



Poodles and YouTube Success Tips with Brian G. Johnson



YouTube success combines personal branding, messaging, and engagement, which Brian G. Johnson has on point. Pick up tips from our latest ep with him.



Brian G. Johnson

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness. This is Episode 817. And I've brought on Brian Johnson, the YouTube extraordinaire. I don't know if that's your official tag, I just made that up. But it's all about the tags, right? YouTube's all about the tags. If I just put the right tag, then I'm going to be number one.

Brian: Please help me. Please help me for the next 45 minutes.

James: It's all right. I remember last time I was teasing you by asking you what camera I should use for my YouTube videos. But in all seriousness, let's just frame this up. Brian, this is not your first rodeo on SuperFastBusiness. I've had you three times before, because you're a top guy, like you have great information; you've got wonderful stories to share. But also, you're good at what you do.

And we're going to prove that right now, because in Episode 492, we were talking about this whole concept of [video marketing](#). In Episode 499, we were into sort of [branding and making a statement](#). In 538, I think you'll get a kick out of this, we were talking about [the evolution of building a 10,000-subscriber YouTube channel](#) in under a year.

Here we are, Episode 817. First question, it has to be asked, is, how's your poodle?

What branding is and isn't

Brian: Ah, the poodle. Exactly. I had two poodles. And, sadly, Otis died about a week ago, and he lived the most spectacular life that any dog could really hope for. And, you know, he gave me so much joy, to the point where he became part of my branding. Everybody asks me about my poodle.

There's anything I can share, is listen, brother, sister, branding ain't about the color of your logo. It's not about the shape of your logo, it's not about how pretty your website is. It's really about understanding how to tell a story that matters to the audience first, and how to subtly add little bits of flavor from your personal life, so it becomes unique to you. And for me, that's what branding is all about.

So when I started talking about my poodles, that was really all that was about, was it's just a little bit more fun. A little bit different than other people, and man, he was a great dog. Whew! Otis was the best.

James: I'm feeling for you. My daughter's favorite character on a show she's watching at the moment is called Otis. He likes to push buttons in the elevator. And yeah, my heart goes out to you. I can only guess how much of a connection must have been there. It's, you know, like, I've got five kids, so I'm guessing they're right up there on the human level, you know?

Brian: Yeah, and you know, one of the things I'm not a fan of, James, is, I know how you feel, because I think we all live our own existence.

James: Yeah, I can't imagine how you feel. But I have a lot of empathy for the fact that you would be going through a lot. How's that sit?

Brian: I was, and I did and rightfully so. You know, you spend 13 years with a being that you care deeply about and brings you a lot of joy, but I'm okay now. Like, I went through that, and I think of him fondly. Do you know Ori, the painter on Facebook and social media?

James: Of course. Bengal.

Brian: Yeah, Ori Bengal. Amazing guy. Met him once. He is just finishing off the painting of me and Otis. It's just dope. It looks great. Don't do it, kids. Don't do that dope, but it looks dope. It looks cool. And so I've got a memorial for Otis and pretty neat. And that's why they all came, to listen to me talk about my dog, Otis.

James: But you know, you've wrapped it in a marketing lesson right there. I reckon if you were to poll my audience, and you'd ask them what's the little bit of flavor or personality they associate me with, I have a guess at what it's going to come out at. I think they're going to tie in surfing, because I just can't stop talking about it, right?

Brian: A hundred percent.

James: It's on brand, you know, like, [work less, make more](#). It really is my message, is, you don't have to be a slave to your computer. You don't have to sit on that thing for 14 hours a day, and hustle and grind, and burn yourself out, and destroy your relationships, and kill your body and so forth. I want to ask you, because you're a big time YouTuber, in terms of the set, what color surfboard should I choose for this episode? Because I can change my surfboard color here.

Brian: What is the color that's resonating with you the most? What's the one that you feel is just the coolest?

James: I'm going to go with sort of a, I think purple, bluey purple.

Brian: I'm down with purple. I mean, we've got prints, we've got Purple Rain. It's kind of blue but...

James: Bluey purple.

Brian: Perfect.

James: You know, it's not the same as your situation. But I recently had seven-time world champion surfer, [Layne Beachley, on my podcast](#), and she indicated that I may have too many surfboards. So I've done a big cull. I've put up 13 surfboards for sale.

And it will sound ridiculous to you perhaps, but I keep a spreadsheet on my surfboards. I track purchase date, price, measurements, best ride, fastest speed, longest wave, how many times I've ridden it. And each one that I've listed for sale, you know, I'm taking pictures and I'm like, you know, it's like Marie Kondo. I'm like, does this bring me joy? And some of them I love, but I can't ride anymore because I've changed size.

I've surfed so much since COVID. Like I've had uninterrupted surfing for more than a year now, right? So I've got bigger arms and chest. I've put on some muscle weight, and probably some chub, but not too much, mostly muscle. And so some of the smaller boards that I've got are just now in that slightly not-quite-enjoyable-to-ride phase. So I've let them go. I'm putting them back out in the world.

But the thing I'm enjoying the most is the people who buy them. They're stoked. They want to take down the ad, they're sending me a message saying, can you please send me some pictures so I can froth on them? This is an actual word they use. And this isn't an isolated incident. This is twice. Two guys bought two boards. And they're like, Can you send me pictures so I can froth on them until I can come and pick them up?

I'm like, Yeah, dude. And then I take extra pictures for them. And then I give them more story around the board, like where I bought the board, why I bought the board, what the best wave it ever caught was, what it loves, you know? And then when they take it, like, I wish for that board to have a happy next life.

So what I'm saying is I'm feeling right now blessed that with my absolute passion, that it's not going to end as badly as has happened to you. So that's a real positive I'm taking from this. But what both of us are saying is, it's got to be more than just you or your boring marketing message. There's got to be some other element, right?

Brian: Yeah. Maya Angelou, people won't remember what you said, people won't remember what you did, but people will always remember how you made them feel. To me, that is great marketing.

From 10,000 to 154,000 subscribers

James: Yeah. Good man. Now, back to business, Brian, how many subscribers have you got now on your YouTube channel? And what's your YouTube channel called? So we can go and look it up, because we're multitasking.

Brian: You bet. Yeah, the channel has, because I just checked today, because I don't care anymore; not to say that you shouldn't, because I obsessed over it.

James: No, but I was going to ask you. You knew I was going to ask you, and you're a smart guy.

Brian: No, I just - I was doing a video, and I was putting in a lower third, and I got the new M1 Chip for the Apple computer. So I got all these plugins working that haven't been working for a while, and I had to put in the lower third with the subscriber count. I'm like, I should just put, like, 1 million subscribers and make it a joke, because I don't care anymore.

But that's not where I started. And I don't think I would have 154,000 subscribers and 10 million plus views if I didn't care tremendously when I started. And I think you get to a point, and I'm trying to balance this out now where it would be easy to get comfortable, I don't want to get comfortable but I want to find that place between, I'm really happy and satisfied with where I'm at but I still want to find that next level. So 154,000 subscribers.

James: Congratulations, mate. That's progress. And I say that because I think my listener wants to have comfort in that, you know, and I always teach this, you know, always question who you're getting advice from. Because there's some sh*t advice out there, right? We both agree on that.

Brian: It saddens me, and it angers me.

James: Right. Well, we don't want to make you sad or angry on this show. We want you to be uplifted. But I mean, last time we spoke, you had 10,000 subscribers or so, and you have progressed. So you're clearly good at this. And that's really the first step of validation. Can I trust what Brian's talking about when it comes to video?

What's setting YouTube apart from other platforms

There's been a lot of other changes. Okay, I'm going to share an observation and then I'm going to ask you to share an observation. One observation I've had as a coach is, some of my clients who have had stratospheric success in the last year or two, they have something in common, and that is video and YouTube. They're just turning it on. It seems to be now the place where people who were really crushing it on Facebook are finding the next wave of success. And not just small increments. I'm talking massive.

I know one guy doubled his business. He went from about three or four million dollars a year to about six or seven million dollars a year, just from finally figuring out a way to make YouTube work. The other one is in the YouTube zone, and his business is doubled. And not an unsubstantial doubling, we're talking from multiple millions to double those multiple millions, and his whole world is YouTube, in terms of him serving clients. Obviously, there's a huge proportion of the paid activity going there.

But even if it's paid activity, to me, that means there's enough eyeballs and enough things happening on that platform. And Google's just getting stronger. And it seems like Facebook is pissing more people off these days. They certainly rubbed Australia's nose in it when they turned off our news, not that I ever go to Facebook for news. It's not my number one source. But in any case, I think Facebook seems to be getting dragged around a bit, you know, with politics and stuff.

Google is definitely playing the more favorite game. But I'd like to know what you're seeing as a creator and as someone who obviously is very connected to other creators. You've got probably plenty of students who you're helping grow their channels. What can we learn from Brian Johnson, not the AC DC singer?



Brian: Right now, there's never been a better time, because you can't go back. I'm not a fan of, you know, I wish I would have. Because who cares? That's done and over.

James: It's gone.

Brian: Yeah. Right now, there's a tremendous opportunity for anybody with passion and desire to jump in and make good videos, and better videos over time, and grow a business, reach a fan base, spread a message, amplify their message, stand up for what they believe in, and be heard. When it comes to being heard, I think it's a platform that is head and shoulders above anything else.

The reason I say that, and that's a big claim, but the reason I say that is that I don't know of other platforms where there's the longevity of content. I know we spoke about this before.

James: It's worth recapping, it's especially worth recapping, because I would say that's my number one complaint with Clubhouse. It's done and run. You go in, you listen to something or you speak, and then it's not leveraged. It's not captured. There's nothing from it, except for the residual vanity metric of a few followers, and maybe some people sending you DMs and going through your stuff.

And also, you know, when I'm thinking of Facebook, your stuff goes up there, and then unless you buy an ad or whatever, it pretty much fades away. Twitter definitely drops off the radar. Instagram, again, it's more visual, and it's sort of more ongoing. The only one I don't know much about, and I haven't talked to someone about, was TikTok. That seems to also be the place where you can get hyper growth. And I'm wondering if you've seen a relationship between those two, or repurposing, or whatever.

Brian: Yeah, I think TikTok is really interesting, because it's exploding. But all of those, you know, every time you mentioned a new platform, I thought basically, yeah, the algorithm is a scrolling feed algorithm where it scrolls and then the algorithm prioritizes based on how it's going to deem value to the viewers.

James: I left out LinkedIn as well. Interestingly, we get the most views on [LinkedIn](#). Because I think it's the most boring platform, and of course, you're going to want to watch a video if you're sitting there. If you're an employee or a business owner on LinkedIn, and you see a video, that's like candy.

Brian: There you go.

James: You know, I'm thinking, as a consumer, I watch YouTube a lot more now than I ever watched. And I watch it on my big television, as well.

Brian: Yeah, so do I.

James: It's changed the game for us.

Brian: Yeah, so that's neat. Again, that kind of puts YouTube in its own place where it's a very unique and different platform with different opportunities and benefits, and it takes a bit of time. Not always, there are a lot of things that we can do to jumpstart that. And what's really cool is that it scales like nothing. Like we mentioned, like, basically, I've had a lot of growth, and I was able to get that 10,000 subscribers in a year, which was my goal, and that was challenging and hard.

And then I kind of plateaued for about two and a half years, and I was hanging out with one of my pals at a conference, and after the conference or before, we were filming some videos, and I basically was telling him, you know, I'm going to triple my results in the next year, which was like, Are you going to do this again? You're going to make this big public declaration? And I did, and it kind of made me nervous, and I didn't hit it, but I missed it by, like, a month.

And basically, I went from 47,000 YouTube subscribers to 100,000 subscribers in a year. And it just goes to show you, there's so many levels, and there's always a new plateau if you're willing to just kind of dig in. And, you know, to answer your first question, James about, like, what's the thing with TikTok? And is there value in that? I think there is.

And it's interesting for me in that, I really tend to focus on one thing, but when I look at TikTok, I really think short-form video content, and now YouTube is rolling out their version, which they call shorts. And I'm really kind of excited about leveraging shorts, because they're so very simple. And I've been doing some experiments. This is fun - I'm scripting out a video, right? So I'm like, I'm spending time and I'm writing and I'm coming up with ideas.

And I'm like a writer guy now, and I'm organizing, and in the middle of this, and it was about shorts; I thought, well, I should make a short. And so I had the short, from concept to idea to I filmed it, and I edit it. And then I published the short, and I did that in 15 minutes, and I spent 90 minutes coming out with a video outline. So I'm very excited about the short-form content. And that particular short was my second short, and it actually drove thousands of views, and it gained me subscribers.

Experiment/pilot versus beta

And I do see this as kind of, there's an opportunity right now, for people that jump in and they leverage the power of YouTube, and possibly shorts. The thing I don't want to say is, don't think you have to do shorts. But what I would say is you should try and experiment, which most great marketers always use the word experiment. You ever noticed that, James? It's like, their success leaves clues.

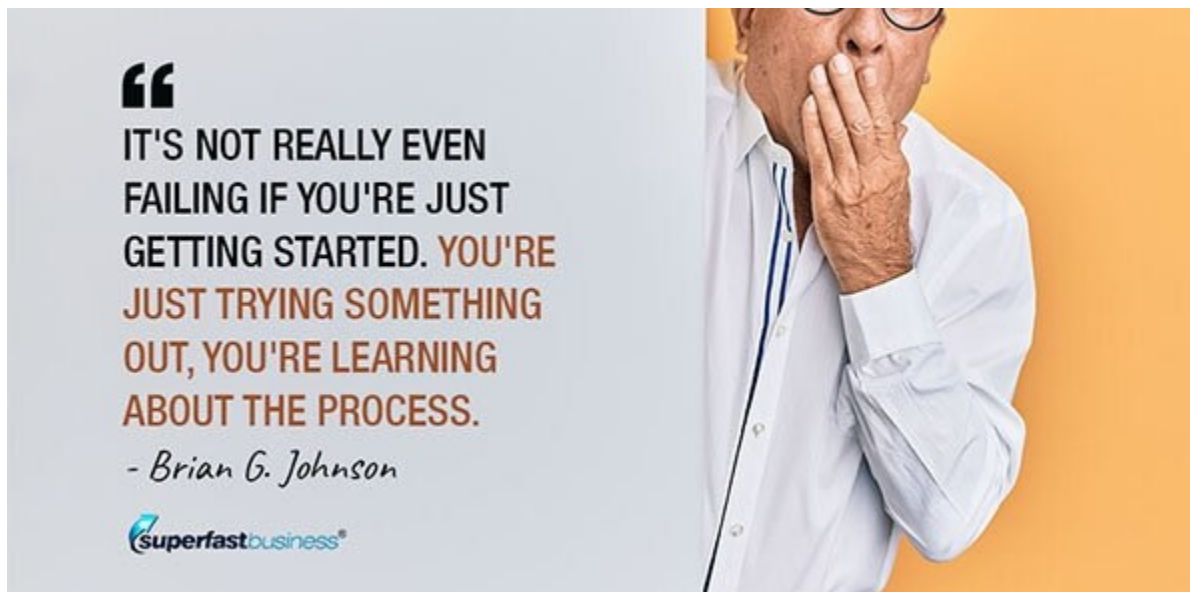
James: I use the word pilot. It's my favorite. Because I think of, you know, like a Seinfeld or any big TV hit, you go back and look at their pilot, and it was just sort of a rough version to convince the studio they should sign on for the show. It's better than the word beta, because beta is just codename for sh*t. That beta means our sh*t first version. Experiment sounds good. I like that too. That's sort of mad wizardry connotations, white capes and formulas.

I like pilot because it implies that we're going to test this, like an experiment, to see if it's got legs. But if it doesn't, we're okay with that too. And it's really good for people who roll out new programs when they don't know if they're going to love it or hate it. And that's how I start most new things. I'm just going to pilot this, see what happens, learn from it, and then do the next iteration.

It's actually accepting that because this is not the end version, in the beginning, I now no longer have to get it perfect, and I don't have to line up all my ducks, and I don't have to learn more before I start, and I don't have to over-engineer this just to have to knock it down. I've got a student who's doing that right now, over-engineering, which you will have to knock down, and it's so frustrating to me when they do that, when they don't have to do that. So yeah, that's why I like pilot.

Brian: I really dig that. I like when you talk about the fact that I'm not going to be, like connected to these results, because we're just kind of dabbling, and we're going to see where we're going to end up.

James: It's setting an expectation for everyone, you and your end user.



Brian: Yes. You know, for me, whenever I'm moving forward, I think in the back of my mind, I have an idea that I know if I give this a good go, that I'm going to learn greatly from this, and it's going to take me to where I need to be, which is kind of an alignment to what you're saying, too. And again, I feel like so many successful marketers, they have certain commonalities. And I think so many people are so fearful of failing, when it's not really even failing if you're just getting started. You're just trying something out, you're learning about the process, you know?

James: It's all investment and experience, you know? Even if you have a failure. We all have failures, we all have losses. I mean, you're going through one right now, like it's the Yin Yang. The only reason you could have had a positive Otis experience is because you know what a negative experience is. So the contrast is what's provided you that rich experience, and it's fascinating.

You know, I've been connecting other thoughts lately, like you know, how would we produce our stuff if we knew we were going to die in the next year? And then you sort of expanded on, and the end result you get to is, we're actually all going to die. We are going to die. So we might as well have a go at it.

But I really think, just to get a bit deeper and philosophical here and not too YouTube technical, I was really interested in your comment about comfort. And as an author of a book that talks about [work less, make more](#), this has been on my mind a lot. I wonder, is comfort that evil?

Brian: I think for me, it's again, it's like finding that balance. Well, I think you have to ask yourself, what is success?

James: That's what I think COVID pandemic delivered us. Most of us have been in Groundhog Day. And then it's, were you in a good Groundhog or a bad Groundhog Day? What if you have a positive Groundhog Day? [I was talking about this with Dean Jackson recently](#).

If life is doing that sort of magical movie where it's really freaking awesome, you know, eat, sleep, surf, repeat, chat to some friends, put out a podcast, spend your time with family, if that's what life looks like, then comfort, I think, is actually you've arrived at the destination that is ideal, and the journey along the way each day is like, ideal, ideal, ideal, and that's really interesting.

How now is different for Brian than before 10,000 subscribers

So I suspect whether you want comfort or not depends on what your situation is. And I wanted to know this, this will really answer the question in a roundabout way, I'll get there - what has changed for you at your now-subscriber level versus when you were pushing for that magical 10,000, in terms of life or business, what does it mean it's different for you?

Brian: Yeah, for me, personally, is that one of the things that is commonly asked by people that are interested in YouTube, and really any kind of success, where you're teaching and covering the same subject over and over again, is how do you stay motivated and excited when you keep talking about the same thing? And my answer for the last year has been that, number one, I know, at the core, my information is different than what it used to be, even though the fundamentals are the same.

And for me, I look at, if we're really honest, I make small movies. I make small movies that are very engaging and entertaining. And as someone that derives pleasure through work, what my goal is today is to continue to make money that I'm comfortable with, to continue to speak on stages, and all of these things are continuing, and to be able to support clients and help people on a constant basis, and yet, almost strive and get my foot more into the, I'm a creator, and I make art, and I want to learn what that means.

Like, how did I get here? James, when I started, I started with this. Most people that are on the outside think they need this, and it's complicated. For the listeners, I'm holding a \$2500 Sony G Master lens with a two times converter, that's another 500.

James: Either that, or it's a really cool, artsy coffee cup. Because that's what I thought in the beginning. It does look a little bit like a coffee cup, I recognized.

Brian: A big mug.

James: Yeah.

Brian: But so for me, it's like, I really get a lot of pleasure out of creating different types of videos. One will be simple, straight to the point, really delivers on that person that needs the information. And yet, I'm also aware, and I'm acutely aware, there's a huge bunch of people on YouTube, it's kind of entertainment. And when we start talking about how-to information, the lines really blur. If you're not engaging and entertaining, they'll go somewhere, they'll find that same information somewhere else.

James: I want to hone in on this, because I get this a lot. Someone just casually put in their coaching thread to me yesterday, you know, they're going to do interviews, and then they're going to just push them up to YouTube, and then strip out the audio and podcast, and I'm just like, please don't do that.

Brian: Do they have any success at this point on any platform?

James: Zero. Donut.

Brian: I think they plan it, by the way.

Plans to get serious on the world's biggest video platform

James: Yeah, it's a common plan, I think, people are going to just syndicate. I'm acutely aware of that. We have very few subscribers, like three and a half thousand subscribers, I think, on our channel, and I am not making made-for-YouTube content, and it's a mistake that I need to fix. My action step from today, right, it's time for me to get serious about YouTube.

I've actually been reserving my private channel. I don't have anything, or maybe I have one video on there. But I've never used my channel because I haven't got started on that. We just use [SuperFastBusiness](#). This podcast will be on there. What I do know is some people like to consume it on YouTube. And I don't think we've put a whole lot of effort into finding the right keyword tags or making exact content that replicates what's already successful, all the standard stuff.

But I do hear this, I've seen this. I've heard it from you, I've heard it from [Scott Devine](#), Scott's bass guitars, who smashes it on YouTube. He is a storyteller. He writes narratives. You know, like, several years ago, Brian, I didn't even know what a narrative meant. I didn't know what the word meant, narrative. I didn't know about storytelling in videos.

Brian: Nobody tells this in school. You know, I looked it up too, my friend. I'm like, Casey Neistat is talking narrative, and like, I got to know. I mean, down to the detail, like the definition is frickin' story. And here's the thing, it's like, story is in everything. And so for me, when you say like, what is the driver? It's like, I want to tell a better story, and I want to make a better film, and that's my driver. And what's cool is that I get to play by my own rules. I do some affiliates, but not really. I drive my own traffic. I sell my own products.

James: That sounds like my podcast. I don't have any sponsors. I can do whatever I want. Here we are at Episode 817. I've just had some of the best feedback I've had for ages on my podcast. [I did one with John Lee Dumas](#) where we're essentially play fighting for the whole episode. [I had Trevor Toecracker Crook talking about copywriting](#). He's sitting there next to his barbecue over there somewhere in South America. People loved that one.

I want to go down the path that's not going down, you know? I want to talk about poodles, and I want to talk about behind the scenes, I want to get access to things that are just not on your standard trotted-out interview-style formats. And my audience really like the solo episodes, too.

So we're drilling into some different areas. And I hope we're talking about topics that you're not discussing over and over again. That's why to get you on the show is a real treat, because of what you know, and because of you. I still remember our encounter in San Francisco, I think, Traffic and Conversions.

Brian: San Fran, yeah. Yeah, I remember that too.

James: Apparently the locals don't call it San Fran. That's something I got told.

Brian: Oh, I see.

James: You know, insider knowledge. Back when we were doing conferences, do you remember conferences, back in the day?

Brian: I really am excited to see my pals, hopefully step on a stage. I started kind of coming into my own as a speaker, and then things got shut down. I always, like, was the guy with a lot of potential. And then I keynoted my first event, and I stepped on stage, and I wasn't nervous. But I was like, there was something going on, but I wasn't ever nervous. And I just think you get to a point where you're like, Hey, I'm supposed to be here. I've done the work. And yeah, conferences, brother. Whew!

So what's the skinny on shorts?

James: You're a people person, I think. You're going to love those. Quick technical question. I've heard of shorts, I saw something about we have to put a hashtag, and it's got to be under a minute. Maybe I'm wrong. But I've asked my team to edit stuff for that. Can you just give us the skinny on shorts?

Brian: Yeah, you're right. It needs to be under a minute. Shoot for 30 seconds or less. Make it fun, make it engaging. Choose one specific thing and talk about that. And above all, just know that we're not trying to be polished, perfect. It's more about the heart, the artistic, the creative. Talk about something that is business, talk about something that's fun. You want to film it vertical.

I see no reason to get it, like I'm going to do most of my shorts with my phone. Like maybe, eventually, I'll film in the studio and then edit vertical. But I'm kind of curious as to what's going to happen if I keep it super simple and stripped down and focus on the story and being engaging, which is kind of where we were a minute ago, because that's the heart of success, for me.

James: Scott told me when he switched from DSLR to Canon G7 X handhelds, his views doubled. They like the organic, more handheld, less polished. He still creates gripping content. But the way that he's producing it has changed, which I thought was really interesting. And then we have to put #shorts?

Brian: Yeah, yeah, exactly. I'm glad you added that. You absolutely want to add, have to add #shorts to the title. Really important. I throw one in the description as well. I screwed it up. I published a short a few days ago, and I'm so used to long form content, and I published, and it didn't have that hashtag, and I added it maybe two hours later. And here's the deal, it's okay. Like there'll be plenty more shorts, but you don't want to forget that. It's important.

James: So how does it compare to an Instagram story or TikTok?

Brian: They're very, very similar, really. It's short-form content. It's vertical.

James: Do you think YouTube is trying to do that? Take say, Hey, that's a good feature. We like that.

Brian: Yeah, absolutely.

James: Kind of came from Snapchat from memory. And then Instagram got on to it. And now the rest of them think, this is a good idea.

Brian: Yeah, now it's, what's the other vertical platform? Oh, TikTok.

Instagramming a routine life

James: Yeah. So I've been making surf videos, GoPro videos. I put to my personal Instagram account, [jamesschramko](#). I'll just mention that. I don't have a huge following, but the people who follow it, they're going to see pictures of me, they're going to see my surfing, behind the scenes of my life. But they're always under a minute, and I get a lot of views. People are really interested.

I actually thought, I might have the most boring life for people. You know, if we did a day in the life of, it's just going to be me having a surf or taking my kid to the playground. That's it. And eating something. I don't put pictures of food. I already know that's not good for Instagram.

Brian: It's not good for you.

James: Not good. No, probably not. Isn't it? Why is that?

Brian: Well, I don't know. All I know is what the audience tells me, and the audience tells me they like your surfing videos. The reason I said that, James, is because I think I don't want someone to hear and think, Oh, you know, pictures of food isn't good on Instagram.

James: Okay. I see what you mean. Not good for my account.

Brian: If you're a famous chef..

James: Yeah, pictures of food are great.

Brian: Yeah.

James: I think when you start Instagram, it's very tempting to start taking pictures of your food, and we've all seen that. I'm glad you picked up on that. I heard someone else talk about the difference between social media and social youdia. You know, whether it's publishing for you or for your audience. SuperFastBusiness channel, we publish all the businessy content for my audience, no doubt about it.

My personal channel really is a little bit more for me, you know. I want to share, I want to let people in if they want to see what goes on. But the surf videos are fun for people, especially if it's winter where they are. They're seeing what my life looks like. I'm actually doing storytelling in those videos. I do a B-roll of walking up to the beach, I do a shot of the board from different angles.

I have the GoPro in my mouth. So you get first person view of catching the waves. And then there's usually a sign-off thing, like flipping out the board, or going back to the beach, you put your hands on the board or a little walking back, or a sunset from the cliff. So it's my way of learning about storytelling in a safe way. It's something I'm really passionate. Like, my capacity to make a story-based video every single day is intense. I can do this when it's something I'm interested in.

Brian: Yeah, for sure.

James: I'm less interested in doing what I used to do. Like, probably seven years ago, I could easily crank out 18 short content videos in my studio, but I just don't spend that much time in an office anymore. I literally spend about five to six hours at this computer a week, the rest of the time from my phone somewhere else, which is my ideal routine.

Brian: Oh that's amazing. You know what's funny about that, James, is you know how you started out telling me about the passion that you have for telling stories and surfing?

James: Yes.

Brian: You said, you used the word boring.

James: What's boring?

Brian: Well, basically, you're like, Oh, I lead a boring life. Like I don't do much. You know, I surf all the time. But it might be boring, but what I think it is, is routine.

James: It's repetitive.

Brian: Your routine might be boring for you some days. You might love it other days.

James: No, it's actually not boring to me. I love it. But I didn't think there's that much story in it. It's like, okay, today he's going to surf, take his kid to the park, record a podcast, and then watch Netflix and go to sleep, and maybe check on some share portfolios or whatever. And he's going to do exactly the same thing tomorrow. And then the next day, and then the other four days, he's just going to surf, eat, and play with the baby. That's it. And answer forum posts for an hour.

So it's not Lamborghinis, or you know, balling trips to here or there these days. That's what I'm saying. It's amazing how joyful your life can be. I'm sitting here in bare feet and boardshorts, right, literally. So that's my life, and I love it. But I don't know if that's a big story for anyone else. Maybe it is.

Brian: I think you know, everybody likes variety. So like, for me, like you said, and you touched on this a minute ago, too, it's like, for the people that are stuck in winter, and it's summer where you are, and you're catching waves, and you're in the water, that's idyllic, you know? And I think the thing that I kind of caught on to there is when you talked about, you know, you weren't sure how it would go down.



But when you start doing it, you understand that the confine's greatly pushed out when you start creating, and this is something I see a lot of people mistaking, is that number one, they think their life is boring, so they never try. Or they don't do it enough times to understand, once you start making content, like people ask me, like, how do you add all these little crazy little things?

I'm like, because I create so much, and I'm mentally open to that, like, I do something fun now, because it seems like the video needs that. And you see something, and you just play off of that, like you see a seagull on the sand, or you see the sunset in a new way, or you see an angle that you never thought about before. But you can't see that angle until you've made one vlog or story-based video.

James: I got to tell you then, three things that happened, exactly what you're talking about. My process is, I charge my GoPro, if I feel like the surf's going to be okay, I'll grab it, and I stuff it in my pocket. And if I paddle out, and I feel like yeah, I'm going well, I'm just going to catch a couple of waves. And then when I've caught a couple of waves, I put it back in my pocket, and then I don't worry about it for the rest of the surf.

So I'm not, like, all on, because it's important for me to have time off. And when I get home, I sync my GoPro to my phone using the GoPro app, and I select the bits of the clip I want, and I download them to my phone, and then using the GoPro editor, I click the auto movie maker and then I put in the title, I change some of the filters, I crop bits, I change the sequence a bit, add some music, remove the GoPro end credit, I don't know why they think that I want that, and then I export it.

It's always under a minute. I put it straight on [my Instagram](#), and then I load it into a Drive folder. And this is important, because I run a surf website. We own a surf website, and my team have access to that Drive folder. They then take that video, and they put our logo on it for our surf site, our site's called [BlinkSurf](#). They put it to our surf website [YouTube channel](#).

Apparently, they're getting heaps of views. My premise for these video clips has always been the board model, because if you're a surfer, the thing everyone's looking up is the board models. Now, I've recently listed a bunch of surfboards for sale, and the first guy that bought two boards, he messaged me, he goes, I love BlinkSurf. Every time I'm looking for a board, it comes up first. He recognized the boards from the site, I didn't mention the surf site, he just knew the boards from the site and he purchased them immediately.

So I've literally created my own market with my hobby GoPro videos that I'm just mucking around with. But I really just want to reinforce what you're saying here. If you're interested in it, and it's fun to do, like, as a creator, I actually don't count any of that time that I'm doing the GoPro filming or editing as work. Absolutely not. That is a total passion hobby. The fact that we can recycle it and even earn from it, that's a bonus.

When work is passion

Brian: There you go. And that's like for me, when you ask me like, you know, what are you doing now to move the needle? It's more on the passion side of things. Because what kind of happened is I started really becoming interested in the cameras and the filming and the settings, and creating, like, artistic-looking things.

And I started thinking like, Well what happens if I take really cool cameras out to the sand dunes and do cool photos and photography and video, and and then I start mashing that stuff into the same content, only instead of standing against a white background like I'm an Apple employee, I'm like, out having fun frolicking in the sand dunes, which is a heck of a lot more enjoyable.

So for me, and honestly, you know, like, people will say, business, or like, your SuperFastBusiness, which is cool. And I'm always like, I shy away from that a little bit because I just think I'm more of a creative person that's trying to figure out how to make good money and maybe not have to like, work. It is work. Editing a video can be work, but like, I got to tell you, I used to work for the man. And brother, what I do now is not that.

James: Like, nothing I'm doing is even remotely close to the pressure and the things I used to have to do as an employee. No doubt about that. I am living the dream. But you know, in the [previous episode](#) to this, my guest, he loves motorcycles and racing motorcycles. So what I'm actually creating here are literally [work less, make more](#) case studies, where, because of your success, you're actually able to become more of an artist.

Take me 10 years ago, Brian, I was a robot. I was like, part cyborg. I remember, I actually had a friend of mine come over to speak at my event. His name's Dean Hunt. And he sat next to me while I was preparing my slides for the event. He came and lived at my house. And he was on the other computer, and just video, after video, after video, after video, after video, watching video. I'm like, I had never seen anyone do that before. I didn't know people actually do that.

I had never unlocked the cyborg module that lets you actually watch videos for entertainment. That would be considered an extreme waste of time and extraordinarily unproductive, etc. Now, like, I'm watching Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV, like every day, I watch content. And I am actually learning how to tell better stories, understand how the plot's unfolding, the character development, conflict.

All these things were foreign objects to me. And I hope some of it comes through into creating better content, even if it's just these podcasts. I want to get the story from my guest. The big challenge for me with the [John Lee Dumas](#) one was this guy sent out 400 videos to people to get on their podcast.

So I'm up against him in the marketplace on every other podcast, talking about the same book, the same way, over and over again. And my challenge was, how do I come up with something interesting for my audience? That's the enemy. And to top it off, he kept sending me the book, but it never arrived. It got eaten up by my filter, so I didn't even have the chance to read the friggin' book. So what am I going to do?

So I challenged him to come up with an episode that no one's going to hear anywhere else. Like, it has to be unique. I got the best feedback. I had so many emails from it. We amped up the energy in that call. And what my team did is they chopped up a little [showreel](#) from it. And it's this really cool showreel with sound effects and everything. It's like, he's calling me names, I'm telling him how much I don't like his podcast.

So it starts off as like, it's like a Western shootout between the guy all in black with the sheriff's badge and then the outlaw who just happened to ride into town at the wrong time. And that is just, like, I'm saying stuff. He's saying stuff. I'm saying stuff. And then we start to think, Oh, hang on a minute. Maybe I don't hate you quite as much.

And then by the end, it's like, I hate to say it but I'm beginning to like you. And then, he's like, you hate to say it but you're beginning to like me; like it was it was entertaining and fun. And then I just put a little bumper in front of that. It's like, you won't believe what we talked about in this episode. You never heard anything like this. And then we put framing around it, like, here's John Lee Dumas you've never heard before.

We put it on our socials. John loved it too, and he shared it. So we had a lot of fun with this whole frenemy mock fight that was, you know, something different. So I like the fact that you know, 800 episodes into the show, we can start deploying new skills and stretching into ways we've never stretched before. So I think the biggest crime we could do is bore our audience, right?

Brian: Oh, a hundred percent.

James: And I definitely used to bore my audience, and I hope we're not doing that today.



Brian: You know what I love? What I hear when we talk about this is how do you continue in the same market, creating the same content, but yet it's not the same content? And how do you inspire yourself? So often people say like, well, how can I get people to get really excited about me? It's like, well be really excited about yourself, and then others will follow. You got to lead the way, you've got to make it okay for people to get excited for what you do.

And I think for me, when I started on YouTube, man, I was not for everyone. Like, if you want to sell a lot of ice cream, sell vanilla. But brother, that ain't me. But I had a lot of fun. And I did have a following, and I springboarded that into a bigger following. And now I'm kind of going full circle, where when I started it was all about entertainment, because it's funny. I did the research and I was reading, like, people were saying, Be engaging, be entertaining, be funny.

And I'm just like, for me personally, someone should have sat me down and said, Relax. Don't be funny, because you're still going to be funny and weird and quirky. But you know, that's just what happened. And now I'm kind of taking that quirky humor, and it's much diluted, but it's still there. And I'm adding new elements that inspire me, and that's what makes it fun. And I think at the end of the day, it's like, if you can make great money that you're happy with, and you can be extremely happy, like, I think for me, that kind of answers your question about comfort.

I think there's some bit of truth about, there has to be some level of discomfort. But we don't want to take it too far either. Like most of the time, I'm pretty happy.

James: Well, comfort is the enemy of growth. If that's true, it depends. If you feel like you need to keep growing, or like a mature bonsai, maybe it's just happy being a bonsai, you know, in a Japanese philosophical way, just hanging.

Brian: Yeah. I love that, because I love those trees. Those are the most amazing. I tried to grow them.

James: I imagine you would. I chose that for you. I could have gone the old oak tree, but that's a bit vanilla.

Brian: Exactly. Perfect.

James: You know, like, speaking of trimming, did you trim Otis yourself? Or did you get a professional groomer?

Brian: Yeah, yeah, he was always professionally groomed, and he looked badass, and always looked great, and right to his last moments, he looked great. He was a great dog, and that's just how we rolled. He wouldn't want it any other way. He was good-looking, and he knew it.

Where to find Brian G. Johnson

James: I love it. Just to sort of round off a bit. Firstly, I'm really interested in, if you can please mention where we can check out your channel, and what is it that you're actually doing now? Like, are you still teaching? How do you teach? How can we get involved? I know I need to get closer to the source as well. It's just indisputable now. You know, I knew YouTube was good 10 years ago, but it's just gotten better. It's just getting better and better.

Brian: It's pretty amazing.

James: Yeah.

Brian: You know, I love that I live stream, and again, it's for fun. Well, actually, it's weird now. It's very complicated, because I love live streaming. But I know every time I live stream, I'm going to make hundreds of dollars on super chats answering questions I would answer on a Facebook Live stream, which becomes part of the revenue source.

Find me at [Brian G Johnson TV](#), and I've got a [group coaching program](#), look up the book [Tube Ritual on Amazon](#). And basically what I do is I help people understand how they can amplify their message in a really busy space and be heard. That's really what I'm good at. And the thing I love is my creative skills and abilities help me help people understand what their brand is, logos, taglines; understanding how to connect with the market. And, boy, I sure find a lot of passion in that.

The equipment behind the engaging videos

James: I was going to ask you about that, because it would be tempting to say, Well, I'm not creative like Brian. I'm not an artist, and I don't think I could cruise around the sand dunes with my cool camera equipment. I'm just a business guy, and I need help with this stuff. I need help with ideas. I need help with team. And yeah, tell me what equipment to buy. Like, I got help with equipment. Like, this podcast that I'm talking to you now about, I'm recording this with a Sony camera that my friend [Charley Valher](#) told me to get.

He said, Just get this camera, this lens. I actually bought the light myself. I got it from Kodak, and I did it partly sentimentally because you know, in my early days of videos, I used to use a Kodak Zi8, and I thought, you know what, I want to support that company. And I think they make a good ring light by the look of it. I'm happy with it. It's a sturdy little mount.

But you know, I'm just using a regular mic.

Brian: Yeah, it's pretty simple.

James: I have to ask you about your mic. Why is it pointing away? Is that so you don't get the pop?

Brian: Yeah, what about the pop filter?

James: Well, your microphone's pointing away from you, unlike anyone I've ever had on the show. This is the first in 817 episodes where the microphone is pointing away from you. They always talk about proximity and stuff. It's joyful too, to have someone who's not covering their entire face with a podcast mic, which is, I don't understand that. Why is that a thing? Hey, welcome to my show here. I'm with the biggest microphone I could find to shield my face.

Brian: I think that's a cyborg defense mechanism.

James: Yeah. It's for shy people.

Brian: All it is, it's a Yeti blue microphone. It's the Blackout edition, but it's just, they painted it black for marketing. And when I started learning about microphones, I learned that basically, this one you don't want to have straight up, because the mics are on the side and it's directional. So you get this boom arm, and I kind of got it in this direction. And it sounds good enough.

Funny, the pop filter thing, I tried to get a pop filter, I could never find one for this mic. So I actually got an old sock, and I slipped it over, and I used to use that for a while. Like, for me, it's like, if it's good enough, and it looks good and it sounds good, I don't care. And I get a lot of heat from my friends, my fancy friends. They're like, What is that, a microphone sock condom? I'm like, you can call it whatever you want.

James: Yeah, that's it. It's just not about the gear, is it? You can do a lot with a little. I accidentally ended up with those Philips Hue lights where I changed the color because my friend [John Lint](#) sent me a light strip and that started a whole cascading exploration, you know, I had to get the brain that runs it and then I got the side lights, and the one illuminating my surfboard is actually an outdoor garden light.

Brian: Oh, very cool. I love them.

And it all works from the app on my phone, and it's great. I've just got this little room in the back of my house full of sound proofing. So it screens out any noise as much as possible, and it suits what I do.

Purpose and future plans

But I think more important is the [storytelling](#), the purpose behind what you're doing. I'm curious to know, what does the future hold for Brian? Any more family members joining the crew, are you ready yet?

Brian: Well, we'll have to see what happens in that department. It's just me. So I recently divorced, and have someone in my life, that's pretty amazing, and that was unexpected. And honestly, right now, where I'm at, James, is I'm on a mission, to really push myself to create something that I'm super excited about, to take my business, and my marketing, and my creative side to the next level; and just get back with friends, too, like to see friends at conferences and hang out.

Like, for me, it's never been work. I put hours into it. But it's like you mentioned, like, I think I'm in the middle, like where you're at, where you work five or 10 hours a week and whatnot...

James: 15 hours a week, five to 10 hours in this room. I just don't want to be in this room anymore. A lot of the coaching calls I do are on my phone, at the beach, or in the car near the beach while my wife's walking, or while she's going around the oval, or just out and about, maybe we're somewhere else, and I just pull aside a chair somewhere. I want to be in a different environment.

And I think part of that is because I'm not traveling for the first time in a long time. I haven't been anywhere since January last year, which is a major, major change. I'm normally overseas every month.

Brian: Wow. That's a lot of travel.

James: But it's also made my surfing improve an enormous amount. I've lost no downtime in travel or transit or being landlocked.

Brian: Yeah. Right.

James: So that's good.

Brian: Yeah. So for me, I get that, though, like being outside. Like, I'm really excited about traveling and maybe going to national parks and taking my gear and filming videos, like more story-based stuff that is also kind of motivational. Like I'd like to maybe explore more of the motivation stuff, which is very hard. But that's okay, like, I never shied away from hard. And again, if it'll give me pleasure, then that's probably what's most important to me.

James: I couldn't agree with you more. And, you know, this whole serendipitous episode came about because we sort of had a little drive-by on Facebook, and I saw you there. And I invited you to come back and share your story. And I love what you said, that you're not even looking at the subscribers, your business has transcended beyond that, and it sounds like things are lining up for you, and I'm really excited for you for that because you're a good human, and always valuable for me and for my audience.

And I've got some takeaways from this show, I'm going to work harder on making better content just for YouTube. An implementable action for anyone listening is to have a look at shorts and see if they might work for you, and don't take things so seriously.

So, Brian, thank you so much for sharing, and we're going to link to your channel, we're going to link to your book, and anything else you recommend on this episode 817 at SuperFastBusiness.com

Brian: Hey, James, it was a pleasure to connect again and just to hang out and talk shop about stories and where the intersection of business and pleasure come together. Fantastic. Thanks for having me.

James: My pleasure. We're definitely going to have you back, Brian. So the journey continues.



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