



Episode 16



Jeff Goins

Jeff Goins, author of [The Art of Work](#), is a full-time writer who lives just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, with his wife, son, and border collie. He has authored four books and frequently speaks on writing, creativity, and making a difference. His website, [Goinswriter.com](#), has been visited by more than four million people from all over the world.

Voiceover *This is Business Reimagined. Every week we talk with thought leaders and revolutionaries who are bringing innovation to their industries, like today's guest Jeff Goins.*

We have this idea that to be a writer or an entrepreneur, you attach these capital letters to the beginning of those words.

You have to arrive.

You have to do something that makes you worthy, but the problem is nobody actually knows what those things are.

This is Business Reimagined with Danny Iny.

DANNY Jeff Goins teaches writers and creative professionals how to use online marketing to get their message heard and achieve success. It's a tough job because writers and creatives tend to be uncomfortable with marketing. Jeff knows this firsthand because he's a creative at heart and had the exact same reservations.

JEFF I've always been creative. When I was really young I used to draw Garfield cartoons and then I got into music. I started playing the guitar and I was so stoked about it that when I was a teenager I thought I was going to be a professional musician. Then, when I graduated college, I was a professional musician for a while. I did it for a year touring with



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

this band, then I went to work for this non-profit as a copywriter and then I became a marketing director. I started learning about online marketing, realized it wasn't evil.

If you have a good idea or a great story to tell, this is a great way to get it to spread and marketing, to me, as an artist, was an icky word. As I started doing it, I realized it didn't have to be icky.

DANNY Jeff immersed himself in the study of marketing and got really good at it. Then, at the age of 27, even though life was pretty comfortable, he began anticipating a mid-life crisis. He saw himself questioning whether or not he was doing what he really wanted to do.

JEFF I think one of the most dangerous places to be, is to be comfortable. When you're uncomfortable, when your job sucks and you hate your life, that's a really good place because you know you can't keep doing that. You know change has to happen. When you're comfortable, when things are good enough, that's a dangerous place because you can drift through life and then be on your death bed and realize, "I wasted my life. I missed it. I missed the thing that I was supposed to do." For me, at 27 years old, I'm going, "Am I missing it?" There was an itch that I couldn't quite scratch.

DANNY That feeling didn't go away. It wasn't until he started listening to his friends that he realized what he was really supposed to be doing.

JEFF I had a conversation with a friend who asked me what my dream was and I said, "Oh, I don't know," and he said, "Really? Because I would have thought your dream was to be a writer." It was funny, it was that obvious to him, and it was something that I was still afraid to admit to myself. I think we have this idea that to be a writer or an entrepreneur you attach these capital letters to the beginning of those words. You have to arrive. You have to do something that makes you worthy, but the problem is nobody actually knows what those things are.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

DANNY What are those things? Do you publish a book, paint a masterpiece, or make a million dollars? Jeff learned that, no, it's not any of these things. Instead, it was simply writing, painting, or running a business; the actual doing of whatever you want to be doing that makes someone a writer or entrepreneur. In addition, it also takes hard work, dedication, and a willingness to learn. That paradigm shift started Jeff on the path to where he is today, and all of those experiences have shaped a world view that he calls the portfolio life.

JEFF Charles Handy wrote this book in 1989 called *The Age of Unreason*. It's a pretty prophetic book, especially if you consider that it was written in 1989, and he said, "In the future, we are not going to have one career. We're going to have a series of mini-careers."

He talked about the five different types of work that you're going to do and how we need not measure the amount of hours that we work in a week, but the amount of days that we spend doing different tasks in a year, days in a year doing things like spending time at home with my family or personal time. How much time am I spending doing study work so I can become smarter and more skilled? How much time am I doing work that I'm actually getting paid for so I don't go broke and can pay my bills? How much time am I doing gift work, which is contributing something to the community or a friend? I'm giving back because that's an important part of the portfolio.

What's fascinating is that he wrote that book in 1989. Basically it's this idea that you're going to have a bunch of gigs. You're not going to have one full-time 40-year career. It doesn't exist anymore.

Recently, Forbes and several other publications didn't originate this, but they published this study about the future, the study of organizations, and the kind of thing that Charles Handy predicted. Forbes tabulated that if current trends continue by 2020, over 50% of the American workforce is going to be freelance. I think this was just an American workforce study, but it's fascinating and a good indicator of what's happening globally. They're not going to have one full-time



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

gig. By 2030, they're predicting that that will be over 60%. I think we're seeing more and more of that.

More people I know are working less traditional jobs. Organizations around the world are getting smaller, especially in the West. They're downsizing. They're outsourcing and people are wanting more career independence. They don't necessarily want to go work for one organization for 40 years, partly because that organization isn't going to stick around for 40 years, and partly because human beings aren't made to do one thing. They're made to do several things. We're not robots and now we don't need hundreds or thousands of human beings in a factory working one job over and over again because they have a certain place on the assembly line. We can have robots and machines doing those jobs, we get to reimagine that.

We get to think, "What does a portfolio look like? What does the body of work that I'm creating over time look like? How can I bring my different skills, my different interests to the table in a way where I'm not being a jack of all trades, but I'm being a master of some?"

I think that's what the idea of the portfolio life is about and it should be really, really exciting for most of us. It means we have opportunities to do lots of different work that we're excited about and the world is actually going to necessitate more of these kinds of careers that Handy predicted decades ago.

DANNY You said something really interesting there. You said not to be a jack of all trades, but to be a master of some. I think that does point to part of the challenge of living this kind of portfolio life. How do you go about striking the balance between the interest and desire for novelty and new experience, and learning, versus the time and experience that you have to put in in order to master something to a degree where you can do it a level that is worth performing at a high level?



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

JEFF I think that the concept of mastery is a misnomer, in fact, in his book *Mastery*, Robert Greene talks about this. He says that the future belongs to people who take various skills and combine them in interesting ways. They tackle different skills and combine them. That's why I think the portfolio of life is really a new kind of mastery. It's what the world will require of workers, entrepreneurs, people who want to do interesting work in the world. It's what's going to be required of you. That's already becoming a reality. Mastery is not about doing everything. Obviously that doesn't make sense, but at the same time, it was never about doing one thing.

If you think about this older term of a polymath, you think about people like Leonardo da Vinci, for example. He was a master artist of his time, of the Renaissance, and he was the archetype of what we now call a Renaissance man, or a polymath, and he did a lot of things. He was an architect. He was an inventor. He designed war and torture machines for the king of France. He was also a painter. He did some sculpture. He was not a jack of all trades, but he took his very brilliant, creative mind and he realized he could apply it to different mediums. I think that's Renaissance thinking. How do I take this thing, and this thing over here and combine them in a way where they can intersect? I think we get in trouble when go, "I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this."

The portfolio life is not a license to not commit to anything. It is the freedom to use your creativity in a way where you take seemingly disparate or different activities and bring them together in what will hopefully be a beautiful intersection where they complement each other. They make the whole of the work better than it could be independently. What I mean by that is if I were just a writer, if I weren't a marketer, if I didn't have an online business, would I be a better writer? That's this limited belief about mastery. I think because lots of things interest me and because I don't just sit around and write all day, nor do I actually want to do that, I think the marketing piece gives me greater empathy about how to write for my audience in a way that's both fulfilling for me, but also is going to connect with their needs.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

Being a business owner obviously makes everything sustainable because of the income that that generates, but it also gives me a perspective on things like this, like work and business, that I wouldn't have if I were working some day job and writing in the margins of my life. I feel like the way that I've built my portfolio, each of these different pieces influences and complements each other in ways that make the greater whole better than if I was just doing one of these things in isolation.

DANNY How premeditated is this whole process? Is this something that you had an inkling that these different pieces are all fit together in this way or did it just emerge that way?

JEFF I think it emerged out of necessity frankly. It would probably be unlikely that I could just write and publish books and make a good living. Now I know that that actually is possible, but I knew no writers who were doing that, so I just thought, "You'll be poor. You cannot make a living writing," and so that was a bit of a limited belief, but that was how I started. I began this process thinking I will write books and I will share ideas with the world and I will get paid some money for that, but if I want to do this full time and have independence to do this, I need to have some kind of business, something that gives me independence, something that I own, not a day job, that I can operate, that will fund the creative work that I do.

I did start out with this model at the very outset that I'm going to be my own patron, if you will. I'm going to be the patron to my own art and as I started going down this road, I realized these are not two completely separate areas. They complement each other and they can do so in a really beautiful way. I can write books that connect to online courses that I sell and I can interact with my audience that I'm teaching in a deeper level than I can with a book, and learn things about them that influence the more creative work that I'm doing. It became very complementary, but frankly it started out as a necessity, like - I got to make money, but I also want to do this, and I want to have the most time to do it, so this self-partnership where I was partnering with myself and wearing the business hat so I could pay for the art and then the more creative side to be creative without having



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

to worry about, "Oh gosh, if I don't sell this many books, I'm going to have to go work at Starbucks."

DANNY Isn't that scary, though?

JEFF Which part?

DANNY Well, all of it. There are a lot of pieces that you're relying on to fall together and click into place.

JEFF Yeah, I bet if I thought about it, I would get really scared. I don't know. I remember talking to Chris Guillebeau about his book *The \$100 Startup* and I said, "You're encouraging people to be entrepreneurial and you're basically telling them to be risk takers," and he goes, "No, no, no. I don't think so." I was like, "You don't think what?" He goes, "I don't know that for people to be entrepreneurial is telling them to be risk takers." I said, "Really? It seems pretty risky," and he said, "What's riskier? Going out and trying to do something that you hopefully love and have to learn some new skills and yeah, it'll be tough. It's hard work to try to make a living doing something that you're really passionate about or to work at a job that you maybe hate or don't like very much and just assume that that job is always going to be there for you."

If we know anything about the economy right now, that promise is not a very good one. He says, "I think there's risk on both sides, but I think it's actually riskier to just have a day job where you have no control over whether or not you get to keep that job." If you run your own business you don't have absolute control over everything, but I think you have more control over your own job security. Along those lines, for me, like a portfolio of investments, I am invested in a handful of activities that would all have to stop working at the same time for me to go broke. It's possible, but I don't think things are delicately balance on each other. I think I'm blending a handful of activities that I find personally fulfilling, but are also pretty good investments.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

It's a good investment to write books and build this list or back list of content and ideas that are proprietary because those are all means of making a living if I need to. It's smart to not put all eggs in one basket with publishing, for example, because that whole industry is changing. It's smart to do online marketing and it's also smart to have my own business. At times I thought, "Maybe I should just do one of these things," but what prohibits me from doing that is it wouldn't be as fun and to me, there's something secure about doing a few different things so if something dries up, I can just focus on something else.

From an entrepreneurial business standpoint, the way that works out is, I've got multiple streams of income as I think any person should do, but certainly any entrepreneur should do. Each of those pieces represent an income stream and what I have tried to do and pretty much have done, is to make each single income stream strong enough that I could live off of just that, but also to diversify enough that I'm not relying on any single income stream, so that if it goes away ... If the economy changes, if this doesn't work anymore, the whole business doesn't go under, and so for me, there is some safety in that diversification, some security in that.

DANNY Does the portfolio life just boil down to income diversification or is there more to it than that? I feel like there's more under the surface, so I don't want us to just focus on the multiple streams of income side of things unless that's really what it is.

JEFF No, that's kind of what Handy talks about and I extend it. He talks about the portfolio career being study work, gift work, fee work, salary work. Fee and salary work are both paid work and they're self-explanatory, and then home work. Those are the five different types of work that you do: work at home, work where you study to better yourself, gift work where you're being generous with your time and talent, volunteering, letting a friend pick your brain, whatever that might be, and then the two types of paid work where you're getting paid for your time or you're getting paid for basically your position.

I look at it as what does your life look like as a portfolio and for me, it's a question of my personal purpose. Why do I exist, not just how can I



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

make the most money or be the most successful, but why am I here? What am I here for? What is the contribution that I need to make to the world through my work, through my relationships? What is that? That's part of my portfolio. My home and family life is a second part of the portfolio. Another part is play, which is personal time to read, get inspired, and do self-care, sleep, get well rested. That's a part of the portfolio, and then there's the work component, which is my job. There's a beginning and an end to that. I'm not always working. I'm not always playing. I'm not always spending time with my family. Those four areas work together in a complementary way, where if I'm neglecting one of those areas, I feel like I'm not a whole person.

The portfolio life is this idea that in order to be a whole person, you are a master of more than a few things. You're a master of your personal life. You are giving yourself time to rest and do self-care. You have a job to do that is valuable. You have a purpose that transcends the work that you're doing because the work may change, but the purpose will not. It may evolve, you may get to better understand it, but I don't think that your purpose is constantly changing like jobs tend to do. Those are some of the components, in terms of relationships, activities, how to take of yourself, and how that all works together. That's what I mean when I say portfolio life.

DANNY How does this tie into the idea of work-life balance?

JEFF I don't like that term. I don't like work-life balance because I think it does not describe my life and it doesn't describe anybody's life who says they have work-life balance. I think that when people talk about work-life balance, what they're really talking about is, "I feel guilty for not being with my family when I'm at work and I feel guilty for not working when I'm with my family." I like thinking of it as managing tension. All of these areas of your life are pulling at you. They want more of your time and I think that tension is good. I think it's healthy. What I think we need to do, if you're going to have a healthy portfolio life, is when you're working, when you're playing, when you're spending time at home, when you're focusing on your personal purpose, you need to be fully present to those activities.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

It doesn't mean that you need to do those things equally, but it means when you're doing them, you need to give equal amounts of focus on them. You need to focus on them and be fully present to them and so I've never been good at balancing things, Danny. For me, life is about managing tension and trying to figure out, how do I make room for all of these things that matter to me? At times, it feels like I'm cheating one thing for the other, but I have found the most fulfilling way to work for me, is that when I'm with my family, I'm all in. I'm not checking my phone. I'm not calling people in between dinner and bedtime to try to do the next thing. I'm fully present to my family, which is a decision that I made a while ago and what that forced me to do is it forced me to work harder, faster, and more efficiently when it was time to work.

What I realized I was doing is I was being lazy at work. I didn't think of it as laziness. I thought I was working really hard, but I was being inefficient during the day because I was like, "Well, I could just take care of this tonight," or "I can work a little bit later and my wife will understand." It was making me less efficient. When I started going, "I'm just going to shut things down at the end of the day," and let's be honest. There are times when I don't get to do that because we're really busy or it's a season of hustle, but 80% of the time, I do that. I'm home before dinner. I'm making dinner, spending time with my family, putting my son to bed and hanging out with my wife, going to bed and not opening the laptop at night. That forced me to become more productive and achieve more during the day and so for me, it wasn't about balance.

It was about trying to master that tension by being fully present to whatever I was doing when I was doing it, which means that when I get up and go to work in the morning, I'm not apologizing to my son. He doesn't want me to go and both my wife and I explain to him, "No, this is a good thing. Daddy needs to go to work because we have to have money to buy more toys for you," is how I explained it to him right now, but "This is what Daddy does and he'll be home after your nap." We thought he would put up a big fight. We just started talking openly about that and our son Aiden goes, "Oh, okay. See you, Daddy." I think for us, it's just about understanding that all of these things



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

work together to create a good thing for our family and it creates a whole life for me and also for our family.

DANNY Is a portfolio life something that you build or is something that you just recognize that you have?

JEFF I think you build it. I think you have to be intentional. I think that's a great question, but I would think of it as a literal portfolio. A portfolio is not everything that you do. Charles Handy would say this, too. He would say it's a carefully curated set of resources or activities or investments, whatever the portfolio is. If you think about an artist portfolio, if you were to hire an architect, they would come to your office and they would show you their portfolio, which would probably not be every gig that they've ever done. It would be the representation of their best work, the stuff that they're most proud of that hopefully represents what they're capable of, not just the things that they didn't screw up. I think a portfolio life is that. I think we have the power and opportunity to curate our lives, to say, "I want to spend more time doing this because this matters to me."

It's not planning life. It's curating it. It's looking at the activities that you have available to you and how can you be more intentional about investing in them and if you think about an investment portfolio, you don't just have one. If you have one, you still have to watch it or pay attention to it, or have somebody watch it for you and make decisions about buying and selling investments. If you really want to build it and you want to grow it and if you understand the way investments work, they tend to not accrue a ton of value quickly. These tend to be long-term investments. Investments in my family, investments in myself, into my personal health, investments in my work, and in my overall life purpose, these are things that take time to come to fruition, but it is something that you build I think.

DANNY For someone who is listening to this and inspired by what you're describing, it's a compelling and insightful way of looking at what might be going on in someone's life. What is the first step? Is the first step just to take inventory of the different places that your time,



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

energy, and resources are going and say, "These I want to develop further and these I want to try to get rid of"?

JEFF Charles Handy has an interesting approach and I keep mentioning him because I want to give him credit where credit's due. He really codified and coined this idea of having a portfolio career, looking at your job, and even your work life as a portfolio and I think we need to do that with the personal side of our lives as well. He has an interesting approach to this that I always thought was fascinating. Instead of measuring and allocating hours per week that you're going to this or do that, anytime we try to tackle a new skill or a new habit, we do this. We go, "I'm going to work out three times a week this year and I'll get into better shape," or whatever. He says, "Don't do that." He says, "Look at the days in a year, 365 days, and then decide how many days do you need to work. What do you have available to you? What's left over and how can you take the amount of time that you have that's left over and starting piecing out the things that you want or need to do."

He gives the example I think of a consultant. Let's say you make \$200 an hour as a consultant and your average gig is a four-hour consultation, so that's \$800 a day because you can get one gig a day. How many days do you need to work to make a living to support your family? Let's say you need \$80,000 and you're set. Well, you've got to work 100 days. That's 100 days. You've got 265 days left to figure out, how do I grow as a person? How do I build this thing if I want to build it, but here's what I have to work with. He recommends using days in a year and I think a good place to start is to do days in a month. Look at the next 30 days and ask yourself, "What does my portfolio life look like? What matters to me?"

I suggest thinking in terms of work, home, play, and purpose. Those are basically what I need to do to live. What do I need to do to eat and pay my bills? Home is what I need to do to make a life that feels personally satisfying and home can be home alone with your cat or your dog or your roommate or your family if you have a family. Play is all about personal development. What do I need to do to stay healthy,



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

stay active, feel healthy, and feel like I'm growing as a person, and then purpose is that big picture. What am I doing to make a difference?

Most of us, work is going to take up the majority of that time, but it's not going to take up all the time and it's not going to take up every day, and so what you have left, are a handful of days, maybe more, that you can choose to invest in. You have to do the activity all day long, but that will be your focus for that day and you can do a deep dive into some of these other areas. If you're wanting to build a portfolio life, I think you should begin with looking at the next month and doing a personal audit. What days am I focusing on work? What days do I need to work, not what days can I work? That's a bad question. What days do I need to work, and then what kind of time do I have left over to invest in the other areas of my life that probably feel neglected?

For a lot of people, that's going to mean I want to grow or learn this skill. Maybe I want to work on this side gig so I can eventually build a bridge to my dream. Maybe I want to spend more time with my family. Maybe I just need some time to reflect and figure out what I want out of life or what I want to contribute. I think that a pretty good practical next step is to look at the next 30 days and start being observant and then also start curating the time that you have and also start focusing some of those days, each day, on a single activity.

DANNY That was Jeff Goins. Reimagining our lives away from a single hyper focus to a portfolio of activities that matter and come together to create value and meaning for ourselves and for others. Take his advice to heart and intentionally curate your commitments and activities like an investment portfolio by focusing on the things that will grow and enrich your life in the way that you care about the most. To learn more about Jeff's work, visit Goinswriter.com or check out his Portfolio Life podcast on iTunes.

Voiceover We love hearing from you. Your feedback makes this podcast even better, so take a minute to rate us on iTunes and leave a review. Each week we'll share what one of our reviewers has to say.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*



Episode 16

DANNY Today's review is Cheesy with Purpose, who says, "I already love this podcast. It has great content, of course, but the way its put together kind of tells a story, which makes it fun to listen to. Great organization and amazing information."

Thank you so much, Cheesy with Purpose. Credit where credit's due. The organization and the story and all of that, that's not me. That's Audra Casino, who puts this podcast together and makes the magic happen. I have the great privilege of getting on Skype and having conversations with really interesting people and she takes those conversations and works her magic and the result is what you hear on the show.

Voiceover This has been Business Reimagined. Join us next time as we talk with Danny Iny.

DANNY In the online world, we've taken information. We're seeing it sold for prices that would only make sense for education. Paying \$2,000 for a "course", when it's not really a course, it's just a collection of videos and you're on your own. The \$2,000 is an awful lot of money when the cost of fulfillment is minimal and the outcomes that are guaranteed are minimal.

Voiceover Learn more about us at Firepolemarketing.com.



Subscribe via iTunes



Subscribe via RSS

*And if you're loving the podcast and you've got a moment to spare, we'd *really* appreciate a short review and 5-star rating on iTunes (if you think we deserve it).*