

Joe Gebbia: How Airbnb Designs for Trust

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I want to tell you the story about the time I almost got **kidnapped**¹ in the **trunk**² of a red **Mazda Miata**. It's the day after graduating from design school and I'm having a **yard sale**³. And this guy **pulls up**⁴ in this red Mazda and he starts looking through my stuff. And he buys a piece of art that I made. And it turns out he's alone in town for the night, driving **cross-country**⁵ on a road trip before he goes into the **Peace Corps**⁶. So I invite him out for a beer and he tells me all about his passion for making a difference in the world.

Now it's starting to get late, and I'm getting pretty tired. As I **motion**⁷ for the **tab**⁸, I make the mistake of asking him, "So where are you staying tonight?" And he makes it worse by saying, "Actually, I don't have a place." And I'm thinking, "Oh, man!" What do you do? **We've all been there**⁹, right? Do I offer to **host**¹⁰ this guy? But, I just met him -- I mean, he says he's going to the Peace Corps, but I don't really know if he's going to the Peace Corps and I don't want to end up kidnapped in the trunk of a Miata. That's a small trunk!

So then I hear myself saying, "Hey, I have an **airbed**¹¹ you can stay on in my living room." And the voice in my head goes, "Wait, what?"

That night, I'm **laying** in bed, I'm staring at the ceiling and thinking, "Oh my god, what have I done? There's a complete stranger sleeping in my living room. What if he's

¹綁架

²車箱

³自家院裡拍賣東西

⁴車停靠路邊

⁵越野的；橫越全國

⁶和平工作團

⁷做動作

⁸帳單

⁹感同身受

¹⁰招待

¹¹空氣床

psychotic¹²?" My anxiety grows so much, I leap¹³ out of bed, I sneak¹⁴ on my tiptoes¹⁵ to the door, and I lock the bedroom door.

It turns out he was not psychotic. We've kept in touch ever since. And the piece of art he bought at the yard sale is hanging in his classroom; he's a teacher now.

This was my first hosting¹⁶ experience, and it completely changed my perspective¹⁷. Maybe the people that my childhood taught me to label as strangers were actually friends waiting to be discovered. The idea of hosting people on airbeds gradually became natural to me and when I moved to San Francisco, I brought the airbed with me.

So now it's two years later. I'm unemployed, I'm almost broke, my roommate moves out, and then the rent goes up. And then I learn there's a design conference¹⁸ coming to town, and all the hotels are sold out. And I've always believed that **turning fear into fun is the gift of creativity.**

So here's what I pitch¹⁹ my best friend and my new roommate Brian Chesky: "Brian, thought of a way to make a few bucks²⁰ -- turning our place into 'designers bed and breakfast²¹,' offering young designers who come to town a place to crash²², complete with wireless Internet, a small desk space, sleeping mat²³, and breakfast each morning. Ha!"

We built a basic website and **Airbed and Breakfast was born.** Three lucky guests got to stay on a 20-dollar airbed on the hardwood²⁴ floor. But they loved it, and so did we. I swear, the ham and Swiss cheese omelets²⁵ we made tasted totally different because we made them for our guests. We took them on adventures around the city,

¹² 精神病

¹³ 跳

¹⁴ 輕輕走

¹⁵ 腳指

¹⁶ 招待人住宿

¹⁷ 看法

¹⁸ 研討會

¹⁹ 用言語說服

²⁰ 幾塊錢

²¹ 管早餐及住的民宿

²² 擠，湊或一下

²³ mattress 床墊

²⁴ 木頭

²⁵ 煎蛋卷

and when we said goodbye to the last guest, the **door latch**²⁶ **clicked**²⁷, Brian and I just stared at each other. Did we just discover it was possible to make friends while also making rent?

The wheels had started to turn. My old roommate, Nate Blecharczyk, joined as **engineering co-founder**²⁸. And we **buckled down**²⁹ to see if we could turn this into a business.

Here's what we pitched investors: "We want to build a website where people publicly post pictures of their most **intimate**³⁰ spaces, their bedrooms, the bathrooms -- the kinds of rooms you usually keep closed when people come over. And then, over the Internet, they're going to invite complete strangers to come sleep in their homes. It's going to be huge!"

We sat back, and we waited for the **rocket ship**³¹ to **blast off**³². It did not. No one in their right minds would invest in a service that allows strangers to sleep in people's homes. Why? Because we've all been taught as kids, **strangers equal danger**.

Now, when you're faced with a problem, you **fall back on**³³ what you know, and all we really knew was design. In art school, you learn that design is much more than the look and feel of something -- it's the whole experience. We learned to do that for objects, but here, we were aiming to build **Olympic trust**³⁴ between people who had never met. Could design make that happen? **Is it possible to design for trust?**

I want to give you a sense of the flavor of trust that we were aiming to achieve. I've got a 30-second experiment that will **push you past your comfort zone**³⁵. If you're **up for**³⁶ it, give me a **thumbs-up**³⁷. OK, I need you to take out your phones. Now that

²⁶ 門門

²⁷ 卡嗒一声响

²⁸ 共同創始人

²⁹ start working hard

³⁰ 最親密的

³¹ 火箭船

³² 發射

³³ 求助於, 退到

³⁴ 極大程度的信任

³⁵ 推你到忍耐極限

³⁶ 贊成

³⁷ 豎起大拇指

you have your phone out, I'd like you to **unlock**³⁸ your phone. Now hand your unlocked phone to the person on your left.

That tiny sense of panic you're feeling right now --is exactly how hosts feel the first time they open their home. Because the only thing more personal than your phone is your home. People don't just see your messages, they see your bedroom, your kitchen, your toilet.

Now, how does it feel holding someone's unlocked phone? Most of us feel really responsible. That's how most guests feel when they stay in a home. And it's because of this that our company can even exist. By the way, who's holding Al Gore's phone? Would you tell Twitter he's running for President?

OK, you can hand your phones back now.

So now that you've experienced the kind of trust challenge we were facing, I'd love to share a few discoveries we've made along the way. **What if we changed one small thing about the design of that experiment?** What if your neighbor had introduced themselves first, with their name, where they're from, the name of their kids or their dog? Imagine that they had 150 **reviews**³⁹ of people saying, "**They're great at holding unlocked phones!**"

Now how would you feel about handing your phone over?

It turns out, **a well-designed reputation system is key for building trust. And we didn't actually get it right the first time. It's hard for people to leave bad reviews. Eventually, we learned to wait until both guests and hosts left the review before we reveal them.**

Now, here's a **discovery** we made just last week. We did a **joint**⁴⁰ study with Stanford, where we looked at people's willingness to trust someone based on how similar they are in age, location and geography. The research showed, not surprisingly, we prefer people who are like us. The more different somebody is, the less we trust them. Now, that's a **natural social bias**⁴¹. But what's interesting is **what happens when you add reputation into the mix, in this case, with reviews.**

³⁸ 解鎖

³⁹ 評語

⁴⁰ 合作的

⁴¹ 自然的社會歧視

Now, if you've got less than three reviews, nothing changes. **But if you've got more than 10, everything changes. High reputation beats high similarity. The right design can actually help us overcome one of our most deeply rooted biases.**

Now we also learned that building the **right amount of trust takes the right amount of disclosure**⁴². This is what happens when a guest first messages a host. If you share too little, like, "Yo," acceptance rates go down. And if you share too much, like, "I'm having issues with my mother," acceptance rates also go down. But there's a zone that's just right, like, "Love the artwork in your place. Coming for vacation with my family." So how do we design for just the right amount of disclosure? **We use the size of the box to suggest the right length, and we guide them with prompts to encourage sharing.**

We **bet**⁴³ our whole company on the hope that, with the right design, people would be willing to overcome the stranger-danger bias. What we didn't realize is just how many people were ready and waiting to **put the bias aside**⁴⁴.

This is a **graph**⁴⁵ that shows our rate of **adoption**⁴⁶. There's three things happening here. The first, an unbelievable amount of luck. The second is the efforts of our team. And third is the existence of a previously unsatisfied need. Now, things have been going pretty well.

Obviously, there are times when things don't work out. Guests have **thrown unauthorized parties**⁴⁷ and **trashed homes**⁴⁸. Hosts have left guests **stranded**⁴⁹ in the rain. In the early days, I was customer service, and those calls came right to my cell phone. I was at the **front lines**⁵⁰ of trust breaking. And there's nothing worse than those calls, it hurts to even think about them. And the disappointment in the sound of someone's voice was and, I would say, still is our single greatest **motivator**⁵¹ to keep improving.

⁴² 洩露

⁴³ 冒險建立

⁴⁴ 放棄成見

⁴⁵ 圖表

⁴⁶ 使用我們服務的比率

⁴⁷ 開未被授權的 party

⁴⁸ 把家中亂搞一通

⁴⁹ 使陷於困境

⁵⁰ 最前線、第一線

⁵¹ 鼓勵、激勵

Thankfully, out of the 123 million nights we've ever hosted, less than a **fraction**⁵² of a percent have been problematic. Turns out, people are **justified**⁵³ in their trust. And when trust **works out right**⁵⁴, it can be absolutely magical.

We had a guest stay with a host in Uruguay, and he suffered a heart attack. The host rushed him to the hospital. They donated their own blood for his operation. Let me read you his review.

"Excellent house for **sedentary**⁵⁵ travelers **prone**⁵⁶ to **myocardial infarctions**⁵⁷. The area is beautiful and has direct access to the best hospitals. Javier and Alejandra instantly become **guardian angels**⁵⁸ who will save your life without even knowing you. They will rush you to the hospital in their own car while you're dying and stay in the waiting room while the doctors give you a **bypass**⁵⁹. They don't want you to feel lonely, they bring you books to read. And they let you stay at their house extra nights without charging you. Highly recommended!"

Of course, not every stay is like that. But this **connection beyond the transaction**⁶⁰ is exactly what the **sharing economy** is aiming for.

Now, when I heard that **term**⁶¹, I have to admit, it **tripped me up**⁶². How do sharing and transactions go together? So let's be clear; it is about commerce. But if you just called it the rental economy, it would be incomplete. **The sharing economy is commerce with the promise of human connection. People share a part of themselves, and that changes everything.**

You know how most travel today is, like, I think of it like fast food -- it's efficient and consistent, **at the cost of**⁶³ **local and authentic**. What if travel were like a magnificent

⁵²分數

⁵³證明…是正當的

⁵⁴行得通

⁵⁵久坐不動的

⁵⁶容易有

⁵⁷心肌梗塞

⁵⁸守護天使

⁵⁹導管

⁶⁰交易

⁶¹字眼

⁶²絆倒、使失敗

⁶³犧牲掉

buffet⁶⁴ of local experiences? What if anywhere you visited, there was a central marketplace⁶⁵ of locals offering to get you thoroughly drunk on a pub crawl⁶⁶ in neighborhoods you didn't even know existed. Or learning to cook from the chef of a five-star restaurant?

Today, homes are designed around the idea of privacy⁶⁷ and separation⁶⁸. What if homes were designed to be shared from the ground up⁶⁹? What would that look like? What if cities embraced⁷⁰ a culture of sharing? I see a future of shared cities that bring us community and connection instead of isolation and separation.

In South Korea, in the city of Seoul, they've actually even started this. They've repurposed⁷¹ hundreds of government parking spots to be shared by residents. They're connecting students who need a place to live with empty-nesters⁷² who have extra rooms. And they've started an incubator⁷³ to help fund the next generation of sharing economy start-ups⁷⁴.

Tonight, just on our service, 785,000 people in 191 countries will either stay in a stranger's home or welcome one into theirs. Clearly, it's not as crazy as we were taught.

We didn't invent anything new. Hospitality⁷⁵ has been around forever. There's been many other websites like ours. So, why did ours eventually take off⁷⁶? Luck and timing aside⁷⁷, I've learned that you can take the components of trust, and you can design for that. Design can overcome our most deeply rooted stranger-danger bias. And that's amazing to me. It blows my mind⁷⁸. I think about this every time I see a

⁶⁴ 自助餐

⁶⁵ 市場

⁶⁶ 一個酒吧接著一個酒吧地

⁶⁷ 隱私

⁶⁸ 隔離

⁶⁹ 從頭開始

⁷⁰ 擁抱、接受

⁷¹ 重新規劃

⁷² 空巢者

⁷³ 孵卵器, 細菌培養器

⁷⁴ 新創公司

⁷⁵ 好客

⁷⁶ 成功

⁷⁷ 除掉

⁷⁸ 讓我永生難忘

red Miata go by.

Now, we know design won't solve all the world's problems. But if it can help out with this one, if it can **make a dent**⁷⁹ in this, it makes me wonder, what else can we design for next?

Thank you.

Comprehension questions

1. What does Airbnb mean?
2. What does it mean “designed by trust?”
3. Why did Joe Gebbia start by telling the story of his yard sale?
4. What did he do that night that was very special?
5. Why was Joe Gebbia very worried that night?
6. How did the story end?
7. What did Joe Gebbia learn from this story?
8. What happened two years later?
9. How did Joe Gebbia start his bed and breakfast business?
10. How did they pitch investors?
11. Why did they fail the first time?
12. What did they learn from the design school?
13. What experiment did he do in the talk?
14. How did they apply this principal in their new business?
15. What did their joint study with Stanford find?
16. What does it mean “building the right amount of trust takes the right amount of disclosure?”
17. What are some bad guests’ behaviors?
18. What does it mean “connection beyond the transaction is exactly what the sharing economy is aiming for?”

Discussion questions

19. What is the main idea of this talk?
20. Summarize the talk in a short paragraph?
21. What did you learn from this talk?

⁷⁹取得初步進展