

Teds Show, Episode 4: Andrew Saka on Building the Future of Mobility in Africa

English transcript of the conversation between Ted (host) and Andrew Saka, founder of Gendayo. Translated from Swedish and lightly edited for readability. Timestamps refer to the original video.

Introductions (00:00:11)

Ted: Maybe start by introducing yourself a little, who you are and what you do, so we get some background.

Andrew: Absolutely. My name is Andrew Saka. I'm 42 years old. I was born in Uganda and came to Sweden when I was eleven months old, in 1983, and I've lived in Sweden ever since. I've never moved away.

Ted: You like it here? Not too cold?

Andrew: No. When you've been here your whole life, it's second nature, as they say in English. Of course I've been to warmer countries, but I like it here.

Andrew: I live in Täby, with my wife and kids. I studied, and I knew pretty early what I wanted to do. I started studying computers in upper secondary school when I was 15, and ever since then I've had a computer and programming as a tool in everything I do.

Ted: There's a real shortage of people who know the IT side of things. People are crying out for them all the time, so I imagine it's a good career path.

Andrew: Exactly. Although when I chose to study, it wasn't completely obvious. When I went to university there was both the IT boom and the IT crash, so it was shaky at the time.

Ted: That was around 2000, 2001?

Andrew: Yes, 1999 to 2001, the millennium bug and all that. Things were uncertain back then.

Ted: Was that the thing where everyone thought everything would stop working when the date rolled over? I wasn't very old then, I think I was about eight.

Andrew: That was exactly it. Going from 1999 to 2000, with all the zeros. The theory was that most systems wouldn't handle it, purely from a computational standpoint, because no data system that had existed up to then had ever had "00" at the end. So people got worried about what it might cause.

Ted: Did anything actually crash?

Andrew: No, nothing. But a lot of consultants got paid well off people's fears. [laughs]

Ted: Smart.

Deciding to go out on his own (00:02:39)

Ted: So you studied through all of that and got to experience the IT boom.

Andrew: Exactly. And somewhere around 23, I already knew I was going to start my own company too. I'd studied computer engineering, the master's-level engineering program at KTH, and I finished around 25. But somewhere around 23, before I'd even graduated, I knew I'd start my own thing. I'd started working, taken a job as a programmer.

Ted: How did you know you wanted to work for yourself? Had you grown tired of a boss, or was there something that triggered it? Taking the uncertain path, though maybe it's not so uncertain.

Andrew: There's a natural explanation. My dear uncle, who's actually here with us today, is an entrepreneur, and he got me onto that track, the idea that there's another way to make a living besides being employed. It wasn't in IT. He ran taxi companies and beauty salons and the like. So that gave me exposure to the idea that you can make money another way.

Ted: It's so valuable to have someone close to you who can show you the other side, that there's something beyond the safe monthly salary.

Andrew: Exactly. But it took a while. From about 23 to 28 I was still employed and ran the company more as a side hustle, something you couldn't survive on. Then at 28 I got a bigger sum, managed to land a larger contract, and since then I've been fully self-employed, running my own company. Now I'm 42, so I've been fully self-employed in IT for, what, about 14 years.

Ted: It's a completely different kind of business when you do it for yourself. A lot of people don't even dare. But IT is maybe a forgiving field for it, since people are crying out for talent and it can be fairly easy to take a client you've worked with before. Was it like that for you, a long relationship that you then brought over?

Andrew: Yes, absolutely. Funny you mention it. I was employed on this big contract, employed by a company, and then I managed to win a larger contract directly from the same client I'd been working for. They'd already seen it worked well, so they said, let's go with Andrew directly. No middleman.

Ted: And you saw how much more your own company could earn.

Andrew: Right. But there was a lot more risk too. For quite a while I had no stability. I didn't get any revenue into the company for up to half a year at one point. I had enough money to get by for six months, but it was still scary, with nothing coming in. It took a while before I got the flow going and found my ways to get stability in the income stream, which is also a hard thing. I became self-employed at 28, and somewhere around 32 or 33 I felt, okay, now I've got a good flow.

Ted: A lot of people suffer through exactly that. What changed for you? Did you start selling more, or get more confident and dare to take bigger contracts?

Andrew: What changed most was that I started relying more on my network and the people around me, and using it. Before, I got assignments more by waiting for someone to call. I wasn't really selling. It was just, someone calls, they've heard I do good work, do you need help here? There was no active sales. So partly I started using my network, and the selling I did was working a lot with what's called consultant brokers, who actively help find new assignments. So my network kept expanding. And after doing this for a few years you build a track record and experience, and people know about it. Now it's more automatic, because I've built up some credentials and accomplishments, so it gets much, much easier.

Ted: I assume you don't regret going over to running your own thing.

Andrew: No, not for a second. It's tough, though. And I'm a bit like this: I wouldn't recommend it to just anyone, because it can be brutal at times. Many times it's so hard that you feel this is something you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy.

Ted: But isn't it also a positive that you don't know how hard it'll be? If you'd known beforehand, maybe you wouldn't have started.

Andrew: Very wise of you to say that, because that's exactly the idea I subscribe to as well. There's a lot in life you take on, big challenges, that if you were more rational you absolutely wouldn't do. Or not just rational, but if you actually knew what was coming, you'd never get into these things. With hindsight, if I'd known everything I'd have to go through to reach the point I'm at now, with everything ahead of me and everything I can accomplish, I'd have said, no, you shouldn't do this. [laughs]

Ted: Should we turn this off for everyone listening? [laughs]

Andrew: No, but a bit like that. At the same time, when you look back afterward, and this is more about how tough it is, when you get through the hard parts you realize, this led to that, and then it's definitely worth it. So it's more that if you strip away all the emotion from a tough entrepreneurial journey, that's when you rationally say, no, I don't want to do that. I think you have to be a little half rational and half irrational, brave and tough, to survive an entrepreneurial journey. You're a pioneer. You have to open new paths, convince people of things that don't necessarily exist yet. You get questioned, people think you're crazy. And then maybe times come when you're not even doing well financially, and that's when they point fingers even more, saying, hey, what are you doing, shouldn't you stop, this isn't going well. And then later it turns out you were right, just because you were a bit more persistent, and success comes, and people start to applaud and say, you're a genius. [laughs] So it has a lot to do with persistence and being a bit stubborn.

Ted: It's so important to choose your friends, what you surround yourself with, and to have a support network when it gets tough. It's so easy to be influenced by the people around you. If everyone just says negative things, "you shouldn't do that," and they mean well too, they don't want to see you stressed and feeling bad, so they say, go back to that steady job. But maybe the opposite is exactly what you should do. Not always, but you don't know that beforehand either.

Andrew: Exactly.

Ted: And in your case I assume there are plenty of jobs to go back to, so you had a safety net if it didn't work out.

Andrew: To some extent, yes, absolutely. But the funny thing is, the more you get absorbed into running your own company, with taxes and bookkeeping and all that, it's a bit like a hamster wheel. Once I'd built up a certain lifestyle and certain income, it got harder to get out. So eventually, when people said "shouldn't you go back," well, it's been over 14 years self-employed now, and I don't really know any other way, so nobody says that anymore. My point was partly that you have forces from people trying to pull you back, but also that it's genuinely hard to go back, sometimes for tax and financial reasons. You can owe tax from the previous year that you're working off in the current year, and once you've paid last year you owe again for this year, so you have to keep going. I've had situations like that, where you need to balance the books. So it's not always easy to exit entrepreneurship either.

Ted: But in this case it almost became a kind of blessing. A good push.

Andrew: Yes.

Ted: Because if it had been too easy, maybe you'd have just gone back. The salary arrives on the 25th regardless.

Andrew: Absolutely. And it's not just taxes, it's also that you have investments in different projects, so much money tied up in something, and emotional investment too. Should I just drop this app idea because someone said, why don't you just shut it down? So the flywheel gets going and you get more and more into it, until there's no turning back. Now you've joined us. [laughs]

What Andrew does: tDigital and Gendayo (00:14:51)

Ted: And now everyone's sitting here waiting. What is it you're working on? You have to reveal it.

Andrew: I'll happily reveal it. I do two different things, I'd say. Let me start with the bread-and-butter part. I have a digital agency, or rather a consultancy, where we consult in digital transformation. The company is called tDigital. A lot of that comes from my network and what I've accomplished with the help of other clients, companies, and public agencies on various things. That's one branch of my business. The other is that I have a product idea, a mobility solution, an app I'm developing, aimed at Africa as a continent. So I'm building a company called Gendayo, which is Africa's answer to Uber, you could say.

Ted: Does the name mean something? Is it African, does it have a meaning?

Andrew: It does, actually. Since I'm originally from Uganda, Gendayo, the way it's pronounced, means "go there." I chose to say it in a more international way, so it sounds palatable and is easy to pronounce for everyone, but it's spelled exactly like that in the language. It's just a different dialect on it.

Transport in Africa versus Sweden (00:16:43)

Ted: Give us a glimpse of what taxis and that whole side of things look like in Uganda, or in the countries you're thinking of. Are you thinking all of Africa? I've been to Africa four times, including Uganda. Tell us how it is today and what the difference is from Sweden when it comes to taxis and Uber.

Andrew: To start with, there are completely different challenges there compared to Sweden, other European countries, the more developed Western world. You have infrastructure limitations, of course, with roads and so on, that you have to figure out how to handle. So there are physical limitations with the infrastructure, and then there are more data-related limitations too, having to do with the fact that internet isn't as widespread there. One of the assumptions, or requirements, for an Uber to work well is that you have good internet connectivity, and that internet is cheap. In many African countries you pay on a pay-as-you-go model. Here you have a lot of fixed pricing and just run on unlimited data. That's not something the broad mass of people there has. So that's a challenge.

And then there's the part about mobile phone use, smartphone penetration. That's also a challenge. Not everyone has a smartphone, they have old phones. But we've done a lot of research, and it's fairly widely documented, you can google it quickly: by 2030, that's about four years from now, Africa is projected to reach 70 percent smartphone penetration. So there's an enormous wave of tech development happening in Africa that will make it easier, internet-wise, for apps including Gendayo to expand there.

There are lots of other things we could go into, having to do with the organization of traffic. Here you have bus timetables. There you don't. Instead, you go down to the street and wait, usually for a minibus or similar, sort of on the fly, taking a chance. Usually one comes, but sometimes it doesn't, and then you wait an hour, and there's no one to call to say the bus is delayed, because there's no timetable. So that says something about how public transport works there.

Ted: So Uber doesn't exist in Africa, or in some countries maybe?

Andrew: It does exist in Uganda, where I'm from. Both Uber and Bolt are there. I'd say the biggest ones in Uganda are SafeBoda, Faras, and others, plus Uber and Bolt. So we have around five players. But nobody is really trying to solve the truly hard, tough problems in Africa, like internet connectivity. And another thing I shouldn't forget has to do with maps, the Google Maps blindspots problem, which is also worth looking into if you're curious. It's about incomplete maps. There was a time when this was a problem in Europe too, when the maps weren't as enriched. Incomplete maps mess up the estimates of how long it takes for the taxi to arrive. You also can't pick someone up if you don't know where they are.

Ted: This shows my ignorance, but it feels like there are satellites everywhere. Shouldn't they just be able to update the maps?

Andrew: It's more complicated than that. You have satellites, but you also need meta-information, information about the information. You need to know which roads are good driving routes, what the traffic is like, and so on. And many roads in Africa aren't formal.

Ted: So everyone drives there, but it works fine even though it's not official.

Andrew: Exactly. So you need additional meta-information about how things actually are. The satellite image is just a geographic, spatial representation of how spaces look, but it says nothing about how they're used, or whether a road is actually a usable route.

Ted: Because that's where Google tracks your phone and sees how much movement there is, how many people travel a given road. I don't know, we were in France a few years ago, drove down, and my wife wanted to go to a lavender field. This is out in the countryside, big fields, small roads. And then we see on Google Maps that it's completely red, total stop. So I think, has there been an accident? But it was just people who'd stopped at a little parking spot, gotten out, and taken photos of the fields. The whole Google Maps view thought there was a traffic jam, but they were just standing by the side of the road. [laughs]

Andrew: A fun thing. Yes, it's not quite accurate.

Ted: But otherwise I think it's great. When I drove here from Gothenburg it said, there's a stop here, choose another route. It's very smart when you get all that info and data.

Competing with the giants (00:23:26)

Ted: But how do you compete against these giants? It must be hard. Or is this getting into too many business secrets? [laughs]

Andrew: No, it's fine. I'd say the thing isn't so much, we understand we'll be competing with the big players. What we're relying on to compete is that we're specialized for Africa as a continent, and that we have first-mover advantage, that we're the ones genuinely trying to solve these problems first. So that's the best way to describe it. We do have some trade secrets about how we'll do it, which technologies we might invest in, patent, and protect, to bring out solutions so we can still compete with giants that have billions of dollars.

Ted: Is it a matter of going country by country? How do you launch?

Andrew: Good question. There are different approaches. But I can tell you, the countries we're working on right now, we have a research group of researchers down in Africa right now doing studies of our market and our audience, our ideal customer persona. That's in Uganda, where I'm naturally from and have natural connections, then Kenya, a neighboring country with a very good coverage ecosystem, and then we've chosen Nigeria, which is also a big market. If I'm not mistaken, it's also the largest economy in Africa, with the most money, turnover, and investment coming from startups. They invest a lot in Nigeria.

Ted: They see how it works in the US, Europe, China, Asia, and you can do roughly the same there, go all in, because you know it works elsewhere. They're a bit behind technologically, but that creates opportunities too.

Andrew: That's basically the idea we lean on as well. But we also know we've identified a gap: these problems with maps and connectivity haven't been taken seriously by the big tech companies. Uber and Bolt just sort of dropped in. They geo-cloned it, as we'd call it, just

threw it in. We really want to make a solution that's made from Africa and for Africa, so it genuinely works in those conditions.

Ted: I was in Tanzania maybe a month ago, and we took a lot of taxis. If you stayed at a secluded hotel where you couldn't see any taxis outside, you could only book one through the hotel. And when we stayed in places more in the city, you had to go out, find one, and negotiate a bit.

Andrew: Exactly.

Ted: Which, I actually enjoy the sales side of things, so for me it was fine. But just having an app where you click, the same way, would be smoother.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: As a tourist I'd want that. You only find out about fixed prices afterward. What's a normal price when you arrive in a country? Sure, now there's ChatGPT and so on, which makes it easier to know prices, but you land at the airport, tired, take the first taxi, and it's three times the price.

Andrew: Exactly. That's also an aspect we're looking at. We've seen in our research that this is something we can offer good solutions for, making sure we have good prices that aren't scam prices. That's something we're trying to solve too. And at the same time we're trying to make sure not just that the customers booking the ride are taken care of, but that the drivers earn well too. That's an important part of our business model, that they feel they earn a fair wage.

Driver economics and the Airbnb comparison (00:28:19)

Ted: Can you explain what it's like in Sweden if you drive Uber? How is it for the drivers?

Andrew: We actually interviewed a driver in Sweden who drives for Uber, and he said he had to work up to 16 hours a day to make enough for a reasonable full-time wage. That says a lot about how many Uber drivers don't feel they earn enough. And compared to a regular taxi, most people in the taxi trade know it's much cheaper, but that has a downside too. We're looking at whether we can find more economically advantageous solutions so drivers can earn a better income while working as drivers.

Ted: Can't you see it a bit like Airbnb? I own a house in Gothenburg, and we have a connected but separate apartment that we rent out through Airbnb. I think Airbnb is a bit like Uber, but the difference, I'd say, is that Airbnb does everything to make us, the owners, comfortable and happy so we stay and keep using Airbnb. They find customers, Airbnb gets paid, we get paid, and the guests get a good place to stay. So it feels like a good symbiosis. But it doesn't sound like Uber or Bolt have that symbiosis the same way. It's more that Uber wants to earn a lot and the customer gets a cheap ride, but one very important third party just gets exploited instead.

Andrew: Exactly.

Ted: You try to find the thing where everyone wins.

Andrew: A better win-win situation. Yes, absolutely. And that's what we're after.

Ted: Because I have another, we also use Booking. But Booking is really a bit like Uber, I'd say. They just started doing what Airbnb does, where it's not just hotels but private individuals renting out too, but they haven't adapted for them. So you get a much worse experience on our side: we can't rate guests, we can't edit things the way we can on Airbnb. So I think your business could be a bit similar, that you focus more like Airbnb, that everyone should be well taken care of.

Andrew: We do, actually. We have a website, gendayo.com, where we've described our value proposition, our offer to both customers and drivers. And it's clear there that we have a driver-first approach, that drivers should be well taken care of, but also that customers should be too. It's something we think about a great deal.

Ted: What I like, continuing the Airbnb and Booking comparison, is that both parties can rate each other. I don't know if you have time as a driver, maybe that's a different problem, but it makes such a difference, because then you have a reputation to live up to. When you're an ordinary guest on Booking, no one rates you, because that's not how it works at regular hotels. But now it's other people's private homes, so it's so good to have both sides rating each other, because then everyone behaves much better. Otherwise you get no guests.

Andrew: It works every time. I can actually tell you it's part of our solution. Verification, not just ratings but verification of both drivers and riders.

Ted: The safety of knowing.

Andrew: Safety. We have a few guiding words. Three of them: safety, smart, and fair. The "fair" part is captured in what I described, drivers getting paid well and no scam prices for end customers. And then how we realize the safety part, part of it is verification, but also ratings, as you described. We innovate around these concepts, and we'll bring out solutions that hit on those things.

Vehicles, regulation, and Africa's diversity (00:34:25)

Ted: What about cars? Can you sign up with any car? Are there requirements? How do you think about that?

Andrew: It varies a lot. We have a part of that.

Ted: Someone shows up with a tractor and starts driving. [laughs]

Andrew: [laughs] You can't forget that Africa is a big continent with many, many countries, and each country has unique laws and governments that decide things differently. So we'll look at it legally on a case-by-case basis, how it is in each country, as part of our go-to-market strategy for how we establish ourselves. So I can't give a straight answer other than that it's somewhat ad hoc based on each country. But since safety is a real guiding word for us, you can definitely count on our solution being safe in the physical sense when it comes to the vehicle, and, as I described before, with people, customers and drivers, being verified.

We'll have an ecosystem where everyone rates each other. All of that will be included. So broadly speaking, everything you expect from Uber today will be in our product, including a fair amount that's specific to Africa.

And remember, Africa is very, very heterogeneous. It looks very different. If you compare certain countries, say South Africa, with other African countries, or South Africa with some European countries, there are cities that are much better off than some places in Europe. So that's also part of the challenge in what we do, but we have a certain baseline that we'll set, which we think works for all of Africa. That's a big core foundation in our approach.

The team and the size of the task (00:37:14)

Ted: How do you take on a task like this? How many are you? When are you planning to release? It feels enormous.

Andrew: That's what makes it fun.

Ted: Exactly. You have to be a bit of a visionary and a bit crazy as an entrepreneur. I like it.

Andrew: Exactly. [laughs]

Ted: That's why it's fun to talk with you, to see how it all works the way you think about it. How many are you, first of all?

Andrew: Right now I'm the founder. We actually built and launched this inside an investment firm called Antler. Gendayo was started there, in their incubator, so to speak. And through them we're incredibly many, you could say. We're still developing it in collaboration and working to win investment for it, partly from Antler's network and partly elsewhere, building up the whole foundation that's needed. Because it's not just about technology, it's about capital too.

Ted: I can imagine.

Andrew: So I'm the founder right now, and then we have an advisory board too. It's made up of a few people, about three right now, and some are experts in Africa, in innovation, and also in mobility solutions. So we have a good mix of people who are very knowledgeable about this. But that's the inner circle. Beyond that, we've recruited and are recruiting a large research group to research those three countries I mentioned, Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria. Right now we have two lead researchers down there, plus a number of people helping them when they do the various studies against the market, asking people questions and running tests. So we're at least around twenty people involved in the closest circle right now. But we also have a very strong network. I'd say the innermost circle right now is about twenty people.

Ted: And your job now becomes a lot about finding financing. That's completely different from what you've done before.

Andrew: A hundred percent.

Ted: You don't always think about that. You start thinking about the technology and the marketing, but you have to bring in the money too. How's the reception been? Has it been hard?

Andrew: Right now it feels like the business case I've chosen to put energy into is a good one, in the sense that there are predecessors, Uber and Bolt and others. So it's fairly easy to explain.

Ted: That's a relief.

Andrew: It is, and you don't always have ideas like that. I've had ideas I sat with on my own that weren't like that. But the case I'm working on now is more easily explained. So the reception has been that people think the case looks good. But then it's also about getting traction, and that's what we're working on. First we have to validate all the parts we're taking as assumptions, and then step by step we'll work our way up toward, well, demanding money, or rather attracting money, knocking on doors and saying, now we've validated, we've built the prototypes, they're launched, the market is responding well, and from there we can build up the capital needed in different stages. We'll also develop it technically, with different pieces of functionality rolled out based on how much money we bring in successively. So I'd say we're working slowly but surely, or actually not slowly, very fast, because we work very innovatively and use AI and other technologies to produce what we're working on. But we work very strategically and methodically. That's maybe how I'd describe what we do.

AI and "AI-native" (00:42:10)

Ted: When you get into AI, how has it changed the playing field for you and your work, since you're in the IT industry anyway? How much do you use it?

Andrew: We use it. Gendayo is, we describe ourselves as Africa's first AI-native mobility solution. That was a lot of words, but let me break it down. AI-native basically means it's built from the ground up to work with AI. We have it as part of our solutions, in how we've developed the product and our architecture, that it's highly AI-driven when it comes to matching, finding customers that work well for drivers so they can earn a good amount, and an AI-driven engine for finding good routes and getting around. Everything is fundamentally very AI-driven. And also forecasting, predicting where there'll be demand for our services. So a lot of things will fundamentally be very AI-driven in how we develop the solution.

Ted: How does that work? Do you build your own, or license from a big AI company?

Andrew: There are different ways. We have a few different approaches, but it comes down to: you can build a lot yourself, or you can use some of the solutions out there that, say, Microsoft or Google offer. In our case we have a fair amount that's very custom, especially since our use case is very unique, so we need to build a lot ourselves, in-house. And that's also part of what we'll patent, our technology.

Andrew: I believe there's a body that handles that, organizations where you can apply for a patent and then extend it across multiple territories. So it's not so cumbersome that you have to do it all manually. But in our case, my expertise isn't really patents. My expertise is more developing the technology, as an engineer, developing these unique solutions, being the visionary and seeing that this is needed. And then we collaborate with real experts, patent engineers, there's such a thing. They know what's patentable. Because not everything under the sun is patentable. However much you feel you've come up with something new, that doesn't mean it can be patented. There has to be a certain uniqueness and inventiveness, otherwise it's not even considered protectable as a patent.

Ted: Will you use something like Elon Musk's Starlink for internet?

Andrew: We haven't, I can say we've thought about it, but I can't really say yes or no on everything, since we're still in a kind of research phase, even though we already have certain prototypes done. But it's not entirely off the table as an option.

Internet shutdowns and political risk (00:46:21)

Ted: This is interesting. I flew home, Tanzania had just had an election, and that was the day we flew home. There was a lot of chaos and unrest, and the government shut everything down.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: It was completely crazy. And you think, well, Uber rides and everything. [laughs] Maybe that's not the most critical thing when they shut off the internet, but still, you feel so powerless when they do that.

Andrew: Absolutely. It's rare that happens, but it's wild.

Ted: We were really lucky to fly home that day, just before it happened. It makes you realize how sensitive it is in certain countries, with internet and everything.

Andrew: Absolutely. It even happens in Uganda, where during elections President Museveni decides to shut down the internet because he thinks it's not to his advantage. So especially there, you have to have a certain political competence within the organization to act effectively in the African market, maybe some contacts, a bit of lobbying, for lack of a better word. To make it work, it's not just a technical challenge, it's a political and business challenge too. There are several layers of things we have to penetrate and have a good handle on.

Ted: And that's also what makes me go, yes, nobody else can be bothered with this, so now let's go. [laughs]

Andrew: That's a good thing, because then there's a case to work on. If everything were easy, it would already exist and already work.

Where the idea came from: the taxi years (00:48:55)

Ted: But how was this idea born? Were you in Uganda and couldn't get a taxi?

Andrew: Exactly. No, it wasn't just taxis. Let me put it this way. Today I'm 42. While I was studying at KTH, I worked extra in the summers, and extra in general, because I'd moved out fairly early, so I needed a way to earn money. I'd gotten my Swedish taxi driver's licence at around 23, 23 or 24, I think. First I drove for Transfer Taxi, which later became Sverigetaxi, and then I worked as a driver for Taxi Kurir. So I'm an old taxi driver in Stockholm.

Ted: You can find every street now.

Andrew: Back then you had to learn the streets by heart. It's a bit easier now with GPS. That was part of the driver test.

Ted: Wasn't that really complicated and hard, having to find your way everywhere?

Andrew: It was. The funny thing was that GPS was fairly novel and new then, so it was like, okay, you have to learn the map, but GPS exists. It wasn't so established that it was in every taxi, but it was something you could use. There was good connectivity. So you felt a bit silly sitting there doing the driver test, memorizing all the streets, when in the end you'd be able to use GPS anyway. But you had to learn it. I went to an organized taxi school, I think somewhere in Solna, Svensk Taxiskola I believe. They had a structured way of teaching this. You spent a few months there, and in the end I knew all the streets, all the municipalities, and how to get around Stockholm. Actually, on the test you're not examined on every street in every municipality, it's the streets in the city center, and then for the rest you're examined on how to get out north, south, west, and so on. So it's not quite as brutal as it sounds, but there are still a fair number of streets in the inner city, within the tolls, that you have to know.

So that was a way for me to get exposure to, hey, this taxi thing, and this was before Uber existed, where I started thinking in terms of an app combined with IT and taxis. It would have worked, you could book. And then Uber showed up later, and Bolt a few years after that. So I'd already been mulling it over. But before that, before I was a taxi driver, I was in Uganda pretty much every summer, and there it wasn't taxis, it was these buses, called matatus in Kenya. In Uganda they're called taxis. They have different names depending on which country you're in. They're the equivalent of buses, but without timetables.

So I saw that boarding one of those was chaos. The departure time wasn't fixed, it was decided by the conductor, who would call out once he felt it was full enough for him to earn enough. So it would sit and wait, and people would stand there banging on it: aren't you done? Shouldn't we go? I have important errands. And he'd say, wait, wait. And you'd sit there roasting in the sun.

Ted: It must get hot in one of those.

Andrew: And he'd say, it's not quite full yet, wait a bit longer. And someone would say, I'll pay for the rest. [laughs] This was probably when I was maybe 15. And in Sweden I'd take

the bus to basketball practice, which I played at the time, and there was a timetable I could rely on. It arrives exactly on time. So already there I saw, ah, there's room for improvement here. I've always been entrepreneurial, trying to find solutions. So my mind has been oriented toward finding a good solution in taxis, mobility, and transport. My antennae have been sensitive to it for a long time, and maybe it's only now that I'm really acting on it and doing something real. Often you see yourself that something doesn't work somewhere, and sometimes it's a matter of taking two sides and putting them together. Good taxi systems plus IT, that's how it came about.

Then versus now: taxi licensing and Uber (00:53:33)

Ted: I have to ask, how long does it take? You said it was a few months at this taxi school back in the day. How long does it take for me to start driving Uber in Stockholm if I don't know a single street?

Andrew: It's different. Completely different.

Ted: I get it, with GPS. But what's the difference today?

Andrew: Today? I don't think Uber even has a real driver test and rigorous control. When I got my taxi licence at 23, first you had to pass the taxi driver's licence. There were questions from, I think, the Swedish Transport Agency. You had to pass a test there, roughly like the tests for a regular driver's licence. And after that you're not done, you have to attach yourself to a taxi operator, and they have their own tests too, which are fairly hard, and then you also have to pay to be part of it, and after that you have to find a driver, or rather an operating company, willing to employ you. So I'd say you probably still need to pass the taxi driver's licence here as an Uber driver, I think. But you don't have the same rigorous controls from Uber, hardly, when it comes to knowing all the streets and so on. Because you learn customer care, customer service, from working at a place like Taxi Kurir. You get a uniform and a tie, this is how it's done, this is how you use the walkie-talkie. It was much more serious, prestige, it was something. But Uber now, I don't think you can, I think you can just drive your own car, and there's no real check on the car either. I doubt it.

Ted: What I've noticed in Gothenburg is that it's almost the same type of car everywhere. I don't know why. Whether they get a discount from some company.

Andrew: Absolutely, that's how it is. You can have a discount that exists when, I used to drive toward the Arlanda remote, which is a kind of gigantic taxi holding lot at Arlanda, where taxis queue. There's a taxi coordinator, staff who coordinate all the taxis picking up travelers from Arlanda. But one thing I learned fairly quickly, besides the remote, was that my operator mostly had diesel cars at the time, and those were penalized by the government and had to go further back in the queue to pick up customers, so you didn't get first pick. So yes, there are forces like the ones you guessed that affect which cars show up in the taxi market. Right now a clear example is electric cars. EVs are favored and get priority in taxi queues, picking up customers first. And that's decisive when there's a limited supply of customers to pick up. So if you had an EV it would go better.

Ted: It must be tough being an EV taxi driver too, with charging all the time.

Andrew: Yes.

Ted: When I drove there, I have an EV and it took a while to charge. The trip to Stockholm takes much longer than with petrol or diesel. But in Africa maybe there aren't many EVs yet.

Andrew: No, not from what I've seen or heard. We'll research that more. We haven't looked at it that much.

Ted: It probably doesn't matter much for you, I assume?

Andrew: No. In the long run it'll become important there too. But we'll see how it develops, and we look at it case by case, country by country.

Launch timing and beyond cars (00:58:04)

Ted: And when can it be released and go live?

Andrew: We're aiming for sometime in the middle of next year, there's a chance we'll have something out on the market in Africa, in one of our target countries. Then the next phase is marketing. And I should add, it's not just cars we're aiming at. There's also something big called boda-bodas in Uganda, meaning mopeds, motorcycles.

Ted: That you can sit several people on?

Andrew: No, it's one person. It's also a big thing. So that's part of the space we're looking at offering good solutions for too. It's not just cars we focus on.

Ted: You have to adapt it to where you are. In Sweden there aren't many people getting a lift on a moped, so understandably it doesn't exist here. But abroad, very many people travel that way. In Thailand it's tuk-tuks, full of people in the back. It's smart to adapt like that.

Andrew: Exactly. So it's a sharp and fun idea to work on and develop.

Self-driving cars and responsibility (01:00:24)

Ted: When do you think we'll have self-driving cars and that kind of thing? Do you think it'll come?

Andrew: I think self-driving cars aren't something you can fully control on your own. Legally you have to get the okay from the powers that be in government. And infrastructure-wise, I think you need good, well-paved ground for it to work.

Ted: But say in Sweden or the US, when do you think it'll be there? In the US I've heard it's San Francisco.

Andrew: In California, San Francisco, I think they already have it. There are better conditions for it. And remember, with self-driving cars you almost need a truly unbreakable internet connection.

Ted: Yep. [laughs] That's not the first thing we'll have.

Andrew: So that condition really has to work superbly, in Africa at least. So I think that's maybe a generation away.

Ted: It's not something you'll have to worry about in Africa, at least.

Andrew: Exactly. It's not what we focus on first at Gendayo. But it'll be cool. I think it was Elon Musk who said that in the old days, when you went into an elevator, there was someone who operated it, drove it up and down, an elevator operator. Back then it was unthinkable that you, the rider, would control the elevator. We don't think about that now. We just walk in and click floor one or seven. He made the analogy that the same thing will happen with cars and taxis in the future. Why should you drive? You can sit and do other things, work, whatever, and it's safe. So it'll be cool when and if it comes. I'm guessing it'll come.

Ted: I'm convinced it'll come.

Andrew: I don't think it's a big leap from where we stand as a global world, with things becoming more and more automatic. Especially if you look at AI and these agents you may have heard of, where you essentially have program code acting as an agent, performing tasks for you online. Then it's not a big leap in thinking to also have a car that drives itself. It feels like a natural extension. Even though it's a bit scarier, since you put your own body in a car and risk your life in the hands of a piece of software. But I've reflected on the difference between that and getting on a commercial plane where autopilot is engaged and the pilot isn't really flying it. I'm no pilot, as you can tell, but the autopilot idea has existed and exists in other areas like aviation, and that's probably, to me at least, even scarier than getting in a car.

Ted: You trust it to drive, run by a computer program. We just take it for granted without thinking, like that's how it's always been. But it hasn't. It came afterward. Aviation came before cars. The next generation will think it's obvious: why would we drive the car? It's much safer when the machine drives it. No human error, no fatigue.

Andrew: Exactly.

Ted: But it's maybe mostly the legal side that holds it back. There's an accident. Was it Tesla's fault or the person's fault? And there's this dilemma where on each side of the road, three old ladies on the left and a young girl on the right. Should the car choose to hit the three or the one? Or should you, sitting in the car, die by driving straight into a wall in the middle?

Andrew: A dilemma. [laughs]

Ted: It's a big one.

Andrew: That's something you don't necessarily want software making decisions about.

Ted: Do you pay extra to make sure you survive? [laughs]

Andrew: Exactly. These are the kinds of moral dilemmas raised as examples. It's scary. I don't know if there's a good answer. I don't have one. I think all human lives are equally

valued and all people are equally valuable, regardless of origin, skin color, who you are, whether you're disabled or not. Everyone is worth the same in life and love.

Ted: But someone has to program it in somewhere, if there's an option where one of these three has to die in this situation. How do you even do something like that? It can't be done morally.

Andrew: Exactly. Or you decide not to program it and let chance decide, or let the AI act autonomously. And then will Tesla be sued? The family. The law gets very complicated. Who becomes responsible? Who bears ultimate responsibility? I've thought about that. Say you steer one, because I've also heard you can steer it like a military drone, where someone sits as a pilot.

Ted: A pilot working with drones. I've seen it in movies, sort of like a video game, and you fly a drone, but it's a military attack.

Andrew: Say you can probably do that with a car too, remote. And the person driving this car remotely is sitting there drinking beer, drunk. It's hard to control, and how do you hold them responsible? Just that aspect raises the question of responsibility and liability. Where does it fall when there's distance between the one performing these potentially dangerous actions and the people who could be put in danger? Who bears ultimate responsibility? I think our legal system doesn't have a good handle on that.

Ted: We're probably far behind on the legal side, keeping up with all the technology.

Generations, AI, and the future of coding (01:08:14)

Ted: In our generation, I'm now 33.

Andrew: I'm probably the tail end of the same generation, or I don't know. Do you count ten years as a generation, or longer? I can't keep track myself. [laughs]

Ted: We'll have to look it up sometime when we have time. [laughs]

Andrew: Exactly. But we're fairly close, and we've been around since technology started picking up pace, so we're used to a certain speed of development. But now that AI has really arrived, we can barely imagine how much faster everything will go. We expect it to go roughly as fast as we've experienced.

Ted: I can imagine it'll just—

Andrew: Exactly. It'll go faster than we've experienced, because it's faster to bang out code than before. I'm someone who developed before AI existed, but now you've sort of gained superpowers and can produce software code much, much faster.

Ted: How is it in your industry now? You write some code. But for the pure coders, what's their future now that you can easily—

Andrew: I'd say it's definitely under threat. I think they'll still have jobs, but I also think the key is they have to embrace AI in their work. They have to develop AI-assisted to keep their professions. I find AI is very good at creating code that's good and production-standard,

that can be used in production, as long as you also keep track of what it produces. And you often have that when you're a senior developer. So AI has its place right now when it comes to code and development, but it still needs a hand and help from more senior people, because it's also very easy to spit out a hundred thousand lines of code and then have no control over what was done, because you didn't have someone senior enough, or an architect. That's the kind of role I usually step into, ensuring that this is maintainable, usable now but also in 10 or 20 years, that it'll meet the requirements. You can't know that if you don't know what the AI actually produced and can't guide it. So I think more strategic roles aren't threatened, and senior programmers aren't either, given that they decide to work AI-assisted. Because if you don't, I'd say even the senior developer might be less productive than a junior who works AI-assisted, purely on speed. Not that they have better code quality, just that it goes faster. Speed to value is something people talk about a lot in Silicon Valley and VC circles. Juniors working AI-assisted produce value faster. So simply put, you have to work AI-assisted.

Legacy systems and lifecycle management (01:12:21)

Ted: There was a bank here in Sweden, many banks have very old systems, I can't even remember what these typical systems are called, from the 80s—

Andrew: You're probably thinking of COBOL-programmed big-bank mainframe systems.

Ted: Right, where it's only the keys that work. You can't use a mouse to click around. And then this old system, the person who handled it at the bank quit, and they needed a replacement, but there was basically no one left who knew it, because everyone new wants to learn all the new stuff and doesn't want to learn a system from the 80s. They had such trouble getting someone to work on it. So when they finally found a person, they basically handed over a blank salary slip.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: It was completely empty. Write your own salary.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: That's how bad it was. And important too, all these, it must be a nightmare. I can't speak to the programming itself, but renewing this much old data, across several systems. I think one company I worked at had something like 52 systems interconnected in this old way, and it has to be renewed.

Andrew: A huge headache, I can imagine. And it's such vital data, whether it was a bank or insurance company. Critical data you can't just pause. It can also be that it's legally mandated data you need to archive, that you can't delete at all, for historical records and legal reasons. But the area you're describing, being able to move up to something new, is usually called lifecycle management. Every system has a beginning and something called end of life. And everything in that circle, everything going on around it, is part of what's called lifecycle management. If you haven't thought about it or have no good handle on it, you end up in situations like this fairly often.

Ted: For this company, someone told me that instead of dealing with it and renewing the lifecycle, they just built another system on top: we need this part now, so build another system that talks to all these, and then another, and another.

Andrew: Even more of a mess and a big problem. Eventually you have a Frankenstein monster of a system that, you don't even know. And then no one dares touch anything, because it'll break. Don't touch that line of code there, nobody knows what it does, but leave that function alone. And then you come in and have to untangle all of it and get an overview. [laughs]

Ted: I know someone who runs their own company. Two people run it, but they're not programmers themselves, they need programming, so they hired people to do it, and one programmer focuses on part of the business and programs it his own way, nothing standardized, very bespoke. And maybe doesn't do everything they want. They'd like it more standardized so they can swap people in or out. So they have a tricky problem: they feel the person isn't very efficient, but it's very hard to bring someone else in to look at it, because everyone else just says, no, we'll probably have to rebuild this, it's that bad. He built it together in some strange way, and only he knows it. So you can really box yourself into a corner if you don't know it yourself as an owner. And suddenly you're dependent on one person.

Andrew: Exactly. These are the kinds of things you might not think about. You have your company and you think, I'll hire someone who just does that and it works, so we'll leave it alone, you carry on. But then you can really box yourself into a corner. It works for getting something out quickly, but in serious projects and serious companies that's a big no, you can't take those risks. And you notice it much later, when it's already happened.

Ted: I mean, you code the same way, but there are many roads forward.

Andrew: Exactly. You need someone acting as architect over a system, with a perspective that's more than just for today. What should we code now?

Ted: Can you bring someone in, say you have a startup and don't know much about IT but know you need programmers, can you bring in someone in your role just to get a second opinion? Does that work?

Andrew: Yes, absolutely. You can have someone do a so-called architecture review, where you look at a codebase and give a recommendation on weaknesses, strengths, and what can be improved, maybe even with concrete suggestions: do this and this and it'll be better. Or you get a verdict that says you have to scrap everything, in the worst case. But you'd rather stay away from that unless you actually have to face it.

Public sector inefficiency and procurement (01:19:12)

Ted: Now I'll shift to public agencies. You've worked with several. Have you noticed it's very inefficient there versus private companies, that they don't invest as they should, take shortcuts, run crazy procurements? Have you experienced any of that?

Andrew: Yes, unfortunately, I almost said. There's a fair amount they make harder for themselves at agencies than it needs to be. And a lot of it has to do with the Public Procurement Act, LOU.

Ted: But how efficient is it? I understand the intent, it's good: companies should compete for the contract and meet certain criteria. But how often is it that most companies are up here on price, and then one company is at this much lower level, much cheaper than everyone else, and of course it wins, and then it ends up much more expensive anyway, because they won the contract and can just keep adding on. There were delays, we had to do this and that. So it doesn't feel very efficient.

Andrew: I can agree it's not always efficient. There are also certain amounts, I believe, below which you don't have to do a full procurement, I think it's called direct procurement, where you simply don't have to go through the whole process to buy in a service. So agencies do have a way to bring things in, as long as the amounts aren't too large. But it's more that I think they value the democratic aspect, that it should be fair how tax money is distributed, that no one is favored, that there's no corruption, and that everyone can participate. Especially when it's tax money that everyone contributes to, it should be fair. And I think that's what they've conceded to, saying that's more important than achieving great efficiency.

Ted: The intent is good, but as for how efficient it is, I love efficiency. It's like, if there's a coffee break at work and they've set out the butter first, then the bread, then the cheese, no, it has to be in the right order, you take the bread first. [laughs] I'll go and rearrange it because it's so inefficient. That's my whole life.

Andrew: That mindset is exactly right in an entrepreneurial context, but maybe not always in a public-sector context. I usually say the best and worst thing about a public agency, whatever it is, the Tax Agency or the police or whatever, is that if they go under, society collapses, so it's vital they don't go under. But they become very inefficient, because every time something goes wrong, if a company makes a mistake, it can go under. But here the money keeps getting shoveled in anyway, and no one really takes responsibility when something has gone wrong, and they just keep wasting tax money.

Ted: People talk about politics all the time, the right wants lower taxes, the left wants higher. But I think of it as a bucket you pour all of Sweden's tax money into, and the hole in the bottom of the bucket is enormous. So I think, tighten up that hole, everything's running out, instead of everything else. Because I think agencies are so inefficient.

Andrew: A hundred percent. There's a clip on YouTube called Slöseriombudsmannen, the Waste Ombudsman. Have you seen it?

Ted: Yes. I follow him. I think he's from Halmstad. He's great.

Andrew: It's like a documentary. I've seen it and I think it's so good.

Ted: It's so important that we have people who do exactly that. I had a previous guest on the podcast who talked partly about the New Karolinska hospital and what chaos it was. He

said one of the most modern hospitals was in Hamburg, Germany, built for two billion, and the New Karolinska here cost around 25 billion and is worse. [laughs]

Andrew: Alright.

Ted: So you think, how did this happen? It's completely insane. You can do quite a lot with 23 billion.

Andrew: That's a huge amount of money.

Ted: And in Gothenburg they're building a tunnel, Västlänken, and it's also complete chaos, money just spraying out. I can't recall the details, but I think they've gone over budget three times and it's not even halfway done. [laughs] And the time, it's chaos in the city too because they're digging everywhere, and that takes time. So something I'd like to see made more efficient is that people are held a bit accountable. With your company, if you make some bad decisions, you'll be forced to change and improve, otherwise it goes under. Here it's not like that.

Andrew: Exactly. I think it's because we have a democracy that's, I think it's called representative democracy, where we vote once every four years and then we're not involved in steering at every moment. It's only at the election, and then we let go of the grip, so to speak, and that's when the mistakes happen too. It would be different if we had a democracy that was more real-time and kept up all the time, then we'd probably be able to steer it better.

Ted: At least the biggest projects, the truly society-changing or large ones. A hospital, or a whole city being dug up, feels big enough that you could vote a bit on it.

Andrew: You could build some kind of system for that. IT-wise I think it's doable. But then it's a question of whether they want it that way.

Ted: Here we have an entrepreneur. [laughs]

Andrew: Exactly. That's how you should do it, find solutions in the problems.

Ted: A kind of budget-monitoring application, something that just tracks every move.

Andrew: Yes. [laughs]

Ted: What's his name, Jens of Sweden? Jens something. I can't remember his surname. He's a bit like a Swedish Elon Musk, I'd say, and I mean that as a compliment. He has an AI-based company that audits invoices and procurements from municipalities, regions, the state, and so on, because so much of it, and it's maybe not reviewed by everyone, and it's not easy because there's an endless amount being created. So it's an insanely large volume to go through. But with AI you can do it. And he's found an enormous amount. I think it's a bit like DOGE in the US.

Ted: Right, the thing Elon Musk was responsible for. He's been kicked out now, but that's another tangent, so continue.

Andrew: I think it's so important to have someone who really gets to the bottom of things and finds out where our tax money goes. Actually, a new agency has appeared called Utbetalningsmyndigheten, the Payments Authority, in 2024, responsible for reviewing how money is paid out in Sweden. That was last year, so hopefully they hire and work hard with AI and all of that. Investing money in that agency is so valuable, finding those pieces, because there's such waste in many places and no one is held accountable, it just continues.

IT security and single points of failure (01:29:21)

Ted: When we talk about agencies, how have you found security, IT security? Is it easy to get hacked as an agency, say Russia wants to run a campaign against us and take out BankID? What do half of Sweden's population do then? It's very hard. Now there's a bit more, what's the other one, the equivalent of BankID?

Andrew: Right.

Ted: It had a name. Isn't it called, what's it called?

Andrew: It has some name, I think. Freja.

Ted: Freja ID.

Andrew: Freja ID, right. So it's good there's another one.

Ted: But if you take out something like that, many people become very, what do we do? I'm not saying it's easy to take out, but if you do, we survive, but things get much harder.

Andrew: Single point of failure. It's something architects and figures like me have to think about. We have to think about redundancy. Beyond the security we have, we need some kind of backup so it works. And they have that. I haven't worked on BankID or anything, but often you build those things into the systems. It's very unusual not to have it, at least with agencies.

Ted: That's an advantage, that with money you don't take shortcuts because of cost, maybe.

Andrew: Exactly. We have almost no cash in our society, so we'd be helpless if there were an attack.

Ted: Right. But we trust they've thought about this.

Andrew: You've thought about this. [laughs] Have I thought about this? But I don't have much insight into that. I know how things work at agencies, because I work with agencies, and there are usually plans for redundancy and disaster measures, action plans you can put in place and carry out for different scenarios.

Ted: Are private companies as good at that, or is it more a place where they cut corners?

Andrew: I'd say it's more a place where they cut corners. And it also depends on which private company.

Ted: Of course, very generally here.

Andrew: The larger companies probably have some plans, but at the same time, you may know the statistics, at least in Sweden, and I think most countries, the US and most of Europe, most companies are classified as small businesses. They probably don't have a serious contingency plan and risk registers and risk management. They're just trying to survive the day, I almost said. [laughs]

Ted: But how hard is it to break through? Does it happen often, do you think, at its worst, with an agency?

Andrew: I think it's a mix. I think fewer such incidents happen, but not all of them are worth reporting, unless there's been a successful attack that exposed something worth reporting on.

Ted: But also, say you're a large private company with a lot of profit interests, it's not good if it's said your data was hacked or someone got in. So there's generally a cover-up too, because if you've been hacked you don't want it to get out, and you don't want your share value to drop. You say it was just a small software issue on our side.

Andrew: Exactly. But that's also part of what's tricky, it's hard to assess, because something might have happened but you don't know it was an enormous vulnerability. Because often how a hacker hacks you isn't necessarily that they found a single security hole, an attack vector they exploited to get in and then they're done. It can be a multi-step attack. In other words, something considered harmless can connect with another piece of information as part of a more coordinated attack. And then it turns out, oh, this was something we should have reported at step one instead of step ten. So it's hard to judge when something is newsworthy or worth talking about.

Ted: It feels sensitive and complex. And that's only when you start a new company like yours and have to think through all of that beforehand. But is it usually the people, the human factor, that makes it fail, through emails and clicking links, or do they go in and hack without human contact?

Andrew: A combination. They call it social engineering.

Ted: Right, I've heard of that.

Andrew: It's about exploiting the human factor, the weaknesses we humans have. We give away information we think is harmless, and then it's used in an attack. So that's part of it, the human factor. But of course technology is a big part too. And then not just technology but also routines, how information is handled between people, and within the systems, how they coordinate and interact, plays a big role. Because you might handle the data very securely in one system, but then when you move it over to another, you made a small mistake, and the whole thing, it's always the weakest link that determines the real security of a system when it comes to certain data handling. So it's complex. And the worst part is that sometimes you, as the owner of certain data, don't have full control over how the data is handled in another system you're obligated to shuffle the data to. And then they have flaws, and it turns out you end up, the data ends up, well, if we're talking about agencies it has to

stay within Sweden, but it could end up in another country with a different legal system, and then it becomes a legal problem too. There are many layers.

The Facebook account story and digital fingerprints (01:37:57)

Ted: This makes me think of a real example. My wife posted, we live in a house in Gothenburg, and we had a lot of stones. We'd picked them up, we were going to make a garden bed, and there were a lot of stones, so we thought, let's put them on Marketplace and people can just come take them. We want to get rid of them, we can't deal with them, but surely someone wants them for a wall or a border. So she took a photo and posted, come pick up free stones in various sizes. And you know, two minutes after she posted it, Facebook blocks everything, blocks her account. And it's both on Facebook and Instagram, saying, no, this is child sexual exploitation, you've violated community guidelines and such.

Andrew: She just—

Ted: She thought, I'd like an extra review of that, and pressed the button. It took half an hour or so. And then it comes back: no, we've reviewed it again and you've violated community guidelines with sexual exploitation or something. And she's like, no, I haven't really done that.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: And she writes to customer service at Facebook, which maybe isn't their strong suit, but they have a few million users. And I think they use a very advanced AI as customer service too. You couldn't tell 100 percent, but after a while you noticed this isn't quite a human responding.

Andrew: How long ago was this?

Ted: About three months ago.

Andrew: Yes, I think they definitely do. First and foremost you were talking to an AI service that handles it. I work a fair amount with Facebook myself. I think they're called Meta now. Their support, it's first and foremost AI that sort of denies some of the things we're building for Gendayo. And if we want a new review, we have to go through their customer support flows, which are awful. You go into really tedious documentation, click the right parts, choose the right category. And we usually fill in what we want, and our experience has been, no, this is wrong, you have to choose here and here. So they have this kind of funneling. I don't know why big corporations do that, but it bothers me so much. But it's definitely an AI as the first line of support.

Ted: Right. Then it can be escalated and humans come in.

Andrew: I understand they have it when they have so many. I don't even know how many use Facebook, it must be a billion or more.

Ted: Absolutely.

Andrew: So I get that it can't be like an ordinary company, a little Swedish company with a few people sitting there. But the thing is, we really couldn't get any further, because it was obvious the AI had read this image and thought it was about child sexual exploitation when it was a photo of stones. And you think, this has to be fixable.

Ted: But it says a lot about how we can't let AI control everything in the world.

Andrew: Exactly. And there has to be someone you can take it to so it moves forward.

Ted: So what we've concluded is that you have to go to court to get it opened up.

Andrew: Okay.

Ted: And the interesting thing is she really felt torn. One side of her felt, I can't be this dependent on a Facebook app. But another side, I have so many contacts there, from when I studied, old friends, people from studying in the US, I won't find them all again, all the groups and so on. So she went back and forth between two emotional states, how do I do this, so irritating, you feel powerless. And Facebook doesn't care. They're so big they don't need good customer service. They won't go under. Too big to fail, at least there.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: So it becomes a vicious spiral. And then after a few months I thought, fine, I'll make a new email account, Hotmail or Gmail, and start it up again. She did it from home, so she has the same IP address. I don't know if it went on the IP address or on her photo, she had to film herself to show she's human. And then it came up, no, you're banned too. So she had it on Gmail, I don't know if it was facial recognition or IP address or phone, what do you think it could be detecting?

Andrew: When it comes to, sorry, describe the scenario again.

Ted: She creates a brand new Gmail with no connections. And then uses the same phone, same internet, and of course looks the same.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: So something recognized that this was the same person, and she was going to start a new account. And this wasn't with Meta, it was with Google.

Andrew: With Google it went fine. Email worked fine.

Ted: But it was Meta, Facebook, where she was going to create a new account. That's where it didn't work.

Andrew: You have digital fingerprints that reveal who you are, beyond accounts and email. So absolutely, they look at these digital fingerprints, like the browser, which has certain unique markers.

Ted: What I'm asking is, how does she create a new account? [laughs] What do you think they're reading?

Andrew: It could be the browser. It's hard to know, because that's very internal, how they identify users. But absolutely, it could be the browser, but also the IP address. I don't have a good answer, it's very internal how they identify.

Ted: Does using a VPN help, or is it the photo of her that's the problem, that they recognize it?

Andrew: I think it could be the browser. It's hard to know because it's very internal how they identify users. It could be the browser, but also the IP address. I don't have a good answer.

Online tracking and data (01:44:51)

Ted: What does your internet use look like? Do you use VPN and different browsers?

Andrew: I can't reveal that. [laughs] It depends, is what I can say.

Ted: Typical consultant answer. [laughs] Should one use it or not? Maybe depends on what you do.

Andrew: Depending on what you're doing, you should use it in different ways. I work and move in circles where you deal with various sensitive systems, and I follow the IT policy that applies to the organization I'm contracted to. Different organizations have different strictness in their policies.

Ted: It's also interesting, as a private individual you don't think about, when all this internet came, how much data you share without even thinking it could become valuable to someone else, that you have this interest, you search for this in your browser and it comes up.

Andrew: Right.

Ted: My wife noticed it, since we're on the same internet. She thought I was, I talked about, I think it was something about cars, I typed it on my phone, something about car safety, and we talked about it, and she said, now I'm getting ads about car safety. It must be eavesdropping. But I think it was that we're on the same internet.

Andrew: Absolutely. But you don't think about that at first.

Ted: And how much information just gets shared with them so they can sell ads.

Andrew: Absolutely. It doesn't even have to be you doing something. It's enough that someone in your circle of friends is interested in something. That's enough of a chance, enough value, for a marketer to try to nudge you. So it doesn't have to be a direct match, that you saw this and therefore the correlation is you should see this. It can be an indirect correlation that gets you targeted.

Ted: It's very advanced. I get that they analyze all the data, and it's incredibly smart. You make good money on it.

Andrew: Absolutely.

Ted: Do you think it'll ever shift to, we own our own data and get paid to share it, or are we too far gone for that?

Andrew: I've at least done this: when I search for things, say I'm going to buy a present, I search on a browser where I get tracked, because I want ads about it and some tips. Otherwise I usually don't, precisely to avoid being tracked and getting a lot of ads. So I've chosen to do it that way, but I think very few people think or act like that.

Andrew: That's right, very few think about it. I've actually gotten some insight into this because I've worked with tracking too, and I've seen, when I've built various solutions and sites, there's something called ad blockers, and not many people use solutions like that. I haven't looked at it very closely, but my impression is that not many do, that many just sell their data freely, with the attitude that they'll find out everything anyway, so just give them what they want. And no one can be bothered to read all these long disclaimers, which are written that way on purpose, because they know no one will bother if they're huge and endless. So I think we need help from higher powers, I almost said. [laughs] Some legal intervention is needed for anything radical to happen here, because there are too many economic interests in keeping it this way, where the data is more or less free to exploit.

Ted: When GDPR and cookies came, on every website you have to accept or decline. Most people just press accept. There was a time I went in and checked, and they'd actually listed who would track you if you accepted. There were like 30 large research companies that would track more or less everything. And you think, all this when I just press accept so easily. It's a bit scary.

Andrew: Absolutely, it is. It's a cascade: I've also given consent to this one, since I just approve this, and it just rolls on.

Closing: what Gendayo needs now (01:50:58)

Ted: What are the biggest things you need and have in the pipeline for the company right now, getting started? Summarize it.

Andrew: I'd almost say what I need right now is, financing is high up. We're still at the starting blocks. It's fairly bootstrapped from revenue we get from tDigital, my other leg, our consultancy. And we have some investment from Antler. But we need more than what we've gotten in support so far to take it to the levels we're aiming for. If we're going to compete with big Silicon Valley players with thousands of employees and billions in revenue, more is needed, especially since we're not just trying to succeed in one country in Africa. On the contrary, we want to take on several countries. So that requires a lot more collaboration. If you're going to do big things, you can't do them alone.

Ted: Exactly. If you want to go fast you go alone, but if you want to go far you go together, or something like that.

Andrew: Exactly.

Ted: So if there's a Swedish angel investor here, are you interested in someone?

Andrew: Yes, we're super interested. A collaboration that's advantageous for all of us. We're highly interested.

Ted: We hope an angel investor who's interested is listening and watching. You never know.

Andrew: Exactly. That's the great thing, getting your ideas out there too.

Ted: I think this has been a really pleasant and interesting conversation, and we've learned a lot more about IT and what you're doing in Africa. And the company name, you can say it clearly here so we can—

Andrew: Absolutely. The company is called Gendayo, a mobility solution like Uber, and it's AI-native, and we operate in the African market as a continent. The plan is to launch it successfully across all of Africa.

Ted: It'll be interesting to follow this, and I want to be a customer next time I go to Africa.

Andrew: Exactly. Ted, try Gendayo. We'll make sure you get a super discount, since you've also given us a chance to be on your platform and talk a bit about what we do.

Ted: I'll let you know next time I head to Africa. Thank you so much for your time, very interesting. Take care, everyone listening and watching.

Conversation recorded for Teds Show. Gendayo is an AI-native mobility platform being built for African cities. Learn more at gendayo.com.