



Why Staying Small Is the Next Big Thing with Paul Jarvis

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Paul Jarvis: For me, it's always, I want a business that supports my life, not a life that supports my business. So I don't want to Elon Musk things and work eighty hours a week and sleep on a couch in my office. I want to work thirty-ish hours a week and enjoy the rest of my time. As long as I make enough money to cover that, put money into savings and all of that, I feel good. I don't need to . . . Working awards ten times more than that wouldn't serve me, wouldn't serve my life in any way. I don't think it would serve my customers, even.

Pat Flynn: I recently read a really interesting book, it was called *Company of One, Why Staying Small Is the Next Big Thing for Business*. When I was initially going to read it, I was thinking about the podcast episode that I did a while back, I think it was 337 called "The Riches Are in The Niches." Staying small is a big advantage. You are just starting out so you have the ability to have some amazing conversations directly with people. That's how you compete with the big people. You have less competition that you have to worry about when you focus and niche down. That's what I thought I was going to get out of this book, but it actually was not about that. It was another reason why staying small is the next big thing for business. And that's what we're going to talk about today with the author of this book, Paul Jarvis.

Actually I found out through some tweets when I had conducted this interview, that Paul's audience and my audience overlap quite a bit, so you may know who Paul is. He is a freelancer designer, but an author and somebody who is changing how we think about business, especially through books like this. This is his first traditionally published book. Happy to support it, but mostly I just wanted to bring him on to share these concepts with you. I'll talk more about it and just a sec. Let's get to the intro.

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, he has a love-hate relationship with skinny jeans.*

- Pat: Hey, hey. What's up Team Flynn? Thank you so much for joining me today in session 365. My name is Pat: here to help you make more money, save more time, and help more people too. And to help us today, we're learning from Paul Jarvis, author of the book, *Company of One*. The really big thing about this and the big realization when I was reading this book was, wow, do I actually need to grow? This is a weird thing to want to not actually have to grow. We talk about where this need for growth comes from, but what could happen when you actually don't make growth your top priority? It might sound very strange to you, it's a very nontraditional, but this is what makes this so special. So sit back, relax, enjoy. Paul Jarvis from *Company of One*. Mr. Paul Jarvis, thank you so much for coming on the SPI podcast today. I appreciate it so much.
- Paul: Yeah, thanks for having me on.
- Pat: You have this great book that just came out, *Company of One: Why Staying Small Is the Next Big Thing for Business*. We're going to about that in just a moment. We're going to unpack a lot of the ideas there. And actually, when I read this book, I actually listened to it, which you were able to narrow it and it was great. Thank you. A lot of big realizations for myself as well, we'll get into that. But let's go back into who you are, Paul, and how you got to where you are as an entrepreneur, freelancer and all that good stuff.
- Paul: Yeah, that sounds good.
- Pat: So where did this all start? Were you always a business person when you're a young kid or where did this idea of being a business owner and working for yourself come from?
- Paul: Yeah. I've worked for myself for twenty years now, but like twenty-one years ago, I didn't think I was going to work for myself. There were no plans or dreams or aspirations to do that. In high school I did fairly well, so all that well intentioned out, adults in my life were like, hey, you should go to university. That seems like something good. So I went to university, I dropped out after a year. I was in school for

computer science, but I was spending all of my time building these new things called websites because this was the mid to late nineties. So it was just interesting. It was just an interesting time to have a computer and know a little bit about code.

And so I dropped out of university and I went to work for an agency who was like, “Hey, we have all of these clients, there's this new thing called websites, we can make money selling these print clients digital things.” So they're like, “Hey, you know how to make websites?” And so I got a job doing that and it was good. I liked the work. I liked the clients, but I didn't like the company. So I was like, I'm just going to quit and go find another agency job. But then the day that I quit, I was like, I got to go to the library. This is when the Internet didn't have a whole lot of websites on it.

Pat: We're kind of dating you here aren't we?

Paul: Yeah, I know. But I was going to go find out how to write a resume from the library. But then I started to get calls from clients saying like, "Hey Paul, we liked working with you more than the agency. Let us know where you're going to go work next and we'll just bring our business there." And I got a bunch of these calls and a light bulb went off. And I was like, what if I just work with these clients directly for myself? So I went to the library, but instead of looking up how to write a resume, I figured out how to start—I was living in Toronto, Ontario at the time—so I figured out how to start a business in Canada, basically. And yeah, the day before I had no plans on starting a business, but then that day I was like, this is what I'm going to do. Let's see if this works.

Pat: That's really cool. I love hearing people's origin stories. And then so from there, you were just freelancing on your own helping these individual clients. When did you really start to go full throttle with that and begin to grow a little bit?

Paul: Yeah. It was basically on day one after I started the business I had—I was lucky enough to have a client roster from the clients who came with me. But dude, I knew so little about business. I knew how to do

design, I knew how to manage a project, but I did not know how to do anything business related. In school, I had just done programming and logic and math classes. I had taken zero business courses. So it was a struggle, it was really, really hard in the beginning to figure out how. I was like, so I have to do all of the work for the clients, but I also have to do all of the work to run the business as well? It was a very harsh and sudden realization for me. It actually took quite a while to figure all that stuff out.

Pat: And did you ever grow beyond yourself and start hiring people to serve other clients?

Paul: No. So the funny thing is, I got pretty busy very quickly. I started, like I said, I started with a full roster, and that continued and I kept making sure that . . . I knew I didn't know how to be the best designer, the best programmer or the best at those things. I knew that I could do those things and I knew that I could do well at those things, but instead I always tried to be the best person that that client hired. So in doing that, I always had clients that would never go away in the best possible way. So I was busy and I was, I guess, successful and people were always like, "Hey Paul, why don't you hire? Why don't you hire another couple of designers, programmer, project manager?" There was a certain point in my career at that time when I was booked six months in advance. It got to almost ridiculous levels. But I always, and people are always like, "You need to hire. What are you doing? Hire people, you can grow an agency. This is what you do, this is how business works."

And I was always . . . I pushed back against it because I was like, "But I like doing the work." And I always kept coming back to that. One, I didn't like managing other people, and two, I really liked the work, and I didn't want to promote myself out of a job that I like doing into a job I didn't like doing. I didn't want to be a manager, so I just never did it. I just kept charging more and more money as my calendar filled like four to six months in advance. I was like, "Okay, I'm in demand, I can just charge a little bit more, and then just charge a little bit more." And it wasn't overnight ridiculous amounts. But over time it was like, if I'm not going to grow the business, and I want to improve

my income a little bit, I'm just going to keep charging a bit more money, a bit more money, a bit more money. See if the demand ever tapers off and luckily it didn't, and just go from there. So I grew it in revenue, not in people.

Pat: How were you able to think that way? I think it's human nature or entrepreneur human nature to always want to continue to grow. And I imagine that it would have been very simple for you at that time to begin to hire people and to expand, especially with the clients who were demanding. A part of me is like, "Oh my gosh, all this work is coming in. I have to help support it." Versus you who are like, "No, I don't have the time yet. You'll have to wait six months." And I think that's a very bold and unusual. Is that just who you are or was there a very clear, I like my lifestyle and I don't want to change it and mess it up?

Paul: Yeah. I do think that I'm kind of a weirdo. Just going to be honest, I definitely think I'm wired slightly different than most people. But I also think that it always came back to two things, freedom and how I wanted to spend my day, and I think they're both actually related. So the freedom side, I never wanted to be put in a position where it would hinder my freedom. And really what I mean by that is just the ability to make choices. So I didn't want to have overhead to a point where I would have to be like, "Okay, I have to work with this client. I have to take on this big project." Maybe I don't agree with their ethics. Maybe I just feel like they're not good at communicating with me. I never wanted to be in a position where I had so many expenses, so much overhead where I had to be just yes to everything. Blank yes.

I didn't want to be in that position because I like the ability to choose. I work for myself so I can choose what I want to do, who I want to work with, how I want to work. And the other side of it is I do like to have control over how I spend my day. And I think that a lot of opportunities when things are going well in business, they have, I guess an obligation debt or a backend maintenance cost. If you say yes to something, then it's going to affect things in the future. And I always like the ability to choose, do I want to spend my day working

today? Maybe I do. Maybe I just want to go for a bike ride. I live in the Pacific Northwest. If it's sunny outside, I would rather go outside than work because that doesn't happen very often, especially this time of year.

So I was always keeping in mind, would a business choice negatively or positively affect how I like to spend my day? Because I still, twenty —we're talking about twenty years ago—now, twenty years later I still actually like sitting at my computer writing and designing things. And so, if that changed, I would make different choices for sure. But I still liked doing those things so I would never want to make decisions that took me away from the things I really like because it's my business. I feel like I should be able to make choices and do what's best for me, not necessarily what's best for the type of people who are on the cover of Forbes or Inc Magazine.

Pat: For the rest of us who have this growth mentality, and we hear it all the time. We read about it all the time. Where do you think that mentality comes from? Is it a result of us being cavemen, who when we found a resource, we try to maximize our ability to tap into that resource? And with so much opportunity now, is it just us always saying yes because we're inherently worried about it running out? Or in your examination of this, where does that yes mentality, the growth mentality come from really?

Paul: Yeah. I think part of it is that evolutionary thing where resources were scarce. So if we found a resource, we would try to just get all of it and hoard. Just hoard it off, I found berries, they're all mine now. But I also think that a lot of it comes down to ego as well, where I think ego can be a great thing. And I think ego is definitely necessary because in the beginning and at the start, we need to feel that we can do better than everyone else in the market that we're trying to serve. So we start our own business and that's great. I think that more people should feel that what they have, what they want to offer is worth it to the market. Because I think it probably is, but where I think ego doesn't serve us is when we start to let our ego be dictated by others. Like when we see, “Oh, so and so was written about in this big entrepreneurial magazine.”

Or even—I was at the dentist the other day, and there was a magazine, it was like . . . I live in British Columbia now. There's a magazine for “BC business.” And the word growth and grow appeared three times just on the cover. I didn't even open the magazine. So I think there's this pressure in society, in business society, in the entrepreneurial space, where it's like, “Well, if you're not growing, things aren't working out.” And I think that we feel like, “Oh well, I'll look better on my business, so it'll seem more legitimate. If it's just bigger, if it's just bigger.” And I think, at some point, we stopped running our business for ourselves, which is probably why we started, why a lot of us started, and we start running it for how it looks to other people. I think that's where we can get into problems. It's not that growth is bad, it's just that growth makes sense until it doesn't.

Pat:

Right. What I love about your book, *Company of One*, which we'll dive into more specifically on some of the topics there now, to me it brings me back to the same feelings I had when I read Tim Ferriss's *Four Hour Work Week*. But a little bit differently because *Four Hour Work Week* was like, let's hire people. Let's have other systems and automation in place—and you do discuss automation—so that the business will continue to run and continue to grow. However, this is more of okay, lifestyle, yes, which is very much what Tim talked about, but being okay with not having to grow so much. It's almost like what it really taught me aligns with what I often say now, which is where people are making decisions because they have a fear of missing out.

So I usually go, no, no, flip that around. JOMO. Not FOMO, JOMO, the joy of missing out. The fact that you are putting a foot in the ground and saying, “You know what? It's okay that I don't have to go down and read that article because sure, it might help. But you know what? I got all these other things to focus on.” And what *Company of One* did for me was realize that, hey, there can be joy in mastering your craft and not worrying about growing so much.

So on my team, Paul, just so you know, I hired a team, and we are great, and I love them, and I'm happy about that. And my integrator, Matt and I, we discussed last year like, "Hey, what if we didn't try to grow the revenue as much, but more just get better at the systems we have?" And luckily, being in the online world, sometimes just getting better at what you do will, as a byproduct, lead to growth. That's really our focus this year. We don't have a ten million dollar goal, which would have been like a 2x goal. We just want to make the same amount that we made last year but do it better.

Paul:

And I think there's so much that can be said for that, for doing things like figuring out better ways to automate or even better ways to spend less money; or to improve the amount of revenue generated per person on the team. The book isn't anti-growth, for people who haven't read it. And I'm not even advocating—just like Tim Ferriss's *Four Hour Work Week*—it's not saying, you work four hours and then you're done. *Company of One* isn't like, "Oh, you grow to one and then you're done." My team is more than just myself as well. It's more like what you were saying, exactly what you're saying. It's more this mindset where we can question, is bigger, better? Sometimes, yes, it is. And sometimes it makes sense to optimize for where you're at. Even our mutual friend, Nathan Barry, his team isn't as big as some other people in the ESP space. But I think—I was reading an article on a site yesterday and I think the revenue per employee is three hundred eighty thousand dollars. It is so much more than a lot of other SaaS companies, but he's found a way to make it work at a place where he's at, where if you just keep increasing the revenue, then your team can grow. But it doesn't have to grow or outpace that by any means.

Pat:

It's very much the opposite of a Grant Cardone 10x growth book, which is like, "Alright guys, let's not just worry about doubling revenue. Let's 10x your revenue because that means you're going to have to do different things in much bigger and bolder . . ." And we could see that from Grant and his personality and such, and that's a great book too. But man, this was a big realization. I think a lot of people in the audience would appreciate reading this book and to

realize that you don't have to always think about growth, although growth can be important.

My big question for you, and I was very curious leading into this conversation, what your thoughts would be on this. For me, growth is somewhat important because I want to help more people. That's been my big motivator. Help more people. And in order for me to help more people, I feel like I have to have some growth in the business, and I have to have more subscribers, and I have to have these things in order to help more arms out there to help people. How would you respond to me saying that, well, growth is important because you have this duty of service to help more people with the talents that you have.

Paul:

I think that, that's a valid . . . I think sometimes goals, or big ideas can be valid like that, but you're also not setting an artificial limit of like, it has to be 10 times more subscribers, because where does that number come from? If that number isn't coming from an actual business need and you're just picking a number out of the sky, like, "Oh, it needs to be 10 times bigger," then that's an artificial target. But the problem with artificial targets is they become real as soon as we start working towards them. The second before, it's just, oh, 10x sounds great. But then as soon as you start working towards it, it's no longer artificial. And it's really difficult sometimes to sustain the amount of work required for these numbers we just pull out of the air.

And I think that there's definitely a magic zone for sustainability and even for growth. Like my own business, my mailing list grows, my revenue grows. But I'm not focused on that as just the only metric in my business to measure success. For me, I focus on connecting with the audience I already have. And if I do that really, really well, then they go out and tell other people and then my audience grows and then my revenue grows. But my focus isn't that. So, that's the by-product of the work that I'm doing. And even the work that you're doing, I think.

And I think if we set these artificial targets for the sake of artificial targets, that can get stressful. I was listening to an interview the other

day with this person who had, I think their business was about twenty-four million in revenue and they set a goal of hitting one hundred twenty million in revenue, and they hit sixty and they were like, “That didn't work out.” But when you think about it, they did sixty million dollars in revenue and they feel like a failure because they didn't hit that artificial goal that was artificial until the second they hit it.

Pat: Yeah, that's crazy. Although they 3x'd their income, from there . . . There's like a lawnmower . . . I don't know if you guys listening can hear there's a lawnmower right outside my window.

Paul: I cannot hear it.

Pat: You cannot hear it. Okay.

Paul: So there's no way they possibly can.

Pat: Well, you can imagine what it might sound like. But I'm going to keep going because this is real life and I love that. So, *Company of One*, you're not necessarily saying that you need to reduce the amount of employees in your business to one and have it just be you. What are the principles behind just this idea of “Company of One” that you discuss?

Paul: Yes. A lot of it is thinking about how you can make things work where they're at, especially in the beginning, especially if things are small. So figuring out how you can get to being profitable as quickly as possible as opposed to . . . Thinking that you will be profitable at scale. And then putting a tremendous amount of risk into things in the hopes that, “Well, if we hit like a hundred thousand customers or two hundred thousand subscriptions, then we'll start to see profit. It's very difficult and actually very risky. And the premise of the book is pretty much that business success doesn't have to mean . . . the by-product doesn't have to be growth. It can be the freedom to choose whether or not you grow because you need growth. Especially in the

beginning, you've got to go from zero to something, but then at some point it's like a diminishing returns sort of thing.

For me it's always, I want a business that supports my life, not a life that supports my business. So I don't want to Elon Musk things and work eighty hours a week and sleep on a couch in my office. I want to work thirty-ish hours a week and enjoy the rest of my time. And as long as I make enough money to cover that, put money into savings and all of that, I feel good. Working towards ten times more than that wouldn't serve me, wouldn't serve my life in any way. I don't think it would serve my customers, even.

Pat:

One thing that you mentioned in addition to having it really be focused on the craft that you do in the work that you do. I love the chapter on one customer, and I think this is a message that we always have to re-listen to, especially for those of you listening. And you know you need to get started, but you're so worried about the journey and how many things you have to do. But I love how you narrowed that down to one customer. How might you, with whatever business a person might be thinking about creating or even has and has yet to have their first customers, how would you recommend they go about finding that customer?

Paul:

Yeah. Businesses is networking at any level. When I used to do work for the biggest businesses in the world, like Mercedes Benz or Microsoft, that wasn't just me being, "Hey, I'm a web designer," standing outside their head office, "need some web design? Hello?" It was me knowing people that work there or knowing people that knew other people that work there. And I think using our networks, I think is so important. I'm really introverted. I'm really awkward but I still spend a whole lot of time making sure that I'm connecting with interesting people, making sure that I'm keeping connections going. That's not just liking people's posts on social media. That's reaching out, having a bit of a phone call, maybe talking in real time, and that sort of thing.

Using networks is just such a . . . it just seems like such a humane way to do business. One of my favorite stories from the book is my

buddy, Alexandra Franzen, who's a really, really good copywriter. She was in radio broadcasting, and she wanted to do freelance writing. So she didn't quit her job and buy a really expensive computer and an office and all of that. She quit her job and then emailed sixty people—probably sixty . . . it was around sixty people—and just said, “Hey, I'm doing copywriting now. These are the type of projects I'm looking for. Do you or does anybody you know need this kind of work?” And so her first step was just looking for a customer. And then she found one and then she did a really good job and then they referred her to a handful of other people. Then each of them referred her to a handful of other people, and then she built a business from there where it was really like . . . word of mouth is still so huge.

I was talking to somebody at their day, and they were like, well, does is word of mouth still even exist on the Internet? I was like, yes. One hundred percent it does. It's so amplified now where reputation and networking and word of mouth just makes such a big difference for . . . It doesn't matter if you're working in enterprise sales, if you're doing B2C, it's so important.

Pat: How would you recommend a person who is also introverted like us to get started with utilizing those relationships or building those relationships? Any quick tips on that?

Paul: Yeah. Lean on some strengths at first like group networking. I still sweat thinking about networking at an event or at a conference, but reaching out to some . . . like DMing somebody on Twitter and just saying, “Hey, you do awesome work. I think I do too. I have no agenda. I just want to talk to somebody else who's doing cool things on the Internet. Let's talk.”

The partner for one of the courses that I teach, Kaleigh Moore, she reached out. Initially it was just like, “Hey, I do writing. You do design. We should talk on Skype sometime. We should have a virtual coffee date or something.” And I was like, sure. We ended up getting talking and now we work together, and she's a partner at one of the products that I have. So just little things like that. It doesn't have to be you standing in front of a thousand people or even being at an event

with a hundred people. It can just be you reaching out one on one to one other person and talking to them like a human.

Pat: Yeah. My tip is just, well, what's the worst that can happen? For a person might just go, no, thanks. Or no, not right now. And it's not usually as bad as we might think for sure. When it comes to the systems that you use in your business, I'm curious to know how else have you become efficient? One way to do that is to say no to things, which is a great thing. And understanding what your priorities are so that you know what to say yes and no to is a big, important theme in this book. But in terms of your business and the other things internally that can be made more efficient, where might we be able to begin to look to see how to, if we're not focused on growth, what do we focus on and how do we more efficiently do that?

Paul: Yeah. For me, because I know that I don't want to have a big team, I know that I'm always looking for things that scale without growth. Things like my mailing list: it takes me just as long to write an article and send it just to you as it does to write an article and send it to a mailing list of thirty thousand people. So things like that are great, or things like when I'm working on my software products, if I can work really, really hard on onboarding, like getting somebody from when they buy to being able to use the software product without having to personally help every single one of them.

If I can answer common questions in videos or knowledge base articles or that sort of thing, then I can increase the number of people that I reached without having to like, "Oh, well I reached another hundred people. I've got to hire another person. I reached another . . ." Things like that where I can scale my business without necessarily having to grow my business in podcasting. Podcasting is great for that. It takes me just as long to record a show that reaches ten people as it does to record a show that reaches ten thousand. So things like that, I find have been really, really beneficial for my business.

Pat: Writing a book.

Paul: That as well.

Pat: Now, are you both a designer and a developer yourself?

Paul: I don't do a whole lot of development anymore. I do more design and writing. Even for the projects that I work on now, I have partners that do the heavy lifting of the programming because I just don't have time for that.

Pat: Okay, great. Because I know a lot of people are thinking—or hearing this conversation might go, “Well, Paul just sounds like this multi-talented dude who could do all the things,” and you know you are wearing the hats and you're doing it right. But thank you for sharing that. I'm curious to know, as you work with your partners or contractors for certain projects that you just don't want to do or don't have the skill to do, what are your thoughts on maximizing that efficiency in communication and getting work done? Do you have any systems in place or tools that you use to help run that?

Paul: Yeah. My biggest expense every year is freelancers, which I'm totally stoked on. Because I was a freelancer for so long. I love that my biggest expense is other people's time, basically, and skills. So I always look for—like I said in the beginning, I don't like managing people, but I have to work with a team of four or five people typically. So the way that I look for people is, I want to find the best person at the job that they do, who requires the least amount of management. I'm willing to pay a premium price for that person because I know on the backend I'm not going to have to spend as much time or as much money training or anything like that. My copy editor who I work—because I do, I write probably an article a day if not more sometimes—we communicate in emojis.

I've never had an actual real time conversation with Matt. He sends me the thumbs up Emoji when he receives a document and then the pencil Emoji when he's finished editing it. He knows my voice, he knows my style. He knows how to make, because I'm horrible technical writer, which a lot of people who aren't writers, they're like, really? How are you a writer? That's not the skill set of a writer. So I

don't have to worry about that, which is good because I'm not very good at it. So I'm always looking for ways to find the very best people where we only really have to communicate when something's done. Or if there's an issue, then we just need to talk about it to figure out what's wrong, how to fix it and how it can not happen again.

I use Google Docs a lot just because one, it's free and two, I can turn on the suggest mode and he can turn on the suggest mode, so we can see each other's changes and we can track changes that way. It just becomes really, really easy. And I like systems especially where I don't have to do any work. So if I have a shared folder with him, he gets a notification when I add something new to the folder, sends me an email. Same with my podcast editor, I have a folder on DropBox, he gets a notification that there's a new MP3 file in DropBox. So he can just get straight to work. So things like that where things automatically happen when we've set up a process in the beginning. I used to think our processes kill creativity. Processes open you up to just focus on the creative stuff. If you get something down in terms of like step by step by step, you don't have to worry about the admin of it anymore. It's so good. You just have to do the creative work, which is the stuff that I like doing.

Pat: Wow. That's a really big realization there I think for a lot of people and myself often is that, these processes and these systems, which A, are seemingly boring and B, take a while to create and C, it's just repetitive. They give you that time back so that, like you said, so you can be creative. Or for me it's like I just want to record podcasts and write. And everything else should be taken care of from a person receiving that article from Google Docs, we use the same thing too. Then editing it and then putting it onto WordPress. Even hitting publish on a date that we know ahead of time. That way it's like I'm just doing the stuff that I love. So I love that.

Paul: It also saves me stress. Because I'm super introverted in that as well, where if I had to go into my newsletter software and hit send on an article that I know is going to tens of thousands of people, I might chicken out. Honestly, I might chicken out. But if it's like . . . I set the schedule for three weeks from now or I set the blog post to publish

three weeks from now. I'm like, "Oh, that's in the . . . I don't even need to worry about that."

Pat: Is that Matt who's pushing that out for you?

Paul: No. I put the stuff into those systems. I guess I could get him to do it now that I think about it.

Pat: I'm sorry, Matt.

Paul: Sorry, Matt. You're going to have more work after this call.

Pat: For the business owner who's listening to this, who was like, "Oh, wow. I grew out of control. I am stressed. I do not have a company of one. We have a company of many with many systems and I probably should prune and filter things down to just what I need to do, I have not fulfilled." How would you recommend that person who may be listening to this. to begin to start to make that happen and become a company of one in a sense?

Paul: For sure. And I think a business of any size can operate like a company of one. So I wouldn't stress anymore, especially if you are stressed. I think everything in business is iterative as well, where you don't know if something's going to work or not until you've taken a tiny step towards it. So I think even in looking at systems and processes, if things are wholly complicated or very difficult to manage, then just thinking about like, what can we do at the front end to put a bunch of work into it so on an ongoing basis, it doesn't require as much work as possible? And I think a lot of people in the product space understand this, where you do the work in the front to have it work for you afterwards. I'd rather do the work once right, and then have it work automatically after that.

So I think a business of any size can look at these things. Like what are some things that are repetitive? Maybe there's a way that technology can do those. Maybe it's like I make a zap in Zapier to connect one thing to another thing and that saves thirty minutes of somebody's time every day. Or maybe we figure out what the

specifics are for a process that we have that's like a 30-page document and maybe we just make it four steps. And then somebody doesn't have to refer to that document and look at the things, they can just think like, "Okay, these are the four steps I need to take. This is the thing I need to do." So I think just simplifying as much as possible and simplifying doesn't mean easy. Simple and easier different words. Just like more and better are different words. But I think if we do the work to make things simple, then they can become easy after we made them simple.

Pat: I love that. And I think your story is very inspiring because you were freelancer and you've built this business in this way and you've been able to live life like you've wanted it to and grow a business. You share some really amazing stories in the book about the island that you're on now in British Columbia, what your day is like a little bit. Hope it gets warmer there for you. Or you can come to San Diego and we can hang out a bit because looking outside, it's pretty nice right now. So I'm curious just about the book itself and the origin of the book. Because I think a lot of us who have businesses, whether we are a freelancer or a course creator or a coach of some kind, we all have books in us. What gave you the idea to write this book and how did you get started with that? I will likely have some follow up questions.

Paul: Sure. The first part is that . . . I thought that the way that we've been talking about business, I thought it was just me. I thought I was the only one who was like, growth isn't the best thing for my business in these ways, so I'm going to avoid it. And I thought that I was the business weirdo that felt that way. But then because I'm a writer, because I write, I've written a weekly newsletter every Sunday for six years, never missed a Sunday, I was like, "Okay, one of these articles needs to be about this. And I know people may not understand it, but I just want to share my thought process for why my business works the way that it does." And I wrote an article, I think it was called some, and this is like three years ago, it was called something like, "I Don't Care About Growth" or "Why I Don't Care About Growth" ("I don't actually care about growth") and I shared it with my list.

I usually get one hundred fifty, two hundred fifty replies to my newsletter. And for that one I think I got thirteen hundred. It was a lot more by order of magnitude a ton. And I just kept hearing from people that said, “Well I thought I was the only one who didn't want to grow this massive business or enterprise or corporation. I thought I was the only one who wanted to put my life and lifestyle ahead of my business goals once the business is profitable.” And I was like, “Whoa, there's a lot of people who feel this way.” And I was like, “Okay. I'll go find a book. I'll read about—I like reading books, I'll go find a book that talks about this and I'll just refer people to it because that seems like a good idea.” And I couldn't find one that was specifically along the lines of that. So I was like, “Oh no, I've got to write one.”

Pat: Oh, no.

Paul: Oh, no. This is my fifth book as well. So I know a lot goes into writing a book. But I was like, okay, this is something that needs to be shared. Not because this is the way I think about business, but because I don't want people to be put off, and this is the reason I wrote the book, I don't want people to be prematurely put off of entrepreneurialism because they think it works a certain way. They think that owning a business, then you have to go down this one track and that's growth. Or being a business owner, you have to be this one type of person. Because I'm not that. You're not that either.

There's different ways to do business and there's different ways to make business work for you. And I'm like, if I can just show some people that I think would make awesome entrepreneurs, that they can do things in a different way, then I don't even know my ways right. It's right for some people I'm sure, it's not right for everybody. But if I can just show some people like, “Hey, maybe you think about entrepreneurialism and you can do it in this way. That could work for you.” Then I think that's like that was the driving factor and that was the driving force for making this thing turn into a book.

Pat: That's really cool. This is a traditionally published book?

Paul: Yes.

Pat: Have you done it—

Paul: My first one.

Pat: Your first one? Oh.

Paul: Yes.

Pat: Perfect. Now I have other follow up questions really quick. How has this process, working with a traditional publisher, been versus self-published before?

Paul: Yeah. I did all right with self publishing. I sold probably close to a hundred thousand copies of my self-published book. So I don't understand self-publishing. I don't know if anybody can, but it did—it worked and I know how to make it work. So it wasn't really like, “Oh, I need to traditionally publish this because they need it to reach an audience.” I think that if you have a book inside you that shouldn't be an obstacle. That's an invalid obstacle thinking that you need to get acceptance from a gatekeeper, an agent or a publisher. You can just publish it. It's easy. Create Space or KDP, those sorts of things. But I think that it was the same but different. So it was the same in that I still had a lot of work to do. It was still years of work. You've written a bunch of books, you know this too.

It's a lot of work. But I also like that I could spread the workout a little bit and I could get the top tier. The guy who edited my book, Rick Wolf, is the editor for Cal Newport and Cal Newport's one of probably my favorite. I'm making it—

Pat: I love Cal.

Paul: I'm making it sound like I'm not a huge fanboy, I'm a huge fanboy. He's my favorite. He's my favorite.

Pat: We've had him on the show. He's great.

- Paul: Yeah. So I got to work with Cal's editor and he's a brilliant man. He made the book still sound like me, which was really, really important to me, but also just so much more clear and concise in my own way of expressing myself, which I thought was great. It was good in that way. Even good in so much as the publisher that I worked with is able to send out copies of books to hundreds of people, hundreds of people like you who—
- Pat: I got one.
- Paul: Yeah. And I didn't have to go to the post office and send out copies.
- Pat: Yeah. We had to do that for *Will It Fly?*, that's for sure.
- Paul: And that's a lot of work. They got the book reviewed by a bunch of book reviewers who I had never heard of, but that really helps with stocking in bookstores. That's the other thing, is distribution. People have been taking pictures of my book around the world in bookstores. I just think that's probably my favorite part about this. And that distribution has been really helpful. But it is definitely like, it's giving up control. Remember I'm a designer, I didn't get to design the North American or the world covers for my book. And—
- Pat: Interesting.
- Paul: Yeah. And they asked me what I thought of it and I was like, “Well, change this, this, this and this.” But then I was like, they're experts. The book cover doesn't need to speak to me. I'm not buying hundreds of thousands of copies of it. I want it to reach the people who could benefit from the book. So I was just like, whatever cover you think will achieve that, then that's good for me. And that was hard. That was very difficult. That was really difficult for me too.
- Pat: Yeah. I hear that, especially as a designer.
- Paul: Yeah.

Pat: That's cool. And thank you for that because I am self-publishing my next book this summer and there's been talks about potentially going down the traditional route at some point even with this book. And it's just, I love talking to people about that because it is a different thing. I'm so stoked that you had many enjoyable moments and you have this distribution. Before we got on the call, you said you were on a book tour now. Is that something that they set up or how does that even work?

Paul: Oh, just calls. And it's funny, in the contract, they had that I would do a two-week book tour going to physical locations, like bookstores I guess. And I said, no.

Pat: Like, no. I'm a company of one.

Paul: I said, I'm not signing the contract until that comes out. And my agent was like, "Paul, what are you doing?" I used to travel in my twenties, I traveled for business at least once or twice a week, just not interested in traveling for business anymore. I just want to travel with my wife, have fun and pleasure travel. But also, my audience is so spread out, I can't show up in a city and have as many people add an event at a physical location as I can if I do just like an online thing where it's just a live video, where I can get people, and it doesn't matter if they live in the middle of the woods, on an island like I do. If they live in New York or LA—same people can attend.

So we talked about boundaries briefly. That was a boundary for me and I was like, this needs to come out of the contract. And she was like, really? I was like, yes. And they were okay with it because they're like, "Oh, that was boilerplate." And they took it out. Leading up to that, her and I were both nervous, is this going to kibosh the whole thing? And they were like, "Oh, whatever that's boilerplate, we took it out."

Pat: No Way. That's cool.

Paul: It was no big deal at all.

- Pat: That's cool. Well, thank you for those insights to the inside knowledge of traditional publishing there with your publisher. They sound really cool. Yeah, man. Where should people go to grab the book and learn more from you?
- Paul: Yeah. The book is called *Company of One, Why Staying Small Is the Next Big Thing for Business*. It's on Amazon. I've got a website for the ofone.co, but it's pretty much everywhere that you find books. And then my website is pjrvs.com and that's where I publish the weekly newsletter that we spoke about.
- Pat: Nice. And I love it. You have a big button there to go subscribe to that newsletter every Sunday for the last six years, pjrvs.com. We'll send people your way, man. Paul, thank you so much for coming on and sharing everything about *Company of One* and I look forward to hearing more reviews from the listeners. And again, I appreciate it, man.
- Paul: Yeah. Thanks, Pat.
- Pat: All right, so what'd you think? Thank you so much for listening in. And I'd love to hear your comments about this concept of, well, guess what, we don't actually have to grow. What if we had our craft to be the priority and growth come as a by-product of that versus reaching toward these numbers that we sometimes just are throwing darts at a dart board to figure out. So if you want to check out the show notes and the links mentioned and even comment, all you have to do is go to smartpassiveincome.com/session365. Smartpassiveincome.com/session365. And a when you get to his website, pjrvs.com, you'll be able to join his newsletter. I'm even looking at a quote here or a blurb from his friend and my friend too, Cal Newport, bestselling author of *Deep Work*. His quote here says, "Paul Jarvis makes a compelling case for making your business better instead of bigger."
- So there could be some people who say, "Wow, well, in order for me to grow and get my business better, I have to grow bigger." But

there's an argument against that obviously, which is what we talked about today. So again, I'd love to know what you thought. [smartpassiveincome.com/session365](http://www.smartpassiveincome.com/session365) and again, I appreciate you so much. Thank you so much for listening all the way through. You are amazing, Team Flynn. I'm just so thankful for you and all the amazing reviews that are coming in through iTunes and other platforms as well. Just, you're amazing. Keep up the great work and thank you, Paul, for coming on the show and good luck to you and the launch of the book.

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