

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/early-days-of-waze>

Di-Ann Eisnor, director of growth at Waze, describes how the origin of the real-time navigation app is one of prototyping and its evolution a story of iteration. She explains how the company, now owned by Google, would release different features and look for frequent engagement among subsets of users, dropping more frivolous aspects like the cupcakes and candy that made Waze seem like a video game.



Transcript

- How did we initially create the community of people to grow our business without marketing? You know, step by step, and I'll go through a couple of concrete things.. So first of all, our founder is Ehud Shabtai, and this was started as a little project.. He was an engineer that got a, I think it was a Palm Pilot or one of these systems, and you could put a GPS on it.. And the maps were outdated and they were wrong.. And he wanted to know where the cops were.. So, what he did was he got the SDK and he got a bunch of his engineering friends to keep adding this information.. And within a few months, they had a thriving community of people who just wanted to have better maps.. And then every night, he would merge all the data into one, re-upload it so that everyone else could download it.. And it was as close to real-time as it could be in 2008.. So, the first ones were really the engineers that wanted to solve this problem..

The second one was, remember I showed you that blank map where people were driving? That was not a mass audience.. That was a way to get featured by Apple, but there were people who loved it.. And we knew it was gonna be a small audience.. It was gonna be a very small number of people, but they would use it all the time.. And then when we had this Pac-Man phase, right, we had roads but we couldn't tell you speeds or anything, so we put cupcakes on the road and you got points and all of that.. That was a way to slightly expand the market and open up who we were talking to, because it was fun, but again, we knew that wasn't gonna be a mass market.. So it was really step by step.. What can we add that's gonna be good for some group of people, and then test it by saying, are they using it all the time? Are they engaging all the time? And then you know you're on to something.. I really don't want billions of users who come and use us once, or use us once a year, or anything like that.. That's not great product..