

Chamath Palihapitiya em Stanford [10/2017]

Consumer Internet businesses are about exploiting psychology, [[and that is one where you want to fail fast because you know]] people aren't predictable and so we want to psychologically figure out how to manipulate you as fast as possible and then give you back that dopamine hit. We did that brilliantly at Facebook, Instagram has done it, WhatsApp has done it, Snapchat has done it, Twitter has done it. [[So there are great examples.]] WeChat is doing it.

[[There are great examples of failing fast is the right path to exploiting psychology of mass populations of people.]]

You said that this is a time for soul searching in social media businesses, and you were part of building the largest one. What soul searching are you doing right now on that?

I feel tremendous guilt. I think we all knew in the back of our minds, even though we feigned this whole line of there probably aren't any really bad unintended consequences. I think in the back deep, deep recesses of our minds we kind of knew something bad could happen. But I think the way we defined it was not like this. It literally is a point now where I think we have created tools that are ripping apart the social fabric of how society works. That is truly where we are.

And I would encourage all of you as the future leaders of the world to really internalize how important this is. If you feed the beast, **that beast will destroy you**. If you push back on it, we have a chance to control it and rein it in. And it is a point in time where people need to hard brake from some of these tools and the things that you rely on. **The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works**. No civil discourse, no cooperation, misinformation, mistruth and it's not an American problem. This is not about Russian ads. **This is a global problem**. So, we are in a really bad state of affairs right now, in my opinion. It is eroding the core foundations of how people behave by and between each other, and **I don't have a good solution. My solution is I just don't use these tools anymore**, I haven't for years. It's created huge tension with my friends, huge tensions in my social circles.

If you look at my Facebook feed, I probably haven't, I've posted maybe two times in seven years. Three times, five times, it's less than ten. And it's weird, I guess I kind of just **innately didn't want to get programmed**, and so I just tuned it out. But I didn't confront it. And now to see what's happening, it really bums me out. Think about there are these examples where there was a hoax in WhatsApp, where in some village in India people were afraid that their kids were going to get kidnapped etc. And then there were these lynchings that happened as a result where people were like vigilante running around. They think they found a person, and they I mean, I mean seriously, like that's what we're dealing with. **Imagine when you take that to the extreme where bad actors can now manipulate large swathes of people to do anything you want**. It's just a really, really bad state of affairs, and we compound the problem, right. **We curate our lives around this perceived sense of perfection, because we get rewarded in these short term signals, hearts, likes, thumbs up, and we conflate that with value, and we conflate it with truth**. And instead what is really is, is fake, brittle popularity. That's short term and that leaves you even more, and admit it, vacant and empty before you did it. Because then it forces you into this vicious cycle where you're like what's the next thing I need to do now, because I need it back. Think about that compounded by 2 billion people, and then think about how people react then to the perceptions of others. It's just a it's really bad, it's really, really bad.

It sounds like you're taking deep personal responsibility also in being a part of it.

I kind of look, I did a great job there, and I think that business overwhelmingly does positive

good in the world. Where I have decided to spend my time, is to take the capital that they rewarded me with and now focus on the structural changes that I can control. I can't control that, I can control my decisions, which is I don't use this shit. I can control my kids' decisions, which is they're not allowed to use this shit.

You have one brain!

So **you're training your brain here, whether you think it or not, whether you know it or not, whether you acknowledge it or not.** Acknowledge that these things, where you're spending hours a day, are **rewiring your psychology and physiology.** [...] So if you don't change this, you are going to get the same behavior [everywhere]. Change this, I am telling you, I'm not on these fucking apps, but I am proactively trying to rewire my brain chemistry [to not be short term focused].