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Subject: Make the problem smaller before you make it bigger
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To: brutalpip@gmail.com

SS

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Make the problem smaller before you make it bigger

A moodboard on simplicity

SARI AZOUT

JUN 7 • PAID



READ IN APP ↗

I showed Andy weissman (investor at USV, remarkable human, and all around mensch) Podcast Magic, the app we're building where you screenshot a podcast moment and get a transcript + clip back.

He loved it. Said he wanted it.

Then he went:

"Does it have to be an app?"



Andy Weissman <[redacted]>
to Sari Azout <[redacted]>

... May 10

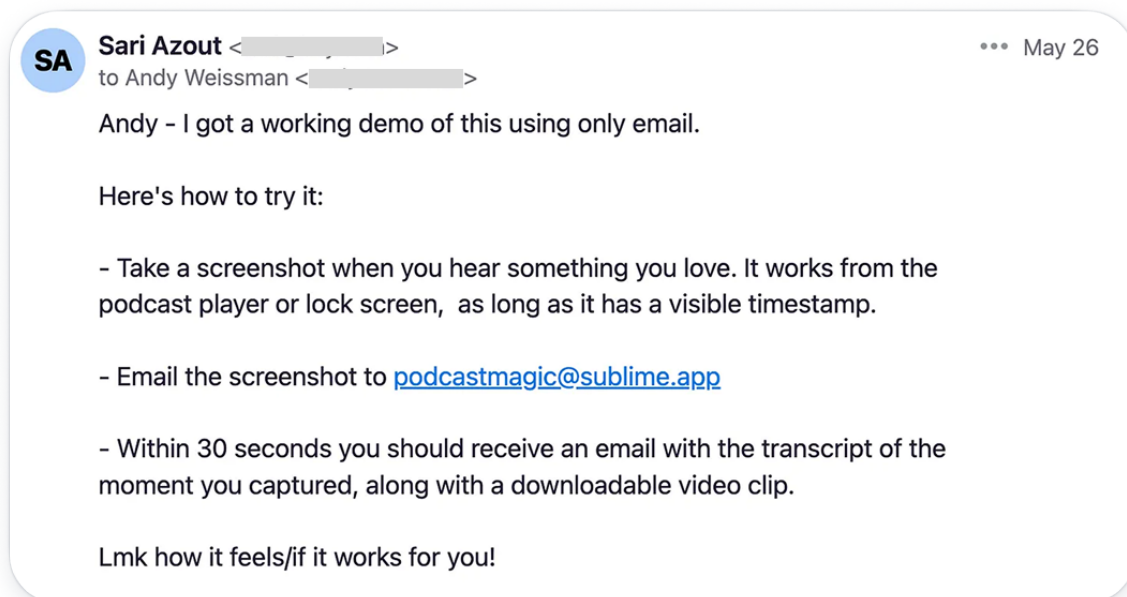
does podcast magic have to be an app? what if you could just email a screenshot to podcast@sublime and you return a web page or something with the result (could also use this as a top of funnel acquisition to sublime too)

I was like ... fuck whv didn't I think of this?

I was immediately, why didn't I think of this?

I'd spent so many months moving pixels on Figma now I wanted to throw my laptop out the window.

A week later I sent this:



Now it's stupid simple:

1. Just email a screenshot to podcastmagic@sublime.app
2. 30 seconds later get a transcript + clip in your inbox

Andy tries it and says:

"This is killer."

I asked him what he'd do next.

He says: **Make the problem smaller before you make it bigger.**

(His full reply is absolute gold for anyone building apps or consumer products.

I'm sharing it with paying subscribers at the end of this issue.)

When we encounter a simpler idea, the common reflexive response is: "it's not enough, it doesn't have X Y Z."

The better response is to acknowledge that turning back can be getting ahead.

Most "features" are just excuses to avoid the scary part:

Making something simple

Putting it out there

And letting people judge it

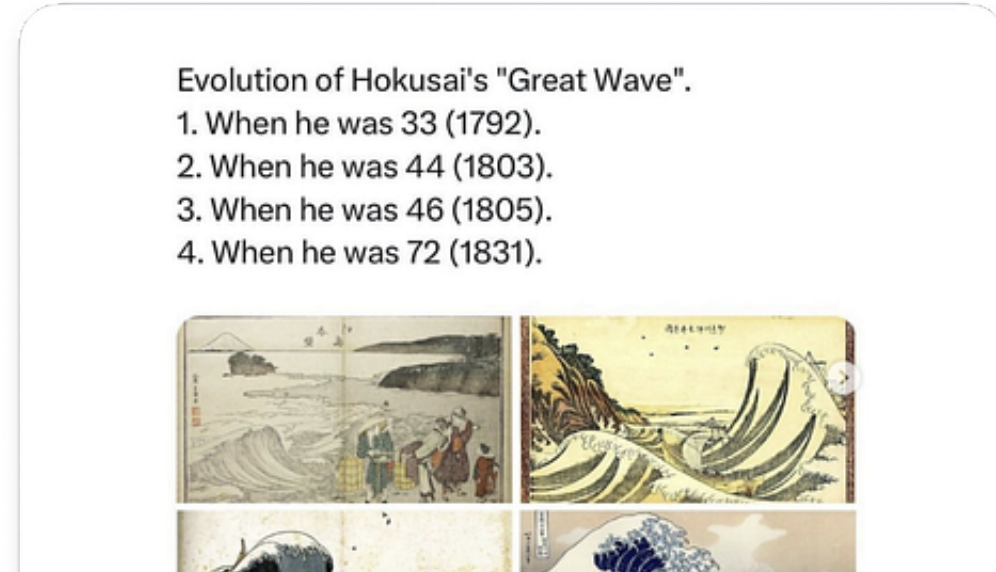
Here's a moodboard—on simplicity.

A great story about simplicity from Akio Morita, the maker of the Sony Walkman:

Engineers had the technology to add the recording function to the Walkman and it would've cost only 50 cents to a dollar per unit. Morita decided against it. He wanted the device to have one function, which it performs very well. Walkman should only play high-quality music to avoid ambiguity. More features confuse people about

their use and where to start. Less is more.

always remember yahoo vs google



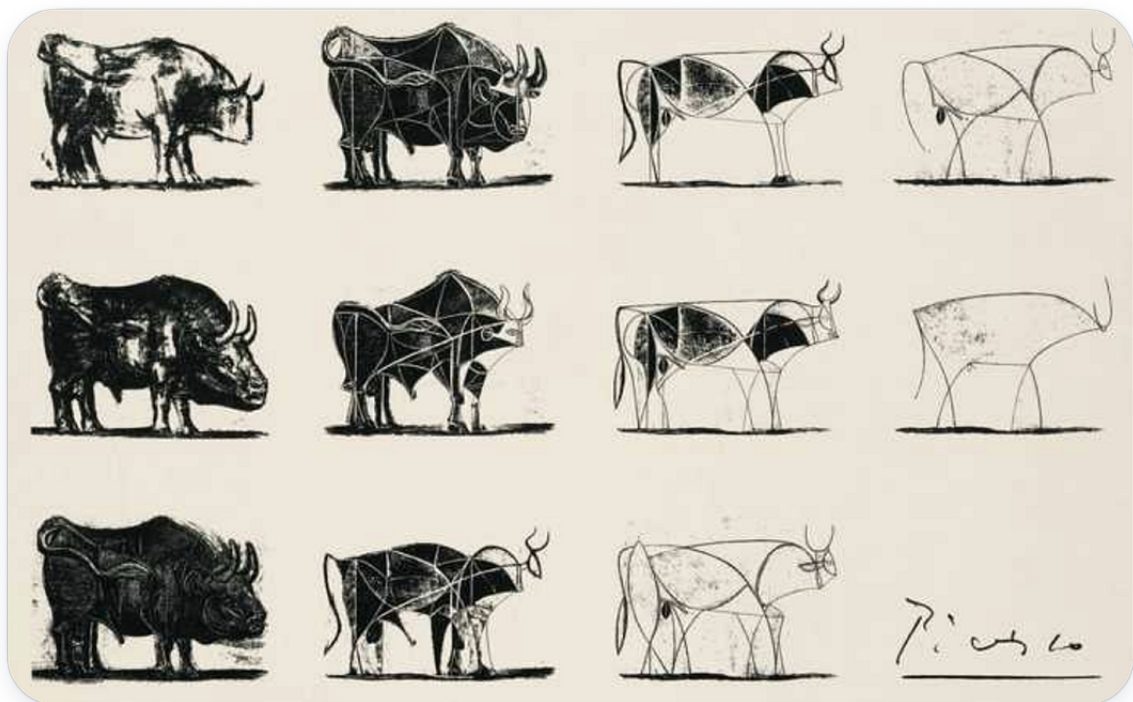
1. When he was 33 (1792).
2. When he was 44 (1803).
3. When he was 46 (1805).
4. When he was 72 (1831).

-



Any damn fool can make it
complex. It takes a genius to make
it simple

Ray Dalio • Principles: Life and
Work



One of the most intelligent case studies in design is the Chinese tea cup. They're made without handles simply because if it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to drink.

Humans naturally want to add more. Add a cardboard sleeve, add a warning on the outside of the cup, add a handle. The result of all these things never cools down the actual contents. And in the end, you'll still burn your mouth from drinking too early. It's not that people don't see the warnings, we're just adding more layers of separation between us and the answer.

Simplify until it's obvious.

Plus, for paying subs, the full email from [Andy Weissman](#) (partner at USV, legendary early-stage investor) on what to do with the app + how to think about pricing. Gold for anyone building consumer internet products.



Andy Weissman <[redacted]>
to Sari Azout <[redacted]>

... May 27

here are my unvarnished thoughts:

What do you people have too much of right now?

1/ apps

2/ subscriptions

in the case of subs, the fatigue is so bad that even offering a subscription will turn away most people, regardless of what you do. In other words, I dont know you or your app. Why should i give you my credit card and then forget about it. Subs are a barrier to growth even without all the other barriers. Let people pay the way they want to the way they want to. It's easier to say yes to a one-off than to subscribing and easier to say yes to subscribing once you've had a one-off.

Upgrade funnels are lame. How am I as a user supposed to evaluate them? This is all new magic capabilities.

Do a one time sale. \$5 (whatever), Forever. Or for a year but no auto renew. Be specific and market to this - "WE WONT AUTO RENEW BC WE LIKE YOU AND WE KNOWS ITS ANNOYING."

maybe year two is \$7.50 bc you added new shit. As my friend Monica likes to say: The effect of getting people to pay once does more to get them to pay more (frequency or amount) in the future.

You create something so easy and delightful - its just an email everyone knows how to do that.

Push the app back for now. See what people are doing. Delight them with a fair price and easy (non-subscription) way to pay. Make the problem smaller before you make it bigger.

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