

Matthew Todd

Hi. My name is Matthew Todd, and welcome to Inside the ScaleUp. This is the podcast for founders, and executives in tech, looking to make an impact and learn from their peers within the tech business, we lift the lid on tech businesses, interviewing leaders and following their journey from startup to scale-up and beyond covering everything from developing product market fit, funding and fundraising models to value proposition structure and growth marketing. We learn from their journey so that you can understand how they really work, the failures, the successes, and the lessons along the way so that you can take their learnings and apply them within your own startup or scale up and join the ever-growing list of high growth UK SaaS businesses. Hey, welcome back to the podcast, really pleased today to be joined by Gary Borham, co-founder of HitPause. Great to have you here today.

Gary Borham

Hi, how are you? It's good to be here.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, I'm doing good. Looking forward to the conversation today and to finding out a bit more about your background, and the businesses. But to kick things off, do you want to give people listing a little bit of a brief little bit of bio as to exactly who you are and what your companies are?

Gary Borham

Yeah. Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me, Matthew. So my name's Gary, I'm the founder of HitPause, which is an out-of-office style responder for your social media and messaging services. And it's really to do with the fact that we have our phones close to our hips all the time. And sometimes it gets too much, you know, the notifications. And what we're really betting on, I suppose, is that there's a little bit of FOMO, that keeps us having to constantly go back to those phones. But I'm also betting on this fear of letting other people down. And that's what compels us to have our phone so close to us this unwritten social contract that says I'll get back to you. Time and time again.

Before that, I was in another startup, which was called Screen Coach. This is all to do with my war on screens, folks. Screen Coach is one for children for kids, where they earn screen time from chores, tasks, and movement. And once that time has elapsed, the devices get restricted in you know, we need to it's a really behavior and rewards program that uses screen time. And also pocket money now is the currency for getting those changes in behavior and learning how to manage the technology is taken over our lives.

Matthew Todd

Yeah. Interesting. I'm curious about your war on screens, where does that come from?

Gary Borham

If I can go back further, before that I did adult behavior change programs in the corporate space for about 15 years here in Australasia. A lot of the change behavior that we did for companies was sometimes how to adapt to technology. So then, towards the end of it, it was actually how to get people

to find a balance of technology. And that just to set that in my mind. And then, I was I'm a father of two girls and if any parent knows what it's like, at some point, screens take over the family and technology is interesting. It's an amazing phase that we've been going through in the last 15-20 years, and how technology has taken over our lives.

Matthew Todd

What was it that made you think that's something that you can create a product of your own around, you know, rather than just address with kind of consulting services-based work?

Gary Borham

Yeah, I didn't. I had the idea. I've got two startups and I'm not a technologist. I'm actually a bit of an illiterate technologist in some ways, as well. So I'm a fantastic tester for the teams that I work with. They produce things, I can't figure it out, and they go, Well, you know, that's different. Gary can't do it, then most other humans can't do it. So, now, we're sort of going further and further back in my career before that. I've done a lot of consulting work with small to medium-sized businesses. And one of the organizations I worked with, the founder and I got on really well. He had two IT companies at the time, we worked together for a period of time, and he ended up exiting those businesses and semi-retiring in his mid-30s. His daughter was born around the same time as my daughter, and we became friends, my daughter and his daughter are friends, we go out on holidays together so we were really closely acquainted.

When the idea for Screen Coach came together, I thought the first thing I wanted to do was get involved with Peter. So we sat down and spoke to his wife, Stephanie, who's a psychologist as well. That's what started Screen Coach. So, Peter, with the tech background sort of drove the technology. My role was really working in finding the resources for the team, so finding resources, finding funding, and getting that project together. Within the startup space, there are so many moving parts and often technology people need that support person and that's me who can just go and find the other parts that you need. If you need an advisor, if we need some government funding, if we need new research and new tech guys, I'd do some of the preliminary work there just to break the back of it to make it easy. So that could project can keep going.

Matthew Todd

What were the challenges in getting that off the ground? Was funding easy to access/

Gary Borham

I raised just under two and a half million Australian dollars. That was pre-revenue and pre-market. So right up through to MVP, minimum viable product. And so we had all these phases to go through raising.

The very first phase was Peter and I put some money together. We said, let's just do a proof of concept. From there, we started realize, okay, this can be built, but it's going to need a bit of money, and we're gonna have to do some research, and we're gonna have to set up the business, and we're going to need a big chunk of money. So we're gonna have to do some fundraising and, knock on some doors.

So there's the legalities of that that have to occur as well. We went to friends and it was interesting because Peter had some friends who have known him for a long time and said, if you're involved, I want to throw some money in, and likewise to me. It's really lovely to have those people get involved and understand. All the people who invested in Screen Coach, I'd say the highest majority, they're all parents, and they're all people who know that there's a problem with screens and kids. And like all parents, we've all tried a few solutions. What part of our proof of concept work was, what's in the market. Now we bought a few of them, tried to use one or two myself and failed. That was all part of that phase as well. So friends, families and fans, they certainly provided us a portion of money that gets us through the next milestone.

The next milestone after that is now we've got something here, we built a proof of concept, it was working quite well. Okay, we've got to take something that can be quite commercial and Peter was clear that we had to do a new tech stack. And so then we went to some government funding, we're really lucky that we have a program here in Australia that's just ceased, actually finishes at the end of the financial year in about a month or two's time, called the Accelerate Commercialization Grant. So we were very fortunate to get that, it's hard. It's not an easy one to get. Government money is not always the easiest avenue and you have to really network, the narrative and the conversations that governments are trying to achieve.

Matthew Todd

Yes, yeah, absolutely.

Gary Borham

So we got some government funding and that sort of took us through the next phase. For anyone out there listening, it's not an easy task. Like I say, I like talking to people, I like getting people excited and interested in what we're doing. And it was it's a juicy topic. It's salacious and people who know it quite well. And, our track record was strong, my background in helping solutions go to market in the corporate space, paid in building and implementing and exiting companies. So, I'm not gonna say it was an easy sale because none of them are but it was a piece of work. I can't even tell you how many pitch decks, I've got hundreds and hundreds to change and tweak and finish to come in. I've done road trips up and down the east coast of Australia. Spoken to angel groups, and had investors say, come to my office and the next thing I've got six people sitting in front of me who have friends of friends who are sitting there just talking. It's a fun, weird journey raising money.

Matthew Todd

I think we've had quite a lot of people on the podcasts in the b2b space, but from where you are kind of b2c kind of selling to parents, I would be kind of curious to see how you found that element of trying to reach different consumer groups, but also then, you know what those investor expectations were? Could you share any insight as to what those expectations were like and how you found reaching that consumer market?

Gary Borham

Yeah, yeah. Okay. A couple of questions in there. So with investors in the b2c space, you're right, there's, there's a level of expectation now. And I was only just talking to someone recently about this,

the risk level for different investors at different stages for your company change. So you know, early days, you meet some people, we've had some very successful people in business who have invested in Screen Coach, and they're like, look, we're taking a risk here, we understand that 80% of startups fail. They're aware that the risk exists, so they're so at that early stage. My experience has been that people like, well, you know, it's a punt, we know you're doing your best.

One thing I can't stress enough is keeping your investors informed. I've always done monthly updates with investors. You know, we've had, you know, little campfire sort of zoom calls, where we say come in and ask us anything, we'll answer any of your questions. And sometimes it's, you know, happy days stories when we've just received new government grant, and let's all come and have a chat. But sometimes, you know, there's times when the project wasn't going in the right direction. And you know, you have to put your hand up and say, We're doing our best, but please come in and ask any question you've got, you know, we were open to that.

Matthew Todd

No, it's good to hear that. Investor relations are definitely important. And it does tie into what I was asking about expectations, because I think it's not just, you know, what are their expectations at the time that you pitch or when they sign the contract? Or whatever it is, is managing that going forward, as well as?

Gary Borham

That's right. And we're clear in our monthly updates, you know, what are our targets? Are we you know, we do quarterly sort of objectives that we do internally, and we were fairly transparent, you know, there's only so much you can put in in a monthly update. And I say, at the end of nearly every one, it was almost like, I could do another six pages of this, but its stupid.

But yeah, all the conversations and all the people and all the, we're going this way, and you try and boil it all down to keep them on track. It's also a successful selling tool. I often found quite often when I speak to someone meet someone, talk to them about their Screen Coach, one of the easiest things, at least I was thinking the last three or four updates, and they'll be like, Oh, that's great. And they'd sort of see that conversation had tracked over time. So you know, it's also a successful sales tool. We've had other investors introduce us to other investors. So there's an opportunity inside that as well.

So yes, certainly, towards the end, as we start to get to market. And I mean, you know, warts and all the product itself is incredible, what Pete has built is amazing, it does have some amazing, amazing features. It's proven a little bit clunky for people to understand, because we've got so many features, it can get a little bit overwhelming when parents start to get in there. So like a lot of startups, you sit there, and we feel like it's going to be filled with dreams, build it, and they will come. And, we built this product, and we put it out going parents are just gonna love this and tell everyone else about it.

You know, the challenge to getting it into the consumer market. It's expensive, it's known to be expensive. And the reason is, there's so much white noise going on for parents for our target market, right. So it's Easter, followed by Mother's Day, followed by, you know, Christmas, followed by

Thanksgiving in America, and you know, all these, all these different things, just keep distracting parents and you're trying to try and pop up.

In terms of getting some traction in the media, we've had a couple of syndications where we've had opportunities as well that it just kept falling into our lap. That AC round that I mentioned earlier, you can get a maximum of a million dollars. Our first round was 330,000. And the second one we got for 770. So the government gave us a million dollars over the course of two parts, and it's dollar match. So we had to find the funding to match that. In doing that we put a little press release in my local town here in Noosa, which is on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, and that got picked up by our local newspaper, which got picked up by a local The TV station. Which then got picked up by a national syndication and we went from, you know, sort of this little sort of, we've got some money and we're starting to get ourselves some traction to, I don't know, 5000 people signed up overnight.

It was a little bit early for us because the product wasn't quite ready to get get in their hands. So PR is a great, great place. I'm less involved with Screen Coach now. I was there for four years, and I finished as a director at the end of October last year. I'm still involved, I speak to Peter and Steph on a regular basis. I'm one of the major shareholders and all that sort of stuff. So I'm well involved with the organization.

But you're doing a lot of work to get into that consumer market, and then fine tune the product to get that flavor right? Because when they get that recipe right, people are just going to start telling their friends about it. And that's that real word of mouth. And that's where your CAC, your cost of acquisition can really come down.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's interesting what you're saying about the press release. And I think the government funding, you know, we have similar different grant schemes in the UK as well. And I know quite a lot of founders have been able to take advantage of the funding. But I think there's also the credibility that, you know, making it through that process provides you as well that it does open doors for investors for PR, you know, a number of other opportunities, just because, you know, you've been through a diligence process. You've got that kind of trust mark almost given to you, haven't you?

Gary Borham

Oh, absolutely. And I said it alluded to it earlier, getting government funding is not easy, you have to really admit to that effort. And that process. I'm sure it's the same anywhere, anywhere in the world where governments are giving away, you know, public money to an organization, you have to go through a series of steps to prove yourself and you are vetted. And it does help and as I said, as adult was dollar match funding initiative.

Matthew Todd

You can leverage them both against each other almost, can't you? I wanted other founders listening to hear that, because I know, not all of you know, many people will be aware of those kinds of grants and government funding avenues. But I think more people should at least look into it and see what is available.

Gary Borham

I can tell you right now with HitPause. I've got five tabs open right now, which I'm halfway through filling in application forms. I sent a message to Matthew a couple of days ago, we've been accepted, and are being sponsored by advanced Queensland to go to London in four weeks' time for London Tech Week. An amazing opportunity for us to really get to see the landscape and what the startup community is like over in London, meet some investors over there as well. There's about 120 odd businesses here from Australia, but 12 or 15, from Queensland. And how I got to that was just, you know, filling in forms. And as I said, I've got five tabs open right now with little government forms. The reality is most of them ask the same questions. What's the problem you're trying to solve? How big is the market? You know, what have you tested? Where you're at? What stage are you at? So I've got a Google Doc with all my answers, you know, and it's just every answer that I've ever answered. And there's little tweaks.

There's another friend that I love right now, Chat GPT. So too often I'll you know, especially with government ones, they'll be limited to the number of words that you have to do, you know, tell us what your problem is in that 100 words. So I'll go to chat and say, here's the question, here's my answer, make it better. It does an amazing job of making me sound better. So I actually have got a second Google Doc, which are the things that Google Chat GPT has told me about my business. Which, I copy and paste.

Matthew Todd

It's an incredibly useful productivity tool if you use it in the right way. Like you say, if you if you've got the raw material to feed it, it can help you surface things, rephrase things and yeah, almost act like a bit of a mentor and adviser in many ways as well.

Gary Borham

The takeaway is that you got to keep hustling in that area. There are government grants, there are small little opportunities that pop up, that I like to be across. So we have a range of, I'm not sure what the landscape is over there in the UK and in other parts of the world, a bit fragmented in terms of understanding, like, there's so many different opportunities for the bits of funding. And it's not always on the one page. There must be at least five different centralized government grant pages that I have, I have links to that I click on from time to time.

But anyhow, you just need to keep checking those every now and then finding them filling in the forms and going through the process. And I find myself, it helps me reinforce the value proposition. It helps me double check and double question what it is we're doing and who our market is.

One of the great things about doing the Accelerate Commercialization Grant funding that we did is that's been our most successful for Screen Coach. It was an incredibly laborious process. There are a lot of questions and I think the whole submission was at least 100 pages and 100 different adjuncts and documents that had to be fed in as well. But in doing so, we actually really vetted our project. It helps to fine-tune our project, both applications that we did helped shape what we were doing in some way. So there is benefit to it as well.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. It certainly helps you look at your own product from a different perspective, which you have to do to answer those questions, which I think is always a useful and valuable exercise. And the more times you do it, the better you get understanding what that value proposition is yourself as well.

Gary Borham

Yep, absolutely. Yeah, I really encourage it. Yes. So you know, you may not be a lunatic, like me having five tabs open and filling forms in on a constant basis. But do it every now and then. And it's important to ask yourself that question.

I've been fortunate enough to get some really great advisors, who I've just met by chance at different events. I do go to a few events, I don't go to a lot here. But I do go to a few events where I'm on the Sunshine Coast. And so our major city is Brisbane, it'd be an hour and a half, two-hour drive to go to Brisbane. There are a lot of events in Brisbane for startups like there are in a lot of capital cities. We have we have a couple of different pockets here. One not so far from me, that's having an angel investor evening event right now as we speak. So we have a small community up here, and we get together and we're and we sort of support each other. But I suppose I'm just saying that I go to a few events, and in doing so you meet a few people and just keep that momentum in that area too. I find you know, again, I'm into metaphors tonight. But you know, there's a lot of plates that you need to keep spinning in startups. So there's product, there's marketing, there's pitching, there's investment, there's, you know, there's there's testing, you know, try and keep spinning, all those plates are just trying just a little bit on each of those plates over the course of any week.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. There's definitely a lot to balance. So with HitPause, what was the kind of founding journey of that like? You kind of referenced back to the war on screens. And I like what you were saying about that ability to kind of switch off the notifications, but there's also that psychological element of not letting people down that can kind of play into that pressure that people put on themselves. And that certainly resonates with me that you have these focus modes on your computer on your phone now, but then you're dreading kind of coming off of that focus mode and saying, Okay, how many Slack messages have I not responded to?

Gary Borham

That's it. So how the idea came about was prior to Screen Coach, as I said, I'm a bit of a technophobe. I used to joke around saying my phone was a mobile answering machine you know, and I'd leave it in my car for a day or so and then go and check it.

Over the course of Screen Coach I get Slack, I get WhatsApp and Messenger and I found myself in all those roles of being more at the front the face of the company. So I had a whole range of different tools. So I had all these notifications. I came home from dinner with my wife one night, and it was 11 o'clock. And there I was sending some messages to people in the Ukraine and developers and friends and people in the business at 11 o'clock. And my wife said, Who is this guy? This is the guy used to only look at his phone every now and then and look at you. Do you miss a little? I was like, Yeah, well, that's weird. And I just sat back and observe myself over the next few days. You know, you just don't know how we were how you've changed over time. It really sort of sets set in my head. And I just started to

peel back that layer of the onion and like, Why? Why am I so compelled to answer people? What's this unwritten social contract that feels that I have to answer you as soon as I can? Part of its FOMO, I want to be on top of things. I want to be on a game and you know, I've got a big role, you know, and I want to make sure I do it. Well, there's a bit of pride there. But it just becomes a point where you just kind of find yourself just fearful of the dings and you go, gosh,

Matthew Todd

Yeah, every notification can be someone giving you some work, essentially.

Gary Borham

Right? And what we found out, the initial premise and value proposition for HitPause is really simple. You write a message, hey, I'm talking to Matt on our podcast, I'll get back to you at you know, tomorrow morning. And as soon as you press HitPause, whoever sends you a message in WhatsApp, Slack Messenger, Signal Telegram, then that message goes back. And what that means is when you actually turn your phone off and put it on pause mode, those people now know where you're at. There's two people who win in this game. The person who's pressed HitPause goes thank gosh, they know what's going on. I don't have to respond to every ping in every notification.

What we're also finding is that people who receive the message love it. They're the ones actually getting the most joy. They're going oh, great. Gary's in a meeting. Oh, yeah. Matt's doing another podcast. That's cool. I will, let them get on with their life. And we have this fearful expectation that we're at the center of everyone's universe, that the truth is, is not the case. But, if you just say, hey, look, I'll get back to you tomorrow, or in a couple of hours. They'll just now put a pin in their mind going, I should hear from him tomorrow morning and they move on. And it gives you that beautiful, beautiful ability for both parties to know what's going on. Because there's focus mode, we can turn our phones off, there's Do Not Disturb, flight mode. I know some people put phones in flight mode. It's funny, when you talk to people about HitPause, you start hearing about these crazy strategies people are creating for themselves to be able to manage this and that's what we do.

This is a real conversation happening out there right now. This technology has taken over all lives. And I initially talked about that with families and kids, but it's taking over all our lives. And this is what we're starting to find these days. As you start to see what's happened since COVID, we've now got people who are hybrid, working half in the office, half at home is pretty common these days, even just purely work from home. It's starting to blur the lines of on and off time, which was already happening anyhow, I think before COVID, but it's really blurred those lines now. You know, the number of people that respond to their phone in the first five minutes, about 84% of phone owners, 83% of the global population has a smartphone. There's like 6.6 billion smartphones out there right now. And they're a brilliant tool. They're compelling. They're entertaining, they're educational. They've got all the positives, but they're also just overwhelmed.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. I've got a smartwatch as well. And one of the things I quite quickly realized was that I needed by default on every notification on my phones, versus on my wrist and appears on there as on I had to turn it off because it was literally like, not like a mini electric shock. But it almost felt like that

every vibration was like a stress inducing notification or notification, you know, do I need to reply to that? Do I need to reply to that?

Gary Borham

It's really interesting that conversation you mentioned before, was the fact that when you go back online, the number of calls and messages you've now got to respond to is also overwhelming. So we're looking at some pretty clever ways right now and how to help triage those calls. So that when you come back to your phone, you'll start to see what you need to do in a less stressful way. So we've got some pretty clever technology we're heading towards on Google, we're still testing and doing a few thoughts around that. But that's the next stage for us as well, because we want to be out in front of this conversation around helping people. We are a wellness tool. We're also an employee wellbeing tool.

And one of the things I'm looking forward to when we're over in London is talking a bit more to some people in government about the right to disconnect. So there's, you know, there's this law around that there's now in Ireland, for example, Portugal, France, I believe it's been tabled in the UK, in England as well, the right to disconnect. And it's this ability for employees to say, Hey, you can't contact me at 10 o'clock at night, you can't be messaging or expecting a reply at 10 o'clock at night. And now we're starting to have to legislate around that because, again, these lines have blurred a little bit, it's got a little bit gray in some areas.

And so we see ourselves as a really helpful tool for organizations and a lot of employers on their brochure, meaning to say that, you know, your mental health is important to us. And it is because burnout is costing organizations an absolute fortune in terms of productivity, that whole quiet quitting, I'm not sure that's a global term. So it's just an Australian term. Quiet quitting is becoming a thing. And organizations are really suffering around that. So we see KitPauze as a tool for organizations to give to their team and say, Hey, here's the tool we want you to have. So you have the weight away to KitPauze from us. So you can recover and recuperate over a weekend or a long weekend or a day off or overnight. So you're better you're a better performer. So that's where we see ourselves as well.

Matthew Todd

And in terms of monetizing it. Is that way you're looking to monetize it, in the kind of employer-employee, or how are you looking at the kind of pricing of that?

Gary Borham

Yeah, we see a sales bit like what Slack did, you know going off and having a really long freemium model with a really wide broad base of people using the product for different ranges, whether it be small to medium sized businesses, individuals, we get a lot of success from students. We have a lot of students, this next generation coming through. I'll tell you a bit of a backstory, but I went to a hackathon weekend. So a tech weekend where they had students, tech people, and sort of entrepreneurs and people in the startup space, come together and work on the World Health Organization's goals. You just had to get an idea and you spend, you know, sort of 48 hours in a hot box working on ideas. I went to the weekend just to help participate and support our community here in the startup space. And there was a whole lot of students here and I picked them KitPauze, and I honestly thought they're gonna say bugger off boomer. We don't we don't need a tool like HitPauze. We got our own sort of digital hygiene,

I don't know. And they actually are like, I need that I'm desperate for that. Oh, my gosh, I want that. So we have an amazing group of students in that next generation, you are really up to now Gen Zed. But you know, this next generation coming through or realizing, you know, they're highly connected, but they also find themselves overwhelmed. So I was quite surprised.

So we want to have a really large broad base of users who can use the services in that freemium model. And then they'll just be a couple of steps up for premium services. So there'll be some tools and features for the profiling, and then it'll be an enterprise-type solution. And we see a lot of us hopefully being picked up at that enterprise level, for organizations looking to employ HitPause, as an employee wellbeing tool, also to enforce their right to disconnect in those countries where that's valid, that's going to be tabled here in Australia, too, by the way. We have two of the biggest unions in Australia that have the right to disconnect, just having been put in their award in the last couple of months. But that's the teachers union and the police union here in Australia. Because again, you know, these organized, these people are starting to realize they're losing employees, they're losing engagement. They're losing productivity. You've heard the rant.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, I think with global businesses becoming more distributed, becoming more global. You know, you mentioned developers in the Ukraine all over the world and different team members distribution, I think, that will obviously come with messages and notifications at different times of day and people find their own working patterns and communication patterns within that as well.

But I think it's not always obvious to anyone when they want to communicate but also when people they're communicating with are going to be available. or will respond. And as you say, people can sit on the sofa in the evening kind of watching TV, but not really. And then they're still, you know, messaging or what have you. So as you can see how it helps.

Gary Borham

I have a small story, I booked my flights this morning to go to London and the lady who is there at the travel agency, she works Mondays, works remote, it was in the footer of her email. She told me up front, you know, I work Mondays, I'm work from home Thursdays, and I'm in the office Fridays, so it was a nice little, it was a nice to take away close, so I had to pay for my flights today, which I did. But that's that's the norm now, right? That the norm is, you know, people going we're talking about four-day workweeks here in Australia, it's starting to become a big conversation. So now we're going to have people who only work, you know, Monday to Thursday, or, you know, Tuesday to Friday. This whole change, well, that's great. You know, you can do that for your team, but your organization, you still need to be here, you still have to have the shingle open and people accessible. So how do I get in touch with Matthew Todd when I need him when he's taking time off? This is now this new world.

So as a startup, we've sort of built our parachute as we fall. But you know, we are starting to sort of figure out, try and figure out you know, where, where you're going to lay where you're going to find your best traction. And, and I suspect that down the track, and this is sort of medium to long-term thinking, where can we play inside that space? Where can we be a tool to help people with that?

Matthew Todd

It sounds like, a great idea, but also a very good strategy as well that, you know, Slack like freemium model with the more powerful features on top. I can see the value on I'll be downloading after this podcast, in letting people know where I'm at, when they can contact me, even just talking that through takes the stress off. I can see then the power of more advanced features like well, okay, who do I actually need to get back to now you know, how many of those aren't just another LinkedIn message trying to sell me SEO Services, or whatever it may be? How many of those are genuine things that I do need to get back to. I can see the value in that.

And also, I can see that, because as you mentioned, you're kind of across different messaging platforms, you're not just on one platform, and not just a Slack app or a WhatsApp plugin, or whatever it may be. Because you're working across them consistently, I can see the power in that. But also, I can see that, from your perspective, surely, you must see it as harder to disrupt by people like the phone manufacturers or Apple themselves that have the very, very simple kind of Do Not Disturb features.

Gary Borham

Correct? No, that's we are do not disturb or flight mode plus, focus mode plus. We currently integrate with WhatsApp Messenger, Slack, Signal and Telegram. We have Instagram and LinkedIn coming fairly soon. And if you look at the stats globally, look, at the end of the day, WhatsApp and Messenger are dominant in every country. Some more so than others. There are real outlier countries like Brazil or Sweden have some crazy WhatsApp and Messenger addictions.

But you know, then that they sort of whittled down after that, of course, once you go through Asia, you've got WeChat, Kakao line, they're getting there on our roadmap, and we'll be heading down that that path as well, at certain points. But you're right, you know, the fact is, wait, we are behind the door of the operating software, we're at we're working at the app level, and the integration is quite simple, you know. Any integration between what's happened and hit pause 30 to 60 seconds, you know, takes less than a minute to do to do your link.

So we use QR codes for the majority of them. Sometimes you put in you use to put a link with your password and username. But it's fairly so seamless in terms of that and the functionality itself on the dial. Listen, go to our YouTube channel, and have a look, please put it in the notes and have a look. But you can see it's really just putting in a message and pressing HitPaze. We've got a long roadmap of other features we're talking about in terms of whitelisting and having people come through when you're on KitPauze mode and other things coming down the track as well.

The reality is when people message you that they're the first one up and hey, how are you going? It's always akin to eventually getting to a conversation right? That's where we see ourselves as well, working in and being able to sort of triage that and finding out what is it that you want so that when you come back you can see well, Matt wants to talk business. You know, John wants to talk golf and football and you start to triage. And that's some of the stuff we're heading towards. So it's exciting.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. It certainly sounds like it. You mentioned data and trends as well, I imagine you see a lot of interesting patterns of messaging behavior, as well, as you're kind of putting out those responses to people imagining you must see some kind of interesting messaging patterns occurring. And there must be a lot of interesting data there about how frequently and when people are on different types of people and messaging as well.

Gary Borham

Yeah, look, we certainly keep our eye across what's happening, we don't see the messaging itself. I mean, that's one of the things that we make sure we keep away from. But yeah, the trends and patterns are also something that we can look at. And, you know, it's potential data for people to pull on, and start to see how they can have that sort of plays out. I liked seeing those sorts of things. I love analytics. We track every conversion through the onboarding process. I love looking at those numbers, having a big chat about that today. And, you know, we're making a few tweaks. So what you'll download after this call will be slightly changed by the time we get to London, and we'll have our how A grade version with a few sexy screens, it'll make it a bit more seamless too. So yeah, it's I like that stuff.

Matthew Todd

So what are the plans and ambitions now?

Gary Borham

So we got into the App Store and Google Play about two weeks ago. We've done a lot of internal testing. And then a doing it with our friends and sending them links and doing things through flight control, Flight Center with Apple and alpha testing. And now we've just started to roll out we had 100 users come in over the last couple of weeks and just do this first round of external users, people we don't really know.

I have gotta tell you this because I told you before, I like marketing and I like sales. At the end of every message that comes back, the last four words of every message it says powered by HitPauze with a hyperlink. That for me is exciting, because then I want to get my cost of acquisition, I want to get that CAC down really low. And if I can get viral marketing, and have people because that's a warm introduction, right? Like, this beautiful, warm introduction. We don't want to get it to spam levels, but it has real power there as well.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, it's kind of educating them but also it's that kind of viral loop as well if they see the value in that thing. Oh, that's interesting. They're gonna hit that link, as you say, that's embedded in the messages.

Gary Borham

That's how we plan to grow and scale. But our first round, of course, is to get our feedback, we make some changes, it's probably going to be a couple of weeks before they all get implemented. And then that then we go to London Tech Week, we hang out a shingle hanging our hat for a bit more funding because we're sort of spent all our pennies till now.

We are going to do a raise around 250,000 and that will take us through. So the short term is then to get that that that money, put those finer tweaks in turn on the revenue tap. So put on those profiling tools and some of those other features which will be the premiere features and start turning on the revenue tap and then do another raise to really scale and grow it out. We're online, so we're available globally.

Matthew Todd

Yeah, absolutely. Creating your own messaging problems as well by going global?

Gary Borham

Like it, that's good. Yes.

Matthew Todd

We mentioned kind of global business now. But yeah, as you say, any kind of SaaS any online platform, any app is available, globally. And I think it's exciting the opportunity that can bring but also, I think, for some people can be like, Well, how do you then focus on when it comes to kind of launching or trying to get traction? How do you kind of pick an avenue that's, that's going to be the best one? Because it might be that it's really super local to you. But it could also be like the other side of the world?

Gary Borham

Yeah. I mentioned Adam before. My co-founder. He's amazing, I met him through the journey that was Screen Coach. We were just shooting the breeze. And I told him about this idea for HitPause. And he's like, let's do it. Adam and his company have been around since the early 2000s, they built a product here in Australia, Smiling Mines, its equivalent would be Calm, which would be the global equivalent of an extraordinary product with a lot of success here in Australia. He's built some amazing products. So it's really great to have him on board. I've been very fortunate. And he was another reason I mentioned him now is that he was with a product that he was involved in, and they got huge traction in Brazil. Just like that. He's like, sure. The next you know, they're in Portuguese, and they're racing off down the Brazilian route.

So yeah, this is a show for founders and people who are, you know, in the market doing their own projects, progress over perfection, you know, that would be one of the things that I work on. Let's have the problem that we've got too many people from Brazil trying to use the product and having issues. Let's have the problem that half the UK wants to download overnight, and we need and they need support, you know,

Matthew Todd

There's a lot to be said for not trying to preempt and solve every problem. Obviously, it's a kind of judgment call. But I think a lot of founders, especially technical founders, can try and polish it a bit too much to try and prevent a certain problem. Whereas actually, let's see if that's a problem that you end up with because there's usually a cost to try and to solve that problem and complexity time or cost or whatever it may be.

Gary Borham

And it's a juggle, right? I don't want to sound too flippant, because I want the product to be good too. As there are some signs here in the startup space that I don't completely agree with. There's one that goes the floats around here. And I'm sure it's probably the same in the UK. That with your MVP, if you're embarrassed by your MVP, then you've launched at the right time. You know, you're supposed to sort of sit to go, oh, what a piece of turd this is.

I also get caught up sometimes getting too finicky. You can get really beaten down by some of the most trivial things. They're batshit mad actually founders in many, many ways sometimes.

Matthew Todd

Absolutely. You're trying to achieve something that's not been achieved before, by definition.

Gary Borham

Right. I like that. I think it's fun, but it has its toll too. I'm not going to deny that.

Matthew Todd

Thank you for sharing the Screen Coach / HitPauze journey. So far. Like I say, it certainly sounds like a massively interesting and valuable App Tool platform. And I look forward to seeing how it develops, and what those features end up looking like as well. But before we do kind of wrap things up for now at least. Is there any other advice that you would give fellow startup / scale-up founders?

Gary Borham

I think progress over perfection was the one that I shared just before I wanted to make sure I said a couple of good books. The Cold Start Problem by Andrew Chen, I think is a great book for founders. It goes through the different stages of a startup from day one through to day 300 and all the pros and cons of each of those steps. I think it's a really great little hand-talk guide. Get good, get around people, and hustle and keep moving.

Matthew Todd

I think that's great advice. So thank you very much for taking the time today, to take a break from the messages coming in. And yeah, it's been an absolute pleasure talking to you, really interesting.

Thank you for joining me on this episode of Inside the Scale-Up. Remember, for the show notes and in-depth resources from today's guest, you can find these on the website insidethescaleup.com. You can also leave feedback on today's episode, as well as suggest guests and companies you'd like to hear from. Thank you for listening.