

# 077: Intentionally Choosing Your Path Instead of Dying a Slow Death: Interview with Paul Angone

J Hello everyone. This is my friend, Paul Angone, who is the author of a book called *All Groan Up*, and we're going to do this thing that we've never done before. We're going to interview each other. And, so, we're going to share different questions and answers. So, Paul, you want to introduce me?

P Hi everyone watching on the other side of the Internet. This is my friend, Jeff Goins, who has just written a new book called *The Art of Work*. And I'm really excited to talk to him about both of our passions, and our callings, and how that works in finding your calling. And we're going to see how this works to interview each other.

J Yeah. So, I think we're sort of like a panel, but we're also asking each other the questions. So, I figured I'll ask you a question, and you answer it.

P Yeah.

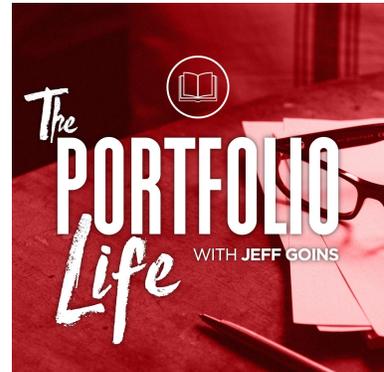
J And you ask me a question, and we're both really passionate about helping people find their way in the world. And we're both doing that through writing and speaking now. But I kind of wanted to go back to how all this all started for you, working at a college. I mean your message is primarily geared towards Millennials. And I just want to talk about your career working with college students for years and all the research that you did, and just kind of the people that you encountered throughout that time when, I think, you were also kind of ironically figuring out what you wanted to do. I mean, it was sort of a meta thing.

P It was.

J Yeah. You're helping people discover their way, and you're discovering your own. Which I think is often how it happens.

P Yeah.

J So, what did you learn through that experience? How long did you work for the college, and what did you learn about yourself and about people finding their way, especially at this formative stage in their lives.



P Yeah. I was that guy that graduated from college and, then, was still showing up at the cafeteria and eating there—

J [laughing]

P —as everybody was wondering, “I thought – didn’t he graduate?” You see the whisperers, “Isn’t he supposed to be gone?” But I started working there as a recruiter, as an admission counselor for a few years. And it was a very interesting dynamic. I remember this very clearly of going – I would travel to different states to recruit high school students to come to my college. So, I’d go and do these presentations. I’d tell them all these amazing stories about my school, and how life changing it was, and how it’s going to set you up for success, all these amazing things. And, then, I’d go back to my rental car to drive back to my dreary motel room in some city that I didn’t even really know anybody, or what I was doing, and I just remember thinking to myself, “This all feels kind of like a lie.” Like, “I have no idea why I’m doing this job, what I want to do with my life.”

J Yeah.

P “And, yet, I’m telling these high school kids to follow my path.”

J Right.

P So, can I honestly do that? And I did love my time at my school. I mean, it really was a transformational place. But it took me a long period of time to put those pieces together of, I kind of thought when you graduated from college you climb all the right steps, you get all the right grades, you get the right internships. You find the right job, whatever it might be. And when you get up there somewhere, you’re going to find success. You’re going to find your dream life, your dream job, whatever might look. But I felt like when I opened that door, when I graduated, I felt like they had tricked me, and I ended up back in the basement.

J Hum.

P And it was dark, and there was a lot of locked doors, and there was just one old guy sitting at the end of the hall under like a lightbulb that’s just kind of laughing. And it felt like a Stephen King novel—

J Yeah.

P —not like, this is my dream life. So, that’s why I became passionate about, how do you figure this out? How do you figure out what do you do with your life? And I know for you as well just to kick it back to you, I mean that’s pretty much what you’ve been in a way answering yourself—

J Yeah.

P —but maybe not even knowing you were answering that. Because you had a job, a great job, at a nonprofit, a job that you felt like you were a good fit for, right?

J Yeah.

P But there was maybe that little bit of a feeling of, “This is not fully it.”

J Uh-huh (agreeing). Yeah, I mean, I did have a great job. And I think that's a tough place to be in when you don't hate your job, 'cause I always tell people, "If you hate your job, that's a really good thing. Because you know that you have to do something."

P Yeah.

J —because it's unbearable—

P Yeah.

J —to stay where you are. But what if you kind of liked your job? What if it's not killing you? That, I think, is the most dangerous place to be. A lot of people find themselves, especially in their 20s. I was certainly there. Just trying to figure out, "Is this what I'm supposed to be doing?" Because, as you know Paul, you graduate college and typically you just take whatever opportunity you can find. And, hopefully, there is something available. I have a couple of sisters who just got out of college recently. And it's hard out there. You know, it's hard to find anything, much less something that fits your passions and makes you feel significant. And I don't know that you necessarily need to do that right out the gates. You need to figure out who you are. You need to take some crappy jobs—

P Yeah.

J —and grow up a little bit through that. And I think you speak to that really well. So, I took a job, took a few jobs. Worked at a — I traveled with a band for a year which really wasn't a job. But it was fun. I worked at a call center for about eight months. And, then, I kind of fell into this opportunity working for a nonprofit. And I started out as a copywriter, and then I started doing marketing. And I became the marketing director. And about five or six years into that, I was 27 years old, I think. And I was imagining where I would be in 10 years. I just sort of saw very clearly that I could just kind of go on autopilot. Because I'd gotten to the point where I'd worked some place for about five years. And they weren't going to fire me. Like I sort of proven myself. I'd gotten a couple of promotions. Every year I got a raise. I was making good money. I was supporting myself and my wife. And we both had good jobs. And we were feeling good. And I just thought, "If I'm here in 10 years, will I feel like I settled?" You know? And I felt that way. And, again, it had nothing to do with the organization. It had everything to do with me. I felt like I was starting to play it a little safe. And I'm not a big risk taker. But when it came to, "Am I doing this because I can do it because I'm good at it?" Or, "Am I doing this, because this is what I think that I'm meant to do?"

P Um.

J And, so, that's what started me on my journey was I wasn't comfortable with the answers that I was coming up with. "If I'm doing this in 10 years, will I be afraid that I settled?" Would I be on my way towards a mid-life crisis at that point where instead of approaching 30, I'm approaching 40, and I go, "Oh, my gosh. I wasted the first part of my career." And I didn't want to do that. I knew it was a really formative point where I wasn't being flaky anymore. And I had lots of many years of flakiness where every year, every six months, every two weeks, "I need to go start something or do something new." I felt like I had kind of grown a little steady, but I needed to figure out what's the path that I'm going to be on for the next 10 years.

P Um.

J And that's when I started thinking about writing and all of that stuff.

P Um.

J So, I'm curious about your thoughts, particularly about your 20s, this season of life that I feel like you can invest in or waste. And one of the most important mentors in my life was my boss at Adventures in Missions. And he told me, he goes, "Your 20s are a series of internships."

P Uh-huh (agreeing).

J "You experiment with a bunch of different things. You try on a bunch of different identities in hopes of finding one that you can wear for the next 15-20 years, the rest of your life."

P Uh-huh (agreeing).

J And, yet, I see people do this right and kind of do this wrong. I see people trying a new identity every two weeks. And they do that all the way to age 45. I'm like, "What are you doing?"

P Yeah.

J Find something and master it.

P Yeah.

J And I feel like there is so much distraction in our culture today that you can do that perpetually. And, then, on the other hand you can kind of commit to something too early. And, so, I'm wondering whether you're in your 20s, 30s, 40s I think it's certainly something that's a problem for people in their 20s especially. But you've had a lot of experiences with this. You've done a lot of research.

P Yeah.

J What's the sweet spot in between those two extremes: Being a total flake and, then, committing to something out of fear—

P Yeah.

J —committing to something because, "I don't know if I can live my dream, or get a better job. So, I'm just going to stick with this, because it's good enough."

P Man, that is, that is the million-dollar question right there. That is a tough one to dissect. And it is tough. And especially in this day and age, right, where I kind of say, "Drowning in options is a terrible way to die."

J Right.

P For us now, or just drowning in, "If I choose one thing, I know that means I'm not choosing about a million other things."

J Right. Right.

P And, so, I think even more so now is just you're just so overwhelmed in possibilities.

J Yeah.

P So, it's like, "How do I know what to choose? How do I know what to pick? How do I know how to be intentional? How do I do this?" And whether you're in your 20s, or 30s, or 40s, I think we all come to that place of, "How do I intentionally choose my life? How do I intentionally choose a path?" Because I think for most of us, we kind of feel like we're just being ushered into a path where different parts of our life, or different things happen, you know, good things, bad things. And it just kinds of makes up the tapestry of our story that leads us somewhere.

J Yeah.

P And I think at some point, like you said, when you're at your job, you've been there for five, or six years, which in 20-something years, that's like cat years.

J Decades.

P Yeah, that's 30 years, you know?

J Yeah.

P We all come to that point it was kind of like that, "Oh, my gosh moment," when you see it for the first time. And you go, "OK, OK, what do I do?" And I think it can be a very scary place."

J Yeah.

P In two ways. Both ways are scary. It's scary if you stay.

J Yeah.

P But it's slightly more scarier if you go.

J Yeah.

P And I love this quote by Professor Robert Quinn in this book, *Deep Change*, and it basically was, "Change is hell, but to not change is also hell."

J Right.

P "But the hell of change is the heroes journey instead of settling for the path of slow death."

J Right.

P And I remember really resonating with that line of being like, "Man, that's really it." Do I want to embark on the hero's journey? That sounds better—

J Sure.

P —than slow death. I don't think anybody when they're graduating from college and people ask them, "What do you want to do with your life?" "I want to die a slow death in a cubicle where I feel like I'm wasting away, and every day seems pointless. And I am just trying to count down the hours. And I've mastered the art of cubicle work, which is trying to spread 30 minutes of actual work to fill an entire day."

J Yeah.

P And I definitely have felt like there's different jobs in my life where I've done that where it's like, "I can't work too hard, because I have to at least make it appear like I'm filling up eight hours here." But, then, you just start thinking, "Is this going to be my life?" But to go back to your question with my roundabout answer. And this is kind of a loose answer, but this is what I tell 20-somethings. I tell them – because a lot of them feel lost.

J Yeah.

P "I don't know what to do. I feel very lost." And I tell them, "Great. That's awesome. Because the first step to exploring is getting lost." Explorers and being lost are pretty much the same thing, but explorers, they get lost on purpose—

J Yeah.

P —with purpose. So, it's not wandering just to wander. It's intentional lostness. So, they have some idea where they're going, right? Like an explorer they set out, and they have an idea—

J Yeah.

P —where they're going to go. They have some maps. They have guides. They have people that know the train better than them, that are part of their party, part of the exploring party. And, so, they're not just going out by themselves. But they're being lost on purpose with purpose. So, I try to think of that as a metaphor for any of us willing to take that step of, "Oh, my gosh, I don't know what's going to happen after Step 3, or 4, or 5. But can I have enough courage to get lost on purpose with purpose and do it strategically?"

J Yeah.

P And I feel like for both of us in a sense probably when you go out and do your own thing, we're both – I know we both probably struggle with defining what we do.

J Um.

P I know I've read some of your stuff where it's like, "One day I say I'm an author or a writer. Another day I say I'm a speaker. Another it's an entrepreneur," or whatever. But I know for both us we probably even have feelings even today of piecing together the different facets, the different strengths. And I even like what you call it, the putting together your portfolio life that you wrote about in *The Art of Work*.

J Yeah.

P And maybe even describe that. I like that concept. And I think it's so true for many of us. What is *The Portfolio Life*, and why do you think that is a more realistic approach to building a career maybe even more so now than it was previously?

J Yeah, a couple of things on that. I mean, you talk about the hero's journey. And I love that idea of a slow death, because a hero's journey if you're not familiar, there is this circle where you can Google it and see a really good picture of it. And right down here is death.

P Yeah.

J The hero has to die a literal or a figurative death. And, so, when Gandalf flies down into the fiery pit and then gets resurrected in the next movie – I mean this is very classic hero’s journey.

P Yeah.

J In the middle of the story, the hero dies in some way.

P Yeah.

J And, then, they come back sort of resurrected. So, Gandalf comes back as Gandalf the White. When Luke Skywalker gets his hand cut off by Darth Vader at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*, and then comes back as The Jedi in *Return of the Jedi*, that’s the hero’s return, you know? That’s very classic hero’s journey stuff. So, what I like about what you’re talking about, and I think this is really the pain of growing up is, “Are you going to die a slow death?” Or, “Are you going to die an intentional death so that you can get reborn in different seasons of life to the next thing that you’re going to do?” And one of the things that when I started talking about calling, and I told people I was writing this book, probably like the first, or second, one of the first three questions that people asked me was – because you say you’re writing a book about something and people automatically assume you’re an expert. But they’re like, “Well, does it have to be one thing?” Right? This is the thing that I hear over and over again. And when I was in my 20s this was my biggest fear was the fear of missing out as you talked about, Paul, where if you choose one thing. You’re not choosing another million other things.

P Uh-huh (agreeing).

J So, you can just go through life not choosing anything, and it feels like you have access to everything. But you’re also by not choosing anything, you’re choosing nothing now. And that’s sort of that slow death. “I’m not going to make any risky choices. I’m just going to slowly descend into the depths.” And the alternative to that is taking brave choices, making brave choices, accepting the consequences, and then figuratively dying sometimes. And, then, being reborn in these different seasons of life. And I think *The Portfolio Life* is kind of that idea: I’m going to do this thing for a while, for a season. I’m going to learn something about myself, and that will probably naturally evolve into something else. And I’ll look back on my life, and I’ll realize that my magnum opus was not one thing, it was a body of work. It was a bunch of different things. And I think that’s true both in terms of at the end of your life you look back and go, “Oh, look at all this stuff I did.” And it’s also true in the present right now. Like, as you said, I’m a writer. I’m a business owner. I’m a speaker. I do a bunch of different things, and I interchange a bunch of different hats. And one of the things that I hear from a lot of creative people is, “I don’t want to just do one thing. I don’t want to be pigeonholed.” And when we talk about mastery or getting really good at something, we tend to talk about it in those terms. But what’s interesting is, when you look at history’s masters, they did many things. You know, Leonardo Da Vinci was an inventor, a painter, a sculptor, an architect. He did a bunch of different things. That was in that Renaissance era when it was good to be a polymath, when it was good to do a bunch of different things. But I think that’s even more useful. I think that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was this sort of season of history, period of history, where we had this false belief because of the Industrial Age where you’re stuffing people into factories and saying, “Do this one thing.” And, then, that kind of got translated to corporate America—

P Uh-huh (yes).

J —that we think that’s the way work is supposed to be, and we think that’s what humans are supposed to be. But when you look at the broad swath of history, and when we look at ourselves honestly, I don’t just do one thing. I do a bunch of different things well. And many of these things are complementary to each other. And I think *The Portfolio Life* is that. And you’re probably familiar with this study that came out a couple of years ago. Forbes popularized it, and the study said that by the year 2020 over half of the American workforce is going to be freelance. And by 2030 over half of them, like 60 percent.

P Uh-huh (yes).

J So, what that means is organizations are getting smaller. It means that what you and I do where we do a bunch of different things for a living is going to become the norm, not the exception. Stiff feels kind of weird to say, “I do these five things for a living,” and I can call myself a writer, an entrepreneur, a speaker, blogger. I can call myself all of those things honestly. Feels like a weird job description.

P Yeah.

J Well, in our lifetime, the next five, 10 years, it’s not going to be so weird. It’s going to be normative. I’m curious about your experience, because you worked at a college. And college is supposed to prepare people for the job market.

P Yeah.

J I don’t know how well it’s doing that. And I’m curious what you think about institutional education in light of these things. But, also, what it’s been like for you to transition from a day job into kind of becoming your own polymath and realizing—

P Yeah.

J Because you and I have talked about this candidly. Even if I could just write and make a living, I’m not sure that I would because I like doing many things.

P Yeah.

J But I was forced to do a bunch of different things, because that’s how I had to make a living.

P Yeah.

J I think it’s a really good thing. But as I said, more and more people are going to have to do this. And, so, it’s a multipart question. I’m curious, what was that like for you—

P Yeah.

J —what you think about colleges in particular and how they’re preparing young people, or not, for that, and what people actually ought to be doing to prepare for this future that most of us are going to see in our lifetimes?

P Gosh. So many different ways to go with that. And I won't even touch on the things that you were saying where I was like, "Man, I want to keep talking about that." Because just this idea of even of transitions in general—

J sure.

P —and that's kind of what we were talking – going from college out, going from your first job to your second job, going from your job to becoming an entrepreneur in these different things. You know, we talk about transitions so lightly.

J Yeah.

P In the sense of, "Oh, I'm going through a bit of a transition." You know?

J Right. That means I'm laid off. I don't have a job.

P I mean, it's only – I think I write about it in *All Groan Up*. I say, "We kind of talk about like it's an English gentleman, "Oh, I'm going through a bit of a transition [bad accent]," and I can't do an English accent. So, it's really terrible.

J It sounded a little Irish.

P Irish. I kind of went a little Irish.

J Maybe Welsh [laughing].

P So, I struggle with that. But I'll do that on speaking gigs. I'll try to do my English accent. And it always comes off terribly. But this idea that transitions are brutal. Transitions are tough. And I'll even talk about transition. I'll even open up a speaking thing I'll do. And I'll typically open it up by saying — if I'm going to talk about transitions I'll say, "Who's had a bad breakup?" And everybody raises their hand. We know what it feels like to breakup—

J Yeah.

P —in a relationship. And I feel like other transitions are pretty similar. You're breaking up from a job. They dumped you. They fired you. You didn't see it coming.

J Right.

P Or maybe you decided it was time to go. But there was still a loss in that. And you – and there's an ending.

J Yeah.

P And it can be somewhat stark. And you feel like you don't even know what to do with your next step. And, so, it is that season of dying, too, that season of like you were talking about before, that hero's journey, and even going back to that. That end of Act 2 when everything falls apart.

J Yeah.

P And the hero is sent out to the wilderness, to the desert, to the caves, whatever it might be. They literally die. And, then, they come back reborn. And they're not – the wilderness wasn't taking them away from their purpose. It was really forging their purpose so that their ? can happen. And I

think that is just such a good reminder for all of us. And, especially, with 20-somethings that I work with. And I think for people that you work with as well. I'm sure you've seen the same thing is there is just so much feelings of failure—

J Uh-huh (yes).

P —immersed in all of this. If you are going to take risks, if you are going to try to choose a path that's intentional, you're going to fail a lot. It's that idea of failing without calling yourself a failure, and realizing that failure is the best clarifier. And I have 20-somethings ask me all the time, "How do you find your passion?" And I'll oftentimes say, "Well, the only real true secret that I've figured out is by failing"—

J Uh-huh (yes).

P —terribly at something.

J Yeah.

P I mean everything going wrong. You do a terrible job. The person never calls you back again. Whatever it might be. And you get up the next day, and you want to do that exact same thing again. It's like, "OK, you have found what you're passionate about."

J Yeah.

P If you find success doing something, great. It's easy to feel excited about that. But when things go wrong, are you going to still be passionate about it? I don't know. So, when we're even talking about colleges, and how they're doing preparing students to leave? Well, I would say most people probably don't feel like they were necessarily prepared well to—

J Right.

P —leave a traditional college and go out in the work world. I know I work with a lot of people that are really grappling and struggling with that. And feeling even bitter about their college education, because it was like, "What is all this student debt for?"

J Hum.

P And I know that's becoming a big topic now.

J Yeah.

P Even just nationally of the average student-level debt, the numbers I'm seeing now is about \$33,000 for undergrad.

J Wow.

P Student debt is up into the trillions. It's like \$1.3 trillion. It's like—

J Wow.

P I think it's credit card debt and auto debt lumped together equals student-loan debt.

J Wow.

P So, we even have a lot of people knocking Millennials or saying, “Why can’t they just figure it out? Why are you guys struggling? Why are you frustrated?” Because of some of the stereotypes about Millennials that they don’t work hard, or they’re moving back home with their parents—

J Right.

P —at a higher rate than we’ve ever seen, about 35 percent of 20-somethings in America live back home with their parents.

J Wow!

P Highest percentage we’ve ever seen. But there are some real stark realities taking place that is not – it’s kind of forcing. It’s like, if you have \$30,000 in debt, maybe you have \$50,000 in debt against other people in your generation that have bachelor’s degrees, it’s the highest-educated generation in history as well. The job growth hasn’t been amazing, especially with the effects of the Great Recession and everything that we’ve gone through. So, I call it – I write about in my book *All Groan Up*, it’s like the Millennial version of *The Hunger Games*, you know, just without any interaction with Jennifer Lawrence, or any cameras on you, you know?

J [Laughing] Everything else is exactly the same.

P Maybe not the literal death.

J [Laughing]

P But they should have handed out spears and harpoon-like devices at college graduation, because you’re literally going to be in a fight to even get a job. I mean, it’s not just even a job that is fulfilling my passions, and dreams, and hopes, and goals. It’s like, “I’m just trying to get hired by Starbucks with my bachelor’s degree, and I can’t even get 40 hours there. I’m only getting 20 hours.”

J Yeah.

P So, it is really interesting dichotomy and reality taking place right now where I think people are being forced to find a different way. I think we’re going through a re-definition of success.

J Yeah.

P And what it means to be stable. And maybe the best way to be stable is to live in a way of completely unstable lifestyle, you know, where you’re not working in a cubicle from eight to five with somebody else controlling your future, because they could pull the rug out at any day and say, “Sorry, you don’t work here anymore.” Maybe it’s this kind of lifestyle where it’s not about climbing the corporate ladder anymore, because who even does that with like if you said, if you work two years at a company, you’re working a long time. But it’s like you’re traveling around from one island to another picking up skills and resources that you’re going to need at that island. And, then, you’re setting sail again.

J Yeah.

P And it's, again, that kind of being lost on purpose with purpose reality. That's a lot of answers in one.

J That's great. I'm going to cheat and ask you some more questions, because this is interesting. So, do you think it's the institutions – like who's to blame? People want to blame the institutions. And people want to blame the Millennials. Who's it on? Like who's responsibility is it to turn the world of work around, particularly in terms of like, "I've got all this debt. I've got this education that I thought was going to give me a one-up on the competition. It doesn't actually. What am I supposed to do?" Is it the college's fault? Are people being lazy? Does that even matter? I mean, how do you assess not so much blame but responsibility in terms of what needs to change?

P You know, I think if we look at a big macro view of what's going on globally and, specifically, in the United States, I kind of see it as we had this steroid era, right? And I think even sports is a good metaphor for that. But it was really true everywhere. It was like everything was being artificially enhanced.

J Wow.

P You know?

J Yeah.

P Baseball, you had Mark McGuire and Sandy Sosa hitting homeruns at an alarming rate, and it brought people back to baseball. It was after the strike. So, it was like nobody even cared that Mark McGuire was 60 pounds heavier and looks like a machine now.

J [Laughing]

P He's like in his middle 30s, or whatever he was.

J Right.

P Or Roger Clemmons. It's like, "How did you become a better pitcher? Barry Bond, all this stuff. But it's like corporations, companies were doing the same exact thing. You know, just fudging everything, artificially enhancing everything.

J Yeah.

P Everything was getting so overextended. We were doing that with our houses.

J Yeah. It's true.

P It was the steroid era. And I think we're just – we're still getting the shrapnel. We're still picking it out. I'm still picking it out of my arms of the American Dream and how it was built. It's just an expanding and inflating balloon that just exploded. And maybe it's bigger than the American Dream. It was the Global Dream. And I think it exploded. You know, so, when I'm talking – so, going back to the question where we're talking about responsibility and what happened. You know, I think it was just we were on a trajectory that was not sustainable. So, that has exploded. And, now, I think you have everybody trying to figure out, how do you be successful in this new economy, in this new

world where you can't just get a bachelor's degree and that means opportunities are opened up to you.

J Yeah.

P You know? Because in the past really you could get a bachelor's degree, and it didn't matter if the school prepared you all that well or not. There was going to be companies that needed you, because there was not enough people with bachelor's degrees to work those jobs.

J Yeah.

P I've talked to a neighbor where she was graduating in the '60s and '70s. And it was like companies were recruiting you all the time. It was just like – it was like a matter of which job did you pick? It wasn't even a – so, I think it's forcing both the student, and the institutions, to become a lot more strategic and become a lot more outcome focused.

J Yeah.

P And I think even the classic liberal arts college is being forced to ask these questions of, "How do we be clear-minded?" Because especially in lots of institutions, universities, career is kind of a four-letter word in a sense. It's like that's below us. Like we are just here to learn how to learn.

J Yeah, right.

P Which is important, but it's like how do you find that career? So, that would be my long answer for all of that. And I'd love to hear your take, too, on that. And maybe even the role of the entrepreneur and how that's becoming kind of a new paradigm, or the freelancer, to maybe solve some of these problems in general.

J Yeah, yeah. It's really interesting. And I was thinking about my dad always wanted me to go to college because he would get passed up for jobs and promotions for the different companies that he worked for, because he never had a college education. So, he'd get passed up, because he didn't have this diploma. And I remember him telling me, "It's a piece of paper, but that piece of paper can get you far in life, and if you don't have it, it can hurt you." And, so, that's why I went to college. Because I saw my dad miss opportunities that were somewhat arbitrary. Because he had more experience and someone would – my dad was in his 40s. Some kid in his 20s with a college degree came and took his place.

P Yeah.

J And, so, yeah, and I went to a liberal arts school and learned how to learn and studied religion, and Spanish, and traveled, and had all these great experiences but there was no preparation for the career world. And I didn't want it. Like I wasn't interested. I don't want to grow up. I don't want to go get a job.

P Yeah.

J But, yeah, there was no prep— There was a career center where you could go talk to somebody about how to get your resume ready. And that was it. And I didn't do that. I didn't have a resume.

P [Laughing].

J Yeah, so, it is kind of interesting. And I definitely don't think that it's going to be as important for my son who is three years old, and for our kids, when they're 18 years old, and it's time for them to go off to school. I think being educated is very important. I think learning how to learn is very important. Like I am grateful that I went to college, because I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now if it weren't for college. But I'm not doing anything that college directly prepared me for. It was just the way that life worked. And I don't think that it's going to be as important for my son. Because there's just – you couldn't forego college when we were going to school. I was in college – I graduated from college now 10 years ago. And there weren't opportunities to forego college and get an education. We were right on the cusp of that, but it wasn't there yet. Now, it's here. Now, you can learn so many different things through so many accessible tools and technology. And we started saving for our son's – two years ago we started saving for his college savings plan. And we did this little – we look at this little graph, this little very depressing chart where a financial planner is like, "OK, if you want to know how much it's going to cost to send your kid to a state school for years." And I was like, "How much." And we guessed, right? "Oh, I don't know, \$50,000, \$100,000." \$180,000 to go to a state school, no Ivy League thing. And I was like, "Well, OK." So, what we started doing is we put it in an investment of whether or not he goes to go to college he can use that money for something. But, yeah, I think it's a bubble. And you're a lot closer to that world than I am. And I think it's a bubble. The cost of tuition and all that stuff, it's going to have to change. And I also think the way that we educate people and prepare them for the real world, I think that's going to have to change, too. There's something really beautiful about the university system where you get to escape reality and you get to just immerse yourself into an environment of learning during a formative time of your life. I love that. But I also think as you get to the end of that, at the end of that self-discovery process, you need to figure out some stuff to do.

P Yeah.

J And we're baptizing our young people by fire. Yeah, I am a big fan of starting a business. My sister has just graduated from college. They're a couple of years apart. So, one graduated, and the other one has graduated this year. And I am encouraging them. These opportunities didn't exist when I was getting in the real world 10 years ago. I would have loved an opportunity to not have to need a job to make a living. And anybody right now can start an online business, sell something on Etsy, or an eBook on Amazon. You can create something, or buy something and then mark it up and sell it somewhere else pretty easily. And not everybody has to become these millionaire bloggers. And maybe not everybody can do that. But I think we have an opportunity that we're squandering. And I fear that the institutions are sort of teaching you to get a job – like you said, get a job and, then, some company will snatch you up. Well, it's not happening. It's not happening for a lot of my friends, the people I love, my family members. And, yet, we have this amazing technology of the Internet. We have connections like we've never had before.

P Yeah.

J Like Paul I can go to PayPal and send you money right now. I'm not going to—

P Let's do it.

J I'm not doing that. It's not a—

P I'd love that.

J But I could if I really wanted to.

P/J [Both laughing]

P Yes, you could. Let's test this out. I don't believe you. What is this PayPal thing you're talking about? We need to prove it.

J Prove it. Hastag send Paul money. We'll see what the listeners and the viewers say.

P And it's wild. Because what you're doing, too, is — just to interrupt you. Because what you're doing, you're — it's almost information entrepreneurs. I mean I remember you—

J Right.

P You recommended that I read a book called *The Millionaire Messenger*.

J Oh, sure.

P Where it was a great book by Brendon Burchard, right?

J Brendon Burchard.

P Brendon Burchard where it's basically about how we're almost — the products are information. It's training, the sharing of knowledge that's becoming a new economy. And, really, that in a sense — because Jeff Goins is not making his living by selling T-shirts or — you were selling something different.

J Yeah.

P And how do you see that world working? Do you see that just growing exponentially? Or how do people get into that?

J Do you remember the movie *Sneakers*?

P *Sneakers*.

J It's about spies?

P Yes, I do remember *Sneakers*. Was that '90s?

J Yeah. Like Ben Kingsley is in it.

P Yeah.

J And they're spies. They're — they're — what? Yeah, they're spies. And Robert Redford is in it.

P Oh, yes. Yes.

J And he's young. So, it was a long time ago.

P Yes.

J And they're like these – they're these two factions. I don't even remember very well. There were two factions. And there's these computers. And there's this information, these floppy disks. And people are like breaking into things. And drugging people to steal information.

P Yes.

J But there's this – they're all trying to get this code, or something. And there's this point in the movie where these two guys who used to be friends are now like enemies.

P Yeah.

J And I think it's Ben Kingsley and Robert Redford. And they're both going for the same information, the same thing they're trying to steal. They don't actually know what it is.

P Yeah.

J And at one point Ben Kingsley says to – I think it's Ben Kingsley – to Robert Redford, "In-fo-ma-tion." Like he's going – "What is it?" And they work together. Then they're like worried about screwing each other over. And Ben Kingsley goes, "In-fo-ma-tion. This is the power. Before it was weapons. Then it was this. Now it is in-fo-ma-tion." And I always think about that.

P That's a good Ben Kingsley impression. We're doing really well with our impersonations.

J In-fo-ma-tion.

P I like that.

J He basically says, "We've gone from military power, to like corporate power, to like money. We've gone from guns, to money, to information." He says, "He who has the information, has the power."

P Yeah. It's all about intelligence. It's all about who knows how to do that thing that can – and how to leverage that.

J And I think that's true. I mean, that's – in a way that's always been true. If you think about the nuclear arms race, and everybody had – was rushing to create an atomic bomb. And they all had some of the information. But if you had all of the right information, you could do it now.

P Yeah.

J And it was all about figuring that out. And the race to the moon, same kind of thing. The technology is good. But information kind of fuels the technology. Well, I think the world we live in now, the tools make it very easy to exchange information instantaneously. I mean, this video, and this conversation we're having right now is a great example of that.

P Yeah.

J It's incredible. You know? You're in California. I'm in Nashville. And we're having this conversation instantaneously. And we're sharing information. We're learning. And we're going to share with other people.

P Yeah.

J So, I think that you have to be careful, because some people think of this is like selling air. Like I'm just not selling T-shirts. I'm not selling rockets. What value is there? But I do think that when I have struggled in life, the things that I needed wasn't a tool. The thing that I needed was more information. I needed knowledge. I needed to know something so that I could go do something. And the world that we live in now, the information that you have, if you have the right information, the most information, you can do anything. Because access to the tools, the technology, it's all there. You just need to know what to do something, how to do it. Where to find the tools that you need. And, so, I do think that with the decline of the efficacy of formal education, there's an incredible opportunity for you to take what you know, or a skill that you've mastered, and share it with people in some sort of exchange of value. So, yeah. Whether it's an information product business, or a coaching business, or a speaking business. I remember reading in the *Four-Hour Work Week* which is a lot older than I realized. That's an older book now.

P Yeah.

J Where he says that if you want to start an online business, selling information products is easy, because it's not a commodity. It's proprietary. Like nobody can do the Paul Angone thing the Paul Angone way. Even if it's all the same information, but because it's your voice, and it's your unique spin on it, it's hard to steal that. It's hard to compete with that which is probably the fundamental flaw with *Sneakers* is depending on the information, we can share the same information to different people, and both have successful businesses doing that, because it's a global economy. It's a huge market. And, so, it just makes everything a lot easier as opposed to, gosh, I hope this corporation hires me to be the human resources manager. And I hope nobody else is applying for this job.

P Yeah.

J So, I think there is a lot of hope for that. The thing that I wanted to ask you about before you even asked that question was, maybe we can kind of wrap up here—

P Yeah.

J —is can, or should, everybody be an entrepreneur? It seems to me — I talk about this in *The Art of Work* and, particularly, in the chapter about portfolio lives, whether you like it or not, whether you want to or not, maybe you can speak to this a little bit, Paul, because some of these things you've kind of been forced into, and others that you stepped into, I think. Whether you like it or not, if things continue in the trends they're continuing on, there isn't going to be a traditional job. You are going to be a freelancer, an entrepreneur, whatever you want to think of it as. You're going to have to piece things together. You're going to have to a portfolio life. There's not going to be just one source of income. Whether you like it or not, you're going to have to figure that out. The thing I'm afraid of, the thing that I'm concerned about, is does the average person have what it takes to be an entrepreneur? Because it's hard. And a lot of people I've talked to — I wasn't natural at this. I had to force myself to do it and figure it out. Now that I've done it, it's kind of fun. But a lot of people I've talked to go, "I could never do that. I never want to do that." What do you think about that? Some 20-something comes to you, and he can't find a job. Do you tell them to be an entrepreneur? What's good advice for a lot of people without misleading them? Because I really struggle with that.

P Yeah, I think we often think about it as such a black-and-white question, right?

J Yeah.

P And I think I often thought of that as well. I'm either settling, or I'm not settling.

J Right.

P And when I started coming to the realization and it was freeing for me to think, "I can settle for a season here without feeling like I'm settling." And, so, I was always working on my "side hustle," or whatever you want to call it. Always that kind of thing where if I'm intentionally working towards something outside of my "job," but this is my work as well. And I would call it my work. I remember being – I ended up working at a marketing job in a university. And I remember my coworkers they would go to lunch, and I'd say, "Sorry, I've got to pass. I'm going to do some work." Because they knew what I was doing. I was running *All Groan Up*. I was working at a Website. And they would say, "Oh, you're going to write a blog?" And they kind of say, "Oh, good, you're a blogger." And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm going to go do some work." And, so, I would even start putting that in my mind, I love doing it. And I'm still calling it work, because it's not a hobby. It's not just blogging. I'm intentionally building something with a goal in mind. And it's filling me up. It's giving me energy. It is helping me do a better job at my work, at my other, "8-to-5 job," because I feel more energy and excitement, and I'm leveraging things I'm learning on the outside, and I'm bringing them in on the inside. And, so, there are all kind of working together. And I think that becomes that sweet spot of all your learning, and all your intentional work, is hopefully leveraging itself on each other. And that's really been my path as an entrepreneur. It's really just been leveraging bits of success and finding new avenues to then walk through – that can possibly make money, that I didn't actually think I could do. But it was like one bit of success I could leverage into another bit of success and piece these things together as I kind of honed what I called – and I like to put this metaphor of my signature sauce. And it kind of goes back to what you were saying. With information, or whatever it is, we can all be saying the same thing, but we're going to be saying it in different ways, because we all are uniquely designed. And I truly believe that. I believe we're all very intentionally made or tailor made. And, so, we're not – you can't be completely replaceable, because who are they going to replace you with to completely match what you bring. You are uniquely made. You have your own signature sauce. And like a master chef bringing together different ingredients, and different amounts or whatever, it's going to take some time and burnt failed experiments before you figure out the right mix to figure out, "What flavor do I bring to the world? What do I serve to the world that is important, that creates an impact that I feel alive doing it?" And I think that's really what the 20s are about. That's what the 30s are about. It's more setting the table than enjoying the feast. You're just culminating these pieces together. It's *The Portfolio Life*. It's all these things that we've been talking about. It's this culmination of things that you begin to piece together. And, then, maybe at some point you have to launch into a "full-time" entrepreneur, or half-time entrepreneur, or whatever it is. But, hopefully, it's not as black and white. But there will be little leaps where you feel like, "Yeah, I'm dying a fast death here, because the ground is coming fast" versus, "I'm sitting in my cubicle dying a slow death."

J I love that. You know, the word entrepreneur comes from like *entregrande* or something, a French word meaning, "One who undertakes something." An undertaker.

P [Laughing] And a lot of things will die as you begin the life an entrepreneur, but.

J Yeah, but like so many things, I see this with writers, too. They go, “I’m not a capital W writer. I just write on the side.”

P Yeah.

J And if anything is true with entrepreneur, I’m really always hesitant to call myself that even though I’m a business owner. And I start new things. But I think what you talked about when you see opportunities, and you step into them, because it kind of fits that sweet spot of what you love doing, what you’re good at, and what the world needs, or what this market wants. And you keep identifying those things. We’re all undertaking something. We’re all trying to do something. I think we all have a gift to share with the world and responsibility to share it. And however you do that, I mean, it’s an undertaking. You’re going to have to take risks, and you’re going to have to identify opportunities. And you’re going to have to leverage your resources, your skills, your passions, and try things. And you’ll fail. And that really – not to completely demystify it, or undermine the term. Because I have a lot of respect for anybody who calls themselves an entrepreneur. But that’s basically it. That is the work of an entrepreneur.

P Yep.

J And I love that you’re doing that. I love that you’re figuring it out, and it’s been fun to watch and journey with you. Yeah, I think that’s a good place to end our conversation.

P You as well, Jeff. I mean I’ve been looking up to you for years. So, it’s fun to do this together, and that’s a fun thing, too. You’re doing this in community. We’re not alone. Even if we are doing it independently, I love the collaboration nature, too, of this kind of economy. I feel like we’re all as each boat rises, the other boats rise. So, it’s not like a cutthroat-type thing. We’re all in it together, and I love that. And, so, for anybody that’s looking to do this, do it in community. Don’t do it by yourself.

J Well, I love that. And I love your hair.

P Not as good as yours. You’ve got the wave going way better than me.

J Well, you know, you said nobody can do things your way. And I was like, “Well, Rupert Grint, Ron Weasley from Harry Potter, could probably replace me which is why I did the flip. I was just worried about job security.

P [Laughing].

J So, if you’re watching this, check out [PaulAngone@AllGroanUp.com](mailto:PaulAngone@AllGroanUp.com). Great work there. Tell all your Millennial friends about his book and his Website. Really good stuff. Check out all Paul’s work there. I highly recommend it.

P Yeah, and then Jeff Goins, you can find him at – I mean lots of different places: GoinsWriter. Just Google Jeff Goins, and you’ll find a conference that’s coming up, Tribe – it’s called The Tribe Conference, correct?

J Yes.

P Tribe Conference. And he's got – if you're a writer, especially, you've got to look at TribeWriters, his course that he has there. I'll have the links for these kinds of things as well. So, Jeff, thanks for doing this with me. This collaborative—

J It's fun.

P —back-and-forth interview. It's been awesome.

J Yeah, I have the recording for this and back to our cutthroat kind of thing. So, I'm just going to steal this and you get access to it. But thanks for letting me use you.

P That's right.

J In-fo-ma-tion Paul.

P In-fo-ma-tion. This is a crazy transition we're talking about here.

J OK. Thanks for being so great to....

## Resources

- [Signature Sauce](#)
- [The Millionaire Messenger](#) by Brendon Burchard
- [All Groan Up](#) by Paul Angone