



EXPERT INTERVIEW

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Brendan Weitz, co-founder of Journey, on building the Webflow for sales

TEAM

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By **Jan-Erik Asplund**



EXPERT INTERVIEW

**Brendan
Weitz**

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Background

Brendan Weitz is the co-founder and chief business officer of Journey. We talked to Brendan to learn more about how slides are used in the organization today as well as the rise of "networked data room" tools competing with products like DocuSign and Dropbox.

Interview

What is Journey, what is the problem you're solving, and what are the big customer profiles you're currently focused on?

Journey is a new medium for storytelling. Over 30 million static 16x9 bundles of squares (ie slides) are shared every single day via email. We're building a consumer-grade B2B product that reinvents how storytelling is done in the 21st century. By



changing the make up of what a presentation is and how it is consumed, this leads to less time wasted in live meetings. We're starting off tackling the process of making software buying less painful. Today, this process consists of lots of stuff typically going back and forth over endless email, lots of people involved on both sides, and lots of live meetings. Journeys help salespeople and buyers make this whole process less painful by bridging the gap between a static PDF and a phone call with a new medium that includes all forms of content in one interactive experience akin to a personalized website purpose built for sales.

Myself and my co-founders were on the go-to-market side of software companies for a while. We were in lots of live pitch conversations, where we were either doing the pitching or buying the software, and it felt like there was a lot of wasted time on those meetings.

What we're doing through Journey is creating this new medium that helps both sides of the equation, from salesperson to customer.

By using a journey, things are asynchronous, you can move much faster, and buyers can get to a yes or no answer much quicker because the seller can share much more context. There's also rich analytics and collaboration to make the process less of a black box for the sales side.

The product is very horizontal, but salespeople are the main end users today, mainly at software companies, along with customer success people and founders. The primary use cases are in sales follow-up, customer onboarding, and fundraising.

What does that outreach workflow look like for a salesperson who is not using Journey?

Most of the time, on the buyer side, you have to talk to a junior salesperson, and you get asked a bunch of questions. Then you have to do another demo call with another salesperson.

The world is moving away from this rigid kind of sales process to more of a buyer-centric motion.



We spent a lot of time on qualification calls and on sales calls with companies where we were genuinely interested in buying the software, but the process made things move really slow. And we were always pretty technical buyers. We usually would know just as much, if not more, than the salesperson on the other side. We just wanted to get in and try the product and share it with our team.

What are some of the major trends you're seeing around how slides are being created today, who's making them and why, and how they're being shared?

I read that there are somewhere between 30 to 50 million PDF slide decks sent every day in Gmail. Sending links in an email is still the standard way that 95% of people are doing things.

DocSend was the first one to bring everything into one link. You're now seeing a lot of the newer slide tools, like Pitch, growing by offering enhancements on top of the slide experience. I don't know if it's necessarily a replacement, but folks are bringing in various complementary tools to tell the story, like Notion documents, Coda documents, Loom videos, Airtable bases.

The general trend we're seeing is that simple slides are not the best way for everyone to tell their story. We're just starting to see, especially with founders in the fundraising process, people using whatever type of content they feel is best to tell their story.

Notion has various integrations that help people embed some of these types of content in docs. How do you think about your positioning with respect to Notion and how do you differentiate?

Notion is obviously an amazing tool. What I'll say is that our users typically tell us that they're not necessarily comfortable sharing a Notion document with a sales prospect. We see Notion mainly being used for more internal use cases than external.

It's also really horizontal—it's not purpose-built for an enterprise sales process. Journey is more focused on that niche, and specifically, the job-to-be-done for a salesperson following up with a client, a customer success person



onboarding a client, or a founder raising money from investors.

For that founder use case, Notion can be great, but Notion is still primarily a document. You can embed stuff into that Notion document, but there's only really one way for a user to navigate it. They have to read your entire Notion document. What we see people doing inside of Journey is more like a choose-your-own-adventure style presentation.

If I'm trying to sell to Sacra, and I'm selling a product to the co-founder, I might send a journey which deep links you to one step of it that is more maybe geared toward you being the decision-maker versus someone else on your team that's maybe the day-to-day user. With Notion, you share one document and everyone goes through it linearly. In Journey, our vision is that it becomes more of a guided storytelling tool that can change based on who receives it.

How do you think about Journey's positioning against data room and filesharing tools like Dropbox, DocuSign, and DocSend?

We don't run into DocSend much on the sales and go-to-market side, more when it comes to fundraising. I think DocSend was the first one to roll out the ability to track a PDF 10 years ago.

For fundraising, 99% of what is shared in DocSend or Dropbox is a document. With Journey, documents are primarily 50% of the content inside of a journey. Journeys are more broad and flexible, with videos, live data, and also documents to complement stuff.

That's where it goes slightly closer to the idea of making it really easy to build a very personalized website for your client, whereas DocSend makes it really easy to upload stuff and track the PDF.

From a recipient standpoint, the consumers of journeys are typically buyers, sales prospects, and investors. From their perspective, we've heard that journeys make their lives easier, whether they're trying to make a decision about software or whether they're trying to make an investment decision. I've never heard about there being a ton of value delivered to an investor when they receive a DocSend.



We're trying to make it so the investor receives that journey, and it's a great experience for them because they can make a decision asynchronously. The experience is so good that they're sharing it, and they're signing up for Journey through that journey and using it for their LP updates and their fund.

Where Notion is horizontal, Journey is designed around this specific use case for sales or fundraising. Could you say more about what some of those hooks are that get it into the sales workflow better than Notion?

In the sales process, there are a few key components which we've put together into templates.

You're going to share your call recording or a highlight from your call recording, and you can pull that easily into a journey. You're going to share your case study video or slide deck from Google Drive or your computer. You're going to share your calendar to follow up.

We make it really easy for you to pull together exactly what you would typically use in a text email or in an attachment and pull that into Journey without leaving your email client.

I'm sure that Notion, at some point, will focus on this, but I think their market is more focused around getting one percent of Microsoft Office users or one percent of Google Suite users. I don't think our niche will be very interesting for them to focus on in the near-term, because they're going more for the internal workspace or wiki use case.

We haven't run into it yet where a sales team has been using Notion for anything that they do today. We're more plugged in with tools like a Salesloft or an Outreach.io or your HubSpot CRM, your Salesforce—that's where we've really seen the delineation.

Once again, I think the design of Notion works really well for internal use cases or maybe a customer that you have a really good relationship with, but it's hard to make a Notion really personalized and really buttoned up for an enterprise sales process. That's what we've been told by our customers—and that's why journeys can be a bit more flexible and customized and personalized in that sense.



How do you think about the internal use cases for Journey?

Once users or companies start using it for one of our three main use cases—fundraising, selling, and onboarding—then we see them starting to use it for other things like internal employee onboarding. We see people doing asynchronous remote all-hands meetings with journeys with lots of different content.

Recruiting journeys have been really cool, where recruiters will do a journey instead of a standard boring job posting, and they'll post that on social media. It'll have a video from the hiring manager, it'll roll into the job description or a video from the team, and it'll have a link to apply. Overall, you get a lot more context, and you stand out a bit from everyone else. Recruiting is also just another form of sales, like fundraising.

That said, we're still pretty locked in on those three primary use cases, even though it's nice to see expansion with existing users to things like recruiting and internal use cases.

How do you think about your competitive positioning with regard to something like HubSpot?

HubSpot is pretty much becoming like a mini Salesforce. HubSpot is a CRM, it's your customer support, it's your marketing cloud now. They literally have all this stuff.

HubSpot is really good about building a pretty healthy ecosystem, similar to Salesforce. They would rather have best-in-class apps that plug in really well and make their users more sticky than building things on their own, so I don't see them getting into anything like this anytime soon.

They definitely, however, make it an enticing ecosystem to drive a lot of growth for companies like us.

How do you see folks using Figma for this kind of sales use case currently?

If you look at the top tools that our users are integrating into Journey, from a slide standpoint, it's Pitch, Canva, and Google Slides, and then just PDFs. From interactive, more prototype demo-type stuff, we see lots of Figma, we see Miro boards,



and we see on Loom videos. It's pretty much all the best horizontal tools that people are integrating into their journeys to tell this story, whereas, before a journey, it might be just a very disparate experience across lots of links.

Once again, I think Figma is an unknown tool to a lot of folks on a go-to market team, like a salesperson, a customer success person. It's obviously a table stakes tool for someone in design or engineering. We see it as a tool that will, over time, compete more with Miro and Envision and Mural and those kinds of tools for whiteboarding. Over time, they will definitely compete more and more as the whole idea of a story moves away from slides. I think Figma is better to support that than PowerPoint or even Pitch, honestly. I think Figma is a lot more flexible.

I think we'll see more and more people using Figma to tell a story beyond designers. For us right now, we don't see a ton of that designer persona inside of Journey. It's more that when we do see Figma in journeys, we see it a lot in fundraising pitches where people are showing you what's coming in for this product or this company. We see it a lot in customer success when they're showing you roadmap stuff of what's coming. I think Figma is a beast, and they seem like they're doing really well.

How are you seeing teams using Canva?

I would say that from my experience and digging into the many stories of how Canva grew, the majority of their customer base is still super small SMB and design, like where they started. You still don't see a ton of go-to market teams using Canva. But I think, over time, we're going to see them more and more. I think that it's going to be interesting to see how the different slide tools differentiate from each other.

It's a fairly interesting place for us to be because we're agnostic to what slide tool you use. We admire tools like Notion—that they're so horizontal. They don't have the best CRM or the best slides in Notion, but you can do basic stuff in there. I think we'll always be agnostic to the tooling that you could use inside of Journey. We'll have basic things that you can build yourself. Today that starts with video and audio and things that you can do natively inside of Journey. In the future, I think these tools will become more and more like competition.



I think we'll also do really deep integrations with them. It's a crazy world of SaaS that we are all living in.

With Journey, I'm curious how you think about what kinds of use cases you might eat up. You had mentioned at the beginning this whole lead qualification call being obviated by Journey. Is that a big one for you guys that you think about, and what might some others be?

The reality is, I don't think Journey is replacing a live meeting. I think the goal is that we're hopefully making you have less of them and the ones that you do have more productive because you're getting lots of context figured out before, or maybe you don't even have to have that meeting. I think where we're going with Journey is going really deep and hard on a new way to tell a story in a B2B context. I think that ultimately that story can be told with any type of content that you feel is best, or maybe you have an inclination of what your recipient likes. Maybe one person likes slides, one person likes memos, one person likes videos, and one person likes audio. You can tailor it. Where we're going with Journey is, you can imagine Journeys just change dynamically based on who receives them.

Maybe we capture some interesting data on who's receiving a journey, and it changes on the fly. Maybe Jan receives a journey, and, based on the behaviors that you exhibit inside of that journey, maybe step two changes for you. Let's take an investing use case, for example. We're a venture-backed company. We hear it all the time where an investor will say, "Oh, really interesting deck. I'm passing," and they never even looked at the deck. A lot of companies ask us things like, "Can you make it so they can't see my prototype until they view the deck for a certain period of time?"

In Journey, you can make it so someone can't book a meeting with you until they watch your personalized intro video. They can't view your Airtable metrics until they take this action. That's where we get into some really interesting things that make it completely different than a Notion document or completely different than a Canva slide. And yeah, that's a small ambiguous glimpse of where we're going.

How do you think about Journey compared to tools like Squarespace and Wix?



I think Squarespace and Wix are some of the largest small business website builders in the world, at this point. Very rarely would you see a salesperson go into Squarespace or Wix and build a website for their customer because it's still too high bandwidth and too high lift for the sales persona, the customer success persona.

We have seen this in enterprise sales with large companies that want to have a really custom experience for a big customer. They'll go into Squarespace or Wix and they'll build them a website. Everything is personalized to them and it makes the customer feel great, but that's really an outlier.

From what we've seen, we see that as a huge opportunity in terms of how sales is being done. Everyone wants it to be more personalized, but you don't want it to be high bandwidth and high lift for a salesperson.

As far as what we're doing, you could imagine a Webflow for sales or a Squarespace for sales. We are trying to give you the power of what those tools do but for a different persona, where the standard workflow for sales and success in our world is that you spend a little bit of time upfront building a journey. You can then duplicate it and tweak it a little bit, switch things around or add in a personalized video for the next client or the next prospect.

You don't see that behavior being done with a Wix or a Squarespace, which are very much one-to-many websites. Those are mainly giving superpowers to the marketing team typically. We want to give superpowers to the individual salesperson inside of a company and have them share it with their team and have it grow within the go-to market team.

Ultimately, how we are evaluated is, are we helping salespeople close deals faster? Are they closing bigger deals? And our north star metric internally is, are we seeing the viral loop actually happening? Is the experience that good for the buyer or the investor that they are signing up for Journey from that Journey? That's how we're building up our organic flow of users because ultimately, that's the entire premise of the product—is the experience is so good that the person signs up. That's similar to how Loom grew to tens of millions of users or how Calendly grew. Those products are a lot simpler because they're just one medium. It's just a video or just a



calendar. Ours is a bit harder. I don't know it'll ever be as big as those because we have lots of different types of content, but we do have a similar inherent viral loop that we track pretty aggressively.

What are some of those things that buyers really want to do in the sales process, like click into Figma and see a prototype? What are some aspects of the ideal buyer experience?

You guys write amazing research on some of the best software companies in the world, like Airtable and Zapier. These companies didn't have traditional sales forces early on, and they grew really fast. I don't know if I've ever talked to anyone that says, "I want to spend more time on the phone with the salesperson and less time actually touching, feeling, trying the product." It's no surprise that we're moving in this direction, and companies that don't catch on are going to be left behind. What buyers want is to see the product, try the product, and be able to ask questions and interact on their own time.

There are a lot of companies that you probably are aware of, like Reprise and Navattic and Demostack, that help companies create a sandbox environment for their product. We're seeing people put those into Journeys like, "Here are my slides, here's my case study, here's a quick video. We're recapping our meeting and oh, by the way, here's a sandbox so you can try out the product right here from the journey."

The reality is that it's helping people spend more time on what matters in the software-buying process, which is understanding if this product is going to suit someone's needs. I think we're moving toward a world of getting people into a product, understanding what they're doing inside of it, and then figuring out how best to approach them in a sales process.

Journeys help people in this kind of product-led sales motion. You can tailor journeys very specifically based on what people are doing inside of your product. I think that's why we see a lot of product-led companies using Journey in the process.

Ultimately, we're seeing buyers who want to buy on their own time and have more control over the process. We know that buyers are 80% of the way there if they're going to even have the call with the salesperson, so you're actually hindering them



if you make them do this stuff that maybe just helps your forecasting.

The whole role of sales is changing. In 5 or 10 years, it's going to be pretty rare to show up to a standard pitch meeting and be talking to someone who hasn't already interacted with their product, and that makes the role of sales completely change to something more like a consultant.

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