PITCHIT FINTECH STARTUPS PODCAST NO. 72-DIEGO REPRESAS

Welcome to PitchIt, the fintech startups podcast, one founder, one startup, one investor at a time. I'm your host, Todd Anderson, Chief Content Officer, Fintech Nexus.

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Todd Anderson: Thanks again for tuning in to this week's episode of PitchIt. I sat down with Able's Co-Founder & Head of Able, Diego Represas. Commercial lenders use Able to quickly collect information from borrowers, streamline the loan process and book loans faster. The commercial lending process overall is still very much document-driven, all those documents might have moved from paper to digital, the overall market is still using this process which was developed quite some time ago. Able's helping to change that equation by streamlining the lending process.

By using Able, lenders can cut down the mistakes, they can cut down on repetitive asks like asking someone for the same or similar document a hundred times and they can save time on the overall process and increase that time to yes. Diego and I talk about Able's technology, how AI is used to automate aspects of commercial lending, the impact Able can have on the bottom-line, Diego's time in the army, raising capital and much, much more.

Before we begin the episode, please take a minute to rate the show and provide feedback. I always take listener comments very seriously. Don't forget to join us in Miami on December 13th and 14th for Fintech Nexus LatAm, LatAm's premiere fintech event.

Without further ado, I present Able's Co-Founder & Head of Able, Diego Represas. I hope you enjoy our conversation.

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Welcome to the podcast, Diego, how are you?

Diego Represas: I'm doing just fine, Todd, thank you for having me.

Todd: Of course. So, I'd like to kick off the interview if you could tell us a little bit about yourself, your background and, you know, a little bit about your professional journey before starting Able.

Diego: Yeah, for sure. So, my name is Diego Represas, I am originally from Mexico City in Mexico. I came to the US via a boarding school actually at age 14 and then ended up going into this kind of a windy career between the Army and then the world of kind of like technology, in particular computer science, after going to Stanford for college. After that, I did a few years at a personal finance company that later became more of a neobank called Digit, recently sold into Oportun and spent four years at Digit where I led everything that was related to AI, I was essentially their Head of Data Science in that regard. And then I afterwards started Able with Andrew who was also at Digit and he led Security & Infrastructure there. So, I think that's kind of like the brief version about myself, obviously we could do more, but we can start it from that point.

Todd: Now, did you always view yourself as someone that eventually would start a company or, you know, your time at Digit, talking to Andrew and kind of seeing a problem. You kind of fell into it or desire to go that direction or was it a pathway that you will kind of always get into?

Diego: Yeah. I mean, that's a great point. So, I'll tell you really what drove it. So, I grew in somewhat of a very complacent environment when I was in Mexico, I grew up like surrounded by people who just really didn't want to change the course of the status quo too much. You know, Mexico is a country of extreme differences, if you will, not necessarily poverty, but differences in wealth and everything and that always kind of drove me a little bit nuts not seeing how many businesses were being built on the back of poor folks. So, I always thought that I would one day create something big and, you know, we have a notion today of what it was, what it means to be a startup founder, but that wasn't there yet, right, but I would create something big and beneficial to the world.

I would disrupt actually all these like incumbent players who were just taking advantage of people, right, and I think that just stayed with me a long time and it was probably in high school, in military school where it took the shape in the form of starting a company. So, you know, military school, I went to a high school, it was actually a military academy, it's called Valley Forge, it's a very weird place to go to for high school, it was a very different high school experience. What was interesting about this high school is that it was entirely cadet-run so what I mean by that is like, you know, kids your age, between the ages of like 13 to 17, were in charge of you completely and they had a level of control all over you that would be unheard of nowadays.

Todd: Interesting.

Diego: Yeah. And so, I think that when I saw what would happen if you had the right leadership in there versus if you didn't and what could happen if you had really inspiring figures or not, like I became a person who said what I want to do is build and grow an organization, right. I think a tech company is just one way to build and grow an organization and there's really no reason specifically why like that and why pick that, but that was, you know, age 14 was really the genesis of like we're going to start something like this.

Todd: Tell us about the company, Able, exactly what you guys do, what's your target customer, tell us a little bit more about what you're building.

Diego: Yeah, for sure. So, today what Able does is it solves probably what is the most pernicious problem, an expensive problem really, within commercial lending and when I use commercial lending I mean lending to businesses like Cabot Tad (?) would say it which is the collection and management and organization of the various pieces of documentation required to complete a loan, right. And so, this process is, you know, we're focused right now in lending, but you could kind of perceive that this process is very similar in any other financial transaction that requires the underwriting of a different party that is somewhat complex, right, and requires a lot of documentation.

So, that's what the company solves. In terms of our current target customers, so we really go for anywhere from community, mid-size and large banks and other financial institutions that look like that. I think we are not limited to traditional financial institutions, but there's just like a limited pool of, you know, fintechs and the like that are engaged in this type of financial transaction, right, so the

consequence of that, we tend to focus heavily on banks, right. So, right now, we're primarily focused in the US, no particular reason why the platform has to be limited in the US, but that's just, you know, an incidental of starting in this market.

Todd: In terms of….. back to the core piece of what you guys do and the documents, you know, what are some of the key issues, if I'm a lender, if I'm a bank, that come up when dealing with all these documents? Is it the documents where each company are different, the information that each company has on itself is different and getting to a point of standardization and full scale of what a company does to understand how much to lend them at what terms takes a really, really long time, I mean, what are some of the key issues that you guys solve with your product?

Diego: Yeah, I mean, that's a great point. This is hard to address, but that's kind of like addressing the more fundamental issues that the documents are just like one block to a more fundamental issue, right. But the more fundamental issues are, you know, today I am a business owner and I want to apply for a meaningful loan, it's going to take somewhere between one to six months for me to get funded, right. I think you can do a lot faster than that if you pursue a smaller unsecured loan perhaps, something that is named after yourself, but anything other than that it's going to be a long process and then you have to ask yourself, why is this process so long and why it is so arduous. It's often not just the time, but it's very duplicative, right, it's like people doing the same work over and over like maybe you submit five different applications, you don't really have to do all that and it's very duplicative, it is long, it's error-prone and it's also a lot of work required on the part of the company, founders, the leadership, everybody who's involved in it.

And so, the document portion is just one, it's the biggest, but it's just one slice of this whole thing, like why does it take this long and I think that, you know, if you would have asked me the same question 50 years ago I would have been like hey, six months is great, a month is great. But, you know, the economy has changed, consumer expectations have changed, right, like the relationship with money is now different. You now, getting funded in three months is probably not a good experience nowadays and you hear it because customers are, you know, borrowers nowadays really they describe their experience of applying for a loan from the bank as, you know, we've heard of things like hey, it's like essentially a process to examine my business, this is open heart surgery, this is pulling teeth, right. So, if people are saying things like that, it's just probably not meant to stay there, right.

And so, the documents are just one portion of it, they have to ask themselves, like why is there all these documents, like first, why is there all these documentations and the second thing is like, why is such all these documentations such a pain to deal with, right. And so, to address a part generally, generally, the documentation is created as a source of risk mitigation so generally, the more cheap the capital you can get for your particular risk profile, the more documentation it will, involve, right, because it's a closer magnifying glass, right. If you did not want any documentation you'll probably go for a thing like that, you know, friends and family, that's going to be very expensive and very risky road to the interest rate of a loan, right.

So, that's generally where it comes from and so I think what you have seen is a like a lot of very neat onboarding journeys that have happened in a world where all these documentations is not the end of it, it tends to be smaller loans, it tends to be more on the retail and consumer side rather than the commercial side. But now what you're seeing is like hey, when the loans get larger and you still want to

be able to get accessible pools of money it's going to involve these documentations. And documentations really of all kinds, like it's incredible where you find them, like everything from like you always hear financial statements, that's the kind of stuff that you always hear.

Todd: Yeah.

Diego: You don't hear like rules of insurance, like certain manifestations that certain people are involved, they're not involved in an entity, right, it's like legal documents of all kinds and flavors.

Todd: This incentivizes the company to like want to go for that as you described it, it's a substantial loan and it kind of incentivizes them in some way to go for these other options, whether it's smaller amounts, more unsecured because they need the capital in a quick way to make decisions quickly for the business.

Diego: You've got it spun on them just like objectively a bad thing for the borrower, right, but it's hard, it's hard on the entrepreneur who's like working 12 hours a day, now kind of like put an extra haul to go apply for one of these low-cost loans, yeah, you're totally right. Instead, they pursue the high-cost options out there that are, quite frankly, not the best for them so yeah, you're totally right on that, glad you pointed it out.

Todd: In terms of, you know, the technology using Able, does it help in terms of not only the documentation and kind of organization and standardization, but how much? If I'm a lender, can I cut out, say if I was normally doing loans at four months, does it now become two months if I implement what you guys provide and does that allow me to get to more yeses more quickly and serve more customers?

Diego: Yeah, that's a great point. So, I think like individual results vary according to the type of loan and the type of organization and everything, right, but let's consider kind of like a sample loan, like a typical commercial real estate transaction that could go well into like 100 days in order to close, right. So, from a transaction like that we expect to shave around a couple of weeks, right, in terms of kind of their time and then more than just that I think, you know, something like real estate, you can't shrink that time fully because there are certain processes that are not in the control of the lender or in control of the borrower, you know, the entity borrowing that are involved in there. But what matters most is what can you do in order to get to a time, like what can you do in order to just tell a borrower hey, here is your general terms and from that you can do a much more significant impact and if you get to a faster time to yeses and you get to more yeses where you end up having it where you need it.

So, if you look at an origination process, it's really kind of like a funnel, if you will, where you saw many people applying and then you go towards the back, right. So, as a lender you'll actually want to be incentivized to find the right people as quickly as possible so that most of your stack is working on deals that are going to make it all the way through because that's the most efficient, right. So, there's a lot to be gained when it comes to just general efficiency if you are working on the deals that you can very quickly say yes to and the borrower very quickly says yes to and now everybody's focused on opportunities really that are going to transpire well that are not going to end up in sour feelings on either side, right.

So, I think there's also a lot to be gained there, but primarily where we make most of our wins is just sheer hours of labor that somebody in the bank has been organizing or preparing or modifying this documentation, right. So, we're very big assistance to those roles within the financial institution that currently have spent a lot of time asking and requesting information, making checklists about what's required and what isn't, chasing down at their customers or third parties to get these documentations and finally, organizing these and onboarding it into the appropriate systems which, believe it or not, sounds simple, but is actually a huge pain that we end up solving, where a lot of our AI investments go into.

Todd: That brings me to my next question which is, you know, the last couple of years there's obviously been a lot of upheaval, there's been COVID, but what we've heard during that period of time is this huge push to digitize. Then we had PPP and getting loans to the small businesses as quickly as possible, but when thinking to the customer that you serve, these banks, has that much really changed and if it has, does that then help the commercial lending process long term and kind of coming down in terms of average time?

Or, from what I understand, a lot of the issues were solved during the pandemic for people essentially thrown at the problem and that the technology wasn't as updated as it maybe appeared and that there were more bodies at that time. And now that there's less bodies, in some cases, it kind of is going back to the normal one to six months frame that we've been kind of stuck on here.

Diego: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I mean, you know, this is just one person's opinion, right, but this, based on my own observations on the field, but we should treat COVID as an accelerant to a trend that was already occurring and PPP as part of the whole COVID umbrella. The trends that we have been observing are the right ones but they're insufficient ones. So, what do I mean by that? You know, years ago, perhaps 20 years ago, if you walked into a bank, the modus operandi, the default way of doing it was literally with physical paperwork and that's still somewhere out there, right, but today, you have kind of like moved all these physical paperwork into digital systems, right.

I think it better be going to the average one of our customers, like each one of our customers is going to be using a suite of, hopefully, cloud-enabled applications that allows them to do their work, right. This transition is very similar to the 90's when the average enterprise adopted the ERP, another systems of record, and, you know, now they're in the cloud instead because the cloud is here, right, it's a very similar transition. You essentially ravel the things that were physical, you now digitize them and by digitizing you gain all kinds of benefits just like visibility, you gain all kinds of benefits such as kind of accurate reporting, you gain some collaboration benefits associated with, etc., right.

But, you know, the customers themselves, they haven't been fully digitized, right, and so the customers are like maybe now are submitting paperwork instead of literally mailing it in. Most customers are like going into some drop box or some portal with like uploading stuff, you know, and that's on a good case, right, the majority of the cases are just submitting stuff via email, right and what ends up happening is that like yeah, good stuff, we have these big systems of record and by the way, this has been a great transition.

Most banks have really gotten their stuff together and they're using the kind of like state-of-the-art in this regard, but what hasn't been stopped is just the amount of manual work that needs to be done by

both the underwriting and lending parties, right, the financial institution as well as the customers. It's just the same work, it's just moved from paper-based to digital-based and so really kind of like where things need to go now is to actually get rid of this barrier of work that needs to get done that obviously increases the cost of capital but also dissuades people from completing processes or from completing a transaction really and moving that out of the way.

I think you have seen a lot of that on the consumer side, right, like today if I go apply for a mortgage it's actually like somewhat a refined customer journey in many cases, not all yet, but it's getting there. If I apply for a ……let's consider another one, right, if I apply for a personal loan to kind of like something that is a retail-based loan that's going to be a very streamlined experience. That's just not the case in the business in the commercial side yet and that's what needs to happen, it's getting its way there, but it's slow as molasses as you can probably expect.

Todd: Can a commercial lending process ultimately, say in five or ten years, could it be automated and should it be automated?

Diego: Yeah, that's a great question. I use a particular framework to think about this, right, and that framework works as follows. Let's look at other products of similar value and how they are distributed and sold and onboarded to a customer that are not financial products, right, so let's look at your SaaS, I know Saas, you know, because we're a SaaS company. So, can selling SaaS and distributing SaaS be completely automated, can you skip the sales person, you can you skip the whole major process and everything? So, the answer is, it depends, right, like for smaller ticket loans, for smaller ticket products that's always the case, right.

But as the lifetime value of the customer starts growing, there becomes kind of like an imperative to not really do that, right, naturally have kind of like many on process because it introduces excessive risk or because there's more risk involved, there's more like of a potential to win involved and everything and so becoming like take those things away. So, I think a very similar thing is going to happen overall in the lending space, like you're going to end up having a pool of loans that are very automated and kind of like a curve in a totally no touch capacity.

You're going to have your pool of like transactions and loans that are going to be in the low touch space and you're going to have a pool that are going to be in the high touch space, right, and there's just reasons why they should, where they have to be. I think a lot of people…as a computer scientist or a programmer, you're always inclined to say, oh yeah, we can definitely automate it, right. So, a lot of these belongs to the territory of like yeah, you could automate it, but actually you will lose money if you automate it so you totally don't want it and that's kind of like the biggest thing.

Todd: What's the biggest lesson that you've learned since launching Able about your business?

Diego: Oh man, (laughs) this is tough.

Todd: One of the lessons.

Diego: Yeah. I don't think I have reflected on this enough, like we're just in the day-to-day, but give me a few seconds to think about that.

Todd: No problem,

Diego: I think there's lessons that you learn as a founder, there's lessons that you learn as an organization, right, those are a little bit different. I think as a founder you always kind of really hear that, you know, starting a company is stressful in one way or another, but I think it really took starting a company for me to realize just how much of starting a company and a company to be successful is predicated upon your ability to wake up every day and be ready to kind of like smash a challenge, right, it's really hard. I mean, it's kind of like the roller coaster analogy is not an exaggeration, but, you know, as a founder I have a lot of other friends that are founders and are doing similar things and you start to see kind of like what makes the big difference there.

One of the biggest differences is like the joy of waking up one day and be like, yeah, today I may not win but I'm here just for the fight and the fight's kind of like an exaggeration, but, you know, the sheer enjoyment of doing something hard for the sake of doing it has really been a big boon in being able to take on this journey, that has just been a personal lesson as a founder. I think as a company, another thing like, you know, our software has extreme applicability outside of lending, right, and it is useful in any of these transactions and it's useful not just like in larger banks which is where we go for, right. We tend to go for this like community bank that is starting with $5 Billion in assets all to the way to the mega bank, but our software is still useful in smaller institutions and all these other different kinds of like pools of the market that are not necessarily banks.

When we started this, we kind of like really were marketing to everyone, but I think what we underestimated, as an organization, is just how hard it is to properly crafting message and a reason to package the product in a way that is useful and makes sense and is intuitive to the buyer on the other side. And so, as part of what we did there, we actually had to kind of focus and say hey, we're just going to pick one of these like market pockets and we're going to focus all of our energy in making these types of customers successful and then moving on to other ones. You know, from six months ago or from a year ago, that made no sense because it's like well, you have the software that is useful with ten times more folks, why are you not selling it to ten times more folks.

Well, no, it's more than just that, is the software useful, it's like can you deliver a happy customer journey from the very first time that they hear about you all the way into our fully onboarding the product. When you think of it that way then it becomes a much tougher problem, right, and so just us as an organization have had to seek focus on that regard. That has been a really powerful learning experience, I mean, I wish I would have learned it beforehand, but, you know, having come from Digit, it's a consumer-facing company it's a very different way of engaging with the customers and software. Different lessons were learned that don't apply here.

Todd: Best piece of advice, thus far, since launching.

Diego: Best piece of advice, thus far. Some of the advice that I got was like advice that I got before starting a company and that I learned while at Digit, right, either I learned it just kind of like on my own the hard way or like somebody gave it to me in the form of advice, as you said. And so, I think a lot of the best advices, if you will, has been things that I've learned or that we have learned really as a team and how they are materializing nowadays, right, and so just from my time a Digit, you know, I just had

this feeling. Digit was a very employee-friendly culture, it was a great place to work in and I always had this like, and it was very mission-oriented company. We were really trying to do things that were good for the world just like how we're trying to do at Able and I just had this feeling from the whole time that, you know, the most important thing that you can have as a company is to have an exceptional team.

Having an exceptional team is going to require you to make investments and it's going to require you to make choices that may not be the best for you as a founder sometimes, but they are the best for the team and they are the best for those first 10/20 people who started with you. And I just had this feeling that it is better to be one part of the bigger team that is going to be very highly qualified than otherwise. And so, we made these decisions early on at Able just based on gut intuition, not really something that was verified, right, we should pursue an approach that is very deliberate in finding the very best talent and is going to be friendly towards acquiring that very best talent and keeping it highly motivated within the organization.

I think we're starting to see that pay off, right, and now that I have seen it work, I just don't know how you can even start a company without having this, right. So, I would say the number one piece of that…it's kind of like institutional knowledge of just adopting and now that I'm seeing it in there it's like invest in your early employees, invest in your co-founders, invest in your people and really try to make no compromise at finding the right person for the right job even if it takes longer, even if it's more expensive, etc.

Todd: Speaking of the team, tell us a little bit more about those around you, co-founders and who's on the team, how big it is, what does the team look like today?

Diego: Yeah, for sure. So, our core team right now is about 20 different people and, you know, there's a number of I would call them like almost team members so really they are team members that are extended and they're just kind of contractors that work with us in one way or another, right. And so, if you add-in the contractor capacity that group extends itself to like 32 people. It started up with just kind of like myself and our investors at Human Capital, originally, and the first person to come in was my Co-Founder, Andrew. I had already worked with Andrew while I was at Digit and Andrew has as different a background from mine, as you could imagine, right. We were just literally so, so different in many, many ways, but I always had tremendous respect for his way of doing things and his way of thinking around a problem and his own capabilities, right.

I have been always a proponent of diversity of thought and diversity of mind and we shared many same values so it was easier to kind of like make that transition. And I think like, honestly, you could have a podcast episode just on Andrew's background, sorry, because it's just wild, it's an incredible background, much more incredible than mine is, but then after that, you know, the first person that come joined us was Justine. Justine was a designer at Facebook who is friends with us, Andrew and I. We had, at that time, a great partner firm that we were working with, the killer that kind of like helped start the technical side of the house along with Andrew, but Justine was our first fulltime employee other than Andrew and myself that came in and started building things. And for a while it was just us two or us three, we even went down to Wilmington, North Caroline, we were living together in this house, looked like a real startup house down there, trying to like build this out.

And then gradually, the next group of folks to join us were people who we knew were very highly competent and very impressive in their own regard so a close friend of mine who was already running a very large operation shop at a different startup came and joined us thereafter and two folks who had formerly worked with us at Digit and were engineers there were the ones that came right after, right. And so, the early days of the company were formed with the DNA of people who we already knew, who we already knew how they worked and who we had tremendous respect for and, you know, I would say it was only after that that we started hiring folks that we didn't know and that we had to take a risk on and I think those risks have actually penned up.

Todd: I saw that you guys raised some outside capital, how was the investment process, how was investor appetite for what you guys are building. If a fellow founder picked up the episode, you know, would there be any advice that you'd give them through that fundraising process that you might have learned.

Diego: Yeah. So, our investment process has been very unorthodox, I would say. I think the typical investment process is you go, you make your deck, you go on a roadshow, you present to people, you get opinions, you get term sheets, you complete it, right. I pursued it in a very different way, I like doing business with very long term relationships so our first investors like Human Capital, Baris there, I had known them for five, actually seven years before we kind of did this and I had been already been speaking and collaborating with them in other capacities for years, right, so I knew Baris very well and Baris was the person who kind of got Able started through a very systemic approach.

So, we started Able by just saying hey, what do we want in a great company and then working back from there, right, and so that piece of investment was really kind of like a leap that the investors took on the founders, in this case it was myself, but in the next piece of investment it was a little bit interesting. So, we identified that we didn't really know much about the commercial banking market and we knew that this kind of software was needed in that market and we knew that we could build it, but we understood banks to be notoriously hard to sell into, right, so we kind of went to say hey, who can actually help us with this very specific thing.

And so, we made a very deliberate effort to pursue a relationship with a very deliberate and very specific firm which was Canapi Ventures. And so I had men in there from my time in Digit and I started a conversation with them and, you know, there was this kind of like 6-month period of courtship and them helping us and helping us refine our thesis before any kind of investment was made, right. And when they formed an investment, you know, it was a million dollars seed round, I remember that, which was willfully inadequate for a seed round for an enterprise size startup, but we just didn't care. All we wanted was them to be involved with us and to help us grow and like they were the ones who brought us into Wilmington, into the offices of Rydal Bank (?) which is probably where we got incubated so that's kind of like where we went through.

You know, after a while of working with both Human Capital and Canapi, the second investment just became a natural follow-on, right, we were prompted for it, we didn't have to do a roadshow and it made a lot of sense at that time. So, I would say to any founder listening to this, right, I think founders should be extremely deliberate about identifying who they want to work with and what is it that….first, identify what your company needs that it doesn't have and then second, find the right people that have

those things that you don't have yet and that you're going to need, right and then target those people and fundraise only from those people.

Especially in the early days, it may be better that if you can fundraise with the people that can make a great team, you just don't start it, and in later days, you know, you can't really afford that luxury. You may have a better vision, but in the early days, it is better to get all the right people on the table, I think, than to get the money on the table. And so, I would always encourage founders to take a lower valuation or take a longer time or whatever it is if the cost of it is actually finding the right person to partner with. That's what I would say.

Todd: We have just about a few minutes left so I'd like to end a little bit lighter with a couple of fun questions. Do you have a favorite book and the last book that you read.

Diego: Certainly. So, do I have a favorite book? No, I think picking a single favorite book would be one of the hardest things (Todd laughs) possible, but I do have a set of, you know, I read three founders, I really like a lot of self-help books like stuff for founders and for sales folks that have been great. I read another category and I'd like to talk about the other category because it's important stuff to us, founders, which is……I do like to read non-fiction historical novels/stories about people or about accomplishments.

I think one of the most impressive books that I have read in recent times has been "The Making of the Atomic Bomb." I kind of remember Richard Rhodes, right, this was an epic book about how the Manhattan project got started and the story is on the lives of all the scientists behind it. I don't think there's a more inspiring and incredible engineering feat than what you will read in that book. And so, right now, I'm reading a different one, reading a book called "The Power Broker," it's about this individual, Robert Moses, who was very famous in New York.

Todd: Yeah, right where I am from. I mean, there's Robert Moses Parkway, Robert Moses Beach. I mean, I live in Long Island so Robert Moses is very close (cross talking)

Diego: He's everywhere, yeah, yeah, there you go, there you go. So, I'm reading the 1974 biopic on him which is also an absolutely incredible work of investigative journalism, and I don't that book is exactly, you know, roses and rainbows, but it is actually an impressive story to read and to learn about.

Todd: Every founder needs to step away, clear their head, what do you do to unwind?

Diego: What do I do to unwind? (laughs) There hasn't been too much unwinding so the first thing that I do is naturally read before bed. You know, I think, I just disconnect completely from work. As a founder, you may be working outside his hours, that's very important. The other thing is like physical fitness, I love doing some form of exercise or another, as of recent, I've been doing a lot of power lifting and, you know, that's going to come as a very fun ride for me. I also do kind of other, you know, winter sports and the like.

I think besides that which is staying in shape, do a lot of exercise, get my energy up that way and reading there really isn't much. I like reading, something about that is I'm curious about myself, I don't think it's like the most common thing, but one of the things that most entertains me and at the same

time keeps me in my sanity is just learning new things. So, I try to learn new stuff that is completely orthogonal or different to what it is that I'm engaging with, sometimes that is hey, I pick up this project and I've learned woodworking, sometimes it is hey, I picked up this project and, you know, I'm now into power lifting and just learning new stuff is really what drives me and what keeps me sane in that regard.

Todd: Do you have a favorite sport or sports teams that you root for?

Diego: Oh man, I'm really into college football. I'm not sure if it's my favorite sport to play.

Todd: As am I.

Diego: I like the idea, yeah, yeah. So, I definitely would not want to……like, you know, what I play and what I watch are completely different, but my two favorite sports to watch are college football and NBA basketball. In college football, you know, I think I went to college during some golden years for Stanford, it was absolutely incredible to watch it. Today, I still watch, you know, I get disappointed a little more often than I should and so I had to emotionally at bay from watching it. but NBA basketball is absolutely incredible. And then in terms of like sports for myself, just really like individual sports, swimming, skiing, power lifting, you know, all these different sports have the same thing which is I'm just competing with myself all the time and I really like that. I also like playing other sports like basketball for diversion, but not so much for getting competitive at them.

Todd: Do you have a favorite vacation spot?

Diego: Also tough. I think there is one which may be like a little interesting, but it's not what you would typically hear. I've traveled all around the world for pleasure and it has been one of the most incredible things, but my parents still live in Mexico, they have a little home like two and some changed hours away from Mexico which is in a tiny country called Tequisquiapan. You would have never heard of that town otherwise, right, going back to that town and spending a couple of weeks there is actually one of my favorite things to do.

Todd: And then final question as we end, biggest inspiration in life.

Diego: There are so many. I'm really of the opinion that it takes a village, it takes a village to make somebody grow into something so I think just picking one individual is not enough. But I can recall specific members of my family, you know, obviously starting with my parents but also my uncle and grandparents who had a tremendous impact there. But, I mean, they're just the beginning of a long lineage of people that inspire me even today, like my girlfriend's a source of inspiration, my best friends are a source of inspiration, it's hard to really identify one, but I tend to pick the right people to follow and just kind of emulate their behaviors and it's fun like that so it's worked out.

Todd: Well, Diego, I appreciate your taking a few minutes and chatting with me. If someone wanted to reach out, find Able, find you, how can they do so, how can they reach out to you guys?

Diego: Yeah, sure. So, our domain is www.able.ai and I would say that's kind of like the number one place to visit us and find us. If you are listening to this and you do want to reach out to me, you just

need to put diego@able.ai then you'll be able to find me and I always respond. It takes me a long time, but I always respond.

Todd: Alright. Well, thank you, continued success to you and the team, hopefully, we'll get you back sometime in the future.

Diego: Yes, sir, thank you, Todd. Thank you for listening.

Todd: Thank you.