

Helsinki Business College Oy

Length of recording: 13 minutes

Transcription notes

I:	Interviewer(s)
R:	Respondent(s)
S:	Speaker(s)
wo-	an unfinished word
(word)	an uncertain passage in speech or an unrecognised speaker
(-)	an unrecognisable word
(--)	unrecognisable words
[pause 10 s]	a pause in speech of at least 10 seconds
, . ? :	a grammatically correct punctuation mark or a pause in speech of less than 10 seconds

[00:00-00:11] (intro music)

I: A very warm welcome to Business College Helsinki's Global Week my name is (--) and I have got Perttu Pölönen here as my guest. Perttu Pölönen is an inventor, at 15 he invented a simple teaching tool called the music clock, Perttu is an author with two published books called Future skills and future identities, he is a speaker, Perttu has received good feedback on his ability to bring fresh ideas to (-), evolution of work and education. Pölönen is a futurist, he received a full scholarship to study at the singularity university at NASA (aims) research center in Silicon Valley California. Perttu is also a classically trained composer, graduated from the Sibelius academy, his compositions have been performed in Finland, Hungary, Japan and the USA. In addition, Perttu has worked in international projects including world symphony for peace. Welcome Perttu Pölönen. I've got a few questions for you. What was it like studying at NASA?

R: So I was at NASA aims research center in California and to be specific it was not NASA I was studying at but rather in the facilities of NASA where they had the singularity university, it's basically a think tank where they go through the global (ground) challenges and future technologies and it's like this American brainwash about how the world is changing. So obviously very inspiring and to be able to be in the heart of Silicon Valley and see that these are the people who are really changing the world, these are the people who have a big impact, it was very encouraging experience because I felt like, well, why not me, if they are doing, why not me. So very important experience in my life.

I: So when you left to study abroad, was the language barrier something that could've kept you study in Finland and not try to succeed in out of Finland?

R: I mean obviously the language, I mean the best way to learn a language is to go somewhere where they speak the language and I jumped into cold water when I went to California. Obviously I had talked in English before, but it's different when you are in Finland. I think nobody should make that a reason

not to go somewhere, I mean you can't expect to be perfect and then only then travel and only then go somewhere. But rather, you will learn when you have to speak the language, you will learn when you don't have a choice, so there to go to new extremes, even though you might be afraid that the language might make it difficult but still, go there.

I: You wrote two books, what was the writing process like?

R: I think writing in general is the best way to develop your thinking because when you talk, you get away with many things, I mean you can play with your intonation, you can speak imperfect sentences and-, you know when you write you have to really make sense or somebody who reads it for the first time and you really have to clarify what you're trying to say and be able to explain it in a way that, kind of fits or-, or in a way that you want to explain it. So it was very good experience to kind of challenge myself and I know I will be writing more in the future, so I fell in love with the process and I encourage everybody to write more, it's so important.

I: What keeps you motivated?

R: I want to help people and over time it has changed how I help them. When I was a composer, I made music, I thought that making these songs, these musical works is kind of-, I can reach certain part in humans that only music can reach but then I kind of went to entrepreneurship circle, startups, and I felt like I want to sell products and services because I know exactly how many units have been sold and that's kind of bit more concrete way to know what did I do. So it has changed a way how I help or what I do but in the center it's still that I want to do something meaningful, something that people find value in. So making the world a better place I guess.

I: What's the story behind your topics in your speeches?

R: Often the topics that I talk about are the topics I feel are urgent or topics that we should be talking about. Obviously, it doesn't mean that I am the best expert in the world about these topics but rather these are things that I'm curious about, I'm interested in and I want to go deeper into what this really is about. It's quite a humbling experience when you think of it, when you go to deliver a keynote for example, you have an audience, let's say 100 people, if you have their undivided attention for an hour, that's quite an opportunity because you can really deliver something, you can really change the way people think or see the world, so you want to use that time wisely and its humbling because you know, you have given this opportunity. So I want to make sure that whatever I'm talking about, its urgent, its important, it's worth their time.

I: You invented the music clock, now, how did you come up with the idea?

R: I was struggling with music theory when I was a kid and I think quite many are, it's a subject nobody or quite few people like, so when I was 15 I felt like it can't be so difficult, it can't be so (-) like there has to be a way to make it easier and as a naive teenager, I thought, well, I'm gonna reinvent music then, just like that, probably if I was older, if I was wiser I wouldn't have even tried because come on, who invents music again but as a 15 year old, you try and I ended up coming up with this musical, this invention that helped me, then later helped many other people, so I think the lesson here is that it's a good thing to be in a good way unrealistic, bit naive because that kind of makes you try things, so if you don't think you're gonna succeed, then you won't even try and I think you need to believe in yourself even though it might a bit too much.

I: What kind of future goals do you have?

R: I know the direction I want to go to, I want to continue talking, speaking, writing, but I haven't made too strict goals so I don't come-, in a wrong way I don't kind of hooked around them. It's good to know what you want to do but there needs to be freedom, some availability, sort of if something happens in the world, I can kind of jump on it, I can react to it. So I know that future, science, technology, art, these are the things that drive me, these are things that I want to do, but the way how I do them might change. But around those topics.

I: What kind of thoughts do you have upon the school system and what would you improve?

R: This is a big question to answer briefly but there are lot of good things obviously, so I don't say that we should explore the system as a whole, no. There are many wonderful things about it but we have to be careful that we don't get too comfortable. In Finland, we are doing well, I mean if you look at international indexes. So we have a good system but the thing is when you have a lot to lose, when you're very good, you become very careful, you don't want to try and experiment too much, you don't want to take risks because there is so much to lose. So even though we are doing well, or even though things are fairly okay, we should continue the work and it's another question to ask like, how do we educate, how do we teach because now we have obviously a lot of new possibilities that we might have not taken full benefit from or we haven't-, we could use a lot of more technology, we could use lot more new opportunities. But at the same time, we need to know what really works and what not. So everything shiny and everything digital is not worth doing just because its new and cool. So we have to be careful. I think education is one of those things that quite many people are so passionate about. So it's (-) discussion. But overall, I said that we need to remember education is not all, like we learn outside of our schools as well, so don't mistake your education to your learning. So even though it's not been taught at school, it doesn't mean that you should learn it. So learning is 24-7, not only at school.

I: What is your average day like?

R: Its very different I have to say because I'm a geek worker basically, my everyday is-, like every day is different for me. I like that it works for my kind of personality. But I travel a lot in Finland, in other places as well. And I give speeches, I give workshops, I write, I work on the train, I work on the cafes. And some people might not like that because you're always on the go, but for me it keeps me energetic and I like changes day to day.

I: Could you tell students one goal and tip for motivation?

R: Goal and tip, well, the worst thing that can happen is not failure, (-) times people think that it is, but no, the worst thing is not failure but rather the worst thing, what we should be really afraid of is succeeding in the wrong things, because that's much worse. You know, if we one day we tap each other on the back, we say oh we were so successful, oh we achieved this and that and we notice, it was for nothing, like it was not worth it, like we used a lot of time but there was something different that we should have been doing, something much more important. That's the worst thing. So don't be afraid of mistakes, but rather regret, that's much worse. So try to succeed in the right things in life.

I: What do you enjoy to do on your free time?

R: I'm a bit weird in a way that, one way for me to relax is to study something. I mean I get to forget everything else, I kind of lose the track of time when I'm reading about black-holes or game theory or how to grow roses in the Netherlands. [laughs] This is something I like to do, it doesn't help me at work, it's not related to my work in anyway but it's better than Netflix. I mean of course I watch Netflix

too, I am curious person. So I think that when I could learn more, that's when I get to be myself. I try to learn.

I: Thank you Perttu Pölönen for coming to Business College Helsinki's Global Week.

R: Thank you very much.

[recording ends]