

EPISODE — BRIAN KURTZ**[INTRODUCTION]**

[0:00:18.0] LC: Hey, welcome to this week's episode, today we have Brian Kurtz joining us. Brian is a veteran in the marketing industry. He ran Boardroom Inc. where he was the director of marketing for the company and they grew the company to \$150 million in sales at it's height, actually reaching over a billion people. This guy has been in the email marketing space for 30 years, has tons of experience. He's recently gone out on his own to a new group called Titan's Marketing where he offers educational materials, coaching consulting.

I had so much fun chatting with him today because when I started out in this industry, writing a book, the very first piece of advice I got was, "Hey Laura, you've got to start an email list." I was thinking, what do we need an email list for, I'm trying to write a book, it's so much work, how I could possibly think about it?" Truth be told, I had a bit of an allergic reaction to marketing myself. I thought the whole thing was just a little uncomfortable.

Brian dives into why Marketing isn't like the evil devil thing that you have to do, it's really about how to bring the value of your message forward in a compelling way to reach audiences. We dive into all sorts of tactical advice about how to think about marketing down to the psychological things that might be in your way. He's filled with tons of information and I really enjoyed hearing about what he had to offer and learned a ton.

I hope you like today's episode and if you're starting a business or you're in one and you want to take it to the next level, this episode is for you. Thank you so much for listening.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:18.0] LC: Welcome to this week's episode. Today, we have Brian Kurtz joining us. Hey Brian, how are you?

[0:02:04.7] BK: Hey Laura how are you doing? Really excited, getting this together was tough. I think you had some house crud in your house and then I got sick and I'm just so excited to finally be talking to you.

[0:02:16.6] LC: Yeah, you're very patient, I definitely had the kid viruses going, I appreciate it.

[0:02:22.1] BK: So excited, I've wanted to do this podcast for a while. I love your theme, I love the way you think and we have a couple of really cool mutual friend, so this is one of those that you had me at hello.

[0:02:32.3] LC: Oh awesome, awesome. Well I had to hit record because we were having such an interesting pre interview conversation that I felt like we were giving up all of the greatest stuff.

[0:02:42.9] BK: The good stuff. Yeah, we're going to give all the crappy stuff now because all the good stuff was just for me and you.

[0:02:47.6] LC: Yeah, so I'm excited to get going here. So Brian, I just want to step back for a minute before we jump in. You're one of those people that I just feel has so much valuable information to share with our listeners and I want to take advantage of your vast experience 30 years working in the industry of marketing. So anybody out there that's building a business has a business, wants to take their business to the next level, I really feel that this is going to be an incredible show. But to step back a little bit, you started off at a company called Boardroom?

[0:03:19.0] BK: Correct, actually I spent 34 years there.

[0:03:20.9] LC: 34 years there and took Boardroom to over \$150 million sales at it's height, is that right?

[0:03:26.9] BK: That's correct. When I got there in '81, the company had been 10 years in the making by an entrepreneur, Marty Edelman, it was his kitchen table startup, not mine. But then I got there in '81 and together he made me a partner after 10 years after that. But in the early days, we were building the company up and I got there, it was about a three million dollar business, newsletters, books, a lot of good consumer information, health information.

And we built it, actually the sweet spot for the company was probably between \$75 and a \$100 million when we kind of got into our rhythm in the 90's and early 2000's and then we just exploded in the mid 2000's and got to that \$157 million I think. Once we got on direct response television, it was like a big leap for us. So again, the lesson there was diversification of media enabled us to really scale the business and that was our height, about \$157 million.

[0:04:25.2] LC: I had a business that is a big business. You believe that starting an in list management system gave you the edge. Can you talk a little bit about list management and why this was so important in your career?

[0:04:38.8] BK: It so happened the Boardroom managed it's list in house and without getting into the details of the list business and direct mail at the time, I don't want to bore your listeners with that. But the key issue, whether it's direct mail in the 1980's or it's the Internet in 2016, everything is about list building. Everything you do. I don't care if it's marketing or not. What are you doing with this podcast? I mean, you've got a tribe, you've got a message, you've got a vision. It's not going to go anywhere unless you are building a tribe and building a list.

So the reason why I say yes to almost any podcast, yours I said yes a lot quicker than most. But I say yes to almost anyone that's a legitimate podcast is that I love building my list organically with people who will listen to my message, who will now say, "Oh he's got an interesting insights on marketing, let me go check out other things he's done," and then they opt in to my list, now I can blog to them and I can have them in my tribe.

Will I sell them something down the road? Maybe? Whether I do or not, it's kind of irrelevant. But to not have someone that you're talking to beyond your Facebook friends is — and Facebook, to some degree, is another version of list building if you do it right. I know people who are making millions using their Facebook account as opposed to just posting that they're taking pictures of their food and what restaurant they're at and things like that.

So learning the list business, learning at Boardroom early on where we were building this list of subscribers and book buyers and then that list was being used by all other direct marketers to mail to, sort of like what they do on the Internet today with affiliates where you let someone mail

your email list, back then, you would rent people's direct mail lists and because the Boardroom list were affluent executives who were subscribers and book buyers at a very high level, everybody used our list.

So my connections in the industry became vast and pretty wide very, very quickly and I was very lucky. I mean it was a nice position to be in but the key was, I realized there's a rule of thumb in direct marketing, which is that the success of any campaign, and this goes back to direct mail but it's true today online, that the success of any campaign is what we call the 40:40:20 ratio and that the success is based on 40% on your list, 40% on your offer and 20% on the creative or the messaging.

That doesn't mean that the messaging is less important because it's 20 and the other two were 40. But let me just leave you with this on this whole thing about lists, if you have the best creative, like the best email or the best sales letter or the best whatever, blog, I don't care what it is. You want to get the highest open rate and you have this amazing creative and you send it out to a list of people who are totally interested with an offer that is so uninteresting that they don't want to open or click, you get zero. You get zero response, zero sales.

However, flip it the other way, if you go out to a list of people that are so interested in what you have to offer and what you have to, you know, what your messaging is and you slap together the worst letter with the worst creative, kind of like with spelling errors and punctuation errors or whatever, you will make some money. I mean I know internet marketers who are basically illiterate, who have a perfect audience for what they're illiterate about and they will make money, they will get sales.

Now, is that the be all end all, absolutely not. The idea is to combine them both and that's why if you take the best creative, put it to the perfect list, add a perfect offer, now you're in marketing Nirvana. That's the key.

[0:08:32.3] LC: So let me ask you this because I am an author, I came out of the brick and mortar healthcare world where list building was not our world. We were trying to get in doctor's offices, sell to doctors, we were like knocking on doctor's doors with sandwiches right? It's a different world, that's the only way that they'll talk to you. But when I started this book, I ran into

this guy Tim Grahl who I interviewed, he was with Ryan Holiday, they're deep into the Internet space of...

[0:08:59.0] BK: Yeah, Ryan Holiday is a really smart guy.

[0:09:00.4] LC: Yeah, yeah, these two guys were amazing, I just got to meet them very early and I'm thinking, "I'm writing a book, the most important thing is to finish it, to put good content," and both of them were like, "Get an email list." One of the things that I'm thinking at the time was, "Email list? I just need to throw a book party like finish my book, right? I don't really think that email matters," right? So you're making this compelling case that, "Well if I finish my book and I don't have a list, who am I going to sell it to?"

You also talk about understanding your audience, the demographics so that, you mentioned this idea of offer, is compelling to them? How does somebody — so they build up a list, they start getting names on it, how do you understand your audience, how to you start understanding the demographic, what's that process?

[0:09:43.9] BK: What a great question? First of all, in the first piece though, having the book is step one but using the book is an incredible tool for list building. I have a book coming out in September and I've got a marketing plan, I'm not going to make money on the \$17 book, by the time I pay royalties and I pay Amazon, I mean that's not where the money is going to get made nor is my impact going to be big. I mean it might be if I get the 20, 30,000 buyers but we'll see, that's not the point.

For me, what I'm going to do is when they get the book, there's going to be a resource page inside the book where they're going to get a lot more free content that's similar to what's in the book. They're going to opt in on a page and now I'm list building, right? If I wasn't working with the traditional publisher on that book, my next book, I won't, what I'll do is I'll offer the book for free everywhere I can for shipping and handling and create my list by giving away the book for free and thinking about what I want to give them on the back end.

Now once you have the list, to answer your question, you are always want to be talking to that list, you always want to be asking them questions. So even in my blog, which I blog every week

when I can, I don't go every week but I try to blog two, three times a month. In that blog, I'll be asking questions, I want them to get to know me but then I want to get to know them. So I ask leading questions, I talk about like a great direct marketing and I ask them, do you have any stories about how — I was talking about a great book of direct marketing by Eugene Schwartz called *Breakthrough Advertising* and then I said, "Has anybody on the list had an experience with Breakthrough Advertising? Please share it."

Now I get those responses back in email, now I start segmenting my list, those people are way more qualified to get information on copywriting, which Eugene Schwartz is a copywriter, than the rest of my list. Now I'm going to start figuring out targeted messages to the people that raised their hand for certain types of things.

So it's kind of an easy way to survey, you can do surveys to your list too, which is really important. "What do you want me to write more about? What are you most interested in?" But make them short, make them quick, things that they can answer. But you can also just get into this engagement with them and then make sure that you keep track of their responses and segment the list properly.

I'm going to tell you a quick story, this is a wild story but I have this list now, maybe I have six, 7,000 people, not a big list and I think I talked about something about this big event I did in 2014 called *The Titans of Direct Response* where I brought together like the best direct response people of the last 50 years. I was talking about it and I get an email, normally you would say I'm just getting an email from someone on my list and it would be like, "Oh thank you for your response good bye," right? But I read them all because you never know what the insight.

So I just want to tell the story because I'm not just about the money but I want you to see how it leads to sales also if you want to make money. The email was like, "Brian, I love your blog post," I don't know the guy at all, his name is Mike. He goes, "I love your blogpost and by the way, are you ever going to do another event like Titans?" The fact that he not only knew about my big live event that he also knew that it was an epic event that would warrant a question that says, "Would you ever do it again?" The fact that he actually short cut it, he didn't call titans of direct response but he called it Titans which means it's like part of his nomenclature, right?

So all of a sudden I got insight. I said, “This guy’s definitely,” — I didn’t even know who he was. I’m thinking, he’s probably a player. I sent him a very extensive email reply back, “Thanks for your interest.” I told him why I’m thinking about maybe not doing a big live event but I’m now doing smaller events and then I had some of the people who spoke at a Titan’s event at the smaller events and lo and behold, what happened is what I was hoping would happen.

This guy was a huge, huge player in online marketing. I’m talking three different businesses, one of which was directly involved in online advertising, so correspondence got even more intimate, right? We became like best friends and best pen pals. Not to — here is the punch line, I have a mastermind group that people pay me \$20,000 a year to be a member of, he is my newest member of my group.

[0:14:14.9] LC: So the whole key here is to take the time to survey, talk to your audience, get involved with them, even if it’s just an email, there’s a ton of information in that experience. I think that’s really great advice because I get emails from people and you don’t necessarily think too hard about how to respond or what to do next with that information.

[0:14:38.4] BK: Yeah, it’s like right under your nose. Jay Abraham who is one of the greats of direct response marketing, he’s kind of like my uncle, he’s just one of the most awesome dudes. I’ve known him since the 80’s, he’s built businesses, he was charging \$25,000 a day for consulting and like 1985, before it was fashionable to think that you could charge that much for your time, right?

He wrote a book called *Getting Everything You Can Out of All You’ve Got*. It’s my favorite Jay Abraham book and it’s all about whenever I got into a consulting assignment now, a marketing consulting assignment, the first thing I do is I assess the assets that the person has. What do you got? It’s funny, some people will say, “You know, I don’t really have very much, I’m just getting started.” I said, “Well you have a business,” one guy I remember he’s a financial planner.

I go, “Okay, you don’t think you have much of a business except your clients? How many do you have?” “Well, I’ve got like 60 and then I have another 50 who have once invested money with me.” I said, “You have 110 name list, you know what/ You treat that list like I would treat a nine million name list. Who is on that 110? How many of those 110 people could actually spend more

money with you or want to be more involved with you? How many of those 110 people would not only invest money with you but would invest time with you and what kind of group could you put together of five of them at an offsite retreat?"

I'm making this up a little bit but that was the kind of discussion. But it all started with what are your assets, how do you go after your assets and what's the gold nuggets within those assets? I mean what I learned from my list, I think you know this because our mutual friend had told you about an event that he came to, Michael Roderick.

[0:16:25.1] LC: Yeah.

[0:16:26.7] BK: What happened was, I had this high end mastermind group that was 20, \$25,000 a year group and what I found in communicating with my list is that a lot of people on my list could never afford a 20 or \$25,000 a year group nor would they want to because they wouldn't belong in the group because it was very, very sophisticated direct marketers. However, I had all this people on my list that were just this wonderful heart centered entrepreneurs who I knew could build a business, they're already building a business, I knew I can help them grow their business. So what did I do? I created to that list an event a \$3,500 event that Michael came to that was a two day event that was just for them.

It wasn't like super high end but it was high end enough to give them a lot of marketing smarts, I did a lot of hot seats so they got a lot of insight into their businesses and what happened from that group is I ended up forming another mastermind group at a much lower price with a very different focus than the \$25,000 group and now I've got two groups. How did I get to two? I didn't know I was going to have two groups when I launched that event, I didn't know I was going to have two groups when I started interacting with my list.

And seeing that there was this whole other group of, I'm going to call them lower level but I don't mean it in a derogatory sense. But lower level in that their businesses are between half a million and five million as supposed to five million to \$50 million, and I could create a group for them that's going to be a lot different, it's going to be price sensitive to them but I never would have found that out had I not been interacting with my list, had I not been asking them for their opinions, had I not been surveying them and who knows what other segments are in my list? I'm

excited about what's the next segment I'm going to find. I'm going to find a segment I'm sure that are going to want to buy a course for me for \$47 or \$97 that will teach them something.

[0:18:27.1] LC: Totally with you on all of this, right? I can just hear people's hairs on their back standing up over this one evil question, right? "It's not supposed to be about money, I hate marketing because then I feel like I'm selling myself out, I don't want to convince people to spend their money." I hear this all day long, I mentor over it, the Chicago Innovation Exchange, I meet with young entrepreneurs all day long and there is this allergic reaction for a lot of people.

There are some times that are sales machines, they just live for it. But there are a lot of people who feel like, "Oh my god, I'm reaching out to my list and being exploitive or asking them for all this money." Maybe they fear that they can't deliver. What do you say to the person that feels that marketing are working on sales copy so that it really speaks directly to that audience group is somehow like a dirty little game that they're playing.

[0:19:27.2] BK: Yeah, great, I mean, this is like the fundamental question for, especially what we call heart centered entrepreneurs who are in some kind of a cause and they don't want to dirty up their cause with what this thing called marketing.

[0:19:40.4] LC: Or this thing called money, right?

[0:19:42.9] BK: Money, yeah, making money.

[0:19:45.3] LC: Because how do you run a business without cash?

[0:19:47.8] BK: Right, I mean it's like you've got to put the oxygen mask on you and then you put it on your kid because if you don't have money to run your business and you're all about heart, then you're not going to be able to make the biggest impact. I told you in the pre interview that I just got back from Paris where I spoke for the second time to a seminar that a friend of mine does there. He's a top online marketer in France and it was an event called Entrepreneur Libre, which means "free entrepreneur".

300 entrepreneurs, and French entrepreneurs is like an oxymoron, right? You don't think of France being an entrepreneurial environment and it's not. There are some and my buddy finds them. So I'm speaking to this group and I'm saying to them, "Look, I don't know whether I want to — I'm here because I'm a marketer on the one hand." I was deciding whether the speech be about marketing or should it be about personal development not that I'm Tony Robins nor am I a personal development guy, I'm a marketer.

But you know what? They're totally linked to each other and so I said to them, basically, "How many of you have a mission or vision or something you really know that before you die, you really want to share with the world?" Almost everybody raised their hand now of course everybody should have raised their hands, of course my second questions was, "How many people never raised their hand at any live event they ever attend?" Of course then I got the rest of them to raise their hand.

Then the third question was look, "How many of you would rather reach dozens of people with this mission or visions that's your lifelong dream or would you rather reach millions?" It was a trick question and if they didn't raise their hand I said, "You might as well leave now because you're not going to want to hear my speech, because I'm not going to sit here and tell you that you should dupe the customer and you should trick people into ordering your shit. I'm not a big fan of the guys online on how to buy more shit from more people, how to get more money for more people, that's not my game."

I know this podcast is kind of under the umbrella of authenticity. You know what? If selling authentically is the way you do whatever you need to do within your comfort zone but if you're not going to sell because you think it's evil to ask people for money to part with dollars for something that can help them, can move their life forward because you really believe in it, you're the one that's actually making the big mistake. You're the one that's not going to really be fulfilled.

So yeah, I think that a lot of heart centered entrepreneurs watch what's going on online, they're a lot of people who just make your skin crawl, there's like so much stuff going on that how do we dupe the customer, how do we hide the offer, how do we figure out not to be transparent with our return policy, how do we not give 100% lifetime guarantees? How do people get away with

all this crap? The fact is that to condemn marketing based on that is the biggest mistake that I see a lot of young heart centered entrepreneurs make.

So look, I can't sit here and tell you that convince somebody who things marketing is evil and they think that, "Who the hell is the Brian Kurtz going to tell me?" But my track record speaks for itself. I know that when I was at Boardroom, we pushed the envelope, we had a lot of outrageous claims in our direct mail to sell health books. However, we could back up every one of those claims that there was actually a study — so the fascination on the promotion was something like *How Carrots Might Help Cure Alzheimer's*, I'm making that up right? Or *How Carrots Might Help Cure Cancer* and that led to a study from a doctor from Harvard or MIT where beta carotene in big quantities had actually shrunk some cancer cells in cancer patients.

So therefore while we got them into the book, not under false pretences but on a little bit of a spectacular headline. I knew that if they get this book, which is *The Greatest Treasury of Health Secrets*, which is what we called it and it had some of the best doctors in the world, giving out the best remedies, secrets, cures that they knew about, in a way, the means justified the ends for me. Now, if I was lying in the promotion, if I was saying things that were blatantly untrue, shame on me, hit me with a wet noodle now, I agree.

[0:24:29.7] LC: Well isn't it, Brian, a question of wearing the nice dress to the party, right? Let's just be real, everybody's out there, they're putting on their face to the world, they want to look good, we can't just walk out into the world a complete wreck and when you think about a product that you have, you could say, "Just love me for who I am, I don't need to put on makeup or dress at all." That's also a stance that you can take.

When it came to — we had a healthcare company and it was best of practices based on my father's work, he was the world's expert in a disease state and the reality was, he really had discovered how to cure a disease and he was very successful at that. You have to get people's attention to purchase it because there's so much information out there.

I love what you said about authentic marketing, that is the idea of the podcast but this idea that do things that resonate with you. Don't go on the internet, find the sleazy stuff and get turned off. Find somebody or a model out there that — who do you purchase from, right? This is

something I, to be honest with you, struggled with myself because there are so many skeazy marketing ads out there.

But I thought, “What are the products I buy? Where is it where I don’t feel duped and I feel like the marketing process was wonderful and the product in the end was a value in my life?” And I took those examples and used that to position my own brand. So is that something that, do have a couple of people that you feel have done an incredible job in marketing their product?

[0:26:08.2] BK: Oh god yeah. That’s a great point Laura because you always say, make believe your mother is on your list and when you go out with that message, are you proud? Would you be proud enough for your mom or dad to read that and say, “That’s my kid doing that.”

[0:26:21.6] LC: Right, that’s right.

[0:26:22.5] BK: The other side of that too, you do have to get above the clutter. To get above the clutter you might have to scream a little bit louder than you’re used to, say somethings that you didn’t think you were going to say but again as you just said that it’s within, if it’s within your heart and it stays within whatever parameters you decide, it’s you deciding, that’s critical. I mean I watch people, some of the best online marketers I know who are, I would call them aggressive but they are aggressive within their niche because they know how much they can help people.

I was just talking to someone last night that who is like one of the top dog trainers in the world and her name is Susan Garret and she is a world champion dog trainer and she has a lot of aggressive marketing to her list. Nothing skeevy, nothing underhanded, full guarantees and she’s got such raving fans that — but she sells hard to her list, a guy like Ramit Sethi who markets a lot to millennials.

He wrote a book called *I Will Teach You To Be Rich* and he teaches money management for people in their 20’s and 30’s and Ramit pulls no punches. He’s very harsh sometimes, telling you to get out of your own way and get off your ass and do stuff and yet it’s talk about authenticity, the guy is just totally believes his message and he’s one of the most well-known bloggers and guys on the internet and when I read his stuff, I’m proud. To say he’s my friend.

[0:28:02.7] LC: Here's what I heard you say that I think is so valuable for the listeners is if he's helping people manage money but if he actually wrote a book called *How To Manage Money*, if everybody's being honest, I wouldn't buy that right? How to be rich is a much more compelling title right? I think that's kind of the message is picking titles that are not misleading but that actually are a little bit more interesting to you that you may be excited to purchase.

[0:28:30.4] BK: Exactly, there was one, I won't mention the name, but it's an amazing functional medicine doctor who I ended up going to as my own physician going back to what you said about is this something I would use myself or do myself? I remember I wanted to do a deal with him to sell his books in direct mail and I showed him what our promotion looked like and it was out of the parameters of what he would want to do.

I tried to talk him into it still because I knew I wouldn't do anything illegal, irrational but he wasn't comfortable with it. On the other hand, I knew that his message was so freaking powerful that if I could be responsible for getting out to a bigger audience, it would be one of the great achievements of my life you know what I mean?

[0:29:17.3] LC: Absolutely.

[0:29:19.3] BK: I couldn't talk him into it, it's one of my failures here, but you know what? That he stuck to his principles, that he said, "You know Brian, I know you're a great marketer, I know Boardroom is great brand but if I market it under your brand and you did that kind of aggressive stuff, it doesn't feel right." So you know what? He does what he's comfortable with, frankly he's not at dozens but he won't be at the millions I don't think unless he moves the marketing a little more aggressive but what's aggressive? Aggressive's in the eye of the beholder.

[0:29:51.1] LC: I hear you. I hear you. But I have to say that this was probably the biggest argument we had with my father. He wanted everything to be — why is it that best of doctors, the one you mentioned, my dad being one of them, can't get their messages out to the world, a lot of it because they're ineffective at the style in which they put the information forward. My dad didn't want to invest in any design or marketing or copy or — I just changed the color to blue, it was red and black, it's like healthcare, blood and death, right?

[0:30:25.1] BK: Yeah, we did a lot of red and black because it got attention but it might not have been what you wanted.

[0:30:29.9] LC: Yeah, not in healthcare. But I think this idea that if you have something that you care about, if you are an entrepreneur that wants to make impact or you have anything, even if you're a yoga teacher who wants to get more students because Yoga is a wonderful thing if you can't compel people into your offering, you aren't going to get them get the value and I think that's really important to get this messages out there.

[0:30:55.4] BK: Yeah, I think we beat this point but I think that the important thing obviously is I think you hit it on the head about, you got to stay within your comfort zone, everybody, it's like I, I think — what's the old expression? "Pornography, you know it when you see it." But that's very — some stuff's obvious, some stuff is not. Pornography is pretty obvious. In this case, a "too aggressive" promotion letter, sales letter, one person's aggressive sales letter is another person's winner and something they're comfortable with. I think being congruent is actually the key term here.

Quick little story, guy had a list, he was kind of a "woo-woo" kind of guy, he was teaching like daily gratitude and it was very "woo-woo", good stuff, very smart guy. Of course he did affiliates, he would let people mail to his list who he had met like the yoga guy, mailed to the yoga woman, mail to his list or guy. He would let the meditation offer mail to his list, stuff that was completely congruent, right? Why wouldn't this guy be promoting those kinds of offers?

So one day he got an offer from a guy who did real estate investing, flipping houses and stuff, legitimate offer, not a fly by night offer but it was an offer for something and it was going to make him a lot of money because it was a onetime deal and he would just have to come out at once. He promoted this offer and I don't remember what the numbers were but they were staggering, it was like 30% unsubscribes or something like that and it was like — and that's all about congruence.

That was all about like, "how dare you bring that to us? I can go elsewhere to find out how to flip houses, I don't come to you for that." It was a good lesson that I like to share that that clearly went over the line right? Would a vegan offer go over the line, you know what? There are

probably people on this list that are like anti — maybe a paleo offer and all the vegans on this list will say, “That’s crazy,” right?

[0:33:09.2] LC: Yeah, knowing your market again.

[0:33:10.5] BK: What’s controversial for one person is not to another and again as you said, it’s what your comfort zone, what are your parameters, set them up but to put the blanket statement out there that “marketing’s evil, I’m not doing that, everybody who markets like that online is a bad person, forget about it”. That’s just not — it’s just not legit, it’s not the way to live life and you know what? You want to live your legacy, you don’t want to just leave it. You’re not going to leave it or live it if you don’t get what you’re passionate about out to as many people as possible and you know what? That’s called marketing.

[0:33:49.3] LC: There you go. So Brian, I feel like we could keep going for a couple of hours with just valuable pieces of information for people out there trying to get their business going, but I’m going to turn the conversation now to authenticity. All of this said, we sort of touched on authenticity, what does it mean for you to live an authentic life?

[0:34:12.1] BK: So I’m going to kind of not debunk your podcast, I would never do that because I love this podcast and I love the idea that it’s about authenticity. The thing I’m going to debunk is this thing about, when you have to start thinking about being authentic, then you’re not authentic. What comes to mind a lot is when I’m at a conference or something and I’m seeing someone on stage and someone says to me, “That speaker’s great and he’s so authentic or she’s so authentic.”

I’m like, “Okay.” If I know them and I know that they’re the same person on stage as they are off stage, I’m like, “Well, you nailed it because she is awesome and the same person that you’re looking out on stage is the same person that I can talk to when she comes off the stage and its authenticity off the wazoo.” However, when someone says that and then the person comes off the stage and you meet them for the first time, it’s like, “So who was that person on the stage?”

[0:35:09.5] LC: Yeah.

[0:35:11.1] BK: This idea of being in different personas and I'm not talking about acting in a movie, I'm not talking about playing a role but to me, authenticity should be sort of a natural occurrence and if you are truly authentic, you should get either hives, you shouldn't be able to sleep at night, you shouldn't be able to do something when you're out of integrity on that authenticity at any one point. It's not so much that, look we're all going to be hypocrites at some point. I'm going to sit here and talk about, "I think we should be givers and be 100 zero and never — always look out for the other person," whatever might various philosophies of life are right?

But then, I'm going to be a hypocrite at some point because I'm going to do something in the spur of the moment that's going to be the emphasis of what I'm doing when I'm on stage and what everybody thinks I'm so authentic about. The key is not to beat yourself up over it. The key is to catch yourself, realize you're now not being authentic or you're out of integrity and actually flip it because you are so in tune with who you are and what you want to be in the world so that you can catch yourself. To me, that is one of the biggest things for me, I don't want to be...

To strive for perfection in authenticity and in practicing every single word of what you preach. I just said, going back to the marketing discussion, here I was saying, use the carrot example I gave, beta carotene, *Carrots Will Help You Cure Cancer*. Some people would say, "Brian, you're a thief, how could you say that if that's about beta carotene and cancer cells, you can't say carrots cure cancer." Then, I think about it and actually there have been situation, I don't know if that was that one in particular, it might have been but where I went back to my creative team and I said, "You know what? That one goes over the edge because it kept me up at night."

I have some things that I know, I know when I'm out of integrity, we all do. You got to know those signs, you got to know the things that say to you, "You know what? I was just being incredibly hypocritical and I don't want to be that. I want to be authentic," and if authenticity to me means not being perfect in everything you practice and everything you preach, not practicing 100% all the time of what you preach but it's actually being in a state of mind that knows when you're out of that level of authenticity. I equate integrity with it very much. Know in your life.

For me, usually I can't sleep or usually I get into a little bit of a panic of sorts, it's not a panic attack but it's like — so I know my signs.

[0:37:58.0] LC: I love that because I think that that's why I ask this question, I think that a lot of people are taught to bulldoze over that stuff, man up, don't worry about it if it's stressing you out, just keep going back to your mind and the pro and con list and what somebody else thinks or the approvals and this are what I call these layers, these imposter voices.

You're saying like staying in touch with the integrity of your true self and things like not sleeping at night and you're getting the stress going are huge signs, right? So yeah, we just don't often pay attention. Was your path to an authentic life a straight line? Was it something where you had a turning point? It sounds like it's something that you practice on a regular basis.

[0:38:44.3] BK: Yeah, I think it's gone to like a whole new level as Marty Edelston, the founder of Boardroom who was my ultimate mentor when he got older and he used to say, "I love getting old because I get so smart." When I make jokes about — because I'm in a lot of rooms with some of the smartest online marketers in the world, who are way smarter than me but to have a golden ticket at 58 years old which is what I am, to be in a room with 30 year old's who are much smarter than me, puts me in a place that says I can give them the wisdom of 58 years of making a lot of mistakes but always working towards, I want to say even more authentic because I think there's authentic and not authentic, it's almost like black and white for me.

But it probably always was, now that you asked the question. I think though that whatever the values that my parents brought me up with or whatever it was, there was a sense of fairness that I wanted to have in my life and I think once I got into business especially, this idea that it's not about getting the better end of every deal. I mean I think I'm pleased that I didn't go to law school or I didn't go into a profession that had some adversarial aspects to it.

Now, I'm not being naïve, I mean I've negotiated a lot of tough contracts over my career where someone had to get the upper hand of sorts but I've always thought about that. That if one person gets a windfall and the other doesn't, that's not going to be a deal for a lifetime, it's going to be a deal for the windfall. So I learned very early on, Marty and I — Marty on his death bed, I remember this distinctly, he was a little out of it, he was 83 at the time and I was sitting on his bed, he always loved hearing about how I was negotiating contracts and because it was always in his image because he was a man of fairness and so I was like, I don't know what he heard,

what he didn't but he opened and pretty drugged up. But he opened his eyes because I was telling about some contract I was negotiating, I don't know how much he heard and he heard enough because he opened his eyes and he said, "Just be fair."

So fairness is the doctrine that I think I've lived my life by. I think there was a turning point once I got into business. I mean how fair was I when I was in high school hanging out with my buds? I was always generous but it took a whole new level when I work for somebody and work around people who understood fairness at a whole other level, understood that negotiating a contract was not taking advantage of the other side, and I'll tell you, there's a lot of people who I work with over the years at boardroom who thought that I negotiated some of the worst contracts ever because I gave in on a lot of stuff.

But my attitude is, I don't know, I just think that you start holding out, this idea that you know, it's the principle of the thing, not part of my vocabulary. Meet me half way, not part of my vocabulary. It's a different mindset of — so to answer your question, I don't feel it's one turning point but the more business I did, the more contracts I negotiated, the more situations where the other person was trying to be more adversarial than I wanted to be, each one of those was like a building block of what you're calling authenticity and what I'm calling authenticity and integrity and it built up to a point where it's pretty natural to me that I can catch myself in a heartbeat now when I'm out of integrity. It won't take more than a few minutes for me.

[0:42:21.3] LC: I love that and this is why I'm doing the show in a large part is I think that there is a false sense of living an authentic life is like sitting on a beach somewhere and that you've just figured it out and I think that it takes a lifetime to kind of understand who you are, what those triggers feel like in your body if it's losing sleep, if it's the pit in your stomach, if it's the stress or whatever it is, and then really paying attention to that, making decision after decision that is integrity with your deeper self requires you to know yourself as well.

So I think it's a very complicated conversation and I love your answer and I guess the last question for you is, now that you're in a place where you've had a lot of success in your life and you're making decisions that on a daily basis feel in line with your internal sense of integrity and self, do you have daily practices or habits to do this? Anywhere from some people meditate to

how to make a decision, how to decide a yes versus a no. What is it that you do to make this work?

[0:43:21.0] BK: I have a few things, I've written a lot about him in my blog, I'll give your listeners a chance to look at some blog post I wrote about different things that I do in terms of why I do what I do and the rituals that I do and again it's not perfect and I'm not saying that what I do is the best thing, it just works for me. But one of the things I do, which a lot of people I know do is I try to incorporate in the morning, I use *The Five Minute Journal*, people who don't know that book, it was devised by a friend of mine, UJ Ramdas.

It's just a wonderful little book and you can get an app for it too, it's called The Five Minute Journal. What I like to do and I don't do it every day than I should but I hate should so I'm not going to open — I do it as often as I can. Basically ever morning, I write down and the book prompts you so it's like three things I'm grateful for, three things that would make today great and then do a couple of affirmations, "I am whatever, I am something."

I try to do that as many days in a row as I can and then at the end of the day, I don't use The Five Minute Journal for their PM because I don't like, it's just not as — I have another thing I do in the PM which is what I call winds. We all have winds every day and I use an app through my one of my coach, the Dan Sullivan who runs Strategic Coach and they develop something called WinStreak, which is also an app but basically, all it is, at the end of the day, without saying what you did wrong, not saying what I could have done better, not one of those kinds of things, there's room in other places to do that but just write down three wins.

I remember specifically, before we got on this call, I shared with you that I lost my brother in law yesterday and he's also one of my best friends from high school. So he introduced me to my wife and that's how he became my brother in law, his wife, his high school sweetheart is my wife's sister. So he went from brother in law, from friend to brother in law and we used to joke that he's no longer my friend because now we're relatives, right?

Then he became my true brother, and so having lost him yesterday, I realized that how fleeting life is and what I'm going to do is at the end of today you could say, "How could I have had any

wins yesterday,” right? On a day like that? I had the same thing happen when my father in law died who is also a mentor of mine.

I work really hard even on the worst days and I found three great wins today. One of the wins yesterday was that David, who is my brother in law who died, I’ve known him for over 40 years and ever since we were in high school, you know, when I was in high school in the Paleozoic era which was around 1975, everybody used to shake hands, they change the straight handshake to the power handshake, thumbs, you know what I’m talking about? I don’t know what they call it.

So anyway, he and I just hated that, too cool for school, “Why do I want to shake your hand like that?” We weren’t crazy about the traditional handshake either. Mostly we were huggers for the most part but I’ve incorporated hugging into all of my life but that’s another ritual. But David and I had this handshake, I just told my wife like a few minutes ago, she never knew we had it for 40 years.

So every time I saw David for the last 40 years, we would shake hands and it was basically a handshake where our index and middle finger would wrap around each other’s wrists. It was kind of like a weird kind of secret handshake, that was our counter culture thing against not doing a power handshake when we were in high school. That was one of my wins yesterday that I had this thing with this guy who is like a brother for 40 years that we didn’t talk about but we always knew we were going to shake our hands like that.

[0:47:14.6] LC: Yeah.

[0:47:16.6] BK: You know? I don’t know, is that a ritual that keeps me authentic? Who the hell knows? But boy, it was one of my wins yesterday and thinking about — another win, then another one was when my in-laws died one after another which is my his sister and my wife right? His wife and my wife are sisters and we were helping them with the estate for my father in law after my mother in law had already died.

David and I had to like kind of be mutual support for our wives during that period and what a win that was to go through — you know how many times someone dies and there’s an estate issue

and it's all about who's going to get what and how you're going to beat each other up over an extra inheritance or piece of jewelry? There was not one thing because David and I were orchestrating for his wife and my wife that was going to go like sideways.

[0:48:13.5] LC: Yup.

[0:48:15.2] BK: That was like a win. So again, it's the gratefulness it's the wins and I also, another ritual is that I umpire baseball and people would say, "Why would you do that? Why would you like just run around and getting yelled at all day if you make a bad call and if you make all good calls, no one gives a crap, right?" To me, that's a ritual that keeps me really on solid footing. Some people use yoga, meditation to get their focus but I think this idea of getting, of just pursuing excellence as opposed to praise is something that is a ritual that I think everybody should try to find in their life.

So in the case of umpiring it's sort of like I equated it to direct marketing in that it's the customer service representative who the only time you hear about customer service is when there's no customer service, right? It's rare and that's why the companies like Ritz Carlton and Nordstrom stick out as companies that are just excellent because they teach their employees to just be excellent and if they get praised, great. So that's why I umpire baseball you know?

So I think that that's — I think you can have that a lot of, you don't have to umpire baseball. I said, "Pick something that may not get you yelled at by an irate parent and you probably got more than I got," right? I think that having that in your life is so critical in terms of that idea that creating rituals that will keep you grounded, keep you authentic and not let you get ahead of yourself because if you're seeking praise as supposed to excellence, you're going to get out of whack.

[0:49:52.0] LC: I love this idea of practicing this wins. I actually incorporated this into my life a few years ago and it is arguably one of the most positive — I've never heard of this Strategic Coach, WinStreak? I love it, I'm going to suggest it to my clients now because I'm always telling my clients, "We sit around and we tell ourselves exactly what we didn't do every day and we're very good at criticizing but what about what you got done? What about celebrating those small

wins?" And I think people think it's strange to boast or celebrate themselves or it's arrogant or I don't know what it is.

[0:50:23.4] BK: No, well you can do this privately so it doesn't come off but you have to celebrate your wins, there's a thing that Dan Sullivan teaches called the gap where most entrepreneurs get into the gap and what the gap is, is that you're always looking to the horizon for the next big thing. You know what? Walk to the horizon, I will guarantee you will never get there.

[0:50:43.3] LC: That's right.

[0:50:43.4] BK: So what Dan teaches is that you set your life up in a series of goals and achievements and the key is once you hit one of those goals, don't keep looking ahead at the horizon, turn around, look at where you were and where you now are, celebrate the win and then turn around and keep walking because you're going on to the next goal, not the horizon. It's a very interesting distinction and probably one of the most important things that Dan teaches in Strategic Coach for entrepreneurs because how many of use would get trapped into thinking, never good enough, some day one day, don't celebrate those wins, you're sunk.

[0:51:24.3] LC: I think most people get trapped in there. Actually positive psychologist study this in Harvard and found people who are chasing after those goals are the most unhappy. Listen Brian, thank you so much for all this information and time today, this was incredible. If people are looking to learn more about you, read your blogs, check out your masterminds, where can they find out more information about you?

[0:51:47.6] BK: So if they go to, very simple, www.briankurtz.me, everybody now will say how come you don't have .com? It's because I was too late to the party, someone else got it. On Briankurtz.me, there's a lot of free content, can opt in to my blog there but there's a lot of free stuff there and you can read some of my stuff that I've written a lot of other interviews like this, there will be some repeats probably of stuff we talked about today but a lot of other stuff and if they want to read some past blogs, it's Briankurtz.me/blog and there I've got like all this blog post about, in detail about wins and gratefulness and hundred zero concept of giving and a lot of marketing stuff there too.

So I would encourage your folks if there was anything in this podcast that interested them that they should go get all that stuff, it's all free and I'm not a heavy duty seller, I don't do affiliates to my list so if you opt in, you're not going to get sold a bunch of stuff. I might tell you about programs, I might do or a live event that I might do but that's about it. It's not an affiliate list at all and I think people would love it. So it's Briankurtz.me.

[0:53:01.5] LC: Thank you so much Brian for coming on the show.

[0:53:04.3] BK: My pleasure Laura, thank you for having me.

[END]