

Jack Butcher Transcript

- Jim: [00:00:09](#) Well, hello, everyone. It's Jim O'Shaughnessy with my colleague Jamie Catherwood for yet another edition of Infinite Loops. Today, I'm really excited about our guest, Jack Butcher, who's organization is Visualize Value. Great example here. I found you, Jack, on Twitter, and watched you for a while and was like, "Wow! I got to get this guy on my podcast." So, welcome.
- Jack: [00:00:37](#) Thank you for having me. My pleasure.
- Jim: [00:00:39](#) So, I love your backstory and I'm going to let you tell it. So, I'm just going to lead into it with something happened in 2019 to you, and it transformed your life. Tell us about it.
- Jack: [00:00:54](#) So, the real backstory is studied graphic design and graduated in 2010 in the UK, and moved to New York shortly thereafter, 2011 or so, and went through the agency life cycle in New York, so bounced around a bunch of different agency jobs as a designer, art director, creative director, all these corporate advertising accounts, and campaigns, and things of that nature. I eventually graduated that world in 2017 thinking I'll build my own advertising agency. I know how to do it better than all these guys, obviously, the 20-something-year-old provider.
- I quickly ran into a bunch of hurdles with that, just figuring out that to absorb all the inefficiency of these big corporate monsters, you need a team of 20-25 people, you need to be answering phone calls in the middle of the night with your international clients and all of these different things.
- So, funny you should mention Twitter. That was really where I discovered a whole new way of thinking about my time and my business. Stumbled on the Naval tweetstorm, How to Get Rich Without Getting Lucky, and this was 2018, I think, late-ish. Some of those concepts I'd just never been introduced to my entire working life.
- So, I hadn't worked in technology. I'd been in the time and materials business for the entirety of my career, and some of the principles of I think that are just native to technical thinkers were completely foreign to me. So, upon discovering that, that's when I took this different route of starting Visualize Value as a business, and there's a lot to dig in to around how the different insights in the values writing informed how that came about, but essentially no longer work in the business of managing

individual clients or doing spec work and things of that nature. So, it's been an interesting couple of years since 2019, for sure.

Jim: [00:03:18](#) Amazing. So, I go on and on and on about the fact that we are moving into a completely new world. The physical world is receding. The digital is emerging. The way you think in each world should and better be different because for centuries, for all of human history, we've only thought in the real world. That requires a certain set of cognitive skills, right? Now that we are moving into the digital world, it's a very different set of cognitive skills.

So, linear over here in the physical world, you can get a lot done. Nonlinear over here in the digital world, if you're not, you're going to have some trouble. One of the things that you realized, I think personally, just looking at all your work, which I think is amazing, so you realized sometimes less is more, not sometimes. I won't even add the qualifier. Less is more. Visualize Value, great name, right? So, I'm wondering, as I'm looking at your stuff, I'm wondering, "I bet he read Cialdini's book Influence."

Jack: [00:03:18](#) Yeah, yeah, that's on the shelf.

Jim: [00:04:44](#) Yeah. So, let's talk a little bit about that. You have really simple rules. You have a Black background. You have a White line, and there's something geometric which are, I think, all hooks into our human OS. So, tell me about how did you get the idea to just start putting this stuff out there, which just captures such huge amounts of attention.

Jack: [00:05:09](#) Well, so this was a series of iterations away from the agency business, which is essentially somebody tells you what to do, right? You're going to a business hat in hand with a pitch saying, "Please work with me. This is an idea I have," and then you get into a relationship with them and they essentially direct you from there on out.

So, this realization I had when I started stumbling on these technology insights or started to understand the exponential nature of the internet a little bit better is the first piece was really, "Okay. What am I uniquely good at in this entire process of creating campaigns for brands?" let's say. I think the most effective piece was the keynote presentations that I was giving to win the work in the first place. So, I isolated that as the thing that I had more patience for than most of my colleagues that I'd ever worked with. I actually enjoy that process of distilling these big ideas into short and punchy presentations.

So, I thought to myself, "Why can't that be the product that I'd sell as an agency?" So, the first iteration of it was, "Let me help you visualize your value proposition as a business." So, we're not going to do TV commercials. We're not going to do print ads. We're not going to do social media campaigns. We are just going to do this very specific thing, which is you as an owner of a business, you have all this IP and you really struggle to articulate it, work with me and I'll help you codify that into a series of visuals.

So, then to get more clients for that service, I thought, "Okay. How can I create something that is going to interest people that need this, that isn't an example of me just ..." For example, my first clients was a supply chain company in New Zealand, and the assets are very compelling if you're looking for a supply chain provider, but if you're not, it's not very interesting, right?

Jim: [00:07:16](#)

Right.

Jack: [00:07:18](#)

"How can I use this same process on ideas that are universally interesting?" So, these philosophical concepts or marketing concepts or persuasion, things that I genuinely am interested in and trying to learn about, I put those through the same filter, and originally, that was a lead magnet for consulting clients for Visualize Value, and to speak to the visual constraints of the Black and White.

One reason I think is pure utilize, I think, well, Tim Ferriss said, "Make one decision to remove 1,000 decisions." So, as a designer, you can obviously sit there and you have millions, literally millions of stylistic decisions that you can make, and if you sit there in front of a canvass with no rules, you could be sitting in front of a blank page for months on end.

So, that was a decision purely out of practicality in the beginning, and then you start to see the equity that comes from the recognition piece, right? When you see a piece of work and it builds on a body of work as opposed to it being stylistically different and it doesn't quite connect to the previous piece, so you don't have that equity building up. At this point in time, now people recognize the work before they even consume the message because the style is so just brutally restrictive at times, and I have to push back myself against that sometimes like, "Oh, maybe I could add this," but no. I was like, "This is what made it work." So, don't abandon the thing that is really pushing the boat forward.

Yeah, and that's essentially how it arrived where it was, and then eventually, it just got to that point where the number of people that were interested in working together one-on-one completely exceeded my capacity to do that, and then that opens up another way to look at the business, way to think about what it is and how it can manifest itself in a bunch of different ways.

Jim: [00:09:33](#)

Yeah. I mean, so as you were saying that, you're looking at the blank page for months like, "Hey, I made a career out of that." Joking, of course, but the idea of simplifying as far as you can without corrupting the message, right? So, I think sometimes people misunderstand or conflate. It doesn't need to be simplistic, it needs to be simple, right? Those are two very, very different things, and the way I look at the world, I totally resonate with that idea.

My wife is a street photographer and she calls the process killing your darlings. In other words, you've got 500 pictures that you think are the best picture you ever took, and the book can only be 100 photos. So, you have to take out and kill 400 of the things that you love most, but watching that process, I did it with my books. She edited all my books. Thank God. She was very happy to kill all of my darlings, and there's plenty of stories about that.

Anyway, you're on the right path, I think, because being able to get down to the gist of something, I think, again, what you're doing here a little bit is hacking what I stole the term from Brian Roemmele, you're hacking human operating system, human OS, and so is Cialdini, by the way, so is Rory Sutherland.

Rory has a quote which goes word-for-word, "Value resides not in the thing itself, but in the minds of those who value it."

Jack: [00:11:49](#)

That's great. Yeah.

Jim: [00:11:54](#)

So, what I am really encouraged by is I'm seeing all this. I'm looking at you. You now have this incredible career. You've managed to understand the inherent leverage that the digital world gives us. Time and space are gone. They're literally gone, and, yeah, time, I can hear people going, "We still have the time," yes, of course, but if you have the ability to do something like the graphic I just referred to, that might take you X amount of time, but think about all of the tenfold, twentyfold, thirtyfold time that it exists and interacts out there. That is one of the things that I just think people, it's going to take people a while to really grok how profound the new world is.

Jack: [00:12:51](#) Agreed.

Jim: [00:12:54](#) You have some stories on your site from clients, and I wanted to ask you about this productize yourself. You want to talk about that for a minute?

Jack: [00:13:07](#) Sure. Yes. So, this idea really came from the journey of iterating on the Visualize Value business model. So, the first iteration is, "Hey, I have the skill, and if you need somebody to deploy this skill for you, you can hire me, and we'll get on the phone, and we'll work through it together," and then in that business, I slowly started to productize the service offering, so start to put some structure around how we get information from a client, for example.

So, instead of getting on a 90-minute phone call, here is this process of a combination of forms, videos, other forms of technical leverage that can help do that work for you. So, it's been just a sequence of iterations that eventually ended up as, "Hey, here's a curriculum that can take you through the process of learning the skill of how to take a message and turn it into something visual, and there's obviously years of practice that come along with that, but here's how to begin that journey."

The idea of productization, I think, just alluded me for so long, and being in agency businesses where the goal is to basically spend as much time as you can to do as little work as possible. It's the absolute opposite.

Jim: [00:14:30](#) Exceeded only by lawyers.

Jack: [00:14:32](#) Right, right, right, right. Exactly. Before I even had any of these mental models in my head, that just didn't sit right with me. I was like, "I just don't understand how this relationship even begun or how this business model has been so effective and dominant for such a long time," because we are incentivized in the complete opposite direction of a client, right? So, it's just crazy.

Jim: [00:14:59](#) There are thousands of ad campaigns that prove your point.

Jack: [00:15:03](#) Right, right, right. Yes. So, it was just fascinating to look at that from the inside and be frustrated with it. There were things in that world where I was like, "We could add some leverage to this process." I didn't call it that. I didn't think of it as that at the time, but it was just these realizations along the way where we're reinventing the wheel every time we sit down with

someone, and it was all ... I can't remember who said this, but this has become obvious in the last year with what's going on in the world, too. It was like playing business, where I was role playing. There's 25 people in the room and you come and nobody is any wiser about what's going on or what we're doing or what it's for.

Jim: [00:15:47](#) It's basically a Dilbert cartoon.

Jack: [00:15:49](#) Right, right. Exactly right. Exactly right. So, that in the back of my mind as I was building up the Visualize Value business led me to, and that's the last tweet in that Naval tweetstorm, too, is productize yourself. It's take that one thing that you are uniquely skilled at, interested in, passionate about, and feels like just playing around to you, and it's complete murder to anybody else who attempts it, and turn that into something that has inherent leverage.

So, the first thing was a curriculum. We sold some products, too. We sold books. That's another way for anybody to get leverage is to write your thoughts down or record your thoughts to something that can be distributed as many times as the market demands it be distributed without any extra effort on your part.

Then basically from that insight of productizing my design skills, I basically zoomed out another layer. It's like, "If I'm a doctor or a lawyer or anybody else that was in the situation I'm in, how could I think about the process of productization for my skillset?" A couple of those case studies on the site. One guy that comes to mind is an oncologist, and he used both of the curriculums in the Visualize Value library to productize some of his work as an oncologist. So, the explanations that he would give to a patient every time they came in is a waste of time, right? The really foundations knowledge that he wants to instill is something that can be completed outside of the consult, and then you can give somebody a really, really personal and specific consultation rather than reading them the user manual of condition X.

So, I think these principles transcend graphic design, they transcend basically any vocation, and you can leverage all these things that we're talking about, all these exponential technologies to make you ... This is not about never doing things that don't scale. It's about not spending your time repeating yourself when you really don't have to, and then that time that you do spend, you refine your skillset, you build better relationships. You're not just in the trenches grinding on

something that could have been done once and performed infinite amount of times by technology or media or et cetera.

Jim:

[00:18:24](#)

I love the example of the oncologist because it gets to the point that this is going to affect everybody and every profession. The more people embrace it, in my opinion, the quicker they're going to get these ideas and actually see for the first time, maybe, see that flywheel start to work and see the benefits of that leverage and think, "Holy shit! I wish I was doing this 20 years ago."

One point that I have around the productize yourself brand, I work with a lot of younger people not just in finance, by the way, but mostly in finance, and one of the mantras that I hear, "I need a brand. I need a brand," and I'm always, and this is rude, but I'm always like, "Fuck brand. Be yourself. That's your brand. Be yourself." Right? Then out comes Bezos with his one word, distinctiveness, right?

So, after be yourself, be a value. Be a value to other people. I mean, it seems so shockingly obvious to me, and yet I see so many people go down these rabbit holes of, "Oh, I need to have these attributes." No, you don't. If you don't have them or aren't drawn to them naturally to learn about them and make them part of your skillset, no, you don't need those attributes. Talk a little bit about that and how you deal with people who maybe, and we're not naming any names, of course, who might have that mindset. How do you get them off that track?

Jack:

[00:20:12](#)

Yeah. I think you know that when you talk about the concept of value, I think maybe the iceberg principle is a good mental model for something like this. It's like all of that work you do behind the scenes and all of the internal curiosity, and in my case, I think all of the agency work, client work, the things you go out of your way to do because you're just interested in them, or you're just motivated at a different level than the people around you, and then brand, if you want to use inverted commas, is really just that little thing that peeks above the water as a result of everything that sits behind it.

I think it's just people attacking it from the wrong end, the other way, right? It's like, "I want to appear like this thing," versus, "I want to build up the foundation that eventually pokes through the surface and people recognize me as that thing."

I think it's been almost accidental for me, and that's another thing that is very difficult to convey is there's probably some very eloquent ancient teaching on this, but you can't chase the

thing directly, right? People can really sniff that out, too. If you're trying too hard to appear a certain way, you send the opposite signal that you're intending to send. So, yeah, I think you really nailed it when you just talk about do something that people need, want, are entertained by, but that's a reflection of your pursuit of something that you want, that you're entertained by, that keeps you curious.

So, this is the process of building things that satisfy you, and then the act of publishing those things or putting them out into the world becomes this magnet for people who think that way or interested in what you're doing, and that to me is where the idea of a brand comes from. If you're attacking it from the top down, you really don't have those deep connections to people where they see your process.

It's like when you're in school, show you're working. If you just come out with the answer, it's like, "I don't really trust where you got that from." It's the equivalent of going to the buzzfeed, I call them how to build a personal brand, and then just doing the five tactics there as opposed to, "Hey, I spent 10 years with my face in a monitor moving pixels around until it was right, and now I happen to discover a network where I can just publish that stuff all the time," and people are like, "Oh, that's interesting. That's cool."

I think it's harder now, I recognize this, too, to stare at a monitor for 10 years and just work on your craft than it was when I started my career, and this wasn't even that long ago. I did not have Twitter as a distraction, didn't have a constant stream. I just wasn't interested in any of that stuff. I moved to New York in 2011. I think this is when Occupy Wall Street was going on in New York, and I was getting off the train at Wall Street most days, and I didn't know until years later that that was going on. I paid no attention to anything but my work at that point in time. I think that's-

Jim: [00:23:40](#) Sorry, but just to interject. The Wall Street protesters also were very upset that no one else know about that.

Jack: [00:23:47](#) Right, right, right. Exactly. I think the bizarre thing and the very difficult thing to communicate is the real key ingredient or the real thing that differentiates someone is very hard to describe or prescribe. It's you arrive at it and it's cliché to say, "Trust the process." You can go look at a bunch of Steve Jobs reflections on this. I think the amazing thing about the way he describes how software was built or how some of the Apple hardware was built was, "I just followed my curiosity in all these different

directions, and then I eventually reached a point where you could connect the dots looking backwards."

So, you collect all these things you're interested in. Likely, I'm not a financial professional, but a very similar comparison there, I think. You pull on these threads of how the world works or what makes you curious about the world, and that makes you a much more qualified and effective professional in basically whatever you choose to pursue. The sum of your curiosity and the time you spent pursuing your curiosity, the brand is the result of that as opposed to, "I want to be known for X. Let me shout about X." It's a very nuanced pursuit, but it takes a long time.

Jim: [00:25:23](#) So, you hit on so many things that just resonate with me, and the first is your last quote. There's a quote by Søren Kierkegaard, which goes, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."

Jack: [00:25:41](#) That's right. That might be a visual after this. That's awesome.

Jim: [00:25:47](#) So, it's very true. OSAM, O'Shaughnessy Asset Management, our motto is, "Learn, Build, Share, and repeat." So, we're very much in sync with you. We try to do that learning in public. One of the reasons why I switched from doing traditional media to doing podcast, to doing things like Twitter was I saw the sea change that was happening. The idea about people trying to be cool, I love that.

So, Alex Danco, who's going to be my first recurring guest, I'm very lucky because he's one of the smartest guys I've ever met. This guy can riff on any subject extemporaneously for 30 minutes.

Jack: [00:26:31](#) Awesome.

Jim: [00:26:31](#) One of the things that we talked about was Schelling points and the idea of trying to be cool. We know this from when we were in high school. Anybody who tries to be cool is by definition not cool, right?

Jack: [00:26:46](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:26:48](#) So, the idea of trying to get people to understand that. So, Tim Urban, who does Wait But Why, another great guest, great thinker.

Jack: [00:26:58](#) Awesome.

Jim: [00:26:59](#) So, we're talking about it and at the end of it, he's like, "You know what, man? What our mission here is to try to make being reasonable cool," right?

Jack: [00:27:13](#) Yeah.

Jim: [00:27:13](#) So, these beautiful graphics of yours didn't just pop in to your head last night, right?

Jack: [00:27:50](#) Right.

Jim: [00:27:50](#) So, I think the more people talk about the fact, but you know what? It's okay to be a little crazy. It's okay to be incredibly curious because, now, this leads to the idea of the accidental, right?

So, there are a lot of things that have been very helpful in my life that I completely stumbled upon, and that I found accidentally. You have a guy on your site that uses this, the Joseph Campbell story arc, right? Campbell is another favorite of mine, and I think he's got a great quote, which is, "The treasure you seek is in the cave you fear to enter."

Jack: [00:29:18](#) Yeah. Great quote.

Jim: [00:29:20](#) So, let's talk a little bit about that. So, fear. Fear seems to be the motivating emotion in human OS. If you do a deep dive and go down all the rabbit holes, you understand that there's a good reason for that because it promotes constant vigilance. It promotes not getting eaten by the tiger. We are all the descendants of the people who ran away, right?

Jack: [00:29:52](#) Right. Yeah. That's right.

Jim: [00:29:55](#) The idea is that that's still in our base coat, and aggregate cultural evolution has power load away from us. So, we still have this idea. We still can't help it that our base coat is fear, "Holy shit! What's that? I don't want to die. I don't want to die," right? So, you need a way to transcend that. With me, it was becoming a quantitative investor because I knew that I guess if I had an insight, which was I don't know much, and I was very happy to admit that like, "I don't know. I don't know."

let me just ask you, how did you overcome that because, I mean, look. You moved from New York to Nashville. You're killing it. Were you ever afraid?

Jack: [00:31:33](#) So, yeah. My first job, I actually applied for 150 jobs on Craigslist when I first came to New York from the UK, and I got one response, and that turned into an internship and job in New York. I think one of the interesting things that, again, all of this is retrospective realizations that the difference between what the world was like 10 years ago and what it's like now, at least in my world, I should say, not the world, but it really has shifted from this linear to exponential mechanic.

So, I was performing the same routine in this linear environment, which was do your work, go and take it for review, it's not good enough, bring it back, reiterate, go a different review.

Jim: [00:32:41](#) Rinse and repeat. Rinse and repeat.

Jack: [00:32:43](#) Right. I was super fortunate that my first boss was, I think, this is really misunderstood now as well, was ... I can't remember who told me this term, but macro empathetic to me. So, by telling me my work wasn't good enough, he was doing me a way better service than cobbling and being like, "Yeah, it's fine."

I remember this one day where he was like, "Okay. We're reviewing work, 1:00," whatever it was, "bring it over to the conference room." It's this tiny little five-person office in New York, and I opened the presentation basically saying, "Well, it's not really good enough yet, but I just want to show," and he's like, "Stop there. If it's not good enough, why are you showing me? I don't want to see it. If you know it's not good enough, then why on Earth would you waste my time?" I was like, "Wow! That's incredibly profound."

I think it was a throw away remark by him, but it stuck with me ever since. It's like, "If I know in the back of my mind I haven't taken this as far as I can logically take it or it's not a reflection of the best of my abilities, then why am I showing it?"

So, I think the agency environment was a huge leg up for me because it was so much about reps. It's you do something and you take it to someone and then there's fear in that. I'm motivated by competition, too. So, you would be competing against other designers, directors for the thing that goes in front of the client. That's fear, competing, because you don't want to

be viewed as inferior or whatever. That's a driver. So, I think fear can be channeled and used in a positive way, too.

Really, I think what I've realized over time is now, you can use that as an advantage, right? The internet feels like a scary place where you put thoughts out and people can hammer them down if they disagree with you, but, really, it's this mechanism of free feedback that you can use to constantly iterate and get better. It's scary.

I could show you posts from when I first started my business where I had no network, whatsoever, and I'm posting to my personal Facebook page about, "Hey, can somebody look at my portfolio?" Nobody is going to come out of the gate with the Cialdini level persuasive copy for their first business. It just doesn't work that way, right? It's just you have to hit the wall and be like, "Why does nobody care about this?" over and over and over and over again, and then you get this glimmer of, "Oh, that one person responded," or "Somebody sent me an email in private," and I think it's balancing this, "What do I actually want? What am I working towards, and what am I willing to exchange for that in the short-term? Am I willing to look like a bit silly to people who I'm never going to interact with or do business with in my remaining time on the Earth, the people I want to school with 10 years ago?"

I think that stops a lot of people breaking through into the area of curiosity where the people you grew up around or the people that you fraternized with locally don't get you or don't ... and that's the beauty of the internet is it doesn't matter. None of that stuff matters anymore. Your internet identity can be incredibly separate from your physical identity and the interest of the people that grew up around you.

I think over the last year, that's really accelerated. Maybe there was this debate to be had at the beginning of 2020 where your physical identity is your identity and your internet identity is just this thing that everybody has to have an email address and blah, blah, blah, and maybe it's a bit more severe than that, but now, your internet first person for the most part.

If you participate in the economy in 2021, chances are you're on the internet six, eight hours a day or you perform a role in the business that is the internet is the backbone of that business. So, it just feels like the linear exponential fear thing is the scary part, and when you start to view the opportunity associated with the exponential piece, I think you're willing to suffer a bit more like lizard brain paying in the short-term to take

advantage of the upside of their exponential effect, but, again, it's like the personal brand point you brought up. It's like you're going to go through hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of repetitions that just fall on deaf ears, and eventually, you see something click and you just hang on to it. That's the signal in the noise that you pursue, and then you just keep refining that signal.

Jim:

[00:37:40](#)

Yeah. Great answer. Back in, again, the paleolithic era, I had to send via snail mail all of my inquiry letters to try to write my first book. I had been out for a walk and I was 33 or whatever, and I came home and said to my wife, "Well, what I really need to do here is write a book."

She's a very practical person, and this is 1993, right? So, no internet, no social media, bad suits, the whole deal. She's like, "You do know, Jim, that you need a publisher to actually publish, right?"

I went, "Of course, I know that. I'm going to go to the bookstore and I'm going to get the book with all the publishers' addresses and I'm going to do a one-page idea about ..." This was my first book, *Invest Like the Best*, "and I'm going to send it to everyone."

Well, like you, I sent it to, I don't know, 100 publishers. The ones who bothered responding, which I thought was very polite in hindsight, were like, "Who are you? Why are you bothering us? This is of no interest. Computers to manage, to clone money ... What are you talking about? You're mad," right?

So, I kept all those. Unfortunately, we lost them in the move. I loved them. I loved them because it was all like Edison, right? I didn't fail. I just came up with another way not to do a light bulb until two letters came, one from Wiley, one from McGraw Hill, "Yeah. This looks pretty interesting."

So, what I always try to tell people is, especially young people because I was born luckier, I think, because I'm not a comparative person. I don't compare myself to other people, basically. I think, I don't know, maybe I just got lucky, but a lot of people do. So, one of the other things that I try to get younger people to understand is when you're worrying about what other people are thinking about you, let me hit you with some truth. They're not thinking about you at all.

Jack:

[00:40:08](#)

Yeah. They don't care.

Jim: [00:40:12](#) The people that you care about, caring about you, they're not going to think about you at all unless, I always had this, unless you give them a reason to think about you. Okay? That's where this whole thing goes. That's where this whole idea of nonlinear growth, exponential growth, why the tools that we now have available to us allow for people who are super curious, willing to understand that other people aren't thinking about them, and then follow that curiosity. Everybody, in my opinion, everybody has some kind of skillset that other people don't have, that if you really refine it can also be incredibly marketable, right?

So, another thing I wanted to ask you about because somebody wrote about it on your site, which was impostor syndrome. I also talk about this with Polina. She's got the newsletter, wonderful woman or even more, they create a legend is what the spooks would call it, right? By the way, huge fan of British MI5. Great job. Anyway, they create this alter ego, right? At first, I'm like, "I don't like that. I don't like that." I get it. I guess I prefer the alter ego creation to being an impostor syndrome. Maybe, do you have any insights into that because you work with a lot of people that might say that? So, if you have insights, I'd love to hear them.

Jack: [00:43:40](#) Sure.

Jim: [00:43:41](#) Secondly, how do you help that person get over that impostor syndrome?

Jack: [00:43:46](#) So, I think there's a couple of things. I think impostor syndrome is really a confidence issue for most people, and I think Seth Godin has a great piece on this like, "The reason you're feeling impostor syndrome is because you are an impostor, and that's the pursuit that you've chosen," right? You want to do something that other people aren't doing. You want to follow the path less traveled. You are an impostor by definition, so embrace the fact that you are trying to break in to an area that you weren't in before. So, you could use the impostor, if you like.

I think the thread that goes through everything that we've talked about is this idea of just because you want something or you want to be perceived a certain way does not mean that that will happen, right? I think that's where things like How to Win Friends and Influence People, that's where the clichés come from is because people read the title and they're like, "Oh, I can just change the way I decide to be and the world will adapt." That's not how it works, right?

The other contradictory thing in the exponential nature of the internet is I don't have to put the hard yards in and become top 10% of anything because there's so many people on the internet that somebody is going to pay me for my bottom 25% version of this thing. Not true either.

So, I think this is where it gets really nuanced is you have to have repetitive experience of generating a result or solving a problem for someone, and the iteration of that feeling or the compounding nature of that feeling just gives you more and more confidence to go out and find other people that you can help or other people that want to hear the thing that you've talked about or the thing that you've proven personally. So, that, to me, is get busy proving something to yourself, initially, right? It could like, "I can draw a pixel perfect version of a portrait of my wife." That's proof that you have to build up and put work into the craft to generate that, right? Your wife is a photographer. It's like you don't go to the shop and buy a camera and become a photographer. You'd take 25,000 pictures a week for 10 years, then you're a photographer.

Jim: [00:46:31](#)

Exactly.

Jack: [00:46:32](#)

That, to me, is you do the things that don't scale and then you tap into this just incredibly infinite combination of technologies in order to just find people that believe in that thing that you've done. So, I think a lot of people feel like impostors because the proof doesn't exist underneath the thing that they're doing. It's going back to the pyramid or the iceberg analogy, where it's like, "Let me help you with this," or "Come and listen to me on topic X." When you don't have all of the ice sitting underneath the water, you feel like an impostor because the people that come to you or the people that you've persuaded based on that hollow sales pitch, you can't actually help them.

So, I think, for me, where my initial confidence came from is Visualize Value, for example, the before and after of the three clients that I worked with in my personal network that didn't have the ability to explain themselves before and now they do. If you make that happen once, you're like, "Okay. I can do this. Now, my job is to just go and find other people that need my help with this thing or other people that need to hear this message or other people that can benefit from X."

So, finding that first person is really difficult, and it's the unscalable stuff. It's sending 150 letters, it's applying for 150 jobs on Craigslist, it's posting 150 illustration on Behance or Twitter or Dribbble, whatever else it is, and then you take that

skillset, you take that belief you have in yourself and you use technology to basically build a network of people that appreciates it. The less proof you have, the more of an impostor you're going to feel, and you can't really attack it from the other angle. It just gets worse and worse and worse.

Jim: [00:48:32](#) Right, right. The idea that I love that you seem to always come back to is the idea that, "Hey, all of this takes some time." The way you grow in confidence is you build confidence by correcting errors. How do you correct errors? You have them pointed out to you or you discovered them yourself, but you have a mind that is open enough to understanding that probably that first trap is riddled with hairs. You've probably accept the whole thing, right?

Jack: [00:48:32](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jim: [00:50:44](#) The world is dynamic.

We were talking about these things might have been found in earlier texts. You're right. They are. Read the Gita. Read the Tao Te Ching. Read all of that stuff and guess what you'll find. Boom. There it is. Life is movement. Life is not stasis. The tree branch that is brittle and old falls off when snow comes on it. The younger tree branch that is supple and bends lives, right?

So, I mean, there's so many good messages out there for people who want to find them that it's just like you can do it, and that's the other thing that I always try to get people to understand. It's like the way you believe in yourself, the way you believe in yourself is different in my opinion than other people sometimes think. You believe in yourself by doing something time and time and time and time again. Each time you do it, you do it a little less bad, and each time you do it, you learn a little more, you correct some errors.

If you're not in learning mode, you're not in error correction mode, and you're not going to make it as far as I'm concerned.

So, I think that I love, again, the way you are doing things in an approach where it doesn't take an hour with you on a podcast or the phone. Does this hour help and illuminate what you do and your message? Absolutely, right? So, hopefully, people are thinking, "I like this Jack Butcher guy. I'm going to watch him a little more." Maybe after they listen to the podcast, they're going to go, "Oh, no, man. He nailed it. Okay. I got it," but people sometimes put these things in the wrong order, right?

It's like don't go and be on podcasts or make announcements to the world when your stuff is still crap.

Jack: [00:55:08](#) Right, right, right.

Jim: [00:55:10](#) Right?

Jack: [00:55:10](#) Yeah

Jack: [00:55:17](#) Yeah, and a lot of it is a function of just the process. If you had told me a year ago even that we'd be doing this, I'd be like, "No. There's no chance. No way." It's very unpredictable the path things take and the opportunities that arise from just sticking to the thing. You've got this thesis. If I rewind two years and look at the first couple of images of Visualize Value, yes, there were some reaction to it, barely at all, but there was a few people who shared it, people are viewing it, and you have some positive feedbacks like, "Okay." This is just a process of iteration.

Now, I heard this guy maybe three years ago now. I went to this, I think it was some small business meetup in New York, and this guy uses analogy of if you can identify the feeling that you love as opposed to the deliverable or the very specific output, what is the feeling that you love to recreate? For me, I think it's this idea of solving communication problems, like puzzles, riddles. When I feel like I've distilled something in a way that gives it more context or is going to make it accessible to more people, I get that rush, and then the confirmation of that is secondary.

So, I could solve that and save it on my computer and be happy with it or hang it on my wall or put it on my desk. The job is done, and that level of satisfaction, if you could generate that for yourself, I think that's a great indicator that the market is going to value something because, now, all this technology essentially is doing is just finding people that value the same things you do or want perspective, want to see what your perspective is on X, but that comes as a result of you finding and pursuing this thing you love in private, and I think that is, again, another bad loop that you can catch yourself in, and I'd been in that loop is if everything is about the validation you get from the market, that's an unwinnable game, right?

Talk about infinite loops. If your worth is determined by how many people are responding to X, then until you get 7.8 billion likes on a post, you're not going to be satisfied, and that's not going to happen. So, again, it's just super nuanced, but if you

can generate the satisfaction before it goes out to the jury, the panel or whatever that might be, whether it's Twitter or your job or whatever you're doing, that to me is a great indicator that, "Okay. If this succeeds, I can actually turn it into something, too," because the flip side to that is, I don't think this way, maybe some people do, but you mentioned people come and talk to you about your business like, "All right. You should do this, and this will be super successful," it's like, "Well, I don't want to do that, and I can't wake up every day and jump out of bed and be excited about doing that. Maybe you think the market would appreciate it, but I cannot generate that. So, your advice is worthless to me," right?

I think there's a lot of people that speculate and talk like that, but it really is about identifying what you can sustain rather than maybe there's some genius inside that if you could wake up every day and produce that thing, the market would love it, but you have to start with what you can personally produce. I think it's just an opposite way of looking at things. Again, seems so obvious in retrospect, but I didn't think like that before I first started my business. I think that we could do a whole other conversation on this, but what I've learned since being responsible for the bottom line of everything in all things, you just view the world in a very, very different way, you behave very differently when you have the box stuff with you.

I think there's a Taleb quote about this like, "It's hard to bullshit when you have a P&L."

Jim: [01:00:01](#) Right. "Don't tell me what you think, show me what's in your portfolio," I think he would say.

Jack: [01:00:05](#) Yeah, yeah, and that to me is a fundamental shift. Even when I worked for these big agencies, I didn't appreciate the fact that the people that started those agencies was just someone who in a garage or in their bedroom, the same thing that I was doing. I grew up in the UK, very different culture surrounding entrepreneurship. My family, military family. None of this stuff came naturally to me, whatsoever. So, the models or the assumptions that I had about how reality functioned and, "Oh, if you want a job, someone is just going to give you a job," or "My career is going to be X, Y, and Z because I decided it's going to be that." I was just so incredibly wrong about that. Then when you're out fending for yourself, the speed at which you learn is incredible.

Jim: [01:00:57](#) Yeah. So, I call that an owner mentality, and you don't have to be an owner to have an owner mentality. You can distinguish

people you have it from those who don't have it in maybe two minutes tops. What you want to try to do is surround yourself with people who have an owner mentality because they, just like you've just outlined, they think completely differently than people who don't.

As I was listening to you, I was reminded of the Robert Frost poem where he says something along the lines of his aim in life is to unite his avocation and vocation as his two eyes make one in sight. Then he goes on to say, "Only when love and need are united is a deed ever really done," right? So, he unites that you've just done, too. He unites that emotion of avocation with vocation, love and need are one, and bang, fantastic things happen because, again, at our basis, we are emotion-driven creatures, and trying to deny it.

I get endless entertainment trying to watch people deny that they are basically making almost all of their decisions emotionally. I'll say, "Well, guys like Cialdini know all about it, and they get you to do, and Rory Sutherland, and Jack Butcher, they know, they know," but more to specifically what you're talking about that I also think it's really important to understand the process and I know you're right, it is cliché because the sports guys made it cliché, but the process is far more important than the specific goals because if you make the process the important thing, guess what? Your goals change. Guess what? You're open to things that if you had, "I will be X by this time," guess what? Your prover is going to just go, "All right, Jack. That's where we're going. That's what we're going to do," and it's going to blind you. You'd think I'm exaggerating here, I'm not. It's going to literally blind you to all of the alternatives.

Whereas on the other hand, you make the process the thing, part of the process is seeing all the stuff that's available to you. So, I'm not opposed to goals, but understand that you need a process in place to get to them, make the process more important, and also, if you do that correctly, some of those goals you're going to scratch off because you're like, "Yeah. You know what? I don't want to do that."

So, I think, look, you're on your own hero's journey here. I think it's an amazing one. I think you're going to continue to do great things.

So, any last minute thoughts before I ask you the parting question about if you had your 15-second spot or 30-second spot on the Superbowl, what would it be?

Jack: [01:04:56](#) You know what? I have to put this in the show notes because I can't remember who said it originally, "No one owes you anything."

Jim: [01:05:08](#) So, you could just buy a 10-second one spot.

Jack: [01:05:11](#) Two seconds. I think that idea took me forever to understand.

Jim: [01:05:20](#) I love it.

Jack: [01:05:22](#) I used to think I think that because I've ended up in a different situation or I haven't had certain number of challenges so maybe I can think that, but the more challenges come my way, the more right it becomes. Whenever I overlay that on top of a problem, I'm just like, "Okay. The onus is on me to figure this out," and figuring out is the thing, that's the experience I get from figuring out is the prize here, and the more situations I put myself in where I do have to figure it out, the more anti-fragile I become, and that's been just a completely different mentality and the way I've ...

I have one other thing. I think the idea of saying no took me a long, long, long time to get comfortable with that, especially when I attributed a lot of my growth and my early career to saying yes beyond my capacity for things and not advocating against that because I think there is definitely a time to just stack up experience and say yes to things that you're unqualified for, but then there comes a point where you have to have enough conviction to say no to things that appear incredible on the surface, but would ultimately be a distraction away from the one thing or the very focused pursuit that can actually flip the way you interact with the market.

So, an agency is really, you're responding to demand, and this is maybe the parting thought is that process of moving from responding to demand and chasing the market to generating demand and having the market chase you, that is the product of this entire journey is you have to be confident enough to say no to people, stick with your curiosity, produce things that you love, and trust the fact that there are other people out there that are going to value the same things you value, and that will bring you way more satisfaction, opportunity, great network of friends than clamoring after things.

There is a period of time where you have to do that, at least in my experience, but then there's a leap of faith. There's a moment in time where you're like, "Okay. I've found something

that I love and I'm going to go all in on this thing," and the things that will happen after that fact are beyond what I could have predicted and beyond what I thought was even in the scope of possibility. So, yeah, maybe I would need a 30-second one to get that in a-

Jim: [01:08:16](#) Well, you know what's great about that is I did that without knowing I was doing it with What Works on Wall Street. I kept telling anyone who would listen to me that there was no compendium of Wall Street's most popular investment advice. Buy stocks with low PEs. Well, okay, does that work? Buy stocks with the biggest earnings gains. Sure, but does that work? There's a lot of academic articles that were looking at this, but come on. I mean, I can count on both hands the number of people who are practitioners who might have been reading those academics.

So, I was taking, by the way, huge risks when I was doing this because I was bleeding money, and it was like talk about going all in. I had this belief that once this book got published, it would make my career. Everybody didn't believe me, especially my family, my wife. They all thought I was insane.

In almost everything, why think, "I'm going to outcompete them"? Why don't you just create a new category where there's no competition right now, and the worst thing that could happen to you would be that you didn't have competition in the future because you want to develop that.

So, I think that, man, I mean, that is great advice, and then my final thought would be the challenge that I have found with working with people, super bright people, by the way, is this idea of surrendering your agency. You put it differently. You put it better, actually. No one owes you anything. My immediate thought was, except to people you've loaned money to.

Jack: [01:10:35](#) Yeah, right, right, right.

Jim: [01:10:39](#) What I would think is if you really don't want to ever see somebody ever again, loan them money.

Jack: [01:10:45](#) Right, right, right. Yeah. That is the one exception to the rule, but imagine you are starting out from zero, that to me is the onus is on you to earn the interaction.

Jim: [01:11:03](#) Absolutely.

Jack: [01:11:04](#) It's just a fascinating reframe. I have been definitely stung in the opposite direction with that, the onus on that advice, too.

Jim: [01:11:14](#) Yeah, but the culture dictates to us that people do owe us things, right? It's the they and they say

Jim: [01:11:36](#) So, I bang on this don't let ideas or people live rent-free in your head and people do that all the time. I don't want to be really overly dramatic, but if you surrender your agency, I mean, this could be a mantra, "No one owes you anything," and that is such a hard thing for people to swallow because they think the world owes them a lot, and the answer is, "No. You owe the world a lot."

So, I flip that around and I say, to complete the advice I give, which people are like, "Thank you. That's so helpful." So, fuck the brand. Be yourself. Be funny, and help people with their problems, right? So, people misunderstand humor, I think, and how incredibly powerful it is. It can bring down tyrants. Why do you think they throw all the comics in jail? Why do you think Lenny Bruce got arrested? Why do you think the first act of Hitler was to get rid of anyone who is even slightly funny? Because that is the little bastard turning away and thinking all of the funny, funny things that underline a much more important point, right?

Jack: [01:13:32](#) Yeah. It cuts through.

Jim: [01:13:33](#) It really does, but I think the final thing is solve other people's problems. That sounds so simple. It's not. I mean, I'm sure when you were in your agencies, you thought you were solving other people's problems, and then they came in and inserted their own priors and their own mixed up beliefs about things. I think that's why you see so many of these ad campaigns even today that just are horrible, horrible, right?

It's like when I saw the first iPad ad campaign with the shadows dancing, I'm like, "Oh, man! This guy is a genius," because it was all about emotion. I think some of them didn't even have the Apple trademark.

Jack: [01:14:25](#) Logo on it, yeah, yeah.

Jim: [01:14:28](#) I instantly know that that's Apple. I instantly know, and then they did a series of different kinds of music. Just brilliant, and the people in silhouette, not showing anyone, brilliant, right?

Anyway, this has been fantastic. I think you are going to go super far. Now, we come to our final question, which is we're going to make you the emperor of the whole world for one day. You can't kill anybody. You can't put anyone in a reeducation camp. You can't disappear the people who really bother you, but you can incept people. You can get them to wake up the day after you've done your duty as the emperor of the world thinking that it's their own idea. What two ideas are going to be a bafelish and implant and incept in humanities' mind?

Jack: [01:16:11](#) I think the first would be you have some unique combination of skills or you have a unique combination of curiosities that can lead you to develop something that is truly unique and valuable would be the first, and to-

Jim: [01:16:36](#) That's good. That's a good one.

Jack: [01:16:37](#) ... follow that curiosity because I think maybe this is leading into the second point, but the industrialization of the education process were churning out on mass like the same types of people, right? I think the idea of organic outcomes of education is something that I would really, really, really push for and try to build any resource possible to make that happen, and this has been said far more eloquently than I could say it, but that does seem like a relic of an old economy now, the way learning happens.

The second one I think would come back to that comparison piece. Unless you're playing a zero sum game, there's no value in comparing yourself to anyone or anything, and you don't have the data to do it, anyway. That to me is really bizarre. It's like, "I'm going to make a comparison to this person who for some reason I've identified as a peer of mine, but they grew up completely differently than me, they've went to school in a different place, they've met a thousand different people that I have, they consume a thousand different types of things every day than I have, but for some reason, I've plucked the metric out of this guy that I'm going to use to compare myself to him." I would just want to make that the most absurd idea in the world, and I think that would help a lot of people.

Jim: [01:18:18](#) I love them both. I think you're absolutely right. The problem with the path of change and this happens everywhere from science to commerce, to literature, to painting, it is universal, and that is Max Planck's famous axiom, progress happens one funeral at a time because people get set in their ways and I vowed that I would never do that, keep a beginner's mind, keep learning. Now, I have a seven-year-old grandson who sends me

his favorite music videos, and I just love it because I love everything new, but it's a choice. You got to make that choice, and I love both of those.

Listen, Jack. This has been awesome. Do you want to tell people where they can find you?

Jack: [01:19:15](#) Twitter is the best place. So, @JackButcher and @VisualizeValue. That's it.

Jim: [01:19:21](#) Perfect. Perfect. We'll put it in the show notes. This has been great. Continue to create.

Jack: [01:19:28](#) You, too, Jim. I loved it. Thank you for having me on.

Jim: [01:19:31](#) My pleasure. Cheers.

Jack: [01:19:32](#) Cheers, mate.