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“ *Make sure you’re solving a problem that either you or other people have. If you have to convince people that they have a problem, it’s probably not real.*

Joel Simkhai

Embodying the American Dream

SOMETHING PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY KNOW ABOUT ME: I have six nieces and nephews – all through surrogacy. IF I WERE STRANDED ON A DESERT ISLAND AND COULD TAKE 3 THINGS: My fiancé, my dogs, & lots of sunscreen. EARLIEST ENTREPRENEURIAL MEMORY: My father and aunts and uncles were all entrepreneurs. When I was 13 I used to work the cash register at my aunt's clothing store.

START BY SOLVING PROBLEMS FIRST. Many entrepreneurs solve the problems that they observe in their lives and in the lives of those around them. That is certainly the case with Joel Simkhai, Founder and former CEO of Grindr, the world's largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people. Joel solved a personal problem, his interest in interacting with like-minded people near him, and he developed this solution into a multi-million dollar company, household name, and pop-social phenomenon.

Joel credits his family with encouraging his entrepreneurial spirits. "As an immigrant from Israel, I remember my dad explaining early on that there are millionaires living in Beverly Hills who just sell buttons for your shirt or have become successful for selling clothes hangers. That you could find financial success anywhere if you're solving problems and keeping your ideas practical."

Simkhai first thought of Grindr when he heard that the next generation of the iPhone included a GPS chip, concluding that geolocation would be an excellent way to meet gay men nearby. "If you asked anyone before Grindr if they were having a hard time historically meeting their sexual needs, the answer would have been yes," he laughs. Simkhai says that the true test of the app wasn't just if it would work, but if users would spread the word to stimulate growth, revealing "that was truly the Holy Grail of success for Grindr, that people would tell friends and family about it all over the world," he explains, adding that "we didn't have to spend money in the early days, the app just spoke for itself through a network of users."

BEING YOURSELF IS ALWAYS YOUR BEST ASSET. Joel started his own company so he could make his own rules, but sold Grindr in 2018 for similar reasons, sharing that he felt "it was time to do something different, be somebody different again."

He also fondly recalls the "billions of different stories from Grindr users that display the variety of impact this app has had. In a way, it's a measurable source of true pride and satisfaction for me to realize it has this legacy," Simkhai explains, while also highlighting that he feels Grindr is not always

recognized for the impact it had globally on LGBTQ+ rights. "This is an area that brings me a lot of joy



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