Daniel Dines @ UiPath

Daniel: [00:00:00] I was living on like 30 dollars a month. one dollar a day, At times I didn't have money to eat properly. So I survived the worst. I knew I had to make this decision to find my financial freedom. to get this fuck you money, I was almost like a prisoner. I behaved like a prisoner, just waiting to get out of the prison. raising the first, money was giving me such a freedom of mind. Because it was freedom and responsibility in the same time. But it was freedom to go big.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-2: Welcome to 20 VC with me, Harry Stebbings and I'm so proud of the episode, stay it's with a dear friend and one of the great entrepreneurs of all time. I'm one of the most insane stories in startups. So for 10 years, this company bootstrapped and after those 10 years, They have just $500,000 in revenue, then it all changed today.

The company has a market cap on the NASDAQ. Of over $10 billion in revenues of over $1.3 billion. This is the story of UI path. And I [00:01:00] could not be more thrilled to welcome my friend, Jim buddy, incredible entrepreneur, Daniel Dines to the hot seat today.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-5: But before we dive into the show, stay, we're all trying to grow our businesses here. So let's be real for a second. We all know that your website shouldn't be this static asset. It should be a dynamic part of your strategy that really drives conversions. That's marketing 1 0 1, but here's a number for you.

54% of leaders say web updates take too long. That's over half of you listening right now. And that's where web flow comes in. Their visual first platform allows you to build, launch and manage web experiences fast. That means you can set an ambitious marketing goals and your site can rise to the challenge.

Plus web flow allows your marketing team to scale. Without relying on engineering, freeing your dev team to focus on more fulfilling work. Learn why teams like Dropbox, IDEO and orange theory, trust web flow to achieve their most ambitious goals today@webflow.com.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-8: I'm speaking of incredible products that [00:02:00] allows your team to do more.

We need to talk about secure frame.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-1: secure frame provides incredible levels of trust your customers through automation, secure frame, empowers businesses to build trust with customers by simplifying information security and compliance through AI and automation.

Thousands of fast growing businesses, including NASDAQ angel list doodle and Coda trust, secure frame. To expedite that compliance journey for global security and privacy standards such. Such as SOC two ISO 2,701 HIPAA, GDPR, and more backed by top tier investors and corporations such as Google Kleiner Parkins.

The company is among the Forbes list of top a hundred startup employees for 2023 and business insider's list of the 34 most promising AI startups for 2023. Learn more today@secureframe.com. It really is a must.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-3: And finally a company is nothing without its people. And that's why you need remote.com. Remote is the best choice for companies expanding their global footprint, where they don't [00:03:00] already have legal entities. So you can effortlessly hire, manage and pay employees from around the world or from one easy to use self-serve platform.

Plus you can streamline global employee management and cut HR costs with remote it's free HR. I S and Hey, even if you are not looking for full-time employees, Remote has you covered with contractor management, ensuring compliant contracts and on-time payments for global contractors? There's a reason companies like get lab and door dash trust, remote to handle their employees worldwide.

Go to remote.com now to get started and use the promo code 20 VC to get 20% off during your first year Remote opportunity is wherever you are.

 You have now arrived at your destination.

Harry: Fun to walk in the park. Yes, I'm good. Well, Harry, so much

Daniel: Well, Harry, thank you so much for having me. It's always fun to see you.

Especially, this is a little bit

Harry: [00:04:00] unusual

Daniel: because, as you know,

Harry: we met a lot

Daniel: often in the gym of our

Harry: There's, it is absolutely true. Uh, and you put me to shame in the gym, so I'm quite pleased to be out of that.

but I would love to start with a little bit on you. I think great entrepreneurs like shaped in childhood. What were you like as a child, Daniel, and when you think about like what your parents and teachers would've said about you, how would they have described you? Maybe

Daniel: they would say that I was, uh, a little bit of a curious child that, uh, was argumentative. Maybe at times too argumentative

especially for the likes of my parents.

So I always liked to Engaged, like in debates and have my opinion and talk maybe a little bit too much. But, uh, I think I lost it time. So now I prefer a lot more to listen to people. But curiosity was something that, always, uh, kind of stuck with me. Were you good in school? In the primary school, I was [00:05:00] good, but after that, I discovered the, I don't know, other activities like

Harry: girls

Daniel: and going to pool and hanging out with boys.

So I was pretty average, except math, where I had like a natural inclination.

Harry: honestly, I love to hear that. 'cause I think you can sometimes hear some stories where it's like, you know, super whiz from like day one and it just feels quite unrelatable.

I, I did hear that. I had to ask you how you learned to code. I chatted to Luciana before and she was like, you have to ask him how he learned to code. So what was that story?

Daniel: Well, I think it's pretty wild after today's standards. So I am not the typical hacker that started, you know, creating his first game when he was eight or something like this. I went to university to math, because it was quite easy for me get in.

Harry: Really, I haven't studied at all, really, to pass the exam to the university. But I went to computer science. I went to math and computer science, so I [00:06:00] have a dual degree. I went

Daniel: to computer science just because it was a little bit fancy

Harry: at

Daniel: that time. But I was very disappointed in the university.

You need to picture, like, early 1990, Romania, just full of communism, but all the professors, the atmosphere was still very communist, ugly, people with kind of a fixed mindset.

honestly, after the first week At university, I decided I don't want to go there. So literally I went only to like exams. no, it was not my thing. I, I, uh.

Harry: Respectfully, how did you pass when you don't attend any of the classes and you just go to exams?

Daniel: was a little bit of the, Wild West at that time. So it was not mandatory to attend, actually. Okay. So I went it, you know, once in a while. I get to know my colleagues.

I learn for exams, that was it. I started to play bridge. So [00:07:00] it was a big passion for me and, uh, in university. Maybe you should ask me how did I learn English? Because it's even more interesting than coding.

Harry: How, how did you learn English? Because also you learn quite quickly.

Sorry I'm interrupting you, but I remember I, when I interviewed Brandon four years ago or something respectfully, your English was not nearly as good. Like it's got so much better.

Daniel: Yeah, I'm an, I'm a total, uh, anti talent, you know, to foreign languages, especially to English. when I was like, 19, 20, and I started to play

bridge, I didn't know any English at all. But the only good books about bridge were in English. So actually, I and a friend of mine you know, we had very little money. So we put, uh, together money to buy a really big, uh, book. I still remember. It's a guy called Goran, and it's called like, American Standard or something, talking about bridge.

And I had to read the book with a dictionary. So that's basically what I was so passionate about it. Because this is how I actually learn English. And [00:08:00] I know a lot of words, but my pronunciation is very bad you know, the tendency was to pronounce as you read. Yeah. So in my musical ear, it's not there.

So in the last four or five years, I worked quite a lot with a great, professor, teacher, I would say, of dialects. She's a great lady. She works actually with, uh, Hollywood actors to teach them English dialects that are required when they speak in the movies.

So they can speak English with the Russian accent like me.

Harry: So if I ask you for an Arnold Schwartzenegger, like I'll be back, I should go and see her

Yeah.

Daniel: yeah. Actually, it's funny. I, uh, she introduced once to Nicole Kidman. And I talked with her like five minutes because Nicole was doing a movie in Australia, where she played someone with a Russian accent. And, uh, she thought that listening to me would help her.

Harry: help her. She learned

Daniel: if you [00:09:00] learn Russian, you can talk to her. Maybe you will be good to act like a Russian in London, if you talk too much with me.

Harry: me.

Daniel: by playing bridge with the dictionary there. I love that.

Harry: What was the first job? You come out of university where you didn't really attend.

Daniel: so I had to, I had to learn coding before getting, because my first job was know, as a programmer. Actually Not really, I had to sustain myself since I was 19.

was a tough family situation. basically my family couldn't support me any longer. So I had to do all sorts of gigs. Like at some point I was buying, like doing some kind of currency arbitrage. I was buying dollars in Bucharest. you know, I went to some other town when I was born and selling to the people that I know them for a little bit of a margin.

So I had to do all sorts of things. I started actually a company in my early 20s, not a software company, but it was something to help students find jobs. At that time it [00:10:00] was very difficult all the ads were in, newspapers, so you have to go and call to paid phones, so talk to a lot of people.

So what we did, actually, we centralized all the jobs, called them, understand all the requirements, and even booked our people, so it was like a marketplace. So it helped me, you know, live for, like, comfortably for, like, a year. Until I got bored by this. Did you make money with that? A little bit, money at that standard.

Probably I made, a thousand dollars in that year. But it was, it was good

Harry: Because going to

Daniel: Because going to my first job, I was living on like 30 dollars a month. I know, it's one dollar a day, right?

Harry: I lived incredibly frugally.

Daniel: Incredibly frugally, yes. at times I didn't have money to eat properly.

I remember days when I didn't eat at all. that leaves a mark. What mark does it leave?

of [00:11:00] anxiety that you have in life. So until kind of recently, when money didn't matter, I always had this anxiety of the times. it's not clearly internalized, that I'm afraid that I am gonna get to a position where I don't have to eat, but the thought can be there.

And I think it makes you a little bit more, . Paranoid and afraid.

maybe in a way it's negative and positive, obviously.

I think it's positive because it keeps us a little bit grounded to reality. but it's negative because I think it's, uh, it can drag you. It doesn't let you go as fast as you can. Because somehowto me it was a very big change when I raised the first, money, the first, like, the seed round, because I bootstrapped UiPath for like 10

Harry: Yeah.

Daniel: And, uh, raising the first, money was giving me such a freedom of mind. Because it was freedom and responsibility in the same time. But it was [00:12:00] freedom to go big. Because I was completely free of, my internal breaks. Related to my upbringing when I had to do everything by myself. And some people trusted me.

So then, I don't know, something switch in my head,

and I, I stopped

having any fear. What was it that caused the switch? Was it the fact that people put their faith in you? Was it the fact that you had the money to spend?

Harry: What was it that caused that switch?

Daniel: I don't know. Maybe all of them, but it was a clear switch, because I was for quite a few years, like, fearless.

Just go spending. Every single penny. That's an interesting story, because between seed series and series A, that we did here in London with Axel, I had to raise a bridge round from my investors, from existing investors. And we were negotiating for a long time, like, to do a cap, like, 20 percent cap, and they wanted the cap, and I wanted the uncap.

[00:13:00] Andwe haggled until like the last dayMonday we were hit zero in the bank and it was company, it's a hundred people but I knew that, you have to play a little bit this game and this guy, Dan Lupo, which is great friend of mine, and he was the first investor that, uh, discovered UiPath, came to me and say, okay, Daniel, we, we can do

Harry: unlimited, but

Daniel: it's gonna be 25 percent discount.

I said, okay, sure. Of course. And they wired the money and everything was fine. the thing is, I had no fear. It never crossed my mind that I might get into troubles, and I put the entire company. I was completely set to go forward. And we went really like a rocket.

Harry: so the living on a dollar a day and coming from such a frugal background gave you the mindset that you could afford to take massive risk, correct?

Maybe. In a way,

Daniel: I knew what is the worst. So I survived the worst. When you have the opportunity, you really want to go big [00:14:00] on the other. There is no point in just getting to where

could have been in the normal situation. So maybe that was, the resort that freed me in a wayit was a compensation maybe for that frugal days.

I really thought that I owe to myself to do it big.

Harry: Talk to me about the first job where you got paid 200 a month. Because we're on a dollar a day there, very frugal living.

And we get that scar that's very ingrained in one's mind. And then you get a first job. Was the first job

Daniel: 200 a

a month?

Yes,

That's

correct. Okay. first, let's go to learning

to code.

Harry:

Daniel: So, in university I didn't learn much, honestly. I learned some basics, like they were teaching Pascal, I think,

Harry: so I met this friend of mine when I was living with 30, and I asked him, what are you doing?

Daniel: He says, I'm fine, I got a new job. Like, uh, what job, I ask him? Like, programmer. I said, okay, that's fine. How much money do you make? And he said, [00:15:00] 300 a month. And I was literally shocked, because it was 10 times what I was making. And, uh, so I, I thought to myself, wow, I'm missing something big here. All my gigs and all this.

The life, the stupid life that I'm doing, and I just can learn to program and I can get a nice job. And that was, uh, summer time. my girlfriend at that time, gave me, a book about programming. It was called Programming C written by the inventor of C And it was not the original book.

it was a book, that was copied in Xerox

Harry: machine. Facts, yeah.

Daniel: yeah, like a fax. Yeah. But I found at that time, I found that book fascinating, somehow, because I learned C and C from that book. So I really read it like an adventure book. So I read the programming book and I went through the exercises and how he described the [00:16:00] concepts, but without trying on a computer.

never wrote too much code in my life, but my specialty was mostly to reason about code and make programs working to debug to, that was what I was at my best. But writing code to me was always a little bit boring to write too much.

But the fun part was always when I made that code that I wrote working.

Harry: It's pretty extraordinary though, to learn code without testing, like, without iteratively doing it.

Daniel: I think it was helpful, in a way.

Harry: I think

Daniel: there are two types of developers that I've seen in my life. There are the hacker types that learn coding, just tinkering with the computer. And they are very good at finding, different ways to do things that they always know. But when you learn more theoretically, and I had my math background and then you know, learning more theoretical, think you can have a broader perspective.

of things. So you can be more of like a software architect and you can [00:17:00] understand bigger systems if you have this theoretical background. So it helped me even today I really like to read from time to time different programming topics. Nowadays, of course, about AI. But I learn, uh, a lot of programming language just by reading. I don't have to program. I didn't program Javascript, but I learn, I understand. So I can have a conversation about Javascript or good systems. then I can extrapolate different ideas to our own system. Like when we build serverless. So it's a lot of theoretical work. my mind works best by trying to connect, different concepts. And try to get the best of them and apply to solve a problem.

Harry: Not at all. This is,

Daniel: to be built? No. No. I'm not good at all. This is, this is where I really struggle. Why?my mind speaks well faster, my thoughts go well faster than my [00:18:00] speaking rhythm. So sometimes I'm trying to keep up pace with my thoughts, so maybe it's a little bit unintelligible to the people in front of me.

So it, I had to develop.

these skills

to kind of, uh, explain more what I think in a little bit in frameworks. What are the principles and then how you can fill in the blanks in. being the CEO of a public company was very instructive me in, Because you have to talk to.

investors, you need to clearly explain, your business. But you cannot go, off the record. There is no such a thing, right? So you have to be pretty precise, So I work a lot with our IR person, Kelsey. I think I,

Harry: think

Daniel: I learned quite a

Harry: bit from her.

Daniel: What do you think you learned?

Harry: I think I learned a very simple trick. Actually to, when you explain [00:19:00] something, go first and tell in

Daniel: high level terms, what you are gonna talk about it, and then drill down each of the items. And this is kind of a framework to explain. So I'm gonna talk about 1,

And then you can ask, do you want me to drill down in one of these points?

It's a little bit

Harry: want, me to drill down in one of these points?

It's a little bit easier. The first job. That was the most amazing

Daniel: was the most amazing job I think I had.

In my life.

So I really like my boss that hired me and I think we had an amazing, uh, human connection in way. he was like, I think 10 years older than me. at the interview, so it was my first job, I didn't, he didn't ask me anything to write, it was just a pure discussion.

And at the end, he said, okay, you can have the [00:20:00] job. But it was a catch, a little bit, they didn't have a computer

to give me to work like a regular job, because they, it was a, it a very small firm. It was a very small firm. So, during day, all the computers they had were, you know, occupied by people.

So what I, uh, had to do was to work night shifts. And that was kind of amazing, because during the night shift, I had access to their most powerful computer. was very quiet. It was just be there. And it was first time in my life when I had really access to computers. a computer as much as I wanted.

So basically I turned for the next six months. I went there every day, so I stopped even seeing friends, I worked literally 12, 14 hours a day, even more. I

went home only in the morning when, they open the first, you know, like the metro line was open. I went home, sleep, and by 6 p.

m. or something, I was back to just working. I [00:21:00] was transported in another world. So I think I was the happiest, in a way, in my life.

it's like building something. I think this is maybe what Michelangelo,

Harry: Michelangelo,

Daniel: felt When you create something, a sculpture, a big, because you see it, programmers are, uh, in a way, lucky and happy creatures.

Because they, they build something, they are creators, they are, in a way, artists, so they get the feeling of being completely in the flow. To me, even whenin the moment of, uh, most anxious to me. if I went front of a computer and I could focus like 30 minutes and start to work, after that my anxiety was gone completely and I just got peace.

Harry: I ask, when you listen to yourself speak today and you hear yourself speak about going to work night shifts on computers that no one else was around you and the office was empty, does it feel like a different person?

It is, it's such a different life.

Daniel: Yeah.

Harry: do you [00:22:00] feel when you hear yourself say that? I

Daniel: I miss it in a way

Harry: I missed the times when you learn.

Daniel: It was time of extreme learning and extreme focus single handed into one direction. So I miss it now. I don't have this. luxury anymore. my only moments when I create something, when it's the rare times when maybe I'm in an airplane and I try to write poetry. I do it only for my own sake.

I share maybe only with a few friends. But this is the only moments when I feel transported in that state of flow. Otherwise, my days are mostly talking to people, making decisions, and, uh

Harry: Fun

me is also maybe even in the night, I am reflecting on some kind of, uh,

Uh,

Daniel: features that we have to build, product roadmap, priorities, discussions with people.

But I don't have this sense of intense focus, which I kind of miss. I need to find a way to go back to that.

Harry: Do you feel like you're [00:23:00] still learning?

Daniel: Yeah, you are dead when you have stopped learning. And this is what I tell, Everybody, if you feel like you didn't change considerably in the last six months, that means you did something wrong.

So for me, all the years are kind of an accelerating, I'm in an accelerating learning mode. Definitely in the last 12 to 18 months, I think I learned more than the past five years combined. And the last five years were amazing, by any metric. I feel right now I'm actually in my prime of learning.

Harry: Yeah, yeah. When I was

Daniel: working in Microsoft in my early 30s, I was also stuck in my mind a little bit. I was very unhappy being there, not necessarily in Microsoft or in U. S., but being removed from my comfortable life that I had in, uh, [00:24:00] Romania.

And I kind of forced myself. It was my decision. you know, somehow

Harry: in me,

Daniel: I know what is the right thing to do. And I have to push and force myself to do the right things, but hating myself in the same time. I didn't have the peace of mind to accept that the right decision can be actually the happy one.

I think I could have done a much better time there. I could have learned more. gym, for instance, I could have worked with the trainer, right? Because I went

to gym quite a bit. when I was there, but I always doing things, you know, in a light way, not pushing.

Harry: That's it.

Daniel: You know what, you know what I mean?

Harry: Yeah, I do.

Daniel: have to push yourself. I didn't push myself there too much and I didn't.

Harry: didn't. Why? I'm just trying to understand why not though. Because you did push yourself when you were going night shifts and you were

Daniel: I

was in a negative state of mind.

I knew I had to make this decision to find my financial freedom. that was my biggest desire in life. To get this fuck you money, my financial freedom. [00:25:00] I never wanted to be in a situation to just work for money. That was, to me, that was very stressful. So, it was the thing. You have to work, get your financial freedom. But in the, in the same time, that made me extremely unhappy.

But it shouldn't be. It was, again, it should have been a switch. It's a simple switch. I could go back to myself and explain to myself a very simple switch. And you have to do it. Okay, we all agree that's the right thing to do. But what's preferable can also be pleasurable. This is also one of the biggest wisdom piece that I heard in life.

For the wise man, what's preferable is pleasurable. It's very powerful. the switch I would have made in my mind was to enjoy the preferable things. And I would have done a lot of things better. learning to ski better, learning to go to gym, learning to play tennis better, learning English, meeting more people.

being stuck, I was almost like a prisoner. I [00:26:00] behaved like a prisoner, just waiting to get out of the prison. Even in the prison, you can have the mentality, I have to stay five years in a prison and be totally unhappy with yourself and say, okay, this is what it is. I will learn philosophy.

I will do this and this.

a switch. we exist only in our mind. The external factors are not that important as the, running of our own thoughts.

If you

change them a little bit, you climb mountains, you climb Everest.

Harry: So what allowed you to change your own perceptions to climb Everest? What was that switch that unlocked in that period of unhappiness when you were a prisoner?

I to break out of prison. So I, finally I, I took all the courage that I had none of my friends at that time believed that I'm gonna leave Microsoft and U. S. and go back to Romania with very little money.

Daniel: So in five years working [00:27:00] in Microsoft, my old savings were like 150, not even enough to buy a nice apartment in Bucharest. But it was fuck you money, in a way, for me. I could have lived for a while without doing something that I don't want to do.

Harry: But

Daniel: going back to Romania, the only chance for me was to build something, build a company.

Harry: back. Prison element. If we carry on that analogy, you can always extend your sentence. And what I mean by that is, you can always be on the treadmill. I remember when I started, it's like, when you make a million pounds, that is like, that's fuck you money, when I started. And then it's like, I got to a million and it's

Daniel: like,

Harry: That's not actually, you can't buy an apartment with a million if it's in a nice area in London.

Uh, it's probably five million. And then you get to five million and you're like, well I can probably buy an apartment now, but then I have no money at all. And

so you can always push it. How do you think about that? And how would you advise me, [00:28:00] who actually struggles with that, honestly?

Daniel: In a weird way,

Harry: I

Daniel: have some, uh

Harry: Remaining fear

Daniel: of this struggle and just completely stupid for me.

Harry: but it makes me feel better that you

Daniel: The way, the way to deal with this is to realize that

Harry: uh,

Daniel: you are a valuable, professional and human being.

Harry: when I struggled the

Daniel: most,

I was actually not in the medium that, uh, put me in the spotlight somehow. when you are in the wrong medium, you start to doubt yourself quite a bit. When you don't doubt yourself, and you go to, work and meet the people that appreciate you, this problem with money disappears.

You'll always make money. And you'll always make good money. it's just getting to the right people.

I think once you understand

Harry: that

Daniel: you have an intrinsic value, And it's not only to go and find the right timing and, assemble yourself maybe ten, twenty, a hundred. you'll be [00:29:00] free. And you can enjoy what you are doing better.

Harry: Do you enjoy what you're doing now?

Daniel: I do. I don't do. uh, and I don't. And, uh.

Harry: unpack that. You do and you don't.

Daniel: Yeah. I am, uh, an, emphatic type of person. So I read, uh, emotions in people. in my position, get to know all the shit that happens here. Most of the shit that happens in the company and all the bedroom wars and all this guy did this, and this is not good for our culture and everything. It comes, and

it, poisons your mind

you have to deal with all this negativity

This is why when someone says it's lonely to be the CEO of the company, because eventually all the shit

Harry: Creeps up to

Daniel: Creeps up to you.

Harry: Yeah,

Daniel: exactly.

Harry: I totally get that. it is 'cause you can't talk to anyone else because you can't be disloyal to other team members.

You can't say speak badly of [00:30:00] someone to someone else and unload that burden

Daniel: Even if you speak to them and unload, and I have some good friends, and I, I work with people for many years. It's not kind of the same. It's not the same position where it's like,

Harry: you cannot

Daniel: put yourself completely in the shoes of the other.

I have the empathy, but I don't feel your pain. They can understand that

Harry: It's

Daniel: negative for me, but they don't understand how much it affects me.

Harry: you ever have self doubt? You mentioned there about doubting yourself. Did you ever have self doubt?

Daniel: Yeah, I think I always had the imposter syndrome.

that causes me to make the biggest mistakes as the CEO Because I, doubting myself, My tendency was to

Harry: search for

Daniel: and hire people with experience, That have done this

job

before. they should have been way better than me of doing some sort of job.

Thank you.

Harry: But

Daniel: problem is that you cannot compromise the affinity between people. If there is [00:31:00] no chemistry, this is not gonna work. So because of my imposter syndrome, I tended to trade off chemistry for experience. with very rare exceptions, it always went bad.

Harry: the

Daniel: time? Yes.

this idea that higher, slow fire fast It reads good on paper, but it's not applicable in, in real life.

Harry: life. In a

Daniel: way it's easier. but FireFast is not so easy applicable. especially with, uh, senior executives, there is a honeymoon, of course, and you need to give them a lot of freedom to do their job.

so they start to hire, they build layers. Suddenly when, when you start to understand that something doesn't work completely, it's a little bit too late, and you are in the middle of the process and all you can do is to be hopeful that it's gonna work. it's very hard to make that decision to fire in the middle but you already [00:32:00] see the signs that that might not work.

You see the batteries of

them,

Harry: Do you let them, do you let them know at that point or do you not? Because it knocks their confidence just as they're playing

Daniel: Sometimes,

uh, sometimes it's not so easy to, tell themeither there are very little facts that maybe sometimes it sounds ridiculous to me if I go to you and say, why did you do

Harry: this?

Daniel: and

even why do you dress like this? let's say if I hire a developer and they come to work in the suit, that's It doesn't happen, but I'm telling you this time, it's kind of hard to go, man, don't look, you look like a

Harry: clown.

Just a

Daniel: nice t shirt if you are not taken seriously.

 I'm not good of, of giving feedback. Even today, this is where empathy works against you. for me, it's not easy to give negative feedback.

Harry: Why is it not easy for you to give negative feedback?

Daniel: know, I have this, construct, a defect in my can easily point people that I like and I enjoy to of their negative, uh, traits.

Harry: uh, [00:33:00]

Daniel: Because in a way, I feel that my love for them compensates the pain that I'm causing them. Because you know, causes pain to give feedback to anyone.

Harry: It's impossible

Daniel: for someone to receive negative feedback without pain. It can be

Harry: helpful and

Daniel: they can heal, of course, because of the feedback.

But it's the bout of pain that they feel that turns me.

Harry: off.

Daniel: So I can, trade the pain that I feel giving feedback with the love that I give them. But when I don't feel love for them, I don't have this trade. So I feel only their pain. And I feel a little bit like I'm a

jerk.

it's a lifelong work to learn this skill. And you know, we talk about what Karl Aschenbach,

before starting this, he told me once something, uh, very profound. we were talking about firing people and, I said that it's so difficult fire people. And he said, Daniel, that's normal. the moment, uh, you will stop Feeling difficult to fire [00:34:00] people, you become like a monster.

You will not be a good CEO.

Harry: mentioned Carl there, I spoke to several of your investors before. And, I asked for weaknesses as well, of Daniel, and some of them said, that you give too much responsibility to people.

And you let them have too much freedom. You mentioned there the execs. How would you respond to that? Do you think you give too much freedom and too much?

Daniel: Yeah, also, maybe I have the wrong impression about giving freedom to people. it's important to give them freedom, but also to inspect. what they are doing.

Inspecting

Harry: what someone

Daniel: is doing, it's not necessarily interfering with their freedom.

I think where I'm bad, it's inspecting what people are doing. And I've seen actually to some other executives as well.

Harry: is inspecting not just micromanagement.

Daniel: No, I don't think so. And I'm not a micromanager.

But my style is to go pretty deep in some point and test and assess.

Harry: you

have

to

Daniel: [00:35:00] understand

Harry: that

Daniel: area. But especially in the product and engineering when, when this is what I do actually a lot of. inspecting.

my technique is to prove and go like with this Sokratian approach.

Why? Why? Why? Why did you choose this? I don't accept like this is what it is or we made this decision a long time ago.

and you go to a point where they say, okay, we have to change and it's fine Sometimes you find uh, early signs of cancer And it's much easier to kill it From the beginning, but you know, it was always a little bit easier for me to work with product and engineers than

to

work in the other sides

Harry: of the company because it's not a language you spoke.

Daniel: It's not a native language to me. It's a language that I learn. So I'm conversational in go to market, finance, HR, marketing. That is not my

Harry: ma tongue.

The, the investor base [00:36:00] also said, you know, the exact team has churned a couple of times, maybe more so than other companies. What are some of your big lessons from that?

And Aaron Lavy actually at Box, a famous enterprise software founder says it takes actually five exact teams churning to go to a public company, I think is his statement. How do you feel about the exection and lessons

Daniel: learned?

I think

it's kind of easy to explain.

most

people will have a range where they can operate well. in a hyper growth startup, the company grows faster than their range. happens. So what can you do? usually You hire more experienced people, and you put them in command. You cannot keep those people.

And, uh, at times, these people feel that they are entitled to get that position, and they leave.

Harry: At

Daniel: times, they feel this is an opportunity to, grow and learn. And they stay there, and they earn their position there. But it's normal, and it's, it was [00:37:00] four, five probably, yes, until we went public.

Harry: In that journey of going public, I, I do want to slightly go back to the early years of UiPath. It's just the most insane story, Daniel, of, as you said, you bootstrapped it for nine and a half years, 10

Daniel: Yeah.

Harry: I mean, that is so atypical compared to anything else that we see in this, in this industry.

Can you just take me to that bootstrapping journey? Why did you not raise money?

What did that look like in that journey to the first

Daniel: raise?

Harry: Did you have product market fit?

help me understand that.

Daniel: so initially I, I didn't even think that was possible for someone to give money to almost nothing. I thought I have to build something, show a product, I started, end of like 2005. It was, uh, still the winter of, the VC industry, even in the Bay Area. So I started to be connected, more with what happened in the Bay Area. from Romania than when I was in Seattle, when I was completely isolated in Microsoft I didn't,

Harry: think

Daniel: that I would be [00:38:00] able to convince an investor to put money. It was very remote thought But it was a good learning. I don't think I was actually ready without these 10 years. Maybe some people learn entrepreneurship maybe if you are born and raised in the culture of entrepreneurship, maybe it's easier.

So you can drop off from Stanford and you can start a company. But for me, these 10 formation years. And I don't regret that. I learned, to go through adversity. I learned a lot of the traits that I use as the CEO. I learned how to write, Google ad copyright. actually, it's a very valuable thing in itself.

I learned how to be succinct with my thoughts, You have to write an ad. You have to describe the product that you love with hundreds of features in just three lines.

So you need to apply some kind of metaphorical thinking. [00:39:00] It's a great learning. I learned software licensing.

you know, I took like Microsoft Word license and then copy and change it and create a license. It's a lot. Selling, talking to customers, supporting them. I did this.

Harry: my worry today, Daniel, and you know this as an investor too, obviously investing in companies. Is that you get a 5 million seed round, and come out of a great company, you can hire a great marketing person, you can hire a great salesperson, all of the things that you

Daniel: learned,

Harry: you don't need to do from

Daniel: day

one.

Harry: And I worry that we've lost the entrepreneur that you are and were, because of the abundance of

Daniel: capital.

Yeah, and, uh, abundance creates monsters. Actually, I think almost all the time.

it's

like you cannot have a tennis player that just go and plays Wimbledon. and win Wimbledon. They have to go through junior, they have to, it's 10 years, from maybe 7 to 17, that makes a tennis player. nobody can skip it in [00:40:00] tennis. Even in entrepreneurship, think many people that get, obviously very smart people, What I've seen, they are a little bit unidimensional, so they know only their craft. I think when they will be put in difficult situations or to negotiate or to understand, yeah, they will fail.

Harry: It's very

Daniel: difficult to,

without really going through the formation years.

Harry: really going through the formation Don't agree with me as an investor? long time. It's a long time. Like, and I learned so much about it. I did every part of this business. I remember googling how to create an invoice.

Because I, I didn't

Daniel: know.

I recognized myself in this. Yes.

Harry: And I was 19, 20. And I was like, what the fuck is an [00:41:00] IO? I've got no idea.

Daniel: Exactly. I I used to pay the salaries

Harry: the

Daniel: go into the banking software and I, I created bots to, to pay the s So,

Harry: So where was the business at when you raised the first money? 10 years in? Like how much revenue did you have? How many customers did you have?

Daniel: so we raised the first one in, uh, 2015.

we finished the year with, like, half a million in revenue. Yeah. But it was an acceleration since 2014. we found the product market fit in RPA.

Harry: In 2014. In 2014,

yes.

What

Daniel: was challenged. that was an incredible luck in a way. think we, we knew so that we built a good product, but we didn't know the market it. So We

build a low code, no code, environment to create automations, That kind of emulates [00:42:00] people, how they work in front of a computer.

So it was pretty cool, it was not an end to end platform. But for what it did,

it was

good. It was actually the best in the world in what we build.

we knew we have something valuable, but we didn't know

it solved

such a huge problem. Being in all of my co founders

are

engineers like me. So we were naturally trying to solve more engineering problems, IT problems with our tool. we didn't work with really huge companies, we work with mostly small medium businesses.

So I, I didn't see a huge future on that approach We were found by a, uh, guy like middle manager in an Indian company, a BPO company. That was actually in 2013.

On the 1st of March, 2013, we launched the version 1. 0 of what has become our RPA product. version 1. 0 called UiPath Studio.

it [00:43:00] didn't have any

Harry: traction,

Daniel: But this guy found it on the internet, so He worked with uh, a British company called Blue Prism.

Harry: Okay.

Daniel: they invented actually the word, RPA and they had more of an overarching platform to create bots. Only that our tool. was way better than their tool to create one single bot,

So that, uh, Indian guy, for some reason, didn't like Blue Prism because they thought they are a bit arrogant, inflexible.

So by

himself, he searched on the internet like a competitor. And Blue Prism, it's also a low code type of environment.

So he searched for something that looked nice. So we had like, our low code was really nice from the beginning. We had like a flowchart engine, you can drag and drop the block, so you can create [00:44:00] easily, visually, he liked this. And, uh, it's crazy, he sent us, uh, an email from, uh, like his personal Yahoo address. And at that time I was doing all the customer

support queries

and everything. So I watched this one and I had the tendency to skip this one because we didn't work with individuals and he wanted a demo of the product.

And, uh,

without telling much about it. But I don't know, I had some kind of intuition that maybe I should still

give

him a demo.

And I asked one of our developers, because we were all developers at that time in the company, like five people, maybe five, seven. and I asked one of our developers to connect with the guy give him a demo. hour, she came to me and tell me, Daniel, this guy is actually from a big company, you should talk to him. And I connected right away on Skype, I think, at that time. And he asked me,

first question

was, how do you compare with Blue Prism? And I [00:45:00] told him, and I don't know who Blue Prism is, first of all, let me search on the internet. So I searched Blue Prism and, uh, It was funny because, uh, they had this typical, corporate boring page with, you know, saying basically nothing and with career investors and I told him, well, looks like the, well, this is a big company.

We cannot compare. We are just a small startup. This is what I told him, you know, very frankly.

But he liked it he talked to his upper management and they actually invited us to go there to India and help them to kind of automate the same type of processes that Blue Prism, just to see how our software is.

Harry: And so you said yes.

Daniel: And even more, he said, uh, I give you a chance, but you have, it's gonna be at cost.

but sometimes there are astral moments in life and you need to seize them and you need to feel them. So I knew that was one [00:46:00] of that

moment.

so I sent, uh,

Three people, including, my CTO at that time, and two, girls, actually,

they went there, they spent like three months in Chennai,

so I took people out of the

programming job. to,

Harry: three out of seven.

Daniel: Yeah.

We understood this is a big market, first of all. And we understood the requirements of what they expect us to build.

we were building a good demo because we, at that time we, uh,

so we used our software to build automations, and we used the Microsoft product called, like, I think, Orchestrator or something. And we created some integration with Microsoft product to, deploy our bots and monitor.

It was pretty nice. It was a cool solution, and they like

Harry: it.

Daniel:

Harry: you do it at cost.

They love it. What happens?

Daniel: They become our client. And that, I think it was, uh, the biggest, single invoice that we sent. That was in 2014. I think we got like a hundred K revenue [00:47:00] only from, uh, that client, which was huge

from us.

But Harry, most important was that

we,

Harry: We that this is a huge market. So that was a BPO company, but they were doing some work for, uh, like a huge American computer manufacturing company at that time.

Daniel: Actually, these big companies are flooded in manual repetitive work, and they don't know what to do.

despite all the advances in APIs, in ERPs, in CRM, there are so many inefficiencies and people use many and our technology works brilliantly. We just need to build a nice orchestrator. The

Harry: thing I find so funny about hearing this though Daniel is like, what you hear and what you tell every founder is you need to know what problem you are solving for what

customer. And they should know that early on. And respectfully, nine years into your journey is when you [00:48:00] actually realized what problem you were solving for what customer.

Daniel: That's true.

Yeah, it's not

Harry: typical. No.

but

the best stories never are.

Daniel: We built our software just because we

Harry: like

it.

Daniel: was really

an

interesting uh, engineering

Harry: problem

Daniel: to solve. So we did it. I don't advise anyone to do this. It was amazing that it worked in our case. But if you do this and you build a piece of engineering that you really like, and you become a specialist, and you become the best in the world in

Harry: it,

Daniel: if it happens later on to find a great use case and a great market for

Harry: this, it's hard

Daniel: someone to stop

you.

Harry: I know it's hard to say, but if you hadn't have got that email from that Indian person in that company, do you think you would've found the market?

Daniel: Yes, for sure, because RPA has become a significant market. also, we contributed quite a bit for RPA to become a good market. But, it's possible that I [00:49:00] would have lost one or two years,

And,

uh, we would never be at that size.

Harry: 6 million

Daniel: million to I think 8.1 post

Harry: 1. 6 8.

Daniel: that bad.

Harry: post. It was not that bad in 2015. but

Daniel: we, we had half a million in

Harry: revenue

Daniel: for a company having half a million in revenue was

Harry: maybe.

Daniel: A little bit cheap, but we were a company in

Harry: in Romania. Seriously. Yeah,

Daniel: it was very interesting because we negotiated for such a long time. Actually, that was the funniest

Harry: thing.

Daniel: I knew that I am on something big. I met this guy, Dan Lupu, in March 2014. and it was kind of funny.

Because it, I asked him to come to, to my office. And the first [00:50:00] time I dressed up. You know, I had like a jacket on me, and he came with the hoodie, and it was, it was

funny

when I

saw, and that was a better way to get my trust,

because I was very skeptical

Harry: At

that

Daniel: of people putting money in the company, and they came initially with some, uh, outrageous terms. You

know. Like what?

Yeah. I don't know, all sorts of drag along and all. I don't remember, but it

Harry: awful. Terms

that weren't great at

Daniel: time.

Yeah. Terms

are not great, really. but I engage in the discussion with him. actually, no, they gave me a term sheet in August, I think, 2014.

And we signed, actually the deal. They wired the money in July 15. So it was such a

Harry: long time.

Daniel: eventually they invested in common stock. So the negotiation went to all these

dragons. In the

Harry: end,

Daniel: discussion was, Man, if you want to invest, that's

Harry: fine.

Daniel: Invest in common [00:51:00] stock. But Look, we are growing.

At

this point, it looks like the interest, we are talking with big companies, like Kaiser Permanente left a voicemail to us asking, guys, let's connect. It's kind of unheard

of for small startup. RPA started to get traction. So they invested in common stock, but with having a pari passu with the next

round

they made billions. So that's, uh, they did well.

Harry: You know what, I've met them and they're very happy about that investment.

Yeah, it's, uh, it's made their funds. how did you feel going into Excel? Respectfully, that was in Romania, and as great as, you know, they are, it's still a more local firm. When you come to Excel in London, and we've both been to their offices, the beautiful offices,

Daniel: Yeah, that convinced me the beautiful office had an impact on me. It's, you feel it in the stomach a little bit.

at that time I was not used to go in such amazing places. They were like in the movies for me, [00:52:00] in all fairness. Microsoft office don't compare with Excel office in London. you feel a little bit, it's, It's easy to be impressed when you are young and you are not experienced, But I wanted, at that time, to associate with something that looks successful, Axel, it's one of the top firms in the world. I think it's kind of normal to get. We have an amazing office in New York right now.

Google inspired me, when I was in Microsoft. an interesting story when I think a corporation is losing its way and they don't understand where they are in terms of like competition. I talk about Microsoft 2004 or something like that, not Microsoft

Harry: today.

Daniel: So I receive an email about some cost reductions.

Google was They, I think they just IPO ed. we knew about their, how they treat employees with Michelin star chefs and massages and all this. stuff,

Harry: right? And

Daniel: [00:53:00] in that cost cutting email, sent to everyone in Microsoft, one of the point that I still remember was that in some buildings in the basement had some showers.

If you go with the bicycle, and they said they are removing the towels in the showers. Well, when I read this, I said to myself, this company has lost it. No, see, it's, it's a company who run, What's the psychological impact? Maybe, I don't know, they would save some money, but does it matter for the psychological impact

Harry: what?

Daniel: what message do you send?

Harry: do you think about that today when you're communicating to the team, do you think, what message am I

Daniel: sending?

I do.

I do

all the time. And, uh, the message that I'm trying to send them, it's always authentic. I cannot be anything else. You know, I hardly speak. So if I try to pretend.

And I try to make up the [00:54:00] truth and the reality. I think I always fail. I connect with people but by speaking my mind. Do you ever get in trouble for speaking your mind?

Harry: not, not necessarily really. sometimes I tend to use, maybe metaphors when describing, uh,

Daniel: stuff. I

like analogies, and it's a funny one.

Daniel: Once I had the speech to my entire leadership team, and it was a big moment

I wanted to announce then that Rob will become the Sol

CEO.

So

I

wanted to give, like, a nice.

Harry: speech,

Daniel: But, I told them about

my biggest,

Harry: learnings

Daniel: in, uh, leadership. I told them, uh,

clarity.

A leader is one that should bring clarity to people and explain.

This is, to me, one of the, the biggest.

treat

of a leader. And I explain, uh, the concept of clarity using like, uh, biblical analogy, like the creation of God

and Adam and how, uh, [00:55:00] God told Adam, do everything you want, but don't eat from this tree.

Harry: tree.

Daniel: And I said that in a way that's a bad leadership. It's good and bad, but it's, because God created clarity to Adam.

Very clear rules.

what God didn't do uh, He didn't explain clearly to Adam

why

the rules

Harry: are

Daniel: there. So God created temptation in Adam to eat from that

Harry: tree.

Daniel: leaders should communicate well, for sure. So it's, it's an interesting analogy to me. So a good message would be,

I

charted all the universe since the creation up to this point.

So you are safe here following the rules that I gave you because I discovered them. And this is why you have to behave in a certain way. But this is uncharted territory.

this is be careful, and we have to go together

in that

uncharted

and find new rules. To me, that would have been a better leadership [00:56:00] message, But I think, when you use two colorful metaphors, people are taking a back. It

was kind of a lesson, maybe, to, to use something more palatable to people. And it's easy to explain that clarity metaphor in, other terms. Because I still believe as a leadership lesson, this is my biggest lesson, provide clarity to people, explain the rules, basically explain your decisions.

You don't have to say it. we decided this and this, because it will always create interpretations, temptations, explain them clearly, and explain what is uncharted territory. It's very important, so they understand that they have no

compass.

you mentioned uncharted territory there. I heard there was a rather interesting period of the company, and I think it was 2020 when the company was actually pretty developed at this stage, but you'd spent bluntly, a lot of money.

Harry: quickly. I think it was 400 million in a year, and it was more than

Daniel: [00:57:00] planned.

That was 2019. 2019

Harry: Take it at that moment because that's a, that's an oh shit moment.

Daniel: Well, I remember it it very

Harry: well. Because in

Daniel: uh, it was like in the middle of the, still middle of the summer, I think beginning of August. my plan for that year,

Harry: 19,

Daniel: was that, I will burn maximum 150 million dollars. Which was fine. We had enough money. We had, like, things

Harry: like

Daniel: 600 million in the bank.

I plan to burn, uh,

150.

I had a very rough,

simple plan.

so we finished 2018, like with the hundred, and 75 million in ARR,

And I

said to my team, guys, we will capacitate this company to get 600 million next year. know it sounds crazy. But I will accept, I will give you a buffer of 150 million dollars.

So, if we do only 450, I think we are still fine. I'm [00:58:00] okay to invest, to burn 150 Well, reality is more complicated

Harry: But,

Daniel: high level, the math stands. In long term it doesn't stand, because you can ask, but next year

if

we start with

150,

time we were growing more than, you know, 150 percent, growth can, help with all the diseases so in beginning of August, we assume transition from like, customer success lead into leading FP& And he casually told me in the meeting that, Daniel, whatever we do,

Harry: we

Daniel: will burn, uh, 300. He said, I said, this is impossible because all the time,

we

were working in the, in this exception, we are getting the 450,

we are getting

150.

It's a huge difference. it's much easier to control cost than growth. Yeah.

Harry: Well, it

Daniel: Well, I feel terrible because you [00:59:00] might, you might lose the company. It's fucking terrible. So we had an emergency meeting. I think, I think Luciana was there.

So we met 15th of August in New York.

That was the moment we, we, we decided it's, uh, We have to stop the train. And hiring, and we were hiring on all cylinders. So we have to stop the train. We had to do a reduction in force. think about it, it

Harry: was

Daniel: 2019, everything was going well in the economy, and we announced a reduction in force.

It was

Harry: a terrible

Daniel: think it was extraordinarily difficult for me. And talking to the company, we fired, I think, like 10 percent of the, uh, Or more, 15%, something like this, 400 people probably, out of 3000. So

it was very, it was very difficult, but, I think the second biggest competitor of ours at the time, behave, uh, very nasty.

So they were celebrating, they send messages on LinkedIn, this is what's happened, this, this company is just, clay. [01:00:00] legs, all

Harry: this

Daniel: in

a very celebratory way.

Harry: but the best thing for them, they continue to hire right into the COVID. And we've become a much better leaner

Daniel: company.

So we entered COVID as leaner company. Actually, my recollection of all of our reduction in forces it's like a surgery. After the initial shock, we become a better

Harry: company.

Daniel:

Harry: what did you learn from that? 'cause it's really hard, as you said, 400 outta three thousands, whatever that is, 12%. no one else was doing it. It's not a great signal for the company. It's tough to, as a leader, it sucks. As Carl Eschenbach said, you should never lose the empathy of hurting when it, when

it fires. Yeah.

Daniel: Our rating on glass doors on this, you know Plummeted and

all. The learning is that, in life you have to do what

is the

right

thing.

And you just have to swallow the pain and the cost. And if you do the right thing, company will heal and will become better.

Harry: what [01:01:00] happened.

At that time it was clear that it

Daniel: subsequent question. At that time, it was clear that was the right thing. I

Harry: The question that I have associated with that is, again, speaking to many of your investors, they said, well, Daniel's approach to risk on the back of that is a little bit different to how most people think about risk.

How do you feel about how you think about risk today and in the past?

Daniel: it depends. There are buckets of risk. Sometimes I'm very, I'm very fearful and I'm ashamed of myself. But sometimes I, I don't have the same sense of risk

as

other people.

So I can, uh I can go much faster and make bigger bets.

I

don't

think of the consequences so much.

Harry: what

is in what bucket? Is it like, kill the company in that bucket and everything else? Fine. How do you

Daniel: [01:02:00] categorize

I don't feel, kill the company in a way, but I

Harry: am more drawn to the upside than to. the downside. Is that because you have money now, do you think?

When you don't have money you kind

Daniel: want to No, I did the same in, I told you, after the first round of investment, that switch happened in my mind.

Harry: switch happening getting sequoia as an investor is it a dream for many entrepreneurs How did that deal come

Daniel: be?

Well, that's another story.

but what's interesting, let me give you one, one piece on this story.

when I met Karl first time,

For

some reason I didn't feel the most amazing chemistry with

Harry: So I

said

Daniel: basically, no to Sequoia to our Series B.

Series B was, uh, led by Axel U. S. And Capital G, Kleiner Perkins, and some other people participated.

But I said no to

Sequoia.

we didn't hit it off.

But it was based only on one [01:03:00] interaction with him. And I actually told him. Directly. I got the good advice not to give Karl the bullshit. answer and

reason.

And I told him that I didn't feel that was, you know, the best chemistry between us. then was when Carr really impressed me because I expect as many people that will turn them off and they will never speak with me and that can actually turn them against the company.

And Sequoia can damage a company investing in competitors, helping them, of course, so I didn't want to create an enemy of Sequoia, of course,

But,

but it was interesting because being, uh, being honest, with Karn, creating a little bit of a competitive spirit

in him,

because he told me later, I told myself, okay, I have so many great relationship with so many people, what was wrong with So made him a little bit curious. So we stayed in touch. they also talked to competitors of us. But, uh, Carl decided that, uh,

if

[01:04:00] Sequoia is gonna invest in RPA, it's gonna before signing with him, he told me upfront, very extreme candor. I really appreciate it. And since then we build, uh, we build an amazing

relationship. But it

was, it was built on a great foundation of

Harry: trust.

Daniel: When

Sequoia invest in your business, it change overnight?

Harry: Entrepreneurs think that it does, you can get talent that you could never get everyone wants to invest in you. Does it actually,

Daniel: it, it it has, it has a significant effect.

Yeah. For sure.

I think there are people that, uh. fall of

Harry: Sequoia

Daniel: and they go only to

Sequoia companies and their place. it's a,

it's a big sign.

Can I

Harry: Can I ask another needle moving moment, is actually when you decided that you would hand over the role of CEO.

Daniel: Yeah.

Can you take me to that decision? Why did you decide to make the decision? And how did that feel? Look, I always wanted what's best for the company.

I never felt that, uh,

Harry: So,

Daniel: we are [01:05:00] doing justice to this company on, uh, go to market leadership.

you know, when I, I got the opportunity to meet Rob, that actually Karl introduced the two of

Harry: of I realized Rob

Daniel: probably is the best

go to market

Harry: leader

that

Daniel: we can have. But the only way to get him was to

Give

him the CEO title.

Was it difficult for your ego? Like everyone has an ego

Harry: I build this company from nothing to more than a billion, the CEO of the company. It's,

Daniel: it's

enough

to feed

Harry: my ego another funny

Daniel: story

In 2014 when I was talking to early board.

Harry: So they consider me engineer founder like more like a cto profile than a ceo

and

they told me Also, in all candor, Daniel, let me introduce someone that might be a better CEO.

And I said,

sure,

yes.

So I

Daniel: met

the guy.

Harry: just a nice guy. And I even introduced him. Look guys, this is gonna be our new

Daniel: CEO.

Harry: so I was always open a little bit

to do

what's the best

Daniel: [01:06:00] for

the

company.

Harry: Thank you. With this guy it didn't work, so we went

Daniel: to pitch

Harry: early bird, and I think they realized that it's, it's not working. The pitch together was

Daniel: not

really

Harry: gelling. And then they asked me to go again to just pitch myself, and then was

Hey, there is a transformation in me, and people, uh

There is

kind of, a

Daniel: uh, demon

Harry: that

takes over sometimes. I just

Daniel: have to

Harry: access it somehow.

Daniel: It's like,

Harry: it's like an inner

Daniel: force.

Harry: it can do damage, but if you can

Daniel: control

it.

When

I,

speak in public, I used to have a lot of stage fright.

Harry: And until I

Daniel: realized this is actually not about me,

not

Harry: about my ego, but it's about

my duty

Daniel: the

company

and to the

people

I work with.

That changed everything.

Harry: And instead of this force, this, I call it a demon, but it's a force.

It's

Daniel: an inner force

Harry: that

Daniel: I think all of us have.

Harry: instead of canalizing

Daniel: it

against

me,

Harry: creating

the stage

[01:07:00] fright

Daniel: because it was

feeding my

ego,

Harry: I

canalize it towards I, am a messenger. So you deliver.

And you should see my, my speeches, even in my early days, I always start, in a rusty

Daniel: way.

Harry: But then when I get

Daniel: rhythm.

I gather

Harry: myself.

So I

deliver

Daniel: the message.

Harry: one thing that I'd love your advice on is like, I always align my happiness to the success of my company or my funds, and that's not a great way to live life. ' cause you'll permanently be happy, unhappy, happy, unhappy.

Daniel: how do you detach your happiness from the state of your company?

Harry: I cannot.

 I'm not a

Daniel: happy

person,

maybe this is my way to,

Harry: to say the grapes are

sour.

But I am not,

searching

happiness

Daniel: What are you searching for, then?

Harry: think I'm searching, peace

Daniel: of

mind,

Harry: impact,

Daniel: and

uh,

Harry: giving my mind, uh, framework, an environment where to work

Daniel: its best.

Harry: [01:08:00] its best. there are bouts of happiness,

but I don't have it

Daniel: long.

Harry: It's

not long.

It's like for

Daniel: every

Harry: but when

Daniel: I

feel at peace

it's more

when

I

can focus.

Harry: It's like the story, the initial story I told you, and I start programming

Daniel: Yeah.

Harry: =that====.

even meditating, even saying

Daniel: a

prayer,

Harry: gives

a little bit of peace. But this is

Daniel: what

I'm

trying.

can I ask your advice on something? I, I was walking with a founder in the part this morning who contemplating leading their series A and we were talking

about work ethic, and he was like, half the year I worked 50 hours a week and the other half of the year I work 70 hours a week.

And I was like, well, I'll give you a tip. Work 80 hours a week all year.

and he said, no, you don't get it. If I did that, my support structures, my relationship with my wife, my family, my friends would break down. And then in the hours that I worked, I would be unhappy. I would be stressed

part of me is going maybe, and part of me is going, you [01:09:00] just have to work harder than anyone else.

Harry: Yeah, part of you would say, don't fucking start a company, man. Get a

Daniel: nice job

and

have

fun.

Harry: because I don't believe

Daniel: in,

uh,

Harry: work life

balance.

Daniel: Because

Harry: in a way, building a company is gonna suck you into building the company. I don't think

Daniel: you can really put,

Harry: barriers.

Now I'm working, now I go home and I relax and the kids are around me and my mind stops thinking of this shit and I just go and play with my kids.

Daniel: It's not working.

Harry: No,

Daniel: No, it's

Harry: obvious

Daniel: it's

not working. So,

Harry: to me you are kind of connected

Daniel: all

the time.

Harry: when

Daniel: I

don't work?

Harry: It's very rare, actually, because I'm thinking all

Daniel: the

time

too.

Harry: to the company's

Daniel: problem.

To

me it's work.

Harry: if I wake up in the middle of the night and I'm thinking how we build better computer vision or how we can collect more data to

Daniel: build

Harry: models,

Daniel: I call

it

work,

right?

Harry: because I'm not thinking where is my next vacation and how [01:10:00] can I

Daniel: book

the

trip.

Harry: my mind is

Daniel: obsessive,

so, So,

Harry: in a way, it's very hard when I get

into something to

take

Daniel: off

Harry: that something. this is where I work, because a lot of time I think I'm overthinking and I go in the circle, so when I feel, ah,

Daniel: every time

Harry: I tell myself this is not working, let's, let's give

Daniel: up

on

this.

thinking. Can I ask you one final one before we do a quickfire? Which is just, I'm worried today more and more about the size of incumbents. When you look at, you've mentioned Microsoft a few times, obviously worked at Microsoft.

Microsoft throw off 330 million in free cashflow per day. You know, I just interviewed Sam at OpenAI, where he openly said, if you're in the application layer and AI startups, we will steamroll you. I'm concerned that the incumbents have never been as large as they are and that leaves little room for startups.

Harry: Maybe it's possible. Yeah.

I

Daniel: had a discussion yesterday

Harry: with two friends of mine from IVP. They are also an

early investor.

They invested along

Daniel: with Sequoia.

Harry: in our Yeah.

Daniel: Yeah. Yeah.

Eric [01:11:00] and Alex. So

Harry: we were talking

Daniel: exactly

Harry: this Is it there a space in the application AI?

They felt,

there

is,

in kind of vertical AI,

Daniel: and probably it

Harry: should be open, I cannot go

Daniel: after

all the

domains.

Harry: But I am more with you, I think it's gonna be harder and harder

Daniel: I think maybe it's more like in the beginning of the internet when the big companies, capture it

Harry: a little bit and it was sometime until big up sales force appeared.

But I think early years,

Daniel: it's more

difficult.

Is it difficult for you now that agents are more, uh, that asked this, but you know, you've been a proponent for agents for years. Yes. And now everyone's excited by agents and everyone wants to talk about agents. Does that make life easier or harder for you?

Harry: Well, it's both, because it's funny enough, I read yesterday

Daniel: that

Harry: Microsoft is, with their new AI for consumer, they are thinking to call it like,

AI

Daniel: for every person.

Harry: And we, we had [01:12:00] for many years, our slogan was robot for every person, so.

Daniel: AI is helping us,

Harry: it surfaces more automation opportunities.

And

Daniel: it helps

us,

Harry: and more with,

completing

Daniel: end to end

process

automation.

Harry: But

also creates a lot of narratives, is, is gonna AI completely replace automation? What if we build AGI that will do everything better

Daniel: than a human

Harry: user? But then we are gonna fall doomed, right? So we'll have two A. I. s speaking

Daniel: here

Harry: I,

I'm not on the doomed side of the equation. I, I personally feel

Daniel: that, the

Harry: current technology, it's in actually the

early innings

of, uh, applicability. we

need to work

quite a bit

to find the right use cases in

Daniel: the

enterprise.

So,

Harry: Space,

but I don't see it as challenging to

Daniel: do you not think we overestimate enterprise adoption of ai? I asked Sam this [01:13:00] the other day,

Harry: Up to the day, the adoption, I think the most interesting cases that we've seen are in,

coding

Daniel: completion.

Harry: And

outside this I don't think there are

Daniel: a lot of

Harry: money.

Right

Daniel: now

to

be

Harry: made,

but many people are trying. It's a lot

of

POCs.

It reminds me a little bit as the early days

Daniel: of

Harry: RPA,

with a lot of

POCs.

But I think there will be certain use, especially in understanding

Daniel: documents,

Harry: reading documents, long documents, summarization of documents. This is gonna be really

where

we can apply AI as of today. And if we pair it with automations, I think we

Daniel: increased the

value

of

ai.

Harry: discover them, right? Yeah, one that I, uh,

 Yeah, one that I, uh, I like to remember, it was nice, was when we established

Daniel: [01:14:00] in

Japan. And it

was

Harry: atypical for

Daniel: a

company

Harry: company.

our growth in Japan was for a couple of years higher than

Daniel: in

the

U. S.

Harry: So we established in the way, in the same time

Daniel: in

Japan as in

U.

Harry: S.

So I always fascinated of Japan culture.

again, really good timing, like this guy

that

called us In 2016,

A Japanese guy kind

Daniel: of called

Harry: us he said, I want to bring RPA

Daniel: to

Japan.

Harry: He was, uh, the CIO of Asia Pacific

Daniel: Pacific of,

Harry: Barclay Bank, I think.

Daniel: very

sophisticated

Harry: he

came to London, to meet with me and with some other

Daniel: guys, and, he

Harry: little bit

Daniel: strange

to me at the time.

Harry: And

he was

after a long flight, and he was,

I don't know, tired, but he asked some good

questions.

I was not sure, really, what they are gonna do there,

Daniel:

Harry: fortunately, I was in Singapore, when in, uh, Early January, he gave me a call and said, you know, we have [01:15:00] an opportunity with

Daniel: the big

Harry: bank in Japan, but you have

Daniel: to come

Harry: to Japan

and

Daniel: meet

Harry: meet that guy in person, because otherwise they will not

trust.

And it was, again, like, this type of

Daniel: seminal moment,

Harry: when

I already had plans

Daniel: to go back

Harry: to, you know, Romania to do some other stuff.

Daniel: But I changed my plans

Harry: and I went to Japan. First

Daniel: time.

Harry: In uh,

my life,

I met, Koichi. It's this guy, our guy. And then I met, another Japanese guy that was very instrumental for

our

development.

He's still working for SMBC, which is one of the Japanese

Daniel: manga banks.

Harry: So it was like an immersion into a

Daniel: different

culture.

Harry: And

they were started, SMBC at the time had big ambitions.

They still have in RPA, I

Daniel: think they

Harry: have probably to date one of the largest, if not of the largest, implementation

Daniel: of

RPA.

 meet people that you hit it off from the beginning

Harry: with them. I

felt such a good energy, such a

[01:16:00] trustable

person. We went to have a

shabu shabu.

So it's, shabu shabu, it's actually a great bonding experience, because he was cooking for

Daniel: me,

I

Harry: he put, you

know, the meat on my

Daniel: plate,

and

Harry: It was still an amazing feeling that I, I get

Daniel: it,

Harry: uh, up to date, and, uh, I trust him instinctively,

Daniel:

Harry: I told him, uh, Yamato san, if you give us a chance, we are gonna invest massively in Japan for us, so so that was like mid January.

I will be back in April, and by that time, I will have,

Daniel: like,

Harry: two people working for you. At that time, it was nothing. Not even Koichi. He was not working. He was something doing part

Daniel: time

for us.

Harry: And then we started to, and actually in April

Daniel: we

had like

six

people,

Harry: and then we went to another dinner,

he showed me,

it was, they hired like

Daniel: 150

Harry: people, almost, different consulting firm that were working all on RPA, I've been so proud

Daniel: going

into

Harry: this,

you

Daniel: know,

[01:17:00] amazing

Harry: building in Otemach,

in the

center of financial district.

They have an amazing building, a top floor, overseeing like imperial

Daniel: garden.

Harry: And

I've seen so many people with their

screens open and having UiPath working in

that

one. Are

Daniel: you proud of what you've

Harry: Yeah,

Daniel: of

course.

Harry: Yeah.

Daniel: but do you take a step back and go, yeah.

Harry: Like now it's, it's a good moment.

Usually I don't, but it's good to remember those moments.

Daniel: You have to. listen, I want to do a quick fire. So I say a short statement, you give me your immediate thoughts. Does that sound okay? Okay. So what have you changed your mind on most in the last 12 months?

Harry: I understand better, how my mind works, and what makes it, focus better, what makes it

Daniel: wonder

Harry: I understand better my, the source of my anxiety moments, maybe how

Daniel: to

avoid

What was the worst decision you've made in the UiPath journey?

Harry: it's all not trusting

Daniel: gut

[01:18:00] what are you most concerned about in the world today?

Harry: I always have a disregard

to

autocratic regimes. I was

Daniel: born

and raised

Harry: into a regime with

Daniel: a

dictator.

Harry: So I hate

those.

I think the potential for

Daniel: doing

Really

Harry: terrible

things

come up with, I

Daniel: think,

from

regimes

Harry: that have

once

Daniel: people

Harry: command

Daniel: and they cannot

be challenged.

Harry: and there are

Daniel: quite a

few

powers

Harry: in the

world, you know, that fit

Daniel: the

bill.

Do you think you're a good operator?

Harry: Yeah. for many years, I thought that

I am

not a good operator. Lately, I realized that actually I'm a good operator. I had this debate with Ashim, our CFO,

Daniel: and, uh,

Harry: uh, I think I realized that I made the confusion, what is an operator?

Daniel: So,

Harry: Because an operator is not necessarily a

Daniel: project manager

Harry: that has,

um,

Daniel: followed a

spreadsheet of [01:19:00] tasks and go and check them.

Harry: I think more of an operator is a guy that

deeply understand the domain

Daniel: where

Harry: they

operate.

Daniel: can challenge people, can probe, can go deep into this.

Harry: if we accept this perspective, I think I'm a good operator.

Daniel: think I'm a good operator.

I cannot talk about this.

Harry: You know, all about this, only people with experience can,

hire people with experience. that done this, that's

Daniel: not working.

Speed is the most

have product market fit. If you don't product market fit, you're not

Harry: is the most important thing when you have product market

fit. If you don't product market

fit, Speed [01:20:00] goes

Daniel: against

you

Harry: in a way, so it's, because if you, if you go faster

with the wrong

Daniel: product,

Harry: you only

Daniel: destroy

yourself.

but you, but you learn.

So I would actually disagree with you respectfully. That speed, even when you don't have it, you learn faster that it doesn't work and you try again at something else that doesn't

Harry: work

In, in this sense, yes, but what I mean,

I've seen

startups

and founders that For the sake of speed,

with a half baked product, going and start hiring, go to market teams, hire, hire, and they lose everything.

They

Daniel: lose

the company.

Harry: If you go big before having product market fit, that's the fucking recipe for

Daniel: disaster.

no, I, I agree. I think that's the title for the episode. You can have penultimate one, you can have anyone join your board who's not on your board right now. Yeah. Who, who would you have?

Harry: have? Well, the guy that I, the guy that I think I learned the most in my, in my formative

Daniel: uh, years

is Paul

[01:21:00] Graham.

Harry: I've never met him in

Daniel: person,

Harry: but he was instrumental to my thinking of building a company. And this is one

guy that

I would like

Daniel: to have

on

the board

for

sure. He lives in the UK

now.

Harry: Yeah,

Daniel: I

know.

There we go.

Um,

final one for you. Where do you wanna be in 10 years? Daniel, you're not CEO anymore. Where do you wanna be in 10 years? Is there another company in Daniel?

I don't think in 10 years.

Harry: ten year

Daniel: times? In

Harry: I think we have a strategy and

a vision

for product for two

Daniel: two or

three

Harry: years.

I think it's wrong to think in so many. I, you know, this is a great saying

that

we,

We

underestimate what you can do in 10 years. I think the world is gonna change so much. I just aim to be

healthy,

keep my mind

Daniel: sane,

Harry: do good in life in 10 years. Nothing more.

Daniel: nothing more. It was [01:22:00] so fun,

Harry: really.

Scarlett 2i2 USB: I have to say it really is shows like that, which just made me love what I do so much. I've been very fortunate to be able to call Danielle a friend over the last year. One of the most incredible entrepreneurs, I think we've seen in the last couple of decades and also an incredible human. If you want to watch the full episode, you can see us in studio on YouTube by searching for 20 VC.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-4: But before we leave you today,

Scarlett 2i2 USB-5: We're all trying to grow our businesses here. So let's be real for a second. We all know that your website shouldn't be this static asset. It should be a dynamic part of your strategy that really drives conversions. That's marketing 1 0 1, but here's a number for you.

54% of leaders say web updates take too long. That's over half of you listening right now. And that's where web flow comes in. Their visual first platform allows you to build, launch and manage web experiences fast. That means you can set an ambitious marketing goals and your site can rise to the challenge.

Plus web flow allows your [01:23:00] marketing team to scale. Without relying on engineering, freeing your dev team to focus on more fulfilling work. Learn why teams like Dropbox, IDEO and orange theory, trust web flow to achieve their most ambitious goals today@webflow.com.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-8: I'm speaking of incredible products that allows your team to do more.

We need to talk about secure frame.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-1: secure frame provides incredible levels of trust your customers through automation, secure frame, empowers businesses to build trust with customers by simplifying information security and compliance through AI and automation.

Thousands of fast growing businesses, including NASDAQ angel list doodle and Coda trust, secure frame. To expedite that compliance journey for global security and privacy standards such. Such as SOC two ISO 2,701 HIPAA, GDPR, and more backed by top tier investors and corporations such as Google Kleiner Parkins.

The company is among the Forbes list of top a hundred startup employees for 2023 and business insider's [01:24:00] list of the 34 most promising AI startups for 2023. Learn more today@secureframe.com. It really is a must.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-3: And finally a company is nothing without its people. And that's why you need remote.com. Remote is the best choice for companies expanding their global footprint, where they don't already have legal entities. So you can effortlessly hire, manage and pay employees from around the world or from one easy to use self-serve platform.

Plus you can streamline global employee management and cut HR costs with remote it's free HR. I S and Hey, even if you are not looking for full-time employees, Remote has you covered with contractor management, ensuring compliant contracts and on-time payments for global contractors? There's a reason companies like get lab and door dash trust, remote to handle their employees worldwide.

Go to remote.com now to get started and use the promo code 20 VC to get 20% off during your first year Remote opportunity is wherever you are.

Scarlett 2i2 USB-1: As always, I so appreciate [01:25:00] all your support and stay tuned for an incredible episode with founder and CEO at zip, one of the fastest growing B2B companies of the last few years on Wednesday.