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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00:43 Jacob: Hello everyone and thanks for joining me for another episode of The Future Work with Jacob Morgan. Today, I'm very excited. We're joined by a Jeremy Gutsche, he's the author of a brand new book which I actually have right here.

01:01 Jeremy: Awesome.

01:02 Jacob: Hopefully, you guys can all see it. And it's a very... Actually, I suppose that's the actual front of it, and it's called "Create the Future: Tactics for Disruptive Thinking." And he's also the man responsible for a company called Trend Hunter, which I'm sure we'll talk about as well. So Jeremy, thank you for joining me today.

01:20 Jeremy: Thanks for having me on the show.

01:23 Jacob: So, I have lots of questions for you, and especially with what's going on in the world, we have a lot to talk about. But to get started, why don't you give us a little bit of information just about you, what you do, how you got involved with all this sort of stuff?

01:35 Jeremy: Sure. Yeah, so I mean, my story is that I was always a guy who wanted to find my business idea but I could never figure out what it should be, from when I was a little kid. And that leads you to the wonderful world of innovation. And I was running innovation for a bank, but truthfully, I was trying to figure out my own business idea. And so, back in 2005, before YouTube, before Facebook, I coded up trendhunter.com, as a place where people from around the world could share business ideas. And truthfully, I hope some trend hunter in South America or a trend hunter in Asia would submit the little idea that would inspire my own venture. And what I didn't expect is that so many people around the world are looking for their purpose, their business, their idea. And so, traffic went from thousands to millions to billions, pretty soon we had more traffic than any newspaper in the world at a certain point in time, and that was exciting. But around then is when we really changed things around to try and create a business model of it, and we turned it into basically like a giant innovation focus group. So now, I've had a really cool opportunity to work with about 700 brands and now about 10,000 projects, and my team and I have learned a lot from that, and that's what I really wanted to bake in to create the future. What we've learned from a decade and a half of just helping so many people figure out what's their optimal path.

02:56 Jacob: Very cool. Yeah, that sounds like quite an exciting thing that you're involved with over there. And, well, I suppose I should address the elephant in the room, which is, what's going on today with Coronavirus? So, as we're doing this. By the time people hear the podcast version of this, it'll be a couple of weeks since, so hopefully by the time you listen to the podcast the Corona stuff should be, hopefully pretty much gone away.

03:19 Jeremy: Right. The wildest part of the chaotic uncertainty will be. You know it's interesting, because my first book was actually called Exploiting Chaos. It's actually... Was version one of the second side of this book. And I had written Exploiting Chaos in 2008, right before the world went chaotic, and that became my... I guess, it became my break. I was the chaos guy in the right place at the right time, and pretty soon I started getting calls from Fortune 500 clients, who were about to go through their really difficult periods of chaos, and I'd come in and you help one or two, and pretty soon you got to help 10, 20, 50, 100, and you become the chaos guy. And I learned a lot from that entire experience. It really did shape our whole consulting practice, and a lot of the tactics in this book are actually about how would you innovate in times of uncertainty and how would you find your optimal path at the time of chaos? So, I guess from that standpoint, sadly this book is once again timed at the right time, but here's what I learned in that.

04:21 Jeremy: Chaos creates opportunity always. And what happens is that we get intimidated by the doom and gloom of bad times. But actually, if you look in history, what happens is that we get caught in a groove. Successful people get caught in a groove. Successful people are the ones that miss out and get disrupted because we get caught on a path of repeating past decisions. And chaos changes that. So if you look historically, you will see an astounding list of companies that were founded during periods actually of economic recession. Disney, HP, Apple, Burger King, Fortune Magazine, the list goes on and on, I've got about 50 in the book, but these are all companies that were actually started in a period of recession. And of course, this is a difficult time that we're in with Coronavirus. It is going to spark different opportunities, people are trying new things, like more of these virtual seminars, ideas, we're starting to rethink about what's important and why.

05:20 Jeremy: And after 2008, there was a return to the kitchen and people started thinking about the importance of their family and hobby businesses, and getting the most out of life, and we're gonna see that sort of thing trickle out of this. So we're gonna go through a really difficult weird uncertain time, but this period that forces us to rethink about work, will cause business models to evolve and consumer mindset, you know, people's individual needs and desires are changing by the minute.

05:49 Jacob: What's actually really interesting because there have been a couple of articles that have been written which basically, they look at how this Coronavirus has propelled so many organizations to become more forward thinking, you know, work from home, policies and practices, how to use technology, performance reviews, how leaders lead teams that they can't actually see. So, within a very short time period, a lot of organizations have been having to rethink their workplace practices. So from that perspective, it's been really, really interesting to see and watch. It's just a shame that it took something like a virus to get everybody to...

06:26 Jeremy: Sure.

06:26 Jacob: They can actually do these things.

06:28 Jeremy: And this one's not proven yet, but if I was to hope for a silver lining, I think what's interesting is, especially if we look at the generational approach, in a hundred different ways, we've already seen how Gen Zs are much more cognizant of earth and the impact that we're having on the world. The Greta generation, if you will. And though this is not necessarily an environmental disaster, it sure is a point in time where you're thinking about your significance and size in this giant world that we're in. It's a point in time where you're locked up in your house, except for the walk

that you can take in the park. And there's a potential that for Gen Zs as they look at our management and mismanagement of this entire process, it will get wrapped up in a whole ball of the importance of the world and thinking a little bit more significantly about that. I think there is a potential impact that I would hope for, which drives forward some of the world's views and support of sustainability.

07:24 Jacob: Yeah, no, I certainly hope so. And I think we're starting to see that as well. What do you think the long-term implications of something like coronavirus is gonna be? Are you seeing a lot of organizations, are they learning from this? Is it making them more innovative, able to deal with failure in the future, or are they just kind of still not getting it?

07:48 Jeremy: Well, technically, we're all going through a lesson in resilience, and chaos does create opportunity. Consumer needs have entirely changed, but I think that at this stage, maybe not when people are listening to this, but in the first couple weeks of somewhat as chaotic or traumatic, there's sort of a crisis reaction to, "Let's just figure out how to get functioning and operating." There's an initial phase where you're just deer-in-the-headlight, trying to figure out what are the next moves, but what's gonna happen right after is that there's gonna be a bit of a shake-out. Companies will change. Products and services will change. Some companies will grasp to the past and just hope that things return, while others are much more aggressive about rolling out their disruptive plans. And what you see is in these time periods is when disruption actually accelerates, not always because of which companies are financially strong and which are weak, but because of which ones are more likely right now to take advantage of the opportunity for change.

08:50 Jeremy: There's a part I get into in Create the Future, where what we've sort of observed in working with about 700 brands, is that you could classify companies based on their self-perception of importance. And there's the companies that feel like their world is falling apart and they're paranoid. There's the companies where they feel like they're doing well, and then there's the companies that are para insatiable on the other end, where they're in number one and they wanna stay number one. Now, the last category, that's like 1% of companies. That's way smaller than you think. That's maybe Google and Amazon and a couple others in the world, and they innovate because they're paranoid to stay number one. The issue is that there's a middle 80% of companies that believe they're doing well, and those are the ones that get disrupted. And interestingly, that group on the bottom right now that feels threatened and scared, they're the ones that try something new, and that's what leads to the disruption of those that are sitting in the background, thinking the world will return to where it is.

09:49 Jeremy: There's a Harvard study that says that this act of disruption happens in three phases. The first is that new people try little ideas and the incumbents don't really worry. They don't care about it. Phase two is that more traction happens and you start to get more followers of whatever this new idea is. But the big incumbents don't really worry 'cause they think, "Well, that new company, that new service is just taking a small share of the market." But step three is called the knockout punch, and that's what nobody expects, which is that something happens, maybe a period like this of crisis or chaos or turmoil, or a competitor comes in and buys this new start-up or there's new funding that becomes available, and all of a sudden, that new little start-up becomes the new dominant player. This is the shake-out and this is when it all happens.

10:38 Jacob: Yeah. And I don't know, I've seen this as well and I don't know if you've seen this too, but it seems to me like most organizations wait until times of stress and chaos and uncertainty, to focus on any kind of innovation, whereas instead it probably makes more sense, even while the company is doing well to focus on innovation and disruption and what you could do differently.

Have you seen that at all with the organizations?

11:06 Jeremy: Sure. Yeah, a big thing that we study at Trend Hunter through an assessment tool that we have put 35,000 or so executives through, which is in Create The Future as well, but it's about the hunter versus the farmer. And the way that I would like to contrast or describe it, is that a million years ago, we were all hunters and we all have hunter instincts. And you and I are both capable of adapting when times are really difficult, but 10,000 years ago, people planted the first seeds. And when they did, we became farmers and around the world, when we became farmers, populations flourished. Great, but we also started to put in rules, policies, procedures, structures, best practices to preserve and protect whatever led to last year's harvest. Ironically, your own success is what can lead you to become disrupted, because when times are good, then we wanna follow the marketing best practice and the best standard and all of the status quo things that we've set up, and that's exactly what creates the blind spot which can block people from realizing their new opportunity. So success makes us repetitive, complacent and protective, and those three traps can block you from finding something new.

12:24 Jacob: Yeah, no. I totally agree, and I love that the success is a little bit of a double-edged sword there, it can be good and it can also be a little bit hurtful during times of required innovation and stuff like that.

12:41 Jacob: We talked a little bit about what we're seeing with corona and some of the long-term potential implications. Let's say you were advising an organization right now or a leader, how would you tell them or guide them to identify opportunities? Especially now, everyone's very chaotic. It's very uncertain. How do you find the opportunities when all this madness is happening out there?

13:05 Jeremy: The starting point would be to say that everyone already wants innovation to happen, 97% of the CEOs in PwC's annual survey, 97% say that innovation is one of their core things that they're focused on. There's already been this buy-in and now we've got this disruption. The problem, the disconnect is that within organizations, people didn't go to chaos school. They didn't go to adapting school. They didn't necessarily get an innovation degree 'cause that's not really a thing. Now, it's that time to really brush up within your organization on the tactics to make innovation and change happen, and there's lots of resources. That's fundamentally what this book is, but asides from plugging the book, more simply, it's just this idea that people haven't taken the time to study chaos and adapting. And now is when you wanna do it. And there's lots of resources out there, but the issue is now when you wanna brush up, because you want your people to have the skills to be able to identify changing consumer needs, new trends as they emerge. And there's not gonna be one solution for any particular CEO, I'm not gonna walk in as the guy and say, "Oh, here's what you're missing." But what is true is that most organizations don't have the tool kits to know how to adapt.

14:18 Jacob: I have a couple of questions here from the comments, from people who are watching live. I wanna jump to some of these before I get back to mine. And somebody was asking, what do you think is gonna happen to entrepreneurs and solopreneurs in this type of a chaotic environment? Are they gonna survive? What's gonna be the outcome for people like that? And I suppose this impacts people like you, people like me as well, because we kind of fit into that category.

14:40 Jeremy: Absolutely, I think that the difficult reality is the solo entrepreneur is actually probably better off, but any entrepreneur that has employees is in a really difficult situation. All of

the economic bailout packages that are announced help the employees with lost income or with job loss. There will be certain bailouts that happen on a financial level that make access to bank loans possible for large organizations, but right now, everything that's been proposed is totally inadequate for small to medium business. And unfortunately, that's gonna cause a pretty big shake-out. I know at my own company, at Trend Hunter, we've got about 80 people, and we are on emergency high-alert to try and figure out what are the new ways to get closer to our clients, what are the ways to get beyond even just our day-to-day working environment, but really try and figure out how we can start providing, I guess, providing new skills or services that would help people.

15:44 Jeremy: If you're an entrepreneur listening and we're still caught in this working from home period, I would go really deep in your research, push hard and hustle, and don't do that assuming there's anything you can do in the working from home period. In the working from home period, you're not gonna make money unless you have a way to sell, I don't know, a detergent and hand disinfectant, but what you could do is keep your relationship strong with your clients and customers, find ways to add value for free, give away free webinars or whatever it might be, just to try to maintain those relationships. And then once we're in potential recession period or whatever is after working from home, then things can happen and you can meet and you can do stuff again, but right now, it's a difficult period of research. Do the research. Don't expect it to work out. Be super careful of your cash flow and any employees, but be looking forward to recession because recession, if that's what's next, is not actually bad, it's still a time of opportunity for entrepreneurs.

16:44 Jacob: Oh I love the positive spin on it, because there are a lot of people out there who are freaking out and panicking, looking at their retirement accounts. Everybody's worried. I like that you have this positive outlook. That's great.

16:56 Jeremy: Well, I'll give you a great story that is one that I always find motivational. In this list of companies that were started during periods of recession, I've got it somewhere on me here. It's about 50 or 100 companies that would blow your mind, but my favorite one is Fortune Magazine. Fortune Magazine was started four months after the 1929 Wall Street crash. It was a luxury publication during the Great Depression, and it was priced at $1 an issue, which adjusted for the inflation is quite a lot. It's actually the same price as a wool sweater in the day, but despite that, during the Great Depression as a luxury business publication, Fortune ended up with 500,000 subscribers and they made $7 million of modern day profit.

17:41 Jeremy: And the reason why it seems counterintuitive, 'cause why should a business publication do well in that time? But if you dial back to the time, people were laid off and they were at their houses and they were wondering how they ended up there, what was happening in those boardrooms that led our society to be where it is, and Fortune offered a glimpse into behind the boardroom doors as to what was actually happening and when we might emerge. Put differently, Fortune was just an answer to a new consumer problem. The deck gets reshuffled, consumer needs change, but if you can spot those needs, especially as an entrepreneur for those that were listening, you can adapt much faster and come up with products and services that will actually lead you to your entire future, your legacy could come out of this point in human history.

18:32 Jacob: Yeah, I was looking at the list earlier and I actually wrote down a couple of them. FedEx, AT&T, IBM, Hyatt, Microsoft, Disney, CNN, Apple, Adobe, all those organizations came out of times of financial hardships and recession, which I didn't actually didn't even know that for a lot of these organizations. Clearly, there is opportunity to come out of this.

18:53 Jeremy: Sure.

18:53 Jacob: I'm thinking about individuals. Whether you work for an organization or whether you are a solopreneur or an entrepreneur, what do you think some of the most important mindsets or skills are to be able to deal with times of uncertainty, as far as like how you think and what you need to know how to do?

19:10 Jeremy: I think the starting point is to recognize that you're in a period where you're in a state of flow, that's the same as everybody else. So not to interpret that state as a necessarily a bad flow. I was actually on the phone with one of my clients yesterday, and she described it as being in a car and, and when you suddenly hit a patch of ice, apologies to those in LA who don't know my example, but trust me, you do it fine to not have the ice. But when you hit ice, and you're not expecting it, the human reaction is to hit the brakes right away. And that would send your car out of control. But actually, if you continue going with the flow, you can figure your way out of it. And ultimately, in a time period like this, it's an acceptance of ambiguity, recognizing everyone else is in the same situation. And on one hand, it makes you personally less comfortable, but actually, this is a time when there's a lot more permission to fail from everyone. Everyone knows you're just doing your best right now, and that creates a little bit more leniency, it creates an opportunity for awkward products and services. It's the natural apology for things. [chuckle] I mean, this time buys you a lot of leeway. And I think that's something that can help the embracing of change seem a bit more plausible.

20:32 Jacob: Well, so I'm trying to think of the mindset that's required for that. Suppose you need to be a little bit level headed, you need to have that mindset of curiosity, even during times of stress and uncertainty, like playing around with ideas and tinkering.

20:49 Jeremy: Yeah, I alluded to this hunter versus farmer before, and we talk about the farmer having three specific traps, which we went into, which is that the farmer becomes repetitive, protective and complacent. The opposite of those would be the hunter instincts to embrace. And your hunter instincts are the exact opposite of those three, curiosity, insatiability, and a willingness to destroy. And the last one's kind of interesting, because it's a willingness to destroy the old way of doing things. And it's a simple note that right now the rules of the game have changed. And if you're willing to just embrace looking into what those new rules could be, combined with your curiosity and insatiability, then you're really well prepared for the future.

21:34 Jacob: Yeah, you actually talked about, I don't know if this is a good lead segment into this, but you talked about the traps of the path to dependency, and you have this really cool story in your book, which I actually had no idea about. It was sort of two and a half by four and a half width of courses. Can you share a little bit about that? Because I was thinking of those examples. I was like "men".

21:57 Jeremy: If you want to learn about horse bots in outer space, this book will teach you that. I'm going to tell you why. 'Cause it sounds, such a ridiculous thing to tell you that I want you to learn about horse bots. But here's the lesson that's kind of interesting. There are no horses in space, but you should expect there to be two horses in space. And since you love horses so much, you should expect those horses to be four foot eight and a half inches wide. And that doesn't... At first, it seems intuitive. But the reason why is that's the width of NASA, that determined NASA solid rocket boosters. And that doesn't make sense at all. So if you wanna understand, you have to go back pretty far in time.

22:39 Jeremy: The Romans had the largest Empire, because they patrol that Empire with the two-horse Roman war chariot. The war chariot tore up the highways in Europe. And if you were a little farmer driving your wagon on one of these highways that now had ruts in it, you might break a wagon wheel. And if you did, and you were a smart farmer, you'd make your new wagon by measuring the width of those ruts in the road, and you'd realize they're four foot eight and a half inches wide, just like the width of the Roman war chariot. So pretty soon, everyone's making their wagon four foot eight and a half inches wide. Next up, we make mining carts to pull gold out of the mines on tracks pulled by horses, and we make them four foot eight and a half inches wide. The Europeans then made some of the first trains and put them on tracks that are four foot eight and a half inches wide.

23:24 Jeremy: Americans experiment with a couple of different widths, but they settle on tracks that are four foot eight and a half inches wide. So pretty soon we got all the tracks and all the trains and put in tracks for bigger, better, faster trains. We put them all in tracks that are 4.8 and a half inches wide. Solid rocket boosters from Utah down to Florida, they have to put them on tracks that are, four foot eight and a half inches wide. Now if you really dive into this, you might say, Oh, but Jeremy the width of the solid rocket boosters on the train tracks slightly over half the width a little bit, but it doesn't change the fact that the width of the solid rocket boosters for outer space are determined by two horses butts. That width is stupid, and we're probably worse off for it. But it goes to show how we get caught in a path. And everyone wants innovation to happen. But not everyone breaks free from that path. And that's effectively the metaphor for creating the future by study and the seven different traps of path dependency that cause us to get caught in a groove.

24:28 Jacob: Can we talk about some of those thoughts? Because I've experienced this even for certain organizations. Sometimes I'm speaking at a conference or just talking to an organization, and they tell me about just a practice that they have whether somebody needs to get a signature, or they need to send you some document. And then, a lot of the times they don't even know why they're doing it, it's just been that way for 50, hundred years, whether it's dress code in an organization where everyone has to wear a suit and tie, whether it's getting approvals for something, and nobody questions it anymore, it's always been like that.

25:00 Jeremy: So there's a concept that comes from social psychology in the 1950s and 60s, is called path dependency. And there's a lot of factors that lead into it. And I think in a time period of chaos like today, it becomes more important than ever to study. And some of the traps include that your new ideas are a lot more subtle than you might think, that there's an ease of an action and doing nothing at all. There's the traps of success that we talked about, the hunter versus the farmer. But what I'll give you that I love talking about is a neuropsychological trap of what happens when you get good at stuff. So when you get good at something, when Serena picks up a racket, when Oprah picks up a microphone, they do it naturally. But they didn't the first time. The first time you try something, you fumble around. That a first time you drive a car down the highway, you think about what speed you're going and you're merging into lanes, and you have to think through it, and then a year and a half it's like orange chocolate mocha cappuccino, and you know how to drive a car.

26:03 Jeremy: What happens in your brain is when you make a new neural pathway, and you practice it a few times, your brain decides you're gonna keep on doing this and so it paves that pathway with myelin. Myelin is a little white fatty tissue that makes up 40% of your brain matter, it's white matter, but think of it like little highways that tell your neural impulse where to actually

go. And the more you practice something, the thicker that highway gets and the more and more you just wanna repeat things the exact same way. So I can show it to you in two ways, and you have to do this in real life, if you're on the line, if you're watching it in video. But it's simple, but I'll show you how to see how your myelin works. As fast as you can competitively, as fast you can cross your arms, just actually do it, it's easy. You know how to do it. So now, un-cross your arms, shake it off a little bit and now as fast as you can competitively cross your arms the opposite way, the opposite way.

27:03 Jacob: Wait.

[chuckle]

27:03 Jeremy: You can kinda do it, but it's weird.

27:04 Jacob: I can't tell if just did it the same way or not.

27:06 Jeremy: Right. So you can't tell it, then you gotta double check it and you have to mechanically go through the steps. And the reason why is you have a myelinated pathway to just cross your, you know how to do it, you don't have to think about it. But when you do something the opposite, and that's not how you do it, you actually mechanically think through the steps, and that's nothing, that's crossing your arms. That's level one. Let's go to level two. So level two is something that's tougher to do on a webcast, but I like to ask people in groups, and I've done this more than 150 times, what can you do with a paper clip? What can you do with a paper clip? And people will come up with the answers, and I just let them run with it. And then in more than 150 times, I actually know what answers they'll come up with. They'll say, well with the paper clip, you can pick a lock, you can make a projectile weapon, you can clip a paper, you can trade it and get a house, you can maybe sometimes they say a toothpick or hang a Christmas ornament. You can make an earring or a necklace out of it. And generally, I have a list in the book, but I predict 20 items, and I put them up on a screen after people try the exercise and I'm right almost 100% of the times on all. Now, here's why that's weird. Average adult groups will get to 10-12 ideas, and you can predict all those ideas, they'll be same. But if you ask a kindergarten kid, they get to 200 ideas on average.

28:35 Jacob: 200?

28:35 Jeremy: 200. And they'll say all sorts of random things. And I've done it with my niece and she just comes up with every possible thing you could imagine. They start saying flag pole, playground, needle, a little crutch to make a cast for a bird, and they go all over the place. And when you then compare the two lists you start to realize, "Wait a minute, the reason adults come up with 10-12 is because you come up with the things you've seen or done before, and that's your myelin. So your myelin narrows your thinking down to what you've actually experienced before. Now, we've talked about your arms crossing, now we do paper clips. When you get to your job, the problem is that myelin makes you better, faster, smoother, more consistent, it makes you really good at what you're doing, but it also blocks you from seeing those other ideas, and so, you become stubborn, complacent, repetitive, and dismissive of new ideas.

29:28 Jeremy: So that understanding how myelin works into your brain is really important when it's a time of chaos, or when you wanna try and find new options, because there are a lot of tactics and methods you can do to get more ideas. With the paper clip exercise that could push you in all

sorts of different cues, and so could you if you broke it down, but you will need to apply these sort of tactics to your own life because you have more great ideas within your grasp than you think. But there are certain tools and tricks you need to employ in order to get beyond your neurological traps.

30:03 Jacob: And so, to build that, so for people listening to this who are thinking like, okay, I get it. I wanna build that I wanna be able to do that. Are there any techniques or practices that people can implement on a regular basis to help develop it?

30:17 Jeremy: Yeah, so I mean, effectively, what you're trying to do is look at your problem from different perspectives. So, in Create the Future, I've got about 100 different workshops, but I'll tell you a bunch of them right now that are easy enough to do. The shortcut is that you're trying to look at your problem from different angles. So let's take disruption. You're in the market, it doesn't matter what market you're in, and you sell a product or service, in this example, it doesn't even matter what that is. How would a couple of different brands totally unrelated to your company approach your market? If Amazon got into your world, how would they do it differently? And you might say, Amazon wouldn't get into my world. Well, they bought Whole Foods, no one expected that. What about Facebook, what if Facebook couldn't advertise anymore, and they decided... Because of privacy, and so they decided to pick 10 markets just to test, and they decided, yours was one of them, how would they have do it?

31:11 Jeremy: Okay, what if LinkedIn bought your largest competitor, well, how would they approach things? What about Patagonia who only cares about the saving the world and making it sustainable, what if they thought the way that you do things in your market wasn't very sustainable, how would they approach it? Now, that's an example. I picked four companies. You could pick your own, but the art is just making little simulations, where you're trying to look at the same problem from how other people would look at it, and the act of doing that allows you to see where you're strong, where you're weak, and then also maybe just refresh your thinking from the traps we get in from looking at our world from the same perspective that we're used to always looking at it.

31:49 Jacob: Got it. I like that one. That's an interesting one, especially with Amazon, 'cause you never know where Amazon is gonna go next. I suppose that one of the other things related to this to a different perspective is maybe diversity, I'm thinking specifically for leaders, right? Surrounding yourself with people who are not like you, not just yes men or yes women, is having those types of diverse teams important for this?

32:02 Jeremy: Yeah, and that's a terrific example. So embracing diversity. There's that old saying and I don't know who to attribute it to, maybe you know, but it's that hey, if both of us agree, then one of us is redundant. And what's happened is that in the past of work, there's been a goal on cultural conformity, but to use your terms, in the future of work, it would be actually embrace diversity, and recognize that you're trying to get a broader composite and different perspectives, especially in a time period like this where you don't need a repetitive situation and the same decisions as the past, you're really right now trying to pull in more perspectives. And we live in this really weird world where, I think last year the number was 23 Fortune 500 boards, have 100% white males, and that seemed weird, and that number is up. It was 22 the year before. So these things are problems when you're trying to make products and services that are destined for the entirety of the world or America. So you really can't be making decisions with one perspective represented.

33:21 Jacob: Yeah. Somebody asked a question, I'll read it and then I'll try to paraphrase it. She

said, "I hope that the way my organization had to adapt very fast to the coronavirus is setting up everything to enable people to work from home easily, and to ensure a big part of our activity will change for the longer term. Do you have any advice to help me surf on that opportunity to make bigger changes?" So hopefully... Does the question makes sense?

33:49 Jeremy: Yeah. I think that right now there are people enjoying this opportunity to work from home, the added flexibility. And it's not that we want this to be our eternity. However, there's been a forced adaption of these tools and people are starting to realize that, "Oh, we should be on a Google Hangout not just a phone call." So I think that the art of trying to make this last so that you can surf those opportunities longer, would be to really play around with what are the different ways right now that you're leveraging this technology? So instead of just having the basic meeting, what are the things you're doing to eliminate some of the awkwardness of Zoom when you don't know who's talking next or to spice it up a little. So Trend Hunter as an example, we have been doing morning check-ins within each team. Each of the teams checked in and say what they're gonna do for the rest of the day.

34:38 Jeremy: We've been talking about having like a drop in lunch hour. We've had a weekly catch-up with your team which is more just about your life, like, "Hey, here's how I'm adapting. This is my room and this is how I've been doing stuff and the kids over there," and just trying to make it real. And then on Friday, we're having our virtual beer parties. [chuckle] So we're trying to find out ways to leverage the tool. But I think the challenge to you if you wanna make it last would be, what are some of the cultural rituals that you can play around with and just make sure you don't get too caught in one format right now, 'cause we're only one to three weeks in depending on where you work. So play around with different formats, try different things and then hopefully, there's a couple of different best practices that stick.

35:21 Jacob: Well, and I think also what she's asking is how do I leverage... 'Cause it sounds like with the pandemic that we're seeing, it's forcing organizations to change in some areas. And from what I understood from this question is she's saying, "How do I leverage this to make the organization make bigger changes across the board?" Like, "Is there a way to... Since you're changing anyway, let's start to rethink these other things as well." Can you take advantage of that somehow?

35:45 Jeremy: Yeah. I was doing a lot of work in healthcare where I noticed a really big impact when ObamaCare came. And healthcare is a very interesting example because it's a world that has previously experienced some of the least amount of change, because people interpret change and risk in healthcare as equating potentially to endangering patients' lives when it doesn't have to be. Like increased risk could be hiring a millennial or putting a social media post up. But what happened when ObamaCare came, is within healthcare, there was a new regime of how pricing and billing and everything was going to happen, it was extremely chaotic and stressful for those in the industry. But what it actually did is it forced a ramp up in terms of how much adapting people had to make. And then in the next five, three years, let's say, that followed what was interesting is all these organizations were suddenly better at generally adapting because they'd already increased their pace of change.

36:44 Jeremy: So I think right now, you are experiencing a pace of change no matter where you're at. So technically, this opens up the appetite for introducing new ideas. You can enable that further when you get back by creating or sounding the alarm or asking the questions about what we're doing to better understand how our consumer mindset has changed, how product demand has

changed for what we're doing, what we learned about our workforce and the stresses we put on people and the wins that we had. So you can facilitate some of this and continue with the momentum you have by posing some of those questions either now or as you get back into the office.

37:21 Jacob: Okay. It makes sense. Next question for you is, how do you go about spotting trends? I know you have a very robust platform that you developed with Trend Hunter. But let's say for most people listening to this, either on an individual level or maybe as leaders, are there trends to identify what's next?

37:42 Jeremy: So technically, the trend is your friend and your best guess at where the future is headed is to better understand trends. And I'd say just increasing your knowledge of how trends work could actually have a pretty big impact. And I'll give you two example lessons on that. The first lesson would be, that we tend to use the word "trend" to represent a pretty wide range of things. On one end, there's this super mega trend like the rise of female purchasing power or eco, and those are interesting but they're just so big and everybody knows them that they're not necessarily going to change your mind too much. You're gonna follow them anyways and that's life. On the other end, we use this word "trend" almost incorrectly to describe what's trending on Twitter, and the new little product that's interesting. But actually that's so little and a flash in the pan that you might not be able to do anything with it.

38:36 Jeremy: So what you're actually looking for would be something in the middle which we would probably call cluster or consumer insight, which would be when you can find grouplings of multiple examples that all show you something that's new and interesting. If you go back to work after this whole process and you notice five or six customers all asking one thing or three or four new product or service ideas all suggested, or two or three products in another area that became very successful through this, then you'd start to look for the bigger patterns of examples. And that would be the ideal size trend that you're actually looking for to shape the world. I pretty much have to be interrupted at this point 'cause I'll start going on and on and I'll just hijack this, telling you all sorts of cool new ways to look for those clusters.

39:01 Jacob: No, no, no. Maybe do it more, because I think... Actually this is very interesting, I think a lot of people will learn from this.

39:01 Jeremy: Sure. So the next thing is that we use a series of patterns. If you go to trendhunter.com/pro, you could see our mega trends and our patterns. And the way the patterns work would basically be to say that whenever there's a big innovation that shapes the world, like coronavirus or let's pick something simple like Facebook, that new big change is like a splash in water, and that splash creates ripples of opportunity. And when a big change happens then, you can use these patterns to predict how the rest of the economy starts getting impacted. So let's take Facebook. Back in 2007, Facebook had 50 million users. Big but not as big as it is now, in 2007. But that was big enough that Google looked at it and said, "Wow, we want Facebook or we wanna do what Facebook is doing." Google could have bought Facebook. But instead, they hired a thousand software engineers who worked for 10 years to replicate everything that Facebook was doing and they failed, 'cause they were just trying to copy Facebook and Facebook was first. But what was Facebook back then? It was a site for friends to archive photos of their every day life. Okay. So Google thought, "Well, we're a site for all of your friends. You can archive anything on Google and people are on us every day." They thought Google should win.

40:47 Jeremy: But after 10 years, Google failed and it was their largest and most expensive failure. But you won't find it in the Google results. [chuckle] But if we looked at your competitor or this big market change from a series of patterns, you could identify what was going to happen. So patterns are things like divergence, convergence, reduction, acceleration. I'm gonna explain some of this, but they're like lenses of how you imagine a stream reacting when you splash it. So let's take divergence. Divergence is the pattern that whatever happens in the world, it will create demand and desire for the opposite. So in this example of Google... Or let me explain that a little bit more. People don't wanna be part of the mainstream. If everyone's doing one thing, I wanna be in the opposite. That's a decent segment of people, that's divergence. So if Google is a site for friends way back in 2007, then its success creates demand for the opposite. There should be something not just for friends. Cool. That was filled by Twitter. If Google is a place for people to archive all of their photos, what if I don't wanna archive my photos for the rest of my life? Something less permanent. The opposite should exist, that would be filled by Snapchat.

42:03 Jeremy: If people are sharing their everyday life, well, maybe they're taking photos of their food and ruining the art of photography, something more artistic needs to come about. That would be filled five years later by Instagram, coded by 12 people, sold for a billion dollars. So the point would be, if you went... We have six patterns that you can see for free at trendhunter.com/pro or in the book. But if you took those six patterns and apply it to the three different values of Google, you could predict 18 different businesses which took off. So now if I look at corona virus, well, if we're now all working from home, boy, there's gonna be a pretty big demand for people to do stuff when they get back together. There's gonna be parties, reunions, ways for people to connect. There's gonna be things that make us wanna do the opposite. And you could go pattern by pattern and predict. So trends are predictable, there's a science to them and I wouldn't get too caught up on when you see what's trending on Twitter, 'cause there's a lot more of a science to understanding human momentum and how big changes impact us.

43:09 Jacob: So somebody was asking, "Is there a way to start documenting these trends? How can we be proactive in spotting them?"

43:16 Jeremy: Well, so within your own office, you could come up with a group that's trying to track what's happening. You could come up with your own system. But I don't mean to try and super shamelessly plug trendhunter.com but it is a free website. The way Trend Hunter works is anyone from around the world can contribute trends or ideas they find. We have a couple hundred thousand contributors, and we use that as our platform to try and document everything that we're seeing. And we look for clusters and mega trends within that. So that's a solution and I say that 'cause I've spent 15 years of my life on it. But separately, I would say that for each of you, in addition to finding your favorite websites, whatever they might be, you can think about magazines you like to watch. You can look at the things you see people doing in the street. You can go on trend safaris with your team, where if you work in a restaurant industry, cool, go to 15 restaurants today.

44:05 Jeremy: If you work at a coffee shop, go to 15 different coffee shops or pick something different. Go to a fashion show. But when you expose yourself to these different industries, try to find the insights and proactively try to see what's different. Why did everyone at that fashion store really gravitate towards the way this display was set up and force yourself to bring that back to your industry. And really, it's about trying to look at the world with your insatiable curiosity and try to connect the dots between whatever you see back to your own world, because your inspiration is probably out there, it just might not be in your exact market. It might be in a different market, different community, different neighborhood. But how can you draw back some of your

observations to your world?

44:50 Jacob: Yeah. I know especially in the culinary world, like a lot of famous chefs at those top tier restaurants, they get inspiration from art, from music, from all sorts of different things, and then they recreate dishes based on that. So I think it makes a lot of sense.

45:03 Jeremy: We talked about chaos creating opportunity. One of my favorite examples is from Eric Ripert, who is one of America's most successful chefs, multiple Michelin stars. And in his restaurant Le Bernardin in New York City, if you were to go into his restaurant and then they ask you what you want and you don't look at the menu, a whole bunch of weird stuff will happen. So they say, "What do you want?" And you go, "Oh, I like the chicken cordon bleu." They'll say, "How did you know that, you didn't look at the menu?" "Oh no, but I heard about it. My friend recommend it." Eric will then come from the back, come up to you and say, "The chicken cordon bleu is no longer on the menu." "What do you mean? That person over there has it." "I know, but we don't wanna be recognized for a signature dish. So it's now gone. That's how we remove things from the menu. So what else would you like?" And then you'll say what you like, it might be something new and he'll go in the back and he'll mix around stuff and he'll come up with a new recipe out of that chaos and destruction. And you might think, "Oh my god, he's throwing away all his best recipes." Maybe, but he's been doing that forever. And now if you fast forward into decades of doing this, he's probably better than most chefs at being able to mix things around and try different combinations.

45:33 Jacob: I love that. Another question for you, sort of related to what we've been talking about but a little different. He's a VP of Corporate Strategy, President of Strategy and, at Radisys corporation. And he says, "What about the people who work in the frontlines like healthcare and supply chain? Do you have any advice for what employers can do to better take care of those people? Because I know, they're under a lot of pressure when, we've seen like the CEO of Marriott make a public statement. Do you see just any device for how leaders can communicate, practice empathy, show appreciation for these people? What do you think they should be doing?

46:54 Jeremy: Yeah. Well, a couple of things jump to mind. I saw this meme, a joke, that was on the internet. And it said that, "From your grandparents." And it's like, "Yeah, when we were your age, we were sent to war. But you have to stay at home and sit on your couch."

47:09 Jacob: I saw that. I saw that meme.

47:11 Jeremy: And so when you put something in perspective like that, boy, do I sure have it easy for the fact that I feel cooped up in my house and I can't go out? When meanwhile, there's people cleaning, delivering, cooking, and on the frontlines of healthcare. We are not in the same scenario. So I think when you see messages about stuff like that, it's really important to forward those along. And people are sharing a lot of messages of negativity in some of these times. But the more that you can champion those heroes, the better. It would be, if I was in an organization that employed people at the frontline, I would be thinking very proactively about the types of special perks that were being offered, because these are often the unsung heroes, in many cases, the lower level employees, where we think so hard about the creative perks and benefits that should happen for our VP level and our people in the creative strategy office get all the fun in the lock sites, and all that kind of stuff, and we don't think about that for janitorial services.

48:09 Jeremy: Right now, I would push yourself to not just think of how to reward those people if

you're there in your organization, but to champion them, showcase a tale of the day of someone who's doing something in it. And if you're in an organization like mine, that has nobody that's on the frontlines, we've been sharing a lot of the examples just to keep everyone grounded. Examples of, be empathetic for others in your life that are making now possible 'cause it just, it gives you a little bit of a chill 'cause whatever we're dealing with is irrelevant.

48:39 Jacob: Yeah. Well, maybe actually, we can talk a little bit about your company and what you're doing. Because you mentioned you have 80 people. And so a lot of leaders who are listening to this podcast, they probably have teams that are around the same size, maybe smaller, maybe bigger. So do you have any advice like things that you've been doing? You mentioned, you've been doing some virtual hangouts. How are you thinking about all this? How has this impacted you and your organization? And maybe people can learn from some of the stuff that you've been implementing.

49:05 Jeremy: Yeah. I think that in some cases, we're like many other organizations in that right now we're still a little bit at the crisis period of just thinking about how this actually works and what it means to us. So we've been trying to reinforce our commitment to our employees, to let them know where we're at long term. We have evaluated different ways that we might scale back our hours, but not necessarily trying to commit to not do any more drastic measures. We are trying to think about ways to encourage our employees to stay connected on a human level. So we have those check-ins and we're trying to think about different routines. We're gonna be adding something, we have in our office called Wellness Wednesday where we try to do something that's more just human. But we're trying to think about how do you do something like that in a virtual world, which could be a virtual lunch room that everyone dials into, where we're just randomly talking and trying to be human.

50:02 Jeremy: We're trying to make you feel more connected in the morning by having those check-ins, but also suggest that people should take a walk or think about what they're doing at their lunch to be a bit more reflective. But I don't really feel like that one's solved. So I don't feel like I'm giving a perfect remedy of advice. I feel really uncomfortable with the fact that my team is all home. I feel sad for everyone, that might be a natural extroverted in me. But I don't feel like that's solved and we're gonna be pushing pretty hard to think about what are the things that we actually do to connect people during this time period, because I think almost all of the cultural rewards and things that my team has built are usually related to being in the office, in person. I have a very long list for you on the cultural things we do within our company when we're all together. And when we're not together, I guess we're a little bit more lost right now like many do.

50:55 Jacob: Yeah. Maybe last question for you before we wrap up. And it's about how do you approach solving a problem? And I suppose there are different types of problems. There are problems that you're familiar with, that people have heard of. And then, there are problems like this, like this type of pandemic that leaders have not dealt with and they've not faced before. So can you talk a little bit about how you approach... Let's say, I come to you and I say, "Look, we wanna create a new product or service." And you might have... When solving a problem, you have a step, a series of steps for it.

51:22 Jeremy: Yeah.

51:23 Jacob: But for something like the Coronavirus, there's no blueprint, there's no framework for it. How do you approach that kind of a problem?

51:28 Jeremy: Well, our starting point is that, you are best served when you get more people involved in co-creating the problem, not just in terms of the buy-in that you'll get, but from having the broader sense of opinion. So in our office, an example would be, we're a workshop company and we've done thousands of workshops. So we try to do, to practice what we preach and apply those workshops internally. So once a month, although it is not gonna happen this month. But once a month, we would actually have an entire team 80-person workshop, where we go to a restaurant or a bar, basically, that can facilitate us as a venue, usually on a Friday afternoon. We do it as a corporate fun-day, but we would methodically try to go through experiences to help people solve a given problem that might only relate to one little part of the business. So an example would be, that someone, Gill, she runs our client services team, and she and her team had come up with a referral strategy. And when she presented it to me, it was good. She thought through a lot of stuff. That's what her team does, they think about stuff for the clients. It was good. But I thought this is actually a great example for us to do as a team-wide workshop. And the reason why is if we can solve it, well, referrals impact every single one of us.

52:19 Jacob: Yeah.

52:19 Jeremy: People within the company can generally understand it. And by putting everyone through it, they have fun with it, they get involved with it. And she ended up getting a number of different examples that her team wouldn't have thought of because they come from people who do not deal with the client in any way, but just thought creatively about the problem 'cause they came from another perspective. So I thought of something like Coronavirus or big changes. I mean, I think that the default answer you're gonna get from me, from the workshop guy, is gonna be to try and think of ways to involve your team and make it a bit of a process so people are involved, they have fun with it, but maybe you get different opinions by actually making it a little bit more of a diverse thinking program.

53:23 Jacob: I suppose the lesson from this is, "Innovation isn't just something that happens on an innovation team. It's something that everybody can come together to do."

53:30 Jeremy: Yeah, I think... You know, it's funny, I have a theory but it's funny because I think of Apple versus Google and there's a lot more complexities to this, but people would study a lot of Steve Jobs and how to be an innovator like him, and I find it very unrelatable example when I hear Jobs. The guy's brilliant, but then part of the takeaway from me is, "Oh, he's a modern day... Was a modern day Leonardo da Vinci. So the takeaway is, "You should be Leonardo Da Vinci." Great. But in reality, innovation more often would come from teams working through things, failing and trying and experimenting and that might be a little bit more like Google's model. So, Google has all sorts of failures publicly that didn't work out. They're willing to try lots of different things. Actually, no even with the work we were doing with Google this week, well, we couldn't do it live, so it became all virtual.

54:23 Jeremy: It wasn't perfect and we worked through it. But the point is that the whole company has been structured to say, "Oh, well, we should always experiment and try something once and carry our way through it. So yeah, I think that's a little bit of my takeaways to note that, "Innovation and inspiration isn't always something that will come from yourself and your genius Leonardo Da Vinci idea, even though you might have great ideas, but more often you'll get to something better when you think about ways to co-create, involve your team and really set up those workshops in a way where you can hear people's different perspectives and not let one person overrule a

conversation.

54:58 Jacob: I love it. I think that's great advice and actually a perfect way to wrap up, I know we went a couple of minutes over. But maybe you can let people know where can they go to stay connected with you? Here's a book for those who are watching the live video. And it's actually a really interesting design that you did, because you can kind of read from the front to the back or from the back to the front if you flip it over, so, it's a really, really interesting design. But where can people go to grab the book? Anything that you wanna mention people to check out, please feel free to do so.

55:28 Jeremy: You wanna go to, trendhunter.com. You can explore our half a million different ideas and get really deep into the categories you love. And in that same location, you can find more about Create the Future. We also have all sorts of free resources that are available to help you and basically... To help you find your inspiration. As a guy who spent more than a decade looking for my idea, that's now our mission is, "How do we help you find better ideas faster?" So visit us at trendhunter.com, shoot me a note and we're very receptive at helping you find your next big idea.

56:01 Jacob: Very cool. Well, Jeremy, thank you for taking time out of your day to join me.

56:04 Jeremy: Well, thank you very much, I appreciate the invite.

56:06 Jacob: Yeah, of course and thanks everyone for tuning in. Remember to check out Jeremy's book, it's called, "Create the Future tactics for disruptive thinking." And I've actually certainly been on Trend Hunter as well and I definitely recommend people check it out. So thank you again, and I hope everyone has a wonderful, wonderful rest of the day.