

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 138: Seth Godin

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Tim Ferriss: Hello, ladies and germs. This is Tim Ferriss and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss show, where it is my job to deconstruct world class performers, whether they are from chess, sports, military, entertainment or otherwise. I tease out the routines, the habits, the favorite books, etc., that you can use; at least that's the goal. This episode was a massive success because the guest, Seth Godin, 10X'd my expectations. And I already expected him to be incredible, which of course he was. Seth Godin is probably the best known marketing mind in the world, the author of 17 best selling books that have been translated into more than 35 languages.

He writes about the way ideas spread – marketing, of course – strategic quitting, leadership, and most of all challenging the status quo in all areas. And he does this personally in his own life in many different ways. His books include *Lynchpin*, *Tribes*, *The Dip*, *Purple Cow*, *Your Turn*, and many others. He's also founded several companies, including Yoyodyne and Squidoo. His blog, which is easy to find; just type "Seth" into Google, is one of the most popular in the world. He's been inducted into the Direct Marketing Hall of Fame. He's done all sorts of amazing things.

And generally speaking Seth doesn't get into his personal life, his personal habits. This interview is an exception. He tells a lot of stories he's never told before. We get into a lot of details that he's never disclosed or shared before. And we cover a ton, and we had a blast. His favorite list of audio books that he listens to repeatedly, some of them once a month; his morning routine, breakfast, dietary habits, how he processes email, meditative practices, why he's fixated on, among other things, coffee and vodka, despite the fact that he consumes neither of them.

How to go from wantrepreneur to entrepreneur, and it goes on and on. We really had a great time. I hope that you also have a great time listening to it. So without further ado, please enjoy my conversation with none other than Seth Godin.

Tim Ferriss: Seth, welcome to the show.

Seth Godin: Tim, it's a pleasure. What a thrill to talk to you.

Tim Ferriss: I have, over the years, just become more and more fascinated by your entire life, and I really admire not only the work you've put out but the entire life you've crafted for yourself. Since day one, I think, my fans have been asking me not will I, but when will you have Seth on the podcast. So it's really fun to set aside the time, and I really appreciate it. We've also ended up having quite a few mutual friends.

I thought perhaps a fun place to start would be with something I only learned recently. I guess the best way to approach this would be to just ask you to talk about maybe how do you prepare coffee or vodka?

Seth Godin: Okay. The coffee thing, we'll start there. I don't drink coffee. I wish I did; I need a vice. But I like making it. I like the act of, without being one of those people who is measuring everything, because that's not my shtick, to have an intuitive sense of what makes a good pull of espresso. I used to have a fancy Slayer machine, which is this super digital hunk of a device that did not belong in anyone's kitchen, particularly mine. So when it started acting up, I was able to sell it for a fair price and switched, in the completely opposite direction, to a Swiss made, 17-year-old totally manual machine; like you've got to pull a handle.

And I roast my own beans, which is key. Marco Arment taught me that. Roasting your own beans is more important than any other thing you can do if you want to make coffee. I think there's a metaphor there; I know there's a metaphor there. Which is, you can spend a lot of time trying to fix stuff later but starting with the right raw materials makes a huge difference.

Tim Ferriss: Garbage in, garbage out.

Seth Godin: There you go.

Tim Ferriss: And Marco, just for context for folks, that's Marco and I don't know why I'm having this mental blank right now. Tumblr, and now Overcast, which is a great podcast player that I use myself. Really fascinating guy in his own right. Why don't you drink coffee?

Seth Godin: It hurts my stomach. Here's the thing. Some people are gluten intolerant; I'm just intolerant.

Tim Ferriss: We're talking about food products.

Seth Godin: Food, not humans. I'm really good with humans. And if you have to pick one, it's better to be tolerant of humans.

Tim Ferriss: The vodka? Can we dig into that for a second?

Seth Godin: There's a place near my house called Stone Barns, which used to be the Rockefeller's summer house. It's a nice restaurant. At the bar – I don't drink either but I'm told that at the bar, they serve honey oatmeal vodka. I reverse engineered the recipe and it's not a still but I make it in my basement. The recipe, for those who are interested, is you take a bottle of vodka.

You don't want the super cheap stuff but you don't want the expensive stuff because that's a little bit of a rip off. You pour it over a pound of just plain old oatmeal, uncooked, and half a jar of honey. You let it sit in the fridge for two weeks, stirring it now and then. Then you strain it back into the original bottle and you're done.

Tim Ferriss: The feedback – that sounds so odd; like an employee interview or something.

But when I was chatting with a couple of mutual friends, they said one of the things that impressed me most about Seth is how well thought out and meticulous all these various activities are. Is that something that started very, very early? Have you had that attention to detail for as long as you can remember? Or did some experience or collection of people instill that in you?

Seth Godin: I think it's really important that we get the scale properly, here. I am meticulous, compared to an amateur housepainter. I am a slob compared to you.

Tim Ferriss: That's not true.

Seth Godin: There's nothing about any of these tasks that could be described as meticulous. For example, the amount of oatmeal and honey varies wildly every single time. The coffee, probably a coffee snob would just turn up his nose at what I'm trying to do.

I don't enjoy being meticulous. I enjoy running rough shod over the status quo, learning what I can learn as I go but no one has ever accused me of being...

Tim Ferriss: Salesperson putting that derisive term aside, I think maybe the word that would be more appropriate in my mind is thoughtful.

Seth Godin: Yes, I'm very thoughtful. That's what I do, because I'm not good at sports.

Tim Ferriss: These are things I just recently learned. I heard from a chef friend of ours that you have the most impressive cookbook collection he's ever seen. How and why?

Seth Godin: Before Amazon, I was a book packager. And what book packagers do for a living is come up with ideas for books and then make them. I made 120 books in ten years; a book a month.

I made best sellers, I made books that sold no copies. I made books on gardening, I did trivia projects, I made books all over the map. And the way you do that is A, you work with an expert. So my second book was Professor Herb Barnes's *On the Spot, Spot and Stain Removal Guide*. Herb was the world's expert on spot and stain removal. The deal was I got his notebook, he got half the money, I did all the work. But sometimes you don't have an expert with you so what you do is you go to the bookstore and buy every book on the topic.

That's how my book collection grew to many thousands of books because a book is a bargain, still; a screaming bargain. You pay \$15, \$20 and you have something that might change your life. You have something that reminds you, 20 years later sitting on the shelf, where you were when you read it. I love buying books.

So the cookbook thing started with my mom's copy of *The Joy of Cooking*. Every time I saw a cookbook that seemed like I would get three good insights out of it, I bought it because it was a screaming bargain. Then it grew and it grew, and Amazon showed up, and one click shopping and maybe you should buy this one next. Growing up, people in my house, the doorbell would ring and everyone would go, "Amazon's here!" because every night the doorbell would ring. That's where the cookbooks come from.

Tim Ferriss: If you had someone over for dinner, and I've heard you're an incredible cook, and they said they wanted to learn how to cook, are there any particular books that you would recommend to them? Or approaches, for that matter.

Seth Godin: For just about anybody, the right answer is the *Four Hour Chef*.

Tim Ferriss: That wasn't intended to be a softball. I wasn't trying to set that up.

Seth Godin: Because before that book, you had to weave together a 30 minute narrative to help somebody think about what cooking meant. My wife got me a Chris Schlesinger cooking class, and it was the only cooking class I'd ever taken. And in 20 minutes I learned more about cooking than I think I've learned before or since. Because Chris basically taught me how to think about what you were trying to do and basically said, A) You should taste the food as you go, which a surprisingly small number of people do; and B) he said salt and olive oil actually are cheating and they're secret weapons and they always work.

You can even add them to ice cream; they just always work. So for me, part of the thoughtfulness is I don't use a lot of salt and I don't use a lot of oil because I know I could, but it's cheating. I like to think about cooking, again, as a metaphor for most of what you have been teaching; the real lesson that you have been teaching, not the decal stuff.

Which is that it costs very little to find out. Lots of people are afraid to find out, and that's why they're bad at cooking. The thing I love about cooking, because my projects – like yours – sometimes last for years, is that cooking lasts for an hour. And at the end, you have success or failure. That cycle of I have an idea for, and we're sitting down at six, is one that I like very much. I'll tell you a story that I don't think I've ever told out loud. I used to go shopping every single night, because I cooked for the family for many, many years every single night; still mostly do. I would stop at the Korean deli near my house.

It was a fish store, it was a flower shop and it was a nice, fresh vegetable place. The man who owned it was a friend of mine. I used to bring him my books when they were translated into Korean, which was fun. Ever single night I would go to get the freshest stuff. Anyway, a giant, evil drugstore chain bought the place and tore it down, and put up an evil drugstore. So I didn't know how to commemorate this loss. I ended up going online to one of those places that sell those brass architectural plaques, and I had a brass architectural plaque made honoring the place. I affixed it to the side of the drugstore where it has been for the last five years, unmolested.

Tim Ferriss: That's amazing. The tangible aspect of cooking, this is something I completely agree with you on, compared to some of the more abstract or longer term projects.

When you have something to show for your effort at the end that is very tangible and tactile. Is that part of the reason that you are as interested in audio equipment as you are, or appear to be? I've never been to your house but I hear that you have the most incredible sound system many people have ever seen. I don't know what the details are but is there an analog, tactile drive behind that? What is the reason behind that?

Seth Godin:

The arc for me, for many, many years, has been railing against various industrial complexes. The TV industrial complex, the educational industrial complex, and this corporatization of just about everything.

I was in China eight weeks ago. There's a village outside of Shenzhen called Dafen where they paint one third of all the oil paintings in the world, over and over as fast as they can. These paintings aren't art; they're merely paintings. They are what happens if a giant, big box store needs 10,000 oil paintings; this is how they get them. What I discovered, I was at my friend Steve's house 20 years ago and he had a big pile of this magazine called *Stereo File*. Stereo File is a handmade magazine about handmade audio equipment with people arguing with each other about this, that and the other thing; a lot of arguing.

It was really fun to read. I have no interest in baseball whatsoever but this was like baseball in that you could track the careers of the various artisans, and you could be on one side or the other of these discussions. So for me, I started by buying inexpensive, used stuff.

There's a marketplace online called "Audio Gon," with no E at the end where you can find people who buy things new and sell them six months later in perfect condition. I found that connecting to the artisan, understanding their point of view, finding the guy – I think he's in Cleveland – who makes speaker wires by hand, finding Paul McGowen in Boulder, Colorado, who is at the cutting edge of certain parts of the stereo but not other ones, making them in Boulder with a team of people; it gives me pleasure.

And that pleasure is a placebo that makes music sound better. The act of carefully choosing what you're going to listen to, and knowing that the heritage and the terroir of the thing behind it, it feels to me like a productive habit that doesn't hurt anybody. So it's something I spent some time on.

Tim Ferriss: How do you consume media, or what type of media do you consume? Is the bulk of it still in book form, that is hard copy? Or how do you consume media?

Seth Godin: I'll start with I don't watch any television that's live, and I feel strongly that most people shouldn't. I think one of the single, best hacks is that after Seinfeld went off the air, and we ripped it up. It frees up hours and hours every day to explore media or content that's up to you as opposed to somebody else. I don't watch any TV at home, recorded or otherwise. So that leaves me with books and Kindle and music, mostly. The thing with books is I really don't have the patience for literature.

I didn't grow up with literature. I was an engineer in college and I just never got the act for decoding really dense fiction. On the other hand, like you, every day the mailman brings unsolicited books in the mail. So there's a very high throughput of reading books before most people get to see them and once you do enough, you don't have to read the whole thing to get the joke. And every once in awhile, it's good enough that you keep going. If I blurb it, it means I went all the way to the end.

I love reading books on paper. It's harder for me to read books on the Kindle when I'm not traveling because it doesn't have that pristine reminder to me of what a book actually means. So one of the things people of my generation are discovering is that people who are 20 or 30 are coming up viewing books as nothing but a reminder of the drudgery of high school.

And if a book is on an electronic device, it's one click away from email and email is always better than reading a book if you're 25. So I fear for the future of or medium because it doesn't have the place in our culture that it used to.

Tim Ferriss: How do you determine if the book blurb of a particular example is going to just create a deluge that you don't want? We don't have to address that one but I've been very impressed in some of our conversations by the rules that you've established for yourself for saying yes or no to certain things. Perhaps we could start, if you're willing to talk about it, with speaking engagements. Speaking engagements, as you've experienced, if you have a successful book that went from zero to 60 very quickly and unexpectedly, and said yes to everything and it just turned into a parody of up in the air.

I felt like a traveling salesman or Jack Lemmon and Glen Gary, Glenn Ross. It was horrible. What are your rules for, for instance,

speaking engagements, to whatever extent you're comfortable talking about them?

Seth Godin:

I'd be happy to, and then I'll scroll back a little bit and tell you why I have to have rules for things like that. For speaking engagements, I don't want to do more than 30 a year because they are, at least for me, not additive to the joy of my day except for the hour I'm on stage. So I'm prepared to do an unlimited number of speaking engagements in zip code 10706. Monday I'm going to Carnegie Hall to talk for free to 25 music students who have devoted their lives to doing what they do, and it's a privilege to do something like that.

If I have to get on an airplane, it's a whole other project. So I think really hard about what impact am I trying to make, and will this help me move things forward, which is where this nests into. My mentor and late friend Zeke Ziegler used to talk about the idea. He used to say, "I've never changed anyone's life with a speaking gig but sometimes I do a speaking gig and they buy my cassettes. And if they buy my cassettes, I've got a shot at changing their life."

For me, my mission, and it has been for a long time, is to make a certain kind of change happen. I want to help people see the world differently and if they choose to, make a different choice after they see the world differently. I want to help people connect to each other and to use that connection to make things better. I don't want to be a TV personality so the question is, how do I bring that teaching to people?

And what I've found is it's a very unique situation when you have 500 or 5,000 high powered people in a room who didn't expect that you were going to be there, but now that you're there are eager to hear what you have to say. And they set aside their Twitter account, and they set aside their preconceptions and for 45 minutes or an hour, you have a screen that's 30 feet by 20 feet and you have a microphone that's amplified.

And maybe, just maybe, you can get under their skin. And if you do, maybe just maybe, they go back to their office and get ten copies of *Your Turn* and hand them out to their team. Then I can do that practice that I seek, which is to change the conversation. So that's why I do it at all.

Tim Ferriss:

And the further away it is, the less likely you are to say yes; is that fair to say?

Seth Godin: Yes. What I did was, having studied a little bit of economics, is I changed the price. Los Angeles costs three times as much as New York. And if you don't think that's fair, then don't make me go to Los Angeles.

Tim Ferriss: You said you were going to elaborate on why you need rules, and maybe you just did; maybe that was the answer.

Seth Godin: Because the phone rings, and lots of people want a thing. And if it doesn't align with the thing that is your mission and you say yes, now it's their mission. There's nothing wrong with being a wandering generality instead of a meaningful specific but don't expect to make the change you seek to make if that's what you do. I thought your interview with Derek was one of the best ones you've ever done.

Tim Ferriss: Thanks. Derek makes it quite easy. Derek Sivers is amazing.

Seth Godin: He's awesome; I adore him.

He talked about offense versus defense. And if you think hard about one's life, most people spend most of their time on defense, in reactive mode, in playing with the cards they got instead of moving to a different table with different cards. Instead of seeking to change other people, they are willing to be changed. Part of the arc of what I'm trying to teach is everyone who can hear this has more power than they think they do. The question is, what are you going to do with that power? Because it comes with responsibility, right out of Spiderman, but that responsibility is you're going to make change happen or you're going to ignore it. And if you make change happen, that's on you.

Tim Ferriss: I was just pausing as I was thinking of how well anyone who is listening to this podcast, relative to the vast majority on the planet, how well they are doing.

And for whatever reason, I was just bridging the gap between our little text exchange before the call where I asked you if you were ready, and you said born ready. Not actually, I was born naked and afraid and unable to read, unable to type. If you look at that progression, making it from there to where we are collectively, everyone listening to this podcast or being on it, it's pretty astonishing.

Tim Ferriss: Can I just interrupt you for a second?

Seth Godin: Yes, sir.

Seth Godin: I think that's part of the secret plan of Tim Ferriss, which is that when you came out of the gate, it was – or felt like – here are some techniques and some shortcuts. And it was seen as an early version of the life acting thing. But I don't think that's what you're really doing. I think what you are really doing is saying to people: alright, now that you are so much more fit in every area, mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, what are you going to do with it?

And when you think about the Seneca stuff and the podcast, that's where you've been going for a long time. And I, for one, just wanted to call you out and applaud you on it because it's not the easy path; it's the path that's important and you have been consistent and shown up and done the work.

Tim Ferriss: Thank you. That means a lot to me. And you're correct. The tactics get people in the door, so to speak, but then the question is alright, once you have more of this finite resource called time, and you've sharpened the axe in these various areas where you apply your effort. And this is maybe going to turn into a therapy session for myself, but I've found myself – we were just talking about books and their place in culture – feeling like I'm in a transition point.

You've been so consistent and so present for so many people for so long, your readers, etc. How do you navigate big transitions in your own life? That's a very general question. The reason the podcast start is because I was burned out on books. It was after *The Four Hour Chef*, 670-some-odd pages. I just felt so battle weary and run down by publishing that I wanted to take a break. The podcast was a side project that then became its own entire thing altogether. But when you find yourself wondering what to do next, how do you navigate some of those larger transitions? If you have any examples that come to mind...

Seth Godin: The good news is you did exactly the right thing and I applaud it. It's not easy to do that because it means going from a place where, by outside measures, you are about to succeed again, to a place where by outside measures you might not.

Hence the model, this might not work. And so on a good day, my story to myself is this might not work. The number of projects I've done, big and small, exceeds most people's and the number of failures I have dramatically exceeds most people's and I'm super proud of that; more prouder of the failures than the successes

because it's about this mantra of is this generous, is this going to connect, is this going to change people for the better, is this worth trying?

If it meets those criteria and I can cajole myself into doing it, then I ought to, right? And the transitions aren't easy. I regularly spend months telling people that I'm unemployed and in between projects.

I regularly, publicly quit the book business, which I did maybe for the last time more than two years ago. *Your Turn* came out a year ago November so 15 months ago, and I have not written one word of a book since then.

Tim Ferriss: What was the word?

Seth Godin: No, I haven't written anything.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, I thought you said I've written one word of a book; sorry. I misheard you.

Seth Godin: The reason is the people who I seek to serve don't want me to write another book. They want me to do something else, instead. People come up to me, as they might come up to you, and say, "You should be really proud of me; I finished your book." No one goes up to Steven Spielberg and says, "You should be proud of me; I finished all of *ET*; I made it to the end of *ET*." And so with *Your Turn*, I designed it, I illustrated it myself; I made it so that people would happily share it with each other.

Because when you share a book, sometimes you feel a little guilty because someone might feel guilty for not finishing all 600 pages. But when you share maybe a podcast or a blog post or an illustrated book, it makes you feel closer to that person in the sense that you're both going to enjoy this journey.

Tim Ferriss: Just to peek behind the curtain a little bit with some of your decisions, how did you decide, or what is the thinking behind, daily blog versus, say, a longer blog post once a week or at some other frequency?

Seth Godin: The daily blog evolved and it's one of the top five career decisions I've ever made in terms of having a practice that resonates with the people who I need it to resonate with that I can do forever, and have been doing for more than eight years, now. And that leaves a trail behind.

I don't need anyone's permission. I don't need to go out and promote it. I don't use any analytics. I don't have comments. It's just this is what I noticed today and I thought I'd share it with you. For awhile, it was an intermittent blog, and then it was a five times a day blog. I do write five posts a day; I just don't publish five posts a day. But it became clear that I could get the appropriate amount of mind space in that period of time. Now, I'll tell you, I've gotten this note maybe eight times in the last couple years. It's enraging.

The note says: "I wish you wouldn't post every day. I can't read that fast. Please post fewer." And the thing is, this is so selfish because all you've got to do is just skip some of them. But these people don't want other people to be reading the posts if they can't read it.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, man. When you say you write five posts a day and you just don't publish five, is that because you are writing them in advance to publish all of them later? Or you write five and discard four and keep the best one, or something else?

Seth Godin: There is no ritual. I just notice things, I write them down, I look at them. I look at the post before or that's next in the queue. I say, can I do better than that? I try a different one. So it just averages out. It's not like there's this method; I have no method.

Tim Ferriss: Do you draft by hand, in Word, in a particular program?

Seth Godin: I type write into Type Pad. I learned this from Chip Connelly. Have you had Chip on the show?

Tim Ferriss: I haven't, but I love Chip. He's a great guy.

Seth Godin: Great guy. Chip and I went to business school together.

He was the third youngest person in the class and I was the second youngest person in the class. He got five of us together and every Tuesday night, we met in the Anthropology Department for four hours. We brainstormed more than 5,000 business ideas over the course of the first year of business school. It was magnificent. It wasn't official, it wasn't sanctioned. It was just Chip said let's do this, and we did. And he picked the Anthropology Department because he knew someone there and could get the conference room.

And he said this is the only place we'll ever do this. And the reason is, when you walk into this room, you will associate this room with what we do here. That's all. I feel the same way about my blog. ID I am in the Type Pad editor, I know exactly what my brain needs to feel like and then the writing happens.

Tim Ferriss: What does your writing warm-up look like and when do you typically write?

One of my fans said – and this could be a misquote – that you had an elaborate or extreme sort of mental warm-up for writing. Do you write in the mornings? Or what time do you typically write?

Seth Godin: Okay, now I need to tell you about Stephen King's pencil.

Tim Ferriss: Yes, please.

Seth Godin: Because I feel very strongly about this. Stephen King often goes to writers' conferences, and there will be this question and that question and the next question and inevitably, someone raises their hand and says, "Stephen King, you're one of the most successful, revered writers of your generation. What kind of pencil do you use?" I won't go there. It doesn't matter. It's a way to hide. It's not interesting to me to talk about how I do it because there's no correlation that I have ever encountered between how writers write and how good their work is. So you should just move on because it doesn't matter.

Tim Ferriss: Alright. I'll make a confession, then. When I feel blocked, which does happen with writing, I take along time to get to the point where I feel like I have the balls in the air well enough to put pieces together. It just takes me a long time to synthesize, not unlike some coders I guess. But the point I was going to make is I went to a conversation between Poe Bronson, a writer, and another gent – I'm blanking on his name – and I asked Poe during the Q&A what he did when he felt blocked or couldn't figure out what to do next in writing.

And he said: write what makes you angry. Write about what makes you angry. And I found that very helpful. It was a very helpful way to at least get the hand or the brain moving to break the ice.

Seth Godin: I totally agree. That's not the question. If you said to Poe Bronson, how do you write these books that are remarkable and thoughtful and generous, I don't think his answer is every morning I get as angry as I can and then I type, right?

Tim Ferriss: Agreed.

Seth Godin: You and I could list 25 tricks that help us get past the resistance and start the flow of writing. But that's different than saying I need to do it like those other people do it.

Tim Ferriss: Agreed. I guess in the buffet of things that have been helpful along those lines, if for whatever reason – didn't get a good night's sleep, feeling off, you sit down to write.

Seth Godin: Right. This is easy. The answer to this question is write. Write poorly. Continue writing poorly. Write poorly until it's not bad anymore and then you'll have something you can use. People who have trouble coming up with good ideas, if they're telling you the truth, will tell you they don't have very many bad ideas. But people who have plenty of good ideas, if they're telling you the truth, will say they have even more bad ideas.

So the goal isn't to get good ideas; the goal is to get bad ideas. Because once you get enough bad ideas, then some good ones have to show up.

Tim Ferriss: Yes. This brings to mind – I have a photo of it somewhere – all of the brainstorm titles for the Four Hour Workweek that were not the Four Hour Workweek. For those people who think the Four Hour Workweek sounds like a bad infomercial product, you should have seen some of the outcasts on this page. They were horrible. It's atrocious just to even look back at some of them. But the blog and the daily blog you said was one of your top five business decisions. What are some of the other top business decisions that you've made?

Seth Godin: Okay so we'll go way back. I would say the first one which is useful to everybody, is sell something that people want to buy.

My friend Lynne is a brilliant, brilliant thinker and designer. And for years, she was in the business of designing toys and soft goods for moms with toddlers. Every toy company in America was mean to her, rejected her, had nothing to do with her. I said: Lynne, it's simple; toy companies don't like toy designers. They're not organized to do business with toy designers. They're not hoping toy designers will come to them. I said, come with me into the book business.

Because every day, there are underpaid, really smart people in the book business who wake up waiting for the next idea to come across their desk. They're eager to buy what you have to sell. And within two months, she did the Decks of Cards, the 52 decks and sold more than 5 million decks of cards. That's because they appreciated her.

So if you think about how hard it is to push a business uphill, particularly when you're just getting started, one answer is to say why don't you just start a different business, a business you can push downhill?

Tim Ferriss: This is a good lesson. There's a fetishizing of the rolling of the stone, like Sisyphus – am I getting that right?

Seth Godin: Yes, Sisyphus.

Tim Ferriss: In Silicon Valley there's this fetishizing of the pain. And I'm like, maybe your model is just too difficult. Maybe you should choose a different business. Okay, that is a good lesson. Any other...?

Seth Godin: The other lesson happens all the time, which is knowing when I'm wrong is a useful skill. And lots of people who do good work have trouble knowing when they haven't done good work, and they think they should stick with it.

Other people have done good work, don't think they have and they pivot too soon. So figuring that moment out. 1994, I'm running one of the first internet companies. We invented commercial email. And Mark Hurst shows me this thing called the worldwide web. And I say: that's stupid. It's just like Prodigy except it's slower and there's nobody to pay us money. And for six months, I persisted in pointing out that the worldwide web made no sense whatsoever.

And I then, one day, just woke up and said wait a minute, let me look at that again. And we completely changed how we decided we were going to do our business. The same thing is true with the cover of *All Marketers are Liars*, because the cover and the title was super clever and wrong.

It was not a matter of me persisting and persuading people that they needed to get the joke. It was merely a matter of persuading the publisher we should just make the paperback have a different cover and a different title. That if you're going to try a lot of things, you're going to fail a lot. And figuring out the difference

between the failures of your judgment versus the failures of not persisting long enough is a useful skill. And I'm still not great at it but I'm better than I was.

Tim Ferriss: You've interacted with many more entrepreneurs than I have, I would say at this point. One of the questions that I get constantly that you might have a better answer for, because I don't have a great answer for it right now, is how do I discern between an idea I should keep persisting with despite many, many rejections versus a bad idea that I should abandon that is getting the same type of rejection but I'm equally enthusiastic about?

That's a very wordy way to put it but I get some version of that question all the time. How would you answer that?

Seth Godin: First we have to scroll back. There's a difference between freelancers and entrepreneurs. Most people who are independent are freelancers. They get paid when they work; they do good work and they get paid for it. A few people are entrepreneurs, building a business bigger than themselves, a business that makes them money when they sleep; a business when they don't actually do the work that the customer is buying, and a business that they can sell one day.

We look at Larry Ellison. Larry Ellison doesn't code at Oracle. Larry Ellison doesn't make most of the sales calls. What does Larry Ellison do, actually? His job is to think about something that needs to be done and hire someone else to do it, over and over again; building something bigger than himself.

So the first thing I would say to the person who is confused is, are you an entrepreneur or a freelancer? If you're an entrepreneur, then you have signed up for a series of choices and challenges. And again, start with selling something people want to buy. There's a reason to try to invent a need when there are so many needs and wants that are unfilled. People didn't wake up ten years ago and say I need an Uber. But they did wake up ten years ago and say I need an easy, inexpensive way to get from A to B.

Tim Ferriss: Correct.

Seth Godin: Once you could go to someone and say, "I have that," people would say, "I want that." But if you're just saying, "I'm really clever; I know what you should want," and when you tell people what it is, they don't want it. You're either talking to the wrong people or you made the wrong thing.

So the blog post I point people to the most is called *First Ten*, and it is a simple theory of marketing that says tell ten people, show ten people, share it with ten people; ten people who already trust you and already like you. If they don't tell anybody else, it's not that good and you should start over. And if they do tell other people, you're on your way.

Tim Ferriss: And for those people who hear your description of entrepreneur and say that's what I want, that is what I want; I want to be an entrepreneur. They currently have a 9 to 5 job, or maybe more; maybe it's an 80 to 100 week management consultant job, who knows? This is also a fan question. They desperately want to go from wantrepreneur to entrepreneur. the specific question was if I had a sticky note to put on my computer to help me make that jump, what would it say? Do you have any thoughts? You can rephrase the question if you like, or rip it to shreds.

Tim Ferriss: Let's pick two different kinds of entrepreneurs.

One kind of entrepreneur you say, whose need am I satisfying today and can I assemble assets who I satisfy in a defensible way so I don't have to be the cheapest. And by that I mean – and I've written about this – snow shoveling. We know there's a need for snow shoveling. We know that if you spend time and effort, you can arrange a team of ten snow shovelers who don't have the initiative you have, and you can use existing, almost free technology to assign the snow shovelers to where they need to go.

And you're not going to win because you're the cheapest snow shoveling company; you're going to win because you can get to customers faster and better and more efficiently. That's a very straightforward form of entrepreneurship; it is available to everyone without an enormous amount of talent or artistic creativity required. Because you just make a list of the thousand things around you that people need and want.

You make a list of the kinds of assets and connections you can build and you go do it. And you do it and you do it until you're big enough. The other kind, to quote Michael Schrage here, is to say the purpose of my business is to change people. To change them from something into something else. And this is the kind of business that we remember generations later. So Harley Davidson, my favorite example, changed disrespected, disconnected outsiders into respected family members, insiders.

That's what you get when you pay \$12,000 for a motorcycle. Because if all you want is transport, buy a Suzuki. The way to think about it is, no one gets a Suzuki tattoo. You can decide that you want to be tattoo worthy. That you want to change a population in a way that makes you indispensable. That kind of entrepreneurship requires insight at a different level.

There's nothing unattainable about it; I encourage people to go do it. But know that it is a higher stakes game than being the person who applies systems thinking to an existing, clear need. That's a big post-it, by the way.

Tim Ferriss: That is a big post-it. Are there any checkboxes that people could use to determine if they should not become an entrepreneur? Because if you look at the narrative on the covers of business magazines, it seems like, to the untrained eye, perhaps – or the trained eye, for that matter – that everyone is being encouraged to become an entrepreneur and start their own company.

I'm curious to hear, in what cases do you actively discourage people from starting their own company?

Seth Godin: The first thing I would say is discerning reader of business magazines differentiates between the articles that are written for people who are voyeurs and the articles that are written for you. And 98 percent of the covers aren't written for you; you should skip those. You should skip the articles that lionize people without actually explaining anything about them other than they are different and better than you. That said, we've gotten this far without talking about Steve Pressfield. The resistance runs deep. And the same thing that causes writer's block is what causes entrepreneurial block.

Tim Ferriss: Just for people listening, Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art*, among other books; very worth reading.

Seth Godin: Right. *The War of Art* is one of those books, at least for me when I finally was exposed to it, I said why wasn't I informed? Why did it take this long for this book to land on my desk? There aren't very many books I could say it like that. Most of my books don't fall into that category, your books don't – they're in the world; you find our books. Steve's book was hidden in some little corner and I'm super glad I found it. I tracked him down, I published the sequel called *Do the Work*, and now he's the publisher of that book.

Reading *The War of Art* is really essential; painful and essential. Anyway, people get entrepreneurial block for only one reason. It is not because they are not qualified. It is not because they are not passionate. It is because they are afraid. And you need to be clear with yourself about what you are afraid of, why you are afraid, and whether you care enough to dance with that fear because it will never go away.

Tim Ferriss: There are so many parallels, of course, with stoicism, meditation, not trying to suffocate these so-called negative emotions because they're going to be constant companions so you have to learn how to navigate and befriend them, or at least accept them in a way. But if we look at fear, I think it was in *The Four Hour Body*, I said the fears of modern men can be boiled down to two things: getting fat and too much email. If we look at email, you are very well known for responding extremely quickly to many, many people who ping you. I can get more specific if it's helpful, but how do you process email?

Seth Godin: Let's also point out, for those of you who are considering sending me an email, that according to the Surgeon General, one out of every 300 people who send me an email spontaneously burst into flame.

Tim Ferriss: This is true. I've seen this.

Seth Godin: You have to decide if it's worth the risk.

Tim Ferriss: The email thing is a real problem for me, and I don't have a way out. I'm not sure I want a way out, because if I wanted one, I would probably find one. I decided a very long time ago, as the author of *Permission Marketing*, a book about anticipated personal relevant messages to people who want to get them, that this medium was going to be a place I was going to spend a lot of time in.

And if someone cared enough to send me a generous, non-anonymous email, I could certainly try to spend the time to write back. And it worked for a really long time. And for someone with ADD like mine, it's a thrill because every time you look over on your computer, there's something that looks like productive work just waiting to be done.

But at the end of the day, if all you've done is answer email, unless you work in Help Scout or some tech support job, it's probable you haven't created an enormous amount of value. I need to work ever harder at disciplining myself to not live in my email box because

I'm really good at it, it makes people happy, but it's not part of the change I'm trying to make.

I don't want to say to people: you are the last one; the person after you doesn't get a response. I don't want to hire someone to answer my email because every word I have ever written has been written by me. And so I soldier on. But I say to people like you who have a platform, please ask people to do the world a favor and write to Tim instead of me.

Tim Ferriss: I've thrown myself to the wolves, in a way, with email because I tend not to respond to many. But in a world where many folks – and I'd be curious to hear how you handle this particular instance – make unsolicited introductions. So people you know, who should probably know better – and maybe you've only met them three or four times but somehow they have your email address – email you and say: Hi Seth, I'd love for you to meet Doug so-and-so, CEO of such-and-such who's blah, blah, blah and he wanted to connect because of this, this and this; I'm sure you guys will get along.

Do you have a coping mechanism for that, if you experience it?

Seth Godin: This is a problem you have created largely for yourself.

Tim Ferriss: Like most of my problems, I'm sure.

Seth Godin: Because I don't invest in any companies. I don't take pictures for my blog, and I don't go to meetings. So it's easy for me to generously write back to someone and say: I don't invest, I don't take pictures, and I don't go to meetings; how can I help you?

Because most of the time, they want one of those three things. So if they're being honest, we're now done.

Tim Ferriss: Do you then, therefore – Rick Ruben is very similar in this way, the music producer. Do you have people always come to you if you want to meet them; it is deemed worth your time? Or are there exceptions and if so, how do you decide what makes the cut?

Seth Godin: Going to LA to have lunch with Rick is on my list. I haven't even begun to schedule it because the thought of flying somewhere not to do my speaking work is really an ethima. But one day: Hi Rick; I'm going to come have lunch with you. One of the things that happens if you live 40 minutes from the world's greatest city is that people in New York don't want to make the last 40 minutes.

So if I'm meeting someone – but I don't go to meetings – I usually end up in New York City.

Tim Ferriss: What other things do you categorically – and I'm not quite done with the email; we're going to maybe come back to that but what other activities do you categorically say no to?

Seth Godin: Cilantro. Cilantro. I hate cilantro.

Tim Ferriss: Tastes like soap to you?

Seth Godin: This is well known. The Gastropod podcast did an entire episode about me and my cilantro aversion.

Tim Ferriss: So no cilantro. There are a couple of cuisines that would be very challenging to navigate.

Seth Godin: That's true.

Tim Ferriss: I mean Vietnamese noodles; very tough. Part of the reason I ask is you have had just tremendous longevity as a writer, as a thinker, as a speaker. There are many people who have one or two successful books get inundated with various opportunities, good, bad, in between.

Say yes, become very scattered, flame out, become irrelevant somehow and the wider world never hears from them or sees their gifts again. And I think in part it is because, as I did with speaking engagements early on, I was so flattered that anyone would pay me anything to speak and just amazed at these sums that seemed just insane at the time, that I said yes to everything and it made my life quite miserable.

And people do that with many, many different things. The investing, which is why I'm not taking any investing meetings or investing in any startups anymore at this point. I just realized I had to say no to all of it. I couldn't say yes to just the top 1 percent because that still meant that I had to filter the other 99 percent.

Seth Godin: Bingo. Bingo! Yes, exactly right. This is about cognitive load, and it's about the dip, and it's about seeking to be a craftsperson. So the reason I don't use Twitter – I saw Twitter early, which is unusual for me.

And I said wow, I could do this and have a lot of followers. And then I said, what would that mean? A) It would mean less time

spent writing my book. B) It would mean exposing myself to anonymous comments from people who want me to pay attention to them. Will either of those two things make me better at the things I want to be good at? No. Will it be a thrill in the sense that there will be a little, fearful edge to it every time I interact? Yes.

But I have conservation of fear, and I have to be really careful because if I'm busy sorting through more stuff, the cognitive load goes up and I can't do what Neil Gaiman does. Neil famously has said that the way he writes a book is he makes himself extremely bored. And if he's bored enough, a book's going to come out because he needs to entertain himself.

The problem most people don't understand about social media, social media wasn't invented to make you better. It was invented to make the companies money. And you are an employee of the company, and you are the product that you sell. They have put you in a little hamster wheel and they throw little treats in now and then. But you've got to decide what's the impact you're trying to make. And this still comes back to the fear thing. One of the biggest misunderstandings of the people who are into that whole quantified self thing is they are confusing quantifying the self with dancing with the fear.

And they are completely different things to do in a given day. That one is tailormism. It's scientific management. It's productivity. We need to move these widgets from one place to another; what's the most efficient way? And I'm glad we got good at industry because it makes our lives way more rich, right?

But our economy, our world, and our soul aren't fulfilled by that. They're fulfilled by people who do something that has never been done before. And if it's never been done before, you can't quantify it because it's never been done before. And so to be good at it doesn't mean you quantify your way to it; to be good at it means you clear the decks so that all that's left is you and the muse; you and the fear.

You and the change that you want to make in the world. I can't think of something that's more productive for the kind of people who are lucky enough and blessed enough and rich enough to be listening to this to focus their energy on. We don't need folks like that to go from 90 words per minute to 105 words per minute when they type. It's not a factor.

What we need is for them to type something that's worth reading.

Tim Ferriss: I'm so glad you brought up Neil Gaiman. He's one of my favorite writers, favorite people out there. Someday, I'll get him on the podcast; it will happen eventually. But I guess it's *Make Good Art*, is that his commencement speech?

Seth Godin: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: It's just such an incredible message I needed that at a particular point. It just happened to come across the transom. I encourage everybody to listen to it. Do you think if you were coming off of, let's just say, your first bestseller and you were thrust into the limelight, would you choose again to do the blog and to do it the way you're doing it, or do you think you would choose different tools?

Seth Godin: The first thing I would say is everyone should blog, even if it's not under their own name, every single day. If you are in public making predictions and noticing things, your life gets better.

Because you will find a discipline that can't help but benefit you. If you want to do it in a diary, that's fine. But the problem with diaries is because they're private, you can start hiding. In public, in this blog, there it is. Six weeks ago you said this; 12 weeks ago you said that. Are you able, every day, to say one thing that's new that you're willing to stand behind? I think that's just a huge, wonderful practice. But that wasn't your question. Your question was trust and attention.

Because those are the two things that are scarce in an economy where things that used to be scarce, not so much anymore. Attention, as you have built your arc around, is scarce because we're not making any more of it. And there are ever more tools to interrupt ever more people. But interrupting people well is not easy and it doesn't really scale.

So first thing we have to do is earn attention. And if we earn attention, over time we gain trust. So if someone says Tim Ferriss is coming to give a speech tomorrow, the other person doesn't say: tell me exactly what he's going to say and then I'll decide if I want to come. They say: oh, Tim Ferriss? I trust him, I'll come. That's what we seek to build. So the book industry is magical because the book industry, 500 years as a book industry, is someone at a publisher picked you, said to their readers: I care enough about this idea that I'll spend X number of dollars to bring it to you.

The bookstore said – this was before there was infinite shelf space – there are a lot of books we could sell you but we picked this one because the publisher is so excited. And then by the time the reader touches it, it's a trustworthy object. Now, that's being hacked and hacked some more. You can buy your way into the New York Times Bestseller List for not much money.

You can self publish a book that looks like a real book. Anyone can publish for the Kindle; therefore anyone does. So we're stripping away the trust building element of the book industry. But if your book did work and people encountered it and now they trust you, then the job is to find a social media platform - there isn't one right answer – where you can continue to connect people, continue to tell stories. So you earn more trust, more permission, which gets you more attention, which gets you more trust, which lets you make the change you want to make in the universe.

Tim Ferriss: What opportunities were you offered – doesn't have to be specific – that you're glad you turned down? Are there any particular examples that come to mind? And if not, I can move on but I'm just curious if there are any opportunities that you've turned down. For me, for instance, one of them would be every reality TV show invite I've ever had, I'm thrilled.

And I was extremely tempted early on, but in retrospect, extremely happy I said no to that.

Seth Godin: That's a great point. TV runs deep in our culture. They wanted me to be on that super famous one, and then that other one and I never hesitated in saying no because that's the moment when you decide who you want to be. So I paid extra careful attention to the question, and extra careful attention to my answer and it resonated. I would say the biggest shift, which is for Silicon Valley people, hard to get your arms around because there's a game being played there, and it's a game that I've opted out of. When I was at Yahoo during the renaissance in 1999, Bill Gross – who's a super nice guy – came to me and asked me to be head of marketing for the company he was building.

It had Steven Spielberg on the board. It was teed up to be the seventh next IPO and there were a billion dollars in stock options on the table. I said to myself if I say yes to this, I've decided what I do for the rest of my life, which is say yes to the next one. Because I don't need to say yes to this to buy cilantro and vodka; why would I say yes? It's because I like the game. And I didn't say yes.

And even though the billion dollars in stock options never came around, I think I'd be even more proud of it if they had. Because money is a story. Once you have enough for beans and rice and taking care of your family and a few other things, money is a story. You can tell yourself any story you want about money. And it's better to tell yourself a story about money that you can happily live with.

Tim Ferriss: Could you elaborate on that a little bit? What is your story about money? Is it what you just said? Because this is a really important point and it's something I've been trying to mull over in the last year or so in particular.

Seth Godin: Let me start with the marketing story about money. Which is take a \$10 bill and go to the bus station, and walk up to someone and say: I'll sell you this \$10 bill for a dollar. You should actually do this. No one will buy it from you. There are a few reasons for this. The first reason is no one goes to the bus station hoping to do a financial transaction. The second one is, only an insane person would try to sell you a real \$10 bill for a dollar, and dealing with insane people is tricky so it must not be a real \$10 bill, and you should just walk away. Now, let's try a different thing. Put a \$10 bill in your neighbor's mailbox when he's not home and run away.

Do it the next day, do it the third day. On the fourth day, ring your neighbor's doorbell and say: I'm the guy who left three \$10 bills in your mailbox. Here's another one; you want to buy it for a dollar? You'll sell it because your neighbor knows you're crazy but you're crazy in a very particular way, and you've earned the trust that it's a real \$10 bill. So we assume that \$10 bills are worth \$10, but no, it's a mutual belief and if the belief isn't present, they're worth nothing.

Now we get to our internal narrative about money. Is money that number – it's not even pieces of paper anymore; it's a number on a screen. Is that a reflection of your worth as a human? One of the things that Derek said on your podcast that I sort of disagree with, is that being rich is a signal, a symbol that you've created a lot of value for a lot of people.

I think lots of times, that's just actually not true. There are lots of ways to create value for people, and most of them do not involve money. So what we have to decide, once we're okay, once we're not living on \$3 a day, once we have a roof, once we have healthcare, is we have to decide how much more money and what am I going to trade for it? Because we always trade something for

it, unless we're fortunate enough that the very thing we want to do is the thing that also gives us our maximum income. And I don't think that merely because some blog decides that people with big valuations are doing better, that doesn't mean that you should listen to them.

Tim Ferriss: So when you think of the word – if you even think of his word – but when you hear the word successful, who's the first person who comes to mind for you and why?

Seth Godin: My parents were successful because of how many people they mattered to. My friend Jacqueline Novogratz, who I think should win the Nobel Prize who runs the Acumen Fund, is insanely successful. She's changing whole continents of the earth by bringing an idea to the fore and doing it relentlessly for year after year after year. And then I think about people in my neighborhood who are successful because they get to shovel their neighbor's walk who's elderly and it snowed last night. And that privilege and that trust lets them live a successful life.

Tim Ferriss: Is there anything you've changed your mind about in the last few years?

Seth Godin: Other than the web being dumb?

Tim Ferriss: Other than the web being dumb.

Seth Godin: Yeah, there are a bunch of things.

I've changed my mind in each direction about the book industry; about it not mattering, about it mattering, and now about it being in a sad but slow decline. I've changed my mind about the big companies in the center of our internet. I think that they changed around the same time I changed my mind; maybe before that. They went from being really, profoundly useful, important public goods that created enormous value to being public companies where there's so much pressure on management by everyone who works there to make the stock price go up that they don't often make decisions in the public good anymore. And I was probably naïve to think they would keep doing it but they are stopping.

Tim Ferriss: What is something that you believe other people think is crazy or insane?

And this is the bastardization of Peter Thiele, a question that he uses in interviews sometimes but I'll leave it at that.

Seth Godin: I think that deep down, I am certain that people are plastic in the positive sense; flexible and able to grow. I think almost everything is made, not born and that makes people uncomfortable because it puts them on the hook, but I truly believe it.

Tim Ferriss: What is the book or the books that you've given most as a gift or as gifts, besides your own, if you've given your own?

Seth Godin: I want to talk about my own.

Tim Ferriss: We can definitely talk about your own.

Seth Godin: You're supposed to talk about your movie if you're an actor, but you're not supposed to talk about your book if you're an author. I wrote *Your Turn* so I could give it away. I spoke at a high school two weeks ago. I gave every student a copy a month before I got there.

There are very few books that are written to be given away in the sense that most books are purchased by the person intent on reading them. And you write a book differently if you think it's going to be given away. But I've also given away many copies of Cory Doctorow's books. If you're into 3D printing and stuff, *Makers*. If you're into security and privacy, *Little Brother*. I've given away tons of copies of the right kinds of science fiction.

Let me just distinguish between a couple of kinds. The movies have ruined science fiction because they've created this sort of violent, dystopian, we all ought to become survivalists, zombie fueled science fiction that isn't what science fiction was for. The other kind of science fiction is the science fiction that fundamentally rewires your brain.

This is one reason why live tweeting speeches makes no sense and why taking tons of notes on certain kinds of books make no sense. Because as Scott McCloud pointed out in his brilliant book, *Understanding Comics*, which I have given away many, many copies of, all the action in comics happens in between the panels. That's why comics are an art form. Because in panel A something happened, in panel B something happened but it's what happened between A and B that changed your mind about anything; the actions in your head.

The same thing is true in a great science fiction book. If you read *Snow Crash* –

Tim Ferriss: Such a good book.

Seth Godin: It's such a good book but you can't give it to someone now. I've tried; it doesn't work. You have to read it before you've been on the internet. Then it changes your mind. Or if you read *Diamond Age* before you've thought about molecular anything or 3D printing, then it changes your mind. He wrote that book before the iPad, before the Kindle.

That shift is – I could tell you the shift, and now the book doesn't work the way it would have if I hadn't told you the shift. Because when it shifts in your head... if you read *Dune*, and you don't read it for the plot but you read it for understanding geopolitics, suddenly something clicks in your head. If you read *Pattern Recognition* by William Gibson, you don't even have to finish it; just read the first five chapters and suddenly, you will now understand what a brand is. Those are the kinds of books I give away a lot, separate from the books in audio that I give away, which I've been saving for you to ask me about because audio is my focus for today.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, let's get into it. By virtue of doing this podcast and also becoming involved with audio books, I'm all about audio right now so please.

Just take the mike.

Seth Godin: So what I explained was certain kinds of books work because they cause something to flip in your head. They cannot be digested; they set you up and they take you to the next step. Audio is different because you can listen to it again and again and again, and you listen to it when you don't think you are paying attention and it's working. When I make a list of books that have profoundly influenced me, they tend to be books that I have listened to – in the case of the first one I'll start with – so many times that I wore out 72 cassettes.

They could not be played anymore and I had to buy another \$500 set. That's when I didn't have \$500 to spend on 72 cassettes. And that's Zig Ziglar. Zig is your grandfather and my grandfather. He's Tony Robbins' grandfather. None of us would be here if it weren't for Zig.

Some of his politics and outlook on life are extremely dated and I disagreed with them but the fundamental principles of goal setting

and motivation and the fear people have of saying yes when you sell to them, those were the three sections of the stuff, just kept me going again and again and again. I told Zig the one time we worked together, I said: any time you need me to stand in for you, I can even do it with the accent. That's how many times I listened. That's the first one.

Tim Ferriss: Is there a particular name to the series or is there just one audio set by Zig?

Seth Godin: There's one series –

Tim Ferriss: Or excuse me; I guess it's a collection, maybe.

Seth Godin: Right. Three series. One series on goal setting, one series called *How to Stay Motivated*, and one series called *Secrets of Closing the Sale*. On *Secrets of Closing the Sale*, Zig tells a 17 minute story about a guy in St. Louis shining his shoes.

So if you just listen to one story, if you're into selling, listen to that story ten times – you can't listen once; ten times – you'll become a different kind of salesperson. And if you listen to the story about his friend in Canada, you will understand what motivation is. If you listen to him talking about how we rewire our brains with goal setting – you, Tim, have talked about it so much – it's a really fascinating glimpse at 1960 and I encourage it.

No. 2, almost the flipside, *The Recorded Works of Pema Chodron*, C-H-O-D-R-O-N, and I'm guessing you've talked about her in the past?

Tim Ferriss: She has come up, yes.

Seth Godin: She is a Buddhist nun who has a monastery in Nova Scotia.

Pema will also get under your skin in a totally different way. She is a disciple of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who was the first full Buddhist monk in the U.S. The way to understand his teaching is in one, tiny little parable, which is this: “We are falling, falling with nothing to hold onto and nothing to slow us down. The good news is, there is no ground to land on.” So those are two.

Then, inspired by the two of them and some work I did, I did something for charity called *Leap First*, that's a short audio book that captures some of the things I was trying to teach people about this, and you can get that at Sounds True. I have four more,

working our way from the nonfiction to more lyrical. *The Art of Possibility*, which is very hard to find on audio and is totally worth seeking out.

It's by Ros Zander and her husband Ben, friends of mine. Ben is a symphony conductor in Boston, and Roz is a social worker. The two of them will completely change the way you think about possibility, about enrollment, about leadership. And again, I listen to it probably about once a month in the car. Just put it on, in the middle; doesn't matter where you start.

The next one is *The War of Art*, also hard to find on audio. I find Steve's voice to be fascinating and even before I knew him, I was fascinated by listening to him speak his own work. Two left. *Just Kids*, which is the single, best audio book ever recorded by Patty Smith. It is not going to change the way you do business but it might change the way you live. It's about love and loss and art.

It's about non confidence and confidence, and it's mostly about having ability best friend. It's magic, and I can just hear her quoting Robert: "Patty..." so good. The last one I'm going to tell you, out of left field, is a book called *Debt*, by David Graeber. I recommend it in audio because David is sometimes repetitive and a little elliptical but in audio it's all okay because you can just listen to it again.

David was on tenure track at Yale, then he cofounded the Occupy Movement and it sort of looks like they threw him out. He's an anthropologist and he studies lots of things in our ancient history. His theory about where did money come from is mind blowing. I'll give you the short version,

Which is every economic textbook – and he quotes seven of them – teaches that people got tired of carrying around a goat to trade for a sheep, and it's hard to cut it up to trade for some butter and some bread. So with all that trading in the little village square that looks something like Salem, Massachusetts, one day someone said: let's have money instead, and everyone was happy. It turns out there's no evidence this ever happened once anywhere in the universe.

Tim Ferriss: That never stops the writing, though.

Seth Godin: And instead, he argues very persuasively, that money was invented to keep track of debt, and that debt predates money. This is a book about simple debt, and then the debt that leads to prostitution, and

then the debt that leads to marriage debt, and then the debt that leads to developing nations being billions of dollars in debt to the rich world merely because a dictator stole a lot of money.

I found it completely rewired the way I thought our world actually worked. I'm not ready to go stand on the battle lines of the next Occupy movement but I really have far more color and insight now as to what money is and how it changed everything, because it's all about debt.

Tim Ferriss: Which of these, going to Zig to Pema and onward down to debt with David, which of these do you think I should start with, or which one would you suggest I start with?

Seth Godin: I think it's important to realize that audio books are a practice, that real books are not. You can read real books the way you and I do, which is read a chapter and then decide if chapter two has earned it or not. But I find that, like dieting, you're not going to get any benefit if you just start and see how it goes.

So for me, if you are feeling stuck, it's all about *The Word of Art* and *The World of Possibility*. If you are feeling stressed, it's about Pema. If you need to see a path that is more colored than the one you're already on, which is pretty Technicolor, then it's Zig. And if you just want to cry a little, it's *Just Kids*, and then *Debt* is the one that is closest to reading a book. I don't think many people should listen to *Debt* ten times.

Tim Ferriss: This is not exactly *Debt* but just on a money theme, can you think of any \$100 or less purchase that has heavily impacted your life in the last six months or recent memory?

Seth Godin: Once the stereo's working, it doesn't make sense to buy more stereo equipment because that's just silly and you can do better than that.

But what you could do is become obsessed with artisanal bean to bar chocolate. I'm saying one could. Not that one should, but one could. So I did, and I worked my way up the ladder. About a year ago I was about to start my own chocolate company because it's not that hard. And then I bumped into a few brands that were doing it better than I ever could. And so there is a company in western Massachusetts called Rogue Chocolate, R-O-G-U-E, and you can only buy their stuff preordered by mail.

It's \$12 for a chocolate bar and I'd pay \$20, happily. Because a party happens in your mouth that's like a whole, new ballgame. So every day I have a huge pile of artisanal chocolates here – only dark chocolate, please – and I'm actually an adviser to a new acumen company called Cacao Hunters in Columbia.

But there are two chocolate companies I want to highlight: Rogue, which I mentioned, and Askinosie. Rogue because I don't believe it's possible to make better chocolate than they are; I think Satan works with them. The second one, Askinosie because Sean, who used to be a lawyer, is living a life that is worth noting and possibly emulating. He not only buys his beans from farmers in the Philippines in other countries who he meets, but he puts their children through school and he has built a practice of creating a worthwhile luxury good that directly benefits people. Not sort of, not a little, but directly.

Tim Ferriss: How do you spell Askinosie? I want to write Ashkanozee but it's not the same thing.

Seth Godin: Right, that's what I say in my head every time. It's A-S-K-I-N-O-S-I-E.

I don't do the marketing for them because if I did, it probably would have a different name; I'm just saying. So anyway, this chocolate habit is finally the vice I'd been looking for my whole life. I can tell the difference between one continent and another. I can tell how long the conked it for. I can talk about –

Tim Ferriss: Conked it? I don't know what that means. I know what a mollusk is but what is conked?

Seth Godin: Here's how you make chocolate. A cocoa pod is like a nerf football. You throw them on a net for awhile and they ferment. And then you crack them open and you dry them in the sun. and inside each one are something about three times the size of a coffee bean. The shell you can't eat. That means that there's about to be a lot of labor.

You can take the shell off; you roast them. Then after they're roasted, you have to one by one take the shell off, and that's really hard and people have made these really cool machines to do it but it's still hard. Then you're left with nibs. These nibs are unsweetened but if you eat one, they taste a little like dark chocolate. Then you take it and you put it in this machine that grinds them and grinds them and grinds them.

As they are being ground, they release a little bit of the oil and the liquor, and they become smoother and smoother and smoother. Interesting side note, it turns out that the machine that you can use to do this at home is also capable of making idly out of rice, which are those delectable little Indian crepes. So a guy from India who loves chocolate figured this out and he imports idly makers, puts a new sticker on them and sells them as chocolate conking machines.

It's two granite stones that are in there, and you can do it for up to 96 hours. What happens is soon after 40, 50 hours in the machine, it's at a micron size that your tongue can no longer tell when you make it even smaller. You then take that liquid, you put it – if you're adding sugar – in a tempering machine.

Tempering is another really cool device that causes all of the molecules in the chocolate to line up in a certain direction by taking the chocolate to a cool but not too cool temperature so it's still liquid – not too hot, not too cool – and by spinning it around, all the molecules line up. And that is why chocolate bars snap when you break them and why they don't turn grey in the air. If you don't temper it, you don't get either of those effects.

Tim Ferriss: It's like an MRI machine for cacao molecules.

I actually did a little bit of tempering back in the day making truffles, ages ago in Saratoga. It was a blast. I recommend everybody take a chocolate making class if you can. This is great. Rogue Chocolate, and where is Rogue Chocolate based, just in case there's more than one? The one that you're referring to?

Seth Godin: Hold on. I just ate up all of my last batch so I can't look at the label but I can tell you that they are in Three Rivers, Massachusetts.

Tim Ferriss: Three Rivers Mass, okay. On the subject of eating, what do your eating habits look like? What does your diet look like?

Seth Godin: It's really not good.

Tim Ferriss: It's not good?

Seth Godin: It's not good because I'm bored by it but people are fascinated when we go out to dinner. I don't eat wheat, I don't eat dairy, I don't eat cilantro, I don't eat meat. Because each time I adjust what I eat, I feel better.

So I feel like I'm in a happy place where I can make fascinating, interesting food and mostly eat happily in restaurants without being obsessive about it.

Tim Ferriss: What does the first, say, two hours of your day look like and what is a typical breakfast?

Seth Godin: Breakfast is one more decision I don't make so it's a frozen banana, hemp powder, almond milk, a dried plum, and some walnuts in the blender. Then I make coffee for whoever comes over that morning and for my lovely wife. Meanwhile, I've probably done an hour and a half of stuff online before 7:30 so I then I know the world didn't break when I was asleep, and then I can get to work.

Tim Ferriss: What does the half hour of internet triage or computer triage look like? What types of things are you doing in that half hour?

Seth Godin: The most important thing is did the blog work, because if it didn't, I have to take evasive action. But I love the guys at Type Pad. It's the best \$29 a month I spend because it doesn't crash and it works. Then I try and clear the email box. I've lived in Box Zero since before it was coined. Now my brain is free. Then I try not to be an email hound until I've done actual, productive work. Then I come to the apartment where I work, and other people join me here sometimes and we work on the Alt MBA, which is a school I am building. That's what I do for work.

Tim Ferriss: When was the last time you worked at home, if you ever did?

Seth Godin: If there's a laptop or I'm not unconscious, I'm at work in the sense that what I do for a living is notice things.

Tim Ferriss: Right. I guess the reason I asked is because I've long considered getting an office as opposed to operating out of coffee shops and miscellaneous locations, and that is the context behind the question.

Seth Godin: I do much better in this room. I couldn't recreate this room for \$10 million. It's got so much patina, it's got patina on the patina. That sets a bar for me about the fact that I don't want to compromise just to do the last thing. Because I look at the last thing or the thing before that, and I say: damn I'm proud of that; don't do something you're not proud of. The Alt MBA, I wouldn't be running it still if it wasn't the single, most important educational thing I've ever

done. And that's what I keep trying to do, is the next thing has got to be worthy of it or else I might as well just take a break.

Tim Ferriss:

Could you elaborate? Because a lot of the questions from my fans on Twitter and Facebook were related to education. They generally came in a number of themes. One was could you have him elaborate on his education manifesto? The other was: hey, I have a kid who's in fourth grade, I have a kid who's just going to be entering school; what would Seth do in my shoes? And you don't have to tackle those right off the back but with that as context, could you tell us more about what you're up to?

Seth Godin:

This is a rant and it's not about what I'm up to, it was about what I was up to. And the rant is this. Sooner or later, parents have to take responsibility for putting their kids into a system that is indebting them and teaching them to be cogs in an economy that doesn't want cogs anymore.

Parents get to decide. I'm a huge fan of public school. I send my kids to public school. I think everyone should go to public school because it's a great mix master of our world. But from 3:00 to 10:00, those kids are getting home schooled. And they're either getting home schooled and watching *The Flintstones*, or they're getting home schooled and learning something useful. And I think we need to teach kids two things. 1) How to lead; and 2) how to solve interesting problems.

Because the fact is, there are plenty of countries on Earth where there are people who are willing to be obedient and work harder for less money than us. So we cannot out-obedience the competition. Therefore, we have to out-lead or out-solve the other people. I don't care what country they live in – Wyoming or across the world – who want whatever is scarce. The way you teach your kids to solve interesting problems is to give them interesting problems to solve.

And then don't criticize them when they fail. Because kids aren't stupid. If they get in trouble every time they try to solve an interesting problem, they'll just go back to getting an A by memorizing what's in the textbook. That it's so important here, and I spend an enormous amount of kids. I produced *The Wizard of Oz*, the musical in fourth grade.

I used to help run a summer camp. I think that it's a privilege to be able to look a trusting, energetic, smart 11-year-old in the eye and tell him the truth. And what we can say to that 11-year-old is: I

really don't care how you did on your vocabulary test; I care about whether you have something to say. And we can teach our kids from a young age to be the kind of people we want them to be.

And anything that's worth memorizing is worth looking up now. So we don't need to have them spend a lot of time getting good grades so they can get into a famous college, because famous colleges don't work anymore. Famous college isn't the point anymore. The point is, is there an entity that will have trouble living without you when you seek to earn a living? Because if there is, you'll be able to make a living. If, on the other hand, you're waiting in the placement office for someone to pick you, you will be persistently under valued.

Tim Ferriss: You talked earlier about writing daily as a practice, listening to the audio books as a practice. Are there any practices that you would suggest to the overwhelmed, busy parent who wants to start to be more proactive in this department? They have an 11-year-old; are there any practices or exercises that you would suggest?

Seth Godin: You know super well that busy is a trap, and that busy is a myth.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely.

Seth Godin: So what could possibly be more important than your kid? Please don't play the busy card. If you spend two hours a day without an electronic device, looking your kid in the eye, talking to them and solving interesting problems, you will raise a different kid than someone who doesn't do that. And that's one of the reasons why I cook dinner every night. Because what a wonderful, semi distracted environment for the kid to tell you the truth? For you to have low stakes but super important conversations with someone who's important to you.

That this idea, get home from work, put on your sneakers and go for a walk with your kid. My friend Brian walks his daughter to school every day. That's priceless. How can you be too busy to do that?

Tim Ferriss: And the work you're doing now?

Seth Godin: I did a couple courses for Skill Share. They worked really well. They were very highly rated and they had an 80 percent dropout rate, which is way better than anybody else because other online courses have a 97 percent dropout rate. Then I did a course for You to Me and the same thing happened. And I'm thinking, I love

making these courses. And there I am on screen; it sounds like me but why are people dropping out of my courses and everyone else's? And the reason is because when it gets hard and there's no social pressure, you leave.

So what I said was how do I make the opposite of an online course? And that meant instead of a million people, a hundred. It meant instead of being free, it's expensive. Instead of letting everyone in, you have to apply. Instead of being easy, it's hard. And instead of being on your own, it's a group thing where there are coaches watching you all the time. And instead of lectures, it's 100 percent projects.

So I built it to see what happened. So the Alt MBA is for people at big companies. We've got people from Whole Foods and Microsoft, and it's for people at tiny companies, and it's not for everybody. But we get this cohort of people and there's a coach for every ten. We put them in Slack, we put them in Wordpress. We give them 14 assignments over a 28 day period of time and we sprint as fast as we can.

And it's unbelievable. Tim, I've just got to tell you, it's unbelievable. Because I'm not actively involved; I just watch. Because eventually, the goal is to have more of these sessions. I can't be in them if we have more of them. And people change because we don't give them any other choice.

Tim Ferriss:

Could you expand on the social pressure piece? I think this is such an important point. I get asked all the time – maybe you get asked this, too. But how do you maintain the discipline? How do you do this?

My answer is almost always the same. You have to have a punishment or a reward for following or not following; for doing it or not doing it. And it's just incredible to see how people who have never been able to lose weight before, as soon as they have \$100 of their own money on the line and it's a betting pool with five other people who will be able to heckle them at the office, all of a sudden they figure it out really quickly and the how to isn't as hard. In this particular example, could you expand on the social aspect? Because I think it's really important and transfers and applies to a lot of other areas.

Seth Godin:

There are some people in some areas who have the self discipline necessary to get the work done that needs to get done. You know those people and I know those people. And when we find one of

them, it's fabulous. I think I am like that with certain parts of my craft, in that no one would notice if I didn't do it the way I always do it.

I just choose to do it. When it comes to education, though, all of us have 12 to 20 years of brainwashing going on, which is epitomized by one sentence I hate with a passion, which is: will this be on the test? So as soon as you say will this be on the test, you've instantly defined why you are doing something. And then, when we invite you to an online course for free on artificial intelligence, in which there is no certificate, which there is no accreditation, and you get to problem No. 4 and it's really hard, and you ask yourself, will this be on the test? And then you realize there is no test and no one even knows you're taking the course, then you stop and you go eat some M&Ms and you turn on the TV.

And so the goal here was if you need, if you benefit, if you thrive from being in an environment where you will push yourself to get what you wanted all along, I'll give you people who will push you; your fellow students and your coaches. And there won't be a test, and there won't be grades. This is better than that. This is teaching you to internalize the narrative of: my mom's not here, my mom's not watching but I should act like she was.

Tim Ferriss: In your life, who helps tell you you're wrong or point out when your work isn't good, or otherwise talk to the emperor, so to speak? Because you've had so much success, there's always the risk that people will tell you what you want to hear or just give you praise in all circumstances. Who do you lean on for the truth when you need bitter truth sometimes?

Seth Godin: I would break this into two kinds of people. I have been blessed by being surrounded by very skeptical people, people who turned to me in 1991 and said this internet thing is never going to amount to anything. Or an English teacher who wrote in my yearbook: "You are the bane of my existence; you will never write anything worth reading."

Tim Ferriss: Hold on. Let me just pause there for a second. What did you do to this guy or woman?

Seth Godin: I dedicated one of my books to her.

Tim Ferriss: Did you send it to her?

Seth Godin: Yes, I did.

Tim Ferriss: How did she take that?

Seth Godin: She had a tongue in cheek all along; she was fine. The sort of uninformed skepticism is easy, at least for me to find, partly because I don't live in San Francisco.

Tim Ferriss: Right, you're not fully in the echo chamber drinking the Kool-aid.

Seth Godin: But the other kind is so rare, so scarce, so precious I only get little dribs of it now and then. Which is someone who gets you, someone who can see right through to your soul who, with generosity and care, can look you in the eye, hand you back something and say: I think this would be better if you did it again. I had a business partner, Steve, who was like that in 1979 and '80, '80 and '81. And finding that again in a consistent way is really precious and really hard.

Tim Ferriss: Yes, it is difficult. What advice would you give your 30-year-old self, and if you could place us for you; what you are, what you're doing?

Seth Godin: I'm going to cheat because I've been asked this question before.

Tim Ferriss: Cheating is allowed.

Seth Godin: First, do you know about the science fiction book, *Replay*?

Tim Ferriss: No, I don't.

Seth Godin: Brilliant game changer. *Replay* is the best time travel book ever written. Anyway, I had so many bumps starting when I was 30 years old. They lasted for nine years, and I wouldn't tell my 30-year-old self anything. Because if I hadn't had those bumps, I wouldn't be me and I'm glad I'm me.

Tim Ferriss: If you're comfortable telling us, what was the hardest or one of the hardest bumps in that period of time?

Seth Godin: You know, I was trying to shift my dream of what I wanted to do for a living. I was growing up, I was failing at business.

I had some quiet, relentless, repeated failures of no. I had failures of sloppiness where if I knew what I knew now, I wouldn't have done something and it would have saved me a year of my life.

There were failures of how big does something need to be, and all sorts of visible scarring that was hard. But it was part of the deal.

Tim Ferriss: When you have a protracted, difficult period of time like that, is there any particular activity or technique or self talk that you use to try to get back on your feet more quickly?

Seth Godin: Now I'm so much better at it because of Pema and because of meditation and because of knowing how to sit with it and not insist that the tension go away.

The other thing that's important here, as long as we're getting personal, is I had to make a decision after I sold my company about whether I wanted to continue facing professional, existential crises. Because Yoyodyne and the projects before that were right on the edge for a really long time. One more mistake and you're out of the game, and I like the game.

I didn't want to be out of the game. There's a thrill to dancing with existential crises. And I know plenty of people who have been lucky like I was, who got right back in so they could have more existential crises. And I made the decision that I like the game too much to bet all the chips, so I never do.

Tim Ferriss: Could you rephrase that? I'm not sure I know what you mean. I understand what you mean about the existential crises 100 percent because I know so many people who they're addicted to that roller coaster.

But when you said not betting all the chips.

Seth Godin: Let's say I took 100 percent of the trust I have in my brand and put it behind something really daring and huge that might not work. And so if at the end it doesn't work and now no one ever trusts me again, that's an existential crisis. That's going to get you out of bed in the morning, isn't it? I don't want to do that. I don't want to violate the trust I've earned with people.

Tim Ferriss: Or risk violating that trust.

Seth Godin: Risk violating that trust. So that keeps me from doing certain things that people with resources could choose to do, but I don't want to play that game.

Tim Ferriss: What does your meditation practice look like?

Seth Godin: It's sloppy. It works. It's nothing worth writing home about.

Tim Ferriss: That's okay; maybe it's worth mentioning briefly, even if sloppy.

In full disclosure, I have journalists ask me: we want to follow you for a day. I'm like: no you don't; you really don't. it'll be like watching *Adaptation* with Nick Cage; it will be so boring for you. But what does the sloppy meditative practice look like?

Seth Godin: My friend Susan Piver runs the largest online meditation center in the world and so every once in awhile I drop in on her thing. I go to the Shambhala Center on Sundays in New York sometimes and sit for half an hour. But usually, I'm pretty good at getting into the state I need to pretty quickly so I'll just sit, and I'll close my eyes, and I'll breathe. And when I've had enough of that, I'll go back to what I was doing.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have a set time for that? Do you tend to do it in the mornings?

Seth Godin: No. I don't quantify that stuff. I quantify almost nothing in my life.

Tim Ferriss: Which I'm okay with, not that you care or should care.

Is there a state that triggers you to sit down and meditate?

Seth Godin: Yes, if the narrative is getting in the way of what's actually happening, you need to make it so that the narrative gently backs off. It's really hard to yell at the narrative and make it back off right away, because that just makes the narrative louder. So instead, I will undermine it by making it surrounded by nothing until it sort of melts away.

Tim Ferriss: I took my first ever acting class – I have no plans to act – with this incredible guy named Josh Price, very successful actor. The class is called “Committed Impulse.” And when people's minds wandered, we were instructed to say I'm back. There were a bunch of exercises intended to make us fully present to our bodily sensations and whatnot.

And it struck me how applicable all of that was to exactly what you're describing, which is not trying to fight the riptide of this narrative but to just be acutely aware of it. I never really thought of it as meditation but I started doing this thing, and I don't know how I started doing it but a three breath break. Because I was

always told count to ten, do ten breaths and for whatever reason, I was too impatient for that. I was like: alright, it's just three breaths.

I found it incredibly helpful, as someone who has some extremely self defeating narratives that tend to surface all the time. If you could have one billboard anywhere with anything on it, what would it say?

Seth Godin: Jay Levinson, another old friend who passed away recently, wrote *Gorilla Marketing*, and he used to say the best billboard in history said, "Free coffee next exit."

Tim Ferriss: Free coffee next exit. Have you given commencement speeches, Seth?

Seth Godin: I have been asked. Let's go over this. A whole bunch of people who don't want to hear from you, waiting for you to be done.

Tim Ferriss: I suppose that's one way to look at it.

Seth Godin: So that's the reason why you have not done commencement speeches?

Tim Ferriss: Ding, ding, ding.

Seth Godin: Alright. Let's say with your class with your MBA, you are giving the commencement speech to them. They are motivated, they do want to hear from you. They're not waiting to get shitfaced two hours later – or maybe they are, but not all of them. What would you say to them?

Seth Godin: I would like to believe that one out of every three days my blog is a commencement speech. When it's not talking about technology or marketing, I'm talking about respect, I'm talking about choice, I'm talking about the impact we can make.

The problem with commencement speeches is the only ones we hear are the ones that were transcribed and written for people like us, not for actual graduates.

Tim Ferriss: Right.

Seth Godin: Because what we really want to say to actual graduates is just a reminder of what they should have heard at least three times a day in every one of their classes. And that is: you are more powerful than you think you are; act accordingly.

Tim Ferriss: I like that. Just a few more questions.

Seth Godin: You're doing great. It feels like we've only been talking for 15 minutes.

Tim Ferriss: This is super fun. I love every opportunity that I have to chat with you. Just a few more. Do you have any asks or requests for my audience? And the next question is just going to be where people can find you, so this is effectively the last question.

But do you have any asks or requests for my audience, suggestion for the people listening? Anything at all that you'd just like to transmit to them?

Seth Godin: Send someone a thank you note tomorrow.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have any particular way that you like to send thank you notes?

Seth Godin: No, I'm giving people lots of freedom, here.

Tim Ferriss: Freedom, I think that's a great place to actually wrap up. I think your work, your thinking, the daily contact that people can have with your blog, even if they get some type of angst by skipping one or two a week instead of sending you an angry note, is really significant. So I just want to thank you for putting it all out into the world. And I think people are able to create greater freedom for themselves and the people they care about as a result of it. So it's a meaningful thing that you do. Where can people find you online; the basics.

Where would you like them to learn more about what you're up to? And of course for everybody listening, we'll put tons of links in the show notes and I'll give out that URL when we wrap up. Seth, where can people find you on the inter webs or elsewhere?

Seth Godin: My mother's plan was to name me Scott. My grandfather, Yezzo, said to her: don't do that; that's a brand of toilet paper. So she named me Seth instead. And if you type Seth into the Google, there I will be. It would not have worked if my name was Scott.

Tim Ferriss: That's very true. That keeps it simple. Seth, thank you so much for the time. I really want to recommend this because I almost ate an entire box. Can we touch on the almond cookies for one second?

Seth Godin: Let's talk about the almond cookies.

Tim Ferriss: Do you want to take it from here?

Seth Godin: My wife was a workaholic lawyer for 25 years, and then she quit.

She decided to open a bakery, but our little town probably wouldn't attract enough people. So it became a gluten free, dairy free bakery and now there's three of them; two in Manhattan, one in Hastings on Hudson called "By the Way." They don't ship so you're going to have to get yourself on an airplane and go to the By the Way Bakery. Don't bother telling them that I sent you because you will not get a discount.

Tim Ferriss: Why the name By the Way?

Seth Godin: I was teaching naming at one of the long form free seminars I ran years ago, and the bakery was just getting started so we used it as a case study. One of the students understood that you shouldn't call it the gluten free, dairy free bakery in town; you should come up with a name that carries value. And the value here is by the way, it's gluten free; who would have known?

Tim Ferriss: The question I asked your wife that I will give the answer to was if I could only have one thing at the bakery, what should I try? And the almond cookies were the first answer. And I've heard – we have a mutual friend, Jeffrey Zurosky, JZ and the Four Hour Chef, for those of you who've read it, whose named off a whole list of others that I need to try. But the almond cookies are amazing. You just have to try them. I can tolerate dairy, I can tolerate gluten.

These are just a home run. I remember having a box in a hotel in New York City, and I sat down and I opened it and I knew it was trouble as soon as I saw the cookies. I had one and I was like: okay, that's enough. Put it away. It wasn't one of my cheat days. And three quarters of the box later, I was like: alright, I have to give these to the staff or I'm going to eat the entire box.

I will leave it at that, and for those of you who follow my stuff, you know that I love pastries and I have a high bar. On that note Seth, thank you so much for all the time. Hopefully I get to see you again soon. And to everybody listening, you can find the show notes with links to everything that Seth has mentioned at fourhourworkweek.com/podcast. Seth, any other parting words?

Seth Godin: I usually end by saying go make a ruckus, but in your case I don't need to because you always do. Thank you for leading us, Mr. Ferriss.

Tim Ferriss: Thank you, Seth. Until next time guys, thank you for listening.