Podcast | Shaping Positive Peace-of-Mind Events for End Users

In this Part 2 of the personal safety tech episode, Lukas Lampe from POM talks to Jean about what it takes to bring B2B enterprise solutions into direct-to-consumer markets – and how texting plays a key role.

Jean: In our previous episode, Lukas, we talked a lot about how the campus-driven use cases have evolved into some other verticals and more standard corporate use cases. The latest news, it sounds like you guys are really getting into the consumer market now, like selling directly to end users. Before we unpack that, I'm curious, other than the obvious, the reason that you want to grow, anything in particular in terms of what made you really enter into the consumer market?

Lukas Lampe: It's actually really exciting. It's been a couple of weeks actually, or maybe like two months we're in this consumer space, really, where you can actually buy a POM on our website. There're two big reasons. One was demand. A lot of people came to us and said like, "Well, it's available for a student, and a nurse, and other mobile workers, but why is it not available for me? I want this." At some point, the gap on the technology side was not that far off anymore, we just had to say "Let's just do it." That's nice.

Lukas Lampe: Then, obviously, the reason why we founded this company was a very personal reason. A friend of my co-founder, Andrew Leahy, actually had an incident way back then before we started this business where he got jumped after a night of party, and unfortunately, he didn't make it that night. One of the reasons was they didn't have the technology to relay the information to 911 where they are and what's going on, et cetera. Basically, in short, 911 or the police didn't have the location and couldn't find them.

Lukas Lampe: That was the founding story of POM itself. Obviously, back then, it's still very sad. AJ And I, we had a bonding moment this time, and we figured, "Hey, this technology, which is out there in iPhones, et cetera, should be available for everybody." We also figured that the accessibility in that moment should be easy because you're panicking, and that's how we founded POM. Initially went to the college market, but then now, finally, we're making it available to everybody. We see people are excited and people are using it already. It's nice to see also the emails you get that they're really thanking you, that there's something and they feel more secure and more...You provide peace of mind basically to them, which is nice, obviously.

Lukas Lampe: We are very early still. Also, in this market, we want to learn more. That's the focus at the beginning. It's not scale. We don't want to go national right away. We really want to see, okay, who's buying it, who's using it, how do they use it, what can we change to make it more valuable for people. That will include surveys, that will include phone calls, and we're trying to really build on the community around it. Very early stage, but very exciting.

Jean:	Any early learnings we can still talk about even though it's very, very beginning?
Lukas Lampe:	Yeah. Early learnings are basically that people always have a period of one or two weeks to get used to the POM in their everyday life. You have to charge it every week. At the beginning, people forget it. That's what we now learn and try to notify them subtly, "Hey, you probably want to charge your POM" or something. Another learning is also that teaching the device still has to be more sophisticated from our side. We have all the videos on our website and everything. In a campus setting and in a B2B setting, that's easy because you just train the people. You just distribute it through the channels which are available and you just go for it. That's, in the consumer space, a little different. Not everybody opens emails anymore, unfortunately. These are the early learnings. We're already making a way to solve these and make them more comfortable and et cetera.
Jean:	Only because our audience is mostly mobile communications people, so you mentioned not many people are opening their emails, and I'm one of them. What methods have you found more effective?
Lukas Lampe:	It's really text messages. Not even push notification too much. It's really straight up a text message. You have to craft it in a certain way which is engaging. That's what we're experimenting still, like incentives, give incentives, text messages. These are the methods. But you have to also be super subtle. Like don't disturb people in an a Superbowl match or something like that. Nobody wants to have a text message at that time. Not from you at least. It's the whole communication plan. We're still experimenting there. We already got some feedback, obviously, change the message up, all that good stuff. Again, early on, but I think we can make something work here.
Jean:	Did you have to make any actual changes to the product itself, the feature sets, or how is that shift happening?
Lukas Lampe:	Actually, we didn't, which is awesome. I mean, at least initially not, because we really integrated into a call center. We literally just had to build a way how people sign up, we call it, for POM personal, and not for one of the campuses. You have to make that a little bit more obvious that you don't have to search for an organization or which organization and stuff. Those are small little changes. Nothing big for now, but there will be a lot coming. Seeing the usage behavior, the communication again to the user will be different over time. Then training them a little bit better, but then also adding a couple of more features for families.
Lukas Lampe:	I mean, when we talk to more and more people, I hear a lot like, "Yeah, I'm sharing my location with my friends so that they know when I arrive and that I'm safe." "I'm texting my friend, 'Hey, if I don't call you in three hours, call me back because I'm on a bad date and the guy was kind of weird.'" You know what I mean? Just seeing that coming in and seeing these anecdotes, we're trying to figure out how can we do it better. Then we said before, POM Buddies is a big

thing, so that will probably come and try to really make it more like an engagement platform.

Lukas Lampe: Our vision is more and more like have the positive … of peace of mind being a bigger part of it. There's always a negative … when it coms to emergency response needs, and that is obviously a big part of it, and that's why we founded the company. But wouldn't it be nice if you actually focus a little bit more on the positive side and just say, "Hey, I'm okay!" That can help your loved ones a lot of times, too, to just sleep well and be well rested the next day.

Jean: All right. I cannot let that go without saying something because, to me, the peace of mind you're talking about…is a big part of what delighted me about your product. To me, okay, so you position this product as a personal safety…but human beings, social beings that we are, we are finding ways to use them for social reasons…and this whole POM buddy thing you're talking about is really that. They have a chain of relationships…you will be the first to be informed and the next person and next person. It is really a wonderful example. I love how you are talking about the positive side of this. It becomes a peace of mind device and it is mobilizing their buddy network, and all those things. I really love hearing that.

Jean: In our previous episode, we talked about the healthcare sector, nursing professionals needing support. But the obvious, at the risk of dating myself, I'm going to say this. The minute I think about these kinds of use cases…I grew up hearing those campaigns, campaigns where 'I've fallen and I can't get up,' the campaign that went on and on. For me, this is like, "Shouldn't this be used for that?" I mean, if I can buy it as a consumer, I would love to get a unit for a grandma because it's a little device and they can just push it. Is this an opportunity for you at all?

Lukas Lampe: I think so. I think for patients, I would say, Life Alert, so the ones you're talking about, are a good option because these people are not as mobile, they're home. It's a different kind of device. It's bigger. It's a little bit more clunkier...so for those who are more conscientious about the form factor, I think there are use cases for that.

Lukas Lampe: I think for us, more, it's the people who are older have some medical history. But for example, my father, he's 75. He's in top shape. He's still playing golf. But, I mean, he has two times, two new hips and one time, two new knees. He went through a lot of things, and you never know. For him, it will be perfect or it's perfect because he connected to his phone, he knows that if something happens, he has quick access. But he also wants to be mobile and he doesn't want to charge it every day, and he doesn't want to run with a big clunky thing around his neck or in his pocket, which is very uncomfortable and show everybody "I need help." No. He wants to put it on his key chain, have it there, know that it's on, available if needed. But he's still a cool senior living his life, and he's mobile and is enjoying it, which I love to see, obviously.

Jean:	Okay. This is one of those rare occasions, I'm sorry we are not doing video podcast, because I would have loved, although they can go to your website and see it, to show how sleek and hot-looking the little POM device is versus the old-fashioned emergency devices. I totally give you that.
Lukas Lampe:	Thank you.
Jean:	I want to fast-forward a little bit…give us a little bit of early understanding in terms of where your mind is headed from here, whether that is already in the pipeline of your development or even going beyond that. Where are you headed?
Lukas Lampe:	It's a very good question. It's been in our minds a lot where we want to go. One of the big things is we want to keep on innovating, which always sounds nice. It's actually harder than it sounds. But our idea is, really, in the B2B market, adding more features which to manage mobile workforce and make it more usable for them. We also think that we want to build different devices for different use cases at some point. Then also, really, in the consumer side, we're still early on, but we would really like to focus also on the positive peace of mind.
Lukas Lampe:	We don't want to be the company who always sends out scary messages or something like that. There's a couple of apps out there which tell in your vicinity if people got robbed or something like that. I think that can be valuable, but that also disturbs your life and it takes the fun out of it a little bit. I think if the subtle notification to your loved ones, as it was back in the day when your mom asked you when you went to a party, "Just text me that you came out of there," and I never did it. I never did it because I had never reminded myself because I was so excited about the party. But if there would be a way how to make this smoothly and give the mom a smile on the face, that would be nice.
Lukas Lampe:	I think, again, it's like features towards mobile workers, really, on the healthcare side and then maybe the positive peace of mind also for the consumers, and then also the students, obviously. We are very excited about it because it's an early market. There's a lot of opportunity. We are more than willing to listen to our users and make the subscription worthwhile, and give them peace of mind.
Jean:	This is going to be my last question. Obviously, as you get into a consumer market, as a mobile phone carrying consumer myself, really don't know sometimes if I can carry another thing, a device, whatever that is. Argue with me, why should I even bother to carry another device? How small that may be if it's just something that can be programmed and built into the phone I'm already carrying?
Lukas Lampe:	It's really accessibility in the end. We have to, as a company, decide more and more if ... We ask us this question all the time. You probably listened and heard there's a lot of features which are outside of that relationship to the POM itself.

But that's why there's subscriptions, it's not only about the POM. The POM is really the accessibility. If you tried to make an emergency call while somebody is attacking you from your phone, it's very hard to do. You have to open up the app. Now, iOS is, actually, you can triple tap or tap it a long time and then it'll make a huge sound and it will call 911 and do all that stuff. But most of the times, you don't want that. You just want to call 911 and that's it, you want to talk to them.

Lukas Lampe: With us, you just triple tap without having your phone in your hand. You just have your keys in your hand, where sometimes that could help for self-defense, and it's very subtle and discreet. That's how we basically differentiate ourselves, is the accessibility, the quickness, discreetness. In an emergency situation where every second counts, that is probably very crucial.

Jean: All right. I changed my mind. I'm going to ask you one more question. Now, as a CTO, as a developer, product designer, founder, now, oftentimes, there are different designers for software and hardware. It's my understanding that you do both. Tell me what you like better in what aspect.

Lukas Lampe: Oh wow. Hardware is hard. Software is flexible. But it's just much more fun and cooler if you have a hardware in your hand you just can say, "This is built by me or by my team." I mean, every time when there is anything, there's always a team behind. It's not only me and I have to thank here everybody who helped me with it because there would have been no way I could have done this alone. But it's cool when you look at this device and everybody looks at it, and it's like, "Yeah, we built this together," and then you go into the production, and you see your production line popping out POMs and you're like, "Okay. Yeah. That's pretty cool." Then on the software side, obviously, it's all about innovating, seeing the data which is nice. I think I like both. I really like both. I learned a lot in the last couple of years. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

Jean: Some people at Google might agree with you, hardware is hard.

Lukas Lampe: Oh yeah.

Jean: Now, just before I let you go, I have a little fun segment that I do, but it's going to involve spilling your personal stuff that is on your phone. You're ready?

Lukas Lampe: Okay.

Jean: Lukas, what are the three things you use the most on your phone?

Lukas Lampe: I'm a very old school with that. It's the mail app probably, the text message app, and WhatsApp. It's a lot of communication to be honest. It's not a lot of games, nothing crazy, but it's really a lot of communication. I'm a very utility-minded person.

Jean: Awesome. I think you are my 11th episode and I think you're the first person who actually named all three communications app. That is great. You sound like you're in the right business as well. That was simply delightful and I absolutely loved it. I want to thank you.

Lukas Lampe: Thank you very much.