



Kerrin Mitchell:

Welcome to the Untapped Philanthropy Podcast.

Tim Sarrantonio:

We're your hosts, Fluxx's Co-founder Kerrin Mitchell and Neon One's, Tim Sarrantonio. We've spent our career learning how to leverage technology and data in the social sector to better connect and serve our collective causes, constituents, and communities.

Kerrin Mitchell:

In this podcast series, we profile leaders, public figures, philanthropists, and industry experts to explore the fascinating intersection of funding, technology, and policy. We're here to analyze the most formative topics and trends that shape the present and future of philanthropy.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Happy holidays to all of you and welcome to our final episode of Untapped Philanthropy in 2023. This has been a year that has been basically on light speed mode. This has been so quick as me as the first year, Tim Sarrantonio here as co-host. This is my first full year Kerrin. I can't believe it's gone by this quickly, but ...

Kerrin Mitchell:

Time flies when you're having fun, Tim.

Tim Sarrantonio:

We are having fun and we're having some extra special fun today because..

Kerrin Mitchell:

Like double fun.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Like double fun. Triple fun even. And I'm really excited for our final guest of the year. We had this wild idea to do a recording at Neon One's Generosity Exchange virtual conference with Phil Deng of Grantable, and it was such a great conversation and people went wild in the chat, but let's also address the realities of audio quality control and we wanted to deliver you the best possible episode. So we are inviting Phil back. Phil, Philip, hello again.

Philip Deng:

Hey, that's a big buildup and I think I kind doubled or triple the fun that we're supposed to bring today. So triple fun. All right, I'm going to do my best.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, let's kick this in a high gear. I'm going to kick things off for you, Philip, to, if folks don't who you're, I'd love for you to introduce yourself and talk about your path, your journey into this career in philanthropy, generosity, technology.



Philip Deng:

Okay. Well, I'm Philip Deng I'm the co-founder and CEO of Grantable, which is an AI grant writing assistant software. And I came to this role after a 15 year career in the nonprofit sector. So I was a teacher in the Marshall Islands and in China. Then I moved up a little bit and started managing nonprofit programs also in China, doing some environmental justice work. I returned to the Seattle area where I went to high school and my father lives and started a nonprofit there after doing some community organizing. So really took on all the hats that a lot of folks listening probably know all about wearing. And then through that experience, I gained a lot of experience with grants seeking and then ended up managing a grants program for a Land Trust and then going out on my own as a solo consultant and built a process during that time that made me really efficient in creating grant proposals.

And in 2020, I was tinkering around with trying to learn how to make software because I thought my process could be its own tool that other grant seekers could use. And then I learned about GPT-3 in December of 2020, and I just thought it was mind blowing and kind of a perfect fit for what I was trying to build. So I really leaned into trying to start a company. 2021 was kind of a solo year really trying to find a collaborator. And then I met my co-founder, Robert during that year, and we teamed up in 2022. And so the last couple of years we've been working together to build this company Grantable.

Kerrin Mitchell:

And what I really love about Grantable actually is that you're taking this AI conversation that everyone's having and coming up with pretty, I know interesting ideas, but Grantable takes it beyond all the sort of demos and memes that a lot of people get stuck in. And you're really helping to apply these sort of solutions to what could really assist, like you said, grant writers, nonprofits, folks that are in our industry that are really struggling to have that pragmatic, practical approach or tactical things they can do with it. I know that you sort of look at Grantable and say, this is something that started so early ago. I absolutely love that because you built it with those new models in mind and that new technology in mind. Can you give us kind the Grantable 101 pitch just for those who may not be familiar?

Philip Deng:

Yeah, thanks for the question. It's, it's three main parts. I would say. There's your content library, which all grant writers know about. It's wherever you keep all your content, your previous proposals, your boilerplate, all that language that you use. So we've taken that and we've amped it up with AI, so just hold that for a second. Smart content library. Then you've got your AI writing assistant, which I think everybody's seen Chat GPT, just spitting out all kinds of text. So we've brought GPT into the space as well, so it can write anything in any way that you want. And then there's the writing space, which I think people maybe have forgotten about if they get really into the Chat GPT land where all you're doing is you're interacting with a bot, but that isn't the ideal space to do document editing. It really is that word processor interface.

So we have those three pieces we've brought together. And what happens in Grantable then is when you upload content to your account, or if you just work on a grant in Grantable, that all becomes part of your smart library. Then the next grant you work on, you can just be writing, working on your way, and then you come to a spot where you want AI assistance, you highlight it, you press command J, and your AI little box pops up and you can ask it to answer this or revise this or shorten or lengthen. And then it will do that, and it will use content from your library, which it's intelligently searching or you can tell it what content to use, and then it will instantly generate that response or that output in your organization's voice using your facts, your figures. So we cut down on those hallucinations.



It doesn't sound generic like the internet in general, it sounds like you. So what we've done is created this cycle, which actually grant seekers all know about. That's how you gain efficiencies when you're doing this at scale. And all we've done is really supercharge that cycle with GPT, with AI to make the document management, the content management, finding the different excerpts that you need, and then getting that first draft on the page can now happen in seconds. And then there's still this gorgeous writing interface where the human being in charge can make those fine tuning edits that still should be made and really provide that expert oversight. So that's Grantable.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Here's what I love about that and the vision there, Philip, because my first job was a grant writer in the sector. It was 2008. That's what I got hired to do, and I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I had grant writing for dummies. That's where I started my journey here. And what drives me, because I had to very quickly because it was 2008, pivot to individual giving because the grants dried up because I had to hunt around for them. I didn't know what narratives that would hit in an environment like that. I didn't have anything. It was a nonprofit that had \$90,000 in annual revenue that included me, that included the ED, that included the operations costs. It was as bare bones a situation as you can imagine. And so my driving passion for all of this is I never want to have people go through the pain that is avoidable because of technology being used correctly that I went through.

If I had Grantable back then, there's a very good chance I probably, well, maybe at that organization it wouldn't have been helpful. But there's a lot that I think you're doing to save those core pain points and also to be able to more quickly drive that over into the individual giving side from a narrative standpoint too, because you can start to take those narratives and go, okay, let's tell this into a story for individual donors as well. So that's what I think is so cool about all of this, and I just wanted to make sure that I flagged it because I lived that pain as a grant writer.

Kerrin Mitchell:

I think it's really interesting, Phil, to your point, Tim, and to be honest, obviously you have a very distinct way of communicating and voice is so important. I think that's one thing you really mentioned upon that I love too, and I want to dive into that, which is how does this scale, you said it understands your voice and the forms it takes. Tell us a little bit how you train that model, what that looks like, because that's really the most important point to make this something that does really make a difference in the way that grant makers write. Can you talk more about that idea of unique voice and style?

Philip Deng:

Yeah, I think there's a lot that folks are learning about in terms of how these AI systems work. The models that have been created by companies like OpenAI, which is just one we use, they're so capable. There's so much in those models that we don't have to train them very much. And when organizations use Grantable, they're actually not training a model on its own. What they're doing is they're basically relying on GPT's ability to imitate or to amplify what you've already written or to mimic your style. So that's another thing that these models are very good at. And one of the things that we figured out is if you interact with Chat GPT, that's a general purpose product that is meant for hundreds of millions of people to use in any which way. So that's kind of a one to many. And what we've done is said, okay, we actually just want to leverage GPT's writing ability and its ability to continue, to take one thing and mimic it or amplify that.

And so when you do that and you have the content that an organization wrote before with just the leadership team or the grant people, and you put that in there and then you say, Hey, GPT use this to



answer, use A to answer B, it's going to sound very similar to the original because that's what we're having it do. The thing that a lot of grant professionals, and Tim, maybe this is what you were speaking to, sort of the pain of that process, once the creative part is over, there's a lot of just sort of repetition and these character limits and word count limits and just particular ways that different funders want the same information rearranged. And I know from my experience, I actually like writing the first couple proposals because you're really putting a lot of thought and creativity and shaping that language to be efficient and compelling.

You're picking your best stories, your best data, and then there's a lot of creativity there and work. But by your fifth or sixth where you're just taking what was a beautiful 800 character answer and extending it to 2000 or smushing it to 200, that part I never found to be enjoyable. And that's what I've heard from a lot of the folks using our platform is that part of it, it becomes a lot easier. And then just to bring it back, Tim, to your point about the equity of the space, one of the reasons why when I was also, I had an organization, I was behind you, I didn't even get the grant writing for dummies book. I was too much a dummy to even read the book, but I made, we had less money and every time I worked on a proposal, I poured my heart into it.

40, 50, 60 hours worth of gathering letters of support, like bringing the grantors to the space where we were trying to have our program happen and getting to the semi-finals, I don't even know how much time at that point had been invested. And to get nothing really to be the runner up and get nothing out of that, it made it so that choosing to apply for a grant became a terrifying prospect. Such a gamble is what it felt like. And so one of the things that we're trying to do now is to level that playing field because the process itself is a barrier to most small organizations that have so many things that demand their time. And then yes, they see that grant opportunity, yes, it looks aligned, but if the ED or somebody that has a lot of responsibility spends 20 hours on that proposal and gets nothing in return, that's very, very costly for an organization like that. So we're really trying to shrink the cost of the application in terms of time and capacity, and hopefully in that way open up the opportunity for grant funding to so many more organizations out there.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, then it shifts it back to the root of what all of this is, which is outlining through a compelling story when you get down to it, your unique path to change and the reasons to believe that path to change. And if we align it back to how do most people become part of the nonprofit sector, a lot of the 97% of small to midsize nonprofits in particular making under 5 million. Everybody that I talk to is usually some random story in a holiday episode, we get to drop this reference and it makes sense. You join the island of misfit toys and everybody has a different story how they got on the island.

Kerrin Mitchell:

That's a very solid Christmas reference you just said.

Tim Sarrantonio:

It's a great Christmas reference.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Really the holiday fun we're promising the listeners actually.

Tim Sarrantonio:



There you go. There you go. The payoff on that. But so many people, they maybe joined because they were a social worker and they really believed in the work. These are not English nerds, English majors. And let's not even speak to the language barrier on grant writing too. But when you get down to it, sometimes there's just a lot of things that something Grantable can say, we're going to level the playing field here. And that's where it's really, really interesting. But I also love how you zero in on almost that first party data side where it's like, yo, don't worry about in some ways the foundational model, we'll get to responsible AI in a moment, but the larger world of Chat GPT is Chat GPT. This is you, and what is your story and what is your data and what is your narrative and your tone and your voice. That's what's so compellingly powerful about this.

Philip Deng:

Yeah, I love that.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, good. It's your thing.

Kerrin Mitchell:

When you talk about this idea of AI though, and some of the really interesting use cases, just to kind of take it a step further, the things that the community comes up with are oftentimes some of the best ideas we have at Fluxx, for example. And people's ability to take the tool and harness it around something that makes sense for them and then create something we never even thought was possible. I mean, that's one of the things that's the most exciting as a technologist. Do you have some kind of fun examples of where people are stretching your platform or using it in unique ways?

Tim Sarrantonio:

Love that question. That's a really cool, because it's like how are they trying to break it, Philip?

Kerrin Mitchell:

I mean, we have this one guy in New Zealand who works with Fluxx and he does some of the coolest stuff I've ever seen. I'm like, I didn't even know could do that. That's so cool. It's just so interesting when you put AI in the hand of the collective and you say, figure it out. What do you do? Where have people come up with cool things where Grantable is just extended in ways that have benefited them and you never thought?

Philip Deng:

I actually, I'll probably wear this as a badge of we need to continue to improve. Because what I've seen is people have been happy with Grantable, have reached out for some tech support, and then I've gotten on video with them and asked them to show me what they're doing. And they were actually not using even the most powerful features and still finding it useful. So I kind of look at it that way. And I guess the way I'm seeing this is that this generative AI technology is so new, so different, so powerful that people are experiencing even a portion of the functionality of Grantable and kind of being wowed and then staying there. And I think the challenge for us is actually to improve the tool, improve the educational content so that they quickly see the full potential of what they've signed up for. So what I'm working on right now is a series of educational modules, which are just free and free self-directed course on our website.



And so basically I'm trying to add a little bit of AI 101 grounding and then some overview of generative AI and then zooming into actually how can you use different tools in your grant seeking and doing it myself, sharing my screen, just talking through what that's like. And that's become a really popular page on our website. So I think people are very hungry for the knowledge. And then I think where we might start to see people doing really, really wild stuff is that part of our roadmap is to now improve the intelligence beyond just helping you write, but actually starting to build a bit of strategic advising. When you put a proposal in, you're sitting down to start on it. We want Grantable to be able to help you think through the process and how are you going to put this application together in the best way. So that I think is where we may see a lot of really, really interesting use cases that we never thought of. So that's kind of what I've seen.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Education is really interesting. I feel the same way if you walk two or three steps beyond where your audience is, you'll lose them. So it's almost like you have to feed them into a mindset that makes them start to think differently and around the way that AI can benefit. It's interesting how that becomes something that you have to almost enroll them into what could be and then teach them how to do the steps to get there. That's a really interesting one.

Philip Deng:

Yeah. Or it makes me think just now how valiant and courageous grant professionals have been all these years piecing together different tools and tactics and spreadsheets and documents just to try to make this very broken system a little bit more efficient. There's a feature in Grantable, which is just that when you can search across your whole library by keyword, so everything in your whole account you can search through quickly and get down to the word. And people are just like, oh my gosh, this is an amazing feature. Because what they're doing is they're sort of looking for all the documents in their different folders or shared drive clicking each of them open into eight different tabs and then control F in one. Nope, it's not there. Control F in another. Nope, it's not there. And that's been the state of the art for quite a while now. And so I'm kind of just in awe of how people in this field have continued on and just found ways to try and save a minute here, a minute there. And then when we bring out this feature like, yeah, here's just one search field that lets you find what you're looking for across your whole library. They're so appreciative. And there have been people that have signed up for Grantable just for that feature, and then we tell them there's AI and they're like, whoa, that's even cooler.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Well, and I think this goes back to who's the audience and the vast majority, if we think about that book *Crossing the Chasm*, right? Grant writers are not the early adopters here. A lot of them are writing things down in notebooks and legal pads and working out their thoughts there in a lot of different ways. And so these little quality of life things that streamlines it. I think back to *The Bear* episode *Forks*, because I try to work *The Bear* into every conversation now and every second counts is the takeaway. And that's not only a life lesson, but it absolutely applies to work here too because it's like if I'm spending my time hunting around for different documents or even different phrases like, oh man, I really loved what I said in that thing. Where was that? And instead of hunting around, God knows where we're all organizing this or Gmail, Google Docs, all this different stuff. To be able to find it is, I think that's the revolutionary part about it. But let's actually, I don't want to throw cold water on it, Philip, because you're also on the forefront of this. Let's talk about the responsibility of that centralization, that level of power to have that amount of information. Let's talk about security. Let's talk about things like compliance. Where's your head at here? You have a really excellent take and I want to make sure people hear this.



Philip Deng:

Yeah, I think so. There's a lot, obviously we're not too far removed from the whole OpenAI fire Sam Altman and then rehire Sam Altman fiasco that happened around this time.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Please, I have to interrupt. Please make sure you work sectorism into your answer at some point. So keep going.

Philip Deng:

Yeah. So Tim's referring to a piece I wrote about that, and I'm sort of coining a term called, I'm calling it sectorism, where I just saw everybody just point the finger at nonprofits. And for those who don't know OpenAI, which is the company behind Chat GPT was started in 2015 by a bunch of folks including Sam Altman and Elon Musk and Reed Hoffman, a bunch of other tech folks. And they chose very smart people who had built the biggest companies on Earth, said, okay, we've been down that road 50 times. We're going to do this as a nonprofit. And they did that very intentionally because they saw a conflict between the power of the technology they were seeking to build and the profit making motive. They'd seen that kind of corrupt over and over again. So they said, we're going to make this a nonprofit so that we can insulate this technology and this work and the mission from the power or the allure of creating a lot of wealth.

And so that went okay until they realized they needed way more money than a nonprofit could quickly enough raise. And so they created a for-profit entity to do the fundraising to hold all the shareholders, but it would be run and overseen and owned and controlled by the nonprofit entity. And that all went okay for a few years. Chat GPT comes out, takes the world by storm. And then just over this last Thanksgiving, out of nowhere, at least to the public, the nonprofit board fired, the very charismatic sort of the face of AI right now. Sam Altman, who was their CEO and a co-founder and a board member. And that just shook everything up, at least in the tech sector. People were really alarmed by it and everything went around this wild merry-go-round, and people, musical chairs might even be the better game. Sam Altman is now back, everything is kind of mostly where it was except everybody is pointing their fingers at this nonprofit entity saying, oh, nonprofits, they don't know what they're doing.

Tim Sarrantonio:

They're stifling innovation.

Philip Deng:

Yeah, just throwing it under the bus as if this wasn't an intentional move by the person that you're all holding up saying, Sam Altman is this person that's so important for the company. He was instrumental in creating this organizational structure. And so just to come back to responsibility, that was their attempt, that company's attempt to try to be responsible to try to have human decision-making, human centrality, human values at the center of that organization, creating the power. I think one of the ways that I'm starting to analogize this as like you either have AI or you can even have capitalism as an engine, and that's great. We've figured out the engine, now we need to figure out the steering wheel because what we've gotten really good at is just making these engines that drive off super fast and just plow over all kinds of things that we care about.

And what I think the challenge for us now to figure out in this next probably 5 to 10 years is how do we better steer and harness and correct for the externalities of capitalism, of AI, of these forces in our economy. And that's what I see as responsible AI. That's where I'm coming at is to say, how do we



actually take human decision-making and create structure around it, create legal structure, organizational structure, policy and norms? How do we put that around AI and so many other things so that we can steer it so that we can guide it and sometimes choose to say yes to some things and no to other things. And I don't think we have, we've not figured out the yes and no very well yet. So I think when it comes to Grantable, what we're doing is I think we hold all of our user data separately and apart from the model, and when you send an AI request to GPT, there's a very specific prompt.

There's maybe a few snippets of context, and then you get your output back. There's no way around that. We have to interact with an AI model. But their policy in their relationship with our company is that they don't keep that data. They don't train on that data. They don't use it to improve GPT. So that data gets wiped after 30 days because that's the arrangement with companies like ours. And then on our end, we're not training the model with the data either. So I think what people are going to have to start to figure out is where is your data living? Because there's so much more that can be done with AI models in these next 5 to 10 years. And who is holding that data and do you share the same view of what ethical and responsible technology means?

Kerrin Mitchell:

So talking about where that future's going and AI, you say 5 to 10 years, obviously it's like 5 to 10 months knowing this gorgeous light speed race that we're all running towards. But the truth is exactly that. It has to align to the values of who you are, what you stand for, how you believe the sector is going to be creating itself. And I think this is something I look to you and say, there's a lot of places where your roadmap is constantly having to be recalibrated, I'm sure. But tell us a little about what is potentially changing in our sector and where you as Grantable are meeting that change.

Philip Deng:

Well, so in the near term, just going back to the theme of how do we keep lowering barriers, how do we keep making the prospect of grant funding more accessible? We just partnered up with Grant Station to offer both of our products together at a discount. And the idea there is that two of the top problems that spring to mind for grant seekers are: first, where do I find grant opportunities? And second, okay, great, where do I find the time to work on all of those proposals? What we've thought was really cool is we talked with their team, we've been in conversation with them for a long time, and we really, really love how long they've been in the community of nonprofits almost 30 years. They really have a wonderful story of growing up with the sector and they said, look, we have this incredible database that we scrape all these opportunities, but then we have a team of experts, human beings calling the foundations, checking in with them to make sure these opportunities actually exist.

I know a lot of listeners out there probably followed an opportunity all the way to the website only to realize it's invitation only or it's not active. So what they do is they really go do that work for you to make sure that their database has live opportunities, and then it's really filterable. You can search down, and then there's even an organization platform in there where you can manage different projects and save all of your leads and your application statuses. And so they said, we've got that figured out, but then there are organizations that say, okay, great, but I still don't have time to apply for those opportunities. And then along comes Grantable where it's like, well, actually, you could write your grants five times faster. That's our average with AI. People can put in one grant and pretty much have the AI assist you in drafting another.

And the more you use it, I mean your language is going to get better and better. You'll have a larger library and you'll get faster is the idea. So together kind of like peanut butter and jelly or wine and cheese, whatever your metaphor is, they go together so well. So we thought, okay, let's offer this as sort



of an annual package to help people find and write their grants. So that's in the near term, but this week I'm actually working on the article as we speak. I'll try to publish in the next couple of days here. But the big idea, I'm a little bit sore about how everybody reacted to the Open AI situation. So I know I'm not going to convince Microsoft of the value of nonprofit decision-making, but my perspective into the long-term and not that far is that the nonprofit sector, nonprofit jobs are the high ground when AI starts to automate more and more private sector work.

And those jobs in the private sector, any for-profit company is incentivized to lower their cost. And so AI's promise is that it's going to be able to do more and more of all kinds of jobs at a lower cost and higher quality, and the companies are going to be incentivized to make that switch. And I think it's going to happen. Kerrin, as you were saying, at light speed. In the past when new technology has come out, there's been enough time where one specific job, let's take the sewing machine eliminates seamstress work, but it creates a fashion industry and then people have the time to create all of those new jobs and people buy more clothes. And that's been the model before, but that's taken years and years and years to unfold. I wonder, I think at this point we may have the first invention that is actually faster than innovation itself.

And I think that's sort of a line that we may be crossing with AI in the next few years. And in that case, if AI can take over work faster than we as a society can adapt to the new opportunities it's creating. One of the places where I think a lot of people will move is to the nonprofit sector. We know that there's a huge amount of work to be done around the world in terms of nonprofit work and the work itself, because it lacks a profit motive, is I believe, much more insulated against AI coming in and really disrupting the sector as much. So one of the long-term visions that I have for how AI is actually going to shape the nonprofit sector and philanthropic work is that I think our sector should prepare to welcome in a whole new wave of people, maybe a new generation of people, and to start expanding and to start shifting the composition of our workforce so that many more people are caring for people, caring for the environment, pursuing arts and culture.

That's the vision that a lot of the AI luminaries have proposed as the most positive future out there. And the thing that they don't realize, which really drives me crazy, is that that exists. It's called the nonprofit sector, but it's small. And every time something goes wrong, people kind of deride it or promote this sectorist viewpoint. And what I actually think there's going to be this sort of poetic irony, which is once the change, speed of change really starts to accelerate and job change and economic change really starts to be visible, I think a lot of people are going to look over at the nonprofit sector and realize, hey, that looks like a really purposeful, dignified way to do something really meaningful in my community or on the planet. And I think it's going to hopefully be where a lot of people consider work. And I think what we have to do is prepare for that.

And I think we have to figure out how do we scale up our systems and scale up the funding? And that's really on private funders, corporate, government, individual donors. How do we start directing the resources to this sector so that it can scale up to bring in and welcome more people to do all this work that needs to get done. So two very, very different answers to your question in the near term, how are we trying to make life quality of life a little better as Tim put it? And then in the long term, which isn't that long as Kerrin was saying, I would say in this decade, we're going to have to really start to adapt more quickly than societies have had to in the past.

Tim Sarrantonio:

I mean, the very nature of work is on the table for discussion and overhaul here because yeah, there's just so many things and so many directions we can go with. I mean, gosh, Phillip, that's probably another three hours we talk about that one. I had to reflect on that, but let's actually end on, I wouldn't even call



it utopian Philip, because I think it's realistic if we set our mind to it, but I think that's a very positive way to end things. I think it's a really excellent vision for the future. So we do have a fun little segment, and we kind of did this at Generosity Exchange, so we might switch it up a bit. Holiday edition, Kerrin, let's do some rapid fire questions. I'm not going to put you on the spot. I'll start and I'm just adapting the ones that have for a little bit more.

Kerrin Mitchell:

Do it. I'm excited to see what you come up with.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Okay, Philip, let's imagine we have non-denominational Santa here, and it's the morning. There's a present in front of you, but instead of a thing, it's a transformative idea that you can open up and it becomes reality, not Pandora's box. Okay, there's no catch here.

Kerrin Mitchell:

A really fancy, not a denominational Christmas present.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Exactly. It's like the most magical Christmas magic ever in a Hallmark special type of way. It's like a movie. You've opened it up and the world is changed. What is inside that box?

Philip Deng:

Oh gosh. The thing that comes to me is global mindfulness, like every single person on earth gains a much greater understanding and awareness of their inner experience, the narrative that's the, they separate from the voice that we all have in our heads, that is the mind, the chattering mind, and then gain this awareness and this distance to be able to observe that. And then also the feelings and the emotional experience. I've found that to be transformative in my own life. It's something I try to cultivate and I just, gosh, if humanity could have a little bit more space there, I think it would be really, really wonderful for the planet and for all the people.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Love it. Love it. Kerrin your version. You do not need to stick to the holiday.

Kerrin Mitchell:

I know. I feel pressure to weave in some sort of fun modern twist on holiday traditions.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Mine's going to be related to terrible hallmark movies. By the way, Philip. So heads up.

Kerrin Mitchell:

It's good. It's good. I'm actually going to go, I liked your answer to this one, so I'm going to ask you to reprise it, which is you're in a time machine, you've accessed it, and you can only witness one moment in history and you can't alter it. Just witness it. Which moment would you observe and why does it captivate your interest?



Philip Deng:

Did you like my answer from last time? The first one or the second one?

Kerrin Mitchell:

Oh, that's a great, I just remember it being, that's a good point. You had two

Philip Deng:

I really answered from the hip last time and it was, I don't know how it landed, but I'll tell you both. Maybe my first answer, which I continue to believe in, is that I would like to go back and witness the making of the first pizza.

Because I'm really, I mean, we share a love for The Bear, and I really, really enjoy cooking and food. And I just think there's so much a dish like that from the grains to the sauce to figuring out how to make cheese and then the right temperatures in the oven. I just think the first person that did that was an innovator that has touched how many lives now. And so there are a number of foods that I would just love to follow back in time and see the origination of it. And then my other answer was sort of related to my mindfulness answer for the first one, which was to go back and follow Buddha through the path to enlightenment that might've been powerful to witness or hopefully inspiring and not discouraging. Like, oh gosh.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Could you bring him pizza?

Philip Deng:

I think I feel like we could definitely talk about the experience over a couple slices and yeah, maybe that's really,.

Kerrin Mitchell:

You combine the two, then you don't have to have two answers.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Yeah, you don't have to.

Philip Deng:

That's the moment is it's actually, it's a moment that maybe didn't happen ever, but the moment ...

Kerrin Mitchell:

Convergence of time and space continuum that brought together two important things.

Philip Deng:

Yeah, I'm bringing the Buddha and the first pizza maker together and we sit down and we have some pizza and we talk about enlightenment.

Kerrin Mitchell:



I feel like a generative AI bot could kind of render that for you a little mid. I think we could figure this out. We'll work on it. Yeah.

Philip Deng:

Maybe in the next, yeah, next few months here. GPT five, that's kind of the main use case.

Tim Sarrantonio:

It's just making the pizzas for you.

Philip Deng:

Yeah.

Tim Sarrantonio:

Alright, I'll end on this one. I'm going to be a little bit more serious instead of my original idea because of what you're talking about. Philip, what is a dish that says home to you?

Philip Deng:

A dish that says home to me is there's a dish that my grandfather on my mom's side used to make in the summers when my cousins would come from Hong Kong, it's called Zha Jiang Mian, which translates to fried sauce noodles. And I don't think he even made it the way that it's made in China. I think he kind of improvised it. They lived in Minnesota for, my grandmother's still there. She's 96, so for 70 years. But he used to make this and it's kind of a sweet savory sauce with noodles and then shaved cucumber, like little shredded cucumber and you can eat it hot or cold, and they would just make mountains of this stuff and all the cousins we'd play all day and then we'd come in a herd of us and just go to town on these noodles. And I still make 'em pretty frequently these days, and it always transports me back to those summers, which are some of my happiest memories. So that's the dish that comes to mind.

Tim Sarrantonio:

That's beautiful. That's beautiful. Well, Philip, I want to thank you for joining our final episode of the season, our 2023 season, and sharing more about yourself and about the amazing work that you're doing at Grantable. If listeners want to learn more about you or Grantable, obviously they can go to grantable.co, but also drop your substack as well. Tell people where they can connect with you beyond grantable.co.

Philip Deng:

Yeah, it's an honor to be on the last of the year. I hope it's not my last one last time on the pod, so this was really fun. My substack is philipdang.substack.com. And the only thing to know there is Philip with one L and my last name, Deng D-E-N-G. And you can find that on my LinkedIn as well and any number of other ways.

Tim Sarrantonio:

What's a stellar 2023? We started the year interviewing Michael Thatcher at Charity Navigator and we're ending with Philip Deng. In between. We discussed all sorts of different trends in philanthropy, in the ways that people can connect and collaborate with each other, trust-based philanthropy and the



overall equity role that our sector plays in overall society. It's such a pleasure to be a co-host of Untapped Philanthropy. This is my first full year, Kerrin.

Kerrin Mitchell:

I know. I'm so thrilled we had you come join us and just, I mean, it's almost like you never, I can't imagine doing this without you. It's so lovely having you here, Tim. So thank you for a 2023 gift of joining all of us here. And honestly, listeners, we just want to thank you, our heartfelt appreciation for an amazing 2023 season. Obviously your support has been just so critical and so memorable. We look forward obviously, to a new year, but Tim, we already have so many of our guests lined up for next year, which is exciting because I look at it and we're opening up with Trista Harris and some major voices around the futurist kind of view of the social sector. And then we go from there into, I mean, some really fun guests. Do you want to highlight this sort of arc, if you will, of the 2024 season?

Tim Sarrantonio:

Yeah, I mean, it's continuing our exploration of the intersections of philanthropy and technology toward that broader goal of untapping philanthropy. I think it's also going to be fun that we're going to surprise you with some of our guests, and this is why it's a tease, folks, I'm not going to tell you yet, other than it's got to do with crises and celebrities. The generosity it, it's unpacking the larger crises, but in a way that will surprise and delight you. So we're staring into the abyss in 2024 and laughing in its face,

Kerrin Mitchell:

And the hope of that as 2024 does evolve, I'm sure, in the same way that the light speed of 2023 did for us this year. I do think some of the stuff we're really focusing on next year is around this practical application of how do these things, why do they matter? What are we doing? So I'm really excited about that. So for 2024, we'll raise our glass and looking forward to that up ahead, and we will be back shortly. But we just want to thank you again from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you so much for being a part of our little podcast family in 2023. We cannot wait to embark on all these new adventures with you, so we wish you all a joyful holiday season and a fantastic start to 2024.