



**SPI 271**

# **An Interview with 5-Minute Journal Founders UJ Ramdas and Alex Ikonn**

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Pat: This is the Smart Passive Income podcast with Pat Flynn, Session Number 271. By the way, just wanted to thank you.

Announcer: Welcome to the Smart Passive Income podcast where it's all about working hard now so you can sit back and reap the benefits later, and now your host . . . If he could do it all over again, he'd start sooner, and that goes for everything . . . Pat Flynn.

Pat: Hey, what's up everybody? Thank you so much for joining me today in this session of The Smart Passive Income Podcast. I'm really thankful you're here, and actually I wanted to take a moment just to express my gratitude for you for listening to the show, for those of you who have left reviews, for those you who have subscribed. I truly, truly mean that, and that relates to today's episode which is an interview with two amazing people, UJ and Alex, The founders of a tool that I use every single day when I wake up in the morning and when I go to bed, and that is The Five-Minute Journal.

This is something you may have heard me talk about before, but this is something that I use every single day, like I said. So when I wake up, I open this journal. It's right there on my nightstand and I write in it, and what it does is it prompts you with a few questions, the first one being, "Well, what are you thankful for in life?" And every day when you wake up like that, it really sets the tone for the rest of the time that you're awake. But even before you go to bed, you come back to this journal right before you go to sleep, and you talk about the great things that happened during the day. And it's just three lines and then also, what's one thing that you wished you would have done better? And just doing this exercise alone has made a massive change in my life, in my mood, and in what I get done.

And it's an amazing way to stay productive but also just remember that about even though things may not always be great there are things to be grateful for, and I just wanted to start this show to express my gratitude towards you but also set you up for this interview because UJ and Alex are an amazing team, and we get into the story about how this journal came about. I also dive into, well, how did they even get this thing built, and how did

they market it, and what has happened since then? We also get into a little bit of the science behind why expressing gratitude is important, and I believe it's one of the most important things in the world. This is a very common trait between all successful entrepreneurs, or a lot of them at least, is they take time to reflect on what's amazing, and I recommend that you do the same, and UJ and Alex give you a little bit of a challenge in here as well. Very simple to do, but not easy to implement.

And by the way, if you are a part of my book club, which you can find at [patsbookclub.com](http://patsbookclub.com), you will have known that I have given away copies of the Five-Minute Journal before, and I may just give away a few copies after this episode, so make sure you stick around and listen all the way through. I have a giveaway for you at the end for a few lucky winners. And then finally, sit back, relax, and here's the interview with UJ and Alex from [IntelligentChange.com](http://IntelligentChange.com) and co-founders of The Five-Minute Journal.

What's up everybody? I'm so happy to welcome UJ and Alex to the Smart Passive Income Podcast, the guys behind The Five-Minute Journal. Welcome to the show. Thank you both for being here.

UJ: Happy to be here.

Alex: Yeah, really grateful to be here.

Pat: So we'll go one by one, actually, for each of you. I want to know what you guys did before you guys came up with this idea and then also about how you met. So UJ, why don't you get started and just talk about, what did you do before focusing on The Five-Minute Journal?

UJ: I used to help people change behavior at a clinic for behavioral change, so I used to help people get from point A to point B with specific strategies to actually move the needle cause I think there was a gap in the market for that, and I really care about people making a real change, and that was part of my work before getting into The Five-Minute Journal.

Pat: That's cool. I think it obviously ties in perfectly for what The Five-Minute Journal became. Alex, how about you? What were you doing before The Five-Minute Journal life?

Alex: Previous to The Five-Minute Journal, me and my wife, Mimi Ikonn, were running a business called Luxy Hair. It's an e-commerce beauty business.

Pat: Okay, that's cool, and then I'm curious Alex, if you can continue with okay, where did this idea of The Five-Minute Journal come from? Did you actually know UJ before this idea came about?

Alex: Yeah, this is actually a really great story. I think the way Mimi and UJ met, we met a couple years prior to The Five-Minute Journal idea and UJ actually approached me because we met at an event a few years back, and then he approached me because he was actually looking to start a lifestyle design business, kind of a Four-Hour Work Week, Tim Ferriss, and that at the time was what I was doing with that business . . . was like a muse. And so UJ literally out of the blue approached me and said, "Hey, I want to have a business like you have. Can you help me?" And I'm like, "You're crazy, and why would I help you?" And at the same time, we had, I guess, some mutual interests, and I said, "Okay, let's go for a coffee. Let's just meet up." We met up, and right away, I'm like, okay this guy is very eccentric. He's a little weird, but he's very interesting and he's very into self development as I am, and we have a lot of mutual interests. We'll just be friends, and we'll meet from time to time.

I said, "I can't really help you create a business because I really believe in," now, especially at that time, "creating a business that you're fully aligned with and the product is really resonant with who you are and not just trying to make money just for money's sake." 'Cause at that point, I figured out for myself just making money isn't going to make you more fulfilled. I think doing a business that is probably within your propose will provide you a lot more value than just having money come in. So that's how we met and how we pursued the idea of The Five-Minute Journal, and I guess . . . Can I go into the story of how The Five-Minute Journal

idea was actually created?

Pat: Yeah, I'm pretty sure the listeners are curious in terms of, okay, how did this idea even come about?

Alex: Yeah, so it took some time. So it wasn't like right away, and me and UJ would continue our talks in the park for four to five hours. We'd have really great conversations about self . . . personal growth, and we just really dig into what each one of us was doing to help us just live our best lives. And UJ actually had a, and I bet you he still does now, an incredible journal instinct where he would journal for like usually an hour, two hours in a day. What was your journal?

UJ: It really depends. So like different journaling is for different results, so I have a journal for different results, and so towards the end of the evening, I had a practice where I answered four to six questions. It took me about 15 to 20 minutes. Sometimes it took me longer, but it really did help me get a strong sense of how did the day go because I came across a really great quote that I think definitely is in The Five-Minute Journal right now, which is, "How you live your days is how you live your lives," and it hit me because at the time I wasn't living my days the way I want to live my life. And so once every 24 hours, at the end of the day, I used to say, "I've got 24 hours. What happened?"

And I was talking to Alex about this, and we'd talked about gratitude and starting in the morning with gratitude, and at the time, Alex used to start his mornings with gratitude walks with Mimi, and we were talking about habits and behavior and businesses, and then Alex was just like, "Dude, why don't we create a notebook that helps people do this 'cause nobody is going to do this. Nobody is as intense as you are, so if we can make a book that helps it be much easier for people to do it," and we just shook hands right there. It was that simple.

Alex: Because I guess to add on to that, UJ's being . . . I guess with . . . that's just the evening portion was probably 15 to 20 minutes. UJ also had a morning journal routine which would take another 20,

30. So in total he would average probably about 50 to 60 minutes a day in a very intensive journaling session. I said, “UJ, this is great. I would love to enter this into my life, but I want to do this in 5 minutes a day,” and we also talked about how there were many self-development books or self-growth books, whatever you may call them. They have all these great tips of what to implement in your life, or there was also a great book at that time that came out was Happiness Advantage by Shawn Achor. He is a Harvard professor, and he did all these great studies of what gratitude can do to your overall well-being or journaling or affirmations or just all of this stuff, but with actual scientific proof that these things work. But with all these books, you read them, but what about the follow through? How do you actually implement all these things into your daily life?

And that’s where me and UJ came together and I said, ‘cause at that time like I said before, the way we met really was it UJ looking for that muse for that idea to create a business, and I said, “Well, we have to wait until the right idea comes,” and when we were talking about this, this is it. “This is the idea that can help us actually bring this gap and actually create a product of value,” and most importantly, I was excited about this. UJ was excited about this because this is something that we would actually want to have in our own lives and use that will help us live better lives and that’s how I really believe the best products really start. Something that you want to have in your lives and because I had a successful business prior, I said, “UJ, let’s just use this Five-Minute Journal idea as a way to help us launch this business on the side and . . . but it’s really to help you understand how to create a business from scratch. So I’m going to help you and take you through this process of what it takes to create a lifestyle business and with this product,” and that’s really how it started. And we said, “We’ll just order a thousand units, and we’ll see where it goes.”

UJ: We’ll see what happens, yeah.

Alex: But in reality, I didn’t really care because I just wanted to have this product in my own life because I want to use it and practice it, because I knew the power of doing this on a daily basis, especially



in writing. Because as UJ previously mentioned, the thing that has changed my life the most, has enabled me, even prior to The Five-Minute Journal to become financially successful and independent and free, was really actually the power of gratitude. And it was really that simple habit. Yes, we did the gratitude walks, something that Tony Robbins talks about, but sometimes the winters in Canada, it's cold. I don't want to go out for a gratitude walk. It's minus . . . Like, it's very cold in Canada in the winter.

So I just thought about hey, when I wake up, the first thing that I'm going to get myself in the habit of is just think of the things that I'm grateful for. It can just be one thing, and it took me some time to get into the habit, but eventually I did, and so that as soon as I woke up, I would just think of the first thing that I'm grateful for, and even just that one single habit. And this is interesting to anyone listening right now: You don't need The Five-Minute Journal or anything like that. If you just instill one habit, right, and that is the habit of gratitude, and just try it out yourself. When you wake up in the morning, just think of one thing that you're grateful for.

UJ: Yeah, just let your first thought be that of gratitude.

Alex: Exactly, but the reason I challenge you to do this, and you will see that actually it's fairly challenging to rewire your brain to actually automatically think like this, and it will take some time, and that's why we also created The Five-Minute Journal. Like, how can we create something that is your buddy in a certain way? That can help guide through this process on a daily basis to help you really rewire your brain and your thought process to help you think that way? Because the truth is many of us are just really have been . . . We have created really negative thought habits through media, through school, through parents. It's a lot of negativity, and what happens is a lot of us have that negative voice in our heads. So how do you overcome that negative voice? How do you create new thought patterns? And we really thought The Five-Minute Journal is going to be the way to help people do that and more importantly, to help us do that.

Pat: Love it. I'm curious, there's a lot of different parts to this book. It's not just about the gratitude which is obviously the most important thing. I've found that now just being conscious about gratitude and what I'm thankful for has massively changed my out view in life, my mood to start the day. I think that's super important. I love that challenge you just gave to everybody to just wake up and start thinking about that right away. Actually, fun fact: At my kid's school, they do gratitude practices at my son's school. It's a STEM school.

Alex: That's an awesome school.

Pat: Yeah. It is awesome school. It's got me really interested in, like, all these other kinds of things that are benefiting me as an entrepreneur and how I can incorporate them into schools. So I mean, it doesn't matter what age you're at, this kind of thing is really important. And I'm curious, though, 'cause I'm looking at the book, and I love how it's not just like blank pages throughout the whole thing. There's instructions. There's science behind a lot of this stuff, and I love that you put that there, but there's more than just thinking about what you're thankful for. There's also saying affirmations and the, okay, check in with yourself at night and ask yourself, okay, what did you do, or what do you wish you had done better? I would love to know the story about, okay, how this got structured the way it did 'cause obviously you're telling a story. It starts with the gratitude, right? And that's where it starts every single day, but how was all this other stuff put in there? I'm sure there were different iterations and multiple things that happened to get to where it's now. UJ, do you want to start and take that?

UJ: Yeah, so a bunch of this comes from positive psychology research, and so kind of what Alex talked about . . . Actually, something I thought about as Alex was talking is something that I think great businesses are formed when you're really angry about something. Something that really bothers me is there is a lot of stuff we know. There's so many TED Talks on happiness and books on stuff, but there's very little application of it, and I was seeing that at the time in the work I was doing with people, and it was bothering me. It was bothering me there was no structure for applying these things in a



consistent way and positive psychology was basically the idea that we can learn from people who have incredibly positive lives.

We can learn from happy people, so typically the way that psychology used to happen about 100 years ago, we used to look at anxiety and depression, and we used to be like, how do we get people out of this? Which is not the ideal place to start. You don't want to learn how to be rich from a homeless person, right? You want to learn how to be rich from a rich person. Makes sense, so . . . and then it took, for some reason, until the 1980s for the whole world of psychology to come to that fact, and there's been a very strong body of research in the last 20, 30 years about how to do this, and the practice of gratitude is the very top. Something else: The second question you'll read on there is, "What will make today great?" And this is actually my favorite question because it's a priming question and the concept of priming your brain . . . Let's say you buy a new car, whatever car. Do you have a car right now?

Pat: I do.

UJ: Okay, what's the car?

Pat: It's a Tesla X.

UJ: Fantastic, okay so you definitely when driving around in that Tesla X, especially when you started, I bet you noticed every other Tesla X around.

Pat: Yeah. Absolutely, I just actually . . . I just asked a question the other day related to that and it has some sort of name to it. I forget the name, but it's . . . Yeah, I'm trying to look for it on Twitter here, but anyway, it . . .

UJ: Priming. Reticular activating system.

Pat: Yeah, there you go.

UJ: Right, yeah, so the reason that works is because when you're in

that car, your brain is primed to notice these things around you. Those cars were likely already there. You just started to notice them, and very similar it's been proven that when you look forward to a positive experience in your day, a large part of the happiness is actually the anticipation.

Pat: Well, actually even before I got the car, knowing that it was coming. 'Cause with Teslas you have to order them ahead of time, right? And I ordered that one in June, and I had to wait nine months for it. During that nine months I would spot every single Tesla, and I would get so excited about being in one of those eventually. So you're absolutely right.

UJ: Right, and so the cool part is, everybody who does The Five-Minute Journal does that every day. Right? You have that experience every day, and we could engineer that just by asking yourself what would make today great? Because when they write it down, they're anticipating actually doing those things later in part of the day, and just the act of writing it down physically and anticipating that improves your happiness. It's a pretty powerful, powerful exercise.

The third question is about affirmations, so the daily affirmations, and two really powerful words in the English language is, "I am," and whatever comes after that. And the reason for that is, let's say today I wrote, "I, UJ Ramdas, am building a strong and consistent work ethic," and what that does is it allows you to strengthen a part of your identity. Our behaviors are going to correspond to the identity that we think we are. If you think you're a confident person, and you write that down, it's like a drop in the bucket. Over time, you will start to build a lot of strength in that belief, and it just becomes a part of you. What's been your experience with this question, Pat?

Pat: I mean, it's always one that confirms who I am. It helps me confirm who I am and also what I want to become. I often use it to strengthen the values and missions that I'm on, but I also use it to help me get to where I want to go as well.

UJ: And so those first three questions, the gratitude, the priming, and

the affirmations, that's the first part of The Five-Minute Journal. It's something you do in the morning, and we always say The Five-Minute Journal is like a toothbrush for your mind.

Pat: I like that.

UJ: Right, something you do in the morning. It's something you do right before you go to bed, and it helps move through the negative thought loops. It cleans away the cobwebs in your mind so you can remain sharp and feel great.

Pat: How many iterations did you have to go through of different versions of the book before you finally landed on one? I'm curious.

UJ: Oh wow, I don't think we counted, but I remember there being strong conversations and important conversations.

Pat: Were they about the content? Or I'm sure there were iterations on the quality of the book.

UJ: Sure.

Pat: And we'll get into that, but I mean in terms of the content in the book, how many times was it revisited before you landed on something?

UJ: We're still changing it every once and awhile, but the core of it hasn't been changed very much. Alex.

Alex: I would just add to that: I think UJ and I knew the kind of questions that we wanted to be in there, and we knew just from the research that we'd both done together that these are very powerful questions, and this is why also we have the introductory pages and description of how to approach each question. It's very important because even, for example, the question of what would make today great, you're not going to write, "I hope it's sunny." Well, I live in London. I can't expect that to be sunny. I can't do anything about that, but we actually explain to people that when you write

that down, you write it from the things that you can actually impact and do in your life. So for me, for example, living in London, I can't really control the weather, but what I can control is saying a thing like I will go for a run today, and by saying that what I'm doing is I'm overcoming my resistance.

I'm doing something that maybe I would like to do, but when I actually write that down, there's more chance of that happening, and when I actually do it, and that's why we also have a question in the evening which reaffirms. The question in the evening is what three amazing things that happened today, and that evening portion helps you yes, reaffirm not only other, maybe, spontaneous things that happened throughout the day but also maybe the things that you set out for yourself to do in the morning that you also complete at night. And the good days are the ones where you say three amazing things that will make the day great, and let's say you list three things, and then in your evening portion you actually knocked down all three. Well, that was a great day.

UJ: That's such a great feeling.

Pat: It is. It really is, and you go to bed happy, and when you go to bed happy, you wake up happy, right, which is just this amazing feedback loop. So I love that you included those questions in there. Was it structured like that from the start before you started manufacturing or were there any that you added later? I mean it sounds like you knew already the plan here to make it easy

UJ: Yeah.

Pat: For people.

UJ: We had a pretty strong sense, and looking back, it's incredible. Like, we're actually pretty aligned on the product pretty early. There were a few details that we went back and forth on, but the main bones of it was pretty set.

Pat: Did you test it with anybody before?

UJ: Just internal testing. We just tried it on ourselves.

Pat: Okay.

Alex: I'd like to mention like as I said in the beginning, we were really creating this product for ourselves. I think we . . . I think one of the best ways to really approach a business, I think, is to see you are, in a way, a sample of a market, and we knew that if we would enjoy using this product, we knew that other people like us would enjoy using it as well. And it's interesting because when people look at The Five-Minute Journal now, and they're like, this is so simple, and especially now it's very on-trend of these journals that if you think about it, we . . .

UJ: We started it. Set the trend.

Pat: Yeah. You really did.

Alex: We started the in a way the trend for these kinds of journals. At that time there was no ... Like why would I buy a journal that is prefilled out where I am going to fill in my stuff. People didn't think about that. But we thought actually one of the reasons once again is that it's my I guess design aesthetic sense of mine, because UJ had this journal once again, there's so much to writing and you just fill it out but it was still messy and UJ knows and through our other products that we've created, like the Productivity Planner, although I can do it in my own journal, I like when things are very put together and they're very aesthetic and they look nice and they feel nice and it's something that I actually want to use everyday, right.

Pat: Yeah, it is. It's great. The quality is amazing, like, I love the feel of it. It just becomes a part of my morning ritual, right? It's like, I put it on my nightstand just so it's the first thing that I do and the last thing that I do, and it looks nice there, right? It's, like you said, not messy, so I know a lot of quality went into it. I love the stamped name of it, The Five-Minute Journal on top, which wants me to begin exploring. This is a physical product. Yes. You come up with this idea.

I mean you could obviously turn it into something digital, and I believe you guys do have an app for it for people who don't want to get the physical book, but I would highly recommend getting the physical book 'cause there's just, like you said, there's something with actually writing it down. I want to know what the thought process was and the journey through actually getting this thing created. I want to know, Alex, you were just talking. Why don't we continue with you? Talk about some of those okay first steps that you took to actually get this thing built.

Alex: Yeah, I think the way we approached is, once again, as I said, is would we want to use it everyday? And UJ and I then went into, say, bookstores in Toronto, Canada, and we would go into and we would just look into products that we liked, and we would go through it. We would look at how the pages felt, what kind of picture we wanted to use, and we collaborated and put pieces together to that final thing, and then when we worked directly with the manufacturers, we said, "This is what we want. We want a linen cover because it feels luxurious, and it's very natural at the same time. We don't want something, like it's something . . ." Especially when you have a product by your bedside, you want something that's cozy, you don't want something that's . . . and it's what some people do with The Five-Minute Journal. You want to hug it.

Pat: Yeah.

Alex: And that's what we're going for.

UJ: I've actually gotten messages from friends that they're like applying it against their cheeks just because they love the way it feels.

Pat: I'm like I'm feeling it right now. No, it's great. You're right. I didn't realize it was actually linen, but . . .

Alex: But as weird as it sounds, these are the things that we would look at because once again, when you design stuff that you want to have in your own life, you look at, what do I like, what do I enjoy? And you have to go through those things, and so through that process, it was



really just . . . When you probably, maybe, ordered your Tesla, you had maybe the opportunity to choose the interior it had, or the color of the car was, right? And when you create a product, and that's what I love about creating a product, I think creating a product is one of the best processes out there because you get to choose all these features that you'd like. What kind of paper do you want to use? What kind of fonts do you want to use? What's the texture going to be like? And all these things. What's the typesetting going to be and how's it going to be laid out? And for me, and UJ knows it, this is one of the funnest parts of the product creation and probably one of the most enjoyable parts, and I think when we're putting it together, we were always thinking, how can we make this product stand out? How can we make, most importantly, ourselves enjoy that product, but how can we make sure that others will also enjoy this product on their daily use? Because this is something you use on a daily basis. You have to like it. If it's not going to be something that you would want to reach for everyday, well then, you're going to fall out of habit pretty quickly. And our . . . really, our main goal is, how can we help you get this habit into your daily life that it can help you transform your life? And change your life as it has done for us.

Pat: I love that. Now when you finally go to the bookstores and you feel around and, okay, it should be like this. We like this material. Where did you go from there, UJ? How did you find a manufacturer to put that together for you, and what was that process like?

UJ: Well, you know this part of this process, the Alibaba stuff, and so we just went to Alibaba and looked and sent messages to several suppliers and went back and forth with some of them. Some of them had really fast responses, and they knew what they were doing. Others really sent generic responses and didn't really make the cut. And we just went back and forth with the people that had a good sense and they were responsive and they knew they could make the product.

Pat: So you literally just went to Alibaba website and then . . .

UJ: Yup.

- Pat: Just started making calls.
- UJ: Yeah.
- Alex: Yeah, not even calls.
- UJ: It was just emails.
- Pat: It was emails.
- UJ: Yeah. And then I think the . . .
- Alex: Majority of them don't speak English. They use Google to translate well. Yeah, but I guess most importantly is you have the ability to with this type of product, where it's still not that expensive to order a full sample, so a full . . . And this I think to be important for anybody who is starting a business, let's say, if you can get . . . still, although, it may cost extra, before you order 1,000 or 10,000 units, it's still better to spend that extra money to have a full sample made.
- UJ: Absolutely.
- Alex: To see how it will look like, and when UJ and I went ahead with that first even in the sample order, we said, we want this first full sample made with even . . . So would you like printing on the inside?
- UJ: Yes.
- Alex: Yes, we want printing on the inside because they can just do it blank, but it will be more expensive 'cause they'll do the whole printing and we said, "Yeah let's do the full shebang. Let's do the printing," and I think it cost anywhere from \$300 to \$500 to do the full sample.
- UJ: It's more now.
- Alex: We got it made, but we got . . . Yeah, it's more now, but at that time, and we got it and we looked at it and we were in love from the start, like, let's do it.

UJ: Yeah.

Alex: To anybody who has created a product or even thinking about creating a product, sometimes things do fall in place, but you have to have that feeling where I feel it, right? I feel I can bring this to the marketplace and it will react well because the way we want to approach this . . . well, like, if this would sit on bookshelves in whether it be Barnes & Noble's or Indigo there in Canada, would it look professional next to other products there, and would it not even just would it look professional, but would it stand out? Would this be something that people would want to grab to and buy for themselves? Because if you think about it, retail right now, and retailers across the US and the world, or even retailers like Urban Outfitters and Paper Source in the US, and we don't have actually any, like . . . there's no screaming things on the front of what it will do you, or how it will help you, or maybe on the back of all the features. It's very plain. It's very minimalistic and simple. However, people still pick it up. We have many customers who will just pick it up. They'll open it up. They'll see the contents. They'll read some of the stuff inside and it will speak to them, and that was really, I guess, our mission from the start when we were creating it and were working with the manufacturers to create that product.

Pat: Yeah, what I'm really enjoying is, like, what you just said there. You're in Barnes & Noble and other places, Urban Outfitters, and on page six, which is pretty much the first content-based page, the title is in big bold letters: Five Reasons Why You'll Love The Five-Minute Journal. And you literally list them out there, so I imagine people go and they're like, what's this? This is interesting. The cover's different. The cover is nice. I want to put my face on it, and they start reading it really quickly and they're like, wow, this is exactly what I need, and then so they flip through it, and they can go and get it from there. So I think that's really, really an incredible strategy for this type of product is to have right at the beginning why they will love it.

Alex: Thank you.

Pat: And essentially tackling exactly what they need a solution for. Go ahead.

- Alex: We agonized over those five reasons.
- Pat: Did you?
- UJ: Oh yeah.
- Alex: That was the hardest. That was the hard part, but I guess in staying with the design process of that, me and UJ, we both know how, like, what happens to you when you go to the bookstore. And I think a tip for any entrepreneurs or starting entrepreneurs is that you have to get yourself in the mindset of your customer. So we would literally go to the bookstore together and be like, okay, what do we do when we pick up the book? Well, you glance through the first couple pages, and if it doesn't really speak to you or sell you really in those first couple pages, well, you just put that book back, right? And so we were really designing that, even though most of our sales are online, but at that time, this was four years ago. We were still thinking of physical retail and how to approach it. Or even regardless, if someone receives it as a gift.
- UJ: Absolutely.
- Pat: Yeah.
- Alex: And that's where a lot of our . . .
- Pat: That's how I got it the first time. Hal Elrod gifted me two of them.
- UJ: Oh that's amazing.
- Alex: Hal's a good friend.
- Pat: Yeah, he's great, and I was like morning routine? What, this guy is crazy, and now, like, I practice the Miracle Morning and I write in The Five-Minute Journal every single day.
- UJ: That's awesome.
- Pat: And I love that. Are you guys in retail right now or just online?

UJ: Absolutely.

Pat: Okay.

UJ: Absolutely. We're in the largest retailer in Canada which is Indigo. We're in Paper Source. We're in two retailers in the UK. We're in Urban Outfitters, Anthropologie.

Pat: How did you get into those kinds of stores?

UJ: Early stages, we just banged on doors or made calls and just refused to take no for an answer. Really, that's what it is. You keep calling them and keep texting them and keep bugging them, and sometimes they don't get back to you, and sometimes they do. And for what it's worth, this is also understanding, learning for me, is retail buying is likely one of the most high-stress jobs possible because turnover in that job is . . . For example, there's a retailer that I'm not going to name that had four job changes over an eight-month period. Right? So these people are buying your product, and so every time there's a new person that you've got to get introduced to that is moving your stuff, so you learn a lot about retail. But a lot of the early stages, you just call, email. You just bug them.

Pat: Yeah.

UJ: 'Til they see the value in it, and you obviously show them proof that you've moved a lot of units, that there's a lot of interesting things that you can do. There's a lot of things you can do to structure a deal, etc. Alex.

Alex: Yeah, and another strategy that we've actually done in the past is if you really believe in your product, is saying, "Hey we'd love to send you your first order on us."

UJ: For free.

Alex: "For free, yeah, so you guys can sell it and you'll see that it sells. If it doesn't sell, well it doesn't. You have nothing to lose really."

- Pat: Wow. How many copies are you sending to them?
- UJ: We're giving 1000.
- Pat: A 1000.
- UJ: Yeah. It was a good retailer. It was a good retailer.
- Alex: Yeah, it was.
- UJ: It's worth it.
- Pat: And how much would that cost to make that happen? I mean, like, what's the loss up front?
- UJ: Enough.
- Pat: Yeah, but worth it apparently. Are you seeing significant sales from retail versus online?
- Alex: Not really.
- UJ: Online is still best for us. People like yourselves and Tim Ferriss and Ben Greenfield and Asprey have been incredibly kind, and we have a fair number of Instagram and YouTube influencers who talk about us, and that's still the number one way that people find us is through word of mouth, is people just raving about other people about how this new thing has been really changing their life, and it's been really making them happy, and then people start to give to their moms and their wives and their brothers and their husbands, and it just becomes very organically moving. I really think we can probably double or triple our retail next year.
- Pat: That is cool. I want to finish off by talking about the online sales and how that all started. Okay, you have these copies and you're starting to go online. Where do you even begin because you don't even have any relationships with any of those influencers yet? What was that like right at the start?



- Alex: Well, I guess my wife is a pretty big influencer, and I have some sort of influence, so that did really still help at the beginning.
- Pat: Okay.
- Alex: And we knew so we had some sort of a marketing to go to, so my wife having pretty big YouTube following.
- UJ: Alex is really humble, like she's an incredibly impressive influencer, and I've just seen her a lot of work. I think she's got over 1.4 mil on Instagram right now, Alex?
- Alex: Well, at the time, like four years ago, it was maybe in hundreds of thousands, but not 1.4 million.
- UJ: YouTube, but still pretty solid.
- Alex: Yeah, YouTube was probably in the hundreds of thousands, so that was definitely a great and still is. Mimi, my wife, she's of course a big contributor and of course is also, I guess, one of our co-founders as well, and also being just the director to oversee the process, and that's how she operates. But UJ and I, we're the ones involved in the making the product, and she's more on the marketing side as a really great strategist. And of course that really helps, but I'll really say, and sometimes you still get lucky breaks, and what I mean by that, even for us in the beginning, having Mimi is great, but of course Tim Ferriss has been a tremendous person that has put us on the map and that happened through just serendipity.
- And of course UJ and I were at an event together with our friends Jayson Gagnard and has put together called Mastermind Talks in Toronto and Tim Ferriss was the main speaker there, and this is the first event, inaugural event, and he together and Tim Ferriss was going to be there, and well, UJ gave them The Five-Minute Journal. You can say that story, how that happened, and how he pushed them because I think a lot of people are also wondering how do you get influencers.
- Pat: Yeah.

- Alex: To like your product or to . . . Because a lot of people now say, try getting Tim to do that. Hey, it's not easy, and it's actually . . . both, say, Tim Ferriss and my wife, they're very similar. They're very picky with what products they will even promote. Like, my wife doesn't even do sponsorships really and Tim does some sponsorships, but he only does it really with brands he's aligned with. He's not going to do it unless he's really aligned with something, and for us to be able to be promoted by both of them very organically because they both enjoyed the product, it has to say a lot, but I'll let UJ tell the story 'cause he's the one actually who introduced The Five-Minute Journal to Tim Ferriss.
- UJ: So I do want to say that Tim was actually a huge influence behind what we created. A lot of this started when I read the Four-Hour Work Week in 2010, and the reason I reconnected with Alex as he mentioned is I basically said I want to do this. This guy totally gets what I'm trying to do. I call everybody in my contact list. I'm like, who do you know? Someone who's done this before, cause that's the best way to actually recreate this system and so I just wanted to thank him for the work he'd done and I said, "Tim, my name is UJ, and I just really want to thank you for the Four-Hour Work Week. What you created inspired me and a friend to create something. It's called The Five-Minute Journal. All I want to do is, please, take a look at it. If you like it, great. If you don't, totally understand. I know you get this kind of stuff all the time, but I'm just curious to hear your thoughts on it." That's it. That's all I said. He said, "Thanks, I'll take a look at it," and about a month later I get an email that he wants to place an order for about 2,300 journals for his audience in his quarterly box, and I don't think I've jumped as high as that in a very long time. I remember calling Alex. I remember texting Alex, I'm like, are you sitting down? Because I need to give him a call. And we were screaming like little girls. It was amazing.
- Pat: That's an awesome story.
- UJ: It's an amazing time. Yeah.
- Pat: So you had an opportunity to see him because he was at this event. You were at this event. Did everybody have a chance to talk to him,

or what was the approach like?

UJ: That's a good question. That's a great question. So it was a little after dinner, and here's the thing with anyone in Tim's position, any kind of influencer, they usually have this circle of people.

Pat: Yes.

UJ: Around them, right? Just wanting to get in a question or wanting to basically say hi, get noticed, etc., and oh my God, it's just so icky, 'cause in that situation you have a no-win situation. You're going in with very minimal odds, but what you want to look for is the transition times. They're in transition, point A to point B, where you can actually get in something where their attention is switching, not where their attention is being competed on for nine or 10 people. So he was switching right out of this group conversation. I just got him right on the outside, and so it seemed like a very natural physical emotion 'cause since he was moving out of the group. I just got him right when he was moving. So I could just have a side by side conversation with him.

Pat: So he was walking. You were walking.

UJ: It was walking. It was right outside the dining hall, and so he was starting to move a little bit, and as soon as he started to move I just got him, and it was a minute conversation tops.

Pat: Right, right. And your primary goal is just to thank him, right? It wasn't . . .

UJ: Exactly.

Pat: Right: "I'm going to show him this, and a month later he's going to promote it for us."

UJ: No.

Pat: Right.

UJ: No.

- Pat: Yeah.
- UJ: Honestly, his stuff is phenomenal. Still to this day, his podcast, the work he's done, his books still impact my life. Every three or four months, I'll do a fear setting exercise 'cause, remember, I journal a lot. So I'll just look at the things that I want to do, and he's been a huge impact on both our lives.
- Pat: That's really cool. Guys, one final question I want to ask to both of you, and this is . . . I'm going to ask you for a tip or something to take away from your guys' experience creating The Five-Minute Journal for others out there who are in the middle of their, or literally at the start of, their journey with creating something that is important to them as well. What's the one big tip, Alex, that you have for people who are right at the start that you could provide for them?
- Alex: As I said throughout this podcast, I think when creating a business, a lot of people . . . like now, like myself . . . at the beginning where, when you don't have money, you just want to make money, and that's your main goal, and I get it. I've been there. It's totally fine. But what I can tell you, even if you do strike it rich and you make lots of money, but you're making money with the business or a product that you're not aligned with, you're not going to have fun, as much money as you're making. And I'm speaking from my own personal experience where I made lots of money, and I was actually depressed and this is where I really . . . My tip to anybody listening who wants to create a business, really start with your own itch. Your own problems that you have in your own life.
- I truly believe that's how you create products that not only can change your life financially and in other ways, but it can, most importantly, change the lives of many other people around the world. Because the way you really want to start thinking about making money is not how you can make money for yourself, but how you can deliver value to other people, and I really believe this is how you make the most money. If you start thinking of other people and how you can deliver value to them and how you can be aligned with the product you're creating, then, well, you may just end up creating the next Five-Minute Journal or something like that.

And what I mean by that is . . . totally thrilled about every day is that we have the ability to actually help people change their lives in a positive way, and there's not a day that goes by when we don't get an email or somebody stops me on the street and says, "Hey thanks for The Five-Minute Journal."

Pat: That's cool.

Alex: And to me that's like the most amazing, incredible moment in our lives because it's just to be able to see how you can make impact in other people's lives, and I know that you can do that in a different way. Even, for example, in our other business, which is a hair business, I was able then to, even with this product, be able to see how we're creating purpose and value in people's lives with that business and that product, and then when I shifted my focus in that business as well, seeing how once again we can create value and see . . . help women, see . . . even with their hair, see how we can improve and imagine and their hair. We're actually able to have a better business and also have better satisfaction with the people that work for us because there's more "why" in the business, and when you have a "why" in the business you're creating for yourself and the people that work for you, it's a lot more powerful. And so that may not be one tip. That may be many tips, but in the end, I would just say create a product that you want to have yourself. Create something with a purpose and "why," and I really believe that's a really formula for magic and success.

Pat: I love it Alex. Thank you for that. UJ, let's finish off with you. Any final words of encouragement and tips for people?

UJ: Yeah, so you want to think long-term. I'm a huge believer in, and Alex and I share this philosophy, when you're building something, you want to build something that lasts the test of time. We want Intelligent Change to be a company. That's the company behind The Five-Minute Journal, right, and that's pretty descriptive of what we wanted to do. It's like, we want to intelligently change people's lives by giving the models and structures that really work based on research and because we want to think long-term, we want to create more amazing things that sustainably make

people's lives better. We want people to think, "Wow, these guys put out something else. I really believe in trusting what they put out because they're using it themselves. They embody a lot of what the company's about and what the values is about." And so as Alex mentioned, early stages, everybody just wants to make money, right? There's nothing wrong with that. That's pretty awesome. It's pretty important, and it shows initiative and drive and knowing what you want. But really zeroing in on who are the people that are like me? What's one of the things that I want to do and that I want to create and I can share it with people who are my friends, who I can serve them for a very, very long time and build something sustainable, real, long-term around that?

That honestly, that part of the journey has been really, really fun and something that I . . . It's really valuable for me is seeing people, seeing the first 1,000 true fans and the 10,000 true fans, the 100,000 or the multiple hundreds of thousands right now, and I'm sure we'll get to the millions soon. That is a phenomenal experience, and that's something I challenge people to really think about. Think long-term, build something of true value that can outlast you.

Pat: I love it UJ. Thank you for that. Thank you Alex. Where should people go if they want to get The Five-Minute Journal and see everything else that you guys have going on, Alex?

Alex: Yeah, you can go on [www.intelligentchange.com](http://www.intelligentchange.com), so that's our main website where you'll find products like The Five-Minute Journal, and of course other products where I think anybody who's an entrepreneur, one of the most important things is focus. We have another product that we've created for ourselves called the Productivity Planner, and that is really all about just helping you stay productive and focused because as entrepreneurs, we can be all over the place, and that's another product we created just to help us to be more focused. So that would be the main thing.

You can also check us out on Instagram, whether it be just for daily inspiration, The Five-Minute Journal, @FiveMinuteJournal on Instagram or @bep productive for productivity inspiration. Also you can find us at what would be my personal account which is



alexikonn, spelled alexiko double N on the end. And also UJ, you can find him at ujramdas on Instagram and just follow us around. See what we do. Get inspired and create stuff.

We're always sharing and seeing how we can help other people really just live their best lives and be able to because we truly believe that you can, by making these small little changes as we said, even five minutes a day with this Five-Minute Journal. You can go on our website. You can see the format. You can do your Five-Minute Journal even in a Dollar Store journal you buy. You don't even have to buy from us. The most important thing that we really want to help people spread is this idea of how this small little habit of asking yourself these five simple questions a day can truly change your lives, as it did for me and as it did for UJ as well. We really believe that your thoughts, your mindset can really transform and shift your mind.

Pat: You guys have changed my life. Thank you so much for all that you do and that you're doing for hundreds of thousands of other people and the millions that I'm sure are to come. Guys, best of luck. Thank you so much, and we look forward to seeing what's coming next from you guys.

Alex: Thank you Pat.

Pat: Take care.

UJ: Thank you Pat.

Pat: Alright everybody, I hope you enjoyed that interview with UJ and Alex from [intelligentchange.com](http://intelligentchange.com), the co-founders of The Five-Minute Journal. That's where I would recommend you go, [intelligentchange.com](http://intelligentchange.com). They have a few other things there as well and have a lot more planned in the future too. So I look forward to helping them and supporting them with that because as you can tell, they're great guys and they have wonderful things to share with the world, and they have changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and will change millions more. So again, thank you guys. For those of you who want to come to the blog

and check out the show notes and get all the links that were mentioned in this episode plus, again stick around, 'cause I'm going to mention how you can get a copy of The Five-Minute Journal if you go to [smartpassiveincome.com/session271](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session271). Again that's [smartpassiveincome.com/session271](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session271).

Now I want to reward the listeners who are subscribed to the show. I know that you don't have to subscribe to the show. I also know that you have a choice when it comes to who you spend time with during your day to provide content for you and hopefully you found value in this episode. If so, if you haven't subscribed please subscribe to the show, but if you have, you have a week after this post or this episode comes out, and so you have until June 28th, by the time the next episode comes out to leave a comment on the blog. Just go to [smartpassiveincome.com/session271](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session271). So leave a comment on the blog with one thing that you are grateful for right now. It doesn't have to be related to business. It could be anything that you're grateful for. So leave a comment for those of you who are subscribers and you're listening to this the week it comes out, anywhere between June 21st and June 28th, before episode 272 comes out. Leave a comment.

On that day the next episode comes out, I'm going to select five winners at random, five commenters, and reach out to you and get your shipping information so I can send it to you free of charge. So five random winners, five commenters from [smartpassiveincome.com/session271](http://smartpassiveincome.com/session271) who comment with one thing that they are grateful for today. And we'll just start that practice and for everybody continue that every single day. Every single morning when you wake up, that should be the first thing you think about, and I'm very thankful I have The Five-Minute Journal to help me, but even before I get into that now in the mornings, I'm already thinking about it because it's just become a habit now. So it's really cool. So again, one more time. [Smartpassiveincome.com/session271](http://Smartpassiveincome.com/session271). Come over there, leave a comment, and by the time 272 comes out that'll be the deadline, and then I'll select five random winners to get a copy of The Five-Minute Journal.

Thank you so much once again for listening in, and I wanted to



finish off this episode similar to how I do with AskPat at the end of every episode. I want to finish with a quote, and this quote comes directly from one of the pages, actually page 142, of The Five-Minute Journal. They start every sort of journal entry post day with a quote, and this one is from Anne Frank, and this quote perfectly sums up where Alex and UJ were coming from and where I would recommend you put your mind as well as you move forward in your online business journey, and here's the quote from Anne Frank. "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before beginning to improve the world." You don't need to wait guys. You can begin changing your world and other people's world right now. Cheers, and I'll see you next week. Bye.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to the Smart Passive Income podcast at [www.smartpassiveincome.com](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com).



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