

The Challenge of Innovation: Episode: 3

Transcript

Asif: Welcome to the Art of the Impossible podcast for the design and manufacturing industry that explores how you can leverage technology processes and people to make the impossible possible. I'm Asif Moghal, senior industry manager at Autodesk. And each week I'll be joined by experts from the design and manufacturing world to discuss their perspectives on the challenges our industry faces and share what they're doing to overcome. From smart products, mass customisation, digitisation, supply chain resilience and the convergence of once diverse industries.

Asif: This podcast is for anyone that runs a design and manufacturing business who's interested in making things possible. You can subscribe by following us on Apple, Spotify or via your favourite platform.

Asif: Coming up with a world-changing idea is something that every design and manufacturing company dreams about. And I think it's pretty well accepted that a really good idea executed at the right time has the power to create markets or create potential, create opportunity. But there's also a risk associated with that kind of innovation. But despite all that, innovation seems to be something that we're all chasing. In fact, Steve Jobs famously said innovation is something that distinguishes between a leader and a follower. And we get the sense that we just want to be leaders. So today we're going to discuss innovation. We're going to talk about what is it? How can you innovate inside a small to medium-sized business? And more importantly, how can you then take that innovation and turn it into a business model? So my guest today is Matthew Maclennan, who is a mechanical design engineer at Steve Vick International. Hi, Matthew, welcome to the podcast.

Matthew: Yes. Thank you very much for having me. It's a pleasure to join you on such an interesting subject, which I certainly hold close to my heart.

Asif: Matt, I wondered if you could just help set some context. If you could just tell the listeners who are Steve Vick International? What do you do? And your role within the business.

Matthew: Sure thing. Steve Vick International has been around since the early 80s in the U.K. and has branched out across the world at various different points in various different things. It's largely centred around the decommissioning and rehabilitation of gas pipes. Most of the underground gas network has gone through some sort of replacement or rehabilitation programme in those 40 years, and we've been providing tools, techniques, consumable products and all kinds of different services to those industries. Throughout that process, we developed all sorts of interesting ways of basically keeping people connected to the gas supply while the main in the street is replaced with new normally polyethene pipe. And that's certainly something that's kept the people at Steve Vick International busy for the last 40 years. My role there is a mechanical design engineer. I think I probably cling onto the title of mechanical design engineer because it's very difficult to describe what it is I do and probably more comfortable describe myself as a mechanical design engineer, even if it's a software product or problem that I'm solving. I think if you look at some of the work I do day to day, we run a Scrum team to develop software. And in that role, I would be classed as a product

owner. So I represent the sort of the voice of the customer in the room and make sure that we sort of steer the products in the right direction. And then someone would walk through the door and say: "I've got this part that needs to fit in this hole and I need to know about clearances and tolerances".

Matthew: And I'll switch hats and jump into the mechanical design role. So it's a very varied role, which I'm very glad occupying. But we've certainly done a lot of development in the last few years. And some of that development work has included Internet of Things, products and a little bit of chemistry as well. So it's been some fun along the way.

Asif: Sounds fascinating. You seem like you're no stranger to innovation yourself. And so since that's the topic of today's episode, what I wanted to kind of get your take on is, innovation, just like lots of terminologies that are used in our industry today, is a great buzzword, isn't it? It is thrown around a lot and it can mean lots of different things to lots of different people. So Harvard Business Review talks about there are three types of innovation. There's transformative, adjacent and incremental. And there's risk associated with all of that. But if you strip all that away and through the lens of you and your role at Steve Vick International, what is innovation? What does it mean in the most practical, simplest of terms?

Matthew: Being particularly cynical, I'd say funding. Innovation is a buzzword. And we could spend the rest of the day talking about these semantics, for sure. I think that innovation is something that puts into a frame 'funding'. So, the government can fund innovation through various different avenues and mechanisms. And companies are therefore incentivised to pick up on some of that encouragement, if you like, and slightly de-risk some of their own adventures by accessing innovation funding. That said, sometimes it can be a bit of a poisoned chalice and people will end up innovating for the sake of funding, which I think is, without getting too political, I think that that's a slightly sort of poisonous process where you just end up with expensive nonsense instead of useful products or solutions or services. But innovation to us is normally about the combination of ideas rather than the invention of new ideas. I guess if you like my lens into that world is: you can innovate your way to an incremental change and probably claim that you've been innovative. And you can also invent a new, completely new thing. And you may find that the invention process was actually the really, really easy bit. And the innovation process is actually where the kind of the hard work is found. I can't remember who says it, but it is one percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration. I think that that's very true. And 60 to 80 percent of most innovation, businesses built around innovation, will probably fail. And it's really gruelling. And it comes with lots of risk.

Matthew: But I think that we've gone through a process of adapting to just-in-time-manufacturing and now I think we're in an age of just-in-time-design. Things are so fast that it's now pushed the focus into the design space, where you've got this kind of huge manufacturing capability, a decentralised manufacturing, rapid prototyping, all these great things. You can just go online and get a quote, 40 thousand widgets. The onus is now on the design process, ideating and creating these new ideas. And you need to be able to rapidly prototype them at the idea stage rather than at the manufacturing stage now.

Asif: So you mentioned something really interesting there, actually Matt. You said the phrase "combination of ideas". And a lot of people that we speak to have a view that innovation is around the next big thing. And they always come up with the iPhone. Everybody wants to

introduce an iPhone type product into the world or an equivalent of it. But what you were talking about is, innovation can equally be about the combination of lots of small ideas. And you also started talking about the fact that innovation isn't just about products. It seems to be about processes as well. So do you have a particular view on, or examples, actually, some small ideas that you've personally connected in the business, that have resulted in other innovation in terms of a product or a process?

Matthew: Yeah. And I think that the iPhone is a great example of a capsule. And in the same way, Steve Jobs is a great example of a catch-all. And I think, somehow as a species, we seem to be drawn to this sort of reductive method where we take literally thousands and thousands of good ideas, like the transistor and radio communication and capacitive touch, all of the great ideas that went into an iPhone, and we just call it iPhone. We seem to need like a kind of a monolith to represent something.

And in the same way, Steve Jobs combined decades and decades of failed attempts to do things and realise his ambitions. We quite rapidly look for the monolithic sample of his success and him on stage in a pair of jeans setting the world straight and introducing a new technology.

So, definitely rendering the ideas into a single kind of monolithic block that people can sort of talk about only happens in retrospect. In the here and now, of course, when they were developing the first iPhone, they didn't refer to it as a single idea. And that's how it is day-to-day. You only know it's a single entity in retrospect. So every day, when you're developing your 480 issues you've got outstanding across your new products, it looks like you've got an incredibly broad horizon of problems to solve. And then when you look at it three years time, you can refer back to it as a single thing. So I think there's definitely this combination is what happens naturally.

And then you get these kind of big bang moments like the iPhone and other things like that, where you kind of get the culmination of all of these things suddenly sort of pop. And that's largely just about timing. And it's either fortunate or very unfortunate. And I think lots of really great combinations of ideas have just suffered poor timing. And I'm sure we can touch on timing a bit more. But I think to go back to your question about combination and what that looks like from my point of view, one of the products that I created a few years ago was a combination of a pressure indicator just to measure gas pressure, measure water pressure, and Bluetooth radio technology. And it's just two things that were very well supported ideas. And the sort of the offspring of that, if you like, is the smartest the product, which is a wireless pressure indicator.

Asif: And that's a really good example. And if you don't mind me saying, pressure sensors and Bluetooth on their own, they don't sound really sexy or exciting in terms of how most people's perception of innovation are. So, there's a lot of that going on in the industry, is people like yourself are combining this bit of technology with that bit of technology. The result is something actually that adds value. So it seems to me that we are innovating quite a lot. But what I'm curious about is, why more people aren't looking at that as valid a form of innovation? As some of the deeper R&D projects that get funded? Do you have a view on that?

Matthew: Well, yeah, I think if you look back at some other examples of big bangs, like powered flight is quite a good big bang. And the Wright brothers will always hold the title for that. And if you look at how they arrived, at their design and their method, it was not through sitting in a darkened room or wearing lab coats or doing anything in isolation. They were actually incredibly good at writing to people of similar interest, their peers, and gathering information. And compared to Langley, who was funded by the government, the Smithsonian, and didn't get there in time. The Wright brothers did, largely because they shared ideas and were able to learn from other people's failures. If you compare it to today's language, they crowdsourced their ideas as a part of their innovation. And I think that's really critical. The idea of fail fast, learn faster. And it's really, really important to make failing cost-effective because you will not walk that kind of tightrope through product development and innovation without failures along the way. So you need to make sure that you can fail in a cost-effective way. And sometimes that presents itself as rapid-prototyping or it presents itself as 3D modelling of some new great big structure you're about to stick in the middle of something. But I think, really being able to get that crowdsourced failure sheet, if you like, is one of the best ways to mature a design along and to get that sort of one or two percent inspiration that you need.

Asif: It sounds like a really good best practise, which I know I would kind of summarise as "gather information". I think you were talking about crowdsourcing people's opinion and trying to understand what that information tells you. And then sort of having the courage to give it a go and fail cost-effectively. So if that was a best practise, obviously, aside from yourselves and the work that you guys are doing, can you think of any companies that you think excel at doing that process?

Matthew: Well, I guess we're in a very interesting time. Coronavirus, lockdowns and pandemics. I'm sure that AstraZeneca would be a great example of innovation. And you or I would wouldn't sympathise or understand the sort of challenges they face. But certainly the pharmaceutical industry has gone through an incredible, forced innovation process to really reinvent the wheel.

But if you look at what they did, that's what innovation looks like. I mean, it's ugly and it's scary. And to be quite honest, most people don't like innovation. Most people are naturally averse to innovation. Innovation is change. And a lot of people are very reluctant to change. So it has to be a culture. And if that's fostered in an organisation or in a government or in an NGO or whatever, then, you know, it can present itself in many, many ways. Innovation doesn't always look like a new iPhone. Innovation is very often just doing things differently. Loads of that happening at the moment in the pharmaceutical industry. And I think also in things like home shopping. The Tesco's delivery service or whatever. I'm sure that supply chain logistics has gone through a massive transformation in the last six months and really had to innovate. And you got products like Deliveroo, where now you don't think about what restaurant you want to get your takeaway from. You go first to Deliveroo to see which ones they will give you access to. It's a completely different market window to look through. But a really interesting product and a really interesting knock-on effect in the same way that companies like Uber or AirBnB have done these sort of, if you like, upside down business models, with this sort of democratisation of the work force.

Asif: Now, you mentioned something about Deliveroo, which I think actually to me, there's kind of great parallels between the Deliveroo example you talked about and the manufacturing industry. So I think if you think about the food industry, what got restaurants full was the fact that you had good quality food. But it seems that good quality food isn't enough anymore. And how you get access to that food is a game changer. So I think traditionally people might have thought about 'let's open some more chains of restaurants', and there are many chains. But even that got to a point where actually the value is somebody bringing me the food. And so if I think about the manufacturing sector, we traditionally design and make and sell products and the products performance and the functionality of that product seems to be the thing that would force and motivate someone to buy it. But this seems to be much more than just the product itself. It's how can you get it? How can you access it? This seems to be like this kind of Deliveroo bubble that needs to be wrapped around manufacturing to perhaps drive some further innovation. I know you guys have been sort of experimenting with stuff like that. What's your view of innovation being not product related, but also being service related?

Matthew: Yeah, absolutely. We've got this kind of 'yeah, you can buy all the parts and you can assemble them yourself. How about I do box build for you as well? So you're buying all of these bits for me so that I can send them to you and you can put them in your product. But if you just send me the three or four bits that you've got, I can build the whole thing for you and I can provide the test coverage and I can provide all of the change control management and I'll just manage product delivery as a service. How does that sound?'. And that sounds like a really interesting product. You kind of take on the risk and you take on some of the challenges and you've probably got the skills to do these things better than I have. So that sounds like a great partnership. I think that that servitization Has got tons and tons and tons of market space left to run.

Asif: I think that to do something like that, it seems or sounds like that, again, in the context of our industry, we need to really understand what our customers value and then try and deliver it to them in different, better, differentiated ways. And if we don't understand what our customers value, we can maybe just assume everybody cheapest prices is what I want. But then the quality will suffer. And in your industry, poor quality could lead to some very dire consequences, I guess. But how can more organisations, particularly SMEs, get better at... If understanding customer value is a precursor to innovation, how can more SMEs to get better at doing that?

Matthew: Certainly working on a kind of hardware, software project for the last couple of years, and looking into the sort of software development sphere and taking some learnings from that, I guess I kind of go back to that idea about just-in-time-manufacturing is sort of old hat. You now need to do just-in-time-design and being able to get the feedback loop. Well greased. You've got to have really good friends in sales who really trust you. And with their customer, that's the other thing. It's a two-way street. You can't just be the designer that sort of knows everything and doesn't share anything. The engagement with the customer is really a fascinating part of innovation to me. That's probably the bit, that's the joy I get, if you like. Second to solving problems. So being able to sympathise with the customer is absolutely critical. And that's nothing new, of course. It has nothing to do with innovation. That same applies in selling, selling the same old thing. One of the developers I worked with. He always begins with his 'walk the path'. So even if you're trying to do some kind of automation of data handling into some MI model to realise some great visualisation that tells you how many

square feet, carbon you've saved this month or something. You're trying to arrive at a thing. He will always insist on 'walk the process'. So you go right the way back to the sort of bare bones of it and with paper and pen in hand. Not relying on digital tools and all the rest of it. Walk through the process with the customer. What is the data gathering that they're expecting? How do they do it? What are the problems you're transferring? Really go down to the granular, atomic level of a process of service or product.

Asif: And so literally mapping out the process.

Matthew: Yeah. And like, no level of detail is ever enough. You can just go right down. Right down, right down. And you start to uncover these fabulous insights that you and your sales team would never, ever have engaged with a customer to elicit those. But suddenly, from your viewpoint, you can see 'hang on a minute, we've just done, 16 steps. And if I just provide you with a shortcut between these two, you can bypass all of this stuff that's of no value. Would that be of interest to you?'. And all of a sudden, you have done it. You've done a little innovation there. That goldstar. It's probably not an iteration. It's probably not what you were doing yesterday, but a bit cheaper, quicker, shinier. It's probably an innovative moment where you've really got right down to that real... You-can-taste-the-mud-in-your-mouth-kind of level of detail with the customer and really understood their problem.

Asif: Well, Matt, if you don't mind me saying, it sounds so easy to do that, it's just kind of makes me wonder why more people aren't doing it, because it just sounds totally logical and 100 percent commonsense. Talk to your customers and you understand them. Why do you think more organisations aren't doing it, particularly in the SME space?

Matthew: Yeah, I think the same things that stop people doing most things it's normally fear.

Asif: Fear of what? What you think they're afraid of?

Matthew: I think there's a plethora of things to be afraid of. There's engaging with your customer and finding out the product you've got at the moment is rubbish. I think people are terrified of that, and proving their previous product wrong. I think that's something that holds a lot of people back, and that's why iteration is so popular. Because you can say 'it's just as good as the last one, but it's got a slightly new thing on it'. It's a bit better. And it's like, why is there an iPhone ten? The iPhone was so good. And it's that iterative process. So people are much more comfortable with iteration for change management. And it makes more sense, because there's not such a kind of a sea change. One of the other things that I think is very difficult for people to confront is the existing business model may very well not support the solution that you arrive at. And that's really confronting.

Asif: So that's kind of even bigger change being threatened is that, oh, my God, we have to do something radically different.

Matthew: Yeah. And I think all companies suffered this. You've got these huge mountains to climb to often prove either the technical validity or the business sense or, all of these other things to confront. So innovation can really tear open unexpected spaces in a business.

And if the business isn't prepared to nurture and foster that, then they'll just smother it and it'll just be in an iteration.

Asif: Does it have to be like a one or the other? I guess, referencing the Harvard Business Review study from, I apologise, I can't remember when it was written, but it talks about incremental innovation, which is some of the things that you were touching on, combining lots of existing stuff to make something just as good as the old thing. But a little better. Adjacent innovation, how to take something and put it into a brand new market. So, for example, some of your pipe inspection technology, could it be used in different markets like medical? As a really unqualified example. And transformative innovation, which is, everybody thinks of as like the Steve Jobs, his new iPhone. Now, HBR talks about there's no one right. You don't just pick one. You kind of need to pick a balance of them. Would you say again for an SME that that's kind of realistic and reasonable, or should they just pick one or two of those types?

Matthew: I think that most people that I've worked with over the last 10, fifteen years, in that sort of new product space or new idea space, would say that it's definitely a blend and very, very unlikely that you will do transformative. And you will probably do transformative by accident, if at all. And I don't think anybody ever plans to do transformative. It's something like, a plan never survives contact with the enemy. So don't ever waste your time planning to do transformative. Just be ready to do it by accident.

Asif: That's a really, really interesting way of looking at it. Because I'm just wondering how many people set off with this. You see it in kind of like workshops that people run, and sort of books people have written, how to develop the next transformative example. But from what you and I are talking about, the big bang only happens if you are open enough to do lots of small changes and just be ready for it. We might stumble across the next penicillin and we might stumble across the next iPhone or the next kind of game changer. I'm not sure that many people probably think of it in those terms. So it is a really interesting way to look at it.

Matthew: And I think that I probably thought that that's how innovation works. You know, before I suffered the scars, slings, arrows, burns, bruises, where disappointment is that all you need is a good idea. I'm sure that that was what I was told was all you need is a good idea or follow your heart and the money will follow or a kitten hanging from a tree. It's all about the slogan.

Asif: Yeah. Those sort of social media type of inspirational things.

Matthew: That's right. But the truth of it is, I think... We started to talk about timing earlier on. And I think that timing is one of those key components in it. We can't get away from timing. It's absolutely embedded in our existence in the universe. And I think that as time goes on, things accumulate around us. And it's a bit like a kind of a wave. When you sort of

walking along the beach, you see the sort of the waves will just be gently washing up against the sand.

And then every now and again, every sort of third or fourth one, they'll come rolling in and there'll be a crash. But for the rest of the time, they just kind of build an ebb and flow. And then every now and again, you get a crash. And I think that that's all those are the big bang moments are. Your classic sort of iPhone things. It's just the wave was just right to crash. All that Steve Jobs did was be... "All that Steve Jobs did?" Matt, come on, finish that sentence.

Asif: You can maybe say one of the many things...

Matthew: One of the many things that Steve Jobs got right in a sort of background of the world on fire, all of his hard work behind him, the pinnacle of his career, of course. And he managed to somehow sew together enough innovation, all in one wave crash with the right amount of marketing, the right amount of ambition. One of the things that I kind of constantly try and focus on is trust, enablement and vision as the sort of the three things that I constantly try to keep a cheque on. Constantly trying to keep a measure on. And I think if you lose any of those three things, then the kind of the triangle is no longer supported.

Asif: What I'm taking from our chat is that innovation doesn't have to be that Big Bang idea, in fact, from what we're seeing, the Big Bang comes as a result of doing other stuff first. And it sounds like you need to kind of have a good, long, hard look at how you currently do things. Sounds like companies, particularly in the SME sector, really need to understand what their customers value. And the only way to do that is to get closer to them and then kind of look at what they're currently doing and how they can combine lots of smaller things, which are probably easier to achieve. They can deliver that value to these customers in different ways and then just step back and be ready for, 'oh, my God, what happens?'. And worst case scenario, we do disrupt the industry. We come up with something transformative. To kind of be ready for it.

Matthew: And I think that there's an awful lot of risk profiling, risk management that goes into this. If you are risk profiling and risk managing, you're probably not innovating. It's a really difficult space to operate in. And you can iterate perfectly successfully, it is nothing to be ashamed of. Make your product better, go and do it, and don't look back. But if you want to do innovation, then your risk model has to be 'this should be able to fail'. That's as much as you need to know, is 'we need to be able to survive if this goes completely belly up'. And that sort of attitude often brings about a kind of a complacency that doesn't really matter if it works or not, because we'll still be here tomorrow. So that's where you've got to get that kind of trust from people that you're asking great ideas of. Saying 'we are going to try all them just to make this thing work'. In order for the business to survive, we probably need to be able to survive if this doesn't work. And that's the closest to risk management I think you're allowed to get until you're just iterating. You're not really innovating. Obviously, most people try and do a great idea very well and suddenly do a Steve Jobs on it. Sorry, Steve to continually bring you back from the dead but this is innovation, after all. I just feel like I've got a thing to say about timing and what I said earlier on about being ready for it to be transformative. I think

timing is used as an excuse for most things, the timing wasn't right. We didn't succeed because the timing wasn't right. And I think the truth of it is you need to get past that if you're to do innovation. You need to accept that you might come up with an idea. Product or service or whatever. That is pretty good. This is going to really upset the market. This is really going to put us right in the middle. And this is going to be great for the business. And you need to be able to have patience and to be able to sit on it and think, well, it doesn't really matter if somebody comes up with exactly the same idea as us, because it's not first to market. It's best to market. That's going to win this.

Asif: Right. Yeah.

Matthew: So timing should never hold you back. You can always be late. You can only be on time once. So you can kind of get the importance of being able to develop a product and have the patience to sit on it and say, well, actually Google Glass is a great example. But that was a compromise. What they really wanted to deliver was in-vision display, augmented reality, probably with implanted lenses. They had to compromise and ask people to wear glasses. As the technology isn't there for the in-vision, you end up with a compromise and the compromise very rarely succeeds anyway. So you've got this kind of combining these fabulous technologies right on the bleeding edge of their development. All kind of combined into a single unit more or less. People can put on a pair of Google glasses and see the world in a whole new way. And it was universally rejected. It's very, very poor adoption. Culturally, there were massive problems. The timing was rubbish. And that's nothing to do with whether or not the technology was ready. The Wright brothers proved that the technology wasn't really there for powered flight, but they managed to do it as bicycle mechanics, not to take anything away from the Wright brothers. But they were bicycle mechanics.

I think timing is a really, really critical issue and getting that wave, knowing that you're on the wave that's going to break or the wave that's just going to ebb and flow is really, really tricky and probably something you will only ever be to appreciate retrospect.

But racing to market to not be late is probably worse than sitting on it, making sure that everything else is right before you release it. And you can always iterate in reverse. That's one of the great powers of a good idea. The good idea is out in the future. You can iterate your way towards it. And that's still a fantastic business plan, not just to kind of release it tomorrow.

Asif: Ah, it's a dilemma of overengineering something to try and get perfection. So, yeah, some fascinating insight. So I think my final question to you would be, let's say that you and I sat somewhere and we're kind of giving advice to an SME manufacturer, 100, 250 employee size organisation comes in and says, 'what's the one thing I can do to create an environment inside my business that would allow the sorts of innovation that we've just been talking about?'. What would you say to that leader?

Matthew: Good ideas don't respect hierarchy. So I think if you are leading a small business today, then you already have a team of people with really good ideas. Being able to extract and collate, weigh, measure, manage those ideas is an art in itself. Incentivising and all the rest of it is a technique. So you've already got those brains walking around your production facilities, your design departments, the rest of it, your company's teaming with good ideas. If there are opportunities for people to share those ideas beyond the watercooler, shall we say? Then I think there's thousands and thousands of techniques and ways of extracting those good ideas. And obviously there will be one that suits your specific needs. But you've got to be able to provide that trust enablement, and they will provide division. And if it's something that people have got a particular passion for, a particular bent for improving the way that you deal with whatever customer returns process or something, if that person's got a particular passion for that, giving them the space and the freedom – and I think freedom is one of those kind of words that gets used a lot in the innovation space. Freedom being the parent of innovation or something like that. But it's one of those special words. The difference between freedom and liberty is really important there as well. If someone's got the freedom to express their ideas and trusts you, that you are going to honour that idea they're not going to feel like you've stolen the idea. I think that's really important people. People feel that their ideas belong to them. It's a bit like me. Not really. But whether that be the stands in front of the Hoover Dam and says to the rabbit, yeah, it's pretty big, but it's based on my idea. I think, you know, there's often a feeling amongst people that the business is out to steal their ideas. So I think it needs to be very clear about recognition and value. So if somebody's idea produces a half a million pounds saving on manufacturing costs, recognise them, I think.

Asif: And I suppose the reverse of that is true as well. If something doesn't go wrong, obviously not penalise or punish somebody for an idea that didn't work, I guess.

Matthew: And be able to afford to fail. It's the most important thing. And you can either make failing really cheap or have loads of money. One or the other. So I think it is a Jeff Bezos thing, isn't it? And I think it's it failed fast and it's it's one of those really critical things that you need to be out to get those ideas from your teams, from your staff, from your colleagues, from your co-workers, from your customers. Even better if you can get from your customers, turn them into innovative ideas rather than just inventions. We're fantastic at imagining and storytelling.

You've got this sort of environment in which people can share ideas freely and have a laugh. That's another thing that we practise at Steve Vick International. It's April Fool's products. So obviously we never make them. We never tell anybody about them breaking the covenant. I'm talking to you about it.



Asif: Don't worry. No one's listening.

Matthew: April Fool's Products is a fantastic way of getting some funny ideas out there. And it's through those kind of conversations where you think like, what's this? What's the most daft thing we could come up with? And really press upon people to come up with a more and more ridiculous idea. And before long, you will have built a list of very, very good ideas. It's a dangerous game to play. April Fool's product line up has been frightening the productive and it forces you to think about things in ways that you have no need to think about things, because all of that is that magic theatre, anything's possible.

Asif: So this has been a fascinating conversation. And so I'm just going to see if I can kind of summarise. I think what I've learnt. So innovation is a big word that can mean many, many different things to different people. But it doesn't necessarily have to be that big idea. It could be small ideas. Innovation seems to apply to the products that we design to make, the business models that take those products out there. And also the processes that we can follow. So kind of it's all fair game. And I think that what we're saying is that if we want to get better innovation, we really need to do a couple of things. So first of all, get close to our customers. And I think it's we talked about internal or external customers. What do they value most? And I think one of the other things is, are they ready to pay for it to be sort of slightly mercenary? Because we do need to monetise this stuff, kind of understanding that. Secondly, understanding how we're currently delivering that value to those people. And then to your most current point, trust and enable your teams to get together and start combining ideas so we can think outside of the box. Be crazy like your April Fools. And then be ready to recognise or not punish people for success or failure and then just literally be ready is a business. Be ready to succeed, just plod along, succeed big, which is the big bang. OR kind of even fail. So first of all, I want to thank you very much for joining us on the podcast today. It's been great having you.

Matthew: It's been great to talk to you as ever.

Asif: And I hope that those of you that have been listening to this this episode, I hope there's some snippets of golden nuggets of practical information that you feel you could take and start employing inside your daily work or your daily business, whether you push this kind of message off the chain or down the chain. So thank you very much for listening and we'll talk to you again on the next episode.