

Cathy Mann: Welcome to, It Doesn't Hurt to Ask! A podcast where we talk about fundraising this season. We'll be talking to shift disturbers in philanthropy, people who are shaking up traditional philanthropy practices. Today we're talking to Jason Shim. Jason is an expert in one of the most disruptive forces in the sector in every sector in the world today. Technology. When he's not playing around with his technology superhero cape on, he's the director of digital strategy for Pathways to Education Canada. Jason Shim, welcome to. It Doesn't Hurt to Ask.

Jason Shim: Hey, thanks for having me.

Cathy Mann: I was delighted that you agreed to come and, and talk with us. You really work the intersection of philanthropy and technology. Does the name Doesn't Hurt to Ask mean anything in particular to you?

Jason Shim: I think it means it's a lot to me on various contexts though, you know, certainly working in a charity, trying to raise support to help the students that we serve, but also think my career, it doesn't hurt to ask. Uh, I think that defines a lot of opportunities that have been available simply for asking.

Cathy Mann: Nice.

Jason Shim: Yeah. And, uh, I mean, I, I would even kick it off my position today I don't think would exist if it weren't for kind of pushing the envelope and asking for some possibilities and opportunities.

Cathy Mann: I love to hear this. So any of you reluctant fundraisers out there, I'm sure that you can think of times when you wouldn't have secured something that you wanted if you hadn't asked for it. And the same is true for philanthropy and asking for donations. So that's a great example of that, Jason. So I first heard about you, like you were this wonder kin who burst onto the, to the sector and we're doing some really exciting stuff early on in your days at Pathways to Education. You've been, you've been there quite a number of years now.

Jason Shim: Yeah, I've been working with pathways to education for, I would say a total of going on nine years now, uh, both at the program level in Kitchener and then moving over to the national office six years ago.

Cathy Mann: Right. So I, you know, I remember going to see a session that you were doing, I don't know where it was and just sitting in the back of the room thinking, oh my goodness, like this is the next generation of philanthropy. I think you might've been talking about accepting bitcoin donations back then. Uh, I actually would love to learn more about that and ultimately want to know in the, in the decade or so that you've been working in this intersection of philanthropy and technology. What are the changes that you've seen? Because they seem to change at that lightning speed.

Jason Shim: My involvement in nonprofits and digital, I would say happened almost accidentally and that I initially had started working more in the context of direct service delivery. Have to youth and

Cathy Mann: You're a caregiver. You're going to help people

Jason Shim: Serving as, uh, as, as a mentor and helping the youth that are in our program to get their volunteer hours. So Pathways to Education, you know, we see youth that are living in low income communities to achieve their full potential and graduate from high school. And you know, that was what I was passionate about. And how I came onto the digital part was that was something that I did for fun on the side through the university, you know, hosting websites and such and one day the executive director of the organization, and I've never encountered anyone who does this. She was looking for my resume after I'd already been hired a couple months afterwards. Then she noted that I had a bit of a digital background, but it wasn't being utilized within the organization and she said, you know, let's strike up a tech committee and let's put you on it and put a whole bunch of other people on it. And that really kind of kick started a lot of conversations about how we could use technology to improve things like service delivery and outreach. So what happened after that was I was designated know a quarter of my time was assigned to the marketing departments as well. And that really opened up the possibilities where I came at things very much from a digital perspective. And then I was added to the marketing department and I was like, okay, how can we use digital to improve marketing? And then overtime by extension also fundraising and I think that really shaped my thoughts around how to approach a lot of these things where, you know, I was coming at it from a digital first perspective, so I think that I didn't have necessarily a lot of knowledge about honestly marketing or fundraising, but it was taking what I knew of technology and then along the way learning more about marketing and fundraising and how to apply some of those pieces to improving processes. So one of the ways that I'd like to frame it is using the Olympic motto faster, higher, stronger. And I think that digital has a lot to play around, you know, how can we make things faster, more efficient, how can we raise higher revenues and how can we build stronger relationships and whenever, you know, evaluating a new piece of technology, um, you know, as I was learning more about marketing or fundraising and some of the existing processes that existed, we're looking at how can we make those things faster, higher, stronger, and really building upon that, yes, there's lots of possibilities kind of unfolded from there.

Cathy Mann: So just picture you in like the faster, stronger, higher superhero cape that, uh, that you should probably be wearing all the time. Anyway, Jason, listen, it's probably the question you get quite a lot, but let's, let's talk about bitcoin donations.

Jason Shim: Yeah. So the, the explorations for bitcoin donations started really out of personal interest. It was something that one of our students in pathways, I was having lunch with him one day and he leans over the table and I remember him asking me, have you heard of bitcoin? And my response was, I have no idea what you're talking. Weel like, well, it's this new digital currency and it's completely decentralized. And my response is, okay, well tell me more. And he's like, well, it's decentralized and no one really controls it but people trust it. And he had me intrigued.

Cathy Mann: And so this would have been a high school student.

Jason Shim: This was a high school student and this would've been in 2012. And after that, uh, I went back home and you know, he sent me a few additional resources and started reading up more on it. And the major turning point was after reading about bitcoin and its background and how it functioned, I got the same feeling about bitcoin that I remember feeling when I first discovered the Internet. And, in that then that would have been in around the kind of mid to late nineties. And my, my reaction to the Internet was, oh my gosh, this is amazing and this, this feeling of overwhelming just excitement or like there's going to be so many possibilities. I have no idea what they are, but this is going to be a thing. And after reading about Bitcoin, just all the fireworks start going off in my head and thinking like this is, this has a lot of potential and this is really, really cool. And you know, keeping an eye on it over time. And then when I, um, moved over to the national office at Pathways to Education, uh, just having conversations internally about bitcoin and accepting it. And my rationale for pursuing bitcoin was, at the time the Canadian government was also considering something called a mint chip, which was

Cathy Mann: Sounds like ice cream.

Jason Shim: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I can totally get behind concurrency an ice cream currency and oh, what's that indicated to me was, you know, it takes a lot of work to get stuff passed through government and by the time if the government is willing to explore digital currency, like that to me was a signal that, you know, digital currency in some way, shape or form was going to be a thing and that was one of the validating points. And so starting the conversation internally at Pathways is really just pitching it and being like, okay, down the road, if we accept the proposition that digital currency will exist in some way, shape or form, it's going to get much bigger just like the Internet did. Then we can extrapolate that. If we can figure it out now, we will be in a good spot years from now. And at the time I was really impressed and grateful for the support that I received from senior management to really run with it. And you know, there was an attitude of curiosity around it saying like, okay, you know, let's, you know, make sure that we are looking into the potential risks and the opportunities. And we weighed them out, let's run with it. And so we launched in the fall of 2013 and that kind of coincided with when bitcoin started taking off and entering the public psyche and more mass media coverage really helped propel that. And Yeah, we, we received a number of donations over the years and one of the things that I've really appreciated is the opportunity to help other organizations also get online with, with, uh, with bitcoin. And we've gotten from a point at one point when I'd be talking about bitcoin donations at conferences and, you know, people kind of rolling their eyes like, oh, you know, fixing this magical, you know, online currency, uh, to the point where now, you know, we're not having conversations about whether or not we can accept bitcoin, you know, that that was settled six years ago. The conversation now is how can we build upon this? How can we build, you know, interesting partnerships with other charities and building things like crypto currency, charitable trusts, that kind of higher level conversations that would not have been possible if we hadn't built those foundational steps years earlier.

Cathy Mann: So just as an aside, Jason, the next time you get one of those feelings like, oh, this is going to be, be a thing, let me know so I can invest in it.

Jason Shim: Okay, I'll send an alert it.

Cathy Mann: Is it true that pathways was the first charity in Canada to accept bitcoin donation?

Jason Shim: Uh, we were the first charity in Canada to issue tax receipts for bitcoin donations. I am confident that we were also the first charity in the world to issue tax receipts for bitcoin donations because at the time there were organizations that were accepting Bitcoin, but there wasn't anyone else who had talked to the CRA or a government authority to figure out how do we assess fair market value, how do we actually issue a tax receipt for this? So we were kind of first past the post in that regard.

Cathy Mann: So I'm not going to do it, but high five can sound weird on a podcast. But congratulations. That's really exciting. You really are a mentor to lots of people and organizations in this sector. I mean, every time I talked to somebody who needs some help with technology, I say, here's how to reach Jason. Go talk to Jason, tell him I sent you. It's interesting because you started out as a mentor. I mean your role at pathways was mentoring kids and here you are mentoring people in our sector. Tell, tell me about that, like what is that like for you to be able to do that?

Jason Shim: I draw a lot of energy from that and it was one of the conditions for which when I transferred over to the national office, that's uh, I remember speaking to the CEO at the time asking, you know, will I get opportunities to work with students because if I don't know, that changes things and you know, fortunately there have been many opportunities over the years to mentor students and alumni insurance from the pathways program. But I've also had the opportunity to, uh, teach, uh, George Brown college and the digital marketing class there. And I think that it's really important for everyone in the sector to really take mentorship seriously in that. When I look at where digital is as a whole for nonprofits by really engaging in mentorship, you, you're helping helping people see nonprofits as a viable career choice. Like a lot people aren't even aware that until, you know, I, I kinda show them what it is that I do and they were like relieved that it's possible to do that in a nonprofit tests. There are the kind of digital technical roles in a nonprofit, but it's not as clearly defined as let's say if you wanted to, um, you know, become like a software developer, you know, it's, you know, you align software developer with, you know, working in a software company or a startup or a very clearly defined path. But I think the mentorship is important. A twofold in that if we want to have more peers in the sector working in digital and nonprofits that see we need to kind of grow that as well. So whenever I have an opportunity to work with people and mentor them, it's, I really see them as my future pierce and that, you know, I'm trying to transfer as much knowledge and experience as possible. And there's a certain experiences that people bring as well that they may not know that the nonprofit sector has used for. So I'll give you a very concrete example of that recently. I just hired a couple of interns who are graduates from the Pathways to Education program and one of them comes from a background where he used to provide chat support in online environments. And one of the things that immediately came to mind was, although you're learning a lot about digital strategy and such, you know, in a, in nonprofits, I'm also looking to use his experience in working in online chat environments and you know, helping provide support. How can we bring that into the nonprofit as well where we can provide a next level kind of experience. As far as I know, like I haven't encountered any

charity website where I've visited and like a little chat window pops up or something like that and the wheels start turning in my head and I think about how that might be actually pretty cool to do. So I, I really, you know very much. I do enjoy the mentoring piece, but also it's because know I'm constantly learning new things as well from the people that I connect with.

Cathy Mann: The thing that jumped to mind for me was using that to supplement the kind of support and mentoring that you're giving your Pathways students right now.

Jason Shim: Yeah, well it's important to meet people where they are and I think that's one of the principles that really guides a lot of the work that we do that, you know, we were one of the first organizations to really leverage Facebook messaging as a way to connect with students. So not necessarily like marketing things, but on a day to day basis, uh, you know, connecting with them and over the years we've seen a lot of changes in terms of the platforms that people use. So, you know, starting with, you know, um, at one BBM texting, moving to Facebook messenger for awhile, you know, a lot of students were on twitter and that was something to take into consideration and hearing now about Instagram and you know, how a lot of students are there and you know, every step of the way, we're always looking to make sure that we're meeting people where they are because it doesn't make sense to force people to use another platform in order to connect with us. Because know what we're trying to do is really build those positive relationships. You know, with uh, with uh, youth that we are working with. But I think the same applies when building relationships in general that, you know, we have to be ready on all the channels where people naturally interacts. And so, you know, we've seen that certainly in the past year where we have a support email that's on our, uh, on a website. But, you know, we get messages from all sorts of different channels that we have to be ready to respond to, whether it be facebook or instagram. And, you know, having the processes and infrastructure to, um, to respond to that in an efficient way as well.

Cathy Mann: So I just had this image of you, Jason as already because technology moves so quickly, like the old guy in the world of technology with all these young people who are coming in with experience that I know you're on top of a whole lot of things, but you are now sort of keeping up with stuff as opposed to necessarily being the one who's introducing things.

Jason Shim: I think that it takes a certain degree of humility to acknowledge and

Cathy Mann: I can be very humble on your behalf.

Jason Shim: I think that um, like I, I used to work at a summer camp and the students that were coming in, they were going into their third year of high school or fourth year of high school. And when I first started working there I was 19 and the students were 17 and I worked there for about five, six years. So, you know, it became 20 and 17. And as time went on there came a point. Had to acknowledge I just wasn't cool anymore.

Cathy Mann: Oh, come on, Jason, and I can't believe

Jason Shim: and I really had for the younger staff members, so I was working with, but I think for me that was a really instructive point in my life where it was like, and that's okay because it takes a lot of time and energy to keep up with the cool. Like I honestly cannot keep up with snapchat like my sisters and I see like younger folks a snapping all the time. I just, I can't do it. Same with instagram stories, you know, personally, you know, I, I think they're fascinating and entertaining, but on a personal level, um, I don't think I can keep up with it, but what that results in is just being more mindful about having those conversations with people who do get it, who are cool.

Cathy Mann: You're always going to be cool.

Jason Shim: Thank you. Cathy

Cathy Mann: Yeah. This old bird says I'm cool kids so listened to her.

Speaker 2: no. Well, like one of the, the earliest introductions to technology really came from actually one of those students I worked with at summer camp. I was observing one of the students kind of typing away on his laptop and I asked him what is it that you're working on? And he's like, Oh, I'm just managing my own web server. And he was 17 years old and I started asking him a whole bunch of questions and we kept in touch afterwards. Know I flew back to Toronto and we would instant message at one another and he ended up teaching me a ton about how to manage my own web server remotely. And that served as a foundation for a lot of my technical skills because in university I, after learning how to management on web server, I would use that skill to host my friends on a server and websites and design and a whole bunch of those technical aspects. But I think that experience has echoed itself throughout my career in that, you know, learning about web hosting from the student. Learning what bitcoin from another student. Learning more about things like chat support from my interns in what's cool and up and coming. So it's definitely helpful for keeping an ear to the grounds. I think part of that, you know, it's certainly helpful having lots of younger siblings and cousins and update every time you have a family gathering is like, Hey, what's cool?

Cathy Mann: And they remind you that you're not cool.

Jason Shim: Yeah, exactly.

Cathy Mann: Yeah. But I think you said a couple of things there that I think are really important. One is around this notion of humility and the notion of essentially being mentored by people who are younger than you. And I think that's a really important message, especially for my generation, my contemporaries and even those younger than I, to reach out to mentors who are younger. I mean I absolutely have mentors who helped me with technology and they are all younger than me obviously. And I count you among them. You know what I mean? It's interesting you talk about a sense of humility because technology is not the world I grew up in. Um, I don't even feel like I needed to have a sense of humility because it was just like, it's pretty clear, um, I need support in this, but I think that is a really important element for, for us to be thinking about, especially as you get more senior in your career to realize or to acknowledge that the future is not

going to look like anything that I walked into 25 years ago. I will say no, I'm going to, I'm going to take that. But I think because I remember the first session that I watched you do and you were talking about crowdfunding and a few other things. And I remember sitting there thinking this is really cool, but it's just really cool technology to support relationship building. And, and so what I keep seeing with new technologies and new approaches that come out is that the fundamentals are the things that we can't forget that it's about. It's about relationships and to the degree that technology can help us create new relationships and reach new people, then it's, it's a great tool, but that it's a tool. It's not necessarily something in and of itself.

Jason Shim: I, I think, uh, I would agree with you there. That's, it's really about knowing how to use technology as a tool to support the relationship piece. I think that a new technology emerges. There's that natural kind of reaction where when I think back to when the web first came out, there was a lot of apprehension around it where it's like, how is this going to be useful? And unless people saw a straight line path to it, then it was kind of dismissed and you know, we saw the same playout with, uh, with social media. And I think that as we move forward, it's very important to constantly be thinking about how do we draw those lines or how do we create the systems that we need in order to build better relationships. I think that one thing that I keep on observing is that there's a certain waiting that seems to occur, either wait for the products to be built or certain processes to be written about before they are undertaken. But I think that nonprofits have a lot of potential to really take the technology. And either build it for themselves or define how we want to use the technology rather than, let's say, taking something that was built for a, for profit context and applying it to the nonprofit context that we can look into. How do we start from the very beginning building or remixing, technology for nonprofits by nonprofits. And I think that's where some of the future philanthropy may lie when we're talking about in trying to engage people in new and meaningful ways. Are we able to do that in a way that isn't just borrowing from a model that we've already seen? Or are we taking some amazing experiences that we've had and really synthesizing a whole new kind of thing that hasn't previously existed. And I know that all that kind of sounds a little bit ephemeral in terms of like, okay, you know, we need to just kind of build and create these things and easier said than done. But I think that we also need to look at how we are staffing nonprofits. Um, one example that I love to draw upon is, um, you know, it's hard to come across a conference in which, uh, people aren't singing the praises of Charity Water and everyone loves her website. Everyone loves their work, but when you actually peel back the layers a little bit, Charity Water employees, a number of software engineers and that's a really important thing to keep in mind that everyone wants to be like Charity Water is everyone willing to staff like Charity Water, which I think is the bigger question. And I think nonprofits can do some soul searching there in terms of, you know, there's various traditional nonprofit structures and if we want to get to the next level or next generation of technology or leveraging digital, we have to staff it accordingly and bring those skill sets in house. But I think that many, um, industries and sectors are contending with that banks are having to contend with on the Fintech side and making sure that they have the prepared on the technology piece. Anyone starting any sort of shop these days, you know, it has to have a basic level of understanding of, you know, online marketing and those pieces and pulling them the experts. So I think, you know, nonprofits are at a similar kind of place in history right now where there's many things happening in that, you know, you have

corporations that are also, you know, edging into the social good space. When we think about engagements with corporations, you know, I am seeing more interesting technological collaborations with corporations that haven't previously existed where you know, hackathons are being held by corporations for social good. But how do we move beyond a one day hackathon where, you know, it's, it's great that we are dedicating this resource to focus on solving a charitable problem. But how would it feel if you are a developer in, in a corporation and your employer has partnered with a charity that you also feel strongly about that you can make this, you know, 365 day commitment as well that is sanctioned by your employer saying, you can dedicate a bit of your time on an ongoing basis to helping this charity, you know, with some of their software or technical pieces. Um, that being said, you know, I think it's really important that nonprofits build internal capacity as well. But you know, we, I think we need to also look at some creative ways of engaging with the talent that we're looking to bring into our organizations. I think one model to, to look at as well as things like having digital councils. I mean we have things like, you know, campaign cabinets which you know are quite common. But what about a digital cabinet? Like if you had providence healthcare foundation. I have the pleasure of serving on their e-philanthropy committee and it's been a lot of fun because, you know, we've had people that are coming in from various organizations around Toronto that are serving in digital capacities that are. I learned a ton from them because they're managing advertising budgets that are massive. But the learning that comes from it is also just kind of cross pollinating what they're working on in the for profit sector. And you know, the wheels are always turning about how can we apply those lessons to the nonprofit sector as well. So that's been a lot of fun. But I think that's something that, you know, I would love to see more of in the sector because it's, it's not just the senior management that can serve on kind of charitable councils and such that there's a lot of digital expertise that could be leveraged in various organizations around the country.

Cathy Mann: **So you mentioned earlier that** you were fortunate at Pathways that there was this sense of curiosity that allowed you to experiment with things that maybe would not have been able to another organization. And I think that notion of, you know, introducing a digital council for instance, or even just getting involved in the world of digital more proactively requires a certain amount of curiosity, a certain amount of, as you said, humility and faith. Um, although it's beyond faith now, I hope that there are leaders in the sector out there listening to this who are impressed with what you're saying and and realize that if they have been reluctant, get involved in this world, that this is the push that they need to do something. And part of the challenge is that, you know, I work so much in this world of social change philanthropy and in the social service sector, the leaders are subject matter experts in their cause. They're fighting hunger or homelessness or helping build communities and the world of technology, especially if they're of a certain age is, is new to them and the much the way that when I go into some organizations and they're unfamiliar with fundraising, I'm sort of introducing this whole new culture and way of being the same is probably true of introducing a more robust technology culture. Would you, do you see that?

Jason Shim: Yeah, I think they're trying to hire him for digital and especially if you don't have a history of doing digital can be challenging and I fully acknowledge that it's not as simple as just hiring a single person because to some degree you may be setting that person up

for failure as well. That if all your digital hopes and dreams are predicated on us single individual, but you know that they're going to parachute in and everything's going to be solved.

Cathy Mann: So that sounds a lot like fundraising in lots of organizations. One fundraiser get hired and you're going to go do everything.

Jason Shim: And I think that a organization, there's some, uh, you know, going back to basics around when you were talking earlier about building relationships, um, when talking about digital, it's digital in itself is a tool to help you execute on strategy. And I think that when you are looking to hire for a digital role first, making sure that you have a good sense of your overall organizational strategy. And I guess being clear about what it is that you're looking for.

Speaker 1: So what if you don't know because I'm going, I'm going to tell Ya, most lots of people, they may not admit this, but they'll be listening to this and they'll think, I don't know what I don't know about digital, so I don't even know what I'm looking for. And again, I see so many similarities between digital and fundraising, right? Because so many leaders in our sector, if they, if they're not working in an organization that has a history of doing a lot of proactive philanthropy, don't know what they don't know, so they don't know what they're looking for. They don't know what kind of person, what kind of skills to hire. I would say the same is probably true of digital.

Jason Shim: Yeah. I would say that it would be helpful to pull people around a table to have a conversation

Cathy Mann: like a digital council.

Jason Shim: But when I think back to digital council I am serving on, it really started from the ground up around having a conversation even before you hired the digital strategist to ask, okay, what is it that, that we need? And like you said, you know, we don't know what we don't know and what we were able to do, you know, the group of us was to, to find a job role and one really fun aspect of it was that the hiring of the individual was left to the council, which is a huge amount of trust that organization is putting to a council that's comprised of people from various organizations. But that kind of understanding as well that, hey, you know, it doesn't make sense for someone with no background in digital to be hiring someone in digital. And um, you know, the, the person that the end of up filling the position, you know, did it, did a great job in it. And it was also an engagement point for everyone that was involved in the process as well. And every single person that was involved in that process and that this was going like three, three, four years ago. It's still actively involved in the council. So from an engagement standpoint, you know, you, you really bought in when you've hired someone, you want to see them succeed.

Cathy Mann: You know, if I said earlier that digital is simply a tool and it's about relationship building, then there's an example of engagement and relationships that have deepened because of digital.

Jason Shim: Yeah. And I think it's also really having those conversations around what does digital mean to an organization because I think it's, it means something different to everyone, like just some, oh you know, we have strong social media but it's a recognition that digital really needs to be woven into overall strategy and if not the strategy itself and we still encounter some of the challenges where if an organization is not positioning digital at the forefront, you run into situations where you may be organizing something and then digital is kind of an afterthought where it's like, oh, we have cleaned up this entire event and I'm okay now how do we talk on the digital at the end? Versus if digital was woven in from the very beginning, then they can identify ways that things could be more efficient, you know, faster, higher, stronger, right? And when you can get that kind of mindset integrated into your entire organization and every staff member also is thinking in that similar way, that's when the really cool stuff starts happening and

Cathy Mann: cutting horizontally across the organization. Not just in fundraising and marketing but in service delivery and everything.

Jason Shim: Yeah, I mean when people talk about everyone's a fundraiser, everyone's a marketer. I would say, you know, everyone's in digital and you know, the expectation that everyone should have a base level understanding of digital. But also, you know, let's say things like content development that once upon a time when we first got on social media, you know, I was going out to every event to snap a couple photos to post on twitter and you know, one of the promises of and principles of digital is decentralization. Like it doesn't make sense for me to be going out, but everyone has a computer in their pocket. They can take photos that can generate content and we have 20 communities across the country. So really looking at the possibilities and existing processes and structures as to how can we make things constantly, you know, more efficient that way. But I use that as one small example that really that kind of stuff, you can always check off an ongoing basis on the tactical side, but it's not sustainable unless you have a broader overall strategy that's kind of guiding your investments as, as you know, how you are looking at digital as a whole and how it supports your mission.

Cathy Mann: What do you see as, what do you see coming down the pipe? What's, what are you excited about? What are you scared about? Tell me what I should invest in.

Jason Shim: Still working on the, uh, Jason's guide to investing. But I think one thing that I find really exciting is that I think more is going to change in the next 15 years than has changed in the past 50. I think we are standing on the edge of some significant technological advancements and you know, this is very, I'm an optimistic kind of viewpoint on it, but uh, you know, just based on where things are going with things like machine learning and artificial intelligence and how that applies to things like image recognition or voice processing or data collection. You know, I, I think that on the one hand all divided into kind of a couple of pieces. I think that there's a lot of promise and things like providing hyper personalized experiences when we look at how we can engage with people today. When someone interacts with an organization. I envisioned a future where, you know, if someone's calling or emailing that know, just like you could look at someone's doing a record, um, you know, when you're interacting with them.

Speaker 2: But really taking that to a whole other level of, you know, what if within seconds of making a donation that, you know, you have some really next level meaningful. Thank you.

Cathy Mann: Like a hologram that shows up and thanks you for your donation.

Jason Shim: That kind, that kind of thing. Or there's an opportunity for, you know, let's say you're at an event and a photo gets taken of you, you know, within moments that have leaving the event that you receive a notification that hey, here is an album of all of your photos that you appeared in and the technology is already there to do it in terms of things like facial recognition or image recognition. So I think that we can really build next level experiences there on the technology side in general for things like service delivery. I'm really excited about how things like machine learning and artificial intelligence can really help us connect and deliver better services in general. So, you know, when it comes to things like how do we engage with folks at the right time at the right moment,? You know, how do we identify moments with our students and alumni in terms of what are some of the best times to get in touch with them. So I think there's a lot of potential there. I think that we also have to be very mindful of the ethical role that we play in, you know, things like data collection and being very mindful of how there are things like algorithmic bias that can be introduced into some of the models that are being built. So I'm cautiously optimistic about, you know, some of these things that are around the corner.

Cathy Mann: So this leads me to a question around digital through a gender lens. The philanthropy sector has, um, overwhelmingly women working in it. Technology or digital world is overwhelmingly male. Any issues that you see around gender bias because you know, that might be more men working on the digital side in an industry that is people overwhelmingly with women. And then in the world of philanthropy donors, while the gender split is relatively equal, we're already, you know, we're starting to see now some different approaches to reach out to a women differently than the way donors in general has been approached in the past.

Jason Shim: Definitely a complex issue that some of the things initially kind of come to mind are supporting organizations that are looking to improve gender biases. So you know, if you know, I think organizations like ladies learning code and any, any kind of stem programs that are really trying to promote more women entering the technology field or certainly a step in the right direction there. We do want to address this. But like you said, you pointed out that, you know, there's a lot of women that are working in fundraising. I think that there's opportunity as well to look internally and building those skill sets. I think that there's certainly an appetite for building those internal skill sets in technology. Like when you look at things like marketing, fundraising, communications, like all of those are areas that are going to be affected by digital in some way, shape or form. So when we look at how we're allocating, you know, professional development dollars, but also when we looked at how much would it take to hire someone in digital versus how much could we invest in our existing staff that, you know, you will have longer retention, you'd have more satisfied staff, you know, and you really giving people a challenge there in the long run. You helping people do their jobs better and I think looking beyond gender biases as well, I think, you know, looking at, you know, are we

employing people, have multiple, uh, different backgrounds. Uh, I think that when we're building things like digital and technology that, you know, if you're coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds coming from different ethnic backgrounds, that it lends itself in a way that, you know, there are some blind spots that as we build technology that we may not have otherwise been aware of that having diversity on the team certainly helps address that. But I don't want to make it seem that it's just about hiring diverse, you know? I think that that's also part of an overall organizational strategy that if you're serious about looking at diversity, equity, inclusion, it starting with looking at the hiring processes and is the process for hiring individuals addressing that because if not, then there's gonna be challenges there because it could be happening at biases that are not accounted for.

Cathy Mann: I do love what you talked about around supporting staff who are already there to learn more about digital and groups like ladies learning code. I know that various groups like AFP and intent and have different ways of supporting their communities and wouldn't this be a lovely one to be way more proactive about and I don't know how you do this, but helping them learn what they don't know, so if they don't know what they don't know, they're not even seeking you out, but how are we proactive around that and I think that's a. that's an interesting question for digital in general because even though we say, well, you know, you have to do digital or you or you're going to be too late practically when, when I'm working with clients, they don't have a real sense of what that means and how to integrate it into their fundraising program, let alone throughout the organization.

Jason Shim: And I would say that most people when they're looking at digital from a nonprofit context or looking at it through the lens of like, okay, how can we raise more money through digital? But again, you know, it needs to extend beyond that beyond fundraising. And how old is digital kind of permeate your marketing, your operations, your, your day to day. You know, you're hiring processes, you know, every step because if you focus purely on the fundraising piece and you know there's a whole bunch of other kind of missed opportunities but also your centering digital only on that part of your organization when really it needs to be an overall kind of consideration. You touched on something earlier around like you don't know what you don't know. And I think one of the skillsets that's really important when thinking about digital is the entire learning how to learn piece. Because a lot of the things that I've learned around digital in recent years, there are new areas of knowledge you know, for which I didn't have any prior experience, but you need to learn very, very quickly. And when I have a new intern join, one of the things that I really try to emphasize is, you know, there are times when you'll be able to come to me for answers and I'll be able to give you a quick response. But more often than not, like I'm probably gonna do a quick google, you know, try to learn as much as I can about certain things. And then relay that information back to you and you know, that's what a lot of digital is just constantly learning all the new things are coming out and having this kind of sense of natural curiosity. I would say a significant chunk of time, you know, if you're looking to invest in digital, part of that is not just a resource investment, it's like a time investment to where, you know, committing to constantly learning and improving. That's the nature of digital, you know, constantly iterating and improving. Is Your Organization, are your staff members constantly iterating and improving as well in similar kind of fashion to reflect.

Cathy Mann: So interesting you say that because I had been working together now for just a little less than a year and I will say that my ability to learn on my own has increased significantly because I see Anne doing it all the time. So she sort of models and you know, classic example, I've had a printer in my office that I've never had hooked up to Wifi because I could never figure it out and, and Anne said how do I get the, how, you know, how do I plug into the printer? And I was like, I just plug it in literally to my computer because I'm sitting next to it. And she's like, okay. And it goes away in five minutes later I hear the printer wurring and something's printing because Anne's like I've got it figured out. I still am not quite that technologically adept, but you know what, I come from a different age bracket, right? Like when I didn't know something, the first thing you did was he picked up the phone and you called somebody and said, how do you do this? And now that telephone call is you google it. Yeah. I mean, I, I know I'm painting myself as a dinosaur now, but it is about having role models and mentors. Um, so, and Anne whether you know it or not, you, uh, you have been a mentor to me, but you're right to it is about time and I will tell you quite frequently I just ask Anne how to do it because I know that she's more adept at it and more patient

Jason Shim: Than I am from a strategic standpoint. If we accept that the credo principle 80 slash 20, what are the 20 percent of a kind of digital trends that are driving 80 percent of the results. And I think to lends to that as well. If it's youtube for example, like, you know, kind of guiding people in that direction, able to find the answers very quickly. And naturally a memory that comes to mind is I've always thought of learning how to tie a tie as being this kind of very ritualized experience that, you know, I learned how to tie a tie on the bus on the way to a conference from a friend in high school. That was a very kind of formative kind of time. And I'd always assumed that you get, you get taught how to do those kinds of things from your elders, and many of the students that we worked with when they share that, uh, you know, I learned how to tie a tie and youtube and that makes sense because you don't just google it or youtube, it just pops up. So do you see that play out on so many things across the professional spectrum,

Cathy Mann: This has been a great conversation for me. Thank you for all the work that you've done in our sector and for being a leader in this space because I know that lots of people look to you to help guide the sector a little bit to see what the future is around digital and to boot, you're just a really nice guy too, so thank you so much. Thanks for having me. This has been great.

Cathy Mann: Thanks so much for listening. It's clear to me that Jason's using his superpower for good. He brings thoughtfulness and sensitivity to the technological innovation that he's also bringing to our sector. If you like what you heard today and want to hear about other people practicing their superpowers, go to it doesn't hurt to ask podcast.com where you can subscribe on itunes and stitcher. If you really like us, leave us a review and you can give us any number of stars. As long as it's five. The great music you hear is "Dog Days" by Isaac Joel. This podcast is produced by poodle party productions. Good girl. Brandy's Cathy Mann and associates, and don't forget, like my Mama said,

Cathy Mann: it doesn't hurt to ask.