

Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel Chats About Sexting And The Future Of His Social App

Evan Spiegel left Stanford University in 2012, only three classes away from graduating, to return to his home with his father and begin Snapchat. Spiegel's fast-growing mobile app lets users send photos, videos and messages that disappear a couple of seconds after they've been received. It was launched in 2011 Snapchat is especially popular among young adults and teens however, many parents are concerned that Snapchat is the perfect tool for sharing lewd photos or "sexting."

Despite the negative circumstances and no revenue, Snapchat is growing. The company has raised about \$70 million in venture capital from investors such as Institutional Venture Partners and Benchmark Capital. The Pew Research Center found in an earlier survey that 9 percent of American users of mobile phones use Snapchat.

Spiegel's views on the permanence of digital data are in opposition to the views of almost everyone in the industry. He states, "It would make everyone's lives easier if everyone deleted everything by default and only saved the most important data to us." "Right today, most businesses are built on creating a backup of everything and then writing a lot of software to manage it and hopefully find the most important items later."

The company recently added a new feature called "Stories," which lets snaps live for 24 hours.

Speigel, 23 years old spoke to The Associated Press to discuss his app and his plans for the future of the company. The interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Q What is the first thing people think of when they think of Snapchat is its potential for sexting. How can you address this?

A: Snapchat's most enjoyable part is the surprise and joy that comes with learning how to make use of it. However, it was a challenge in the beginning. SEXTING I still remember the first time we tried to recruit people to join the service. I was on the Santa Monica promenade, and I would approach people and say: "Hey, this application is worth trying." You can send disappearing images." And they would reply: "Oh, for sexting," which kind of meant that we needed to be more effective in teaching people. We're completely satisfied with the way we described the service in the past. The expansion of the service shows that it's about a lot more.

Q What is Snapchat all about?

A: It's fun. Period. It's the most important thing. Somewhere along the way when we were building social media products we forgot the reason we love to communicate with our friends is because it's enjoyable. People began to consider friends as networking tools.

Q What was the reason for the idea? originate?

A My friend was unhappy about a photograph that was sent to him. (regretted) sent. We started looking into other applications that could do disappearing text, photos, and video. And they really had a tough time as there was a lot of negative stigma associated with deletion of items. But when Bobby and I built the prototype and started using it we realized how we had a lot of fun sending the photos back and forth. Based on our experiences with the application we were successful in doing a great job of explaining how ephemeral media can make an experience that is really engaging, fun and more engaging.

Q: Would the service be as popular if it didn't have the element of disappearing?

A We love to think about this. At first the service was much faster than MMS (multimedia message service). This was a major benefit. So a lot of users simply loved it because its interface was so easy to use. It also sent the pictures quickly. It was a lot quicker than opening up the text message, then going and taking a picture , or choosing it from the gallery and uploading it -which takes a really really long time- and then sending it to your friend. Snapchat has many advantages. Obviously we haven't yet run the experiment of making messages permanent, but we have seen that users save messages they receive. Two percent of snaps sent are saved and also screenshots taken. It's a great idea to send images swiftly. If you like an image, or find it interesting you can save it.

Q: How'd you go about securing your first round of funding?

A: The guy who is named Jeremy Liew, who works at Lightspeed Ventures, one of his partners, Barry Eggers had a daughter who was using Snapchat. She claimed that her top three apps that everyone was using at her high school were Angry Birds, Instagram and Snapchat. And (Liew and Eggers) had never heard of Snapchat which is why they were in awe of those guys. So Jeremy sent me a Facebook message. I ended up meeting him and showed him some of the initial data we had. This was the month that we realized that we wouldn't be able to pay for our server bills anymore. Bobby was working at the time and needed to pay server bills. It just got too costly, so the time was right. My dad was not willing to pay for the disappearing photographs any more.

Q: What's the stress now that you've got these investments? What are the best methods to generate revenue?

A: Moving forward, there are many different revenue models. In-app transactions are among the most well-known revenue models. This is because we don't need to create an entire sales team to create cool products that people would like to buy.