



slack

VARIETY PACK

Episode 7: The Laid Back

Narrator: You are listening to the Slack Variety Pack, a collection of stories about work, life, and everything in-between. Brought to you by Slack. If you don't know what Slack is, head over to slack.com and change your working life forever.

On this episode, is this the ultimate job perk?

Speaker 2: Hubspot's vacation plan is unlimited. How long do you have to work at Hubspot to earn unlimited vacation? The answer is usually an hour.

Narrator: Being fake famous on the internet:

Anil: I have this network that looks as if I should be at least a mid-level hip-hop star or something, but I'm just like a middle-aged nerd dad who spends all his time typing on a computer.

Narrator: The Silicon Valley version of the game, "Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon":

Speaker 4: "Nicki Minaj to Ashton Kutcher in Six Easy Investments"

Narrator: First, Pinterest is more than food porn and fashion:

Slack Variety Pack? Yeah. Cool. Okay. "Making work less work-y."

For people with creative callings, your mojo doesn't stop flowing after you leave the office at five. Hobbies and side projects become a natural extension of your creative self. Meet a guy who's chosen an unlikely platform for his unique brand of creativity and humor:

Will: My name is Will Hall. I'm from North Carolina originally. I've been in New York for ten years. I'm currently the executive creative director at an agency called rain.agency. I've been doing these sort of "ironic" I guess you could say Pinterest boards for a couple years now. I always talk about, "It's a joke for one person." That person in this case is my sister. I would always imagine her mornings. She would get on Pinterest and do all the things that you would expect you're supposed to do on Pinterest: wedding cakes, all this kind of stuff. I just loved the idea, the joke of her, I know that's how she started her Saturday. I would then just spam, here's 50 prison shanks. It would appear in her feed. I'd just know that that's funny.

Narrator: Pinterest, huh? Why that platform?

Will: If this stuff lived on tumblr, just as an example, that should be on tumblr. That's not particularly remarkable. It's obvious. If you're on Pinterest, where it definitely should not be, and you're spamming prison shanks in a feed, that's a

wrong place. I think in advertising, that's something we talk about a lot. I emphasize all the time with my team is, "Right is wrong." You have to be the right kind of wrong. To quote Seth Godin is that idea about, "Your job isn't to be right, but it's to be remarkable." I think that Pinterest will allow an odd context for this content to be a little bit a fish out of water in that way.

Narrator: Okay. We've gotta know what these boards are all about. Here are some of Will's favorites:

Will: I think one of my favorite boards is Championship Alpaca. I think, Best in Show, that faux-documentary, of course, would have picked up on that trend with dogs, but I have to say, horse people are nuts, oftentimes. I think alpaca people are particularly nuts.

I have a board called Talk to the Hand which is about ventriloquists which are terrifying in general. (ventriloquist voice: I'm not the second fiddle.)

There's also things that are quietly creepy, like Mannequin Headshots. There's sort of an over-sexualizing that happens. I think picking up and not showing the obvious parts of their body, their boobs, their butt, etc. and just showing these disgustingly perv-y eyes on basically an inanimate object is particularly terrifying.

Narrator: Will's sense of humor is definitely out there, but he has a sharp eye for noticing subtle similarities in things sprinkled around the Internet and the real world.

Will: One of the things that good designers and artists do is they find patterns in things that exist in plain sight. You walk through the city and you see coincidences hit over and over again. What I'm working on right now, it's not even a Pinterest board but just something I collect on my iPhone, just pictures. I see weaves on the street all the time.

Narrator: He's talking hair weaves.

Will: I'm always wondering, "What happened here? Was there a fight? Did it just fall out? Did you, 'Ooh, girl. My head's scratching,' and just throw it down?". I mean, I have 25 of these photos, and they've all been taken over the last 12 months. You've probably, anybody in the city has walked by the same weaves I have. It's just a matter of, for, I think a designer and creative folks, you see this and recognize these things. I'm on the Internet, fortunately or unfortunately for the better part of my day at work, and you end up seeing huh huh huh pattern, pattern, pattern, pattern.

Narrator: For Will, creativity doesn't have an on-off switch. It's part of who you are, whether you are thinking about work or discovering a new subject for a Pinterest board.

Will: I think those who sort of treat design or creativity as a 9-5 typically don't do so well, I've found. There are, perhaps, exceptions to the rule, but you're always thinking. You're always collecting. You're always noticing trends. To me, it's just an extension of who you are. It's not sort of a segmented self.

Child Body Builders

I love this contrast of, it's sort of like Jazz Moms meets masculinity. It's very interesting to me.

Spelling Bee Eliminations

I went through all of the spelling bees of the last ten years and actually was taking screenshots of the moment these kids would figure out, "Oh, no. I spelled it wrong. I'm done." You realize in that one moment of dread that the last nine months of training and homeschooling have come to an end.

Narrator: Will's not sticking to the status-quo forever. He's already got a new challenge in mind:

Will: I love how serious everybody takes LinkedIn. I, omigosh, it takes a lot of self-control not to just. I haven't figured it out yet, but I can't wait to subvert that platform.

Narrator: Check out Will Hall's Pinterest boards in all their glory at pinterest.com/ponyfight.

Channel Change: Random Channel

Speaker 4: Kevin Bacon

Famous for his dance steps in Footloose. Famous for fighting sand snakes in Tremors. Famous for his basketball coaching in The Air up There. Well, maybe not that last one, but he is famous for his game, the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon Game.

If you don't already know it, it's where you can connect any Hollywood celebrity back to Kevin Bacon in six easy steps through their film credits. Did you know that Silicon Valley has its own celebrity connection game? It's called

The Six Degrees of Ashton Kutcher

The rules are basically the same. In six easy steps, you can connect any celebrity investor to Ashton Kutcher through their investment portfolio. I'll show you what I mean, starting with Nicki Minaj.

Nicki Minaj invested in a French picture messaging app called Pleek with P-Diddy. P-Diddy invested in a chat website called tinychat. Tinychat was also invested by Justin Bieber. Justin Bieber invested in Spotify, but so did his manager, Scooter Braun. Scooter Braun invested in a health and music company called BioBeats, which is also backed by Will Smith. Will Smith invested in Vidi, the failed Instagram for video app with Jay-Z, and Jay-Z invested in the Uber for private planes called BlackJet with Ashton Kutcher. Nicki Minaj to Ashton Kutcher in six easy investments.

Let's try another round, starting with Jonah Hill. Jonah Hill is an investor in the Silicon Valley-loved coffee retailer Philz Coffee. Philz Coffee is also backed by hip-hop legend Nas. Now, Nas is an interesting one, because he is invested in over 31 companies and was an early investor in Dropbox with Bono. Now, Bono loves his coffee, too, and has given some money to the other Silicon Valley-loved coffee chain Blue Bottle Coffee. Blue Bottle Coffee also gets money from Jared Leto, and Jared Leto is an investor in Reddit. Reddit loves to get high and count dollars with Snoop Dog. Snoop Dog helped get the app Secret off the ground along with NFL hall of fame legend Joe Montana. Joe Montana invests in a flower delivery company called BloomThat with, you guessed it, Ashton Kutcher. Jonah Hill to Ashton Kutcher in six easy payments.

Now for my final trick, I will connect Kevin Bacon to Ashton Kutcher.

Kevin Bacon lost millions when he invested with Bernie Madoff. Bernie Madoff also ripped off legendary venture capitalist Arthur Rock, who was an early investor in Apple. Now, Arthur Rock was played by J.K. Simmons in the 2013 film adaptation of Steve Jobs' life, Jobs. Steve Jobs was played by Ashton Kutcher. Kevin Bacon to Ashton Kutcher in less than six easy steps. Proving that Ashton Kutcher really is the Kevin Bacon of the tech world.

Narrator: Play the game with friends. Start by sharing the story:
soundcloud.com/slackvarietypack.

Channel Change: Almost Famous

Anil: Hi, I'm Anil Dash. I'm the co-founder of ThinkUp, and I'm a writer and geek on the Internet.

Narrator: Some of you may have heard of this guy. You might even know him, but chances are you have no idea who he is. Maybe you should, because he's famous, in the way that only the Internet can make you famous. He has more followers than Jeb Bush and just slightly less than Bjork. He's definitely got more followers than you.

Anil: My life online is really strange. I have about half-a-million Twitter followers. I think 550,000 or something like that. About 150,000 followers on Facebook. Most of the other networks are similarly huge, if you look at Instagram, or whatever. I have this network that looks as if I should be at least a mid-level hip-hop star or something, but I'm just a middle-aged nerd dad who spends all his time typing on a computer.

Narrator: Anil picked up a lot of followers on Twitter by being early to the game. Also, back in 2009, someone at Twitter added his name to their suggested user list, an old feature that recommended people for you to follow. His network got upgraded to rock-star status. Not only that, he got that little blue check-mark on both Twitter and Facebook that tells everyone he's verified.

Anil: Today, Internet celebrities are mostly like regular celebrities. Right? A Vine star who comes up is just a mini-version of somebody that would be popular in pop-culture. For me, though, Internet celebrity used to be this thing, it's just simply like being well-known at all online was novel on its own, and people would pay attention to it. It's been a really interesting shift in that you can't just be known for being known anymore. Now you actually have to have some talent, which I'm glad that I got grandfathered in before that was a requirement.

Narrator: There's gotta be some kind of great pay-off for having such a large following, right? VIP access? Free stuff? Eh. Maybe nothing that sexy.

Anil: If I ask a question, there's always somebody with an answer once you have a big enough network. I can be like, "Oh, where's the best place to get a sandwich in this town I've never been to?" and somebody will know. That's really cool, just having access to the network of people's knowledge and what they're doing. There's some downsides. There's always somebody there that wants to harass you or that wants to disagree with you or. A lot of times, people see these, sort of these big numbers and they think you are something that you're not. People think I'm really rich because I have a lot of Twitter followers. I was like, "Man, if I could sell them and get a place here in New York City, Yeah. That would be awesome."

Narrator: For a lot of us, though, we want to believe that the number of followers counts. Maybe we're just conditioned that way now, that having a large social network means we're special. We're famous, even though we're not.

Anil: The people that I see that get the most out of being huge on Facebook, on Instagram, on Twitter, are the people who have a dedicated following of whatever size. The people that are real fans, really support them will support their projects or back their Kickstarter or whatever they're doing. Those are the people that do really, really well. If you just want numbers for their own sake, you can buy followers on eBay and they won't do anything but spam you. If you care about that number, that's the way to get them.

Narrator: The one true thing a large network can guarantee you? Lots of notifications. For Anil Dash, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Anil: I leave all the notifications on for all my apps and all the default settings. In a given day, except for maybe email. In a given day, I probably get somewhere around 3,000 or 4,000 notifications. On Twitter alone on top of that, I might, my notifications tab might have 1,000, 2,000, or today I did a talk, so I might have 4,000 or 5,000 mentions. My notifications are like their own Twitter stream. They were constantly flowing, and there's interesting stuff or boring stuff or noise. I don't recommend it. Except for for me where it's like sort of an intellectually interesting. It's no way to live. No normal person should actually endure that.

Narrator: Slack. Feel Good, Busy.

Channel Change: Email Evolution

That little bit of text at the bottom of your email? It's changed a lot over the years. How many of these email signature trends can you remember?

Speaker 6: And now:

20 Years in the Evolution of Email Signatures

Narrator: 1996

Speaker 6: Put everything in your signature: name, company, job title, office phone, home phone, car phone, fax, car fax, street address, quote from The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy, ASCII art. Oh, and email address for some reason.

Narrator: 1997

Speaker 6: Same as above, but add a URL. "Check out my homepage."

Narrator: 1998

Speaker 6: Ditch the ASCII art and randomize the quote.

Narrator: 1999

Speaker 6: Ditch the quote.

Narrator: 2000

Speaker 6: Ooh! We have HTML now. Every line gets a different color and font and a tiny image attached. Unfortunately, the recipient may not have HTML, so it's just nonsense and a broken image icon.

Narrator: 2001

Speaker 6: The recipient finally gets HTML and can see your signature. Cute, but maybe we can lose a few phone numbers and addresses.

Narrator: 2002

Speaker 6: Okay, let's grow up. Everything needs to start looking like a business card. I just got American Psycho on DVD.

Narrator: 2003

Speaker 6: Actually, let's add a legal disclaimer. It's nice to feel a little bit threatened by every email.

Narrator: 2004

Speaker 6: "Please consider the environment before printing out this email."

Narrator: 2005

Speaker 6: You know what, add a giant company logo.

Narrator: 2006

Speaker 6: Scale that back.

Narrator: 2007

Speaker 6: "Sent from my iPhone." I mean, it's no big deal. I don't mean to brag. It's just, this is the default signature. I don't, I actually don't even know how to turn it off.

Narrator: 2008

Speaker 6: How do I get rid of that "Sent from my iPhone" message?

Narrator: 2009

Speaker 6: Social media links.

Narrator: 2010

Speaker 6: Sent from my iPad.

Narrator: 2011

Speaker 6: Got rid of that.

Narrator: 2012

Speaker 6: Social media links, but, like, all minimalist?

Narrator: 2013

Speaker 6: Wait, how long has Gmail been cutting out my signature?

Narrator: 2014

Speaker 6: Well, then, I just won't bother with a signature.

Narrator: 2015

Speaker 6: Email signature, why that's impossible. Nobody's read to the bottom of an email in 20 years.

Narrator: Channel Change: Future of Work

Hear that? That's the sound of your summer ticking away. Soon, all your vacation days will be used up, but if a new way of thinking about work catches on, time off can be anytime.

Narrator 2: Meet [Leah Safflu 00:16:58]. She is a Justin Timberlake fan. A big one.

Speaker 8: I spent about 18 months following Justin to eight different cities and over the course of those 18 months saw 19 different shows.

Narrator 2: Leah also works full-time at a marketing and sales software company called HubSpot.

Speaker 8: As you can imagine, that's a whole lot of time off.

Narrator 2: That is a whole lot of time off. It's apparently not that much of an issue when your company offers unlimited vacation. Yes, you heard correctly, unlimited vacation.

Here's Hubspot director of talent and culture, [Katie Burke 00:17:33], to explain.

Speaker 2: Hubspot's vacation plan is unlimited. How long do you have to work at Hubspot to earn unlimited vacation? The answer is usually an hour.

Narrator 2: And, there's more. Leah can work whenever she wants.

Speaker 2: The idea of clocking in and clocking out will be outdated sooner than we think.

Narrator 2: Leah can work wherever she wants.

Speaker 2: From my perspective, part of how the world is changing is people are working anywhere, anytime. They are working on the go, working on their phones, working remotely.

Narrator 2: Here's Leah again:

Speaker 8: When I was actually waiting on the sidewalk in Manhattan in line to go see Justin at a show, I had this router power-pack out and was doing some of my work and doing some of my email on my laptop on a lawnchair sitting there.

Narrator 2: Hubspot isn't alone in this thinking. Netflix, Virgin, The Gap, and many other companies are moving to a new way of work that is focused on trusting employees to get their work done in the way that works best for them.

Speaker 2: I really think that in a decade we're gonna see what it means to be a workplace completely revolutionized.

Narrator 2: One of the earliest proponents of this thinking was Best Buy. In 2003, Jody Thompson and her colleague, Cali Ressler, invented the Results Only Work Environment.

Speaker 9: We realized people wanted control over their time, complete control. The only thing that matters in a Results Only Work Environment is what do you need, and when do you need it?

- Narrator 2: This all sounds too good to be true. To be honest, there is a flip-side to 100% freedom.
- Speaker 9: The balance of that had to be 100% accountability.
- Narrator 2: No matter how many times Leah sees Justin sing "Sexy Back" in his suit and tie, she is still fully accountable for her results at work. No excuses.
- Speaker 8: Nobody here at Hubspot blows off their work. If I had to stay late some extra nights to get that work done, that's something I was 100% willing to do. I can pretty much take the days off knowing that my manager understands my work will get done.
- Speaker 10: Now, in a Results Only Work Environment, it's no results, no job. That's the new employee agreement.
- Narrator 2: That is a big change, because the workplace of the future fundamentally trusts its employees.
- Speaker 9: The way that the workplace is set up today is that managers are put in the position of almost being our parent. We have to ask permission to leave early. We have to let our manager know if we're going to go to the dentist. It's really, it makes people feel like children. We started to think about how we could create an environment where each person had complete autonomy.
- Narrator 2: Autonomy is also a key pillar in Hubspot's culture.
- Speaker 2: Investing time in signing permission slips or telling Leah it's fine if she leaves the office a little bit early to fly to a concert that she's excited about, from my perspective, those are not a good use of our manager's time. Instead, I'd rather just hire great people and give them the autonomy to figure out that work-life fit that makes sense for them.
- The answer to how much vacation the average Hubspotter takes is, "I have absolutely no idea." I don't spend any of my time measuring it. We have a three-word policy for almost everything at Hubspot which is, "Use good judgment."
- Narrator 2: In environments that provide complete autonomy and extraordinary levels of trust, the hiring process takes on a whole new level of importance.
- Speaker 2: Making shoulder-shrug decisions about people or about culture is fatal to your business. We think about attracting the highest-caliber candidates at every turn and for every position.

- Narrator 2: Hubspot's greatest recruiting asset has turned out to be something called the Culture Code. It's a SlideShare deck that celebrates their unique approach to company culture, and it's been viewed over 1.6 million times.
- Speaker 2: When you are very clear about what it takes to join your company, ideally, you'll get a lot of people raising their hands and saying, "That sounds like me and sounds like a great fit." It also does a good job at filtering out people for whom that blisteringly-fast pace is actually not the right fit.
- Speaker 10: There's a small, very small percentage of people that don't do well in a Results Only Work Environment, because all of a sudden they realize that they have to actually produce work.
- Narrator 2: Once you've got yourself a company filled with top-tier, self-motivated, results-oriented employees, and you've eliminated a lot of needless bureaucracy, the job of a manager changes pretty radically, too.
- Speaker 10: People do not need to be managed. Management is really, by definition, the manipulation of human capital. That has got to change in the 21st century. The old command and control management style is not going to work. It's really switching that to what we're calling the Results Coach. When people are autonomous and accountable, what they need is they need somebody to help guide and mentor them against the results they need to achieve.
- Speaker 2: Managers' jobs are to elevate great employees. I spend most of my time as a manager, not trying to make myself look good, but rather to invest and grow the people that work for me. That's a core part of our culture code.
- Narrator 2: It's pretty clear how this might be great news for employees and for managers, but how about the overall business?
- Speaker 10: Here's what happens for you as a business:
- First, everybody wants to work for your business.
- Number two, people, once they start working in this environment, never want to leave it.
- Three, every single person knows exactly what they're supposed to deliver for the organization.
- People are truly happy!

Narrator 2: By the way, the fact that you're listening to this means this stuff actually works. As an experiment, I produced this entire story from a remote island with lovely sandy beaches. Seriously. Listen closely, and you can hear the ocean behind me. I can attest that after getting over my initial guilt about escaping the office and a 9-5 work schedule, the future of work is looking pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty good.

If you'd like to see the whole Hubspot Slide Deck, check out culturecode.com. You can learn more about the Results-Only Work Environment at gorowe.com. That's gorowe.com.

Narrator: Gift your boss this story. Go to soundcloud.com/slackvarietypack.

Channel Change: The Office

Here is a cold, hard fact. Everyone in the world, ahem, uses their phone at least once a day. Even the Queen of England, ahem, uses her phone. Although, where she uses her phone is probably way nicer than where you do. Here's the thing. Sometimes, we all have to use our phone at work. Here's our advice to help you gracefully navigate one of the least-talked about but most-universal workplace experiences.

Before we begin, it's important to remember, if you have the option, always, always, use your phone at home before you leave for work. After all, the office is probably the second worst place to have to use your phone. The worst is a gas station. Remember, discretion is key. No one in your office wants to know that you're about to use your phone. If you have the option, go to another floor in the building. You want your location to be the opposite of Cheers!. You want to go where nobody knows your name. On a side note, if your office is near a fancy hotel, go there. They typically have the nicest facilities.

Worst-case scenario: in some situations, you'll just have to use your phone in the same room as your co-workers. Remember, we're all adults. Your phone is going to make audible notifications. That's perfectly natural, but never acknowledge them, and whatever you do, do not speak to the person using their phone next to you. Nobody came in here for the conversation.

Finally, when you return back to your desk, never let on that you were doing something overly-complicated on your phone. Rather, you want to make it seem like you were just sending a quick text. It's a delicate issue, but you can handle it with dignity, because, let's be honest. Nobody wants to acknowledge that once in a while, everybody has to use their phone at work.

This has been Episode 7 of the Slack Variety Pack.

The next episode:

Meet the man who's rolling out the red carpet to welcome our bot overlords:

I just love them, and I wake up thinking, "Ooh! I know what the bot can do now!"

What if physical stores started acting like online stores?

Here's a pair of underwear, too. What? Customers who bought these socks also bought this underwear. Okay, yeah. I'll get those, too.

Learn about a list that's empowering writers and affecting Hollywood for the better:

Movies that have been made from scripts that were on the annual blacklist- Whiplash, The Imitation Game, American Sniper, Selma, Argos, Slumdog Millionaire, The King's Speech, The Descendants.

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