You put the building code online for free. You got 800,000 users and six lawsuits.

Then the fight moved to Congress. We went through 11 of your interviews since 2018: **57 stories**, **37** told on one show only.

Two things you've said about the code

You'd never opened a code book. Years later, a code publisher sued you.

“I've literally never flipped through a building code in my life.”

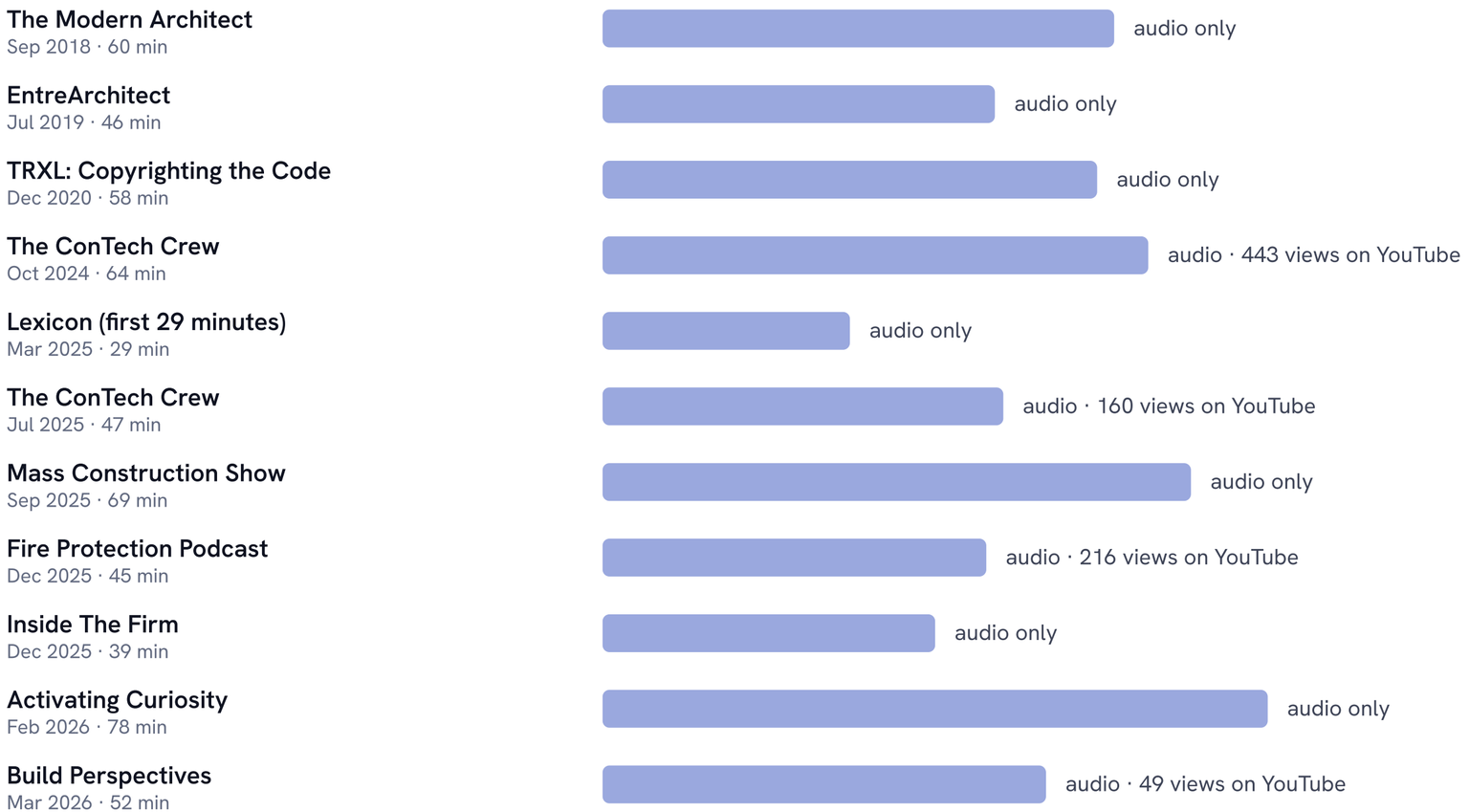
You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 3:46. About your first day in practice as an architect.

“Right when we got home there was a summons on our doorstep from ICC.”

You, on EntreArchitect, Jul 2019, at 34:39. Summer 2017, the week you closed your first round.

Your interviews since 2018

11 interviews. Almost all audio.



9.8 hours

of you on tape, across eight years of podcasts.

868

views on YouTube for the four of them that are also on video. The rest are audio only.

37 of 57

stories you've told on only one of these shows.

Ten lines that each open a bigger story.

“We'll never reach 100,000.”
The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 18:18

“We thought we were in the clear.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 3:22

“It's kind of like the troll under the bridge.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 9:50

“Even if you're in the right, your table stakes or your ante that you have to put down can be up to a million or more.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 15:25

“Nine days after our judge released this, just nine days after ICC sued us for a second time.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 40:51

“They pointed out like 14 possible errors... We found over 400 errors on their website.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 42:44

“It is like a wolf in sheep's clothing.”
The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 27:10

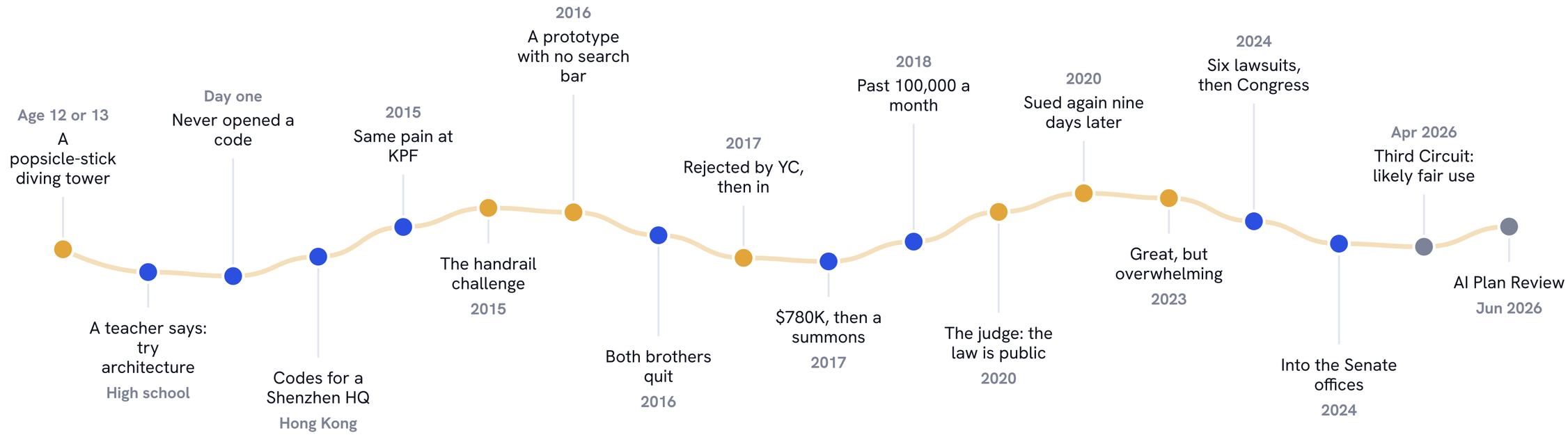
“We shouldn't grant monopolies to people for the text that we're legally bound by.”
The ConTech Crew, Jul 2025, at 9:00

“They lose every single time.”
The ConTech Crew, Jul 2025, at 16:00

“It's become dangerously like an obsession.”
The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 21:05

Your route so far.

told once, in one room · told on more than one show · a fact, not a story yet



Origins

Before UpCodes: an architect who'd never opened the code.

Age 12 or 13

A popsicle-stick diving tower

He lobbied his dad for a diving tower on the lake. Dad said: build a model first. The popsicle-stick model won.

High school

A teacher's nudge

A teacher saw his models and sent him to a summer program at Syracuse. He stayed for architecture school.

Day one

Never opened a code

On his first day in practice he realized he had never flipped through a building code, and didn't know how to put a building together.

Hong Kong

Codes in translation

He relayed the codes for TP-Link's Shenzhen headquarters to the design team in New York. He thought US codes would be easier. They weren't.

2015

Same pain at KPF

At Kohn Pedersen Fox in New York he was back to books, PDFs and government websites.

Thanksgiving 2015

The handrail challenge

His brother Garrett didn't believe it was that bad. Scott asked him to find the maximum handrail height. It took him a long while.

“He insisted that we first build out of popsicle sticks, a small scale model for what it would eventually become.”

The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 3:18. His father, on the diving tower.

Inflection points

Then ten turns made UpCodes.

Winter 2015-16

No search bar

The first prototype: type your search into the web address, get raw text back.

2016

Both brothers quit

A side project kept growing. Scott left KPF; Garrett left PlanGrid.

2017

Rejected, then in

Y Combinator said no the first time. They lived on their savings and got in later.

Summer 2017

$780K, then a summons

They closed their first round and came home to a lawsuit on the doorstep.

2018

Investors doubled down

For the seed, a lot of early investors put in again. One tripled.

2018

Past 100,000

He once thought UpCodes could never get 100,000 visitors a month. It passed 125,000.

2020

The law is public

A judge ruled the law is in the public domain. Part of the case stayed open.

2020

Nine days later

ICC sued again on new grounds. UpCodes found 400 errors on ICC's own site.

2023

Great, but overwhelming

Users loved the library and drowned in it. That's what pushed UpCodes into AI.

2024

Into the Senate offices

Outspent on lobbying, he went to Washington to explain the Pro Codes Act himself.

6 of these ten you've told on one show only. Most of those shows were made for architects.

Told on 3 shows

“Right when we got home there was a summons on our doorstep from ICC.”

Summer 2017. After Y Combinator and a month of pitch meetings, the brothers closed a first round of about $780,000 from 10 or 12 investors and came home to San Francisco ready to sleep for a month. The International Code Council's lawsuit was on the doorstep. Their lawyer didn't do lawsuits. They hired a litigation firm the evening before the deadline, and much of the first money went to the defense.

How it could open

The week we closed our first round, a lawsuit was waiting on our doorstep.

You, on EntreArchitect, Jul 2019, at 34:39

$780K
the first round

2 weeks
to answer the suit

1 evening
before the deadline: a law firm

6
lawsuits by 2024, he says

Told once

“So I challenged him to find several sections of code.”

Thanksgiving 2015. Scott, an architect at Kohn Pedersen Fox, invited his brother Garrett, a software engineer at PlanGrid, to New York and showed him how he looked up codes. Garrett didn't believe it was that bad. Scott asked him to find the maximum height of a handrail. It took him a long while, and it convinced him. By New Year's they had a prototype, with no search bar.

> How it could open
>
> **I asked my brother to find one handrail rule in the building code. It took him a long while.**

You, on The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 9:02

2015
Thanksgiving in New York

1
handrail rule, and a long search for it

0
search bars in the first prototype

800,000
monthly users today

Told once

“Nine days after our judge released this, just nine days after ICC sued us for a second time.”

In 2020 a judge ruled that the law is in the public domain, firmly and more than once. Copyright experts rang his lawyers to congratulate them and the team celebrated. Nine days later ICC sued again, on new grounds. ICC pointed to about 14 possible errors among UpCodes' million-plus code sections. UpCodes checked ICC's own website and, he says, found over 400.

How it could open

Nine days after we won in court, they sued us again.

You, on TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 40:51

9 days
from the ruling to the next suit

14
possible errors ICC pointed to

400+
errors on ICC's own site, he says

1M+
code sections on UpCodes then

Told on 2 shows

“It is like a wolf in sheep's clothing.”

As he tells it, the code publishers, losing in court, took the Pro Codes Act to Congress. UpCodes can't match their lobbying money, so Scott went to Senate offices to explain it himself. Some staffers thought the bill opened up access to the law; he says it locks it down. Others had already heard from a GC, a builder or an architect back home, and repeated their worries to him.

> How it could open
>
> **Some staffers told us the bill opened up the law. It does the opposite.**

You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 27:10

6
lawsuits by October 2024

3rd
Congress the bill has been brought to

$100M+
ICC's yearly revenue now, he says

$50M
ten years ago

War stories

The ones you tell in passing.

Summer 2017

The lawyer who doesn't litigate

Their lawyer said he doesn't do lawsuits; he knows a guy who does. Scott thought that was a TV joke.

Summer 2017

Two weeks

Two weeks to answer the suit. They hired a firm the evening before the deadline.

2017

We thought we were in the clear

He'd read the case law: the code group that became part of ICC had lost this argument before. ICC sued anyway.

2016

A gap on the resume

Leaving architecture, he worried what a year or two away would look like to the next firm.

Revit days

A slab named Bob

A user swore a warning was wrong. The 'fire-rated wall' was a concrete slab stood on end and named Bob.

2020

14 against 400

Asked to answer 14 possible errors, they checked ICC's own site and, he says, found more than 400.

2024

Outspent

No lobbying budget. So they explain the bill, office by office.

Every code cycle

The code nobody posted

A city's new code takes effect, and a week later still isn't on its website.

“So even if you're in the right, your table stakes or your ante that you have to put down can be up to a million or more.”

TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 15:25.

Fights you already pick on tape.

The toll bridge

“It's kind of like the troll under the bridge.”
TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 9:50

Selling it back

“They put that into a book and sell it right back to those same volunteers that just volunteered their time to actually write the code.”
The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 14:08

Owning the law

“We shouldn't grant monopolies to people for the text that we're legally bound by.”
The ConTech Crew, Jul 2025, at 9:00

Tools never built

“It's frustrating to think how many tools the profession would have at this point if that had never happened.”
The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 15:40

Losing and growing

“They lose every single time.”
The ConTech Crew, Jul 2025, at 16:00

Reading rooms

“It can be very difficult for someone who doesn't have sight to actually read the codes.”
The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 25:50

The fight moved to Congress, and staffers listen to builders.

> **“We spoke to this GC, we spoke to this builder or this architect in our constituency.”**
>
> You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 34:38

> **“We just need to educate folks.”**
>
> You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 23:50

The Pro Codes Act is back in a third Congress, and the other side pays for lobbyists. What moves a staffer is a builder from home who has heard your story. Plan Review now sells to whole project teams, builders and owners included. Today the story is spread across eleven podcasts.

The next ten we'd tell.

1 **“The week we closed our first round, a lawsuit was waiting on our doorstep.”**
You, on EntreArchitect, Jul 2019, at 34:27

2 **“I asked my brother to find one handrail rule in the building code. It took him a long while.”**
You, on The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 8:13

3 **“Nine days after we won in court, they sued us again.”**
You, on TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 40:33

4 **“On my first day as an architect, I had never opened a building code.”**
You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 3:40

5 **“My dad wouldn't build the diving tower until I built it out of popsicle sticks.”**
You, on The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 3:09

6 **“Some staffers told us the bill opened up the law. It does the opposite.”**
You, on The ConTech Crew, Oct 2024, at 27:00

7 **“I once read that a business needs 100,000 visitors a month. I was sure we'd never get there.”**
You, on The Modern Architect, Sep 2018, at 18:01

8 **“Our lawyer told us he doesn't do lawsuits. He knows a guy who does.”**
You, on TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 8:16

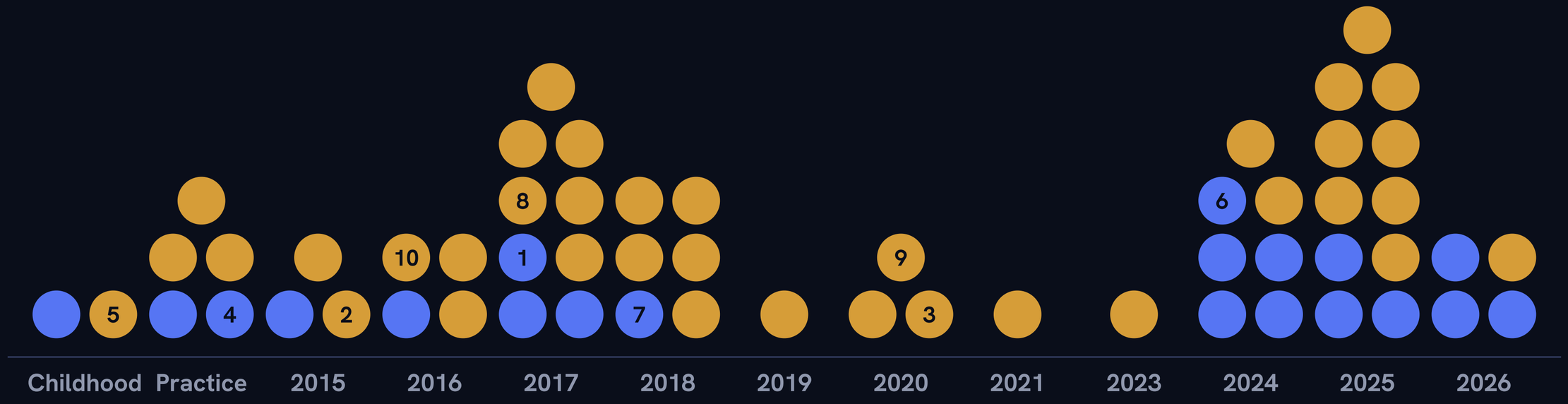
9 **“They pointed to 14 possible errors on our site. We found 400 on theirs.”**
You, on TRXL: Copyrighting the Code, Dec 2020, at 42:44

10 **“When I left architecture, I worried about a gap on my resume.”**
You, on EntreArchitect, Jul 2019, at 20:46

All 57, by the year they happened.

Every story we found on tape, with the minute you said it. Gold: told on one show only; numbers are the next ten. Where you don't give a year, we placed it by what came before and after.

1. The summons on the doorstep
2. The handrail challenge
3. Nine days later
4. Never opened a code
5. The diving tower
6. The confused staffers
7. We'll never reach 100,000
8. The lawyer who doesn't litigate
9. 14 against 400
10. A gap on the resume



You talk. We write. You say yes.

You talk

One call every two weeks. We bring the questions, starting with the doorstep, the handrail and the nine days.

We write

Posts built from your own words, with the recording behind every line, for the project teams and owners Plan Review now sells to, not only architects.

You say yes

You fix a draft or kill it. Nothing goes out without your yes, and nothing about the cases without your lawyers' yes.

Month one: the summons on the doorstep, the handrail challenge, nine days later, and seven more.

“The more people that know the rules, talk the rules, build tools on top of this, the better buildings we're going to have at the end of the day.”

You, on The ConTech Crew, Jul 2025, at 12:52

Same with your story. The more builders who know it, the better it goes in Washington.

Nitesh Dubey · nitesh@tagent.club · tagent.club