



## Interview with Jeff Goins

Jeff Goins is a popular blogger, speaker and author who has both self-published and traditionally published several books, including *You Are a Writer Now* and *Wrecked*. He has developed a large and passionate following in the past several years. He graciously agreed to an exclusive interview for Voxie Media's **Beta Author** program. <http://www.goinswriter.com>.

**Debbie:** This is Debbie Weil, and this is another edition of the *Beta Author expert interview series*. Our guest today is the amazing Jeff Goins. Jeff, welcome. I'm going to say a quick introduction, and then we'll get right to questions.

Jeff is based in Nashville. He's a writer. He's a blogger. He was, until very recently, communications director at an organization called *Adventures in Missions*, which specializes in Christian short-term mission trips. He started writing a blog in 2010 that has really taken off and he now has a huge following.

He has self-published one book that I am absolutely crazy about. It's called *You Are a Writer (So Start Acting Like One)*. He published *Wrecked: When a Broken World Slams Into Your Comfortable Life* with a big-name, traditional publisher last year. I believe he's working on another one.

Let me start with setting the scene here. Let's go as deep as we can because Jeff has a lot of great stuff to share. What we're going to talk about with Jeff is the topic of *voice in writing*.

On Jeff's blog, he says a couple things about what he wanted to do with his blog. He said he had some questions. How do successful writers make a living? What does it take to get published? When is it okay to pursue a passion? Why do writers write?



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He talks about the idea of developing a worldview, or having a worldview, and writing in a way that people might even disagree with. Jeff, why don't we jump right in there? Tell me how you define voice in writing and why it's so important.

**Jeff:** Great question, Debbie. Good to be with you and everybody on the call. Thanks for having me. I hope the weather is favorable where you are. The sun's coming out, and it might be good jogging weather here.

I think voice is the most important aspect of a writing career. The most important thing that you should be pursuing as a writer is not money or accolades or any of that stuff. It's your voice. Your voice is what is going to resonate with your audience. It's going to be what ultimately leads to all of those other great results that people aspire for.

***Your writing voice is basically the intersection of what deeply satisfies you as a writer and what resonates with an audience.***

Your writing voice, I think, is basically the intersection of what deeply satisfies you as a writer and what resonates with an audience. The reason I think more people miss the boat is that they write about what they love, and nobody seems to care. Ultimately, there's something dissatisfying about sharing art or creative endeavors and seeing people not care about them.

I believe that we do want to write in a way that resonates with an audience. That's one extreme. The other extreme is writing just for the audience. The problem with that is you can get successful in the wrong thing, and you can go, "Man, I'm writing all this stuff and it's being super successful, and my heart's not in it." I think your voice is that area of resonance in what satisfies you and what affects an audience.

**Debbie:** Is that still important if, as the Beta Authors are, you're writing a nonfiction business book, for example? It's not fiction. It's not poetry. What would you say about that?

**Jeff:** Does that still apply in terms of how you find your voice?

**Debbie:** Sure.



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***Before you can find your voice, you have to understand your own worldview.***

**Jeff:** Yeah, absolutely. Before you can find your voice, you have to understand your own worldview. I think, particularly in the business world, particularly online with blogging and social media, people are missing the boat with this, and a lot of gurus are giving bad advice about what it takes to succeed as a communicator.

What they're saying is you need to pick a topic. You need to talk about that topic so much and so consistently and in such a helpful way, that you're constantly sharing your expertise, that people start seeing you as an expert in that particular field. If you do that enough with the right topic, you will eventually build a platform and then get paid to be an expert in that field or topic or whatever it might be.

The problem is most people go, "What can I write about that hasn't already been written about?" The answer is nothing. You can write about nothing. Even the most niched down niche has been exploited, because the Internet is a big, big place. Everybody is writing about something. It's impossible to Google something that doesn't have some sort of result that you're going to get.

The problem is that's not really what makes an author or a writer successful, but makes us love someone like a Seth Godin or a Stephen King or an Anne Lamott. Nonfiction, fiction, business advice, narrative nonfiction, it doesn't matter what they field is or what the genre is. What matters is that you're writing in a way that resonates with your readership.

The way that you do that is you take a worldview. An example of a simple worldview is "good always overcomes evil," or "it's better to give than to receive." These are ways of looking at the world that not everybody shares, but some people do.

***When you pick a worldview, you go from just saying, "I'm going to write a book about finance," to saying, "I'm going to write a book about personal finance that's going to help people succeed so that they can be generous..."***

When you pick a worldview, you go from just saying, "I'm going to write a book about finance," to saying, "I'm going to write a book about personal finance



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that's going to help people succeed so that they can be generous, because I believe that wealth as an end to itself is not a good goal. We become wealthy so that we can help other people."

That's a worldview, and not everybody agrees with that. Some people actually very much disagree with that. But people who do agree with it will love the message and will therefore love and resonate with the author. That's how you go from writing one great best seller to writing 10. You write with intent, representing a worldview that's going to resonate with an audience.

**Debbie:** Jeff, you're really saying that no matter what your topic, if you step back and think about why you want to write about the marketing cycle or whatever it is, what your goal is, what your sense of mission is about your topic, then that's how you'll discover your worldview. Most likely, we probably all do have a worldview associated with that topic, but we don't always articulate it. Is that part of what you're saying?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I think the worldview trumps the topic. Every great writer does this, whether they realize it or not. To give you some examples from the business world in best-selling authors, I mentioned **Seth Godin**. He writes with a worldview, and that's why he started writing about marketing, and then business, but now he can write about public education or arts or the economy or the nonprofit sector.

His worldview is something like, "The system is broken, and we can fix it." Whether he's talking about the industrial complex and why factory mines don't work anymore, or why we need to care more about fine art, the point is there something here that's broken, and we can fix it.

Take another business author, somebody like **Malcolm Gladwell**. He clearly has a worldview. He's writing about how to be an expert, how to make big ideas tick. He's writing random stories about journalism pieces that he has done. He's writing about a lot of different topics, but the worldview and the style and the voice are very consistent.

Gladwell's worldview is something like, "There is scientific proof for any phenomenon that we see in the world, particularly in the business world." He



then goes through and tells you, "Here's how people are successful. It's not just chance, and it's not just luck and hard work. Here's what happens."

There's a worldview. That allows you to write about a certain topic and add a level of nuance to it, so that even if that topic has been written about before—and it has—you're going to bring something unique to that.

### ***How do you find and articulate your worldview?***

**Debbie:** Any tips on how a writer, particularly say a first-time writer working on a short book, can really discover and articulate their worldview?

### **Ask yourself: what bugs you?**

**Jeff:** Absolutely. Very simple question: What bugs you? What can you just not stand? What drives you crazy? The wrong question to ask is, "What am I about? What do I believe in?" These are hard questions, because we're not honest about those things. We would say, "I believe that good overcomes evil, that generosity wins," and all these things that are clichés. But we don't live like that, sometimes.

The best way to find your very specific worldview is to look at things that bug you on a consistent basis. Maybe it's lines at the grocery store. Maybe it's typos. Maybe it's bad customer service. Whatever it might be, it's the thing that drives you crazy, that you think should drive everyone crazy and it doesn't. It doesn't drive everyone crazy; it drives you crazy, and a handful of people that are like you.

The question to ask is, "What are some things that really bug me? If I had a million dollars or had all the power in the world, I would fix this thing, I would do away with it." Look at that and analyze that. Look at all those things that might bug you, and see what the common thread is and what the solution is. That solution is usually a hint of your worldview.

***Jeff's worldview: "People should care about the work that they do, whether or not it affects the bottom line."***



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For example, I cannot stand bad communication. Lazy speeches or sermons I abhor. Typos and poorly written copy on pages. I realize that not everybody cares about that stuff. I can act like it's a sin to have a typo on a website, and to know about it and not care about it, because you're still getting your sales or whatever. That indicates to me that there's a worldview there, which is, "People should care about the work that they do, whether or not it affects the bottom line."

**Debbie:** You are preaching to the choir. I'm one of those weird people that can't stand typos. But then you took it one step further. You said people should care about their work, whether or not it affects the bottom line.

**Jeff:** Here's an example. It's not just communication. I'm a communicator, so I'm sensitive to these issues, but it goes deeper than that. It is a worldview. I look at everything through this lens. I was at Jiffy Lube the other day. I go to Jiffy Lube because it's fast, but when I go there, I go through this dehumanized experience where somebody's reading a script to me.

"Have you been here before? Step right here. Watch there. Sit down. There's coffee there." They're following a manual, and nobody cares about that system. Somebody has created a system so the franchise can maintain what they call their level of excellence. But because of this local branch, they haven't hired the right people.

These people do not care about the work that they're doing. They are reading a script. That bugs me. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth. I'm willing to pay more for a service in which I have a more human interaction, because it bugs me. The truth is that doesn't bug everybody, or not everybody's willing to pay more to have a more quality interaction.

It's not just communication. That's a topic in which that worldview fits, but the reality is I feel that way every time I walk through the checkout line at Wal-Mart, which isn't very often. If somebody's complaining to me about their job, I go, "I'm paying you to complain to me?"

Those types of experiences bother me, because I have this worldview that people should do great work regardless of the pay. Great work should be done



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because of the pride of honoring your craft, or pick another craft. That's what I'd do.

**Debbie:** It's interesting. I think that's also Seth Godin's worldview. That's part of what he expresses. It totally resonates with me. Maybe that's why I like Seth Godin, and that's why I found you to be very inspiring. Let's talk a little bit about the craft of writing, which I know, obviously, you care about a lot.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but the first book you published was, I believe, the self-published *You Are a Writer (So Start Acting Like One)*. It's a short book, which is what the Beta Authors are trying to do in this program as a first book. Tell us about writing it. How long did it take you? Was it hard? Was it based on a bunch of blog posts? Maybe also your decision to self-publish?

**Jeff:** Great question. The path to publishing this book is probably not a recommended one, but I think the principle is do whatever works to get you there. Once you publish one book, the next one is going to come that much more easily. The *New York Times* did a study about it. Something like over 80% of the population of the United States has a dream of writing a book someday. Obviously, there aren't that many books out there, so people aren't doing that.

I know because I have a lot of friends who say, "I'd like to write a book someday," but what they really say is, "I have three ideas for these three great books, and I don't know where to begin." I always tell people to pick the worst one first. Pick the one that has the least possibility of succeeding.

Write that first, because your first book is going to be the worst one you write, probably, because you're going to get better as you go. Pick one. Don't pick three. You don't have three great books in you. You have zero. Until you write one good book, you don't have three great ideas. They're just ideas. They're nothing. They are a dime a dozen.

What really makes a difference is putting action to the idea, making that idea happen. I had been saying for a long time that I wanted to write a book and wasn't doing that. Part of it was I was afraid to put my work out there, because I thought it would fail.



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Out of financial necessity, I decided to publish an eBook, because my wife was pregnant and about to have our son. A month before he was born, I released this eBook, because I heard that that was a way to make a little bit of side income. I thought, "Maybe if I do this and make enough money, my wife can stay home and raise our son," which is what she wanted to do.

The way that I picked the topic and tried to figure out what I was going to write about was I had started doing public speaking. One of the things that I started doing was talking about my journey of becoming a writer, building a blog, launching a writing career, and how it all began with an affirmation.

I told a friend that I wanted to be a writer, and he said, "You are a writer. You just need to write." That lesson, to me, was you have to believe in yourself before you actually do it. You have to believe that you can do it before you do it. I don't know if there are any Napoleon Hill fans listening, but that's a business classic I think can grow rich, and Napoleon Hill says, "Thoughts are things."

I think that's true. The thought that I am a writer—not that I would like to be one someday, but that I am—forced me to write. That forced me to start acting like it. I would introduce myself as a writer, and people would naturally go, "What do you write?" I felt foolish saying "nothing," so I started getting to work.

## ***How he decided on the topic for his self-published eBook***

I started sharing this story with people. In those speeches, I would challenge people. "If you've never declared yourself a writer, if you've used words like 'aspiring' and 'wannabe' or things like 'someday.'" I don't know why, but most writers struggle with this. They will not call themselves writers.

**Anne Lamott** says, "If you write, you're a writer." It doesn't mean you're a good one. It just means you're a writer, so go get better. I don't know why we exalt this term "writer" so highly, but we do, and we're afraid to own it. Every time, I would tell people, "Write down on a sheet of paper right now, 'I am a writer.' Read it to yourself. Believe it. Start acting like it."

Every time I did it I got phenomenal responses. This is the one thing that hung with people. It was one minor point in the whole talk, but it was the thing that





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resonated with people more than anything else I said. I realized people need to believe that they already are what they want to be. They just need to believe it, and own it, and start acting like it.

That's how I found the topic. In terms of how I wrote the book, the book is only 17,000 words. I went back and basically hodgepoded three different things eBooks that I had written, one of which I gave away for free as a survey to a handful of people to survey my audience.

Another was something that I had been working on, where I did a presentation to a college writing class, where I talked about how to build a platform. A lot of people were asking me about that, so I had the notes for that. The other part was this talk I'd been doing about how you're a writer and you need to start acting like it.

I had all this content, and I pulled it all together in a very hodgepodgey way and tried to make it work. I didn't pay to publish any of it. I crowdsourced the whole project. I wrote the rough draft. I posted a question on Twitter asking if anybody wanted a free preview of my eBook in exchange for editing it. I asked if any designers would be willing to design a cover for me for free in exchange for getting their name credit in the book, and if people would help me format it.

I got the book edited, designed, and formatted for free. I didn't have any money, and I didn't know this was going to succeed, but I believed that it could be successful and that, if it were successful, other people who helped me would share in that success.

And it was. In the past seven or eight months, over 30,000 people have downloaded it. As you're saying, Debbie, more than anything else I've written, it is the thing that people talk about the most, which is really humbling to me. I feel like I threw it together, and part of me wants to go back and edit that whole thing. I think the idea of it is what's so powerful about it.

**Debbie:** As Anne Lamott, who's also a hero of mine, says, "Perfection is the enemy of getting anything done, so do it." It's so true. It's a funny paradox, particularly for those who really care about the written word. This desire to have it be perfect is so overwhelming that it's paralyzing.



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I think you're not supposed to do this, but I love the way you turned a noun into a verb. You said "hodgepodged it together," which I love, because it's a great image. We're going to go with that.

Quick question about the self-publishing versus traditional publishing. I think it was last summer your first book came out with Thomas Nelson Publishers. It's called *Wrecked: When a Broken World Slams into your Comfortable Life*. I think you're working on another book for them. Can you give us an update on that?

**Jeff:** The publisher is actually Moody Publishers, but my friend Michael Hyatt, who is the chairman of Thomas Nelson, he wrote the foreword for it. The book came out with Moody Publishers. It's called *Wrecked*, you got that right. I'm working on another book for them that's coming out a year after the first one came out.

Last year, I had *You Are a Writer* come out. It was a self-published book that came out in April. Then in August, I had *Wrecked*, which is a traditional paperback book that came out. This year, I'm contracted to have another book come out August 1, and that's called *The In-Between*. It is a memoir, a bit of a departure from other stuff I've written. It is about slowing down and enjoying the moments in between the big moments in life.

**Debbie:** Interesting. Somehow, that feels to me like it is all of a piece. It fits, which is good, because I think people do want that from an author. I'm just going to guess all these fit into your worldview. Now that you've left your job to be a full-time writer, is this spacing important? It does have a lot of pressure, a book a year. Say something briefly about that.

**Jeff:** Probably 25% of my income comes from writing in general. I would not be able to launch out on my own following the traditional author model. It's hard to make a full-time living writing and publishing books. It is not impossible. I have friends who, every time they publish a book, it's a six-figure contract. But I don't have a lot of those friends.

It is getting harder and harder to traditionally publish books and make a great living off of it. Not impossible, but it is challenging. What I've done is essentially built a business around my platform. That gives me a lot of freedom to generate



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income, much of which passes through my website, and spend most of my time writing, without having to worry about getting that next contract or selling X amount of copies, otherwise it's going to be rice and beans for a few months.

I got really fortunate to be able to do that. I think the Internet and the way the new economy works makes it more possible for writers, who are naturally gifted communicators and producers of content and sharers of ideas, to get paid to do their art, without having to go sell a book once a year or write a couple of books every year.

I have a friend who is a novelist. She has to sell three novels a year to live. That works for her, but I would rather spend a little bit more time writing something that I believe in. I'm not saying that she doesn't, but it would be hard for me to churn that out so quickly and feel like I was doing my best work.

Having a side business that involves selling information products and doing consulting and coaching and teaching online courses, all of that gives me a lot of freedom to spend a lot of time writing, without needing that income. A book a year feels pretty good to me. It feels like there's enough time to let the last book settle with people, but at the same time, get my next idea out there, build up to it, launch it, and give it the best chance of succeeding.

**Debbie:** Jeff, you're saying that you are getting a book advance, because it's a traditional publisher, but you're making a considerable percentage of your revenue from your online writing program, information products, and selling things through your site. Is that what you're saying, that that is a significant piece of your revenue?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I haven't crunched the numbers. It's more than half. The more books that I write, the better I get paid, so the advances keep increasing, which is nice. If I was only living on those, if there was no other aspect to it, and my writing career was just writing and publishing books and living off of advances and royalty checks, then I would not be doing this full-time. I couldn't afford to do it.

**Debbie:** That's a very interesting point. What about self-publishing? You did have, and I guess are still having, a lot of success with the *You Are a Writer* eBook. It's only an eBook, right?



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**Jeff:** Yeah, it's just an eBook.

**Debbie:** Would you do more like that self-publishing? Where are you on that route?

**Jeff:** I would do more. That's a great question. I have several books that aren't a good fit for selling to a publisher. They're shorter form. I know that their form was written just for my tribe, for my blog audience. I know that I could package them and sell them and make good money. Instead of giving away 80% of the royalties to the publisher, I'm going to do most of the work and marketing on it and publish it as an eBook. I'd rather keep 75% of the royalties, self-publishing it.

I probably will eventually do that again. I'm not being as aggressive with it, because I am trying to focus on the traditional publishing route. Not because I don't love self-publishing, I do, but because, for me, it's partly a financial thing. I could make more money selling X number of online writing courses for \$200 versus trying to sell this many thousands of \$4.99 eBooks.

I don't try to publish books for financial reasons, but if I am going to do it for a financial reason, there are easier ways to make money. If I'm going to publish these eBooks that I have sitting on my desktop, I need to believe that the idea is ready for the world. I'm just not there yet. I think more people need to read *You Are a Writer*, and more people need to read *Wrecked*. I want to give my next book as much chance of success as possible.

I'm definitely interested in continuing to self-publish, as well as continuing to traditionally publish. I learn stuff from both. I learned how to boot strap stuff online and how to gorilla market your book. I also learned about the process of creating an excellent print book through working with a traditional publisher. I borrow from both to become a better author and entrepreneur.

**Debbie:** I will point out for those listening that when you go out to crowdsource for editing or design or formatting, you do have this big platform, and you have a big following, so it's a little easier for you to get a lot of people to step up to the plate and say, "Hey, Jeff, I'm interested," and have some of those people be good. That is a problem. Not everyone has a following that they can crowdsource in that way.



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One more quick question, and then I think we should open up for questions from those listening. You said earlier, I thought, that 30,000 people have downloaded *You Are a Writer*. Is that what you said?

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Debbie:** 30,000 people have purchased the Kindle eBook?

**Jeff:** No, because I had a week where I gave it away for free.

**Debbie:** Good work. That's how the word gets out. Anything you want to say about that really quickly? That is something, by the way, that I encourage the Beta Authors to think about doing and take advantage of that Amazon zero-dollar promotion to spread their books and their message around.

**Jeff:** The book probably has been downloaded over 35,000 times. I need to go back and look at it. People have bought it as a PDF on my website, and that's several thousand. People have bought it on Kindle and Nook and all of those, so it might be as high as 40. 23,000 downloaded it for free over the course of about three days.

It was incredible. The reason that I did that was because the sales had plateaued and dropped down significantly after the book launched. I thought, "I just want this idea to spread. This is an important idea, and I want it to spread." At the end of the book, there's a link to an online course that I teach.

I knew that books were mostly about spreading ideas, not about making money, and if I could get this idea to spread, maybe the people that it resonated with would be interested in taking my course. By giving away that many copies of the book, maybe I could make up the difference in the courses. If not, maybe there's a bunch more people out there that are writers and weren't before, and that would be okay with me.

I think it comes down to goals. If your goal with a book, which I would argue probably should be, is to spread an idea or to share your story or whatever type



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of book it is, giving it away for free is a great way to do that. It is a great introduction to you as an author.

If you haven't published a book, I would recommend giving your first book away for free if it's digital, because it doesn't cost you anything. It all of a sudden helps you build this platform to deliver the next book to, to deliver to an audience. Amazon is very powerful. Even if you don't have a platform, it is your platform. It is a powerful way to connect with a lot of people. To people who are skeptics and don't know, a zero-dollar price point sounds like a great deal.

**Debbie:** You said you didn't do that initially. You waited how long? Weeks? After you launched the book, how long did you wait before doing the zero-dollar promotion?

**Jeff:** Several months.

**Debbie:** That's great tactical information, I think.

**Jeff:** I think it depends. As you said, I did have an audience that was ready to buy from me, so my initial impetus for writing the book was, "I need to make a little bit of money, so I want to write a book. Something that people will care about, but I do need to make some money off of this," so I sold it first and then gave it away later.

I only had a handful of people complain about buying it and then it being free later. I said, "If that's a problem, I'll happily give you a refund. I'll send you the money." I didn't plan to do this. I didn't plan to sell it and then give it away for free. I learned about the Amazon KDP Select program after I had launched the book.

I've seen other people launch their books by giving it away for free, and that creates the momentum that leads to sales later on. Both can work. It just depends on what your situation is and what your goals are.

**Debbie:** Absolutely. Let me open the line, as they say. Everyone is unmuted. Are there any questions? We have a couple more minutes here. Any questions for Jeff?



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## *Q & A with the Beta Authors on the live call*

**Dale:** Hi, Jeff. This is Dale. I found your comments very provocative and helpful. A big part of what I do is executive coaching. What occurs to me, with the whole conversation you started out about voice, is that that is absolutely true with leaders as well.

If they do not have a discernable point of view, sometimes with warts and all, of course, they are not very believable. People may follow them if they have positional power, but that's about the extent of it.

**Jeff:** You're absolutely right, Dale. I think I came to this revelation a couple of years ago that any sort of communication is a form of leadership. This is why great leaders are often great communicators or learn how to be. When you're a leader, you have a platform, people are watching you, and if you don't communicate well, it's hard for us to follow you.

I think leaders understand that. I'm sure your clients understand that, Dale. What I want writers to understand is, because you write, you are leading, and because you're leading, we want you to take a stance. We want you to stand for something. It's okay if you're wrong once in a while as long as you own that.

The reality is consequences are scary, so the reason we follow leaders and read certain authors is we want to be protected. We want to follow somebody into the heat of battle. We want to join a movement and understand that the person at the front, that's going to take the brunt of those consequences, we trust them and they're a good person. When they're wrong, they're going to own it. They're going to inspire us when we're discouraged.

**Dale:** It makes so much sense. Maybe I'll ask you a quick question, but I wanted to run this by you, because the juices are flowing based on what you served up earlier. I love to use story and great narrative pieces and some poetry to do what I think of as help marinate people in a different way.

When you said about what bugs you, what occurred to me is that I definitely believe that we're all free agents. There's no doubt about that in a grand sense. But I also believe that people don't realize how they are pickled by the world, by



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the metaphors they use, the images they ponder, and whatever they fill their brains with, essentially, to say it inarticulately.

That is critically important. For me, what bugs me is when people forget the importance of things that they consider to be externalities, like "my success is basically me, nobody else helped me," that kind of thing. That's what bugs the dickens out of me. Thanks for serving that up.

**Debbie:** Dale, thank you for articulating that. That is great. I just want to make sure that if there are any other questions, we can slip them in.

**Leslie:** This is Leslie. I have a question for you, Jeff. First of all, thank you for your time here today. I just discovered you before even Debbie said anything. You started making the rounds in the circles, I saw your website, and the interview came up. I was really grateful to have the chance to talk to you.

My question is on the business side of what you're doing outside of the books. You talked about having a platform. My question is, are you intentionally following Michael Hyatt's platform model? How much intentional thought and planning are you putting into that particular side of the business and how it connects with the writing model or with what you're actually writing?

**Jeff:** Not just writing and publishing books, but building a platform, becoming an established expert in a certain field, and then delivering information products, services, and experiences to people that you can sell. That model? Is that what you're talking about?

**Leslie:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Mike's a friend. I love that model. I have been watching him for years, learning from him and applying what works. A few years ago, I got frustrated because I wasn't succeeding as a writer. I looked at all of these online marketers and entrepreneurs, and they were applying these concepts, a lot of copyrighting.

But they were doing stuff that felt smarmy. It felt bleh. I felt like there was a small dichotomy between "poor author who loves the craft of writing" and





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"successful millionaire bad writer who knows how to sell stuff." What I appreciate about Mike is he's found a way to bring those worlds together.

A few years ago, I got over my bad self and said, "What can I learn from this Marketer Joe over here, who isn't a great writer, but understands how to connect with the emotions of people? What can I understand from Entrepreneur Jane over here, who understands how to build a business, but isn't the world's best communicator?" Whatever it might be.

I think I'm being intentional about that. The caveat to that is I do see my business as a patron to my art, which is to say that I am first a writer and all of those other things second. I will pursue business opportunities to do consulting, coaching, speak at events, or even do courses that help people.

But I have realized that if I'm only doing that and I'm very successful at that and making a ton of money, if I'm just doing that and not writing, then for me, it would be unsatisfying. I am a writer. I just found some ways to pay the bills and take care of my family. That allows me the freedom to go and create my art in a way that I don't feel like I have to compromise it and it doesn't necessarily have to be commercially successful.

Sometimes, that's just a crapshoot. I can do that, and do that a lot, without having to steal from my family, or my day job, or whatever. Everything's going to be okay. I do intentionally go for the business side of it, but the end, for me, is freedom to write and create content and share ideas that I think the world needs to hear.

**Debbie:** Jeff, that sounds great. Here's a question for you, and this is going to resonate with our Beta Authors. Do you write every day, and do you think it's important to write every day if you are a writer?

**Jeff:** First of all, I'm not a very disciplined person. Most of the things that I should do, I struggle with doing on a consistent basis. But do I write every day? Yeah. I write every day like when I'm trying to be healthy and work out, which is to say pretty much every day.



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Some days, I'm tired or I'm busy, and I just don't get to it, or I don't get to do the kind of writing that I want to do. If I'm working on a book, I'm pretty much doing that. I'm working on a project and it's every day. If I'm in between projects, other than writing to my blog or something, I struggle to figure out what I should be writing and how I should be writing, because a lot of my writing is project-based now.

## *What sustains any writer is the perfect mix of grace and discipline*

That said, I think what sustains any writer is the perfect mix of grace and discipline, at least for the lazy writer like myself who can sometimes go a few days without practicing. I say both grace and discipline because I've done that thing where I write every day, no exceptions, and I kick my butt every day, and then I miss a day and feel this terrible shame, and I beat myself up.

It's an unproductive emotion, much like if you're trying to diet and you eat a slice of cake, and then you feel terrible, and because you feel terrible, you go eat a slice of pizza or something. It's an awful cycle. That's what shame does. Shame hits you, and you fall down. Then it hits you again, and you go, "I probably should just stay down." Then it keeps hitting you.

At the same time, I don't just say, "I write when I feel inspired," which I feel a lot of writers do. I often don't get inspired until I sit down and put my fingers on the keys and start moving my fingers, and then inspiration often meets me there. For me, there's this tension where I don't want give myself too much freedom, and at the same time, I don't want to be too strict on myself that it leads to shame and guilt and the I'm-never-good-enough type mentality. That's not going to lead to great work either.

**Debbie:** I would never call you lazy, and I bet none of the people who follow you would call you lazy. What you just said is a gift, and I thank you. It is so important. I love what you said about balancing grace and discipline. I want to thank you so much for joining us today. That was completely fascinating. I was thinking the whole time you were talking. Thank you for sharing your time with us. We are so grateful.



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**Jeff:** It's my pleasure, Debbie. Thank you, all you guys who are listening. It's a gift to me to be able to share this. If it helps other people, then I'm grateful for the opportunity. Thank you.

**Debbie:** I will make this audio available on my blog, and there will also be an edited transcript for the Beta Authors. Thank you so much, Jeff.

**Jeff:** My pleasure. Thank you, guys.

**Debbie:** Goodbye.



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This interview was recorded live on April 4, 2013.

