Jen Lehner: You're listening to The Front Row Entrepreneur Podcast episode number one.

Welcome to The Front Row Entrepreneur Podcast where you always have a front row seat for the best tips and strategies in online business, modern marketing, and productivity. Now, your host, from her home studio in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Jen Lehner.

Jen Lehner: Hey, hey. Welcome to episode number one of The Front Row Entrepreneur Podcast. I am so excited to be with you today. This podcast is something that has been in the works for quite some time. You know, actually the actual physical mechanical part of launching a podcast is not that big of a deal. I mean, it's not that complicated. Like most things digital, you just find a recipe and you follow the recipe and then, in the end, you have a thing. The reason I’m launching now today is really demonstrates a front row story in the perfect way. I’m going to get to that in just a minute. The hard part for me about creating this podcast has been in deciding what my message is going to be. What is the format? What’s the structure? What’s the value that I want to bring you each week? That took lots of stewing, lots of thinking on, lots of podcast listening, lots of scribbles on napkins and legal pads and Evernotes, a lot of conversation with my friends and my family, my mentors, my peers, my students.
The place where I always knew that this podcast would begin from, like the actual words, are these. "How can you squander even one more day not taking advantage of the greatest shifts of our generation? How dare you settle for less when the world has made it so easy for you to be remarkable." Those words were said by marketing expert and just overall genius Seth Godin. When I heard this quote from him, I almost fell off my chair because, and I wish that I had said those words initially because I believe exactly what he is saying. This really sums up what this podcast is going to be about. That is taking a front row seat in your business, in your life, not squandering these incredible tools and opportunities that are available to each of us today. We live in incredible times. When I talk about being a front row entrepreneur, what I’m talking about is both metaphorical and literal. Literally, when you go to a conference or a meeting or a class, where do you sit? Usually,

you are a person who consistently will sit at the back of the room near the door for a quick exit so nobody really notices you or you’re the kind of person who will take a seat right up front, dead center, whenever you get the opportunity. Very literally speaking, when you sit in the front of the room, you’re able to see things first. Your line of sight is not obstructed and you’re also more visible. The people behind you can see you and the person up on the stage can see you or the person at the front of the class can see you. Metaphorically, when we talk about being a front row entrepreneur or having a front row mindset, what I mean is the whole carpe diem thing. It’s stepping up. It’s being all in. It’s committing. It’s allowing yourself to be seen and heard. I believe that you can be a front-rower whether you’re an introvert or an extrovert

and that it just makes sense. Guess what. You’re going to die. I’m going to die. What we do between now and then, how we’re going to live our life, is really determined by the choices that we make right now. If we’re sitting in the back and we don’t step up and we don’t take advantage of opportunities or create opportunities for ourselves, then they’re not going to drop in through the ceiling onto our lap. We have to go after these things. The good news is that it not only doesn’t have to be complicated, it can be a lot of fun. Over the next couple of minutes, I just want to share with you where I am right now with my own online business and the journey that I took to get here and why I’m so passionate about sharing all the things that
I have learned in the digital world that I think is going to help you take your online business where you want it to be. The title that I’ve chosen for myself over these last few years is digital marketing strategist. Basically, that means that I show other people how to use digital tools to grow their audience and their income. Specifically, I create online courses that teach people how to do this, whether it's how to create Facebook ads or use Twitter or create an online course. I also am I a university professor teaching digital marketing strategy. I am currently teaching a course at Cleveland State and just wrapped a course at Notre Dame College. I’ve also created a really nice online community called, guess what, The Front Row, where people come and we share all the latest greatest digital marketing strategies. It's really been one of the best things I ever did for my business because being completely unknown, no one knew who I was, but what I was able to do is create this community, share what I was learning myself about digital marketing and online business, and create a group of people who trusted me and depended on me for good, reliable, actionable information. Those people also ended up being the people who purchased my online products. I think one of the reasons I am so passionate about sharing what I have learned about online business and online marketing is because I built my business, I have built this business that allows me to generate revenue when I'm actually out doing something else like riding my bicycle or spending time with my kids. I'm able to do this. I was able to build it with my laptop computer and a wifi connection. That’s really just about it. I still come into my office each day and feel completely blown away by this. Back in the old days, not even that long ago, when you got a good idea, then the next thing you had to do was you'd write a business plan, not saying a business plan is a bad idea, but this is how it would go down. You would write a business plan, you would have to think about funding because then you had to get a prototype created in China or wherever, and then you had to figure out how you were going to manufacture the product at scale, and then you would have to think about funding because then you had to get a prototype created in China or wherever, and then you had to figure out how you were going to manufacture the product at scale, and then you
automate that. That is what it means to be a front row entrepreneur. I think that the steps that I took to get here today with this online business are pretty typical and

might be the steps that you’ll take in your journey as well. My hope is that I’m going to be able to save you a lot of time in your own journey by sharing with you what I’ve learned from mine. Basically, it went down like this for me. My career, my early career, was in marketing in nonprofits. I would always say it’s one of the best places to learn marketing because you have to be super resourceful and I really enjoyed that. When my first child was born in 2000, I decided to be a stay-at-home mom.

I felt really fortunate to be able to do that. In that decade, and actually from 2000 until now, so much stuff happened. Ebay, Amazon, social media, email marketing, so many things were going down and, fortunately, I was able to pretty much stay on top of all of it because I’ve always had a real curiosity about all those things. Even though I wasn’t working, I was always keeping my tools sharp because

I was just interested. I was always reading up on stuff and listening to podcasts and all of it. In 2014, I started a flash mob called Flash Cashers. This was really just a fun project that I wanted to do to help local businesses. Essentially, it’s like a cash mob. It is a cash mob, where the community sort of decides on a place that they want to support, that they want to keep in business, and they show

up and spend cash on a specific date and time. The traditional model, if you could say it’s traditional, is to sort of show up and surprise the merchant, but I decided to really create more of a framework for doing this that would really highlight the services of the businesses and showcase why they were great. I felt like bombarding them with 300 people and surprising them might not be the best way in the world to do that. We got it really regimented

and we made it sort of a voting process. I trademarked it. It was really going gangbusters. As I promoted each one of these events, I, of course, was using social media and email marketing to get people out there. One of my big aha moments early on with Flash Cashers as it relates to social media is we were flashing a local pie store. I sent out a tweet and I at-

mentioned in the tweet two celebrity chefs who are originally from where I live, Shaker Heights. I didn’t have a ton of Twitter followers at the time, but when I tweeted them, I asked them to retweet the details of the event. Sure enough, they did. Between the two of them, they
had about a half a million followers. What resulted is that we had, for three straight hours, literally lines around the block for this event. The more

I started using social media and the more I realized that the stuff that I knew was not necessarily stuff that everybody else knew. I thought, “Hmm, I might be able to turn this into some sort of business.” I started with consulting. My consulting practice took off really quickly. I was just ecstatic to learn that I could sort of go out and earn money just by sharing what I knew about social media and digital marketing. What I discovered is that

I was really running myself ragged. Suddenly, even though I thought having my own business would mean I would have all this freedom, I was less free than I’d ever been in my life. I was not seeing my kids or my family. I wasn’t seeing my friends. I wasn’t doing the things that I enjoyed. I was just completely consumed by this fast growing business. The other thing that I realized was that I had

all these clients, but each of the clients were like having a different boss. Instead of having one boss at a job that would, I don’t know, give me the security of benefits and vacation time and all the good stuff that comes with a job, I not only didn’t have that, but I also had like 10 different bosses. All my clients were really nice, but this was absolutely not what I was searching for. I was definitely not happy. I made a big decision to stop accepting new clients. All this time, I had been listening to a bunch of different podcasts. They were opening up my eyes to the world of information products, namely, online courses. This really resonated with me because I realized

that all these clients that I was working with one-on-one, I could actually help an infinite number of clients by sharing more or less the same information but packaging it as an information product in the form of an online course and then being able to sell an infinite number of these. This really lit me on fire. I was so excited. I was listening to podcasts like Internet Business

Mastery. That’s an old one and I don’t even know if they have new episodes, but I know it’s still on iTunes and I highly recommend this. This was really the first glimpse I got of what my online business could look like. Then Amy Porterfield’s Online Marketing Made Easy is outstanding. Also, there is a guy named David Siteman Garland. He had a podcast called Rise to the Top. I was listening to these podcasts and I
was starting to understand that it was actually very doable to create an online product and sell it. That's what I wanted to learn how to do and that's exactly what I did. In the episodes that follow, we're going to break all this down into really actionable steps. We're going to talk about where to start. We're going to talk about branding and positioning. We're going to talk about how to be the most productive with your time. We're going to talk about content creation and what's the best kind of content to create to attract a large audience. Where is your audience? How do you target them? How do you grow an email list? All this and more in all the episodes to come. I'm so excited that you're along with me for the journey. Now, I want to tell you what I alluded to earlier about how I'm starting this podcast a lot sooner than I had intended.

Here's the reason why. Honestly, this just brings us so full circle in so many ways that it thrills me to death. Yesterday, I was listening to a podcast with two of my favorite people in the podcasting online space, James Altucher and Gary Vaynerchuk. Gary Vaynerchuk was a guest on James Altucher's podcast. What they were talking about is really everything that we've talked about here. I mean, they were talking about a front row mindset really without using those words. I was just on my edge of the seat the whole broadcast because it really spoke to me. It was all about how if you want to make things happen for yourself, you just got to do it. You just got to step up. You have to, in this day that we live in, that there really are no barriers for entry. We all have access to the same stuff. We all have GarageBand in our Macs. I think we do. We all have the free editing software that I'm using right now for this podcast called Audacity. We all have access to Facebook and Instagram and Twitter. There are no monetary barriers. It's really up to us to create that thing that we're inspired to create.

They were really talking my language and I was so excited. Then, out of the blue, and you could tell that this was completely unplanned, Gary Vaynerchuk says, "You know what? You know what I'm going to do? Everybody who starts a podcast today because of this episode and creates two episodes and then tweets us to let us know that you did so, I'm going to be guest number three and James is going to be guest number four on your podcast." Hello, it was one of those things that stopped me in my tracks. I literally stopped walking, pulled out my phone, wrote down the hashtag that he told us to use, went
straight back home instead of another loop around the lake as I had intended to walk, and ran inside and told my husband, 'I have to create a podcast tomorrow. Listen to this.' I told him about Gary Vaynerchuk and James Altucher, who he knows I adore. That's it. That is the ultimate front row story because here I am, making The Front Row Entrepreneur Podcast, launching it because I'm seizing an opportunity. Hopefully they'll make good on it. Either way, I've got my podcast started. I look forward to seeing you each and every week right here on iTunes or Stitcher or wherever it is that you listen to your podcasts. Please make sure and let me know what you thought and what you'd like me to talk about. You can tweet me @jenrgy. You can also go to JenLehner.com/podcast. Please don't forget to subscribe to this podcast because when you subscribe, you will automatically get all the new episodes without having to do a thing. Thanks for being here for our very first episode. Can't wait to see you in episode number two.