

Press Release: 15 March 2017

“THE MECHANICS OF HAPPINESS”: BRUCE DAISLEY SPEAKS AT THE CAMBRIDGE UNION

On the 15th of March 2017, the Cambridge Union welcomed the Managing Director of Twitter Europe, Bruce Daisley. Additionally, Daisley runs a podcast called “Eat Sleep Work Repeat” that explores work culture.

Daisley commenced by talking about Twitter’s evolution, which came about before the onset of mobile phones. Inspired by the MSN Messenger status bar, “Twitter was a means of updating your status to many people”, which is why tweets are 140 characters. “Hashtags were created because a coder thought he could categorise things using a hashtag”. Indeed, the evolution of many Twitter features were “largely based on hacks that we’ve incorporated into the product”. Daisley noted that “we compartmentalise different social ideas into certain products” and suggested that whereas “Facebook is grandma’s home, Snapchat is your best friend, Instagram is prom night every night, Twitter is a powerful news environment and conversation network”.

He also elaborated upon his fascination with work culture. Daisley worked with YouTube for 4 years and Twitter for 5 years and stated that “many of the things that companies try to lure you in with will have nothing to do with your actual happiness” and job satisfaction. He noted that “we’re most satisfied at work when you’re in a sense of flow” yet interruptions vis-à-vis emails mean that people are working 2 more hours per day than ten years ago. Yet because human attention spans are finite, “the output of working more than 55 hours per week has zero marginal gain”; rather, it is important to ensure that these 55 hours are *productive*.

Indeed, Daisley said that work culture is best when “there’s a combination of purpose and pleasure”. Noting that “a lot of tech companies try and invent a sense of purpose when they’re just an app delivering takeaways”, he argued that whilst this industry of creating purpose has some merit, work satisfaction will suffer if the purpose does not feel genuine.

He also noted that “Amazon and Uber see conflict as productive thing at work because they produce better outcomes”. However, he argued that we should not force ourselves to be happy, as we will be constantly disappointed.

In terms of policy challenges, he noted that scaling is a considerable obstacle to be overcome because there are often moral and ethical challenges that cannot not be predicted.

Asked how he expected Twitter to increase its user base, Daisley responded that the customer base is growing, and that this is because Twitter developed a “reductive understanding of what Twitter is”. Daisley stressed the need to articulate a product/campaign with one word, which is



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what Twitter had to do – the word chosen was “news”. Indeed, “Twitter is not a ‘look at me’ environment, but rather a ‘look at that’”.

Regarding Milo Yiannopoulos’ ban from Twitter, Daisley noted that “everyone has a right to free speech, but not everyone has a right to have their opinion heard”. He said that productive disagreement needs to take place, but intimidating or bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. “The challenge that we have every day is that with a strong spirit of free speech, how do we ensure that one’s person free speech doesn’t harm someone else’s right to free speech?” “If someone isn’t about the strength of their argument, but rather just sets out to bully someone” then the line will be drawn. “This is something that we think about every day.”

Indeed, Daisley noted that “no one has the right to say ‘I have the right not to be offended’”. Rather, Twitter seeks to police violent threats against people. He concluded that “Twitter *strongly* believes that people have the right to their opinions”.

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For footage of the event go to <https://www.youtube.com/user/cambridgeunionsoc>

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