[MUSIC]

**JUSTINE:** Everyone’s like, oh, like, have goals and stick to them. And I don’t believe that at all. I mean, I think it’s great to have goals, but I think if you stray from that goal, you could potentially find something way better.

[MUSIC]

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Hi, everyone. Welcome to Behind the Tech. I'm your host, Kevin Scott, Chief Technology Officer for Microsoft.

In this podcast, we're going to get behind the tech. We'll talk with some of the people who have made our modern tech world possible and understand what motivated them to create what they did. So, join me to maybe learn a little bit about the history of computing and get a few behind-the-scenes insights into what's happening today. Stick around.

[MUSIC]

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Hello and welcome to Behind the Tech! I’m Christina Warren, senior cloud advocate at Microsoft.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** And I’m Kevin Scott.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** And our guest on the show today is Justine Ezarik, also known as iJustine. She’s a techie, she’s a gamer, and she’s one of the top tech female influencers on YouTube. I followed her for many years. I’ve met her a few times. And it’s been so interesting to watch her career trajectory.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, it’s really fascinating. I mean, I admire what she does, in general, inspiring people to get interested in technology, but like maybe even more so like I’m just inspired by her as an entrepreneur. She has – like she was one of the very earliest people who figured out that there is a way to create content and to engage with audiences using these new technologies like YouTube and streaming. And she pioneered a way to turn that interest into a business, and now it is a big thing, like a thing to the point that both of my children would love to be able to figure out how to be influencers or streamers or whatever you want to call it, which is just it’s crazy how influential she’s been, honestly.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yeah, no, absolutely. I mean, I read a study recently and I don’t know if this is a good or a bad thing, but apparently the number one career that kids have today is like they all want to be creators.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Like that’s their number one career, and –

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Look, I think it’s a terrific thing, actually. So the creative impulse in general is a great thing to have. It’s what you have. It’s what I have. It’s like why a bunch of us are out, like trying to make new things to see whether or not they’re actually useful for a large number of people. And I think anything that can make kids want to create things and to create connection among people is good.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** One hundred percent and Justine is certainly one of those who has helped lead the way. All right, let’s talk with Justine.

[MUSIC]

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Our guest on the show today is Justine Ezarik-- a techie, gamer, vlogger and celebrity YouTuber best known as iJustine. She has over a billion views across her YouTube channels. Justine is also an actress with appearances in film and television and authored *The New York Times* best-selling book, *iJustine: An Analog Memoir*. She hosts a podcast with her sister Jenna, called Same Brain, where they talk about tech, video games and food.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Thanks for having me. I’m so excited.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  It’s so awesome to meet you. I think we’ve had one conversation before when you were chatting with some of the leadership team at Microsoft. But I’ve followed the arc of your career, and the thing that you’re doing, I think, is-- it’s obvious to everyone how relevant and interesting and important it is here in 2021, but you started a while ago. How did you figure out that this was an interesting thing? Did you have any sense that everything was going to blow up the way that it did?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  No. I mean, I was just a kid that loved technology, and it’s weird because now, like, there’s always, like, the buzzwords, like women in tech, women in gaming. And it’s so strange to me because when I grew up, no one ever, like, thought that that was, like, different. I was never treated differently because I was a girl and I love tech and I love playing games. It was just sort of, like, the people that I was surrounded with then, like, that’s just what we did. Like, we played games. Like, I was just – that’s something that we loved. And I had never had any intention of this becoming a full-time job. It just sort of did. And I mean, I’ve been doing this for so long, and it’s just so cool to still be able to be doing something that I really, truly enjoy.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Well, let’s maybe dig into that story a bit, because I think that’s just a super interesting thing. So, were either of your parents in tech? Like, how did you first get interested in technology?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So, my mom was a teacher, so it was interesting because back then, there were a lot of, like, Apple computers and stuff in schools. So, that was, like, the only person that really ever had them was because of students and teachers and things like that. So, that was, like, my first computer.

And then my dad, we ended up getting like a PC later. So, it was interesting because there was just so much support from both sides, and my dad is also super tech savvy. So, he and my mom, like, built our entire house, like, basically with their own two hands. And so, they’re both very savvy in that sense. So, they were always super supportive of, like, my interests as well.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  And so, was gaming the primary first tech interest or did you ever do programing or was it BBSs or the Internet? I’ve – you’re probably too – too young for BBSs. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:** I was really into IRC, so it was maybe like in sixth grade on IRC and just like trading, you know, music and things like that. But I loved gaming, and I had a Nintendo, like, very, very early. And I even remember asking my mom when I was working on my book, I was like, “Why did you buy me a Nintendo?” She’s like, “That’s the only thing that you wanted.” And I was like, “Oh, okay.” So, it did stem from something that I wanted because I really didn’t remember back then, like, why did we have that?

But yeah, then I also was very interested in coding. So, around sixth grade, the whole time, whatever, I was really getting into video games as well, I first realized like the Web meant something. And I was like, well, how did they make this? And then when I viewed the source of a website for the first time, that’s when I had this realization of code, and that was something that was creating this.

And then I got into Web development and I taught myself HTML. And then I thought that I wanted to be a computer programmer, and I went down that whole path. And then I started loving sort of the frontend design. So, I had a teacher in, I think maybe like in high school, and I would work on getting everybody in my class. I would be making their – actually making their programs look good and kind of neglecting the code a little bit. And he’s like, “You don’t have to code. Like, you could be a frontend designer. You could do something like that.” I go, “Oh, I didn’t realize that that was something I could do.”

So, that kind of put me on a whole other path of discovering photography, graphic design and video production. So, it kind of really did stem from my love of tech and coding.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  You know, the thing that you just said is really important. We, I don’t think, fully appreciate how important role models are when kids are trying to figure out what it is they want to be and what it is that they could do. Like, this whole thing where you didn’t even understand what a frontend designer was and, like, didn’t realize that was a path. So, I don’t know whether you think about, you know, you have a pretty big audience right now. Like, how much do you think about your job being a role model for kids, like getting them excited about technology and sort of showing them paths forward?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, I mean, I think I recently – well, I guess not that recent because I have been doing it for a while, but I sort of realized how powerful that is, because, like you said, like there wasn’t somebody who I could look up to that was doing this thing that I wanted to do because it wasn’t even a thing yet.

So, it’s so cool for me to just see how excited, the younger girls are getting about technology. And they’re so excited about their phones or their new laptops, and they’ve started making unboxing videos. And any time – we haven’t done these recently, but, like, back in the day, whenever you would do meet ups and just seeing people, and I would be signing phones and laptops and devices, I was, like, this is so–it’s strange, but it’s also like this is what I love and, like, I’ve created this community and it’s just so cool to see it.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So, what did you choose to study when you went to college? Like, did you have a clear sense of what you wanted to do by the time you graduated from high school?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Well, it was interesting because I kept telling my mom that I, like, I refuse to take my SATs. I was like, “I don’t want to do this. I want to do – I want to –” I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to do something in computers. But, you know, that whole, I guess, traditional way of, like, going through school and that, like, it just – like, I’m not a good test taker. And that’s just, like – so, traditional school for me was very, very difficult. But it’s like the things that I liked, I was so good at, so like the computer stuff.

So, I end up going to, like, a two-year school, which was for graphic design, video production, multimedia. Basically, everything that I’m doing, I had a crash course of that for two years, and it was just the perfect fit for me. So, I think when kids are looking at, like, what it is that they want to do, you know, I think school is so important, whatever that is. If it is a traditional four year, if it is, like, a two-year crash course, like something like that for me was so perfect.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, that’s awesome. I know the way that I learn is a little bit similar. So, I need to find my own path and, like, I believe everybody learns slightly differently than everybody else. And if you can figure out the thing that there are things that you’re really excited about and, like, you have a way to go immerse yourself in that, like, you can really get ramped up pretty fast on like new things.

I mean, I’ve taught myself how to do so many unusual things by watching YouTube videos and then just practicing. And like, I just really wish that there had been this when I was a little kid, right, because I could have learned so much more so much earlier.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, that’s the thing that I was even thinking about. It’s like, even if this was available when I was younger, would I have taken advantage of that, because I feel like now, as I’m older, I feel like, I’m like, there is everything here at our fingertips. Like, we can do anything. We can learn anything. I think you kind of take that phase of childhood, like, I don’t think – I don’t know if – I don’t want to speak on their behalf, but I feel like, I don’t know if it’s like you don’t understand until you’re older, like, how incredible and how powerful that is. So, I definitely encourage kids, if there is something that you’re interested in, you do have everything at their fingertips. Like, go for it.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So, when did you really start doing the thing that you’re doing professionally right now, like making videos, connecting with the audience, like, using the Internet to say this important set of things that you have to say to, like, as many people as you could reach?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, I would say probably professionally, in 2006, 2007, I think that’s when I finally was actually making money and getting sponsorships, and things like that. I mean, there were obviously very small and very different back then. But I also, before that, was, after I quit my job, I was working just like freelance. So, I was doing graphic design, video production and stuff like that on the side, sort of supports my Internet habits of, you know, like doing the live streaming and things like that, because it’s also weird, because I was one of the first people to ever stream on, I guess it was Justin.TV at the time.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  But it was – I mean, obviously that became Twitch, which was also strange because no one was doing live streaming and I was doing it for 24/7, six months straight. And it was just such a weird experience because, like, that is the ultimate way to connect with people. And doing these, like, live streams was easy because it’s like we just met so many people, and everyone kind of became friends in the chat. Like, it was no longer about me. I was just sort of this small factor of, you know, everything that people were doing and they just made friends that way. And it was really awesome.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** It’s super cool. And I, you know, I think sometimes, we forget how quickly things have progressed. Like, one of the things I’m interested in is how did you find courage in 2006, 2007 to quit your job and make this your career, because people can actually have the idea in 2021. It’s like, oh, I want to go be a YouTuber or I want to go, you know, be an influencer on TikTok, or whatnot. And it’s still hard, but, like, it’s a thing at least that you can sort of see a whole bunch of other people doing, and, you know, the same way that, yeah, maybe kids aspire to be a theater actor or a movie star or whatnot, but, like, it just didn’t exist when you started doing it. So, how did you get the courage to do that?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  I think that’s probably the good thing is because I was young and I really didn’t have any concept of the world. You know, I was actually at a concert last night, and my friend Lindsey Stirling, who’s a violinist, also had the same sort of perspective, because what she’s doing now on tour and being a traveling musician, violinist with costume changes, all of this, 10 years ago, managers, agents, everyone was telling her, “You can’t do this. This isn’t a thing. This will be nothing. This isn’t – like, it’s impossible.” And just to see her 10 years later on stage doing that, like, I have that same feeling of so many doors were slammed in my face. Like, everyone was telling me, “No, this isn’t a thing. Like, what are you doing?” I was getting made fun of.

But I don’t know. For whatever reason, I was like, I’m having a good time. Like, I love this and I think that there is something here. What it is, I don’t know. And I was just grateful that I did have very supportive parents and supportive friends that were like, “You’re weird, but whatever. Like, we’ll go along with whatever you want to do.” (Laughter.)

And thankfully, I did have that background of being able to do freelance work, you know, graphic design, making websites on the side so that I was able to sort of support my habits or my fun little side projects. I wasn’t like completely homeless.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  And so, what were the technical things that had to happen to enable you to do what you’re doing? I mean, so I guess there’s some obvious things, like YouTube had to exist and be at some level of scale. But, like, what else? It’s not just that, right? Like, you have whole bunch of other tools that you use to make your content and to reach your audiences.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah. I mean, now, it’s so different. I have a computer for streaming, a computer for editing, my travel, my storage, like all of that stuff. So, but then, I mean, it was still so early. So, like the price of these things was just – it’s so expensive that it was, like, it was unattainable at the time.

So, like, the camera that I had, I mean, it was a small little, kind of, like, a VHS kind of thing with, like, the little DV tapes. And it’s like that then was, like, thousands and thousands of dollars and the quality was terrible. And that was, like, the cheapest thing that I could find, like, on the market.

So, now it’s incredible just to see how the price of things have come down. Like, you can create an entire, you know, business and studio on just a phone. Like, a mobile device can do that. And I think what’s so cool is, like, you know, once you actually have these tools and people are able to upgrade and see things that you can do, I mean, it really is endless.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  I guess I hadn’t realized how good the technology had gotten until the pandemic, where as soon as I was spending almost all of my time in video conferences, I was like, “Okay, well, how could I make the sound better, how can I make the video better?”

And so, and, you know, the funny thing to me is everything that I’m doing right now, so I’ve got a DSLR that’s sitting above my machine. I’ve got a Shure Sm7b microphone. I’ve got a Focusrite Scarlett, USB audio capture device. I’ve got a –I’m super nerdy. Like, I’ve got a big LED octo bag over my head so I’ve got decent lighting.

But all of this stuff I just copied from streamers who had figured all of this out. And I’m like, wow, it’s this incredible innovation that streamers have done, like, assembling all of these tools so that they can connect with other people. And, like, now, I’m using some of these same things to, you know, have better meetings.

So, have you seen anything about what you’re doing change as a result of the pandemic or, like, bigger audiences, people more interesting in some of the tech stuff that you’re doing, like try to get your advice about how to, you know, because we’re all streaming right now all the time, right? (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So, I mean, I basically did the same thing that you did. Like, I completely upgraded my setting. And right now, I don’t have it because I just got back from a trip. So, I had all my camera gear and stuff packed. But normally, I do have, like, a DSLR or a mirrorless camera, actually. And then, you know, you end up creating such a good look. Like, your – like, your view right now, like, people are like, “Is that background real?” I’m like, “Yeah, it’s real,” because, like, especially because yours, because you have the nice bokeh effect.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah. I mean, me and my sister started a podcast during the pandemic and we – like, now I have a whole Rodecaster system, and we have several of them. And it’s just, like, we’ve got the whole lighting. And it definitely is completely different because a lot of people did not know how to do any of this. In the beginning, it’s like this is something that I live and breathe, and I was, like, sending out extra webcams to friends who weren’t able to buy them, because there was, like, a webcam shortage. And I was like, “Oh, I’ve got a whole box full of those from, like, the past five years of not having to really use a webcam.”

So, yeah, it’s really cool how that kind of all shifted and everyone kind of adapted to this new kind of lifestyle. And I think integrating this sort of way to do these meetings, I think, is going to save people a lot of time in the long run.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, I remember at the beginning of the pandemic, it got really hard to buy basic stuff. So, like, whatever was on YouTube is like, oh, this is the best, you know, camera for doing live streaming, like, all out of stock or, like, this is the, you know, HDMI-to-USB video capture device, like, all out of stock. (Laughter.) So, it’s really crazy, like, how many people all at once decided that they were going to try to up their game.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Well, even that, it’s like some of the computers they might have don’t even have it. So, like, they actually could not participate or do their job, which is so wild to think, like, there’s a webcam shortage. That is something that I never would have ever expected. Yeah, I think a lot of stuff during the pandemic, I think really shifted kind of our perspective and – and realization of how much we do with tech and how far we’ve come. And, you know, for a lot of us, it’s like, oh, this is our way of life like this. This is what we do all the time.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So, talk a little bit about how it is that you run your business, because in some sense, what you’re doing resembles how people created content for, you know, for a long while now. Like, you’ve got lighting and microphones and cameras, and some of the mechanical bits are the same, but, you know, what you’re producing and, like, how you engage with your audience and how you make money is very different. So, like, talk about how that works.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, it’s interesting because it is different for a bunch of creators. I know, like a lot of creators rely solely on merch, and I, for whatever reason, I’m just not a merch person. But that is definitely going to change, because I feel like there’s so much stuff that I want to create and just never really have. So, I think also during the pandemic, that was something that I was like, what am I kind of missing here? And that’s definitely something that we are working on.

But as far as the business side of it, I do a lot of brand deals, and it’s really fun because I do do a lot of tech. So, there’s – the tech just is never ending and that never stopped. And it’s still just continues to be so fun because there’s so much tech to cover. So, there’ll be brand deals that I’ll do that can be, like, sponsored integrations for just, like, a one-off video or a long-term partnership, and then, of course, with YouTube, there’s the partner program. So, you get paid off of sort of, like, the AdSense and the ads that run over the video.

So, that’s kind of the main thing. And then, obviously, like there’s other things like consulting for companies or do I take, instead, if they don’t – if it’s a startup, if they don’t have a budget to pay, then I’ll work for equity or something like that. There’s a lot of different ways that you can go about it. And it just sort of changes because the world is changing. So, it’s like you just kind of have to mold whatever that project is, whatever brand.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. I mean, I’m watching my 11-year-old son right now who has aspirations to be a YouTuber, try to get started. And, like, granted, I placed a bunch of restrictions on them that an adult wouldn’t have. It’s like, I’ll let you upload YouTube content, but you can’t show your face, for instance. Like, I don’t – you know, for your own safety, like, I just would prefer you didn’t do that. So, he makes these little animated videos that he uploads.

And so, I just watch him struggle with, I’m guessing, the same thing that you all struggle with, which is, all right, I don’t really understand this YouTube algorithm. I don’t understand always, based on the feedback that I’m getting from the people who watch my videos, about what they like or don’t like so that I can make more of stuff that people will like. I don’t understand how to reach new people. So, if I want to get a bigger audience in a way that isn’t just luck, like, how do I go do that?

And, like, this is stuff that, like, you, in particular, since you’re one of the very first people who’ve ever figured out how to do this as a career, like you’ve had to try to understand all of these things. So, I’m just sort of curious, like how do you approach this stuff?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah. I mean, I definitely learned early on that there’s going to be good videos, there’s going to be bad videos, and sometimes, there really isn’t an explanation and then you have to just accept it. There are small things you can do to make changes, but I just try not to focus on the numbers so much, unless there’s, like, a significant dip, and then, I’m like, okay, I need to really kind of go in and assess, because at one point, it drove me absolutely crazy. Like, I was obsessing about numbers, I was obsessing about subscribers. And then when I kind of stopped obsessing about it, it just sort of naturally came.

And really, it’s just about creating content someone else is going to want to see. There’s been videos that I’ve been editing and I’m like, I am so bored, I can’t post this. This is – this is garbage. (Laughter.) And then I just end up scrapping it. And then sometimes, there’s – I’ll also say that. I’m like, okay, let me work through this. What can I change to make this better? And I’m able to make it a decent video, and even though I might not think it was that good, I’m like, “You guys really like that.” Like, that’s strange. So, it’s hard because you really don’t know what someone’s going to like or what’s going to resonate with people.

I think what’s so cool is the audience, like, is just so vast that even if you’re doing something that is such a niche sort of thing that you think nobody else likes, there’s somebody else out there. It might not be a huge audience. So, it’s like go after that audience and, you know, be the best in that small field, because there’s so many less people doing it and there might not be a huge audience for it, but you’re going to be the best at that.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, I think that’s a really interesting thing that’s happened that is, you know, partly enabled by the technology, because it’s possible for a single person. It’s hard, and I don’t think people appreciate how hard it is to make compelling content and then, you know, just sort of get it distributed. And the audience is so big, it just changes the economics of what content creation can look like.

Most of the stuff that I watch on YouTube is weird. Like, I love to watch – I love to watch classical pianists practice.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Interesting.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So, like, I love, like, weird sorts of cooking videos. I’ve taught myself to be a machinist by watching…And I don’t--Some of the time, I don’t even understand why people post this stuff. Like, why would you, as a busy professional machinist, post a bunch of videos on YouTube and social media about how you do your job, where you are better than the best teachers that I’ve ever seen? So the generosity of that, to me, seems incredible. So, I just love this ecosystem, like how rich it is and how much of this, you know, sort of unusual stuff that you would never find anywhere else. Like, there was never going to be a machinist, you know, television channel, even on satellite or cable. It’s just awesome. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  It’s actually funny you say that. Like, why do they post it? I don’t – I don’t know. Like, I don’t even know why I first started. I mean, I feel like it was because I was just – I was entertained by it and, like, I thought it was funny. I don’t know. Like, now, I mean, it makes a little bit more sense, but still, like, he has a very busy day. Like, he’s going out of his way to, like, give that information to people. So, hopefully, you know, it comes back and he’s able to make some money off of the ad revenue and stuff like that. But still, it takes a lot of content and a lot of time to do that stuff. So, it’s like, is it worth it?

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. And I think, I mean, I watched this one machinist who posts a couple of videos a week, and I’ve been watching this guy for years. And he was able to quit his job as a full-time machinist to make machining videos on YouTube, which is –

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  That’s cool.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, it’s cool and it’s mind-blowing. I mean, it’s just – (laughter).

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Right.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  And I sort of wonder, for you as a creator, like, this must be true for all creators and artists, how you find that line between serving the interests of the audience so that you can get paid. And, like, paid might be currency or it might be recognition or, like, you know, whatever the value is that you’re getting from the audience, versus what stimulates and fulfills you above and beyond, you know, the paycheck or the fame or whatever else? And, like, it strikes me. I’ve never done this, but I think it sounds hard whenever I think about it, finding that line.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  It is, and, you know, I think that’s the fun thing about working with brands, is, like, I’m able to sort of do a video that I may not have otherwise been able to, because, you know, they’re supporting that video and I’m able to make, like, something even cooler. But it’s, like, a lot of that content is stuff that I would have already made anyway. So, it’s great to be able to get a cool brand attached to it, because it’s something that I was like, oh, I would have done this and made this anyway.

But there is kind of that fine line of, like, okay, I’m doing this for them or I’m doing this for myself. And I feel like that also goes back to the beginning of why you’re creating, why you’re making the stuff that you’re making. Like, you have to choose something that you’re interested in. So, I genuinely like what I’m talking about, so it’s easy. It’s like, I’m doing this for myself, but also for them.

It does get a little tricky, though, because, you know, sometimes with brands, like, they will want you to say certain things. And I think now, like, I’ve done a really good job of kind of, my audience trusts me. So, it’s like I have to have these brands trust me when I say, look, this really bad idea. You shouldn’t do this because I’m going to get made fun of. You’re also going to get made fun of, and we don’t want to do that. So, you have to have, like, that difficult conversation sometimes.

And honestly, sometimes you also just have to own up to it. Like, if you posted something that people didn’t like, either apologize or you just kind of move on and be like, all right, that video was bad. Just don’t do that again, and kind of just shift and change. But that’s what’s so great about YouTube, is the audience is vocal. Sometimes it’s negative, but it’s like you have this core group of people, and you know, if you hurt one of them or let them down, it’s like, oh no, I’m so sorry.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** And is that, for you, how you have the stamina to do what you’re doing, because I’ve watched a whole bunch of other YouTubers who just burn themselves out because it can be all consuming? And some of them have even talked about that process. Like Casey Neistat, for instance, like, it sounds like he figured out a formula that worked of, you know, like, how do I make content that is compelling enough where it’s going to get a lot of engagement. But the process that he figured out how to do that, which he could repeat, was just killing him, it sounds like.

And like, you know, his reaction to that is, like, he’s dialed all the way back now. And he had a little stint, I think, last summer where he was posting videos again and they were really great. And like, you know, now, they’re dialed back again. So, I don’t know. How do you not burn yourself out?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Oh, I definitely have, and I think it’s just knowing yourself. And because I have been doing this for so long, it’s like you kind of understand when things are getting to be too much, and then you just have to dial it back or you have to find outside things or outside hobbies to just sort of take you out of what you’re doing. And making time for, like, health, fitness and just yourself is, like, I schedule that in now. It’s like everything kind of revolves around that instead of revolving around work.

So, it’s like I revolve when I can do whatever around, you know, like, okay, so if I can – if I’m not going to be able to, you know, run during the day, like, I have to do it really early. So, it’s kind of like revolving those things and just like making sure that, like, your health and wellness and just, like, your mind is okay, because if you can’t come to the table and be able to do your job, it’s like you’re going to be letting down all of these people.

And like, they can sense it online. Like, they’re – they’re not stupid. They know when, like, you’re having a bad day. And also, there have been times that I’ve been filming, and I will just be like, “I’m having an awful day. Like, I physically cannot do this.” And I know that, at this point, I’m like, I just – we’re going to have to put it off until tomorrow. So, it’s like it’s okay to, like, listen to yourself and know when things are too much, because it’s like we’re not machines, unfortunately. (Laughter.) So, we operate a little bit differently.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  I don’t know whether this is true for you or not, but I have that all the time, like, when I get to a point where I’m overwhelmed and I need to stop. And I always feel guilty about stopping. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Right. I definitely do.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  And I don’t know whether you feel guilty about it, but, like, learning to just sort of say, okay, well, you know, I may feel guilty about it, but, like, this is the right thing to do, and, like, I’m going to go do it anyway. But I still feel guilty to this day, like I’m sort of letting myself down or letting other people down by, like, not working as hard as I think I ought to be working.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Right. And then, you’re like, I’ve actually been working very hard, when you really think about it. (Laughter.) You’re like, I’m overworked. That’s why I’m feeling this way. Yeah, I know (crosstalk/inaudible). But I mean, sometimes, it’s just – it’s like, I was like, is this actually – is getting this thing done worth me, like, breaking out in tears because I’m so stressed out and upset. I’m like, no, it’s not. I need to go for a walk. And, you know, just sometimes, those simple things of just going outside or going for a walk, like, it helps so much. It sounds cliche, but it really does.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  That’s such good advice. Everybody should just sort of pause and absorb that. And this is the, you know, the thing with folks who do actually burn themselves out because they can’t figure out a way to moderate.

Then this thing that they were doing is gone. Like, they can’t do it anymore and, like, they can’t share it with the world anymore. And like, 0that’s way, way worse than just, like, having a thing be a few hours late or waiting until the next day.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah. And it’s like, right now, so I’ve kind of taken it sort of easy this beginning of this year, just sort of for myself and just everything. And me knowing that tech season is starting basically, like, right now, it’s like knowing that I’m going to burn myself out, so it’s like I’m fully prepared for that. So, it’s like if you’re prepared for that situation, it’s like I’ve been preparing for this for four months. Like, I know these next two months are going to be ridiculous.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  And going into that, I know. And, you know, I am lucky that my sister is super supportive and I also have a great camera person, and he also helps edit. And it’s like we know this is go time and just – just have that mentality of like, okay, do what we have to do to get it done and then we can relax when we need to. And if we really have to take a break, that’s okay. We are important. (Laughter.)

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, it’s almost like training to run a marathon, right? Like, you’ve got to prep for it, because if you don’t, you’re going to – you won’t be able to run the whole race.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So true. Like, yeah. I’m like, okay, we’ve been resting. We’re ready. (Laughter.) It’s tech season.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  That’s awesome. So, I’m curious to hear if you have a set of things that you do for your work that you think are much harder than – than people realize. So, like, I’ve got a handful of maker videos that I have produced and posted on YouTube, just so I could understand the process of what it takes.

And, like, one of the shocking things to me is it takes a lot of work to produce five or 10 minutes’ worth of good content. Like, I look at what Mark Rober does and I can’t even conceive of, you know, how much work must go into these, you know, 15-minute things that he’s – that he’s making, because it’s like 40, 50 hours just for my sort of crappy 10-minute videos worth of filming and editing and voiceover work.

And so, and I don’t think people appreciate it because you see the ten minutes of video at the end, and you’re like, oh, wow, that’s – you know, it’s almost like the better you make it, the more – the more people take for granted what must have gone into it. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Right, yeah. Everything just takes so long and a lot of times, a lot of my videos, I don’t script them. I just, like, sit down and start recording. So, that for me, that was working for a while until I realized how much time I was wasting, because I would just go on and ramble for two hours about – I’m like, what am I even talking about? This has nothing to do with, like, this product review. (Laughter.)

So, I started trying to at least, now, script them a little bit because I was wasting space, like, my storage. I’m like, I’m wasting not only time, but also space, storing all of this nonsense of stories that I’m never going to even use. So, I think that is also something I started doing, just a script to sort of make things a little bit more efficient.

But it’s really the whole process. It’s like when you think about everything that goes into it from just setting up, making sure it’s okay, the sound, the lighting, the actual recording, the prep work that goes into making sure I scripted everything, the unboxing, even the cleaning up of cardboard boxes is – honestly, it really could be a full time job for somebody here. Like, we would have a box recycling person because I spent hours breaking down boxes, and making sure that they’re in the recycling.

And then, even from that, the shooting, and then we have to, like, save the footage. We have to edit, and we back up the footage to make sure. Then we export, upload, thumbnails, replying to comments. I mean, it’s hundreds and hundreds of hours per video that, you know, people don’t really see. And then, when I kind of break it down like that and I think about it, I’m like, did I lose money on this project, because I think I might have, by the amount of hours that we put into it. (Laughter.)

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  I don’t know whether this is true for you. I can easily imagine if – if I were going to take these maker videos that I have produced and, like, do that as a serious thing. I think it would take a long time and a lot of engagement to get to the point where I could hire someone to, or, like, outsource some of the work where it would even be enjoyable doing, because there’s some parts of it that I just don’t like.

Like, I hate editing. And it’s so crucial to getting a good product at the end. But, like, I’m just terrible at it and I have no patience for it. And so, like, the first thing I would want is to, like, find an editor who can help me out.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, and I mean, I think that is the thing. It’s like find somebody to do the thing that you really don’t like the most, and that would be super helpful. But I love editing, which is the problem, because it takes a lot of time. And if I’m editing, I can’t be on camera filming more or doing anything else. So, I, for the longest time, maybe until the past three years, like, I was editing absolutely everything myself. Like, no one else was editing. But now, I mean, I still edit a few videos here and there, not as many as I used to, but I still do maybe, like, half, maybe a little less. I’m not sure, it depends.

Also, like, I sometimes know that if I’m shooting a video and it’s going to be a disaster to edit, like I almost feel bad. Like I don’t want somebody to have to sift through all of my mistakes. And it’s hard because I’m there doing it, and I know in my mind when I’m saying things, like, I can just, like, do this and get it done.

But that’s definitely something that I do need to sort of let go a little bit more so that I’m able to do other things, is the editing. But man, it’s like I love it so much, though. So, that’s the problem.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So, for things like that that you love and that you’re good at, how do you teach someone else how to do that in a way – like, they’re not going to do it exactly like you, but, like, how do you teach them to do it, you know, well enough where it’s above your bar so that you can scale, because at some point, like your business gets big enough where you actually have to give up some of the things that you love?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, I was even talking to another content creator friend, and they were like, “Oh, I don’t even look at my TikTok. I don’t – do I even still even have a Twitter?” And I was, “You have millions and millions of followers on all of them and you – you don’t even know?” (Laughter.) And that, like, hit me to the core, because I was like, I still actually love doing this. And like, they’re super successful and super creative. And it’s like, for them, like, they’re like mentally, I cannot be on and I can’t see that. I’m doing what I’m good at and leaving the rest to somebody else.

And so, I think there’s a lot of creators like that, but then there’s also people who are really actually in their uploading and adding thumbnails. And a lot of that stuff is wasted time. Like, I know I could be doing something else probably better with my time, but giving up that sort of ownership of it is very difficult. And, like you were saying, how do you teach somebody? I mean, I think it’s a lot of time, too, and if they kind of get your vision and watch your videos, and I think a lot of it is timing, too.

So, it’s just a lot of kind of working on things and saying, okay, maybe we can do this differently or why don’t you try this? And it’s also kind of good sometimes having somebody different perspective, because it’s like I’m so set in my ways. It’s like, all right, maybe let’s give me a little kick here. Let’s try something a little different. So, that’s always super helpful, because I think a lot of us kind of get comfortable.

And that’s one thing that, like, I love being comfortable, but I also now have learned to hate it, because I feel like I’m not growing and there’s no change happening. It’s just like, cool, I’m just chilling here. This is great, everything is good. And I’m like, something is wrong. We need to – we need to get uncomfortable. Anytime I get into my set and I’m like, this is perfect, let’s destroy it and we’re going to start over.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. Well, I think that’s a really good mindset to have, because the space in which you operate is evolving so quickly. I mean, and you’ve been doing it long enough, you know, maybe longer than anybody where you’ve just sort of seen the full spectrum of change. (Laughter.) Like, when you started, there were no iPhones. There were, you know, like, smartphones were a very different looking thing than they are right now. Like, you were the first person other than Justin on Justin TV, right?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So crazy. Yeah, it’s like, and now, just like looking back on kind of the whole picture, like it doesn’t even make sense. Like, what was I doing? I honestly don’t even know. Like, I was just having fun. And I think that is something that, like, we really need to enjoy whatever we’re doing. And it’s like if you’re passionate about anything, like, you really can make it be something.

It’s going to take a lot of work. I mean, there’s been ups and downs. I mean, I was, like, not even able to pay my rent at some point. And I was, like, moments away from getting evicted. And my landlord, bless his heart, back in Pittsburgh, I was like, “I promise, I have one more project. Like, it’s going to – everything’s going to be okay.” And like, you know, just having people that are supportive and kind of, like, believe in you and sort of give you that little bit of lenience, like, I am forever grateful.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, every successful person that I’ve ever met and, like, success is, you know, success can be, you know, you or success can be, you know, someone who is just feeling, you know, that they’ve got fulfillment in their life. But everyone that I’ve ever met, like, has had, like, these moments of grace, and compassion, and serendipity, and, you know, good fortune that have helped to get you through.

So, like this, you know, moment of compassion from your landlord, like, that was probably like a couple of things, like, you know, at some level, you know, she or he had to have had faith in you that, you know, that whatever it was that you were doing was going to actually make enough money so you could pay your rent, right? So, it wasn’t just giving you a pass. It was like they were believing in you a little bit, right?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, and I think that goes a long way. And I think compassion and kindness can go such a long way. And this was interesting. So, we were in Hawaii filming a project, and me and my sister were there for a month. And the last day, I, for whatever reason, left, like, my small bag. Like, and I shoved it behind the seat. And somebody broke into the car, stole my bag, and, like, my wallet was in there. (Laughter.)

And I made some video and I was, like, trying to, like, make light of the situation, just, you know, because I was like, this sucks. I was like, man, if anybody can just – you can keep the money. You just – can you turn in my ID so that I don’t have to go to the DMV because, like, that was also a nightmare, and I had to travel. And we, like, went around and people were so kind. Like, we were pulling security footage from various gas stations and, like, all these places. I basically, like, followed the crime as it was happening. So, I was like, man, this is wild, what’s happening right now. (Laughter.)

But somebody found my ID and they turned it in and said they saw it off of Instagram, that I had lost it. So, it’s like the kindness that we were showing to people who were helping me, like, we were giving them gift cards for helping, like, if the pulled security footage. So, I was like, I’m repaying you. And it’s just like the kindness comes back. And it’s think it’s something that, like, my mom and, like, my family is always kind of, you know, instilled in us, and it’s sort of just resonates. And it’s like, why would I want to be mean to somebody?

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  And I think, you know, going back to, like, troll comments and things like that, it’s like you see that stuff and it hurts so terribly. But it’s like, how does that person feel? They have to be in such a place of pain to ever say that about somebody else. And so, it’s like I have compassion for them. And I’m like, oh man, you’re trying to make me feel bad, but it’s like, I know you’re probably going through even tougher times. Like, you like to kinda have some forgiveness.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  That is an amazing way to look at the world. I think if we had more of that, like we would have less of this, you know, sort of screaming at each other that we have right now.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Well that’s hard with social media, because it’s like everybody has an opinion, they have a voice and it’s like, it’s incredible that we have that, but it’s like no one’s the same. And in text, things can be taken so out of context that it’s just so vicious.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Well, I know one thing that I do all the time is, like, I will get irritated about something and then write a 500-word e-mail that is just awful. And then I’ll write it, I’ll reread the e-mail, and then I’ll just delete it. (Laughter.) No one deserves me clicking “send” on those things.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  (Laughter.) I do that on Twitter. I’ll be like, I’ll write a mean tweet. I’m like, okay, I wrote it; delete. I’m not going to send it.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Or sometimes, it’s also nice to, like, kind of bounce ideas off of people. Like, I will write the tweet. I’ll send a screenshot to my sister and be like, should I say this? She’s like, no. So, it’s like having that person that’s like, no, you shouldn’t do that.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, and I think that’s the thing that we’re missing a lot right now. I mean, it’s great that you’ve got your sister, but, like, just being able to, like, push pause on your emotions for a few seconds, like, it’s a pretty important thing to have. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  It is, because it’s just, everything can get so heated and it’s fueled by emotion. And people have been stuck in the house for, like, a year and a half and, like, there’s no clear end in sight. And it’s just so much misinformation. So, it’s like, just breathe. Namaste, go do some yoga, or something. (Laughter.)

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. (Laughter.) So, you know, back to this point around how much change there’s been in the sort of social media and content ecosystem over the past 15 years. What’s interesting to you right now? And like, what are you excited about, going forward?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So, I’ve, strangely enough, been so interested in TikTok, mostly just because of it’s where I’ve actually been spending most of my time consuming content. And even creating for TikTok is different because it’s – like, you have – to create for TikTok, you have to be a part of TikTok. Like, you have to see what people are doing and you have to be a part of sort of the community and see the memes. And it’s just, it’s a whole ecosystem in itself. And I do feel like I create differently for each platform, and it’s not really something that, like, I’m doing, like, on purpose. It just sort of happens. Like, Instagram has a different vibe to it. Like, I post different things there.

TikTok, during the pandemic, I got really into it, to the point that my friends had to have an intervention, which was one of my favorite videos that I’ve made today. We made, like, a TikTok intervention, because it was, like, a joke – (laughter) – but everything that was happening there was actually very, very real. So, it was like TikTok kind of had this community where you could be yourself. I could be – it felt like the original days of YouTube. Like, I was just being silly and crazy, and they’re like, who is this person? I go, no, this is me, actually me. (Laughter.) Whereas YouTube, it’s kind of become a little more serious. It’s become learning and educational and tech focused. So, it’s weird because it’s all sort of shifted naturally into sort of different places.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  My daughter, who’s 13, you know, we had a rule. Like you can’t have an iPhone or a smartphone until you’re 12. And so, she got a phone a year ago, and it’s locked down in a whole bunch of ways.

And one of the things that she was desperate to get on the phone was TikTok. And I’m like, you know, I don’t know – know whether or not we should have – have our 12 year old daughter – she just turned 13 – on TikTok. But I let her have a TikTok account, mostly because, you know, she had something that she wanted to say, and the way that she was going to say it was through TikTok.

And so, she’s got an account. It’s private. You know, she’s not blasting stuff out to the – to the whole ecosystem. She’s got just her friends on her, on her account. And it’s like this way that they are sort of doing these creative things to show to each other. So, like, rather than drawing something in a sketchbook or, you know, like goofing off with each other, like on, you know, old handset telephone like I used to do with my friends when I was a teenager, like she’s using this as the medium.

And it’s really interesting. Like, her motivation for being on TikTok is different, I think, from a whole lot of people’s motivation to be on TikTok. And I just realized, at some point, that maybe everybody’s motivation is slightly different, you know, when they’re using these things. Like, there isn’t just one thing. Like, oh, I want to be famous. Like, I’m going to, like, that’s probably actually the worst motivation for being on any of these things. (Laughter.)

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Well, and that’s what’s so cool about TikTok, is a lot of these people, like they’re just creating for the sake of creating. And the TikTok algorithm is so incredible that it’s able to surface content that you might not have ever seen. So, you could have zero followers and overnight, you could have millions and millions of views and followers.

And it’s weird because the community is so oddly supportive. It’s like they want to see people succeed. Obviously, I’m sure in every platform, like, there’s a negative side to it. But for what I’ve seen, it’s super positive. And, you know, just seeing that is so cool.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah, I mean, I think honestly, one of the things that maybe makes TikTok a little less toxic is the comment section. Like, you have to do real work. Like, if you’re in the flow of just flipping through videos on TikTok, like you’ve got what, the heart count and the comment count, and, you know, some other stuff sort of sitting there on the side, but, like, it’s not front and center. Like, the video, the piece of content is the front and center thing. And you’re going to consume that and probably just flip to the next thing, and you’re not even going to click on this stuff that’s on the side.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  That’s actually a good point. I never really thought about that because it is a process. Like, where YouTube or Instagram, it’s like the comments are right there and you could just hit it.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  And I think sometimes, people are swayed by the comments. So, if you see a video and you see people saying, “This sucks, this is terrible,” you’re like, “Yeah, you’re right, it does.” And if you don’t see the comments, like you’re able to have that first opinion by yourself.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Oh, for sure.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So, and if you don’t like it, just wipe away.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  There is occasionally like some sort of meta controversy, like, about content that then makes me not enjoy the content anymore. And then I’m super disappointed on YouTube. (Laughter.) And like, you know, TikTok, it’s just a little more focused on the core content and, like, getting you through as much of that content as possible.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Yeah, and it’s interesting because it’s obviously, like, there’s, like, the Instagram has reels now and YouTube has their shorts. And it’s like TikTok is doing one thing and they’re doing it very well, whereas a lot of these other companies are trying to do that also in addition to everything else. It’s something that I kind of miss about, like, the old days of, like, social media, because everyone wasn’t just trying to do what everybody else was doing. It was like, hey, look, we’re Twitter, we’re going to do this and we’re going to do it great. And, you know, I think it’s just like kind of sticking to that I think is very important.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. So, we’re almost at time here. I want to be respectful of your time, but I’ve got two more questions for you. One is just advice that you would give for kids who are thinking about what they want to do in the future. And like, you know, maybe to anyone who’s sort of thinking about like, hey, I want to be a content creator, like, what advice would you give to folks?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  So, it’s weird--everyone’s like, oh, like, have goals and stick to them. And I don’t believe that at all. I mean, I think it’s great to have goals, but I think if you stray from that goal, you could potentially find something way better. And I think, like me wanting to be a programmer, like that was my goal, I want to do this. I may have never straight away and started doing video or photos and things like that to lead me to what I’m doing now. And I think just be flexible and kind of going with the flow and sort of figuring out things is honestly great. So, it’s like have goals, but don’t be afraid to stray from them.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Awesome. But, you know, you’re also driven at the same time. It’s really interesting hearing you talk. So, like, I think that flexibility is, and awareness of what’s going on around you and with yourself is, like, that sounds like one of your superpowers, but you’re also driven, right?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Sure. And I mean, it’s hard because there are so many different people. And it’s like my other sister, she’s our middle sister. Like, I could never see her doing this. You know, it’s like there is a type of person that this is for. But I feel like if anybody wants to do it, like, it really is possible, but there’s hard work involved. Like, it’s not just, hey, I woke up and I’m going to post a video. Like, there’s so much that goes into it.

But if you do genuinely enjoy it and if there is a part of the process that you aren’t able to do or you really don’t like doing it like you, you don’t, like, enjoy the editing as much, you’ll find people around you that can support you and kind of fill in the gaps.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Yeah. That’s awesome, awesome advice. So, last question. So, and maybe, maybe this has already been asked and answered, given how public a figure you are, but I’m just sort of curious. Like, outside of, like, this work that you do, which consumes an enormous amount of your time, what do you do for fun?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Oh my gosh, it’s so funny because this is something I, like, I want to talk about more than anything. So, I started training jujitsu about three some – three and a half years ago, maybe.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Nice.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  And that is something that has completely, absolutely changed my life. So, for the first year, I was like, I’m not going to talk about this. I’m not going to post anything. I didn’t talk about anything. I told the gym, I was like, I don’t want anyone posting that I’m even here. And it was, like, until I got my blue belt, I was like, then maybe I will actually post and say if it’s something that I’m doing.

But martial arts has become such a huge part of my life, almost even more than tech. Like, even when I was in Hawaii this past month, I basically was there. I did, like – I was just training jujitsu. I was doing – I started training light sabers, so doing, like, light saber combat and light saber things from – which stems from a martial arts called kali, which is a Filipino martial arts. And I don’t know, it’s just –it’s so empowering and the amount of knowledge that is out there for these things, like we’re talking about machining. I mean, I spend most of my time watching jujitsu videos like on YouTube. (Laughter.) So, it’s like my entire algorithm is, like, oh, an unboxing and jujitsu.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  So I know a lot of people now, actually, who are like very into jujitsu and, like, maybe the first time as an adult, like I know Anthony Bourdain, like, was into jujitsu and, like, I was a huge fan of his work. And I was like, oh, that’s sort of unusual. Like, this tall, skinny chef guy is, you know, training martial arts. So, like, what is the attraction to that for you?

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  I mean, for me, I just felt, when I walked into that gym, I just felt I was at my lowest point. I felt incredibly weak. I felt just I was, like, depressed, like, it a super bad point in my life. And, like, I was like, I need to do something other than what I’m doing. And then, when I walked into that gym, it was incredibly humbling because nobody cares who you are, what you do. It’s like when you’re on the mat, you’re there to learn, you’re there to train. And it’s just, for me, it kind of puts so many things into perspective, mostly because I wanted to learn everything so incredibly fast.

And, you know, as a white belt, like, you really – like, you think, yeah, I’m doing such a great job. And then somebody comes in and crushes you, and then you just go home crying. You’re like, oh, man, I know nothing. And it’s like every single time, it’s like every time you level up and you learn something, that just causes another problem. But it’s just such a vast variety of things that you learn. And it’s so empowering when you actually are able to start leveling up and actually learning things.

And it’s honestly one of the most rewarding things that I’ve ever done. And I think I learned the most when I got injured for the first time because I was going too tough. I wanted to learn everything so fast. And that taught me to slow down and kind of enjoy the process. Like, you’re not going to learn everything in this first year. So, if you keep getting hurt, you’re not going to progress. So, it’s like that injury taught me to kind of figure out what else I could do when I couldn’t be training.

And that’s when I started the other martial arts, Kali, which is more kind of, like, hand-to-hand combat with, like, various sticks and different weapons. I was doing that while I was injured. And then it’s kind of – that sort of has played into my life a lot, where if there’s a problem that I’m having, I’m like, okay, I myself cannot do this, but what else can I do to work around that issue to make it work? So, it’s like martial arts has taught me so, so much about, like, myself, and it’s just such a rewarding experience.

And I think from that, my biggest piece of advice to anyone is, like, have a hobby that you do outside of anything. And just go, set phone down and just be. And I mean, that took me like 13 years to kind of figure that out. (Laughter.) And, you know, when I did, I was like, this really is life changing.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  That is super awesome. And with that, thank you so much for talking with us today. This has been really super interesting. I’m such a huge fan of what you do.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Thank you.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  It’s just awesome to have you out there in the world. Thank you so much.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Thank you. No, I appreciate it. This was really fun. Thanks for having me.

**KEVIN SCOTT:**  Super cool.

**JUSTINE EZARIK:**  Awesome.

[MUSIC]

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** So that was Kevin’s conversation with Justine Ezarik. You know, listening to her talk about her story, I was struck again and I kind of admit, I’d kind of forgotten-- our career paths are remarkably similar. We’re the same age. We got started online about the same time. Obviously, she went more in the video direction. I took a more written approach, but it was so interesting just, I think, hearing about A) how she got into tech and B) just the story of her career, and I was honestly kind of struck by it – A) again, because like I said, it was similar to mine, but is also just not the typical story that we hear a lot of people who are interested in tech.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, and I’m always inspired by that and just sort of fascinated how people even get the courage to go do these things. So when you are charting a new course, it is so easy for everybody around you to sort of dismiss what you’re trying to do to say it’s stupid or silly, or that you’re going to fail and summoning the courage to go do the thing anyway because you believe in it is just, I mean, it’s inspiring and like to see it work.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yes.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** It is very encouraging.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No. One hundred percent, you know, I mean, like I remember when she used to – back when Justin.tv, which is – which became Twitch, but back when it started, it was it was livestreaming, usually what’s now known as IRL streaming. But that was basically what it was. And she would live cast her life, and it was completely new and there weren’t many people who were doing it. Justin Kan was doing it, she was doing it. And then to just see the business that she’s built, you know, like, not only has she continued to be a creator and influencer and put out great content, but she’s actually – and I think that this is applicable even for people who might not want to be on – on that type of creative thing, the business that she’s built has been really inspiring and really amazing to watch come together.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, and I can say when Justin.tv started and when she and Justin were doing this stuff, you know, they had a camera strapped to them 24 by 7 we’re broadcasting their life. I didn’t really get it, and I certainly did not appreciate that they were figuring out a template for a way for people to assemble a whole bunch of technological components in a new way to reach an audience. And, and like so much of what I consume now –

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Is that stuff.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** It’s, it’s exactly that stuff. It’s, it’s not the, you know, 24 by 7 IRL stuff, but it is like little episodic views into people’s lives, whether it’s someone who is a cooking enthusiast or, you know, like I like watching people practice playing classical piano.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yeah.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** It’s like it’s just these things that you get to see that you just wouldn’t otherwise. And like, they are the ones who pioneered this stuff, it’s just great, I think.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No, I totally agree, because the technology obviously is what allowed that to become more democratized and allowed people to be able to do that. But then you had the personalities and the people who were willing to A) put it out there and show, yes, this can be compelling. And then I think, you know, there were a number of people who were doing those things at the time. Very few of them have stayed around, let alone have grown into, you know, big brands. And so that’s another thing to not – not that that has to be the goal, but I think it’s been really impressive to see, with Justine, especially since she started, you know, in her twenties, had the foresight to say, okay, I want to make this into a career and I’m going to figure out a way to make this into a business because it wasn’t a business then and there wasn’t a path that you could follow to make that into something that you could actually turn into a career.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, and I think the really interesting thing is like, we honestly all owe them a debt of gratitude, I think, because the fact that they pioneered this stuff and they created not a small business ecosystem around streaming meant that a whole bunch of technology was in place when the pandemic started, where we all sort of kind of turned into streamers over the past 18 months.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yeah, yes. No, that’s been the joke I’ve been making with my friends is that like we’ve all become, you know, Twitch streamers over the last 18 months because we had to, and I had a slight advantage over some other people because I already – I’ve always had camera stuff and I’ve done that sort of thing. I had audio equipment and some video stuff, but certainly not to the extent of, you know, people like Justine and others. And it was interesting, you know, when I got up to speed, I’m sure that you found this too, you know, I almost found myself becoming a consultant for like friends and family on how to do their own setups.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** And I thought about people like Justine, and I was like, you know… not that she needs to, and she’s doing plenty well on her own, but it’s like the stuff that she does we’ve now seen a direct one-to-one way where it’s not just from a consumer standpoint, it can actually be an enterprise or, you know, a standpoint, you know, it (crosstalk), and there’s so many different things where once you have figured out how to get the process down –

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** It can be incredibly, incredibly useful. But it can also really kind of change the game for things and open up access to opportunities and into resources that people might not otherwise have had and.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Oh, yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** And, and so, you know, seeing that and seeing how that can become more accessible to everyone, I think is awesome.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, I totally agree. And I don’t know whether this was the case with you from last spring, but when I was trying to get my AV game into a better state for prolonged remote work or for being able to do TV interviews –

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yeah.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Or keynote conferences or whatnot, like the way that I figured this stuff out is, I went and watched a bunch of videos –

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yes.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** From gaming streamers to see what they were doing.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No, that –

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Because they were the pros.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No, that’s exactly what I did. I did the exact same thing, and then I went to like YouTubers that I liked, who I knew had like a fast turnaround system. I was like, okay, you know, many of them put their gear in you know, the description boxes, which was very useful and to say, okay, what’s your setup? And, and fortunately, a lot of them would do behind-the-scenes streams. I’m like, okay, this is how I set it up. And I was like, yep, this is what I’m going to take on, because even though the context is different and the content might be different, this is what we want to achieve. And, and so it was great to have those examples out there because we all had to kind of become home broadcast studios.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, it’s super cool, a strange and fascinating world.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** A strange, fascinating world, indeed, and Justine has been such a good influencer, and I like that, you know, she is conscious about the fact that she is a role model for the next generation coming up, like your kids, right? Because they see her as somebody who has done this and has been successful and has also been true to who she is as a person.

Yeah, and she’s sort of fearless with what she does.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Yeah.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Like she is – you know, more so than most of the rest of humanity has figured out who she is in public, but she’s been relatively fearless in the way that she has embraced opportunity and technology and business, and we even chatted a little bit. It, it’s not like the things that she’s pioneered have remained in stasis.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Right.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Like, you’ve got a bunch of new stuff coming along like TikTok, for instance, and that won’t be the end of it either.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No. No. Well, this is actually what’s always been – what’s been impressive to me, about here, is that she has lasted for this long, because again as I mentioned, early on, like in the Justine.tv, like live, you know, life streaming days, you had a number of people and most of them have fallen off. And then every time a new platform comes out, again, you kind of get the next wave of – you have people, like you know, Vine was big, and there were a lot of people who were Vine stars and some of them were able to translate, some of them weren’t. But what’s been impressive about her is that she’s been able to master these different networks and stay relevant.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** But also stay true to who she is as a creator and as a person.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, and that is a super interesting thing because not everybody is able to do that.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** No.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Some people are not interested. Like you look at Mark Rober and –

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Right.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Mark makes one, high production value, you know, 20-minute-ish video a month.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Right.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** And like, he has figured that out, and it’s awesome. He’s, he’s almost like the, you know, the modern moral equivalent of MythBusters, right? He’s sort of figured out how to do that on his own and be the entrepreneur of that. There are some people – like I forget who they are, but like, there’s a TikTok star right now who got up to a hundred million followers and got offered a TV show. Not clear that that’s going to

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Charli D’Amelio, yeah.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** In that direction, yeah. And so, you know, like these people like Justine who can navigate multiple generations of technology, multiple generations of media, multiple – you know, different ways –

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Multiple generations of audiences, frankly, right?

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah, yeah, for sure. So it’s just impressive. And like she has such an easygoing way about her. You know, she’s just super impressive.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** Totally agree. It was a great conversation and it’s great to seed someone like her out there.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** Yeah.

**CHRISTINA WARREN:** All right, well, that’s it for the show today. You know that we always love to hear from you. Please send us your comments or questions any time at behindthetech@microsoft.com and don’t forget that you too can be an influencer. That’s right, so please, tell colleagues and friends about the show. Thanks for listening.

**KEVIN SCOTT:** See you next time.

[MUSIC]