Welcome to TBD: Technology By Design. I'm your host, Matt Perault.

So, this is an episode with Sam Knox. She's the Associate General Counsel for Competition at Facebook, and one of the company's leading lawyers on antitrust issues. We worked closely together when I was at Facebook: she was a great mentor and a great friend, I learned a lot from her, and we were lucky to have her on the podcast. But first, I want to be honest with you about something. When I first listened to this episode, I was kind of uncomfortable about how the first couple of questions sounded. Not because of anything Sam said, but because of how my questions come across. I really wanted to get at how much working with Sam meant to me, and how I miss working with her, and I wanted to try to be specific about some of the really great parts of working on a strong team. We were in the trenches, we were working on big hard issues, and that creates a special feeling. And that's the intimacy of working in the tech policy field that I'd like to try to convey in this podcast.

But I don't think I did it very well. Being in a new home is also about leaving your old one. It's sad in many ways, but it's happy in others, and it's really, really complicated. I think my opening questions to Sam get at the sadness, but I don't think they really get at the happiness, and they don't really get at the complexity. It's a swing, and a miss. So, producer Sarah and I talked about it, and we considered cutting it. But ultimately, we both really like Sam's part of the conversation. And we thought that even though I don't really convey what I want to convey, my fumbling gets at some of the pain and awkwardness of leaving a place that you once called home, as you move forward to try to carve out a new independent space to call your own. So, we decided to leave unedited. It's a swing and a miss, memorialized.

Anyway, Sam is a brilliant antitrust attorney, and she's deeply involved in the antitrust struggles that Facebook is facing now. She tells us about the current state of antitrust, she talks us through the nitty gritty of policy work with state governments, and she talks about her experience as a woman in two male dominated worlds: the tech sector and antitrust, and then we swap stories of early parenthood. So, let's get started.

Associate General Counsel for Competition at Facebook, Sam Knox. Thanks for joining.

Sam Knox 2:17
Thanks for having me today, Matt.

Matt Perault 2:19
So, I miss you. And I miss our team so much.

Sam Knox 2:23
We miss you, too.
So, I miss... so, I thought I'd start by going into some of the things that I miss because I've been thinking about it a bunch. So, one of the things that I really miss about life at Facebook is that we have a common team of people who are looking at the same questions, who are reading the same articles, people would circulate articles, ask for feedback in terms of what everyone's thinking, what are the arguments raised in this article? What are the best arguments in response? And academic life is sort of different because people are all sort of in their own research verticals, thinking about their own research questions. And even though you have groups of colleagues who are focused on similar things, if I'm focused on tech issues and antitrust and I want to talk to people about it, there aren't as many people who you can talk to, because you're not on this sort of common team or looking at just one question. So, I really miss that about our group. I feel like we learned, I learned so much from the group of people who were working on this issue. And learned so much from you in particular.

Sam Knox  3:20
And I have to say, Matt, the team is not the same without you. I think you were a huge part of honestly establishing that dynamic. And we are really lucky, this dynamic is really unique in my career, as well. So before joining the company, as you know, I was in private practice. And even there when you're all working on the same case, or working on the same set of issues, it didn't have that same kind of team feeling. And I think that that makes us better and a lot of ways. As you said, it's great to bounce ideas off of each other and challenge each other when one of us is kind of maybe in a bubble, to pop that bubble and kind of challenge maybe the assumptions or an argument that might be getting us out over our skis. And I also think it's really, you know, one of the unique things about being at a company as opposed to in private practice, or in the government or in academia is like the practical applications. And so, we're talking about big ideas, but we're also advising the company and helping shape products,

Matt Perault  4:20
Right. Yeah, trying to get our product out the door.

Sam Knox  4:22
Huge privilege. Yeah.

Matt Perault  4:24
So um, so what do you think is like the, what do you think was sort of the driver of that feeling of "teamyness"? Because I was on several different teams at Facebook, you serve in several different capacities within Facebook, and some are more "teamy" than others. And the one that we were on, working on antitrust stuff, which is across different teams across the legal organization, the policy organization, the comms organization, I think felt particularly teamy. Do you think the reason for that was like how difficult the issues were that we were facing, like there are periods in time where it just felt like every single government in the world was initiating something on antitrust and we were being forced to respond?

Sam Knox  5:00
Um, I think it still feels like that. More so now than even six months ago.
Matt Perault  5:07
Exactly.

Sam Knox  5:07
But no, to answer your question, I think really, it's, you know, I think one of the things that our team was good at is we were all coming from different backgrounds, as you said, like legal, policy, communications, we also had like product people. And we were good about, I think that you're each bringing, kind of, a different superpower to the team...

Matt Perault  5:29
Right.

Sam Knox  5:29
...And an expertise and we all respected that each other's expertise... and you got to a better place. And again, this is something that's really different from private practice.

Matt Perault  5:38
Yeah.

Sam Knox  5:39
You get to a better place when that legal submission has the benefit of different perspectives, or that you know, kind of policy advocacy has the benefit of being sharpened by the different views on the team.

Matt Perault  5:52
Or, for instance, when our legal team teaches our policy team about antitrust, because I started at square one, you and other people on the team, I feel like we're the shepherd in that area...

Sam Knox  6:02
And I think, you know, for even within the practice of law, I think, you know, the reason I decided to specialize in antitrust is it was the most intellectually challenging and interesting and it was fun quite frankly. It was interesting to me in a way that securities law wasn't or white-collar law wasn't. And I think, I mean, it seemed like you felt like that too, I think...

Matt Perault  6:20
Yeah!

Sam Knox  6:20
Of the different topics that you could choose to work on, you know, and certainly, being in the tech community... We're kind of at the center of a hurricane right now, where people are kind of rethinking fundamental principles of antitrust law and figuring out how to apply hundred-year-old precedents to cutting edge technology.
Matt Perault  6:36
Yeah, so I love the substance and I definitely like dorked out on the substance and felt like it's an area where you can sort of push on it and it pushes back... like there's a lot of depth and a lot of like nooks and crannies and it's fun to explore. So, I love that part of it. The other thing I liked about it is how much people who are in it, love it. Because the people who are in it are like obsessed with it, which is really awesome. And it always seemed to me, as I got to know the field a little bit, it seemed to me, like people were sort of serving two powers. They were like serving their employer, whoever their employer might be: it might be an academic institution, it might be industry, it might be in private practice. But then they were also serving this like higher power of like, how to practice antitrust well. Like people seem so committed, people in the antitrust field seem so committed to the field. So, I guess I have two questions about it. One, is that right? And then second of all, what is that dynamic like when you're the Facebook person? Like when you go into these rooms of people who are committed to the practice of antitrust and just want to do antitrust well in the world? What's it like now going in as the person who works for the quote unquote, big tech company?

Sam Knox  7:41
Great question. So, on the first question, I agree with you. I do think that the antitrust community and the antitrust bar in particular is a really small community. You can tell when people come into the courtroom that aren't part of that community. I think that everybody knows each other, everyone understands that no matter what side of the table that you're on, that your interest is in getting to the right result and in doing antitrust well, as you said...

Matt Perault  8:12
Yeah.

Sam Knox  8:12
And it's just obvious when they're kind of people that, kind of, aren't part of that ethic in the room. And I think it's a good thing, right? Because I think in many ways, the practice of law can be so impersonal these days, but within the antitrust space, it's still a place where you can really get to know people and find mentors and have connection...

Matt Perault  8:31
Right. It almost seemed like one word you can use to describe is almost like a chivalry. Like there's almost...

Sam Knox  8:36
Like a code of ethics or...

Matt Perault  8:38
Yeah, code of ethics in a sense, but not just of like ethics in the sort of sense of a class in law school on ethics, but a sense of like, a duty to the profession that practicing the profession well is a goal in itself, independent of serving your employer well.
Sam Knox  8:52
I think that's right, because I do think it's really like a sense, the way I think about it is a sense of reputation. Like do you I want to own this argument? Am I going to be embarrassed by making this argument, like in engaging with this regulator? How is this going to reflect on my credibility and my company's credibility?

Matt Perault  9:08
Yeah.

Sam Knox  9:09
And I think it's more common that you find other people thinking about those issues the same way in the antitrust bar, then maybe kind of in the bigger like, you know, other areas of commercial practice. I don't know, it's just my experience over the last decade or so. On your question about what is it like to be the antitrust lawyer from Facebook walking into the room?

Matt Perault  9:26
Right.

Sam Knox  9:26
I'll say that's changed a lot over the last two years since I've been with the company. And I do think that some of these people that have not practiced antitrust law, but that have recently joined the debate, and are some of the loudest voices on the edge of the debate, if I can characterize it in that way...

Matt Perault  9:42
Yeah.

Sam Knox  9:43
Maybe don't share some of those beliefs, or experience around kind of the code of ethics, if you will.

Matt Perault  9:51
Well, many of them are antitrust people also, right? They're advocates and they want certain results, social results, which are maybe desirable, maybe you and I agree those are desirable, but it's different from the kind of chivalry of antitrust.

Sam Knox  10:03
And they haven't had the experience of practicing whether it's, you know, for the government or for firm or for a company, and I think that makes a difference. And what I think is, you know, and that's great, we should have new voices coming into the debate all the time. I think that's great, it's certainly livening things up. But what I regret about the direction that we're traveling in is that it is getting harder and harder at some of these conferences, antitrust conferences, antitrust professional association meetings, to have a civil conversation with some of these new folks.
Matt Perault  10:33
Yeah.

Sam Knox  10:34
And I certainly understand that not everyone’s going to agree with the way that I see things on behalf of the company. And I'm not pretending to be an unbiased observer here. I'm an advocate for the company,

Matt Perault  10:44
Right.

Sam Knox  10:45
But if we're getting to the point where the people on the other side of the table can't even engage in a reasonable conversation, we've lost something really valuable.

Matt Perault  10:53
Yeah, that seems exactly right. So, one question I have and I'm starting to move... I'm starting to try to push my headspace to be outside of Facebook. So, I left Facebook in October, it's now been a couple of months. And I'm trying to enjoy trying to see if there are kind of new perspectives that float into my head as a result of having more distance from the company. And I think maybe on certain issues, I'm feeling that way a bit, but I'm not yet on antitrust. And it makes me wonder a little bit. Something that I wonder it even while I was at the company, which is if there are so many critics in the world who seemed to feel so strongly that there's clearly the case that Facebook is a dominant entity, and it's clearly the case that it's abusing that dominance. Was there something that we were missing? Like, is there something, you know, if you believe in the wisdom of crowds’ idea that, you know, there's sort of strength in numbers or that huge groups of people tend to be correct? Do you think there's something we're missing if there are so many critics who seem to be pushing for changes to antitrust and so many people who seem to see it as a foregone conclusion that Facebook and Google and Amazon are obviously dominant and abusing that dominance?

Sam Knox  12:02
I think that's exactly the right question to be asking. I think I wouldn't be a good lawyer if I said no too quickly because I don't want to be in a bubble.

Matt Perault  12:12
Right.

Sam Knox  12:14
And as you say, there is kind of a growing chorus of voices in what might be an echo chamber, what might be a consensus, it's hard to tell from the press, right? It's hard to tell kind of how many people hold these beliefs and how well informed they are. But there's certainly a louder growing chorus of voices, saying the things that you just said. From where I stand and what I've
seen so far, you know, I do think it's clear that we're at a point in time where a large number of people are questioning some of the principles like foundational principles of antitrust law that I would have considered to be well settled that I think everyone considered to be well settled even like three or four years ago.

Matt Perault  12:57
And so, what would those be?

Sam Knox  12:59
So, for example: so there's been a lot of talk around kind of the consumer welfare standard. And what should the kind of standard of how we measure whether something is harming competition or not, we typically look to a variety of factors that's kind of collectively referred to as the consumer welfare standard. Anti-competitive effects could be evidenced in a number of ways like an increase in price, it could be a decrease in quality, decrease in quality could be measured a number of different ways. One element of that certainly could be competing in terms of privacy, could be competing in terms of how fast your service is, how many features you offer. There are a variety of kind of non-price elements that could go into that, right? So right now, we're at a moment in time where some people are saying consumer welfare standard is not serving us, it doesn't work anymore. We should throw it out because we're seeing increasing concentration, especially in the tech space.

Matt Perault  14:02
Yeah.

Sam Knox  14:03
What I haven't heard is what the replacement for that should be. I also think that some of the criticism around the consumer welfare standard isn't even particularly well informed. There's some kind of straw man versions of this argument where people are saying current antitrust standards are only well equipped to deal with changes in price.

Matt Perault  14:20
Right.

Sam Knox  14:21
And we can't recognize other anti-competitive effects when we see them. That's just wrong. That's like misstating the case law.

Matt Perault  14:26
Yep. Exactly.

Sam Knox  14:27
So, you know, to me, it's still an open question. I have yet to see evidence that current standards are not working well enough. I'm not opposed to engaging in these conversations. And I think if people want to raise questions about whether there's a better standard, sure, let's
have that conversation. But you have to offer solutions you have to offer a replacement. And currently, the way things work in the US, is that we apply the Sherman Act and the Clayton Act through the lens of economics. You need some logical principle through which to interpret those statutes and apply them in a predictable way. Because I think the most important thing for regulators and policymakers to keep in mind is that what companies want above all is certainty. We need to understand what the law is so we can advise our clients on how to comply with it. What we don't want is surprises or uncertainty. That is inefficient. That's going to create all kinds of problems, right?

Matt Perault  15:19
Yeah.

Sam Knox  15:20
We have a predictable way to kind of apply and understand the antitrust laws now. If people want to change that, okay, but let's make sure that the replacement is something that's equally predictable and understandable about how we'll apply that.

Matt Perault  15:34
Yep.

Sam Knox  15:34
And I haven't yet heard kind of an alternative framework being proposed.

Matt Perault  15:38
Uh huh. So, moving from the sort of big picture of the scope of antitrust to more narrow.... What are you doing in North Carolina today?

Sam Knox  15:47
Well, we are here today... and I would love to say just to visit you. I am really excited to see you Matt...

Matt Perault  15:56
It's a reason in itself.

Sam Knox  15:58
It is. It is absolutely a reason I would fly across the country. But no, we're here today for some meetings with a number of stakeholders in the state, including Attorney General Stein's office. As you know, we've been engaging with competition regulators, at the state and federal level in the US to answer questions that they have and address some of the concerns that have been raised, you know, in the press on some of these antitrust issues.

Matt Perault  16:26
So, I know you obviously can't speak about the specifics of the meeting, but what are the nature of these interactions with various different government officials? So is it kind of the
norm that a company would meet with an attorney general who’s interested in their business practices? And what do you kind of hope to achieve in these meetings?

Sam Knox  16:44
Yeah, absolutely. It's definitely the norm. I mean, it's the responsibility of regulators at the federal and state level to kind of ask questions and investigate when they have questions and it's the responsibility, at least the way I see it, it's our responsibility as a US company to be responsible in responding and engaging directly with those regulators. And more than that, I actually think it's an important part of how we move forward. Right? And I think Mark and Cheryl, have been really clear about this. We're interested in... I mean, we're at the table trying to have these conversations and trying to address what are hard policy questions. Candidly, it's less clear to me that these are antitrust questions. I think what I have seen a lot of in the last two years are other policy concerns that are surfaced through the lens of antitrust simply because we are a big company and a successful company. But if there are antitrust questions, you know, we're happy to answer them and help find solutions.

Matt Perault  17:40
So, I know you've done a bunch of work the global level, and then you've done a bunch of work in DC at the federal level as well. How does state work compare to those? Does it feel different? Does it feel different doing meetings in North Carolina versus meetings you've done in other in other places?

Sam Knox  17:56
That's a great question. It is in the sense that I think you do get a much stronger sense of like connection to the local constituency and the concerns of particular states may differ from state to state, more than what you might see at a national aggregate level. And so here I think, you know, one thing that if I were kind of a state representative for state AG, in North Carolina, which kind of supports such a vibrant tech startup community in biotech, and in tech, just like Silicon Valley, one thing that would be really of interest to me is tracking the current conversation around mergers, and whether we should change standards around merger review.

Matt Perault  18:38
Right, because presumably, those startups that are booming here, the startup sector in Durham, the startup sector in Research Triangle Park, those companies want to be acquired. They would they would be harmed, presumably or potentially by tighter merger review standards.

Sam Knox  18:52
That's right. And look, I think so we're hearing a couple things kind of in terms of press narratives right now. One is people seem to be more and more operating from this presumption that mergers in and of themselves are inherently anti-competitive and a bad thing. And let's just call out that that is a complete reversal of our current approach to merger review. Certainly, there can be bad mergers, there can be anti-competitive mergers that would cause harm to competition.
And those should be reviewed and challenged. But we don't start from a baseline assumption that aggregation or mergers are wrong. In fact, there are many things you can only achieve, efficiencies that can only be achieved through a merger... where it's not cost effective or even possible for a company to build it itself.

Okay, so can we give, can we talk through an example? You're a biotech company in Durham, you're growing your business, you're looking for companies to acquire you? Or why would a company, why would a bigger company be interested in purchasing a biotech company in a place like Durham?

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I think that the easiest example to give here is kind of moving into the AR/VR space or maybe a particular type of technology...

That that startup has kind of brought to market. But the startup itself doesn't, that the service invented, but the startup itself doesn't have the resources, or the bandwidth to develop the entire consumer product, or the entire product that a business would buy. So, they're a component that could get acquired and plugged in, by a company with the resources and perhaps existing capabilities to actually bring the product to market. And actually, a great example of this is Oculus. If you look at Oculus, we took that technology and we were able to bring actually a VR headset to market through, by the way, you know, billions of dollars of investment post acquisition...

So, there's quite a lot of R&D and money and time and further tech and development that went into that.

Right. So, there's more investment going into Oculus, at least for some period of time, then revenue that the company would have been bringing in as a free-standing entity.

Right, and our investment in Oculus has far exceeded the price of the merger.
Matt Perault  21:03
Right. And so let's say there's a merger that results in interesting new VR technology being able to be deployed. Like the control labs acquisition, for instance, is an example of that. What about privacy concerns related to it, for instance, so people might be concerned, for instance, about acquiring about a company like Facebook acquiring new types of data and sensitive new types of data? Is it the case that antitrust is well equipped to deal with those kinds of concerns? And if not, what do you think of in terms of the ways that regulators should react when they might have concerns about components of an acquisition but don't necessarily have concerns about the antitrust elements of an acquisition?

Sam Knox  21:41
Yeah, great question. So, look, I'm not a privacy layer. And I would worry if I were in charge. Like if I were working for the government, I would not want to be addressing important questions of protecting consumer privacy's through the merger framework.

I just don't think it's set up for that. I also don't think that from a causation standpoint, like I don't see the causal link between, like, for example, an acquisition and then risk to kind of people's privacy. So, let me put that a different way because I think that wasn't entirely clear. Privacy is not an obligation that only large companies with big market capital should have to uphold.

Matt Perault  21:55
Right.

Right.

Sam Knox  22:21
Like, we'd be just as concerned about a breach of social security numbers or financial data from a small startup, as we would from a large public company.

Matt Perault  22:29
Yep. But large public companies often will bring a small startup to scale, right? So, a technology that might not have been deployed at scale or had like a route to market now, because of being acquired by a company like Facebook or Google can go from being in a small number of people's hands to being in everyone's hands.

Sam Knox  22:44
That's true. Yeah. And I also do think that larger companies, candidly, probably have more incentive and also more resources to invest in protecting people's privacy. Got it. And, you know, that's, I think that's certainly something that we've seen. I think one thing that is top of mind for Facebook is when we have lost user trust, and haven't done a good enough job of meeting people's expectations and protecting their privacy in the past, that caught like, that is a huge problem. It's a reputational risk. It's not good for business. Right? So, the suggestion that
somehow we're intentionally doing that, and that we are more effective at doing that, because we're a big company just doesn't add up for me.

Matt Perault  23:23
Yeah, I like the idea that people have that Facebook just gets away with these things. Because I think it’s clear, it’s clear the company doesn't get away with much or anything. And that clearly the, you know, the goal would be to avoid those things happening for a lot of reasons and including the press and the accountability, but also just in terms of serving people less well than it might otherwise be able to.

Sam Knox  23:43
Exactly, exactly.

Matt Perault  23:45
So can we talk about what it's like being a woman in antitrust and tech? So, antitrust and tech are both not known for being diverse enterprises. The tech sector has struggled in terms of in terms of the employment numbers being heavily tilted toward men as well as, you know, lack of racial diversity. And then antitrust is heavily male and heavily white. You're a woman who is succeeding in the tech sector and succeeding in antitrust. What is it like for you practicing in this area?

Unknown Speaker  24:19
It is. It is that... Yeah, a double male majority environment. It is not easy. I will say that the struggle is real. But I will say that there is... I have never felt more empowered and, kind of, well-respected than I have in the two years since I've joined Facebook. I think Facebook is really good at this. And they also invest a lot in, they have a woman at leadership program where they kind of invest in teaching and kind of providing professional development to women around things... like even basic things like leadership and kind of management skills. And that's not just for women, that's actually for all employees. So, I find that this has been less of an issue at Facebook than it has been previously in my career. A few years ago, when I was walking into a settlement negotiation, we kind of divided up the roles on who was going to speak to what pieces and I was going to speak to kind of the damage's calculation in that settlement. And when the time came to turn to that I kind of started with my presentation and the mediator who was like 80-something, former judge, right? He literally said something along the lines of, "Okay, that's nice honey, but we know you actually didn't do the numbers."

Matt Perault  25:39
Wow.

Sam Knox  25:39
And then turned to the male partner. And to his credit, he actually stood up and said, "Actually, she did do the numbers. So, I'm going to defer to Sam on this piece." But that is so rare, and that example of like what I heard from that mediator, I could give you like dozens of examples like that. So, it is, you know, those challenges are still all too common. But I think companies
like Facebook are actually leading the way in changing the market, particularly in the law sector and the expectations that we have of the law firms that work for us: we're trying to make this as measurable and have as much impact as we can as a client in this area, which I think is like one of the other ways to really change this.

Matt Perault 26:21
You mean pushing for the service that you received from a law firm to reflect the values...

Sam Knox 26:25
Exactly. Demanding diverse teams and not just diverse teams that but that we're seeing younger associates and diverse associates actually taking speaking roles in court and in interfacing with the company and doing kind of interviews with people at the company.

Matt Perault 26:38
Uh huh. Interesting. So, one thing as you were talking about this, one thing I was thinking about in terms of old guard antitrust, and then emerging antitrust is it does seem like there is helpful diversity in the emerging antitrust view... like you have Lena Kahn, who's leading the charge. You have people like Elizabeth Warren, who's leading the charge. I'm not sure what the question is here. Maybe there's no question...

Sam Knox 27:00
Well, I can jump in I'll say, the problem I see at like, I'll be happy as Ruth Bader Ginsburg says "when there are nine," right? Like, we still don't see that diversity at the partnership level, even within the company, we don't see it at the executive level that we'd like it to be. We're trying to manage actively towards that. But who, who sticks around and actually makes partner in the law firms? Who's actually like leading law departments? We have our first female General Counsel now, which is amazing...

Matt Perault 27:25
Right.

Sam Knox 27:26
But that's still all too rare in Silicon Valley and more broadly, in like the fortune 500.

Matt Perault 27:30
Yeah, yes. Agree. I mean, I guess one thing I was thinking about just in terms of thinking about the new antitrust voices is, we may disagree on the substance, but it's great to see more diversity coming into the field, I think.

Sam Knox 27:42
Totally agree.

Matt Perault 27:43
Yeah. And it does feel like the sort of emerging critics are, reflect more diversity than the than
the old guard. It doesn't mean the substance is better or worse on either side, but it is
interesting to see that development.

Sam Knox  27:55
Yeah, and it’s certainly heartening. Yeah.

Matt Perault  27:57
Um, can we talk about parenting briefly? So, this is related, I guess a little bit to the
conversation about diversity. Because when I was thinking about your visit and how excited I
was going to be to see you, I was thinking about our conversations about becoming parents. So,
we had this very funny conversation on a long international flight, where I asked you, like,
hundreds of baby questions, and it was before my wife was publicly pregnant...

Sam Knox  28:27
I had a suspicion...

Matt Perault  28:27
You had a little bit of suspicion... it's possible I would have asked them no matter what, but I
was asking more questions with more intensity. And I was thinking that one difference of how
those conversations felt from how actually I felt, you know, some of the conversations I had at
Facebook about gender... is I felt like you... I felt like in a lot of the conversations at Facebook
about gender I was really treated as a man. Like as a person who was an observer in the in the
excitement and investment that was being put into women in the workforce. I don't disagree
with that excitement or disagree with the investment. But I felt like a bystander. And I made
plenty of my own mistakes. I'm not like faulting anyone at the company or the company at all
for that. But I did feel kind of like a bystander. And I felt like there was something about how
you talked to me about parenting, that was more...e you were talking to me as a parent, not as
like a man who was going to become a dad, but as a parent. And that seems a little bit... that
seemed different, and was more... felt to me more like becoming part of the team as opposed
to, I think the way sometimes people frame it, where it's like, how can you support your wife,
and supporting your wife is an important component, but it's a different thing to be part of the
team.

Sam Knox  29:41
Yeah, I totally agree. And I think I'm really blessed to have a partner that views it the same way
that I do. Yeah. Because I don't think it's like, you know, I don't view it as like the mom’s job to
like, raise the kids. Obviously, like, my partner and I both work and we take kind of a 50/50
approach to the kid stuff and to the house stuff. And I'm not sure if that's, you know, maybe
that's why it sounded that way. But I do think that you know, whether it's like two moms two
dads like you know, mom and a dad, like you're both responsible for kind of providing like
health, safety, child welfare and yes, there are some things that like yes, moms are nursing and
that's not your thing that like Greg can step in and do. But in terms of like the emotional
connection, even at like the infant stage, you know, the, like, for example, after my first
daughter was born, they talked a lot about kind of the skin to skin time or like koala care or whatever. And they did that at Stanford. We were at Lucile Packard for both me and for Greg, and that was huge and like studies show that that's just as important for the kind of pheromone bonding with between the dad and baby as it is for like mom and baby.

Matt Perault  30:52
Yeah, they call it skin the skin on the mom side and I think they call it skin to fur on the dad side.

Sam Knox  30:56
That's so funny.

I might strangle my child. But she survived.

But yeah, that's the best. Are you getting lots of newborn cuddles?

Matt Perault  31:07
Getting lots of newborn cuddles. It's pretty, it's pretty amazing. It's funny how fleeting it is... like last night for instance, she's like crying and fussing and fussing and fussing. And I, at some point, get her on my chest and she falls asleep. And then when, the second that happens, it's bliss.

Sam Knox  31:21
Yeah.

Matt Perault  31:22
And then it's bliss for like, 30 minutes, and then you're figuring out like, how do I get this child to sleep? Or how do I get myself to sleep? But those moments of bliss are pretty amazing.

Sam Knox  31:32
Absolutely. And, you know, Greg's actually, like his nickname was "the sleeper" because he was better at getting both girls down than I was. Like, I would feed them and then I'd pass them off. Both of them went through phases, it was funny, like, you know, for a few weeks, the yoga ball worked and then it was the rocking chair. And then it was like the bouncing.

Matt Perault  31:51
Apparently dads and the bounce are, it's like a thing. I was bouncing our kid over the weekend and someone was like, "You got a good bounce." I told my husband would be impressed. Um, so what are your like memories from infant phase? I was remembering that I think I saw you with your youngest kid going out of Facebook right after, but pretty soon after you started and we were just we had just gotten to know each other and you had like, come in with the family or something and you guys were leaving. I'm trying to remember what phase that how old she was.

Sam Knox  32:25
Yeah, I think Lucy would have been about six months. It's really funny. So, I had been working as outside counsel for the company for a while before the job opening came up and I had kind of been keeping an eye out for it because, the work I was doing for Facebook was like my favorite work that I was doing. And of course, that listing went up literally the week after I gave birth. Like seriously, so I went in for my interview in my stretchy pants. Good thing, it was all... you couldn't really see.

Matt Perault  32:50
Right.

Sam Knox  32:52
So that was hard to do, but I'm really glad that I did it because then I got my dream job and yeah, so we... Yeah, so Lucy was just about six months when I started. And you know, and we had a lot of travel that year, a lot of international travel, which was tough. I think honestly, I probably stopped nursing sooner than I otherwise would have. But I also like I think this is what one of my mentors said to me before actually had my first, that like parenting would be the hardest and the best thing I ever did. I think that's 100% true.

Matt Perault  33:27
Yeah.

Sam Knox  33:28
And then, you know, in the moment, many days, I don't feel great about the balance choices that I'm making, like either like not good enough at home or not good enough at work. But like when I look back at that, I think like, actually, I am pretty kind of proud of the example that I'm setting for the kids and I think I do a pretty good job of, you know, putting them first as much as I can.

Matt Perault  33:50
Yeah, and being a kick ass mom. That seems like a nice spot to end. Thanks, Sam for coming on the pod.

Sam Knox  33:56
Thanks so much, Matt!

Matt Perault  34:00
This has been TBD: Technology By Design. A podcast hosted by Matt Perault, Produced by Sarah Cromer, with music by Velvet Negroni.

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