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Bringing to market a Tool that helps Teachers and Parents Improve Student Behavior at School and at Home, Class Dojo is experiencing Explosive Growth around the World Driven Entirely by Word of Mouth among Teachers both Online and Offline

Technology
Education

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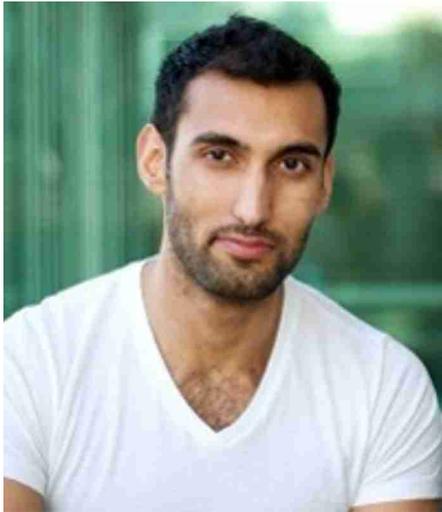**650-503-3656**
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Sam Chaudhary
CEO & Co-founder

BIO:
Sam is the co-founder and CEO of ClassDojo. Sam holds a Double First-class degree in economics from the University of Cambridge, and taught high school after graduating. He subsequently worked in the education arm of consultancy firm McKinsey & Co in London. Sam and his co-founder Liam founded ClassDojo in 2011 to help teachers, parents and students improve classroom behavior and build positive learning habits and character strengths. Since then, ClassDojo has become one of the world's fastest-growing education technology companies, currently being used by millions of teachers and students in more than 30 countries. Check it out now – it is free for teachers: http://www.classdojo.com.

About ClassDojo:
ClassDojo is a tool that helps teachers and parents improve behavior at school and at home. It helps build specific positive behaviors in and out of the classroom, and also generates data on behavior that teachers can share with parents and administrators.

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: What is ClassDojo?
Mr. Chaudhary: ClassDojo is a classroom tool that helps teachers and parents improve behavior at school and at home. It builds specific positive behaviors in and out of the classroom, and also allows teachers to share the generated behavior data with parents. This turns behavior, which has always been a very negative, punitive thing into a positive experience that is about actually building positive behaviors and character strengths, rather than about discipline and punishment.

After a quiet launch, growth has been explosive in schools around the world, driven entirely by word of mouth among teachers, both online and offline. Today, ClassDojo is used by millions of students in over 30 countries. In September, ClassDojo was selected by the NBC network in America as one of the education technology startups to watch for 2011, and was subsequently voted by teachers as 'Best Education Technology Company of 2011', winning a $75,000 prize and appearing on NBC's Today Show.

CEOCFO: What have you figured out that works?
Mr. Chaudhary: There are a few key behavioral insights that underpin ClassDojo:
1. Consistent, regular positive reinforcement works in changing behavior. This is an established classroom management best-practice, as defined by classroom management experts like Lee Canter and Doug Lemov, whose teachings are used by Teach for America to train their teachers. The key to this technique is catching students being "good", as well as recognizing and supporting students when they show appropriate behaviors, and on a consistent basis letting them know you like what they are doing. Teachers told us that currently, they get bogged down in focusing on the negatives, even though they want to be positive during the course of the school day. We wanted to make a really easy to use tool that would help them deliver the kind of consistent, positive feedback that is beneficial for their students.
2. Realtime feedback changes behavior: there is a whole body of generalized knowledge on this: feedback loops are powerful tools in changing behavior. Many teachers already use basic feedback loops: sticker charts, or card systems, that are visible to the class. What we're doing is trying to go beyond those, making them more engaging and easy to use consistently, while also creating a lot of data that

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can be used to spot and improve behavior problems early, rather than waiting for kids to go off the rails before an intervention can happen.

3. Engaging parents is crucial. A recent study by researchers at North Carolina State University, Brigham Young University and the University of California-Irvine, for example, finds that parental involvement — checking homework, attending school meetings and events, discussing school activities at home — has a more powerful influence on students' academic performance than anything about the school the students attend. Most students spend more time out of school than in it: it stands to reason that consistent systems inside and outside of school are important in effecting behaviour change.

Practically, we make it easy for teachers to give students feedback on specific skills they are demonstrating; things like curiosity, risk-taking, teamwork, leadership, or anything else they want to award. At any point in the class the teacher can say for example, "Hey, Lynn, that a great example of teamwork," and give you a feedback point for teamwork; these points are recorded automatically in real-time. They are also automatically collated into behavior reports, which can then be shared with parents, the students, and with other teachers or administrators.

CEOCFO: Is the assumption that teachers and students are typically sitting at a computer for most of the class time these days?

Mr. Chaudhary: This is the cool thing actually; ClassDojo only needs one device in the classroom. Most teachers have a projector, or an electronic whiteboard, or a monitor, something that can display a computer screen. ClassDojo only needs one computer, or a tablet or a smartphone to work: you can use ClassDojo on any of these devices to give students feedback. You do not need to have computers with every student, or every student with a computer, or every classroom to be equipped. You just need one device – which means ClassDojo is accessible by almost every classroom.

CEOCFO: Is the device shared with the whole class or just directly to the particular student?

Mr. Chaudhary: If there is some kind of projector or electronic whiteboard, then everybody in the class can see it. Practically what it looks like is a kind of seating chart. Every student has an avatar, which is a little bit of fun for the students, but it is also based on research that depersonaliz-

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ing feedback makes it more palatable. In this case, you'll have a seating chart that everyone sees, and you can see the feedback points being rewarded and popping up in real-time. If there is no such projector, a teacher can still use it on an iPad or a phone. There is also an audio component, so the students can hear a little "ping" every time someone gets rewarded a feedback point. They can log in separately at home, customize their avatar, and see their behavior or character profiles.

CEOCFO: Is there a particular age group for which this is most appropriate?

Mr. Chaudhary: ClassDojo is used throughout K-12, but mostly we see it used most in K-9th. The user interface is primarily targeted at that age range, too! Having said that, we also have a few users in some companies and universities (!), but those are far smaller use cases.

CEOCFO: Are there programs that have tried to address the same situation, and been less successful perhaps?

Mr. Chaudhary: I think what you find is that none of our competitors or other people looking at this space approach it different to us. One of the classic kinds of tools you see are behavior logs or detention logs, which basically expect the teacher to sit down and fill out spreadsheets to record what happened during that class session; who did what, who should get detention or punishment, or other kind of consequence. Not only does that add work for the teacher, but it also does not really address the problem: nowhere else in society do we wait for students or anyone else to mess up and then punish them for it, accept maybe other than prisons – which shouldn't be a model for school!

Rather than doing that, what we have done is to make this much more about actually improving behavior in real-time, and then having the data logged automatically. Teachers never have to do any data entry after school. Not only does it save time after school, it saves time during class: 40% of US teachers say they spend more than 50% of their class time managing behavior rather than teaching. We want to return that 50% of instructional time to the classroom, and save hours after school, by actually improving behavior in real-time rather than just logging it after the fact. That is how we are different.

CEOCFO: Is the concept of positive reinforcement understood by the teaching community, and is just been

a matter of how to translate that into a system like you have developed, or, are many in the education fields still not understanding the basic concept?

Mr. Chaudhary: I think, actually, it is pretty intuitive for most teachers, and most teacher training programs will emphasize this consistent, positive reinforcement. Most teachers already find a way to do it – we're just making it easier, and removing all the administrative effort from giving specific, positive feedback, and sharing outcomes with parents and administrators. There is, in fact, a whole philosophy called PBIS, which is about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

CEOCFO: Who is using ClassDojo today?

Mr. Chaudhary: When we started in August 2011, it was just eighty teachers, and I remember thinking it would be great if we could get a thousand teachers using it by the end of the year. Actually, what we found is those eighty teachers that we started out with liked it so much that it spread by almost entirely by word of mouth. We have now got about four million teachers and students using it in more than thirty countries.

CEOCFO: What is your revenue model?

Mr. Chaudhary: We are a young company, and we're strongly focused on solving a real problem for teachers; we wanted to first, prove that we do make a product teachers and schools wanted to use. That was really the first stage: getting growth and ubiquity. The second stage of the company, around revenue: we are coming to that soon. There are a few different models we are going to try out, like everything else we do, we'll just test a few things and see which one sticks. We have had a lot of interest from schools and districts; interestingly, we have also had a lot of interest from parents who know that behavior is not just a problem at school, but a problem at home as well, and they would like some solutions at home. There is something there we can try, too.

CEOCFO: You mentioned at least thirty countries; how is your offering distributed, and are there countries most people would be surprised to find have been using your service?

Mr. Chaudhary: The major ones are probably what you would expect; the English speaking ones such as: Australia, the U.K., Ireland, and some of Canada, but there is a long, long list of countries across Asia and Europe: China, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India, to know a few.

CEOCFO: Where do you go beyond word of mouth now and what are your plans to go further?

Mr. Chaudhary: We have to date not spent anything on acquiring users; it has all happened organically. I think one of our strengths is being able to grow that way. What I would love to see is teachers spread the word to more and more teachers, and actually have every single teacher in the school using ClassDojo, and engaging all their students and parents to use it, too. I would rather have ClassDojo spread a bit like Facebook, rather than go out and do enterprise sales to schools and districts. This is in part because it scales better, but also because if users continue to spread ClassDojo by word of mouth and use it, than it shows they really love the product. I think that the right place to start for a consumer-style application is high engagement and high growth, and then build the other distribution methods on top of that. I think word of mouth will always be the primary distribution method for us.

CEOCFO: What surprised you most about the feedback you have received so far?

Mr. Chaudhary: In the early days, it was that we actually had any feedback at all! So many applications struggle to get any usage at all, and we are very fortunate that teachers are really engaged and that we have seemed to tap into a deep need. We get hundreds, if not more, emails a day with ideas, suggestions, complaints, bugs - all kinds of things. More than just the quantity, though, we are always astounded by the kind of things that teachers ask for. In retrospect it appears obvious, but when

you are designing any software, you really need to be close to your users, or be a user of it yourself. Now most of our team has an education background – I used to be a teacher, for example - but if you leave that context for even just a year or two, you really lose touch with it. A good example is one of the teachers asked for an attendance feature – and we thought, "Hey, that makes sense! We'll build that." We built in, and launch it, and we go back in a few days, and then the feedback comes back, "Can we have a button to mark everybody as absent?" We thought, "Why would you ever want that? If the whole class was absent, you just wouldn't use it!" The teachers said, "Well, obviously, I want to mark everybody as absent to start with, and then as the students come into class, they can check themselves in." We were amazed – that seemed so obvious when the teachers told us about it, but we never would have built it if we were just designing things ourselves. That is a small example, but it is indicative of the power of feedback from teachers, making us build things we could not possibly anticipate. You can see why it's important that we stay close to teachers, and listen and act on their feedback.

CEOCFO: How far long will your current funding take ClassDojo?

Mr. Chaudhary: We are a pretty lean team, and given the funding we've raised so far, we could go for the next year and a half or two years at the current team size.

CEOCFO: Why should investors and people in the business community pay attention to ClassDojo?

Mr. Chaudhary: The two things that really differentiates us from pretty much any other education technology company out there are the following:

First, one of the biggest problems with education is actually distribution. Very few education technology products actually achieve ubiquity. If I look back at this year going from a standing start to four million teachers and students using our product, that is unprecedented in education technology. That makes us one of the fastest

growing education technology companies ever as measured by number of users; we look more like a consumer-growth company than a traditional education company. That is exciting for us!

Second is the vision for what we are doing as a company. The really big vision for us is that there is this whole other half of education that currently goes almost completely unaddressed. That is the half that is to do with character development; it goes beyond just building great grades, to building great people. What that means is all the character strengths and competencies – teamwork, leadership, integrity, empathy, and persistence – that we value as a society, but don't really think about developing in as meaningful or measurable a way as we think about delivering content. We think that has to change – there's 40 years of educational research (see James Heckman's research on the Perry preschool program) that shows that when you develop character, particularly early in life, it has a step change on almost every single socioeconomic indicator: test scores, graduation rates, health outcomes, even substance abuse rates. What's more, some of the best-performing public school chains in the country already do this. We think that is incredibly powerful, and we want to deliver this character development for every child in every household in the world. ClassDojo is the first small step towards it.

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