



**Jake** 02:18

Thank you, Andrew for coming on. And joining me on the show today. I really appreciate you taking the time. You are the co founder and CEO of skiff, a privacy first end to end encrypted email collaboration and file sharing product. And some of those features are pretty new. I used the product couple months ago and was basically using it for like Google Docs with comments. And you know, checking out the website, in anticipation of this call realize you guys rolled out email, the whole thing looks looks a lot different. And it's very cool. I'm looking forward to talking about things. But before we get into all that, I would love to start by just getting your background and hearing your story. For those who don't know you and those who don't know skiff and, you know thoroughly as you're going to start the better.

**Andrew Milich** 03:03

Absolutely. And yeah, thank you so much, Jake for having me on. I really appreciate it. So I guess not unlike many of your guests, I think I started programming when I was really, really young. And it's just for generation after generation gotten much, much easier with programming toys and classes and all sorts of stuff. I started really young probably, you know, around five years old with stuff related to first robotics. And so I got introduced to the basic concepts of, you know, building robots that competed simple tasks with programmed them to follow lines to move around, and to just basically move things from one place to another. But, you know, I basically then started doing my own engineering projects for the following decades and ended up just really enjoying building things in the physical world from flight simulators to small autonomous cars. You know, eventually that brought me to do computer science competitions, robotics, and just my own engineering a lot when I was a teenager, and in high school, I grew up in New York City. And then, you know, that facilitated a whole transition to studying computer science at Stanford, running actually Stanford's hackathon with skiffs co founder he kind of planned all of our design back a few years ago, we had no idea we would later company together and then eventually into permanent programming jobs and internships at SpaceX and all sorts of other awesome places. So definitely really early roots in general programming. But I really kind of ended up following this passion more towards you know, human safety and security and collaboration with design.



**Jake** 04:43

Yeah, it's interesting. I've heard certainly a lot of you know, guests on podcast started coding quite young. I don't know if I've heard five years old though. That's pretty that's pretty early working with robots and things like that.

**Andrew Milich** 04:54

Well, I truly mean it. It gets easier and easier, like if you you know, gone into Apple Stores. You see, you know, elementary school coding classes, and there are these amazing pushes by code.org and other organizations to get computer science in every US elementary school. And so it's pretty awesome to see that kids are getting exposed to all of these concepts. And I think with the right few fundamentals of, you know, how does a basic programming language, how would you write instructions in it, I think that is can be a game changer, not even giving you years of advanced knowledge, but just making you kind of much more curious about it from an early age. So I think that's awesome. And who knows, I don't know if the entirety of American society needs to be engineers and programmers, but we're definitely seeing a lot of kind of young young students and kids exposed to it, which is cool.

**Jake** 05:43

Right. And so I guess, growing up in New York, just as like an aside point, you know, that's a pretty unique experience, I grew up somewhere near New York, and sort of that was like, my main city, though. And I always thought it was a bit funny to like, you know, my closest city, like, if you live in, you know, Ohio, or something like your closest city might be Cleveland, let alone somewhere outside the US in some totally remote place, but just happening to be born in like, New York, or around New York, it's like this weird thing where your city is, like, the biggest city in the world, think that at any, like, you know, that like help your development at all, or impact your development? Anyway?

**Andrew Milich** 06:24

That's a really interesting question. I'm curious if you have thoughts on the opposite answer, you know, being outside of city. Um, so what I



like to say is, you know, 8 million people live in New York, so someone has to go out there. And, you know, me and whatever other students doing, finding all sorts of things to do. And I think it just, you know, it definitely played some role where I was exposed to a lot of people and parents and things that were either technical, or, you know, really kind of computer science focus. So, you know, my dad was an engineer up to a PhD, my mom, you know, ended up getting involved in a lot of the engineering activities me and my siblings did, and she, you know, doesn't work in engineering, but has some technical experience. And I would also see that in, you know, friend's parents who were engineers who, you know, worked in finance, or who, you know, worked for the city, or worked for, like major shipping companies, and airlines, and all sorts of stuff. So there's definitely a lot of exposure to that. And finally, I think New York just has everything. So, you know, I remember going to like little robotics stores and, you know, collaboration clubs when I was in elementary school. And so if you basically want it, you can kind of find it. And so, I think that that definitely played a role. Yeah, I don't know, I think, you know, I'd love to hear what are your thoughts on people who grew up? I know, you've talked to people all around the world, but I'm wondering, like, do you feel like there's a theme of big cities just having these opportunities? Or is it just, you know, diverse, and everyone finds their own path?

**Jake** 07:55

Yeah, it's an interesting question. I think, it seems to me that it's mattering less and less, obviously, growing up in a super urban area is a bit different in a lot of ways than growing up in a very rural area, sort of, regardless of where you're from, but people all over the world are just plugging in online, and you know, who they follow on Twitter is just as important as you know, who their neighbors are. And obviously, you know, from a very young age, like before, you sort of plug in online, although people are plugging in earlier and earlier, your parents have a larger impact and your friends and teachers and parents of your friends and, and things like that, but it seems to me that the playing field is evening out a bit and that will be probably really good for people in developing countries, or just generally internationally and maybe not so good for for people, you know, like us born in the US or you know, even on the on the more



extreme side of things people born and are growing up around San Francisco and New York and things like that. But for now, I think I certainly consider it haven't been helpful to have sort of grown up in this area a lot going on a lot of people very ambitious and you know, fortunate to have some, some good network and things like that. And I think the same sounds like it was somewhat true for you. So yeah, I think long story short playing fields evening, but still, it's sort of advantageous to grow up in any place with like a lot of energy and, and people doing interesting things. Transitioning on the point of interesting things a little bit. You talked about working on flight simulators, I think you said and autonomous cars. I saw on your website, there's like some sort of video in the background. What do you know what that is? Can you tell me a little bit about that? If you remember?

**Andrew Milich** 09:45

Yeah. So I worked on a bunch of different honestly very autonomous vehicle probe focus projects for the first 20 something years of my life. So I built some little navigating GPS guided cars, you know, nothing like I Waymo or Zooks, or a big car like that, but just something that could navigate around, and then eventually got really into just kind of autonomous aircrafts, high altitude balloons, and stuff that would just go really high in the atmosphere and take pictures. And so this was around the time, I also had the awesome opportunity to be an intern at SpaceX and work on their crew capsule. And so I think that's just an awesome context for doing engineering, you know, you're thinking about this device that's going to go up into the air and to be, you know, exposed to all sorts of different temperatures and pressures and altitudes and conditions. And so, you know, doing engineering, when it would affect, like, the safety of the device with the occupants is just so meaningful and deep. And I think in many ways, it it has led to a great transition to skip where we think a lot about, you know, our users and making sure that their every single piece of their personal information is owned by them. And when they communicate, they own their own data, and they can speak freely and work privately. And I think that same mentality that you think of when you're doing engineering in such circumstances really feels quite similarly.



**Jake** 11:08

Yeah, and we'll definitely talk about Skiff quite a bit. It's interesting. I'm curious, like, maybe we'll get to this in a little bit. But working on, you know, you worked on, like you said rockets at SpaceX and autonomous cars at Xerox, I think, well, let's just address this now, I guess what, what's so important about privacy and collaboration and all of this that sort of convinced you after years of working on things like that, you know, and like the hardware world, to go and focus all of your efforts and all of your energy on on starting this company in particular?

**Andrew Milich** 11:43

It's another really interesting question. I think, in many ways, they're super similar, where we're basically seeing, you know, this transition to increasingly digital lives. And that's been happening for decades. But I think it's more true now than ever, where we store so much more personal information on our phones, or on our laptops than anywhere in the physical world, and in our wallets, or in our homes, or, you know, in our cupboards. And so I think it just feels like we're almost at this decision point where we can either have a world that preserves and protects those freedoms in the digital world. So we have communication products, and social media products and news products that respects kind of these fundamental rights that we like to think we have in the physical world, like people don't know everything about you, they can't search your house on demand, they can't, you know, look at everything that you write, and you say to other people on demand. And basically, we can either build those into the digital world, or we cannot. And I think that is just a pretty strong mandate, for me personally, having worked on all sorts of deep challenges and human safety on autonomous vehicles, and also just spending time abroad. And, Jake, I don't know if you've worked in other countries, or you've had so many international guests. But you know, just having the experiences of being in other places and thinking about where your data is going and who has access to it. I think it you know, it made me really think that the freedoms and the privacy that we can build into the products we use are really special.

**Jake** 13:14



Yeah, it's interesting. I didn't put that together previously, but just hearing you talk about it actually does seem like there is a common thread between, you know, like rockets, autonomous cars, and email and collaboration. And that sounds like it's safety, basically. And obviously, it's like, you know, informational safety, or I guess it could become physical safety if information becomes sort of a physical threat, but obviously, much more physical and like the rockets and cars space, but safety nonetheless, and seems like something that, that you're certainly passionate about. When you talk about, you know, seeing what's going on internationally and not being a part of the inspiration. I understand that actually, a seed of the idea for Skiff or some part of it came to you on a bus ride in Siberia. Can you talk about you know how you came up with the idea in the first place? And why that sort of international perspective helped inspire what what you're doing today?

**Andrew Milich** 14:12

Yeah, so this is actually around the end of 2021. So before, before COVID for the pandemic, but still, you know, a really interesting time for anyone. Oh, 2019 You're right.

**Jake** 14:27

And I'm five. Oh, my

**Andrew Milich** 14:29

gosh, yeah. So yeah. And of 2019. I had graduated from Stanford, I was basically on this kind of graduate student exchange trip to Russia. And, you know, I was basically trying to collaborate and work together with people all over the world, you know, people who were on that trip who we were doing some research together with colleagues back home, and just on my own personal projects and information. And I think, you know, the context of being in another country as opposed to just another zip code. made me really think about the devices, I use the, you know, what's going on how is my information transmitted across the internet. And I was definitely an early adopter of signal a few years back and reasonably familiar with the private email space. And so I think I just, as an engineer, got very kind of personally obsessed with that problem. And so then, you know, being in around the world, you know, in Russia and working with people and thinking about time



zones, and internet service providers, and you know, undersea cables, and where all your data is going, just maybe you want to do much more of a technical deep dive, you know, how is our data transmitted, how is it stored, who has access to it, and then just kind of seeing this whole private ecosystem evolved. So we see private search engines, private browsers, private messaging, apps, private, everything, private social media apps. And I think, for me, personally, just working on the future of work in that context was really meaningful, and really exciting. And then just also kind of very personally impactful, where I didn't know at the time, but it's so common, you know, skip has people we work with in so many different countries every day, and, you know, families communicate across borders, and friends talk to each other, across all these different, you know, cables and ISPs all the time. And so, I think it's a problem that just feels like it's only getting larger, and that there's just a far broader consumer awareness out.

**Jake** 16:20

Right. And going back to part of what you had said, previously, I thought was really interesting, I think I'd read something that you wrote along these lines as well. I always, you know, subscribe to the idea that, like the future is not set in stone. And we can do things to change the trajectory. And you know, of course, in a lot of cases difficult for one person to do that, or, you know, even a group of people to do that. But there are certainly people who do it. And there are groups and teams and companies who do it. And I think that right now, you mentioned, like, we're at an interesting time, where we're shifting extremely fast into this digital world, where we had previously spent, you know, most of our time, all of our time, you know, in the physical world, and what that digital world looks like and what the defaults are and how it's built and how privacy is built in or, or is not built in. It's sort of you know, it's undetermined, it's up for grabs, and to have like a very sort of narrow time to try to sort of impact that and move things in a more privacy forward direction. How do you think about before we get into, like, how shift is actually, you know, playing a role there? Just how do you think about the development of like, the digital world, and what a future could look like, sort of on both sides of the extreme in a world where



that privacy isn't built in versus a world where things develop more accordingly, with with what you're trying to do with gift?

**Andrew Milich** 17:51

That's tough. I think we're, I think we're seeing privacy become a necessity across the tech industry. So you know, many of your viewers, and we both have probably seen Apple's iPhone privacy campaign. So you'll see them basically marketing, the new iPhone, as, you know, privacy as kind of a banner leading feature. And interestingly, around the world, you'll see the same from Samsung, and you'll see it from, you know, Android and Google in certain contexts. And so basically, I think privacy has become a necessity in the US and the EU. And just in general, that said, I think the technical format takes is super variable, and all over the place. So in some cases, you'll see that, you know, from Apple, they basically had a multi year campaign around, you know, email proxying, and hide, you know, hide by email and password management and the way photos are stored and all this stuff. And I think in others, you'll see it more as a marketing technique, or an adjustment to privacy policies or a commitment to just some sort of, I don't know, marketing campaign almost. And I think that's generally really, really exciting, because it also means that we see, these private search engines and web browsers and messaging apps take off. But I think it's also this turning point where we could see privacy just kind of be done lip service by governments and by big tech, or we could see, you know, a combination of consumer pressure, new regulation, and just kind of corporate necessity in these, I don't know, in competitiveness, to basically make sure that this becomes a real push. I don't know, what are your thoughts? And have you seen any of those ads around the world or any of those campaigns?

**Jake** 19:29

Yeah, I've, I've seen the ads and I get it, you know, sort of resonates what you're saying that privacy is important as a headline for everyone but what's actually behind the scenes and how private the thing actually is versus paying lip services. Not only unclear but also very difficult to understand for people, you know, unlike you who don't have like, the technical background to look into things and understand like okay, what's actually going on by And the scenes here. And so for me, like, basically, I care about privacy, I think it's





very important. But if I'm being realistic, I sort of, you know, it's not my number one priority, right? If there's like a two out of 10 product that I can use for, you know, pick whatever as my phone, right, like, as my iPhone or whatever, I'm being like hypothetical, but there's like a two out of 10 product that's just like, really terrible to use. And, but you know, it's totally private, everything I do every note, I take every text, I send, whatever, and then there's an eight out of 10 product, and they do the marketing around privacy, you know, what they're actually doing is like, a five out of 10 on privacy, just being realistic, I'm going for the eight out of 10 product, because I use this thing every day, you know, several hours, whatever. And it's just people are practical and sort of make these trade offs. And so I think one of my concerns is that privacy sort of sneaks up on people as this thing that everyone cares about, in theory, but people don't care about enough in practice, like myself included. And you know, in a, in a world that goes fully digital, I think it can be hard to appreciate. You know, just exactly like what the cost is, like, there's certain things you do, and you don't realize the cost until later. And it's too late to put the genie back in the bottle at that point. So I mean, certainly I've tried to build this brand, and this podcast and everything, pseudo anonymously. So there's obviously some, you know, privacy thinking behind that. And that's a good example, because it's one of those things where, when you start out, you know, on Twitter, or doing a podcast, or whatever it is, no one cares who you are, you have no followers, no one reads what you're writing, no one listens to your podcast. But if you aspire to develop a brand and grow a following of some sort, then eventually, you know, theoretically, people will be following you and will be, you know, they'll be seeing your identity if you're sharing your identity. And so I just sort of think from day one, like, well, if it's going to be too late to put the genie back in the bottle at that point, and I do seek to build a brand of some sort, I need to start that from day one, even though it's like actually kind of harder to build a brand without a face and things like this. So it's something that's in my mind, I'm not on like the far end of you, no privacy conscious people by any means. But um, probably, you know, 70% there or something like that, and hoping that people like you come and build good tools and sort of make them just as good to use like going back tonight to add 10 and eight out of 10 Phone example. You know, if they're to eight



out of 10 products, and one of them's blatantly better at privacy, all opt for that one. And it seems like skiff, you know, it's still very early days. But playing around with it seems just as friendly as notion. Email seems basically better than Gmail from like a UX perspective. And so I'm hopeful that people like you sort of built in the right defaults into society that makes it like a default private world.

**Andrew Milich** 23:05

Yeah, I, you, you hit the nail on the head, I really appreciate that. I mean, I think you also said it perfectly, which is my general take is that I think no two out of 10 products can really succeed today, or at least succeed at scale. And regardless of any other Wingdings or features you add on privacy being one of them, I just think bad products are unusably bad. And, you know, in certain ways, we are doing everything we can to make skip the best product possible, you know, really simple, intuitive, easy to use, easy to log in and works on all your devices. It is a similar workflow to products, you understand similar design system stuff, but we also experienced bugs that I understand would make people just, you know, very frustrated. So that's an app doesn't load, or it loads much more slowly, or it feels like you're getting a subpar experience. You know, people just won't use your products. And I think the world we're trying to get to is like the one you said, basically, which is where you know, our product, or we're living in this kind of this ecosystem of eight out of 10 Plus, you know, where all the products you can choose from are really good. And then some of them are private. And I think privacy can become a really strong tiebreaker in that sense, but, um, it seems like we're generally on the same page with that, and hopefully we're getting more to that point.

**Jake** 24:29

Yeah, so let's talk a bit about, you know, what you guys have actually built here. It's been like you said, I guess we're just over two years since I think he founded the company, q1 2020, just from COVID was starting to hit in the US at least. And I mentioned at the top of the show, I started, you know, my first interaction with Skiff was maybe a couple of months ago. I was, you know, using the Pages app for or you know, the pages probably opt for basically like a G docs type



experience, commenting on, on like a blog or something like that, like a drafted blog post. And then, you know, since in the last couple of days went on, and it's a whole different thing, you guys have mail, there's G Drive equivalent, but obviously, you know, in a privacy first way, so it's sort of like those three main products, which very loosely are like Gmail, G docs and G Drive, I'd say that g Docs is, you know, your guys pages product is more akin to notion, which in my opinion, like both of those are, are better than G docs and just more plugged in, you can do tables and sub pages, and all these things like that. It's more comfortable for me at least. So how did those things like sort of come about, because when I had seen it just a couple of months ago, was just pages.

**Andrew Milich** 25:52

So I think generally, the skip mission is to empower people to collaborate, to communicate and to work together more freely and more creatively. And so in that sense, I think going beyond just written collaboration and notes was super natural, and always part of the picture. Also, I'd say, the way we architected things, technically, if you actually think about what goes into building a collaborative product, a lot of those things carry over really nicely to a drag product and to our mail products, from text editing, to sending things to multiple people to building an antenna encryption, a lot of the fundamental CAC and the privacy was basically built in from the start. So I think building an email product and a drive product aligns so deeply with our mission. And also, I think, with the way people just communicate and collaborate online today, you know, we use our mail inbox to store attachments, which basically function like a drag product, where I'm sure we all have attachments from years ago that we need to keep searching for. And, you know, we're constantly messaging, documents and notes back and forth, and meetings and colleagues. And so basically, people more and more are looking to have an all in one ecosystem of products they use. And you see that in all the products you've mentioned, expanding to offer more, you know, an all in one workspace, or a whole suite of products for you and your organization. And basically, it just became more and more of a necessity to think about how we can kind of cover more people's use cases. And then also introduce them those use cases to privacy. And yeah, I'd say that's a start. I don't know any where where do you think's the most



interesting part to dig into the technical side? Or the strategy? Or what are your thoughts?

**Jake** 27:37

I guess for, for me the strategy probably of starting with Docs and going to email and drive. Just as like one small thing that I was thinking about, you know, anyone who creates an email with you guys, and I understand a lot of people have, since you just recently launched their addresses, you know, their email addresses@skiff.com. And that's like, sort of like free advertising in a way, where people start to get all these emails instead of you know, slowly, but surely, you're getting less emails, from@gmail.com, or whoever's website.com and more from at Skiff. And there's this whole sort of network effect of, if you're working in the pages, you know, or you're sharing and file, you're inviting people into the platform. And one thing, I think that's pretty, pretty cool about what you guys are doing is basically that the whole thing is very usable and very functional as a free product. And you only really have to start paying for it if you want, sort of if you bump into the wrong limit, like you know, you want to share this with X number of people, or you want to do this and that, then you might have to pay for the Pro Plan or whatever. But I think it's, you know, just comparing it to like notion or something. It's a lot more useful before you have to pay. So I guess, you know, that's a lot to download, maybe, but just your overall thoughts on strategy. And if any of those pieces have sort of been intentional and thought out?

**Andrew Milich** 29:00

Definitely, I guess I'll split it my thoughts into two categories. One, I think is the business strategy. Other is just the product vision and the company vision. So on the business strategy sense, email has some really strong context like the one you're talking about, which is the virality of having an ad skip.com. I think the benefit to people who like getting the email address that they want, like if you could get Jake get skip.com I make no promises, but

**Jake** 29:25

I try. I try that I couldn't get it, but I try. Yeah, so



**Andrew Milich** 29:29

we're rolling out shorter email aliases shortly. But basically, the value of getting the email address you want is really high to people, you can kind of get a little more ownership over your identity. And, you know, sharing with other people, like you said, the ads gift.com the email signature, you know, the extra storage space you can get by referring people. There's just these really strong benefits to having an email product that people like because then they can, you know, share with their friends. They can get more value out of it, and they can have an email address that they you know, that's much better than some first name last name. and six numbers@gmail.com or something. So that's why we were thinking about it. I think on the vision side, email also, just more and more is just such a private corpus of our lives. And tell me if you disagree, but I think it's up there with messaging or anything else, you know, we have years of family records and medical PDFs, and education and everything else jobs. And so I think it just is really intuitive hits the nail on the head when you think, where's my most private information, and a lot of it will come back to your email. And so kind of getting people to understand why skip mail is useful to them. And it's because we basically escape have no access to anything that people share, right or communicate. And that just made a lot of sense. But what are your thoughts?

**Jake** 30:47

And I definitely agree, lots of sensitive stuff over email, particularly, you know, companies email like things internally and things like that. I'm curious, have you sort of intentionally, at least not started with if not entirely avoided, the more you know, non email messaging space, like WhatsApp and signal obviously, there's already products in that space that are working, whereas like, I know, WhatsApp, I use WhatsApp, I know signal, I use signal. I don't use a privacy preserving email. I use notion I use G docs for pages. So these are and same with Drive. So these are areas where like you guys are offering a private alternative to something that I currently use a non private product for. Whereas the messaging would be just sort of like, you'd probably need like a pretty strong suite that someone's already using in order to like, convince them to come on and use your messaging as well. But did you think about maybe going for a product like that in the early days? Or how do you navigate that?



**Andrew Milich** 31:49

I think we had a pretty strong personal connection to building more of a workspace product just in my personal background, and our CTOs personal background, and, you know, communicating and collaborating across borders and thinking a lot about that. But I think we could also, we definitely thought about the context of private messaging to because in some ways, you know, think about the future of email, email could end up looking a little more like messaging or feel a little less formal five years from now. And so we see that in some of the email prototypes from Gmail inbox, which I think is shut down at this point from Hey, email, and just from other email products that are out there. So it's definitely something we thinking about. Generally, I'll also say, I think there's just really good products in that space, we've worked with the CTO of signal as an advisor and gotten some help from other people on their team. They are just an excellent product that I think has led the way in a lot of the algorithmic design around anti encryption with intend encrypted video calls and group messaging and all sorts of things. And so I think they've just done a really fantastic job on building a product. And so in thinking about what we're kind of uniquely excited about, and also uniquely good at, you know, building skip as a workspace products made a lot of sense. But you know, the strategy is interesting to like with messaging, you can get such strong network effects once people start to adopt your product, but have such immense kind of startup challenges. As you know, it's you in an echo chamber of not a lot of people on your bad product today. And I think we've seen that, like I imagined, you know, if you've been on signal for a few years, you probably have gotten a lot more of those, my friend is on signal now today than, you know, a year and a half ago.

**Jake** 33:24

Yeah, no, definitely. And I like those products. I mean, they're, like I said earlier, like we talked about, you know, they're eight out of 10. And there's no reason not to use them. From my perspective, I still end up using SMS for whatever reason, but you know, with certain messages, but basically anything that's like important is on those now. And I think there's basically no trade off. So sort of speaking of the, you know, trade off situation, and people going from



potentially one, one product to another. We talked a little bit offline about, you know, the just the stickiness of people getting comfortable with whatever products they use for work especially. And, you know, convincing them that it's worthwhile to shift over to Skiff whether it's for, you know, from notion to Skiff for pages, or Gmail to Skiff for mail are ideally all of the above. I'm curious, like, on the one hand, what sorts of things you guys have done to try to make that an easier transition and sort of remove friction from the process for people? And then secondarily, I don't know if you have insights into this, but like, where people are coming from mostly like imagine on mail. It's probably mostly Gmail just because of how dominant is but are you sort of in the early days converting most people from like, other you know, and and encrypted email services and providers or How's that looking in terms of like, where people are coming from?

**Andrew Milich** 34:52

Yeah, he's a great questions. I think on the first on basically switching cost. How do you get someone to consider using a new product and eventually make it there? Their main product, there are large things that you can do to just build into a product and make that possible. So what I mean by that is, you can build an automated migration tool. So in Skype today, you can basically connect your Gmail or sorry, connect your Google Drive and download in all your documents, and soon all of your other files and then, you know, later your Gmail and import existing mail. And so you can make it easier for people to not have to kind of parallelize multiple things at once, if they already, you know, are interested in switching. So I think that's the first. The second is a bit of a pitch, I know you have a pretty strong technical audience. So it's one of the most technical, you know, immense, technical challenges, I think that's out there, which is email docs, collaboration, drive their products, people that use every day. And in some cases, for hours every day, you'll you know, you could check your email every single hour, you're awake. And so you're basically exposing yourself to an extremely challenging products surface area, like, you know, how's the refresh animation? How are the swipe innovations? How are the scroll animations? How's the load to refresh? You know, how's the in app mobile experience? How's the typing experience has the latency in the editor. And so I think all of those things start to compound when you're dealing with





the scale of, you know, basically, people are using a product many, many times per day. And that's something we are just working on all the time, you know, how do we make that easier for people to transition? How do we make our product better? And, you know, how can we get to use get for six hours? How can we make sure that experience is perfect? What was your second question?

**Jake** 36:30

We'll I'll bring back up the second question, if I can remember it, I think I have it. But I want to go further on that point for a second. When you think about sort of these experiences, people spending, you know, several hours on most of these apps, whether it's on their phone or on their computer, in a given workday. Obviously, you have various models to look at whether it's Gmail notion or the like, but were there things you just rattled off, like a pretty impressive list of things that that people care about and sort of features that people maybe don't think about unless you're building them? And but they do appreciate and recognize and make the experience better? And everything. I'm curious if there's anything in particular that comes to mind, where you decided to differentiate from what was sort of best in class, to try to actually do something even a little bit better than what people are used to?

**Andrew Milich** 37:20

That's a great question. I think we definitely have a really strong design culture. Our CTO, Jason is a designer, and I think has always basically done things from the ground up. So it's never been look at Google or look at notion it's, you know, what is the 30 year evolution in text editing and email? And how can we build a product, that's great. And so you'll see things like, you know, skipping the single page design, it's not paginated. And you see kind of Google moving in that direction. And obviously notion and Evernote and others already there, a lot of that is because people just don't really print their things anymore. And so Jason could give you a whole history about, you know, typography and printing and where that movement is going. But I think you would see that in our product in a lot of ways. And so a few examples that come to mind. Just some of the things we think about are like badging in the products, you know, around antenna encryption and security. So making it clear when a document or an email or person





you're talking to, just like you'd see on signal or on WhatsApp, you'll see something when you start a new email or conversation that, you know, shows you something about security. I think we also, you know, thinking through those things I talked about with like attachment storage, and the privacy and attachments and the privacy and sharing files, we thought a lot about, you know, having a distinct page and the email app where you can look at all of your previous attachments. And so I think that, you know, both carries through on this theory that we have of building a dry product where people can store and share files, but also that a lot of your personal files and data are stored in your email. And so that's another direction we've gone. I think finally, you know, you'll see this in the product over the next couple of months. But it's building a really cohesive, integrated workspace. And so all those workflows I talked about some time ago, you know, you're writing something in an email thread, you want to create a document, you're sharing a document where you're working together on, you know, in real time or asynchronously, you're going through comment workflows, a lot of those, you can just see build layers and layers on top, you know, inside an ecosystem. So like really rich notifications, really good back and forth really good mobile apps. And so I think, you know, something we are working towards more and more is just a really integrated workspace. I don't know, does that cover it? I think I skipped over all the tiny things you'll see like low time and you know, the refresh animations and swipes and scrolls. But I'm happy to go into excruciating detail there because a lot of that I think is where you go from the two out of 10 You're talking about just a new product that exists to like the eight out of 10 or the nine out of 10 from the products that a billion people use today.

**Jake** 39:41

Yeah, no, that was a great answer. I think you know, you know, you can trust sort of when when you see that people are doing the little things right that the big things sort of work themselves out and you guys are obviously thinking like extremely deeply about this. It sounds like your co founders, extremely design oriented. And actually, to that point, I think he's, he's pretty technical as well, right? You guys mentioned you sort of CO lead the hackathon at Stanford. What's it been? Like? You know, what, what are the advantages, I guess, of



having two technical co founders? Because not always that way? And, you know, how do you guys sort of play off each other, it sounds like he's a bit more designed forward. And maybe you cover more of like, sort of the business end, I'm curious, like, sort of how that that pairing has worked early on, and how you guys sort of play off each other's strengths and weaknesses.

**Andrew Milich** 40:35

That's also super interesting, and I think has changed a lot. And I wish I had understand exactly, or understood exactly how that would evolve over the years. But I'd say, first of all, having two technical co founders, I think, is a big strength. Like, at the end of the day, you know, something's broken, in the middle of the night, we're responsible, you know, as the CEO, CEO and CTO of the company, on and there was a point where we were the only employees in the company. And so we're both I think, you know, or at least like to think we are more than capable of fixing things, you know, in a moment of crisis, or something really needs to get redone or tested or explored, you know, we'll both jump in immediately. And so I think that's a big advantage, especially in a really small, early company, where, you know, you may not have as reliable a team, you may have really limited funding, and, you know, just having two people who are completely aligned and ready to build something together is huge. And so we would just code all day, I think more and more, you know, you're right, that actually that design mindset, more than a technical mindset has started to guide things where we need to make the right decisions about how's the product gonna look, what features are we gonna build, because there's such a mode of, you know, you're building a consumer product, and feature creep is the depth of your product or company, and you're not actually getting further enough to, you know, build something that people definitely want. So I'd say more and more Jason thinks about, you know, what are we building? What is the design? How is the product evolving to get to that eight out of 10 plus, and a lot of more, what I do is, I'm still very involved in engineering, but also with a lot of the partnerships we do, you know, we're collaborating with crypto companies and privacy companies. And then oftentimes doing a lot of engineering based on that, you know, changing the way our product, you sign up for our product or onboard onto our product or the integrations with our product. And so I think we're both super



involved with the engineering team. But I'd say overall, if you want a two year roadmap on, you know, where the product is going, I think you better talk to Jason and get some design perspective.

**Jake** 42:26

Yeah, no, it's really interesting. It sounds like a great pairing so far, for sure. You mentioned the crypto partners and everything like that, you know, it's very obvious when you go to the website that you guys are crypto forward, you know, when I went and signed up, again, signed up using my meta mask wallet, I think you can do it with phantom for people who like Solana more and a few other wallets as well. What was you know, I think you guys probably could have built what you're doing without leaning heavily on like, you didn't need to offer meta mask sign in. And then these various different integrations with crypto, but you decided to do so nonetheless, I'm curious, you know, why crypto basically. And, you know, I imagine that you're sort of optimistic about where the space is headed. But why did it become like a natural integration, not just like something to think about down the line, but something to really lean on in the early days?

**Andrew Milich** 43:23

Well, I'll give you the the kind of answer in terms of how we think about it in relation to the mission. And I'd love to hear what you think, because I'm sure it's come up a lot more in the last six months than the six months prior, or maybe it's it started to peak. But basically, I think we think about how it intersects with our core mission to let you know, enable people to work together and collaborate and communicate more freely and privately and effectively. And so when you think about that, crypto I think aligns so well with privacy in many ways, like your keys, your data, owning your you know, wallet, and a wallet is just a private key, just like you know, an encrypted email address. And so at the end of the day, the technical intersections are really high. You know, everyone who has a crypto wallet has a private key, and everyone who has a skip account has a private key, why not connect them? I think also just ideologically, they're really aligned, you know, people in crypto want to own their own data, they want to exist or like work with systems that are kind of free from human interference and intervention. And so, you know, with decentralized storage, and private custody of your, you know,



tokens or NF T's or your information, you know, owned by your hardware wallet, I think there's just as deep such a deep sense of ownership in the crypto ideology that overlaps so well with how we think about privacy and data ownership as well. So that's how we think about it. And, you know, happy to talk in more detail about the individual wallets or the storage or other components of that. So I think this is one of the most interesting, interesting things we do at scale.

**Jake** 44:45

Yeah, for sure. I mean, go ahead and sort of like keep going on the point. I guess I'll sort of help direct a little bit like you know, right now, you can sign in with Metamask and you get like an email that's basically your email address@skiff.com And I think the storage for the files is on IPFS. And like there's maybe some other integrations that I'm not aware of. But do you foresee anything in particular that you can talk about today? In terms of sort of, you know, doubling down on that, that integration with crypto and pairing? I totally agree with what you said, you know, like, there's, there's a lot of natural alignment there. So I'm curious how you're sort of going about putting it into practice.

**Andrew Milich** 45:25

Definitely. And I think you hit on the main points, and I'll talk about some of the things we see coming up. So the main premise and just building on Metamask login, for example, which was one of the first crypto related elements of Skiff is just that a meta mask wallet is just like a private key, you know, it's basically something you can use for signing data. So like we saw that transaction, or for encrypting decrypting, and proving you have access to something. And so that's basically how Skiff functions, you know, you're sending an antenna encrypted email or message to someone, or encrypting a file or a document that you want to keep online. And so using a meta mask wallet, all of a sudden with the kind of flip of a switch gives 3040 more million people every month who use meta mask access to a way to collaborate and work together and communicate with that same wallet, that same private key and that same identity. And so I think that's so cool. And also just so optimistic for the future. You know, for those who follow the history of private email with PGP, and all these ways of sharing keys, we've basically been trying to get people access to



more private keys for decades. And so if crypto and crypto wallets is one way of doing that, we are super optimistic. And so then I'll just kind of jump into the other product sides of this. You mentioned decentralized storage. Well, decentralized storage, you know, for certain people is super compelling, because you can basically publish your thesis or a blog and then just have it stored on a network that could exist forever. And I think IPFS has nodes in space, they have nodes in, you know, probably over 100 countries and just basically petabytes of storage on the network. And so if you want to publish something to a network like that, Skiff is a user friendly, simple and anti encrypted way of doing that. And that's something where we're kind of connecting the dots. So you go from, you know, Metamask, to a private key to end to end encryption, which you need some sort of private key for. And then now that you have end to end encryption, you can do decentralized storage, you can store it on a network that exists around the globe. And you can get a lot of those benefits of, you know, someone doesn't want their data stored on a data center, they can get, they can use IPFS. And so we think about it almost as these dominoes of reaching more people bringing more utility, and also just aligning with the core skip mission. And yeah, happy to go into more detail on each of those as well.

**Jake** 47:39

Yeah, I really liked the sound of that. And just to sort of clarify one point on the, the IPFS. I'm, you know, admittedly somewhat ignorant on on the on the subject, but it sounds like, you know, you'd mentioned obviously, there's the privacy aspect of not storing it with Google or whatever. But it sounds like there's another aspect, which I hadn't thought about as much of like, if you're storing it in a decentralized manner, it's more, you know, everlasting, basically. Because, you know, that's like one of the whole issues with centralization. Obviously, there's like the censorship issue when it comes to social media. But there's also like the risk that the centralized entity no longer exists, and X number of years is that sort of infinite storage, a part of the compelling nature there.

**Andrew Milich** 48:28

It definitely is to us. And I think it depends on your work style, or what you work on, that will make that more or less compelling. Like,



if you're, you know, you're working on publishing something that you want to exist forever, that will matter to you. Also, just, you know, as a future topic of exploration, there are a bunch of different decentralized storage networks now beyond just IPFS. And they all have really different properties around these questions, like, for ideological reasons, for, you know, network reasons, like the network wants the ability to remove or delete things. So basically, a bunch of people are working on decentralized storage, all I think with the same mindset of, we want the ability to have censorship resistant networks, that little live around the world, and they have different properties of things existing permanently, or, you know, for some time, and how you pay for it, and all that kind of stuff. So it's super active in development and in crypto in general.

**Jake** 49:16

Right. And so with that, was there any particular reason why you went with IPFS? At least for now?

**Andrew Milich** 49:24

That's also a great question. I think largely just from the team and relationships we had, they have a really large, stable and growing developer community. And so we got to know just some of the developers and Dev tooling that exists there, like hosting pages on IPFS hosting data, you know, having JavaScript Python go and other libraries to interact with their networks. And so I think it was just the maturity of the, you know, the developer product and the tooling and the community there that was really compelling to us. And so we got more and more involved with that, you know, exposure to more of their team or people who develop in the community and in their open source projects. And so I think just you know, Working with the team in the community was the biggest thing and, you know, getting getting us to build IPFS into our product, which of course is awesome, because we were looking at them as a developer product.

**Jake** 50:12

Yeah, no, that makes sense. I remember the second part of that question from earlier that we, we trailed away from. So I'll go back and ask that one. Where are people coming into Skiff from like, are they leaving a Gmail address behind or they're leaving notion behind



where they're coming from more, you know, privacy oriented emails, and you're targeting more of like, sort of that niche audience, or at least Nietzsche, audience from day one? Where are people coming from?

**Andrew Milich** 50:39

It's definitely both, I'd say, well, with Chino Hills, let's say 3 billion plus users, I think most people on the internet have had some exposure to it. Just generally, people who are exposed to a privacy focused email provider or messaging app, they tend to be, you know, more engaged users more engaged in the product or community or, you know, asking us more questions. And so we definitely see that just because I think they ideologically understand or researching this space more, but we have plenty of users who just come to us and say, I've been looking for a Gmail alternative, I've had this experience or this frustration, and, you know, I'm looking to move on. So it's definitely a mix. But I'd say people who come from experience in the privacy community tend to either engage more or know more about the product or, you know, have more feedback for us or interact more. Yeah, no,

**Jake** 51:29

that makes sense. So zooming out a little bit. And on a very related point, I think, maybe we'll make this last question. But, you know, certain people like on that point of where they're coming from certain people are coming from more privacy oriented services, others are coming from, you know, general public, they're moving from Gmail or notion, and they didn't, you know, use privacy for products in those realms previously, but now they want to, because they care about privacy. But basically, like, there's a whole world of people. And, you know, like you said, Gmail has captured billions of them, or Google's captured billions of them. And, you know, they may or may not be open to switching or whatnot. But basically, there's a bunch of people who care about privacy, you know, a lot, a lot. And then there's some who are, you know, seven, eight out of 10 on the spectrum, sort of like I am, maybe I'm underestimated myself, I'm sort of doing this thing. synonymously, I'm actually closer to nine and a half or something. But, you know, regardless, there's a whole spectrum. And like, there's somewhat limited number of people I imagine, at the far end, on the privacy side, and in the mainstream





sort of lives, somewhere in the middle. So I'm curious how you think about, like, you know, on the one hand, showing all the people who care about privacy, you don't have to convince that privacy is important. And more than just a billboard, like, it's actually you need the real deal. And there's sort of, there's sort of those people who are like, the easier targets for you guys. But then there's a whole world of people who like sort of loosely understand, you know, privacy is important, but don't really care that much, or whatever. And I'm curious, like, how much you've thought about approaching that overall market, and maybe starting with the people who care more and eventually convincing people, you know, why they need to care and things like that. Just any thoughts you have on sort of like that long term vision of bringing this to, you know, a billion people or whatever it might be?

**Andrew Milich** 53:20

Yeah, I think my overall take on the market is I think that people generally bias towards caring, or at least say they're caring. But I think like you said, they have, you know, very little energy or understanding or opportunity to do something about it. And so I think those people are really the people we need to almost connects most deeply with, at skiff, I guess to share a little more about that, you know, the people who already love privacy, they should be great users for us, you know, I think we built a lot of our product and our brand and our mission around connecting to them, you know, our privacy policy, our products, our blogs, the whole technical background, the open sourcing, all sorts of stuff there. But I also think that there are, there's almost a bifurcation where you can either dig more and more into certain privacy features that only a few people will use, like if we built, you know, certain types of encryption integrations into our product or, you know, basically certain features that not everyone would use, but maybe a small really privacy fanatic group of people would, I think we could actually end up losing out more on those people who are those five that attends they think privacy is important, but they don't really know what to do about it. And I think you know, the much kind of more important thing for us is to be that eight 910 out of 10 product, and then to compete head to head with privacy and owning your own data and protecting, you know, all your personal information is one of the biggest differentiating elements of





skin. And I think, you know, we had to build that in from the ground up. That had to be our core mission and vision because it's really different than the way things exist today. But I think the most important thing for us is being a product that you know, everyone can use and benefit from and can really easily understand, and I don't know what what are your thoughts on that? I think Do you feel like That is a different strategy. Do you think that's doable? What do you think?

**Jake** 55:06

Yeah, no, I think I was just gonna say I mean, you mentioned like, ideally, we become data to a nine out of 10 product, and you don't have to choose between privacy and sort of having a pleasant experience, you get both. And I think you guys are, well, on your way to that, you know, I encourage anyone to anyone who's listening who sounds at all interested in what we're talking about here, you know, go to skiff.com. Check it out. It's just like, we could talk about it all day. But you know, play around with the with the mail, get your email, sign up with Metamask, whatever, go and make a doc and or a page and, you know, see how it compares to whatever you're using for collaboration. Now, I think that to start, like you guys have been focusing not just on the technical back end, but also on the part that users experience and making sure it's competitive with anything else they could use privacy or otherwise. It's like super important, and there's always going to be switching costs, but at least you know, making it an apples to apples are better product. They're not switching just for the privacy, they're switching for the privacy and the experience. I think you guys are you well on your way and looking forward to using the product more myself and, and maybe taking taking a bite out of the switching costs and making the full move soon. But Andrew, it's been it's been great talking with you today and appreciate you coming on. I know we're coming up at the top of the hour, in addition to everywhere that I just told people to go on the website and things like that anywhere else that you want to point people to follow your journey and skiffs as we go forward today.

**Andrew Milich** 56:40

Now I'd say you really covered it. Thanks so much for having me, Jake. And as you mentioned, skiff.com is the best place and if you'd like to

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