

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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**Jacob 03:17**

Hello, everyone. Thanks for joining me for another episode of the future of work with Jacob Morgan. My guest today is Jay Papasan, and he is a bestselling author and executive at Keller Williams Realty Inc, co owner of Keller Inc. Keller capital, and Papasan Properties Group. And his most recent work with Gary Keller, called The One Thing has sold more than 1.5 million copies, I would imagine it's probably getting very close to over 2 million copies at this point. translated into 35 languages appeared on more than 500 national bestseller lists, including number one on the Wall Street Journal hardcover business list. Jay, thank you for joining me.

**Jay 03:58**

Thanks so much for having me. It's a pleasure.

**Jacob 04:00**

Well, man, what a killer book and it's also got 1000s of reviews on Amazon. So clearly, you guys have hit something, some sort of a, it's resonated with so many people around the world. So why don't we get started with why you actually wrote the book.

**Jay 04:19**

And I'll just make a comment like the we've actually sold more. I mean, like, it's, it's we've actually passed up 2 Million, copy mark. And I was just like, I made a note like up, we probably need to update our fact sheet. So we can set our partners up for more success. But I think that we got lucky. I think that a lot of times when a book blows up, and I mean, anytime you get into that million copy threshold, timing is found you. So you know, the book, we're writing about effect effectively focus and how do we identify the real priorities, and I just think that we're operating in a time where so many people have so much going on. We have so many opportunities and obligations. That's what I think happened the digital world kind of outpacing our ability to adapt our book. That's that's the luck that showed up in this in my that's my belief at least.

**Jacob 05:12**

But there's so many books that are about focus and minimalism and avoiding distractions. Why do you think your book in particular? What made it stand out? Why did it resonate so much more with people than so many of those other books out there?

**Jay 05:27**

There's a couple stories I can tell. I think, I my hope is because Gary and I are at our heart pragmatist. We want knowledge for doing sake, not for knowing sake. And so a lot of times, we'll dive in, and he's the first to rap me on the knuckles and say, this idea stuff like, what do we do with that? And so a lot of the ideas in the book aren't novel. Some of them are, I think we did share some at the time, absolutely fresh, new research. But we tried to put it into an approach that people could actually live. And so I think that's one of the reasons is people read it.

**Jay 06:06**

And it like, if you look at I did an analysis, one year of all of our five star reviews in one star reviews, I put it all into a word cloud. And one thing that was in common was the simple message, that people who loved it said, You know what, it's straightforward. It's simple, I can follow this. And the people who hated it said it was too simple. So, you know, just you can't please everyone, I feel really happy with the reviews overall. But it is simple. It's not easy. But most true success is actually if you look at it properly is simple. But it's it can be difficult to do.

**Jay 06:43**

So I do think that that's one of the distinguishing factors. And I'll tell you the title helps if we called it focus, nobody would buy it. We actually went to the year before we went to market, we went to the book exchange in New York, the book Expo, two posters, one had the title of The One Thing and the other one was called The Success Habit. And we polled like all of the booksellers that came to the publishers booth, and these are people who just buy business and self help books. And I think it was like 80% of them said it should be the success habit. And remember, this is in 2013, before atomic habits and the Power of Habit was the thing. They're like, Oh, that sounds cool. That book will sell.

**Jay 07:25**

And we came back to Austin. And it was me and Gary and our then marketing director, Ellen Curtis. And she said, I don't know, the success habit. That sounds hard. But I see that one thing I'm like, I want to know what the one thing is. I think I can do one thing. And that that jives with Gary and I and so we I think a little bit of a what is the one thing so a little bit of curiosity. The Unexpected helped us. So, the marketing folks really for a win there. And then also, you know, like I said, I think it's also simple, that people can process it really busy people which are most business and self help readers, they can actually process the message and try to go live it.

**Jacob 08:09**

Well actually love that story. Because had you listened to what the book buyers were telling you 80% of them said the success habit. Chances are you would have been in a very different space. Right? I mean, you wouldn't have had such a popular podcast called the one thing book. I mean, who knows what would have happened? So we actually you went against the grain against what the market told you in some way.

**Jay 08:34**

Yeah, which I don't want to recommend that people do every time. That's not a license to go with your gut. I do felt that we Ellen articulated something that we were feeling. And it was this idea of we want to

facilitate the learning. We want people to feel like they can do this thing. Because if people don't feel like they can do something they won't even try. And we just learned that as teachers we teach, and we coach for living. And when people have the belief, the self belief that they can move forward, they do. And we know this with our kids. If your kid doesn't think he can take the test and succeed, it's gonna be a bad day. But if you can convince them, they've got a shot and they lean into it. They might surprise themselves.

**Jacob 09:22**

Well, before we start talking about some of the concepts from the book, I'm curious to just get your general perspective on a few things. And one of them is what do you think of the hustle culture? Because this I feel like this has been permeating a lot of the business right especially for entrepreneurs, you know, work non stop, you know, forget about enjoying life just hustle nonstop. What's your thought on that?

**Jay 09:49**

Did somebody tip you off like this is like a hot button item for me. I one of my fundamental beliefs is that a to be a successful husband And a father and a successful business person, that those are not mutually exclusive endeavors. I refuse to believe otherwise. And the challenge I have with the hustle culture that you have to outwork and work longer than your competitors, is that they're just ignoring the fact that like, I get to work every day with a self made billionaire. I do the math, what is the his dollars per hour, it's incalculable. But he doesn't work any more hours than I do on an average week.

**Jay 10:30**

So it's not how many hours you work. It's what you put into the hours. And it sounds so trite, but it's incredibly true. So not to say that sometimes we don't work long hours and weekends, we do. Like before big conference, before, we're facing a deadline with the main script, you're going to see me up here on a Saturday. And I'm going to apologize to the kids. And I'm going to use the language of the book, I'm going to counterbalance afterwards, I'm gonna take a day off, maybe yank my kids out of school, and try to not lose all of that time, because I gave it to work. But and there's a time in my youth, right? When I did have more energy where I'm trying to get ahead, I'm trying to do better. And those are sometimes appropriate times to work longer hours.

**Jay 11:12**

I think last year. It was a differentiator moment where some businesses adapted and they had to work really hard to adjust to COVID. And they not only survived, some of them, still a lot of market share. So I think there's also moments in time, but as a lifestyle, it's not supportable, as a lifestyle. I've seen it be a recipe for divorce and disease. And I do not want the people I love to be caught into the culture of hustle first think second. So I think this is business as a thinking person's game. And when we are strategic in our investment of time, we win.

**Jacob 11:56**

I love that. So So Gary gets a full night of sleep, he doesn't work 18-19-20 hours a day and constantly drinking coffee.

**Jay 12:06**

He will tell you, this is funny, it's true. He he was cursed and blessed to come from a family of very low energy people. So you look at the idea of the the classic entrepreneur hopped up on, you know, Red Bull and their knees bouncing in every meeting, Gary does have high intellectual energy, but he doesn't have high physical energy. And so he was taught brutally early on that, if he used hours as his mechanism for getting ahead, his body would break on him. And so are it's in stark contrast to our vice chairman of the board Mo Anderson, who is our CEO for when I first joined the company 20 years ago, she's amazing businesswoman, and she was kind of known for being able to go to bed at 11 wake up at 2am. And like, you know, operate on three or four hours of sleep. And we all have heard of those entrepreneurs. But she's an outlier. Like she's a complete outlier.

**Jay 13:09**

And, and by the way, she's like, I'm at something now and and still going strong, right and amazing. She's just one of those people that was gifted with this untappable double well of energy. But that's rare. You can't model that you might have been lucky to have gotten it. But frankly, I'd rather put in my hours at work and go home and have that energy with my family. Or like my my fly fishing habit or walking my dog like I want to have a well, I want to have my life have all of the facets of it. I don't want to say well rounded because we are the one thing, we're not going to be trying to be jack of all trades. But there are things besides work that matter a lot to me. And I want to have the time and energy to invest in those too.

**Jacob 13:52**

Couldn't agree more. Okay, so not a fan of the whole hustle culture mentality. So for people who are maybe not familiar with the book, or who haven't read it, what is the the gist of the I mean, the title kind of says it the one thing so what is the main message that you want people to take away from whether it's from the book or this conversation about the one thing?

**Jay 14:15**

Sure. The the heart of the book, is the focusing question. And if you look at the back of the book doesn't have any testimonials. There's no marketing copy. It's just a giant question mark. And we were very clear going in and coming out that the one behavior we wanted to adjust is we wanted readers to build a habit of asking that question. And it's a lot it's a lot of words and you can put it in the podcast notes for people so they don't have to pull over or try to write while they're driving or jogging. But it's what's the one thing I can do such that by doing it, everything else would be easier or unnecessary.

**Jay 14:55**

And it's a it's a it's a very specific verbiage that gets you to a very powerful place. As you're looking for the activity that will get you the most gain towards your goals of all of the things that you could do. And over time, you know, in my mind, it's like, well, what's my one thing today? What's my one thing with my child? What's my one thing for my marriage, you can apply it in a lot of different areas and timeframes. But that's at the core of it. You're looking for your number one priority. Your number one priority to achieve your goal.

**Jay 15:30**

And the biggest mistake people make is they hear only one thing. We never said that who gets to do one thing? Nobody, right? We have kids, we have aging parents, we have hobbies, we have jobs, our jobs have all kinds of busy work that is absolutely necessary and can't be ignored. But if we start and give disproportionate focus and energy to the true priority, everything else does get easier. And sometimes it just goes away. You don't even have to do it. That's a big idea. Does that make sense? When I say it that way?

**Jacob 16:03**

No, it does completely. And I was gonna ask a follow up question, which is, like how, how to actually go through. So let's say for example, today, I'm Uh, I don't know, I'm an entry level, or maybe mid level employee at a company. And I want to start thinking about that one thing, and I really want to grow in my career, right? I want to become a more senior level leader, someone like yourself. So I would basically wake up and I would say, what is the one thing that I can do today to help me get closer to my goal? So do you ask this on a daily basis? Do you ask it about personal things? and business? Like how many times can you ask this question about how many topics you know what I mean? Like, I'm trying to put some context around it so that people can actually practice this themselves?

**Jay 16:52**

Sure, sure. I try to say you should do this around the important things. Right. Not about what Netflix show you're going to stream tonight. Right? That is, it is an effective way to get really quickly to the truth. I when we wrote the book, we were working on this book for almost five years, Jacob. And I can remember, I was truly afraid that when it came out that people wouldn't know their answer. They would ask the question and go, well, shoot, I don't know the answer. And in my experience, now teaching 10s of 1000s of people the principles, maybe 5%, don't know the answer.

**Jay 17:29**

And much more common reality is that people do know the answer, they've been too busy to give it any focus or attention. And they actually have some guilt around it. So it's that mirror they don't like to look at sometimes because they realize they've actually been neglecting it. They've been letting the things that scream loudest which are not often your real priorities. It's your email inbox, or the pull of Twitter and Social Media distraction, to take them away from the thing that they know is a higher priority.

**Jay 17:57**

So let's go back to your example. I'm a young, young person, maybe I'm in my first major job. And I'm trying to ask how do I figure out what my one thing is, and in what context, I like to go out big, the mistake a lot of people make is they try to have a great year. And in doing so they might short circuit their career. Because they're aiming at something that definitely will get them ahead right now. But it isn't something that strategically will get them ahead in the future. So when you're young and starting, I think you're trying to figure out what your gifts are. The reason ultimately people get accelerated through the business world is that in some area, they can provide disproportionate returns on their investment of time, right, they can sell more than the next person, they can close more than the next person, they can write better copy, or better code than the next person.

**Jay 18:51**

So part of the young person's journey is discovering where their passion and their gifts align. And so there is a little bit of experimentation when you're young, it's kind of necessary, unless you're just, you got that road to do Damascus moment. And it's a very rare thing where you just like, oh, since I've been eight, I wanted to be a surgeon. I just so uncommon, most of us have to go through the hard work of little trial and error. And then we suddenly go, that idea of getting into flow, like they find something that they actually enjoy. And because they enjoy it, they do it more, and because they do it more, they get better at it, and then it becomes a very positive cycle.

**Jay 19:30**

And so I would ask, like, if it was my son, you know, I'd say ask the question, how can you become invaluable? Like, how do you do something so well, that executives have EA is they pay someone full time to take all of the little stuff off of someone's plate so they can do that thing? So your first goal would be where can I bring disproportionate value? I believe everybody has a gift and they can show up and provide extra value, because they're either more passionate about it or have more skills and the lovely combinations when you have both passion and skill, the passion trumps, like I really, this aligns with my values where I want to go. And I'm gonna lean into it, because so much of mastery is not fun. It's boring. You show up every day and you practice, and you get better and you get better. That's why that purpose passion shows up.

**Jay 20:24**

So that that's where I would start, you ask the question, what kind of a high level? What are the things that I really enjoy doing? Every job has unpleasant activities? But there's things that maybe you kind of don't you don't dislike, and you might discover that you're actually good at, those are the things that you lean into. The second advice I would give them is you report to someone in the beginning, right? Unless you're an entrepreneur, do you know how your job ties to your boss's success, and to the success of the company. And so it's kind of lining up those dominoes, right? If you can understand how your job contributes up this scale of success, then you can start making a bigger argument for how you're contributing at a high level.

**Jay 21:11**

And the sad truth of a lot of people's jobs is they show up and they make widgets, and they don't really understand how they're connected to the larger machine. And frankly, just take a little bit of humble pie and say, Jacob, hey, I've been working with for you for six months. How does what we do make the company more successful? I've never stopped to ask the question, how do we connect to the bigger picture? So I can know if I have to make a choice where I should focus? That actually, it's a great dumb question. It makes you look smart, even though it's a dumb question.

**Jacob 21:42**

Yeah. You know, actually forgot to ask owner to take a step back for people not not familiar with Keller Williams. How are so what does the company do? How many employees do you have there? And the reason why I wanted to ask this is because I wanted to get your perspective on how do you coach the employees in your company to do this? I mean, do you train them some way? Do you just have one on

one conversations? Is there some sort of a structured process you guide people through to help them find their one thing? And also to not just identify it, but to kind of go after it?

**Jay 22:15**

Sure, sure. Keller Williams, when I joined, had 6700 agents that was 20 years ago, a little over 20 years. Today, we have over 190,000 associates in 50 countries, countries.

**Jacob 22:29**

Wow.

**Jay 22:30**

So we're a franchise company. So the vast majority of those are independent contractors. That's how real estate sales works. They're not employees, except in a few rare instances. And we have franchisees. And so when I look at our corporate headquarters here in Austin, I think we have 371 employees. And I'll tell you, even in our industry, we're very lean. And I think that has a lot to do with how Gary is incredibly clear about what matters. And like, you know, it's like, we've never had a franchise sales department ever. And he goes, you don't need one, if you have the best franchise model. Now that's obviously coming. Like there's a lot of bias in that statement. But if you're, if you're your model has inherent value, people will seek you out. And that's proven true.

**Jay 23:17**

So there's a lot of departments we don't even have, because we've done other things well enough to not need them. So lean I've run a division that has about 44 employees. And as a company, we tried to get really clear on our annual goals. We call it a GPS, it's in the book, what is our number one goal? What are three to five kind of maximum priorities to achieve it? And you would order those if we only did one thing to achieve that goal, what would it be great, we nail that we get another chance, what's the second priority, and you work your way through five true priorities in order of priority. And each of those priorities, you can have up to five strategies.

**Jay 24:00**

And the goal here is on one piece of paper, face up, you don't have to turn it over, you don't have to go into eight point type. You can have all of the major objectives and strategies. And we call that that's how you get everybody on the same page. So even though we're this giant company that is moving into all of these different spaces, we have that document, and we have that clarity. And then as our departments scale down, we're assigned different pieces of different priorities. And we might build those same plans for our teams. And then we're going to get caught up a little bit in the technical here. This is called the GPS. It's our one page goals, right? Those cascade through the organization. And then on a weekly basis, I meet with the people that report to me, and they have a one page set of goals. We call it a 4-1-1. And it's four weeks, one month and one year on one piece of paper. And so every week, they look and they have their annual goals based on our company priorities based on Those they put their monthly goals that will get them closer to their annual.

**Jay 25:05**

And every week, they put their weekly goals that line up to their monthly goals that line up to their annual goals that line up to the divisional company goals. So it's a cascading set of priorities. So that every week, I spend 30 minutes or so with the key people who, who who work with me, and we review their weekly priorities. And once a month, I will look at their monthly priorities and just ask the question, how does this help us achieve our goals? And at the beginning of the year is the most work, right? We ask what's our one thing and then based on that we create the cascade.

**Jay 25:40**

So there is a fair amount of institutional buy in, that makes it really work at a high level. But what I love about it, is throughout the organization, every body, like gets at least a check in to know that they're operating in a way that actually leads to the overall success of the company. And it's really hard to know like, I want to be a best selling author someday, Jacob, how that could take five years, how do I behave this week? That process of working backwards? What would I have to achieve by the end of the year now based on that this month? Now, based on that this week? Now, based on that today? Based on my daily goal? What do I have to do right now, we call that goal setting to the now we're just working backwards from a discrete goal, and then breaking it into manageable bite sized. It's just a process for doing that. And we do that with lots of corporations with our training.

**Jacob 26:34**

And I like that approach. So totally. I mean, the process is very easy to understand, I think on a corporate level. As far as how you set the one thing for the organization each year, how does that map back to the one thing for the person? Do you do you take a similar approach with employees who are looking for their one thing for themselves?

**Jay 26:56**

Well, you hope that a certain level of employment, people are an engineer because they realize that writing code is their one thing. And that's how they are they've chosen to excel at and that gives them some level of work doesn't always make you happy, but it should make bring you some level of fulfillment. Right. There are hard days. I mean, I'm an author and a teacher, and I'm an executive, there are parts of that job that absolutely tapped into my inner purpose that why I'm here, and there's stuff that will just put your soul on ice, right? I mean, I don't love reading p&l. I'm an English French major. But it's necessary that because I'm passionate overall, I do it.

**Jay 27:36**

So first off, unless they're straight out of college, we hope that they've done some of this interior work. And occasionally, you know, we look up and as our in our coaching sessions, I be like Jacob, you realize that you've got two hats that you're wearing right now you're having to produce this podcast, and you're doing your your writing job, I see that you just like the days that you're doing the podcast, you're just bouncing, have you thought about just going full time into the podcast, instead of having like that kind of split your time and marketing between the audio and the written. And like, if you're if you're working with someone, you can start to see patterns if you ask the right questions.

**Jay 28:16**

And a lot of times people self discover, and here's a great question for everybody listening, you've discovered that you're not on the right path. And you need to go to your boss and you want to adjust your job description, the language I've been taught is, Jacob, what would I have to do to earn the right to be the next person you interview for a Podcast Producer in our company? And it's a very specific question. You're not asking, Can I do it? You're asking what would I have to do to earn the right? And it's a bit of an integrity question. Because if your boss is, they have to think about the answer. Right? Right.

**Jay 28:57**

And because you're not saying you can't go back in time and go to college for a degree, they might say, you're probably gonna have to take some night classes, you're gonna have to learn how to use the software. And you probably might have to, on your weekend job, show me that you can produce a podcast, so maybe go out and bring me a reel, right. So I'm just making this stuff objective.

**Jacob 29:15**

Yeah, no, I totally get it.

**Jay 29:17**

But the earn is the key word, what would I have to do to earn the right to be to be a serious candidate for the next opportunity there? Now you can work backwards, they'll tell you, hopefully, well, I think it's these things. Awesome. So I'm going to put them on my 411. And I'm going to put it on the personal column, not the business column, because I realized this is me and trying to develop myself to be a better employee. Would you hold me accountable on that? You can ask me after I've done checked every box on the work side, you can ask me. Hey, Jay, did you run your five miles today? Hey, J did you go do the homework you were going to do on your professional development?

**Jay 29:54**

And we found it just knowing that someone's going to ask you about it makes people About 77% more likely to do it.

**Jacob 30:02**

Wow, that's huge.

**Jay 30:04**

It's much better than written, just written goals, written goals is about 36% more achieve more achievement there, the Knowing that someone's going to ask you, there's that level of accountability makes people incredibly likely to make some progress towards those goals, because they don't want to show up and say, I didn't do anything.

**Jacob 30:23**

You also mentioned something interesting, which is that there are some aspects of your job that you're not going to like, you know,

**Jay 30:28**

It's called work.

**Jacob 30:29**

Exactly, exactly. So in your case, it's, you know, the p&I stuff.

**Jay 30:34**

Actually, I use that as a classic example, I was trying to be unsuccessfully funny, because I am a French English major, I actually kind of enjoy it now. It's perverse. But paperwork in general, like going through the bills and signing off on that part of the job. It's a necessary evil, I have to pay attention. I don't want to turn an honest person into a thief because they have access to our Amex card, so I have to check. But it doesn't give me joy. It's just part of the job.

**Jacob 31:04**

Yeah. But you also said something interesting, which is that because you're a passionate person, you bring that passion with you. And I think, you know, there's always this debate in the business world, should you pursue your passion, or should you bring your passion with you, for example, in my case, I didn't actually pursue my passion. I mean, I was never passionate about writing, or speaking, or having a podcast or doing anything around leadership, for that matter. I was passionate about marketing, I thought I was gonna be the CMO of a company and go get my MBA at some, you know, University, and then climb the corporate ladder, hey, that's what I was passionate about. Didn't turn out that way for me. But as I learned that I started to get good at some of these other things, started to get good at sharing ideas and thoughts and having a ..., you know, then my passion and my interest group. So what are your thoughts on this debate between follow your passion or bring your passion with you to whatever it is that you do?

**Jay 32:03**

So I introduced the word so I'll take ownership of that, that's I'll be accountable. I the word passion can be deceptive, because passion is fleeting, okay. So you can have a passionate affair with someone, that can then go cold. So that just you know, that's been 21 years since I've been single. So that's, that's old. I don't even know why that metaphor showed up. But like, I don't love the word passion, we use the word purpose, very purposely in the book, and it's a placeholder for your mission.

**Jay 32:39**

So I think that, if we're lucky, and we work at it, we can start to identify a directional sense of where we need to be headed, to kind of achieve our self actualization as human beings, right. And it is a journey, very few people know this coming out of the gate. And some of it can be professional and purpose. And some of it can be personal, that we start to get clues if we pay attention. What are the decisions that I've made, that I've really been happy I made, you know, to partner with this person to marry this person to do business with this company to choose this part of my career?

**Jay 33:19**

And one of the ones I've really regretted, right, where I looked up, and maybe I was making a lot of money, but I was inherently unhappy. Those are clues to when we're moving towards or away from the

things that truly matter to us. So I think they're there, whether we have articulated them or not. There's a great book called The the happiness hypothesis. I think it's Jonathan door. And one of the metaphors that was in that book originally, and I've read in many books sense is the elephant in the writer. Have you heard that, Jacob?

**Jacob 33:57**

I don't think so.

**Jay 33:59**

It stuck with me and informed kind of the sense of the journey that we're on. He just said picture in your head, a small child riding on the back of an elephant, right? You've probably seen it on some, you know, National Geographic show you watched, right? Some, you know, shirtless teenager with a little bamboo stick riding on an elephant through the jungle. You got that in your head?

**Jacob 34:22**

Yep.

**Jay 34:22**

Okay. So, the question they ask is, with that bamboo stick, you've got a 70 pound kid on a 1.5 ton 2000, you know, 3000 pound elephant. Is there anything the child could truly do to stop the elephant if the elephant chose to go in a different direction?

**Jacob 34:42**

Yeah, not sure

**Jay 34:44**

The physics are not in the child's favor. The rider, we often think that the rider is in charge. But the truth is, the elephant chooses to go where the rider directs if the elephant wanted to be in charge, They'd be going where the elephant wanted to go, but the elephant chooses. So the rider is our intellect, the elephants is our heart. And so a lot of times people look up. And this is called a midlife crisis. And the driver says, How did I get here? And the elephant says, You've been beating me and driving me this. And this is not where I want to be.

**Jay 35:23**

But the elephants actually, almost always in charge. And so I just usually tell people, if you don't have a clue where you're going, look backwards, your elephants probably the majority of the turns, they were actually in control, you thought you were. But there's a clue, like you got into this. Because there was something it was doing for you. Now I understand that there are circumstances that people are born into, that are very hard to change, that's got nothing to do with the elephant. That's just horrible luck and life circumstances, they were born into a situation. And now they have to work disproportionately hard to get out of it. That's, that's the world we're living in. And thankfully, people are waking up to it, that some people have to walk a lot farther to get the same results.

**Jay 36:06**

But I think the principle of the elephant matters. So I think that it's always there. And our opportunity is to tap into it, to articulate it and get clear. And when we're really clear, ultimately, the direction we're going, like I'm headed north, and that North might represent for you, I want to impact people's lives through a podcast or for me through books, or whatever that is that that's the thing that ultimately is my truenorth. At the very least, I know not to go south. I might go North by Northwest. Now I'm kind of weaving back and forth. But directionally, I'm making progress towards this thing that is ultimately hopefully going to bring me the highest levels of fulfillment.

**Jay 36:48**

So as a manager, I would tell you, you can't motivate people. People are motivated, you can help them tap into their motivation, you can ask them questions about why did you take this job? What did you think it was going to be about? What did you hope to achieve, you can help to discover that maybe they are on the wrong path or going the wrong direction. So we can help people tap into and discover their motivation, but their motivation is with them. The idea of motivating people, I think that's a little bit of a myth, I can give people a pep talk. But I know the difference between a self managed and self motivated employee and one that has to be pushed, the person who has to be pushed is probably in the wrong path.

**Jacob 37:32**

I love that because it also means that I think we as individuals need to have a little bit more accountability, and not just say, Oh, you know, my, you know, my leader doesn't do anything to motivate me, my company. It's like, you gotta have some accountability over your own life and your own career and seeking the experiences and the path that you want. And not assuming that somebody is just going to come along and take care of everything for you.

**Jay 37:54**

So that giant statement, Jacob, I could not agree with you more. Yeah, we have a little section in the book. Because, you know, it's the difference between being accountable and being a victim. And victims, very tough word, and we acknowledge it, but we just couldn't find a better one, people who do not lean into their own DNA and how they got there. Right. If they make it all about their circumstances, their the likelihood that they become a victim of those circumstances goes ways up way up, unless they got really lucky. But when we choose to own our part of why we're there, like, again, I'm going to go there are people that are born into very different circumstances mean, I won the lottery.

**Jay 38:37**

I was born a white male in North America, in America. So I won the genetic lottery, the luck factor. So I got many advantages from those things. But when I look up, and I'm unhappy, my first job is to ask, How did I contribute to the situation I'm in? Because I can control what I do. I can control my attitude about what I do. If you're my boss, and I'm like, God, I'm miserable in this relationship. I can't control how you treat me. I can control how I communicate with you, how I let you know how I feel about how you work with me, like but I want the accountability is really about trying to give people agency, and it's very easy in our world to look up and feel like you're just a drift.

**Jay 39:23**

So accountability. To me, it's all about what's my agency here? How can I be accountable so that I can have some control? And if I feel like I have control, I'll do something. And if I do something, I have a chance to get out of these circumstances. Does that make sense? I hate that word victim. And I know that there like I said, some people are truly disadvantaged. How do we help people find their agency through accountability?

**Jacob 39:47**

No, I love that. I mean, I think it makes a lot of sense. And, I mean, I couldn't agree more because I, at least, I feel like I've talked to a lot of people sometimes that have, like you said, it's an unfortunate word to use, but it's true, kind of a victim mentality. And instead, we need to have more of that ownership mentality. Like it's your path, your destiny, you shape you create. I mean, I come from an immigrant family, they came from the Republic of Georgia, they had no money, they didn't speak the language, they could have just easily said, Well, you know what, we have nothing, we're going to create nothing, we're going to live in poverty in the United States.

**Jacob 40:21**

But they didn't have that victim mentality, they had the mentality of work hard create the life that we want, look for opportunities. I mean, my dad had to learn to speak English by watching the Johnny Carson show with a Russian English translation dictionary. So you know, I come from that mentality very much. And even when I was growing up, my dad would always say, don't be a victim. And, you know, nobody cares about your problems, like, except for family, of course, but it's like, you need to shape the your path. And, and I love that approach. I mean, I couldn't, it's kind of like a tough love thing. But I think it's necessary for a lot of people to hear.

**Jay 40:56**

And as long as we acknowledge that, like your folks, some people do start out at a distinct disadvantage. What we're looking for is, where do you still have control? Where do you still have the ability to change your future? Because it's so much better to wake up in the morning and know that you have the ability to impact your life than to feel like you're just a victim of it? And how do we get to that frame of mind?

**Jay 41:22**

And as long as we acknowledge that different people have different starting places, I think we're okay there. And we're just like, let's give people agency, one of the tougher questions that Gary will ask me, he's my accountability partner. You know, maybe I had a really bad interaction with a employee. And he's very common for him or my coach, I also have a coach to say, Jay, what's your DNA in that? Let's just start there. I get the circumstances. I'm sympathetic. It sucks that that happened. Let's talk a little bit about your DNA in this. And it's very uncomfortable. And I'll just be frank, it pisses me off. Sometimes I'm like, Yeah, but that person did this to me. Yes. But is there anything that you did to contribute to how that happened?

**Jay 42:03**

And sometimes it's like, I'm just standing there, and the asteroid hit me. And he's like, well, should you stand under an awning next time? And I'm like, Yes. But come on, give me a break. Like, sometimes it is bad luck. But it's a powerful question. Because sometimes you realize, I'm enabling people. Maybe I'm enabling people. And then one of the reasons that people take advantage of me is I'm, I'm trusting to the point of naivete, and I should exercise a little healthy skepticism, and inspect a little bit more before I jump into things. And like trust is not a dirty word, someone took advantage of you. But the ownership you can take in that as you know what I should have asked, I need to take this contract home and read it. And I may need to get someone to review it with me before I sign it. But I'm really excited about this opportunity.

**Jay 42:50**

And then you go do your due diligence. But like there's, there's always that moment, you can ask that question. And they what you get, I think is this feeling of agency and control over your life, that's the gift it gives you.

**Jacob 43:03**

I like that. Okay, so we mentioned that one of the concepts from the one thing isn't that you only pick one thing, you do many things, but it's kind of like you prioritize one thing like that's kind of where your North Star is, so to speak. And you mentioned that there are four pitfalls that people might experience when living the one thing and I'm also very excited to talk about this, because as you mentioned earlier, this isn't something you talk about in the book or something you've shared in other podcasts. So where do people stumble, when they try to make that one thing, a reality?

**Jay 43:37**

Where there's kind of a flow here, and this has been fun. This is in my training and consulting with people trying to live it and my employees, other businesses that we work with, right? We go through this path. And I think the first thing people have is they have a goal, but they lack clarity about exactly what it is they want. So I think the first pitfall and they all build on each other is a lack of clarity. And there's a local entrepreneur named Keith Cunningham. If you've never had him on your show, you should because he is absolutely amazing. written one of my favorite book, The Road Less stupid, but he asked great question.

**Jacob 44:16**

I love that title.

**Jay 44:17**

Yeah, and he is funny. And anyway, so he says, generality kills clarity. And so what we have to do is be very specific. So when you say, you know, I would like to do X, let's really define what the finish line looks like and why it's important. So clarity often gives us clues into what we need to do to achieve where we need to go. generalities don't do it. So, like people will say, hey, I want to look great for swimsuit season. Okay, that's actually probably a grab bag of dieting and physical fitness goals and shopping for an appropriate bathing suit for your body type. I could break that down into, you need to shop differently, you need to prepare your food differently, you need to eat differently, you need to

sleep differently, you need drink more water and you need exercise. And you can't do all those things at once, you would have to break it down. Right?

**Jay 45:14**

You would have to say, well, of all of those things, what would be my first priority, if I wanted to. So you want to get really clear about what it is you're trying to achieve. Because that that helps you avoid this overload. And where people start off with a new year's resolution. That's actually fabulously unrealistic if you broke it down into goals. Number two, is they're actually really clear about what it is they want. But they don't have any sense of focus in their approach to get it. Now we're getting right into the one thing, I know what the thing is my goal, I'm going to use the tools and the one thing, what's the one thing I can do such that by doing it, everything else will be easier or unnecessary?

**Jay 45:57**

I need to look at all the activities that I could do, and ask, what is the real driver that I need to be focused on? That will get me what I want? Does that make sense?

**Jacob 46:09**

It does. Yes.

**Jay 46:11**

Cool, so the first one is a lack of clarity. The second one is a lack of focus in their approach if they were clear. So if they were clear, and they were focused, I think then the next trap is they don't actually have any free time to execute. They've said yes to so many other things. They can't say yes to this new thing. And I see this a lot with employees, like we have a new initiative, we're going to launch x, y, z, right? Who wants to be on that team, and you see the eager ones raise their hand. And I sometimes see it's the same people that always raise their hand. And I might just pull them aside and say, Jacob, I love that you want to do this. When are you going to do it. And then you see the panic, right? they've committed to something without actually having any bandwidth to do it. And I gotta tell you, we do it to ourselves all the time.

**Jacob 47:05**

I was gonna say, in our personal lives, I know lots of people who commit to things, you know, a play dates and dinners and stuff like that. And then the day comes where, you know, those things actually need to happen. And it just seemed a bailing on everybody. Sorry, I can and it happens all the time. And in my mind, I'm like, why are you committing to things, if you just think about it, before you commit to it, it will make everybody's life so much easier.

**Jay 47:30**

You could teach a whole class on that, I'm sure right. There's so many techniques to buy yourself time to use a schedule to use other tools to make sure if I'm going to make a commitment, that's one of the number one reasons I say no, like you want me to co author a book with you. And you'd be like, I'd be like, you know what, I would love to do that. I think it's a great idea. But I already have existing commitments that I'm I've, I've made commitments on, and made commitments with other people on.

And if I were to take this on too, I would be doing someone an injustice, right, they wouldn't be getting half of my focus, when they should be getting all of my focus, or my family could be the one that suffers.

**Jay 48:11**

I've over committed myself professionally. And now instead of watching whatever the latest show is, you know, my wife and I are actually between shows, so I don't have one to bring up to right now. But like the office or whatever, with my wife, after our kids go to bed, I'm working on my laptop at nine o'clock. Right? So those are those are there in order you want clarity, if you have clarity, you need to be focused in your approach, like what do I need to do? And then you need to look up and say, Do I have time on my calendar? So much of our processes? What are my goals? And what is my time look like? And if I block the time to do the things I need to do, I usually feel like I'm on track.

**Jay 48:52**

You know what I said I was gonna write one chapter this week, I'm going to look at my calendar and go, how many hours do I have blocked to do that activity. And at this point, my career, I kind of know how many hours it might take, and I'm going, you know what, I think I can get that done. If I don't, I'm going to start canceling on people to get that time I need for my number one. And so you get to the last one. You have you clarity and trying to build the thing you're clear about what it is you want, you're clear about what you have to do to get it. You've got time on your calendar, but then you leave that time unprotected is the last one.

**Jay 49:28**

And this is where we don't have a process for saying no, we don't have a process for guiding people around our principles and the operating hypothesis we used for the one thing that we've been living, is you do your one thing in the morning, those hours where we tend to have the most willpower. It's easier to say yes, because we have energy. there's fewer distractions early in the morning than there are late in the day. And it's also great like at noon. If you did your number one thing. You're like Hooray, I'm getting the cheese burger to celebrate, right? It's not hanging over your head, you're not going home, knowing that your number one priority is still undone. So you knock it out early. And then a lot of your unstructured time is in the afternoon. And so a lot of that is just about protecting it with scripts. So ask me to do something at 10am. Tomorrow, Jacob will roleplay it.

**Jacob 50:21**

I have a meeting, I need you to join, we're going to be talking about sales stuff.

**Jay 50:25**

Oh, man, that would be awesome. Unfortunately, I've already got another commitment at that time. I'm a look, I actually have some openings like two in the afternoon or at four in the afternoon. I'm looking out and my mornings are just crammed. But my afternoons I have a lot of flexibility would an afternoon time work for you.

**Jacob 50:45**

Sure.

**Jay 50:46**

So here's the secret, I'm never going to tell you that my commitment tomorrow is to myself. I'm meeting by myself with only myself, there's no one who's going to be disappointed other than myself. I just said I've already made another commitment at that time. And I think of that commitment is also not just to me and my professional journey, but to the partners and the employees that count on me to do my job. My wife and family, they count on me to do my job so I don't get fired. And we can put food on the table and have a nice house to live in. Right? There are other dependencies even if I'm the only one there. But if I just tell you, oh, you know, I was going to be outlining a new book tomorrow morning, then someone's going to be like an aggressive person go. Well, could you do that another time?

**Jay 51:28**

But it's very rare that someone says what can you cancel on that person? It takes some hutzpah, to ask someone to cancel. So the secret here is I have a commitment. And the commitment is to you don't reveal that it's not with someone else. And just offer up alternatives. There are always alternatives. You know, and so we really try to teach people that skill set. It's not a no, it's not now. We do that with our kids. Hey, when I when mommy's done, we'll do this. Can you give mommy just 15 minutes? Can you go do this? Like we buy time? Right? And we because it's not it's not a no, it's not now.

**Jacob 52:07**

Now, I frequently share a story that somebody in my team, Michelle, she helps me with a bunch of stuff. And I remember I think it was a year or two ago, I just threw so much work at her. It was just not possible to get anything done with the timelines that I set out. And so she had a choice, right? She could have just come back to me and said, No, there's no way I can do this. But instead, she came back and said, Hey, Jacob, you, you're asking you to do a lot of stuff during this timeline. Which one, which one of these things? Do you want me to prioritize first?

**Jay 52:38**

Oh, love her. Awesome

**Jacob 52:42**

I was like, wait a minute, are you? Are you trying to tell me no, without saying like, I was like, wait, what's going on here? There's Jedi Mind Games. And I realize that she's forcing me to really think about does everything really need to be done at the same time? And so she was basically saying no, without saying, no, and I love that story. I think it's a great technique.

**Jay 53:03**

That's actually a skill we teach. And it's really, really helpful if you're in an admin position. And like, the biggest challenge I get, like in a corporate training is like someone's a an executive assistant, well, what's my one thing, because they quickly identify their job is to take all of the 80% items off of their executives plate, so their executive can do their one thing. So they tend to be a grab bag of task. And I tend to say your job is to remove the 80% from your partner's plate, I think of an executive assistant as a partner, right? They are the partner that makes the big things possible. So your job is to only 80%. And the number one thing that you can do is to constantly be in touch with your executives priorities.

**Jay 53:47**

So you know which tasks go first because there will always a great executive or leader or founder or whatever, whoever's in that, that driver position, they can always generate more tasks than a human being can do. And the reality is, if you're always triageing the priorities, right, like a great emergency room, nurse, this one's not going to bleed out. I've got a tourniquet, right? And they're all about prioritization. And a lot of those things eventually, because they prioritize, right? They just go away. They were never they were an idea that didn't have to be done. But if you don't communicate with your executive, she might not be able to tell you Oh, that was last week. You know what, we don't actually need it anymore.

**Jay 54:31**

But nature of a lot of people that go to those roles is there if it's on their list is going to get done someday. So that compensation helps them eliminate stuff that's no longer important. It was a flash, and helps them make sure that they're prioritizing their time. So it sounds like this individual you were working with was either trained really well or incredibly wise, because that's exactly how to succeed in that position.

**Jacob 54:56**

Yeah, no, she's pretty wise indeed. Well, I mean, I Can't believe that our time has already run out. I feel like I can still ask you a million more questions. Maybe to wrap up, let's end on the the best piece of advice that you have for people who are watching or listening to this, to start to practice the one thing. So if there's one thing that somebody can do, what would you recommend it be?

**Jay 55:21**

I would ask him to tackle this on a weekly basis, right? Daily, I would love a daily habit. But I would have them look at their professional goals, and just set a time frame and maybe 30 minutes on a Sunday or a Friday before they left the office and look at their next week and say, of all the things I could do next week, right, just list them out, what's the number one thing that I could achieve next week. And then if they can identify their number one goal for the week, the thing that they really, if they could just do it, then manage their time to make sure that thing happened.

**Jay 55:56**

And a time a week, you know, especially a lot of people don't have a lot of control of their day. So it might be that some days it bleeds to the next. But if you actively manage your calendars, like I am going to make a stand, I don't care if I have to call my spouse on Friday saying I got to stay late, because I didn't do my number one, they start to learn a skill set there. And over time, they can start applying it to their days and their hours, right. But they start to learn how to manage their time they can control to do the things that they identify as true priorities. And I'll tell you just the act of going through your to do list and saying what's my number one here and my your top five, even, it's a great sense of it relaxes people, they're like, wow, I just because I spent 30 minutes kind of triageing my list into a success list is what we call it. Now I've gone from 25 to five things that actually matter. And I know what's number one.

**Jay 56:54**

I now can know I can sleep a little better knowing that all of those things don't get to tyrannized me every day. And I'm probably more likely to get my number one done, because the reality is I fall prey some weeks, I look at that list of 25. I just want to make it shorter. So I do the stuff that's easy, that I can do quickly and cross off, like email triage. But it's actually not very important or impactful. So we want to flip the scripts. Let's turn on our to do list for the week into a success list and make a stand around our number one. How does that sound, Jacob?

**Jacob 57:27**

I love it make a success list. That's great. Well, Jay, where can people go to learn more about you the book, anything that you want to mention for people to check out? Please feel free to do so?

**Jay 57:41**

Well, we do have our own podcast, The One Thing my partner Jeff woods, it's really about living these principles. So they can tap into that for absolutely free. We also have a ton of resources on our website. The one thing with the number one, the number one thing com and there's just tons of free resources. People don't even have to go buy the book. I would love it if they did, obviously. But if they don't want to make that commitment yet, go watch some of the videos, go listen to a little bit podcast and experiment like do that week or two for a week or two and say, Is this making a difference? Do I feel better? Do I feel like I have more control of my life? The answer is yes. Then keep leaning in, you know, add a little bit more. I've been living this for goodness now I guess. 13 years.

**Jacob 58:23**

Wow.

**Jay 58:24**

Yeah. And it's made a huge difference for me and my family.

**Jacob 58:27**

I love it. Well, Jay, thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me today.

**Jay 58:32**

Hey, thanks for having me. I appreciate your sharing this message with your audience.

**Jacob 58:37**

Of course, it was a lot of fun. And thanks everyone for tuning in. My guest again has been Jay Papasan, make sure to check out their book, the podcast and all sorts of resources. I promise you'll be glad you did. And I will see all of you next time.