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Invited Andy Maclean   Jef Adriaenssens

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Summary

Andy Maclean and someone in Berlin - Amsterdam discussed the outdated laptop refresh policy and challenges associated with work phone usage, which segued into someone in Berlin - Amsterdam's frustration with engineers not testing code in production and Andy Maclean's comparison to varying builder work ethics. The participants also detailed a series of technical flaws and incidents related to an 80% off offer in Bristol, which highlighted the issues with the company's "worst pieces of technology" in the offer management system that relies on outdated architecture. The main topic centered on the challenges of displaying dynamic product and item carousels, with Andy Maclean outlining two key problems: dynamically deciding when to show items and the current inability to efficiently retrieve individual items and their offers outside of the full menu domain, which the storefront SDK is addressing. Andy Maclean and someone in Berlin - Amsterdam agreed that the platform needs to evolve toward a unified discovery experience, breaking down silos between menu and discovery pillars to support partner-agnostic item pages, with someone in Berlin - Amsterdam advocating for core platform investment to support "infinite pages" and sharing data on the successful impact of simple reorder carousels on grocery orders.

Details

- **Laptop and Work Phone Policy** Andy Maclean and someone in Berlin - Amsterdam discussed the current policy regarding work laptop refreshes, noting that laptops now only get replaced if they are broken, which Andy Maclean suspects is not checked rigorously ([00:00:00](#)). The conversation naturally transitioned to work phones, with someone in Berlin - Amsterdam sharing that they lost their personal phone in a kayak incident, leading them to rely solely on their work phone ([00:03:47](#)). Andy Maclean mentioned the potential problem of leaving a work phone at home, while someone in Berlin - Amsterdam noted the benefit of having two phones for testing different operating systems like Android and iOS ([00:04:30](#)).

- **Engineer Testing and Pride in Work** Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam expressed frustration about engineers not testing their code in production, describing a personal preference to selfishly try their work in production ([00:05:08](#)). Andy Maclean compared this behavior to some builders who lack pride in their work, suggesting a wide spread of different approaches among teams, particularly observed from the trustee side ([00:05:54](#)).

- **Bristol Offer Incident and System Flaws** Andy Maclean recounted a series of wild incidents related to an 80% off offer in Bristol, starting with accidentally applying a 50% off offer to everyone in Bristol, then taking out all order tracking, and finally applying the 80% off offer to everyone ([00:06:52](#)). The issues included a lack of order tracking events, meaning they had "no clue" how many people were using the voucher or ordering ([00:07:44](#)). Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam joked about abusing the 80% off, but Andy Maclean noted that large orders might have been fraud placed by restaurant partners to claim the full amount ([00:08:23](#)).

- **Offer Management Technical Debt** The speakers agreed that the offer management system is likely one of the worst pieces of technology the company has, citing its reliance on outdated architecture and API calls to an old-school EC2 ([00:09:53](#)). Andy Maclean identified this system as the last part of their discovery funnel still making such an API call with no clear plan to move away from it ([00:10:46](#)).

- **Challenges to Displaying Item Carousels** Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam introduced the main topic of product and item carousels, noting that while everyone wants to show items, the current system presents significant challenges ([00:10:46](#)). Andy Maclean outlined two main challenges for displaying

items: the first is the fundamental issue of deciding when to show items dynamically, and the second is the current inability to efficiently retrieve individual items and their offers outside of the full menu domain ([00:11:35](#)) ([00:13:32](#)).

- **Storefront SDK and Item-Level Access** Andy Maclean explained that the second challenge—efficient item retrieval—is being addressed through the storefront SDK, which will allow requests for details of a single item without pulling the entire menu, which is critical for handling large grocery menus ([00:12:36](#)). However, Andy Maclean clarified that this solution must also address retrieving offers for individual items, as offers are currently only reasoned with partners ([00:13:32](#)).

- **Dynamic Item Display and Brute Force Limitations** The first challenge concerns how to dynamically determine when to show items (number one), which Andy Maclean stated is fundamental to search ([00:13:32](#)). Andy Maclean detailed that the current partner ranking system uses a brute force approach by loading all local partners and their details in real-time, which is not scalable to hundreds of thousands of items across thousands of partners ([00:14:35](#)) ([00:18:25](#)). They proposed that solving this problem requires some form of offline calculation and potentially tagging to understand potential carousels, allowing a layout orchestrator to reason with different content types ([00:17:17](#)) ([00:19:16](#)).

- **Evolving Role of Ranking and Silo Breakdown** Andy Maclean confirmed that ranking needs to evolve from merely ranking restaurants to ranking all content, including items and banners, and across the platform, not just search ([00:20:14](#)). The conversation circled back to the importance of breaking down the silos between the menu and discovery pillars, which Andy Maclean stated is necessary because the system needs to treat partners as a sub-page of items and reason with a catalog not bound to a single partner ([00:27:16](#)) ([00:28:55](#)).

- **Vision for Partner Agnostic Item Pages** Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam presented J Deals designs as an example of a product-first vision for versatile, partner-agnostic pages centered on item-level shopping missions ([00:22:38](#)). This vision includes thematic clusters of items, reorder lists, and leveraging the marketplace by comparing item prices across different partners ([00:24:30](#)). Andy Maclean agreed that this direction is where the platform is headed, aligning with breaking down the search partner and menu pillars into a unified discovery and exploration experience ([00:26:23](#)).

- **Pushing for Core Platform Investment** Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam expressed a desire to push for investment in building the underlying capability to support "infinite pages" based on context, rather than building specific pages, which they believe engineering is aligned with but requires buy-in from product leadership ([00:31:54](#)) ([00:35:55](#)). Andy Maclean suggested someone in Berlin - Amsterdam should speak with Alex and Ben Dashford, the search lead, to gain agreement on this direction, noting that engineering uses such visions in the absence of a holistic product roadmap ([00:31:18](#)) ([00:33:02](#)).

- **Success of Grocery Carousels** Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam shared recent data showing the impact of simple reorder carousels on grocery orders, noting that the reorder carousel is becoming the second-biggest carousel and is highly impactful for retention. They emphasized the value of bringing reorder functionality to the grocery page, along with the growth of the grocery logo carousel for acquisition ([00:38:33](#)).

Suggested next steps

- [ ] Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam will send the prototypes to Andy Maclean to give people an idea of where the platform can go.
- [ ] Andy Maclean will start having conversations with David Mur and principal engineers about the need to break down silos between menu and discovery.
- [ ] Andy Maclean will share the prototypes with Sunny and Ben.
- [ ] Someone in Berlin - Amsterdam will keep pushing for the required changes with Alex.

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