



EPISODE 246

The Power of One

With Jay Papasan

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AMY PORTERFIELD: Hey there, welcome back to another episode of The Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast. I'm your host, Amy Porterfield, and I hope you are having a really, really good day.

I hope your day is going to get even better with this episode because I have to say it's a good one.

Before we get into all of the details about choosing the One Thing that is going to keep moving you forward I wanted to first give a listener review shout out to Jeffrey Lee. Jeffrey Lee is in my Online Marketing Made Easy Facebook group and this is what he said:

"I listened to your recent podcast with Jasmine Star on mental health. It was difficult to not be overcome with emotion with your openness and honesty. Genuine authenticity is often difficult to find in the marketplace. We aim to present a tough, strong, powerful, and determined mindset to gain trust, growth, and more business. We fail to perceive how this one-sided view stymies our overall impact on the world around us. So let me just say Thank You!"

Oh my gosh! First of all, Jeffrey has a way with words. Second of all, that was just so sweet to read, Jeffrey. It made my day. Thank you so much for being a listener.

Today we are talking about one of my most favorite books, The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results. I wanted to bring one of its authors on, Jay Papasan, because I truly believe the principles in this book are the difference between realizing your potential and true success and, honestly, just settling.



If you're listening I know you're looking for something more. I just know my community, my listeners, are always looking to up level. So if you're looking for something more, if you're looking to play a bigger game, if you're going for some really big goals that are scaring you, you my friend, are in the right place right now.

Jay's curiosity about why some people get extraordinary outcomes and others do not helped fuel his work with Gary Keller to write The ONE Thing, which has sold (are you ready for this) over 1.3 million copies worldwide.

It has appeared on national bestseller lists more than 400 times including #1 on Wall Street Journal's hard-cover business list. That's pretty impressive. It's been translated into 30 different languages so I thought The ONE Thing was particularly powerful, especially for any beginning online entrepreneur.

It's great for any entrepreneur but if you're just starting out this one is a big one for you because when you're working your 9-5 job it's easy to get distracted, overwhelmed, and lose site of the end goal.

If your online business is your side gig right now or if you're just getting started and it's your full-time thing and you are feeling distracted and overwhelmed and stressed and totally all over the place with your ideas and thoughts then this book can change that for you.

With Jay and The ONE Thing I think you will feel a new sense of clarity, a new sense of confidence, and even a directed purpose to where you need to go. I'm really excited to invite Jay on the show so I won't make you wait any longer.

AMY: Jay, welcome to the show. Thanks so much for being here.

JAY PAPASAN: I am so excited to be here. Thank you for having me.

AMY: This is truly a treat. I feel like timing is everything. I think this is the perfect time for you to come on this show and share The ONE Thing with my listeners, particularly because so many of my students are in the trenches right now, right this minute, creating their first digital course.

It's a big undertaking, as you know. You guys have a digital course as well so it's a big thing. I think you just might be a life saver for so many people today so, again, thanks for being here. I can't wait to dive in.



JAY: I'm super excited. You know this, when people are building their first online course it's almost always a side hustle so they already had a full plate before they started. All of the tasks and priorities and competing, The ONE Thing can really help there.

AMY: For sure. That's why I'm truly excited to jump in. I think sometimes as online entrepreneurs we feel we have to do everything and be everything, especially when we're just starting out building our businesses.

I always tease that I was on the "yes" train for years before I jumped off. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves and we hear about the hustle. You've got to hustle and show up every morning and you've got to put your best foot out there.

But, right off the bat, I want you to kind of set the stage for us. What does it mean to have your One Thing?

JAY: The interesting thing to us, One Thing is just kind of exactly what most people think it is. It's your #1 priority. It's the first thing you should be doing. I was afraid people wouldn't know what it was.

The more I've shared the book the more I found out that most people are pretty cognizant of what their One Thing is and they just feel guilty for not doing it. So I like to kind of talk about The One Thing as: At any given point of time we can only have one true priority. We might have a lot of them in general.

I've got teenage kids and aging parents and you think about the adult life, your work requirements, your health requirements. Those are all priorities but at any given moment we can only have one and we need to be present and focused on that thing.

I like to think of The One Thing as my most important work for the day, for my job, my most important work with my kids today. When you put it in that framework it sometimes gets some of the fog out of the way for people.

AMY: I like that, your most important work. I know in the book you say it's easy to explain this but tougher to buy into. Today I really want to dive into some of the steps my listeners can take to really embody this idea of The One Thing.

Can we start with your idea of the success list? I know you say a "to do" list is really just a survival list to get through the day. I have to-do lists. I have nailed down the to-do list so this was something I had to read a few times and look at a little bit differently.



What is a success list? What steps do I take to turn my to-do list into a success list?

JAY: I love this. This is almost always where we lead off because even if people tune out after this they will at least get one thing they can practically apply.

AMY: Right. They're not tuning out. But, just in case.

JAY: I speak to large groups. I ask, "Who here works from a to-do list?" Almost every hand will go up so it's a pretty universal thing. We need some form of inventory of all of the things we know we need to do.

If you read Getting Things Done you've got to have a trusted source for recording those things. You might have a physical list and somebody else might have an app. The real problem with that is it becomes fairly tyrannical.

You start to look at this inventory of all of this stuff you have to do and it can be very overwhelming because it's comprehensive. That's what's good about it and that's what's bad about it.

To take your to-do list and convert it to a success list is just two steps and it takes about three minutes.

AMY: Nice.

JAY: Literally, I bought one of my coworkers an egg timer. I tell them I will give them five but it should only take three minutes a day to do this. You look at your to-do list. You start your timer and all you have to do is look at all of the things you could do today and decide what are the hand full that you really should do.

Your timeframe could be your week. It doesn't matter. It can be your day or your week. Usually, you will see a list go from about 25 things to five. Most of us know the Pareto Principle, the 80/20 rule.

About 20% of the stuff we do is going to give us 80% of our results. I see the truth of that every single day. I wish I could prove it but I believe for business people it should be like the law of gravity.

We absolutely see the evidence everywhere. Even scientists struggle to explain how it works. But there it is, 80/20. You separate that stuff out and the second step is to kind of go through the process of numbering them.



If I only got one thing done today or this week what would that thing be? That becomes your #1. Then you ask, if I got my #1 done and I still had time, what would my #2 be? That becomes your #2.

You go from an unsorted, unprioritized jumble of stuff to a very short list that is prioritized. The beauty here, I found this incredibly liberating once I figured this out, I can go into my to-do list, turn it into a success list, and if I only check off one thing for the entire day I can go home feeling good about my day because I did my #1 priority.

The other stuff, I now know, didn't matter as much. The opposite is true. I can also go into my days without doing this and I can cross off 50 things and I'm in a lather. I've been so busy.

But activity and productivity are not the same thing. My wife will ask me, "What did you get done today?"

I will be like, "A lot of stuff." To me it's really identifying a couple of short steps to find the true priorities and then start there.

AMY: Activity and productivity are not the same thing. I love that. We had a guest on a few weeks ago. Her name is Brooke Castillo. She talked about doing something and actually producing something being two totally different things. I'm pretty sure that's exactly what she meant, what you just said there.

I love that we are hitting home with that, for sure.

I want to back up a little bit. You say you look at the to-do list and you're going to circle the things you should do. Talk to me about how you know you should do it. What does the word "should" mean to you?

JAY: That is just a charged word. Your mother or your principal said things like, "You should," and I don't want it to feel that way. I will go back to Pareto's Principle, the 80/20 rule. If you look at that list and what it's for I usually have to separate my list on some level.

My primary to-do list, or my success list, is going to be about work so I'm just going to use that as my example. Of all of the things I could do, what is the one thing I should, or what's the One Thing I can do today such that by doing it everything else will be easier than necessary.



That's the focusing question we use in the book. It's evoking this idea of what activity will give me the greatest return towards my goals. I actually thought that would be tough for people to figure out.

But I've literally led thousands and thousands of people through this exercise and nobody raises their hand and says, "I just can't figure it out."

If you show someone their list and ask what's really important here, "can you identify the three or four things, maybe five or seven if you must, but break out the ones that are truly important and impactful for your job or whatever your category is?" They are going to know what they are.

Like I said, my big a-ha in publishing the book and teaching it is not that people didn't know what they were. People know what they are they are just not building them into their daily work lives and they feel guilty about it all of the time.

AMY: Yes, I can totally relate to that so I am there with you. I love the idea of the success list. I'm 100% implementing it now and I'm really going to encourage you, if you're listening, to just give this a try.

I will tell you, in the beginning it all feels really important. When I first did it I thought it would not work. You're right, Jay. I sat with it a little bit and pushed myself a little bit more.

For some reason it's like I just got clarity. Let's be honest with ourselves here. What's really going to drive me forward and at the end of the day make me feel really accomplished? It was very easy once I sat with it a little bit.

JAY: You did a lot of that, it's great coaching, because here's the reality...If you've identified the five out of 25 and you really honestly don't know what the #1 is but because you now only have five things to do and you get them all done over the course of the week it didn't actually matter which one you did first.

Over time, with experience, you'll know which one matters first but in the beginning at least you're working from the hand full of things that are truly impactful versus all the trivial stuff that just takes up your time.

AMY: That's where the beauty of this comes through. I hope you guys really heard Jay there because that's exactly what I felt, for sure.



I'm moving us along because in the book, this is a big one for me, I talk about this a lot. Another lie that you talk about in the book is the idea of multitasking. I love that you call it a lie because I've been telling my listeners for years that switching your attention back and forth is a recipe for wasting your energy.

Talk to me a little bit about the challenge of this idea of task switching.

JAY: What's funny, it's kind of out there now but people still do it unapologetically. When we were preparing to publish this book in 2013 you could go on Monster.com. That was still the king of job sites. One of the little boxes you could check to make yourself more attractive to employers was "good at multitasking".

AMY: That's so right, I forgot that!

JAY: How to multitask was something that people would wear as a badge of honor. We suspected it was a lie. Gary's personal experience (my co-author, Gary Keller, who has built a billion-dollar company) said it didn't work.

We asked our researchers to find some truth to back that up. We went in with a bias but overwhelmingly we found it to be true.

There is a guy named Clifford Nass. In 2009 he did a study about multitasking. He was a little bit like Gary and a little bit like me. I tend to focus more than not, that's kind of my nature. I'm not good at multitasking. In fact, I'm pretty horrible at it.

He was feeling guilty. He was feeling that these people were super people. Look at all of the stuff they are doing. He wanted to actually figure out what they did so well so he did a study with a bias believing that multitasking existed and that it was a good thing and he just wanted to discover why it was good.

He put 260 students in a room. Half of them said they were great at multitasking and half said they were horrible at it. He gave them a battery of six tests including one on actually multitasking.

When he wrote about this in the New York Times the line that stuck out for me is that everyone was shocked by the results because multitaskers were "suckers for irrelevancy. They were lousy at everything, even multitasking, the very thing they thought they were good at."



The first big proof that came back is there is a large body of research and they don't call it multitasking, they use the right word. They call it switch tasking. When you alternate back and forth your focus between two tasks you will always have more errors and perform more poorly than you would if you focused on one.

I could go on. I've taught whole seminars just on this one topic but the other research, and I'll tell you two more facts, it takes you 28% longer or 100% longer, depending on the complexity of the task when you start bouncing back and forth.

You've got one screen up and you've got your social media and you have another screen up that's got your work and you are bouncing between your Google newsfeed and your writing. It's all fun.

Scientists will tell you it takes up a lot more time to do your work that way than to just shut down, put your computer on lockdown, and just focus on the one task. If I could give you back, on the low end, 28% of your workweek, what would you do with it?

AMY: I would just love it.

JAY: Would you go home and read a book on a rainy day or would you put in a few extra hours and get a new course out there? It's your choice. But when we multitask that choice is taken from us.

The last one, this is a study that we discovered after the fact. There was a guy in Kings College that did a survey of three different IQ test surveys. It was a survey of surveys. They had a group of people who had taken an IQ test while focused, a group of people who had taken an IQ test while stoned on marijuana, and another group that had taken an IQ test while having to juggle phone calls and emails (multitasking).

The reason we know about this, it made headlines, and unsurprisingly the focus people, on average, scored about 11 IQ points higher than the other two groups. That's a giant leap in intelligence. It's not a small amount, it's a big amount.

What shocked people is the people who were stoned, on average, scored six IQ points higher than the people who were multitasking.

AMY: Okay, stop it. Are you making this up?

JAY: No. Look it up. Kings College 2009. It's a survey of IQ tests.



AMY: Oh my goodness. This is crazy.

JAY: It's not an excuse to join the marijuana people but it's legal now in Canada and a few other places, especially if I'm talking to teenagers. I have to be careful how I talk about this.

AMY: Right.

JAY: The three things come together and it makes you less effective. You make more mistakes. It takes you longer and it dumbs down your work. When we're going back to our first priority, our most important work, why in the world would we want to bring those three things to it? To make it last longer, be less effective, and be dumber?

AMY: That study is insane. The part I picked up the most is that you said you dumb down your work. I take a lot of pride in my work so right when you said that I was like, "Ouch! I do not want to be a part of that."

I have been talking about this whole idea of switching tasks. I know it's important and I genuinely make an effort not to do it. However, I have one terrible habit. Actually, it's two habits and what you said here is really going to stay in my mind as I do this.

One thing is I always have my iPhone near me when I'm working on something on my computer. Right now I am creating a course so I'm working on the outline and working on the content and I just pick up my phone...For no reason whatsoever.

When I get stuck on something and it's not flowing easily I pick up my phone and I gravitate toward Instagram. I love looking at Instagram. I use it a lot. But I asking myself if somebody that's just crushing it in their online business if they would look at Instagram every five minutes when they get stuck on what they are working on?

Obviously not, right?

JAY: If it makes you feel better, they pay really brilliant engineers at Apple and Google and Instagram bajillions of dollars to make that phone be so attractive to you.

AMY: Good point.

JAY: They have engineered it toward your baser instincts so I'll take you completely off the hook. I know you said "two" things.



AMY: I'm going to put the phone out of reach though. I think I have to genuinely do it. That's how bad it is. But I appreciate you saying that. You are right. There is a reason it's addictive. They want it to be. That's one.

Then the other one is it's very scary to me because I automatically, when I'm working on something and it starts to feel a little bit uncomfortable or difficult, I click on the icon to check my email.

I don't even have that many emails I have to deal with during the day. I have an assistant. But, I just click it and I just look. It's ridiculous.

JAY: I'm going to go back to taking you off the hook. First off, engineers have programmed those devices to make them very attractive. That's why that little red circle with the number that keeps getting bigger shows up. It's to create anxiety so that you'll open up your email app.

Even if it just says "1" you are like, "Whoa, I wonder who that's from?"

AMY: Yep.

JAY: The other part is you're programmed to notice it. If we weren't programmed to notice things happening in the background our ancestors would have never made it out of the savannah. They would have never seen the saber tooth tiger sneaking up on them in the grass.

It's a survival thing. It doesn't serve us well when it's doing dings and feed-your-plant or dinosaur on some electronic game. It is one of those things that is absolutely totally normal that you're suffering through this.

Here would be my solution. On the radical end of things you could say, "Hey, I'm going to delete my email app and my Instagram app from my phone." My wife has done that.

AMY: I love it. Brendon Burchard talks about that. When he's writing he does not have any of those apps on his computer.

JAY: There are programs you can get that will shut those down on your computer and not actually delete them. You could still go through your Safari app to both of them and do those things if it was really important. But it puts a few barriers between you and the quick check. It's just a quick check.



The other one is to only practice this no-multitasking rule in the beginning when you're doing your #1. If you look at your success list and your #1 that day is to complete Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 on your course then for that period of time treat it like you're going to an opera.

Put your phone on Do Not Disturb and put it out of your reach. We can go into more detail on those strategies. But you can just do it in the beginning when you're doing your #1. See if you don't feel a lot more effective and start doing it at other times as well.

At the very least, when you're doing #1 that's a great time to say, "This is a No Instagram Time for me."

AMY: That's so good. I love baby steps. I'm going to do that, for sure. I'm going to put the phone on silent out of reach. Even if it's just a little further than it is now so I can't quickly reach it, I'll at least break the habit. I'll look for it and then I'll just kind of come back to what I'm doing.

This is big for me. I appreciate you kind of walking me through it and making me feel not so guilty like I'm crazy in the head that I can't even not check my phone. I appreciate that.

JAY: This is big for all entrepreneurs.

AMY: It's such a big one. I love everything you're saying. I know my audience is listening like, "Oh my gosh, I needed to hear this."

The next thing I want to talk to you about is this idea of discipline. It works perfectly into even what we're talking about here. In the book you talk about how sometimes it's easy to mix up what discipline really means.

One of my best friends was just talking to me about how she wanted to get back into running. She wants to do a half marathon but she said, "Amy, I just lack the discipline to do it."

When I heard that I thought about what you said. You say it's not really about having discipline, why she's not doing that, right?

JAY: That's right. I think we misinterpret what the word actually means. We use it in the vernacular the way we should be using a word like "willpower", which is our ability



to focus on things even when we don't want to. I'm going to use my brain power, my willpower to focus.

It's funny, if you ask a kid what discipline means. What are they going to tell you? Punishment, right? If you ask an adult and they think it's willpower. They are kind of both off.

The actual definition is training yourself to do something until it's habitual. The story I've told about this for going on four years now is from when I was first teaching the book.

I was going out to promote it right after it came out. I was speaking in Nashville. I think our seminar started at 9 a.m. I showed up, of course, 90 minutes early to do a sound check. There was a guy sitting on the front row.

I was just kind of trying to be a semi-nice guest host, whatever I was. I went up and introduced myself and asked if he was part of the crew. He said, "No. I'm just early. It's a habit."

He said that habit word. I asked him to tell me more about that. He said for nine years he was a green beret over a decade ago. He was trained to show up early and observe before he acted. He said he just couldn't shake the habit, "It drives my wife crazy."

I think the inverse of that, showing up late would also drive your spouse crazy. But a soldier is a perfect example. He was trained to do something until he didn't have to think about doing it anymore.

When we are trying to talk about how to use discipline what we want to change that too is to kind of make it about having a selected discipline and building a habit. You work to build a habit toward your goals and then that habit will work for you.

Your friend that wants to run a marathon, that was my first experience in logging miles, running a marathon. In 1997 in New York every day I had my one thing. It was my mileage.

If I just kept doing that one thing every day you look up and three months later you're running a marathon. It's kind of incredible when you think about it. It doesn't happen overnight. It's something you have to work on building the habit of being the person who runs every day.



Habit becomes the real success. I'll pick on Instagram. The most Instagram quote in our book is by a guy name F. M. Alexander. It says, "People don't decide their futures. They decide their habits and their habits decide their futures."

AMY: That is so good! That is so good.

JAY: It hits you in the gut, doesn't it?

AMY: It does.

JAY: We tell people to figure out what your one thing is. Is there an activity that would lead to your accomplishing it naturally? If the answer is "yes" then go make that activity a habit so that every day it's automatic.

It's like brushing your teeth. I have two teenage kids. I have a 12, almost 13-year-old, and a 14-year-old. I can tell you for a fact, I didn't know this until I was a parent, it takes years of training to get your kids to have the habit of brushing their teeth without being told.

As adults you and I don't have to think about it. I can stumble in to the bathroom at 4 a.m. on a travel day and still remember to brush my teeth because of that work my parents invested in my dental health when I was a kid.

The same thing can apply in other areas of your life. You can become the person who gets up and the first thing they do is run their mileage. That's how it works.

I won't go into all of the details but there is a lot of misinformation around forming habits. Everyone says it takes 21 or 30 days. We had two full-time researchers helping us. There is zero evidence that those statements are true. In fact, we found books that were referencing each other and they were circular references.

Everybody was referencing each other's books but nobody had an original source. So there is a group in Australia that actually did the research. They asked a group of graduate students to take on a new habit and then track them for an entire year and answer two questions. Did you do it? How hard was it?

They found on average it takes about 66 days to form a habit.

AMY: Oh, that's much longer than you typically hear.



JAY: Exactly the point, 66 is great. But it's average. If you're quitting smoking, I guarantee you it will take a lot longer. But it might take you less time.

The point is, for most people, it's taking two to three times longer than they expect to actually have the habit stick so they stop focusing on it and giving it energy too soon; therefore, they don't form the habit. That's why most New Year's resolutions fall apart in February.

AMY: This makes perfect sense to me. It's all about the habit and I want to look at some of the things I've been doing and really identify the habit. Say that quote one more time. It was so good.

JAY: F. M. Alexander, and I might be paraphrasing slightly because I don't have it completely memorized, "People don't decide their futures. They decide their habits and their habits decide their futures."

AMY: Come on guys, that is so good. Look at your habits. Where do you need to show up in different ways?

You do have an antidote to tell about Jerry Seinfeld and the idea of not breaking the chain. Can you tell us that one?

JAY: I love that one. I read about this first on the website, Life Hacker. There was an engineer who was trying to become a comic. Back in the day when Jerry Seinfeld was still doing a lot of open mic shows, he would still show up, he was already Jerry Seinfeld but you could just go into a comedy club and sometimes he would be back there.

This engineer runs into him and works up the courage to say, "Hi Mr. Seinfeld. I want to become a comedian. What should I do?"

I love Seinfeld's answer, "It's easy. Go buy yourself a calendar, the one you put on the wall that is laminated with all the days of the year. Write a joke every day. Every day you write a joke put a red X over that day. Pretty soon it won't be about writing a joke every day it will be about not breaking the chain."

I love this on so many levels. One, it plays into the idea of building a habit. It plays into baby steps. He didn't say to write a comedy act every day or write a hit sitcom every day. He said to write one joke. We call that your smallest domino in our book.



That was our metaphor, lining up your dominos. Just knock over that domino every day. With time you'll get better and stronger as that habit grows.

AMY: I love it.

JAY: It's building the habit. There is a free app out there called Don't Break The Chain. There are 20 of them. We have a calendar, a 66-day challenge calendar, on our website. Whatever you do, whether you like a piece of paper that you draw on or if you want an app it's a great way to build that reward system.

I love it. Right now I'm meditating. That's one of the things I'm trying to build a habit of doing. Every day I get to go on my Don't Break The Chain app and hit the little X saying that I did it. It's kind of a little reward. It's a little dopamine burst along the way. It is kind of a fun thing to feel progress in a long process.

AMY: I am all about this. I'm super competitive with myself so I like to see those red Xs. That really does something for me. I'm 100% going to do this and I love that story. Thanks for that.

I'm switching gears here. This next topic is one that is near and dear to my heart. I have been talking to my audience a lot lately about this idea of going bigger and up leveling and really stepping into what you were made to do.

I had a live event recently and I had one full talk all about the idea of knowing that you were meant to be a big deal and going big in the world. One of the principles that really hit home for me was the idea that people fear becoming big.

You have a name for it. You call it mega phobia. Because I think sometimes my students fear going big...I don't think, I know they do, like you said in the book, staying where we are feels prudent but the opposite is true.

When big is believed to be bad small thinking rules the day and big never sees the light of it. I love this. So what are some ways you can live big?

JAY: First, I'm going to address mega phobia. I had dreams in life. It's one of those things that I may be thinking small or maybe a little outside my control. But I'm trying to make it happen. I would love to be the creator of a new word for the English language.



I can remember when we were playing around with this, writing mega phobia, looking it up to make sure there wasn't already a phobia around this, and I'm hoping it sticks.

AMY: It's so good.

JAY: Use it. Go out there and maybe I'll find it in the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) some day with my name in it. That would be great.

AMY: I'm crossing my fingers for you.

JAY: How can we live big? What's funny is most entrepreneurs think they don't have a problem with this. In fact, our publisher, who is one of the best business publishers of all time, wanted to cut this whole chapter. He was like, what in the world? This is a business book. It's a self-help book.

These people don't have a problem with thinking big. We were like, "Well, you've never coached anyone."

The challenge that happens is when people first start to experience some success. They have conquered the idea of the to-do list. They are doing their success list. They're not multitasking when they do it.

They have built a habit of doing the thing that really matters for their business. They look up after a few months or a year and success is coming at them fast and they absolutely will start shutting down.

You will hear things like, "I just want a small, comfortable business." They will say they don't want to become a bad parent. They will start creating excuses about how big is a very bad thing for their life.

A lot of times it's because they have no good role models on how to live a balanced life in the big arena. So first and foremost if you don't have kids talk to yourself like you were your own parent.

You would never tell your child, "I just want you to have an average life where you don't have to worry about failure. You can have an average marriage. You can go on average vacations and have average kids."



Nobody has that speech with their kids. We want them to dream big and we have to kind of take that advice ourselves. The beauty of this is if you can detach yourself from the outcome, "I want to write a course that sells 100,000 copies," great.

If you start with that goal you will be asking bigger questions, you'll be using bigger business models, you'll be seeking out better mentors and relationships to get it done all because you started as big as you could think.

If you start with something really small then the habits, the models, the relationships you will use will all be tied to that goal. If you surprise yourself and grow bigger you'll go through one of those periods that we hear about all the time, "I just have to reinvent my business."

When you hear that it's a code word for, "I didn't think big enough. I have to top grade my assistant. I didn't think big enough. I hired for my existing pain not for where I was going."

You've just got to think big. To be honest, we can't do this all by ourselves. We need our spouse, our coach, our mentor to help prod us and ask things like, "Is that the best you can do or is that the best that can be done? Are you really reaching for it here?"

In 18 years of my working with Gary Keller, the number one thing he's pushed me and my wife Wendy to do is to think bigger for our lives. Every single time I think we're thinking big he will point to a bigger picture we're not able to look at yet.

Because he points us there we set bigger goals. We fail a lot but because we fail and are aiming so high we're going so much farther and faster than we would otherwise.

AMY: That's so true. I absolutely love this idea. I've never thought of it this way in terms of setting a goal, a big scary goal that feels way too big, you are showing up differently in order for that to happen versus tending to play it safe with my goals.

I am very blessed and lucky with my business but I'll set a revenue goal for a promotion and I don't set it too high...Well, in the past I wouldn't set it too high because I didn't want to be disappointed.

Then I would meet it and say, "Look at me, I'm the super star." But, holy cow, if I really pushed myself I would show up different during my launches and during planning on the promotions.



To me, you just offered such a big gift of how you look at those big goals. I also want to point out that I'm going to link to this in the show notes when I talked about Brooke Castillo.

You guys know I'm a fan of her podcast. She talks about setting a big goal and having all of what she calls obstacle thoughts coming up, "I can't do that. What about this? What about that? This won't work because of this or that."

She has a podcast episode I'm going to link to where she says, 1) That's normal, and 2) You're going to tackle each of those objections your mind is coming up with. You are still setting really big goals and it's okay to be scared of them.

I just love what you said about that and I want to point out that you had mentioned that you have a partner that helps you set bigger goals. I have a coach that will say, "Really? Is that as big as you can go?"

I agree with you that we need people in our lives that will push us to bigger goals.

JAY: I'll tell you the truth. I've got my partner, Gary. He's a self-made billionaire. Most people would think that's all you.

AMY: Right. That's a good guy to have in your ring.

JAY: It's great. But I actually pay a coach to get on the phone with me every two weeks for an hour and push my thinking. I've given my wife, who is my partner in my whole life, permission to call me on my B.S.

AMY: That's good.

JAY: We've done that for each other so I kind of think of myself as having three full-time coaches. That can be excruciating on your worst days but it is definitely a gift the rest of the time.

AMY: Yes guys, so look at your environment. Do you have people that will call you on your B.S. If you don't, give someone you love and someone that knows you all permission to do so.

I have to do that with my husband, Hobie. I need to tell him...I'm on a weight-loss journey right now and the other day I'm feeling really good about it but I said, "Babe, if you see me backsliding I need you to call me on it."



He gave me a look like, “Oh no. I don’t want to do that.”

I said, “This is the most important thing in my life right now.” Getting this weight off and feeling good and healthy is truly my one thing so I said I needed somebody that’s going to call me on it, “Please, I’m asking you no matter if I get frustrated or upset or sad for the moment. It’s the biggest gift you can give me.”

If I didn’t tell him that, Jay, he would have never. That’s a sensitive topic.

JAY: It is. And I love that you had the wisdom to give him permission. My wife and I run businesses together and I have to remember my first hat is as a husband. That’s more important to me.

If we play golf together I’m not about to become her golf coach.

AMY: Good man.

JAY: Winning in the world of golf and winning in life, the gap is too great. The things that matter to her a lot and she gives me permission I will occasionally wear the hat of the coach and step in and say, “Hey, honey, I thought we said we were going to eat differently. Why don’t we both order the salad and we’ll cheat and do ‘this’ together.”

You just work together. You find that rhythm. The whole idea of a professional coach, I hardly ever go there. But, because you have one, one of the things we found, we were looking into the idea whether written goals really matter.

We found some research that suggests that when you write your goals down and I may be off a percentage point, but you are 36% more likely to achieve your goals.

The old song about people who wrote down their goals before they graduated from Harvard made more than everyone else. We called Harvard and Yale. That never existed. But the idea of it is so true that we believe it.

There is a lady who did that research, 36% more likely. While we were in that same Dominican University research they also had a secondary part of the study. If someone shared their goals with someone else and had to report their progress on a weekly basis they were 77% more likely to achieve their goals.



I was like, “Whoa,” I get chills even saying it. That is 2 ½ times, the probability of success. And that’s a very low form of coaching. All you are doing is reporting progress.

AMY: Oh guys, we’ve got to remember that one.

JAY: It’s a lot to have that relationship that you show up and say, “I’m moving forward.”

AMY: That is so good. Let’s remember this idea of reporting. You are right, you don’t even need to have a professional coach that you pay for in order to still do this action item. It’s so good.

Since we’re talking about goal setting I was hoping we could talk about a goal-setting exercise you talk about in the book. The version you have is called goal-setting to the now. That seems like just a tweak at first but it’s really something much more meaningful.

With your method it’s a simple way of thinking to help avoid distractions and keep us on the right path. So can you walk me through it starting with your someday goal?

JAY: Sure. And I’ve got to say this skill thing I learned in the process of researching the book from Gary, I don’t know where he learned it, it’s something that is very original to his life. I just wish I had learned it younger.

I have made a real commitment with the young people in my life, my kids included, to teach them this skill. It really enables what we were talking about earlier. How do we think big?

Goal setting to the now is one of the ways that makes that feel more likely and possible to do that. The whole crux of it, I remember Gary looking at me when we were trying to write this section, he said, “Jay, why do we even set goals?”

I gave him some bad answer...So we know where we are going or whatever. He was like, “No. The answer is that we only set goals so we know how to be appropriate in the moments that matter.”

I was like, “Oh, okay. Let’s unwrap that.” There is a really complicated economic idea called hyperbolic discounting that is simple to explain.



If I offered you \$100 today or \$200 tomorrow you would wait a day and take \$200. But if I changed just one element, the timeframe, \$100 today or \$200 a year from today, you are still doubling your money, guaranteed, but almost no one will wait the year.

The thing that happens is the farther in the future a reward is the less influence it has over our actions today. So we have grandiose plans and big plans take time to accomplish. But because they are so far in the future we don't know how to behave today, much less this week or this month.

Goal setting to the now, here's the framework. You write down, your big health objective. Maybe it's that someday you want to run five marathons, to use your friend's marathon example. There are five big marathons that people will try to check off like mountain peaks.

Someday you want to achieve that goal. Great. Based on that, what is the one thing you will have to accomplish in five years to feel like you are absolutely on track? Get someone to write that down.

Great. Maybe you will have to knock out the Boston and New York marathons. Great. Okay, based on your five-year goal, not your someday, you are going down a step. Based on your five-year goal, what is the one thing you would need to accomplish this year to feel like you were absolutely on track for your five-year goal.

You get that answer. Maybe it is that you will have trained and qualified for the New York Marathon. Great. Write that down. Based on your one-year goal, not your five or someday, you are moving down the chain, based on your one-year goal, what is the one thing you would have to accomplish this month to feel like you were absolutely on track for that goal?

Write that down. Maybe it is that you have to buy a new set of shoes and get a running coach. Great, awesome.

Based on your monthly goal, what is the one thing you have to do this week to feel like you are absolutely on track for your monthly goal? You have to start Googling running coaches or running groups and make sure you schedule time to go to the shoe store to buy your new running shoes.

Great. Awesome. Based on your weekly goal, what is the thing you have to do today to feel like you are absolutely on track for your weekly goal? Then they write that down. It could be whatever it is.



The point is that you're changing the timeframe very systematically and working backwards from the goal. It's playing a trick. If I asked you, "Amy, in the last ten years you've done 270 episodes of your show. What were the big moments of truth that led you to your amazing success?"

You would probably rattle off a series of milestones when you look back at your life. When you look back at your life you had a high school teacher who told you that you could do it. You had this experience in college and you met this person out of college.

Blah, blah, blah. You would tell me the stepping stones and it would kind of in a straight line when we look back.

The problem is, if I say, "Hey, I want to run five marathons," and I look forward to what I have to do this week or this month there are a million options.

AMY: Yes.

JAY: The trick is to go into the future and look back. That's the whole process. You are kind of cheating time. You are getting as clear as you can about where you want to be and then looking back from that time and drawing a straight line.

It eliminates a whole bunch of false bunny trails. I can tell you, having done this year after year after year with my wife and our goal setting that it is absolutely magical and you're guessing what to do in five years...nobody has a crystal ball.

It is crazy how accurate you are. You might be within a window of about 20% accurate. That's great, you eliminated 330 degrees of wrong.

AMY: So true.

JAY: It brings things so much more down to focus. By the end of year one you are so much more clear about what you have to do by year five that as you maintain those goals and keep pushing them forward you get more and more clarity and you get more and more accuracy.

I don't know where Gary got it. He couldn't tell me the origin story of that one but he's been doing that automatically for most of his adult life.



I've seen him do it 1,000 times. We just broke it down and made it a system, goal setting to the now, in the book. I'm absolutely, passionately adherent to that process. My wife and I do it every single year.

We go out of town, we go on a retreat for a day and a half and set our someday and five-year goals and, based on that, where we want to be the next year.

AMY: That is so good. I love this. I'm absolutely going to do this for the next year as I start planning for the upcoming year. This is so good.

JAY: Can you hear my passion?

AMY: Yes!

JAY: It is so boxy, I know, but I feel strongly about that process. It works.

AMY: I love it and I can feel that. It makes me want to embrace it even more. I love that. It's funny because when we were preparing for this episode I had help from Gina on my team. She said the same thing I was thinking, "Oh my gosh, we could talk about a million different things. This book is so good."

There are so many things we wanted to drill down into and I know I only have a certain amount of time so I wanted to make sure you talked about goal setting because this whole concept of "the now" was very, very relevant to my listeners so I am glad we got that in.

I want to get one more thing in before I let you go. It is the idea of time blocking. I talk about batching your work load and blocking out time on your calendar. But you're taking it to a whole new level. I'm very excited about this and I want you to talk about it.

Here's what surprised me. First of all, you've got to tell us about time blocking in case someone hasn't read the book. But also, the amount of time you're suggesting seems like a lot. So talk to me about that.

JAY: It does. What is time blocking? Time blocking is simply making an appointment with yourself to do your most important work. I remember the first time I interviewed with Gary. It was in the summer of 2002. I had already worked in his company for about two years and change.



The first thing he asked when I walked into his office was, “Can I look at your calendar.”

This was in 2002. I think I had a palm pilot. People didn’t do the full electronic thing. I had a little checkbook size week at a glance in my back pocket. He started flipping through it.

It was very important to him that I be the kind of person that made appointments with myself versus just with other people. I had no idea that was part of the interview before I went in there.

That was a fundamental belief about success for him. Luckily I’m kind of an introvert and I didn’t go to lunch with a lot of people so my calendar was just my task list. That’s basically what it was. I passed that test. But it was by luck and by nature.

Time blocking, you look at millionaires like Gary Keller and other people. I’ve done this every chance I get to sit down with a CEO or someone. Do you block time just to do your work?

The answer I come back with is often, “Yes,” and often very much the way Gary describes it. That’s the idea. You’re making an appointment, not with someone else but with yourself.

There is a little side note of beauty around this. If you have blocked off four hours tomorrow to work on your new course and I call you up and say, “Amy, I’m in San Diego, let’s go get brunch,” you can now say, “Hey Jay, I love that you’re in town. I already have another commitment tomorrow from 9-1. Can we go out afterwards for a late lunch?”

It immediately gives you an out so that you can protect that time. That’s time blocking. Why four hours?

Gary was teaching this before he wrote the book. I remember at the beginning it was two hours and then it became three hours and then it became four hours. I asked him about that.

If you want to accomplish big things you generally need big blocks of time to do it, especially if it’s creative work. I found it to be true for people working on any kind of big projects whether it be budgets, programming, you can do the sprints but this idea



of having a big block of time allows you to show up. It allows you to kind of be unproductive for part of that time, which we often are.

AMY: That's good.

JAY: We are preparing to get ready. I've got to get my outline ready before I can write. You know what, I need to read some in Google and grab all of the books I'm going to reference. So there is preparing to do work. Then there is the work. Then there is the unwinding at the end of it.

It's almost like there are three periods in that four hours. You are giving yourself a big block of time. If you net an hour for activity out of there but you are doing that every single work day you will be miles ahead of the rest of the world.

Most of the world is going out there. Their calendar is almost exclusively given to other people so they are going from meeting to meeting to meeting to meeting. When do they do the most important work? At 9:30 after they have put the kids to bed.

They are on the couch while their spouse is watching Netflix and they are on their laptop. You block that time and it's like putting a rock in the river. Everything will flow around it if you are insistent around that.

I usually tell people to take baby steps. If you're not ready to go the full four hours start with an hour if we're talking about your professional one thing. Build on that. Build the habit of showing up every day at 9 a.m. or 8 a.m. and just plugging away for an hour.

You'll start adding to that time as you get more confident that you will show up and work. The magic happens. This book wouldn't be here if Gary and I, for years, hadn't blocked four hours a day.

For us it was 10 to 2. He had so many businesses going he needed two hours to clear the decks before we could even go into a place where we could lock the door and say, "Go away."

It's ideal to start your day because there are fewer distractions earlier in the day and you have more willpower. That's all secondary stuff. But the big block of time, because you're trying to do big stuff around your one thing, gives you time to be less productive but still get the outcomes you need.



AMY: That's so good. So, a few quick things here. I'm creating this program right now and I do my best work if I have four hours. I just don't feel so stressed to get it all done. I can ease into it and think and have the space.

I actually totally understand the four hours. One thing I've learned, if I want to block off big time like that, if I look at my calendar this week, next week, even the week after I think there is no way. I could never do this because of all of the stuff I already have scheduled.

But I have learned to just skip to the next month. Make it a commitment that starting the next month this is going to be something you do. Your calendar is more free to just get it all set up in advance but then block it out for the rest of the six months or the rest of the year or whatever it might be.

I have to look way ahead to get that on my calendar because if I look today and wanted to get it on tomorrow it would never work.

JAY: I love that you said that because we don't want people time blocking every single thing. That becomes crazy and robotic and we need to have buffer time. I usually have 30 minutes before I go into my writing block and 30 minutes after that I batch all of my emails and social media stuff.

That creates anxiety for me and I want to be free of that before I go in and I want to know that the first thing I'm allowing myself to do when I come out is deal with all of the urgent, but maybe unimportant, stuff that might be happening in my email inbox.

Your idea of batching comes in around your one thing time but you don't time block everything. The three things we encourage people to start with, 1) Vacation time. American's just don't take it. If you're on a long journey, remember your someday goal that has a five-year goal along the way, these are big goals in your life, that's a marathon. You need to rest and recuperate.

The thing is if you start your calendar for 2019 and you look and say you are going to commit to taking three weeks of vacation and you block it off...Gary blocks off seven or eight weeks.

AMY: I love it.



JAY: I'll ask him, "I see that you're gone for a week at the end of April, where are you going?"

He will say, "I don't know yet but I think I'll need it."

AMY: That is so good. I'm going to do that, for sure.

JAY: First is vacation. You may not know where you're going but if you block that time it's like putting that rock in the river. Your work will flow around it. I get all of my team to do this at the beginning of the year.

I'm in Austin. We have Austin City Limits. They are millennials. They are going to want to take workdays off to go hear Paul McCartney or whoever is playing. I get it. If you think you're going to go we can plan for that in January.

If you decide not to we get that day back. But don't show up to me on a Thursday before the Friday that Paul McCartney is playing and say, "Boss, I've got a ticket. Can I skip work tomorrow?"

Now you've put me in a horrible place where I either have to be the ogre or I have to do your work for you because we didn't prepare for this. Plan your vacations in advance. When you do that bosses almost never say "no" and if you do you kind of find out who you're working for.

You have to time block your one thing. Sometime in November or December I will get a copy of Gary's calendar for the next year. On that calendar for the next year he will have identified, at least through August, the days he thinks we'll be writing together.

That's one of the first things that goes on my calendar for the next year. Here are my writing blocks and everything else has to flow around it.

The third one is planning time. Each week and each month there needs to be at least 30 minutes where you're looking at your goals and you're looking at your calendar and saying, "Based on where I plan to be at the end of this year, do I have enough time blocked this month or this week to do my one thing?"

What you are doing is making some appointments go away and you might be adding time or you are ahead of the game. You can increase your goals. But that regular check in between your goals and your calendar (the calendar is kind of where the



rubber hits the road) is how time blocking actually gets you to move forward towards your goals.

AMY: So good. So vacation, your one thing, and planning.

JAY: You've got it.

AMY: Okay, I'm going to do it and that's clear and so easy to compartmentalize. I love that. Like I said, I could literally talk to you for many more hours but I'm sure you've got some things to do.

With that, before I let you go will you let my listeners know of just that one thought you might have that you know could help move them forward and help solidify everything they have learned in this episode. No pressure or anything, but just final thoughts.

JAY: Probably about six or seven years ago I was at an event. I was in the audience and Gary was on stage. He had interviewed three of the top business people in our real estate system and they all had been in the business for five years or less and they were just knocking it out of the park.

He said something and I remember writing it down. I put it on my whiteboard and posted it to my Facebook account and all of these things. I just wanted to retain this thought.

He said, "Folks, no matter where you are today you can achieve anything you can imagine in five years."

In five years you can go from zero to knocking it out of the park. That statement that anything's possible in five years really, really stuck with me. I think there's the idea, we often exaggerate. We think we can get a lot more done in a year than is actually possible.

AMY: Amen, yes, you're right.

JAY: But we under imagine what is possible for us in five. It sounds like it's a long time. But if you steadily work toward something you can become a master in five years. You can become world renowned in five years.



It's amazing what you can accomplish in five years if you put your head down and keep knocking over those little dominoes every day. That would be the thing I want people to remember, anything is possible for them in as little as five years.

Why not sit down, take a look at where they want to go some day and at least say, "Based on where I want my life to go someday here's where I think I need to be in five years to feel like I'm absolutely on track for the big things in my life."

Start using that as your compass. If it's not leading you towards that, if you want to do the full goal setting to the now, awesome. But at the very least have that tangible and with you so that you have a compass direction to be going toward that place where anything is possible for your life.

AMY: That is such a good final thought. I knew you'd come through and it would be really good. Jay, it has been so much fun talking with you. I absolutely loved the book. I recommend it to all of my students.

If you're listening, go grab the book. We're going to link to it in the show notes. Listen to it on Audible, which you guys know I do all the time. Jay and his partner have been on his walks with me for many, many days now.

Beyond getting your book, where can people find out more about you?

JAY: Pretty much everything is at our website, www.The1Thing.com and we've got our own online courses there around time blocking and goal-setting retreats. We have lots of free resources. There's a kickass guide to better goal setting, all kinds of tools, even a tool for helping you walk through the exercise of doing your first goal setting to the now.

We kind of put everything there that people need all under one roof.

AMY: Perfect. I'll link to it in the show notes, for sure. Jay, thanks again for being here. I hope that we get to talk again in the near future.

JAY: Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me.

AMY: There you have it. I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Jay as much as I have. It was really fun at the end when I stopped recording. He said, "Hey Amy, if you ever come to Austin make sure you let me know and we'll get together."



I said, "Well, I'm coming in just a few months," and he said he was taking me to the best breakfast tacos in town. I thought, "Breakfast tacos?" I'm a Cali girl. We know breakfast burritos but I do not know breakfast tacos.

If you're from Austin I guess you know this is a thing. I've never heard about it but Hobie's coming with me and I think he's going to love this. I'll report back on those Austin breakfast tacos and tell you what I think.

Okay guys, thanks so much. If you haven't yet subscribed to the podcast make sure you do so whether you listen to it in iTunes or someplace else because we're in a lot of different places with our podcast. Subscribe so you never miss an episode.

I can't wait to connect with you again same time, same place next week. Bye for now.