Kate:	00:09	Hello, and welcome to 'How to Build a Dating App'.
Michael:	00:12	This podcast will chronicle our journey of building and launching a brand new dating app. Our aim for this podcast is to take you through the whole experience of what it takes to build a dating app from scratch, and not just any dating app, but one that we really hope can take on the big competitors in the market.
Richard:	00:28	We're definitely going to be learning some lessons along the way, as this is the first app of this scale that any of us have been involved with. And none of us have worked in the dating industry or are experts in dating.
Kate:	00:37	So to really help us delve into the current dating landscape and online dating trends, we're going to be speaking with some of the leading dating industry experts, coaches, and app developers to share their insights on the industry.
Kate:	00:50	John Kershaw is the founder of a dating app called Bristlr, which connects those with beards to those who want to stroke beards. He's also the founder of M14 Industries, a platform which allows anyone in the world to have their own branded dating app. John, thanks for coming in and talking to us today.
John:	01:05	It's my pleasure.
Kate:	01:06	Great.
Michael:	01:07	So how did you get into the dating app industry, and ultimate launching the dating app Bristlr?
John:	01:12	So I got into the industry by essentially stumbling backwards by accident. I created Bristlr as a complete joke. I was trying to think of, this is 2014, we're at the peak of all of these Uber, and Tinder, and all of this connecting, and apps, and what does it all mean? I came up with this idea whilst procrastinating at work, that I can stroke my beard when I'm thinking about something, but other people don't have beards. So we need to fix this urgent problem, so I'll make the Uber for beard fondling where you press a button, and a beard turns up for you to stroke, so you can have your good ideas, and you can focus and concentrate.
John:	01:53	So that's why the tagline is connecting those with beards to those who want to stroke beards. It really was just that. Then it sort of grew into the idea of, oh, it's a dating app for hipster-y types who have beards, and that day I came up with the name

Bristlr, and was like, oh, this is great. I'm the funniest person ever, this is brilliant, and I don't like doing my work, so I'll procrastinate on this for a while. And I created Bristlr, which subsequently went viral and led me on this very strange journey that I've been on ever since.

Michael:	02:26	So it didn't initially start as a dating app then? It was just a quirky idea, and then it turned into a dating app?
John:	02:32	Yeah. So as the idea developed, it became obvious that making it a dating app was the best vehicle for it, and also that lends itself to the PR and marketing. Early on I realised the thing that's going to make Bristlr go viral is the fact that it is the Tinder for beards, which is hilarious. So you engineer it from the beginning to be a fun thing to talk about, and that lends itself to marketing.
Michael:	02:58	Okay. So what were the main challenges in creating an app start up, and how did you do your due diligence? What sets Bristlr apart from other dating apps, basically?
John:	03:06	So the main challenge was that I knew literally nothing about anything. That, though, arguably that is one of my biggest strengths, because I have no idea how ridiculously difficult this process is. I just went, ah, it's fine, this is easy, I'm getting loads of PR. What could possibly go wrong? This is fine. So it was my complete ignorance to all things dating, and business, and technology, and essentially every tick box that I need to be an expert in, I didn't realise that I knew about.
John:	03:36	But that kind of lends itself to one of Bristlr's strengths, which is that it's built by someone who isn't running by a rule book of like, oh, an app needs to do X, Y, Z, a business needs to do X, Y, Z. We can build stuff that's just kind of fun. So one of the features we built for fun in Bristlr is called the Lothario detector. If someone sends the same copy pasted message to multiple people, we let them, and then we tell the other person exactly how many times they have copied and pasted that message to other people.
Michael:	04:05	That's really good.
Kate:	04:05	That's amazing. That's so needed.
Michael:	04:05	That is a problem, isn't it? People-
John:	04:09	Yeah.

Michael:	04:09	Come up with these suave-
John:	04:11	One liners.
Michael:	04:11	Or sleazy, or what they think are funny one liners and they just paste it to every girl, or guy.
John:	04:16	Yeah. There is Reddit forums, there is websites where you can get the best opening lines and all of this just complete garbage. So we made this Lothario detector for fun. We started to ... Well, for the best feedback we got is from angry men, and then the second best feedback we get is people complaining about us on these forums, like, well, I'm never going to use Bristlr then if they're going to ruin my lines.
Michael:	04:45	But their lines obviously didn't work in the first place, if they've had to use them so many times.
John:	04:49	No. I think, it remains a mystery to me how men think dating works. Like, well, not all men. But enough of them that it's significant in my day that I think a lot of men view dating apps like Bristlr is something like, okay, so my ultimate goal is a relationship, and about three steps before that is meeting someone, and about two steps before that is a conversation, and that means I'm going to send a message and get a message back. If we view this like a big funnel, the more messages I send, the more I'll get back, and thus, the more likely I am to get a relationship, and they just don't think any more about it. They're just like, right, off we go. That's perfect. I will now send 1,000 messages, and this is guaranteed to end in a marriage. No.
Michael:	05:35	They're essentially, though, spending very little effort on a mass of people. Whereas if they picked two people that they liked, and put a lot of attention into the type of messages they were sending-
John:	05:45	Yeah, if they actually put some effort in, then they would do better is a fair assumption. But you would be surprised at how low the bar has to be for people to not trip over it.
Kate:	05:56	Do you think that's men, though, being on a dating app platform, rather than like real world?
John:	06:02	I would love to say yes to that, but I have a horrible feeling-
Kate:	06:06	I know, I feel like it's very much both.

John:	06:09	Yeah. I think dating apps are quite good at reflecting a lot of the real world. But in a slightly warped way. So I think we all know guys who will go to a bar and try to chat up 20 people, and it's the same kind of mentality and approach of just like, well, I don't really care, I just want one. So I'll just shotgun this whole thing and see what happens.
Michael:	06:34	Trying to increase the odds of someone falling for-
John:	06:38	Exactly. Exactly. You can kind of follow the logic, but it results in a fairly unpleasant experience for everyone, and a completely lack of success. But hey, each to their own.
Michael:	06:46	So do you know of any other dating apps that do the whole Lothario Detector type of approach of calling people out on that?
John:	06:54	I don't know any that have actually implemented it, because you get a lot of bad feedback.
Michael:	06:58	Yeah.
John:	06:59	It hurts your metrics, because you get fewer messages being sent. Like, if one of your metrics that you report about how successful you are is, ah, we've seen a million messages sent. This is like, yeah, but 900,000 of them were, "hey". It's like, mm, let's raise the bar a little bit.
Michael:	07:17	So yeah, I guess you've chosen to do something that ultimately might hurt your metrics, but make it a better user experience for people.
John:	07:24	Yeah. Then you just look at like, okay, well, what are our metrics? We should be looking at these metrics knowing what they actually mean, and not trying to push those metrics as hard as we can. We know how many messages get sent in a day. But we're not constantly trying to improve that, or push that up, because then you end up building for the wrong thing. That ultimately isn't where our success is.
Michael:	07:51	So how does Bristlr make money? What's your pricing model? We don't need to go into detail in terms of figures if you don't want to.
John:	08:00	So we offer, like most apps, a freemium subscription service. So you can do pretty much everything you need to do on Bristlr for free. If you want to kind of get a little bit of an extra helping

hand, maybe you want to see whose viewed your profile, maybe you want to see whose liked you without having to like them first. You can pay a subscription fee, and that's just a monthly price, and that's how we make the money out of Bristlr. A certain percentage of users will convert to paying users, and that's what keeps the lights on.

Michael: 08:31 So you describe your company M14 Industries as essentially a white label dating platform, which basically means that if you've got an idea for a dating app, M14 will help you make it. Can you take us through that process and how it works?

John: 08:44 So M14 came out of Bristlr, because we realised that we have this ... Well, we have no real idea how to grow Bristlr, because it is ... Like, you don't turn Bristlr into the billion pound company that we all aspire to run. But, we have this really unfair advantage that we've got this really cool technology, that I, as the founder of the company, know inside out. I know that it wouldn't be too hard to make a Bristlr for people who are into tattoos, or a Bristlr for people who are into coffee. That, sort of, revelation came about when we were going through a start up accelerator, so you're surrounded by people much smarter than you who are like, yes, that is the good idea. The dating app for people who like beards is not actually the good idea. But congratulations on that, by the way.

John: 09:29 From that, we realised that there is actually this opportunity to build a company, because there is no easy way to make a dating app. If you google for how to make an app, we've done no SEO, so you can actually still do this. You google it, and they're all like, oh, use this script, or, click these buttons, and you get your own dating app. What you end up with is just garbage, absolute terribleness, or you go to an app development agency and mortgage your house, and then you've got a slim chance that you'll get something decent at the end of it. Then there is a 10% chance that that will then actually make you money.

John: 10:05 So we sort of looked at this landscape, and were like, well, we can probably do something here, where it's like, you don't have the resources to have your own development team, but you want your own app. But you want it to actually be good. Hello, welcome to M14 Industries. The way our process works is initially just quite a lot of conversations to figure out what people want, because the more we use, the more we've developed our platform and our business, the more we realised that one of the key pieces that people need is actually information on how these things work, because everyone in the industry will lie to your face about what's important and what's

not. It will take you about three years to figure out who is ... Can I swear?

Michael:	10:48	Yeah.

John:	10:48	Full of s*** and who is not. Yeah, so we try to be a little bit more like, okay, here is how it actually works, here is the metrics that are important. When people say, you can never make money on apps, here is what they actually mean by that. We kind of try to help people understand what business they're actually trying to build. Then we kind of provide the technical supports. It's like, you give us your branding, we will give you a fairly generic dating app, and it'll look exactly how you want. We'll do the website, the hosting, the customer support, payment processing, your VATMAS, we do all of the complicated crap that you don't want to have to touch, so you can just focus on the marketing and the branding, because that's kind of the key, the technology is almost the solved problem.

John:	11:37	The marketing, the branding, and the idea is where it's exciting and interesting, where the novelty and your success ultimately comes from. So we work with you on that, and then we'll launch the app. If you want any custom features, we just charge whatever our day rate is. We try to not actually make profit on our day rate, and we try to make profit more long term, because it forces us, as a business, to be more interested in the long term success of your product rather than, oh, we can sell you, do you want your buttons to be slightly shinier? That'll be 10 grand please. Like, it kind of removes our incentive to do that.

Michael:	12:14	Yeah.

John:	12:14	Though if you do want shiny buttons by the way, we can give you a great deal on them.

Michael:	12:18	Yes.

John:	12:20	We kind of work with people, and then we launch their app, and then it kind of grows from there.

Michael:	12:24	So your goal overall is to keep your client long term, rather than just sell them an app and send them off, and say, okay-

John:	12:32	Yeah. We understand that a lot of people who will work with us won't be successful, because 90% of new businesses don't work.

We know that 10% of our users will be with us for a long time, will raise hundreds of thousands of pounds, and we can be there alongside them to help them do that. Whether they then stay with us long term or whether they get so successful that they then move onto their own stuff, fine. Much like with a dating app, on dating apps, people worry, oh, what if you're really, really successful? Won't people get married and then never use your service again?

John:	13:06	It's like, okay, if it turned out that every single person who signed up to Tinder ended up, within six months, in their dream relationship, do you really think then Tinder will struggle for users? If every one of our clients is like, ah, we've just raised two million VC funding, sorry, we're going to move to our own development studio, we would sing that from the absolute roof to be like, hey everyone, look what we managed to achieve. So it's kind of, it's nice, because again, it reinforces that we're there to kind of support our customers and kind of, we want them to be successful, be that with us or not. If we can be the stepping stone that took them from idea to success, we are doing our job, and we can grow, and that's ultimately where we see our success, like living in that specific space.
Richard:	13:52	So that brings us onto quite an interesting other question I was going to ask you. If I could pick your brains a bit about the dating app industry in general. So what are your opinions on dating apps, like good or bad? What more could be improved about them?
John:	14:08	So, in terms of actual dating apps, I think essentially every successful dating app that you see is something that you can study, you can break it down. So, if you take Bumble, you can dissect that app any which way. If you copied various of their strategies, you'd probably end up quite successful, because they are the masters of looking at their data, figuring stuff out. As far as I'm aware, they have the best monetization strategy of any app, and the way they do their marketing, it's all fantastic.
John:	14:42	I think essentially all of the big apps are fantastic, and they have enough money behind them, and enough engineering support that they are the best they can be. Anything that they improve, they are pushing the envelope of what dating apps can, and should, do. In terms of the rough, I think, you're just looking at all of the apps that are just really low quality, they're just doing key word stuffing, or like SEO, just garbage. All they're looking to do is just get people through the door, so they can sell their data, or scam them, or something like that.

Richard:	15:16	We found that a lot of, in our research, that there are loads and loads of dating apps out there. They start to get, as the more we researched, the more sort of, I don't know, basic they became. They were, you know, like hot singles now app or something, or they just become very ... They're the least imaginative names.
John:	15:39	Yeah. But a lot of those apps, their goal isn't to be the next Tinder. They are doing exactly what they need to do. They know there will be people who are like, ooh, hot singles near me. Yes please, I would like some of them. So they can grow a business or they can sell advertising, or they can just take your data and just shove it in a big database or something like that. There is a lot of that that happens.
John:	15:59	But, you'll find that those same apps, it's almost the same as if you try and search on the app store for how to speed up my phone, and there is like all of these download more RAM apps and stuff like that. It's the same kind of, all they're doing is they're using dating as the mechanism to get users in, and just to acquire users. They're not that first on the actual product or the actual, actually making a decent dating app. So I think for me, anyway, I just don't really think about that entire segment. It's just like, eh, they're not really doing this for the same reason that we're doing this. Not really appealing to the same people. So fine, they're going to go do that. Go for it.
Michael:	16:40	That is reflected in the reviews on the app stores, where people are like, it doesn't even work, I can't even get past the log in screen, or it just kicks me out. So they're not thinking of the user experience at all, basically.
Kate:	16:52	What is their gain out of doing that? Like say an app is so bad that people drop off after their first use of it? What are they gaining? If they spent whatever it might be, 20,000 to build it or whatever to buy it, just off the shelf?
John:	17:07	It's the database of users.
Kate:	17:09	So they're just selling all of the data?
John:	17:10	Probably, yeah.
Kate:	17:11	Yeah.
John:	17:12	Or selling access to the data or something like that.
Kate:	17:13	Yeah. I wonder how much that outweighs it. Is it worth-

John:	17:17	Well, say, if you think you could probably get about four quid for a user's profile, so if you can get 10,000 people to download this app over the course of a year, that's potentially 40 grand worth of data that you could then sell. God save us, GDPR.
Michael:	17:30	Then there is this whole pool of people that aren't getting their hot singles. So they-
John:	17:37	No, but they'll go on and download five more hot singles apps in-
Michael:	17:40	They'll find a hot single eventually.
John:	17:42	Yeah. Hope so.
Michael:	17:44	We all hope so.
John:	17:46	Yeah. I mean, that's outside of the industry, and I wouldn't worry too much. They're not going to be your competition. They acquire users in very different channels to you, they're probably different users, probably different demographics. So there is that side to watch out for, and it just kind of steadily gets sketchier and sketchier as you wander off down that path.
Michael:	18:04	The further you get down the app store-
John:	18:06	Yeah, yeah. It's like on Amazon Prime video, when you scroll too far and you're like, oh, it' a Sonic the Hedgehog drawing tutorial, I have scrolled too far down my list here.
Michael:	18:17	But I would watch that.
John:	18:19	It depends on how late in the evening it is, and fine, I was looking for Game of Thrones, but this'll do.
Richard:	18:27	So bouncing off of that, what do you think the current trends in the dating app industry are?
John:	18:34	So the big positioning plays, moving towards feeling quote unquote classier. So Tinder comes along and is like, ha ha, take this old people, we're all sluts, or whatever their messaging is. It's that kind of, and everyone is kind of aghast at like, oh my god, single people are sleeping with each other? The world is going to end. They make huge amounts of money, and all of the 20 somethings, like this is great, it's not actually seedy, but I totally get that that's the vibe that people outside of Tinder

think that it is. When actually, it's just a really effective version of a dating app.

John: 19:10 So in response to that, you get a lot of apps trying to be the anti Tinder, and they're trying to take all of the negative PR around Tinder and make it their own, be that Bumble or ... So Bumble then comes along and is like, hey, you don't have to be sketchy to use dating apps. They get a huge amount of PR that builds on that. What we've seen recently is Match, who owned Tinder, have bought Hinge, and they essentially, as far as I can tell, kind of gutted the app, remade it. It's a really, really great app now, and that is kind of being brought in to kind of counter, to be Match's equivalent of Bumble, that kind of, it's a classy, it's more meaningful, it's that kind of thing. I think that's a pattern that we're going to see more of. That kind of positioning. Then from a technology standpoint, video streaming seems to be coming in. It's massive in China, and you're seeing it a lot ...

John: 20:09 Video Streaming in general is just taking off with things like Twitch, and you're going to start to see more of that in social media. That leads it into dating apps, where it becomes almost less about dating and more about companionship and friendship. In the same way that you follow people on Instagram, and then when they go live, you can kind of watch them and chat to them. You see a lot of dating apps incorporating that, where you can go live on one of their dating apps, and you have an audience of people, and you can kind of interact. It's moving to be less about dating, like you're not expecting to go on a date with this person, but you can kind of interact with them, and in a sense, it's like a reaction to the fact that lots of people are a lot more alone now than they used to be.

John: 20:56 Live video streaming and those kind of small communities that come up around them is a really nice way to counter that. It's not the best way to counter that, countering it would be, let's change this society so we're not all miserably eating ready meals, and our flats are on. I'm just projecting here. But it's a reaction to that. So I think you'll see a lot more video streaming, and also you can monetize that really effectively, and a lot more of this move to being kind of like, we're really classy, this is more wholesome dating. But it's as effective as Tinder.

Kate: 21:31 That's so interesting to think that probably because of social media, the way we feel closer to strangers now translating into the dating sphere.

John:	21:43	Yeah. It kind of makes sense, because dating kind of always reflects a facet of how, like, how our relationships and how our society in general kind of moves. Social apps have a much nicer business model than dating apps, in that if you have 1,000 people on your dating app, within a month, you need 1,000 more people to keep people interested. If you have 1,000 people on your social network, that same 1,000 people can be there every single month, and it feels really nice.
John:	22:11	You're constantly getting more content. Like, if you had as many matches on Tinder as you have Facebook friends, you'd stop using Tinder within about half an hour. Whereas Facebook, we're all addicted to it because it's that constant generation of interesting things to kind of keep you there and keep you connected. So a lot of dating apps are sort of taking that ... So even on Tinder now, when someone uploads a new photo, if you've matched with them, you get little notifications, like, hey, they've just updated their photos. Go check them out. So you're seeing a lot more of that kind of coming in.
Michael:	22:40	Content, generating content.
John:	22:41	Yeah. Yeah, it's more ways for people to actually interact, it's more ways for people to share themselves. Like on dating apps that integrate Spotify or your Instagram. Yeah, it's just more ways to be on an app, and to share yourself, and to connect with people.
Kate:	23:00	Interesting.
Richard:	23:01	It is. So do you feel like these niche dating apps are for a different mobile experience to mainstream apps?
John:	23:10	No.
Richard:	23:11	No?
John:	23:11	So I mean, if we can make Bristlr almost functionally identical to one of these big apps, we probably would. But I mean, we'd get sued, and it's really hard, because they're really, really good. We're small, and they've got literally a million times the resources than us. But excluding all of that, if we could take their functionality, because their functionality is fairly basic and well polished, and then make it for our niche, then that works, because the strength of a niche is not necessarily the technology. It's the fact that everyone signing up to Bristlr has kind of already been filtered out through our marketing, and

everyone is kind of, like the beard is what's loosely ... You could describe our marketing as being kind of a lifestyle marketing, that kind of hipster-ish type. I will drink my oat milk flat white, thank you very much, niche.

Michael: 23:58 That is literally you.

Kate: 23:59 Shut it.

John: 24:01 So this is the thing, this morning, that was me. I was sat, in shortage, drinking my hipster-y coffee, and I'm like, this is the best thing, I'm so happy to have paid four pounds for this. The barista only slightly hates me. Which, when a barista hates you, the coffee tastes nicer, I don't know why that is. I think that's because they temp it slightly more, and it gives it more of a burn. Anyway.

Richard: 24:20 It's the secret ingredient.

John: 24:22 Yeah. So I think with the niche, it's more the ... The analogy I quite like is it's kind of like you bought a club, and if you do the marketing right for the club, you only get like one specific demographic of clientele that comes to that club. So if you do like an Indie club, you're only going to get Indie kids in. If you do a goth night, you're only going to get goths, or some very confused regulars. That's really where, for me, nicheing is effective, because you can have a niche for people who like books. You can have a niche for people who like beards. That, it's not necessarily the niche, it's the marketing that then gets you the right people in, that then makes the app a lot nicer. You're more likely to get better matches.

Richard: 25:00 So that's the, this is the pro against having a very saturated marketplace at the moment. As we said, there are millions of dating apps out there. I'm sure you know way, way more about them than we do. But the fact that a niche can sort of distil that audience, to basically finding exactly who you want.

John: 25:18 Yeah. It kind of shortcuts a lot of the work that Tinder have to do to show you people that it thinks you'll like. So Tinder has the largest machine learning team in the industry, by an absolute mile. They put huge emphasis on using heavy technology to make those matches effective. That's why if you actually, if you took all of the users of Tinder and just showed people randomly, it would feel vastly different to how it is now. If you want a fun experiment, download Tinder and try and train

it. Think of a type of person, only like those people, and then in a month's time, you'll only start seeing those people.

John: 25:58   You can choose almost any metric to define that by, because it's not rule based, it's not going off your filters, it's not going information you've entered. It's actually looking at your social feeds, it's looking at the information, it's looking at what your preferences are, it's doing image recognition on your photos to kind of figure those things out. Where if you got beard, yes, great, come on in. We don't need any of that fancy AI.

Richard: 26:25   That's so interesting.

Kate: 26:27   What about the actual user experience, when someone's using a dating app? What are the most important things you think for users, especially when it comes ... I know you touched on your Lothario feature, and things like that conversation and those initial first impressions. But what do you think people these days, with the market being so saturated, that they actually value?

John: 26:47   I think people's expectations for how an app looks and functions is important. So we, this year, we're actually, for the first time in four years, we're kind of rebuilding our front end to bring it back up to speed. So where Bristlr looked completely, like, modern four years ago, the way you design an app and the way apps look has changed. So we will be replicating a lot more of the kind of Facebook-y, Instagram-y ... It's all based around a software called React Native, and it kind of makes everything feel a lot more generic. Which I think is sad, but I think it's like in the '90s, every website was bright colours and gifs, and then we moved to now every website is literally the same thing.

John: 27:30   You're seeing that with apps, where to make your app feel more modern, it kind of feels more generic. I think making it feel modern, or making it feel slick, people just expect, if your app is a little bit clunky, if images take a little bit too long to turn up, or they just like pop in, rather than a nice little animation, and that's something that we see. Your technology, it just needs to be good enough, essentially. You don't need to do anything flashy with it. It just needs to be good enough to meet people's expectations, like the way you message people. Don't do anything interesting with the way you message people. Just make it as good as What's App, or as good as whatever people are using. Don't try and be too clever.

Kate: 28:14   Yeah. So the functionality needs to be quite seamless, design needs to look good.

John:	28:19	Yeah. You don't need to go above and beyond. There are apps that have done that, and they look absolutely beautiful. Jig Talk, which is a fellow Manchester dating company, their app looks absolutely beautiful. That makes it a real joy to use. You can kind of, you can go down that route. I would say until you've got confirmation that your app idea works, it just needs to be good enough that people aren't put off by it, and then off you go.
Kate:	28:46	What about people's, I guess, actual experience with other users on that [inaudible 00:28:51]? I mean, what ... Because you can have the nicest looking app, but you never meet any decent, whatever. So what is, do you think, what people are looking for when it comes to actually finding a mate and using them?
John:	29:02	I think it's tricky to generalise, because everyone is looking for totally different things. I think for us, anyway, we've struggled to be like, who is our default user? Some people want to just go on there and just have loads of conversations. Some people want to have one conversation, and then meet in the pub. Some people just want to look at profiles. Trying to design for each of them independently is impossible. But trying to group them all into one, to be like this is the user, is really, really hard. So we try to give people, I guess, in a sense, as much freedom to kind of do what they want. Then we'll have a look at the data and see what people are actually doing, and then if we can facilitate that more. A lot of the decisions we make are based on feedback and data, rather than our intuition, because my intuition is terrible.
John:	29:56	I've learned that you can ... You build the prototype, and then see what people do, and see what the feedback is. Just see how people are using it, are people happy with it? So with Bristlr, I don't know what it is in our interface that's good or bad. But I know that people have gotten married and had kids as a result. So I know that there is a path through Bristlr, where you can sign up, and then you end up being proposed to at 30,000 feet. Like, that is a thing that has happened. But, we don't really like design it to be that that's the same for everyone. So we just kind of make it almost like a club. You design a club to be just a fun experience for people to do what they want in, rather than anything else.
Kate:	30:37	At what point, then, does Bristlr step away and just let people engage with each other? Is there any features within that ... Obviously you've mentioned one, but that enables better conversation, these are the things that are more conducive to people actually finding each other?

John:	30:54	So the big one is the double opt in. So both people have to say that they like each other before they have a conversation. That stops a lot of trouble. So some dating website and apps, anyone can kind of message anyone, because they want to ... But then you maybe have to pay to see what the message is. But that means that you paid 30 quid and the message is like, hi, from a profile that doesn't have a photo.
John:	31:16	Whereas the double opt in kind of forces everyone to up their game and actually fill out their profile, or the people who can't be bothered to fill out their profiles don't get matches and will leave. That kind of solves your problem for you, because you probably don't want those people on your app, if they're not going to bother filling out the profile. Then there is no point in having them there. So there's that double opt in. Then we just let people chat. Then they kind of take it from there.
Kate:	31:42	I see. That's pretty interesting, because there is some apps that we've been trialling that always interfere in conversations to improve it, or suggestions and things like that. I'm wondering how necessary that is.
John:	31:57	I think it depends on what your app is and what your goals are. Jig Talk is a great example of this. They put a jigsaw puzzle over the other person's face, and every time you chat, back and forwards, another piece is revealed. That isn't there just to spur conversation for the sake of it. Their whole vibe is talk more, swipe less. I think that's like their tagline. So their marketing, their vibe, their whole mission statement defines how their functionality works, and vice versa, so you can do that. I think, yeah, you can do things to encourage that kind of conversation. We don't, but then we have a niche that's all about beards.
Kate:	32:38	Yeah, that filters it out, initially.
John:	32:40	You can filter it out, but also, it gives you a topic of conversation. You always start talking about, ah, I really like your beard. Like, that's how you start the conversation. Some anecdotal feedback we get is that when people go on dates, it's already lighthearted, it's already got an already nice vibe, and you've already got that, hey, let's just start talking about beards and go from there. It's a fun, lighthearted conversation that we've kind of baked in for you. But, we don't say, like, send a message saying your favourite kind of beard or something like that. We don't prompt. But I mean, you could.
Kate:	33:14	Yeah.

Michael:	33:14	I guess you're giving them something that they've innocently got in common. Then just knowing that they both live in the same kind of location-
John:	33:23	Yeah, you give something to just spark that conversation. Most conversations all kind of fizzle out. But some conversations, they'll actually, you can just cause that little spark, and then that turns into a little flame, and then off it goes.
Kate:	33:35	Yeah. I guess it's helpful that it's kind of humorous, a little bit novelty.
John:	33:37	Exactly. That kind of breaks the tension a bit.
Kate:	33:41	Yeah. Why ... I'm sure we all have our own thoughts on this, and things that are quite obvious as well. But why do you think people use dating apps over just going out and trying to meet someone?
John:	33:51	Going out and meeting people is terrible. So, so, I don't want to go to a bar, and then just randomly hit on people, because that makes me feel like crap, it makes them feel like crap, and I know nothing about them. Like, if we can avoid that whole thing, it will make bars so much nicer, because you don't need to guess what people's intentions are. There is a few movements to bring dating offline again, either with like badges or little wrist bands to be like, hey, I am here, like, to meet other people. It's like, great, you're opening up that door.
John:	34:23	But without some kind of mechanism like that, basically, everyone is fair game, and you just get a fairly crap experience for everyone. Where dating apps, there is intention, there is information, and there is simplicity. So it gets around the social awkwardness, or the social unpleasantness of hitting on people randomly in a bar. Like, people will still do that. People will still flirt, people will still introduce their friends, people will still go out with friends, and someone you know, you'll be like, ah, that person and that person, they'd be good together. That's still going to happen.
John:	34:58	But dating apps just kind of help add this extra intention. Also, maybe I'll meet someone on the dating app who is amazing, but who I just wouldn't ever meet. Like I can meet someone whose three miles away in Manchester where I live, who I would never see, never meet, never bump into. Or if I did bump into them, it would be like on the tram. It's like, that's not, I'm not going to hit on someone at like nine in the morning when I'm needing a

coffee, and it's like, yeah. So that's why I think dating apps are so effective, because it's the first time we, as humans, have actually bee able to really do that.

Kate:	35:33	Yeah, and control it a little bit more as well.
John:	35:37	Yeah.
Kate:	35:37	No matter your circumstance, that you can control, whether you end up meeting someone or not.
John:	35:41	Yeah. It gives you more control, and it lets you meet people that you have more in common with. So it lets you control the narrative a lot more. You can be very specific about the kind of relationship you want, right now, and you'll meet people who meet that degree of specificity. That's really, really important, because you're not being like, oh, well, I want a family and a child, and he's kind of like about to go on his world snowboarding tour for three years. But, maybe, let's just see what happens. It lets you have a high quality of relationship.
Kate:	36:20	For sure. What do you think, there is obviously so many dating apps, what would cause someone to switch and try a new one? We've read that most people have between like three and four at a time. What do you think is the main reason that people switch over and try something new?
John:	36:36	I guess there is two main reasons why people would switch. One is that their friend recommends it. The other one is you've advertised, and they've seen the ad for it, and your messaging clicks. Those are the two main ways that we see people arriving to our apps is either the word of mouth, which is great for Bristlr, or like paid acquisition channels, or other kind of marketing channels. Like Bristlr has got a lot of PR. That really helps us.
Kate:	37:03	In terms of their actual experience, is it that they'll be burnt by one, or-
John:	37:09	Nah.
Kate:	37:11	People keep on trying because there is bigger pools of people, right?
John:	37:13	Yeah. Why wouldn't you? I have, I don't have just Deliveroo on my phone, I've got like all of them. Why would I limit myself to just one set?

Kate:	37:22	So true.
John:	37:23	It's the same kind of thing. I don't have just one app for doing one thing on my phone. It's quite an important part of life, so I'm going to have multiple apps, and multiple different things. Maybe you've got OK Cupid, and Grinder, and Tinder, and like you might use them for different things. So it just gives you a bit more control. I think there is this weird ... Well, it's an understandable myth that one of the things that dating apps try to do is they want to keep you on the app, so they won't want you to find someone and stop using their app.
John:	37:58	The number of users that will stop using your app because they found someone is tiny. Most people just lose interest in your app and just drift off and go somewhere else. It's kind of the same with mobile games. No one stops playing Candy Crush because they finished it. You just kind of get bored, or another app comes along that you try, and you're like, oh, this is interesting. It's that kind of thing.
Richard:	38:23	I didn't know that you could finish Candy Crush. Is there an end?
John:	38:26	I assume. I don't know. I guess maybe.
Michael:	38:28	I don't know anybody that has.
Richard:	38:32	No. I think as you said, I think they all just sort of-
Michael:	38:33	Leave.
Richard:	38:37	Give up. Do you get like a Platinum card or something?
John:	38:40	You become the Candy Crush.
Michael:	38:41	One thing I just thought of, when you were talking about the ease and convenience of it, and the fact that you don't have to deal with going out to a bar. Has the fact that dating apps are so easy to use that you can just use it from your house on a Friday night in your pyjamas made people kind of lazy with it? I was telling these guys about a friend of mine, who at the pub the other day, he was just swiping through without even looking. Just-
John:	39:08	Was this a man, by any chance? Yeah.
Michael:	39:11	I guess his view was that if he matches, he'll deal with it then, whether he likes them, or likes the look of them, or not, or even

bother to have a conversation. So is there a kind of a laziness with it now?

| John: | 39:25 | Maybe. But what would ... If the dating app wasn't available, what would this guy be doing? |

| Michael: | 39:30 | Just sitting in his house- |

| John: | 39:32 | So it's not really changing. If anything, it's made him more likely to leave the house and go on a date with someone. |

| Michael: | 39:38 | True, yeah. |

| John: | 39:38 | Who has chosen, has decided that they want to go on a date with him. So it's like, on the one hand, yes, it can make you lazy, it can make you ... I don't know if lazy is the right word. Because people put a lot of effort into dating apps. You spend, if you're like actively using it, you're having lots of conversations, you're being really, really social. But you're just like tapping away on your phone. It's that ... I guess it's that classic misconception that when you're talking to someone on your phone, you're isolating yourself, when in reality, you're having like 10 conversations at once with people all over the place. You're just not talking to the person next to you on the train, because why would you? |

| Richard: | 40:17 | Ugh. |

| Michael: | 40:18 | Yeah, maybe like you say, it's not laziness, it's just the scatter gun approach of increase my odds of matching somebody if I'm matching with everybody in my area. |

| John: | 40:28 | Yeah. I wouldn't say that it makes people more likely to do that, I think it's just a different way of doing what they would have otherwise done. |

| Richard: | 40:34 | It's just sort of create or curate online identities now. So I suppose that these dating apps allow people to do that in a kind of positive way as well. |

| John: | 40:43 | Yeah. |

| Speaker 5: | 40:43 | Stay connected. |

| Kate: | 40:48 | If you want to get in touch with any questions or feedback, you can find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and SoundCloud. |

Just search for 'How to Build a Dating App Podcast'. Thank you for listening.

Michael: 41:00   Our interview with John Kershaw continues on the next episode.