

Jere Simpson:

We did all the things we said we wanted to do and we wonder why we're not happy. And I just think it's that taking stock of, what is your destination? Being unapologetic about the fact that this is where you want to go with your life, what you want the journey to look like, what are those climate factors that could add risk? And where are you in that journey? And then putting together a system with the tactics to get there.

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The EOS Life is...

Speaker 3:

Doing what you love...

Speaker 5:

With people you love.

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Making a difference.

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Being compensated appropriately...

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With time for other passions.

Speaker 2:

The EOS Life.

Mark O'Donnell:

Hi, I'm Mark O'Donnell, visionary at EOS Worldwide. And I'd like to welcome you to another edition of the EOS Life podcast, where we explore the why and the how of entrepreneurs actively living their ideal life. Now, not later and not in retirement, the world of entrepreneurial freedom and the impact on those around you depends on it. Today I have the pleasure of speaking with Jere Simpson. When Jere founded KITEWIRE in 2007, he tapped into the B2G market with custom software development services, primarily for the department of defense. KITEWIRE was successful, pulling in about \$4 million in revenues with about 40 highly skilled employees. But Jere wanted more, something grander and more successful for both him and his staff. When he realized that the road his company was on would never become the grand vision that he imagined, Jere launched his company on a journey that would change everything about how KITEWIRE did business and transform his company into a \$55 million success story. Welcome to the show, Jere. Thanks for being here.

Jere Simpson:

Thanks Mark. Thanks for having me.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah, absolutely. So just tell me about yourself, what do you do now? What is your role? What are you responsible for on a daily, weekly basis? So what is the day in life of Jere Simpson look like?

Jere Simpson:

Sure. So I recently exited last company KITEWIRE, which you were kind enough to mention, just this last summer and I've started a new company called Atlas UP. A lot of my life right now is hiring out our executive team, you know how that goes. It's actually, for some people it's frustration. I love just trying to find the people that are the best at this position, particularly aiming at individuals that are considered unhireable because most of them run their own businesses. And they're a kind of a category leader in trying to figure out how to join arms with me and co-found this thing with me, and put it into terms that make sense for them.

And just building up the team, setting the vision and trying to get things in motion, get all that momentum going that you need at the beginning in the day to day. And the other part is, I'm a dad, I'm a husband. It's been a tough pandemic on everybody all around. And so I'm trying to make sure that everybody's keeping calm and not letting the fear monsters in and all the anxieties that come at this time, as my responsibility's there.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah, for sure. So can you tell me a little bit about what the new company, what it is that you do for your clients? Is it similar to KITEWIRE? A little different?

Jere Simpson:

No, it's completely different. So what we do is we build unstoppable plans for anything. And if you think, I don't know what you mean by that, it sounds catchy or silly, think about Waze and what Waze does or Google maps, if you've used either one of those, and think about the maturation of where we've been with street navigation. We used to be committed to navigating you. It was like their full-time job. There was no relaxing in those days. And then we upgraded to MapQuest, which was more frequently updated data about what was out there in the world. And then we updated to the Garmin, which was beautiful because it had your orientation on it. It always knew where you were, it had the directions, it could tell you at least where you were and that it did not know if the roads had been updated. It did not know if there was an accident or a tire in the road or something like that.

Then we got Waze and Google maps. And what Waze does is it's the perfect synchronization of your destination, your orientation, where you are and the climate. And it does that in real time, all the time. And you don't go 10 minutes past your exit before you realize it. And then you don't have to stop and pull over and create a new plan. It keeps you moving no matter what happens, it builds you an unstoppable plan. And so we do that for anything.

Our primary customers that we started with is the Department of Defense, just because we think they're the hardest, they have the biggest, boldest missions, things like operation warp speed and the vaccinations rolled out. They understand this problem very well because they admittedly don't know where they are in their orientation, they don't know what they even have towards their destination. So it's a technology that just automates all of that so that, you miss a milestone, it says, "Cool, new plan. This is how much time..." Sometimes you miss a milestone and you don't have a delay, sometimes you do. You just need to know what it is, but you don't want to spend any time figuring out what the next steps are and it just keeps everybody moving all the time. But it's all software and it's definitely

something that is to the point of trying to inspire individuals to join with us, it's an ambitious challenge. So it requires really bold talent too.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah, I bet. And I'm just thinking like GPS for project work, you just follow the blue line and gets you to where you want to go. So that's a really cool business. So as you know, the focus of this show, this podcast, is to help other people discover their ideal lives by sharing the stories of ours. And so oftentimes that means that you weren't living your ideal life, the EOS Life. And the EOS life is doing what you love, with people you love, making a huge difference, being compensated well or appropriately and having time to pursue other passions. So could you tell me the moment in time where maybe you weren't living your ideal life and what was that thing? What was that moment that you came to, that you just realized you had to change, something had to give?

Jere Simpson:

Yeah. Had a day where, like a lot of entrepreneurs do, I was feeling unmotivated. I knew what I needed to do. I had why I believed it was urgent. I just wasn't feeling that get up and go, to get out of bed and do it. And then another day like that happened and another day, three, four days in a row string up like that. And that's my alarm that says, "You don't want your dreams. Whatever you staked in the ground, that is your dream, you don't want it or you would get up and go." You're unmotivated to do it. The work that it takes to get there, isn't worth it. And you need to move or recalibrate what your dream actually is. And we do this thing where we tend to set our dreams inside of our beliefs of what we believe are capable of.

The first thing we do is say, "Well, what do I think I could accomplish?" And there's a fence there and then we set our dreams right inside of that. And that's often why we don't feel motivated. So I try to just kind of meditate and blow all that away and think, what do I really want? It's not a boat or a thing. It's like, what do I want to experience? How do I want to grow? What do I want to contribute? A lot of those things that you talk about in the EOS life and I realized that my problem was that we think about dreams so much about the future. And what I really wanted was right now, I wanted right now to be able to be a very present father in my kids' life, I wanted to be physically healthy and 10 to those things, not burned out and tired all the time.

And I was having a conversation with another dad who told me, he read a stat, and I'm going to butcher the stat, I don't remember exactly what it was. This is fictitious, but it was in this realm. It was like 89% of all the time you'll spend with your children is before they graduate high school. And I thought, "Gosh, my kids are like..." yeah, that's going to go by in a blink of an eye. "That's 89% of all the time will spend with them is before that?" And then the guy I was talking to said, "Yeah, and they only worship you for the first 10 to 12."

Mark O'Donnell:

If that.

Jere Simpson:

Yeah If that.

Mark O'Donnell:

Maybe 10. Ill give you 10. [crosstalk 00:08:39]

Jere Simpson:

If you're lucky. So you got some years that are encapsulated in there, that they're going to be trying to do everything they can to get away, not be near you. It's just their nature. And I felt the urgency of that weigh on me and thought, "No, I need now. I need now, this time while my kids are into me and to be just a very present in my home and not working 60 hours and commuting 10 and traveling all the time" and those things, which is really what got me focused on, "Okay, I'm going to work less. I want the people that are working with me to have this too." We need to build some constructs that make us hyper efficient. So it's about productivity and not being handcuffed to a desk for an amount of time.

Mark O'Donnell:

Right. So when you think about that moment, realizing that stat which probably sounds right to me, my daughter is about, she's a senior in high school and you're starting to see...

Jere Simpson:

Now I'm sorry I said it.

Mark O'Donnell:

Man...

Jere Simpson:

God.

Mark O'Donnell:

... it's so terrible. I mean, it's great but at the same time, you're like, "Man, maybe she can just live at home and go to school online or something." So my question for you is, with that moment, thinking about the kids, thinking about all that, and then you mentioned in the beginning of our conversation here that you exited KITEWIRE, did that exit have in the decision to sell the business that moment, the time with the kids, did that have anything to do with that? Is that related at all?

Jere Simpson:

I would say that decision had more to do with a passion. So I had shifted towards the end of my time at KITEWIRE. I had already shifted into changing. Actually January 1st, 2020, right before the pandemic, I made a huge shift in just how I work and how that's going to be. And my transition out of KITEWIRE was more about pursuing things I'm really passionate about. I had already made the moves towards being able to be involved in things outside of work that I was passionate about and having that really nice balance in life that I wanted to. I'm invested in Calm, the meditation app. And we had LeBron James do a series for Calm and he's the best because he takes his recovery more seriously than everybody else does. He learned, at least in his later years to, he could leave everything on the court knowing he was going to go into full recovery mode right afterwards.

A lot players are like, they're in New Orleans, they are going to go to a nightclub afterwards. They know they're reserving a little energy for that. And then he just takes his recovery more seriously than anybody. And I had pondered the idea of a four day work week and it just never felt right to me. And listening to the way he was talking and sort of the idea in my mind about what if... For some reason, anytime someone said four day work-week, I thought Friday's off. It's just the way I automatically formatted it in my mind. And I thought, "What if we did Wednesday off." And thinking about the way a

basketball schedule is very kind of intermittent like that and I thought, the reason that that Friday's off never sounds that great to me it's because we're all burned out midday Thursday anyways.

So to keep going with Fridays doesn't make a lot of sense, but it just didn't seem like a solve. And I thought, "What if our work days were two, three and a half hour periods and we took a nice rest in the middle and then we broke the middle of the week up just the same way, took Wednesdays off and came back." You never have more than two days of working without a break. Mentally, that's really nice. Every day feels like Thursday or Friday and let's just give it a shot and see how it goes and see if the scarcity of time actually creates efficiency and if people are just excited and motivated by the fact, if I can buckle down, not spend the first half of my Monday morning talking about Sunday night football at the water cooler, if I can just buckle down and be very efficient, the reward is my time back. And will that work?

So just kind of a theory or a thesis. I noticed the first quarter, we were incredibly more productive and COVID hit towards the end of that quarter. And so then I was thinking, "Well, now it just feels requisite. There's so much stress and burnout and people are managing kids at home and all these things now, it just feels like we've got to keep going this way just to manage everything that's happening."

But quarter after quarter, I was seeing just so much more productivity and I was a lot happier, able to spend... I do dad school with my kids on Wednesday, where I think about all the things that the school system isn't going to teach them and really isn't their place or responsibility to. And we go to the beach or we go to the playground or something like that and just go through these things that I want them to know. It's just the coolest part of my life. And it's a reward that's right here and right now, and every day I think, "If I can stay productive at work, if my team can stay productive, I can have this reward again and again and again." And it's not this thing that's way off in the distance.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. I mean, that's amazing. And it reminds me of Parkinson's law. Parkinson's law states that, "Everything expands and contracts in the time and space allotted." So you, what you're doing is, you're contracting the time and the space allotted for work. And well, now you get more done and you force the efficiency and that's just a fantastic way to do it. It also reminds me of Dan Sullivan as you're talking about LeBron James. Dan Sullivan's a strategic coach, he has what's called the entrepreneurial time system, which is set up with free days, 24 hour period, no work. Buffer days are essentially like practice days. And then focus days are the money making activity or game day. And so it's really about, you have game day, you're full on, but then you go into a buffer day and that's your rest, recovery. You go to a free day where also is rest and recovery, but you have this kind of practice schedule, which is really interesting to think about.

Jere Simpson:

Yeah. I'll say that, if you don't mind me, there's a concept around there too, that I kept thinking about. Which was, I noticed this trend where businesses are telling employees, I'll give you this much time off to go exercise, or this much time off to go meditate or this much time to go learn something. And I don't mean to poo poo any of those businesses., It's just my belief that that's babysitting. And so what I will do is, almost every Tuesday I remind people, "You can do whatever you want with your time off." Some suggestions are, and people tell me that they really appreciate the reminder, learn something new, contribute in your community, build on your relationships, their personal relationships, get some pesky tasks off your hand, just off your back so that they're not stressing you out, you're not thinking about it. And work on your physical and mental health.

And the other part of it is, I know people are working a lot when they're not hands on keyboard, they're working in the shower, they're working in the car, while they're driving or whatever they're doing, and we don't give people credit for that time. And it's meaningful, valuable time to the business. And so we advertise 28 hour weeks, but the truth of the matter is, these people are working 40. They're just not doing it hands on keyboard in that time. And so it's a bit to do what you're talking about is that, be in your head, thinking about the problems, not in the urgency of the situation but working at a high level trying to say what would really make some of these problems stop happening altogether?

Mark O'Donnell:

Giving them the space to think clearly and all that. Here at EOS Worldwide, we have unlimited vacation for our people because they're adults, they don't need to be told. We just picked a Wednesday, random Wednesday and said, "You know what everyone? Just go recover, do whatever you want." Just give a day back to people. And it was really appreciated and everyone was energized around it. And you do that every Wednesday so maybe I have something to think about there.

Jere Simpson:

I always try things as a pilot, so I can take them back if I don't want it. And then that's enough data, I'm like, "Okay, the pilot is ending." And this can actually become a policy. Yeah.

Mark O'Donnell:

For sure. So I want to rewind just a little bit in the conversation to, you're working 60 hours a week, you're traveling all over the place and a lot of people who are listening to this podcast are there right now. They don't have the particular luxury of working 28 hours, just on a snap of fingers. What is the very first step that you took in order to start down that path of, "Hey, there's more to life than what I'm doing in my work. I want to be with the kids." What's the first thing you did? What was the start?

Jere Simpson:

The very first thing that I did was think, "Well, we're not going to be able to do any of this if we're not being efficient and don't have a system to do that. And we're not going to go do it if we don't have the right people." And it's just a really good inflection moment to sit and think, is the team alright? Are they the right people, the right seats as you say in EOS? And are they going to be focused on the right things? One thing I always tell my team is, "Look, I'm just like you. I grab it easy, low hanging fruit too. I think things are momentous, if I start surfing on the web, it can roll into three hours. If I don't have time, then work gets momentous and I start rolling it that way." I was sharing with my EOS implementer, Andrea Jones is the absolute best. I have to my left, I write down our scorecard, anything that is red I write it on that whiteboard.

And it's my reminder that when I walk in, first thing I do is look over there and say, "If anything is red, there's a lot of things I could do today." There's things I'm good at, there's things I like doing, there are low hanging fruit I could grab just to make myself feel good, but it is my job to make sure that there is nothing on that board, on our scorecard that is red, and I must take immediate action to turn those things around. And I train my team to do the same thing. There's so many things we could do but we're not going to get to keep this lifestyle that they want if they're not going to be hyper focused on the things that are actually going to move the business. And knowing, the best way for me to get the lifestyle I want, is to make sure that my team has it and that we're all at jeopardy of losing it together if we all can't be running on the same system.

I do a thing with my rocks, where I make a vision of the life I want. For me, that's really easy because it's the life I have. I'm not thinking about something in the future. So I just take a picture of myself and my kids doing dad school on Wednesday, put it up there and then I use, do you know Mix Styles the company? You can print pictures from your phone. You can just send them pictures and they'll send you these squares that you can stick onto anything. So I make an illustration out of our rocks and I stick it on top of my vision. So it's blocking my vision and it's annoying me and I'm sitting there thinking, and then when we knock one off, I take it off of there.

And I've just got all of my team running on the same page there and reminding ourselves, Hey, my chief of staff too, is also really great. She'll see me, start to run down something and like, "This is Jere's sweet spot. He's so good at this, but it's just not the most important thing we need to do right now." And I need to use safe word to challenge him and say like, "Is that the thing that you're supposed to be doing right now?" And kind of pull me back on onto my task. And it's just this constant reminder of, listen, we all like this lifestyle. And if it's not the lifestyle you like, it's really not for everybody, then this probably isn't the place for you. But everybody that's here does and we're all in jeopardy of losing it together if we can't be hyper efficient.

So to answer your question in the most long winded format, it's getting the team buy-in on, do we all want this? Does this make sense? Do you think we can do it? Do you buy-in on my theory? How should we test it? And how are we going to be hyper efficient getting it done? And also kind of making sure... As entrepreneurs we're so good about creating the life we want and we don't necessarily lend some of these tools downward. The thing I was excited about EOS life is because my team's familiar with EOS, it's an entrepreneur's thing that can be felt all the way through. Everybody in the company should be checking those boxes that you talk about to say, are they fulfilled in all those categories?

But entrepreneurs tend to go do this cool training and they do these amazing things that enrich their lives. And everybody below them doesn't get the opportunity to do those things. But if you can, and you're all in sync together and you're all in jeopardy of losing those things together, then it creates this really tremendous alignment. I talk a lot about... There's this fad about culture in the last decade, as you know, and I met so many CEOs that think, "Oh, we need culture. We'll go buy foosball tables and [inaudible 00:22:04] taps."

Mark O'Donnell:

But we still all hate each other.

Jere Simpson:

Right. We still hate each other. We do a lot of work with the Department of Defense and I just kind of thought about what is the organization I've experienced in my life that has the strongest culture and what is it that I could extrapolate out of that? And I thought, the Navy seals, they have such a strong culture. They have no nap pods, it's horrible conditions that they work in, but they're accountable to each other for a common mission and they have each other's backs. And really orbiting around those things too, we are having to have that common mission together, not just, "Hey, I want to do really well and I'm going to do that by you working your tail off", mentality.

Mark O'Donnell:

And that's exactly right. The way we think about EOS life is that yeah, it does start with the entrepreneur because the entrepreneur typically has the freedom to do that, to go pursue those five points of the EOS life. Then it's the integrator and then the leadership team and what a world it would be if everyone is

like your company and to the lowest levels of every organization, to the frontline employees, where they can have a picture of their kids on the wall and their rocks are blocking their view. The obstacle is the way. And...

Jere Simpson:

That's actually required, reading in my company, the obstacle's the way.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. Ryan Holiday did a great job with that.

Jere Simpson:

One of our core values is, opportunity knocks. And the thing I say is, everything that knocks you down is really opportunity saying hello, open the door. So I love Ryan Holiday references there.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. Just think about the improvement that children would have, the improvement that parents would have, that relatives would have. Everyone thought in those terms, as opposed to trying to get ahead and trying to work 80 hours a week and wearing that time like a badge of honor and saying, "Well, I work 90 hours a week, so I must be better than you in some way." That's not what life is all about. When you're old and in the nursing home, you probably want people that... Bronnie Ware, she's an Australian hospice nurse and she wrote a book called The Five Regrets of the Dying.

Jere Simpson:

That sounds good.

Mark O'Donnell:

Totally recommend it. And I would encourage any listener to just go in Bronnie Ware, B-R-O-N-N-I-E, Ware, W-A-R-E and the Top Regrets of the Dying and it's no surprise that you'll find there. Like everyone regretted working too much, everyone regretted not being free to be themselves. And I think there's just a deep, deep lesson in that. And so living the EOS life at every level of the organization is the goal, for sure.

Jere Simpson:

I love that.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. So I'm assuming, as you made these changes, you're working the 28 hours, you have dad school, which, how old are your kids now?

Jere Simpson:

Five and seven.

Mark O'Donnell:

Five and seven. Yeah, they definitely still like you.

Jere Simpson:

Yeah. They're in that... I got to capture it now though.

Mark O'Donnell:

You definitely do. You definitely do. My 18 and 15 year old are like, "Yeah, whatever dad. Stop trying to teach me something." But the nine year old, she still listens and enjoys her parents' company.

Jere Simpson:

Loves the attention still.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah, for sure. For sure. And watching her do handstands and look at me type stuff. Your personal life, you're making all this time for family, focusing on the things that are important to you, you're surrounding yourself with people you love, you are doing what you love, you're making an impact on your employees. And I would imagine with your involvement with Calm, is there any other types of things that you're focused on in terms of making a huge difference?

Jere Simpson:

Thanks for asking. My mentor, Lewis Schiff, introduced the two of us together from the Birthing of Giants Program. He serendipitous because I was living in DC and he was doing his Birthing of Giants Program. They do it twice a year and it happened to be at UCLA. And he always makes sure that during the program, we get some time to do some philanthropy. So he had asked somebody here like, "What could we get involved with to make a difference?" And they took us to this place called Homeboy Industries. And homeboy industries, I'm telling you, it is a magical place. They are doing something really special there that should be replicated in every community. They're taking formerly, not always incarcerated, but usually formerly incarcerated gang members, people that have deep roots in gang life, they are in gang life, many of them, third or fourth generation gang members, and helping them figure out a life outside of gang life.

And we went in there, we heard some really powerful stories and got the opportunity to do some kind of just rapid fire mentorship with a couple of people there. And my heart just gripped to this place and stayed involved, took people's numbers, was zooming with them when I was in DC, calling them on the phone. And so as soon as I moved to LA, the first thing I wanted to do was go get really involved in that community. And what I found was, so there are people that are working in, they call it Homeboy Industries, because it is a business, and they're using this business as... As we all entrepreneurs know, businesses are really vehicles.

And the reason that most entrepreneurs love entrepreneurship is, they're vehicles that put us in front of amazing people, they teach us incredible things, allow us to grow and learn, and just be in this orbit of all of... It's like the money and the accolades and the prizes are one thing, it's the river that it puts you in and all the things that you get to experience in that journey that I think is the root of what people never want to give up. I'm realizing they're using this business as this vehicle for an alternate life and teaching them all kinds of things. And I started talking to the people there and said there's so many kind of little entrepreneurs inside of this business, I'd love to just sit and workshop with them some of the things they're going through and demystify business for them. So the first thing I do is this workshop, there's a woman there who makes this incredible jewelry.

There's somebody who has a recipe, just one food item, tamales recipe, sells them out of their trunk and somebody else who's got a t-shirt print shop. And they're just doing these little businesses kind of ad hoc because they've learned some skills through the industry. And I say, "How are you marketing?" And I get a little bit of blank stares. And I said, "Okay, marketing something you believe you don't know, something you believe you don't have any experience with." Let me tell you what marketing is. Marketing is, how do people find out that you're in business? How do people become aware that you have a product or service to sell? That's all that it is. There's nothing special about it. There's all kinds of neat tricks and stuff, but it's just letting people know, "Hey, we're in business."

And then you can see they're like, "Oh, I was thinking marketing was something I'm not able to do." "Yeah, you're able to tell people that you're in business. Let's just go through these things one at a time." And I kind of use a lemonade stand as my basic example for everything. And if you took a basic lemonade stand, how could you get more people? How could you move the location? What else could you upsell? And what's incredible to me is how many business things these people already knew from what they were doing in gang life really well. And I heard one guy say, "The profits on these are terrible." "So what do you mean?" And he said, "It's like 20% profit." And I said, "But what did you do before you came here."

He said, "Well, I sold drugs." And I said, "What was the profit on that?" And he said, "It was like 500%." And I said, "What was the price?" And he goes, "We sold it..." And I said, "No, no, no. What was the price? You just told me you did 20 years in prison. That was the price. That was the real price that was factored in there. And what I'm telling you is, this is not going to send you to prison, there is no risk factor there."

I mean, just seeing these individuals for the great people that they are, for the growth that's happening with them, for the parents that they're getting to be able to be, that their parents were not able to be. And also just understanding, I'm learning so much about, a job doesn't solve everything. A lot of these individuals have had a lot of traumas and things like that, and had to get through some of those things. So it was serendipitous that, that happened to be an LA thing and I happened to move to LA and that it's all kind of orbits around business and using that as a catalyst to change life circumstances.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. And it is an opportunity for those individuals. You talk about the woman with the tamale business out of her trunk, it's part of her unique gifts to the world. How do you amplify those unique gifts and tell everyone about it and get a line out of that trunk? And maybe one day the trunk turns into a storefront or whatever it turns into. It's such an opportunity, incrementally slowly over time, no 500% margins.

Jere Simpson:

Right. Right. I mean, it is though, because Homeboy Industries makes up guacamole that is in whole foods. And so I had to use that, I was like, "Whose recipe was it? It was somebody's recipe here." And they were trying to figure out where did the recipe originally come from. Like, well, there's somebody's recipe here. And now it's in whole foods, making money to support this whole industry that you have here, that's providing all kinds of services for all these people that want to change their life. So somebody turned a guacamole recipe into a life.

Mark O'Donnell:

That's right.

Jere Simpson:

And it's just one thing and I'm telling you, you can turn this tamale recipe into a life.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. Well, clearly you're passionate about Homeboy Industries. And so, on that topic, how would someone support homeboy industries? Is there a way that people can help or-

Jere Simpson:

Oh yeah.

Mark O'Donnell:

... anything like that?

Jere Simpson:

I believe it's homeboyindustries.com. They're based out of LA. Like I said, if you see their stuff in whole foods but you can buy it. What I have encouraged people to do is just take some time, reach out on the website and say, "I'd like to just get to know one of these individuals and hear their story." and then once you do, invite them to be like a guest speaker at an all hands meeting in your company.

The level of perseverance and understanding about who they are as actual individuals and even their ability to take responsibility for any crimes that they have committed, and then understand how much value they still have, even though they have a criminal record, I think changes a lot of people's minds about their hiring practices right there. And I just think that's one of the best things Homeboy Industries is doing. So if you talk to them and get to know them and see what's going on, I think these people could really change some of our workplace hiring habits. But if you're in LA, definitely go do a tour, send a check. Checks are helpful to say the least. Take somebody to lunch there, have a meeting over there instead of at Starbucks.

Mark O'Donnell:

Very nice. So Jere, clearly you are living your EOS life, your ideal life. And what would be the number one piece of advice, other than everything that we've talked about, for the person who's listening to this podcast, what's your number one advice? How do you get started? What would you say to them?

Jere Simpson:

This genuinely is not meant to be a plug of my business, but to just start in life with those basic concepts of understanding, what is your destination? Where is it you want to go? Be really dissected about that. I talked to a friend of mine, she said, "I want to own a house in the south of France." And I said, "That's a very specific place. And you want to be the deed holder of a property in a very specific location. Stop. What is it that you want out of that? You want to experience something? You want to brag about it? What is it? You don't have the answer for me, just what is and get really true with what it is you're trying to experience. What is your destination? What do you want the journey to look like? And try to understand where you are in that journey. And as just sort of that very first... Understand your business in that cycle, understand your life in that cycle, and then try to put the tactics in place that would get you there.

I think, we are being very, memetic, like mimes, where we just think, "Oh, I don't know, Sally did this and everyone celebrated her. So I'll go get that handbag and drive that car and do these things. And people will celebrate me." And we get jerked into a path that is not really our own. And as you said, our authentic path. And then we wonder why we're not happy. We did all the things we said we wanted to do, and we wonder why we're not happy. And I just think it's that taking stock of... And what is your destination, being unapologetic about the fact that this is where you want to go with your life, what you want the journey to look like, what are those climate factors that could add risk and where are you in that journey? And then putting together a system with the tactics to get there.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. Very nice. And it's funny you mentioned, you kind of do these things and then you're not happy and you're kind of wondering why. I think there's a lot baked into that. One of the books that I'm reading now is Gap and Gain by Dan Sullivan and Dr. Benjamin Hardy, who talks about this concept of the gap, meaning you have these expectations. You want the house in the south of France or whatever it might be and you get it. And you're sitting on the front patio looking out at the Mediterranean, or I suppose, whatever you look out in the south of France, I think it's the Mediterranean, and you're still not happy. And you wonder why. And the reality is you just are not celebrating your gains and the goal line at the horizon, the thing that you want is always moving there. And so, looking out and observing the gains that you've made, the progress that you made and being really satisfied in celebrating those wins, I think is a really important component of the entrepreneurial journey of living your ideal life as you go along that path,

Jere Simpson:

I just came out of a call, where I found out about EOS in the first place is I'm in a group called Mastermind Talks group. That's how I actually found out about EOS and I was annoyed because I was like, "How many people are doing this? It's like half the group." I'm like, "Why was nobody telling me about it?" I'm just kind of irritated that I'm learning about it this late. But I was just in a call with that and they asked what books are people reading. And 20% of the people said that book. So now that it's come up twice in two hours, I'm definitely going to have to buy that.

Mark O'Donnell:

You definitely have to buy Gap and Gain. Of all the strategic coach concepts that I've been exposed to, I've been in strategic coach for eight years, Gap and Gain has been one of the most impactful overall. But you get off the track and so the book is just a complete reminder of just celebrating progress, celebrating the journey, looking back and being happy with your progress. Because a lot of people, if you're at homeboy industries and you're selling tamales out of the back of your car, you might be very unhappy with where you're at, where you're sitting, because you're looking at maybe the person who has the guacamole in whole foods. And that can paralyze people. Instead of, with that comparison there, as opposed to saying, "Hey, two years ago, I was in prison. Now I'm making money, selling tamales out of the back of my car. And so we can be really happy and celebrate that." So it's just a really interesting kind of overlay to that.

Jere Simpson:

Let me ask you, do you think that part of that is because, everybody asks us, "What are you doing all the time?" And we feel compelled just to give an answer that will satisfy the person on the other end of the conversation. And then maybe we start spitting that plan out to other people. And then we start

following the plan, because then they're going to follow up, "How's that going?" I know someone's going to ask someone to see them. I gave them this plan last time. I really just wanted to satisfy them socially. And they're going to ask me for progress, I better make some progress on this plan that wasn't even something that they wanted. Do you think that, that's part of something our culture does habitually that continuously just sort of falsely encourages that habit?

Mark O'Donnell:

Oh for sure. Because like my daughter's going to college, inevitably, I did not personally go to college. I was homeschooled. I eventually went to college later, but I had a very specific purpose for it. Because most of my friends and family members, you go to a public high school. Then when you graduate, you go to college. When you graduate college, you get a job and then you get married and then you have kids and then you die. Most entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs because they don't follow the path most traveled. Because there is an expectation. There is a comparison, there is this path that people think they have to take to become someone they think they want to be. But, to your point, they never really asked who do they really want to become? Who are they really? And what's the best path for them to get there and then celebrating the progress along that path. And I would imagine, Jere, you didn't follow the typical path either.

Jere Simpson:

No, no I didn't. To your point, what you were saying, when I was graduating from high school, to be Frank and transparent, I never attended high school, but I was very good at adopting enough teachers into my plan to pass me through and realize that at least the public school system is highly incentivized to pass you through. Everybody would say, "Where are you going?" I didn't want to be this loser kid that wasn't going to do the thing that everybody else was going to do. So I went to college and I didn't have any place to live. So I moved in, like the first day they would let you and I had saved up enough money and had a partial scholarship with it. Saved up enough money for a year and moved in and immediately thought, I had a lot of alone time because nobody moves into three weeks early that they'll let you move in.

And I thought, "What am I doing? I do not have enough money to finish college here. Also, I am a horrible student. This is just not a format that works for me ever. What am I going to do?" And I decided about two and a half weeks before school started, that I was never going to attend a class, that I was going to start a business then. And I started my business, it was perfect because it was a .com. and it was the age of .coms. You really couldn't have a .com if you didn't have, what was it called? A T1 internet connection of at the time. And that was unaffordable. You had to be a fortune 500 company. The government had hundreds of millions of dollars to venture capital or be at a university. And I thought, "Well, really, you could get this T1 line for the price of a year's tuition."

I could get room on board, a meal plan. And I needed a server space, which they had. And I would use all of the professors like consultants. I would go to the law professor and unfold all the stuff I had and say, "Listen, I don't know this is, this isn't. This is..." and he would say, "Which one of my classes are you in?" And I would say, "I'm not in any of your class, but I am a customer here. And I understand you're supposed to be here during these hours. You know something valuable and I'm the one that wants to hear it. And I would say, work on this .com can you help me out? And they would just rip through it with me. I'd go to the marketing department and say, "Don't do things in theory. Let's do them in practice. I have a .com", which excited people. It's not going to damage me if it doesn't work, let's just use whatever we could workshop together as a class and put it in and just use that like a runway.

I think I could be in there for eight and a half months before they would kick me out. And I actually asked them, "If I do nothing, what will happen?" And the first thing they said was, "Well, you'll go on academic probation." I said, "But you won't remove me physically from..." And they said no. And I said, "Okay." And then another semester goes by and I do nothing, they're like "Then we will remove you. You will not be allowed to stay here." So I just thought about that like runway. And I thought, "Okay, I've got eight and a half months of runway to get this thing off the ground and make my .com work."

And it was just lucky because my goal wasn't to make a successful business, it was to make portfolio work so I could get a job that I could show people and say, "Look, I made this thing, give me a job." And the business started to make money. The business I made was very much like Amazon, it was called MouseMalls.com, like a computer mouse. And you could buy anything you wanted to on it. I was actually just showing my wife what it looked like the other day. She was like, "Doesn't look great." I was like, "It was 1998." And I eventually sold it to Amazon, which is...

Mark O'Donnell:

They must have been threatened by you. So they wanted to take it off the market.

Jere Simpson:

Yes. Well, they weren't threatened by... That's what I didn't understand. I didn't know it was a broker that did it. And I didn't know anything about M&A or anything. A check came, I just sort of sensed that they could write a bigger one. Although, I would've taken that one. And I said, "You could do better than that" with my pompous teenage cell. And the guy did come back with a bigger check. He probably could have done better, I don't know. But I took his second check. And then I became to understand who he represented and I thought, what you've just said, I thought, "What? I don't even step on the toes of Amazon. Why would they come by me? There's no way this is beneficial to them." And he broke it down for me and said, "I use some criteria to find you. Venture capitalists are using the same criteria to find somebody like you and my job is to get to you for they do so that they don't go pump 100 million into you and make a problem for Amazon. And so I've just eliminated that problem from happening."

And I thought, the brilliant thing for me was that they didn't want me to do anything. I didn't have to work. It was like half insulted, half thrilled that I didn't have to do anything. I told that story to the CEO of Walmart at the time and he laughed and he goes, "That's what we should have done to Amazon."

Mark O'Donnell:

Then they had the opportunity to do that and declined.

Jere Simpson:

"We should have done to Amazon what they did to you." And we had a good laugh and chuckled about that.

Mark O'Donnell:

That's funny. Yeah. So that does not sound like a traditional path to me.

Jere Simpson:

No, it's not terribly traditional. Again, school is just not a format that works for me. I have so many friends where it's a perfect format for their learning. I've been introspective about why that is, but it feels like, especially at a big university, which is where I had gone to start my business, there's 200 kids in a class with one person speaking. And my brain just constantly would say, I mean, anything that one person is going to come in and share with 200 people, can't be that valuable. I would break it down to the hour and say, "This is not that valuable. I want to know the things that can't just be bought and taught and what are those things and how can you learn them?" Most of that is just exploring and trying and tinkering, which is sort of the trait of most entrepreneurs, is to get in there and get your hands dirty and try it yourself and see what you find.

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah, for sure. I've been guilty of tinkering a little bit here and there myself. So is there anything else you'd want to share to our listeners or people who are striving to live the EOS life, to run a better business or anything like that before we sign off?

Jere Simpson:

Everybody hears it a lot, which is, you got to spend time working on the business and all the time in the business. And I really encourage people not to brush that off, to have time clarity breaks, where they take their hands off the keyboard and they go sit outside or sit anywhere and think what are the really big things that would move mountains in my business. And then there's another exercise that goes along with that, that I do where I tell my people, "Okay, our five year goal..." Let's just say you went into a coma right now. And it's a year from now and I woke you up out of the coma and I say, "Jamie, guess what? We got all of our five year goals done in a year. Now you tell me what you assumed must have had to happen for that miracle to happen."

Well, you must have had formed an amazing partnership with blah and you must have blah. And this becomes the roadmap, the blueprint, and it's sort of a map... And you get each person to do it and you see what's common and, "Oh that's interesting." Everybody had it on their mind that this assumption must have had to happen. The only way we could have done our five year plan in one year, would've been if these things happened and then how much of that is actually doable? And what is the effort it takes to find out if it's doable? And again, that's still hands off keyboard time. That's thinking on the business. And that exercise has been really valuable for me. I challenge people to try to figure out why they think it would take five years or 10 years to do their five or 10 year goals and is there a way it could be done in a year? Is there a way their year goals could be done this quarter?

Mark O'Donnell:

Yeah. Very nice. It reminds me of a quote I use often, especially for people who are striving to live their ideal life or their EOS life, is a quote from Epictetus who said, "How long will you wait until you demand the best for yourself? How long will you wait?" And so doing that exercise is a great setup to stop waiting and get moving.

Jere Simpson:

A quote from Epictetus as well. I'm going to butcher, but it's something like, "It matters not which port you sail. If you don't know which port you sail, no wind is favorable." And so that's just kind of a capitalization or punctuation on my point earlier about know your destination.

Mark O'Donnell:

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Yeah, for sure. Well, Jere, thank you for your time today, I really appreciate it. Where's the best place for our listener to learn more about you and get in touch?

Jere Simpson:

All of my information is under our team information, which is AtlasUP.com/team. And I'm on LinkedIn, I'm very approachable on LinkedIn. I'm not one of these people that ignore words. If you're not pitching me, if you just want to say hi and network and get to know each other, if you're not in emailing me. Then I like to meet people. I like to find out what they're doing. I love learning about other businesses that people are running and what they're passionate about. So that's a good way too.

Mark O'Donnell:

Perfect. All right. Jere, thank you very much.

Jere Simpson:

Thank you. It was great talking to you, Mark.

Mark O'Donnell:

Thank you for listening to the podcast. I hope you got value from today's episode. Remember to ask yourself how long will you wait until you demand the best for yourself? How long will you wait until you live your ideal life? The EOS life.