

The Downside of Scaling Fast with Chris Evans from Traffic and Funnels

James and guest Chris Evans discuss potential downsides of scaling a business too fast. They give valuable insights for achieving sustainable success.



Chris Evans

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to my podcast. This is episode 981. Today, we're chatting with Chris Evans, not the Hollywood actor. Welcome.

Chris: Thanks, man. Glad to be here.

James: Yeah, look, we've known each other for a while. I remember we were in online communities way back in the day. I've seen you face to face a few times at events. I've watched your journey. You're just a normal dude, doing some cool stuff. And then you blew up pretty big, I must say.

And one of the last times I saw you in real life was at a nice, fancy dinner at [Kevin Rogers](#)'s copywriting event. I think we were both speaking at that event. So it was really good to connect. We've stayed in touch, we exchange a few Facebook comments here and there.

And here we are, we decided it'd be good to have a little peer-to-peer chat on the show, talk about what's been happening in your life, and see what lessons we can extract for the rapidly growing entrepreneur. So I'm pretty excited to see what's going to happen today.

Chris: Well, I'm excited to share. Thanks for having me, man.

A big business built quickly

James: So you're over there in Charlotte, North Carolina, it's probably evening where you are, it's still early part of the day here. You built a very big business very quickly. I'd say most of the people listening to this podcast will have been exposed to some of your advertisements. I remember there was like these famous boardroom ones, people writing ads on the wall.

Do you want to just give us a quick insight into, when did things start to take off for that business? So you were doing your online marketing stuff, and then suddenly you got big. It happened pretty much overnight from my perspective, is that how quickly it happened for you?

Chris: Yeah, it felt like that, it just felt like a roller coaster, man, just ups and downs, and the speed at which we moved. So we started the business, we went full time, my partner and I, in January 2016. And our first full-time month, we did six figures. And we had just kind of messing around with the offer for a few months.

And once we really committed to go all in on Traffic and Funnels, it felt like it exploded. And I was really on the ad side and I'd built webinars and infrastructure for launches. My partner, he was doing the sales stuff. And I say that, in my mind, that was an amazing amount of money, because I'd never touched that kind of money before.

I'd helped my clients before make a good amount of money. So I thought before I got to the point, I thought that was going to be the arrival. Right? Like the \$100,000 a month was like the, for whatever reason, in my mind was like, Man, that's it, like, I'm going to just feel this certain thing. And I'll be like, have this amazing crescendo, after all the years of grinding. I remember seeing you at Stompernet, in 2009, dude. I don't know if you remember that event.

Scaling up, then down

James: Well, you know, like in 2008 was when I [quit my job](#), around about July 2008. And the first month out, I made six figures a month. And I've never averaged less than six figures a month since, since 2008. But I've kept small. So this is really a very interesting scenario. You cracked the six figures, you thought, I've made it.

But then I think things changed a lot, didn't they? I'm sure you've got that volume up quite substantially. But this is where we have to talk about internet math. Right? A lot of people talking about revenue. But there's so many choices that get made and so many things that happen that can interfere with the dream.

So in my case, for example, I kept a pretty high-margin business, low-cost business, initially, but then I started going to service provision or whatever. And we scaled up from just me to one, to two, and then I had 65 people before you know it, but all in the Philippines, and running at a 50 percent profit margin back then.

So we were doing several million dollars a year at a 50 percent profit margin, which was still very decent and healthy. But then I scaled back down when I sold off those service agencies, the SEO business and the website business. And I've just kept a tiny little team.

We've got six people in my business. We're still a seven-figure business, we make great profit margin. My wife's business, [visionfind.com](#), the recruitment agency, is a tiny little business. It's a good little business as well.

After the six-figure month

So you went down a different path. You get the six-figure month, what happened after that?

Chris: So we ended up hiring, I think our first hire was in the summer was actually a media buyer. Then we added an ops person. And I think when we really got starting to get well known is when we launched our newsletter, which was January or spring of 2017. And my partner and I, we were just kind of crazy, we made fun of each other, made fun of the industry. And our ads were just crazy. And we're just all over the place.

And I think that's when people really got to start to see us and know us. And man, we just thought the right thing to do was to just add people and scale as much as we could, as fast as we could. And because we kind of figured out the model, like, we figured out the economics and we could engineer the economics.

And then I think we had started adding info products, front end products, you know, self-liquidating offers, as well in 2017, probably, really, maybe made it popular in our industry, I don't know. But it helped us to kind of get ahead of the curve, if you will, and build market share pretty quickly.

James: Well I was definitely seeing a lot of your ads, lots of ads, the newsletter, it was a very low price from memory to enter into that.

Chris: Yeah, it was seven bucks a month.

James: That's it, \$7 a month product, getting lots of traction, I mean, obviously, you're good at traffic, and funnels, so you're applying your own knowledge onto your own traffic and funnels. It makes sense that you could smash that part.

When you're not good at it...

It sort of begs the question, what bits weren't you good at that broke? Because I'm sure as you scale, you find things start to become unwieldy.

Chris: Yeah. Really, I think the biggest challenge was operations and finance. It's something that myself nor Taylor really, likes or really good at. I would rather, you know, eat dog food than have to do operations. It was like that kind of thing, like just let me be a marketer, let me innovate, let me create, and let me grow things. I don't want to do that stuff.

But we hired our operations guy in 2018. That was just another part that was really a catalyst for our growth. Because then I could stay in innovation and marketing and doing my stuff. And then Taylor was on the sales side. And then we had this guy that was helping on the operations. So it's just like, man, let's just take this thing, the stuff that's working, really, the mental model of first principles, really have that locked in. Let's just go to the moon. Right?

Unbridled growth

And so the mistake is, we were ungoverned, really. We had the ability to grow. We had the ability to grow fast. And so we did, because we didn't have, really, I'd say, the right identity and value system that would bring boundaries to the organization, that would keep us from just accelerating just because we could. And that's one thing I think I would change if I could go back - discipline in growth.

James: I wish I was mentoring you back then. [laughs] I feel like I'm often the train tracks for people. And one thing that's really interesting, when people come into my sphere, they often have very big growth goals. I mean, some people have actually said to me, I don't know if you'll be the right person for me because I don't want to work 25 hours a week. I love what I do. I want to work more.

But I'm saying, Well, your goals are your goals, your goals are different to my goals. Like, I'm in my 50s, I want to surf every day. I've got a young daughter I want to spend time with. I'm not interested in having a \$20 million a year revenue, it would have way too much compromise for the life I want to live. Like, I'm already set. Why would I go backwards?

Bigger revenue, bigger responsibility

But if you're young and full of fire and stuff, I would definitely question what's driving that? Why do you want to make \$10 million a year? It's always 10 million, by the way, always. Everyone wants to make \$10 million a year. If you do 100 grand a month, you're now a seven-figure business. I'm willing to bet that your next goal is like, We can get \$10 million a year. Right? That is the trophy point that you get to. When you get to \$10 million dollars a year, does it change for you?

Chris: No.

James: Did you have bigger problems?

Chris: What you end up getting is more responsibility.

James: More responsibility. That's what I noticed. When I had 65 people and we were doing millions per year, I'm like, you know what, I don't think I want 300 people to make \$10 million a year because I'm just like, all these people... You know, when it hit me the most was when we hired out a restaurant, I brought my team to a restaurant in the Philippines. And some of them stayed at home. They got kids or they couldn't make it whatever. But I think we had 55, 60 people in the restaurant.

I just looked around. That's like two classrooms in a school, of people who are like all directly, you know, I'm responsible to navigate my business to provide these people an income. Like, they've committed to me. They've said, We're on the ride with you, we trust you. We want this to be successful, right, as a unit. And I felt like, this is huge.

Now with a small team of six, I can say that they're so self-organized, and so independent, and so trustworthy that my life is so drama-free. We meet for 10 minutes a week. I'm not involved in minutiae or crazy, risky stuff with them. We have a fantastic business. So this is just critical. There'll be so many people listening to this.

I'm going to call out, there'll be especially young guys, right, in their 30s, maybe mid 20s through to mid-30s. At that age, you feel like you need to be making \$10 million a year to be significant, to be valuable to society, to show everyone that you are the man. Right? I do have a slightly more male-skewed demographic, it's about 65:35, I think.

But these are the people I have the most impact with. When I take on a 30-year-old and help them grow. I've done this before, guys like [Ezra Firestone](#). I've seen this growth trajectory. You need someone to manage that with you. Because if you're left unchecked, you start to not know where is North anymore.

A changing concept of success

So what happened after that? You've added Western team members, you've built a significant thing, you probably have offices and all that sort of stuff. You've got a lot of money coming in and a lot of money going out. Did you start to get a sense of, hang on a minute. Is this what success looks like?

Chris: Yes, yeah, well, I think, so we got to about 150 employees, two office leases, about \$50,000, \$60,000 a month just for the office leases, and then all the expenses that come with that, right? We were doing events and everything. And so our velocity was pretty crazy. And then you wake up one day, and you realize the responsibility that you have.

And I think for me, self-awareness has not been my strength in the past. And so I've been able to endure a lot of pain and a lot of burden and weight. And I just woke up last year and just realized, man, I think I've built a prison for myself that is very hard to escape. What the hell, right? Which just leads to burnout and really unhealthy things. But it's hard to unwork that. Right? That's a really interesting thing.

And so for us, we took this model, and not only do we have Traffic and Funnels, but we started another thing called Sales Mentor, which blew up and that went crazy. And we started a real estate company, then we started another book publishing business, because we could, and again, it wasn't built off a healthy identity or healthy value system.

And even as leaders, I think we grew out of a place that wasn't healthy, just what you were talking about. We wanted significance, and we wanted acceptance, and we wanted the praise of people. And for me, I discovered that I wanted and really needed some level of financial security. And so all these things, I think, are a really unhealthy foundation for scaling.

And which led us to a place of just, I think, for myself, and we could probably speak for Taylor's, building something that ultimately we didn't want at the end of the day. Coming to this year, just having a lot of battles and external factors that we had to deal with and challenges where we both stepped outside of the business handing it off to someone else.

And man, me just taking time to figure out, what is life, what do I want? Because it's not what I've had. Of course, it's been an amazing thing that's happened, and we've had tremendous impact and all those kinds of things. But ultimately, I'm 41 now. So ultimately, just figuring out where I'm at in life, my daughter is 18, she just went off to school, and so just the convergence of all these things.

And now it's like, man, yeah, getting to a place of really designing my business and life from a healthy identity. And the thing about it is my pace. Being okay with being slow and methodical, and intentional, because man, my whole life, dude, I've just been in a hurry, everything, you know, 90 miles an hour.

Did you know you can design your life?

James: Because we're taught all these myths. You know, even in a workplace, people will say, Walk fast, your boss will think you're a highly effective employee. Now, people like Elon Musk are trying to coax people back into the office, right? So it's very interesting what you said. Key points there are to design your life.

I suspect people have not yet realized they can design their life. You do not have to follow the script. We're force fed the script. You go to school, you get good grades, so that you can go to university. So you can have like, you could be a doctor or an engineer, or some highly valued status role in society, you get good money.

And then you can go and get a nice house with a mortgage, and get married and have kids. And that's the script. And then at 65, you can stop working and live off your retirement fund. It's bullsh*t. It's just not how it works, right? I think over time, people in the online space have realized, well hang on a minute, this is kind of like a trap door to living in a twilight zone.

The life that I lead is so very, very different to that, you know, academic, traditional employee path. You know, when I went off script, in 2008, I just went into a whole different dimension. Like, I live in a world where you can create your own calendar, you work with the people you want, you can build your own team. It's so exciting and interesting.

And it's not from a place of craving more or feeling like I'm lacking. It's like, it's coming from a place now of having abundance, and calm, and serenity. And the slow thing, I totally get you. There's a whole movement, the slow-living movement, that there's podcasts about it, it's not about doing the most, or being the fastest.

I actually ditched my entire brand [SuperFastBusiness](#), because I realized it's not about fast. And this is the thing, when I do a post about a great business is a sustainable business, people fight me on this. They're like, no, no, a great business is a growth business, one that's growing, you have to grow to have a great business.

And I'm like, You know what? I don't. I'm happy to sustain a great run rate, you know, for a long time. I'd be happy to do what I'm doing now for quite some time. I can manage a couple of podcasts here and there, coaching the people who are already in my program who stay forever, dealing with my same team for 10, 12 years.

I want to surf every day, I want to eat good food, I want to get great sleep. I don't want drama, I don't want people coming at me, I don't want to be super famous and have all these trolls or be recognized everywhere. I'm having enough impact with the people I work with. I'm at a good point.

The process of deciding what you want

So I wonder, how do you decide where you want to step in, in that scale? Like, what was your process? When you said to yourself, This is not what I want, and now I'm faced with the, how do I unwind this or make the changes? Firstly, how do you set the compass to where you want to be? And then what were the steps to get there?

Chris: So for me, I was completely burnt out. Like, I would get on a Zoom meeting for 30 minutes and couldn't function the rest of the day. So I had no option but to step out and take a sabbatical. And then it's just been a process as I've had quiet and solitude and space and capacity to be confronted with the condition of my soul.

But just like, who am I, what do I want? And I think capacity and space and solitude and stillness really is a process to start that. And then it's just like, looking at the identity like, who am I as a person and who do I want to become, that is something that's going to have longevity? And I think longevity in business really is the thing that creates multi-dimensional growth, right?



We have this concept online that growth is just so linear. But true healthy growth is multi-dimensional, and it's the freaking roots into the ground. And it's capacity to maybe expand somewhere else in life. Right? We just think it's business. And that's what we attach our value to, right, because of our jacked-up identity issues.

But it is like, okay, well what about if in the capacity of the business, I can spend time with my daughter. And our value system being there and how important that is. And that's hopefully the message that I can bring to the industry now, as people do know me as Chris Evans from Traffic and Funnels and all this to bring this message, multi-dimensional growth and deep roots and the right foundation. Because I think ultimately what we all want is peace and contentment in life. And we're stacking on all these things to meet that need and that desire that we have that what I've realized is a finish line you never cross.

James: Yeah. Dan Sullivan calls it like, the horizon. Everyone's always, the horizon. They want this and they want that, like they're looking at the next thing and the next thing, and they never realize and appreciate. That's why I made a short video that got a bit of traction recently. And it was where only in the more recent part of my life have I even been aware of the concept of gratitude, like, true happiness is more aligned with being happy with the things you already have.

And I'm constantly challenged by this, like in two ways. One is with my surfboards. Where's the line between being happy with the surfboards I've got, versus seeing something on Instagram or whatever that I think, gosh, I'd love to be riding that board? It's like, it keeps coming to get you every now and then.

But I remember when [I quit my job](#), the shift, like the first morning that I woke up after I quit my job, so this was in 2008, I had this sort of panic, oh my god, like I'm not actually - I don't have to be in the dealership right now? I'm not supposed to be getting into my suit. Because I was in prison, right?

I was in my fancy, expensive suit with my expensive watch and my expensive pen and my expensive shoes, getting in my expensive car, driving in traffic, listening to Jeff Walker and John Reese CDs, and then going to my office and basically just getting smashed, you know, all day long. And then going home and my kids are already in bed.

I'm like God, oh my goodness, like I don't have to be there. It was actually overwhelming, this concept that I'm now back in the driver's seat of my own schedule. And it took me a while to adjust. And for many years, the recurring nightmare is that I still got a job in a car dealership. That's my nightmare, right? And it took me a lot of years to wash that out. Mostly just by replacing it with mind surfing, surfing my surfboards. I had to flush that nightmare out.

They hook you in hard. When you're in an environment you're so hooked in, you think that is the whole world. So I think people get trapped in their bubble. If you're in the army, you would be in the army world. If you're in traffic and funnels world and your office and your team, it's very hard to escape that.

So that's why you need space, you need white space and a break to get perspective. It happens for me every time I hop on an airplane and go to another country. I get away from my environment. The thing that I've noticed more of late is I'm so excited to come home, I want to be back in my bubble. My bubble is an awesome bubble.

So I've created this world that I want to be in, that every day on repeat is a good thing and not a bad thing. And I try and do things today that will help future version of myself be happy that I did this thing.

Breaking the news to the team

So I'm wondering, how did you discuss this with your partner and the team in terms of, there's going to have to be a change?

Chris: Well, at that point, I already moved out and we had conversations about bringing someone else in. I think we just knew that was something that needed to happen. And he was kind of ready to go. And when I stepped out, he just, really, the next day, stepped in. And I don't know that I was of much use at that point anyways.

So to be, you know, honest, I definitely wasn't creative, wasn't innovating, and just didn't have the strength to carry much burden. And I felt like that's what it was. All the responsibility and the costs and the expectations, and not only stuff with business, but stuff that I'd been pushing down for years and years of other people's burdens that I'd carry. I just had no idea.

The results of stepping down

James: So you're one of those people who wants to help others and to take on that responsibility. It gets heavy, doesn't it?

Chris: It does. And so it took me, one, getting the separation, I hired a mindset coach because again, I've never really entertained or been okay with feeling feelings, I'm just depressed. And I've carried and burdened and taken pain because I've just - it was survival and then it just became pattern. And so hiring a mindset coach to really work to that stuff and get in touch with it has been one of the best things I've ever done.

And it's just made me, I'd say a better husband, better father, and more powerful, right? So like, really know what I want, what I need. And to freaking design that and for my family, to get me to a point where it's like, you know what, I don't think I want to step back into what I had. And whatever happens with that happens.

And you know, I learned a lot, amazing experiences. The messages I've received from people who have changed in their lives has been beautiful and stuff, and it's just a new chapter. But there's also been a grieving process in that, because of how much my identity was tied into that thing. And I had no idea, man, until the shaking came, I had no idea how much of my identity was tied to that, and how much I felt like I needed that to be someone of significance, which is not a good foundation to be on.

James: It's so common. Because a lot of that marketing message is just constant imprinting of what success is supposed to be. It's challenged me a lot. Like, I coach plenty of people who make a lot of revenue, they have great businesses. Some of them say, Oh, you know, you could do this, or you could do that. I'm like, But that would involve a compromise. It would actually take away from my living, my quality of living. I'm happier with what I have.

I've actually, as I get older, because I'm 10 years down the track from you, I'm having an increasing awareness of health and relationships. Because your body changes, you know, I want to be able to do better maneuvers for my surfing, I'm really motivated to unlock new feelings, and ride better waves, etc. So I want to be stronger and fitter. So you know, I spend more time and energy on that.

And also the relationships, because you get a sense that some of them are coming to an end. You know, if you have parents and you get older, then they get older. You've got kids that are growing up, and you realize how precious that time is. Even my youngest child, she's all of a sudden almost four. But I've had that opportunity to be around her every single day, and to experience that parenting from a new perspective that I think most corporate slaves will miss.

And so once you're aware of it, nothing's going to take that away from me. And so it's becoming clear on who you are. I love that you talk about identity, a lot of these personality-driven business types, they are their business, aren't they? And they've locked into it. I think one of the healthiest things that I did was create a [surf brand](#) as my play area, a thing that I can run that and channel my fun.

I go down to my garage and film things like waxing a surfboard or unpacking. I put a time lapse video of me unpacking my surfboards when I came back from a trip. And it's had 36,000 views on Instagram, I can't believe it. It literally took like a minute to film. It's so fun tinkering with that. And that's not tied to my brand. It's not tied to me. I'm not the same. It's something that I can be outside of and just sort of move into when I want to be.

Changing the alter ego

So it's very interesting, you know, at the same dinner that you and I were at was [Todd Herman](#), and he talks a lot about this alter ego stuff. Did you have to change your alter ego?

Chris: That's an interesting question. I think I've had to deconstruct, I'm in the process of reconstructing everything. Honestly. Yeah, I love Todd. And that's a really fascinating book and concept. And I've toyed around with it and tested that some, but the core of who I am, looking at, you know, why I'm doing the things that I'm doing or not doing the things that maybe I should do, to some degree, and, you know, in the picture of your kids, and that's something that's been a huge check for me as my daughter went off, and I'm like, this time is gone. Right?

Like, I was so busy building the businesses, you know, really, formative years. Of course, I'm going to come around, I've been around as a dad. It has been a very important piece for me. But I've thought about this recently, so my daughter's the oldest and I've got three boys, and the youngest is 11, he'll be 12 in January, and so I was just thinking about, like, how much longer I have with these guys? It's not long, but just thinking about it as maybe I've been a present father, right? For the most part.

But the thing that recently I've thought about is my state as a father. And when you're growing a business, you have all these things. If you don't walk in peace and contentment, your state often can be jacked up. When you're walking around with anxiety or your fuse is short or, you know, you're paying attention to your phone versus your kid talking to you, and that sends messages, and that encodes things into your kids. That's a state that I don't want to be in. Right?



I want to be in a state where I can be fully present and available in every way, like my eye contact and my emotions and my physical touch. And that's one thing that I would highly encourage entrepreneurs, is to really check into, not just are you present as a parent, right? Or maybe it's a spouse or whatever, but what's your state that you carry in the house, in the family? And it's something that I'm really looking at prioritizing, and being intentional about kind of this next leg, if you will. But I think it's something that's not talked about enough.

How being a parent impacts business

James: Not talked about much at all. And that's why I'm so pleased to be able to talk about this on the podcast, because as a parent, I mean, this is deeply emotional.

I'm sure it's very easy to go and build a \$100 million business if you and your partner just work seven days a week, and that's all you do. But for anyone listening to this podcast, as a parent, kids change the game completely. They will steal your sleep and attention and time, especially in the beginning, it's very stressful for new parents. They are a massive responsibility. Essentially, for the first 20 years, apart from financially, you know, you can't just leave them alone, or whatever. You've got a full-on care. It's serious business.

And I've learned the most from my kids, the kids are the best teachers, they teach you everything about how humans operate. They're incredible manipulators. They can motivate you to do things you wouldn't do for anybody else. And they also, you know, the bond and the connection that you can experience when you're close to your kids is just hard to put into words.

So it's a lot like trying to explain surfing to a non-surfer. Like, there's things that you have to feel to know. Sounds like you've gone from not feeling stuff to feeling a lot. And you're leaning in towards it.

Advice to those in growth phase

What would be your tip to someone who's currently in a growth phase of their business, they're just on a purple patch?

They're running their ads, they're making sales. They're getting a little bit of an ego tap when they get up on stage, or they do a VSL and they'd have a big million-dollar week, whatever, what advice would you have for that person?



Chris: I'd say to hire a mentor who has been through the fire and can be a voice of wisdom and reason. And that's what obviously you've done for quite some time, something I'm looking at right now to be that for people who are on that journey, as I've actually started a mentor group, and it's something like I do, I wish I had a James Schramko. Like, I've had mentors, but someone to really pull me back and to, you know, ask, why am I doing that? Like, really, why am I doing that? Is that really what I want?

And to least, at the very least, help me to establish some kind of governor or boundaries. Because when you're going so fast and you're building off of ego and all these things, and I think it's building off a false self, right? A false identity. There is often, you see these stories, man, like we're one of them.

We wake up one day, and it's not what you thought, or you wanted, and sometimes there are terrible crashes in that scenario. And to avoid that, you need boundaries. Boundaries are good and healthy, and too much of a good thing is not good.

James: Yeah, that's right. You know, like, in the newest iteration of my mentoring, the key feature is called Sounding Board. That's of all the things, you know, I've gone from teaching tactical things. Way back in the day, I used to teach SEO and Pay Per Click, very tactical stuff, and how to build websites, if you can believe it. It was how I started.

And I went right through and it ended up being more about the mindset, and the strategy, and the packaging and pricing, and more and more, it ends up, you know what, people at a high level just need someone to chat with, someone who can get what they're talking about, who understands it, who can have an opinion that is actually valid, because as well-meaning as their friends or the kid they went to school with is, they probably don't have enough context to be able to have a proper conversation.

The more and more you do it, I predict you're going to be really valuable in this market because there's not that many people who get it. And I think, you know, I meant it before, I wish I'd been able to get involved earlier, because that's what I fix. I help people with that. And you're going to help people with that, too.

There's plenty of room in the market for people to do this at a high level. And there's so many people serving beginners and people who are growth-focused. And that's great. I'm servicing advanced people who are having more complicated challenges that they've never had before and would like a hand with, and that's great. It's really good that you're doing that.

Backing off from the business

How did you step away? Did you just say it's all yours, I'm done? Or did you think about, maybe we can sell off some of this? Or get someone to buy in a stake? Or did you just give the team a time period that you're going to roll down?

Chris: Yeah, so initially, it was a 30-day sabbatical, okay, I'm just going to go and just sit outside for 30 days and collect my thoughts. And then after that point, I was still just exhausted. Even now. So that was third week of June, and I'm just now starting to come around. So after about a month or so, I realized that, man, I'm not ready to do anything.

I have a lot to work through, a lot to process. I just communicated with the team, it's like, Hey, guys, at this point, I'll be here if you need advisement or counsel, but I'm not going to come back. And yeah, we brought this new person in to lead, and they have equity in the business. It then came to a point where with all the fixed structures of the business, and just the momentum or lack of momentum in the business, it just seemed probably like, the best thing to do is maybe a wind-down, or just get rid of certain parts, and maybe keep a few elements.

And that's kind of the state that it's in right now. I'm not involved at all in it. And it's just, yeah, it could have turned out a lot better, again, if we would have had the wisdom and those nuances and the things. And so I've had to process a lot of grief and regrets. I should have done XYZ better or different, or, you know, what have you.

James: I think, you know, there's ways to deal with that. I've had traumatic situations in my life, like crazy employers threatening to kill me and waving a steak knife in my face. And when I was a debt collector, I had someone pull a knife and also wave a gun at me. I've had other life circumstances I've never even broached on his podcast, to do with relationships, etc. But maybe they'll come out one day.

The point is, there's good ways to deal with it that don't include hitting a bottle of alcohol, etc., which is a very common thing, a lot of people go straight for the pain numbing. I remember having a guest on my show, and he was talking about, experience the pain, like lean into it, to get through it, and that's what I do. If I ever felt sad or down or whatever, I would just experience it and let it go.

But also, I did some reading of Adlerian philosophy, understanding more about the past and how it no longer exists. So some things you can just let go and stop bringing it back into the future. I also like the viewpoint, I think it's Anthony Robbins talks about that things happen for you, not to you. I don't think you could be in a position where you're as useful to people now on this topic, unless you'd been through this firsthand.

Unless you did it my way, which is experiencing it secondhand for a very long time. Like, I feel blessed that I've been able to navigate very well through business because I had very good foundations. Being trained, you know, at an early age, to run multimillion dollar businesses, and then running them, and reading all the books on the wall behind me, and implementing them over decades got me to a point where I could avoid making most of the mistakes. But then working with all the people and seeing everyone else make the mistakes, I've been exposed to them.



So everything that you've been through had to happen for you to be where you're at now. And there'll be so many positives, every single negative has a positive attached to it, if you could recognize it, and bring it forward. So when you're helping people in a year from now, and you see a scenario unfolding that you've seen before, you can step in and say, Hang on a minute. I know how this movie ends, we need to leave the cinema right now. Let's not stick around to watch the ending, right? Let's change your path.

So you're more powerful now having been through that and surviving. And in terms of regrets, I'm always cautious about that, you know? If someone brought a time machine and you could use it, it might be better to just burn it, because there's a chance you could end up on a completely different path and not be in a situation where the majority of things in your life are probably pretty good, you know?

What could be an important episode

You're in a pretty privileged situation in life, as it turns out. So take some good with the bad. Life is what it is. But from today onwards, you, I, anyone who's listening to this podcast, watching the video or whatever, can make choices to put their future self in a better position. Maybe some of the points from today are going to hit home with some.

I really feel like this episode is particularly important for someone who's on a growth tear right now, who hasn't really stopped to think about why. What is it causing the need for that? For me, when I stopped wearing my Rolex watch, you know, that was like, something shifted. I don't need to wear my Rolex watch now for anyone to look at me and know how special and important I am, because I already accept myself. And I don't care what they think about.

And often people probably misjudge me based on the fact that I'm rarely wearing shoes, and I'm just wearing board shorts or T-shirt, right? And that's okay. I'm not even attached to the idea that I would get any joy from them misjudging me. It's just what happens. When I was in the car dealership, customers used to love to tell the story about how the previous dealership wrote them off, because they weren't dressed well. And then they went in, and bought a car and drove it past the dealership.

What they're really saying is they don't feel significant. Right? So I know when you make that shift, you know, things become more or less important to you. Your story is, you know, it's so brave of you to come along and share this story today. I think a lot of people wouldn't be at a point where they could or would share it. So that just shows how much progress you've made for yourself.

And it just opens up the pathway forward. And I imagine your whole peer network, and myself included, would wholeheartedly be supporting you no matter what happens, because we're all aware of just how damn hard it is to run a business. It's bloody challenging.

Chris: Yup, it is. And I think that's one that I really appreciate those words, man, those are words of wisdom. And I think it just highlights what you just said, like the communal thing. And what I'd love to see more in our online space is more vulnerability and authenticity, and less posturing. Right? I think it's something that I perpetuated out of my own issues and identity, what I thought I needed.

But what we really need is more authenticity. And people to say like, this is just what's going on man. Like I know, it's not like necessarily the marketing way, right, because we feel like we had to put ourselves on the pedestal and all that stuff. But I think, man, to sleep better and to walk better, is to be open about where we truly are. And I think that's life-giving for people. And that's part of why I'm open to share it.

I think it's part of the healing process that we all need to go through in our own journey and our own things, whether it's a relationship or business. And so for me, for anybody listening, one of the things that's been beneficial, of course, is sharing with the right people, right, in the right context, but just surrounding myself with people that have been supportive, and have just been willing to lock arms with me and be a part of the journey and not be weird and for the, you know, just accepting. Me going through this process, man, my level of compassion, and empathy, and understanding, and patience, patience is so much greater and expanded through this whole journey.

And for that I'm very thankful, especially as a father and husband. Because as an entrepreneur, especially someone who was always in a hurry and always running pedal to the metal, I lacked patience and compassion often.

James: But not always.

Chris: And so I'm grateful for that gift.

A really decent guy

James: One of my early memories of you was when I went to a Traffic and Conversion summit and we were in a cafe. And you saw me. I think you had a backpack and a cap. And you acknowledged me. You said, Hi. Good to see you. And I think we shared a coffee, like we had one each, right, [laughs] but we shared the moment and caught up.

Chris: [laughs] We had two straws and one cup.

James: You know, you had no particular reason to go out of your way to be nice to me, and it struck me then in there. You know, this is a really decent person. All of our interactions, I've always been left with the impression, What a nice guy. And even, you know, you came into contact with our [VA recruitment agency](#) at some point and my wife mentioned that you were getting a couple of team members. I think I mentioned it when we were at dinner. And you followed through.

Chris: Kevin, Kevin's event. Yeah.

James: Yeah. And you came through and got some team members. And again, you know, like, that was a great experience from our side. And I appreciate it, like every interaction I've had. That's why I want to mention your podcast before we wrap too, at chrisaevans.com/podcast. The time we publish this, your podcast is probably up and running or close to it. And I'm sure you're going to have some interesting discussions and guests, and the journey you're going to take from 2023 onwards, I think, will be really interesting to be involved with.

Chris: Yeah, I'm excited about it because I am sharing the journey and being open and honest, but also, what scale and growth looks like now. And the multi-dimensionalness of it, and the health of it, and roots. And that's what I'm really concerning myself with now, not just what people see above the ground, but what's below the ground.

But it's really the most important thing, because that is what gives us longevity, right? And so that's what I'm excited about. And yes, shout out to the VA service that you guys have. So that was October, I think, 2019 is when we were at that event speaking for Kevin's, and you told me about it. And I've used VAs before, just, you know, through Upwork or whatever, for years.

And that was a pretty pivotal moment for us, because of all the things they were able to take off of our plate, especially running info products. And one of the things that we really struggled with was just the process and the operational side of it and the customer service.

So we ended up building a pretty large VA team from that moment. And they're awesome. And they're still working with some of the clients that I have, which is pretty amazing. So I definitely would recommend people check that out.

James: Yeah, that's very cool of you. Thank you. That's [visionfind.com](https://www.visionfind.com). Look, I appreciate you coming along. It's been good to get under the hood and to find out what's going on and to see where things go. Very exciting. And we'll look forward to staying in touch.

Chris: Yeah, absolutely. Appreciate it.

James: Chris Evans there. This is episode 981. So we'll put up some show notes at [JamesSchramko.com](https://www.JamesSchramko.com). And, yeah, we may get Chris back in the future and see how that journey is unfolding.

Chris: Let's do it.



JAMES SCHRAMKO

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business you love**