



**Angelo Porrovecchio** 

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 1045. Today, we're talking about branding and story and design. And I've brought along a new guest, Angelo Porrovecchio, welcome to the call.

**Angelo:** Hi, James, I'm happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

**James:** You're over there in West Australia, so we're on the same continent, but gee, it's a long way apart, actually, for one country, couldn't be much further apart.

**Angelo:** Closer to other countries than cities in our own backyard, which is a funny scenario.

**James:** That is funny. I think I can get to New Zealand a bit quicker. Now, of course, we get to catch up every week or so, we have a chat, talking about business and stuff. You're in my Mentor program. And I've really enjoyed getting to know your business through that process and seeing what you're doing because it's kind of like you've brought fresh stuff into my view.

And I wanted to talk about that today because in this online space, we're often talking about performance-related stuff. We come from this direct response, copywriting, paid traffic, conversions, etc., etc. You've come at this a little more from a branding and storytelling perspective in the work you're doing.

And of course, being where you're located, you've been doing some of this stuff for very large companies, like multinational companies who are extracting mineral resources from the earth. But also, I know you're a passionate cyclist, and you've been building a brand in that market. So I'm interested to sort of counterbalance the performance side of marketing with the branding and story side.

## **Branding consistency and trust**

Can we just sort of share for a moment, what's your observation when you come into this sort of hardcore performance world?

**Angelo:** Well, I see this perspective of short term versus long term, I mean, performance. It's a fierce market out there because you're competing with budgets. Now, budgets vary. And let's say you have a similar product to the guy next door, and the only differentiation is the product. Now, if you don't need to weave your story, and who you are, or what your company is in vision stands for, from a visual perspective and storytelling perspective, you're really just competing on price.

**James:** Right, so you can build value in the perception of your business. How do you describe brand? I've heard it described a few different ways. But when you think of it, what does it mean to you?

**Angelo:** Well, it's the alignment of your visual perception to the world, the world's perception of your organization from a visual point of view, and emotional point of view, with its values and its core end goal, its core beliefs. So if they're aligned, then you're being true to what you're selling. And customers, people resonate with that. If you're consistently playful or consistently disruptive, the consistency becomes something that the brain gets drawn to, because, you know, it's not erratic, it's not some kind of scam. It's someone you know, basically.

**James:** So like when I'm watching Formula One, and I see a Red Bull sports car, I keep seeing the blue, red, yellow, I see the logo a lot. And then I see it on a motocross's helmet or a BMX's helmet or a skater's T-shirt or a surfer, kite surfer, wind surfer on their board bag, and I start to see this brand a lot. Does that mean they're really nailing their game?



**Angelo:** I think so. There's an awareness there. I mean, the brain equates the consistency with trust. You know, back in evolutionary times, if something's consistently there, it's not a threat. So the trust element is what you want associated with your organization, business or whatever you're selling.

Over time, that trust, even if you're not a buyer, or an engager on the spot, when it does come time to engage or to be drawn in, the trust element and the recognition of that brand, that's when that comes into play. So it's really for the long-term player. And aside from that, it adds value. Even if you're in the short term, if you were to sell - I know there's a lot of entrepreneurs in your audience - to sell your business at some point, a brand that is recognized rather than one that isn't, is worth a lot more on the market.

**James:** Well, I'm certainly hoping that for my surf brand, where I've put time and effort into logo, trademark, a certain look and feel, and building out content, and not necessarily being the face of it, you know, for the most part. Like, someone asked me my name the other day, like I'm not known for that content personally, but the brand does that. And that is my intention. I think I brought from Mercedes-Benz a love of, or recognition of how strong a brand can be that can exist without one person because the founders of that brand were well and truly long gone. Right? It was 100-year-old brand.

# How important are the details?

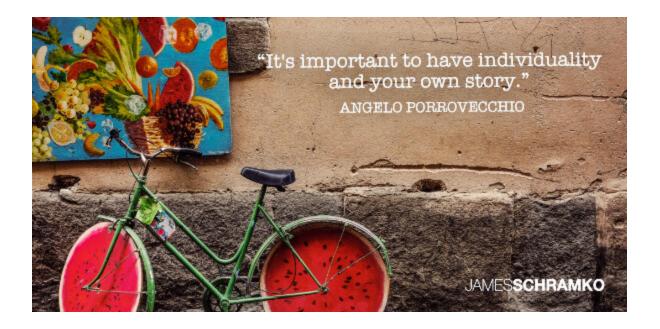
And how much detail do people take in when we're presenting and when we're on a Zoom and when we make content? Because I'm looking around your studio here, I get a certain feel about you, I can see a DSLR camera on a bench top there and some neatly organized receptacles, and so lots of natural light and some wooden panels, and you know, the way that you're dressed, I take it all in. And I imagine people are doing the same thing when I'm making this content. Is it something they're conscious of? Is it a big deal or not?

**Angelo:** I think it is. I mean, colors and things you resonate with, like simplicity, these are all elements that we take into consideration when designing and approaching a brand. We need to tailor it to the person. Now, yeah, it is a reflection on who you are. Even your brand, James, the orange, its energy, its vitality and encouragement. That's exactly what you stand for. And another element, which I've seen recently, is your little video flicker at the end of your posts.

**James:** With the little splash. It's got the surfboard and microphone.

**Angelo:** Exactly. And the wave.

James: The wave, that's it.



**Angelo:** So that's a little story, and I don't even have to see you, or your face or your name. I can associate that with who you are. And what - well, a little bit of what you represent. So yeah, I mean, it's important to have individuality and your own story. That applies to an individual, an organization, their vision, or where it started. Even if it's not an exciting industry.

There's something to scratch beneath the surface, that there's a story there. It started for a reason, or a great, great grandpa father was a wheat farmer, that this is incorporated into this curve of the logo. It's something you represent, something people want to wear and be proud of.

#### Can people learn good design?

**James:** So is this something anyone can learn? Because I've noticed some people just get design, right? Like I remember reading, I think you said, You know what good looks like, or something along that line. And I'm like, yeah, there's people like that, like my friend Greg Merrilees. He just knows what design looks like. He knows what a good design is.

I would say that I didn't, maybe don't. I need to rely on experts like you guys to help out. And I've noticed even within our own team, some people have gotten more of a design affinity than others. And I'm not sure how long it's been fostered. I mean, it's sort of on my mind because my daughter who's very young does a lot of painting.

She's cranking out good pictures now that I don't think I could paint as well as her now, I'm a lot older than her. So I think it's just in there, and it's being brought out. But would there be people who are oblivious to the fact that their design is so offputting that it's discouraging people?

**Angelo:** Yeah, so I've seen them all James. It's a funny journey.

**James:** I see some that make me like, [gasp], you know like, people squished their heads or they used really bad lighting, and they wear the wrong color, you know, like light or cool or warm, like they wear the wrong type of outfits, or they're just a clashy mismatch, or terrible logos or whatever. And they don't really have their own - their own design style is lack of style, if you know what I mean. Would they be oblivious to it?

**Angelo:** Yes, absolutely. I mean, it's a bit of a curse. Having an eye, a design eye is a bit of a curse. Just walking down high street, you start looking at kerning, at art colors, and you have to kind of unlearn that, switch it off, let's just walk down the street, and not analyze every sign or every piece of branding out there.

But yes, some people have the strength. And others, I've seen clients that have come to me with their own ideas, and very strong on them. And that's the biggest challenge, is slowly letting their tires down and showing them, and the only way to do it is to show them why this won't work. And research, and this is not who you are, you are this person because you've told me this whole story. We're great listeners. You've got to listen, and you've got to look at what they're working with. And you have to become a little bit of a psychologist in a way of, You've got to let go of that.

James: I love how you put that. I know how you're very gently spoken and reserved. However, I know you're really good at your skill. I like that expression, letting their tires down. And there's a famous Oatmeal cartoon, I'm not sure if you've seen it, where someone gives someone a design job. And then they just keep hacking it and changing, and the designer in the end just says, Oh, here you go. And they give them exactly what they want. And it's like the ugliest possible thing ever. Is there a point where you have a client that you say, I don't think we're destined to work together?

**Angelo:** Yeah, usually you can pick up on it quite quickly. And yeah, like you said, I'm not about throwing my weight around. Because this is their baby, this is their business. A lot of the time, they've nurtured that. And they're quite attached to it. And just like anything, just like with accounting, you've got to let the books go at some point, you've got to bring someone in.

And with branding and design, you've done great, you put your hand on their shoulder, but it's time to let go of this because you do what you do, great. Let us show you another way. And let us tell your story on how the external world will see it. And it can be heard to its full potential. So yeah, the answer to your question is, there's some characters out there. And business is tough. It's tough. It's hard to get like there's all these books about not being emotional. They're written for a reason, because people get attached. I'm a victim myself.

**James:** I can imagine. I've found a lot of artist-type people have very strong emotions, whether chefs or musicians or designers. They're very passionate.

#### The people Angelo works with

What type of materials would you say should be in consideration for someone when they come to get help from a design studio branding, storytelling, makeover? Like, who are you helping? And what are you helping them with?

**Angelo:** Well, like I said, previously, we listen to their story. People that the alignment's off, and they might be doing well with sales. But that can bring you to a point where you'll be capped at some point. Because if your competitors are serious about design and branding, they'll be known. And you might have helped them get the recognition, get their product out there. They'll be known at the end.

So who we're helping, probably people that have a story to tell, or that aren't singing in unison. They're not consistent across the board with their communications. They're not happy with, they don't feel their logo represents who they are and what they do. Because sometimes you might sponsor something, and logos can be quite simple, but there's sometimes a little story that can be told.

### Getting to where you want to be

Even the FedEx logo. A lot of people don't realize there's an arrow in between the D and the E, or one of those. So it's inbuilt in there. So we can weave in, even in typography, a little wink to, a little nod, this is who we are. And it usually starts with a questionnaire, I'll send out like a brand pulse checker. And sometimes it's just an alignment. You know, I use an analogy for a flight path. You start your business, you want to go to the destination, and the destination equals success, whether it's helping the community or making millions.

Now a few degrees off, if you're not consistent, someone comes in with their own ideas that you've let take the reins, a few degrees off over, you know, compounding over, and you end up in a totally different destination. You want to go to Brazil, you end up in New Zealand.

James: In Brisbane.

Angelo: Yeah, well.

**James:** That reminds me, I went on a dealer trip of the Mercedes-Benz prize winners. There was a guy there. And they said, How did you end up in the town that you ended up in? And he goes, Well, when I came to Australia, I went to the train station. And he said, I thought I was asking for a ticket to Melbourne, but he ended up in Maury, which is very, very different.

Angelo: I don't even know where that is.

**James:** It's a tiny little country town on the border of New South Wales and Queensland. And he just set up shop, basically, and then ended up creating a nice little dealership for himself. That was quite funny.

**Angelo:** Oh, brilliant. Okay, so in that scenario, sometimes you can work in your favor.

**James:** Could be serendipitous. But often now with bad design, it's not going to work in your favor. I love what you said before, you could actually be helping your competitors. The one with the stronger brand wins.

## Not enough focus on brand

Do you find people don't really put much emphasis on it or don't think it's as important as it possibly could be?



**Angelo:** I think people probably over-invest in performance marketing, and under invest in brand awareness. Because let's say you've got a product that becomes redundant one day, then the business is only worth as much as the product or service. Al comes in, something comes in, a change in the market.

If you've built your brand awareness, consistent collateral, everything you do is the right tone, the right colors, if you've built your brand awareness, that product doesn't really mean, it doesn't hold as much weight as initially did. That product can be switched out, connected to the brand that you've created and invested in, and you could still prosper as a business.

**James:** It'd be like some of those famous companies that like maybe Bugatti for example, or Bentley or Aston Martin, you know, like they've got such rich heritage that they can transcend different ownership structures.

**Angelo:** And we wouldn't even know. We just know that that is prestige. That's performance, whatever we buy that. It would get us a certain type of product, and expectation will be met.

**James:** Yeah, it's like I realized this when I was hiring at Mercedes-Benz. People would say, Listen, if this was Ford or Nissan, I wouldn't be here for this job. I'm here because it's Mercedes-Benz. So you realize there's a powerful force going on there. I was definitely more performance-oriented when I started online, and I've only, in the last half of that journey, rolled back in branding. We've had all of our designs done, from the logos to the website, to the templates of the things we upload have a certain set standard, a style guideline and our specific colors down to the - what do they call, the hex thing?

**Angelo:** Yeah, online, the hex colors and then printed, which is, you probably wouldn't see much of that, the Pantones.

**James:** Pantones, that's it. Those things. Right, see, look at that, tools of the trade. Now you're just showing off.

**Angelo:** Quick reference. This is like my gun belt.

**James:** Just like, he's got the top left pocket. No worries. Oh yeah, Pantone. Did someone say Pantone? [laughs]

**Angelo:** [laughs] Arms reach, everything has to be at arm's reach. The moleskin, yeah, ideas come and they go.

# What goes into effective design

**James:** So what are we after? We're sitting here, we're thinking, gosh, I've never really thought about design or branding. What should we want in the toolkit? Are we talking about - you've mentioned a logo - should we have a color palette done or a mood board, or what are the tools of the trade?

**Angelo:** So definitely a color palette. You should have your primary colors. And then if you've got multiple products, it's okay to introduce more colors as long as they're complementary. You know, you might have your gold standard, a certain type of color. So keep the consistency. Consistency is the biggest, I mean, it's an obvious one, but consistency will be the lifeblood of what you do.

So you check in with your logo, the logo is one element. Check in if your logo represents who you are, what you stand for. And then we work on to colors, and templates for marketing, depending on what it is. Socials, everything needs to marry up, throughout the signage, digital presence. Banners can't just be thrown together with templates that other people are accessing, because you're just going to look like other people.

And you have to have your individuality as an organization. So a style guide is super important. I'd say once that's all locked down, a style guide. And that way that can be passed down and updated. And you will never stray off course. You end up in Melbourne, not that country town, which I can't remember.

James: Maury.

**Angelo:** Maury, if you want to go to Melbourne.

**James:** You know, actually I remember, it was probably about maybe 12 or 13 years ago, one of the very first mandates I rolled out to the team was, Please, let's just use Helvetica Neue, if we're going to build any slides or whatever, just use the same font. Because they were making all these different looks and feels, and it was scary, right?

**Angelo:** I love that font.

James: I do too, I was just like, Let's just make it that.

Over time though, we've been able to build out, to the point where, you've identified, we have that little splash thing in every video. So we do have a brand guideline, I suppose you'd call it. One thing is we wanted to get off making Hormozistyle videos, because we're not Hormozi. I had a friend of mine, Mark, and he just wanted us to have a more natural feel. He edited up a few for us to show us what to do, which was really generous.

And now we don't have, you know, all the pshew, pshew, pshew, sound effects and the TikToky style stuff. We're more just clean cuts. So Mark Whitehand was pivotal in saying, Look, just keep it natural. He said, you can't be too authentic if you just keep it as natural as possible. So we leave in mistakes now, we keep the cuts clean, we have a standardized captioning. And we have that little thing. But over time, the consistency is what lets people know, oh, this is our content, because they see it and it's not anyone else's, it's ours.

**Angelo:** Exactly. And sticking to that is vital.

**James:** And it's actually easier for the team to have a standard that they can benchmark off rather than trying to be creative and come up with a new take on every single one.

**Angelo:** Well, that's what happens with organizations, they might spend all this money on locking down a style. And then a new marketing manager might come in and start, Here's the style, but I'm going to add my little flair to it. And that's okay. But again, it strays off course. So what you have to do is, maybe it's time to update the style guide.

If we're going to be a bit more punchy, if we're going to do a call out for if it's podcasts or a new product, we use this font all the time. It's a bit more fun. But then when we do the corporate stuff, we use these fonts. So people know, oh that font means new product, or that font means a new event. And so, they still connect with your brand. It's super important.

That's why often we stay on just as a partner, and just run everything through us. We create the brand and then just provide updates and customization to templates. Because content might be, you know, there might be a lot of content on one piece of marketing material and a little bit on another, and you need to fill these gaps in some way in a creative way.

**James:** It gets away from you over the years, you know? I'm so fortunate to have Greg - he's been helping me all this time. He'll say, Oh listen, I think your podcast needs a new logo, or your website needs a bit of a cleanup, or the membership, we can rearrange. And just a constant, I guess, it's like Kaizen.

### When someone encroaches on your brand...

But there's a lot of assets if I think about it, we've got logos, we've got front-end public pages, we've got the back-end memberships, we have the app, we have the video content, we have PDF downloads that we give, they're all in the same look and feel. And I even went and put the same picture of me on the social platform so that people can instantly recognize that's me.

Because when those scammy, thieving bastards go and steal pictures of me and make a fake profile, trying to give away bitcoins to my followers, hopefully, usually they'll use a different picture, and it automatically looks a bit different because you get used to my picture. But if I do a universal update, it's usually because someone's stolen it and Facebook won't take it down, which is frustrating.

**Angelo:** That's brilliant. You touched on that, you know, the trust element. Because the scammy guys...

**James:** Well, it's like, you know, automatically, most people would think, why would I be giving away Bitcoin for free? You know, like, they're very clever how they do it. They open up some random account, they change the name to the same as yours, they put your picture, and then they go to your posts and post as you on your posts with these giveaways.

And unless you're quick to shut them down, or, you know, ban them and delete them from the page, some people might get involved. But I've said that, I even updated my bio. I don't give away free bitcoin, right? I ain't given any of my Bitcoin away, I'll just let it ride. Right? So let's get that clear.

But I think people, you know, and you've noticed there's a theme of the surfing comes through into my work, even on the book cover, which, again, this went through a change, because it used to just be my head. And then not only do I look a bit different now, but this cover was more making the message about the book benefit rather than about me. So it was a change in strategy.

### Angelo's typical approach

But I guess the earlier you inform your strategy, the better, and the more consistent you can be, the better. And it would probably cost less to just update everything and lock it in and try and hold on to that as long as it's current, right? With just a little retainer maintenance program.

**Angelo:** Yeah, that's often how it works. Sometimes it's an alignment. And yeah, just a maintenance kind of scenario. But if you've already spent, you know, if someone's already spent money on a brand update, chances are, there's something workable, might just need an alignment to get back on course.

That's why we just sit down and do a checkup, because there's nothing worse than going through the whole process again. And what we do with systems, we save the song and dance, we get to the work, and we find the problem and we move on, because we're results-driven on that.

**James:** So you don't put on the black skivvy and have a boardroom meeting? And then just regurgitate what the client said to you back to them to make them sound like it's an awesome idea? [laughs] And then they pay you 200 grand and you drive off in your Porsche.

**Angelo:** Exactly. In the boardroom. Yeah, no, I refrained from the black skivvy, we usually have good weather here in WA, so it's hard to pull that off. [laughs] Unless it's a sleeveless black skivvy. No.

James: Go merino, I think that's natural fiber. It breathes.

**Angelo:** Love merino. Now that's half the reason why I got into the business, and we're brand designers. All the song and dance and yeah, the black skivvies, kind of repelled from it. So we did a strategy and the design process on the fly, nothing starts without finding out who they are and what they stand for. Because we create our own businesses anyway, like you said, the cycling apparel. These are things we've gone through ourselves. So we're not just the branders. We know what it takes to start a business and how it can be. You want to get it moving and get generating.

**James:** Yeah, well, I mean, you're probably too humble to say, but I know that your brand got some international interest, people wanting to take it to the different markets. It's proof in the pudding, as far as I'm concerned. It means that you know exactly how to tune into your market and what they're interested in.

# The struggles of being your own artist

Was it - did you have any tortured artist moments when you're trying to make your own brand, you know, as the client and the provider?

**Angelo:** Well, I guess if you're a designer, you immediately think the problem is design. So it's not working, it's not selling, it must be the design. So, yeah, hours and hours of redesigning, rebranding, taking a step back from the screen. And yeah, probably going around in circles but ending up in the same place, because you're going through the same methods.



Identifying the technical issues, as a brand designer, is, you know, basically the moral of the story is, hire the people that are experts in their industry. You can rebrand yourself 10 times over. But if your books aren't in order, we're going to have an issue. But on the flip side, people will know your brand. So you're not hurting yourself too much.

**James:** While we're on that, Angelo, what are you calling yourself out there in the market? If we want to look you up?

**Angelo:** Got Creative - G-O-T Creative. So it's just like a slang, got creative. You can yell that out. But yeah, so we provide these branding solutions, and the website is gotcreative.com.au. And yeah, we have fun, we love it. And I've got a brand checker online, that pulse checker, that you can fill out a questionnaire to see where you're at. It's always good to see where you're at. And usually, that's how we start engagement with people. People are curious, and then they realize, oh, wow, we're in trouble here.

## Is something amiss with your brand?

**James:** What would be the first indicator that something's not right with your brand?

**Angelo:** Let's say you're using assets in the brand, and you're not feeling proud, you're not feeling that you can wear it on your shirt or, you know, you're not feeling that it represents you and what you're doing. So I'd say it's an emotional thing. This is not us. That question, if that's being raised, or does this perceive who we are and who we stand for? Just with the colors, just with this graphics that we're using, these assets, is it us? That, if the answer is no, or even half a no, there might be something to address behind the scenes.

**James:** One of the questions I ask in my onboarding is, what's the name of your business? And do you like it? And often people are like, well, I get, I love it, through to either or, or not necessarily. I think the emotion is such an important point. If we are a micro business, let's say like, and by Australian definition, right, small business starts at like \$25 million a year in revenue. So most of us are just tiny little businesses. We're so tied to it personally. I think it's important to be into the brand.

One of the main reasons I retired my last business name is I felt like I outgrew it. It felt a little - I don't know, it felt too childish or immature, I suppose - and part of that was probably the audio logo that was on the podcast as well. And I just wanted to grow up, you know, grew up into my personal brand. I was ready for my personal brand. I was ready to put myself out there.

I guess before, I was just hoping maybe I could build an asset that I could sell. But I realized that the real, the secret ingredient for that business is me. So that being the case, I was better off to pursue partnerships for my chances of selling a business and to build that other brand, the surfing brand that doesn't rely on me, which I am really proud of. And I love the name of it, and the logo. And I like creating content for it, probably even more so than the business stuff. I can be just as happy making a surf board video in my garage as recording a podcast.

So I've got the brand to a point where I really like it, and what it can do and how much reach. I get people messaging me all the time asking me what fin they should use, or which board between these two should they choose. And the Shapers are often engaging with me and sharing my content, and it makes me feel a sense of deep satisfaction that I'm connecting with the market, because it's something I'm interested in.

So I've experienced what a good brand is like, both from working for major brands and from building out some of my own. And I think if you're listening to this episode so far, and you don't feel like that's in play, it's probably time to get some brand help. And there are people out there. People like Angelo, for example, who just get it, they can tell you straight away what's good, what's not. And then let your air down slowly.

Angelo: They tell us the answer.

James: Yeah, I like that.

**Angelo:** Yeah, it's a technique, it's pretty good.

**James:** You have to do that if you drive on the beach, too. So if you get these little - they're called Stauns, I think, and you put them on the tire, and they actually put it down to a preset level, like 14 psi. You put four on and all your tires are hissing. And then it stops when it gets to the right level. You need some of those.

**Angelo:** But then you can move forward and get to your destination, right?

**James:** You can without getting bogged. It's a counterintuitive step, that to get where you need to go, you've got to let your air down sometimes, and let the process take over. And then you can put the air back in later if you want.

**Angelo:** Absolutely, yeah, I'm good at putting air back in as well. That's something I'm great at. You can tell it's liberating, the way you were speaking about what you've created. It's a liberating feeling when you're connecting with the brand and connecting with the right people.

**James:** I'll tell you what also was good was when I had the opportunity to sell a couple of my businesses. No doubt the person buying the business was buying the customer base, they were buying the team, the systems, the domain name, the brand, and what that name and reputation in the market meant.

There was a certainty that people would continue to buy from it, because the brand, you know, the way people feel about that business was worth something. And it was, again, it's incredibly satisfying, to think I took a domain that I purchased for \$500, I built this business live in a two-day workshop, and then seven years later sold it for a decent sum. It was just the magic of putting it all together.

So yeah, I'm a fan. I think people get too obsessed with the direct response. I've been enjoying bringing a direct response approach to your stuff, and seeing that take off and it's very satisfying to see. So I've always enjoyed our conversations. I thought we'd be able to have something interesting to share with our audience, Angelo. So thank you for putting the time aside, especially being a brand new daddy, I imagine you've got some duties to attend in a minute.

**Angelo:** That's all right. Yeah. And I just kind of weave it into my lifestyle. Yeah, so he's great, little Miguel. And he's not too much trouble. He gets the rhythm. You know, he has his music playing or something. So it's a positive environment, he goes with the flow.

**James:** Love it, getting them in early, learning the craft.

**Angelo:** Yeah, family business, we'll see. And I appreciate it. I look forward to our talks every week. And I feel the effect and the energy coming from your orange color palette, orange and black.

**James:** That's why I put it around my head there.

Angelo: Yeah, I noticed. A little halo.

James: A little halo effect. Pure chance. All right. We'll catch you later.

**Angelo:** Okay, thanks, James. Ciao.

James: Thank you.

