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Jaime: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I'm Jaime Masters, and today on the show we have Denise Gosnell. And what I think is amazing about her website is it's just called the Vacation Effect. She's a multiple business owner, but she talks about actually taking away things, going on vacation to build your business. So, thanks so much for coming on the show today. I appreciate it.

Denise: Thank you for having me, Jaime. I'm excited to be here.

Jaime: It seems so counterintuitive, and I do this for my clients, and they're like wait a minute. I make them take vacations. 1.) It's good for your health, but 2.) It makes them be a better business owner. So, I would love to hear your theories because I apparently already agree with you. What is the Vacation Effect?

Denise: So, the Vacation Effect is a company I started. I had always been somebody who wanted to have freedom. That's why we go into business for ourselves is to have freedom. But it always seemed like I have – there was tradeoff. If I worked a lot of hours, I'd make more money, but I'd have no free time for my family, or if I took a lot of free time for my family, I'd make no money. So, it was always this balancing act that I never seemed to figure out. But long story short, I figured out after a series of – a lifechanging incident and some things that woke me up to the fact that I just had to figure this out.

I ended up realizing that there – I stumbled on to it after a scheduling experiment, that you can actually get as much done each week as you do when you're about to go on vacation. I don't know if you've ever felt this way, Jaime, but you know how right before you go on vacation, you get a months' worth of work done in the two days before you leave?

Jaime: Totally.

Denise: You know what I'm talking about?

Jaime: Yes, definitely.

Denise: You've felt that way? I think everybody's felt that way before. And it's like why is it that we feel that way? And well, what's happening is we're forcing ourselves to focus on what really matters. And so, that's part of where the name the Vacation Effect comes from. It's that hyper efficiency that I call it, where you're super productive right before you go on vacation. But it's also, I

believe, that life should have so much joy that your life feels like a perpetual vacation and that you've got space to do what makes you happy, you've got freedom.

So, the Vacation Effect actually has a double meaning. It's that hyper productivity, and it's joyful life where life feels like a vacation. So, I hope that makes sense.

Jaime: It totally does. And all those burnt out business owners are going wait, wait, what? How do we – because you only do three days a week, and you have three businesses. So, tell us a little bit about the scheduling experiments and how you actually implement this because it sounds like it's too good to be true.

Denise: So, it's one of those things where I had always dreamed of having a Tuesday, Thursday schedule, and what I mean by that is I was a workaholic entrepreneur, had three companies, working 80 hours a week in those companies, feeling like that was the only way I could do. That's what we've been taught to in our North American business culture and in a lot of other countries as well. And so, that's what I thought you do, and it had worked for me in the past, but it always came at a price. I was always burned out or unhappy.

So, I went to this meditation retreat, and the goal of what I wanted to have answered was how can I have the Tuesday, Thursday schedule I'd always wanted where I could just wake up on those days and say hey, what do I wanna do today that makes me happy and be able to run my company three days a week? That's what I'd always dreamed of. It's like a retirement goal or something. Kinda sounds silly if we think about it. And the answer that I got in the meditation retreat was lifechanging. It was Denise, all you have to do is decide and make today what you want tomorrow to be.

So, I'm like okay, make today what I want tomorrow to be. Well, I can't just go from working 80 hours a week to working three days a week because I got three companies. There's no way, but there's this permission thing. I'm like, I'll give myself permission to do an experiment, a 30-day experiment. Surely my business won't fall apart if I give myself eight business days in the next month that I can test out the waters on this idea. And so, that's what I did. I went back. I rescheduled meetings. I carved out eight business days. Mine happened to be Tuesdays and Thursdays where I was allowing myself to have that time.

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And it was interesting what happened. It was actually painful at first, Jaime.

Jaime: I can bet.

Denise: Like you said, how does that work? Magically. Well, no, it's not magic. It is, but it's not. Here's what I mean by that. So, at first, I realized – I mean, I had to figure out, I used to work six days a week. Now, I'm trying to fit it all into three. So, I learned that things had to go. You know how when you're about to go on vacation, some things just don't get done, and you just literally have to decided, you know what? This is just gonna be ignored. And most of the time, it really could have been ignored anyway, but we just didn't let ourselves ignore it.

So, I had to learn what needed to be delegated, that I as the CEO of these companies, of two of the three companies wasn't delegating. I had to learn where I was wasting time with my meetings. I don't know about you, if you've ever done this in the past or a lot of your listeners have as well, but I used to have meetings all over my calendar. I'd have meetings in the morning, meetings in the afternoon, meetings any day of the week. There was no criteria for when I would have a meeting and when I wouldn't have a meeting. And that was one of the first things that had to go in order to have my new three-day work week.

So, it was a lot of things. After that 30 days, I ended up extending it for another 30. Does that make sense so far?

Jaime: Definitely. So, it does feel like it would be very painful to have that yes vs. no because we're kind of sucky anyway at prioritizing things, just like wait, I need to do it all yesterday. So, how do you manage what stays and what goes because I know some of it is delegation with your team, but some of it might just not be – like hey now, we're not doing this project anymore. And that's – especially for the overachiever mindset, that's a lot to ask.

Denise: That's one of the most impactful things that I had to figure out. And I have an actual methodology that I use, that I work with my private clients on. I'm happy to just kinda walk through that quickly, if that's helpful.

Jaime: Please, yes.

Denise: And so, it starts with how we typically will do a brain dump each

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day, and I don't know about you, but I normally have 10 or 15 things that are my brain dump of the day of things I'd like to get done, or make sure somebody on my team is moving along, or whatever the case is. And so, you do your little brain dump. And then the first part of that, and this is an interesting analysis, it's doing what people might think of as a Pareto principle analysis. And for those listeners who may not know what the Pareto principle is, the Pareto principle is – it is said basically that 20 percent -- or 80 percent of the activities that you do tend to produce 20 percent of the results, which isn't much.

80 percent of the stuff that we do is really only producing 20 percent of the results? Now, these are on average. It may vary a little bit. But it's also said that on average, 20 percent of the efforts, the things that we do produce 80 percent of the results. It's like interesting statistic there. And so, if 20 percent of our efforts really do produce 80 percent of the results, why are we not living in that zone all the time, right?

Jaime: Right? Geez.

Denise: And it's because we're crazy busy, and we have all these things we're juggling as business owners and trying to get it done. So, step one in my process of how I manage my tasks each day is to do a Pareto analysis where I'm looking for the levers. I'm looking for out of that 10 or 15 on the list, the two or three that are gonna take the least amount of time, but they're gonna produce the biggest results. And then, guess what? If I do those first, before noon ideally – and it may linger, early afternoon too, but if I do those first, even if I do those first, even if I do nothing else today, I'm already successful in my day.

So, that's part one of my – the way I had to shift how I spend my time in order to maintain this three-day work schedule without the company tanking, without the three companies tanking. And then, the second part of the analysis – and this is something I've never heard anyone else talk about. I call it hacking the hack. So, I have these time hacks. I have 12 time hacks that some of them, people might use already, but they don't realize it's a time hack. But it's things like batching like tasks together, like responding to different e-mails at the same time, or doing the same kind of activity like editing certain Word documents all together in bulk, you know what I mean? The same type of docu – so batching is one.

Using a timer is another. This thing right here, I use this timer all

the time. Well, so – but I’m getting ahead of myself, but in terms of the list of that 10 to 15 things, so step one, we’ve already marked 1A, 1B, 1C, those three big levers that we identified from our Pareto analysis. Now, step two is the hacking the hack, and that’s where you look down the rest of the list, and you say out of 2 through 15, which of these can I apply a time hack to, to help me get them done even faster? Does that make sense?

Jaime: Yup.

Denise: So, then, you might say – you might batch one next to the three things that could be batched together. You might write batch two next to the other things that could be batched together. You might write timer down next to a bunch of them. Sometimes, I’ll write timer and batch down next to them. There’s a bunch of others. Like I said, there’s 12 total that I use, but my most favorites are the batching and the timer. And so, what you’re then doing is you then go about your date, you then prioritized based upon the levers and the hacking the hack, and then you go about your day that way.

Literally, if you just follow that and do nothing else of any of the other things that I cover in my programs, that will get you halfway there.

Jaime: I love it. And you are 1 of 6 interviews today, so I totally get the batching because it’s the same brain space. So, my question is though, especially when it doesn’t come to meetings – because meetings are easy to me to batch because it’s already preplanned. But when it comes to actually doing stuff, especially if you feel inspired or not at the beginning of the day, how do you get yourself to do some of it when you’re like I’m just – I’m wait – our own minds are not nice to us sometimes.

Denise: So, that’s where I actually wanna go back to forced hyper efficiency. So, I talked about, when you get ready to go on vacation, you force yourself to get it done because you’re under a deadline, and you know you’re not gonna be available, so you focus on what matters, and you get it done faster. So, for me, the way I get stuff done that otherwise might sit too long is I’ll create an artificial or real deadline. And what I mean by that is sometimes I’ll commit to somebody else. There’s no greater way to get a client project done than to schedule a call with the client to review the project, even if you haven’t started it yet.

It magically gets done. Same thing with that – whatever that thing

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is that you've been putting off. Well, guess what? Commit to sending it to somebody to review because it's gonna get done because you gotta send it to them in order to have that meeting. So, those are the games I play with myself all the time. And when I am already in reduced scheduling mode anyway, when I'm only letting myself, when I'm not traveling – have my working in the trenches Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays, notice we're having this call on a Wednesday, that's all by design. That forces me to not mess around because I know tomorrow, I'm not available to do it.

Jaime: I love this.

Denise: So, it's like these games we play with ourselves. Does that make sense?

Jaime: Totally. And I love that you call them game – we run implementation retreats, and we take something that would take two months or even longer and put it in two days because as long as we reduce the friction and you know what you're doing, you can – we are way more effective than ever when you actually are focused on something, even from somebody that has ADD. So, my question though is how do you deal with small business owners because this is sort of what I always get. People are like, but we have urgent things that pop up in the business, and I'm the only one that can deal with it. So, what happens if on Thursday, something urgent pops up in your business?

Denise: That's a great question, and I'm glad you're clarifying that. So, in order to make my reduced schedule work long-term, I had to put emergency buffers in place because things – there are times when a true emergency happens. So, on my freedom days, that's what I call the business days that I wake up and say what do I wanna do that makes me happy, on my Tuesday and Thursday generally freedom days, I have a two-hour emergency buffer. I generally set it between 2:00 and 4:00 eastern time because that's just when I like to have it, or 3:00 and 5:00 eastern time, but it's where I can respond to emergencies if it truly happens.

But I only have that happen once a month on my freedom days because what I define as an emergency has been refined over time.

Jaime: And you can delegate actually and train the other people to deal with most things instead of you having to be the decision maker. So, you call them freedom day – so, it's not like you can't work on the extra days that you have. So, you still have the time available

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to work on stuff that you love that could be different, or what do you do on those freedom days?

Denise: So, for me, a freedom day is being able to wake up and say, what do I wanna do today that lights me up, that I just can't wait to get out of bed and go do, makes me happy? And there's no resistance. It's total flow, total love. And my rule for myself in general is that I don't want it to be in the trenches of the company, but that doesn't mean I couldn't be writing a book, or researching a new company I've always wanted to start, or going and visiting a family member, or taking a friend to lunch, or going to donate my time to a charity, or whatever that may be.

It can be business or personal. My only rule is that it makes me happy and it's not in the trenches of my companies. Does that make sense?

Jaime: Yes, it totally does. So, I have so many questions when it comes to this too because I was just – got asked to speak at this event for all women business owners that are doing over a million. And they're like is there a difference between female and male everyday productivity wise? Because we are different creatures, and so I would love your feedback on that too because getting in flow and actually tapping into our creative power, I think is really huge. Where do you see the difference between male and the female side for this?

Denise: That's a good question. I think females tend to – I think we tend to be more – we have more emotions involved too. We've got a lot – a lot of times, we have more the – those that are parents are balancing the feelings of the whole family, the needs of the whole family, not that men don't do that too because my husband does that as well, but I'm more sensitive to those kinds of things. How is my daughter feeling about these things, or how's the family feeling? So, I think that females bring a more sensitive side to the drive as well. We're very driven, but I think females in a lot of cases might tend to burn out quicker because of that sensitivity.

So, that's not necessarily always the case. Certainly, men can burn out just as easily. But that's kind of what I've noticed. I don't know if you've noticed that as well.

Jaime: Yeah, because men seem – men are hunters, women are gatherers. So, the hunters are like, I go after the goal, and blah, blah, blah. And women sort of take in everything. And so, unfortunately, I

feel like people, especially females that are clients of mine and me, I'm taking in so much information that I need the days to not have anything coming at me in order to understand my creative side and making sure that I'm actually producing something instead of again, consuming everything because when there's emergencies and there's this, I can't in the flow. I mean, not saying men don't do this too, but I can't in the flow, and then I'm so much less productive anyway.

So, I tell people to try to get in flow, but it's sort of a catch 22. They're like, but I know. But I have so many things. It's all this stuff. So, I love your methodology around that.

Denise: And what you just said is so important too because like you said, whether you're male or female, what I love about the freedom days is whether somebody does them as a personal or a business freedom day, just to have – the feeling to have something on your calendar blocked off that just says freedom day, and there are no meetings scheduled, you can just be with yourself and your thoughts, and do the things that make you happy, do the visionary things you've always wanted to do as the business owner, and just be, and have fun with it, and be with it.

Magic happens on my freedom days when I'm not even trying to solve a certain problem. It's much like when you go on vacation like you talked about at the beginning. You get – some of your best ideas come when you're sipping a margarita on the beach, when you're not even trying to solve it. It's because we've finally slowed down and let our brain think for a second or let our mind process what we've been trying to solve.

Jaime: I call it defragging.

Denise: Oh, that's great.

Jaime: Our brain actually has a chance to defrag. Well, and that's the thing. That's why, in the shower, we have different – we're doing something else with our body, and we're not necessarily solely focused, I have to figure this thing out now because when you put that much pressure on yourself, it makes it almost harder. It makes more resistance to try and figure it out. So, people, you can be more effective when you take time off. I know it's so counterintuitive to people that are listening, but please understand. How did you start figuring out what really got you in flow on the freedom days? Because usually, it's like towards your strength –

how do you figure out, this is gonna make me happy, or this isn't?

Denise: It's challenging for a lot of people at first, the clients that I've worked with on this. A lot of people are like, I don't know what I do with my free time, Denise. I've never – I haven't, since I was kid, given myself the space. And so, I actually have exercises that I take them through at the beginning that foundational to our work together. And part of it is reconnecting with what it is that they love doing as a kid that made them happy, what kinds of things they can lose themselves in doing, and look up, and it'd be 3:00 in the morning, and you didn't even realize what time it was.

I actually make them go through a bunch of those kinds of exercises up front, so we're building a freedom day idea bucket. And then, when they get to the point where they're like now you're helping me do my own experiment, you're helping me carve out this time, they're like I don't know what to do with the time. I'm like, remember that first exercise? Let's pull it back out. And then, they're like oh, but I don't know how to go take piano lessons, or I don't know how to go get hiking le – I'm like, you just schedule it. It's not like it's challenging.

Their brain hasn't even processed that skill. They're brilliant entrepreneurs, but they feel like it's an obstacle to learn how to schedule a piano lesson?

Jaime: Well, it feels self – so, this is the thing. The overachievers are like well, if I'm not getting something done, then I'm not valuable, or whatever. There's so much head junk that comes – I know from experience. My coach has been making me do more creative things. And I'm like, I know, but – not saying that I don't get better ideas when I'm doing that stuff and it's defragging, but it still feels so hard to make myself go – and I'm taking more time off, even more than I even think that I'm comfortable with. And that's interesting, that I have to be comfortable with taking time off. It just seems stupid.

Denise: No, not at all. You hit on the biggest objection that I hear from every single client I've ever worked with, never fail, including myself. I was the one I had to win over on this first. It's guilt. The guilt in our society, in our business culture is so deeply rooted. We have been taught that only the hustlers succeed. You've gotta grind, grind, grind all the time in order to do anything meaningful. And we mock people who aren't grinding all the time as being lazy.

Yet, what makes that – what I finally realized is that it makes no logical sense, that if we get as much done in three days as we used to in six because we’re actually being effective with our time, and we’re prioritizing correctly, and we put the right systems in place, there’s nothing to feel guilty about. Yet, we still do. So, I literally had to learn to turn the volume down on that little guilt voice, that little creature that was sitting on my – it’s like the angel and the devil, the little devil whispering in your ear, “Denise, get back to work, you lazy idiot.” The angel’s going, “Denise, you deserve free time. Don’t listen to him.”

Jaime: Seriously. And it’s so – we’re like two – multiple personalities. You’re like, are you kidding me? But it’s insane, especially – I mean, I had to reschedule the last interview. And I’ll be completely open. My former husband has Stage IV inoperable cancer. And when something like that is so – I mean, he’s 38. So, the amount of life changing, flipping upside down, what actually matters in your life starts to really hit home. And it has these past few weeks for sure. And it does make me go money and busine – and don’t get me wrong. I love what I do. Overachievement, not as important as it was before.

And I know you had a crazy personal thing go on too. Is that what really impact you to sort of shift into this mode?

Denise: Yeah, it is. It was the incident that happened back in June of 2011. Totally made me realize I wasn’t living my life in alignment with my real priorities.

Jaime: Do you mind telling us all about it?

Denise: Sure, yeah. So, imagine, there’s this not – so, let me back up for a second. So, our house was struck by lightning. There was a boom and a shake. And my husband and I were up at 8:00 in the morning. We saw the lightning bolt hit the house. And then, I had a 5-year-old – my daughter was 5 at the time. She’s now a teenager. But her toys turned on from the energy passing through the room. “Welcome to Dora’s playhouse.” So, anyway, that was freaky by itself.

Jaime: Creepy.

Denise: I guess, that was just a side note. So, we’re looking around. We don’t know whether we’re on fire or not. We just know we were

hit by lightning, and we're trying to assess the damage. And then, there's this knock on the door. So, I go to the front door, and there's a fireman at the door. And he informs us, our house was on fire. Our neighbor had called 9-1-1 because they thought they were struck lightning. Our phones weren't working because the – our whole house was dead because it knocked the power out, knocked everything out.

So, my cellphone wouldn't work because it was nasty storm, our home phone wouldn't work, so we couldn't call anyone, but we were just trying to figure out the damage. So, the fireman says, "Your house is on fire," and then he asked me the most incredible question I've ever been asked in my life, and sometimes it even brings me to tears when I say the question. It was like, "What do you want us to retrieve in the next five minutes before your house is destroyed by fire and water? What do you want us to go get?" Can you imagine, Jaime, if you were asked that question?

You only had five more minutes to set foot in your house again. It's like, what would you grab? It's like – now, thankfully, I already had my computer, and my wallet, my daughter, all the family members and the pets were all safe. So, that was all fine. And we could grab the wallet and the laptop. But knowing that we already had that, that's the instinctive thing somebody would grab. But forget about that. Let's say you already got that handled. What else do you grab if you can only go back in your house for five more minutes?

And it was really eye opening. It wasn't any of this stuff that you see behind me on the video, for those that are seeing this on video. None of this stuff existed at the time. I bought all this after the fire. But that wasn't what I had them retrieve. And what hit me, Jaime, was that I – what I had them retrieve, it was what I didn't have them retrieve that was so eye opening. I didn't have them go get the jewelry in the jewelry drawer. I didn't have them get the artwork on the wall or the expensive items throughout the house. That's all just things. You can replace things any day of the week.

Well, I like nice things, but it doesn't define who I am. But what I had them retrieve were my daughter's favorite stuffed animal. At 5, your stuffed animal's a member of the family. Bunny, gotta go get Bunny. We still have Bunny to this day thanks to the fireman saving Bunny. My daughter will probably pass Bunny onto her daughter. I had them get my wedding photos off the piano and around the house. That's from 25 years ago. I don't have those

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digitally. That's my wedding with my husband. We just celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

I had them go get my grandmother's blanket that she made me as a child. It's a patchwork quilt that teaches love and acceptance. She used to tell me a story from it about loving others. And so, what did all those three things represent? The people in my life that really matter, not the stuff. So, long story short, to answer your question about what changed my priorities, I was working 80 hours a week to pay for a bunch of stuff that I didn't even care about when it was burning.

Jaime: Wow, that is so impact – and it sucks that you had to go through that, of course, to know those things, but it's so visceral, and you so accepted them. So, what did you change after that effect – besides the Vacation Effect, I get that piece, but right afterwards, especially being so – dealing with that?

Denise: So, I vowed that day, as we were standing there at our neighbor's garage, watching our house burn, and the firemen, took them like eight hours to put out the fire even though it was raining because it gets into the walls, in the crevices, and they have to hack walls to put it out. And so, as I'm standing there, it was almost like a slow-motion movie where it's your life, but you're watching somebody else's movie. And it was like that. And I was just standing there going, I'm gonna make this the best thing that ever happened to me, like I do with any other challenge I've ever had in my life. I'm always a glass half full kinda person.

I'm gonna make this the best thing. So, I'm like, how am I gonna make – I don't know yet how, but I will figure out how to reconcile the fact that it is no longer acceptable to not spend the time that my family deserves. I do not accept that anymore. So, that was the one thing I vowed. But I also vowed – I kinda had this reco – this come to Jesus with myself. I reconciled the fact that the stuff that was burning didn't matter to me, but – over my family. They were way more important. But that I also like providing a nice life for my family, but I didn't ever wanna have to do it at the expense of my family's time and love. Does that make sense?

Jaime: Oh, totally, yeah.

Denise: It's like reconciling the divine dichotomy – or not the divine dichotomy. It's like reconciling that two sides to the coin of I like nice things, but money's not everything, but I still like nice things,

but I don't want it to come at the expense of me not being there for my family. So, that day, I vowed that I was gonna, no matter what, have more free time with – spend more time with my family, but that I was also gonna figure out how to have both, how to have free time and still make a good living, even if I didn't make as much money as before. I didn't care about that. I just still wanted to be able to provide a nice life.

So, I just started trying to figure out how to make it work, and I failed at a lot of experiments that I tried.

Jaime: Maybe we'll talk about those in just a second too because logically, it's one – so, people will hear this story and go, logically I know – of course I know the people in my life are more important, but taking the action, and making the decision, and when the rubber hits the road, that's what really matters, so the vows to yourself are amazing, but the fact that you kept the vows to yourself because it was such a lifechanging moment. I want everybody listening to not have to have their house burn or – you know what I mean – and to be able to take the weight.

Denise: Yeah – or lose someone.

Jaime: Exactly. Take the weight of that, and still take the same amount of action because it's just the belief that you had that changed. Nothing – I mean, you lost your stuff too, don't get me wrong, but it was the belief that changed, that changed everything in the long run. So, what experiments did you try that didn't work? Because I know there's a lot of people that are like well, I tried so many things. There's all the things that I tried, and you kept going, so what did you try and failed at?

Denise: So, the first thing I did was I stopped doing work that I hated, but I was still doing too much of work that I loved. And so, I was like well, this is gonna work because I need – I have to have more time with my family. I was – I started to fall back into that pattern of not taking the time off that I had wanted. So, then, I took off more time, and I took a year where I didn't really do much. And I made very little money, the least money in my life as a professional. I still had the businesses where we had business income and stuff, but my services income had gone down vs. the passive income.

But I was like oh, so now my income went down when I was just taking time off and not really doing much – because there were – I mean, doing much other than – don't get me wrong, we were

buying a new house, and negotiating all that, and doing personal stuff, getting our self established, but I wasn't working in any of the companies. So, it was – or not much. So, my income dropped. I'm used to a – where we would normally gross seven figures in our companies, and that one year it dipped to less than seven figures. I normally make over a half a million dollars in just one of my companies by itself, not counting all of them combined.

And that year, it made like 90,000 when it normally makes a half a million in my law firm.

Jaime: How does that make you feel? Because that's the other piece. Because that sucks, to go down. I mean, I know you went through a huge tragedy, but still, it hurts your self-worth to be like, even though I know I didn't work, but now I'm making less. And for overachieving entrepreneurs, it's tough.

Denise: I didn't – and at that point, I was thankful because I had a large insurance settlement check that was more than paying for it, so it's not like I was doing it and I didn't have any money. But I needed a break. I was so burned out, Jaime. I just needed a break. And I'm like, that thinking time, I finally was like this clearly isn't working though because I'm not working in those service businesses, so the income's not coming in. My other passive income was still coming in, so that's good that we had that, and we had the insurance money. So, I hit each into the spectrum.

I'm like, I learned that if I work too much, my family suffers, and if I don't work enough, I don't make enough money. So, I'm like surely there's a better way. And that's when I – what led me to the – going to that meditation retreat and saying, how can I have the schedule I've always wanted without my income tanking? And the answer I got was all you have to do is make today what you want tomorrow to be. And so, I then did that scheduling experiment, and that led me to figuring out the rest of it by trial and error. So, there's nine components that I figured out.

We've already talked about 3 of them of the 9. We talked about the – No. 1, which is the forced hyper efficiency, limiting the amount of time that you're willing to work so that you force yourself to get things done faster like you do when you're about to go on vacation. No. 2 is freedom days where you give yourself some space, so you then are more calm and able to solve problems when you're not even trying to. And then, No.3 is goal setting – proper goal setting. And No. 4 is time hacking. We've actually talked a

little bit about those first four.

When you do the goal process that I talked about, the step one and the step two of the Pareto analysis and the hacking the hack, and then you apply those time hacks – time hacking is 4 of my 9 prongs, you're already 40, 50 percent of the way there in doing what needs to be done in order to be able to grow your business and work half as much. I call that grow by subtraction. Grow by shedding things from your to do list. It's like the balloon floating in the air, and you're cutting weights so that you go higher.

Jaime: Oh, that's cool.

Denise: If you think about that analogy, the balloon floating into the air, higher and higher, grow by subtraction, by doing less. But the other things that I've figured out that I still had to do in order to let the business keep growing even when I wasn't there as much was, I really had to dial in my policies and procedures. I had to dial in my automation of – if you find yourself repeating certain activities over and over again or typing your name, address, e-mail, phone number over and over again, have a keyboard shortcut for stuff like that, having delegation you're good at. Just because we delegate doesn't mean we're good at it.

Jaime: Seriously, that's true.

Denise: Just because we delegate doesn't mean we delegate enough. I mean, on the delegation point, a huge hack that I did that I think people will find helpful is I actually have a 24-hour operation now. And it's not expensive to do. Even people that are just in business three to five years can do this. I have U.S. assistants, and I have a Filipino assistant. And literally, right now, I've got somebody who could type something up for me or do what – research that I needed. And right before I go to bed, I task my Filipino VA with wherever my U.S. team left off that I still want done, and when I wake up, it's done, and then my U.S. team picks it back up.

You literally can just shift the money that you're already spending so that you're covered 24/7 or 24/5, depending on what you want that to be, and not spend any more money than you're already spending. And imagine the speed you can implement things by having a 24-hour operation.

Jaime: I talk about speed of implementation all the time because the faster we can make that wheel turn, the better it is. Tell me a little bit,

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especially for people that don't have a really big team right now – because that's the other piece. You're a lawyer, so technically, you trade time for money. But what does your team look like? And do you have to build it out? And how many hour – because a lot of people will be like, but I'm a service-based business, and therefore, I need me, or my secret sauce, or whatever it is.

Denise: So, I have three different companies. My law firm's one of them, the Vacation Effect is another, that's my entrepreneurial coaching and training company, and then my real estate company. And across those three companies, I have 12 team members. So, my law firm, I have three, my coaching and training company, I have four, and then in my real estate company, we have seven. That math may be off with something, but something along those lines. So, basically, I'm able to – I didn't always have that many people. Even when I was first starting, I had one person that was helping me.

Even just having a VA in the Philippines or another country, U.S. or otherwise, it doesn't matter, just having – you can afford an assistant, and you really can't afford not to have an assistant, unless you wanna have no quality of life for yourself.

Jaime: I mean, that's –

Denise: You can have an assistant for as little as \$200.00 a month, even if they're helping you part-time.

Jaime: Well, and that's the thing – and getting an assistant so that you do get good at delegating because that's something that, as a business owner, you're always going to want to have long-term. So, how do you actually find – so, \$200.00 is an easy amount of money, and yet, finding the right person for that type – because then, if they're not good managers or good delegators yet anyway, then the whole thing will add more issue than relief, right?

Denise: Right.

Jaime: Do you have any tips on that?

Denise: Yeah, so if you go the route with hiring in the Philippines, for example, like what I've done, I have always used a site called OnlineJobs.ph. They're a Filipino resource. But I will typically give two or three people, two or three candidates whose resumes that I liked, and I had a good interaction with them, and the e-mail

interaction process went well, they followed my instructions – I always tell them to e-mail me back with a certain subject line, and with their resume attached, and three sentences about what they want, why they think they’d be a good fit for the job. And if they can’t even follow those basic instructions, how are they ever gonna be able to follow my instructions in general?

But the ones that I end up interviewing because they followed my instructions, I gave all three of them test task, and I offered to pay them for the test task. I might offer to pay them, depending on how detailed it is – the average wage in the Philippines is \$3.00 to \$4.00 an hour, depending upon their skillset. So, if I think it’s gonna take them three hours, I might offer them \$10.00 for the task or \$15.00 for the task, and I’ll send it to them by PayPal. But I’m paying them, whether or not I hire them or not. And so, you end up getting three different examples of the quality of that person’s work.

And then, I end up proceeding with the one that does the best job. And then – so, that’s an example. You can do that with whatever service you end up using, how to hire somebody – it’s all about experimenting.

Jaime: And you’ll hire them part-time? So, you’ll – and I have team members in the Philippines also. And do you hire them part-time? And have they been with you for a long period of time? I notice people go back and forth. Do I hire in the U.S., or do I hire there? And especially if they’re not good managers, sometimes it’s harder to have them manage up that kinda stuff.

Denise: Yeah, I actually have team members in both places. I have staff in the U.S., and then I have one that’s in the Philippines, but I also have a programmer in the Philippines I’ve worked with for eight years, that he’s just part-time, whenever I need changes to one of my company’s websites. My VA, she’s full-time. Well, she’s like 30 hours a week. I’m splitting her with one of my friends who needed a part-time VA. She’s awesome. I’ll pay her full-time if I have to, even if I only need her for 20 hours because she’s so awesome.

Jaime: That’s awesome.

Denise: That’s what I do with her. Even if I don’t have enough work for her, I still pay her, her full salary because I don’t want her wandering anywhere else.

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- Jaime: Yeah because one you find somebody that's good –
- Denise: So, she's that valuable.
- Jaime: – you're like, I need to retain you, definitely.
- Denise: Yeah, exactly. But – so, it just depends on what I need them to do. Some of them, I work part-time, and some of them, full-time.
- Jaime: How do you figure out what you're actually doing on your three days that – is it all meetings, or is it – how do you figure out your project plan and how much you're actually getting done?
- Denise: So, for me, I have it scheduled so that my meetings are all in the afternoons, and then the morning, it's focus time to do work product. So, client calls are in the afternoons, but that's just how I do it. That's just based upon my own unique workflow.
- Jaime: Is it eight hours a day, or how long are your Monday, Wednesday, Fridays?
- Denise: 8 to 10 hours depe – me, right now, I literally have been off 4 of the last 6 weeks. So – because I ended up having two weeks off for Christmas and New Year's, and then I took two one-week trips with two of my CEO mastermind groups. We went to Costa Rica, and we went to Mexico. And those were vacations. I wasn't really working. So, now, I'm trying to get done work that needs to be done. So, I'm working 10 to 12-hour days right now for the next week because I have to shift my schedule around based upon travel.
- Jaime: Because you took time off, so therefore, you do it.
- Denise: Yeah, exactly. I took a two-week vacation already in January, so guess what? I got to – now I've gotta work five days and five days for the other two weeks in January. But I got my two-week vacation. I just – I did it in bulk instead of here and there.
- Jaime: Well, how do you determine what you're gonna push farther down the pipeline also? So, when vacations or whatever comes up, is it – do I just squish the time, and I try and get it all done in a shorter period of time, or are you cool with pushing off deadlines a little bit and going slower – get a slower pace than – a lot of people – especially, we talk about speed of implementation, and they're like
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well, I don't wanna push things off either.

Denise: So, for me – I'm glad you're touching on this because I've decided, I wanted to live life with ease, and grace, and not with a lot of stress. So, I'm okay with pushing things off. There – most of the time. There are times when it just can't, and it really needs to be done. But as long as my client is okay with pushing it off – my own self-imposed deadlines, if I need to push it off, I'd rather have sanity. I'd rather have time with my family. I'd rather have the free days built in. If I need to push it off another week, it's not a big deal.

And even with clients, I've learned that the stuff that we – these self-imposed demands that we put on ourselves are not usually what the client even expects. We put so much on our self that's false. So, what I mean by that is I had to learn to free myself from the judgements of others, and what I thought were the judgements of others. And that's a big one. I don't know about you, but I get a lot of e-mails. And just because somebody e-mailed me, a client or otherwise, does not make it an obligation for me to meet what they were asking for. Just because they e-mail me does not make it a to do on my end.

If I haven't agreed to that, or committed to that, or if I haven't paid for that, I'm not obligated. It's like, it's just – a to do list is a suggestion. I mean, my e-mail is a suggestion. It's like, these are things other people are asking me to do that I get to negotiate how I'm going to handle them. But I stopped letting it dictate my life. And people think that if we are asked to do a call with the clients on a day that's a freedom – a day that we've got set aside for ourselves, that they'll be mad if we somehow say no. When you guys asked me if I could chat on a day, and I said, "Well, that doesn't work for me. How's Monday or Wednesday work for you?" did you think for a second, oh, she's lazy?

Jaime: I know, right.

Denise: No, of course not. You're like, okay, cool. She's busy, and that's the best time for her. I don't owe anyone an explanation. Listeners, you do not owe anyone an explanation for the space you've carved out for yourself. Just give them the next available window.

Jaime: Self-imposed pressure.

Denise: That was a big shift. Free yourself from the judgements of others.

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Most of the time, they don't care anyway.

Jaime: Well, it's like –

Denise: That was a big epiphany for me.

Jaime: This level of excellence that we hold, it's like well, then, I have to do everything for everyone, self-imposed timelines, self-imposed level of excellence, and that creates stress. So, what is it – tell me about your life before and how stressful it was vs. now because I feel like people that are going through it right now feel this pressure and stress that they don't even realize is self-imposed. There's just small decisions – you're saying these are small decisions. And yet, the people that are listening won't actually make these decisions. So, tell me about the before and the after of your stress levels.

Denise: So, the analogy I used to give my team members with every little interruption they would give me, and I would be like don't interrupt me unless it's urgent, the flow. I'm like, I feel like there are a million arrows coming at me. I don't know if people can relate to – there's things, like the phone's buzzing, the bing, the Skype's dinging, the e-mails are coming in. It's like, I feel like all these – I used to feel like all these arrows were coming at me. And it's because I was letting them get to me. I was letting other people's agendas dictate my life.

And I finally had to free myself, what I was saying a minute ago, freeing myself from the judgements of others, so now, it's not that those things aren't still happening. I don't get as many alerts because I've turned off almost every notification on my cellphone. I've turned it off, other than text messages, when I'm receiving text – when I'm real willing to receive text messages. Right now, I'm in do not disturb. I can't receive a message because I don't want you and I to be interrupted. But – so, I control that. I don't have as many notifications going on.

And I don't go into e-mail. I don't live in e-mail all day long. And I basically use e-mail as a database. It's a database of information that I go to when there's something I need to look for. But it's not my to do list. It's not my commitment list. It's my – the database of information of a client I've agreed, I'm gonna go grab a file that they sent me. I'm gonna go to e-mail and grab the file. It's not my to do list to what I have to work on today. So – but the big thing, Jaime, was just making the mindset shift that you know what?

Even if somebody doesn't like my schedule, and they think I'm lazy, I'll be okay if I lose them as a client.

And I have haven't, but if I ever do, I'll still be okay. And they're not they kinda client I wanna work with anyway, if they're so worried about me having a quality of life that they would not want me because of it.

Jaime: You're putting yourself and your selfcare first, and that way you can give back and be more present with your family, I'm sure. Have you really noticed the difference with your family time also?

Denise: Yeah. I was able to be with my dad a year and a half ago, right before he passed away. He was in the hospital for six months on and off right before he died. And I was able to go see him four days a week and just sit with him for hours and hours at a time. And the old version of me would have never had the time to do that, to have that space with –

Jaime: Or, checking the phone while you were in the hos – crazy stuff like that, and not being present like you really know you needed to. Wow, that's awesome.

Denise: What I finally figured out was that as long as I had a spot for everything to fit work wise, I then – I put my life first, my freedom first, my happiness first. I worked my business around it. People say that, put your family and yourself first, and wrap your business around it, but doing it's not always easy, as I found. I stumbled around for five years trying to figure it out. But what finally made it work was I had to make a space for everything in the business so that I could get it done, even putting myself first if that makes sense. So, that's where, now, I have a compartment, Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays in my particular example.

I have a space to get the work product done. I have a space for meetings. I have a team that can implement the different drafts of things that I need done because I've got them to delegate it to. If I didn't have them to delegate it to, I would just shift those buckets accordingly. And I've got a spot for it. So, Tuesday, when I have my freedom day, I don't need to stress about it because I know I've got a compartment. I've got that emergency buffer from 2:00 to 4:00, which I rarely need, and I know I've got all day Wednesday, where I've got those compartments. It's like, as long as you've got a space for it, just ignore all the rest of that noise, and the arrows don't need to come at you anymore.

I hope that makes sense.

Jaime: It definitely does. And especially, for moms, I'm a mom also, to be able to go family first is easy. Oh, family first, totally, and then business, and then self, typically. And so, as a mom, you get the last little breadcrumb left for yourself.

Denise: I know.

Jaime: And then, you're like, I wanna die. This sucks. I'm so exhausted. But you're doing it to yourself. And it's hard to hear that, but it's really cool to hear your story, where you really did put things back in the right order, and you're getting everything done, and being able to feel like you're achieving things also because we don't wanna hear the story of yeah, I put my family and myself first, and then I just am making a lot less money, and you're like great, that's awesome. And we really wanna have both sides of that coin that you were talking about before. I know we have to – oh, were you gonna say something?

Denise: And I was just gonna say, and I'll be okay, even if I do make less money because I'll never go back to my old ways again. But thankfully, that hasn't happened. But if it ever did, I still wouldn't change because it's totally worth it.

Jaime: Well, exactly, and you're set in that anyway. And it's all mindset and belief anyway because money isn't everything. Who knew? I know we have to start wrapping up. So, what is one action listeners can take this week to help move them forward towards their goal of a million?

Denise: So, I would recommend that they do a 30-day experiment like I was talking about. And even – a 30-day experiment where you pick ideally eight business days for the month that you give yourself for just joy activities, whatever brings you joy that day. And even if you don't wanna do it forever, like what I'm talking about, I know a lot of listeners may be hesitant to do that. That's totally fine.

But the reason for doing the experiment is to literally figure out the – where your – the bottleneck in the company, to figure out where you're not being efficient with your time, where you're not delegating, where you'd benefit from delegating more, where you're being lax with your meetings, and how you're spending

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your time. So, I recommend a 30-day time experiment, just for the purpose of making yourself more productive, so even if you wanna go back to working six days a week after that, you're more effective in what you do.

And I hope you get the bug like I did, and you actually decide that, you know what, I kinda like having these freedom days. I wouldn't mind having a reduced schedule now that I've tasted this. So...

Jaime: I just wanna bump that in everybody's mindset. One of the reasons why I make my clients take vacations is you get to see what breaks when you come back. And when you come back, and you go oh, now I have to fix it, it's not the end of the world. You just have – you now know what rose to the top, you fix it, you go on vacation again, or you take another freedom day, people. This is not – it's not rocket science. It's just a little bit of out of your comfort zone and a little bit of pain for the best reward.

Denise: And you're gonna feel guilty.

Jaime: Exactly.

Denise: That's for sure. You're gonna feel guilty, and that's okay. That's normal because you're learning to turn down that dial. And just tell yourself, if I can learn how to get as much done in six as I did – in three as I used to in six is there really anything to feel guilty about? And that's what I'm learning here.

Jaime: I love it. Where can we find more about you online?

Denise: So, the best place would be VacationEffect.com. That's Vacation Effect with an E, E-F-F-E-C-T .com, and on that website, I've got a lot of free resources, a free copy of my book summary is being loaded there, and my podcast is there as well. So...

Jaime: Definitely check out her podcast because I think I'll be on it also. So, thank you so much for coming on the show today. I really appreciate it.

Denise: Thank you for having me.

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**Duration: 46 minutes**