

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/why-joining-twitter-made-sense>

Jeff Seibert explains the initial doubts about Twitter's offer to acquire his second startup, which delivered crash-analysis reports to mobile-app developers. Despite its rapid growth and potential, Seibert says an acquisition made sense because of exact alignment between his team's vision and that of Twitter, where he now serves as senior director of product.



Transcript

What's interesting, of course, is among our big apps using us, was Twitter.. And Twitter became obsessed with the product, put it out in both their iOS and Android apps.. And we were going along, they were a happy customer, things were great.. And all of a sudden in October of 2012, so about a year after we had started, we get a call from them.. And they say hey, have you guys ever thought about working for Twitter.. We're like no.. I'm like why would we do that.. We have a great business.. The product's going gangbusters.. We're really happy..

We have a great team.. I don't see why we would go work for Twitter.. That doesn't make sense to me.. And they're were like OK, OK, well great chatting, and hung up.. And that was October.. In December, they call back.. And they're like hey, we really want you guys to come think about working for Twitter.. At the very least come out and meet with our exec team and we'll actually fly you out there, because we were in Boston at the time.. We started Crashlytics in Boston.. And we're like OK fine..

But remembering back to the lessons learned, we had to do this very, very carefully because we had no interest in selling Crashlytics, that was not the goal.. We needed the team to stay focused.. We were in pursuit of our B round of funding, which was going well.. We had started charging for the product.. We had a ton to build in order to scale up the team and the business, and so we couldn't let this wind up being a huge distraction that didn't pan out.. So we came up with a plan.. This was December.. We threw the team a holiday party on the 18th, we gave them all these spiffy jackets, and on the 19th my co-founder and I secretly flew to San Francisco, and we gave the team that week off.. And so no one knew were out here.. And the 20th, we met with Twitter..

And this is actually from Jack Dorsey's conference room.. Ironically he was not CEO at the time, but he did have a conference room and so we're meeting with them there.. And asking them point blank, why do you want us to work for Twitter.. We have this trajectory.. We're building developer tools.. We don't understand how that meets with a consumer product.. Why would these two-- and like and by all means, you can continue to be a happy customer, that would be great.. And what really struck us was Twitter's nuanced understanding of the mobile space.. And you gain this perspective from being one of the largest apps.. They had a very clear vision of how they saw mobile developing over the next five years, and the different products they would need to build in order to be a permanent factor in that ecosystem..

They also were very, very conscious and aggressive at reinventing their developer platform.. And so if, I don't know how much you remember Twitter history, but Twitter was deeply popular with developers in the early days and there were tons of apps, and tons of things built on top of Twitter, and then in 2011 the company had made the decision to sort of pull that back a little bit and discouraged people from building clients.. And that had frustrated, in fairness, a lot of developers.. And so here in 2012, Twitter had recognized that, and wanted to go and sort of reinvent their image for developers.. And Twitter is an extremely, it's an incredible platform for developers to build on today, and they wanted to go and make that a reality.. And so this got us more intrigued.. So now we understood that this wasn't simply they needed to own a crash reporting tool because they used it, this was that they saw us as sort of a beacon of this new wave of developer tools, that developers had fallen in love with at a massive scale on mobile, and maybe we could build upon that to do more things.. And so they asked to see our roadmap.. So we show them a rough roadmap we had.. And this is the actual slide..

And so we're doing crash reporting.. We wanted to build a beta distribution tool.. We wanted to go into analytics, and then way down in the future we wanted to do some ROI or monetization stuff.. So move further up the stack from developers, to product marketers, to at marketers, and sales and so on.. And that was the long path of the company that we had been pitching.. And as we started talking with them what blew us away is that this was almost exactly what they wanted to build.. And so we made a few tweaks to the roadmap but largely it was identical.. We inserted a Twitter SDK.. Twitter didn't have an SDK at the time and so we would have to go build that, and that was great, and fine.. But otherwise the roadmap was basically the same..

And that blew our minds.. We had such complete strategic alignment that they basically had painted for us our own roadmap that we had been working on internally.. And we were like wow this becomes deeply compelling, and we could leverage then Twitter's brand and notoriety and their willingness to build all of this and offer all of this for free instead of charging for the tools as a way to very, very quickly scale up the platform...