

# Make Me Smart November 29, 2021 transcript

**Note:** *Marketplace podcasts are meant to be heard, with emphasis, tone and audio elements a transcript can't capture. Transcripts are generated using a combination of automated software and human transcribers, and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting it.*

**Kai Ryssdal:** I'm tired. What the hell?

**Molly Wood:** It's hard coming back after some vacation.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It is tough coming back. Very tough.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, hi. Hello, everyone. I'm Molly Wood. I am in fact back and focused up. Welcome back to Make Me Smart, where we make today make sense.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I'm Kai Ryssdal. Thanks for coming back on the pod. It's Wednesday to--no, it's not Wednesday, it's Monday. It's Monday. Jesus, Kai. It's tough coming back. It's tough coming back, that's all I'm saying. It's Monday, also known as what did we miss Monday, where usually we discuss stories you might have missed over the long weekend. But, and I believe this is true for Ms. Wood and myself mutually. We didn't do a thing for a week on the news kind of on purpose. So we'll be a tad more current than we usually are on Mondays. We'll talk about some news and then we'll do a make me smile or two, and then we will be off and running.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, I mean, luckily the world is, you know, making up for our absence with a flood of stories today. In fact, if we had gotten here, like five minutes sooner, we'd be all Cuomo all the time. But we'll just, we're just gonna wait and see how that one shakes out as a business and power story.

**Kai Ryssdal:** We're not the media show. Although it is, it is totally a business and power story. Okay, so we're gonna play two pieces of audio for you and you get to weigh in in your minds and then we shall discuss. So, Mr. Thorpe, let's hit that first one, please, shall we? I believe it's labeled ENG. Okay, so that's one. And here's the one that's labeled BRIT. Omicron. So, Omicron is listed first by the good people at Merriam Webster. So that is the one I'm going to go with and I believe you are in accord. Hmm?

**Molly Wood:** I have gone Omicron. Yes, I, which I guess is fitting since that is indeed apparently the English pronunciation. Omicron does sound kind of fancy. But, you know, it's distracting.

**Kai Ryssdal:** If you're gonna say Omicron, you have to actually say Omicron.

**Molly Wood:** Which, frankly, is how the world is reacting to the new variant of concern. Omicron! And then like, shut it down.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That's exactly right. That's exactly right. Yeah, I just think it's, I just, you know, so I was obviously off on Friday, I watched the markets go haywire. And I was like, oh, my God, this is crazy. And then about a nanosecond later, I was like, oh, yeah, there's gonna be a big bounce back on Monday. And surprisingly, shockingly enough, that's what happened because everybody took a minute to gather their wits about them. But look, let's be clear, this is not great news. Not great news at all.

**Molly Wood:** It's not great news. And yet it is a bunch of other things. Okay, in case you actually, much like us, just went into a deliberate news hole, and you have been waiting pressed to inform you, let's do that and sort of jump right into the conversation as though. So Omicron, of course, is the new variant that has emerged in many, many countries around the world. South African doctors sequenced its genome and identified it as a new variant with lots of mutations. And then over the weekend, the WHO labeled it a variant of concern, which is sort of their very dry way of saying like, uh-oh, guys, it's totally the new Delta. And that led to an immediate global freakout of the kind that you would actually think that two years in, we wouldn't do quite so much. Shut down travel to South Africa.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I think after two years of this, though, we're hair triggered to freak out cause everybody's like, oh, yeah, we're almost through it. Ah, God, here we go again, you know?

**Molly Wood:** Ugh, giant setback. It is definitely also from the desk of what did you think was going to happen when Western countries hoarded vaccines and didn't vaccinate there? I mean, it literally is like, you can, you could hear over the weekend the sound of epidemiologists across the world sighing, like simultaneously facepalming. Like, yeah, turns out mutations are going to occur and they're definitely going to occur because the global vaccine rollout has been unequal, to say the least. I did pick this one specific story because I do think this is important.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah. Yeah, I think that's a good point.

**Molly Wood:** So far, and much like Delta, It appears that even though Omicron spreads quickly, it does not yet seem to cause more severe illness, which is actually in keeping with what a very successful vaccine does. Makes like, lots of people sick, but not so sick that it burns itself out by killing them all. So they're reporting in South Africa that most people who have this have mild symptoms, pardon me, I have mild symptoms of a cold so I sound a little like eh. And that people with more severe symptoms are unvaccinated. So if anything, you know, now that everybody's like, taking a breath, our response should be, hey, you know what totally works? Vaccines. We should get them in arms everywhere, including all over the world, ASAP.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes, I just, I just, I wonder if there's, I mean, yes, we should, and we should be, all the rich countries ought to be giving them away to the developing economies, and we ought to just, we ought to just make that happen. I do wonder, though, whether the non small portion of the American population that's anti-vax is going to listen to any amount of reason or cajoling. And the answer, of course, is no. And that just bums me out.

**Molly Wood:** Well, reasoning and cajoling, no, but mandates are working.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, oh, yeah. For sure. For sure.

**Molly Wood:** We're here and so as far as I'm concerned, like at this point, why am I ever getting on a plane with a vaccine--or getting on a plane with someone who has not been forced to show a vaccine card?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, yeah, totally.

**Molly Wood:** Mandate vaccines for flying, right? Right, like, mandates do work. They are the kind of social pressure that just chips away at that resistance. And that's what it's gonna take at this point.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Right. That's right. I think that's right. It's gonna take a bit longer, but I think that's exactly right. Okay, so the other thing, pre Andrew, pre Chris Cuomo and sort of after the Omicron thing is Jack Dorsey this morning saying I'm not gonna be the CEO of Twitter anymore. Discuss.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, that was a big one. Not entirely, like the timing was unexpected, but it's not entirely unexpected, considering that like, a activist investment group had been trying to get rid of him for a couple years. Elliott, I think, is the one. But it is interesting that he hung around. I, we talked about this today, I talked about this with Amy Scott on your show.

**Kai Ryssdal:** With Amy. Doing my job, yep.

**Molly Wood:** About how like, nobody else but the founder of a big tech company with all that founder mystique and like, Merlin beard would ever be able to hang around as the CEO of two publicly traded companies by all accounts doing basically nothing. Like, give me a break. Everyone's like, he's really hands off. He just travels around and thinks about stuff and talks about crypto. That's a job? I'll take it!

**Kai Ryssdal:** Before this email. Yeah, totally. Yeah. I read somewhere this morning that by, by some reporting, he had been spending only 10% of his time on Twitter. And thus, you know, its stock isn't where it ought to be and it hasn't figured out the, you know, the revenue side of the house yet. So hence, ends the shares were up, you know, some not small percentage this morning.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah. And then at now, it just remains to be seen whether the new guy, Parag Agarwal, will be able to, will just, will do stuff. I mean, there's all these things that Twitter has introduced that no one wants, and then all the things that everybody wants that Twitter never introduces.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, totally. It's Bonz, I know, it's my wife pulling in the driveway. Hang on a minute. Hey, Bonz. Bonsai, come here. It is cause, oh, my God, it's a person who, you know, I've been living in the same house with for 12 years, but I must bark at her. Come here. To be clear, she barks at everybody. Yeah, so I need to correct myself here. So Twitter shares down 2% today, so, you know, the news was not all jolly for Twitter shareholders. But yeah, it's gonna be interesting to see what happens. And also, here's the other part of this, right? The role that Twitter is playing in our political and social discourse, and what a new person at the top might mean, I don't know the answer to that. It's not like he's gonna come on and reinstate the former president. Right? Because he was in the leadership and in on that decision, I'm sure. But, you know, we'll see what happens. We'll see what happens.

**Molly Wood:** It is, I mean, this is, it, Twitter has been moribund as a product for years. And you could argue that had Trump not come along and made it so profoundly, immediately, instantly, real time relevant all over again, that Dorsey would have been gone, I would imagine, a lot sooner and or it would just have sort of been like, just a playground for pissed off journalists, which it is increasingly returning to over time.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Alright. Yeah. You want to do the NLRB thing, because I think that's very interesting, actually, and we touched on this one before.

**Molly Wood:** This is just like, yeah, one last thing before we go to make me smile, which is that the National Labor Relations Board has called for, demanded, in fact, a revote at that Amazon warehouse in Alabama, where the union, the attempts to unionize were voted down. The NLRB was like, yeah, you definitely bullied everybody who works there. And you have to do a do over now.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Which is all the more amazing because companies have wide latitude in, in how they handle, shall we say, union elections and so the, the idea that Amazon got called out on this by the NLRB says something about what they might have been doing. You know?

**Molly Wood:** I agree, it's a big deal, especially considering that it was a pretty lopsided vote, like Amazon won, you know, the union lost pretty decisively. But nevertheless, they're like, nah. Well, and then Amazon almost immediately purged everybody who had been involved with it. And so Washington Post subtly, which is totally true, the Post now subtly suggesting that with the, quote, turnover, the results could be quite different.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Harrumph. Alright, shall we? I think we shall. There we go. Charlton Thorpe, reading my mind. Okay. A couple of makes me smiles today sent in by y'all. Here's Rachel and Colorado. She sent us a make me smile courtesy of the Holderness family. It's a YouTube family that does musical parodies about modern life. Rachel says and here's a quote, love these videos and this one is right on with holiday supply chain woes. We're gonna play a little bit of this one.

**Molly Wood:** We had them on once before, or we, they were a make me smile once before and I'm trying to remember what it was. Yeah, they did. It was like, it was like a wear a mask song that really catapulted them into the, the audience will know, they'll tell, we'll know by tomorrow. And then I actually left you hanging on to make me smile that I found before Thanksgiving, which everybody that I know at least, finally took the time to stream Shaun T in the legend of the 10 rings. And so it was relevant to all over again, this wonderful Twitter thread from a San Francisco bus operator rating, essentially, the accuracy of that scene in the film. It's like a new guy working, driving the bus. And he's like, actually, that's not quite the right line. And like, that driver should not be wearing those headphones. He'd be cited with a, you know, one, two, B and blah, blah. It's actually hilarious. It's hysterical. Like as a fight breaks out behind him, he's like, that would definitely happen. It's delightful.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, there we go. There we go. A couple of make me smiles on this Monday that's frankly been a little weird, at least for me and Molly. I don't know. Tomorrow, though, is Tuesday, which means two things. Number one, we do a deep dive. We're going to get to that in a minute. But also, tomorrow is giving Tuesday and, and spoiler alert, we have a challenge for you. \$100,000 raised from individual donations unlocks another 100 large from the Marketplace investors challenge fund, which is a new fund created by a group of oh, so generous Marketplace supporters who are challenging you to join them in supporting the work that we do here at Marketplace and at Make Me Smart.

**Molly Wood:** Oh my gosh, wait. So it's existing investors, existing donors being like, guys, how can we raise even more money than the money that we already donate? So they have pledged to match. I'm not, this, I know this sounds like marketing, but I'm actually figuring this out in real time as we talk. They have pledged to match this \$100,000 if we can raise it from--I love that. That's so clever. So even if you're listening to this on Monday, by the way, we'll still count your gift as a giving Tuesday. Right now, you don't have to wait till tomorrow. But if it's already Tuesday, get after it. Give what you can and know that other Marketplace and Make Me Smart fans will do the same because best audience ever. Marketplace.org/givesmart, or hit the link in the show notes and, and I think we can all agree this is the important part, the banana pants are back. Limited time, limited quantities.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Limited quantities, right, so line up first.

**Molly Wood:** You're gonna think I'm making this up, but I'm wearing them right now because I have a cold and they're so comfy.

**Kai Ryssdal:** My kids, so, so two of the children who have left the house were back over the holidays and, and they're not used to me doing the pod every day and, and I was wearing my bananas sweatshirt the other day and they're like, Dad, what the hell with the bananas sweatshirt? I'm like, oh, it's this thing we do on the podcast. Nevermind.

**Molly Wood:** Oh my god. I'm wearing the sweatshirt and the pants right now. I'm top to bottom banana.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's awesome.

**Molly Wood:** It really is. Yeah, go get that thing. It's amazing.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Alright, so tomorrow deep dive on ether and Aetherium, the whole blockchain, cryptocurrency, smart contracts, what it can do for you. And, and where it might be going, honestly. A little, we're gonna do a little bit of web three, I think, to make everybody smart on that too.

**Molly Wood:** He's just throwing in all the buzzwords. DOA, decentralized autonomous organization, you know, all of it. I know you have questions about Aetherium, I'm not gonna say if, I know you have them, send them our way. [Makemesmart@marketplace.org](mailto:Makemesmart@marketplace.org). Maybe we'll use them to inform our interview tomorrow. It's gonna be a 101, but we're like, it's time, it's really time to understand this. You can call us and leave us a voicemail. Our number is 508-827-6278, 508-UB-SMART. By the way, Twitter's gonna be all blockchain all the time any second now, so like, very relevant.

**Kai Ryssdal:** For sure. For sure. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera with some help from Marque Greene. Today's program was engineered by Charlton Thorpe. Tony Wagner writes our newsletters.

**Molly Wood:** Our senior producer is Bridget Bodnar and the director of on demand is Donna Tam.

**Kai Ryssdal:** And there we go. We're out. Boom.

**Molly Wood:** That's it, 15 minutes.

**Kai Ryssdal:** As designed and promised.

**Molly Wood:** Matthew McConaughey's not gonna run for Texas governor, so that's one less shit show.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Alright, alright, alright, alright, alright.

**Molly Wood:** Alright. Alright.