



# Getting To Know Rich Schefren

Rich Schefren was a marketer ahead of his time in the early days of online business. In this interview, find out how he continues to approach marketing with a futurist view in mind.





**Rich Schefren**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 714. And I have a very special guest today. [Rich Schefren](#), welcome to the call.

**Rich:** Glad to be here, James. Thanks for having me.

## The guy who kicked off James's online journey

**James:** Well, this has been a long time coming. I'm thinking back to the year 2005 or maybe early 2006. And I'm sitting in my house in the heat there and I'm on the computer there looking for some [Jay Abraham](#) resources. I wanted to see if I could find this book that I heard someone talk about, Mr. X.

And I'm searching for Jay Abraham, and this page pops up, and it says, 'Hey, you could get these free reports of Jay Abraham.' And it's signed off by this guy Rich Schefren and Stephen Pierce. And It had all these sort of yellow, italicized, bolded words, and it was very compelling. And I put my name into that, and you guys sent me the reports.

But then it said, 'Hey look, if you want to give these reports away and earn commission, you can join this place called ClickBank and use this link, and we'll send you a commission for that.' And I thought, Wow, this is amazing. It's like, I don't know why I felt compelled to put my name in, but it was like, it just flowed very smoothly and I got my ClickBank link and I started trying to put it on the free account that I got with my website hosting provider. Well, my internet service provider. And I put my links up there and I didn't sell a single one.

**Rich:** Oh, bummer.

**James:** So I don't think I made you rich back then. But that's my absolute first interaction with affiliate marketing online. I was involved with copywriting, but I didn't know the word at the time, and the name capture, the whole free report. You were way ahead of the pack, obviously, getting into it early.

By the time I started to get online, you know, I was thinking maybe I'm too late. And this is now, this is 15 years ago we're talking about. So you were there at the very start of my online journey. So that will always be special. And there were other little milestones along the way, which I'm sure will come up in this conversation, where you've had a touch point in my life. So this episode's filled with a lot of gratitude and acknowledgement for the work you did in the early days for me.

**Rich:** Well, thank you.

**James:** And I went on to get all of your reports and manifestos, and I think you've actually really revolutionized what we see with the current stock of experts. And new people coming wouldn't have a clue how pivotal you were in the beginning, but the manifesto where you had you on every single role within the business was deeply impactful. And I used to study your material that you had used to grow the business that you had prior to coming online. I think you had a clothing store, and was it chiropractic?

**Rich:** Hypnosis center.

**James:** Hypnosis, right.

**Rich:** Yeah.

**James:** So I used to use those materials as a general manager in the Mercedes-Benz dealership to help build and train my team, and I was just feeding off that stuff. And you know, you were right there. So thank you for that.

## What's different, what's new, and what's the same in the industry

But I'd love you to tell me what changes you've seen in the last 15 years, because you rose right to the peak of being the guru behind the gurus. And then for a little while there, you went offline, and now you're back. So there's been obviously a lot of change for you, and what a journey.

**Rich:** Yes, for sure. So what has changed? Wow, I guess lots has changed. But you know, certain things, I guess, also kind of are the same. I guess what has changed that is concerning is just how much power that a few companies like Google and Facebook have, and Amazon. You know, Google's always had that, at least it's always felt that way. But I believe that the competition between these rival, these big platforms have kind of hurt smaller business, especially what's happened like, with fake news and stuff like that. It's kind of had these platforms start favoring bigger brands as opposed to smaller businesses. But yeah, I mean, the industry has definitely gone in cycles to, you know, from being lone islands to very JV and affiliate, like, centric to back to lone islands. I think it'll probably kind of meet somewhere in between; I think there will be more room for partnerships, but maybe not like it used to be.

“I believe that as time goes on businesses will be more in partnership with their customers for whatever result they're getting.”

- RICH SCHEFREN



I also think that we don't even know yet what the next evolution will look like. No one saw Uber coming until 4G developed, and now they'll be 5G and no one really knows what type of services, what, you know, the internet of things, like that's probably the thing I'm probably... Even though this might not be really answering the question that you're asking me, the thing I'm probably most excited about is just how I believe that as time goes on that businesses will be more in partnership with their customers for whatever result they're getting. I think that's what the internet of things really allows.

Like, I use this one example, but it can be applied to anything. You know, your imagination is probably the limit. But it could be like, a mattress company and instead of selling you a mattress, you pay per night based on the quality of sleep you get, and then they're incentivized to help you get the best night's sleep possible, etc. So everything can kind of be that way. Maybe less owning and stuff.

But anyway, I'd say the internet marketing space, I guess I see less innovation than ever before. And I think that's also a function of the Big Three. Like, I don't expect there to be all of a sudden another platform out there that really attracts massive attention, at least away from those giants. You know, whereas that was not the case – there always seemed to be more things rolling out. I would say that there's less of that. I'd say that there's always been a hot place to advertise, and I think that right now, that's still YouTube. But yeah, things are more the same than different, I would say, except that there's just a lot more that can be done to promote, and I think that then has people promoting even more.



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"A LOT OF PEOPLE END UP DOING A LOT OF MEDIocre INSTEAD OF A FEW GREAT THINGS. **WHEN YOU DO DO SOMETHING GREAT, THAT STANDS OUT, AND I DON'T THINK THAT THAT'S CHANGED, WHICH IS A GOOD THING."**

**RICH SCHEFREN**

## Rare greatness amidst common mediocrity

This is probably a little bit off topic, but it's to the point of what we're talking about, though. I think that even if you look at everything successful that I did, it came down to some critical pieces of content. And I think that people, well, a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of content marketers, even, try to be prolific as opposed to being great. And I think that a lot of people end up doing a lot of mediocre instead of a few great things. And I think that the internet is populated with that. And I think that when you do do something great, that stands out, and I don't think that that's changed, which is a good thing.

**James:** Yeah, that's very accurate. You know, we're prolific with content, but we're certainly making a huge effort to be better – better content, more research, picking the best parts to promote, being more relevant. I suppose the documentaries that showed us the extent of the manipulation of social media with political campaigns etc., it just shows the power of relevancy. The fact that someone in one part of the country could see a completely different campaign to someone else in a different part, based on their response to the messaging and the segmentation, etc.

One of the things that hasn't really changed, that still blows my mind, is that we're still using these old-fashioned keyboard things. Like, when we can get to the Minority Report thing, or I can just think and move my hands around to make the computer do what it wants, I feel like I'll finally be empowered, because I still can't type. And you know, voice and that side of things is starting to come on a lot better. A lot of us have got a device in our house, and we're training on that, but it hasn't got to the point where it's eliminated that keyboard, for me, yet.

But I also agree, we're seeing a little less variety. Like if a SnapChat comes up with something, then it's going to be in Instagram fairly quickly. And if Twitter comes up with something, then it's going to be in the Facebook feed pretty quickly. I think those big ones are just getting stronger and stronger.

And what I think a lot of these small marketers don't really realize but they're starting to figure out, is that they don't count at all unless they're spending millions of dollars on ad budget in a month. They're not a big customer. You know, their hundred thousand dollars a month doesn't even scrape the surface. That's why we don't have much recourse or say in it.

A photograph showing several people from behind, looking down at their smartphones or tablets. The scene is dimly lit, with a blueish tint, suggesting an indoor environment like a subway station or a public event.

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**"WE WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT FROM THOSE HUGE PLATFORMS. USE THEM WHILE THEY'RE WORKING, BUT DON'T BE UPSET IF THEY DISAPPEAR."**

JAMES SCHRAMKO

## Why seek independence from the big players?

I like how you talked about the difference between the island and then partnerships in the island and partnerships. I've long held the belief that we want to be independent from those huge platforms. Use them while they're working, but don't be upset if they disappear, because it's almost inevitable that they will push us off the platform at some point if we don't suit their agenda.

**Rich:** Yeah, no doubt.

**James:** I think a lot of them have no doubt they're looking to please a shareholder before they're trying to please their free content creators, you know?

**Rich:** Yeah, for sure. And I think that right now, it's like, you know, if you are competing with a competitor in your margin, you're both giving a lot of your money to the platform.

**James:** Yeah.

**Rich:** Right? For the same leads, to be in front of the same people where, you know, it's like if there was an opportunity to join venture on your lead gen, all of a sudden the platform would get less, and both companies would be more successful. So I hope that there's opportunities for that going forward. Maybe not direct competitors like that, but that attention can be siphoned from these walled gardens that can be passed along more outside.

## Do not underestimate the power of a pamphlet

**James:** So when it comes to content, I think one of the most remarkable pieces of content was your manifesto. And you put a lot of research into that; it was a high quality document, it got shared on a really wide stage. It was a classic example of high quality. And I've been researching more about this. Friends like [Dean Jackson](#) pointed out that a lot of the biggest ideas in the world, like communism, and also the precursor to the American way of doing things, they were all started off in small booklets, or actually pamphlets. The whole of the communism thing idea came from a pamphlet. And so it doesn't have to be a big document, it doesn't have to be a book or a series. It can really just be one core thing that strikes at the heart. Can you tell me the story around that manifesto, like, what led up to that, and were you surprised by the results of it?

**Rich:** I was incredibly surprised by the results from it. I was hoping to get like, a dozen clients when I first wrote it.

I had finished a coaching program and I had three months until a project was starting with Agora. So I had this like, three-month window. And my coaching program that I had just finished was 18 months long. So I wasn't really thinking that I was going to be able to do anything in those three months. But then I thought, well, I could probably condense it down to 11 weeks and, you know, three months is 12 weeks, so maybe I can do this. Maybe I'll just do a small group.

And it's kind of a confluence of things. I had given a presentation that was loosely based on what the manifesto ended up becoming. And it resonated very deeply. So I guess on that level, I knew I was already on to something. But what I tried to do was like, I was writing to a market of people that believe that marketing was everything. And I felt like I knew something they didn't, that they also needed to have some business understanding in order to kind of mix with that marketing knowledge. And I knew that based on my own experience, and I knew that based on the results I was getting for my clients. But that wasn't the standard way of thinking, so there wasn't exactly like, a line outside my door and people beating their way in, because nobody really appreciated what understanding business could do for you.

So there was that, and then I'd say the last thing was there. I was listening to a Dan Kennedy seminar on coaching and consulting, and someone asked him on one of the follow up calls what they should do, because they had a coaching program, but they didn't have any front end products, and they didn't want to make any front end products because they were afraid they would cannibalize the sale on their coaching program. And I was in the same exact spot at that time. And Dan just laughed at him and said, "Bobby, you don't get it – you take your best ideas from your coaching program and you put it in your front end products. That's what gets them to want to buy the coaching program." And that clicked for me.

And then it clicked for me that like, Okay, well, maybe it's even better to give people who, you know, are not even in my front end, in my lead gen, some of my best ideas. And maybe I could do it in a way where, what led me to the conclusion that you needed to understand some business to be successful, maybe I could kind of use that in my head of what it convinced me; maybe it could be the same things that convinced them. You know, if that makes sense. Like, recognizing that I believe something that my market didn't. What led me to that belief, and can I bring them to that belief?

Later on, because I was caught so off guard by the success. I wrote a lot more reports very much after – one, because they were so successful, but two, because I was trying to figure out why. But at that time, that was all I knew. That was what I was trying to do. And I was blown away. I never thought that writing 30 pages would change my life, but it totally changed my life. Completely. And yeah, I mean, it was a game changer for me. For sure.

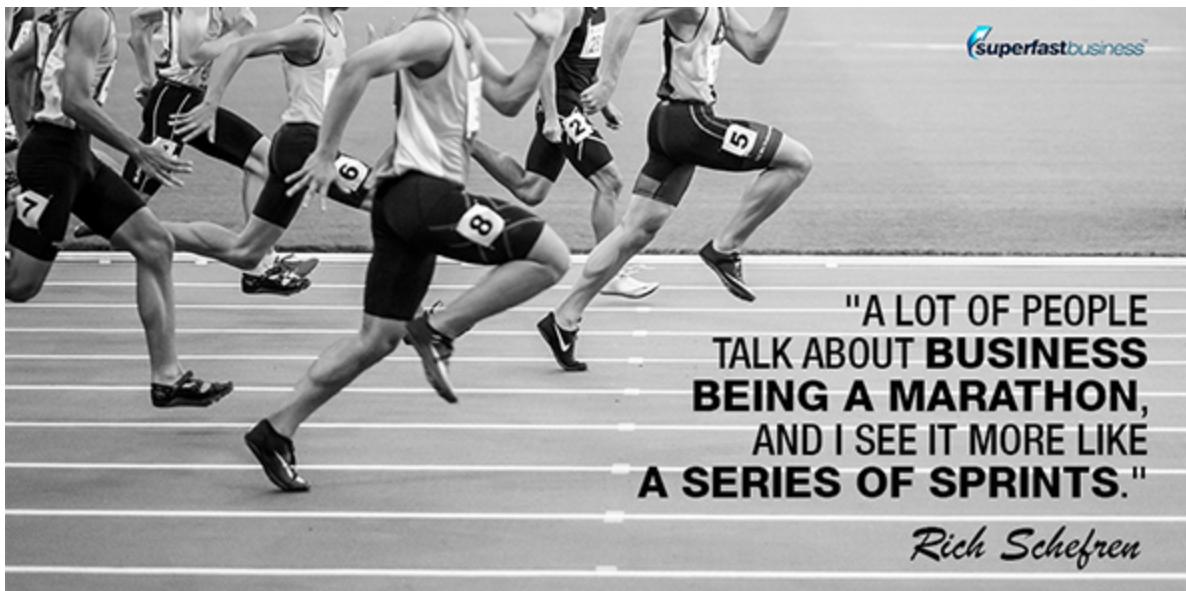
**James:** Yeah, it's great to see. I mean, I had a similar experience with my first information product, which was a cheat sheet helping people how to get better SEO and better results from their website. Because in the course of failing with my first affiliate campaign, with your offer, I decided to figure out how to build my own website. Because the page on my internet service provider was not getting any traffic. So as I took notes through that process, I documented them and I created a couple of lines in Excel, and then I'd cut and paste them into a Word document and turn them into a cheat sheet. And I went on to sell a lot of copies of that cheat sheet. It was my first thousand-dollar-a-day product. And it was really only 10 pages, 20 pages and 30, and expanded to 115 and then turned into a membership. And then it was too niche, and then I went more general.

## Sprinting versus running a marathon

But I remember, when I was still in the dealership, I was a general manager by day and I was trying to build a website by night. And I remember reading, you used to go to the beach and write notes in your journal. It was hard to relate to that at the time. But now I can totally understand it. I'm in the water every day, and I get that you figured out how to leverage yourself really well. And you do take time away from being, you know, a cog in the machine on a regular basis. How important do you think that is? And do you see a lot of people miss that step?

**Rich:** I do. But I also think it's also, I feel like I have less choice in the matter, primarily based on my work style. I like to work really, really hard, and then not.

**James:** So you're on and off.



**Rich:** Yeah. I've always kind of thought of myself as more of like a sprinter than a marathon runner. And a lot of people talk about business being a marathon, and I see it more like a series of sprints. And at least on the marketing level, that's really resonated for me. Like, you've had thought that it's easier to like, jump into the market and sprint against a bunch of people who are running like more of a marathon, rise above the clutter for a short period of time, attract a lot of attention and then take that attention and focus it on demand for a product, but then to kind of retreat into the background until the next campaign. It's a lot easier and it works well with my style of working, like, you know, pedal to the metal, but at a pace that would be unsustainable long term, I guess.

**James:** And do you pull off the pace before you blow up? Or do you wait till you blow up, till you know you've hit the limit?

**Rich:** What do you mean?

**James:** Like when you max out?

**Rich:** I work till it's done.

## To be, to do, and to have

**James:** You went to this meteoric success, right? You were the guy behind the guys.

**Rich:** Right.

**James:** And then you weren't there for a while there.

**Rich:** Well, that's a totally different thing. That wasn't as much taking a break as it was really reexamining my life. And that was more because I had achieved all the goals that I had wanted to achieve a lot younger than I thought I would achieve them, and I found myself not really sure what I wanted to do next, and I found myself not happy and not really wanting to do anything. And that then started me down a bad spiral of – well, not necessarily a bad spiral, but a very unpleasantly-feeling spiral. Maybe it was actually all for the good. Definitely the end of it was good – I got a lot more self-knowledge and understanding of really what I'm about and what would make me happy.

But yeah, I mean, what I thought was going to make me happy didn't. And I guess, like, the best way to describe it without getting too overly spiritual or that kind of stuff with it was that, a model that was once described to me as be, do, have, you know? And you can kind of put that order in different orders – you could, you know, be, do, have; you're going to have, do, be; or the other way, whatever the other way is.

So let's see, have, do, be, right? Like, so have, do, be is like, what you could say are a lot of opportunity seekers or dreamers in the world. They believe that if they had something, they'd be able to do something. And then because they had that thing, they'd be able to do that thing, and then they'd be that thing, right? So that's a dreamer philosophy, because they're waiting to have something.

The doers in life, which I would have considered myself one, was more a do, have, be. Like, I'm going to do certain things that's going to get me certain things, and then I'm going to be a certain way. Like, I'm going to do these things – I'm going to make this money, and then I'm going to be happy; or I'm going to do these things, I'm going to get known, and I'm going to be happy, or whatever. So do, have, be.

And I found that that's a great recipe for getting sh\*t done. But it doesn't really work that way. What you do and what you have doesn't necessarily make you happy. You're going to kind of have to be, do, have. You've got to be the thing first. And while that won't help anyone right now make more money, that's what I had to kind of figure out in a much deeper way than I'm explaining it now. Which is why it didn't take a week, it took a couple of years. But yeah, there was some deep reflection as to how I wanted to proceed with the rest of my life.

**James:** That's a nice one. You know, I started a podcast with [Ezra Firestone](#), and it's called [Think Act Get](#). And I based it on the activator, behavior, consequence model, you know? That the way you think determines the way you act and results in what you get. It's probably closer to the be, do, have version of it.

## The state of things and predictions for the future

But it's good to see you back, and you've got a new passion and you're on another sprint, this time where you're bringing attention into the market, you're putting a focus on the changes that are happening with, the controls are being taken out of the hands of the small business marketers. So it would be interesting to hear about your thoughts on this, because you have been regarded as somewhat of a futurist, and I'd like to know what you know now that no one else knows, that you're bringing to the market.

**Rich:** Well, I do think that like, long term, I think that we're going to see some changes with big tech. I think that they're going to be broken up in some way, shape or form, even though that's like, we don't even know how that's possible right now, because they've infiltrated their ways into so many parts of our lives.

But I think that what you'll see is that these platforms will increasingly become more hostile towards small business, that, I think we were talking about it earlier, but I don't even remember now. Like, you know, Google passed the threshold several months ago. They're now, more than 50 percent of the searches on their site don't leave the site. And that wasn't the original intention behind search engines, nor, you know, the original intention behind Facebook, which got the whole world saying, Like us on Facebook and their ads and sent all their traffic there.

And, you know, these businesses are now in a more mature stage. And in a more mature stage of business, you don't innovate as much; you monetize better, and that's what they're doing. They're monetizing their platforms better, and they're doing that by creating walled gardens where you need them for basically everything. The challenge with that is that they're going to increasingly increase areas where they are going to try and make money. And that's going to infringe more and more on small business. It already has. And so I think that small businesses kind of have to wake up to that.

In addition, they hold all the data. And with what they're attempting to do now, whether it's Facebook kind of keeping all their data on their platform, or whether it's now Google getting rid of cookies over the next two years with Chrome, they're making it so that first party data, like data that a company can own itself, will become increasingly more difficult to have. And that will make using AI tools increasingly more difficult. So they're also kind of setting up a world where there will be companies that use AI tools, and there will be fewer of them. And then most other companies would struggle. And so that's what I kind of see, I see that small business is kind of in a precarious situation now, and they're being set up to be in a worse situation.

And I also think that there's been, unfortunately, and I would imagine you would agree because you know, you're an OG as well, that there's been a proliferation of people who claim expertise in almost every area of online marketing, business growth, etc. It's like they've taken one course and now they're going to parrot what was said or what they learned. And I think that that's unfortunate because I think that in a time like this, real growth strategies could be very much appreciated by most.

**James:** What you described is almost like a university graduate. They've got four years of theory and no one in the trenches. And they can only parrot. You know, I do see a couple of courses where they give people the idea that they can do a certain thing or be anything they wanted only if they just take this course, and then they're out in the marketplace. It's been a proliferation of, I guess, thin coaching, going on at high ticket rates since in the last few years.

**Rich:** It makes me feel silly about my coaching program being so inexpensive.

## Change is underway – how can you adapt?

**James:** Well, this is the marathon part, you know? Like, over the long term, I've seen a lot of people come and go and chop and change. And just holding a steady line for me has been interesting, but it's also like a snowball that just compounds and grows, and over time you can win if you stay. And I've often been talking about the concept of [own the racecourse](#) and not being dependent on one of these platforms. Because some people just set up their whole shop on someone else's turf. I mean, of course you're going to get the rent jacked up. Like a shopping center, you know? Like, it's really good to get out from under the shadow. And I've seen some big companies have, for example, left Amazon, and said, "You know what? We can sell our own stuff." Like big shoe companies, etc. And they're starting to realize, gosh, if we keep down this path, we won't actually have anything to go back to. We'll lose our footing in the marketplace. So there is a change underway. What do you think we can do about it?

**Rich:** I think there's a lot of things you can do about it. I mean, I think one is just definitely start to amp up some partnering. So there's a lot of things, right? One is amp up your partnering on lead gen side on, you know, on the backside, make sure that you're partnering with other companies that are growing their base, so that if you get together with a bunch of other companies that are doing that, you've kind of now protected yourself one level than isolation, but you also have a growth strategy.

The next thing is like, just kind of precautionary. You should be downloading your data from all of your analytics accounts, your ad accounts, on a pretty frequent basis, just in case you ever lose an account. When you are doing any kind of retargeting, and building any kind of list builds, of retargeting, you want to have a secondary account in Facebook where you just store those retargeting lists, so that if you ever lose your main account, you still actually have access to those lists. You know, you can put two different tracking pieces on any website from Facebook, so it's not a problem, you're not violating any rules.

Another thing people can do is begin to start actually using some of the alternative channels. You know, whether it's advertising on Reddit or you know, places like that.

Another is to move people from platform to platform. Like, in fact, you know, you don't want to be relying on one platform, but it's a better thing to have people have access to people on numerous platforms. And something that [Andre Chaperon](#) did a lot with with Autoresponder Madness, you know, sequential storytelling, like applying that online, moving people from platform to platform can be really effective.

I think leveraging the cheapest platform, you know, leveraging the opportunities to advertise when they show up, like right now on YouTube, it's still a better deal than everyplace else, but still moving people around nonetheless. And, you know, same with your email list and your physical addresses, all that kind of stuff.

And there's a lot more, but I guess that leads to what we have, like kind of right around, coming up. And that is, is that I came back into the game because Agora reached out to me; they were having a lot of challenges with the platforms. That was back in like 2017. I came in, and I started looking at AI and data a lot. And I was really fascinated by it. I thought the solution would be there. But I think small businesses, like I said earlier, they don't have the data. So I think they're going to be, it's going to be problematic.

**James:** I think we're at a crossroads. And this really supports what I've been telling people for so long. Like, I've been telling people this for so long that when someone loses their account, they tagged me and say, "[Own the racecourse](#)." But I love this. I call it a list guarantee, because I still think the email list is a great asset.

**Rich:** It is.

**James:** But you can guarantee that email list, you know, for deliverability and bounces and so forth, by making sure they're subscribed to YouTube videos and your iTunes, and your podcast and so forth. Because you want to be able to reach someone on multiple touch points to share your message and not get taken out if you lose a portion of your database.

**Rich:** Totally agree.

**James:** It can quickly fill in the gaps, you know, migrate people.

**Rich:** Yeah, totally.

## In parting...

**James:** Cool. So in summary, Rich, firstly, thank you for being a good marketer in the beginning and sharing your insights. It really helped me make the leap from having a job to having my own business. Thank you for having that coaching, positioning of being the best of the best, because it was something I really looked to model around, was I wanted to be the best coach out there behind the people who were doing well. Not necessarily seeking fame for that, but it's something I've been fortunate to move into progressively over the years.

**Rich:** And it's a wonderful position to have, right? Like, as you learn a lot while coaching people like that.

**James:** Oh, it's the best. Like, people pay you, where normally everyone else is paying them. And you get the deep, inside, behind-the-scenes sort of insights. It's wonderful, creative, mind-bending work. You've got to be part truth-teller, part trauma coach, part visionary strategist. Like, it's a great line of work to be in if it's up your alley.

**Rich:** Yeah.

**James:** Thank you for facilitating my first face-to-face meeting with [Jay Abraham](#), when you invited me to the loft apartment in Las Vegas; it was a true highlight. I remember, like, I just flew over just for that meeting, and I read his book again on the plane over just to make sure I knew everything. I think I sat and I spoke to him for about five or six hours straight.

**Rich:** I remember that.

**James:** It just was the best. It was like, the best moment in business at that point. And you made that happen. And it's really good to stay in touch and connect with you.

**Rich:** Congratulations also on all your success. I mean, I've been witnessing it from afar, but you know, the [book](#) and everything else, just congrats. It's been fun to watch over here, see your growth and your success all the way on the other side of the world.

**James:** It just shows how far, you know, those original lessons can be spread. It's a great collaboration. Thanks, Rich.

**Rich:** My pleasure. And thank you.



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