was just cold here in my apartment. But yeah, it took us almost a million dollars to build these courses. 250 videos, 250 quizzes. And the final course is a practicum where you need to figure out a use case in your industry. So if you go to INSEAD and you ask for blockchain in the enterprise, or just Google my name and Coursera... Did I say go to INSEAD? I mean go to Coursera and you can find it.

0:52:07 Don: And It's free to take the whole first part of them, it's not expensive, like $79 or something. So anyway, there's stuff like that that... My TED Talk, it's like many millions of people, and there are all kinds of things that these things take time but what you get is this thing which we could describe is uneven, but then combined development, where things just start to take off. And I could be wrong, but I sense a very strong head of steam penetrating many industries on this topic.

0:52:40 Jacob: Yeah. Well, before we wrap up maybe last two pieces of advice that maybe you can offer people. So the first would be, advice that you have for non-leaders of organizations, just for the average person like me, like people listening, what should we be doing about blockchain, if anything? And the second piece of advice would be specifically for leaders of organizations who have the decision-making power, the budget, what should they be doing about blockchain, if anything?

0:53:12 Don: Okay, well if you're a consumer, you're wearing a consumer hat or a parent hat or an entrepreneur hat or a citizen hat, and you care about society, there are lots of different hats that we all wear. If this is right, what I'm saying, that we're getting something that's bigger than the internet emerging here, then that's a really big deal. And I always find there two kinds of people, whether in a mahogany row in a boardroom, or whether it's just somebody I run into.

0:53:52 Don: And it's, and this is a bit arbitrary, but there are people who are curious and those who aren't. "Well, Tapscott, he's called most of the really big ones over for decades, and he thinks its a really big deal, it's gonna affect everything and everybody. Maybe he's right. I think I'll check it out, try and learn some more." And that's the very first thing that you can do, check it out, and the more you check out, you read a book, you watch...

0:54:24 Jacob: Yeah, watch your Ted Talk. It was a great primer, I watched it.

0:54:28 Don: Yeah, and it's the power of TED, every day I run into people who say, "This is my whole world now, is 'cause I watched that talk." But take the course, and then all kinds of opportunities are gonna open up for you, 'cause when you start to get curious and learn about this stuff, there's just so many different angles and interests, whether you care about including things in society, or making money as an entrepreneur, whatever.

0:55:00 Don: So if you run a big corporation, it doesn't matter what function you're in, say, well CEO is obvious. CEO, now, they set the corporate culture by their own behavior whether they intend to or not, are you gonna show some curiosity around this thing and start to put in place the resources so that you can make sure that you don't get wiped out, and that you do the right thing and that you can re-intermediate?

0:55:32 Don: CFO, the financial person, it's called triple entry accounting. For 350 years we've had a debt and a credit. Soon there'll be a third entry on a blockchain, which is like a real-time audit. So you won't need an audit at the end of the year, not the way that we used to, because you can do an audit at 2:00 this afternoon.

0:55:56 Don: And government, you won't have a auditor general come in and say, "We found a really big problem from nine months ago. It's gonna be at 2 o'clock in the afternoon." "What? Well, there's a problem, I gotta fix that." But the CMO blockchain is beginning to have a really interesting set of opportunities around the branding and around knowing the provenance of things. If you look at something like you're in the food industry, and the food chain, you can know the provenance of an avocado. Walmart is using blockchain for produce like that. Or fish, a quarter of the fish...

0:56:37 Jacob: You know where it comes from, you know every, who touched your product.

0:56:42 Don: Well, for starters, the fish, a quarter of them are not labeled accurately, they're just fish labelled as expensive fish. Or endangered fish labelled as okay fish. So you can know what your fish actually is, but also how old it really is, and what it ate. And if it was on medication, and what temperature it was, as it moves along the food chain and so on. So if you're in marketing or in supply chains, big opportunities there. We've done a lot of work on what blockchain means for CIO and IT people, and there are many, many implications there.

0:57:20 Don: So HR, I'm actually doing a big talk, I can't wait. It's called, Rethinking Work for the Second Era of the Digital Age. It's gonna be in Miami, it's a big conference. And it comes up early in the year, February, March of next year, and I'm quite looking forward to that. And because, what does it mean to have an identity with all this data about you? You don't actually own it. And you can make decisions about it, that's a very powerful thing. And many of the things that we dreamed about when I wrote Wikinomics, which is really about mass collaboration, those ideas were in part waiting for technology that can enable those ideas to take hold in the reality.

0:58:12 Jacob: Yeah, no, makes a lot of sense. Well, we're pretty much near the end of our time but somebody was asking, they sell the guitars in the background so I have to ask you this question and they said, what is your favorite song to play, and why?

0:58:31 Don: Right now, I have a granddaughter and over at my daughter's house, I have a ukulele and her favorite song that I play for her is, Hey, Good Lookin. What You Got Cooking? So I need to cook up something with me, but I'm in a band obviously, this is the...

0:58:58 Jacob: Men In Suits.

0:59:00 Don: Yeah, the name of the band is, Men In Suits. This is sort of... I got a pretty good set up here at home, where you can't really see it, but there's keyboards over there and stuff.

0:59:09 Jacob: All sorts of craziness going on over there.

0:59:12 Don: But the song is called, Morning Light. And you can just get it for free. It's at meninsuitsmusic.com.

0:59:23 Jacob: And very last question, I wanted to congratulate you. I heard you had two grandchildren from two different kids, born within 12 hours of each other, which I don't think I've ever heard of anything like that. So that's quite an amazing...

0:59:38 Don: Yeah, it was in the same city, in different hospitals.

0:59:42 Jacob: Wow.

0:59:44 Don: Little... The eldest, I'm sure will rein over the 11-year-old younger cousin for a long time. "My little cousin", stuff like that. That's what will go down there.

0:59:56 Jacob: I'm sure. Well, I have a three-year-old, so I'm just learning the ropes, so to speak. But I just wanna give you a big congratulations, 'cause that's very, very exciting.

1:00:08 Don: It's a great thing. And they say that being a grandparent is awesome because you can walk away. But that's not it. It hasn't for me at least. When you're young parent, Jacob, you know this, you're just trying to stay alive.

[chuckle]

1:00:25 Don: Every minute with your kids is trying to get them to do something or to go somewhere, or you're trying to teach them stuff. And whereas with a grandparent, pure joy. Just playing out. I built... Those two kids are seven months, but there's a 18 months older. I have a granddaughter, and she and I built a Lego train over... She's two. We built a Lego train, it took us an hour.

1:00:57 Jacob: Wow.

1:01:00 Don: The stuff that we had on that train, it had a long column with a birthday cake on the top, and she found a candle that went on the birthday cake. [chuckle] What a joyous experience. And I didn't have to go anywhere. She had nothing to do. We just chilling.

1:01:15 Jacob: Well, I love that, with all the stuff that you have going on, and with all the travel with all the speaking, you still make for the family stuff. So I think that's something we all can do a better job of. Where can people go to learn more about you? Anything that you wanna mention? You mentioned your course on Coursera. You have the Blockchain Research Institute. Anything that you wanna mention for people to check out, please feel free to do so. Any urls or products you wanna throw out there?

1:01:40 Don: Well, google my name, Don Tapscott in Ted, and that talk will come up. Blockchain Revolution, if you're gonna get it, get the new edition. In North America, it's a paperback with a yellow band across the top, because we've updated it and it's got 25,000 new words. Take the course, you'll be a world leader. If you can... You can do it on the side, easily, over two or three months. And it's almost free, it costs almost nothing. And if you're with a big company, or early stage company in this space, think about getting your company to join the Blockchain Research Institute, that's blockchainresearchinstitute.org. And we're doing like $10 million worth of work in this area.

1:02:39 Jacob: Wow.

1:02:41 Don: And the other thing is, April 7th and 8th, we're holding a huge event in Toronto. Last year, we had 130 speakers. It was Imogen Heap, British singer songwriter, I mentioned, performed at it. And it's called blockchain Revolution Global. And if you go there, Blockchain Revolution Global, April 7th and 8th in Toronto. You'll see the whole deal on that too, and tickets right now are massively discounted, and they will be for another few days, I think.

1:03:16 Jacob: Very cool. Well, Don, I know you're super busy, so I really appreciate you taking time out of your day to speak with me. It was a lot of fun, I learned a lot. I hope everybody both watching and listening to the podcast when it goes live learn a lot as well, and make sure to check out Don's site, the course, the book. And the TED Talk. He's super easy to find. So Don, thank you. Thank you again.

1:03:37 Don: Thanks Jacob. So long.