
Jaime: Welcome to Eventual Millionaire. I am Jaime Masters. And today on the show we have my good friend, Grant Baldwin. You can check him out at GrantBaldwin.com. You can also check out TheSpeakerLab.com. He's an amazing, nationally known speaker and he was a former client of mine and he's amazing. He just came out with a new book called *The Successful Speaker*. Thanks so much for coming on the show today.

Grant: Jaime, it is such an honor to be here and I've been looking forward to this for a while. I'm glad we were able to make this work.

Jaime: Heck yeah. So, congratulations on your book launch. That just came out.

Grant: Thank you.

Jaime: Make sure everybody check that out. And you have a podcast, which is why we started to get to know each other.

Grant: **[Inaudible] [00:00:35].**

Jaime: Yeah. You came online in 2014, which is not that long ago, and you've had, I'm allowed to say, a huge successful uptick in being known by all of my friends and everybody in this space. So, how did you do it?

Grant: Well, it's you. It's all through you. And so, for the backstory here, I don't know how much you wanna dig into, but we – I was a fulltime speaker for several years. And part of the challenge with being a speaker is that it's a – I remember a friend telling me it's a high-paying manual labor job. And that we'd get paid really, really well to stand on stage and talk. But the nature of speaking is you had to be there. You had to show up for it. So, you had to get on a plane. You had to leave your family.

And so, at the time I was doing 60-70 gigs a year, which was fun, I really, really enjoyed it, but I was like, "Is this it? Is this what the business looks like for the rest of my life?" And there's plenty of speakers who have been speaking fulltime for their entire careers. They wanna do 50-60-70-100 gigs a year for the next 20-30-50 years of their life. And that's fine. There's nothing wrong with that. I was just kinda like – I don't know. I really felt like I had a job more than a business. And so, I was trying to think through, "Okay. If I was gonna do something different, what would that look like?"

And so, at the time, started seeing more with online courses and with podcasts and that sorta thing. And somehow, I came across your stuff. And was first really intrigued on doing a podcast. I know you were doing a lot of coaching around podcasting. And I was like, “Okay. I’m gonna reach out.”

And I still vividly remember at the time we lived in Missouri. We live in Nashville now, which you were somewhat behind the scenes helpful with. And we can get into that, if you want. But I remember the call that we had. And you quoted me a price, which was astronomical at the time for me. And I was just like, “There’s no way I can do this. Oh, my gosh.” And I was like, “I’ve gotta do this.” And so, I jumped in for the next several months. You helped me build a – put together a podcast, which went really well. So, at this point, I mean at the time of this recording I’ve done 450-some podcast episodes.

Jaime: Wow.

Grant: And you were incredibly instrumental in that. So, yeah. You helped me really kinda think through ultimately making some of those transitions on where I was going and what were – how do you get from where you are to where you wanna be. And so, yeah. Follow the Jaime Masters strategies and here we are.

Jaime: No testimony needed. Thank you so much, Grant. But I know I was only just a piece of what you’ve created. Because even at the beginning I know you wanna be home with your – you have three girls. You have an amazing family. You’re one of those dads that wants to be around a lot more. And to see your drive, really impressive.

But and this is where the story, I think, is interesting, we started out with a whole different brand for you. And you totally pivoted. So, tell me a little bit about what that is. Because everybody thinks that they – everybody gets it out of the gate. And that’s typically not what happens at all. And no one really talks about that backstory.

[Crosstalk]

Grant: Right. Yeah. So, at the time when I was doing a lot of speaking, I did a lot of the speaking in the education space. I did a lot with high school students and colleges. And I was doing a lot of

speaking around the topic of careers. Helping students think through, “What do they wanna do with their life? What do they wanna be when they grow up?” And I know a lot of 20-30-40-50-60-year-olds who are thinking about that same thing, “What do I want to do with my life?” Because far too many people get into something just because maybe, “It’s the path of least resistance,” or, “My parents wanted me to do this,” or, “I had an opportunity there so I did it and I’m still here decades later.”

And so, really thinking through like, “Okay. We’ve all gotta work. We’ve all gotta make a living. We’ve all gotta do something. What do I really wanna be doing? What am I excited about? What am I passionate about? What am I interested in?” And so, I was doing a lot of speaking around that. And at the time, as a fulltime speaker, one of the things I noticed is I would have a lot of people who would come up to me after I’d speak and say, “That’s really cool you’re a speaker. How did you get into that?” And they would always ask that phrase, “How did you get into that?” And for the longest time I thought, “That would make a really interesting podcast.”

And so, that’s kinda the idea I think I came to you with or we kinda worked out. I was like, “Wouldn’t it be interesting just to interview people who had just unique, interesting careers and just to hear how they got into it?” And so, that ended up kinda becoming the podcast. So, we did about 140-some episodes of that over a couple years and were interviewing people. We interviewed a guy who was a Lego master builder. He’s one of the world’s top Lego builders. And a guy who worked for Nike who helped work with Michael Jordan to design some of the Air Jordan’s. And a lady who is a cheese monger and a professional literally cheese expert. A guy who is a mascot for an NBA team.

So, some of these things you’re just like, “How did you get into that? That’s just fascinating.” So, and two ways, 1.) Is there may be people who are listening that are like, “Okay. This sounds weird, but I would love to be an NBA mascot. What’s the path to that? How do you go about doing that?” And so, hearing their stories. But then, 2.) Hopefully being an inspiration for people who are going, “Okay. If that person can be a cheese monger, if that person can be a Lego master builder, if that person can be fill-in-the-blank, surely, I can figure out my thing. What it is that I wanna do.”

And so, the podcast was really kinda the – in some ways, the

gateway drug. Let's just try this. Let's kinda build the audience and then kinda figure it out from there. And so, eventually I had a lot of people who naturally were listening were people who were trying to figure out what they wanted to do with their own career and with their own life. And so, we created a course. At the time we called it Clarity Course. Just helping people get clear, which I thought was a great name. Helping people get clear on what they wanted to do with their life.

And so, we did – I remember we did this initial launch for it and put all this work into it. Like, “Okay. Here we go.” And we do this launch. And it was fine. We sold enough that hindsight you're like, “That was pretty good.” But I don't know if my expectations were just like, “This is gonna be it. I'm gonna do this one launch and then I'm gonna be on Jaime's show and I'm set for life.” I don't know what to expect. But it was just – it's kinda like this intuition, internal feeling of like, “It was okay, but I don't know if this is the – I don't know if this is gonna – if I can make this work or if I'm excited enough about it.”

So, at the time though, I continued to have a lot of people who were asking me, “I wanna be a speaker. How would I go about doing that?” And so, a couple years before I had put together a small little training for 10 people. It was a once-a-month live coaching call type deal. And I really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed teaching, speaking, and teaching the business of speaking and how do you find and book gigs. And so, as soon as we did the clarity course launch, this was in December of 2015-2016. Something or other like that. And I was like, “I'm gonna quickly pivot to this speaking thing and teaching that.”

And I remember I had some entrepreneur friends, and probably even you, just like, “Why don't we give it a second here. Let's try this thing that you just did. Let's let that marinate for a second.” I'm like, “No, no. I think I've got something over here.” And so, I put together a different course for speakers really teaching how to find and book speaking gigs and had that come out a couple months later. I think in March. And presold it. And then we did some webinars for it and we started to figure out automated and live webinars and Facebook ads and yada-ya. And that started to really gain some traction. And so, that's where I started to feel like, “Okay. I really feel like we're onto something.”

And so, what ended up happening is for a while I kinda had a couple different things going. Because I was doing a lot of

speaking. I was doing a lot of teaching and training around speaking with this course. I was doing webinars on speaking. But then I had this career podcast that I really enjoyed, but it just didn't really fit anywhere. And so, what we ended up doing was kinda basically wrapping that up after about 140-145 episodes. And started a new podcast called The Speaker Lab Podcast, which is what we still have today where, again, we – which pitch within what we do now, teaching people how to find and book paid speaking gigs and understand the speaking business.

And so, yeah. It's certainly to your point, it was starting one path, but quickly realizing, "I think this is gonna be a better fit over there." Which I tell speakers all the time, "It is much simpler to steer a car that's in motion than to steer a car that's in park." Because for so many people we feel like, "Okay. I wanna start a business or I wanna do a thing or I wanna do something, but I don't know, and I'm not guaranteed success, so I'm just gonna sit here and wait. I'm gonna wait for the stars to align. I'm gonna wait until I have the burning bush. I'm gonna have the voice from the clouds." And that's just not coming. That's not happening.

And so, I learned a ton from doing the initial podcast and figuring out some of the workflows and figuring out how do you get interviews and how do you connect with these people and what do you ask them and how does this work? To then be able to take a lot of those skills from the first podcast, from the first course, from the coaching with you, and then pivot it to what we still do today in our current business. And so, those, even if you are pivoting, I think that's just – that's part of the journey versus feeling like you've gotta have it all nailed from day one.

Jaime: You're such a shining example of that. And I just wanted to really go into it, because I think people, like you said, are like, "I know, but it has to be the right first test. I could do this, or I could do this."

[Crosstalk]

Grant: Sure.

Jaime: And it's hard to pick. And people have bigtime issues with picking. How did you know? Because it also just makes logical sense that you would teach speaking because that's what you were really, really good at for a really long period of time.

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- Grant: Sure.
- Jaime: And you don't know how to be a mascot. Sorry. I'm assuming. I don't know if that's true or not. Maybe you do.
- Grant: I cannot do that. No. I have some skills, but that is not one of them.
- Jaime: So, it seems like a logical step, of course, if anyone looked at you, "Oh, well, why didn't you pick speaking in the first place?" And so, tell me a little bit more about the decision? And was it a gut feeling? Was it like an, "Oh, I just loved this anyway"? Tell me a little bit more about breaking that down because I feel like people get stuck there.
- Grant: Yeah. So, it was definitely – because I really enjoyed the career thing while I was doing it because I was, as a speaker, genuinely enjoying what I was doing. And when you and I started working on this initial podcast, How Did You Get Into That, which is still something – in fact, at the time of this recording, this morning I did another interview for a guy who is – the podcast is for high school and college students. So, I was like, "You need to have them – the show's a couple of years old but go listen to it because I think it's a really good show." And I think, if I remember correctly, you are the first guest on the show or maybe the first interview. And I was probably terrified.
- Jaime: We didn't let John's – when I was the first interview for John Lee Dumas, we didn't let that one go out. Yours was good. You were already a speaker. You were already great. Let me just say that. **[Inaudible] [00:10:26] John.**
- Grant: So, it all worked – it would all work out in the end. But yeah. So, I really enjoyed doing the career thing, but the thing that was kinda interesting to me on the – when I was kinda like comparing them, the career path versus the speaking path, was the career path felt a little vague and squishy. We're gonna help people figure out what they wanna do with their life. I'm like, "What does that even mean?" There's certainly something there and something that everybody wrestles with, more or less.
- But the speaking thing I knew there was a tangible process with an end result. And thankfully, the end result was for most gigs a check. And so, if we could show you how there's a direct **[inaudible]** – because when you're helping someone get clarity, that's – it's just squishy. And it's just kinda like, "That's really
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good, but it's also really, really hard to quantify," versus what...

Jaime: When your marketing has to be really, absolutely amazing and it seems like there's different avatars because there's different language for each one of the pieces.

[Crosstalk]

Grant: Yes. Yeah.

Jaime: And that's hard to sort of bulk-do. Right?

Grant: Totally. So, if you're 22, you're just graduating college, "What do I wanna do with my life?" Or you're 55 thinking, "All right. I'm starting the second half of my career and I'm trying to think through what I wanna do." That's just different phases and stages of life.

Or the 30-something who's been in their same career their entire life and going, "I wanna do something different, but I'm scared." It's like those are all real challenges and real fears, but it's hard to speak to that and to address that in a way that makes sense from a business model perspective. And so, it's also just important from that standpoint to identify. A lot of speakers we work with one of the questions we'll ask them is kind of the long-term goals and aspirations for speaking.

Because some of them just say like, "I just like to speak. Speaking's kinda fun. I have a fulltime gig. And so, if I can speak a few times, if I can share this message, it's something I'm passionate about, why not get paid for it? I just wanna do some local stuff." That's fine. Right? There's nothing wrong with that. Versus also the speaker who says, "I wanna do this fulltime. I wanna make a living from this. I've done a little bit of speaking. I wanna go all-in on this. Both work, but you just have to decide what kinda the goals and the ambitions were.

So, if I was just like, "Hey, I just wanna help some other people kinda process this." And there's nothing wrong with that, "I'd just like to do the podcast because it's just a fun outlet and it's a fun little passion project." There's nothing wrong with that. But if it's going, "Okay. I want to turn this into a viable business that I can build," then I had to really think through the financial model of that.

And so, I just immediately knew from a – teaching people to find clarity was important, but financially it was gonna be a little bit tough to make work. Whereas I felt with the speaking thing this is a tangible process that I feel really good about teaching, that I feel really confident in. That this is something that's very confusing to a lot of people, but I know that there's going to be – for people who do it, who follow the process, again, there's kinda a financial result at the end.

So, just it checked a lot of boxes. And I think something we've kind of alluded to is I think intuition and just kinda that gut feel is really, really undervalued in business. And maybe not just business, but just life. I know my wife; we were high school sweethearts. We've been together for quite a while. You had a chance to meet her on a trip that we were all on for a speaking gig.

And so, there's times – I remember early on where a wife would have the – a feeling. "I don't know. I can't explain it. I just have this feeling." "What does that mean? Your feeling doesn't fit into my spreadsheet." But just quickly learning, "Okay. Sometimes when you have that feeling, I don't know, it's hard to explain. It's hard to articulate. It may not make sense.

So, when everyone else is going, "Hey, have you thought – this Clarity Course, you just launched it. Let's give this a minute here." And me feeling like, "No, but I think there's – it could work. It could be a square peg into a round hole. Maybe somehow, we can make it work. But ultimately, I think there's more opportunity and potential traction over here." And just feeling like, "No, no. We can pivot that direction." And so, I'm ultimately glad we did.

Jaime: It's worked out extremely well. You're on the show right now. So, where does that come in though where you don't do it again? So, must've gotten enough traction that you weren't like, "Oh, now I have a different hit." Because I see other people that go, "Oh, I switched once." But then they launch something else and then they switch again. And they can never really build the momentum because they're switching too often.

Grant: Yeah. No. I think that that's incredibly true. I mean you and I both have entrepreneur friends where every year they're, "You're doing what now? What are you teaching?" And like, "I thought you were just doing this other thing." And like, "What?"

So, I think there's a lot to be said for just longevity and staying

power of you wanna make sure that you are positioned as the blank person. “I need some help with speaking.” “Oh, you’ve gotta go talk to Grant because he’s been doing that his entire life.” Versus, “Here’s someone who does Pinterest marketing one day and then they teach Facebook ads another day. And then they’re teaching Facebook groups one day.” And then you’re just like, “What?” So, I really do think that there are —there’s a lot of opportunity and a lot to be said for once you kinda find that thing of just doubling down.

I’ll give you an example of this. So, the company that we run is called The Speaker Lab. And so, you mentioned that we had just recently launched this book. And so, I had a lot of people who — we’ve had several people who’ve come to us and said, “Hey, as speakers a lot of us are also interested in publishing a book.” And there are naturally a lot of ancillary opportunities that exist. People who are interested in speaking are also interested in writing and doing a podcast and doing YouTube and doing a course and doing coaching and consulting and all these different things.

So, we could say, “Okay. It’s justifiable that our audience is interested in all these other things. And so, why don’t we teach all these other things?” And so, if there was a guy who sent me an email that said, “Hey, you have The Speaker Lab, you should create The Author Lab.” On the one hand you’re like, “Okay. That’s kinda interesting.” On the other hand, you’re like, “But for every other thing we do it waters down the core thing that we do.” And so, one thing that we tell speakers all the time who are — as they’re trying to process and think these same questions through, “Who do I speak to? What’s the problem that I’m solving for them? I’m not trying to do all things for all people.”

As we said, “You wanna be the steakhouse and not the buffet. The steakhouse and not the buffet.” Meaning that if we were looking for a good steak, we could go to a buffet where steak is one of the 100 things that they offer and they’re all mediocre, or you could go to a steakhouse where they do one thing, but they do that one thing really, really, really well. So, they don’t do lasagna, they don’t do pizza, they don’t do tacos, they don’t do cupcakes. They do steak and that’s it.

And so, by doing that, it’s counterintuitive, but it makes it simpler to attract the right type of clientele and to repel the wrong type of clientele. Like if you’re a vegetarian, you’re probably not going to a steakhouse, and that’s okay. But the chef at a steakhouse had to

make a decision at one point to say, “We are going to be a steakhouse.” And by doing that, we’re not going to do all these other things. They may be deeply passionate about, “I love making tacos. I love making cupcakes. I love doing all these other things.” But saying, “No, no. We are focused on this.”

And by doing that, it’s actually – it’s again counterintuitive, but by focusing, by being more narrow, more clear, more focused, actually makes it simpler to attract the right type of client and to build the business, versus like, “We do all these things. We are this big, broad, vague thing where we feel like we’re casting the net as far and wide as possible.” Which again, just doesn’t work. So, for us, there’s a lot of people interested in the speaking industry. But we focus primarily on the business of speaking, “How do you actually find and book gigs?”

So, we do a little bit, for example, on how do you create and deliver a great talk. But it’s not the core of what we do, but we’re happy to recommend, “Oh, you should talk to such-and-such or such-and-such. They’re great at that. You’re looking for some type of group coaching or course or one-on-one coach, here’s some people that we would recommend. But here’s our lane and we’re really, really good at this thing. We’re a really good steakhouse, but if you’re looking for tacos, that’s great. I’m happy to recommend a taco shop down the street. But here’s what we do.”

Jaime: Yeah. It makes it way easier to recommend you. I know anyone that needs to speak, I’m like I know you and Hugh Colver. And I just send everybody over to you guys. Now he’s doing something different too. So, now it’s you. Right?

Grant: But he’s also really double-down on that thing.

Jaime: Yeah.

Grant: What he was doing was he was kinda just – he had this little side project and he, to his credit, is going, “No, no. I’m going all-in on this.” And he’s really focused on this. And again, filling one specific need. The core thing that he does now is he takes content, creates blog posts for – a lot for speakers. Right?

I’ll give you one other example of this. So, let’s imagine, God forbid, that one of us had to have brain surgery, all right? So, we have a choice. We could go to our local family medical doctor. They are a doctor. They went to medical school. They may have

done some surgeries before. They know more about the brain than you or I do, but they haven't done brain surgery. Or we could go to the brain surgeon where day in and day out this is what they do.

So, if you have a cough, you don't go to them. If you have a broken arm, you don't go to them. If you've got the Rona, you're not going to them. But if you have a brain issue, that's the person that you wanna go to versus the doctor who's like, "I could probably figure it out."

That's not who you want in the same way that the people who come to us, "Well, there's an opportunity over here and an opportunity over here and we could do this. And speakers need help with that. And we could do..." No, no, no. We do brain surgery. We are a steakhouse. We do this one thing and we're good at the one thing. And again, if you – by doing that, it actually makes it simpler to attract the right type of client.

Jaime: It's so funny. I can tell you've said this before. You're so precise with your analogies and with everything too. And even just in that, it allows you to have less energy with the stories and the analogies. And you just really – you get to tweak what you're already doing to be really, really of the best, highest excellence humanly possible. And that's how you can create the best course and the best experience for people too. Do you ever get bored talking about it? That's what everybody else goes like, "Oh, but then I'm just talking about the same thing all the time."

Grant: Yeah. I think I don't in the sense that there's always new angles and new challenges. I'll give you an example. So, at the time of this recording we're in the thick of Covidland. And which, as you might imagine, isn't real great for the speaking industry, where it's dependent on large groups of people to gather together. And that just mid-March kinda stopped all of a sudden. It was just a weird thing. And so, now all of a sudden as a company who teaches and trains this you're going, "Well, now what do I do?"

Jaime: Exactly.

Grant: How do we pivot? How do we adjust? So, we really have leaned into virtual speaking. This is something that has been around for a long time. And some speakers have dabbled in it. But because of the world and what's happening, it's caused this real need in the marketplace and real opportunity in the marketplace. So, we have really leaned into that a lot. And actually, in the thick of all this

we've had a record revenue month. Two months ago was our best revenue month that we've ever had in spite of this.

And so, I think even though there's a lot of longevity to the speaking industry, there's always gonna be kinda unique challenges and opportunities and obstacles that present themselves as technology changes, as the economy shifts, as the market shifts, that we just have to be aware of and have to pay attention to of how do we best serve and support students who are interested in speaking.

Which is another thing that I like about our particular industry is it does feel like there's a long track record here. Professional speaking and being a public speaker is one of those things that has been around for a long time. You can go back to the Greeks and there's people standing on stage presenting to a group of people. So, it's been around for a long time and it will be around for a long time.

So, the speaking industry has survived wars and depressions and recessions and 9/11. And so, even though this is really weird right now, the speaking industry will certainly be fine on the other side of this. Versus, again, if you were teaching Pinterest marketing, again no knock on that, but is Pinterest going to be around in five years? I don't know. And so, I like the idea of, "Okay. Let's plant our flag in something that has a long track record and should continue to be around for a long time."

Jaime: I remember I emailed you and I was like, "So, how are you doing during this crazy pandemic," because of that. Right? Everything was shifting, but especially your industry. So, I wanna go into that. Because there's people that are speakers that are listening right now going, "Oh, crap. I thought you couldn't charge for virtual speaking gigs though." And I know you have thoughts to say about this. So, what does somebody who was planning on doing potentially quite a few speaking events this year, what do they do? How do they shift? Give us some advice.

Grant: Yeah. A couple of big picture things. So, one is that again, like I said, the speaking industry has been around for a while. It will be around for a long time after this. So, the long-term perspective is I'm not real worried about it. Now what we're trying to figure out is the short term. What do I need to do today?

One of the things that we have seen is that events are still booking

speakers. And so, even though there may not be an event happening today at this moment, most of the time when events are booking speakers in the first place, they're booking anywhere from three to six months out. Sometimes closer in, sometimes further out.

And so, if there's an event that's happening six months from now, some of those events are going, "We may happen. We may not happen. We may have to go virtual. We don't know. But at this moment we are planning on having an event and therefore we can't wait until the week before to book a speaker."

So, just in our own experience and just kinda talking with other speakers and kinda keeping our ear to the ground, it seems like there are still new events that are being booked. More than just reschedules and postponements and that sorta thing, but new events that are still – some that are being booked. And more so in some industries versus others.

We've also noticed that a lot of workshops continue to be popular. Meaning that big conferences with 1,000 people and doing a keynote type thing that may take a second to come back but doing maybe a corporate training or some type of small group workshop with 25 people, you can do some safe social distancing there. You can have a bit of more of a controlled environment. It's a little bit simpler to coordinate and put together versus a large-scale event. So, that's a couple things that we're seeing with live in-person events.

As far as virtual, there are certainly a lot more virtual opportunities that are happening now. Virtual has always kinda been one of those things that not a lot of speakers or event planners have taken super seriously. Like sounds nice, but it's not the same. And you're right, it's not the same. But, right now, for so many businesses and companies and organizations and conferences it's the only option. And so, there's more and more groups that are leaning into it, which is creating more and more opportunities for speakers as speakers are kinda scrambling to figure out, "What do I need to do? And how does this work? And how does the technology work?"

And so, the thing that we keep beating the drum and telling speakers is as speakers, as entrepreneurs in general, we are in the problem-solving business. And just because live events aren't happening doesn't mean that, all of a sudden, their problem has

magically been solved.

So, let's imagine that you are speaking in the corporate space on sales training. Well, just because there is a live event that was supposed to happen where you were speaking at and now all of a sudden it's not happening doesn't mean, "Okay. All of our sales issues have been resolved. We figured it out because we're not having the event." That's not the case. They still have a challenge and you have to still figure out how to best solve that.

So, one of the things we've been kinda talking about is think through kinda the different mechanisms of how you can go about solving that. So, it's kinda like you look at the restaurants right now and the restaurant industry. Now for most restaurants their model has been, "You come to us, you sit down, tell us what you want, we'll bring you the food." And all of a sudden that can't happen, but we still need food. And so, people are switching to delivery. They're switching to carry out. Or some of these other type of examples of where the food, the deliverable, is the same, but then the mechanism may look slightly different.

And so, for us, the problem that speakers help solve for their audiences, that still exists. That problem still is there that speakers can help with, but the mechanism has to look different if we can't all gather in the same place. So, how can you present virtually? What does that look like? Are there coaching or consulting opportunities that you should be thinking about or considering or leaning into? What do some of the smaller live in-person – you're used to doing these large-scale keynotes, but what does a small in-person workshop look like? And so, just talking through what do some of the variables – or some of the variations look like?

And so, I think one of the biggest things for any speaker to do right now is to not stick their head in the sand and be like, "All right. I'm just gonna ride it out and see what's gonna happen." Because I mean the truth of the matter is we're a few months into this. And as humans we are good at dealing with crisis when we know where the beginning point is, and the end point is. And right now, we are dealing with a crisis where we know where the beginning point was, but we don't really know how this is gonna play out or how long this is gonna be.

So, it's just not healthy for any business owner or entrepreneur to be like, "All right. I'll just wait." That's just a bad plan versus saying, "No, no, no, no, no. We've gotta pivot. We've gotta pay

attention. It doesn't mean we have to do this forever." So, one thing we've been telling speakers is that your pivot doesn't have to be permanent. Your pivot doesn't have to be permanent. Meaning that, "Are we gonna do – are we gonna teach virtual speaking forever?" Maybe, maybe not. But while there's this real need and opportunity in the marketplace we're really leaning into it, but it doesn't mean we have to do this forever.

So, leaning into something or pivoting accordingly to what the market would ask right now is important, but also realize you're not making a permanent decision here.

Jaime: What I really liked that you were saying before about the problem still being there, are there a really cool way – have you seen any cool ways of doing/speaking in a better way than just webinar PowerPoint blah? Is there anything that makes it better? Are there better platforms? Or are there just better ways to chat? I just feel like even in the webinar space beforehand it was just getting kinda like, "Oh, now we have 100 webinars that all say kinda similar things and have the same formats." Is there any cutting-edge stuff you can tell me about?

Grant: Yeah. There are certainly some speakers who have done a really good job upping the production value. And so, a couple speakers come to mind who they have really said, "Okay. I'm gonna go all-in on this. I don't wanna do – I don't wanna just be a talking head to a camera," because it's not the same environment. Because you on the other side you are competing for people who maybe have other browser tabs up or have TV on in the background or fiddling on their phone. And it's hard to keep their attention in a virtual environment, let alone in a physical in-person environment.

And so, one thing that they've really done is really just upped the production value so it's almost like a – if you're watching a live news – like your evening news or something, there's a high production value to that. Multiple cameras and it's more than just a talking head. And so, we have seen that. We've also seen that the higher the production value from kinda the set up for a speaker, the higher fees that they're able to charge. Because events realize, "Okay. They're taking this seriously, I've gotta take this seriously."

Because if you are just kind of a – as far as speaking fees right now it is a bit of a wild, wild west where people are kinda figuring out like, "What are the going rates for this?" This is something that the

whole industry is trying to figure out. And so, if you are just kind of a standard talking head, it's really hard to charge what you have been charging to stand on stage and deliver a presentation to an audience.

But if you have the production value that really backs it up. "Hey, I can demonstrate to you that this is much more, that this is really an experience more than just kinda me sitting in my house and a mediocre setup with a poor-quality camera or lighting and giving my talk." That doesn't work. And so, really thinking through the production value has really gone a long way.

Jaime: What are you seeing as far as speaking fees then too? Because somebody who before, pre-pandemic, could have done \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 and then they're like, "Oh, I'm a talking head and have really crappy equipment." What are they actually getting paid for doing some of the similar, but virtual, events?

Grant: Yeah. We've certainly seen it all over the map. So, we have seen some speakers who on the high end of the production value are charging what they would get if they were doing a live, in-person thing. Yeah. That's not common, but we have seen that and seen several – I've talked to one-on-one conversations with several speakers who have been getting five figures on speaking. Now, most speakers are charging anywhere from 30 to 50% of what their normal speaking fee would be.

Now, the upside with virtual versus in-person stuff is that you can certainly make it up in volume. So, when you are doing live in-person gigs, you can only do one, two, maybe – I don't know. I've never done a hat trick, but I've done two different gigs in the same day in different cities. And that can be done. Occasionally a speaker can pull off three. But there's just a limitation to it. And there's times where I might do a gig and be invited to do a different gig a different day in a different city. And logistically I cannot make it work. I cannot get from point A to point B with the parameters there.

But whenever it comes to virtual, I've talked with some speakers who are like, "I'm doing 10 virtual gigs a week. And even though I may be charging less, I'm home the whole time. I don't have to go anywhere. I don't have to do anything. I don't even have to wear pants and I'm able to do these presentations." So, there's a lot more versatility and options with virtual. So, it is something that even though it's different it doesn't necessarily mean it's bad. It

certainly creates a lot of new opportunities for speakers to consider or lean into.

Jaime: Well, and that's one of the reasons why you wanted to go more online is to be with your family. So, yay. At least you get to be with your family a lot more.

Grant: Well, and this is a good example of as I was working with you and making that transition from being a fulltime speaker to now, I do a handful of gigs, but not nearly as much as I used to. If I was a fulltime speaker right now it would be really, really tough. And I've had a lot of those conversations with speakers who speaking is 100% of my livelihood and now it's just gone. They're not happening. I'm not sure when they're coming back. That's a really, really scary difficult spot to be in now.

So, I am thankful to have been intentional to build something that's not dependent solely and strictly on me. Obviously right now every possible industry is affected.

Jaime: What do you say for the mindset side though too? Because as somebody that deals with speakers all the time that just had their entire money taken away from them and then they go, "Uh," and we have no endpoint. I'm sure there's a lot of fear and anxiety and all sorts of stuff. What are you telling people to try and help them with some of that stuff so that they don't bury their head in the sand?

Grant: Yeah. So, a couple things. One is to realize we're in this. So, I think for a minute there we were all kinda like, "This will blow over in a week or two." But I think at this point we've all recognized, "We're in this." So, you can't stick your head in the sand. If your head's been in the sand, you've gotta pull it out. Realize, "I've gotta pivot and do something different."

And so, it kinda depends on a bunch of different factors of what you would be doing now. So, there are some speakers I know who maybe they were the breadwinner for their family. And they're going, "I don't have any gigs. And so, what do I need to do?" And so, some of them have picked up some part-time jobs or some of them are – I know a handful that are like, "I'm pausing my speaking business until things resume and pick back up. And I'm getting a fulltime job elsewhere." Because at the end of the day you do have to provide for your family.

We all like to eat and live indoors. So, you've gotta do something. Again, you can only go so long of like, "I'm waiting. I'm waiting. I'm waiting. I'm waiting. Holy crap. We're in a much worse financial position now because I was waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting." So, you've gotta do something. So, there's no shame. And at this moment really whatever you need to do just to make ends meet.

The other thing I would say is that if you are – if you're not interested in leaning into the virtual form, then again going back to what we were talking about where again, if you're a restaurant and you're saying, "Well, we don't wanna do delivery." "Okay. Well, then you have to transition to do carryout or you have to transition to do something or you're gonna be out of business if you wanna stay in that business.

So, for example, there's a – we live in the Nashville area and there's a taco place 10-15 minutes from here and we love going there. But for several months they were closed. And so, once or twice a week we'd go in and we'd pick up tacos and they had to switch the whole thing to to-go. And so, I was talking with the owner and a couple of the managers a few times and they're like, "We just weren't set up to be a to-go place. We did a little bit of to-go stuff like most restaurants, but now all of a sudden all we do is to-go and all we do is Postmates and Uber Eats and that sort of thing. And so, we've had to shift the business model and the operations of how we operate.

And so, the same thing is true for speakers. That restaurant, that taco place, realized it's not always gonna be like this, but for a season, if we're gonna make ends meet and we're gonna keep this ship afloat, we've gotta pivot. We've gotta do some things differently. And so, they are making those pivots.

And it's the same responsibility for speakers of saying, "Okay. If a lot of events aren't happening, then how else can I serve and support clients that have the problem that I can solve?" And again, that can come in the form of virtual speaking or coaching or consulting or working on a book or doing a course or any number of things, but just sitting back and saying, "I'm gonna wait for live events to come back." They'll be back, but you're gonna be waiting a while unless you've got pretty deep pockets then you may not – that may not work.

Jaime: Well, and what you did was start a podcast and start building an

audience online and starting doing the webinars but owning your own trajectory instead of being a speaker and having other people do it too.

[Crosstalk]

Grant: Sure.

Jaime: Are you suggesting that for people? And tell me a little bit about how you started? Because you said, “We started getting traction when we first started.” But I know it’s been quite a few years. What are some of those pivotal moments of your journey of being an online thought leader?

Grant: Yeah. Yeah. So, early on when we first started doing the webinar, the first live webinar too that we did, one of the things that I think was really helpful was kinda looking for some different models and examples of people who had similar business models. And this is something that’s been really helpful for me personally just over the years is look for people who are doing something similar to what you’re doing and are a step or two ahead. Not lightyears away. So, if I said, “Okay. I wanna be a speaker. Let’s see. Tony Robbins. He’s a speaker. What’s Tony up to these days?” That doesn’t work.

But I’m looking for people who, again, are a step or two ahead. And it helps me kinda like, “Okay. This is what that would look like.” And so, for example, when I saw – you mentioned John Lee Dumas. And so, John was doing the – was doing a lot of webinars and doing a lot of live webinars for a course. And so, I was kinda like, “Okay. It’s a different course, a different industry, but I see how that would work in our space.”

And then I would see, “Okay, Rick Mulready is doing a lot with Facebook ads. And so, I don’t know Facebook ads, but I could probably find someone who does know Facebook ads. And Facebook ads to webinars? Okay. Let’s try that. Let’s lean into that.”

And so, it was a lot of kinda saying, “Okay. That’s what that person’s doing. Here’s how that is working. Here’s how that would apply to us. Okay. They’re doing this podcast and that podcast is leading to this. Okay. How would that apply to our podcast?” And just kinda paying attention to a bit of what’s working in the marketplace and figuring out how you can apply those things to

your own world.

And so, for me it was never like, “Okay. I’m doing a lot of speaking gigs and I’m tired of speaking. I don’t wanna be a speaker anymore. How do we get out of this?” I really enjoy speaking, but I also wanted to be intentional to build something that wasn’t dependent on me.

And so, as we were doing more webinars and as we were figuring more stuff out on course sales and that sorta thing, then as each month that side of the business revenue, like the teaching and coaching and training side would grow, then I was just decreasing the number of speaking gigs that I was doing. So, it was never like a – on a Friday like, “All right. I’m done being a speaker.” And on Monday like, “All right. This course thing’s pretty easy.” It wasn’t like that.

I mean literally over the course of a couple years of decreasing speaking, increasing the online stuff to the point now where again I’ll do a couple of speaking gigs, but it’s a fraction of the percentage of our revenue because I wanted to build something that was not dependent on me.

So, yeah. So, I’m really, really grateful and I’m thankful for where we are today, but I also wanna be clear it’s not an accident. We’ve been really, really intentional along the way in decisions that we’re making and who we’re hiring and what people are doing to make sure that the – I’m not building a job for myself but building a business that’s not just dependent on Grant.

Jaime: Definitely. And I know we talked about SOPs and systems. We’re not gonna go into that right now, but I do want to dive in – because I feel like your commitment to the course – because I feel like in this internet marketing world everyone’s like, “Get a course. Make \$100,000.00 on your first launch. Yay. Go team.” And it’s harder than that people. It takes a lot of work and a lot of tweaking and a lot.

Can you tell me about sort of the years and how you’ve grown as far as the course sales? Because you really went all in. And I’m sure you’ve tweaked the funnel and the Facebook strategy and the things many, many times over the years.

Grant: Yeah. So, I’d say another thing that’s kinda similar to one thing we touched on was finding something that works and just sticking

with that, for the most part. Meaning that that very first course that we offered we still offer today and it's a decent percentage of our revenue. And so, you see a bunch of people who they offer a course then three months later they offer a different course then three months later they offer a different course. So, maybe it's kinda all under the same umbrella, but it's just like – it's hard to keep up with.

So, for the longest time maybe even to this point we – prior to all the virtual speaking stuff, we really offered two programs and that was it. And that's all we've done for years. And not trying to do all these different things. "Well, what if we do this?" And what that means is there's a lot of ways that we leave money on the table and a lot of opportunities that we're passing up.

Like we've never done live events, which would be a natural fit for speakers. We've never really done one-on-one coaching stuff. We've never really done mastermind stuff. And that's all good stuff. And that's stuff that you could certainly use to make a living and to generate revenue in a business, but by saying, "No, no. This works. We're gonna focus on this. We're gonna make this really, really good. We've improved the product numerous times since then. And how do we continue to improve that product?" Versus again just trying to – "All right. New course. New course. New course. New course."

Another thing I would say would be just, in terms of the business model, is we've been really intentional with how we've gone about doing this. So, I know when we first started working with you, we saw a lot of people who were doing – and still to this day a lot of people whose business is built on these big launches. Everything kinda leads up to once or twice a year these big launches. And we did one or two, but man, are they stressful. You're putting a lot of eggs in that basket.

[Crosstalk]

Jaime: Stress. Stress. Stress. Yes.

Grant: And you're just like, "Okay. I need this to go well in order for me to survive the next six months." And I was just like, "No, I like to sleep at night. That's not fun." And so, I really had the approach of I would rather make a little bit every day than make a whole bunch of money a couple times a year. And so, that was kind of the approach of doing these live webinars and automated webinars and

just doing these daily. I'd rather have one or two or three-four sales a day that are just small than to have 100 in one day, but only have that happen once a year. Boy, that is rough.

So, just again, being really, really intentional on those things and saying, "Here's something that's working. How do we improve it? How do we tweak it? How do we modify it? How do we make it better?" Rather than, "Okay. We created this course. Now let's go over here. We created this thing. Now let's go over here." And all of a sudden you have all these plates spinning, but you're not – you're just so scattered in what you're doing. So, for the longest time everything that we...

Okay. Let's fast forward to today. Everything we do points to one of two places. You either book a call to talk to our team about kind of a high-ticket program or to attend a webinar. And that's pretty much it. Like everything we do, book a call, or attend a webinar. So, and we have some different lead magnets and some different ads and some different – but everything points to one of those two things. And that's it. That's the whole business.

And really those two things, the high-ticket program and kinda the DIY program are largely the same or similar curriculum. They teach similar things. They teach people how to find and book gigs. But the high-ticket version has a lot more group coaching and one-on-one stuff and done for you and handholding than the DIY version. But still what they do is they teach largely the same thing versus, "Oh, we do this, and we do this, and we do this, and we do this." No. We're still a steakhouse. You can get a filet, or you can get a T-bone. And that's pretty much it. That's what we do versus, "Here's 20 different versions of steak."

So, for the longest time that's really been our business model. Just like, "Let's be really, really good at this one thing." And we may offer it a way or two, but instead of trying to do all these different things, we do this.

Jaime:

I really appreciate that too. Because you can also level up each piece within that. Instead of having 20 different funnels where you're only giving little pieces of time to each one, you're copywriting. I thought the email I got the other day was so solid. And it was about booking a call. And I was like, "Oh, that's not him. Okay. Thanks Grant. I thought you wanted to hang out with me." But to be able to tweak the copy, do you do the copy? Do you have an in-house sales team? Tell me a little bit about the team. I

know we have to wrap up in a sec though.

Grant: Yeah. So, at this point we have 16 people on the team, which is a mix of fulltime employees, it's a mix of regular contractors. I'd say it's equivalent of probably eight to 10 fulltime people. And everybody wears a different hat. One of the best things that we have done in the business is about – so, last fall, fall of 2019, we – I did a one-month sabbatical. And I think we – you and I maybe talked a little bit offline on this.

[Crosstalk]

Jaime: Such a good idea. Yeah.

Grant: And so, some of this came from Mike Michalowicz. And he was the one that kinda suggested it. And so, I'd been intrigued by the idea. I'd seen some other people do it. I was like, "Okay. I wanna give this a shot." Unless from the sense of like going into it I didn't really feel like I needed a long vacation. I knew I was gonna get kinda bored and stir-crazy.

But what I really wanted to do was do a stress test on the business and say, "Okay. If we take Grant out of the business, then how do things run?" If you just force people to make decisions and run things without you, what happens? What breaks? What works? What doesn't work? And so, we talked about it then kinda prepped for it for a couple months leading up to it. And did the sabbatical and came back from it and things went really, really well.

And so, I remember talking with the team afterwards and kinda debriefing and they're like, "Nothing really broke. We didn't really need you." And on one hand you're like, "You didn't need me? Okay." On the other hand, "Good. That's the point of it. That's what we wanted." But the other side of it was I remember a couple of team members who came to me and said, "It meant so much that you trusted us with the keys to the business."

And I wasn't checking slack. I wasn't checking email. I wasn't attending meetings. I was completely offline, and they handled everything. They hired two new people while I was gone. So, it was fun to come back and be like, "Hey, who are you?" And so, just trying to make sure, again, if I'm going to build a business that is truly a business, and it's not building a job, that I have to trust and lean into other people and depend on other people that are not me. And so, that was a really, really good kinda again stress test

for the business.

Jaime: And totally different skillset to be a better leader instead of being at the beginning. And it's only been five or six years for you. And that's what's so impressive. I know you've been a business owner for a lot longer than that, of course, but to be able to see the growth and the trajectory of your team. And they probably like working without you sometimes instead of you going, "Hey, and then there's this thing. Hey, wait. We're gonna need this too."

Grant: Well, I kinda have a balance of like I really, really care about what we do, but also have just enough where it's like, "No, you are smart people. You can make decisions." And it's not that I don't care, but it's like I don't have to make every decision. I don't wanna make every decision." And so, here's the end result, but how we get from point A to point B. And there's a lot of ways to get there. "So, what do you wanna do?" "I think we should do this." "Okay. Let's do that. Let's give it a shot."

And there's times where they do something. There was something the other – I don't even remember what it was. Something the other day and I was like, "I probably would have done it differently, but that's fine." That's part of it.

It's kinda like when you're – you understand as parents you're teaching your kid. You're like, "I'd probably do it this way next time, but I gave you the freedom and the autonomy to figure it out and you gave it your best shot." And I've gotta be cool with that rather than, "Why'd you do it wrong?" No, no. If I didn't tell them that this is the way I wanted it done, then I can't be upset if they didn't do it that way.

Jaime: It sounds like you're good at letting go, which is not always a good trait of entrepreneurs. Who knew? Sometimes it's like, "Wait. I just know." Yes. I really appreciate that. And I love having you on the show. And 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?

Grant: I'd say one thing that we kinda touched on was to find someone who is a step or two ahead of you that is just not only in a similar business that what you wanna be, but is doing it in a way that you wanna do it. And what I mean by that is there are – you can look at people who may – they may check the box in terms of business. And they're like, "Man, they are just – that's what I wanna do."

But maybe personally you're just like, "Is that the kinda life that I wanna have? Let's play this out for a second."

I'll give you an example. Like I said, I live in the Nashville area. Which we ought to tell that story of how you indirectly got us here. But so, naturally there's a lot of country musicians and people in the country music industry that are here in the Nashville area. And so, a couple of neighbors are in country music. Or I've talked with a few of them before where they would say, "Being on stage is really, really awesome, but being away from my family or sleeping on a tour bus is just not what people think it is."

So, on one hand you're like, "Okay. If I wanna be a musician, I look at them and their career and that sounds awesome. But then you kinda get the behind the scene story and you're like, "Well, that's not what I wanna sign up for." So, look for something to like – let's play this out. If you're successful in that thing, does it check the boxes of what it is that you wanna do? Is it fulfilling for you?"

So, for me, as you well know Jaime, one thing that I'm passionate about is I love entrepreneurship. I love business. I love speaking. But it's really, really important to me to be a good husband and to be a good father. And so, I tell our speakers, I tell our team, I tell entrepreneurs all the time, "Who you are is more important than what you do. Who you are is more important than what you do." Meaning if you and I are great podcasters and great entrepreneurs, but if we suck as a wife or as a husband or as a mom or as a dad or as this shell of a human being, we're doing something wrong.

And so, the reason that you and I enjoy what we do is because we like making a dent and like make a difference in the world, but also like having the freedom and flexibility to spend a lot of time with our families and our friends. And so, make sure that you're – again you're building towards the kinda life that you wanna have rather than getting there and being like, "Crap. I climbed this ladder, but I'm leaning against the wrong wall. And now I'm somewhere where I don't wanna be."

Jaime:

That's preaching to the choir. Yes. And the people that are in that spot right now please listen. And it can be done in five-six years like Grant has done as long as you persevere and stick with the things that you need to do. Thank you so much for coming on the show. Where do we find out more about you? Where do we get your podcast and all that?

Grant: Yeah. Everything we do is over at TheSpeakerLab.com. TheSpeakerLab.com. And the new book, it's called *The Successful Speaker: Five Steps for booking gigs, getting paid, building your platform*. And we have a podcast by the same name, The Speaker Lab podcast. We have at the time of this recording about 300 podcast episodes on all things speaking and virtual speaking and being a speaker and dealing with Covid and all of that. So, yeah. Anything and everything we can do to help serve and support speakers, we're here for.

Jaime: Go check that out everybody. Thank you so much, Grant, for coming on the show today. I so appreciate it.

Grant: Thanks, Jaime.

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Duration: 49 minutes