

In this episode, Alan and I are joined by Greg Goodall,

co-founder and Chief Commercial Officer at Awal Adventures

Limited. Hi, Greg. Hello. How are you? We're fine. Yeah.

Great. Good to have you, Greg. Yeah, it's a pleasure to be

here. Thank you for joining us. So you are the co-founder and

Chief Commercial officer at Awal Adventures Limited. Whoa. What's

that all about? What's very boring?

Tonight, yeah. So Long story short, A will does two things.

We have a media production arm where we do all sorts of types

of anything to do with moving imagery. So it can be video

stuff. We also have do still imagery as well in in photos and

we have a number of photographers who work for us.

With the video side of things, we've worked with likes of

American Express, with bear grills, we've done stuff with

BT, we hold retained.

Retainers with major charities such as the NSPCC. We also work

with the Royal Air Force Memorial Fund, we've worked with

the Army Benevolent Fund and we we do that sort of stuff. So.

On the other side of the business, we have what is

effectively a tech arm to the

business and it's actually that

part of business I'm here to
talk to you today about, because

about 2 1/2 years ago, we were
funded via the UK and European

Space Agency to the tune of
actually at the time about half

a million euros.

To.

Integrate space assets into what
we do. So what we do on that

side of the business is we go to
mass participation, sports

events. There are things like
marathons, half marathons,

triathlons, that sort of thing.

And we take pictures of people

at those events and then we sell
them the pictures.

So two years ago when we when we
used to do this, we're pretty

relentless people in our
business, said three directors.

We've got nine employees.

We used to go to these events,
take pictures of people at those

events, and then we would
literally rush back up the road

so we could be doing an event
that's in London. We were rushed

back up the road having had 4040
photographers out taking

pictures of say, 15 to 20,000
participants would get back up

the road. We'd sit down in our
office, put a load of SD cards

down on the desk and be like, Oh

my gosh, what do we do now?

We've got to try and get these all online. So then we would

upload those pictures, we'd get them online.

And it would normally take about 48 hours and that was all well

and good and as soon as they were online we would then be

like right now we have to link the people in the pictures to

their numbers.

Um, and then use the finisher list to try and marry up who

that number is and that finisher and then get an e-mail sent out,

generic e-mail to. Then people would come and find themselves

by searching for a number and they might get two or three

pitches. And that was basically the the workflow that we used to

do. So was that the standard model across across the

industry, not just with you guys around the world? That was,

that's the way it works. Yeah, that's the way it works. It's

really interesting one because.

Some people would just go, you know what, don't really care how

long it takes. So it would take like a week. And they really

focus on every picture. So they go through every picture. They

make it really nice and try and work on quality and sell the

quality factor. But it would
take a week and by the time you

get those pictures to people,
they're not bothered. We would

try and find an intermediate. So
we'd get all these pictures

online. We would personally come
and sift through them really

fast, but we'd send the pictures
to be tagged in in places like

India or Pakistan and and that
that.

A major data entry houses, and
that poses some interesting, you

know.

So commercial sustainability
questions because we would get

toured around these data entry
houses and literally on Skype at

the time, but then you'd be like
Umm this person. I really

believe this person. So some of
them you just literally go, I'm

not too sure I believe you and
we'd find another because you

just don't know who you're
dealing with when you're doing

that because you can't. The cost
of physical flying out there,

that's carbon you carbon issues
and all that sort of thing and

environmental issues going out
to cheque these places. So you

just have to work with. And then
also you don't know what time

you're gonna get all the
pictures online to be able to

get them tagged. So you'd have

to work with different.

Data entry houses in different parts of the world to make sure

at that time when you need them to be on literally physically

data entering.

You you'd have to do that. So it was a bit, it was a real

complicated thing and the major, major factor as to why we needed

to approach the European Space Agency via the UK Space Agency

was that.

The faster we got our pictures online, the more money we made.

That was literally, that was literally the case. So we

approached the European Space Agency through a demonstration

project which actually believe it or not this gentleman he sat

here right now was was involved with. I remember the very first

time I met Alan, actually I was, I was in Daresbury where we have

an office. It all has two offices. We've got main bulk of

personnel work out of Lancashire Place called Place Kirkham in

Lancashire.

And then the tech side of the business operates out of Cytech

dansbury, which is incredible sort of innovation hub if you

like, with incredible people and lots of great networks. And that

network is actually for a

gentleman called portlaw.

Randomly put me in a room with you and was like explain what

you're trying to do.

My office faces that innovation centre. My desk remember him

calling me over and I was like what are you talking through

exactly the issue there. Yeah, but how can we. Well, yeah. I

don't wanna take steal the Thunder from telling the story

exactly when there was, there was literally two things we were

like we would need to get these pictures online faster because

we genuinely every time we get them even like half a day faster

we would make more money, a considerably more money. So is

this. So that data and that correlation was something that.

Again, was that known across the sector or was that something

that you guys had figured out? Not something we really figured

out, I mean, I think, but I think everyone.

I don't know, I mean I would have thought so. Most people

around the sector would probably realise that actually the faster

they get them on the more money they make because but the but

the barriers to getting it faster are just too big and too

expensive. So the things, the situations you have is like for

instance you go to any of these major events, so.

An event with 20,000 plus people, you turn up to that

event, there's 20,000 people running, but then you might have

10 to 15,000 people just in the start line. Then you have

another 10-15 thousand people on the finish line. What that does

to critical infrastructure such as the cellular.

Ava, so you can't even get Wi-Fi. Actually, you try and

get. We used to go beforehand would require these places and

we would physically run a cable from private cafes because we

went to the other big ones and none of them were very helpful.

No one wanted to take responsibility of charging us

for the Internet that day. So we would go to private cafes, we

would run a cable out of the out of the cafe and we'd have a

little Wi-Fi hotspots. So we were trying everything we could

to try and get these images online and nothing really

worked. It was just, it was an absolute nightmare.

Um, so, so firstly you're trying to get images on into the

Internet into the the get them online basically in a very

contested environment. So that's really one thing that's really

difficult. But then secondly,
you really.

You need to be using like AI
sort of mill and a bit of an

edge computing really to be able
to get this, this, this data of

who these people are. So when I
say I'm talking about optical

character recognition, optical
character recognition, talking

about facial recognition, I'm
talking about pose recognition

as well and using all those
different things to be able to

identify somebody really
quickly. And then you then have

to, you then have to put them in
place because you need to

understand where they are as
well. Can I rewind slightly so.

In that circumstance, yeah
you're not doing that once you

get the pictures back to Kirkham
you're doing that on the camera

as as it's happening. Is that
right? Is that. Yeah. So I guess

I probably just I'll probably
start again to make it really

really simple. So when we when
we realised that we had this

major problem and we sat down
with you and you said that

sounds like something that space
could help, we we needed

connectivity and we needed to
also stamp these images with.

GNSS data so time and location
to assist us because we played

around with AI before, hadn't really had the funding to be

honest to get it to where it needed to be.

And so we worked out that if we.

Integrate, integrate space assets in the form of Satcom and

at that time it was Japan. So not the best thing and not the

best connectivity in the world, right? Because everyone forgets.

But literally two years ago the world changed when Stalin came

on the scene from a space point of view.

This was just before that point. So we were using Kaban sat, so

we'd use that. That brought up its own issues. But we were able

to use it and get solid connectivity all the time when

we used it, as long as we have a shot South. Then we also use

GNSS, as I say. So time and date, just for clarification,

that's global navigation satellite systems. Thank you.

GPS, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And and time. Time is really,

time is really important factor in this.

We integrated the AI, we integrated some ML and we

integrated this bit of computing at the edge and what that did

was it brought us this.

Ability to upload, upload these

images and tag them live. So we

spent about three to four months
really going at the AI and

concurrently we worked on the
connectivity issues. How do we

get around the fact that Kaban
really works better on like if

you're into your space and
stuff, it works better on

streaming and we're trying to
upload images via something that

works more of us is more based
on a stream sort of thing as

handshake processes and all this
sort of stuff. So actually we

have to work out how do we sort
of.

Around that and and make it
really effective to be able to

deliver an image to the
participant.

Which is of a sufficient enough
resolution that they can look at

on their phone and it looks good
quality.

But then also be able to be able
to use that that picture to run

our AI on in the cloud and do it
all, do it all like that so.

What we did is we ended up
coming up with a solution. We

were like we need a rugged
computer so we're going out

looking for these rugged
computers and and we couldn't,

we we were we were like really
struggling to find the

computers. Everyone we found was

like literally like you know a

couple of Â£1000 for a ruggedised
computer, military grade

computer, you need to use this.
But actually what we actually

did find this all like working
around problems right? The one

we found was it was a computer
designed for toddlers so.

That's the question because
basically the guy was like show

this demonstration like fell on
the floor and it was like, yeah,

yeah, all right, got you and it
had enough. It's a big panda. It

was almost like that. Yeah.
Well, it literally is like, it's

like Fisher Price toy, but it
actually was really good. So we

were like, OK, so is military
grade stuff and these ones are

like Â£200. So we're like, we'll
have that. And we made that

work. So that was one of the
first little bit of like

creative thinking around the
problem and then we had. So you

never took that to see Alan
then, obviously.

I saw it, but it just doesn't
look like it just when it was in

the box. So we ended up with
these this box, which is imagine

a big Peli case. We we put in
that box, you put computers, we

put fans and we have to have
batteries to power computers,

batteries to power the fans,

battery to power the cameras as

well. Cameras are also an interesting these are like the

camera cases, weren't they? Like you see photographs using all

these different compartments? Yeah that's what.

Essentially off the shelf, correct technology and solutions

to yeah, yeah, hardware, yeah, off the shelf hardware, yeah,

the magic was really happening in going on the edge with that

computer and then what we're doing in the cloud.

And then and then this box was huge. It was a huge Peli case

box. And then we would literally go to a marathon or half

marathon. Then we would hand these boxes out to people and

it's hilarious. You just be like, right, here's your box and

you give this box to a photographer. And this

photographers are artists. They're really good. You know,

they're incredibly creative individuals who you give them,

they're really good at what they do. Some of these people are

extremely competent in bad weather. So they've got like the

wet kit on there. They're ready to handle anything because you

sat out there taking pictures at marathon or half marathon or a

big event.

You sat there for hours so we would have these boxes, and you

just see the face go you sorry. You want me to walk around the

marathon course with this box? And we're like, yeah. And

they're not doing it. And you're just like, oh, gosh. So yeah,

it's OK. I didn't mind it. I used to be in the TA back in the

day. I just love this this big old blood.

Bag on the back and carry it to where it needs to be, put it,

drop it down. But it wasn't really, really not very

scalable. You know, you can't really scale this quick. So we

were like how do we make this product a bit more scalable? So

we finished that project with the initial project we did with

ESA and at the end of that project we had achieved

everything we wanted to achieve. We initially said we wanted to

get the time from Click to ping. This is a terminology we use

click of the camera to the ping of someone's phone.

We said we wanted to get that time down to.

We wanted to get it roughly down to within 5 minutes.

And we actually managed to do that consistently at that point

in 12 seconds. So at 12 seconds, we would deliver the picture.

After taking picture, somebody would hit them in 12 seconds. So

from 48 hours average, yeah, sometimes as much as a week,

yeah, down to 12 seconds. And we're talking massive scale. So

we are talking. So some of the events that we were doing, one

of them in particular is like 40,000 person event.

That event had 40 photographers at it. Each time the runners

were going past them and they go past them in blocks for about an

hour. They would be shooting 5 inches a second. So that's a

massive scale that there's a lot of imagery, a lot of image data

coming through within that image data. There's loads of

information as well, which is really, really interesting

stuff. So to be able to do it and to queue it and to make it

work that fast consistently was it was a really big challenge.

But we did it and we got there with this there with that, and

then we went to.

When we did that, we were like, yeah, great, ESA were really

happy. Yeah, UK space were happy. Can I, can I ask again,

can I rewind slightly and ask about that ESA project? Right.

So I remember sitting down with you and you took me through all

the challenges you face and I said, well, I've thought about

satellites and at that point you had and you couldn't quite

figure out. So the actual ESA project.

What was that and and and how did you as a sportsman

photography company convince the Europeans and UK space agencies

to give you hundreds of thousands of pounds to, you

know, you weren't going to go we're going to build you a

rocket. Yeah. You know, complete it seems left field to what

people would normally think of as a space. Exactly, exactly

through that. It does, but it isn't. And I realise that now

and I thought exactly the same as we all do when we first come

into this world. It's amazing world of space.

So it's a demonstration project and and it's an open call. So

you could you you were able to apply to them and say hey look

we're really interested in integrating space assets into

our workflow.

We went to the space agency and said look, we, we, we really

believe that if we can integrate this, we can one expand our

business.

We will shore up and guarantee the jobs of people in the

northwest of England, which was a big thing actually. And it has

done. You know, we've gone through the most horrific times,

as we all know, with COVID and coming after the aftermath and

our business is solid, you know, so things are good.

And that there was a number of different factors like that that

had to be had to be achieved and actually a huge process that we

had to go through.

Around paperwork. Now I am useless at paperwork so.

You know, thankfully we got this. This guy called Rich who's

our chief operations.

A chief operations director. And he he literally is a legend when

it comes to. He did, actually, he did an English literature

degree here at Lancaster. Ohh nice. So, yeah, there you go.

Yeah, well, I did outdoor leadership, what was formerly

known as Preston Polytechnic, now known as You.

And yes, and Alan, when you first met Greg, what how did you

manage, what was it that was going on your your mind when you

were thinking this is a space business? He just doesn't know

that he's in the space sector. Yeah, it was that it was.

As we've said, you know 3/4 of

the space economy is the use of

data from space assets in non
space sectors, right? So my job

at the time when I was ESA
business applications Ambassador

for this part of the country was
to go out and find companies who

either either knew they were
going to use a space asset or

had a challenge that could be.

You know solved by space and you
were kind of in that you know as

I said you tried your dad did
your own go doing satellites and

it hadn't quite worked and and
and it was just that that

challenge because you'd gone to
disbury and you've gone to to

portray law and had gone what we
know this is a challenge and if

we and this is what it comes
down to with you guys want which

is what nailed it for me.

You knew?

But if you could get those
photographs in the participant

and faster you would increase
your revenue and that was the

core of us that was a solid
business argument that you could

prove that was the core of it
for me. So you've gone to

Poland, got we've got these
contacts to help us in some way

and from that it rolled on
amazing. I mean and literally to

the point of which is unheard

of, right. So we have done,

we've had a contract change notifications since then because

we've just moved it further on.

Moved it further on within your project for effect. Yeah. OK. So

we had a contract change notice where we were like this isn't

scalable. So back to the scalable situation. We were

like, OK, we've got these boxes. Photographers love what we're

doing and the capability of it. But actually what we're getting

is that photographs actually wanted to be able to have this

available to them when they do their own little races. Like

they're smaller, smaller little things. That was one thing that

we're hearing. But then we also, you know, very clearly hearing

on the days that photographers like, I'm not carrying that box

anymore.

Can you pick up in the van and we couldn't because the roads

closed, bloody bloody blah, it's a nightmare. So we went

back-to-back to them and we're like we really need to make this

more scalable. It isn't currently scalable. We can't

scale this because a was really passionate about being a tech

company. We want to, we always use the core technology, so we

want to be the Gore-tex that powers these events and allows

photographers and allows events to be able to give the best

possible customer experience to their participants and that

means living a really good quality.

Picture really fast and making sure you deliver to the right

person SO3 pillars of what we stand for in this business is

speed, accuracy and quality.

With the quality we can physically like, even when we

were even in the box, big box stage, the petty cash stage, the

quality one, we were literally doing live quality control on

these.

Images, we've got somebody watching. So we had one case,

I'm sure I told you this before, but we had one case when

somebody, because out of 10 photographers, due to the nature

of what we're doing, they're brilliant, they're all very

professional. But out of 10, one will have a bad day. And it's

not them going wrong, it's something out of control

happens. Like the wind blows and you get a stick on your lens.

Like it's really weird. We had that stick on the lens and the

guy didn't know, but he's taking images and he's got stick on his

hands and you're like, how's that gone wrong? But the images that are coming out.

Unless they stop and look at the back of the camera and there's a

lot of pressure on these guys and girls who work for us. And

so unless somebody's backing them up going, hey you're

exposure is a bit wrong, this is a bit wrong and we do it all the

time now and we literally just ring the photographer and it's

straight to them. We go, yeah sort that out and they sort it

out. So we don't need to be running around and trying to

make sure it just helps the management point.

But anyway, so we we got, we got to this stage, we had these

petty cases really all very good. We're already seeing

better revenues come in, but we like, we need to get this

faster.

We wanted to try and see if we go even faster with the whole

processing of the imagery so and we also wanted to be able to

make it scalable but at the same time.

In that. When we built this delicate solution.

Low Earth orbit was really starting to rock'n'roll. And so

this is the low latency stuff

like Starlink and one web. And

yeah, so we actually were probably some of the first

people in the UK to receive a Starlink Starlink transponder.

That's great. Technology might be wrong. It's ground station

anyway. It's a very simple device, unbelievably cool thing.

And when it turned up, it was literally like, we're cutting

around with it and people like, what the hell is that? Just

like, watch this.

So that made our Click to ping time when we, because we

integrated that very, very quickly, so simple. It just

really helped. Never a problem with connectivity. You never

have to point S it does point out vaguely at the sky, don't

you? Yeah, it's a game changer. Like it's a game changer.

Comes game changer, but so that that helps. And so I'll Click to

ping, then went from 12 seconds to five. It's now 5 seconds. And

so again I repeat this from sometimes as long as a week,

usually about two days down to less than 5 seconds.

Scale. Scale. Yeah, 10s, hundreds of thousands of

photographs. Everyone's getting it. And now all say participants

can choose to send to get those pictures delivered to their who

they choose to see so they can have their mum, dad, sister

watching them when they run around.

Um.

So that's really really fun and really cool. But then what we

also realised is that we needed to, like we said Miniaturise

this. So we went about going ohh as sort of a techie company

might do. We were like, it's going on as reply, let's do all

that stuff. So thinking Raspberry pies, they were cool

at the time and then we're like hang on a minute, we are. We

spent a couple of weeks doing and we're like we are barking up

the wrong tree here going for Raspberry Pi, everyone has a

phone, we've got to make this work for phone, but then there's

processing power that's required to do what we were doing on the

little laptop that can be thrown on the floor for toddlers.

And we were like.

How do you get that into a phone? And the answer was to

just strip out loads of stuff but then make it leaner so the

whole tech just got crushed down and made it much more exquisite.

It works really, really well now.

But that tech now sits on

phones, so we now just deploy

our photographers with their phones.

We own those phones, we give them the phone, they take it

away and use it.

We're now in the process of getting to the point where it's

on. There will be very, very shortly going on to the App

Store. They'll be able to download the app, anybody,

anywhere in the world, and they'll be able to run their own

pictures and photos. And so the business is just continually

growing.

So you've gone from.

This bag's too big.

And we've got, and again, we've got to scale it down to the

point that it's now an app. Yeah, snap. Yeah, there's

literally literally an app. So all you need to make this work,

you actually don't need, you don't need.

You don't need a camera. Or do you just use your phone if you

really wanted to. So for those event organisers who, because

what we've seen after COVID, really interesting within this

sports world is that we've had.

The major, major events.

Have done well major and so like

talking London Marathon

brilliant event those sort of
these sort of big events

Manchester Marathon you
Manchester Half Marathon you've

got bit Brighton Marathon which
is what we do and they've all

done well for numbers people
want to do it because

prestigious the smaller events
which which would run locally

and they were like cost Â£30 or
maybe less Â£20.00 and you just.

Or you can book on like a week
before, Umm, we've seen them

boom. So they've become massive.
So events are like 4th, 2000

people Max are now 5000 people
really weird. Which is posing

all sorts of problems for
infrastructure for those people.

But they've just gone pop 'cause
I think it's to do with people

not wanting to pay and then not
get their money back or you

know, not risk of weird stuff
going on in the world. And then

you have the middle sort of
events.

Which seemed to be struggling
quite a lot if those if it's not

highly prestigious, the events
that sit in the middle are

really struggling to get the
numbers through, which is really

interesting and interesting
thing. And I don't know whether

that's because.

What what the? The way the world's gone or whatever it is,

but it's just something we've seen just polarised it in

options. Yeah, it's really interesting. It's really

interesting from aspect perspective because we sit

there. So what we want to do is enable anybody who might have a

really small event, medium sized events that need help. So we

want to be able to help those event organisers and those local

photographers who just want to get stuck in and be able to take

pictures at these events and then support the event or

whatever it might be and make money and generate revenue. We

want to be able to support those people so commercially.

Is one of the main drivers for these events.

The photographs you know if if one of these midsize events can

offer five seconds Click to ping, yeah, is that what?

Is that a means for to save them? Would would they become

more attractive to. Well if you think about it, so you're

participant is basically your brand ambassador to for your

support and your event, right? So. So you then use the power of

social media which whatever it might be, we don't know which of

these could be on TikTok. They could be on Instagram, they

could be on Facebook, they could be on Twitter, they could be any

other new wonderful Snapchat thing, whatever it might be.

They will choose to share that with their followers or their

friends and family and if you can turn.

That runner into your brand ambassador to their friends and

family, that's only a good thing, isn't it? A marketing

opportunity which is which in the past was not really

exploited. We used to say if you can feel it in your legs the

things still feel in the legs will be able to sell photos. But

now it's all about getting those pics to people quicker and with

the the tech it has, it's got better and better and better and

now we have we can deploy more photographers out on the course.

It's lighter, it's quicker. It's just quickly deployed the last

major event we did the last major.

Major event we did, we sold to over half of the field. That is

unheard of. We sold to half. Half the participants bought

pictures. Half. That is never ever something that happens. And

they began one picture, a couple of pictures, all of them. They

buy a bundle really. So there's.
Oh, wow. OK, yeah, yeah.

That can happen. So all the
events do vary, but this one was
a major event, so big scale.

20,000 plus event so that that
event.

We had, we were I think we were
doing at the beginning it was

like 20, 2020 pounds if you
bought pre. So it's also like we

do, we do it disruptive model to
sell. So if you buy pre, you got

£20, you get £20 or whatever it
might be. We'll always talk to

the event organiser as well and
ask them what they think the

price should be and we'll work
it out. They all vary and then

if you bought afterwards be £40,
but it was actually 51%.

You shot.

Do you know, just listen to what
you're saying and how much your,

your business has really grown
and how you've diversified and

really thought about the tech
behind. It's so impressive. But

what I want to know is about the
man behind the business as well.

So you know how did you get into
this field because you talked

earlier about being in the TA
yeah, so.

A long, long old story I guess,
but I'll go for it.

There's three directors with an

awl. There's myself, there is a
guy called Rich Bennett already
mentioned the chief Operations
Officer we then have.

Matt, who's our CTO, who's our
Chief Technical officer, so Rich
is.

He's incredibly literate guy,
former Royal Marine.

Used to work for BAE Systems All
in all places was getting to the
point about.

10 1/2 years ago when we set the
business that he just wanted

something more exciting to do, a
bit more fun to do, and we were

in a position to start a
business.

I am.

Was I? I say I did a degree in
outdoor leadership, basically.

No, no, no. In Penrith,
actually. Was it?

Rich with it Lancaster I was, I
was in, I was in what you plan

at the time.

But yes, and I say obviously put
up tents for a degree, but their

leadership theories and context
leadership, which is really

interesting, that's always,
always and it was at the time it

was only degree course I could
do had leadership in the title.

That's why I did it.

Now I will get thoughts gonna

join the army and just to do

running around like a lunatic
for the rest of my life, but

didn't.

I then worked for little. I was
an area manager for a little. I

managed 4 Central London
supermarkets for them when it

was sort of really starting to
get big. And then I went to work

in the Middle East and I worked
out there. I worked for the

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and I
worked there for three and a bit

years. And then I said what was
that putting up tents, little

sort of.

So I worked. There was a student
citizenship programme that I was

involved with, which is
basically college age students.

Basically like preparing them
for life in the big wheel, the

big world. Just like it was like
leadership, tolerance,

perseverance, it had some great
values. It was a really cool

course. So we just ran a course
on that basically and then came

back from that and I was also in
the point where I was looking,

had a little bit of money saved
up and I was ready to set up a

business. So I was talking to my
real good buddy rich. He was at

the point we're ready to go and
then our friend Matt who we we

all met through through.

You sort of military Connexions
in a way. Matt he he he was a

former EA games developer back
in the day. He's also run like

multinational websites,
international websites from

multinational company.
Originally they were called

Pilkington Glass and then they
got bought out by NSG Group,

which is a major, major, major
company. So he was doing that

for a very long time, running
their whole online presence and

then.

We were just like we sat down.
We were at an event, actually.

We were going to go to an event.
We're going to run an event.

Sorry.

That was called Total Warrior.
Actually it's just the road here

in chap. What was that was a mud
running event, right. So there's

there's four and a half thousand
people there. We are like we

should. We've got an idea, let's
come up with a great concept

because it was a time when
Facebook was really take flight

as well. We're like easy. We'll
fight them, we'll have them.

Have it. We'll have a bit of
social media. So we actually own

the trademark, the social
network for the outdoors,

because we thought we were going
to set up a social network for

the outdoors. And that would be
like because we're all into

outdoor sports. Rich is really
into his, his running fell

running. Matt isn't all things
watery. He's like a yacht master

in his spare time. I fly planes
in my spare time. And so we like

goodbye land, land CNN, and
there's all went and next space,

yeah, that's it. Is there
anything we can do?

So we needed a rocket. Actually,
we don't need a rocket. He needs

a rocket.

So yeah, so we are like, right,
let's let's set the social

network for outdoors, then we'll
how do we get people to use this

site, you know?

And Facebook was just starting
to do, it was really just

starting to go. So it wasn't
that amazing at that point. So

we were like we'll go to this
major event, we'll take pictures

of people and we'll give the
pictures away for free and we'll

get people to the website. So we
create this really buchi

website. It was a rific, but it
was kind of workable. So you

could put your picture on. The
idea being that if you're cool,

skydiver your pictures on there,
another cool skydivers will be

there.

I will say it. And if you're
into kayaking, you're cool. So

you'll put them out there and
other cool people will see it.

And this was our idea, but
actually that's just trying to

be cool. Yeah. Yeah. So we
learnt a lot about the human

psyche at this point actually,
as well, which I'll come back to

you in a second. But we'll take
pictures and we'll make a video

and we'll get everybody.
Everybody. And we'll try and

film as many people as possible
and all want to see the video

because it's cool. And that
would be that. And then we sat

down on that day. On this day,
we went to this event we carried

out.

We said we're going to do. We
took pictures everyone. We got

all our mates. We just got mates
like 10 mates. It's so funny.

Some of them had the most
useless cameras as well. They

might as well have been the wind
up once. They might as well have

been. And we and we, we, we we
literally just, just we we took

all these pictures. It took us a
week. We made this video edited,

took it a week, but then we put
them online.

And then when it when it went

online, it was it just the

message went out Facebook and
we've got 2000 unique views

within 5 minutes and it's just
the websites went.

The website can handle it. And
then they should have scaled

this up. We should have done
this, should just like, right.

Couldn't get it back online. Got
it. And then occasionally we got

it back online like a week
later. And we're like, right,

OK, right. And then it got
hammered again because they put

a message on Facebook and it
just went flat over again. So we

couldn't keep this thing out. We
were just, so there's a clear

market there, right? So we're
like, they're onto something

here. This is interesting. But
these people are coming and they

never came back to the website.
And then we realised that

actually.

Pictures. The interesting thing
about pictures, it's about

vanity. So. And no one likes to
admit that. But it's true.

Because when you you don't want
to show off to another cool

person, you want to show off to
somebody else to make them think

you're cool. That's the thing.
You Facebook brilliant for this

because you show something
you've done on Facebook and

everyone was like, oh, that's good, or they're interested in

what you're doing. This is from the vanity side point of view,

from the pictures. It's really very interesting because.

You don't really want to show that off in this specific group.

You'd very rarely see like some of these running groups, them

showing off their own pictures. But all these individuals are

sharing their pictures on their Facebook for their other friends

because again, they love and they're getting that, that sort

of nice positive affirmation that they've done something good

and that will make, you know, maybe they've worked hard,

they're losing weight, they've, they've trained for this. So

they deserve that, that positive, that positive

reinforcement from their friends and family.

But interestingly enough, on the day when we when we set up the

business, we were like how are we going to know we've made it?

This is a great. This is great. This is absolutely true as well.

We're sat down after we we've been around making this video

running around like idiots. The Sun was going down, we're having

a beer and we sat on these deck chairs and our rubbish little

stand that we had, which is made of an old rubbish tent. And we

were going how are we going to know we've made it? And I was

like, right, well, we'll be flying around the world doing

really cool stuff, making videos and we'll work with Bear Grylls

because that's really outdoorsy. And.

One year and one day, this is nowhere to believe. We were late

getting to an air the airport. We were rushing really fast to

get to the airport because we'd just come off a shoot with bear

grills and in it was down down South and we were rushing to the

airport. So it was a part of the Bear Grylls Survival Academy

thing and it was an amazing, it was an amazing thing. But we

were rushing to the airport to go film adverts from American

Express, which literally every video. We made six videos across

the world and each video got two million impressions.

By the independent website, it was actually like, but we

definitely haven't made it.

Yeah, I made it. But you had gotten to that site but didn't

dawn on. Yeah, one year and one day as you run through the

airport, did you go hang on? Yeah. Now that literally I was

in there. I was in the car and I went, we actually said we were

going to do this, and then we're saying we're just like, it was

absolutely amazing. We literally kept cutting around the world

with this suitcase because that was the sort of the story that

we're the creative part of these videos because one of us would

carry the suitcase and said we didn't have to fill ourselves.

The suitcase would travel around the world.

We would show people there a gold card experience and the

suitcase would move around. I still have a suitcase in my

house, phenomenal. And it just had all these lovely labels on

it. What we had to do so.

Go to the cloud Forest and Ecuador serial. OK, did that.

And then we went there, filmed ocelots in Ecuador. We were

filming like Lions in Botswana and nearly got killed by one of

them. Actually, really, really dangerous moment, but we did all

this wonderful, weird and wacky stuff.

That was just amazing, really, through lots of South America,

lots of South Africa.

So, so again, I'm trying to process this right, so you've

started off.

Essentially as a tech company,
yeah, that's what you're trying

to be trying about social
network tech company that falls

over. But what you've now
developed is what grows from

that is a business doing
essentially content video

content which then grows an
offshoot of and it's still doing

very well, thank you very much
and offshoot of that.

Is to do mass.

Participation, participation,
sports events, at which point

you realise what's holding you
back and then that forces you

back into the tech side of
things, yeah. And then you end

up working with the European
Space Agency, the UK Space

Agency. Now you've got a space
business.

That is wild, isn't it? Yeah,
it's an interesting journey.

It's been great and yeah and and
any like thoughts had you ever

thought that you would ever be
or owning a space business like

was ever in your mind?

To be very honest, I remember
the very first time. We keep

going back to this guy, Paul
Taylor. He is an amazing guy.

You need to go there.

OK, that'll be a 6 hour podcast.
Yeah, he's a very good talker,

but he's also brilliant at what he does. So you know, he he's a

fabulous guy. But he said to me you're a space business. And I

was like what? Well, you know, we didn't think we were. And I

was like, yeah, we could be our best. And he's like, no, you

definitely are. I remember Alan came in the other day and he was

talking to me about a pub chain that got funding because they

needed to know they're in the middle of nowhere. They needed

to know what, how much beer they poured and.

Their space business and I was like.

Right. Let me complete this and then I got it. But then actually

it's phenomenal. So what we did, what we're doing now again like

we're back, back-to-back. What we're doing is we're rolling out

this app making, we're making the customer experience just so

much more interesting like the we're now at a point where yeah,

you can now share.

Your images of your friends and family. And before we used to

run our network, we used GNSS data in the background, but now

we're putting that forward.

We're creating it into a map so

you can physically see where your loved one is when they have

the pitch taken of them. So you

can literally go right. You can track them with our app as well, so that easy to do and so it's good. The sports app just keeps going from strength to strength and it's doing well. So would you describe yourself as an?

An Astra preneur.

I would do today after I found out what one of those is, but

before. No. Yeah, yeah. Or would you rather be a space on and

start again? So would you rather be a space entrepreneur or an

Astra preneur? They're the same thing. But what can I think

more? Space entrepreneur, I think is quite cool. Yeah. I

don't know. It's just some of the old school. What do you

think? I don't know. I like astronomers. Efficient, isn't

it? It's kind of on brand, but yeah, space entrepreneur. But

then there's no space.

Entrepreneurs in Star Wars look at these bandits. Do you know? I

mean, there's that. I wonder whether Astra in there is a

bandit because they're fine asteroids around.

Ah, OK, yeah, see, OK, so I'm going to get dead sci-fi now. So

in the opening, in the opening of Babylon five, they talk about

being a home to half a million aliens, entrepreneurs and

Wanderers. So that
entrepreneurial.

It does have, it does. It does
have a rooting science science

fiction for sure but fabulous to
hear something that is

absolutely science fact and that
is commercially. Oh yeah flying

yeah yeah yeah now. So it's
great.

Right. I've got some quick fire
questions for you. Or maybe

they're not that quick fire, but
if you could go to space, would

you, yes, 100% why?

I've always been into, I've
always been into aviation.

Firstly, it interests me, you
know.

And what a great thing to tell
your grandchildren. And actually

they'll all be in space anyway.
They're like, yeah, you know,

we'll do that anyway, which is
almost feels like that we're

starting now already. You know,
like it's like you should do

Starling. Yeah. Been using it
since it, you know, yeah, it's

amazing how it's changed, I
think John Glenn said, he says

something like the market
progress is when the absolutely

phenomenal becomes mundane.
Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, OK, so I've got a quick
quote I'm going to read to you

and you can tell me what this

means for you. So Professor Carl

Sagan once said, who's an
American astronaut? Astronaut

even once said the universe is a
pretty big place. If it's just

us, it seems like an awful waste
of space.

What does that mean to you?

But.

I think.

And and infinite. Well,
everything is possible, right?

So everything is possible.
There's no such thing as,

nothing as possible.

And I believe that entirely. You
just have to look at the

situation with.

Quantum quantum time.

Quantum physics.

And.

You know, theory relativity. The
two exist, but they can't exist

together so therefore everything
is possible.

Which is a crazy thing. We could
go down a massive, massive black

hole here.

Sex, sex, so to speak. But if
you just look at that, anything

is possible, right? So I think
time is an interesting one

because since I've started
working in the space.

Case sector.

You start to understand that time doesn't.

OK, it is weird and like out there, but time doesn't exist.

It's just a concept that we created. Yeah. And so when you start to.

They start to look at this sort of thing, it's.

Anything is possible, it's just really far out and a bit crazy, but it's true. Like physics.

Physics.

Is a very interesting thing and not every law in physics is

unbreakable. I believe there's so much that's that's that's

that's very interesting. But yeah so for me I think yeah

there space, space is infinite loads as possible. I believe

there's probably people out there walking around living in a

parallel you know a parallel dimension probably even to run a

racist images faster.

I know someone can call it. So yeah, if you need some help. I

lied when I said that was the last question. But is there

anything before we wrap up that you would say to anyone

listening who is thinking about, you know, setting up a business

and would love to have a business in the space sector?

And yeah, I think you need to have a vision. So things I've learned in business, the most important thing I've learned in business is selection and maintenance of the aim. You hear our story and it's absolutely wild and crazy as you rightly describe it. And but you have to have a selection and a maintenance of what you're trying to do. You have to also continually come back to your strategy, which is something we do quite regularly. So within our strategy, we have our strategy, we have a mission statement, we have where what we're doing and what we're trying to do.

In.

And our line of operations as well of what we're doing within that. But ultimately it all comes back to one thing and if you can keep everyone focused on that one thing.

And justice, do one thing and do it really, really well. You'll

be highly, highly effective. That's my one thing I've learned

in business and I'm still not very good at doing that. Thank

you. Any other questions for Greg Allen? Don't think so. I

mean, that's been fascinating to sit down and thanks for walking

us through that because there's

some really interesting, not

just an interesting story, but
some really valuable insights

there. Yeah. And what can be
learned from leadership fairly

as ours as well served you well,
hasn't it? Yeah, yeah, there's a

great quote.

Which is managers do things
right. Leaders do the right

thing. Yeah, that's something
I've always, I've always

believed in. Well, that's a
great note to leave it on. Thank

you so much, Greg, for your
time. It's been lovely. And

thank you, Alan. Thanks for
having me.