

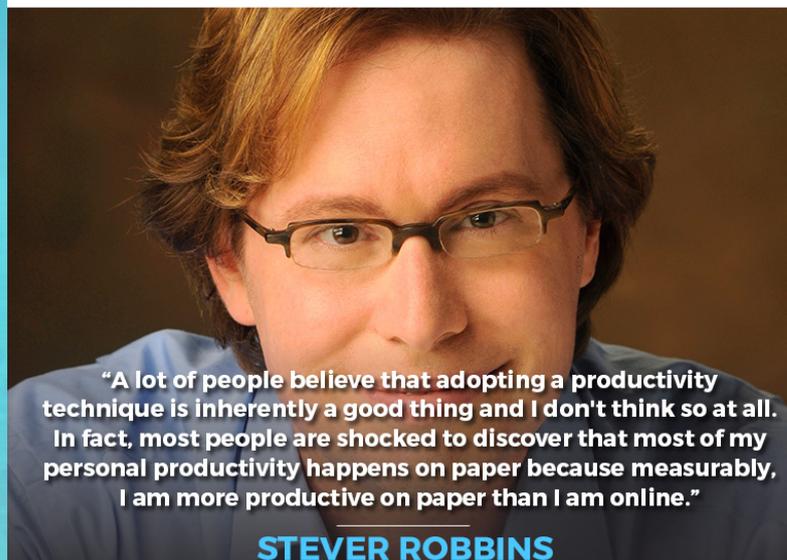
Tools for Designing a Productive and Prosperous Lifestyle

Transcript and 10 Point Checklist Stever Robbins

Want to gain as much knowledge as possible out of The Optimized Geek? Read on below for a full transcript of this episode, as well as a **10 point checklist** that gives the next, real steps you can take for introducing these insights and optimizing your life.

The **OPTIMIZED GEEK** 

HOSTED BY **STEPHAN SPENCER**



"A lot of people believe that adopting a productivity technique is inherently a good thing and I don't think so at all. In fact, most people are shocked to discover that most of my personal productivity happens on paper because measurably, I am more productive on paper than I am online."

STEVER ROBBINS

10 STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

Want to take charge of your health, wellness, and success? Here are 10 steps that can move you closer to your goals – today.

- Are you creating a lot of excuses around a subject? Do you have negative feelings towards something? You may want to use NLP techniques to change your beliefs around those topics.
- Create a life map: When a new obligation comes in, ask yourself “Where in this map does it go?” If you can't find a place that it goes in the map, say no to it.
- Get Stever's PDF worksheet with the career planning exercise at [SteverRobbins.com/careerplan](https://www.SteverRobbins.com/careerplan).
- If you are considering creating a podcast, create a format for your show and stick to it. Make sure you add actionable items for your listeners to use after they tune in.
- Stick to your priorities. Before adding more responsibility to your life, consider if it fits into your business or personal goals.
- Get creative! Like Stever's musical, don't be afraid to try new things that haven't been done before.
- Check out Stever's website at www.SteverRobbins.com, there are around 400 informational and motivational articles available, along with a lot of free stuff.
- Distribution and creation are both important when you are starting and running a business. Manage your time wisely and don't focus all of your attention in one area.
- If you want to be productive and rich, you need to concentrate on both at the same.
- If you take notes by hand, it may help you to learn and remember the content. Try it at your next meeting or seminar.
- Balance your life by creating goals not just around your career, but about your relationships and life in general.

Stephan: Got it! So, you're also a contributor to the Harvard Business Review?

Stever: Yup.

Stephan: That's impressive, that's really cool! Yeah, you're just an all-around expert on productivity, on just getting the most out of business and out of life, and a lot of other stuff too, which will get into—kind of life, career, and everything. So, welcome, Stever! It's great to have you!

Stever: Thanks, it's great to be here!

Stephan: All right, so we were just talking before we started recording that you started when you were very young with your first ventures. You actually started working 14-year-old. How did you get started and then become this serial entrepreneur?

Stever: I would love to say that I had some grand vision, which would be entirely rewriting history. What happened was that, I was 14 years old and living with my mother and stepfather. I didn't really care for that living situation and I wanted to move out to live with my father and stepmother but their house was too small so they said, "Why don't you rent an apartment near our house?" However, in order to rent an apartment near their house, I needed to be able to enter into legally-binding contracts, which meant I needed to become an emancipated minor and in order to become an emancipated minor, I needed a way to support myself. I was able to program computers. Now, this was back in the 1970's so programming computers was not particularly common among 14-year-olds but I knew how to do it and I got myself a job programming computers. I became an emancipated minor and moved out. The only place that would hire me was a tiny startup in the neighborhood because the actual official working age—and since I was an emancipated minor, I could get around this—was 16. Do you know how many places are going to actually take a chance on a 14-year-old who's never had a job before? That was my first startup and the second startup I got involved in was when the head programmer from that company split off and started his own company. Basically, he split off and I was the programmer for him and so that was my beginning in

“Do you know how many places are going to actually take a chance on a 14-year-old who's never had a job before? That was my first startup and the second startup I got involved in was when the head programmer from that company split off and started his own company.”

the world of startups. I really just never stumbled into a large company. I'd love to say that that I predicted how awesome being an entrepreneur would be years and years and years in advance but I actually didn't. I just fell into entrepreneurship and ended up staying there.

Stephan: Wow, it's an interesting story and it actually kind of parallels my early path too because I was bounced around as a child and ended up in foster care. At one point in time, there is a couple years where I was living at my mom's and then I was at my grandfather's and then back and forth. I was teaching myself computer programming as an early teenager and actually before that, I wrote my own bulletin board system from scratch. I taught myself not just basic but also assembly language and even machine language. I was a real geek. I would code all night long during the summer, sleep during the day, and then I'd run a bulletin board system on my one and only home phone line.

Stever: I bet your parents don't know that!

Stephan: Yeah, my mother would pick up the phone and hear the modem and she'd scream at me



from downstairs, "Get that thing off!" and I had to hang up on whoever was connected at that moment. That's why I called the BBS fly-by-night BBS because you never knew when it had to go down suddenly, whenever I was getting in trouble so, yeah, it was an interesting time. It taught me a lot about being just kind of independent, forward-thinking, and just following my own path. My mother worked nights so I'd spend my nights alone, which didn't feel so good to be in the house by myself all night long as a 12-year-old but I adapted. I ended up like trading software stuff as a young kid with people who are 10 years older than me. My mother just didn't know or care and I just would come and go and thinking back it's like, it's crazy, as a parent, to think my kids just going to do what he's going to do! I could have been into drugs, I could have been in a gang or whatever,

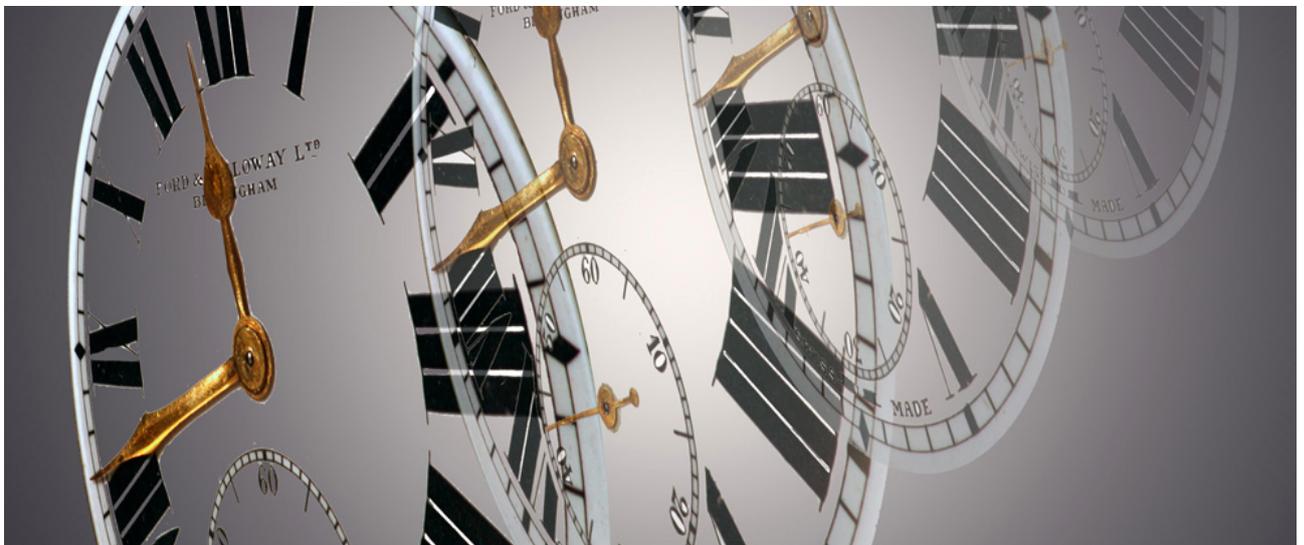
“ It's nine years of podcasting and it has a huge number of downloads—27,000,000! Not many podcasts can claim that. ”

and she would have never known or done anything. It just floors me to think about that but it gave me a lot of, I don't know, confidence in myself that I could forge my own path and build whatever I wanted. So, we have kind of similar paths at the beginning there—it's kind of interesting!

Steve: Yeah, I was big into BBS' too. Who knows? Maybe I know yours!

Stephan: Yes! Oh, that's funny! Now, you're on your eleventh startup and tell us a bit about the books and the podcast because these two things seem to be a passion of yours. You've been doing the Get-It-Done Guy podcast for how many years now?

Steve: Since 2007 so that would be, what? Seven years? Eight years? Nine years? Oh my God,



nine years!

Stephan: Yeah, that's a long time in podcasting. I started in 2007 and I quickly gave up because it just wasn't, I don't know, it wasn't as popular back then and I was doing a lot of other things. I restarted just last year with these two podcasts—this one, The Optimized Geek, and then also Marketing Speak. I'm excited to get back into it but I kind of let this long hiatus pass. It's nine years of podcasting and it has a huge number of downloads—27,000,000! Not many podcasts can claim that. What's the competitive advantage that your podcast has over all these other podcasts in the business

category? I mean, even just in productivity, there are a lot of podcasts in productivity. What makes yours unique and awesome?

Stever: Well, first of all, the editorial format is very precise. Every episode is five to seven minutes long and each one has a specific actionable tip that you can have. That was a very conscious decision—the format of the episodes—because back when we started, people didn't really listen to podcasts that are much over five or six minutes. We found that the 45-minute to an hour-long podcast, people will download them but how much time does somebody actually have in their life to listen to hour-long podcasts?

Stephan: Yup.

Stever: You know, not very much. So, the short format, I think, is a biggie. The second one is that, because it's always actionable, you can listen, and you know you're going to walk away with something useful whereas, there's a lot of podcast where you might walk away with something interesting but it doesn't make a difference in your life. Whereas, if you choose to do the things that we talk about in the Get-It-Done Guy, you'll actually change stuff. Of course, the final part is my absolutely, stunningly awesome personality and the style of writing. You see, for those of your listeners who don't recognize what other people would have interpreted as perhaps a slight cynical snort, I am deeply, deeply insightful enough to realize that it was actually your attempt to stifle an involuntary exclamation of utter and complete hero worship so I appreciate your supporting my modesty by not doing that out loud.

Stephan: You're quite welcome. I had it on mute!

Stever: Excellent! But the reason that I found the Get-It-Done Guy had nothing to do with my business. My business was about entrepreneurial-consulting, strategy-consulting, leadership, and things like that—like, you know, sea level kinds of stuff for mid-size and small businesses. I wanted the Get-It-Done Guy to be a completely a creative outlet for me. I wanted to be able to go wild, I wanted to be able to have fun, I wanted to be able to talk about zombies and make weird science fiction references and give useful information but give it in a style that would never fly in the kinds of places that I hung out in the business world where everybody has to be buttoned-up and wear far too conservative clothes and things and so, it started really as a creative outlet and became very popular. You know, I'd love to say that it became popular purely as a result of deep thoughtful market-targeting on my part but it didn't. It just turns out that my personality and the way that I present things really resonated with the audience. It took off and hit number one in the business category on iTunes three days before the PR campaign that I had arranged was going to start. I was hoping to get into the top 100 and that was a big, big learning experience for me because had I hit number one two weeks later, I would have concluded that I had hit number one because of the PR efforts. As it was, it suddenly hit me that, wow, had I hit number one two weeks later, I would have come to an incorrect conclusion. I would have come to the conclusion that it was the PR campaign when in fact, it wasn't

the PR campaign, it got to number one organically and fortunately, I understand that. Now, I can realize that I'm the recipient of luck and inexplicable skill as opposed to being the recipient of careful planning and thoughtful execution.

Stephan: Or just PR dollars at work!

“It just turns out that my personality and the way that I present things really resonated with the audience. ”

Steve: Exactly!

Stephan: Right, so your approach though to time management is different. I mean, you have a different way of packaging it and presenting yourself. I knew you created a musical, which is very creative

and an unusual way to convey information about time and life management. What was the name of the musical? I forgot to include that in the bio.

Steve: The musical is called, Work Less and Do More, and you can see a five-minute promo video if you go to WorkLessandDoMore.com. There's a five-minute promo video there—not starring me but starring two professional musical theater performers. The story behind the musical just blows me away every time. I had written the book, Get-It-Done Guy's 9 Steps to Work Less and Do More, and I was preparing to go and do the promotion thing and do promotional tour, book tour, and so on. I was talking to a friend of mine. I had just discovered musical theater a few months before and by discovered, I mean some friends had taken me to musical and I walked out thinking, “Oh, man! That looks like so much fun. I want to try it.” I wanted to audition for a musical, except I've never acted, I've never sung, I've never danced, and I've certainly never even seen a script before in my life, and I was talking to a friend of mine and he was saying, “What are you up to?” and I said, “Well, I'm about to go do this book tour to promote my book on personal productivity but, you know, I really want to try this musical theater thing. Wouldn't it be funny if I had like, a one-man musical that I could perform that will be all about personal productivity but would also be catchy and move people to tears and be hummable and singable?” He just looked at me and said, “Steve, you do know what I do for a living, right?” and I kind of looked at him and I was like, “Uh, you are a journalist?” because I thought he was a journalist. He said, “No, I compose and write musical theater for off-Broadway and I teach musical theater composition at NYU.” I kind of walked away from that conversation going, “That was

“Wouldn't it be funny if I had like, a one-man musical that I could perform that will be all about personal productivity but would also be catchy and move people to tears and be hummable and singable?”

Stephan: And that's just weird, right? That's like the universe saying, "Hello!"

Stever: And so, about a day later, I finally worked up the nerve and I sent him an email—actually, it was on Facebook—and I him a Facebook message and I said, "Hey, Joel! I know you mentioned this but would you like to collaborate, understanding that I know nothing at all about the genre and I've never written or done any of this in my life?" and about three seconds later, he wrote back and said, "This would be so much fun. Absolutely! Let's do it!" Long story short, it took a lot longer than

"We ended up with a musical, which, to be honest, is a pretty good musical. It's an hour long, it's designed to be done as a business keynote, it has enough information that people want to take notes, it has enough drama, character development, and story arc..."

I thought. I thought we could pull it together in six months but it took about a year and a half. We ended up with a musical, which, to be honest, is a pretty good musical. It's an hour long, it's designed to be done as a business keynote, it has enough information that people want to take notes, it has enough drama, character development, and story arc that—well, the original people cried but we decided that if it was going to be business keynote, very few places would want to pay to have their people walk out in tears, so we changed the plot a little bit and now people walk out all pumped up, excited, and having fun.

Stephan: Oh, that's good. I would never have thought to mix those two completely separate disciplines together. So clever and, yeah, really, really neat. Very innovative! So, your approach to time management is kind of, I guess, stands on the shoulders of giants like David Allen and Byron Katie—although she's not really a productivity expert—

Stever: No, she's—

Stephan: In fact, I'm going to be interviewing her tomorrow for my podcast.

Stever: Oh, tell her I said hi!

Stephan: Okay, I will. I'm really excited about that. I've been a big fan of hers for many years. So, you base some of your productivity and time management philosophy on David Allen, on Katie, and on others and yet, what you have is different and what you propose is not exactly the same as these other folks. So, what is different?

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Steвер: Well, you find two major thrusts in the time management world: You find people who focus on efficiency—how do you do what you're doing more efficiently?—and you find people who focus on effectiveness, which is are you doing the right thing to begin with? The way that I think about it is, if you are doing the wrong thing but you're very efficient, you are getting where you don't want to



go faster and faster.

Stephan: Mm-hmm.

Steвер: I don't believe it makes sense to even think about efficiency until you make sure that you're being effective—in other words, that you're trying for an outcome that's really an important outcome to you. As far as productivity goes, I am really a big believer in measuring your productivity and not doing something if it doesn't make you more productive, which puts me in the extreme minority. A lot of people believe that adopting a productivity technique is inherently a good thing regardless and I don't think so at all. In fact, most people are shocked to discover that despite the fact that I have three desktop computers, two laptops, two iPods, and an iPhone for one person, most of my personal productivity happens on paper because measurably, I am more productive on paper than I am online. As our online experience becomes more and more about how to distract and addict you as opposed to how to help you be productive, online is becoming less and less productive and in fact, is becoming more and more disruptive to getting anything done. I'm at the point now where my to-do list is partially online but that's mainly just for convenience because I have to share it with business partners. Most of my day-to-day to-do list, the stuff I actually operate off of versus my project plans and things, is done on paper. My note-taking is on paper. I outline articles on paper although I do my writing itself on a computer and etcetera. What makes me different is, I consider pencil and paper a productivity tool just as much as computers, if not more so. I am also a big believer, whereas a lot of people use business output as the measure of “Are you being productive?” I use life output as a measure of “Are you being productive?” because at the end of

the day, all you have is life. There's actually no such thing as business. There is simply what you choose to do with every waking moment. If what you're choosing to do with every waking moment isn't working for you, it doesn't matter how much money it's making, or it doesn't matter whether it's the next best thing, or the next big thing, or whether you are four-houring yourself or whatever. A lot of my emphasis is on measuring your output in terms of life satisfaction and measuring your input in terms of the work and the effort that you have to do and being real clear about what you want to do. I mean, you said how is it different? I'm sure there are other people out there who have similar philosophies. We all have different techniques because it just depends upon where we come from. I have a computer programming background—and you're the first person I've said this to out loud because you have one too so you'll understand—but I just think of the way that people do their work is a giant computer program. I trace out the steps and the decisions that they make and then I sit down and optimize it the same way I optimize a computer program and then say, "Oh, well you're doing this step and this step and you should be doing it in another order and you'll save 20% your time." It's not because I have any deep insight into personal productivity per se, I just have deep insight into how processes work, and personal productivity just happens to be one kind of process.

Stephan: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense—at least for me, it makes a lot of sense. I agree with you about using pencil and paper. I spend a lot of time on my computer but I find that when I am at my most creative, I'm just sitting down with a notebook and writing. If I'm at a conference or a seminar, I prefer to take notes by hand. I recently interviewed Bill Donius. I don't know if you are familiar with him but he teaches how to use your non-dominant hand, which, in my case, would be my left hand as a way to access your right brain and incorporate your right brain into problem-solving and brainstorming and, yeah, just ideation and so forth. It's really powerful. I'm starting to incorporate that into my processes but you have to be writing with pen and paper or pencil and paper and not typing into a



computer in order to do this process.

Stever: One of the things a lot of people don't understand is, there has been a fair amount of research on the cognitive effects. By cognitive effect, it just means

the effect on your brain of a lot of our productivity tools. It turns out that—well, here was the theory: The theory was, “Oh, if we have computers do stuff for us, it's going to free up all of these parts of our brain to be used for us to become super geniuses.” Now, that's like saying, “Oh, I'm going to sit in a wheelchair and never use my legs and they will magically turn into wings.” It doesn't actually work that way. If you stop using some mental cognitive ability, you simply lose that ability. You don't magically become able to read minds, for example. What happened is—and there is now research for all of the things I'm about to list. There is now research backing all of this up, which is how I found out about it because I stay up on the research. If you use an eBook—things you read on eBooks, you're far less able to remember and recall than things you read out of paper books because paper books have all kinds of contextual markers like how far through the book you are and where things are on a page because it never changes and it's always the same part of the page. Your brain uses all of these things to categorize the information, store it, and make it retrievable. On an eBook, you're missing all of those cues so your brain has no way to get back to retrieve the information. So, paper, for anything you need to remember, paper books and not eBooks. Writing in cursive develops all kinds of brain connections between goal orientation, spatial reasoning, and muscular movement that don't get developed if all you learned to do is type. Typing does not develop those same things. It's not the curse of itself, it's inherently valuable. It's just that the exercise of learning to do it makes a lot of cognitive connections that you otherwise, don't have. Taking notes on paper—interestingly, you will remember things that you learned by taking notes on paper. Even if your notes look just like little diagrams and are really incomplete, you will still learn more than if you type in a complete transcript on a keyboard. If you take notes on keyboard, you basically are losing the information whereas, if you take notes by hand, you're getting the information. That's another reason why these days I'm so pencil-and-paper oriented. It's just we have determined through research that human beings are made to be much more interactive with their content and it's not about just capturing the content to somewhere, it's about capturing the content in your brain and that doesn't happen when you do something on a computer. Your brain goes, “Oh, it's in the computer. I don't have to remember it in your brain,” and in fact, that's just not the case. If you truly want to be creative and if you truly want to be able to solve problems, you've got to have the problem-solving information in your brain because if it's not in your brain, you don't know how to Google it so you're not going to find it anywhere else. Stephan: Yeah. One thing I always teach people when I'm about to give them a content-rich training, seminar presentation, or workshop is to come with an intentionality to teach this information to others because if you find that, let's say, I'm teaching various internet marketing strategies and tactics in a workshop environment and they see that they can teach their kids how to make passive income. I just interviewed my oldest daughter, Chloe, for my other podcast, Marketing Speak, and we talked about how teenagers can make passive income through Google AdSense and just blogging about something their passionate about and doing a bit of SEO and so forth. She did really well with

Google AdSense over the years. She's now 24. If that inspires you to teach your kids some of the stuff that you're going to be learning from me then your retention rate goes sky-high in comparison if you're just learning it for yourself. That and the intentionality and the distinction of, well, I need to take notes on paper instead of the computer because I want higher retention—those two things will have a profound impact on your learning.



Stever: One of the things I recently discovered at the advice of a friend is, the Livescribe Pen. It's a great little pen and you have to get special paper to use it but the paper is ridiculously overpriced. If you use this pen to take notes, draw things, and whatever you want to do, it transcribes it perfectly into a PDF file, which you can access on your phone, on your iPad, and on your desktop and you can print it out so that gives me the best of both worlds. I get to take notes on pencil and paper but it's getting transcribed beautifully onto my device. Actually, if you're listening to a lecture or doing something that has an audio component while you're taking notes, you can record the lecture and it will synchronize it with the notes and you can then go back in and tap on a particular note and it will play the section of the audio that's associated with that note. It's very cool and it's as easy as putting pencil to paper so that gives me the ability to get the memory benefits of putting pencil to paper but then I also have a backup of it that I can use for reference in the form of a PDF file on my machine. Wonderful device!

Stephan: Yup, I've been using Livescribe Smart Pens since 2010. I love them!

Stever: Oh, you're ahead of me!

Stephan: Yeah, I discovered them from Tony Robbins' Platinum Partnership with some really amazing people and they were all taking notes with these

Livescribe Pens and I'm like, "What is that?" so I quickly got one myself and got a bunch of notebooks and I have a few of these pens now because they only have so much battery and if I'm in a day-long seminar or something, I need to take notes. Now, of course, some seminars they say strictly no recording devices allowed and so I can't use the recording pad but, yeah, for situations where it is allowed, it's great. I love it! I rarely go back and re-listen to what I've recorded but I'll look back at the notes that I took and those tend to be enough.

Steve: I didn't realize you were into Tony Robbins' stuff. Have we ever talked about NLP?

Stephan: We should talk about NLP!

Steve: Just for the record, I'm one of the 18 highest certified people in the world—

Stephan: Oh, whoa! La-di-da!

Steve: Take that, you, person-who's-been-using-Livescribe-for-five-times-longer-than-I-have!

Stephan: Well, I'm a big fan of NLP. I'm not a master certified or whatever, I've just got a keen interest in it—anchors, mirroring, and matching and mirroring and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, I'm a big fan of it and I do apply it in my life. One context I learned this from, not just Tony Robbins, but I was studying Pick-Up after I got divorced. I didn't know how to enter the dating world, I went two and a half years without having a single date, and it was pretty lonely. I'm like, okay, I need to reinvent myself, which is the whole impetus for this podcast, The Optimized Geek, is because I went from a socially-awkward inept geek who didn't know how to get a single date to somebody who was really confident, shows up powerfully and with great intentionality, and looked 15-20 years younger than I did previously. It was a makeover inside and out and I wanted to share my journey with the world. I'm working on a self-help book on this topic of personal transformation—physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, career, business, finance, intimacy, and etcetera. I wanted to podcast as a way to interview various experts such as yourself so that I could augment what I was writing in the book with additional strategies tactics, data, real world case studies, and so forth and so the podcast was born. What I learned about NLP from pick-up artists is real world applicable every day in just business and all sorts of life situations. It's really powerful so let's define, for our listeners, neuro-linguistic programming and how it's used in a self-help kind of environment, how it's used to persuade and influence, and how it's kind of a powerful discipline for many, many types of applications?

Steve: Sure, for people who aren't familiar with it, NLP stands for neuro-linguistic programming. The name is made up—it's a combination of neurology, linguistics, and computer programming—with the idea being that it allows you to understand the steps that you or someone else takes in thinking about and doing something with your brain so if you have a particular skill or an ability that's a mental ability, you actually do that mental ability by doing a series of things in your brain. One of the simplest examples is if you're a good speller. Good spellers make a mental picture of the word

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that they're spelling in their mental field of vision typically a slightly above center and when they have to spell a word, they do a visual comparison with the middle image that they have memorized, read that off from left to right, and that's how they spell the word. People who are not as good spellers often spell auditory. They represent the word as a series of sounds and they try to sound the word out when they were taught to spell. It turns out, sounding out works great for reading but it does not work for spelling even though we teach people to spell that way. That's an example of an of an NLP approach to understanding spelling—that good

spellers, generally speaking, are people who use mental images and they store the word as an image of the letters and then they read off the word to get the spelling. In terms of how you can use this, you can use this all over the place because pretty much anything you do with your brain, you can figure out what the components are. I was interviewing someone a couple days ago, a friend of mine who wants to start a business, and this person said, “Oh, but I need a building!”, and I said, “Well, it just so happens there's this building down on the corner that has been for rent for the last six or seven years, have you thought about that?” and my friend said, “Oh my gosh, that right there would be a perfect building but you know—“ and then my friend came up with another objection—something like, “Well, I could never get the loan,” and I said, “Would you know what it would cost?” and then my friend said, “Well, I wouldn't know how to figure that out,” and whenever I hear three or four excuses in rapid succession, that's a sign to me that there is some deeper belief going on because if you keep generating excuses faster than you generate solutions, that says you have an independent reason for generating your excuses and upon a little bit of digging around, it turns out that my friend has this fundamental belief that people like him don't start businesses because my

friend is from a very lower class neighborhood, very blue collar, and not a place where anyone started businesses because that was something that other people who lived across the river did and that belief is enough to hold my friend back. So, using NLP, number one, you can identify that that belief is the thing that's holding my friend back and number two is, there are specific techniques you can use to actually change beliefs so that belief stops having any control over that person's behavior and instead, you replace it with a belief like, "I can learn how to do this and succeed at it." If you genuinely believe that and not try to believe it, I'm going to keep repeating it myself over and over. If you simply, genuinely believe that and it's the way you show up in the world, all of a sudden—surprise, surprise, you're going to start achieving results in a different way than if you truly don't believe it and have to try to talk yourself into it every time.

Stephan: Yup.

Stever: NLP can be used for things like that—for changing limiting beliefs. It can be used for acquiring skills. I use it all over the place—an awful lot of the Get-It-Done Guy, in fact, comes from NLP. I take a look at places where people are inefficient or where I'm inefficient and what I do is, I use NLP to understand what are the mental steps that someone is going through to be inefficient because inefficiency has its own structure just the same way that efficiency does. Then, once I find out, "Oh, look, the person is doing these steps that are all redundant," I can streamline the steps and then present a tip saying, "Hey, when you're doing this thing, try this new way," and people go, "Oh my God, it's brilliant! How did you figure it out?" The answer is: I figured it out by just paying very close attention to what was going on in someone's brain as they did the task the inefficient way. I just figured out—because I'm an ex-computer programmer so I know how to think about process—a way to streamline that and I present the streamline thing as a tip. However, I don't tell people that whole back story so people just go, "Wow! You have all these tips. Where do they come from?" The answer is: They come from applying NLP to watching people work.

Stephan: Very cool! Yeah, so NLP is one of the number of different philosophies that will get to the end-outcome of optimizing somebody's life or rewiring their belief system like, for example, I'm a big fan also of EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique, or also known as Tapping. It's a great way to kind of reprogram yourself so as cognitive behavioral therapy or CBT but I'm a big fan of NLP as well. One thought that just came to me while you're talking about these different objections that come in rapid succession are not their true objection is one of the classic closed techniques for salespeople—the hand-on-the-door-knob close—to get at the true objection, or the one that they really don't want to say, or they're not really connected with the prospect and isn't able to verbalize, or doesn't want to so you have your hand on the door knob, you're ready to leave as the sales person who says, "Oh, by the way, if there was that one last thing that would really have prevented you

or that stops you from making the close or from signing that the contract or whatever it was, what was that one thing?" and they'll you because they think you're essentially out the door and then, of course, the salesperson now has that true objection, comes back and is like, "Well, what if we could solve that right now?" So, you've studied NLP for how many years?

Stever: Well, I read my first book on it in 1979 and I took my first practitioner training in 1985 so I guess, if you want to count from the time that I started my official training, it would be 31 years.

Stephan: Wow! Did you learn directly from Richard Bandler or from Grinder or what?

Stever: Yes, as a matter of fact, I've learned from pretty much all of the first generation trainers so I've studied very extensively with Richard Bandler one-on-one. I've taken a couple courses with John Grinder, Robert Dilts, and Todd Epstein back when he was alive, Chris Hall, Gary Boone, Max Steinbeck, Linda Sommer, Joe Yeager, Wyatt Woodsmall, Ted James, a whole lot of them—

Stephan: Steve Linder?

Stever: Nope, don't know.

Stephan: Okay.

Stever: So, that's pretty much a lot of them. The last like, ten or so years, all of my studying things have been directly with Richard Bandler. I help out, sometimes, at his workshops that he does. He does two or three workshops a year down in Orlando. He does a trainer training and a couple practitioner programs and I will often come down and help out with the trainer training and help give people feedback and, sometimes, I just take it again just to keep up on my skills and challenge myself.

Stephan: Okay. So, how do you use NLP on a daily basis to help yourself?

Stever: Oh! That's a very good question and the answer is, when I start to notice when I'm feeling depressed, upset, and stressed about anything or when I'm feeling the kinds of things that are signals to me that something isn't working in my life, I will actually get out a piece of paper and I will write down what I'm thinking and what the problem is. So, let's say that I am browsing—and this is something that really happens—LinkedIn and as somebody who went to Harvard Business School, let's just say that I have a number of contacts who are way more successful than me and I will be reading the bio of somebody who, you know, sat next to me in class and this person is now on his 19th \$400-billion fund and owns his own planet or something and I will read this and I'll notice that I'm feeling a little bit jealous and, maybe not jealous, maybe I'm even ragging on myself and feeling inadequate, inferior, and just bad and I'll write that down. I will say, "Hey, when I was looking at so-and-so's LinkedIn profile, I was feeling these things, investigate that," and then when I have some time, I'll sit down and I'll start using some of the NLP techniques on myself to try to understand what was the real belief that was going on there or the real self-talk that I was doing or whatever it is that was going on that was causing me to feel that way.

Stephan: Mm-hmm.

Stever: And once I find that then I'll make a conscious decision: Do I want to change this or not? Is this something where I want to change the belief itself? Do I want to change my reaction to it? And then I'll use whatever the appropriate NLP technique is. I also have a friend who, I sent him off to NLP training so that he could help me because some of it depends on being able to, in essence,

“And once I find that then I'll make a conscious decision: Do I want to change this or not? ”

see your own patterns, which is I find it much easier to have someone else spot your patterns than to spot your own.

Stephan: Yeah.

Stever: So, now that I have him, I just tell him, “Last night, I was reading this LinkedIn profile and I freaked out. You have to come over today for lunch. We have to dig into that and you have to help me figure out what's going on!”

Stephan: Right, and, of course, the profile was probably Elon Musk or somebody, right?

Stever: Yeah, let's just say that there are a number of people whom I graduated with who managed to catch the first internet wave in a big way. They are extremely recognizable names these days and they are billionaires. I was at a party with one of them and, you know, we got drunk and we were talking and he looked at me and he was like, “Let me tell you a secret. I have no idea what I was doing. It was total luck but you know, I'll be damned if I'm ever going to admit that!” Believe me, he's like, “Now that I'm a billionaire, everyone brings me these deals but, you know, the first thing was just a complete fluke!” That does nothing for my self-confidence frankly. You know like, oh, great! So, now I have to find that one in 250,000 fluke.

Stephan: Yeah, so the thing is though, you've got to earn it or you lose it, right? Somebody wins the lottery and they just blow through that cash because they didn't earn it. You have to feel that sense that I earned it in order to really keep it so he certainly has that. Yes, there was luck there but I earned it. I earned it through whatever I did—maybe it was even stuff I did in my past life, I'm getting paid forward now for.

“let's just say that there are a number of people whom I graduated with who managed to catch the first internet wave in a big way. They are extremely recognizable names these days and they are billionaires”

OPTIMIZED

Stever: Right. Well, you know what? I am simply going to say that that I would like to believe that those who had money got it because they earned it. I can provide plenty of counter-examples of people who have money and didn't earn it and also people who should have earned it and somehow didn't have it. Let me use a real-life example and I think this is very worth thinking and talking about, which is Steve Jobs. Most people don't seem to remember that the reason that Bill Gates is not living hand-to-mouth in a prison somewhere for breaking the law is because he—for those people who don't know—he was found guilty of a lot of the restraint of trade fraud and things like that. The man got where he is in part through criminal behavior. It's just that you give enough money to charity and people conveniently forget that part but it was Steve Jobs who invented the Consumer PC Industry and not Bill Gates. Bill Gates wrote Microsoft Integer Basic for the original Apple II. That was how Bill Gates really got a start—by working for Steve Jobs. So, Steve Jobs invented the Consumer PC Industry. He pretty clearly took the MP3 player industry and completely revolutionized that with the iPod. He totally re-architected the software industry with subscription software or software you bought through a central store. He took the cellphone industry and invented the smartphone category pretty much or at least, invented the usable smartphone category and took that over so, if in fact, money is related to the amount of value one has created in the world, I would argue that Steve Jobs should have been the richest man in the world when he died. Oh, and did I mention the fact that he also pretty much put computer animation on the map? I can't think of another individual possibly short of like Edison and Tesla whose accomplishments were so significant to terms of the actual material difference they made in people's lives. However, what most people don't know is the bulk of his net worth upon his death was still in his Pixar stock, not on Apple because back in the mid-80's, he sold his Apple stock when he was let go from Apple and they brought John Sculley and Steve Jobs sold all but one share of Apple stock. When he came back as CEO, he was given stock but obviously nowhere near as much as he would have had he kept his original shares and that one decision, that one single decision, he made was more important in terms of his net worth than all of his subsequent accomplishments. All of his subsequent accomplishments couldn't even begin to make up for that single decision to sell and I look at that and—this is one of my personal disillusionment with our economic system as it currently is—we have an economic system that gives money to the people who own things, not gives money to people who do things and. You can have someone like a Steve Jobs and whatever he was like as an individual and there's plenty of people who say, “Oh, you don't understand what a jerk he was!” I don't really care. What I notice is that with him around, there are at least three industries that exist that would not have existed otherwise.

Stephan: Mm-hmm.

Stever: And yet, he didn't get the money or the monetary reward for that.

Stephan: Okay. So, what do we do, as listener, to this episode? What do we do with this inequity? How do we—

Stever: Nothing.

Stephan: What's our action out of this?

Stever: Well, okay, one very important action item that you can take and this won't change things but if we're talking about your own career or your own life, it's to get really, really clear on what you want, what your belief, and what your expectations are around work and things. If you have a belief that says, "If I work hard, I will be adequately rewarded," I would suggest you change that big time and what you change it to is, "If I understand where the money is in a given situation and where the value creation is in a given situation and I make sure that I am appropriately positioned in terms of how the money gets distributed then I will be appropriately rewarded." However, most people who are rich concentrate on value distribution and most people who are productive concentrate on value creation. I think that if what you want to do is be productive and rich, you need to concentrate on both at the same time. Stephan: So, value distribution—how is that different from value creation because most of us are thinking, "All right, so we need to do something good and valuable in the world, create whatever it is—software or start a business—that adds value to a customer base, or we go work for somebody that is doing that and maybe we can enter on the ground floor, at the beginning stages, and get some stock options or whatever," so, value distribution—how is that different? What's different about that?

Stever: Well, first of all, you can distribute value without ever creating it. The entire banking industry—the only way they make money is by distributing value. They don't create anything. They just move money around and take a percentage as they move it so it's important to understand that they really are completely distinct phenomena. Well, I mean, if you want to use the idea of a startup as an example, learn enough about how stock works that if you're offered options or stock in a company that you're joining, you know how to value those. I have noted that an awful lot of people have no clue how to decide what stock is worth and what it isn't. If you are involved in a startup and someone says, "Oh my gosh, I got 15,000 shares of stock!" I'm like, "Yeah, out of how many outstanding?" "Oh, only 19-billion!" "Okay, so you own .0000001% of the company, which means if the company someday is worth \$100-billion, you'll make \$0.97." If you don't understand how to do that math, you can have what you think is a great deal that actually doesn't benefit you at all. Conversely, if you negotiate for a percentage of the upside and things—I mean, most people, when

they become employees, they are perfectly happy to buy into the whole idea that employers should just take a fixed salary and that's that. Understand that by doing that, it means that all of the value you create goes to someone other than you. Now, this is all about negotiation. It's also about talking to the right person and finding ways to contribute value that people are willing to pay for in terms of a percentage. However, you need to understand who is going to get the percentages of things versus who is going to get the fixed salary.

Stephan: Yup.

Steve: And get yourself to be thought of as one of the people who should be compensated as a percentage. So, if I were negotiating for a job, depending on the job, I could imagine coming in and saying, "Well, what I want to do is to set up a partnership. Let's set up a partnership with your company or a joint venture where we share in the upside if I can figure out a way to structure something that way," versus saying, "Hey, hire me for \$10,000 to do this thing," because if I truly believe that the thing is valuable, I'd much rather have part of the upside. Now, an awful lot of companies will refuse to do that and that's great because what that tells you is, these are companies where if you go into business with them, you get the short-end of the stick.

Stephan: Yeah!

Steve: And if you ever work as an employee—by definition, no one's going to hire you as an employee unless you're producing more money than it's costing them to hire you or else why would they hire you? If you're happy getting the short-end of the stick in return for maybe a minimum payment or, in the case of being an employee, you presumably have a guaranteed regular payment and you're willing to trade your upside in favor of the guarantee of consistency.

Stephan: Yup! Because we're so certainty-driven as species. For most of us, that's a trade most people are willing to make.

Steve: Sure, and by the way, there's nothing wrong with that trade. I'll tell you, I would be thrilled to be able to have a suitably high income with a suitable degree of certainty. As it is, so far, I have not been able to find the combination of what I love to do, the high degree of certainty, and the high degree of income. So, once I find someone willing to give me all three, you bet I'll sign on as an employee.

Stephan: You're funny! So, one of the first seminars I took when I started my business—I dropped out of a PhD in biochemistry to start an internet marketing agency—was a seminar on negotiating. It was Karrass.. He is pretty famous for his negotiating seminars so I took his seminar and it was really powerful so what you're talking about really resonates with me—value distribution and how important it is to make sure you're not getting the short-end of the stick because you can create all sorts of value and get screwed in the process. So, definitely, only you are responsible for looking after your own best interest.

Stever: Just earlier today I gave a webinar, a free webinar actually, on how to accelerate your career and one of the pieces of advice that I gave in that webinar is, learn how deal structures work. Unfortunately, I don't know any good source for this, I learned it at a business school but, basically, every deal that you enter into—even if it's just going to the movies with a friend—has an allocation of money that is being used to make the deal go, decisions that are being made, and then, if there's

“every deal that you enter into has an allocation of money that is being used to make the deal go”

a benefit, how does the benefit get distributed. If you know what you're doing and can understand a deal in those terms, you can realize—for example, if you're a venture-funded startup, a lot of the way that venture capitalists fund companies these days, the particular mechanisms they use are things like participating preferred stock and stuff like that are actually designed to give all of the risk to the entrepreneur and all of the reward to the venture capitalist. I mean, it is actually allocated that way. So, if you let x be the amount of risk and y be the amount of possible benefit and you sit down and do the math under the best case/worst case scenario, in every case the venture capitalist gets the most that could be gotten and the entrepreneur gets stuck with the bill essentially. If you don't know how to parse out and how to break down a deal in those terms and don't ask yourself, “Who is making a bet? What bet are they making? Who is it that's being depended upon to deliver results and who isn't?” then you can get screwed in a lot of different ways. Here's a cool little trick if you ever do freelancing: I sometimes do ghost writing and if I'm having a ghost writing contract or a contract while I'm producing a piece of intellectual property that somebody else might use, there's a teensy weensy little clause in my contract that says, the copyright remains in my name until I'm paid in full at which point the copyright and the intellectual property becomes the property of my client. Without that clause in there, a client can decide and fortunately, never had this happen to me but I've seen it happen to friends, a client can decide, “Well, we just don't want to pay you and we're not going to,” and they can go ahead and publish your work and you're kind of screwed because if you do take it to court, they can say, “Well, look, it was a work done for hire,” and then you have to say, “Yeah, but I wasn't paid, blah-blah-blah...” When you have that clause in there, it makes the trigger of ownership very, very specific and it makes it contingent specifically on payment so I am no longer having to bet that they're going to pay me because if they do not pay me then I have a very, very clear cut and dry case of copyright infringement.

“there's a teensy weensy little clause in my contract that says, the copyright remains in my name until I'm paid in full at which point the copyright and the intellectual property becomes the property of my client.”

Stephan: Yup.

Stever: Without that clause, it's ambiguous. With that clause, it's not. The trigger is the payment so you want to understand where all those bets are and who is it that's being depended on to do what and you want to make things so that if you don't pay, you actually are breaking the law to use the material.

Stephan: Mm-hmm.

Stever: And if you do pay, then I'm breaking the law to withhold it. That's only fair.

Stephan: That's a great tip! Thinking about this kind of value distribution and how to maximize your value is not just about avoiding getting screwed, it's about how to get compensated well for the value that you're created. One example of that was I ran an agency that was essentially just a consulting firm—consulting is all about trading hours for dollars and that's not really the best model for growth. It's much better to get paid for performance. If you perform well, you get paid. If the client doesn't see the performance, they don't pay so they win as well. It's a win-win. But how do you structure a consulting deal so that it's pay-for-performance? Well, I figured out an approach to do that. I was able to use a proxy server as a middleware intermediary layer between our clients' web server and the greater internet and we were paid to search engine optimize their web site. Well, we did it in that proxy layer instead of trying to do it on their web server that would have been a very time-intensive and expensive process because we would have had to get their IT team to do most of the work and so forth. Doing it in that middleware layer allowed us to make all sorts of changes that normally would have taken a lot of time and lot of expense and we could do that much more quickly and efficiently. It was kind of a set of search and replace rules and we were able to charge on a performance basis because of the approach that we that we had. If the client got value, they paid for it but if they didn't get value, they didn't pay for it. We charge on a cost-per-click basis at \$0.15 a click, which is a heck of a deal when you compare that to what you spend on Google AdWords. It was a different model, completely outside-the-box thinking, but it allowed us to get sometimes ten times more in fees per month than we normally would have gotten just on a pure consulting deal so I really think differently.

Stever: Yeah, think differently and think how I can capture the value that I create.

Stephan: Yup! So, let's do a little bit of a quick lightning round here for a few minutes because we're getting close to time here and I wanted to give our listeners some actionable takeaways to start applying in their lives immediately so—what sort of things would you recommend in terms of career-planning that would be immediate action items for them?

Stever: Sure! Make a list—make three lists, actually. One list of skills, one list of relationships, and one list of beliefs. Take three pieces of paper and label one of them

skills, one of them relationships, and one of them beliefs. Draw a line, a vertical line, down the middle of each page and on the left-hand column, write “I have these,” and on the right-hand column, write “I need these.” Make a list of what are the skills that you have and what are the skills that you need to acquire to be successful five years down the line in whatever career that you have chosen. Make a list of what relationships you have and what relationships you need for five years down the line. Make a list of what beliefs you have and what beliefs you need. For beliefs, you can

“When you catch yourself thinking things like, “Oh, that person could do that but I could never do that.” That's one of those beliefs— the “I have this belief currently that I couldn't do this,”—to put in the “I need this belief” column so that you'll believe that you could do this and then go through the skills and put together a learning agenda for yourself.”

look in self-help stuff, you can listen to interviews with people who you strongly admire, and want to hear what they think and so on and so forth. When you catch yourself thinking things like, “Oh, that person could do that but I could never do that.” That's one of those beliefs— the “I have this belief currently that I couldn't do this,”—to put in the “I need this belief” column so that you'll believe that you could do this and then go through the skills and put together a learning agenda for yourself. Go through the relationships, put together a networking agenda for yourself. Go through the beliefs and put together a belief change agenda for yourself. Get

something like *The Work* by Byron Katie or learn some NLP and start working on your beliefs and start working on your skills and start working on your relationships because you won't get anywhere if you don't move.

Stephan: Yeah, I love that! That's great! Do you have a worksheet like a PDF download for that exercise?

Stever: You know, I just did this webinar and everyone on the webinar said, “Do you have a download PDF for this?” The answer is, I don't yet. However, when is this going to air?

Stephan: Probably, in a couple weeks. Maybe three weeks or so.

Stever: All right, by the time this airs, I will have it. And if you go to—let me make up a URL real quick and then remember that so I actually create it. If you go to SteverRobbins.com. That's S-T-E-V-E-R R-O-B-B-I-N-S.com/careerplan, I will put it up there so that you can download it and enjoy.

Stephan: All right, perfect! How about setting priorities—remember, we're still in lightning round so —how would you suggest folks do a better job of setting priorities?

Stever: Understand that there is no such thing as a priority, really. There are things that you're going to do at the end of the day and things you aren't. The only things worth doing are things that



will take you closer to the goals that you have and not just your professional goals—your personal goals, the things that you love about life, and so on and so forth—so every single time you put something on your to-do list, you should stop and ask yourself, “Which of my larger life goals does this relate to?”

Stephan: Yup.

Stever: And if you can't find one, get rid and that item doesn't go on your list. People say, “Well, what about things like having to pay my taxes?” Well, you tell me. Having to pay your taxes is probably part of your goal of having an income without going to jail so it actually is related to your current life goals. You may not want to be but it is. Furthermore, if it does relate to something that's going on, look at the other goals and the other tasks that you have that are also related to that goal and yourself whether you're actually going to have enough time to get to this one or not, and/or what do you have to drop in order to get to this one. So, basically, be a ruthless filter of incoming tasks relative to what your real goals are.

Stephan: Okay, cool! And then last question, if there was one thing that you could recommend folks do or some sort of shift that they could make to make a huge impact on their lives, what would that one thing be?

Stever: I actually think that the one thing would be what I just said that—to be really

clear on what you want and using what you want as a filter for what to what to allow into your life, what tasks to allow, what relationships to allow, and what activities to allow. Most people let their day-to-day experience be whatever happens to come along and then they wonder why they don't have what they want—the answer is because you haven't been using what you want as the determiner of what your day to day experience should be.

Stephan: So many people just don't have strong boundaries for what they're going to allow in and out of their lives and also, they don't have this compelling vision that drives them forward so they're just kind of putting the time and not really making life happen for them. They are kind of on auto-pilot.

Stever: Chapter one of my book, which is the Get-It-Done Guy's 9 Steps to Work Less and Do More, is about what I call life maps, which is an actual mechanism for how on one piece of paper, you can essentially dig out what are all of your underlying motivations. Get it all visible on a piece of paper, specifically to use when a new obligation comes in and ask yourself, “Where in this map does it go?” and if you can't find a place that it goes in the map, that means it doesn't go in the map and it means you say no to it. If it does have a place then you can fit it in. There is an e-mail address set up where you can email—it's an autoresponder so it'll just send you back that chapter for free and it will not subscribe you to anything. I'm not sure what it is but if you go to SteverRobbins.com/careerplan, I will make sure to put the link to this chapter on that page as well.

Stephan: Awesome! Well, Stever, thank you so much! This has been a very insightful episode. It's been a lot of fun to chat with you. We've got a lot in common—we should do another episode sometime for sure. Lastly, if somebody wanted to work with you, hire you as their executive coach, or work with you to help them build out their marketing funnel and their online business, how would they find you?

Stever: You can email me directly at sr@steverrobbins.com. That's S-T-E-V-E-R R-O-B-B-I-N-S.com and you can find my website, which at some point is going to be because right now, it's mainly a business card website, you can find my website at just www.SteverRobbins.com, and there also are about 400 articles there, which you have to click on the article link but has lots of free stuff as well.

Stephan: Perfect! Well, thank you again and thank you, listeners. This has been Stephan Spencer and this is The Optimized Geek podcast—we'll catch you on the next episode! In the meantime, apply some of the stuff in your life. Go to the Optimized Geek website, download the transcript and the checklist that came with this episode, and check out the show notes and click on the links. Apply some of the stuff because just listening is not going to move your life forward—it really has to be applied. Until next time!

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STEPHAN SPENCER BIO:

[Stephan Spencer](#) is an internationally recognized SEO expert and bestselling author. He is the co-author of [The Art of SEO](#) (3rd edition - August 2015), author of [Google Power Search](#) and co-author of [Social eCommerce](#), all published by O'Reilly. Stephan founded Netconcepts, an SEO and interactive agency in the 1990's, and sold it to Covario in 2010. He invented a pay-for-performance SEO technology called GravityStream that was also acquired and is now part of Rio SEO. Stephan's recent SEO clients have included such retail giants as Zappos, Sony Store, Quiksilver, Best Buy Canada, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Chanel. Stephan has spoken at countless hundreds of Internet marketing events, including all the major search & e-commerce conferences (SES, SMX, PubCon, Internet Retailer, Shop.org, eTail, etc.). He's been a contributor to the Huffington Post, Multichannel Merchant, Practical Ecommerce, Search Engine Land, DM News and MarketingProfs, to name a few.

CONTACT:

Email: stephan@stephanspencer.com

Address: 6516 Monona Drive # 114,
Madison, WI, 53716

Follow me on Twitter @sspencer



KRIS JONES BIO:

[Kris Jones](#) is a serial entrepreneur, best-selling author, angel investor, and accomplished public speaker. Kris was the founder and former President and CEO of Pepperjam, a full-service internet marketing agency and affiliate network he founded in 1999 and sold to eBay Enterprise in 2009. In 2010 Kris founded an early stage technology investment fund and incubator called KBJ Capital. Kris is a contributing writer for Forbes, Inc., Fast Company, Business Insider, and Citi Bank Financial. Kris has been quoted as a business and marketing expert in over 50 publications, including the Wall Street Journal, Entrepreneur Magazine, Huffington Post, Business.com, Fox Business, Mashable, Black Enterprise, and Success Magazine. Kristopher is the author of the best-selling book: "Search-Engine Optimization: Your Visual Blueprint to Effective Internet Marketing," which was originally published in 2008. Most recently Kris released the Third Edition of [SEO Visual Blueprint](#) (April 2013). In 2014 Kris published the book [Local Search Engine Optimization – Crush Your Competition by Outranking them on Google](#).

CONTACT:

Email: kris@krisjones.com

Address: 14 E Northampton St, Unit
210, Wilkes Barre, PA 18701.

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