



ASPIRATION EXCEEDED MEET CHAD HURLEY, FOUNDER AND CEO OF INTERNET GIANT YOUTUBE

By Lulu Berton

His appearance is casual — jeans, a sweatshirt and trainers — but Chad Hurley has the attitude of someone who knows exactly what he wants, besides having already reached one of the greatest career goals that anyone could ever imagine. “Let’s get down to brass tacks” isn’t the motto of anyone who messes around, as Hurley, an overachiever from the beginning, exemplifies. After graduating in computer science and Web design at the University of Pennsylvania, he nailed his first major job at PayPal, designing the company’s logo (which remains the same one to this day). Soon after, around early 2005, in a tiny garage in Menlo Park Calif., Chad Hurley invented what became the largest user-generated video platform in the world. At 32 years old, he is now the CEO of YouTube. He seldom engages with the press, but he made an exception for Malibu Magazine.

At 29, you invented YouTube. Now, at 32, you are the CEO of the fastest-growing Web site in the world. Any ambitions for when you hit 40?
I always think about tomorrow, but not that far! I don’t see myself slowing down, hanging around at the beach, although it’s tempting. I’ll definitely be here at YouTube for quite some time, and I have multiple ideas I’d like to work on.

What’s the secret of your success?

We were at the right place at the right time, able to simplify what were our own problems with online videos and turning them into opportunities. We developed this at a time when people had the devices to take videos themselves, had digital cameras, cell phones and also had the connections to upload these videos and view them pretty seamlessly.

You also created a visual stage on which everyone could participate.

Yes. We asked the community what entertained them rather than programming and deciding what was entertaining for the community. It’s really our users; they are the ones who made this platform their own and the ones who truly make YouTube valuable. Beyond the videos that are

viewed — 1 billion a day — we receive close to 24 hours of content being uploaded to the site.

How is YouTube making money? Are you covering the costs?

It’s always frustrating. I think people have lost sight when they talk about Youtube, saying we are not moving aggressively enough to justify the acquisition that Google made. First and foremost, you need to have a large audience to have a successful business. Second of all, you need to build businesses for the future; you’re not purchasing something and justifying it the next year. Where is YouTube going to be within five to 10 years? That’s why Google made this acquisition.

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In a bad economy, you also created new employment.

Monetization was introduced a few years ago, and it has had a very positive effect. We thought maybe introducing the monetary reward would distort what YouTube was all about (voicing your opinions and sharing your experience). In essence, what we sought to do is just improve the quality of the content. Beyond just building an audience, and benefiting from views, our users can also benefit by us sending them a check, which would allow them to own their skills and concentrate to create better content for the site.

What do you envision is the future of TV? Will TV and the Internet coexist or will one kill the other?

It depends on how you define television. I think the living-room experience, more suited for a longer duration, won’t disappear, as people enjoy sitting down and relaxing. What will disappear is the concept of linear broadcasting, so there won’t be a channel that you tune to and just sit and wait for them to deliver you video information. The computer screen is more suitable for shorter bursts of video content, and people are starting to hook their laptops to the TV to experience this full-length programming. Eventually that’s where the entire industry will go.

You’re also developing a browser to link the laptop to the TV. Is that correct?

Oh, yes. We have multiple projects going on. I’m

really bullish on the connection to the TV. If we really want to be a true video platform, we need to serve all experiences. We don’t necessarily need to confine ourselves. People who are used to a linear broadcast will want a linear transition to the Web- or Internet-based video. They don’t want to change inputs; they don’t want to pick up a different remote. There needs to be a pretty seamless transition.

Touching on advertising, will the traditional form also disappear?

What Google is all about is building advertising tools that are first scaleable, giving the ability to everyone to participate, that are market driven, option based, and you’re truly paying what the market is demanding. What we are seeing right now are a lot of advertising solutions that don’t have that going for them. A lot of ratings on TV are based on a fuzzy kind of math: There are only a few hundred boxes within a certain region that represent the entire country, which doesn’t really make any sense. In contrast, with digital delivery of every video, you can truly measure much more closely the response to any given campaign. That’s where the rest of the industry is going to move. I think that every smart company, especially in this economy, is going to want to spend their money in smart places where it can be measured.

And so you developed a tool called Insight.

It’s pretty unique. You get a sense of how your audience is truly engaging and consuming your content. We break it down by age, gender and also give you graphs of how people have viewed that specific piece of content, like hot spots (interesting pieces of the video). Our viewers and partners can start looking at this data to improve their storytelling and the audience.

Your kids are 6 and 4. Do they watch Youtube?

Of course. They love all the animal videos. It’s a fantastic educational platform.

You must be very busy. How do you find time for family?

I have a good work balance. Especially here in Silicon Valley, it’s not about putting time in the office; it’s about being connected. I always have my phone connected and my laptop at my side.

You look so calm and focused. Do you meditate?

No. I just try to keep things low-key and take things one day at the time

How do you keep mentally and physically balanced?

Last year, I decided to work out more, as many years sitting behind the computer started catching up with me. It feels good to work out and stay healthy, because I think that at the end of the day, if you don’t have your health, you don’t really have anything. ■