Noa Eshed 00:25
We're here with Yam Regev, co founder and CEO at Zest. Yam what's up? How are you?

Yam Regev 00:30
 Oh, great. Thanks for having me.

Noa Eshed 00:31
Great. What are you up to these days?

Yam Regev 00:34
Trying to grow Zest, trying to have more sleeping hours. And to be more with my three daughters.

Ronen 00:41
Zest and rest.

Yam Regev 00:41
 Zest and rest? Wow, that's good. It is a new slogan. Yeah, alright, very good.

Noa Eshed 00:45
Do you want to maybe tell us what Zest is?

Yam Regev 00:47
Right? Yeah, definitely. So Zest is a user fueled learning platform for professionals. And actually what we did, we built some sort of an engine that know how to distill content from the web. And we'll speak about the whole process, probably later on. And with the distilled content, what the engine knows to do is actually to match the content for each end user and build for him a learning path that will improve his professional talent eventually. So that's what Zest does.

Noa Eshed 01:10
How do you end up building something like that?

Yam Regev 01:15
I believe that I'm one of those University dropoffs, dropouts you say? Right. So I wasn't

Noa Eshed 01:25
You're in a good crowd. Many others were also.

Yam Regev 01:28
So that's good. So yeah, I was a weak student in high school, I was even weaker in a you know, when I tried to study in the university, and then what I started to do is when I co founded my first web marketing agency, and I didn't know anything about web marketing, so I just consumed a lot of content through the web. And the web is, you know, it was full of great content over there.

Noa Eshed 01:34

You dropped out of university, what did you go to study?

Yam Regev 01:51
I study the Chinese studies or East Asian studies, and I tried to study economics, but it was a huge failure over there. So I just stopped, probably it was in the middle of the, and just, cofounded.

Noa Eshed 02:08
Was it a difficult decision to stop?

Yam Regev 02:10
No, one of the easiest, it just wasn't for me. I am not built for studying.

Ronen 02:15
Why? I'm always interested about this, because there's a lot of talks today, which I totally agree with, that education is stupid, in correlation to how people learn today in Google and information, and it's just not, you know, not there. So like, I'm interested, why were you not good at school? Because you probably, you're already you're good entrepreneurs, right? Why school?

Yam Regev 02:37
Right? It's a great question. I'm not sure what is the right answer, probably more, more professional people than me can testify. But I think that it's very methodological kind of thing over there. And the specific methodology is not good for everybody. And for you know, if I if I'm a little bit dyslexic as far as it relates to my, the way that I'm handwriting or the way the I'm consuming content, or educative content, so, I just cannot do that. In that way.

Ronen 03:07
Are you? Are you dyslexic?

Yam Regev 03:08
Yeah, I am.

Ronen 03:10
 So, but I'm thinking like dyslexic is one reason but like, can you think of why other reasons?

Yam Regev 03:17
I believe it, um, you know, and maybe I'll start to, I'll answer this one from the end, when, um, eventually I hired a few hundreds of people, you know, throughout the last decade or so, and interviewed probably 1000s of potential candidates. At any given stage, I wasn't, it wasn't that important for me what they studied, in school or in the university doesn't even it doesn't even was a small parameter in my decision making process. And as far as actually, as I realized is, it's all about what you actually did. You know, as a professional, what type of human being are you? Yeah, your achivements as far as you relate, what what you actually did? Not more than that. So I'm not sure, I think what you, we study what we studied at the universities and schools, it's so theoretical, which is almost I consider it it's a little bit fluff, you can say. You cannot do anything with that, after you finish your degree.

Ronen 03:42

I wanna stick with that. You said two things that are like amazing, in my opinion. So the two reasons that you hire people is who they are and what they did. Okay, but what they did, like, how did they do that if they don't have education? Okay, so I'll give you one theory. One theory is there's a lot of startups today, a lot of young people going into business and even if they fail, they can get a job. So like that's the new academic. Like worst case scenario they build something a website or whatever, they go ask for a job. They say, what do you do? I built a website didn't go well, but I'm a great human being. So like...

Yam Regev 04:12

Not only that. If you already built something you already learned, much more than probably a student will learn, you know, in the first year of whatever that you will learn over there. So you already have something.

Ronen 05:00

So I would ask you this, if it costs $100,000 to study, okay, in a great school, or $100,000, to do a startup that even fails, what would you advise someone to do?

Yam Regev 05:10

Go find a startup. That's it. Just go ahead and fail.

Ronen 05:15

And that is the best on your CV...

Yam Regev 05:17

Definitely. I preferred to have someone of course, like, of course, prefer to have someone with a failing experience, than to have someone with a successful and let's say high result in whatever he studied. So give me those people with the experience with the with the, you know dirt under their fingernails. I love these.

Noa Eshed 05:39

I think about 15 years ago, college was some sort of guarantee for career. And today's reality is just that there's no real constant, everything is changing. So if a person has a degree, even if they find that first job, it doesn't guarantee that they're going to stick there for life. In general, people aren't staying in jobs for very long. So what you have to offer is basically you and your set of skills. And if people think that they can go to college and just gain their skills, and go with that for life, that's just doesn't correlate with reality.

Yam Regev 06:07

True.

Ronen 06:08

What do you think about this theory? People who finish college. Again, you know, not all people, but people finish college, may be more confused than people who are just trying to do stuff.

Yam Regev 06:20
I think it's, it's true in some extent, because eventually, and same with all of us are self learners, and all of us as professionals, we're all the time improving our talent, right? So probably most of us professional studied, at the universities in schools. And then when we started our own professional life, whether we will freelancers or we're working in some given company, we then taking some workshops, trainings, courses, and stuff like that. What I'm what I'm suggesting to professionals, let's say, is that you should know what you want to do before you're taking any kind of course. Right? And that's like the second step of you have been more professional with what you do. I wish that we could have a taking the same decision before we are studying because you just said - know what you want to be good at. Like, what is your exact profession? Like if I, if I went ahead, and I go, and I studied East Asia studies. it's, I cannot do anything with that. Unless I would be super hyper focused with what I want to do is that eventually what I didn't know it before I started the studies over there.

Noa Eshed 07:24
Steve Jobs would say that you would connect the dots in retrospect. That he studied and learned about funds, and he learned all these different things. And by the way, I think he was also a dropout, right?

Ronen 07:32
He was.

Noa Eshed 07:33
But he did take academic courses. And he did say that every course and everything that he learned, ended up serving him.

Ronen 07:40
He wouldn't guess that, that fun session would actually make Apple. So when he took it, he couldn't see that pathway. But in retrospect, or hindsight, he would connect the dots and say, that's part of that story. And it's something about being in motion. But like, what you're seeing is really hard, because, how can I know what I want to do, before I have any experience or learning anything.

Yam Regev 07:58
I think none of us know probably, but you should have something and then everything that you will learn in whatever the courses or whatever the degree is, we come in a different kind of perspective. So you will be able to, to be much more laser focused. And then you can take those theoretical tools that you learned and, and absorb and actually execute them on what you aim to do. Whether it's going to be again a failure, or not just be much more focused and know, you know, if you can match your head, what you want to do after, after the degree itself.

Noa Eshed 08:36

What was your plan when you entered college? I mean, you took Chinese and Eastern Studies, which is not very conventional, and not practical, but you also merged it with economics. Which I'm assuming is the practical aspect. So what was the plan, then?

Yam Regev 08:50
At first probably moving to the to Eastern Asia, whether it will be China or something else in the neighborhood over there and probably start to do something with that. But again, when I'm thinking about it right now, when you guys, you know, asking me about it, it still sound too broad and zoomed out. And I think it was a very bad decision, business decision, if you may, to take back then to think that they can do something with it without any pre planning or better pre planning the whole, the whole process.

Ronen 09:19
But then again, if you pre plan plan that you may not have had at Zest.

Yam Regev 09:23
Might be, yeah.

Ronen 09:24
You know what I mean? Like, maybe there's nothing like, there's no right and wrong and on that...

Yam Regev 09:29
Probably through all about. It's like more like a biology rather than mathematics. Right. So that's probably the thing. For me specifically, it wasn't the right route. And I found myself improving my talent, just by consuming professional content on the web, as far as it relate to marketing is I'm a marketing professional. So it's all about the content over there on the web and the way that I find it, consume it and then implement it.

Ronen 09:52
What was the thing that hooked you on marketing? Like what what was that?

Yam Regev 09:55
To think of a, or the potential or the option to deliver a cohesive message with in your targeted audience, from the very top of funnel, kind of place, till the bottom, and I see marketing is something that really wraps up all the all the company, it's not just creating a noise, you know, up the funnel and get more traction in. But it's actually to know, the psychological aspect of your targeted audience or users. And then to hook them with the right messages throughout the journey and, and funnel. And then you need to tweak the message a little bit. But again, it needs to be a cohesive message yet, so I really like it. And we like the psychological aspects of the marketing.

Ronen 10:40
And when did you know that this is this, if that's what you want to do?

Yam Regev 10:44

So when I co founded my first web marketing agency.

Noa Eshed 10:49
When you dropped out of college?

Yam Regev 10:50
Yep, it was, like 11 years ago, something like that. So back then what we did is that it was all about local SEO, which was quite fresh at this time. So we know how to create a Google Maps listings and how to have more exposure to them, Yahoo local and stuff like that. No one did it before, especially not in Israel, because I think a Google Maps came to Israel just a few years ago and back then. So it was all about activity in the States and Canada. And I think that after a few weeks, we started to have a lot of phone calls, and leads coming in from those listings that we created on Google Maps and Yahoo local, and a few weeks after, there were like dozens of phone calls and leads that came in global owned businesses in states, in states of Canada. And then when I understood that, we can actually do something, it's you're making something, whether it's Blackhat or not, we can discuss it probably in a second. But by doing something quite simple, but smart, you'll be able to create the whole reality for your business, and then to grow your business. And eventually, the company that I founded, grew to be almost 40 people, a big and a huge, a high amount of revenues. And I CEO, the company for four and a half years. It was a true fun, you know, it was really great experience.

Noa Eshed 12:05
And how did you decide to even go and start doing SEO?

Yam Regev 12:09
I think it's not really SEO, right? It's like local SEO. So it's all about playing with listings and Google and Google Maps, it was the lowest hanging fruit that we saw...

Noa Eshed 12:17
How did you identify that?

Yam Regev 12:18
When I started doing marketing, I didn't have an email, I'm originally a farm boy from the north part of Israel. I didn't have even email.

Noa Eshed 12:25
What year was this?

Yam Regev 12:26
It was 2005. Okay, something like that. So I still manage the family farm in all that, and then we moved to Tel Aviv. And then I started a marketing agency, when we search for with my co founders have a lot of, still have a lot of businesses in the States and Canada. So when we looked for local results over there, whether it was in San Francisco, or in Canada, in Toronto, and places like that. So we saw that the search engine result pages are contracts from three different sections, you have the paid, right, the PPC, then you have local pack over there with maps and pinpoints and all that. And then you have the

organic results. Now organic results, it was all about SEO. So we knew what it takes to control or to dominate the first search engine result pages. But we saw that no one is playing in the local SEO field.

Noa Eshed 12:26
What do you mean, we knew how to dominate the local results? I mean, you were studying something completely different. How did you have that confidence? How did you know?

Yam Regev 13:16
We did, we did know, let's say that we knew what are the basics of SEO. Because I read about it, and I consumed right...

Noa Eshed 13:30
Pretty random. How do you evolve from just studying economics and Chinese to thinking I can be a marketer and set up an agency?

Yam Regev 13:39
Just going through the when the students had the biggest channel probably will be Google. Back then and we didn't have a lot of budgets to do you know PPC and the...

Ronen 13:47
How did you get the first client?

Yam Regev 13:48
How did we get the first client? Those businesses already operated over the, but they umm, all their marketing mix were offline. So they did really yellow pages but you know, the hardcopy, you know, pages and stickers and...

Ronen 14:01
You did affiliations for them.

Yam Regev 14:03
It's not really like that because those my co founder had those businesses for you know, a few years before that before I joined, but then they said that they want to move back to Israel and to move all the offline activity to be online. And that was a really strategical KPI, you know, to try and do that in the span of two years. We managed to do that to smother all the, all the traditional marketing and to switch it or to transform it to be more digital based.

Noa Eshed 14:22
How did you meet them?

Yam Regev 14:22
I know it from the, from the school and from the fellow kibbutz members so I knew them from back then.

Noa Eshed 14:36

So you're basically understood pretty much what their business was at that time.

Yam Regev 14:41
Yeah.

Noa Eshed 14:41
And you identified an opportunity to take that online locally.

Yam Regev 14:44
Right. So what one of them already have this marketing game, orientation we can say, and he suggested we try a few things, we just need to learn and to improve, see how it goes. And we tried a few things and when the phone started to ring so we understood we are onto something. And back then it was, we understood we can gamify or manipulate Google Maps results quite good. So we did it. It was like a gray hat kind of technique, not really black hat. But a few years after, maybe two years after the folks at Google, they understood that something is wrong, because the impact was so big of what we did.

Noa Eshed 15:06
It wasn't natural

Yam Regev 15:17
So I started to be deep fault for Google.

Noa Eshed 15:19
What do you mean?

Yam Regev 15:23
Like I told them how you can manipulate the Google Maps results in order to gain first positions

Ronen 15:29
To ruin it for everybody else?

Yam Regev 15:30
And then once you did that, then were you still able to use that?

Yam Regev 15:30
Yeah, exactly. And because they understood that it's, it can be widespread, and it can really ruin in the product. So I started to give, give in a lot of information and details how you can, how one can do it. Now I'm not a mathematician, I'm not good in formulas and stuff like that. So I just understood how things are working. And yeah, and try to, you know, manage a few things together, and it worked. So we really manage to manipulate, you know, the whole Google Maps pack cover the results page, and then they, they reach out to me, and then you know, I think that for one year, I just discovered for them all the all the gray hat techniques.

Yam Regev 15:46
In some cases, they, how do you call it the pool, the baby was the water. Right? So in some cases, we got heat. But in most cases, it was good, because other competitors were clean, got cleaned out, right. So it was good for us. And those people that I was in contact with today, they're like SVPs in Google, so connect, you know, anyway, anyway, connection, it's good. But that was back, back then.

Ronen 16:35
And what happened with that company at the end?

Yam Regev 16:36
Still working, operating from Binyamina. And it's a beautiful company, and they have a lot of employees, and they made a lot of fun. You know, it's a great company, I again, I see oh, the company for four and a half years. Then I started to do consultation for big brands. And then I joined where Webydo. Some maybe, one of you know Webydo, it's like Wix for b2b. So at Webydo we fundraised almost $80 million over there, the company grew to be quite, quite big, and I left to a Webydo two years ago, something like that. At Webydo I met my Zest co founder. He is my co founder and CTO at Zest, so we just started of Zest, and eventually I found myself...

Noa Eshed 17:17
But you are describing a situation where you were part of a very successful ventures, and something made you leave at least twice. What was that, like an urge to do something bigger?

Yam Regev 17:28
I think that I the first time that I left the company that I co founded, the web marketing agency, I just felt the time hitting some sort of a glass ceiling over there and it's time to move forward to move on, although the company is great and I, love I love my co founders still this day, you know, we're partying together, we have a lot of common things that we do together. So it just was an internal fire that was inside me that I felt I really need to.

Noa Eshed 17:51
Were they disappointed?

Yam Regev 17:52
I think that they maybe yes and no, eventually, because it's easy to say that oh, it was perfectly right. Because eventually, so it's good that this guy left now everything is even better than when I was the manager over there. But that's because they are so, they are like survivors, you know, and they're really, really thankful people over there. So they managed to I believe, you know, do big and great things with or without me. But I think it was good for everybody, eventually. Now again, it's didn't finish bad or something like that. It was all good with good karma. And stuff like that. With Webydo it was a little bit different. I was in Webydo, I think for four years.

Noa Eshed 18:32
Were you a co founder there?

Yam Regev 18:33
No, no, I just joined as a CMO, the company was already funded. The team was I think, nine people something like that. We already had a daughter company with Google Ireland, which is still operates, 'till today. And I was there for almost four years, and I really managed to help the company grow. So it was one of the best things that I ever did is that maybe some of my skill set demands to be also an agency kind of marketer or based marketer, not supported based marketer. And I believe those are two different kinds of animals eventually, and I'm so happy that I was fortunate enough to have the taste both of these worlds. So I think that that was a real privilege.

Yam Regev 19:12
And you guys founded a daughter company together with Google Ireland, Were you part of that?

Yam Regev 19:17
It was a little bit before I joined, I joined the in, in the company, as I said, still operates today and I think that that's part of the highlights of what we did at Webydo beside of, you know, other kinds of things. But that was one of the best things that we did in the beginning.

Noa Eshed 19:32
And then you met your co founder at Zest there?

Yam Regev 19:35
it was a few years after. So he came as a advisor away like a software architect to advise our CTO. And I met Idan, he is my co founder over there, and we started the yellow, and love fell from there.

Noa Eshed 19:49
And so how did that go? Did you guys just leave that company?

Yam Regev 19:53
Webydo still operates and I left Webydo two years ago. Idan he's a, he wasn't a freelance, but he had his own agency or ITN Development Agency. And Zest started to gain a lot of traction, so we understood we need to go all in.

Noa Eshed 20:07
So you started Zest while you're still there.

Yam Regev 20:09
Yeah, we started with Zest, I made sure that it's all good. Like, you know, we signed the right documents with Webydo to make sure that we are, it's completely different kind of effort. And we kicked off while we talked at Webydo.

Noa Eshed 20:21
And was this risk mitigation to start doing it, while still being at Webydo?

Yam Regev 20:24

I am really grateful for Webydo to give me the option to kick off my own venture over there.

Ronen 20:31
They're not a part of it at all?

Yam Regev 20:32
Not at all. And it was so important to sign off the right documents when we just started. Even if we said it well, okay, we don't even know will it be a successful venture or not. But it's so important to do these kinds of things in the beginning.

Noa Eshed 20:46
Did somebody warn you to do that?

Yam Regev 20:48
No, I saw that it will just, it'll make sense. Because, you know, Zest is like, back then it was only the new tab extension. So it was on my browser over there. And then you know, working from the companies from Webydo's computers over there, right. And then it was good to make sure that just to divide those efforts. And I think it was good from both, a couple of angles, because it was good legal wise, of course. But it was good also to set the tone and to line expectation with other chiefs who is my coworkers over there. And bosses, of course, and the board of directors. And also, it was a good thing to do back then.

Noa Eshed 21:22
So you met Idan and through that you both sort of brainstormed and felt like there was stuff that you can do together and that evolved into Zest?

Yam Regev 21:29
Yeah, we understood, we both had the same thing. We both suck at studying, we don't probably do good at it. And we're not doing a good job over there.

Noa Eshed 21:38
I beg to differ. I think studying is very is a very broad term, you're clearly very much a self learner,

Yam Regev 21:45
Right? So we see also ourselves as trying to lead the self learners kind of a movement, we'll speak about Zest movement and everything probably later on. But yeah, we are self learners. And we understood that everyone are self learners, and we understood that everyone is consuming those kinds of...

Noa Eshed 22:00
Do you really believe that everyone is a self learner?

Yam Regev 22:02
I've never seen this. No, it's probably a spectrum of self learning. So I think that everyone almost around us, the more professional you are, the more self learner you are. And we can see that at Zest

for instance. Most of our weekly active users are the senior marketers, most of them are like heads of departments, or VP, CMOs, co founder, CEOs with marketing background and all that, like 56% of the weekly active users all quite senior. Probably the more senior you are, the more self learner you are, the more you appreciate solution that cuts through the noise for you. So I believe that, again, maybe at the beginning, you're not a self learner, but in time you get the right tool in understanding some sort of understanding that you should,

Noa Eshed 22:42
Maybe becoming a self learner is something that sometimes people sort of don't evolve into. Because society doesn't always push you towards that, you know, you go to school, and you're not very much encouraged to be self taught.

Yam Regev 22:52
 That's right.

Noa Eshed 22:53
So maybe these days, not many people, or at least not everyone realizes that

Ronen 23:00
I think it changed already.

Noa Eshed 23:01
It's changing for sure.

Ronen 23:01
Nah, I think it changed already.

Noa Eshed 23:02
You think most people teach themselves stuff?

Ronen 23:04
Today, like, you can see that by the amount of jobs that are people are bouncing about. Google and everybody that's doing amazing startups that you guys are, just doing great job of making it more efficient. If you think about it in regular spec today, what is easier to study? Okay, is it easier to study a seven minute video, or going to a class for three hours, like it's becoming more efficient, like everything should be.

Noa Eshed 23:30
I cannot agree more, but, we all get CVs right on a regular basis. Think about the CVs that you get. How many of those people that you don't really see that added value of surf learning? Which is something that you can easily spot.

Ronen 23:34
Because you can't see it...

Noa Eshed 23:40
I think you can. I think if you see the extracurricular in that person holistically, you see what they do, which is what Yam is also talking about. Doing people who initiate stuff, versus the person who just went to school, then went to college, and is now looking for you to spoon feed them.

Ronen 24:04
I'm with Yam here in the beginning of the conversation. Because if in the CV is written down you studied in INSEAD, okay, or MIT. Or if it's written down on something that I'm doing right now, like a parallel startup or company. I'm taking the parallel startup company any day of the week, even though he's amazing. So, that's...

Noa Eshed 24:25
I advocate for that.

Ronen 24:26
But that is self learning.

Noa Eshed 24:27
That's not my point. Okay. I agree a 100%. I think and I'm pro self learning, I can say about myself that I am. But I do think that not all people, still realize how much power they hold, and how much they can learn because I think all knowledge is out there. And using tools like Zest that Yam is leading they can actually gain everything that they need. You don't need some sort of organization to help you get the skills that you want to acquire if you understand that you want to take what's some path or other, you can learn how to get there yourself. And I think it's a very important message for people, because I think a lot of people want that structure. And they should ask themselves why they need it.

Ronen 25:12
You know, what's really funny about, about thinking about Zest? Is you're actually making user journey for a user journey. Like, it's like teaching marketeers how to get to the client by showing them how to be the client. Because you're, you're studying that person and making them a funnel. So he gets the best out of that product. So...

Yam Regev 25:12
That's true.

Yam Regev 25:33
You know eventually, all of us as we as we said, before are self learners, probably, we can, we can argue about how much self learners we aren't at the end. But we all consume this kind, or that kind of content, eventually, in a bite size kind of portion. So I'm anyway going to read probably two articles today, for instance, and listen to two podcasts a week and you know, watch probably videos and not talking about courses, as you said, right, taking a course right now, 16 hours of, you know, whether it will be training or video based kind, of course, or whatever it is. That's, I call it today, macro learning, right? The course today of 16 hours in Lynda, Udemy, Udacity and all that. You need to make enough

time in your schedule. for that. That's my macro call learning today. I don't think that macro learning, it's just universities and colleges. I think that today, the macro learning spectrum, it's been opened right, a little bit and been zoomed in because macro learning are those kinds of courses that will interfere with your schedule, and Zest tries to fit into the macro learning kind of experience that anyway, you're going to consume an article today. So let's make sure that this article is good and fit for your career paths and your job title at this very moment. And it's not something that you should have consumed few weeks ago, or that you need to consume two months ago, no one is telling you today, what you need to consume, you're just lost in a sea of content, which you assume should be good for you to read this, this article.

Noa Eshed 27:00
So how do you solve that?

Yam Regev 27:01
So the way that the Zest engine works, is that it's based on cognitive computing and network effects. Now let's start to pull in a lot of buzzwords the discussion. Right, so that's the time to do that. But anyway, it's really, this is what we discovered that, if I appreciate, you know, as a marketing professional, and you know me, you know, we discussed a few times, probably, and we met today, today. And I can tell you, you know what, I love podcasts, and I love marketing, you know, you know me? Would you mind to show me a link of a piece piece of content, whatever the format will be, once a week? If you think that's relevant for me, would you mind showing me a link? Once you would show me the link, I'll probably stop doing what I do and I consume your knowledge. By the way, it's not longer information. It's knowledge because you digested it for me, and you know recommended it for me, or that I will save it for later. And I probably most chances that I will read it, you know, or I will listen to it. Be it in the way at work, or the toilets or whatever to consume this kind of knowledge. It's not just something that I discovered, while I scrolled through the feed of Facebook

Noa Eshed 28:07
You has some sort of quality stamp now

Yam Regev 28:09
And appreciation. The level of appreciation of our bond of our relationship, probably have a lot of impact on the way that I will consume this knowledge and how it will impact me. And then probably what will happen is that I will, that's what's actually happening for most of us, we are gathering the group of people that we quite appreciate, professionally speaking, probably personally speaking, as well. Once they're sharing with us, once they share with us something, that relate to our profession, will probably consume this knowledge. So we have a high level of appreciation. That's exactly what Zest does, but in a huge scale. So we understate. It's really like Spotify kind of algorithms. So you have those weekly lists and recommendations and Spotify understand, you know, it's matching a playlist that we do and then you take one song from this one from this character and putting in your way in playlist and then it understand how you consume it. We're doing the same for professional content, exactly the same. So we understand the appreciation and bonds and how close you are professionally speaking and profile speaking or persona speaking to some others who suggest content in Zest and maybe curate content in Zest, you know that you can save articles and all that. Then we are starting to build

your own micro learning path. And you can decide how many articles you can you want to consume each day, week, and so on and so forth. You don't need to go to for the Google to search and to be flooded with links or manipulated kinds of content over the you know, with SEO, don't need to go to Facebook to discover things that the algorithms think that you need, but they will give things that you want, but not things that you need probably. And if you if we go back to your original question, so me and my co founder, we understood that something is completely broken with the way professionals are consuming content today and there is no effective and trusted or trustworthy kind of solution for professionals to go go ahead and consume knowledge and become better at what they do.

Noa Eshed 30:02
This is just for marketers or...

Yam Regev 30:04
For now, just for marketers. Yeah, just for marketing professionals. We have, we are teaching the machine how to, let's say distill content, because the people are so involved or the user are so involved with the way that they filter and distill content. So people are suggesting content that you think the other tribe members should, should consume. And then if the machine don't know if this content is good enough, or not good enough, I'm talking about insightful content, in depth with a lot of added value. So we then send queries to hundreds of volunteers that we have and the machine asks them really simple questions about the article, and then it builds some sort of picture. So the machine can decide whether this content holds any kind of added value for someone or not, most of the content get distilled out of the distillery, we call ourselves content distillery. So that's how it works. So it's all about the community and tribe members and a multi level kind of structure and stuff like that.

Ronen 30:58
Can't you do that to any subject, requiring you to take or...

Yam Regev 31:03
I think we can, and we should, and we will, eventually we will do that. Again, it's really cut of the technology, that's for sure. That's probably one of the main pillars in our strategy, the technology. But another huge pillar that we have in our strategy is the human aspect of it. And we're not putting humans now let's start to use some cliches also not just buzzwords. So we're not putting users in the center, we're putting users in the forefront of what we do. Users are the one who will decide what content will get distilled in and what's not, they're suggesting content, we're not aggregating the web, right users will will do that. So if you if you do that, if you put yourselves in the forefront, you're making them let's say that you're multiplying your brain force, right in your in your organization. And today, although we just started as two co founders, and we had a team of a few volunteers, which are now probably, we can call them full time employees, we had hundreds of users in our user advisory board that help us in different kinds of aspects, whether it's a business model, a new design for landing page, a new feature that they need, that they want to test, and you get yourself a lot of brain power that can just reinforce you and you know, you're having no friction. So you're moving all the buffers, or the automation buffers, if you may, between your product, or yourself, with your users. And absorbing all those, those feedback from your users just really shorten the time for product market fit, which is great, of course, you know, that's, that's probably the biggest struggle as the startup that you might to have. And also its function as

a huge growth flywheel if you want. Because those people are so integrated and so engaged in they're so grateful for what you give them as far as the delightful added value, so they just want to be part of your thing and they want to give back, and they will probably write about you, you know, in the blogs or publications, and so on and so forth. A great example is that we, when we had when we were at the end of our pre seed round, where we just closed a few like two to three months ago, we understood that there are some low hanging kind of investors. We can discuss about all funding strategies that we had at Zest. So what we did, we understood that in order to convert more investors in, or those investors that already now in the funnel, if you want to call it that way, we need to have some prominent mentions in some media publications. So then we went to our user advisory board and some sub tribes that we have within Zest. We asked who can help us with that, and a few weeks after we had an article about us on an entrepreneur.com, and Forbes, (wow), for instance. I think that I think we paid a lot for that, again, not in money, we just been humans. And we did we are we are, we have a lot of fuck ups, we're doing a lot of wrong things, we are sharing it with the community, you can see our Facebook page, and you can see our Medium publication and all that we have all the bad things and good things. It's everything about transparency, and authenticity and vulnerability. So that's how we operate the brand of Zest, how we operate the product. So we operate our own self brands as co founders or Zesty members, and all that.

Noa Eshed 34:08
And in the spirit of transparency and vulnerability, what would you say the biggest challenges you've encountered so far?

Yam Regev 34:15
I simply was fortunate enough to find the right co founder, not to find but really to work together is one of my best friends today. He probably knows me better than most of my good friends, my good old friends, probably even a little bit better than my wife, you know, because of her. So we have a lot of time together. The past few years were really, had a lot of high friction in a good way, you know, just been together for such a long time. So it's all about partners. I believe. It's all about that.

Ronen 34:45
Was there something in the transparency of vulnerability that you were, before you posted it you're like you're scared about or what people think or because we've been hearing the transparency and vulnerability as strategy last while, and it's an interesting strategy like we understand the likability, but there's probably a lot of fears about it.

Yam Regev 35:03
It really depend on, first of all, who you are as a person, what's your persona or what's your personalities, if you want. So I'm that kind of person, I'm transparent, I'm authentic, I don't have a problem to speak about my fails and my successes, I really want to share knowledge. I feel like it makes me feel better, you know, just to help others. And I believe that what we started to or what we tried to do with the Zest, brand tone of voice positioning, messaging and branding, if that makes sense. And then that was really good for the beginning of the of the journey. I believe people want to speak with more human nice kind of brands, eventually. And then when we started to do to put a lot of efforts on fundraising. So we took the same disciplines and we use them, we use them over there, what we

did, for instance, we created a dashboard for the parameters that we had addressed. Some of them are good, some of them are bad, about revenues, about growth, about demographics, but everything it was, it went quite spreadable. In Israel in the East Coast and in the valley, a lot of entrepreneurs shared it. And in the middle of the dashboard that we built, there was a CTA button over there, that was within the bar above it, I can't remember the whole tag, but it was we're putting everything out, you know, I can't, I didn't see any pre seed kind of startup that put all these parameters out. Maybe you know, a buffer and those kinds of huge companies doing it in the last few years. But in the past, it was quite quite challenging and scary to do that. Then we wrote it, we were doing it just in order to create some sort of a transparency communication with like minded entrepreneurs. We got 700 leads, like people who actually clicked and fill up the details.

Noa Eshed 36:48
Asking them to what?

Yam Regev 36:49
If they want to invest in Zest, it was like investor dashboard. There's all the parameters over there. So first of all, the tribe loved it all the all the 1000s, or the dozens of 1000s of the weekly active users that we had, they loved it because you put in all your data, so they it's good for your community, first of all. You know, it's bad and good parameters, so let's just share it. And they all KPI, or the whole strategy was to acquire investors and to try to reverse the paradigm. So it's not us going after investors, which, which we also did, to also was some sort of an inbound marketing kind of discipline. And then we acquired 700 potential investors, again...

Noa Eshed 37:27
Did any convert?

Yam Regev 37:28
A few, a few with small amounts, which is great. But what was even better than that, the far, the bottom left, let's say, part of this dashboard, that we had the link for our investor, investor deck, and invest in the one page, and we put them all on Google Drive. And then when we went to meet other VCs and angels, and and all that, and you show them, alright, let's open the deck. So you see 70 plus people over there on Google Docs, right? Because you can see all the profile. All right, okay, what's that? So like? Okay, so like 70 people are now watching the deck? What's going on? Like, they it's like, the scarcity, kind of parameter what's going on, all right? You see them like swinging up in the chair and being more serious, which is good, right? So it's all about those kinds of, as I said, at the beginning, psychological effects, you can use your marketing, psychological effects to fund more money or for your own tribe members, or to be more engaging with your users, and so on and so forth. So it's huge, those are huge tools that we are acquiring and learning each day. Just need to think, how to use them and when, right and to be...

Ronen 38:39
And that's a really good idea, by the way, I like that one.

Yam Regev 38:42

I thought the discussion will be pragmatic right?

Ronen 38:45
Fair enough, you're totally right. Question for you. What is your superpower?

Yam Regev 38:51
Wow, that's a tough one. I think that my superpower in a really broad definition, people. I think I'm good with people, I understand thought processes. It's really easy for me today as a professional, to speak with someone that is a professional as well. But again, maybe I'm missing things, I'm mixing things together. But I think that I can quite fast understand, who am I speaking with as far as it relates to his functionality level, not just if he's a marketer. So as a person I sit in I divide into two kinds of aspects and I'm not sure how to do it in English, so maybe you guys will help me. There is the professional aspect of who we are. In Hebrew, we would say it in Hebrew, sorry everybody else, but there's a miktzoi and miktzoan. How do you say it in English?

Noa Eshed 39:42
So being a professional versus just the professional aspects holistically,

Yam Regev 39:47
Something like that, something like that. Being a professional like me, I mean, I'm a professional marketer, right? So that's something that I should be good at as a professional, but being a professional in the wider aspect of it, if we will try to translate it. So it means that and I will give you stupid example, if we set a meeting today, right? Let's say we'll meet each other at 11am. I'll be probably 10 minutes before the meeting. Right? It doesn't relate to me being a good marketer. Right?

Noa Eshed 40:13
You know what? He's like, spot on. Because what did I tell you before when we got here? I told you he'll be here early.

Ronen 40:13
He'll be 15 minutes early

Noa Eshed 40:16
Yeah, and I have never met Yam before. But we've communicated on professional levels quite a few times during the past few years. And I can, I can really say that it's exactly that with him. Because everybody that I know that knows him will also say that they feel like they know him and appreciate him. You're able to create rapport with people that you've never met.

Ronen 40:40
(Cool) Looks like you're one of the most convenient and comfortable people to work with. Like as, as a professional.

Yam Regev 40:48
Some somebody might argue with you.

Ronen 40:49
It looks like you're you're down to earth, and you're easy to work with. And, like so. So I think that it's logical what you're saying, right? What you're trying to say was the difference between being a professional than being an expert in something

Yam Regev 41:05
Something like that

Ronen 41:05
So you can be a professional, no matter what you work with? I'm still professional, I come on time, I speak like this...

Yam Regev 41:11
It doesn't have nothing with your profession, right

Ronen 41:13
Exactly.

Noa Eshed 41:14
It's exactly that, it's the professional versus expert.

Ronen 41:16
Right.

Yam Regev 41:17
And I thaink that I am quite good in creating some sort of biological metrics, so far as it relates to your profession and your professional aspect. And they, of course, your personality, but personality comes much later, because we need to get to know right, each other right so that's the thing. By the way, when structuring, when we structured Zest, Zest strategy, and we spoke, we talked about the people or the human beings who actually worked in Zest. So we created some sort of three pillar base kind of platform we can say. And we discussed about profession, professionality, and personality, as it relates to your own KPIs. And what each of us in the team need to do with that within Zest, or you know, out of Zest, it doesn't really matter. So we all have, like, personal KPIs that you want to achieve. Like, you don't want to lose weight, for instance. So it's part of the Zest strategy, as far as it relates to the team members. And you also have your own professional KPI that we need to acquire more users, for instance. Right, right. So it's all structured that way. So I think it's probably me bringing in, as you said, maybe it's I'm not sure if it's a superpower, because it sounds so bombastic, but something like that, to bring it in and to try to use it. Because if I have some good orientation to that, so let's make others...

Ronen 42:29
And the kryptonite?

Yam Regev 42:31

Ugh, I have so many.

Noa Eshed 42:32
Yeah. It's always like with that, with the honest people that we sit with. They they struggle to answer what their superpower is, because we're trying to think of one. And then you ask them about the kryptonite, and they're like, okay, what do I choose?

Yam Regev 42:44
Yeah, you have multi choice kind of options over here.

Noa Eshed 42:49
Take two.

Yam Regev 42:50
I think that being a control freak, it's the worst thing that in my personality. See, it's not just affecting my professional life, but also my personal life. I hate it, I try to be better at it, if I still need to improve something quite significantly, it will be that, to try and let it go in a good way, of course.

Noa Eshed 43:11
When did you realize that's what you are?

Yam Regev 43:13
In my early days as a professional, probably 10 years ago, and each time that I'm starting a new venture, it's like, I'm not sure why, but it's been zero. And then I'm starting almost from scratch. Maybe because you need to refill it, you need to take care of everything. And, you know, you need to absorb everything to think about anything. So already, that's, that's one of the one of the things that I hate with my personality.

Ronen 43:36
And, let's give it a year. What would be a successful year for you now? Like you say: listen, if I do this professionally right, okay, I'm gonna say this is a good year.

Yam Regev 43:49
Wow. All right, I think, you know, again, we are we're living by the feedback that we're getting from our avid users, and we have quite a lot. And we really feel that we're changing something in the web karma, you can say, right? People are saying, Oh, I'm, I'm enjoying this, let's say quietness. I know, I'm not feeling that I'm lost in a sea of content anymore. I believe that they don't need to go anywhere else to consume to be better at what I'm doing. Right. So I'm, we're using some sort of like we're a medium or something, something like that between people and the knowledge out there and we are just trying to be a tube that will give you the best kind of knowledge. So again, it was quite a branded kind of answer for you. But I really believe that we are doing something good. And in one of my lectures, the last slide, there is the quote from Gladiator, which is quite militant, but since we're doing right something like echoes for eternity, (okay) like that. This is what I'm trying to say to budding entrepreneurs as well. Don't think about your solution or your product is the big thing that you do. If you have a tool that is

converting more to use more visitors to users, for instance, you know, like MarTech wise, it's maybe the the end solution of what you do, but you're actually doing something that is far bigger than that. And try to think, from this broad definition of what you actually give back to karma or to health or whatever you want to call it, again, not in a spiritual kind of manner. But what you solve as a, what your startup solves have much bigger impact and it really can echo for eternity. If you look for it, not just for the revenue point of view, or you're actually trying to convert more people with our tool, try to think what you actually give (the why), what is the added value, that we that we that we do? We really believe that we are succeeding to make people to be more knowledgeable in a really, a not stressful manner. Right? It's a big thing. It's a, now we have product, we have the Zest distillation engine, and we have the product and we have the solution and we have the multi-level layer, kind of, you know, the Zest in the way that we distill knowledge. But that's the solution of the solution of the solution. Right? Try to think what you actually bring in.

Ronen 46:02
Nice.

Noa Eshed 46:03
I'm inspired.

Ronen 46:04
Nice. So first of all, thank you so much, for like those insights. I hope no one's going to copy that strategy for the investors, becuase it's really a good one. You know becomes so like mainstream

Noa Eshed 46:17
Unless they call it like the Yam strategy

Yam Regev 46:18
Oh, that's good, then it becomes, branded and it's good for us and then I don't mind to do it. Anyway, we have it on the media, on our Medium publication. So if you want to read about it, go ahead, use it. One more way, this is the grain of salt, right, which is so important. What works for me, what works for us throughout my career, will most likely will not work for anyone else. So all those best practices, that we all hear all the time, that the biggest killers that you can have for your own initiatives. It's again, as we said, it's not a mathematics, biology, it's like a fingerprint. What works for me was great for me at this time, maybe if I'll use it, same methodologies now. Maybe I'll just screw myself over right, it will not generate the same value that they generated before. Same goes with what I'd said there now. Maybe if some startup with some other startup will use this hyper transparent kind of strategy, it can break things apart, right? It might ruin the whole process.

Yam Regev 46:36
So there could be very logical reasons for that. Because if you share information, and information actually says there is no business here, stay away, then, logically enough, I understand why people would want...

Yam Regev 47:20

Maybe even if the parameters are great, maybe in a given period of time, it's not the right thing to do. But anyway, what I'm trying to say is that, take it, absorb it, digest it with a grain of salt, and maybe use the ideal the methodology, but don't do it as ease and try to adjust it and to customize it. And that's good for any kind of best practices that you can read on the web. By the way, one of the things that our tribe members hate and they're not approving those kinds of articles are those listicles for instance, they so narrow or 10 best, most of the 10 best kind of articles will be distilled out quite fast. Even I don't ask those chiefs, moderators to read those articles. Because it's not the Zest kind of material. It's not, no one should consume this kind of knowledge. It can be maybe the almost 10 best kind of things. But no one nothing can be the best for you. And as you will know that you need to readjust it and customize it for your own effort.

Noa Eshed 48:10
No actual formula. You just have to take what you can get from people to see if it resonates or not and then structure your own.

Ronen 48:23
Right, and most importantly you guys always remember to Zest and rest.

Yam Regev 48:27
Oh, that's great. That's the good one. The new sticker.

Noa Eshed 48:30
Let's step out with that. Thank you

Yam Regev 48:32
Thank you