

Dan Putt:

If you could, just give us a brief introduction of who you are.

Noah Kagan:

Hi, Noah Kagan, number 30 at Facebook, founder of AppSumo.com and 80 million dollar a year, number one software deal site online for solopreneurs or people starting businesses. So if you're creating software go to AppSumo.com and I have a book coming out called *The Million Dollar Weekend*, it's exactly how to start a seven figure business or beyond in 48 hours.

Dan Putt

I've had the pleasure of getting to know you well over the last few years. But the funny thing is, is I was preparing for this conversation. I went back and I looked in my personal Gmail. What was my first interaction with Noah? And it was a 2009 New York Tech gaming meetup. I had originally told you that I had met you through Ramit, but it was actually before that is what I found out. And so I think there's a part of me that in setting up this conversation, I felt nervous, partially because I wanna do a really good job for you, but I also felt nervous because I think I've been connecting with the original version of me that connected with you. Which was this kid who didn't know what the heck he was doing with his life. And...

There was a piece at the beginning of the book that really resonated with me. And I, and I have it here. Um, we talked about the early years of your career with filled with almost successes. You had the internship with Microsoft. "Normally anyone who gets an internship gets a job." I'm reading a quote here from your, your book, as you might've guessed. "Normally anyone who gets an internship at Microsoft gets a job. I was rejected before because I performed poorly on interviews. Then I had a job offer at Google pre IPO. Google rescinded my offer because I couldn't do long division. Long division. And then of course, Mark Zuckerberg fired me."

But the piece about the almost successes, what prompted me to reach out to you originally in back in 2009 was because I was the guy that was supposed to be successful. Everybody in high school said, you're gonna do it, you're amazing, you're smart. And yet when I hit that point, I had a bunch of almost successes. I had not figured it out. I was totally lost.

And the content I saw in you was somebody who had not only gone through almost successes, but also had figured it out and had like a confident playbook. And so the email I sent you was, "you probably got a million of these was something to the effect of, can I just buy you a beer or a lunch? Because I need the plan on how to get out of this funk and you have the plan. So please help me." So.

All that to say, I was nervous about this conversation with you and excited about it because I think I'm still connected to that guy and I also want to make sure you, you know, you, we have a good conversation.

Noah Kagan:

I'm curious, did I respond to you that email?

Dan Putt:

Of course. You said, I'd be happy to help over email.

Noah Kagan:

Yeah, okay, that's nice.

Dan Putt:

Which was super nice. You responded and you responded quickly. And frankly, I get it now. I'm now in a position where people ask me for help. And so I am happy to help, but I can't get on a call with everyone or grab a beer with everyone. So I get it.

Noah Kagan:

It is challenging. I mean, it was interesting. There's a guy yesterday, his name is Chris Williamson. He runs this now very popular podcast and show called Modern Wisdom. And my publicist for million dollar weekend got me on the show and I'm coming on in two weeks and I've been consuming more of his content and I'm like, well, this stuff's solid. I really enjoy his, some of his messages. And, uh, I wanted to text him. Thank you. Cause I liked his message about success bias. So you hear these stories of all the successful people. You don't hear about all the failures. You never hear about the people who never make it.

Dan Putt:

Yeah.

Noah Kagan:

I don't know if you, you know, and so I, I just, I went into my Gmail and looked up his email just out of curiosity. He emailed me five years ago. He's like, Hey man, I'd love to have you on the show. And I was like, Hey, no, I'm busy. An interesting thing about this life existence where we think all these other people have figured it out.

They probably have it less figured out than we realize. I think that's a hundred percent true. And it is a small world on the internet. So how we behave, how we respond, how we come across, I do think it's gonna be mindful of that because like Chris Williamson, I had another email from Andrew Mason. He found a Groupon and now Descript. He emailed me and I was like, ah, I don't think I was rude to him. But you know, just how are you behaving and how are you showing, what example are you showing to others? So when your paths cross, which they inevitably will,

Dan Putt:

Totally.

Noah Kagan:

Are they willing to reply to you? Are they willing to tell others probably how you made them feel?

Dan Putt:

Right. Well, you had a really positive impact on me at that time. I look back on that period of my life where I was really lost and felt, frankly felt broken. I had all these almost successes as you named in the book, and I was looking for people who could help me get the plan to be fixed and to be whole, and your content was a driver for that. The other thing that's important to note is I now sit in this seat of coaching and being a co-founder with Jerry. That's when I met Jerry too, because I went to him looking for the same thing. I went to him asking for the plan on how to be successful and how to be whole. So the broken time was actually like one of the most rich and profound moments of my life, but it was so painful, so, so painful. Such a hard place.

Noah Kagan:

Dude, I had a breakthrough at that. And so for the listeners, I think they probably know Dan coaches me and he coaches the AppSumo team. We pay and we've used Reboot for a while. And I was talking with Chad yesterday, and I'll tie back to that time in 2009, 10. So I can chat with my business partner and the CTO of AppSumo. And he's like, man, you're doing some of your best work I've ever seen. And I've known Chad 15 years. Either he was my customer or now he's my partner. And what I recall though, which is interesting, Dan, in that like 2009, 2010, I was doing my best work at that time, but I was doing it sad to some extent. And I think now I'm, I saw on the other side of it where I'm feeling just happy as I do this work. I'm feeling content. And I was literally just in therapy this morning trying to understand why it's so good now. And, but it's interesting, you know.

Dan Putt:

Hmm.

Noah Kagan:

We all have great work in us, but I think we all feel like we can do more. And when do you know, or when do you feel that you're like, wow, I'm really doing my best work. Wow. I'm really maybe being broken is a feature, not a bug. You know, maybe it's not such a, things aren't so as bad as they seem. And I don't know. It's definitely a journey that we're all figuring out.

So some of the things I would, I would just highlight that have helped me feel better about how I, who I am over the past few years specifically is one, um, practice being alone.

So just practice being alone with yourself a lot more. That was definitely helpful. Going to therapy on a regular basis, which I think people know, but maybe they don't do it. Three, maybe think about the hard things we're avoiding in life. So for me, the hard things were like writing a book, hard thing was being alone, hard thing was like being a CEO and facing it and realizing we can actually do more harder things than we realize. Four was finding a partner. So actually

finding someone I felt that was, you know, just I admire.

I really admire and she's always making me more kind. And I'd say lastly, there's more, but these are giving things, the abbreviated version. I would say I shifted, I'll give you two more, but one, I shifted my thinking from all or nothing.

I think it used to be like, okay, if it's not 10x, it's a fail versus, okay, it can be in the middle. Like it's not drinking or no drinking or hire a lot or don't hire a lot. It's just like, can you do a little bit and then kind of do more than that or do something in the middle? It doesn't have to be so binary.

So those are areas that have really helped me develop where I'm, problems are still happening. And lastly, pausing and responding. I know there's a lot here, cause it is a lot. And it takes time, but pausing on these things. So as things are happening, cause problems still happen. Yesterday people quit, things are gonna keep happening. Someone's gonna say no, got rejected for someone who I thought was gonna help. And they said no, but just pausing in these moments versus being so reactive and emotional. And those combined have led, I would say, to a nice, a peaceful place. I feel very, very peaceful.

Dan Putt:

There's a very practical thing that you do that I actually point a number of clients to, which is your anxiety management checklist.

Noah Kagan:

Yeah.

Dan Putt:

And what you noticed was how your anxiety was driving you to take actions that were actually disrupting the team and the company. And so now you have a process that you've shared with your whole team and you've tweeted about it on how you make decisions in the context of being anxious.

Noah Kagan:

Yeah, I mean, I think even regarding that yesterday, someone quit and so I was like, oh shit, well, business is going to, we're going out of business tomorrow then. Like that's literally, and it's okay to have that thought. That's not a bad thought, but then realizing, okay, I have a plan if that's the case and let's now pause for a second. It's like, oh, that's not so bad as I think it has. And I don't have to go rush to create some chaos of a problem that's not a problem. The other thing I'll end with that I think is helpful for all the founders is that weekly review. I think we've talked about it a little bit.

But I think especially for founders, I found this invaluable. Probably one of the biggest growth things for myself as a leader is every single Friday, there's a Slack reminder, which is a Google

form and asked me three questions, which is how did I rate myself as a leader in the business, one through five and why? Two, was my behavior consistent? One through five and why? And then three, what are the three things I'm doing next week? That silly enough. And I've done it probably 51 weeks of the year. So almost every single week I'm doing it.

I just find a really good benchmark and I know it's coming. So if I'm in a meeting getting a little, if I'm acting a little impulsive or I'm getting too overly emotional, which it's not bad to have emotion. I'm not trying to remove that. I'm just trying to have consistency so people know what to expect when they, when they interact with me. And it's really just helped me improve a lot. I'm like, what's, what's the priorities? Am I actually doing those? Am I delivering this week what I thought I was going to deliver? Am I showing up the way I want to show up? And just having that kind of check in weekly has been invaluable. So I'm gonna leave it at that.

Dan Putt:

I think it's fantastic. And I have my own version of it, partially inspired by you and what you have done. So thank you for that.

Noah Kagan:

How did you, how did you get fixed? Unbroken.

Dan Putt:

I actually, you know, we'll go back to a book you and I have talked about quite a bit, which is *The Missing Piece Meets The Big O*. Excellent book.

Noah Kagan:

Oof. Great book. Thank you for that suggestion. That's a fire book.

Dan Putt:

Firebook, yes. It wasn't about filling in a hole from the outside to use that language. It was about kind of just more fully embracing who I am, what I care about, what I stand for. You know, to use something even that sounds kind of cheesy, but it's true, which is to really come to love myself for the man that I am and the man that I can be and the man that I wanna be, as opposed to seeing it as like a brokenness or a hole.

I think that was a big part of it for me. As I was reading the book and you start with this, the chapter that talks about sort of like that phase. For you it's probably more like 2005, 2006, it seemed like, when you got fired from Facebook and the almost successes that we were referencing earlier. And I was just like, what is the present day Noah? If the Noah of 2006, 2007, whatever the year, what would he see if he saw that version of him today? Like if he was on this call with us, what would you see in that man? What would you notice about him?

Noah Kagan:

I would see that it's a boy, not a man. I would see, and I see these 20-year-olds now. I'm 41.

And there's nothing wrong with it. Everyone develops at their own way. And I love that, again, that book, *Missing Piece*. I appreciate you recommending that. I've bought that for a lot of people. And I think he's chasing something externally that he needs to really find internally. And that's what I've been really sitting with for years now and working on. And it was like, if I can get money, finally, either my dad will recognize me or these people who fired me will recognize me that I have skills. If I can get fame, if I can get some attention, I'll be validated. I'm not sure how it's going to all work out. I would see someone with a lot of anxiety, a lot of like bitterness.

Dan Putt:
Mm.

Noah Kagan:

And through a lot of swings, like I'd have, you know, super high moment. Maybe I have Community Next to put on a conference, even though I never put on conferences before. Have, you know, my idols come and speak. And then the next day I'm sitting, I'm living on a couch in, you know, the sunset of San Francisco drinking a bottle of Charles Schwab, two buck Chuck by myself. Right. Just this very confused about what we're supposed to be doing here. Or like on the streets of Argentina where I was living for a while and like, trying to figure out what the hell the purpose is. I think the person who would see him now is like, man, it's gonna be okay. Try to smile along the way, even if you're feeling a little frustrated during this time.

And even to this day, I'm working my ass off and I'm really happy with all the work. But I literally, this morning and last night, I was signing autographs for the book, which is kind of a crazy thought. And I was like, remember to smile. Just remember. And yeah, I think I'd also feel proud of how far I've come since then.

I think that's true for most of us. If you actually go on your phone and you like scroll up, you know, two years, three years, four years, just on the photos and you see where you were, and you can think about where you are, you'd be like, wow, I'm pretty much ahead of where, even if it's smaller amounts, but it could be larger, you're further ahead than you kind of realized you were. I think we'd all be like, pretty proud of myself. So it would definitely be a transformation. I'm very lucky and I feel blessed to be where I am today and definitely took somewhat of a journey that we all have in us to get to where I am.

Dan Putt:

I think that's really well said. And the journey of your book actually prompted me to go back to that time. Cause I also really, as we said, connected with that 20 year old, 23 year old, 25 year old, the boy and there's something that I've observed in the client work I've done over the years, and frankly, I've had the privilege of seeing it in you, which is, to put it over simplistically, we can run from or run towards. And when I look at the 2009 version of me, my guess is when you look at that 20 something year old version of you, we were really running from something, running from the fear of not being enough, running from, um, the fear of not being enough to be loved by our parents, maybe as, as an example, or our father, um, running from the fear that, that maybe

we're broken. But when I look at the man I see before me today I see somebody who's running towards something. So what is it that you're running towards?

Noah Kagan:

Yeah, you know, I'm a huge avoider. And, you know, if you run, then it's hard for fear to catch up. That's why a lot of *Million Dollar Weekend* is about going really fast so that you don't even let fear stop you. Right. Which is actually also a power that you can look at as a good thing. And so the big thing I've embraced overall is really liking myself. And I don't know, a long time ago, people were like, you're successful. And I never felt successful.

Right? That's like other people saying it for you. It's like, how do you feel good about yourself? And so over time, I was literally in therapy, just literally exploring this today about like, why am I feeling so damn good?

And it's how did I reduce the amount of external validation I needed, which is still, we still need it sometimes. And then really increase the internal validation, really increase the internal validation. We're like... I look at *Million Dollar Weekend* and it was really hard and it was scary and I didn't think I could do it. And I thought it was going to suck and all these things. And also finishing it and be like, damn good job. Or with my girlfriend, like being a good partner. I'm like, wow, I'm really not arrogant, but I'm like really proud how I show up for her.

Dan Putt:

Of course.

Noah Kagan:

And I had a therapist years ago and they said, the only way through is in. And I'm like, shut up, man, I'm gonna find a shortcut. I don't care about your hokey pokey, you know, psychoanalytic babble. But really, there's there's, I think, to get to these points of contentment for ourselves, is really thinking about what are we really avoiding. And we all have it, right? And there's different areas of it. And as you start working on these different areas, but for me, it's like being alone created a lot of anxiety. Um, you know, maybe doing partying sometimes to like, keep chasing more, the more bug that a lot of us have. And through going through that and facing them, uh, it's never solved necessarily it's, it's created, I think, the capacity that I can handle different problems better where, man, in my twenties and thirties.

I was just swinging so differently emotionally. Like it would be emo Noah today and then tomorrow it's a high and so forth. Whereas today, you know, yesterday, someone very key in the company quit problems with, uh, certain things with their girlfriend problems with some of things on YouTube and all these different parts. And I'm like, okay, this is, this is Monday and I can handle this. And I don't have to react so much. I can pause. I, you know, that was my word of the year. It's pause. And, uh, I think that's led me to feel better just overall about my behavior and just who I am as a person. And I don't need more subs or more money or more like acknowledgement or this book to sell a ton for me to feel proud of who I am.

Dan Putt:

Yeah, that's really amazing. I mean, the listeners are probably wondering as I have been known on the Reboot Podcast for doing the introductions and doing, um, a few conversations here and there, but mostly it's been Jerry. And so they're probably wondering why I'm, why am I doing this interview? And the, and the, the truth is that I've had this really privileged seat to watch Noah change pretty dramatically over the last few years as a leader and as a man. And it just felt really important for me to, I guess, be able to introduce you to the Reboot audience because I have been so damn proud of how you have shown up as a leader and how you have grown as a leader over the last few years. So I wanted to be on this conversation.

Noah Kagan:

Yeah, it's hard. It's really hard. One, thank you and thank Reboot. You know, you guys didn't only coach me, you coached the leadership team at AppSumo. And you coached a lot of the individual leaders. And you know, we go back to the earlier versions of ourselves. I think if we all were a little bit patient with ourselves and had more positive self-talk, like, we will get to that same destination just probably a little bit more enjoyable.

Dan Putt:

Mm-hmm.

Noah Kagan:

And I was, I was just thinking about the first time you came into a meeting when I came back as CEO of AppSumo, which I was very afraid of coming back and ruining the company. And I remember like, who the fuck is this Dan guy talking some shit on a Zoom call? Why are we talking about?

Dan Putt:

I think you might have said that out loud, actually, too. Ha.

Noah Kagan:

I did. And then everyone's talking about their, their feelings. I'm like, dude, who, who are you people? Why are we talking about feelings? We've got to talk about business. And, uh, you know, and then we have people, a lot of people quit. We had to let go of people. Everyone's not trusting each other.

And one of the things that I can recommend for any of the other founders or people starting business out there was getting feedback. And I think we do get feedback. So every quarter now, the leadership team gives me feedback on my leadership style. And then I give myself feedback each week. And then you can see over time now, wow, I'm actually, these people seem to like me. The company seems to be going from the numbers as well as from a subjective numbers, subjective stance in a positive direction. But that also doesn't happen.

You know, it doesn't happen immediately. Right, and it's been nice to work with you to see like, no, you're, you know, you don't seem to like what you're doing. Nah, I hate this stuff. And one of the things I remind myself today is that a lot of the, when you're at a good place, let's say for yourself, you kind of think, oh, I don't need all the stuff that I did to get here. I can stop exercising, I can stop Reboot, I can stop going to therapy in the morning, like I'm good now. And I remind myself that it takes time and then keep doing the things that got you successful.

Keep showing up for the different meetings, keep doing the survey, keep doing the workouts, keep doing it. You might need to evolve it in some way, but don't stop it. And I think that's a very common thing with entrepreneurs and founders. It's like, how'd you grow, simple example, how'd you grow your business? We used to do a lot of one by one cold emails, or one by one phone calls, or one by one events. How often are you doing that? Oh no, we stopped. Just go do that again. And then they do it and it works. I'm like, yeah, that's all for all of us, myself included.

Dan Putt:

I mean, I think you referenced the need the ongoing practice and that's something that I've always appreciated about you is my sense, your ability to lean into the hard conversations and to invest in the support, not just whether it's working with a coach, but it's your own therapy and you're constantly asking these bigger questions of life, I've noticed too.

But how do you continually evolve as a leader, besides some of the things you mentioned, like feedback and ongoing support?

Noah Kagan

Yeah, I was I was chatting on Tim Ferriss's show that's coming up. He's helping. We were just talking, we haven't talked in a while. And so that show is coming out. And he asked me, no, you have a lot of coaches, right? So how do you evolve as a leader? You know, I think one, the easiest way is from the people around you. Right. So you ask for feedback and every month it used to be monthly. I think it's now quarterly. There's three questions. It's like, do you believe in the direction of the company? Do you feel safe to speak your mind and how do you evaluate Noah as a leader?

And it's a way to then ask for suggestions specifically based on their responses. So that's one way to evolve as a leader. The second way is to get, and this what I was talking about with Tim, was to get different advisors. So I have Moody Glasgow, who's a marketing advisor, Rajatish Mukherjee, who's an operations advisor. He works at Indeed. Moody worked at Glass Door and Zapier. Now the interesting part here, Tim asked me, was how do you decide what inputs to listen to? And I don't have a great answer.

I don't have a great answer then. I don't have a great answer now. I think that's part of intelligence, right? But what you can do is that if you're not sure what to listen to is you can try

things out and see the impact of it and then make changes on that. For example, I don't know if it was through you or through something, but, and this is going to sound so obvious to people, but if you're positive, people want to work harder and work. They're more excited to work with you. But all I normally do is shit on people. I know it doesn't sound nice.

Dan Putt:

Mm-hmm.

Noah Kagan:

But I've evolved. And so as a leader, I think I don't know where I learned it from. I don't think my parents are this way. Maybe it was Zuckerberg or someone. But I'm normally very like, here's the problems I see with what you just showed me. I'm never acknowledging the good parts. All I'm seeing is the areas for it to improve. Maybe it's me feeling a lack in myself. And so noticing a lack in someone else feels better for me. And so I don't know if it's through you or through someone, but I tried out with Mitchell. I think you know Mitchell. He's one of the guys at AppSumo.

And I just was first acknowledging positively his work and then optimistically, which is something that I've really worked on, talked about some of the improvements. And then I later, I asked him, I'm like, how'd you think that meeting went? You can always ask for feedback. It's like, it's the greatest gift you can get. You just have to decide what to do with it. And so I asked him, he's like, dude, that was the best meeting we had all year.

And this is from a guy where a week ago, he was like, that's the worst meeting I had with you all year. Because I was shitting on him for not coming back with solutions around our Plus membership. And so to evolve as a leader, I think it's taking different inputs, getting different feedback. I don't find a lot of books as helpful at this point. There's some books. I actually think Jerry's book is really good, *Reboot*. I thought that book was fire.

Dan Putt:

Yeah.

Noah Kagan:

I like a lot of biography books. So any biographies about different entrepreneurs, I think just go listen them on audio are really helpful. And then you try things out and then you kind of notice. You know, I met with you and I noticed that I commented something. And I think one of the things you guys say was like, what's the unsaid thing? And I noticed what I was talking with you in one of our sessions was, hey, I don't really know if we're all on the same page for Q1 2024. And you're like, huh, that's interesting. What do you want to do about it?

I was like, well, I'm going to have a meeting tomorrow and make sure that if I'm not clear, is everyone else not clear? And what's the example I'm setting and how would I make a change on that? And so I think ultimately maybe taking a zoom out here with all these things we're talking

about evolving leadership is just writing these pieces down for each person. So I have a doc on my phone called 'Noah's Lane of Leadership.' And in this doc, it's like a living document that I'm updating about what's my Q1 priorities. What's the Q1 AppSumo company priorities?

And then what are the leadership things that I'm noticing, like getting an advisor, super helpful. Having a business coach, super helpful. Being optimistic, sounds stupid or maybe obvious, but it's like, am I as optimistic? And I don't mean fake, like, you know, we had a toxic positivity problem when I first came back, which everyone was like too positive, but noticing these areas of your leadership style that seemed to work for you and for the company and style of company you wanna run and keep that kind of living document of your leadership. Maybe you publish it one day or maybe you just have it for yourself, but I'd say ultimately that also helps you kind of cement the foundation of your leadership style and evolution.

Dan Putt:

I love that Noah's Lane for Leadership. I'd love to see that posted at some point. You're pretty transparent. So it'd be fun to see that.

Noah Kagan:

Let me pull it up. Hold on. So I have it pinned. You can always pin your things. Noah's lane of leadership. Q1 focus, VP of marketing and VP of finance, content plan, and we have a directory product. The three things I'm interested in, people, boundaries, and goals. Set the goals, one clear one so everyone knows what they're doing, and a scorecard for each person. Boundaries, give people principles, frames of mind for how they should think about things in the App Sumo way. And people hire great ones. If you're solving for them, you have the wrong people.

And then there's just different bullet points about things I was talking to you about that I noticed was more effective based on feedback. So one of them is a phrase I should use. "Here's what I would do." So instead of telling someone what to do, just be like, "hey, let me just tell you, here's what I would do." Don't debate over the phone. Debate over a document. I don't know, just different little things that I've, that was pretty good actually.

Dan Putt:

It's very good. Sounds like a second book, perhaps.

Noah Kagan (24:25.038)

Yeah, no, a *Million Dollar Weekend*, one and only man. I don't, I don't know about that. Maybe I'll sell it as a thing on appsumo.com. We'll see. There's just, there's not like strong leadership books. There's strong, like I like sports coaches, like basketball, John Wooden or Phil Jackson, you know, especially cause they're dealing with a lot of egotists and very, you know, a lot of different individuals. Uh, but there's not necessarily like how to lead book. I think like, uh, Frank Sloatman from *Amp It Up From Snowflake* is an amazing one. Or Netflix, *No Rules Rules* is another amazing one. Those are two of the probably bangers I'd recommend for most people, but there's, there's definitely more room for a strong leadership.

Dan Putt:

Well, it sounds like you've done what I often want and help clients to do, which is perhaps you take stuff from Frank Sloatman or Reed Hastings or any other conversations you have with your advisors, but you gotta make your own. It has to be your own document. The way that Noah leads effectively is a little different than the way that Frank Sloatman leads. And if you're trying to be Frank Sloatman, you're not gonna do very well. Cause you're not Frank Slutman. You're Noah. So what is like Noah's, when you're at your best as a leader, what does that actually look like?

Noah Kagan:

I would say the two things that come to mind of when I'm at my best leadership style, number one is that I'm leading by example. And I really think behavior by example is undervalued in companies. So when you message someone, even the words you're using, even the phrase you're saying and the behavior you're doing, like what's the example you're showing? Are you messaging someone at night that's saying that everyone should be working nights? Are you messaging someone and expecting a quick response? That means that people should be focused on distractions all day and thinking about that.

And so I would say my example of best work is when I'm doing promotion. When I'm promoting appsumo.com, when I'm making a YouTube video, when I'm promoting million dollar weekend, when I'm going on shows, I think people are like, wow, Noah's pretty good at that kind of stuff. And also I love it. And so I think they see the thing I'm enjoying and they find that in themselves. I think the other part where Noah's that's me. I'll talk, I'll talk in first, second and third person him.

The other thing I acknowledge about when I'm at my best, it's really finding these hidden gems of talent. And I'm talking about the AppSumo customer and my YouTube viewers and the book readers. A lot of them, I call them underdogs. I've always called them underdogs because I've always felt like an underdog. Like I'm not a Harvard elite, even though I grew up in Silicon Valley and I was able to be around them. I always felt like not part of it. And so I believe I find these people that are just really special. And then I kind of do my best to lift them up. I think I've just chosen really great people that are experts categorically or have the ability to be experts. And I do my best. And so I think I've done a good job of that.

Like even Chad, he was my customer. I was building Facebook games and he was the first customer I got. I called him on Thanksgiving and I still call him every Thanksgiving as a Memorial about how much I annoyed him. I'm like, Hey, you don't know me, but I want you to be my customer. He's like, who are you? And, uh, you know, Chad was my favorite customer. And so I ended up quitting that business and starting really up-seeming with Chad. Uh, and so yeah, finding certain people. And I think that's where I'm at my best. And then finding.

Like even Chad, he's in meetings a lot of the time. And that's not him at his best. And so how do I help him have the environment? And he's like, I just need to get the fuck out of meetings. I'm

like, all right, we're gonna get you an executive assistant. So I'll find one for myself and that'll support you. What else? Can we have someone else on the team help you reduce this stuff, but like you should be making shit all day. And we're doing data research. Like his pattern matching skills and prototyping it from zero to one are phenomenal. And so I think that those are areas where I'm at my best.

Dan Putt:

It's so well said. And, you know, it takes me back to some of our early conversations when you took over as CEO again, after Amon's departure. And one of the refrains that I heard from you early on was, I want to bring in the, you know, top, you know, the hired guns, the people with the strong pedigree. But after one of our early team facilitations you said something to me that I frankly, I have told multiple clients now, because I think it's such a, such a strong statement. You looked around the room at the people on the team and you saw that maybe they didn't have the background, but they were not only excellent, they also cared. And you said to me, you can't buy caring. You can't pay for caring. And I look at AppSumo and I love that team and I've come to know them well and it is an exceptionally talented bunch that really cares and cares about each other. And you attract that group. Like you do such an amazing job of bringing that together. They attract it. That's right. And of course, yes.

Noah Kagan:

They really do. They attract. Yeah, you know, they attract. I think finding people that were, you know, me and you have talked about this a lot, like that we're impressed with, right? Be impressive for ourselves and then also be around other people where you're like, man, in this area where you seem to like your work, you're excellent. And I think one of the things that's the AppSumo way is finding the people who are on the come-up and then pairing them with an expert on the top. I think has been the approach that seems to work really well for us, given that we can't afford Silicon Valley prices fully. We were competitive.

We don't have stock options that are, you know, maybe go up and down, but we can create a cool work environment on a product to help inspire entrepreneurs and help entrepreneurs. And then you have a lot more freedom and impact than pretty much anywhere else you're going to get. Uh, I think creates a nice environment for a certain type of person. A lot of, I would say the immigrant mentality and that doesn't mean you have to be an immigrant. It just means the immigrant mentality would have noticed from the successful people at AppSumo is twofold. Being an immigrant, you can control your attitude.

And immigrants are like, holy shit, I'm finally at a country where I have more opportunities. And then you can control your effort. There's literally no limit on effort, besides time. And I think we've had a lot of success with the immigrant mentality at AppSumo and a lot of the executive leaders, I think almost every single one is either an immigrant or their parent is an immigrant.

Dan Putt:

Yeah, that was something that I think I pointed out to you early on. I was really blown away by

it's pretty amazing. But if we look at, if we go back again, you know, the thread of this conversation, going back to the 2005 Noah up to the present day, you, you reference this, like you've always believed in and wanted to support the underdog, but say more about that, like, because I was looking at some of our threads and I had a thread from you where I had expressed my partner and I had expressed an experiment we were doing. You said, I love it. I want to support you. I'm going to send you a PayPal. What's your PayPal? Like you were driving us to take action and believing us in as underdogs. Like that's part of who you are, but say more about that. The, the underdog support supporter and you. Where did that come from?

Noah Kagan:

Probably insecurity, right? And not feeling worthy, not feeling good about myself. And then over time, recognizing that I can feel good about myself, there's probably a lot of other people who feel like they have the ability. They're like, man, I know there's a little bit more out there for me. Broken is a very strong word to label it. And I think how we label ourselves is very interesting. And feeling doubted a lot, especially after the Facebook experience for me, that was traumatic. You know, like.

Literally, it's why I became an entrepreneur, I would say, because I didn't want anyone ever again to take away my livelihood and my self-worth, ultimately. And so...for a long time it was like, you know, can I do these external things to finally feel worthy internally? And I would say that was feeling like an underdog. And someone asked me recently, like, dude, you're, you're rich. You have, you know, cool business. You're living in Spain and America. Like, I don't know if you're an underdog. Like, I don't, I say that, you know, not cocky. I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I was like, I don't know. You know, maybe it's just an under, underdog mentality, right? But there's also a thing where that can evolve where now I don't necessarily think I'm an underdog or an overdog or anything, but it's like...

Dan Putt:

Ha ha.

Noah Kagan:

I'm excited to see the people willing to take a chance on themselves, people willing to try. Doesn't mean it's going to work right away, but at least they're doing something. And that's who I surround myself with too. I just am around doers and people that I find interesting. And I think just being around that and wanting to support that over time has always been something I felt I wish I had more of myself.

Like someone being like, Hey man, like I know you got fired and you're kind of boohoo and you're salty and then this thing didn't work out and this thing, but just keep going. And eventually, yeah, if you stick with it, it can work out. And I wanted more of that myself. And I like that that's what AppSumo can provide instead of paying super expensive software prices from all of these companies, you can get an insane deal. And same with the content, you know, the content that we do inspires people on business. And I think I've always been excited about what

you can learn about yourself through business. I've learned more about myself through business than anything else and as an underdog, yeah, it's just more of the idea that we can do these things. And it is a hard thing. It doesn't mean it's going to be easy, but you can do it. And that's available for everyone worldwide.

Dan Putt:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Well, you just said you've learned more about yourself through business than anything else. I mean, we often say it Reboot use work to do your work.

Noah Kagan:

Someone said a long time ago, similarly, like, your business is a life-size projection of your behavior and who you are. I was like, ooh, that's good. Some years ago, Rameet, our mutual friend, he called my business Ross. You know Ross, like the clothing store that's kind of the cheap stuff. Yeah, he called it Ross. A lot of times when someone jokes about things, it's good to just...

Dan Putt:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Noah Kagan:

...not react but pause and think about it. And what he meant by that is that it's a lot of cheap stuff but there's maybe one or two gems in there. Like Ross always has like the French coffee press. That's the thing you get there. You know, the French coffee pots and.

Dan Putt:

I can't tell you the last time I was at a Ross, so you have to remind me here.

Noah Kagan:

I was there, I was at a TJ Maxx, which is comparable, uh, last week. I love, I still love a good deal. And, um, you know, there was something to be said for that. It was like, oh, this is what I'm saying is AppSumo. And it's like, that's not who I, how I feel. Like, I think it should be good value. It should be that everything you see at the store is really good value. And so then we changed a lot of things over time at AppSumo where now, you know, went from 13,000 products and you were part of this to 600. And I look at the products. I'm like, these are damn good software tools at great prices. And then how do you build that into your culture so that, you know, whether you're around or not, that, that, that operating behavior can keep happening ongoing.

Dan Putt:

Yeah, I think that's fantastic. I mean, it's, that comes from inside out, right? Like what am I really here to do? What I really care about. And let me build a business as a manifestation of that.

Noah Kagan:

Oof. Yeah, and like...You've asked me a lot to you're like, you're not excited or you don't care here. And I'm like, I don't. Okay. So let's fix that.

Dan Putt:

What else are we here for?

Noah Kagan:

That that's the greatest part of being. Yeah. That's the greatest part of being entrepreneur or founder, uh, or even being a part of a smaller business, like you have the power, you don't have to be a victim. You can change it where now you're spending your six, eight, five hours a day doing something you actually enjoy. And that, you know, I've been doing...most business gets boring.

It gets boring, right? Like Jeff Bezos, 50 years old, he's on a yacht. You know, I don't know if Amazon got boring, but I've been doing this 14 years and I'm more excited now than I've ever been. It's like, how does that possible? Like my 20 year old self would have never believed that I've been like, dude, every year you got to something new. And now it's like the newest stuff is just doing the same stuff that's working and then keep evolving it slowly over, you know, a compounding it over longer periods of time. I'm proud of that. And that's definitely an evolution.

Dan Putt:

Definitely an evolution. And it's amazing to watch.

Noah Kagan:

But it's great. The best things about business are the ones that work. And this is working. And let's keep working on it instead of necessarily chasing for some new high. I think there's an Esther Perel quote. "If you want variety, date one person." And I was like, oh.

Oh, that's, that's spicy. And I think that's true for business. Like if you have something working, like find ways that you can keep going deeper and understanding your customers better or your partner's better or how to be a leader better or where the market could be going better and just doing that. Not so aggressively. Like I think a lot of Silicon Valley are funded, which I know a lot of Reboot people are, but if you can do it less aggressively, you can actually sustain it over a longer period of time and probably have more higher compounded returns.

Dan Putt:

I completely agree with you. I think that's absolutely right. So we kind of follow the trajectory. I mean, we started looking back 2006, 2009. Here we are, 41 year old Noah. What will we see at 50 year old Noah? Like, what is he focused on? What's he doing? What's he care about?

Noah Kagan:

My first part is family. I'm going to be having a kid in the next few months. And so being a part of a smaller business, being a founder, being an entrepreneur enables me to create more flexibility

in my life so that as much as I can be present for my partner and for our child, that's my priority.

And so I'm, I'm excited for that business. I don't know if it sounds weird to say it's a business. And I mean, maybe I had a workshop that, but that, that is my most important business over the next, I mean, lifetime, but really this next decade specifically. And, uh, so yeah, that, that is something I'm looking forward to. I've been reading books, I'm talking to people, I'm asking for the most overrated baby gifts. So I don't get those for myself. And I just looking forward to being present for that, you know, like, uh, being the the parent that I'd always wish I had. I think I had good parents, but now I can take all the learnings and do even better. So I think that's definitely some of my 50.

I think that, and I'd say professionally, it's a lot of just keep doing what's working. Keep making content, keep promoting software deals, figure out more ways to help promote more software products for solopreneurs. I don't think I'll do another book, so I don't think that'll be as much. Probably reducing work and more time available for the family.

Dan Putt:

Why, I have to ask, I know we're running out of time, but why, why won't you do another book? And related, why this book? Because you are super busy. There's so much going on. So why was the book important to you to begin with?

Noah Kagan:

I always dreamed of doing a book and I never thought I had the, you know, I never thought I was ready. I never thought I could face it until, you know, in the last few years. I, 15 years ago, I was, I was wondering, like, I wish I had a book that I, that someone would have given me that if I didn't have a lot of money, didn't have a lot of time, I didn't know what to do that in a very short time, which is a weekend, which we all have 52 of them, uh, that I could, that I could have. And that, that's what I, there's nothing else like it. Otherwise I wouldn't have done it.

And then why I don't plan on writing another book. I think this is everything I have in starting, maybe in growing a business. You know, we've grown a business 14 years now, 80 million dollars. Like the team seems to love it. Customers and partners seem to love it. I'm very proud of what we've done. So potentially, but it's a lot, right? It's not to get rich. I already have enough attention more than I need. Not in the need, but I'm very happy with the amount of awareness I have when I put out material. I'm excited though. This has been...

The original, the secondary reason, besides I've always wanted to do one, it was my dream. I wanted something really long to work on. If you think about all of our businesses, most of our projects, it's like, all right, put out a tweet, that's like in a snap. So the book has a snap on it. Or do a quarter, what's your quarter project? Or let's do a, what's our one year plan? Like this was a four year plan.

It was four years and I knew it was gonna take a long time and this is not what I'm supposed to

say. I'm supposed to say like, I had a dream and I wanted to help you and I did, but I also was like, I wanted to challenge myself with something I didn't know if I could do it and I knew it was gonna take an exceptionally long period of time.

And that was, I think that's cool for everyone out there. Like what is, what's a longer term project? Maybe it's a child. Maybe it is a book. Maybe it's part of your business. Maybe it's building a house. And so having something that I knew was going to be a very long journey. And it was, it was nice to do that mixed with a lot of the other, uh, things I'm doing that are shorter term, because it taught me a lot, like, Hey, if you think longer term, you can go actually bigger, the longer you think and having a book. The other thing I thought that everyone can, can replicate or copy is you don't have to do it alone. Right? So appSumo.com, we have Alona and Sean really running it day to day. And then with the book, I hired Tal Ross, who's probably one of the arguably one of the best business writers of the decade. He wrote *Never Split the Difference*, which he's written other bestselling business books. And then same with the YouTube channel. So I try to hire CEOs of the different areas that I'm interested in. Because otherwise, there's one, I'm also not as good of a writer as he. But finding someone who can support me so I can have a you know, relatively popular YouTube channel and then a book that I think should do well and a business that's performing well. And then try to have free time to be present for my partner.

Dan Putt:

So I'd be curious, like if you're making the ask of the Reboot audience to buy your book, what's the ask you make?

Noah Kagan:

I wouldn't ask them to buy the book.

Dan Putt:

You wouldn't. Why is that?

Noah Kagan:

No, I think people need to if they're trying to get a business going, I would check out milliondollarweekend.com. There's a free chapter and you can see some testimonials. And if it makes sense for where you're at, what I think has been fascinating when you talk about these challenges and fear, no one's ever like excited to buy a book where they're going to be more afraid. But I think people get excited to think about what kind of life could I actually live? Like I would I was talking to therapy this morning.

Two years ago, I never would imagine I'd be in this kind of house, which is insane. I'm in like a McMansion. I have a pregnant girlfriend. I have a cool Miata and a Vespa. I also have a Tesla, but I have cool cars. Like I'm really happy with what I get to spend my days doing.

And that is possible for all of us. And you have to get started right now. And I believe *Million*

Dollar Weekend is that ticket to get there. About how do you get started right now? How do you get better at asking for things? And then what's the steps that you need to take to make sure you're doing a business that you don't spend six months to find out no one wants it, which I've done many times. And hopefully I've learned. I just started a, I would say a seven figure business in the last 48 hours. I started a DocuSign alternative. And I...

Noah Kagan:

You know that video is coming out on the YouTube channel and I think people can see that I've done this time and time again And I've failed time and time again. I share that as well and I mean that's something that other people are curious about Go check out the book

Dan Putt:

I love it. And going back to your thread on how you've evolved, I mean, I also see somebody who, and this will sound cheesy, but I see somebody who loves themselves, like appreciates the man they are and the man that they're not. And that is a big change from the guy that I saw a few years ago who wondered if he was enough.

Noah Kagan:

Yeah, I don't ask that question anymore.

Dan Putt:

I thank you for being with me and thank you for trusting me and giving me the privilege to be part of your life and part of your company because it's really awesome and I really appreciate it.

Noah Kagan:

Thanks for having me.