

Thinking Outside the Bud

Episode 148 - Jack Whipple

<https://www.thinkingoutsidethebud.com/podcast/148-jack-whipple>

Jack Whipple, Founder, CEO, Whipple Effect

Jack Whipple has spent the last decade in the cannabis industry focusing on commercial cultivation and is a psychedelic plant medicine advocate. His new venture, Whipple Effect, is an operations management firm designed to bridge the gap between growers and owners, teach teams communication skills, and optimize the efficiency of gardens with technology and agriculture science. Jack started a non-profit called A Sacred Trip that provides a setting to explore the psychedelic nature of the plant via sound meditations.

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EPIISODE TRANSCRIPT

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You're listening to Thinking Outside the Bud where we speak with entrepreneurs, investors, thought leaders, researchers, advocates and policymakers who are finding new and exciting ways for cannabis to positively impact business, society and culture. And now here is your host business coach Bruce Eckfeldt.

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1:06

Welcome, everyone. This is Thinking Outside the Bud. I'm Bruce Eckfeldt, I'm your host. And our guest today is Jack Whipple. He is the Founder of Whipple Effect, which is a consulting company helping organizations with the cultivation side of the cannabis business we're gonna get into lots of conversations about that jack has been in the cannabis space for a long time has been a founder involved with many different companies is an expert on the business of cultivation, really understanding how you bring in agricultural science, deep knowledge of the cannabis plant to create successful cultivation operations, cultivation businesses excited to talk about this. I think one of the fun things about cannabis as an industry is it involves so many expertise, areas of science areas of of the world in terms of really what makes the cannabis industry run. And the cultivation side is a fascinating one, just the agricultural science that goes into really understanding how the plant works, how the plant grows, what it takes to create, you know, successful, healthy, loved plants. It is really it's a fascinating part of it. So I'm excited for this. With that, jack. Welcome to the program. Hey, thanks very much. Thanks for having me. It's good to be here. Yeah, it's a pleasure. So let's start with background. Just tell us a little bit about how, like, how did you get involved in cannabis? How did you get involved in the business side, which came first? What was what was kind of the backstory for you and this whole thing, this whole business,

2:22

so it kind of starts a long time ago in Indiana, which is kind of funny, because cannabis is still illegal there. And, and my grandpa at the time was the Chief Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court. So you can imagine I was not the most popular person in the family once I started selling weed at the age of 15. Yeah, I've heard the story a couple of different times. But um, yeah, I mean, I started at a, I found the cannabis plant at a young age and everyone kind of in school back then it was made out to be the scary thing. And I was quite frankly, scared of it. But then I tried it. And I was like, Oh, this is not scary. Like this is actually really awesome. And he's like teaching me things about myself. And I just believed in it. So yeah, way, way back when when I was 15. I started selling it to friends. I didn't have a scale either. I just bought like a quarter pound and made it into four piles. I was like, Okay, I have four ounces. Like I'm gonna go find people that want this.

3:24

So when did it become winded to go from, you know, this kind of smaller hustle kind of business focus to really being, hey, look, we can really develop a profession and a career and make this a life's calling or a professional calling for you.

3:39

Yeah, so that's what was really cool. Like, I had still been dabbling a little bit. And just kind of what you said, like a small time hustle. And while I was a pre med student in college, and Indiana University, and I was studying biology and chemistry, and I just had a revelation one day and I was like, man, why am I selling weed illegally in Indiana? This is stupid. It's legal in Colorado. Yeah. And, like, what was cool about the selling weed in college? Is it kind of taught me about business? Yeah. And I was like, Okay, if I can do this here, like, Why can I not start a dispensary? So I finally had the courage to tell my parents, I was like, Hey, this is what I've been doing. This is what I'm passionate about. And this is what I love. And I hope you'll support me either way, I'm going to call her out, and I'm going to figure it out one way or another. So

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that's what I did. I'm always curious about the reactions when people you know, kind of go into the business into the profession or industry of cannabis. And, you know, they're dealing with, you know, other professional

colleagues, their professional reputation, family, friends, what was the I guess, what was the impact? I mean, you kind of mentioned that you had some family that were kind of in the judicial law enforcement side of things was where there was this divisive was this, you know, people supportive will, how did this play out for you?

4:52

Yeah, you know, I feel really, I feel really fortunate because my family was really supportive. My mother's a lawyer, and she was like, You know what? As long as you want to go do this legally in Colorado, I'll support that just don't ever come back to Indiana says, I didn't really want to be in Indiana anyway. So see you later.

5:11

Yeah. Well, sometimes you got to make these decisions decisions in life. And and I guess has that changed over time? And now that, you know, things I've kind of developed both socially and, you know, from a business point of view?

5:21

Oh, yeah, I mean, I think all my close family and friends who come out to First Colorado now California, they see the size of these projects that we're working on, they see the science that goes into it, the professionalism that goes into it, you know, we're paying federal taxes, we have licenses granted to us, from the state, everything is being done by the books. And these are big complex projects, you know, 50 plus employees, and each one of them 10,000 plus plants, there's a lot happening a bunch of different genetics, and I rarely get a reaction other than people just being pretty impressed and kind of awestruck and by the beauty of the plants.

6:04

Yeah. And tell us about your journey kind of going from the hustle side to how did you get into the agricultural side and we're really kind of focusing on the cultivation science, like what it takes to really grow grow these plants successfully at scale.

6:19

Yes, that's what was super interesting, you know, because I moved to Colorado back in 2013. And with the intention of starting a dispensary because I had never even considered growing cannabis in Indiana, because it's so illegal. You know, it just seemed like it was just a crazy I never once even considered it, you know, it's like deaths just you'll go straight to jail if you get caught. So, I got to Colorado and I was trying to start, I met someone who had a dispensary and we were working on starting a dispensary together. But he also had a cultivation facility and had won multiple cannabis cups and was kind of a world renowned grower. And my background in biology and chemistry coming straight out of chemistry labs in college, I just immediately fell in love with the plants. You know, it's kind of a big chemistry experiment, a big chemistry lab mixed with all these different genetic cultivars that napped in different ways. And literally, I've had the plants in my life every single day since I set foot in my garden. Yeah.

7:20

And what would you tell us about your first real grower experience? My what would like what was surprising what what wasn't surprising? What What did you learn? I mean, it sounds like you had a lot of crossover in terms of your kind of science background, but what what were the barriers that you really needed to kind of add to your knowledge and your skill set to be able to successfully look at the cultivation side. And they

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said many different parts of it, I guess, initially, I learned on in a 5000 square foot facility, and I did it I took for granted the health of the plants that I was witnessing, you know, if you come into a dialed in system and you're brand new, it almost seems like you just water the plants. And as long as you know the formula, they'll grow, you know, yeah. And then from there, I thought it was easier than I ever would have imagined ice, I started my own 12,000 square foot facility. And oh man, that just taught me so many different lessons, how important the environment is how important irrigation strategies are probably harder than any of the plant sciences is how to manage people. I had never never managed people before. And all of a sudden, I had 30 people to manage. So that was a huge challenge. And then everything on top of the plant sciences how to work and manage with partners and investors. You know, it's there's just a lot of moving pieces that go into these cultivation projects. Yeah,

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give us a little sense of the types of facilities types of growers that you've worked with, but how they've been different, how they've been similar, you know, some of the things that you've kind of learned over the course of kind of working with them. Give us a little picture of kind of some of the work you've done. Okay. Yeah,

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I mean, it's come a long ways. You know, like, my first company in Colorado, the majority of the companies from, you know, the majority of the companies that were commercial cultivation facilities in Colorado, eight years ago, were businesses that were they were commercial buildings and other businesses before they were cultivations, you know, so that's converting an old building into the best version of a cultivation room with the best knowledge that you had at the time, you know, the sciences are progressing so fast. It's kind of funny to think about where we were at eight years ago, but yeah, my first project was actually an old missile silo built by Beechcraft, right after world war two to make anti Russian missiles. And then it was an EPA cleanup site for five years. And then the entire thing got zoned to be it was seven buildings on the side of a mountain just north of Boulder. And the entire thing got zoned for cannabis is seven cannabis companies up on the side of this hill, and the EPA was show up every three months with with these little like air testers to make sure that there's like no nuclear pollution. So it's just kind of like a interesting scenario. Yeah, but yeah, I mean, you know, that compared to one of the projects that I'm working on right now, and Cathedral city, which we built the building from the ground up and designed every single piece of it, it's an extreme difference, you know, from having wooden tables on wheels and everything being built from, you know, like, go into Home Depot and buying two by fours for trellis poles to now we're ordering professional greenhouse tables from Canada, and can control the environments to the degree and the humidity, to the percentage point and we have sensors in all of our plants, I mean, everything from hand watering, and gassing to now I look at graphs and charts, and we have your daily irrigation strategies based on live data.

10:59

Yeah. And in terms of kind of growth strategy, stuff like that. I mean, I know there's lots of different kind of theories or philosophies or camps, you know, around outdoor grow greenhouse grow, you know, indoor grows, what's, what's your area of focus? Or how do you kind of approach this? And why do you Why do you approach it in that way?

11:16

Yeah, so my area of focus is specifically indoor cultivation. That's how I was introduced to cannabis cultivation. And that's really what I've just focused on ever since What I really like about indoor cultivation is that we have control over every single, every single environmental factor from temperature to humidity to the micromoles of

light hitting the plants, every two milliliters of water per plant that every single plant, the room gets, you know, and then we have substrate sensors as well tracking the water content of the substrate and the sea. And we're literally controlling every single environmental factor and all the irrigation strategy in order to push the plants and steer them in whatever direction we want to. Meaning if you have a short call Tovar, you can send the plant signals and and create certain different environmental set points to make it bigger than it normally would be. Or if you have a plant that's really big, you can give it a bunch of generative signals to make it shorter and step have internodal spacing stacked a lot tighter than it normally would be. If you are not doing these specific things to steer the crop that you want to

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Yeah, and what goes into an indoor grow facility, I'm gonna give us kind of a sketch of the major systems or the considerations that designing a modern indoor grow, like what are the factors that you need to kind of design or put in place or, you know, systems that you need to have to control these things?

12:48

Yeah, I mean, ultimately, the backbone of an indoor cultivation facility is going to be your h vac system and in your irrigation system, and there's a multitude of different ways to skin, the cat. But ultimately, what you're trying to do is, if I want an environmental setpoint of 80 degrees Fahrenheit and 70% humidity, I want to be able to hold that for a 24 hour time period. You know, when the lights go off, you don't want the humidity to spike up to 90%, and then have your plants basically the stemmata closing your plant not able to respire for an hour and a half while you try to get your room back into homeostasis. Yeah, those are the two systems that are really important, you know, but ultimately, there's a lot of different things that go into it, you know, are you going to build it with drywall or refrigerator panels? How are you going to seal your floors? What kind of tables are you going to use? What kind of technology you're going to use to control all the internal equipment inside the room? The building materials matter as well, you know, because we're basically creating indoor greenhouse climates inside. So building with drywall, and drywall alone is a recipe for getting black men with

14:03

just gonna say sounds like black mold problems.

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Yeah, I say, you know, all of these different things have to be considered and based on client's budget, or what their goals are, all of these things play a factor into the different avenues to take when designing a facility.

14:19

Yeah, and I'm assuming if you're doing this in Alaska versus Arizona, say those are the external factors or the environmental conditions are going to be a big factor as well.

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Oh, yeah, definitely. You know, like, if you're building to grow in Florida, and you're not going to be able to suck fresh air into the building, like I could out here in Palm Springs where the air is super dry, you know? Yeah. So

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yeah, so that that's gonna necessitate a different design. And how much of this is that there is there is a best way to do all these things. And how much of this is there's different sort of schools of thought or different camps around kind of strategies and you know, what you optimize and what you kind of adjust for what have

you Notice in the industry at this point in terms of you know how these rows are really shaping up and the technical strategy for how to build these facilities? Yeah, I

15:08

think they're I think there's a few different, like leading thoughts on how to design around this. But I think ultimately, the agricultural sciences that go into cultivating at the highest level, I think all the leaders are pretty much falling into line and focusing on the same things, you know, the science of the plant, the science of how plants respray and how you can use Vpd. To put pressure on the stemmata. In order to let the plant respray in certain ways, this is not unique to cannabis. These are not ideas that were designed by cannabis growers. You know, this is what they've been when we got to when I went to Vegas last year for the cultivation sciences tech technology summit. You know, this is what people are using for cucumbers and strawberries and tomatoes in every agricultural crop that exists. And we're just now applying it to cannabis, which is really fun. Exciting. Yeah,

16:05

I guess how much of this? I mean, yes, it sounds like there's a lot that you can just borrow from, you know, the highly mature and well developed world of agricultural science. What pieces Can't you apply? Or how is cannabis unique that either as you know, as a plant, or as what we're doing with cannabis versus what we're doing with other crop kind of grows, where it's kind of as different? And where do you need to kind of adjust? Or where do you, you can't apply kind of standard Agricultural Science agricultural process to this.

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I mean, I think it's unique in the fact that there's, I don't know, a single other crop where people are growing nearly as many different genetic varieties, which makes things a little bit more complicated, such as there's different strategies, depending upon which cultivars that you're growing and like how hard you can push them or like, you know, the different EC levels that you can push a strain to before it stops performing. And so I think stuff like that makes cannabis unique. But ultimately, everything that we're doing right now is just more and more veering towards different different agriculture practices, and seeing how there are very direct parallels to you know, how people clone chrysanthemums and how we clone cannabis all the way to, you know, different environmental set points that people use in cucumber farming, to make plants not stretch as much and how they directly apply to the cannabis plant as well. So I don't have a background in like a master's degree and plant scientists is like some of my friends do. But my peers that I work with, on a daily basis, pretty much everything that we're doing comes from one vegetable, or one crop to another, you know, and and then really, I guess what's fun about cannabis is no one's really studied it on a level like they've studied all these other vegetables, and agriculture crops. So it's really interesting, you know, really feels like we're still at the very forefront of this. The highest level of conversations that I have are, let's try all these different things that we think might work and kind of putting our own theories together and doing small scale experiments to test and prove theories. And then Matt spreading those throughout our companies in order to maximize yields and profit. Yeah,

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I'm curious on the cultivar side, I mean, you mentioned that one of the dynamics or one of the factors or differences, you know, it's like, yeah, I mean, we have we have several different types of tomatoes, but we don't have that many types of tomatoes. And with cannabis, I don't even know what the counts are at this point. But what are we? How many cultivars are we growing in the industry at this point, when it comes to the larger grows, or the more, you know, commercial kind of grow facility situations

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on the market across America, there's 1000s. Now, I mean, it's just anyone can like you could put up a tent in your bedroom and put eight female plants in it with a male and all of a sudden have eight new cannabis strains. And you could call whatever you want, and try to convince people to grow, you know. And that's kind of what's making it crazy, though, because the industry is growing so fast. And it's still so young that besides just like people's reputations on Instagram of us, this is really the only validity that breeders have, in my opinion. You know, like there's different companies that are tracking the genomes of these strains. But I see more new strains every single week, then that will just make your head spin.

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Yeah. And why like, what's your kind of understanding? Or what do you feel is like really driving the diversity of the cultivars and why do we see all these new strains like what are people trying to achieve? Or what's the what's the strategy here?

19:44

Yeah, I think that there's multiple different purposes and intentions with breeding. I have peers that are doing breeding with cannabis in the CBD world strictly for medicinal purposes. I have other friends doing breeding for different types. of cannabinoids that you don't normally see, like CBG and CBN. and stuff like that, that's less common as well. The most common for recreational cannabis, which is all the facilities that I work with all of my clients have recreational cannabis facilities, I think it's a two part thing a via fax, of course, the terms have always been indicates ativa. But yeah, it's very evident when smoking different strains of cannabis, that they can affect you different ways, some could be mellow, some could make your head race a little bit more, some could give you more energy. So I think one part of breeding is trying to pull out different desired effects. And then another part of it is kind of for just for the beauty in the art of it, you know, it's a lot of fun to cross two strains, two different genetic cultivars that you love, and see which traits will come out, you know, and see if you can make a better see if you can make it look better see if you can make it smell stronger, see if you can make it bigger. All of these things are goals when breeding, and then it kind of just turns into like a fun artistic game of what you can create, you know? Yeah,

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yeah, it seems like there are kind of these necessarily two counts, but there's a commercial application side of this, which is, Hey, can I create something that's going to be more productive or result in a more marketable product somehow, and then there's almost a kind of artisanal, you know, kind of craft side of it, which is, you know, really just creating new, interesting, you know, products, you know, plants that are that have really kind of unique attributes. And the other kind of crafty side of it, in terms of where you are now, and that's having all this experience, you know, having worked with all these different operations and, you know, grows, what's your kind of, how have you amassed that into, you know, kind of knowledge, expertise, what are you working on? Now? How do you take all this and provide it as you know, as a business or, you know, professionally, your next steps?

21:54

Yes, I just started a company called Whipple effect with my brother. So our last name is Whipple. So it's kind of fun. And the goal with Whipple effect is to create like an operational support consulting firms in this industry kind of get a bad rap, you know, so and I really, like I've had a bunch of different consultants and like, what I wanted to do was create a support system to be able to help cultivation companies learn the science, track the

results, and have lines of communication in order to make it all work because there are a lot of different moving pieces. So what the ripple effect is the kind of the ethos and the structure and the way that we're the different facets of it that I have created in order to give us the results that we want, and to have healthy plants and all these projects, I wrote an in depth training manual that I've called the cultivation process instructions pulled out from the manufacturing world manufacturing process instructions, but that's basically just like an A to Z guide, taking every single step of the whole process like this is funny, this is an overview of what climbing is. And then this is the equipment that you're going to need for it. This is how many people that you'll need for it. And then under that each individual step with pictures depicting exactly how to do the process. On top of that, I use a system called Basecamp. So whenever I take on a new client in the first week, what we do is after meeting the team, and figuring out the employees structure and how they want to who's in charge, what rooms, we load all of these standard operating procedures and room checks and cultivation process instructions and an app that everyone in the business download. It's called base camp. So the employees are just like walking in. They're like wondering what to do every single day. They're working off a checklist. It's very organized, it's very specific. And it's all digitally timestamps. And it's archived, you know, so the manager every single day, or myself, or, or one of the consultants on my team, who gets paired up with one of the managers, they can say, I have a client in Colorado, and I'm in California, I can still see every single day what they're doing through this app on base camp. And then also, it's kind of cool having my brother on the team because he has a business degree and comes from the world of corporate business, not cannabis, which is amazing to work with him, you know, because I get to tell him every single thing that's going on in these projects and the data that I've been collecting, and that like when we first started this project, I was like this is everything I collect, and he kind of took all that and just amped it up another notch and made it put like that corporate touch on it. So my brother is in charge of managing all the data from each project and we'll send every manager every day gets a cultivation daily snapshot. So that shows every single room the environmental set points, the highs and the lows. The substrates points, the sea the water content. And then he built into this spreadsheet. If it goes out of the desired ranges, it'll change a different color and give a notification to everyone. So every single day, instead of the managers, which are super busy, you know, collecting data for two hours, they just, it just pops up in their inbox, and then we can have a high level conversation about it. On top of that, I really am big into what I learned early on with management of these projects, I can give someone a golden formula. And that doesn't mean that they're going to succeed, it really is about having clear lines of communication, clear job titles, and a positive team atmosphere, which is what I really believe in. So I've used teams with a weekly gratitude meeting. And everyone talks, everyone shares something that they're grateful for something that they love about the company and something they'd love to change. And these are really great meetings, because it allows everyone to connect on a deep level and just like learn about each other's lives, and then it gives positive and constructive feedback about the company. And then the final piece of this is kind of all the back end like sea level executive data tracking data tracking arm of Ronnie in one of these facilities. So after every single harvest, Our firm provides a harvest analysis in this show, this breaks down the harvest by grams per square foot of every strain dollars per gram. So not only just like, Oh, we had a great harvest was like now how is every single cultivars producing and if you like, and then comparing all of them, you know, so it's like, Okay, this strain, I had a cut of Oh, gee, Cush, that yields 10% less than the Sour Diesel. So then I can talk to the owners of the company and say, Hey, the only way that it makes sense for you to grow the strain is if you can charge 10% more for it in order to make sure that, you know, profits are being maximized.

26:56

Yeah, yeah, it seems like the whole that we're now at the point in the industry, where a lot of this business is data driven, like it used to be much more kind of intuitive, or, you know, people just kind of knew what to do. And they kind of had a sense for what's going on, you know, now the data that we can collect, and, you know,

the scale that we operate on, you know, is a, you know, it's shifting fairly dramatically into this kind of data driven business data driven systems model. Yeah, big time. I

27:21

mean, there's, there's nothing that happens in any our facilities is not 100% planned out, like at this phase of the plant's life, it's, this is a teen and it has one one square foot per plant, and it's going to get 100 milliliters of water per day, five times a day, so on and so forth, every single day of the plant's life until we cut it down. And then while we dry it, same thing, very specific set points very specific times and how long we dry it, how long we cure it there, there's really no guessing anymore, you

27:50

know, yeah, on the campaign, I mean, the, you know, the difference of a quarter percent on on some of these things gonna end up meeting serious money when you start thinking about the scale that these operations are running out now. And so what else beyond the, you know, working on the cultivation, you know, operating process and, you know, helping with helping companies just get to higher levels of efficiency and productivity? What else do you have got going on in sort of professional at this point?

28:13

Yeah. So, I also just started who we were just talking about breeding, I just completed my first breeding project, which I'm really excited about, and the brand of the seeds is going to be called psychonaut. Genetics. So this is still at a super early age. This first projects kind of like what we were talking about, is just for the craft of cannabis, and, but it's a really exciting one, all the cultivars that are a part of the project, either test over 30% and THC or they've been previous Cannabis Cup Winners, or they come from world renowned breeders. So it's kind of a fun way for me to get to display the great work of my peers and the breeders that have paved the way before me and now get to start doing these breeding projects and crossing these genetics and, and putting my own flavor on it, while also giving, paying respects to the great psychedelic pioneers who have paved the way for psychedelics at large, which cannabis is one of those. So that's also special to me. That's excellent. Yes. So actually, real quick one, though, I have one more project that I'm super proud of dropping, except I also have a nonprofit called a sacred trip. And that is, I make a special blend of cannabis. And then we have like a two hour long sound journey meditation where everyone gets to set intentions and just experience cannabis in like a little bit different way than that they normally do. So had the talk about that real quick. And then all it's just donation based if people choose to donate, and then that all goes to maps to support them with their MDMA research that they're doing. Yeah, fascinating. Yeah, it

29:55

sounds like you're busy. So if people want to find out more about you about ripple effect, What's the best way to get that information?

30:01

Yeah. So my website is www.whippleeffect.com and my last name is spelled w h i p p l e. And also you can find me on Instagram at Whipple effect. Great,

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I'll make sure that the links in the handles are in the show notes here. So people can click there and get that information direct has been a pleasure. I always love people who are passionate about the work they do passionate about the plant, and also, you know, highly technical and I've really kind of studied this and figured

out what it takes to really make these operations make these grow successful. And clearly, you've spent a lot of time here you've got a lot of strong ideas. It sounds like you've been very successful in helping companies really master the cultivation side. So I really appreciate your time today.

30:39

Yeah, thanks for yours. I really appreciate you having me and look forward to connect this more.

30:45

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