



JAMES SCHRAMKO

Adapting to Change: How to Stay Ahead of the Curve

Change is the one reliable constant. James and Joe Fier talk about weathering - and making - challenging changes in their businesses and lives.



Joe Fier

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 999. Got a nice sound to it, hasn't it? Special guest, Joe Fier. Great to see you again. [We've been doing this for about five years](#) where we simulcast our podcasts. So we're going to put this podcast on my show, and you're going to record the podcast for [your show](#). So I'll get out of the way. I'll let you do your intro, and then we'll rip into today's topic, which is going to be fascinating.

Joe: Hey, we're back here with another episode. And this time, I have a great buddy of mine and mentor. This is James Schramko of the James Schramko Podcast. And we're doing this as a simulcast. This is the - what, over five years or so, James and I have been doing this. I think this is the fourth episode now. And a lot has changed for both of us. So I'm excited for this episode. Let's dive on in.

James: Well, one thing that's notable is it's just you today, Joe.

Joe: Oh, you noticed, huh?

James: In the past, there was three of us. Yeah, I did notice it. I'm sharp. So obviously, that's a change that could be worth discussing. And from my perspective, the name of my podcast has changed because last year, I just pulled out a big bunch of paper, a huge notepad, a couple of pens, and started drafting the next version or [the next iteration of my business](#).

And today, I think a great topic would be change, because as I've got a lot of people that I'm helping in their business, it is a constant theme. This is something unavoidable. And for me, this is a special topic, because there was a certain point in my career when I was in my 20s, and I was at Mercedes-Benz, and they'd earmarked me for future leadership because I was performing really well in sales.

I came first in Australia for selling, and they promoted me to sales manager. And I was coming first as a sales manager winning the awards, and they're like, Okay, this guy could be running dealerships. And they took me off to some leadership change seminar sort of stuff. We had three-day workshop, live-in, maybe it was even a week. And then we went away, and then we came back after doing homework, and did another session, like it was pretty intense.

But they gave us this book. And this book was about change. And it came from Germany. And I remember reading the book and really absorbing the message. And the message was that change is the constant that if we can actually master and embrace, even look forward to, then we'll have an advantage of everyone who's reactive out in the marketplace.

Navigating the wild west online

And a few years later down the track, I ended up running the dealerships, and I decided I need to go on my own. And the commitment I made myself when [I quit my job](#) was that I will be responsible to navigate myself through business as there are changes. And boy, since July 2008, Joe, I can tell you, there's been a lot of changes in the marketplace.

In 2009, I started my membership, and it was sometime around then or a little bit after, Facebook started doing groups. I was in, like, probably the end of the Wild West era of the online marketing. It was really hard to build websites. There weren't social media platforms. YouTube was only new. Facebook started to run ads. All these things, I got to do for the first time. I remember running Google ads in about 2006 or 2007, while I was at the dealership. I was bidding on keywords like Mercedes-Benz.

Joe: That was the real Wild West then huh? Google.

James: It was crazy. But then every time you think, oh well, it's settling down or whatever, there's so much more that comes. I remember retargeting came out. And then they made it easier for you to build websites, and funnels, and campaigns, and stuff. The video exploded, you know, we went from really crappy internet speeds and difficulty to put a video on a website.

I mean, I had to hunt down for SWF players, and compress videos, and it was really hard. Now, you can just join TikTok and be streaming videos, like within a minute. So there's been so much inflation of accessibility. Everybody can be a creator. And it puts pressure because it just accelerates and fuels innovation.

And what you're doing now is almost certainly not going to work in a year from now the same way. I think that's an emphasis, because there are some core fundamentals that don't change. When you're thinking about change, I think it's the Amazon guy, right? He's talking about what won't change, I think that's a good thing to remember.

I still run a membership, I still do a podcast, I still feel [email is a strong source of marketing](#), of conversions, and worth doing. But then we've seen a lot of proliferation of video and so forth has taken off, you know, there was a point where we switched from audio to video for the podcast. Same for my coaching, actually, I used to do all my calls on Skype via audio, and then they've ended up becoming group Zoom calls. That's a change we'll talk about when it comes down to our business model changes.

The big change that is AI

But I just wanted to sort of wrap this overall episode with a key line is, if you choose to have your own business, if you choose to have your own business in the online space, well, you better be good with change, because that is something you can count on. And right now, we're seeing the AI wave. Like a year ago or so, we saw the NFT wave.

But this one, I think, is substantially different. And it's going to move things in a way where a lot of the things that were being done before will have to change. They've already started changing for me, and I'm not, by any stretch, the most excited about bright, shiny objects. I wait until people are using stuff for quite some time and they're proven and validated and tested.

And I also, and this is very important to me to manage change, is I pay attention to my own behavior. How do I adapt? What am I doing differently? Because that's often a signal that's going to carry across to the human population in about five years from now. Although this time, the lag time between [me knowing about AI](#) and now, so far, it's about six years. And that's pretty common.

It's usually five or six years, whatever I'm doing or aware of, it usually takes half a decade to roll through. But I feel like the AI thing has particularly accelerated, because it didn't take long from when it went public with ChatGPT until my mom and dad, my kids, and my friends, and normal people are talking about it, and it's on the news, and you know, teachers, etc. are concerned about it. So I feel like it's speeding up.



Now for a lot of people, that scares the crap out of them. They are frightened, they're overwhelmed, they can't fully process what it actually means. But they know they should be scared about it. And hopefully, this episode will give some tools at least to start dealing with it. But step one is, acknowledge that it's good to be a master of change, because that is a powerful weapon in this world of online entrepreneurialism.

Joe: Yeah, and we have the time for it. I think that's, you know, without resisting of it, it's welcome it. Welcome that change, even if it, well, it should be rooted in our own principles and our values. And it might challenge some of our beliefs about our business models and the way we go about things. And yeah, at least I know, over the last year, well, plus, I've had a lot of changes in my side of things for a lot of different reasons. It could be external, it could be internal.

Knowing it's time to change

So I'm kind of curious, why I'm curious, James, like for reasons of change, are there any that come to mind that you've found, at least for yourself, because you're in the midst, or you've changed a lot in your own business, recently, but it's not the first time. So what are some of these common reasons you found yourself changing things up, but still holding true to your own principles?

James: I'm reading a book actually, at the moment, that talks about how our thinking goes beyond the brain. They're actually trying to link it now to things like your gut bacteria, etc. And you know that expression, you know, I have a gut feeling. You know, there's some science to say that that could actually be a thing.

Sometimes I get a sense that something needs to change. So I can't explain that logically, but I just know. And part of it's being in tune with your body. So for example, if you were doing a particular job, and then you start noticing that you're not wanting to do that job, or you have reluctance around it, like a kid on Monday when they have to go to school.

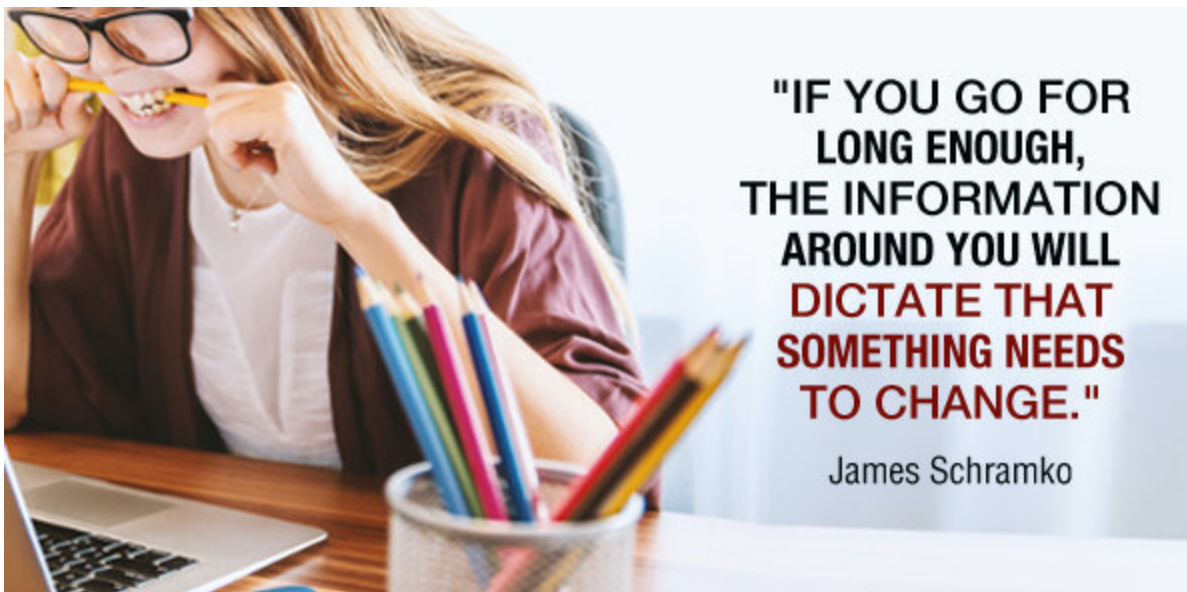
They know, they can tell that they're not wanting to do this thing, and there's a resistance. That could be a sign that maybe something needs to change. And then of course when we're making decisions, we're making them with the information we had available at the time. But over time, we get the benefit of hindsight that the further away from a decision we get, and the more we look in the rearview mirror, we can say, Well hang on a minute. Maybe this isn't the path that I thought it would be, because we could only make a hypothesis at the time.

And the best thing about decisions is being able to look back and then score that decision with the benefit of hindsight. So one of the reasons I started a business brand, and we're talking about 2006 or 2007, so it was quite a long time ago, I decided to pin most of my efforts around a business.

This was pre social media. I mean, I think I hadn't even joined Twitter by that stage. And Facebook wasn't really a big deal. It was still probably doing universities and stuff. So I already decided to build around a business back then. But what happened is, we came into an era of the personal brand, that social media ability to build a brand.

And it's only even in the last year or two, I think, Facebook allowed people to have subscribers to their personal profile, maybe in the last two or three years. Up until then, you kind of needed a page for your own brand to build a subscriber base, because you know, almost everyone in my field maxed out at 5000 friends.

Joe: Right. It's pretty easy to do that these days, too.



James: Right, and you spill over to, back then, you couldn't have subscribers, so you had to have a page. So it really was confusing. I actually had a personal page. And then I went, put it back to business, and then it's ended up being personal again. So if you'd go for long enough, the information around you will dictate that something needs to change.

So how do you know that you need to change? One is setting review points. So for me, no matter what, I still sit down. And it's usually, I certainly had an annual ritual around this, especially around that Christmas/New Year period, where everyone else is getting all pumped up about goals and whatever.

For me, I have a quiet time because my clients ease off a bit around Christmas. And so, I usually just pull out a paper and a pen, and just sort of remap and recalibrate. And I'd say some of this exercise comes from the theory of constraints. So like Eli Goldratt, where he was really an innovation guy.

You know, guys like [Jay Abraham](#), etc., are very much into optimization. How can we improve the thing we've got? Goldratt was more about, how can we completely discard this entire thing and have a new thing or, you know, take one bit of this thing and change everything fundamentally. He had this concept of inherent simplicity.

So I would pretty much clean sheet my business each year. I just say, Okay, if I'm starting from scratch today, because this is the question every podcaster gets asked, right? You know, if you had to start from scratch in 30 days from now, even though it's a wrong question, because I'm not building my business to be successful in 30 days from now, I'm building my business to fuel my lifestyle forever, and I want to build a life that I don't want to quit from. So this exercise is starting from scratch, but with my experience and knowledge.

You know, I can still access my customer base, I can still keep the parts of the business that are working, but I could change or discard parts that aren't floating my boat. And so I've made a lot of changes to my program over the years. So the constant is I still had a membership from 2009 to now. The change is I started it as SuperFastResults.

I went for three or four years. That was a partnership. I dissolved that partnership, went solo with FastWebFormula. I then rebranded everything, because I had about 11 different properties, into SuperFastBusiness, which I had carried that brand the whole time, but I didn't focus on it. And then last year, I changed it to my personal brand.

So how many iterations is that since 2009, right? It's a lot. And people are scared to make change, but I can assure you, it's okay. And your customers will actually, for the most part, lean into it for you and with you, because they'll assume that you've done your homework, and you've got reasons. And it's also good to explain it to them sometimes.

But I feel like in hindsight, right now actually, is I'm at a different stage in life, and a more reflective stage, and the stakes get higher. The further you get down the track, and the closer you get to the end game, it intensifies your moves, because you're now dealing with a more finite period.

It's like I just read a book called *Not Fade Away*. It's about a guy who died of stomach cancer at about 52. He's a billionaire. But you know, as you get close to death, he said, Everything magnifies, even like, looking at flowers is a beautiful experience. So for me, I'm learning these lessons.

A few big lessons

There's a few lessons along the way, I think they're big lessons. One lesson was, I was probably a little slow to move to the personal brand when the social media was like, definitively taken off and really killing it. One thing that probably held me back a bit was my desire to have and maintain a fair bit of control over my assets. And I've still done that to this day.

I still host my own podcast, I still have my own membership, and I still have my own email database. I think the email database, if you could only pick one, that would be it. So if any social influence or someone with a huge channel, that's awesome, and it's great, if you're getting 50 or 60 grand a month in ads from that platform, or you're able to use that fame and fortune for other things, make sure you build that asset, and I think an email would be a good asset to build.

So whilst I was probably a little too much on the control side, I've never experienced the dip. That whole time online, like since the day I quit my job, I have never experienced a dip from now till then. So my process is working well for me. Could I have made more? I think so. Could I have lost more? Most likely. If I'd gone a little more wild, I might have had some bigger ups and downs. And I'm not an ups and downs sort of person.

Joe: Oh yeah, definitely with the membership model.

James: Yeah, I operate from a place of calm, and I've already done the high stakes, repossessions in sales in the earlier part of my life, I've had all those adrenaline spikes. I like a nice, steady ship here. But at really good numbers, right, I'm very, very happy with my business model. So it's like, I think some people who are highly creative, they tend to create change for the sake of change. And that's a very dangerous thing. So I don't want to over excite someone about making changes.

For me, I'm pretty reluctant to make the change unless I feel it has to be done, because it's a big deal to change your brand. But you also have to throw out stuff, you know, I threw out a brand I'd built up for over a decade. I threw away some channels. I was able to rename a couple. This is a big one, if you're going to change your YouTube, you can.

You can change the name, you can change your Facebook page. So don't discard them if you're going to be somewhere in the zone. Keep it, and start not from scratch, start with an asset. I'm also, I have a leaner and more effective business model. A couple of other things that cause change.

So to continue that answer, when I'm coaching people, I see behind the scenes and under the hood of other businesses. And what I noticed over the last year or so is I saw a lot of inflation of coaching rates. I'm coaching people charging two or three or five times more than me. And I felt like I started to form the opinion, I feel like I'm probably under market rate. And that caused me to recalibrate. And so I learned a valuable lesson about retention.

Now, let's say retention in essence is a function - within a membership, at least, it's probably a function of relationship and results. So I have amazing relationships with my members. I have members for 12 years, 10 years, seven years, eight years, I know my members, I've met them face to face, I've met you face to face.

Joe: That's right.

When you're doing too much for too little

James: I talk to people privately, even if they're not paying for it, even if I just see someone in need, or I feel like I could help, I'll reach out. And I often see something that makes me think, okay, well, there's been movement in the market. It's like if you have a house and you're not selling it every week, you wouldn't really know if it's going up or down in value.

So for me, when I set my rates a long time ago, one of the main things I did was grandfather people into low rates. And I was locking them in against the market. But if you do it for a long time, and you're actually good at what you do, you can end up ripping yourself off a bit, because you end up with a cohort or a bunch of customers, to use a less fancy term, who are paying under market rates.

They know they're paying under market rates, and they will never ever leave. But you're actually tying up that hour of your life or the energy that's involved in servicing that customer could be sold for a higher rate. For example, if you were to buy a car today, and it was on order, and it's going to come in a year, the contract will say that the price of the car in a year from now will be different to today, and the model of the car might be different, right?

So you're in it, they're not going to lock it in, because they will end up ripping themselves off if there's inflation, right, if the car goes up \$10,000, they will charge you the market rate at the time. So I think my big lesson, if you're really good at keeping members, and you keep members for more than a few years, like when people talk about membership retention of three months, I always laugh, because my membership retention is about five years. And you can end up getting out of step with the market.

So the big change I did last year, and I had to do this in phases, so we can talk about how you roll out a change, and I'm conscious that I'm doing a lot of talking here, so please stop me if you want me to come up for air.

Joe: I have a couple of notes, but no, keep it going. I like to sit back.

James: Okay, well, you're a good man, Joe, I appreciate this. It's actually a little bit therapeutic. I don't really have anyone to talk to about this.

Joe: I think I kind of noticed that. And I was like, you know, this is great for both of us right now. So continue on.

The process of making changes

James: I mean, it was such a big change. But once I decide I want to change, I'm kind of like the get-it-done-now type person. And I'm using a 3D process here. Step one is data. I look at all the information. Step two is I make my decisions. And that's not an instant thing. I marinate it, I think about it when I'm surfing.

It took me about six months to make that decision. But the day I make the decision, I want it done. That's the third thing, I want it done, like I tell my team, This is what we're doing. I'm adamant. There's no turning back. And then I will even say to them sometimes, If I question this later, or I want to change it, can you remind me this? And I'll give them a little capsule to tell me later.

Joe: I like it. Here's my vision. Hold me to it.

James: Exactly. And, you know, like, I'm pretty consistent with my vision. But you have to lay it out. So the main things that I changed were I wanted to change the name, so I wanted to just make the old brand redundant everywhere it appeared and change it to the new one. Point everything, fix it all up. So we did all that stuff very easily.

I needed to now, I had this sticky situation of having hundreds of members on old plans that were too cheap. About seven or eight years ago, I started doing private coaching for regular members as a test, because I noticed people wanted, they liked sharing things privately with me that they wouldn't put in a group. And I sort of kept providing it, and then I never really stopped it.

And years later, I had 250 people who were able to do private coaching on a really low rate. And like, okay, this is now holding me back from doing private coaching with the people who really need the help and are happy to pay for it. So we did the unthinkable. And we went in and unsubscribed hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of subscriptions.

And you know, we set a scheduler so that we do it just before it renews, which is like, basically, don't let people buy this again, is my instruction. And we did videos to explain what's happening and why. And then so we moved across to the new name. We migrated people from our old cart to the new cart when they changed to the new rates, if they want to come on board.

In between that, we gave them access to both. So they had an experience, they had a full demonstration and access to what it's going to be. And then at some point, it could take up to a year to extinguish annual subscriptions, they get to make a decision. Thanks. That's the end of this ride. Now, we're getting on to the new train, do you want to come on board?

Thankfully, almost everyone's come across at new rates. And they understand, and they're cool about it. I've had zero complaints, which is good. And a few of the members who didn't come across, I wasn't sad about, because they probably were the end of the line for that. And if I'm being super open, because it's just you and I and a couple of listeners...

Joe: It's just us, right?

James: I wasn't really planning on bringing that lower tier across at all. I kind of got to the point where I only want to work with the medium and higher level now at this part of my life. And the problem was I have these relationships, I have so many hundreds of relationships, and I can actually help these people.

So my solution to that was how can I make it useful for them, but doesn't drain me, now that they're not getting that private coaching? So I set up the option for them to have pods with each other. And that's flying. I join myself to those pods. So it could be a couple of members and me, and they're chatting to each other, and I'm just sort of facilitating or supervising, and that's been amazing.

The other thing that I thought was super valuable is if we're in this era of micro content and short attention span, so again, taking the cue from change, what platforms are blowing up, right? TikTok, Instagram reels, YouTube shorts, it's pretty validated that people want short content. So I'm like, Okay, I don't want to put a big value on my training products. I'm sick of these people selling a \$2,000 or \$3,000 course that just gets lumped into their G Drive, or they get some login, and they'd never really log in, probably.

Why don't I just go through my own trainings and condense them down into a one-sheet playbook? So I added the Playbooks section. And my goal, so I've got internal goals, my goal is to go through my old trainings and condense them into one page. And so the playbooks, and I publish about one a week, they've just been fire. Like, I give them, no pun intended, but I give them the cheat sheet of something that's working like a framework for selling high-value items in a page.

There's people in my membership, who, like they couldn't sell a meat pie at a football match, but they go through this framework, and then now they're starting to sell every single person they talk to on the phone. So it's life-changing for them. So now the low-ticket membership, which at the time of publishing is about \$99 a month, it is still, like just to get a playbook each week, that would pay for that.

I still do a live Ask Me Anything call every month, and now people are coming to it. Again, a few years ago, they wouldn't really bother. But that one call a month is really valuable. And they can come and ask me anything they want in person, live. And that's got a good vibe about it. And so but the real thing is, the next level up, the Mentor level, I made some changes to that.

There was a thing happening with my SilverCircle, the one to ones, those members started off as a group in 2010. And they started going on to little one-to-one calls, I was getting particularly good results. And I keep my members forever. But again, the rates were starting to slip from what the market is. And then I did an analysis and I realized, well hang on, I'm spending this amount of time each month with these one-to-one calls, but I have to park my life. And I have to go into their life.

And as good as it is for them, and as interesting as it can be with some of the conversations, I need to stop this. So I kind of retired my one to one for the most part. There were 15 members, I think I'm down to five now, and I've asked them if they would come across to the middle level. And I gave the middle level the SilverCircle calls slots, and then I added slots.

So this is an [effective hourly rate](#) technique. I took the time that was available for the one to ones and gave it to the group. Now what's happened with the group is it's magnifying. Obviously, I've added in 10 members straight out of the gates. But I've also added time in my calendar for that group. And now at the moment, I'm up to four calls a week with that group, they can come to any of those calls. And some of them come to a couple actually and just listen in, or have a double dip if there's no one else there, but I put that time in my diary for them.

These people are kicking butt, they are getting amazing results. And they're feeding off each other's energy. And that level, at the time of recording this, is about \$1,000 a month. So there's some big lessons here. The one to ones cost more, but I've rolled some of them back. I'm using that time for my partners. And now, I'm six years down the track with the partnership.

So again, the partnership success, you know, now becoming more than half my income, has informed that I can make changes to what used to be my bread and butter, is now no longer required. So you can bump products off to the side, you can boost the products you want and make some adjustments.

Results of implementing change

So hopefully, I've answered a few of the questions there. Why did I make the changes? How did I go about rolling it out? So in short, where I've ended up is from all those years ago, when I started a lower ticket membership and then added one higher ticket one above, I've ended up building something incredible in the middle of that.

So I've ended up with the leverage of group at reasonable rates, with members getting incredible results. And it's reduced the amount of time, I've actually chopped about 10 hours a month off my workload, which I'm now putting back into books and to working with my partners to grow their business.

And if you ever wanted to see a 64:4 or an 80:20 distribution, the partnership's fascinating. Between the top performer and the lowest performer, or even the top performer and the next two or three is such an interesting distribution curve. It's always a reminder that within any portfolio, or any product range, or any shopping cart SKU range, there will be some standouts that need your highlight. And there'll be some unproductive or not that useful things that should be eliminated. So if you're looking to change something, start with that.

Joe: Yeah, doing a full-on analysis, and I like the blank page. Yeah, nothing fancy, we usually know what's, like you said, going all the way to the gut feeling. There's something there.

James: And almost always you're wrong.

Joe: Yeah.

James: Like I pull up the spreadsheet, I ask my team, Can I have the numbers? You know, I need the revenue per product line. If it's partners, I need revenue per partner. I need the revenue for this level of membership, that level of membership, this level of membership, and then I want it year on year, or even six monthly. Then I have to put in my like, how many hours are contributed to each, what are my cost fixed and variable for each? What's the actual profit for this division? And how much hours am I putting in? It was stunning. You know what the number one effective hourly rate thing that I do is?

Joe: Oh, man, I mean, probably partnerships, I would imagine.

James: That's the second, second most.

Joe: Second. Okay.

James: Affiliate marketing.

Joe: Affiliate, I mean, partnerships. Yeah, I was figuring affiliate was right around there.

James: The punch line is performance-based work.

Joe: There you go.

James: So with affiliate marketing, if I can craft a good campaign, or pick a really relevant offer for my audience, I don't need to spend a lot of time on it, because there's really no fulfillment. It's just the creative and the promotion of it. So to craft a few emails, to let people know about something that someone else has, and for them to do the follow up, and to take the money, and provide the service, it ends up a lot. It can be somewhere between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per hour. So I'd say, I know [we did a whole episode on affiliate marketing](#) back in the day.

Joe: Yup. We'll link it to in the show notes, at least on my side.

James: Yeah, and performance-based deals, the [revenue share deals](#), it's the cream now, it's so good. The good ones are fantastic. They can be ultra-high. So what I'm saying is if you're locking yourself into low-fixed retainers, review that, and just say, Well, should that rate change? Can I communicate a message of change to my audience? Will they come with me?

I was prepared to lose 15 one-to-one members in the change. So I was prepared to scrap tens of thousands a month in revenue, to put my energy where it needs to be. But what I really realized is the relationship was so strong, like I've actually, there's only one of the 15 who's probably going on a different path.

And in that case, it's extreme, because that person doesn't even have a business and hasn't had for a couple of years. I helped them get out of a massive, like, over \$100 million partnership. That was the main thing they hired me for, and they just stayed because we were having such great conversations.

Sadly, the conversations will end but it's kind of a relief, in a way. It was probably the most difficult thing that I've had to do, is to talk to someone when we don't really have anything specific to work on. It was a bit too soft, I suppose.

Joe: Yeah. And especially for a one-on-one approach.

James: I mean, it'd be keen to know about your changes as well.

What's new with Joe?

Joe: Well, yeah, there's been a lot, and I know you've been kind of watching from the sidelines on some of the aspects, especially last year.

James: Yes. I mean, I observed the podcast moved in a different direction, because you know, I was a frequent guest and a subscriber. And I don't even listen to podcasts. So that's a pretty big endorsement.

Joe: I remember you telling me that.

James: Yeah. I very rarely listen to any kind of podcast. And I noticed it's moved into a different direction. So I was curious about it. We have a few friends in common. I kept an eye on it. And then, you went down a direction that I felt was, for me, massive, bright, shiny object to me, like I never got dragged into it hard.

I bought one NFT out of curiosity so I could understand the platform. I spent a little bit of time with my friend, Jarrod, to make some purchases, etc., and to see how that works, and that's the end result. And by the way, I've cleaned all that up now. I'm basically just holding Bitcoin and maybe some Ethereum, right? Like it's the most vanilla thing, I have nothing fancy or tricky or sh*t coins or whatever.

And I felt that the general public were not talking about it and didn't understand it. I remember Gary Vee talking about the biggest problem he's having with his club was that just people don't understand how, the education required around it, it's too high. So I thought, oh, I'm not so sure where this is going. But it turns out, you've both ended up in great position. But there's obviously a story in between that.

Joe: There's definitely a story. And yeah, I'm happy to share it. And I want to give you thanks for the fact that you planted the constant. So going back to what you said, there's that constant with the change. And the podcast has been my constant for six plus years now. Email list as well. So yeah, I mean the change last year, just to get everybody up to speed, especially on your podcast and your folks listening, yeah, we've had a - and so I say we, my previous partner, and co-host, Matt Wolfe, who I'm sure a lot of you all know, or have heard his name around...

James: I think more people know about it now, than before. [laughs]

Joe: Yeah. [laughs] We'll tell where he's gone. And back to the change, he revitalized a YouTube channel that he had for probably 15 years, he had, I don't know, less than a thousand subscribers, and that thing's, I think at 100,000 subscribers now within a month, millions of views on that channel. So yeah, if you have an old thing like that, don't just discard that old account that might have already 1000 to give you that momentum of subscribers.

But back to the story, it was at the end of 2021, I guess it was, there was starting to be a lot of friction between how Matt and I were seeing the business, our interests in what we were doing in business, and it just, it seemed like more friction than there needed to be. So we had some friends pop up. And there was definitely, you know, the influence of Web3 Crypto was starting to bubble up in a lot of communities.

And some old marketing friends of ours, we kind of collaborated and we're like, you know what, there seems to be an opportunity here in terms of the media and what we know with content marketing that we can apply to this industry that we are interested in, but at the same time, retrospect, I was not as much interested in the thing.

So I mean, there's always this tricky play with a partnership. You know, it's two people, like a marriage. We've got to be super aligned with where we're headed, goals, vision, beliefs, all that. And at that point, there was definitely a point, it was around December, maybe November of 2021, where there was just more friction, and we were just not getting aligned on where we're going.

Still love Matt, we're great friends and all of that. We've never had a blow up or anything like that. And this is where, in retrospect, we let things just kind of go this direction, you know, the other way without intention, I would say. There wasn't a lot of, it was shiny object, just to say the least, you know? And there's a lot of things like that.

We had the thought behind it that we could take and build a media kind of brand. We actually ended up having one called Hard Fork Media, and then turned into gaming, connected with some amazing people over the short period of time of even four months. We had Justin Kan, the founder of Twitch on the podcast. He's brilliant, incredible, great guy to his co-founder, who was David Wurtz. He also founded Google Drive, Google Fonts, gave us great feedback on actually our business model.

Ironically, like months later, when I asked him, I was like, Hey, so what's the deal? Because we were starting to work with their newer company called Fractal, who's still around, and I believe they're doing some good stuff. They're building great tech in the space. But the problem was that, yeah, we were focused on the media side, and the way that we were approaching it, let's be honest, the audience isn't large, there were a bunch of scams over the year, last year, and hacks and things that really put a bad taste of crypto and that whole space in people's mouths.

So we were in a good trajectory, probably the first four months. We were partnerships with some of the biggest brands, Animoca Brands is one of them, they're five billion or more company, massive investment portfolio. Now they're actually going into AI quite a bit. Huge, and they were going to us for their media, because we realized no one knows marketing and content really in this space too well, or at least they don't have a great structure for it.

And so we just learned a lot, made a lot of connections, used those skill sets, but at the same time, I think there was a lot of things going. So internally, wasn't a fit for me. And the structure, what we were doing, wasn't working out. At the same time, we kind of burned, I wouldn't say we burned the bridges of everything from before, but definitely did not have the communication with the audience that we cultivated for 10 years or more.

Same platform, different topic

James: It seemed like you took the same platform and just changed the topic.

Joe: Pretty much, yup.

James: For me, that was the disconnection that rang an alarm bell. I'm like, well hang on a minute. By all means, start a new podcast or a new brand, and migrate the ones who are interested. So in my case, where I changed the name of my thing, I'm still doing the same core with the same people.

In your case, you kind of kept the brand. And you know, with a little bit of additional, but you just changed the topic. And you probably had just people like not sure what's going on. There'd be other people like me who just aren't interested in that, right?

Joe: And there were a lot of yous on there that reached out, and this is where definitely, I would never recommend anyone doing that. Because it's that connections, the bond with your people.

James: Gosh, it's come up in your story and my story, the relationship you have with your audience, to some extent, is going to dictate the decisions you make. And I'm lucky that I've ended up retaining almost all of the relationships, but at a price point that I can actually continue to have a relationship with them. Otherwise, I would have had to just stop it.

That's why it's almost, it probably sounds over the top, but it's almost a form of self-abuse, if you end up running yourself down because you want the relationship to continue. I can see this would translate into personal relationships. Sounds like you almost went along for the ride a little bit because of your relationship with your partner, even if it's starting to not feel right. And that's definitely, I picked up on that.

I definitely sent an email to both of you saying, I'm happy to chat with you if you want to talk about where your mojo is, or whatever, because I could see on the surface, I think there was a solo episode put out at one point. I'm like, okay, something's going down here.

Joe: Yep. From the outside, in, definitely, it was pretty obvious. And it was weird, man. I mean, there was that hole, and this, I would say Matt was in a similar boat is we had this interesting, like tunnel vision. But we also did it to ourselves. And this is what, you know, and we'll talk about the shift back too, because this was my biggest drive to get out of that business, out of that industry, and really, completely do a big change.

And realizing honestly, like, what I want. Years before this, I had a lot of family things, I felt like there was tragedy, there was new life, there's fostering, there was a lot of things. And, man, it was tough. And it was finding myself. Yeah.

James: It sounds like, I reckon with the first change from where you were on that steady plane to the new thing, it's almost like you're just probably just a bit overcooked with it, maybe just a bit burnt out on it or bored with it, which is very understandable. And I mean, someone who's been doing a business model for a very long time, I can tell you.

Joe: Boredom was part of it, yeah.

James: There are times. I mean, I actually almost sold my community about eight years ago to someone. They kind of sneakily Microsofted me a bit, I think, they made an offer to buy, and they wanted to see the numbers and how it all works, and then instead of buying it, they started their own community a month later, so I was disappointed.

Joe: It happens.

James: Disappointed that those things can happen. But in any case, you've both found your own pathway. Matt probably went from not sure what to do to just pursuing things that interested him regardless of any business intent. And now he's just, perfect timing, perfect preparation. And he's in his sweet spot by the look of it, and I'm so excited for him in that regard.

And you have done what I would suggest anybody do, who is in a situation where they were doing okay, and then did something that's not feeling right. And the word that comes to mind is revert. It's like if you're on a trail and you go down some side path, but you end up at a dead end, go back down the trail to where you last were on the good path and start again. So you've reclaimed the podcast, clearly. And how did that work?

Getting to where Joe is now

Joe: Well, thank you for your guidance. I have to give you a lot of credit, man, because you reached out, maybe what, a handful, maybe just four or five months ago or so. And that was the time where, so I quit the business Matt and I were in before those guys quit, because now it's not there. And we all decided it was the right move.

And really, it came down to me objectively looking at, well, first, the numbers and the amount of time I was putting into every single deal that just eventually all started falling away because there's no money in the industry, no one wanted to invest, the rates that we were putting out there, and we, first half of the year, great, second half of the year, just completely was just like, wow, okay, we're talking with the big dogs, and nothing's working here.

So I had to make that change. And this is where it was mentally for me, you know, I wrote out everything, and I probably spent a good four or five hours writing this message, but it was very specific on the numbers and my things and objective for, you know, across board, and it helped them I think, see some things that they might have not seen at the time, you know, being in our little, you know, it was a house that we were all kind of working in without a lot of input.

We didn't have mentors like you we were chatting with, and other folks, you know, there were a couple times they would reach out but no one really got it. So after I made that change, immediately, the pressure off my chest just flew off. And I was like, Hoo, all right! Did something right. That felt good. Not going to go back into the rearview mirror and drive that way.

So yeah, and sunk cost is what comes to mind too, you know, revert is one way, but sunk costs, yeah, I could have kept pushing, pushing, pushing against that resistance. But why? There was nothing. It wasn't serving me. I honestly felt like I was having panic attacks and like, my chest was just tighter than ever. It was freaking me out. So on a health side of things, mental health, being away from family, grinding too much, there were all the reasons right there that felt so real.

James: You're speaking to my heart with those ones.

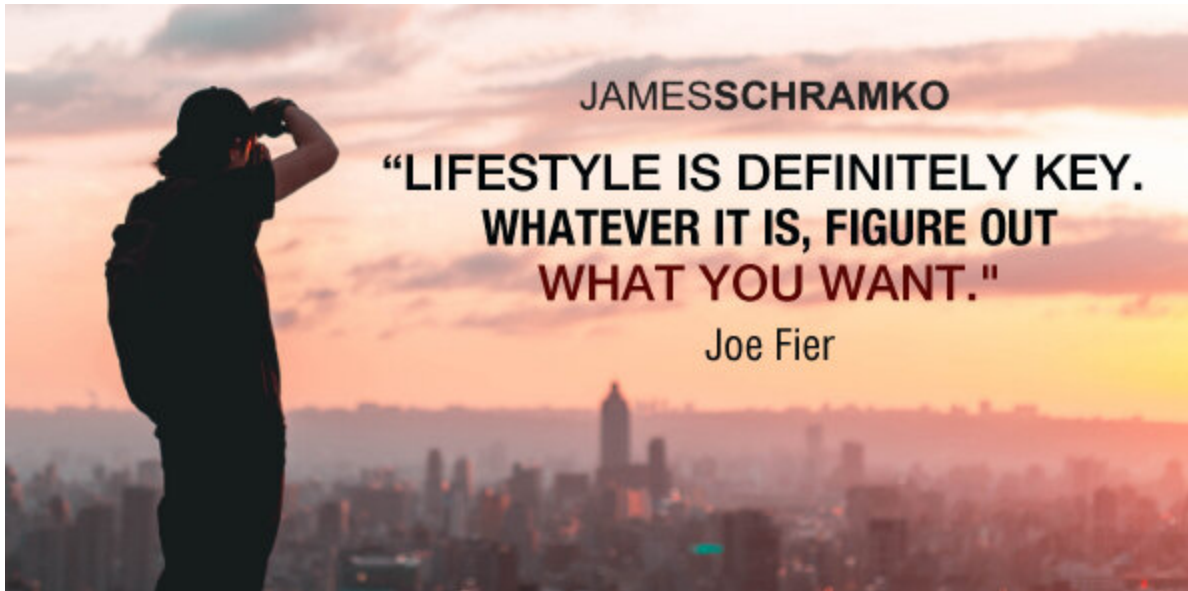
Joe: [Sighs] Dude, it scared the hell out of me. Yeah. It really did.

James: And you're still a young man, you know, and Happy Birthday, by the way. It's your birthday. This guy is doing a podcast on his birthday. Like, that is how, I mean, when I booked this on your scheduler, I might add, you could have moved it if you wanted. I apologize for taking you away from the family on a special day.

But the thing that comes to my mind is just how young you are, and the different phases of life, you're in a very, very good age to slingshot the next decade. And the vast majority of your wealth is yet to come. That's the cool thing. Almost everyone's wealth comes towards the end of their earning capacity. And you're just in the middle part. So it's going to compound, it'll be ridiculous.

Joe: Yeah, and thank you for saying that because in the midst of things, I'm speaking to anyone who has gone through this similar approach, and that's why I want to share this so openly, and thanks for letting me do it is, yeah, it doesn't have to be that way of that hard resistance, feeling like you have to beat through this brick wall, or work with people that you might not be working great with, you know, life's too short for that.

Your family probably wants to hang out with you more, you probably have some stuff you want to do, hobbies outside of the business that truly lights you up. So it's a big assessment of where you want to take things in life, because the business is there to fuel your life. I mean, I believe that. I believe that you do as well.



JAMESSCHRAMKO

**“LIFESTYLE IS DEFINITELY KEY.
WHATEVER IT IS, FIGURE OUT
WHAT YOU WANT.”**

Joe Fier

And yeah, man, lifestyle is definitely key. Whatever it is, figure out what you want. And when I figured out what I wanted at that time, and that's when you and I spoke, you rang me up right around that same point, I think maybe I reached out to you and said I did it. I cut it off. And I think it worked for all of us.

And then that's when you brought up the podcast. There was this analogy that you said, I mean, it's like glued in my mind or imprinted now, is we have this castle, we had all the gold bars, and we chose to go play in the woods. And you know, mess around out there and find, I guess, forage around or something, but the castle and the gold bars are still hanging out over there. Go get 'em!

And it was true. And I immediately did that. And it was a win-win with Matt. He had a path. I mean, it was great, and you gave me that spark because I knew there was something that was missing for me. And it was that thing I avoided for over a year or more, which are the connections to people like yourself, and all my connections were all right there. It was up to me to reach out, up to me to make that decision and show up.

I mean really that's what it was, and take full responsibility of what I did, don't dwell on it but learn immensely from everything. And then continue on, because knowing that I am in the prime years, you know, there's another book I just read and I recommend it, it's Die with Zero is what it's called, and yeah, great book.

Living your life while you can

And that definitely reframes, you know like, live your life now while you are young. And yeah, you're right, 38, like that's how old I am now. It's like the prime experience time. But you know, you're 52, you told me, and you're surfing every day, multiple times, maybe.

James: Man, I'm just going to full drive so I can get to better surf spots. And you know, like, I'm living every single day.

I am working on my health and fitness and living experiences. So I say to my wife, my daughter, let's go on the river today. Let's go and get a boat. And they're like, Yeah, let's go. And you know, my daughter's driving the steering wheel and having the best time ever, we'll put our things in the back of the truck, drive up the beach and camp, and have a surf, and cook some food. Like, you can't get that time back. You cannot.

And when I had my first kids, I was working seven days a week. So I've missed some of that. And I'm not going to do it this time around. So it's critically important. I'm so glad you went back to the castle and got the gold bars.

Joe: They were there by the way, so thank you. You were right.

James: Well, hopefully I'm more often right than not, but I'll tell you what I do know, that when people are a bit lost, or down, or feeling a bit isolated, which is very common in this field, that's when they need the friend to show up. Paid or not paid, they need someone to show up, and they need to get some reassurance and some confidence in what the next moves could be. And to have that support through.

I was very pleased to be able to help out there, because I missed the podcast, I missed the old version of it, and I missed you. And I'm thrilled that Matt has also found his thing. Now, you know, everyone's winning from this.

Joe: Yeah. We are.

James: And I had literally been through the same process of identifying, well, where's the gold sitting in my castle? And you're right, some people do, they just leave the castle gates wide open and head off into the forest, like they need a break. I get it. It's good to have someone in your corner to help you in those situations.

Remember to review and evaluate

So I imagine you're at this fulcrum point now where you're just going to strengthen and sort of consolidate what your next pathway looks like. And as you make the moves, remember what I said earlier, to look back and just see, how does it look like it's going? Does this seem like it's working well? Does it feel okay? And if I had that time again, would I still make the same decision? Or what would I change? And if you would change it, why don't you change it now? That's really where you get to.

Joe: That's right, man. And that's so powerful.

James: So I would suggest at the minimum an annual review point. For my clients, I do it every 12 weeks. Every 12 weeks, they get a reminder, a prompt, and a couple of sage words from me to review certain aspects of what's going on. It's not just money, by the way, because I think you'll hear a lot about money. We hear a lot about traffic.

It's also things like reviewing relationships, reviewing their skills, and what are they looking to improve upon, etc. So we should always be working on something, improving something. And for me, I'm just enjoying reading more, developing skills. I want to be able to hold my breath longer. I want to be able to get barreled more often.

I rebought a PlayStation, I hadn't had one for a while, I'd lost interest in it, and got it just in time as it turns out, to go back to the therapy tool I had back when I was selling cars was playing Gran Turismo at night. It was my switch off, it was my switch off and my release, and I just went through and did all my licenses again.

And I can actually feel that I'm driving my real car better on the road. I'm taking better lines and breaking in the right spots. And I wasn't interested in cars for a long time until now, just because I'd spent, you know, I drove a brand new car home every single night from 1995 to 2008. I was like, I got it all out of my system.

Joe: Yeah, that's great. I mean, that was right before the money phase, right, of building your business and focusing on accumulating that part of things.

James: Yeah. And then there was the surfing phase. And, you know, clearly, I've just about put in and hold 10 years in that. I'm nine years into that. And I'm at a sort of a mature stage of that, where I know exactly what's going on. And I'm really enjoying it. And it's settled down a bit, and I love it.

But that's obviously the baseline. The daily surf is the reset. It's the analog activity, it's the timeout, it's where I think.

James's hierarchy of activity

I've got this hierarchy, actually, I've never shown this to anybody. But on my map, I did this triangle. It's my activity iceberg, right?

Joe: Oh, what have we got here? Okay, I've got to zoom in.

James: Yeah, I'm just holding it up to the camera, but I'll just explain it. It's a big triangle. And it's sort of, where do I want to spend my time. And I want to spend most of my time thinking, you know? I just want to read books, I want to surf, I want to just think about stuff, you know, like a philosopher, I suppose.

Joe: So that's the foundation of the triangle. Yeah,

James: That's what I want - and then the next stuff is I want to sort of research. I want to - there's a word for that, I think like, flâneuring, just wandering around, looking at things. But just, you know, being exposed to different ideas, reading books, studying things. Then there's the drafting, like, that's just coming up with sort of the first version of something. And then there's the editing, which is cleaning it up. You should always create in two phases. [Ed Dale](#) talked about that at my event. Draft, and then edit. And then there's the doing, and then there's the tuning.

So I don't want my whole life just to be grinding and doing. I'd rather put a lot more thought, and research, and drafting, and editing into something before I actually do it. You do all the work here, the doing part is small. And then there's the tuning, that's just the adjusting, and you know, fine tuning it.

So you know, when you and I were speaking about your change, we were doing some thinking together. And then there might be research involved, you might go and have a look at the numbers of something, you might go and assess different models. Then you get to the drafting, okay, you'd sort of have your best guess at how it looks. And then you edit that, like clean it up a bit before it goes out to the public. And then you do it. And then you learn from that and adjust it after that. So that's my activity iceberg. That's where I want to spend my time.

Joe: I saw that the iceberg, yeah, it had a line. And I think that the top two or three were exposed.

James: Yeah, the doing and the tuning like, almost everyone's just looking at the doing. You only see the bits I do. But you didn't see the part where I was thinking, or researching, or drafting, or editing. That's silent. And people keep crapping on about, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, you know, and they make these big declarations on social media. You know, don't. Just do it. Show us, don't tell us, right? Go and do your work in the background. And then what we'll see is the part you did. Tell me about that.

Joe and the daily reset

Joe: There's uhm, I think his name is Alan Watson, not Alan Watts, but Watson. And he's a guy out of the UK. And he talked about this hierarchy of how we essentially behave. But how we think. And a big thing is get down to the physiological part of things, our body.

So you mentioned, you know, the reset, the daily reset, and for me, I was realizing last year especially, I wasn't doing that. I was just tight. I was going into grind mode every day.

James: You're a blunt saw, as Stephen Covey would say.

Joe: [laughs] That's true. Yeah, I forgot about that term. Yeah, it's true. And I felt it was just getting blunter by the day and frazzled. So now, five months later or whatever, I feel like I'm in the best shape of my life right now. I mean, I have these actions I'm doing every day. One of them's 100 pushups.

I mean, I'm always going for at least seven hours of sleep. I'm working out at my gym garage every day. I'm running again, which not far, but enough to two, three miles, let's say, but it gets the brain going. I've hills all over the place. I do hill spreads. I live on the hills, I can't escape them, might as well befriend them again.

James: Do you have a single speed bike? [laughs]

Joe: [laughs] I don't know if that's even doable around here, man.

James: That's the thing, isn't it? You work out in your garage. I just have my surfboard rack, and I look at them from my infrared sauna. I have very passive garage activities compared to you.

Joe: Ha-ha. That's true. I love my garage.

James: The most activity I do in my garage is like wax a board or screw a fin in. But you know, at least I go and do the activity somewhere. Like, I live on a hill, and I walk down to the beach, surf, and then walk up. And I walk through this National Park, there's this wooden pathway through National Park. Hopefully, I don't get mugged after this episode.

I'd change my path occasionally, there's multiple paths, let's just say that. And, you know, as long as I don't step on a brown snake or a deadly spider, because I'm always barefoot, walk through this beautiful national park, you hear the birds and see the creatures, and then you emerge out onto the beach. And then it's just paradise. It's important to have that in your life.

Joe: It really is. And yeah, and I brought up this guy, Alan Watson, there's a couple of videos, but essentially breaks down his hierarchy and how most of us just try to stay in the cerebral and the mental. And maybe it's the thinking, you know, but there's so much of these, like the emotional layer, the feeling layer, and it just goes deeper all the way down to, let's tune into yourself first and actually take an audit.

For me, I do a lot of breath work as well. And it could be from more intense stuff like Wim Hof or Tummo, I think it is originally, or just where it's like HRV, Heart Rate Variability. I'm thinking a lot about that. And that's what this guy Alan Watson talks about. It's like breathing in six seconds, holding for a brief bit, and then six seconds out, just even breathing.

James: Like the navy seal box technique.

Joe: Similar, very similar. Yeah, yep.

James: And one of the diving apps here, it allows you to - you hold and then it counts down, and then you release and stuff, and it can extend your breath. I think breathing is critical. If people just did breathing, sleep, and good food, they'd be a long way down the track. I think [sleep is still the ultimate performance enhancer](#). It's the secret weapon, eluding a lot of people with a false belief that they can cheat.

Joe: And the Apple watch helps a lot too. [laughs] Keep yourself honest.

James: [laughs] Not having a watch helps a lot to me.

Joe: That's true. I did it for the longest time.

James: No notification things or, like it's a bit stoic. You know, I've got a beautiful Rolex in my safe. I don't ever wear it, because it's not important to me anymore. But it was very important to me in 1997.

Joe: Yeah, status and all coming up, you know, of course. But with the metrics, it's like knowing your numbers, just like business. I started looking at my personal metrics of sleep and HRV, all these things that are essentially gauging my energy and stress level. And that is like the key metrics to drive me.



JAMESSCHRAMKO
“LET'S BE HONEST,
WE ARE THE ONES
THAT ARE GOING TO
FUEL THE BUSINESS,
THE VISION,
THE RELATIONSHIPS.”

Joe Fier

Obviously, there's business metrics as well. But let's be honest, we are the ones that are going to fuel the business, the vision, the relationships. Without that health or your health, our health, I mean, we got to show up somehow. Yeah. And we can't show up if we're just in space or wherever the hell we are, laid out in bed, sick.

James: Yeah. I've got one of those little oximeters you put on your finger. And it does your pulse. And I try and meditate to lower the pulse to get that resting rate.

Joe: I've done that before. Pretty fun.

James: Yeah, I've got a baseline on where my resting pulse is. And I can tell if I'm not right.

Joe: You're probably like 30 years something,

James: I can tell from other things. Well, if I'm tired, if I feel hungover or something because I stayed up too late, my vision will get a little more blurry, or my concentration won't be as good. There are indicators that I have that tell me if I'm not right, or I'd notice a little black line under my eye, or I might be irritable. These are all signs. We're able to be aware of these. Do something with that information, get that data, make decisions, do it, use this cycle to continually improve. I've loved this episode on change, Joe.

Joe: Me too.

James: I feel like we've both shared some sort of insight of our own world. It's not all easy. It's not at all easy, this online stuff, is it? But I'd have to say we're both in a great position now, and it's been so good to bring that process out. In my case, just before my celebration episode, this is the last episode we're doing in this first batch of 1000. For you, you're just about to hit 500?

Joe: Ah, we're over 500 now, I am, I'm still saying we. I have a team though now. I'm accumulating my own team and systems. That's kind of where I'm at now with the reboot, but yeah, just over 500. So it'd be 500 and some change on this one.

James: Wow, that's amazing.

Joe: Yeah, I don't know how - both of us, man, congratulations to you.

James: Yeah, and to you too.

Joe: Thank you. Consistency, man, it pays off.

James: A lot of people never really get past the first, you know, three or four episodes. So a bow to us.

Joe: Oh, man. Yeah, seriously. In evolution too. There's a lot of change in just a podcast, obviously. So there's a lot of history there.

James: So much, so much. And I'm about to face that. I have to record the next episode. And I have to look back and where we're at to now. So I'm sure change is a massive topic, this is a really good precursor. So big thoughts from this episode are that it's inevitable, changes, life will punch you in the face occasionally, you're to have to adapt.

You can also preempt change by just building up your change muscle, recognizing when things should change, and changing before you get forced to. Having review points so that you can systematically look at things in hindsight and see what you learned from that and if something should change forward.

And of course, if you have a friend or anyone out there who you notice is going through some changes, or you feel like they could probably do with some support, reach out to them and say hi, that'll always be well received. So there you go. What a great episode. For me 999, and for you, well done. Thank you, Joe.

Joe: Five hundred and some change, yeah, appreciate your time, man. And a little extra too. These are always fun, so I'm sure we'll do it again.

James: Please. That'd be great.

Joe: Alrighty. See you guys.



JAMES SCHRAMKO

**Build the business
that will fuel your
ideal lifestyle with
James's help**