

J. Michael Locke

Musings

#104: Musing December 11, 2020

Nothing wrong with being early!

Hats off to Brian Chesky at Airbnb. Unlike some of his Silicon Valley colleagues, he stays more low-key and has done a tremendous job managing the organization from a startup where he and his friends rented an air mattress on the floor of their apartment (thus Air Bed & Breakfast) to a company valued at closing Thursday of \$86.5bn. He made hard decisions like laying off over 25% of his staff during the pandemic with empathy. He deliberately sought to learn from others along the way and listened. <https://fortune.com/longform/brian-chesky-airbnb/>

I am less a fan of Mark Zuckerberg (who stole the idea of Facebook) and his negative impact on society. Not sure about the merits of the FTC and states' antitrust lawsuit on trying to break it up; however, I wish we could shut it down.

Speaking of Airbnb, the drastic first day increases in the prices of Airbnb and Doordash show a broken IPO market. It is almost like bribery with investment banks allocated stocks to favorite institutional clients – not you and me. [kelly-evans-the-airbnb-pop-that-wasnt](#). Day one values of \$100 billion and \$55 billion and they have never made money. Crazy.

We are moving from a credit economy to a debit economy. Volumes on debit cards growing double digits while credit card use down double digits. This is healthy. Credit card debt is terribly expensive. Bad future for credit card issuers only magnified by the loss attraction of travel cards which airlines have relied on as a major source of revenue.

Feel sorry for BioNTech. Everyone is talking about the Pfizer vaccine but it was developed by BioNTech which is small German company set up by a couple scientists. Let's call it the Sahin/Tureci vaccine. [europe/biontech-pfizer-vaccine-team-couple-intl](#). *"It uses the never-before-approved technology called messenger RNA, or mRNA, to trick cells into producing bits of protein that look like pieces of the virus. The immune system learns to recognize and attack those bits and, in theory, would react fast to any actual infection."* Pfizer is the marketing/distribution partner. Big pharma is growingly not pharma at all but sales & marketing companies.

According to a Quinnipiac study, only 61% of people are going to get the Covid vaccine. I am more trusting. Employers can mandate it but will they? IMO, an emergency-approved vaccine using a novel technique (mRNA) should not be forced on people. [your-boss-can-fire-you-if-you-refuse-the-coronavirus-shot](#). Interesting debate on "Vaccine Passports." Should folks who have been vaccinated have different abilities to move around and conduct themselves vs those who haven't?

Big exit for podcast creator Wondery to Amazon for over \$300mm. Good article on leadership lessons from its founder ([entrepreneur.com/article/359546](#)):

- 1. Your idea needs to be something you're so passionate about that you would do the work for free*
- 2. Mentorship can help you navigate sensitive areas as you progress*
- 3. Trying times can often be the catalyst for positive change*
- 4. How you accept your "no" is one of the greatest tests as an entrepreneur*
- 5. Raising money is part of the journey that every entrepreneur has to take*
- 6. Find another successful business you can model yourself on*
- 7. Get out if you have a toxic manager*
- 8. In your 20s, realize that just doing your job is not enough*
- 9. Thinking that the grass is always greener can lead to unhappiness*
- 10. Have a consistent routine that keeps you mentally and physically grounded improves your productivity*
- 11. Have one foot on the creative side and the other foot on the business side*
- 12. Interviewing is the most important thing any executive can do*
- 13. If you are in a specific role, do something outside of the box to reach your potential*

Business is conducted between people and you are most effective if you build relationships. Not "client vs vendor" or overly dependent on contractual language. I think this is especially important in times of stress on businesses like today's world. This is part of Trump's failure IMO. As a real estate developer, he was transactional. He viewed the world as a set of zero-sum combats. He also believed in that you want to be famous and in the news for anything. Fame is the objective. No thanks.

You have to be a good listener to be a good leader. To paraphrase Hamilton, "Talk less, Listen more." Article on some techniques here. [7-things-great-listeners-do-differently](#)

JML pet peeve. Hate it when someone starts an answer with "that is a good question." Just a stalling technique. Doesn't add any substance to the exchange. Don't do it.

Congrats to our Certica Solutions team and New Harbor Capital. They are bringing great technology and data solutions to K-12 and it has been a pleasure being a part of it. [instructure-to-acquire-certica-solutions-to-make-learning-personal-for-every-student](#)

Be safe. Happy 50th to my wife Heather!

jml