
Jaime Masters: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I'm Jaime Masters and today on the show we have Fabian Dittrich. He's awesome and I can't pronounce the website very well, but we're going to try it anyone. It's called helpando.it, hopefully. He also runs startupdiaries.org, Digital Nomad Type and Expert in Serendipity. I am so excited to have you on the show today. Thanks for coming on.

Fabian Dittrich: Hi, Jamie. Thanks for having me. It's a pleasure.

Jaime Masters: Okay. So pronounce or spell the name of the website so that way everybody is on the same page, because I'm sure I botched it.

Fabian Dittrich: Okay, so just imagine the word "help" in English and then an A-N-D-O at the end. So it's helpando.it.

Jaime Masters: Thank you. Appreciate it. Now everybody can understand. So tell us what it does though, because it's a really cool site.

Fabian Dittrich: We are a service provider for cloud-based, customer service tools. So we help companies to improve their customer service by implementing cloud-based customer service tools, such as Zendesk **[inaudible]**.

[00:01:04]

Jaime Masters: That's funny. I was just chatting about this with one of my clients yesterday and he was trying to clean up his time. He's like, "Is Zendesk worth it?" I didn't have the answer to that. So you tell me. How big of a company do you need to be to have one of these tools?

Fabian Dittrich: Well, Zendesk has like 85,000 different companies, so it's using Zendesk to give customer support to the customers. They're small startups with maybe one person working in support, but there's also big customers like **[inaudible]** **[00:01:33]**. We have thousands of agents, right? So there's not really a limit because you pay per agent per month. So if you're just a one-man startup, you can still get a Zendesk account and pay only one agent per month. That might cost as little as like \$10.00 per month. So there's not really a limit. I guess it makes sense once you get contacted by customers over different channels.

[00:02:00] If you're just one person and you only get emails, it's fine. You don't need a customer support tool. But let's say you have Facebook friend page. Let's say you have Twitter. Customers

might mention you on Twitter. They might mention you on Facebook. So the advantage of having something like Zendesk is that all these requests are centered in one central place. So if somebody mentions you on Twitter, it ends up on Zendesk. If somebody writes an email, it ends up on Zendesk. If somebody calls you, you can pick up the call via Zendesk.

You have ten different channels you connect to Zendesk and you only need to login to this one central place instead of logging into ten different places.

Jaime Masters: That makes so much sense. Maybe I should be implementing Zendesk. Because what we do right now is it's a little all over the place with customer service. I have an amazing customer service person, but still it's a little like trying to go crazy. I just assumed it was for longer-type threads, right? So somebody without just one question, something trying to like problem solution type thing, not one call solution. You know what I mean?

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Fabian Dittrich: Yes. Yeah, and it's for everything. Sometimes – in Zendesk everything is called a ticket. So if an email comes in, it's a ticket. And there's tickets you can solve with one response and there's tickets which sometimes have one out of 20 different responses. It depends on your business.

Jaime Masters: I've been – because I came from the tech world and all we did was tickets. I think I have PTSD from that. So I think I've always been like, I don't want tickets in my business because oh, my gosh, pain in the butt. So how the heck did you get into this space? Because it's not like, I'm going to create solutions for customer service-type software.

Fabian Dittrich: Right, yeah. And this is where the serendipity thing comes in. It's hard to think where I should start to give you the long story short. I think it started in 2006. I was studying computer science and I had no idea how I would use any of what I learned to make a living. But I had a friend. He's like 65. He's a retired dentist from Bulgaria.

[00:03:58] He does this funny thing where he uses an old, expired press card that he still has from like ten years ago, when he was a journalist. He sneaks into these expensive conferences just to get the free food.

Jaime Masters: Free food. That's my man. Okay.

Fabian Dittrich: So one day he called me and I'm at University and he's like, "Hey, Fabian, I'm at this Ruby on Rails conference and the food is just about, the buffet is just about to start. It looks really good. You should drop by." I was like Ruby on what? It's a programming language, but it was fairly new in 2006, so I didn't know what it was. But free food sounded really good. So I went there and then he brought me in with his fake press card and while I was shoveling all this salmon on my plate, there was a recruiter standing next to me who was like "Hey, do you work with Ruby on Rails? Are you looking for an internship or a job or something?"

I was like, "Yeah, sure." It was this fake it until you make it thing, right? And the employed me. So the next week, I started working in this consultancy company and then two days a week learning Ruby on Rails.

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Jaime Masters: Wait. You learned at the company or you were trying to learn like crazy before you actually went in, right? Because you said yes.

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah, I had one week. So I went into the basics of Ruby on Rails. I mean, I studied computer science, so I was familiar with programming languages. Ruby on Rails is easy to learn. It was just some sort of an internship. It didn't pay me a lot of money, so the expectation was I **[inaudible]** **[00:05:25]**. So I learned Ruby on Rails at the job and then I just went from company to company by studying. At one point, I guess I knew Ruby on Rails. So I worked at an NGO and one day I walk out of the office, like 5:00 p.m. to go home, and there's this Spanish guy with long hair sitting on the streets in Berlin, like in front of the hospital and he was playing a guitar.

It was exactly the guitar that I wanted to buy at the time. Like a backpacker, small guitar. So I walked up and said, "Hey, can I try this guitar because I'm thinking about buying it?" He's like, "Sure." I'm sitting next to him playing this guitar.

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And while I'm playing, he's telling me this amazing story how he met a girl at the beach in Barcelona and then from one day to another decided to give up his house painting business, sell all his stuff, and picked up his passport from home, told his parents to sell

everything, and she had a camper van and she was on her way to Africa. So he joined and didn't come back for four years. So he drove through Africa in a camper van for about four years, only coming back like for a weekend each year to Barcelona, buy another car, drive it down to Gambia, sell it for three times the price, and then live on that money in Africa.

Like really low budget, right? He was like this kind of on-the-streets guy. So I'm like, "Isn't that dangerous? Driving a car through Africa?" He's like, "No, man. You do this and this and this and when the police stops you, you say this." I was like amazed. I thought, this is really an adventure and I wanted to do the same, right?

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So two months later, I bought an old Mercedes and drove down through Germany, France, Spain, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, like basically the whole thing. I wanted to go to South Africa. So I end up in Congo and suddenly I feel really sick. I have this – like I'm shaking, I'm freezing. I have high temperature and I had malaria. So I'm hosted by these two French, like a couple. I'm car surfing and I'm living in this luxurious mansion that they got from some Shell or something because they get out the oil for petrol. I'm shaking and freezing and really like hallucinating.

It's not a nice state of mind. So I'm trying to keep me busy to not get sucked in by this fever delirium. So I go on Google and watched all sorts of funny cat videos and the craziest Guinness World Records just to do something.

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But one day, I literally type into Google "the coolest job on the internet" and I hit search. The first result was an article on **[inaudible]** **[00:08:13].eu**, which is like a startup **[inaudible]** in Germany, I think. It was a job offer from a company called Zendesk in San Francisco. I had no idea what they do. I didn't want the job. I was not looking for a job. I thought I would never go back into IT. There was an online application form like that long, like name, phone number, letter of motivation, like **[inaudible]** text box and upload your CV. The only thing I did was Fabian and my number in Congo and then I hit submit.

It wasn't like mandatory required fields so I could submit it anyway. So the next day, I'm slightly off the malaria thing and I get a call from the CEO of Zendesk from the European office.

They're like, "Why did you apply for this job?" I had no idea what I applied for, but I wanted to play along.

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So I improvised the whole thing. I went on zendesk.com. Okay, customer service. Okay, we need somebody with technical skills. Okay, I can do that. So I went on and on and then the next day, somebody else called me and it really sounded like an amazing job. So they were like, "When can you be in London?" I was like, "Well, in two weeks." I had the car, so I had to sell the car while still slightly on malaria like waiting and shivering and 40 degrees outside, Celsius. It's really hot, that's like 95-something Fahrenheit, I think. Selling this car to Africans who came late, four hours. It was horrible.

But finally, I sold the car on the last day, like a couple of hours before boarding the plane. Then I flew to London. I looked like crazy. I had a long beard. I had long hair. So I slightly shaved and then they taught me, when you walk into the office, just don't say hello. Just pretend you're a Zendesk sales expert and we are your clients and you pitch them **[inaudible]**, right?

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So I'm on the plane and next to me, that's also really serendipity, there's a newspaper and the front side story is the new face of customer service on that day. So I walk into the office and kind of throw the newspaper on the table and say, "Have you seen this?" I made this presentation. It was all for fun, right? I didn't really want the job. And then they said, "Dude, this was awesome. When can you start?" I was like, yeah, in two months. Because now I have to go to South America first. So I went to the jungle, came back and started working at Zendesk. This job was amazing. I loved it.

I worked like 80 to 100 hours a week because I loved it so much. After one year of driving through Africa and not being productive in the typical sense, I was really happy to be productive again and cross things off my to-do list. So I really kind of made myself indispensable at the company. At that time, that was five years ago, Zendesk had 150 employees and now they have 1,200.

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So they grew like crazy. They double customers, income, employees like every year. So I always said, if I had found a job offer for managing a gorilla park in Congo, I also would have said yes, right? It was just for the story. Because back in the days, there was this – you know the **moth** podcast where they talk about stories? I think there was a live slam in Chicago and the guy who started the podcast said, "Sometimes I think the best way of

making decisions in life is to choose the option which has the most anecdotal value.” For me, it was all about this anecdotal value. Like this is a cool story, man. I just searched for coolest job on the internet and now I have a job. I have to do this just for the story so I can be on your podcast now.

[00:11:53]

So I’m working my off and after a year and a half, I had a friend who was like on the brink of suicide because he was in a top management position at a French car manufacturer, and he was working so much and had so much pressure in his life, but he was also this perfectionist, this neurotic perfectionist, that he developed tinnitus, this ringing of the ear, this constant. He had that for 18 months, so he didn’t sleep well. He slept for like two hours every night. I can understand how that brings you to the actual suicide. It’s like having a crazy hangover for a year straight. He tried everything to get rid of that and at one point, I met him after a long time not seeing him, and I said “Dude, you should try something completely different. Just go change your environment. Go to the rain forest. Maybe meet some shamans or whatever.” He said, “Well, are you going to bring me there?” I was like, “Are you going to pay my flights?” He said, “Yes.”

[00:13:00]

So I take all my vacations from the year and we fly to the Amazon rain forest. I translate and I connect him with shamans and participate in these sessions, you know? What now is very popular with the [inaudible] crowds.

Jaime Masters:

Oh, my gosh, yes. We’ve talked about that on this podcast before. Also, [inaudible] sorts of stuff, yeah?

Fabian Dittrich:

Yes, right. Exactly. So there I thought man, I don’t want to end up like this, but I was on the best way to end up like this because I worked like 100 hours a week. I loved it, but still I had no life. I had no lifestyle. I had a workstyle, basically. So I came back to Zendesk and I prepared this slide deck. I had I think four slides. One was “this is my time at Zendesk” and a bunch of pictures.” And then I said, “this is what makes me happy” and a bunch of pictures, like the jungle and guitars and tech conferences and all that.

I said, “I have no time for this. So either I can do what I always do, which is quitting my job and then go traveling, or we find some sort of middle way where I can still stay here but travel at the same time.”

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My middle way was I worked three days a week but get the same salary and my boss was like, “No way.” So another guy came up to me and said “Dude, why don’t you just open up a company and then you try to maintain the relationship with Zendesk and then maybe they can send you some customers?” I pitched that idea to the boss and he was like, “Yeah, you can do this.” So I suddenly was the CEO and founder of helpando.it, which is a service provider for these cloud-based customer service tools, mainly working with Zendesk.

So in the beginning especially, Zendesk sent me a bunch of customers, which was great because the customers go to Zendesk, then trust Zendesk. Then Zendesk tells them work with Fabian, so they trust me. I don’t have to do a lot of the sales pitch. This was three years ago. So I have my three-year anniversary now with the company and doing really well. I’m just basically doing all these data migrations from anywhere in the world.

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I’ve been in 60 countries since I have the company. A half year into the company, I was sitting in my office in Berlin and I had just employed the first employee, which I met him at a **car showing** trip in Romania. He had moved into my living room. So I was in my office and he was in my living room. Then I felt really bored because I like when things are full of surprises and I can’t foresee what’s going to happen in the future. So I was sitting there and I was thinking yeah, now I could employ more people, I can make a bunch of my **[inaudible]** because I already know that it will work, right?

So I have this friend who drove a Land Rover through Africa for like six years and then ended up in China after six years. I wrote him a message on Facebook and I said, “Dude, what should I do with my life?” He didn’t say anything. He only sent a link to a Land Rover which was for sale in Buenos Aires in Argentina. He said, “Buy this Land Rover.” I’m like, “Why should I buy this Land Rover?”

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He said, “Well, you buy it and then you see what you’re going to do with it.” I said, “Okay.” So I was like, “Huh, maybe we can manage the company from the Land Rover, because then it’s full of surprises again.” So I walk into the living room where **Dominic** sits, my first employee. “Hey, Dominic. Do you want to manage the company from a Land Rover while we cross South America?” He looks at me just like, “Sure.” So two months later, we’re in

Buenos Aires buying this Land Rover, which has this flexible roof where you can sleep in.

We started this mission, which was crossing Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and managing our company from the car. With daily calls with customers.

Jaime Masters: I was going to say, with internet? Like how do you –

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah. I get to. And the second mission was to film a video documentary about people who we call the **[inaudible]** **[00:16:50]** of work, right? People who redefine work. Like working from co-working spaces, coming on a skateboard to work, no bosses, no 9:00 to 5:00, no hierarchy.

[00:16:59] We made a documentary about this. That's StartupDiaries. So you can see these video episodes on our blog. It worked. I mean, it was super stressful because we didn't know how to make a video documentary and had to learn all that stuff. We worked like eight hours in Berlin a day and now we had like two or three hours for the same workload, because we had to do so much other things. The car broke down, we had to drive 15,000 miles and all that. But we learned by using the right tools. We learned to save a lot of time. Just one example. Let's say a client wants to schedule a call.

They say, "Hey, Fabian. I need a call." And then I'm like, "Hey, are you in PST, EST, GMT -2, what are you?" So then he's like PST. And then I'm like okay, I go to my calendar, I have to sub strike like nine hours to see when it fits and it's **[inaudible]**. And then he says, no, I can't do that time and then he suggests another time. It's like six emails to get a call. So we started using **[inaudible]**. You have other scheduling calls where you just send one link to the client and then all the time zone calculations are gone and you know, with one link you have it. It's just one example.

[00:18:02] We used things like Alfred app, which is an amazing like quick launch for shortcuts and custom-made shortcuts. The Alfred app actually shows you how many times per day you use a shortcut. Yesterday, I gave a talk here in Mexico. We looked at the statistic. I used 140 shortcuts a day, custom-made shortcuts. You think it doesn't save you too much time, but if you use it 140 times a day and every time you save like 10 or 15 seconds, it's a lot of time.

Jaime Masters: I didn't even know about that one. I'd like to be a geek. All right, I wrote that one down too. That's awesome.

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah, I give these workshops for companies how to save like an hour a day by using all these shortcuts and it really works. Somebody told me, "Man, the day I installed Alfred app was like meeting my wife."

Jaime Masters: Best testimonial ever.

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah, exactly. Well, it depends on the wife I guess.

Jaime Masters: Good point, valid point. Or sad, very sad.

Fabian Dittrich: I wanted to de-install it after a week.

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Jaime Masters: That's awesome. Wow, that's crazy. Okay, so there's so many questions that I have on this, let alone saving the hour a day. But it sounds like you really like uncertainty, which is awesome. But do you think the serendipity piece is because you're not attached to this stuff? You're just sort of going on the ride? Because I feel like a lot of people are attached. You're really quick at making decisions. Going, I'm just going to go here. It doesn't matter. But for a lot of other people, they're not like that. Is that something innate in you? Do you think it's cultivated?

Fabian Dittrich: I think – I'm 35 now and I started traveling when I was 20. That was my first long-term travel trip to Thailand. There's a great book by Ralph Potts called *The Art of Long-Term World Traveling*, which is amazing. Tim Ferriss recommends that book a lot. It's really a great book to learn how to travel like a vagabond. It's called vagabonding. You have vagabonds, you have travelers, you have tourists. You have tourists in a group and they follow a guide and they don't go by themselves. You have travelers which follow everything that's in the lonely planet.

[00:20:01] Then you have vagabonds who just walk until the day becomes interesting. You just don't plan. You just sit around and see what happens. Since from early on I got into this environment, like there's certain places in the world. I call them magic places where serendipity happens. Like Morocco or Thailand or Jamaica. Where people are just hanging out, so they engage you in certain things. I really like those non-planning trips, where you just arrive at a place

you just sit there and see who comes up and who offers you to go there or there. And then the craziest things happen, right?

So I think from very early on in my life, I started living that way and that's why I was open, you know? Because it's one thing that you walk out of the office and you think, okay, I need to go home. And you're like a horse with these things on the side, right? You can only look straight. And another thing is, okay, I need to go home, but I enjoy the ride and see what's left and right.

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And maybe you'll see a guy sitting on the street with long hair playing the guitar who tells you to go to Africa and then because of that your life changes. I don't think it's magic. I don't think it's the law of attraction. I don't think that exists. I think it's just how much you are open to confront yourself with many opportunities because if you confront yourself with many opportunities, the probability that one of those is good or great is higher.

Jaime Masters:

But anybody could've sat next to that backpacker and played the guitar and not made a decision right then and there to do something completely different and then just go back to what you normally do. So the fact that you're like and then two months later, we did this. And then two months later. Two months is a thing for you, apparently. Two months later, we just were doing it. So what is that ability to go? I make a quick decision and I go after it and figure out the details later?

[00:22:00]

Fabian Dittrich:

I think I would call it freestyle living or improvised, spontaneous living. It's not having plans. It's living in the present and not to be too focused on the future. I don't know what that is. I don't know how it started. I just know that it's always what changed my life in a positive manner were these serendipitous moments. It's not easy. Sometimes when I come back from one of these trips, many expedition people they have this word called "post-expedition depression." Imagine you're a rock band and you go on tour and then you come back home and just sit there, nothing's happening.

That happens to me a lot. I always stress myself out. What's the next thing? What am I going to do now? Where's the crazy stuff? That doesn't work. Always when I try to force myself to come up with a next idea, it didn't work. It was just frustrating. I always knew, don't stress yourself. Just chill.

[00:22:59] Something is going to fall from Heaven. It always fell from Heaven when I was just living in the moment. I don't know if I'm just lucky or I guess not. I think luck is sort of what's you make of it. I don't think there's lucky people. There's a great experiment by Richard Weissman, the psychologist, who had 100 people. He took 100 people, like a random sample from society who said, "We are always lucky." Then he took another 100 people who said, "I'm never lucky." He made this experiment. He gave everyone a newspaper and this newspaper had, say 143 pictures in it. The task was to count the number of pictures.

Three of the pictures had a subtitle which said, "If you read this text, you will get \$100 from the guy who's running the experiment." It was not the task to read this text, but the people who said, "I'm always lucky," significantly more reported to the guy who was running the experiment that they read the text than the other people who said "I'm never lucky."

[00:24:04] So it's not about I'm lucky and I'm not lucky, but destiny. It's like, how much do you read between the lines? How much do you do things that you're not supposed to maybe? Like reading the subtitle even though nobody you to do so. I think that's also from *The 4-Hour Workweek*, where Tim Ferriss says, "Fishing is best where no one goes." Like let's say if 95 percent do what you're supposed to and what society tells you, go to school, study, get a job, work until you're 65, until you're too old to spend all your money. If you're part of the 5 percent who don't do it, it automatically means that the competition is lower. Because you're now competing with 5 percent, not with the 95 percent. So being different or kind of weird and strange helps sometimes and doing things asynchronously.

[00:24:59] It's like when you walk into a public toilet and there's four toilets. People usually think, okay, I think the first one must be the dirtiest one, so they go to the last one, but it's actually the opposite.

Jaime Masters: I've heard that before too. Well, let me ask you this though. Because I agree, luck favors the prepared mind. Everybody used to call me lucky. I'm like, I just ask for more stuff. But when you start asking people that are listening to do something that makes a difference, it's one thing to be like oh, I'm just going to go on a crazy trip. A lot of people will be like, can't do that. So what's one thing that they can do that might open up their senses a little more to this uncertainty? I feel like you have a trust in yourself that's just so like, "I'll figure it out no matter what it is."

It doesn't have to be trust in the universe. It's like, "I'll figure it out. I'll be fine either way." Malaria? No big deal." But what are people that are used to the planning, that are used to the checking the stuff off the list, what can they do? Like one or two things that would open them up a little bit?

[00:26:00]

Fabian Dittrich: Well, first I would say to break your routine. As cliché as it sounds, get out of your comfort zone. Do things that you never did before.

Jaime Masters: Like what? Because they'll probably sit there and say, that sounds good, but I don't know.

Fabian Dittrich: Well, you go to the web browser, you open meetup.com and you browse the things that are happening in a five mile radius and then you just go to a random one. Now you're going to meet people that you never met before because you're going to a place where there's people interested in something that you're not interested in and then you get a whole new perspective on the world. Meetup is great for these things. It's happening everywhere. I think just confronting yourself with new opportunities. It's just a numbers game. The more opportunities you confront yourself with, the higher the probability that one of them is great.

Jaime Masters: Let me ask you this though, because we talk about opportunity versus distraction a lot and the thing is, we only have so much time. We have goals because that's who we are normally, right? Quote, unquote. And so we assume that this is a distraction, right?

[00:27:03]

Especially if we have too many opportunities, sometimes they look like opportunities and sometimes they're not really a good fit. So how do you determine the difference between the two? I'm giving you hard questions. Flesh out exactly what all of this is in your brain now, go.

Fabian Dittrich: That's really hard to answer because I don't think about those things. I don't plan. I just go with the flow, you know? It's really hard. I think there's a TED Talk from Martin Seligman, the guy with the positive psychology where he talks about flow and all these moments where you don't think about time. You don't even know what you're doing because you're so engaged in your activity like playing violin, that you're not aware of things that are

happening. So I think for me it was always, what are the activities that I can do where I have these flow experiences? And then that's what I went with. But I don't have a recipe for it.

[00:27:57]

Jaime Masters: There's a great book by Jamie Wheal called *Stealing Fire*. I don't know if you've heard of it. It's not out yet, but it talks about flow. He runs the Flow Genome Project. What's crazy though is I feel like you're finding flow in non-work-related activities, which might sort of go into work-related activities. Do you find the flow within work at the same time too?

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah, totally.

Jaime Masters: Tell me about that.

Fabian Dittrich: Well, when I worked at Zendesk, I actually walked up to my boss and asked, "Can I live in the office?" Because we had this space where everybody was storing their suitcases or something and I wanted to put a bed there because I wanted to work all the time. I loved it. And rent in London was really expensive, so he said, "No man. For security reasons, you can't do that." But a couple of nights I slept in the office because I was so engaged, you know? I like – I probably could hire someone who does what I do.

I probably work like two or three hours a day because I learned to use all these tools in such an efficient way, why traveling is **[inaudible] [00:28:54]** because of the time pressure and work overload. That now I don't have this time pressure, but I can still use the same strategies and now I only have to work those two or three hours a day.

[00:29:04]

So I could probably find someone who does that for me, but I love it so much. I love being a guy and hacking away and doing some coding here and there or having this black terminal with green letters which looks like the Matrix. I need to see this everybody and I love it.

Jaime Masters: That's amazing.

Fabian Dittrich: It creates flow for me too. So yeah, I love the feedback from the customers. I'm always responding to emails super-fast because I love how they come back and say man, this is such a great service. I like it.

Jaime Masters: You sound so delighted from everything, whether it be work or fun or whatever it is. But when everybody's listening, I'm sure they're going, wait, I only want to work two or three hours a day, so give me – what are your top three tips on really trying to save that hour per day, besides the Alfred app? Because we want to save as much time and be in the flow as much as humanly possible.

Fabian Dittrich: Right. So I think the philosophy behind – on a meta level – behind Alfred app is, let's say you're a carpenter, right? If you're a carpenter in Germany, you have to make a three-year apprenticeship where you learn how to use your saw.

[00:30:07] You learn what the buttons are for. If you're somebody who uses a computer for more than two hours a day, it really makes sense to know how to use this computer. But we don't learn how to use a computer, right? We open it and then we learn by doing, which is great. But there's certain things which can save you so much time. Everybody in the world, even my mom, knows how command-C, command-V works, like copy and paste. But there's just as many shortcuts which are just as useful which nobody knows. I would say learn how to use your tools, starting with the computer.

Every time you're sitting at the computer and you're doing something again, like a repetitive thing – if you catch yourself doing something over and over again, then there is a better way. There's a more efficient way. Sometimes you can use shortcuts which are already there. Sometimes you can use a tool like Alfred app to set up a custom shortcut.

[00:30:59] Here's an example. So a friend of mine, we are having this competition where we do ten minutes of exercises every day. Like barely exercise. We have a spreadsheet where we put in our progress. Like every day we have to put what we eat and how many exercise we did. On the same time, when I open this spreadsheet, I need to open the video of the girl who's doing the exercise so I can follow them. So imagine how many actions that takes, right? Open the browser, go to drive.google.com, where the shared spreadsheet is, search for the spreadsheet, click on it to open it, right?

Then you have that thing. Now you have to go to YouTube, search for this exercise video, open it, put it next to the spreadsheet. It's like ten actions. I have a shortcut. The only thing I do is command space, EX and it autocompletes to exercise. I hit enter. The

spreadsheets open on the left side of the screen, the video opens on the right side of the screen. Done. It's like one action compared to ten. So I have like 250 of these shortcuts, which I set up while I was in the desert in Peru because my friend was driving and I was sitting there. We had no internet.

[00:32:00]

So I had nothing better to do than create all these shortcuts. But it only takes you a day to set up all these shortcuts for the repetitive things you do in your daily activities and then you save time for the rest of your life.

Jaime Masters:

If you remember them all. I feel like that's the one thing – now I have to remember 250 shortcuts. That seems like that's – not that many, but you know what I mean. Is it a lot to try and do that?

Fabian Dittrich:

Not really. No, because let's say you have one which is called exercise, right? You know that you're going to do exercise. All you do is EX and then it autocompletes. If you have others, you know more or less what you're searching for and it autocompletes. Alfred gives you suggestions. Another example, let's say you have to schedule a call tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. Let's say you have to meet somebody tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. at Union Square. You can go to your Google calendar, click on 3:00 p.m., create an event, put in the details. It's like six actions, right?

With Alfred app, you do cal meet Lauren tomorrow 3:00 p.m. at Union Square. It automatically adds that thing in your Google calendar at 3:00 p.m. It automatically takes the part at Union Square and puts it in the location thing.

[00:33:04]

It's little things. The same for task managers, like Wunderlist task manager? I just do WL, like Wunderlist, call customer X tomorrow at 9:00 p.m. It'll remind me 15 minutes before per SMS and then I get an SMS 15 minutes before. It's like just one command which I type in 10 seconds instead of opening Wunderlist, go there, add the task, add a time, add a reminder, 15 minutes before. It's these little things. You learn them once. Maybe it takes a day or two. Once you have them, it serves you for the rest of your life. So I'm a big shortcut guy.

If you could see my command button. Unfortunately, I can't do that. But the command button is the only button on my keyboard which has no key. The CMD is gone, the whole thing is gone.

Jaime Masters: So I use my Amazon Echo a lot. There's a lot of little things that you can save voice command wise that's been really helpful and saved a little bit of time anyway. I feel like it's kind of a pain for me to try and set things up like that.

[00:34:00] What's another thing that people can do to save time?

Fabian Dittrich: Well, tools in general, like Calendly for scheduling. It depends what you do, right? I do a lot of data migration. So when I have calls with customers, I ask them the same questions over and over again. What system are you migrating from? Is it **[inaudible]**? Is it FreshDesk? How many tickets do you need? Files, whatever. It's like 15 questions, which are always the same. So why would I do those calls? What I did is we created a tool which is like – it says it needs 1.5 minutes of your time and we know everything we need to know to give you a quote. They click on this click-through, step-by-step wizard.

It's like eight steps. And they only click. I need this, I need that. At the end, they put in their email. We get a summary, they get a summary, and we can quote. We can send them a quote. Because if you're like a nomad company like we are, having calls is the worst thing. You need a stable location. You need good internet and you need to be there at a specific time, which is the worst to do if you're traveling through the desert.

[00:35:02] So this is the takeaway: because of this pressure and the constraints that we had in South America, we were forced to develop those tools. So it might also be a good idea sometimes to get into these positions where you have those constraints because then you have to force yourself, no matter what, to work more efficiently.

Jaime Masters: I love it. Yeah, I'll do these interviews from remote locations – no, I'm kidding. But I mean, I think that's the funny thing. There some things we can definitely do. You being a computer programmer makes it way easier because you're like, oh, I'll just create a program for that, it's not that big of a deal. Whereas somebody that actually needs something like that has to go and be like now I have hire somebody and do something like this, which is kind of a pain. But it's still worth it because if you save that much time, you don't have to do any phone calls out of the whole year. It's insane.

Fabian Dittrich: Yeah. For everything I mentioned, the only thing you need to be a programmer for is the last thing I mentioned, where we built this tool. For everything else, you don't need to be a programmer for.

But even if you're not, you go to UpWork, you hire some guy in Eastern Europe who for \$8.00 a day develops your tool and you're probably paying him 16 hours and then it's done.

[00:36:08]

Jaime Masters: Heck, we could use Wufoo or like Google Docs and have a form too. It's not like you need something crazy in order to get some information from people. Okay, so I love this. I know we have to start wrapping up. But can you give me one other thing that you give when you do these talks for people to try and save them, or at least think differently on saving time? Because time is such a big deal and I feel like we just do the normal productivity stuff that doesn't always really help anymore.

Fabian Dittrich: Well, I guess the typical Tim Ferriss rant, right? If you're sitting in an office and you're employed and you know you're going to leave the office at 5:00, no matter what, no matter how fast you work, you will not focus on the task and finish it in the most disciplined way because you have to sit there until 5:00 anyway. So if you have a task which takes usually two hours if you work with super focus, you stretch it until 5:00. If you're your own boss, then you know if I finish this task now in two hours, when it's done, I can, in our case, jump into the waterfall in Colombia or interview somebody.

[00:37:08]

But I guess the vision, if you have something nice to do when the task is done, probably that helps to do it with more focus. So just getting rid of this 9:00 to 5:00 mindset helps. I think I mentioned the other things. There's things that if you read *The 4-Hour Workweek*, you get all this. Like the Pomodoro technique. Having 20, 25 minutes of focused work, knowing that then you have a 5-minute break where you can check Facebook or call your grandma or whatever and then have another 25 minutes of focused work and then another break and then you have a longer break. Gamifying it, you know?

I never did exercise and I had terrible back pain at one point. Then I used the 10-minute workout app, which is like a game. You do exercises and then you're unlocking your trainings if you did the exercise for 30 days straight.

[00:38:02]

That was the only thing that made me do exercise. Having this reachable goal. Like now I'm writing a book and I cannot just sit down and write a book. I'm just too overwhelmed because it's so

much. But I'm using a tool now, which is like 750 words a day. So I have a counter. I need to see this progress. I need to see the bar filling up. When it's 750 words, it turns green and then I'm done for the day. Then I see a statistic how I did and I feel really bad the one day that the curve is low. So breaking bigger goals into smaller, achievable ones I guess helps. Tim Ferriss would say, make it a game, make it competitive and make it measurable.

So making it competitive would be, I'm writing a book with someone. So if this someone sees yesterday I didn't write, she would call me out on it and that's making it competitive.

Jaime Masters: I love that. I feel like we forget those pieces, that accountability, but also making it fun.

[00:39:00] I'm a huge fan of competition, so I want to win at pretty much all costs. So yes, using that against myself seems like the best thing in the world. I have a lot of my clients who use Toggl.com – T-O-G-G-L.com, so when they time themselves, you're just more focused because of that. You know what I mean? Because you're like, oh, crap, this is taking forever. All right. I really appreciate that.

We're going to put all the resources you mentioned and now I have to go download Alfred as soon as humanly possible because I literally use so many things and I'm just thinking right now how much time that will save me. So I'm going to ask you the last question I always ask. It's what's one thing listeners can do this week – I know – move forward with their goal of a million?

Fabian Dittrich: Oh, man. Well, is there time for a little story?

Jaime Masters: Yes, go ahead.

Fabian Dittrich: All right. So I'm in Canada, it's the coldest winter in years. I'm like, this is too cold. So I take a last-minute trip to Jamaica and I get out in Montego Bay, drive a bus to Ocho Rios.

[00:40:02] I'm in a hotel because I got the hotel with the deal for \$450 Canadian dollars. Like the flight and the hotel was amazing. It's the first time I do this package deal. So I'm sitting there and there's this Canadian couple my age and I'm saying yeah, I'm going out. They're like, "You're going out? Out of the gate? It's dangerous." I'm going out and it's not dangerous at all. I have the time of my life. There apparently is this amazing waterfall, Dunn's River Falls, right? Like a bus comes into the hotel compound, they pick

up the tourists, they drive them to the waterfall. I walk there because I can't do that.

Then I'm the only one at the waterfall because I arrive first in the morning. So I go to the ticket counter and they say, "Hey, where's your guide?" I'm like, "Guide? You have to have a guide?" Then better wait until there's a group so you don't slip and break your legs because it's dangerous. Yeah, right. So I buy the ticket and go in there. I sit there and then all these masses of tourists come and they're in groups of ten people and they all have their Rastafarian guide. They're like, "Hey, when in Jamaica we always say yeah, mon. So I go like 1, 2, 3 and you all go, yeah, mon."

[00:41:01]

I'm sitting there and I'm watching all these groups asynchronously shouting yeah, mon. I'm like what is happening here? So we're at the foot of the waterfall and it's like this cascading long waterfall, like 300 meters, but with cascades. So everybody's led by this shop where you have to buy like \$10 rubber shoes so you don't slip. The guides are barefoot and they run up the waterfall. All the tourists, even in much better shape than I am, they buy all these \$10 rubber shoes. So then they say, "Hold each other's hands." Then a long line of like 200 people go up the waterfall.

Everybody's taking these baby steps and being afraid of dying in this waterfall which is not really dangerous at all. So I'm there barefoot with a backpack on and I said, man, I'm going to do it like the guides do it, right? I feel a bit weird because I'm the only guys who's walking like this where everybody is holding hands and going in a line. First I feel slippery and it's a bit risk and I have to bear with the strange looks of the people in the line.

[00:42:01]

But then I get into it. I get into this flow of climbing the waterfall. I go like left and right. I discover all these lagoons and I see these giant butterflies. I see this green tree frog. I have the time of my life. But I'm far away from the line. At that moment, I have this philosophic thinking going on that this waterfall is the representation of how society works. You have a line of people which follow what the other people say and that's why they stay exactly in that line and hold each other's hand and go up and they don't see anything.

But then you have some weird people who take a bit more risk, but if you image there's 100 treasures hidden in the waterfall, like separately, randomly, where is the probably higher that you'll find these treasures? Is it in the line where there's 600 eyes looking left

to right? Or is it when you walk left and right and all these different places. It's probably higher when you're the other guy, right? Everybody reaches the top of the waterfall, I guess.

[00:43:00]

Which maybe can compare with death, but the question is how, right? I think for me, the answer to your question is, go out of the line. See the things that are happening left and right. Don't do only what society suggests to do. Make your own climb.

Jaime Masters:

I love that. I love that story. I got goosebumps. I can actually see that. So everybody that just listened to that story, think of one thing that you can do to shake the heck out of what you're doing right now. Because I feel like we do get so engrained. I spoke in Thailand not that long ago and everyone's like, "You're going to Thailand? Because right now's really not the best time." That's what I heard from absolutely everybody that I talked to. It's not a big deal. It's so funny how we think the sky is falling from the silliest things. You're going to slip. Yeah, if you die, whatever. No, I'm kidding. But thank you so much. I want –

[Crosstalk]

Jaime Masters:

Well, everybody's going to die anyway eventually. It doesn't really matter. It's how you live when you're here, right? It sounds like you're living in delight literally all the time. It's so amazing to listen to you speak. Which is eye opening because a lot of people. We do gratitude lists in the morning. We've got our 5-minute journal where everybody talks about this stuff. I feel like it seems like you're just in it all the time, which is really refreshing to see because it's uncommon. So tell us where we can find more about you, where we can go to your website and check it out if we do need to do any migration, any of that fun stuff.

Fabian Dittrich:

So if you want to follow our adventures of being a nomad company crossing South America in a broken-down van, you can go to StartupDiaries.org and you'll see ten video episodes of our adventures. If you need data migration from Zendesk to anything, or vice versa, go to helpando.it. If you want to know about me personally and the book I am going to publish soon, it's FabianDittrich.com. It's a bit hard to spell, but I guess you can link it up somewhere.

Jaime Masters:

We will definitely link to it. I love how diverse your links are.

[00:44:59] Thank you so much for coming on the show, Fabian, I really appreciate it.

Fabian Dittrich: Thank you and make your own climb. You're only going to die.

Jaime Masters: I mean, come on. It's not the worst thing that could happen. That's awesome. Thank you very much.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 46 minutes