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## Joel Friedlander: At 62 Years Old Launches Independent Book Publishing Blog, Starts Earning \$46,000 Pay Days, Makes Readers Digest "Top 10" And So Much More!

Hello, this is Yaro and welcome to the Entrepreneurs' Journey podcast. Today's guest is Joel Friedlander.

**YARO:** Hello, this is Yaro Starak and welcome to an Entrepreneurs' Journey podcast interview. Today's guest on the line with me is Joel Friedlander who basically wrote me an email. I want to read it out because I was just speaking with Joel on how to introduce him and to say a claim to fame or some sort of overall picture of what he's done with his blog and so forth and as we're talking, his email does a great job of it.

So, first of all, Joel let me read out your email and we'll get to talking to you, okay?

**JOEL:** Okay.





**YARO:** Here we go. So, Joel sent me this:

*I went to a Blog Mastermind in 2010 and it taught me just what everything I needed to know to get my blog up and running quickly. At the time, I was 62, and although technology competent, new to the world of blogging. Your course put me on track to build the biggest authority blog in my niche which is independent book publishing, get speaking engagements all over the country, sky-rocketed the prices for my services in consulting and eventually spun off a highly profitable e-commerce site in 2013 with another one coming in 2014.*

*My blog has consistently been voted one of the best in its field. I was named one of the top ten publishing pros to follow online in 2014 by Readers' Digest and many other kudos.*

*A couple of weeks ago, I ran an affiliate promotion for my blog that grossed \$33,000 in about five days and it all started with Blog Mastermind.*

Joel, that's the best testimonial I've heard in a long time. So, thank you for sending that through.

**JOEL:** [*Laughs*] It's all true, Yaro and I just want you to know, since I wrote that email, it's gotten even better because we ran another affiliate promotion right behind that one and it just blew that one out of the water and then, the second one, I believed we grossed over \$46,000 in about five days.

**YARO:** Right, so you do all of these in the niche of helping people get published with their book. Is that correct?

**JOEL:** Exactly right. My tag line on my blog is, "practical advice to help build better books."

**YARO:** And, what you had said to me earlier off the air, I found quite interesting. You said a lot of your audience aren't in it for the money. They just want to publish a book which is, that's different motivation for someone



like myself. It's usually publishing a blog to make money. So, have you found that effective the way you built a business?

**JOEL:** You know what's very interesting, Yaro, and I've read a lot of your articles obviously over the years, and I was just reading one that was concentrating on how important it is for you to know your readers. This comes out of a lot of research of mine over the last few years but, I also am a self-publisher. I started self-publishing in the 1980s and most people in the fields of self-publishing don't actually do it for the money.

Hey, sure. Everybody would like to be very successful and have that tens of thousands of people buy their book. But, that's not what's driving them. What's driving them is putting their ideas out into the marketplace, communicating with people, finding people with similar interests, sharing their expertise, and that's very rich. There's a lot of richness in that from a personal point of view and the money is secondary.

**YARO:** I'm really curious now then to learn your own motivation and going back in time, Joel, if you were for self-published and it's a bit of a dream, I think, for people to make a living doing what they love.

I guess, you might be a good example of combining what you love and then, creating an ancillary service sort of around it to help people with it. That's how you can make a living yet, you can also be a self-published author as well.

I have to ask, you've obviously published a few books of your own, right?

**JOEL:** Yes, absolutely. I probably haven't published as much as I should because I love writing but, yes. I started publishing in the 1980s. The last book I published was 2011, [A Self-Publisher's Companion](#). It's all truly well, Yaro, and it was completely taken from blog articles I had written. I just assembled the blog articles, re-edited them, reformatted the book and published it.

**YARO:** Fantastic! Well, that's a great strategy for rapid book creation, isn't it?



**JOEL:** Well, you know, Yaro, something about bloggers is that bloggers don't realize that they are in a perfect position to take advantage of this new independent publishing paradigm. I know that in the last year or so, a lot of Internet Marketing people have moved in to Kindle, eBooks, but the whole publishing field, there is a huge amount to gain and bloggers, more than anybody else I know are in the perfect position to make that profitable for themselves.

**YARO:** I have noticed a lot of the people I interviewed for this podcast, if they are a specialist like yourself, it's often a combination of a successful blog, a successful book, or several newsletter and then, some kind of product or service or several products and services that are sold around that. And, that seems to be this really great platform formula as a writer, as a creative expert for having an online business and it sounds like you might be another example of that, like you have all those pieces as well, don't you?

**JOEL:** Yes absolutely, and the book itself, there have been many studies about the impact of publishing a book, and even though today in 2014, we all know that it's no longer that difficult to publish a book, that you can publish a book by yourself and you can actually do it for next to no money. It's still true that being a published author gives you a certain kind of [unclear] or authority that you don't have without it. Studies have shown that business people who publish books stand to make about \$100,000 more over the rest of their career than they would have if they hadn't published that book.

**YARO:** Well, it's pretty clear, you know, you talking about, Joel. So, let's do a jump back in time now. You said in the 80s, you were already publishing... This is pre-Internet, I assume, were you a writer since childhood? Is this an early day passion?

**JOEL:** Yes. I have been writing a long time but, actually, I got into it because I was in the publishing industry and then, I went out on my own and started my own company providing services to the publishing industry.

So, I'm a service provider and a vendor to the publishing industry and what I noticed was I self-published because I had a book that I knew that no



publisher would be interested in and I ended up selling about 10,000 copies of that book although it took quite a while to do that.

**YARO:** Is that before the Internet?

**JOEL:** Yes, that was before the Internet, Yaro.

**YARO:** Wow, that must have been hard work.

**JOEL:** I spent time in the direct mail industry also so, I knew the publishing industry. It was all direct mail, presentations, advertising and print magazines, compiling snail mail lists. I had a list of about 10,000 people by the time I quit publishing. I actually had my own publishing company for a while but, as a service provider, that's what led me to get into blogging originally because picture yourself as a book designer, a book designer has a lot of trouble finding people who need a book to be designed. You got to hit the right people at exactly the right moment in the creation of the book.

So, basically, I was a business to business type provider. My clients were all publishing companies. And then, I noticed a lot of self-publishers started calling me up and saying would I create a book for them? I started working with a lot of self-publishers back in the 90s.

**YARO:** I'd love for you to take us forward because I know the book publishing industry, it has to be one of the most heavily disrupted as a result of the Internet and yet, you have been able to kind of arrive with transitions by the sounds of things.

So, can you take us forward from the 1990s and when the Internet connected this world?

**JOEL:** Sure. I'm an old print guy. I grew up with print and typography and linotype and all that stuff so, it's been really fascinating for me to watch print on demands, eBooks and the Internet have such a huge influence on book publishing.

I was sitting there and it was really hard to find people to even to just talk to about stuff I was interested in. If I wanted to find somebody who wanted to



talk about type fonts, that's pretty challenging before the Internet. You can find maybe five people in your local area if you were lucky.

In 2009, we had a company, my wife's in the mortgage business, and the mortgage business went through a big disruption in 2008. You might remember that. I started looking around for some other way to replace the income that we were missing.

As a service provider to publishers and authors, I thought, "Gee, it would be great to be able to find some new clients," and that's why I started my blog because I knew that the way to find clients in the new era was on the Internet.

**YARO:** So, did you have any presence online because that's already late, 2000s? I would have thought you would have, these kind of websites if you're offering these publishing services by then, were you still 100% offline?

**JOEL:** Yes, I had a small website with about five pages. And, I had actually been out of the publishing business for a number of years helping my wife and her mortgage business and then, when the crash came, I thought, "Well, time to go back into book publishing."

It was really quite interesting. I came to it very fresh. There were a lot of things that happened in the time I have been out of the industry and when I started looking around, I put up a website and Yaro, I had this one thing. I kept looking at this website, over and over again and there was one question I had I could never answer.

The question was this, "Why would anybody come to this website twice?" I could see why they'd come once but, they would never come back. There was nothing there. There was no there there. It was just like a place holder on the Internet for my company but, it did nothing for me. I pretty sure I never had three visitors and it was pretty disappointing actually.

**YARO:** Okay, so yes. That sounds like you're having a second career, going back to what you knew but, it's been several years. You don't have everything established. It's the Internet, a new era and Kindle would have



popped up soon too. I would love to hear about that impact on things. Can you take us first.... Okay, so you got a brochure website, not performing in terms of as a business tool, what did you do next?

**JOEL:** Well, I discovered blogs. And, I was very late to the game. You had been online for years by then, probably five years and I started reading and then, I started reading articles and then, I started realizing, "Hey, these articles are all being written by bloggers and they are publishing all the time."

I'll tell you something that really connected for me because I have been very involved in self-publishing and individual expression. And, I realize that there was just a natural link between blogging and self-publishing, that they weren't really all that different. You get the control of the tools of the publishing, whether it's online publishing or print publishing and all of a sudden, you have a voice in the world. You are now a media site. You are actually publishing content.

There's a reason that button in Wordpress says, "publish," right?

**YARO:** Yes, that's funny.

**JOEL:** So, that's where I was and I thought, you know, I love this blogging thing. Now, in the two years before I started my blog, I had spent quite a bit of time practicing what's called "free writing." I don't know if you're familiar with it. It's a kind of a practice to help you free your inner voice and practice your writing muscles.

So, I spent about two years practicing free writing and we would sit down and set a timer and you'd have a prompt, some kind of thing to get you going and then, you would just write as fast as you possibly could until the timer went off. The rule was you couldn't stop writing. You can't pre-judge anything and never take your pen off the paper if you're writing with a pen. You're just non-stop writing.

Now, I didn't know at that time, Yaro that this was absolutely perfect practice for becoming a blogger [*laughs*].



**YARO:** Is that how you write your blog post, you sort of turn the timer on...?

**JOEL:** Not anymore but, it developed my writing skills just fantastically. So yes, when I started blogging, I realized once I understood the structure of a blog post and the formatting of the blog post, I could sit down and write a thousand word blog post that was pretty much basically finished in about 40 minutes.

So, that gave me a huge advantage and so, I decided, "Hey, this might be a bit fun because I love writing and profitable because I have a lot of knowledge about how books are constructed." This is very niche-stuff by the way. I mean, this is details, type font, margins, paper weights, stuff that nobody really cares about until you get involved in trying to publish a book.

So, I sat down and started writing and I realized right away that it was going to take quite a while for me to figure out how to do it. That's when I ran into [Blog Mastermind](#).

**YARO:** Okay, so did you already have [thebookdesigner.com](#), your blog set up and you were starting or was this prior to that?

**JOEL:** I was on a domain called [marinebookworksblog.com](#).

**YARO:** Okay.

**JOEL:** But, it didn't take me very long, Yaro to understand that nobody was ever going to find me on that domain. So, I switched over to [thebookdesigner.com](#) in November 2009, actually. I got that domain. I was very happy to get it because I realized right away, it had two of my big keywords right in the domain name and then, I decided to try to grow my blog as fast as I could and there were two reasons for that.

The first one was I was not the youngest guy on the block. You mentioned I was in my 60s when I started this. When you're in your 60s, you're really conscious of the fact that you don't have an unlimited time frame in front of you. When you're in your 20s, you figure, "Well, what difference does it make how long it takes? You could just quit this and start again next year."



But then, when you're in your 60s, you don't have that and the other thing was, I realized that nobody was occupying my specific niche about writing about books in the way I was writing about it to help people create really good quality books.

But, I felt like, you know, that wasn't going to be that way for very long. I might be the only guy today but, I knew like a month or six months or a year from now, somebody else was going to start writing the same stuff I was writing.

So, what I wanted to do was create as many article as huge and authority draw as I could as the first person out there to kind of guarding against other people interloping on my territory.

**YARO:** Right, and it's funny that you say there wasn't that much competition. I can see that your niche was kind of like a niche of a niche. It's not just book publishing. It's like in the name of your blog, "The Book Designer," it's an aspect of book publishing or aspect of typography, the layout, the design. So, it's not necessarily how to write, is it? Do you even cover that aspect?

**JOEL:** I try to avoid the subject of writing. Occasionally, I'll have a post on that but, there are so many writers' blogs that I just avoid that area because I feel like there's no reason for me to go in there.

But, I will say that one thing I proved out and I believe I learned this from you actually was that I started very narrow. I confined myself very, very narrowly in the book publishing niche but, as my blog grew, it's like my readers started to get me permission to expand and write about more stuff so, I started writing about book marketing, blogging, I've written a huge amount about blogging for authors and how that works, how to sell stuff if you're a non-fiction author, how you monetize the work you're doing online and the expertise that's embodied in your book.

I've really gone off in different directions while staying kind of true to the Indie publishing field.



**YARO:** Okay, now I'd love to learn a little bit about how this turned into a money-making business again for you.

It was 2010 you joined Blog Mastermind, correct?

**JOEL:** Yes.

**YARO:** Now, you were... Were you making a living or any kind of income from this new web presence you had created?

**JOEL:** I was making nothing, Yaro. As my blog got more popular, I started get a lot of inquiries about jobs and that fulfilled the initial idea I had for the blog, that is how to find projects to work on because I was a service provider, so I needed clients and within about six or eight months, I was inundated with clients. I had more clients than I knew what to do with and I couldn't possibly service them all. That was the beginning of when I started thinking about monetizing.

What I did was I really spent almost the entire year, 2010, learning how to blog and trying to figure out how to get people to visit my site, in other words, drive traffic to my blog, and that's basically all I did in 2010 and I was publishing five days a week.

**YARO:** Right. So, did Blog Mastermind help? I know I have a whole chapter / module on traffic. Did anything work? I hope it did.

**JOEL:** Hey Yaro, you know, Blog Mastermind really is responsible for where I am today. There's just no other way to say it. I mean, I studied that course, I must have listened to your audio about the **Blog Profits Blueprint** maybe five or six times. I just kept listening to it over and over again down at the gym while I was on the elliptical and then, my wife said, "You got to buy that course."

And then, I said, "You're kidding? I'm not going to spend that kind of money. It's hundreds of dollars." And then, she said, "You're crazy. Just go ahead and buy the course." And of course, she was right, and she usually is, and I went through that course, I was just one of those perfect students.



I did every lesson. I did every activity in the course. I did every suggested exercise and it was fantastic. It taught me exactly how to do it.

So, I spent 2010 just working on building my blog, learning how to be a blogger, learning how to write engaging content, doing all those exercises. It took me about a year to go through the course and that was the foundation of everything I'd built from that point on, 2011, I started trying to figure out, "How do I make money doing this?" Because I'm having a great time, I'm building my traffic but, there's no money there.

**YARO:** Before you talk about money, Joel, I know a lot of people listening to this will be thinking, "I'm struggling with traffic. I've set the blog up and I like my topic. I'm prepared to write and do the work."

What did you find actually directly brought in the traffic? Can you remember the certain things especially during that early stage?

**JOEL:** Yes, absolutely. Well, some of the things that really worked were suggestions from the course. For instance, you had one suggestion where you were supposed to disagree publicly with some famous blogger. I don't know if you remember that.

**YARO:** I do. I remember being a little bit cautious about writing that like, "Don't pick a fight if you're not the fighting kind of person but, if you do have an opinion, don't be afraid to voice it."

**JOEL:** Yes, well that created a huge traffic event for me because I picked a fight with Chris Brogan.

**YARO:** Okay, wow.

**JOEL:** And I thought well, you know, why not? He wrote some article about Amazon and distribution. I thought, well, here's my chance to do that exercise, and that was the total approach that I took.

So, I wrote an article. I put Chris's name in the title in the headline about why he was wrong and I wrote about my thoughts about Amazon and distribution. It doesn't really matter what the post is about.



But, lo and behold, Chris Brogan came over and started commenting on my blog. I couldn't believe it! I thought, "Wow, you see, Yaro he knows what he's doing."

And then, that article got tremendous amount of traffic and I got a lot of new subscribers and stuff just from that. It was like little events from that and then, doing a lot of guest posting, networking with other people in my niche. I write away because I had a specialized knowledge. I had people asking me if they could link to my articles or reprint them or if I would write something for them, and that's really how I built traffic.

Although, I have to tell you, and for anybody listening to this-- it was not fast. I was a total Analytics junkie. I used to check my metrics like every day and write them down and the growth was incremental but, it was very, very slow that first year.

**YARO:** There's so many things about this but, I love that you've did what I thought which is always rare, people actually implementing things, and even the controversial stuff. I love that you started this in your sixties because how many people think that technology is too hard when they're over their 40s. It's just, "No, I can't do this. It's for younger people," which is so not true and you're a great example of that." And, it turned into a business.

So, that's the part I'd love to continue with now. You did all these various traffic techniques, you've built your audience, and when you say you've built your audience, are we talking hundreds or thousands? Do you remember what sort of base you had when you felt, "That's enough, I can start focusing on money now?"

**JOEL:** Yes. And, I don't want to short circuit the traffic either because there were so many things over those years I did to build traffic. I'm trying to think about what would be useful to people, what would be something people would want on a bookmark... basic stuff.



And, also I would say, the other thing that would help me was your whole concept of the foundation post. That's been critical, I think, in the development of my blog.

All right, so I got to about, I would say, around 1000 visitors a day which really was pretty mind-blowing to me, Yaro. I couldn't even believe that there were that many people who wanted to read about type fonts and paper and stuff like that.

That's the amazing thing about the Internet. It almost doesn't matter what you're writing about. If you do it properly, you're going to find people out there who share what your passion is.

So, I got to that point, and also, by this time, I put a huge amount of work in. If you publish five days a week and you're writing all that stuff yourself, that's not a small commitment. You have to be very committed to do that.

Because there were times I didn't want to or it was late at night. They didn't have a post and you have to sit down there and grind it out and, you know, meet your publishing deadline.

So, I got to about 1000 people a day and I thought, this is crazy because at this point, I shouldn't be able to make some money from this venture. And, that's when I really started to work on monetization and conversion and find a way to connect the traffic to something that people actually wanted more willing to actually get out their credit card and pay for.

**YARO:** Did you have a newsletter at this stage?

**JOEL:** No. I tried a newsletter, and I knew everybody was doing newsletters. I did three issues of a newsletter and I hated it. And, I said, "Man, I'm never doing another newsletter again." So, I changed the name on my email list, it was my newsletter list. I just threw that out. I don't even know what I call it now. I think I call it my, "Early Notification List." But no, I know that newsletters work. I wish I could do it but, I just don't have the bandwidth to do it and it's just really painful for me. So, I don't do it.

**YARO:** Maybe, I should clarify then, do you have an email list of any kind?



**JOEL:** Yes, well there was phase two in learning how to make money from my...

**YARO:** Okay, I'll let you continue there.

**JOEL:** At first, I tried selling stuff from my blog and I started trying to create things like PDF, eBooks. It's kind of easy to do. You collect a bunch of blog posts on a certain topic, put a title on it, put it up for sale, and you know, my opinion is that for most blogs, it's really, really hard to sell anything from your blog and in my business, I've transitioned the blog. The blog is not a vehicle for selling stuff. And, in fact, when I stopped trying to use it to sell stuff, it became more popular and more fun for me because the blog is strictly a platform building and traffic generating device. So, I'm much more in the funnel method now. I bring people in. Early 2012, I really started aggressively trying to build my email list which I had pretty much neglected before them.

**YARO:** I guess, we should clarify. So, a newsletter, it sounds like it was just a case of producing more content through email versus... and that is an email list. But then, you have a targeted email list that might be designed to sell something a bit more than a generic newsletter that this sells updates. It sounds like that newsletter style didn't work for you but, there's an email list behind some sort of dedicated process to sell something did work for you. Was that correct?

**JOEL:** Yes, absolutely. In other words, by this time, Yaro, I had also started to study Internet Marketing because one day, I realized, and I said to my wife, "You know, I'm not sure I'm still in the book publishing industry anymore. I think I'm in the Internet Marketing industry now." I really started to apply myself the same way I did the blogging to learning to Internet Marketing and one of the results of that was to create a very robust ethical bribe, a freebie, a lure to get people in exchange for their email address and they get into a closer relationship with me because by that time, I was kind of like a guru in the self-publishing field and independent publishing was exploding. I was very lucky. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.



So, the PDF I put together, I put a lot of work into. It's beautifully designed. It's a very rich piece of content. But, the reason I did it the way I did was because I knew that anybody who was interested enough to go through the problem of putting in their email address, confirming it, doing the whole double opt in dance and downloading it, that was my customer. That was the person I wanted to talk to. They were self-selecting into my market by just downloading that PDF, and I'm still using the same one by the way and right now, it's putting about 1000 people a month on my email list.

**YARO:** Fantastic. And, what do you sell behind that?

**JOEL:** Well, I make offers to my list. That's what I do. That's how I eventually generated this eCommerce site but, I'll talk about that in a minute. I put together a training program for people who wanted to learn how to get into book publishing. It's called [The Self-Publishing Roadmap](#). Some membership site, I set up a site for that and I launched it off my email list and the first time I launched it, I had 1400 people on my email list, which is not a very big list. It's not tiny but, it wasn't very big and it generated almost \$10,000 in income on that very first launch.

So, I was very happy about that and I realized that email was the way that was going to make this all work for me. And, that's how I work now. I use the blog as a platform and traffic generation and all my business and sales are done through email promotions, whether they're my own products or somebody else's.

**YARO:** Mm-hmm. That's exactly what I focus until now, basically digital products and services, how you monetize, and the blog and the newsletter or the email list is the traffic and conversion mechanism. It's a great formula and you're now a good example.

So, did you go on after this first membership site to create a range of products or how did the e-Commerce spin off happen?

**JOEL:** Well, I was looking for ways to find... I now had a pretty big following. My email list today is probably about 25, 000 and I've had a lot of success with Twitter. I have a pretty big following there about 35,000 people and so, what I was actively looking for where things that my



audience needed to make their life better, to help them reach their goals because I knew that was the key. It was all about them and what they wanted to achieve and how my expertise could help them.

In that then, it took me quite a while actually, I finally found somebody who could translate my book designs which I have been doing for many years, and you know, it's just my business, my job, who could translate my book designs into template products that anybody could use. So you wouldn't have to actually hire a book designer. You can kind of do it yourself and I did find somebody with a very good technical mind, and I partnered with them when we set up an eCommerce site to sell those book templates and it just made the whole process much easier for people and you know, we were able to sell them at a very reasonable price and thousands of people have been buying them. They are very popular.

**YARO:** Now, I have to stop you and ask you an important question, especially for the listener, there's a lot of technical components to everything you're talking about here. We've got the blog. We've got the email list. We've got a membership site. You've created an eCommere site with templates. There's a lot of technical things. There's a lot of labor involved for setting this up, and trust me, I've gone through setting up these things so, I know what it's like.

Now, in the email, you wrote me, you said you're technically competent but I can't see you having done all of these yourself. Could you maybe, list all the tools you've used in terms of Wordpress and what membership platform, and what email list service do you use and then, who's helping you do all these? Is there anyone?

**JOEL:** Yes, well, I am technically competent but, I'm not actually interested in doing a lot of technical stuff because I think, it's not a good use of my time basically and it is really a sinkhole. You could [*unclear*] that hole. I spent four months building that membership site and I didn't do hardly anything else and I didn't like that. I hate it because it's just a lot of work and I could be doing something else more profitably.



My blog is on Wordpress. I've been on Wordpress since day one. I love Wordpress. It's a really great tool. I have always had a blog technician for many years who was Joel Williams who I met on the Blog Mastermind site.

**YARO:** [The Blog Tech Guy](#).

**JOEL:** Now, it's Andrew Rondo, you probably recognize that name also. And so, I've always had a technician available to solve the technical problems that I couldn't solve. When I built my membership site, I built it with [Optimize Press](#) and [Digital Access Pass](#), but the whole membership site set up at that time, it was just really, really hard to get it to all work together properly, particularly if you're not a technical person.

What else? I use [Aweber](#). I've been with Aweber since I started my email list. I'm very happy with them. I haven't had any problems with Aweber. The Aweber stuff, I figured out how to do it myself. I thought that was important to know how to do.

I can do a lot of Wordpress. I could do, you know, widgets, sidebars, changing stuff but, when it came time to get like our design, I went and hired a blog designer to create the overall design for my blog because I didn't feel technically competent to do that.

**YARO:** Where did you find them?

**JOEL:** I networked with people I met in the Blog Mastermind forums.

**YARO:** Okay.

**JOEL:** You might remember Josh Hanagarne, "The World's Strongest Librarian"?

**YARO:** Okay yes, that sounds familiar.

**JOEL:** Yes, he was visiting the forums at that time and I really liked his blog and I asked him who did it and he turned me on to his blog designer and I hired him.



It's funny about networking, Yaro because a lot of people get online and then, they don't want to talk to anybody else. They want to like do it all themselves. They think it's like you're an island somehow and you're throwing stuff out into the world and people are going to respond.

But, I found it doesn't really work that way. I think you really have to network, whether it's with technical people, peers in your niche or whoever. You have to reach out to people and if you do that, a lot of things will come back to you.

**YARO:** Mm-hmm. All right, we're getting close to the end of the interview, Joel. I know you have to run off soon. I'd love to know what it's like today. I know you said you had a \$33,000 month. Is it just a case of you doing like many product launches now? Or, how do you currently make a living?

**JOEL:** Okay, so the training I went to after Blog Mastermind when I realized I needed to learn Internet Marketing was [Product Launch Formula](#), Jeff Walker's Program.

**YARO:** Right.

**JOEL:** I've been part of that community for a few years. I've been to some of the live events and in one of this Mastermind groups. So, I have used that technology to launch products or to run promotions. It's a really good technology.

We have day to day sales. I still have a book design practice. Now, I have raised my prices enormously since I started because it's just supply and demand. So, I'm now able to pick and choose the books I work on which is very pleasant for me. I don't have any clients who I don't like working with anymore. I've also raised my consulting fees. I started out when I was consulting at \$75 an hour. Today, I'm charging \$350 an hour which is more than most little lawyers I know charge. It's just crazy but, you know, what could you say? There's a demand and you have a very limited supply. I only do two appointments a week. That's it. I don't have time for more than that.



But, basically my income now derives from day to day sales on our e-Commerce site and promotions of either new products I'm bringing out or affiliate products that we're helping somebody else launch that are very closely related to my niche, that is their interest to my readers.

For instance, that promotion I talked about to you in the email well, first about how to learn a software program that many writers want to learn how to use but, it's very difficult to learn and I found somebody who created a great training program and we put together a product launch for that.

I'm really partnering with a lot of people now so, we just did another product launch of a media kit. In other words, you can download all these templates that help you put your media kit together, and I partnered with somebody who is one of the most popular publicity and PR people on the web, John Stewart.

The synergy of networking and partnering, doing JVs with other people who also have a following is what's stimulating a lot of my growth right now.

**YARO:** Fantastic. It's amazing. I know you never actually went through and took my second course membership site Mastermind but, it's very much like Product Launch Formula with Jeff but, sort of for bloggers and you're doing everything I wrote about it in that course too like JVs is a fantastic and powerful way to grow your audience size and also have the synergy of creating product and selling it to both of your audiences. And so, I did that with Gideon Shalwick in another course.

Joel, it sounds like today, you've got this wonderful business that's based around your interest. It's very lucrative. You've got speaking. You've got consulting. You get to work on the books that you like. You have an eCommerce business that sells. You have an email list of buyers, of people who pay attention to what you do. It's pretty amazing how what you may be able to do, I guess, around a market that's certainly changed over the years, and you've been able to get back into it, I guess is the best way to put it and thrive through a lot of hard work, obviously, in terms of demonstrating your pre-eminence and showing that you are an expert using the Internet to do so but, you're really reaping the rewards of doing that.



One more question I'd love for you to answer for the listeners in particular. You sound like a guy who's got no hesitation. Or, maybe you did. Your wife might have convinced you initially but, no hesitation to now study courses and join masterminds, work in with a coach perhaps, take actual training programs.

When do you think is the right time for a person to put the money down because it does cost a bit of money to join these programs versus try and do it yourself with free information? Like what's your opinion on free versus focused training programs that cost money and hiring coaches?

**JOEL:** Sure, that's a great question, Yaro. I think it depends how important the outcome is to you. If the outcome isn't that important to you then, I would say, go for the free information because why pay money for it?

But, I would say if the outcome really is critical to you or to your happiness or your business success then, you have to do what's going to get you there to get you to the goal. And, I was very hesitant to buy Blog Mastermind. I have to tell you, I really thought it was insane that somebody would charge that much money for the program or that people would pay it.

And, if it wasn't for my wife putting her foot in my back, I wouldn't have done it. But, having had that experience, it clicked. I realized, "Oh my God! This has short-circuited my whole learning process to an incredible degree."

And Yaro, since that time, I bought numerous training programs because I realized if the outcome I'm looking for is really critical to my happiness or my business then, it's crazy not to do it.

For instance, I bought \$2000-training programs which was quite a bit more than what Blog Mastermind cost at that time but, I have gotten a fantastic return from everyone that I've actually gone through and put the work into learning what they had to teach.

So, I would not hesitate and I run into this problem all the time because I do consult with people and I'll tell them, "Look, go get this program," and they'll



say, "You're crazy! It's too expensive." And, I really feel sorry for the people who don't do it because they don't know what they are missing.

**YARO:** Well said. Couldn't be more. I think, obviously, you have to look at your finances as well. I always think that's an important question. You don't want to spend your food and rent money on a course if you're in that sort of situation and, you know...

**JOEL:** Oh absolutely. You have to be off the survival. I mean, if you're in the survival level, you got to take care of yourself first. But, a lot of people now offer multi-payments, or payment plans or stuff like that. It's very easy to do and you can really get the cost down to where it isn't that expensive. Certainly, if you're worried about paying your rent, I wouldn't go buying a \$2000 training program so, you got to get off the survival level first but, I would definitely encourage anyone who wants to get the result that they can see other people in getting or that they know that they are capable of to invest in yourself. It's not really investing in somebody else's training program. All you're doing is investing in your own potential.

**YARO:** Love it. Joel, where can people find out everything that you do today?

**JOEL:** Well, they should come over to my blog and check it out particularly if you're interested in independent publishing. I'm at [TheBookDesigner.com](http://TheBookDesigner.com) and you can find everything I'm doing right there. There are links to all my e-commerce training programs and just tons and tons of freebies. I love giving stuff away.

**YARO:** I recommend everyone, take a look at all the different things that Joel has touched on in this interview. If you're wondering how he does his speaking or how he sells it or how he has an e-commerce site and how he has an email list with a free guide, his consulting services as well as all the free information. You can see it's like a vintage blog information selling business. I love it. So, you can see a perfect example of it at The Book Designer. I'll certainly be showing off to you all as a perfect example, too.



So, Joel, thank you for joining me on the interview and sharing your story. Great work. I wish you continued success with what you're doing and yes, thanks again.

**JOEL:** Thank you, Yaro. It's been an absolute pleasure talking to you.

**YARO:** Thank you everyone who has listened in to this point in the interview. My name is Yaro. You can find all the other podcasts like this at my blog. Just Google for my name, YARO. You'll find my blog, my podcast there, and yes, thanks Joel. Thanks everyone or listening in and I'll catch you again on a future episode. Good bye!

## Relevant Links Mentioned in this Interview

- [A Self-Publisher's Companion](#)
- [The Self-Publishing Roadmap](#)
- [The Blog Tech Guy](#)
- [Optimize Press](#)
- [Digital Access Pass](#)
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