

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/more-than-a-party-funding-app>

James Beshara, co-founder and CEO of Tilt, recounts meeting his fellow founder, Khaled Hussein, and the initial doubts he voiced about the frivolous uses of the mobile-friendly crowdfunding platform. Beshara explains how the everyday usefulness of the app serves as the gateway for people to crowdfund more meaningful projects as they gain savvy.



## Transcript

Drive down to Austin.. And by the end of it, three hours into this coffee, from 7 PM to 10 PM.. By 10 PM, the coffee shop is shutting down.. And this guy, Khaled says, all right.. I'm putting my two weeks notice tomorrow.. And I'm going to quit and join you and build out this company.. But that is not how the coffee started.. The coffee started with a very stern, very strong-- one of our board members is back there.. I think both of our board members are actually here in the audience.. And they know how strong Khaled looks..

He's a pretty intimidating dude.. And the coffee started with this pretty jacked Egyptian guy that I never met before, arms crossed, saying all right.. Why am I going to quit my job tomorrow and help you build a crowdfunding platform for party buses and barbecues and bachelor trips? It was a great question.. Luckily, I had an answer for him.. But it was a great question.. And that question I mention in this story today because it's something we think about as a company all the time.. We, actually, put probably a profound amount of thought into that question and why we're building what we're building, how we're building it.. The answer that I gave him is the same answer I get in an interview or something at the Tilt quarters right in San Francisco.. And I told him, look, version seven of these things looks very different than version one.. And they have to look very different..

Version seven would be something like Facebook.. And it was about six months prior that it was the Arab Spring.. So it's just convenient timing.. But I was able to say version seven of Facebook is powering 14 nonviolent revolutions, two of which afterwards became violent, but 14 nonviolent revolutions in the world.. That was version seven.. Version one was an application for voyeurism and exhibitionism on a college campus.. I remember my freshman year when it launched.. It really was just, what did your friends do last night? Which cute girls are in your class on Tuesday, Thursday? And it needed to start that way because it had this everyday, this daily utility in our lives when we started using it.. There are many social networks launched.. And coming from the social space, coming from the nonprofit space, I made note of every single one of them..

And they were all dead on arrival because they didn't have that frequency, that daily use, that utility in people's daily lives that Facebook had.. So in telling him that, I also mirrored Tahrir Square.. He's from Cairo and Alexandria.. So I was able to say, look, when people wanted to protest the government in Egypt, they went to Tahrir Square.. They went there not because the government said, OK, this is the designated area for protest.. No, they went there because that's where people already were.. So if we focus on building a crowdfunding application that's very accessible, kind of bite-sized-- one way that it's been described is kind of a Twitter of crowdfunding-- then it's going to get a lot of people on the platform.. The first time you use it might be for a group birthday gift.. The second time you use it might be for a tailgate for the game on Saturday.. Third time you use it might be for a neighborhood cause, but you're just going to love the platform, the product..

And you're going to get more and more ambitious.. And the 17th time you use it, it might be for running for mayor.. We've had one of my favorite Tilts of all time was a guy came in, starting using the platform.. Saw his friend using it for a softball league.. And then he used it two weeks later to collect money for private patrols of his neighborhood in Oakland.. And I joined the campaign because it was so cool.. And literally the first line on the Tilt was enough is enough.. The crime in Oakland or our part of Oakland is so high, it has the largest, the highest mugging rate of the country.. And it's only \$8,200 for four months of private patrols, just someone in a car and a flashlight.. And we can see if that will help the situation..

I pitched in to that Tilt, which the guy came across it because of a softball campaign.. And I pitched into that Tilt because I thought it was so cool.. And I don't think the guy knew.. And he sent out a newsletter two months later after the first month of the patrols.. And the newsletter said that they had cut crime by 46%.. They had set up a Tilt, and in 24 hours had collected \$82 from 100 households-- 24 hours-- and had used it to cut crime by 46%...