

# Future of the Business World: Cool Sneakers and 'Creative Destruction' with Jiro Noor

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*In September 2020, the [Wharton Global Youth Program](#) launched its first podcast, *Future of the Business World*, which explores the motivations and creations of young entrepreneurs from around the world. In case you missed it, be sure to listen to our debut episode with [Rucha Mehendale](#).*

*This month, we travel to Jakarta, Indonesia, to explore the intersection of technology and entrepreneurship with high school student Jiro Noor. Jiro, 16, is endlessly curious and innovative, reflected in his diverse pursuits, from sneaker apps to 3-D-printed limbs for children. He spent part of this summer studying online with Wharton in our [Future of the Business World](#) course. Jiro is already well on his way to having a profound economic and social impact on the business world, all while wearing his favorite Nike HyperAdapts.*

*An edited version of our conversation appears below.*

**Wharton Global Youth:** Hey, everybody! Welcome to the Future of the Business World podcast. I'm Diana Drake with the Wharton Global Youth Program at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

We're exploring the Future of the Business World through the eyes of teen entrepreneurs and innovators. As the world constantly changes and evolves, young trailblazers are embracing the entrepreneurial mindset and finding ways to solve problems and understand emerging trends. We've met some amazing future business leaders – and we want to introduce them to you.

Jiro Noor is 16 and a high school student living in Jakarta, Indonesia. Jiro, Welcome to Future of the Business World.

**Jiro Noor:** Thanks for having me.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Jiro is living at the intersection of technology and business. Jiro's various entrepreneurial endeavors have leveraged the power of technology to quite literally help the world.

Before we discuss that bigger impact, though, we need to start by looking down. Jiro, your coding life began with a shoe collection. Tell us about your alias as a sneakerhead and how you used technology to build a sneaker community in Jakarta.

**Jiro:** Thank you, Diana. Initially, since I was a kid I really loved collecting sneakers. But to be a sneakerhead in Indonesia is difficult. The problem is that in Indonesia, lots of sneaker retailers like Nike and Adidas are hesitant to sell the trendy sneakers desired because they don't believe there's a market here. But they're wrong. If I wanted to buy rare sneakers like Air Jordans, I'd have to wait for the school holidays like spring break or summer break. Whenever I had the opportunity to travel to Japan or New York, I would get the sneakers and bring them back. When I needed money for savings, I would start selling these sneakers. Initially, I sold some of these sneakers overseas on Instagram. But then I realized that the sneakerheads in Indonesia like me are also doing the same thing. So I decided why don't I use my love for coding to connect them all in one platform to one app. And this app is known as BE-EM.ID.

**Wharton Global Youth:** How many sneakers have you sold through this app?

**Jiro:** I've sold 200 sneakers through the app, 250 if you count the previous ones I sold through Instagram. That's a lot.

**Wharton Global Youth:** How many do you have in your collection and what's your favorite pair?

**Jiro:** I have close to 100, not quite, but I'm getting there. My favorite pair is the Nike HyperAdapts because it's one of the only self-lacing sneakers. It really captures the beauty of form and function. Nike believes it's going to be the future of self-lacing technology and I feel [this sneaker] really captures the beauty of it.

**Wharton Global Youth:** You've gone on to build other apps, namely one with much more of a social impact that connects farmers in Jakarta directly with consumers buying their products. That's a departure from what we just talked about. What sparked that idea and how has it evolved?

**Jiro:** I'm involved in a lot of service projects at school. In one of the service clubs, we build homes and provide education, the basic necessities. One day we were set up to build a better irrigation system for farmers in West Java. After we successfully built the irrigation system, I noticed that although the farmers have a lot of crops, their houses are still in poor living conditions. That really doesn't make sense. If you sell a lot of crops, don't you have more profit? Turns out, in Jakarta it's different. When the farmers sell these crops, they sell to a farmer coalition or coop. These coalitions take a lot of profit and they act as middle men to big supermarkets. The middlemen control the prices. I noticed that farmers couldn't reap what they sow. I say that's unfair.

Initially, I thought that the best way was just to cut the middlemen and have farmers directly transport their crops to the supermarkets. Then I noticed that even with the transport costs, the farmers still wouldn't be making much profit. I had to change the idea from selling to supermarkets to directly selling to individual household consumers. So, the farmers would work with Indonesian street vendors. These vendors would transport these crops to the local community. My app hopes to [support] the idea of a local produce, local use kind of system.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Have you had an impact on the farmers? Are they earning more money?

**Jiro:** Over the month, I've had 20 farmers sign up. They're actually earning much more money because they don't have to sell in bulk. They sell what is demanded. The profit margin per crop is so much more.

**Wharton Global Youth:** What is the main crop in Jakarta?

**Jiro:** It can range from rice to carrots to broccoli to eggplants. It's a lot. Our main staple is based on vegetables.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Why is Generation Z so interested in making a social impact? I hear this a lot, this triple bottom line; this idea of social entrepreneurs so you're not just making money but you're also giving back to the community and helping the community. Do you feel your generation is particularly oriented this way?

**Jiro:** I definitely think so. Now that social media is available. At first, we had WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram. And just when we thought we ran out of social media, TikTok came up. These platforms are used wisely by people to spread urgent problems. Many of these social users are Generation Z. They have the power to use these platforms and they get outreach from these platforms, as well. That's why I believe Generation Z wants to have a profound social impact.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Let's move from coding and app development to another type of technology. You've also been able to use 3-D printing expertise to have a profound social impact. We've heard a lot about 3-D printing these days. Groups all around the world have used their printers to make personal protective equipment during the coronavirus pandemic. You have been using your 3-D printing skills to help children. Can you tell us more about your passion for 3-D printing and how you turned that into a club helping the community?

“My regular prosthetic depends on the elbow for movement...But Sumarsono did not have an elbow, so I had to design a whole new prosthetic model that relies on the shoulder instead.” — Jiro Noor

**Jiro:** Initially, my love for 3-D printing was that I was just trying to make things. I started off trying to make things that I couldn't find online or import. Now I lead a school club that focuses on 3-D printing, I understand the real problem. In Indonesia, many children do not have limbs. Even if they did, it would need frequent replacement due to growth. There is no affordable solution for a real prosthetic. 3-D printing would be a much better, cheaper alternative for these children. Using my club, I gather children in need and I use an iPad and lidar scanner. I use CAD software to build 3-D modeling out of that. I scour online blogs to figure out how the assembly works. After that, I have to bring them back and custom fit the [limb to the child]. It's not a one-step process. Even if it could fit in their arm, they have trouble moving it. It requires so much adjusting. That's why I love it. It's dynamic. There's a thrill to it.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Can you tell us a story of one child you've helped?

**Jiro:** This one child I helped is Sumarsono. It's an Indonesian name. He was helping his dad work at a plastics factory. And when he wanted to turn off the plastics machine, it wouldn't turn off by the lever so he had to do it manually on the machine engine. When he tried to do it something went wrong and the blade cut his arm above the elbow. His prosthetic was actually one of the most difficult ones to design. My regular prosthetic depends on the elbow for movement. How it works is that the elbow acts as a hinge and whenever the person moves [their arm] back, the lever would contract and would move the fingers in a fist position. But Sumarsono did not have an elbow, so I had to design a whole new prosthetic model that relies on the shoulder instead. When his shoulder moves, then the fingers also move. He's really happy with it. Since he's a child, I used art to make it look like ironman. That was one of my most successful, yet most challenging prosthetics I've ever made.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Do you get to see him again after you do the work?

**Jiro:** Sadly, because of COVID-19 I actually did not get to see him again, which is unfortunate. He took a picture of the arm for me last month, and I was happy to see it.

**Wharton Global Youth:** How do you describe the power of technology? It's been so influential in your entrepreneurial endeavors.

**Jiro:** It's actually one phrase: creative destruction. That seems like a weird term. It just captures how much businesses evolve. Just like my example from 3-D printing, businesses are constantly overtaking each other and superseding to lower inconvenience costs. 3-D printing technology does the same thing. It lowers manufacturing costs. I use that as the perfect opportunity to help children who need their prosthetic frequently replaced due to growth. I hope it does the same thing with my sneaker reselling business in Indonesia. I hope it overcomes the stereotype of the non-retailer so it would

force [companies] to see that we in Indonesia love sneakers too. Please deliver some of those trendy ones that we love.

**Wharton Global Youth:** If you could change one thing in the world, Jiro, what would it be?

**Jiro:** That's a challenging one honestly. I guess it would be the unequal access to education. I believe that every child and every person has to have an equal opportunity in education so that they can expand their potential. We couldn't do that now in an age of digital divide because a huge portion of the human race don't have access to technology. With the power of technology, we could definitely reach more people and get more information out there. And use it for education.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Let's wrap up with our Future of the Business World lightning round. What is your favorite app, other than your own?

**Jiro:** An app that has really been useful for me this year has been Google Jamboard. Basically, it's an interactive board where teachers and students can write and annotate easier. It helped me a lot with online learning. It's a really good way to take notes.

**Wharton Global Youth:** What is your favorite company slogan or tagline?

**Jiro:** My favorite would have to be Apple's slogan from 1995-2000, which says "Think Different." Initially, it was a counter to IBM's slogan "Think." It really encapsulates the values and visions that the Apple CEO, Tim Cook at the time, and the founders wanted to brand themselves. That was to be different. While a lot of the computers had the same boxy design, Apple tried to minimize that with rounded curves.

**Wharton Global Youth:** In a word or two, how do you define success?

**Jiro:** I would define success in two words: resilience and perseverance. Why perseverance? No matter what, you always have to work hard. That doesn't change for any startup or success. Resilience is knowing when to change paths. You can't just be perseverant without being resilient. If you combine those two, it's a great formula for success.

**Wharton Global Youth:** What is your favorite emerging business trend?

**Jiro:** It would have to be virtual reality. Virtual reality has been really big, especially in 2020. Phone cameras can have 120 megapixels and can capture photos as good as a camera. Using the VR technology and the gyroscope from the phone, it's a powerful way to learn and have fun.

**Wharton Global Youth:** And finally, which business person would you most like to invite to lunch, and why?

**Jiro:** Elon Musk. Why? Because he's known for challenging conventional thinking. Back to his PayPal days, people didn't think that cryptocurrency as well as online payment would succeed, and he challenged it. Right now, I would want to discuss with him how he manages to evaluate which waves and trends to ride on. If you look at his portfolio, recently he just did Neuralink, which is brain-to-brain connection, which is pretty cool. All of his ventures are different: from SpaceX to Tesla to PayPal. I want to know what he thinks before he jumps into a certain venture and how to evaluate risk. He seems to have a good knowledge when to get the first-movers advantage, and that's really helpful.

**Wharton Global Youth:** Jiro Noor, thank you for joining us on Future of the Business World.

**Jiro:** Thank you for having me.



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