

IntegratePro Show: James Schramko



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DAVE: Hey Dave Wooding here from IntegratePro and today I've got my friend James Schramko here. James how are you doing?

JAMES: I'm doing very well thanks Dave.

DAVE: Excellent. And you know like I mentioned before the call I'm really excited for the book that you've put out recently and I want to give the chance for people who read my emails and listen to what I say and hear about you know the book you produced in so far as I can tell it's kind of a culmination of what you've been doing. Not necessarily just online for the last 10 plus years probably a lot of business experiences you've had. So can you tell me the name of the book and what it's about?

JAMES: So this book is called Work Less Make More: The counter-intuitive approach to building a profitable business and a life you actually love. The thing that's really interesting for us Dave is that you and I have been friends since we both had a job. So that's given us a long relationship that spans more than a decade. But really this book is a summary, a collection of my ideas or thoughts or turning points that have helped me take that journey and have also helped you take that journey.

And you've been such a huge part of that. So right at the start of this I want to acknowledge how much you've contributed to everything that's going on in my life and especially around all the help you've given me with putting together my memberships and website building tools and concatenation software. Just the whole journey you've been there helping out being that amazing support person which is you know it's in Chapter 4 building a team. It's important to know you shouldn't expect to be able to go on a journey like this by yourself and you've been a part of that and I suspect that you are that team member for a lot of people who are listening to your material and involved in your world.

DAVE: Yeah, thank you very much James. I Appreciate that. One observation I've had like you know dealing with a lot of people that are coming online doing stuff. One thing I see you do is you know you make a decision and you move forward. For instance, you don't get things perfect right? You don't wait until a 100 percent, everything's lined up and ready to go. It's like OK I know what I want to have let's make it happen. On the other hand I see a lot of people you know kind of get down into the weeds when they want to get things going. I remember the membership site, you know back in 2000 whatever it was. You basically said "All right let's turn on".

I suspect that's been kind of a good reason for your success. Being able to move quickly on ideas that you want to implement.

JAMES: Some of that actually goes back. I found a presentation that I watched with fantastic Peter Drucker when he was still alive and it was beamed via satellite. I went out to this auditorium in Sydney. I thought he was gonna be live actually. He was live but he was in another country. So disappointed about the medium. I was excited about his ideas and one of the notes that I took down about decision making was that it's not so much in whether you make a fast or slow decision. It's not taking into account all the factors at the time the real power of decision making is usually in hindsight. And that really struck a chord with me because as you mentioned

I think people do deliberate a lot on things and it slows them down. So I've focused in my business and in life in general is to identify what are the actual vital things what are the things that are really really important. I Talk about that being the focus and the power of 64:4 which is a really weird name for chapter. It's about just figuring out what's actually important here then rolling forward and without being a perfectionist. You can let go of all the baggage that comes with being a perfectionist because for one thing you're chasing an illusion. There is no environment where everything is absolutely perfect because of the element of change.

If you can accept that things will change then basically whatever you sign off on wherever you're at, say the membership example you raised, I knew when I signed off on the membership that that's not going to be the end to membership. It's just the starting point. That's what we should remember in business.

DAVE: One observation, I see you James as you tend to iterate on you know like the membership and you have a stats program that identifies (how many people are sticking around) and I know I've seen you iterate you know make small subtle changes constantly improved the experience for your customers and the result is it shows up as people stick around a lot longer. Remember I had a lot of insight into different memberships and the length that people stay with you tends to be kind of out of the norm you know it's not one or two or three months it's it's kind of measured in years. I think a lot of it has to do with you iterating on what you set up and just constantly improving it. You know what, I haven't quite finished the book but I wonder if that's something you've covered in there or something similar to that?

JAMES: Perhaps. Like innovation interestingly enough I also learnt that from Peter Drucker who is an absolute genius. By the way I recommend his material. He predicted what we're doing now in the 60s. He talked about people being valued for their knowledge and the demise of traditional education institutions like he was way ahead of his time. But he talked about marketing and innovation being the important things to know and business. So innovation is a key part of it and so going back to this idea that if you accept that things will always change then you only need to start because you will not end up with whatever you start with. So you know you try to get all your ducks in a row, you want things to be all perfect when you start but if you can't accept that's not where you end up. Like in the last decade how many different versions of my membership have we built? When I say we I mean you (laughs). You know we've done the odd update here or there haven't we Dave?

DAVE: Yeah, that's true.

JAMES: You know what we have now is not what we started with but we just got started and I'm so thankful that back in 2009 I believe it was that we turned on that first version of the membership because that was a transformation. So I do think that I cover some of those elements in chapter 1 about personal effectiveness and also chapter 2 about planning and goal setting. I don't have super super long goals or plans. I definitely think about where I want to go.

So it's like a visualization exercise and I anticipate what's going to be along the way but I'm still open minded. In much the same way if you wanted to travel to Sydney right now then maybe things that you hadn't quite planned along the way like you may have to get an online visa or something so you say 'Oh I remember I have to do that'.

You might have ticked all the boxes straight away or you might go to pack your bag and find out that someone borrowed it and never gave it back to you or that you packed the clothes to come here and you didn't remember, it's the opposite season so you have to get some new clothes when you arrive. So if we accept that there will be little things along the way it gives us such a good resource to be able to deal with it when they happen.

DAVE: Yeah, Interesting. So James, let me ask this.

JAMES: You know was it a challenge to write a book for you. Or was it just naturally come out of it. How was that for you?

JAMES: I'd love to say it was easy and I'm a natural book writer but I can tell you it was one of the most challenging things that I've done so far evidenced by the fact that it's taken me around about 8 years since since I wrote down book on my my sort of map which I called the Mafi plan.

JAMES: The book was there, I have only now produced it many many years later. There's been a few iterations of it. This is my first published book. However it's the second attempt because the first time just didn't work out properly. The real obstacle for me was just the sitting down and having to read my own notes research my own story. You know checking with my parents about things like dates and look at my diaries and go down to my garage and dig through a few boxes of stuff to remember. You know i've forgotten more of my journey than I can remember.

JAMES: Because I've really crammed a lot into my life already and there is nothing more boring in the world to me than reading my own material because zero new information there is you know it's it's just work. Each chapter even by the time I'd gotten the words out of my head into audio. For the most part but some of them are transcripts some of them were emails some of them are blog posts. I had a lot of help from Kelly Exeter who gave me the structure and asked me a zillion questions and pruned it down into just typed material and then pretty much ghost wrote the entire book from my own transcripts and words. And then I went through each chapter and rewrote her ghostwriting back to the words that I say and the phrases that I believe.

So it was this weird process. Her structure my material her writing my writing her final edit and then we went off to professional editors and proofreaders and then a couple of customers and we only had one typos. By the end of that phase that we're aware of. So it was it was just a big process and it took about 18 months. I'm just it's one of those things it's like having a kid that you look back on it and think gosh I don't know how I did it or you know I'm just so glad it's done now because that first phase was difficult.

DAVE: So having done that is there anything that you look back like did the book bring up something my boy I wish I would have done something totally different in my life. Like did you get any insights and I know you mentioned that you know nothing was new to you because you've already done it there. But did it give you a chance to reflect on maybe you know doing something different or doing more of what you've done or you would've cut out this type of stuff in your life earlier.

JAMES: Actually almost the opposite. I have a lot of gratitude for everything that I've done in my journey. I don't think I would change anything because I'm very happy with where I'm at right now in life. I'm at the perfect place for me at my stage in life in the areas that count so I wouldn't want to go and mess with it. You know if there was a time machine available I think I've just destroy it because I'm OK.

JAMES: I think even the difficult things and I talk in the book you know had everything from debt collecting through to working very difficult jobs to sum up some of the challenges that happened my parents having a financial situation. These things all shaped me you know having a child when I was young and newly married forced me into a sales role like oh I was 23 and found out we know that my wife's pregnant and I was only earning thirty five thousand dollars a year. I could categorically say that I would not have gone on to make millions and millions of dollars online.

If that hadn't have happened because it just put a fire into me and you know it was an external motivator but somewhere just after that I found my internal motivator because I actually went really well in the sales role and I learnt to have a little confidence bank you know I could actually look at a statement that someone else had prepared in this case it was BMW showing my name at the top of the list for all the sales people in the whole of Australia and that that just gave me some confidence that you know what maybe maybe I'm actually ok at this and then I believed in myself.

And I mean that in a nice way not in a silly ego way but I think in life it's easy to feel that imposter syndrome or to lack the confidence to put yourself out there. And so to have some validation and I actually experienced that again later with SEO, with search engine optimization. I found that I could do things to a website and have Google give me praise and say "Hey well done. We're going to give your Website a priority over other Web sites because you've done all the things we want you to do." I built an entire business around that. So I think it's important to find your confidence and to have other people saying nice things or validating what you're doing is something you should bank into your self-esteem and use that as fuel for the next mission.

DAVE: Excellent. So is there a second book on the horizon or is it way too early to even bring that up.

JAMES: It's not too early and definitely already thinking about you know people are asking me questions because I've published this book. I've had a lot of emails I've had hundreds of emails actually which is mind blowing telling me what they liked about the book and it's different for each person and some people are asking me you know could I go deeper on this or that and that's providing me ideas even chatting to you now Dave I'm thinking about notes, you know, I'm a note taker down the conference bank and an external validation because maybe I can go deeper on that in another book. So I've actually opened a tab called Book 2 on what I call the life sheet and my life sheet is a spreadsheet.

That is where I have tabs that cover everything that's important in one place so I have a surfboard register of what surfboards that I own and what their measurements are and how much I paid for them and what the best conditions I've surf them in are. That might sound super geeky but then I've also got things like checklists and frameworks and ideas that all go into this one spreadsheet. So I've already written down a few notes and I think I could make a book from the follow on questions. The first book was really just to be an introduction it's to say hey this is who I am.

This is my philosophy. I think there could be some ideas in here that could help most business owners even employés wanting a business because I've done that journey as you have Dave and it's a collection of my ideas in one place that's a pretty short rate. They say it takes about two hours to read from cover to cover. And I wrote this book for my kids to say look "here's what dad's figure it out so far" and it's gotta be easy enough to read that they understand it and that they're interested in it. And I've been field testing it on them. They range in age from 15 to 22 and so far three of them have had a good read of it so that's been good validation for me because that's what that's the goal. That's what I wanted a simple, easy to understand book.

DAVE: What I hear from you and I recognize cause you know as we've known each other while you're really leveraging your experiences and right now you're taking notes you probably share lessons learned in your membership community because I know from observing in your membership you know a lot of times people have private conversations just with you. But you end up sharing not personal details but the common themes that people are going through and also the solutions that might occur. So I can see where you're kind of queuing up for the next book based on people's feedback. What do they want. What do they want more of, that type stuff so I can definitely see I guess a second book forthcoming.

JAMES: I think this goes under the category of problem solving.

DAVE: Right.

JAMES: I've got this unique scenario where I have pretty big dark catchment. I mean I'm coaching 500 people. So if you add up over time I think there's a couple of thousand people in the last almost decade who I've been helping. I like these sort of help because I think that's the

most appropriate. I'm just helping them solve problems and because they keep coming to me with problems I've built up a database. I'm like a business where you can tell me your problem and I'll probably already know some of the answers because I've already seen it before and I like sharing ideas I actually do like nurturing.

I do like seeing people get results whether that's this guy. T.J. comes to mind. He found out that I used to be a top sales performer and he got a job selling Toyotas in Canada I think and I actually got on Skype with him and I chatted to him for an hour or two and just told him my top tips and he went away and he became the top salesperson in his dealership doing things that nobody teaches and that they weren't doing. Even though they were counter-intuitive and unusual. Like one of the things I told him was to send a handwritten note to every prospect. It's a very simple thing.

If someone comes in to look at a Toyota and then they leave the dealership you just pop a little handwritten note and put a stamp on the envelope and send it to them saying hi Dave. It was lovely meeting you and Betty today. Hope you enjoyed the Toyota Camry. Let me know if you would like to take it further or you know I'll let you know about new colors when they come in etc.. Nobody does that. Nobody in the car industry. It will be so rare that you instantly stand out. I mean how often do you get a handwritten note from a salesperson when your prospect.

DAVE: You don't.

JAMES: Especially now with online. So having that sort of cut through helped. So I like seeing those results when he posted to me you know how well he went. I thought this is this is great I love to see people take this information and do something with it because you're only as unemployed as you want to be today because there's so much opportunity out there. There's so many problems to solve.

DAVE: And you know that's interesting that you mentioned your personalized message because as far as I can tell you're effectively doing the same thing online right. When you get new members often times you will send them a personal message which is you know kind of retro in the way things go. Everything's automatic you send out emails. If I'm not mistaken you've taken the time to make personalized videos. But also you figured out how to do it in time-effective way. Is that true.

JAMES: It's definitely true for one of my memberships. Every single member get a personal video from me. Usually within minutes of joining. But definitely within hours and absolutely the same day. Second part of that is the high level program they actually get a physical pack arrives with three items in it in a handwritten note. And that really shows personalization and commitment and care because for that to happen there is some automation. I've got my CRM system actually sends a task when someone joins that sends the name in the address and a shirt size is a bit of a hint there.

And it just sends the email and that is pretty much if you go back old school that's like a printing or packing slip that you know at one point. If we go back 20 years. One of my jobs was to dispatch telephones for a digital telephone company and we had printing and packing slips. We're using this clunky system called Oracle which was designed for shipping barrels of oil and we were using it for funds. I have to run these processing batch tasks on the computer to be able to actually reach into the cupboard next to my desk and get a phone out of it and give it to someone. So yeah it's like a packing slip and you get the three items.

There are already pre assembled into post-tax and I address the package and I'll take it down to the post office and I'll pay the usually 30 to 50 dollars in postage to send it off to wherever it's going or if it's in Australia it's only about 15 dollars 12 or 15 dollars and the next day or the next week wherever they are it arrives and it's like wow you know this is rare it's rare to get physical packages these days so that's one tip I'd say no matter how automated or electronic you want to get. Remember the high touch model is still the future. There might be a day where someone brings milk and bread to your front door again maybe that day when we're sick of all the automation and the fridge that pops itself up and stuff that'll have real impact.

DAVE: Interesting..

JAMES: And for people who want to get on the telephone they'll still, the only higher level of personal communication is face to face. So that's why I still hop on an airplane and fly over there and you still hop on an airplane and fly over here because that face to face interaction is level number one. But the telephone or Skype is level number two. And then the you know hiding behind the e-mail or the social media account that's like level number three. If you want to go up a few levels you'll get really amazing results and you can still use automation to provide that pathway with total customization.

DAVE: Yeah and now you know my personal observation with you know the traveling parties is it's actually very leveraged in hindsight. Sure you might need a few people but oftentimes that leads into acquaintances or relationships with a whole bunch of other people versus for instance just say having a mailing list you know you might have you might build thousands and thousands of people on your mailing list. You may have some personal contacts for instance going to your superfast business life that result in you know business relationships and introductions to other people. So it definitely does have a big impact in my opinion in kind of a leveraged way.

JAMES: It's it is unbelievable. I mean I went on the Maldives boat trip two years ago and there was a really nice guy on that boat trip called Mel and I didn't hear anything from him since. And then about a month ago Mel's new girlfriend rang me up. And said hey my friend Mel my boyfriend Mel said that you do business coaching. Could you help me. And I said I can. That's

what I do. And this lady came on board to my highest level program and she's lovely and amazing performing her field.

I won't mention her name because probably what she does is quite confidential. However I said you know what. I've got a book coming out and I really need a pro photographer. Could Mel come around and take some pictures and she said sure. So Mel took the picture for my book and he gets the cover photo credit in the book. And Mel and his girlfriend who is also my customer also booked for the next Melbourne's trip. So that's an example of a face to face meeting a few years ago two strangers and then turning into incredible business synergy. I don't like the word synergy or let's just say a great collaboration. But the other thing is if I hadn't have hopped on an airplane in 2008 and gone over to America to a conference there's no way that I'd be on this situation I'm in now.

It just opened up massive doors for me and I've got you know I'm blessed to have people like John Race and Perry Marshall have given me words of praise for my book which if you go back a decade these people are absolute cult heroes online. And now they're peers. It's just it is amazing to think of that. You know what can be done in a decade.

DAVE: Right. And you know a decade it first seems like a long time but it's going to happen regardless. So you know might as well start what it is.

JAMES: Let's hope so.

DAVE: So James normally I like, I'm sure I'm forgetting something I should be asking. So I'll just ask you is there anything I should be asking.

JAMES: That is a really good question Dave. Yeah it's showing that you're open to what you don't know. And I think it's an interesting one for us because we we have so much context. I mean I literally have your surfboard sitting in my storage. You know on standby for the next visit. So that's how well we know each other. I think the the main point that we've talked about here is that the book would be a great introduction to some ideas or concepts that would help a business. That's the short.

The book is no longer than it needs to be as is you know this discussion let's keep it punchy. And I think you've covered the things that someone would want to know to start with. Yeah I invite, everyone listen to this please read the book. Labor of you if you liked it on Amazon and I just want to say you know just a huge thank you Dave. Without your help there's no way I'll be in this situation in my life so I've wholeheartedly endorse and to this day use your services. So it doesn't get any better.

DAVE: Thank you very much. So James where can somebody go to find your book?

JAMES: Head over to JamesSchramko.com. That's S C H R A M K O. And you'll find all the information you need.

DAVE: JamesSchramko.com they can find out all the information about your new book which is titled please tell me again.

JAMES: Work Less Make More. You can find it on Amazon. You'll be able to get the Kindle or the paperback version.