

## Transcription details:

Date: 01-Apr-2015  
Input sound file: Moxie Podcast 24 - Youth in Technology

## Transcription results:

S1 00:13 [music] Hello and welcome to another episode of the Moxie podcast. This is episode 24. It is recorded on Wednesday April the 1st, 2015. This is the companion web show to the Moxie Sessions, which is an internet economy discussion group held once a month in Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand. The aim is to bring together a group of interesting people from right across the economy to talk about how New Zealand can take advantage of the internet to improve its economic performance. A special thanks to Alcatel-Lucent and its NG Connect program, whose sponsorship helps to make this podcast possible. Check out the program at [ngconnect.org](http://ngconnect.org).

S1 00:50 I'm Glenn Williams with you here in London and I do have a fantastic panel of guests ready to discuss today's topic and I will bring them in very shortly. Just a wee note, this is the companion Moxie podcast of the session that was held at the Spark Lab in Auckland on March the 11th, and the topic of the last Moxie Session was broadly focused on youth in technology. Now, the evening was a chance to hear from some inspirational young people who are creating technology and using it to change New Zealand and, in fact, the world. So, let's bring on my guests.

S1 01:23 Christian Silver. Now, he's created something called Project Decode@[decode.org.nz](mailto:decode.org.nz) to help encourage high school students as creators of technology, rather than just consumers of it, and it's certainly got to be a good thing. Christian, welcome to the show.

S2 01:39 Hi, Glenn. Thank you.

S1 01:40 Very much a pleasure to have you here. I've also got Ezel Kokcu. She's an entrepreneur in Wellington making a global business in the cultural sector. She's started Stqry, which is a solution to make it easier for those running cultural facilities to make their information available to visitors in a friendly, customizable and much richer way - things like in museums. Welcome to the show, Ezel.

S3 02:02 Thanks for having me, Glenn.

S1 02:04 And, we've also got Laura O'Connell-Rapira, who's a campaigner for social change focused on how to use technology to engage people in campaigns. Pleasure to have you here, Laura.

S4 02:14 Thanks for having me.

S1 02:15 And, it is an absolute pleasure, of course. Now, it was a very much broad topic - youth in technology - I guess it's all about how to get more young people, not only being users - and I think this is what Christian's going to talk about - but, actually creating technology, creating new businesses, being entrepreneurs. Christian, can you give us a run down on what you talked about at the last session?

S2 02:36 Yes, I'm just one year out of high school. Well, I'm in my first year out of high school now, and my life is just completely involved with software creation and programming,

and all that sort of stuff. I discovered that, basically, accidentally early on in my middle school years, and I was entirely self-taught, and I was happy to do that because it's a great learning experience to do anything like that. But, I didn't have any mentors or teachers to help me out with learning how to create software and how to programme, and I didn't really have any peers that shared that passion with me. That was a bit frustrating. Towards the end of high school, I realized that this is quite a big problem. It's globally widespread the fact that it's difficult to get in to software creation at schools and it's becoming this expectation that it's not necessary. Talking about this idea of consuming technology, as the rise of the tablet and the smartphone, and things like that, people are expecting technology to be so easy. When technology becomes really easy, they don't want to know the ins and outs and how to work with it, and that means that they essentially don't know how to use it. What I'm trying to do with Decode is provide schools with a model - call it a programming club - to help students engage with technology in a way that's interesting for them, break that barrier, teach them not to be consumers of technology, which I think is a really big problem, especially as I know a lot of schools are moving towards using, for example, iPads as a learning device, as opposed to using laptops, which I feel is really restrictive.

S1 04:10

It is indeed. We need to stop the zombie hoard of technology users, and create an army of technology creators, I suppose. Ezel, what did you talk about at the Moxie Session?

S3 04:21

My topic of conversation was really that I've only been a few years out of high school now, as well. For me, growing up I know I wanted to do something really big. I know I've wanted to do something world-changing and something that affected millions of people and help change people lives. When I had a gap year and traveled around Turkey and Europe, and helping children, it really helped give me an understanding that information wasn't always accessible and, when you did want to know more information, it usually costs you something. When the idea came for Stqry, it was the fact that we wanted to create more content and have content coming right from the organizations themselves that spent hundreds of thousands of dollars researching and creating that, and making it as special as possible, and provide a platform that let them share that content really easily. There was no barriers to entry for anybody. It's really easy to put information on the platform, and then really easy for our visitors to go and explore and engage with all of that content. That's really it. It was just bringing content to the community and giving people an outlet to find more information when they wanted it. But, the biggest thing for me is I never really had that taught to me. It was something that I had to go out and seek myself. As you're starting a company, it can be quite difficult. My mission for this year is just to talk with more high schools and openly discuss with students the fact that they can start their own businesses and that they can go and learn from people that have done it before, and don't be afraid to ask.

S1 06:23

Ezel, can you tell us how big the business is now - Stqry? What are we talking about?

S3 06:31

We have over 5 million users. We've got over 500 organizations here in New Zealand and the United States. It's growing really rapidly. We work with some of the biggest museums, and art galleries, and zoos in the world. We have thousands and thousands of stories on the app now. It's just growing in to this huge ecosystem of exploration. It's fantastic.

- S1 06:56 Definitely some good stuff going on there. Laura, can you give us a round up of your talk at the Moxie Session.
- S4 07:01 I guess to give the situation some context, I had been working as a charity fundraiser for the last five or six years, and I was doing that in England, Australia and New Zealand, and Canada as well. Charity fundraising is really really brilliant and it's largely about story-telling and trying to tell an engaging enough story to people that they're willing to take some kind of action to make the world a better place. During that time while I was in England, I also ended up working on Glastonbury Music Festival, and I passionately fell in love with events, and what I noticed between these two hats that I was wearing is that the people who were largely giving to charities, were people that were volunteering their time for charities were all people that were over 55. Then, the people that were at these music festivals who had these really awesome and interesting ideas going on, were all in this 18 to 34 demographic which charities were, by and large, completely missing. Then, I came back to New Zealand and I saw that, unfortunately, in our political systems, young people weren't really voting. When I say that, I mean like 60% of people under 30 weren't voting when I came back, which is huge. That really concerned me because the challenges that our generation, and younger, face - climate change, income and equality, massive growing debt - are huge, and if weren't not turning up to have a say how we mitigate some of the risks involved with that, then that's deeply concerning. I merged these two world of mine which was, I call it parties with purpose. What my entire life is about now is really try to use online tools and organizing, so that young people, particularly, and when I say young, I'm being quite loose with that - like under 40s sort of thing - to take action on the issues that they care about. Last year I organized a campaign called Rock and Roll which is basically trying to get more young people to go out and exercise their vote, by combining the reach of the Cloud with the power of the crowd.
- S1 09:09 How well did that campaign go?
- S4 09:12 It surpassed my expectations. To start off with, we had no money, we just had a lot of ideas, and this is just me and my flat-mates that did this - my house-mates - we ran a crowd funding campaign. We managed to raise \$10,000 from that. That was activating the power of the crowd there, bringing people in to our journey. That allowed me and my best friend to quit our jobs full-time and work on this thing for three months. That was really bootstrapping it, but it was really brilliant. In those three months, we managed to activate a 100 volunteers around the country, who then went on to enroll 3,500 young people, which is small in the big scheme of things, but I think that the fact that we mobilized 100 volunteers to get out there is really really powerful. I speak to a lot of those volunteers now who have gone on to do other interesting things in their communities, as well. It was about building activist tool-kits.
- S1 10:15 What strikes me about what you've all been saying is that you've been able to do stuff without a whole heck of a lot of money, particularly with what you were just saying there, Laura, really bootstrapping it and had to do that crowd funding campaign, but started from nowhere. But, isn't it hard to do things without money? Isn't it almost impossible? I think that's what a lot of people think. Christian, what can you achieve without money?
- S2 10:40 I think, once upon a time, money would have been a huge barrier to just about doing anything, but now that our medium, or what a lot of the things that we do nowadays is digital and electronic, money is hardly a barrier at all because we can create

content and make things without spending a cent. There are all these free platforms that allow for that and, especially with the things that I'm doing, involving myself and technology and helping other people get themselves involved in technology, that's one of the big things that I try and emphasize. There's a very little cost barrier - if at all - to getting involved in any sort of digital content creation.

- S1 11:19 Would you agree with that, Ezel?
- S3 11:21 Completely. My business partner is highly technical and he built the initial platform when we first had the idea. I was out there selling like crazy. Pretty much it was very very low upstart cost and then we were very fortunate enough to get a few customers that believed in our dream, and believed in our idea, and we secured investment after securing a few customers for quite a large sum. Then, we were able to bring on more and more people to fund our dream. Yes, I completely, completely agree. Money should never be a barrier. It's just how much you want to invest your own time and be dedicated, and be passionate and motivated.
- S1 12:07 Have any of you gone to university?
- S2 12:08 No.
- S4 12:09 No.
- S3 12:09 No [chuckles]. For like three months [chuckles].
- S1 12:14 Before you decided this wasn't for me.
- S4 12:16 Yeah. It was just too boring [chuckles], too slow.
- S1 12:20 Christian, I can tell, you're only a year or so out of school, so you haven't gone to university either.
- S2 12:24 Yeah, I'm heading off at the end of the year.
- S1 12:27 You are going. Why are you going because it sounds like that you're already on a trajectory? Why do you think you need university?
- S2 12:34 Well, I quite like academia. That's something for me. I feel like a lot of people have this perception that university is something you have to do, but I want to do it because I want to study computer science and that can be quite a technical thing, and there are some very technical and academic elements to it. I'm really looking forward to studying those parts and getting involved in that. But, by no means, is it a requirement. This is my understanding and my belief.
- S1 13:00 Laura, do you think you need to go to university?
- S4 13:03 Yeah. I think it really depends what it is you want to do, but, no, I don't think it's necessary at all. Although I will say that when I came back to New Zealand after my five years of traveling, I did take part in a social enterprise accelerator program over the summer, which was 10 weeks long, and without the connections and the framework, the social link canvasses, and the financial plans and all these sorts of things, I don't think I would have been as successful in running Rock and Roll as I was. I do think it is important to educate yourself in some form, or just makes friends with mentors and make those connections, but it doesn't necessarily have to be the path of university. Although, Alan and I did talk about this, at the Moxie Sessions, and it's like if you are going to be a doctor, then you should definitely go the university. If

you're going to be a dentist, you should go to university. But, if you want to start up a campaign, then maybe not.

- S1 13:56      What about stepping back, before university? Are schools equipping young people for the internet economy for types of roles that you guys are now filling? Is school doing its job?
- S3 14:13      From me going a few years ago, I don't really think so. The things that should really be taught is how to bring people together and how to work in large teams, and how to work with small teams - just working with people. And, how to engage people and how to create good first impressions, just communicating. I think just the really basic stuff isn't being taught and it's more just really scraping the surface with how much you can teach somebody, and I just think more interesting and more-- I almost feel like the students should have a really large say in what gets taught at school, and it's just not happening. The teachers and the faculty really dictate what's being taught, and, growing up, I never got asked what I wanted to be, what I wanted to learn. It was just a select few of courses, and that was really it. There was really nothing fulfilling and motivating me to learn more.
- S2 15:24      Yeah, this was a really big topic on the night, and I strongly believe that schools need to look at the way they teach their students and prepare them for the future. Learning things is extremely important, learning facts about the world we live in and how it functions, and all that stuff, is a very important thing to cover, but that's not the only element of life that we need to learn about. Those are things that can be learnt by a person really at any time, and when you go a step out in to the real world, what are employers are looking for are these things that people call soft skills, which are really probably the most important skills - the ability to work in a team, to learn things yourself, to communicate with people, do all those sorts of things. But, because they're not formally assessed or formally taught, they're undervalued, and I think those should be far more integrated in to everything we do in school. I'm a big advocate of [Sub Carnadamy's?] book. Basically, everything he's written in there I agree with, and he's all for making schools a place where we learn how to communicate and work together, and problem-solve in really interesting ways, while making the academic side of it more integrated and more universal, so anybody on the planet can learn anything they want do while the school adopts their own unique way of getting students to work together.
- S1 16:46      Do you think we're going to see that in our life-time? It sounds really radical doesn't it - almost like a school revolution?
- S2 16:51      Yeah, it's the problem. It's such a big change and there's a lot of people who will fight to the death for the current school systems. A lot of the time, it does get the job done. We don't have riots or heaps of things going on where schools clearly aren't functioning, it's just very subtle things where we don't know how it could get better. I think there are a lot of progressive schools that are trying heaps of new things, and it's just a matter of finding one that's proven to be extremely successful and then saying, "Well, this school did this and for the past five or ten years they've been stretching all the over schools." Then, obviously, they're doing something right.
- S1 17:29      I just want to quickly now touch on motivation because you all, obviously, very much motivated individuals. But, how can anyone generate or sustain the motivation to do any of these world-changing things that you guys are doing? Laura, how do you keep it going?

- S4 17:46 That's a really great question because I think that anyone working in social or environmental change really needs to be deeply connected to their why, because it's your why that will get you through the ups and the downs and the day-to-day. I think there are a few things that you do. I like to go surfing. I like to go dancing, so it's making sure that I engage in the activities that fill my own personal cups, or whatever that is for you. I think it's really important to keep doing that. But, in terms of just keeping on the path of wanting to empower people to take action on the issues that they care about, it's about building a really good team around you. Now, there are four of us that work at Action Station, which is basically using online tools to empower Kiwis to take action. We all work remotely, so we have to be really really motivated. I live in Auckland, the rest of the team lives in Wellington. But, we celebrate the small wins along the way. There are certain things that we're working towards forever, and one of that is to see a zero carbon economy in New Zealand within my life-time. That's a 20:50 vision, but, along the way, we celebrate the things like we won a campaign to get protected cycle lanes on Karangahape Road in Auckland city. It's about having that bigger vision in mind, but celebrating the small victories along the way that get you there.
- S1 19:14 It sounds like vision and goals are extremely important to you guys, but what the balance in life - the work-life balance?
- S3 19:23 I like to think I have a balance, but I think people that know me will pretty much say I work a million hours a day. But, I totally agree with Laura. It's just those little things that let you just be normal for a little bit. For me, I love taking really long walks, and I love going on holidays, although they're short. It just lets me reconnect and re-understand the reason why I'm doing things, and just lets me take a step back and look at my life and look at things that I'm working on as a whole, instead of working so heavily day-to-day in the business and to what you're doing. I just feel it's so important to just take a step back and just reflect and then make really good, judged decisions on how to go forward.
- S1 20:21 Christian, just going back to you and what you were talking about when we started the podcast - talking at Decode and what's going on there - is this going to be something that will be a money-spinner for you? How are you going to go forward in the next few years and make sure that you're also not only doing good things in the world, but earning a living?
- S2 20:44 I've never seen Decode as something that would make heaps of money, or any money at all. I could see maybe a sign-up fee for some schools with a pack that they come with, but it's not an enterprise or a business, by any means. It's completely up and sourced the whole thing. It's a model for schools and the website's up and sourced. The idea's that other people can contribute to it and other people can build up it. I see myself in the future doing something like Ezel's doing and creating this brand new and incredible product that will help other people all over the world in a variety of different ways. Currently, I'm just trying to raise some money for university, I'm doing a lot of menial website work. But, still technology's still interesting, still passionate about it and I'm involved in a start-up at the moment that might lead to that in the future. Decode isn't a money-maker for me - it's a passion about helping other people. I want to make my money off something else, so Decode doesn't turn in to a business name, it doesn't cost me excessive money.
- S1 21:47 It sounds like your having a lot of - from what I understand of now talking to all of you - that you've got your main projects, but you've also got other little things bubbling

away and that's, I think, sounds to me like a big difference between previous generations who were very much, "This is now my job. This is my career." They might change career later on, but have generally only got the one thing going at a time. Would that be accurate, Laura?

- S4 22:13      Yeah, definitely. I think the face of working is just shifting hugely. The fact that I work remotely is something that wouldn't have been done in my parents generation as well. Quite often when I catch up with my mum for dinner, or something like that, she finds it very hard to grasp what I actually do because it's all done from a laptop, which can be quite confusing [chuckles]. I think it's definitely shifting.
- S1 22:42      And, she'd be saying, "You're not really working are you? You're on your Facebook, or something?"
- S4 22:46      [chuckles]Yeah, and I try and explain that I have quite strict rules about when I can go on Facebook, and when I can't because then I wouldn't get the work that I need to get done done. And, also that Facebook is actually a channel for the work that I do. But, even that is a bit over her head sometimes.
- S1 23:05      And, finally, Laura, just with you because you've got this perspective of having been in England. Is it different in New Zealand with young people leaving school between the ages of 20 and 30. Are they thinking a different way to the younger people in the UK, or is it the same?
- S4 23:24      I think the political contexts which provide the framework for the socio-economic world that young people grow up in are quite similar in England and New Zealand. We both have high rates of youth unemployment and we both are seeing the rise of social enterprise, although social enterprise is much further along in the UK. But, I think, what I'm starting to see a little bit of, and that's probably because I'm living in this bubble of social enterprise at the moment, and campaigning, is that a lot of the tools and resources, and learnings and experiences that have already happened in the UK are being passed on to people here. What I mean by that is who I work for at the moment is Action Station, and in the UK the equivalent of that is 38 Degrees. 38 Degrees has been around for 10 or so years - we just started up last year - and these are using online tools, petitions, email campaigns, these sorts of things, to empower people to take action. I think that a lot of the things that have been happening in the UK for a while are just starting to pop up here and really starting to get some legs.
- S1 24:37      Fantastic. We are out of time on the Moxie podcast. All that's left is for you guys to pimp out exactly what you're doing and how people can follow you at the moment - whether it be social media, websites, that sort of thing. Laura, first up, where can people follow you?
- S4 24:50      You can follow me on Twitter. My handle is @laura\_oc\_rapira which is R-A-P-I-R-A. Otherwise, Actionstation.org.nz or rockandroll.me is the other project, and that's to get young people to vote.
- S1 25:07      Good stuff. Ezel, what about you?
- S3 25:09      People can follow me on Twitter. My handle is ezel kokcu, so E-Z-E-L K-O-K-C-U, or they can also follow stqry S-T-Q-R-Y.
- S1 25:19      And, Christian, what are you up to?
- S2 25:22      Building software, making websites - you can follow Decode by going to decode.org.nz and following our Facebook page. Or, you can follow me on Twitter,

which I'm just trying to get in to at the moment - that's pinpickle - P-I-N-P-I-C-K-L-E for the twitter.

S1 25:37

Good, and you can find me on Twitter @radiowammo. Also, being a shopkeeper as well at Hot Burns Black here in the UK. Thank you so much to my wonderful talented guests - Christian, Ezel and Laura. Thank you so much for being with us. You can find the Moxie Sessions at the website - the moxiesessions.co.nz and also thank you very much to Alcatel-Lucent and its NG Connect program whose sponsorship helped make this podcast possible - ngconnect.org. My name's Glenn Williams. Be with you next time. Cheers. See you. [music]

m