

tucker carlson

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SPEAKERS

Tucker Carlson, Pavel Durov

- T** Tucker Carlson 00:00
telegram is one of the fastest growing and biggest social messaging apps, text apps in the world, popular all around the world, including in the United States, but almost nothing or very little seems to be known about the company. It's headquartered in Dubai, where we are now. It is run and owned, and the software is designed, written by Pavel Durov, who began it some years ago, who almost never does interviews. And turns out, he's in a very interesting person, extremely interesting person. We learned that the other day, we'll talk into him and he has agreed to sit down and tell us about himself and his company, and we thought it'd be definitely worth hearing. And with that, Pablo, thank you for joining us.
- P** Pavel Durov 00:40
Well, thank you for having me.
- T** Tucker Carlson 00:41
So, um, I confess I use telegram I didn't know anything about you or the company. And I was just kind of amazed by your story. And if you wouldn't mind just recreating it a little bit for our audience. Where are you from? How'd you start this and why?
- P** Pavel Durov 00:57
That will be a long story.
- T** Tucker Carlson 00:58
That's okay.

P

Pavel Durov 00:59

I was born in 1984 in the Soviet Union, so it was a fun year to be born. And back then I could witness you know, the deficiencies of the centralized system we had in the Soviet Union. When I was four years old, my family moved to Italy, where I could compare what I saw in Turin, Italy, with what I experienced in the Soviet Union. And I thought, the capitalist system, the free market system, is definitely better for me. And I went to school in Italy, I became sort of a part of the European as a result, but then when the Soviet Union collapsed, we decided to move back to Russia. In Italy, though, we, me and my brother, we had a lot of fun time. He was shown live on Italian TV as a young prodigy kid who could solve cubic equations in real time, being just, you know, 10 years old, and that was considered to be impossible back then. And Italy,

T

Tucker Carlson 02:09

I don't know the cubic equation is so difficult.

P

Pavel Durov 02:13

Definitely. And you know, when I first went to school, I didn't know how to speak Italian, I didn't know a single German word. And a lot of teachers said, like this guy, will, this kid will not going to be successful in our school by the end of the first year was second best by the end of next year, I was the best student in our class. So it also showed me that, well, you could excel, you could compete, I liked that competitive environment. And then when we got back to Russia, it was a little bit chaotic. The only reason we got back is my father got an offer to run at one of the departments in the St. Petersburg State University. He is one of the famous scholars and writers dealing with ancient Roman literature. And that experience was very different. And I still enjoyed it. Because in Russia in the 90s, you had this experimental schools, where you were taught everything, like we had six foreign languages, we had math, like very special six, four languages at once, six foreign languages in parallel, you would have math similar that you would have in specialized math, schools and chemistry at the same level you would have at schools specialized in chemistry and biology. So that was really intense. My brother, he became world champion in maths in international Olympians in maths and programming, many times in the role. Absolute Best myself, I was just the best student that my school also did some victories in local competitions in several areas. But we both were very passionate about coding, and designing stuff. And because we brought this IBM PC XT computer from Italy back in the early 90s, we were one of the few families in Russia who could actually teach ourselves how to program. And we started to do that I was in the university, I was building websites for my fellow students. And as a result, you know, I started a company that became what they called the Facebook of Russia. We don't like to name it that way because we actually managed to do a lot of things before Facebook and that defined how the social media industry developed in the years to come. The company's name was VK. I started when I was was 21 years old, just graduated university and eventually became the largest social network, the most popular social network in Russia, Ukraine, Bill Russia, Kazakhstan, a bunch of other post Soviet countries. That was a significant effort on my side, because I sort of point was the sole employee of the company, I would write the code myself, I would do the design myself, I would manage the servers, myself, it was quite intense. I even responded to customer support requests, barely

slept. But that was fun time when I was 2122 years old. And then the company grew, like I said, to somewhere about 100 million active users, which was a lot back then it was, I think, 2012 or 2011, when we faced this the first issues in Russia, because you see, I was still a big believer in this values of free market freedoms, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. So when the Russian opposition started to use the kg to organize large protests in Russia, where like almost half a million people would go and protest on the main square, or some of the main squares of the city. We were requested to ban this communities on VK by the government. And I refused the

T Tucker Carlson 06:37

so the government asked you to shut down communications between their opponents,

P Pavel Durov 06:43

because it's social networking, right. So they have this large public communities that anybody can join, anybody can read, what people are discussing, or what the administrators are posting, they can comment they can share. So it was a tool for this protesters to organize themselves. Back then it wasn't about us, you know, siding with one side with one part of the political fight on the other. It was us defending the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly, which we believed was the right thing. But that didn't go too well with with the government. And they were not too happy about that, I would say. And in a few years from then, in 2013, we had a similar situation where you had this protests in Ukraine, where people again, would use VK, to organize themselves and go to the main square of the city and show their disagreement with the government. Yes. And we received requests slash demand from the Russian side, saying you have to give us the private data of the organizers of these protests. And our response was, wait, wait a minute, this is a different country. We won't betray our Ukrainian users. Because you're asked us to do that. We decided to refuse. And that didn't go too well with the Russian government as well. So at the end of that year, I had to make a difficult decision because I was offered basically a choice between two suboptimal options. One of which was, I would start complying to whatever the leaders of the country told me to do it. The other one was, I could sell my stake in the company, retire, resign as the CEO, and leave the country. I chose the latter.

T Tucker Carlson 08:54

That's a it's a fun c'est que pasa it's a little strange, because I have heard people say that telegram is a part of the Russian government. And you're describing the opposite. You're saying you had to leave the country because you wouldn't bow to their demands?

P Pavel Durov 09:08

Well, exactly like you're saying people who have very limited knowledge of where telegram came from, they would make these claims. They could be encouraged by our competitors who see it as an easy way to discredit us because you know, telegram is spreading like forest fire.

Two and a half million users sign up every day, and we're sort of its threat. So I'm not surprised there's this perception is our competitors. They spend 10s of billions on marketing. And they're known for using PR firms to also engage in campaigns like that. So how much

T Tucker Carlson 09:49

do you spend on marketing? Zero \$0 in dollars,

P Pavel Durov 09:53

we've never spent anything on acquiring users for market In purposes, we've never promoted telegram you know, on other social platforms in any way. This is very different from other apps, you could see them being promoted here. Their telegram is different. All of our growth is purely organic. We got to almost 900 million users without having to spend anything on ads to promote Telugu. Amazing.

T Tucker Carlson 10:31

I'm sorry to interrupt your No, no, it's just it's just interesting, because I have heard people say that, but it sounds like the opposite of the truth. So you decided to sell the company resign as CEO and leave your country?

P Pavel Durov 10:44

Yes, that's what I did. But was a bit painful, because obviously, my first company was my baby, I created myself there was a lot of creativity, time and effort invested in that platform. But at the same time, you know, I understood that I would rather be free, I would want to take orders from anyone. And I left behind probably a comfortable life. But for me, it was never about becoming rich. For me, everything in my life was about becoming free. Yes. And to the extent it is possible, my mission in life was to allow other people to also become free in a sense. And using the platforms that we create, or I created. My hope was that they could express their freedoms. This is the mission of telegram and it was also in part, the mission of my previous company. Okay. We

T Tucker Carlson 11:47

wanted to pause this interview just for a minute to point something out. When the Russian Government asked Pavel Durham to use his social media company to censor its political opponents, he refused. He said he would rather resign and leave the country where he was born, then participate in something like that. Such was his commitment to free speech. Now, you got to compare that what he did with Pavel Joseph did to what Mark Zuckerberg did, or Prague Agra wall, the guy who ran Twitter before Elon Musk bought it. Both of them have collaborated with governments to censor people. And that's shameful. So we believe Pavel when he says that his his app, Telegram will be a bastion of free speech, because it has been and we believe him, because he's shown how committed to that he is. So we decided that we're

going to launch with pride our own telegram channel, to give one more avenue to reach people with our content free from censorship. So if you're on Telegram, we asked you to subscribe to our new channel, for by searching for username listed below. We're honored to be doing this, we're gonna get back to our conversation with Pavel Dieruff. So you start telegram after you leave Russia, correct? Yes.

P

Pavel Durov 12:55

So the idea for telegram came when we were still based in Russia. Because at some point, we had this very stressful situation where armed policemen would come to my house tried to break in, because I refused to take down this position groups that I mentioned earlier. And I realized there is no secure means of communication, I realized that I want to tell my brother, what's going on to coordinate, whatever we want to do. And that every tool to communicate I could use was not really secure, not encrypted. It was not safe to use them. So I thought it could be a good idea to actually come up with a decently encrypted messaging app. And my brother being the genius that he is he was able to create this encryption standard that we're using up until this day with minor changes. But

T

Tucker Carlson 14:00

then you can't brother wrote the encryption. Yes.

P

Pavel Durov 14:03

Well, my brother is like two PhDs and maths super smart. He could, you know, he's he's an expert in cryptography. He designed the basic principles of intelligence encryption was more on the user interface side, the way how the app works, the features etc. He's was responsible for it to the encryption side.

T

Tucker Carlson 14:29

So where did you go when you left Russia?

P

Pavel Durov 14:32

We tried several places. We first went to Berlin. We tried to set up a company in Berlin. We then tried London, Singapore, San Francisco, you name it. We've been everywhere. And

T

Tucker Carlson 14:46

why didn't you stay in any of those places? Oh,

P

Pavel Durov 14:46

P Pavel Durov 14:49

because the bureaucratic hurdles were just too difficult to overcome. I was bringing the best in class programmers in the world. So All these places, and I was trying to hire them from a local company. And the response I got in places like Germany, for example, is that no, no, you can't hire people from outside of the European Union, because you should first run some newspaper ad in a local, magazine, wherever. And then for six months, nobody responds from the engineers that are available inside the European Union in Germany, then you're allowed to hire outsiders. And I thought it was a crazy idea, because why

T Tucker Carlson 15:38

didn't you just say there were illiterate refugees?

P Pavel Durov 15:42

Well, because we didn't consider ourselves really we were, you know, very successful people. We could have gone anywhere.

T Tucker Carlson 15:50

No, but if you told them you were illiterate refugees, they would let you stay. Yeah. So you see, go from Germany, to Singapore, to London, to San Francisco, what happened in San Francisco,

P Pavel Durov 16:04

on San Francisco, we really thought that would be the place for us to be in because all the tech companies are near or around San Francisco. And there were two things that happened. That made us think twice. Well, one thing is pretty obvious. I was in San Francisco, I got attacked on the street after visiting. At think it was Jack Dorsey, in Twitter in the Twitter's office, and I was walking back with 8pm to my hotel, and I got attacked in the street. This is the only country where I got attacked on the street. What happened? It's just three big guys try to grab my phone from my hands. I was tweeting about the fact that I just met the founder of Twitter, that seemed like a right idea for me. Back then, to do and I get attacked. I didn't want to let them have my phone. They probably didn't expect resistance. So I snatched my phone back, there was a short fight with the guys there was a little bit blood involved. But I managed to run away and decided I should

T Tucker Carlson 17:24

probably they probably don't mind a lot of Russians, they might have been surprised.

P Pavel Durov 17:28

Well, they were much taller than me, I must admit, and there are three of them. But I think I

have a good fight.

T Tucker Carlson 17:35

Were you surprised that this happened in San Francisco completely? Yeah, it was,

P Pavel Durov 17:40

it was a shock to me, because I traveled a lot. That wasn't the first place like I got attacked. And I thought, Alright, maybe we shouldn't look at San Francisco. Maybe there are other places in America, where

T Tucker Carlson 17:55

where you don't get attacked?

P Pavel Durov 17:56

Yeah, exactly. But there's this second part, which was probably more alarming there in the US. We get too much attention from the the FBI, the security agencies wherever we came to the US. So to give you an example, last time I was in the US, I brought an engineer that is working for telegram. And there was an attempt to secretly hire my engineer behind my back by cyber security officers or agents,

T Tucker Carlson 18:32

or what they called the US government should the higher your engineer. That's my understanding. That's what he told me to write code for them or to break into telegram. They

P Pavel Durov 18:42

were curious to learn which open source libraries are integrated to the telegrams app on the client side, and they were trying to persuade him to use certain open source tools that he would then integrate into the telegrams code. that in mind, the saying would serve as

T Tucker Carlson 19:04

backdoors would allow the US government to spy on people who use Telegram, the

P Pavel Durov 19:09

US government or maybe any other government, because the backdoor is a backdoor,

regardless of who is using it. That's right.

T Tucker Carlson 19:17

And you're that's a little surprising to hear. Maybe it's not surprising, it's offensive. You're confident that happened?

P Pavel Durov 19:24

Yes. There is no reason for my engineer to make up the stories. Also because I personally experienced similar pressure in the US. Whenever I would go to the US I would have two FBI agents grilling me at the airport asking questions. One time I was having my breakfast like 9am and the FBI showed up my house that I was renting. And that was quite surprising. And I thought we're good think too much attention here. It's probably not the best environment to run, why

T Tucker Carlson 20:04

would they had you committed a crime? No, they

P Pavel Durov 20:08

were interested to learn more about telegram. They knew I, you know, left Russia, they knew what we were doing, but they want the details. And my understanding is that they wanted to establish a relationship. So in a way, control telegram better I'm, I understand that we're doing their job. It's just that, for us running a privacy focused social media platform, that probably wasn't the best environment to be in, we want to be focused on what we do not on government relations of netsource government

T Tucker Carlson 20:47

relations. So then you came to UAE, to Dubai.

P Pavel Durov 20:52

Yes, several years ago, we moved here, we first wanted just to try it for half a year, see if it works out. And it turned out to be a great place. We never looked back. And we never wanted to change the URI for any other place. After that. Why? Well, for a number of reasons. First, the ease of doing business here is so high, for example, you can hire people from anywhere in the world, as long as you're paying them a good salary. The residence permits that grant automatically, it's very different. If you try to do that in Europe and some other countries, it's very different from them. Second, it's very tax efficient. Third, the infrastructure is great, you get a lot for the minimum amount of taxes, you're paying the the the roads, the airports, hotels, the rest everything. I think you witnessed it yourself. Yes. But I think more importantly,

is that it's a neutral place. It's a neutral country, it's a small country that wants to be friends, with friends with everybody. It's not aligned geopolitically with any of the bigger superpowers. And I think it's best place for a neutral platform like ours to be in if you want to make sure we can defend our users privacy and freedom of speech.

T Tucker Carlson 22:18

So in the time that you've been here, there have been a number of wars and threats of war are precursors to war. Have you had any pressure from the government or honestly, any pressure from the government here to reveal a backdoor into telegram or to ban anyone or to make any changes to your business?

P Pavel Durov 22:40

Zero? That's the best part. For all the seven years we've been here, there's there's been zero pressure coming from the UAE towards telegram. They've been very supportive, very helpful. And it's a big contrast from, you know, whatever we've experienced before.

T Tucker Carlson 22:57

What about what you've experienced? Since since you moved here in those seven years? Have you come under pressure from other governments, under whose jurisdiction you don't fall, but to to accommodate their demands?

P Pavel Durov 23:10

Well, of course, well, telegram is a large platform. We are popular in many, many countries. And we we've been receiving a lot of requests demands, some of them were religious, legitimate, right? If there was a group of people was promoting violence, there was terrorist activity that was, you know, spreading violence in some parts of the world publicly posting things that any decent human being would disallow wouldn't want to be posted, we would help them. But in some other cases, where we thought it would be crossing the line, it wouldn't be. We've aligned with our values of freedom of speech and protecting people's private correspondence.

T Tucker Carlson 24:05

We would ignore, can you give us an example of a request that you thought crossed into censorship and spying violating people's privacy?

P Pavel Durov 24:16

Well, there's a, I will say, very funny story related to your home country. After the events of January the sixth, we received a letter from, I believe, Congressman of the Democratic side.

And they requested that we would share all the data we had in relation to what they call this uprising. And we checked it with our lawyers and they said you'd be better ignored, but the letter seemed very serious. And the letter said, you know, if you're fail to comply with this request, He will be in violation with the US Constitution or something.

T Tucker Carlson 25:07

They want to data on people who voted for the other guy in the election.

P Pavel Durov 25:11

Well, they wanted the data of people. Yeah, who were demonstrating in Washington or wherever. Yeah, doing. They probably probably right. They're not an expert in the US politics. What was funny about it is two years, exactly two, sorry, two weeks after that letter, we got another letter, a new letter from the Republican side of the Congress. And there, we read that if we give out any data, according to the previous request, we would be in violation of the US Constitution. So we got two letters that said, whatever we do with the violating the US Constitution, in a way, that was my understanding of this letters from

T Tucker Carlson 26:05

the same legislative body, both from the US Congress, yes. So how do you respond to that?

P Pavel Durov 26:12

Well, the same way we respond to most such requests, we decided to ignore them. Because it says such a complicated matter related to internal politics in the US, we don't want to take any if

T Tucker Carlson 26:27

you I believe this strongly, if you ignore your problems, most of them do go away.

P Pavel Durov 26:31

That's very true.

T Tucker Carlson 26:34

No, it says it, but it's true. That's amazing. Have you ever had demands that you can't ignore?

P Pavel Durov 26:42

P Pavel Durov 26:42
Well, it depends. unreasonable

T Tucker Carlson 26:44
demands.

P Pavel Durov 26:45
So I would say the largest pressure towards telegram is not coming from governments. It's coming from Apple and Google. Hi. So when it comes to freedom of speech, those two platforms, they could basically censor whatever is you can read access on your smartphone.

T Tucker Carlson 27:08
So, I mean, do you run the risk of being thrown out of their stores? Exactly.

P Pavel Durov 27:13
That's what they make very clear that if we fail to comply with their guidelines, so they call it children can be removed from the stores?

T Tucker Carlson 27:25
Well, that would be not a small thing for you, right? Well,

P Pavel Durov 27:28
it's one day a small thing for us, because obviously, a big chunk of the world's population will lose access to a valuable tool that they're using every day. But you know, it will not also be a small thing for them. I mean, there should, I believe the must be find some compromise in such cases. But Apple and Google are not very compromising when it comes to the guidelines, you may believe some content is against the rules, they will see to it that all the apps that are distributed to their stores comply with this rules,

T Tucker Carlson 28:06
or any of those rules, or do you interpret any of those rules? Do you believe any of them to be political? In nature?

P Pavel Durov 28:16

Some of them, but it's not the rules. It's the application of the rules, the rules themselves? They're pretty general. Right? So there must be no violence, discrimination, public, publicly available. Child abuse materials, it's hard to disagree with that, yes. But then when they start to apply those rules, sometimes we are not agreeing with their interpretation. And we try to get back to Apple or Google, wherever it is, and say, Look, we think you got it wrong. We think, actually, this is the legitimate way of people expressing their opinions. And sometimes they do agree to their credit. Sometimes they disagree. And we still have to take some content down, at least in the version of telegram that is distributed through their platforms.

T Tucker Carlson 29:16

So there are a bunch of a number of conflicts going on around the world right now. And that may accelerate. So would you expect it the number of demands and the intensity of those demands, the persistence of those demands would increase as the wars become more intense?

P Pavel Durov 29:36

Let's see. I'm really hopeful that the past is behind us want to be optimistic. I think now we reached a point where politicians and societies know what to expect from social media platforms, and where their red lines are. Yes. Are, we also learned much more about the requirements coming from both them and Google slash apple? So and our users get better educated as well, what what is allowed and was not allowed. So I don't necessarily believe that things are going to get worse.

T Tucker Carlson 30:19

It does seem like the red line for for governments is allowing organized opposition to the rule. That's what you saw in Russia, with Navalny and the Ukraine crisis in 2014. That's what you saw from that Democratic member of Congress after January 6 2020.

P Pavel Durov 30:37

There's a pattern here telegram has been used by protesters in places like Hong Kong, yeah, Salah rose, Kazakhstan, even in Barcelona back of the day. Yes. So it's, it's been a tool for deposition, to a large extent. But it doesn't really matter. Whether it's a position, or the ruling party that is used in total for us, we applied the rules equally to all sides. We don't become prejudiced in this way. It's not that we're rooting for that position where we're rooting for the ruling party. It's not that we don't care. But we think it's important to have this platform that is neutral to all voices, because we believe that the competition of different ideas can result in progress, and a better world for everyone.

T Tucker Carlson 31:34

That's in stark contrast to say Facebook, which has said in public, you know, we tip the scale in favor of this or that movement, and Fisher that country all far from the west and far from

Western media attention. But they've said that, what do you think of that? Tech companies choosing governments?

P Pavel Durov 31:54

Well, I think that's one of the reasons why we ended up here in the UAE out of all places, right? So you don't want to be geopolitically aligned, you don't want to select the winners in any of this political fights. And that's why you have to be in a neutral place. But I think Facebook in particular has a lot of reasons, apart from being based in the US for doing what they're doing. I think every app and platform plays its own role. And we believe that humanity does need a neutral platform like telegram that will be respectful to people's privacy and freedoms.

T Tucker Carlson 32:41

Maybe the most from a political perspective, it seems like the most provocative thing telegram does is offer something called channels, which seem sort of ready made for organizing groups of people. Can you explain to viewers who aren't familiar with them what a telegram channel is? Yeah,

P Pavel Durov 32:58

so telegram channel is a one to many broadcast tool that allows people to quickly disseminate any message to millions of people. So there's a channel people subscribe to it. It's a one way communication, meaning a channel can be used by, say, a president or a head of state, and everybody else will not be able to send a message to the President, the President will be able to send a message to all of the people who subscribe to his channel. Yes, or her channel. So the point here is, channels are so easy to use. And they're so deeply integrated in the messaging user interface, that they became extremely

T Tucker Carlson 33:47

popular. So you receive it like a text. Exactly.

P Pavel Durov 33:51

So it's it's a very familiar form for people. And since we want to watch channels, eight years ago, I believe a few other apps, popular apps, fold in our footsteps and copied that feature as well. Not nearly as advanced as it was rehab. But that shows that it's a really high quality and demanded feature that the world needs.

T Tucker Carlson 34:19

I think it's interesting. You don't have to answer these questions. If you don't want if it's too personal, but you're the owner, you own it. And it's very unusual. In fact, I've never seen it. To have a large business like this owned by one person. Why didn't you take and you could have

have a large business like this owned by one person. why didn't you take and you could have cashed in and private equity money along the way, but you didn't. Why didn't you?

P Pavel Durov 34:41

Well, it's true as of now, touring was 100% owned by myself, which is, like I said, quite unusual.

T Tucker Carlson 34:48

I've never heard of that before.

P Pavel Durov 34:50

The reason I tried to stay away from venture capital money to the early stage. Just a lot of development is because we wanted to be independent. We knew that our mission and our goals, not necessarily consistent with the goals of funds that could be investing into us. And also for me, it was never about money, right? So I have a few 100 million dollars in my bank account or in Bitcoin since 10 years ago, and I don't do anything with it. I don't own any real estate, jets, or yachts? I don't think those. This lifestyle is for me. I like to focus on what we're doing. If

T Tucker Carlson 35:41

you don't own anything, like big assets, you don't own the gas. It's an island in Hawaii, or no, no, no,

P Pavel Durov 35:50

no land, no. Real Estate, nothing. Why? Because for me, my number one priority in life is my freedom. And once you start buying things, first, it will tie you down to a physical location. In my view, it's my personal view, I don't have nothing against people who are buying real estate, but in my personal view, it will be like this for me. And the second reason is, I like to stay focused on what we do I tell them. So I know that if I buy a house or buy a jet, or something like that, I would be spending time trying to make it nice. Yeah. This will require a lot of time and effort,

T Tucker Carlson 36:34

would you go with leather seats or velvet seats? Exactly. And

P Pavel Durov 36:38

if you're not even going to choose yes at for me, I would rather make decisions that would influence how billing people communicate, rather than choosing the color of seats in the house

influence how billing people communicate, rather than choosing the color of seats in the house that only I am my relatives for probably a bunch of my friends will see.

T Tucker Carlson 36:57

Interesting, and you didn't take because I just have to say the third time, haven't seen this before. You obviously were famous as a young man, as a company builder, an entrepreneur, and she could have really taken a lot of money. And you didn't, because you didn't want to be controlled.

P Pavel Durov 37:16

I just didn't see any reason to do that, you know, I had enough money to get by. Well, to be completely fair, pilgrim deep takes outside money we issued bonds three years ago, so we raise debt. And that was and before that, we had a cryptocurrency project that also raised some funds. So there were instances where we raised outside funding. But when it comes to company, equity, you didn't give up ownership. We didn't give anyone ownership or voting control or anything like that. Because we also believe in efficiency. I think that having myself as the sole owner, director, and Product Manager for this extensive period of time, and the company's development allowed us to move faster, and how could

T Tucker Carlson 38:08

you be the only product manager? Are you still the only product manager in the company? Exactly,

P Pavel Durov 38:14

I still come up with all most of the features still work directly with every engineer, every designer who is implementing these features. I'm running this company because I enjoy it. I'm the only product manager because I think this is the way it can contribute contribute.

T Tucker Carlson 38:35

How big is your HR department? Zero?

P Pavel Durov 38:38

Well, you could say it's me, and because the way we hire in general,

T Tucker Carlson 38:44

you need a big HR department that you don't think you don't suffer without one.

P

Pavel Durov 38:49

We, in a way, decentralized that we started a platform where we host contests. For engineers, it's actually contest.com, we have the separate platform for that. And we select the best of the best engineers, as a result of the competitions that we organize. We hold them every like, month or two months. So after a series of these competitions, we select the best of the best of the best. And they then maybe can join our team, which is just about 30 engineers. So it's it's really compact, the team super efficient. It's like a Navy SEAL team. And this is how we operate. We don't need HR department to find super talented engineers.

T

Tucker Carlson 39:43

Why doesn't everyone do this? When I look at some of these tech companies are Elon Musk famously when he showed up at Twitter. I mean, there are people doing things he didn't even know what they were doing and they didn't know what they were doing. They were like there was a world peace department and a foosball department and why doesn't everybody The run their business like you? Well, it's

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Pavel Durov 40:03

an interesting question. I think it all boils down to the question of independence. In a way I asked this question to the predecessors of Elan, Jack Dorsey Jack and. And his prices are as well. And what you say the customer? Yeah. And this jack, he told me that if I told him, Look, we can run this company with 20 people, you don't need so many people. And the response was, I agree with you. But if we start firing so many people, it will make the Wall Street scared, they will think Something's very wrong with the company. And we don't want to do that. And that's why we keep all this employees. So

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Tucker Carlson 40:53

to keep the stock price high, he had to run it inefficiently. I mean, that's what you're saying.

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Pavel Durov 41:01

If I understood him correctly, that's what but to his, to his credit, union has to take Twitter private before he could do all the memorization.

T

Tucker Carlson 41:14

There's, I mean, there's something sort of profound in what you're saying. I mean, the whole point of a publicly traded company are one of the points so the public can participate in the ownership of the company, but also, so outsiders can assess the operations of the company. And so there's transparency. So we know how the company is run, because it's owned by the

public. And so it would be by definition, more efficient, you would think, but you're saying that it's wildly less efficient that you wind up with the foosball department when it's publicly traded, but when it's privately held, you don't? I mean, that's kind of the opposite of what you would think, right?

P Pavel Durov 41:46

I guess most tech founders would actually agree that running a public company is less efficient than running a private company, because you have to be accountable to much more people. There's a lot of redundancy bureaucracy involved. So from a purely, like, efficiency standpoint, I would argue, I think a lot of people will agree with me that when a public company is suboptimal. However, there are other advantages of getting listed. And of course, that is relevant when you want to acquire other companies, you will cash Yes, you can have access to cheap capital. You know, there's a lot of things you can do.

T Tucker Carlson 42:32

But you don't want to do any of those things.

P Pavel Durov 42:35

While not not presently, definitely I am enjoying running my company in the way it is, well, who knows what the future holds. But as of now, I think we're doing a great job with with the algorithm. 900 million users will probably cross a billion monthly active users within a year from now. I think we're doing great why why would we lose this momentum? Right? Can

T Tucker Carlson 43:00

I go back to something you said at the outset? You don't have an HR department, you only have 30 engineers working for you. You run the products, you own the company, such a tight organization. But how do you get new users if you spend zero money? For acquisitions? If you're not advertising? If you're not paying to bring people in? How do you how do you do that? How do you get to a billion for free?

P Pavel Durov 43:25

Because people love our product. What we realized pretty early on is that people are smart. People like to use good things. And they don't like to use in theory, things. That's why whenever you have a person who is starting to use Telegram, and they're there for a while, and they start to discover all the features or their you know, the speed, the security, the prompts, everything that we have. They don't want to go back. And they start inviting their friends recommending them, you should really check this app out. Because it's so much better than everything else. Also, because people realize that whatever messaging apps they're using right now. They're like five, six years behind. They're copying what we did six years ago. And that's

not a very high quality copy that they make about features. So people love quality. That's why they move. They also love the independence. They also love the privacy. They love the freedom there are a lot of reasons why somebody would wish to telegram from other apps.

T Tucker Carlson 44:35

So one of the things we learned when Elon Musk bought Twitter is that the Intel agencies, not just us but a bunch of other countries. The usual suspects were all over the company. I mean, they were some of them were present working at the company they had access to the direct messages, you can just imagine we you know because you run one, but the wealth of data flowing through would be of great interest to to governments Does that make you paranoid that you'll be penetrated? I mean, I assume governments would like to know what's going on with privately on telegram? Well,

P Pavel Durov 45:10

there's definitely a lot of responsibility that we have on our shoulders. And we, I wouldn't say we are paranoid, but it makes sense to stay prudent and not being too accessible, not traveling to weird places.

T Tucker Carlson 45:29

You don't travel to weird places,

P Pavel Durov 45:31

I hope not. Like I traveled to places where I have confidence that those places are consistent with what we do in our values. I don't go to any of the big geopolitical powers with countries like China or Russia or

T Tucker Carlson 45:51

the US. So you don't go to the US. I try

P Pavel Durov 45:56

not to I can go. But you know, it's too much attention, like I described before.

T Tucker Carlson 46:01

Yeah. Because at some point, if you run something like this, you're a player in world politics. I mean, by death, what do you want to be or not do anything?

P Pavel Durov 46:08

We definitely don't want to be a player. We want to be a neutral platform that is impartial, and doesn't take any side. But you probably right, that is some role we have to

T Tucker Carlson 46:21

play. Well, not taking a side is the one thing you're not allowed to do, right? I mean, aren't you required to take aside in the modern world,

P Pavel Durov 46:31

I think that's a big problem, because I think that kind of attitudes can result in our world becoming a more dangerous place. Because at the end of the day, we all have to try to understand each other, and try to get closer to each other in terms of getting to know the positions of the other people, even though they're drastically different from our own positions. And that's how we get to some compromise and move forward. If we're strictly divided, and everybody is required to take aside, and we can't take aside because we are this platform that people should use to collaborate and to find common ground, and hopefully to move forward. If we lose that we can end up into much more dangerous place.

T Tucker Carlson 47:27

How often do you intersect with the National Security Agency NSA? My asset is someone whose texts were read by them. So I know that they're very active in this world. What's your experience been?

P Pavel Durov 47:40

Well, I think the NSA is not an agency that works with you directly, right? Here. Yes. So

T Tucker Carlson 47:49

diplomatic, I love it. Yes, it is not an agency that works with you directly. No, that is true.

P Pavel Durov 47:57

So my knowledge of my interactions with the NSA is very limited. Yes. I could read something in the newspapers about, you know, my phone being penetrated with Pegasus, something like that. I have no idea whether it's true or not. But this is the only source of information I can have about me personally, being of interest to any of secret agencies. But

T Tucker Carlson 48:26

you've got to think even though you haven't done an interview in seven years, if, you know, you're it's widely known by people who are interested in who you are and your role in this. I mean, you've got to think you're under crazy amounts of surveillance, wouldn't you think?

P Pavel Durov 48:40

That's probably true? You know, it would sound funny, but I assume, by default, that the devices I use are compromised, because you will still use an iPhone or an Android phone. And after experiencing what I experienced in the US, I have very limited faith in platforms developed in the US from a security standpoint, yes, privacy standpoint. Exactly.

T Tucker Carlson 49:12

Because in a lot of countries are ours, America included. Spying is described as, quote, security. You're looking at it from the other perspective, you're assuming that security is privacy and my right not to be spied upon. But I think government's got bribed spying upon you as security.

P Pavel Durov 49:30

Thank you for this correction.

T Tucker Carlson 49:34

So last question, do you since you've done this since you were in college, and you've been at the center of it, where do you see it going? And by this I mean, the free exchange the private exchange of information between sovereign individuals, human beings, non slaves. When I was a child that was possible, it's increasingly difficult. Are we moving toward a world where there just is no private communication? Do you think that privacy will remain, despite, say AI or just massive increases in computing power?

P Pavel Durov 50:09

Well, this depends on the extent of privacy. When you say privacy will remain, do you mean that we have absolute privacy? Now? I

T Tucker Carlson 50:20

don't think that we do. And I think the world is becoming less amenable governments becoming less tolerant of privacy. And that's clearly the trend because they have more technological power. But will they win? I guess, will there ever be a way to preserve privacy? You know, can Is there a place for it?

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Pavel Durov 50:40

I believe in that I am an optimist. I think some new secure hardware communication devices will be created in a similar way that now we have hardware wallets to store your cryptocurrency, yes, maybe we'll have secure communication devices, you know, to send messages or voice calls. It's possible. I do believe that, you know, the world develops in cycles. And if things seem to go in one direction today, doesn't seem doesn't mean that tomorrow they will go the same direction. I also feel that at some point, people will get tired of what they experienced today and they would decide to move to some other direction. So it's, I seen if after COVID, for example, during COVID Do you have a lot of restrictions, also, on social media platforms, you know, social media platforms, you will not really allowed to express doubt in relation to lockdowns, vaccines, or masks. And at some point, I could feel the sentiment changed. People started to feel very, very tired and sometimes angry with the fact that they were not allowed to express their opinions, particularly after the end of the pandemic. Lot of people started to be even more skeptical about the restrictions in their freedoms that they experienced during the pandemic. What was your

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Tucker Carlson 52:38

position as a business owner? During COVID? Did you must have come under pressure to censor opinions on lockdowns, vaccines, masking? What How did you respond? So

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Pavel Durov 52:51

our position is pretty straightforward. We're a neutral platform. We were helping governments to spread their message about the lockdowns and masks and vaccines, we get dozens of governments who were really help similar bear information. But we also didn't want to restrict the voices that were critical of all this measures. We thought it made sense for this opposing views to collide and hopefully see some truth come out of those debates. And of course, we got criticized for that. But looking back, I think it was the right strategy.

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Tucker Carlson 53:30

So you allowed people to voice doubts about the so called Science throughout the thread the experience.

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Pavel Durov 53:36

Exactly during the pandemic, we I think we're one of the few or maybe the only major social media platform that didn't take down accounts that were skeptical in relation to some of these measures.

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Tucker Carlson 53:56

TUCKER CARLSON 53:50

So why are you not famous and treated as a hero in the United States? Shouldn't there be a parade in your honor? If you're the only social media platform not to take down what turned out to be true or in some, to some extent true? More certainly more true than the CDC guidance? What Why, why we're in you times, Man of the Year. Why isn't your face on the nickel?

P Pavel Durov 54:25

I'm not an expert in the US politics. But to be fair, you have now Twitter or x Yeah. And that seemingly becoming more pro freedom of speech? And I think it is, it's a great development and back to our earlier discussion about how all of this is developing in cycles. Things are starting to change seems

T Tucker Carlson 54:56

so deep, but in in some ways you on buying, Twitter sort of ends your monopoly. But you still greet it, cheerfully, you're still in favor of it.

P Pavel Durov 55:10

Definitely, we will love the fact that Elon bought Twitter, we thought it was a great development for a number of reasons. First reason is just innovation. You could see x doing trying a lot of things, some of them will turn out to be mistakes, some of them will work, but at least they're trying to innovate. That's something we didn't have outside of Telegram, and a few other companies in this industry for the last 10 years, what you saw from big players, they would rather copy the proven models, the teachers that apps like telegram launched, and just scale them on a larger audience. These features will be a payload will repel, repel reflections of what we built. But this was the way those companies operate and still operate. What X is trying to do is inline what we're building innovation, trying different things, trying to give power to the creators, trying to get the ecosystem economy going. Those are all exciting things. And I think we need more companies like that I was I don't know if it's good for humanity that like Elan is spending so much time on Twitter, making it better, but it's definitely good for the social media industry.

T Tucker Carlson 56:37

When you see the other guys who run these other companies, what do you do know them? And do you ever talk about freedom of speech? I mean, if you're running, you're not you don't have to answer of course, if you don't want but like if you're into Mark Zuckerberg

P Pavel Durov 56:51

Yeah, I we met with Mark. More than 20 years ago, I was still running VK. And I told them, I told Mark and his colleagues about our app platform, we launched an app platform, I think it was 2009 vk. They were very interested, who was an interesting meeting. They ended up trying to

copy not what we did, but what I told them. We did. It was funny. I remember him asking me whether we were planning to start something on a global basis on the global level level, like go for international expansion. I said no. And I asked him whether he was going to try to capture more of my domestic market where I was working out. And he said no, and we both ended up doing exactly that. And two or three weeks when I

T Tucker Carlson 57:57

was son thinking I shouldn't go into business with Mark Zuckerberg. No comment. I will drop that. Thank you very much. It was a great conversation I appreciate and we're rooting for you.

P Pavel Durov 58:12

Thank you for having me. Of course.

T Tucker Carlson 58:18

Free speech is bigger than any one person or any one organization bodies are defined by what they will not watch it is the total inversion of virtue.