

Chris Attwood:

It's 5:00 on the West Coast in California, and I know it's all different times from where you are all calling: Spain, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, to all parts of the US and Canada. My name, again, is Chris Attwood. I'm the Features Editor with *Healthy Wealthy nWise*, and I want to welcome all of you to this "Passions Series" interview.



Twice a month, we interview people who are inordinately successful at living their own passions in their own lives. From their experience and their example, I know I certainly have gained a great deal of wisdom and learned what it takes to really live a successful, passionate life.

Thank you all for being with us. I want to read a quote that has always inspired me around passion. It was a quote from Soren Kierkegaard, "God has given each of us our 'marching orders.' Our purpose here on Earth is to find those orders and carry them out. Those orders acknowledge our special gifts."

All of you have special gifts, and tonight we are going to discover how each of us can become more aligned with those special gifts.

It is my privilege and honor to introduce a man who is exemplary in having demonstrated one of the things that you as our readers have told us many times is one of your biggest questions. How does one take one's passions and turn those into something that can support you, something that can create wealth and financial freedom in your life?

David Riklan is the founder and president of [www.SelfGrowth.com](http://www.SelfGrowth.com), the number-one ranked self-improvement website on the Internet. He started that website some seven years ago with his wife, as a hobby, and has built it into an Internet powerhouse, a portal into the world of self-improvement.



He has given us all a place to go to identify who are the greatest and best people who can support us in our own journey in discovering who we are and how we can give our own gifts.

David is also the author of *Self-Improvement: The Top 101 Experts Who Help Us Improve Our Lives*, and I'm excited that we get to hear his story, and to hear how he has achieved such great success, starting from just a hobby website some years ago.

I'm also very honored that tonight, we have as our co-host Scott Martineau, one of the co-founders of Conscious One, and those of you who have not yet been to [www.ConsciousOne.com](http://www.ConsciousOne.com), you absolutely have to go. It's another amazing introduction and source of online learning in the self-improvement and personal growth area.

Scott, are you with us?

Scott Martineau: I am indeed. Thank you for that introduction.

Chris Attwood: Thank you so much for joining us, and I'll turn the interview over to you now.

Scott Martineau: Chris, thank you so much, and I can't let you go without saying how much I appreciate the introduction, and what you're doing at *Healthy Wealthy nWise*. We have been working with people like David and others.

It's so nice to have you doing what you're doing, and bringing like-minded people who are discovering their passions and their interests. We love what you're doing at *Healthy Wealthy nWise*.

Chris Attwood: Thank you so much.

Scott Martineau: I get the distinct pleasure tonight to interview someone who I've worked with for the last three years. While we have not yet seen each other face to face, I feel like he's a brother already. He was very kind to us when we got our business started three years ago. He's been like a big brother, and so



there might be a sense of real familiarity or almost familiar feel to this interview, because we talk quite regularly, and help each other out.

David, I get to ask you all kinds of questions tonight at a formal level, but I just appreciate you being there, and I want to start off by saying we admire everything you're doing at [www.SelfImprovement.com](http://www.SelfImprovement.com), and have for a long time.

David Riklan: Thank you very much, Scott. I greatly appreciate it.

Scott Martineau: It's great to be with you tonight. I'm going to do some interviewing of David, and I've got a few questions that I wanted to start us off with, that I think will lead us into understanding what it is, and what it takes, to put your passion into your work every day, and actually make it turn into a labor of love.

David, you started and really created an Internet portal which gives access to an incredible array of self-improvement resources, and you've worked with and researched the top self-improvement experts in the whole world.

What role did your passion, the things which are most important to you in your life, play in leading you to do what you're doing today?

David Riklan: For me, passion is critical, and when I take a look at the passion and the desire, I kind of mix passion and desire together; there are really three things that I look at in my life that are really driving for me, especially tied into the business.

I think of my passions - one of my long passions is a desire to have my own business. I had that passion for many years, and equally I had another passion, a passion about self-improvement. I had an interest in self-improvement that was very strong, and it was a very strong desire to really learn how to improve my life, how can I be the best that I can be?

A third passion that's really driven me was really a strong desire or passion to be a strong provider for my family. I'm



married. We have three young kids, and those three passions really are driving my business and a lot of what I do.

Scott Martineau: Do you have any idea where the passion to have your own business came from?

David Riklan: Absolutely. That came from corporate America, I guess is the best way to describe it. I didn't really grow up as a young kid thinking I was going to necessarily have my own business. When I graduated from college, I was thinking what was the best place to start, and identified what I thought at the time was one of the best companies to work for.

Out of college, I went to work for Hewlett-Packard, and Hewlett-Packard back then, was one of the most, if not the most respected company in corporate America. I thought it'd be a great learning ground for me.

I started out in the computer area, in sales and marketing, and I was really learning a tremendous amount about how to be successful in business, how to run my own business, how to really be successful at whatever I was doing.

One of the things I learned early on from my first years at Hewlett-Packard is that I wasn't necessarily cut out for corporate America. I started to develop in my blood a desire to have my own business. That's really where that came from.

Scott Martineau: Interesting. How about the interest in self-improvement? Was that a trait you had from your youngest days?

David Riklan: That started a little earlier. I remember back in high school, it goes back a few years as well. I took one of these Evelyn Wood speed-reading courses when I was in high school, and I remember I doubled and tripled my speed reading ability, and I thought, "This is just great."

It was phenomenal, and I kind of started to get my interest there, but I was really hooked probably a little after college, during my Hewlett-Packard years. They sent me to a Dale



---

Carnegie course to learn how to be more effective at what I was doing.

I remember taking my first Dale Carnegie course and I just got hooked. I said, "There's something special here, something powerful there," and I continued with Dale Carnegie for some time. It was really the self-improvement spark that stayed with me.

Scott Martineau: I think it's a common theme for those of us in the self-improvement genre or field. I remember my first Tom Hopkins course that I was introduced to, and a Karrass negotiating course, as being really big, eye-opening events for me. I learned that there were other ways to learn how to do things other than just the school of hard knocks.

David Riklan: Absolutely.

Scott Martineau: Before I have you tell us a little bit of how you started [www.SelfGrowth.com](http://www.SelfGrowth.com), I wanted to give everybody the URL, so that if they want to have access to your book, they can do so. The URL to check David's book out is [www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth](http://www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth).

Tell us how you started SelfGrowth.com.

David Riklan: The way I started it goes back a few years. I had met my wife. At the time she was my girlfriend, and then we got engaged. We both had an interest in self-improvement and personal growth, and I still had in the back of my mind, an interest in my own business.

We decided to purchase a URL, a website. I invested the \$35 at the time, and got [www.SelfGrowth.com](http://www.SelfGrowth.com), and we really just started posting information. We both had an interest in how to improve our lives in different areas, whether it be career, family, personal, social, or our health areas.

We started posting information, kind of like a mini Yahoo, of websites or links that we liked. We really weren't sure what we were going to do with it other than it was a hobby. It was something that we were doing together.



The hobby tended to grow and grow, and people started sending us positive feedback. It turned into a small side business, and over the course of three and a half years, I grew a small side business into a larger side business. A little over three and a half years ago, it grew to the point where I left my full time corporate America job, and I went full time with this.

We've grown and we've hired a number of people. We just keep growing SelfGrowth.com and our other website. It kind of just started out as a hobby and grew from there.

Scott Martineau: How many years ago would it have been that you and your wife, Michelle, had the idea, and then how long did you think about it before you actually did it and bought that first \$35 URL?

David Riklan: We had the idea, it probably wasn't very long. It was a little over nine years ago. We're coming up on our ninth anniversary in a couple of days. It was shortly before, during our engagement. I like the web. I love the Internet, and we just decided very quickly, "Why don't we get a website?"

We came up with the name, SelfGrowth.com, and we worked with it as a hobby for some time, and it was a lot of fun. It was something that we could do together, something that we both believed in, and something that we were both passionate about.

Scott Martineau: What is your vision now, and what do you hope to create in the world with your work?

David Riklan: The vision now kind of ties a little bit into how we created it initially. My initial feeling of why we created SelfGrowth.com was to be a central place. What we were doing at the time was just posting information and different websites or resources that we felt people could use to improve their lives.

One of the challenges, and one of my pet peeves, is people are always trying to stick a square peg in a round hole, and my general belief ties into the fact that there are resources for virtually everybody to improve their life.



One of the challenges is, it's a matter of finding the best resource that's going to help you personally improve your life, whether it be a seminar or a book that's going to touch you, or a person, or a mentor.

My goal at the beginning was really to provide a resource center that people can come to and find out about all the resources available for them to improve their life. Then, once they can look at all of them, figure out which is going to be the best resource for them.

My vision then and now continues to be providing a super site, or super Internet portal where people can come and really find information about tens of thousands of different resources, and identify what's going to be best to help them in their life.

Scott Martineau: Yes. Exactly. At [www.ConsciousOne.com](http://www.ConsciousOne.com), we take that same philosophy that we're a bit of a Baskin-Robbins. We're 31 flavors. You get to choose your flavor. All of them are good. Anybody can appreciate we would like to have them under there so we can help them improve their lives. I think that's exactly what you guys do with your resources.

David Riklan: Yes, and I see it with you folks as well. It's a matter of really finding the best material to help you improve your life. Both of our websites and businesses strongly advocate that.

Scott Martineau: Exactly. One of the things I'd like to share with everybody is that David and I have tried to get together two or three times, and both of us share a commitment to our family that rarely gets us away from our family very often for an overnight or two nights. That's really strange.

David has some younger kids, that he may share a little bit about, but how do you balance your work, this crazy Internet business and your family life? What role has your family played in your success? I know it plays a big one, because that's why we've never actually shaken hands, because we can never get scheduled in the same city together, because we don't like to leave our families.



---

David Riklan: Absolutely. I think my single biggest challenge for me is the balance, the family and the business balance. To give you a sense, I feel like I have two 12-hour jobs. I have my business, which I've very devoted to, but I also go home, my wife and I have three very young kids, they're two, three and five. For anybody who's spent any time with a two, three or a five-year old, you know that having all three of them together is a challenge.

When I come home, it's definitely time to help out with my children. I make a commitment as much as possible to really help and be part of that. Some of the things I've done, for example, is I opened up an office that's literally one mile away from my house, so I can come back and help out when I can.

I try right now to devote as much of my weekend time to my family, which has meant I really haven't traveled. I haven't left, and I tell folks if it needs to be more than an hour away, it's going to be a challenge, because it's so important at this young age for me to stay close to my family and help out.

Scott Martineau: That's an important commitment for me to make so that I can stay passionate about my work. They work together. I'm passionate about my family, and passionate about my work. I'm assuming it's the same for you. If you got into your work so much that you couldn't spend much time with your family, I think the passion for work would lose.

David Riklan: Absolutely. I'd say that one of my driving forces, one of the passions I mentioned earlier, is my family. It tends to tie together, because one of the things that I'm looking to do with my business, and was looking to do is really provide me the financial freedom where I can spend more time with my family.

It's a catch, because I'm balancing almost competing passions. You're passionate about your work, so you're driven at work, and you're passionate about your family. I almost feel blessed that I have at least two things that are very important to me. The big challenge, almost on a daily basis for me, is the balance.



Scott Martineau: I think that's one of the things that's maybe different with our generation than with previous is that we're trying to blend the two lifestyles together as seamlessly as we possibly can, without sacrificing either one.

David Riklan: We try. We're doing the best we can.

Scott Martineau: That's exactly right. Tell me, we've been talking a lot about passion. You researched the top self-improvement experts in the world. How important is passion from the perspective of these experts?

David Riklan: Passion and desire, I kind of look at them as closely tied together. They're critical. I think they drive everything else. I think passion for people creates a motivation, which creates action. It's that action which is going to create success.

I'm a big proponent of motivational, inspirational quotes that I use to kind of keep me going on a daily basis. One of my favorite ones is from Napoleon Hill, who wrote *Think and Grow Rich*. His quote is "Desire is the starting point of all achievement..." so I'm a strong believer that passion and desire are critical if you want to be successful.

Scott Martineau: I haven't had a chance to ask this of you at any time. How did you choose from the thousand people you interviewed and researched for your *The Top 101 Experts Who Help Us Improve Our Lives* book? How did you find the top 101 out of literally thousands that exist out there?

David Riklan: Let me give you a little background on what we're trying to do with the book. We're trying to create what I'd describe as almost a mini encyclopedia on self-improvement, and we're focusing really on the experts. We wanted to create a resource where we could identify who the experts were.

Who are the best people to learn from? We wanted also to include information about what their message was, what you could learn, some specifics, some ideas, who they are, what their background is, and what programs are available; really, a mini resource on each of these experts.

The challenge became who we were going to pick from all



---

the experts. We started out really with a fairly exhaustive list of 1,000-plus experts, and we got these names through a lot of research, and a lot of interviews. We did surveys through our website and our subscribers.

We were challenged. How were we going to come up with the top 101? We wanted to come up with a list out of this 1,000-plus people, and we wanted to do it as objectively as possible.

What we did was we turned to the Internet. We had an Internet business, so we said, "What's the best way? Let's turn to the Internet." We decided to use the criteria of most searched for. My general feeling was that the people who were the most popular self-improvement experts might not be the best, but they're clearly the ones that people were the most interested in.

We decided to identify who the most popular 101 self-improvement experts were. What we had done was we started gathering information through Yahoo and Google, and we did a search analysis to find out how many times people were actually searching for people.

We gathered information from Yahoo. We contacted Google. We basically asked how many times did people type in the name 'Anthony Robbins' in the search engines, 'Dale Carnegie,' 'Deepak Chopra,' or 'Stephen Covey.' We ranked these people based on how many times their name is searched for over the Internet.

We came out with a ranking from one to 1,000, and we wrote our book focusing on the top 101 experts. No surprise that the two most-searched experts in self-improvement turned out to be Tony Robbins and Dr. Phil, both very popular, and both very well-known experts in the self-help, self-improvement area.

Scott Martineau: I'm going to put you on the spot. At this time in your life, who are two or three of your favorite experts in the field, people maybe you're reading right now or really enjoying?

David Riklan: Deepak Chopra, I have a strong spiritual bond to some of



the things that he's provided, but I still go back to Dale Carnegie. Dale Carnegie early on provided a lot of seeds for me, and one of the things about Dale Carnegie, I mentioned that I took the course, I also ended up being a Dale Carnegie instructor for some time.

A lot of what he taught really became a part of what I believe. I also love reading a lot of material. Og Mandino is one of my favorites. It depends on what I'm looking for. It depends if I'm looking for spirituality in my life, more business focus, or more financial focus. There's really a wide range. Out of everybody, Dale Carnegie still holds a special place in my heart.

Scott Martineau: The *Think and Grow Rich* tape by Napoleon Hill, I think, was the first self-help tape I ever listened to. *Think and Grow Rich* with Earl Nightingale announcing it, I just thought that was the most amazing thing in the world.

David Riklan: Yes. There are a lot of powerful resources. Going back to my earlier premise, it's a matter of finding what's best for you, and really leveraging that.

Scott Martineau: What was your wife interested in when you first started the business? What was her area of interest in self-improvement?

David Riklan: My wife came from a human resource background, so very much into training, human resource development, personal development, that kind of thing. She was working with a number of large corporations, doing training and development, and human resource-type things.

She had a strong personal interest in that as well. We thought it was a great connection. Let's go out there and really start working together and finding resources. It was a lot of fun. We were in the dating stage of our life. Things were a lot of fun. We were spending time building something together.

Scott Martineau: When you were doing your research for the book, were there common themes amongst the people that you were looking for? Did the top 101 people all have a similar theme,



or were there two or three things that you could identify in each one of them that they were proposing, or were common themes in their work?

David Riklan: Absolutely. I'll give you a quick synopsis of some of the top principles that we found. One is, the majority of them felt it was critical to take responsibility for your life, and that was one of the things that we saw all over the place.

Another one that's not surprising is it's critical to really take action. You need to take action and move towards your goals. Move towards what you want, is the second one. A strong desire, the passion, was also critical for many, many experts.

Two additional key ingredients for folks were to really set goals, to sit down and set goals, and to create a plan to implement those goals. If I had to take five, those are probably the top five that we saw frequently throughout the experts.

Scott Martineau: Maybe we could go off on just a little tangent on the passion concept. I'll make this statement, and I'd love to get your comment on it. One of the things we see at Conscious One is people trying to find out what their passion is, and I know *Healthy Wealthy nWise* has a fantastic way of assessing that.

One of the things we've talked about with our authors is you can tell passion, or what you'd be passionate about, by how there's a level of energy or excitement about a subject matter, a concept, or an idea, where you feel wide awake, you feel a higher energy. There's almost a vibration to it, that helps you identify it as your passion.

One of our authors, Sonia Choquette, says that if you ask the question, "If I weren't afraid, I would..." and if you finish that sentence off, you do that in the morning when you first wake up, do that sentence four or five times in the morning, it's a great way to find out what it is you truly want to do.

The other example is that you just feel a little excited about it. It's something that has a lot of energy in your life. Have



you found that to be true in your life?

David Riklan: Absolutely. I'll have to step back a little bit because it's a challenge. How do you go about finding out? There are two things. How do you find out what you're passionate about, and then if you want it to be an integral part of your life, you want your passion to ideally be tied into your career.

For me, that was important. For me, it enabled me to have something that I was passionate about be something I was doing five days a week. I tell folks when they come to work here that you spend more time here than virtually anyplace else, and you're going to see us probably more hours than you see your spouse or your family.

For me, having something I was passionate about as my work was critical. It was a challenge to figure out what that was, and one of the ways I went about that early on, was I tried a whole bunch of different things. I experimented, I guess, is the best way of looking at it. I tried different things to explore and figure out what I was passionate about.

There are countless other things I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about travel. There's a whole list of stuff that I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about racquetball. It was a matter of finding out not only what I was passionate about, but what I was passionate about and I could develop a career around. That was the real challenge.

The way I did it, for me, was just experimentation, finding and trying different things until I hit on something that started to feel right. I found that as I was getting more and more into it, I grew more and more passionate about it. Then things start clicking, and it kind of gets into your blood.

Scott Martineau: You said two things in there I think are really interesting. It just feels right is one thing that happens, and then there's a little bit of magic. I know in each of us, if you were trained in Hewlett-Packard, I had a similar corporate background. There's a certain amount of business knowledge and such that helps you understand if you're on the right path.

However, there's something about when you're passionate



about it, you've made it your life's purpose, you're life's work, there is a magic that occurs where there feels like there's a favoring wind, and the sun is on your face. It's much different than when it's drudgery, it's not quite your passion, and you're trying to push the rock uphill.

There's a big difference between when something's your passion, you're making it your life purpose, things just happen, like it probably happened with SelfGrowth.com. It just starts to click and all of a sudden, you're no longer a part-time position. It has to become a full-time position.

David Riklan:

Absolutely. One of the things that I've found also, regardless of how passionate you are about what you're doing, there are ups and downs. Sometimes, things are going well. Sometimes, things aren't going well.

I remember going back when I was doing this as a side business, this goes back a few years, at the point where we turned it from a hobby to a side business, I still had a full-time job, plus I was working it as a side business.

During that time as a side business, we had our first child, so we had the late nights, getting up and feedings and everything. I had to really figure out what's going to drive me, because it was very easy to step back and say, "It's a side business. I don't really need to focus on this."

It was really the fact that I was passionate about it that kept me involved, because there were clearly some days where you are tired, you aren't motivated, and you lose sight of the vision, and the fact that you're passionate about it keeps you going.

That passion deep down inside drives you to get up and do it some more. That's what got me out of corporate America, and got me into running my own business, the fact that I kept the passion with me and let it drive me.

Scott Martineau:

We were very similar in our experience, too, David. It was so important to us to bring personal growth to others and have them experience it and enjoy it the way we did, that during that first whole year that's just tremendously lean, where we



were just pouring money into the business, a lot of people would be saying, “Why are you doing this?”

When you run your own business, there are a lot of times you’re not able to pull any kind of financial compensation out of it. The passion has to suffice, and it did. It was more than abundant enough for us. It got us through that first year that was very lean. Without the passion, I don’t think you could have even gotten through the first two or three months.

David Riklan: Yes. It absolutely helps.

Scott Martineau: You’ve created a very successful business on the Internet, and you’re doing the things that you love like we talked about. One of the most frequently asked questions on *Healthy Wealthy nWise* is: How do I turn my passions into profits? What have you learned about the answer to that question as you’ve built Self Growth.com?

David Riklan: It’s a challenge. One of the things I mentioned earlier was trying to figure out what it is you’re passionate about that can make you money. I’m passionate about racquetball, or I’m passionate about travel, and for me, that wasn’t necessarily going to make me money.

What I needed to do first, and I think people need to do first is identify the things that they love. Going back to the experimenting, everybody has good experiences doing different things. It’s a matter of thinking back to what it is that’s kind of inspired you, what you’ve done where things have felt like they’re clicking.

Once you’ve identified that area that you’re passionate about, in terms of turning it into something that you can profit from, my sense is that in that area, you need to find a product or a service that you can provide that can tie into your passion.

You need to find a product or service that you can earn money with. For me, if you want to find a product or service, it needs to be a product or service that people want or need. Take a look at the process.



---

After you find what you love, start searching. Figure out what you would want. What service is available that perhaps you would want, that you could provide, or that isn't being provided, or perhaps what is being provided by other folks that you could also provide, perhaps better?

Businesses are either generally going to be a product-driven or a service-driven business. Once you've identified the product or the service, start looking at the business side of it. You need to look at the practical business side. Passion's only going to take you so far.

What you mentioned earlier, Scott, I think rings true. You need to have and you need to learn a little bit about business. If you're looking to have your passion be your life's work, it's important also to understand the finances of it. It's great to be passionate and have the desires, but you have to understand the business side of it.

That ties into basic stuff, finding a product or service and figuring out how you can build or develop that and then how could you market it? Once you've figured that out, even on a small level - and my sense is it's always better for me to start with a small level. That's my recommendation. Figure out how to do it on a small level, and then figure out how to grow it.

If you can find a product, service or something you're passionate about that you can make money on a small level, once you've gotten to that point, you can figure out how to multiply that. You need the first step before you can start multiplying it.

Scott Martineau: That's right, and it doesn't have to be a perfect entity before you launch. That's one of the things that we've noticed, too, in coaching people and talking with people. It doesn't have to be perfect. It can be like our friend, Mike Litman. It can be good B or C work.

Get it out there and see if your audience, your members, your friends will buy and pay for it. Then fix it from there, as you grow the business, like you said. Start small and then grow it.



---

David Riklan: One perfect example of that that I see is eBay. There are thousands and thousands of people there who had just a passion for going into garage sales, buying stuff, and there are literally thousands and thousands of people who are now full-time, quit their jobs, searching for stuff.

Their passion is really looking and finding bargains, and then placing them and making a living on eBay. There are countless people who are making a tremendous living on eBay doing what they're passionate about.

The way they started is they went to that one garage sale. They found that first item, and they sold that one first item on eBay and made money at it. They just built on it from there.

Scott Martineau: You may get this question a little bit, but I want to ask it a slightly different way. You've got the number-one Internet site for self-growth personal-improvement work, something that we're very envious of at Conscious One, but we're just happy to be in the same game with you.

Everyone looks at that ranking of 10,000 or 11,000, and says, "Gosh. It must have just been easy for you. You didn't have any obstacles or challenges, because look at where you are today. You're so successful at what you've done."

Could you share with people some of the obstacles and some of the challenges that you've experienced, and how did you overcome those so people understand that it's not just a rocket ship straight up to the moon when you start a business like this?

David Riklan: Sure. I'll bring you back to a previous business first, that I had before SelfGrowth.com, and before the Internet business. I started another business a few years back, and it was a total failure.

This was before I met my wife. I was still single at the time. For the first time, I left corporate America, and I was filled with passion and desire, and not much business sense and not really a strong understanding of what I wanted to do.



I started my first business, spent all my money, and basically ended up without having any money. I had to sell my home at the time to pay off my bills. I remember thinking at the end of that experience, there was a point where I was so depressed, I was just kind of sitting around, waiting to figure out what to do.

After a couple days of just sitting, pretty much doing nothing, I said, "It's time to get back up there, and to take action." I remember saying, "All right, I've got to do something," and I picked up the phone. I made the first phone call and set up an interview.

I got back in corporate America, started earning money again, and kept my sights on long-term, getting back to the desire of my own business. It was devastating at the time. I found that the only thing that really got me out of it was just that I didn't care, took that first action, made the first phone call, got back on my feet and was at it again.

When I finally got back to SelfGrowth.com as a business, one of the big obstacles, as a quick challenge, everybody on the phone here I'm sure gets spam of one sort or another. Spam for us is a big issue, and one of the things that we ran into maybe a year or a half ago that was extremely painful. There was a German company that was sending out porn advertisements or porn spam in German. It was basically German words and porn.

They were sending out literally millions of emails. We really didn't see any of them because they were going out to German-speaking countries. Lo and behold, at the end of the German porn emails that were being spammed throughout the world, there was a little unsubscribe button that said, "If you have any complaints about this porn email, please send your complaints to David Riklan @ SelfGrowth.com," just out of nowhere.

That wasn't the actual email address. It was one of our email addresses, and suddenly, one day, we just started getting inundated, literally with thousands of complaints, cursing at us in English, German and every language imaginable. We



---

were just overwhelmed with email coming to us with complaints about the German porn spam.

I had some people translate it, and started finding out what people were saying, and I didn't know what to do. We had absolutely nothing to do with it, and we were getting literally a thousand-plus emails, every single day, sent to us. We didn't know what to do.

I contacted an attorney. I contacted the US Government and asked, "How can I stop this?" We finally found out that it was German spam being sent from a country in former Soviet Union that was being done for a Polish company.

They basically said, "It's going to take you tens of thousands of dollars to track this down. You're going to have to hire attorneys in three different countries to stop this." It was killing us, and we weren't sure what to do, and we just kind of rode it out for a week or two there.

We made some changes to our website and did what we could, but for a couple of weeks there it was just painful. It was difficult to do any kind of business, but we realized that we just needed to stay focused and do our business, and figure out what the best approach would be.

Scott Martineau: This too shall pass.

David Riklan: Exactly, but at the time I wasn't thinking it could pass. I knew that I needed to stay focused, that one way or another, we had to figure out a way to get through it.

Scott Martineau: It had to be a tough couple of weeks.

David Riklan: Oh, yes. I remember the first one, "What's going on?"

Scott Martineau: What did you take away from that? What do you apply to your business going forward from that episode?

David Riklan: A few things on the more practical side, I learned some practical ways to deal with this. We were given some specific ways and approaches. For example, we set up an auto responder. We set up something where something



---

sends us an email, we explain what happened with the complaints. We automated a lot of the stuff, so we would know how to deal with it in the future.

One of the things that I realized and took away is that there are certain things that are just not under my control. You need to really focus on the things that you can control. For me, the things that are out of my control, I do a better job at controlling my frustration with them. They're still frustrating, but I realize there isn't much I could do. I do what I can, and just continue, stay focused on what my mission is.

Scott Martineau: For those of us who were getting the good stuff from you everyday, and using your resource, we were unaffected. We want you to stay focused on that because we want you to be doing what you're doing because we're enjoying that content everyday. We had no idea about the German spam.

David Riklan: Exactly. Unless you were German speaking, and got German email and were probably in one of the German-speaking countries, you never would have seen those emails or never would have seen our email address.

Scott Martineau: As a business owner, as an entrepreneur who started this up, there are a lot of different ways that you can be taken off your game. This is a pretty extreme example, but there are a lot of different things that can come up and take you off the focus of what your work is each day, aren't there?

David Riklan: Absolutely, and things come up, even if it's a small business, you're looking at two parts. Generally, part of it's something that you love, but you're running a business, so there's the financial aspect of it. There's the accounting aspect of it. There's the marketing aspect of it. There's a whole number of other pieces where you might not necessarily have a lot of expertise in them.

A lot of times, they're pulling you in different directions, and for me, the challenge is just keeping your eye on the ball and staying focused. It goes back to some of the key things for me were having a clear and set goal of what I needed to do, and a clear plan on how to do it.



---

No matter what, things are going to try to grab your time, things are going to try to dissuade you and everybody wants your time. For me, it's on a daily basis - reminding myself of what my focus is and what I want for myself, for my family and for my business.

Scott Martineau: You said earlier that one of the key elements, or common themes, you saw in the experts was taking responsibility. It sounds like that's exactly what you're doing - taking responsibility, being responsible for what's going on around you, including how you utilize your own time.

David Riklan: Absolutely. It's interesting, as I mentioned, one of the key things is a strong belief that you need to take responsibility for your life, for how you feel and for what you're doing. My general feeling is, if you look back on your whole life, a lot of things - you weren't responsible for deciding where you grew up, what public schools or grade school you went to, or choosing your parents.

A lot of the things that impacted you and made you who you are today, you weren't really responsible for. My view is that you might not be completely responsible for who you are today, but you are completely responsible for where you're going to be tomorrow. The challenge, I believe, for everybody is right now, to take full responsibility for where your life is going to take you.

Chris Attwood: Scott, I'm dying to ask a question. David, it's fascinating to hear the story of these challenges that come up. The thing that I would love to hear, and I'm sure everyone else would as well is: are there any similar examples on the other side, where you did something and it went really well - it just outperformed your expectations?

David Riklan: Absolutely, there are quite a few of them. One of the first ones is with SelfGrowth.com. I remember an early-on example of when you can look at something positive. A number of years ago, we were a couple years into the business, and I had an idea of starting an email newsletter. This goes back a few years before email newsletters were so common or popular.



I said, "I think it's a good idea to collect people's emails and send them information." I wasn't sure at the time whether people would really be interested in sending it. A lot of people were just going to websites. We decided to post a link saying "A free self-improvement newsletter" and had no idea whether anybody would sign up.

First day, out of the box - we put up the first link, the first promotion, and people just started signing up on a daily basis. To our surprise, it started growing and growing and we started sending some motivational and inspirational articles every week.

The feedback we were getting from it was phenomenal. We've grown from tens or hundreds of subscribers to now having over 850,000 people who get our email newsletters every week. The success behind the newsletter and the decision to go ahead with it has just been phenomenal for us.

If you're looking for one other good one, the book that we've been mentioning, *Self Improvement: The Top 101 Experts*; one of my driving forces for that book was that I was looking for a resource to help me grow my own business. We were in self-improvement, so I figured I should be in contact with all the top experts in the field.

I went out there looking for a book that was kind of a compendium, an encyclopedia, that would tell me about everything. I couldn't find anything like that, so I said, "I need something like this, so I'll write it." We wrote it, I did a lot of research on it and people started buying it - thousands and thousands of books - and it resonated really well with a lot of folks.

Scott Martineau: That's a perfect example too, of how you said, in the passionate work that you did, that you wanted to find something that people wanted or needed. In fact, this was something that you wanted or needed, and that's how you created the book.

David Riklan: Exactly how it happened, yes. Good thing I didn't find it!



Scott Martineau: People would probably be interested in the three things you suggest that they start doing right now, to begin creating the life of their dreams.

David Riklan: I take a fairly simple approach in terms of the best way to do it. The first step is to start with a list. I'm a big supporter of lists, to get your ideas on paper. Very simply, I tell folks to make a list of things that you know you're passionate about. Figure out what it is and spend the time - it could be in one session or over several sessions - and write down a list of the things you've been passionate about.

Then pick one of the things you've been passionate about and take one action item toward making that happen.

1. Make a list,
2. Pick one thing you're passionate about and
3. Figure out one thing you're going to do relative to that passion and run with it.

Those are the three quick things I recommend that will really help folks focus.

Scott Martineau: You said something important. You talk about taking action. You said that was also one of the common themes, that it's not something to be contemplated, it's not something to be wringing your hands or worrying about. You're talking about picking something and taking action to put it in place.

David Riklan: Yes. I'm a thinker, so I like to think and overanalyze. I find a lot of folks do it as well. I'm not the only one who overanalyzes situations. I find that sometimes you just get stuck in overanalyzing: Is this the best? Should I be doing it this way? Is there a better way?

My feeling, what works best, is at some point, you just cut loose and say, "Let me just do it. Do something," and I find it's better to do something than to think and do nothing. Take an action - move ahead.

Scott Martineau: I want to give everybody the URL where they can get the book. [www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth](http://www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth). I know



that people get some bonuses when they get *The Top 101 Experts*. Could you talk about the *Top 501 Inspirational Quotes*? What are some of your favorites? How did you come up with these?

David Riklan:

Let me give you a little background. What we were looking to do with the book itself was create a bundle package, where I'd call it a "print book and ebook bundle package." We felt that in the print book, we had a tremendous amount of resources and we wanted to add additional resources for folks.

We provided those with electronic books, ebooks you could download, audios and a whole bunch of things. One of the things that was one of my passions were these inspirational quotes. I mentioned one earlier: "Desire is the starting point of all achievement." I decided to come up with a project to share the top inspirational quotes of all time.

The way we started was to survey all of our readers, and then we did an exhaustive search and came up with a list of literally 10,000 inspirational quotes. We had this list of 10,000 and had to figure out how to prioritize which were the best ones. We did it very simply.

I had somebody hire a software programmer to write a program, take each of these quotes and search the whole Internet to find out how many different websites each quote was on. My philosophy goes back to how we figured out the experts - the quotes that were on the most websites, 5,000 to 7,000 different websites, were considered some of the best.

Five or six thousand people out there on the Internet voted for this quote by putting it on their website. We had somebody take each of these 10,000 quotes and search all of Yahoo and Google to figure out how many different websites that quote came on. Then we ranked and identified the top 501 most popular quotes for inspiration and motivation.

That's pretty much what we had done to come up with it. Some of the quotes are from people you know. Some of



them might be from people like Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Covey or Winston Churchill. We get them from all over the place, but we use that as the criteria.

Scott Martineau: I think those are motivating. People love to get those, don't they? They always find one, two or 100 that are really meaningful to them.

David Riklan: I find, for me, if I'm caught in a process, the right quote at the right time could just snap me out of it and keep me focused.

Scott Martineau: That's one of the bonus items they get with *The Top 101 Experts* book. They also get another bonus ebook with inspirational movies, right?

David Riklan: Right. It's *The Top 101 Inspirational Movies*. We also created that in a similar way. We did a survey of all of our subscribers, asking them: "What's your favorite, top inspirational movie of all time?" Same thing - we got back hundreds and hundreds of movies and we ranked these movies based on how many votes they got from our readers.

So it's a little less formal. We didn't go out to the whole Internet, but we did go out to our audience, which is a sizeable audience, and we came back with a list. In the book, we included not only the list, but information about each of the movies, favorite quotes from the movies, who's in them, a synopsis and things along those lines.

A lot of the movies in there were just favorites of mine and movies that people expect, but there are also surprises in there.

Scott Martineau: I'd love to hear a couple of your favorites.

David Riklan: I'd say one of my favorites is *Forrest Gump*. I love that movie and wanted it to be the top inspirational movie of all time, but it turned out the number-one inspirational movie of all time is probably one many people have seen: *It's a Wonderful Life* with Jimmy Stewart, a great inspirational movie from years back, before you and I were watching movies.



---

Scott Martineau: That's right, but we see it every Christmas, every year here in the States.

David Riklan: Yes, and it's a powerful movie.

Scott Martineau: Are there other ones that you're proud of?

David Riklan: I'll leave it at those - there's a whole bunch that I really love - but that's a good starting point for folks.

Scott Martineau: Good. What would you say is the number-one reason that you've grown so quickly with SelfGrowth.com?

David Riklan: There are two main reasons we've grown quickly. One comes from us and one comes from outside of us. The one that comes from us is my focus. I stayed extremely focused on what I wanted to do with our business and part of that ties into the passion, but I stay focused. I literally have a picture in my head of where I want to be and where I want to grow.

The other thing that's equally or more important is that the interest is there. People are hungry to improve their lives, are hungry for good information and the right information, and they're coming to us for it. So me staying focused enough to provide what people want, in combination with people wanting what we're providing, is really what's helping us grow.

Scott Martineau: Do you see any major obstacles in this personal growth area - anything you're concerned about or major challenges you're anticipating, that you have to overcome right now?

David Riklan: In terms of our business or personal stuff?

Scott Martineau: In terms of the personal growth business. My sense of it is that the personal growth business is exploding, as more and more of us have the opportunity to contemplate our life's meaning and what's important to us. We've moved beyond the concept of having to just work for a living.

We now have a chance to say "What is my passion and how can I make that into my life?" When that happens, the



---

personal growth area becomes particularly important for those of us in the field, to make sure we're good providers of content, because there are so many more people looking.

David Riklan: I think there are two general challenges. One, for us, is that it's a very confusing world out there - the self-improvement, personal growth world. The reason it's so confusing is because there are so many resources out there saying, "I'm the best, I'm the best, I'm the best."

I even look at the dieting and weight loss area. There are probably 100 diets out there, all saying that they're the best in terms of what people provide. One of the challenges for us is helping folks figure out who does really have good, quality products. Who's really providing good ways or systems to help improve their lives?

For us, we're constantly inundated with information about a wide variety, so one of the challenges is figuring out which ones are working for people, and then providing information about those. They don't necessarily need to be ones that would work for me personally, but we're always looking for what works and what we could provide for other people.

I think a challenge for me, in general, in our business is that the Internet is constantly changing and email and spam and all those issues. We have a print book out, but we're still primarily an Internet company. There's a flood of stuff going on in the Internet, but there's also a flood of information going on in life.

Wherever you go - television, radio, newspapers - we're bombarded with so much information that it's difficult for folks to stay focused on their own personal growth. That's a big challenge in general. How do you stay focused when you're bombarded by 100 different things pulling you in 100 different directions?

Scott Martineau: From somebody who watches what you're doing from the outside, you're doing an incredibly good job because you continue to grow and attract more and more people to your site. You're clearly meeting the challenge of being able to provide good, valuable content and letting people access it



when and where they want to.

David Riklan: We're trying.

Scott Martineau: All of us at *Healthy Wealthy nWise* and in the personal growth area believe strongly in the power of intention to manifest outcomes. What is your current most important project and what intention would you like all of us to hold for you?

David Riklan: For my strongest belief, my intention, I'll go back to something I mentioned earlier. My intention is to help as many people as possible, through our business, identify what they need to help them improve their lives, whether it be spiritually, financially, health wise - and to provide all the resources that each person needs.

That's my focus and what we're trying to do as a business, to help people get the right resources. Not only that, but I also want everybody to have the clear message that for each of us, there is something that can help us improve our lives. It's difficult at times, especially if you've come from a background where you've had failures.

What frequently happens is that you tend to focus on the failures and forget the fact that there are ways and there are successes. My belief is that since everybody can improve their lives, there are tools, people and solutions to help all of us.

My intent is to get the message out to people that you can find what's going to help you improve your life. Our goal is to provide those resources. In terms of the intention for us, join with us in that mission, not only to help yourself, but to help people you know to find the resources they need to help them in their lives.

Scott Martineau: What are the main types of resources people are looking for? What's the most-searched item in terms of your program? Maybe you want to share some of the different URLs you operate under, because I think that shows some of the interest you're seeing on your site.



---

David Riklan: People are looking for a number of things. A lot of folks are interested in how to improve their career. Career and family are important to a lot of folks, as well as relationships. People are looking for health information and how to feel better and be happier. A lot of people are looking for goal-setting information.

People are looking for how to deal with past challenges, their anger or their fear. These are common themes. Two other things that block a lot of folks are their anger over the past or their fear of the future. Those are two things we like to spend a lot of time finding the resources to help folks with.

In terms of the types of resources we provide in those areas, we look to connect people with different types of resources. Clearly, we're Internet-based, so there's a lot of written material that we provide. We also provide ways to access the best books and resources.

We're also strong believers in, in addition to reading books - and there are a phenomenal number of books - some people might resonate more in listening to an audio program that they can either download or buy and listen to on a CD. Some people find it more appealing to go to a live seminar of some sort if they're in a large city that has a Learning Annex.

Some people respond better to something like what we're doing right now. We're all on what I describe as a 'super conference call.' For us, we're finding what we want to do is become a super center for all those types of resources on all the topics that I mentioned.

You can come to [www.SelfGrowth.com](http://www.SelfGrowth.com) and search for each one of these and find what resources are available for you. That's our goal - getting folks in touch with and figuring out what worked for them and then running with it.

If there's a particular issue or challenge you're facing, go in and figure out what help you need. Do you need a mentor or a coach? Do you need to take a course at a local school? What do you need to help you get where you want to go?



Scott Martineau: From what I heard you say, I think there are people who may be searching for some help with their career, a relationship or with goal setting, or with past challenges with anger or fear. They need to know that they're not the only ones out there.

We literally have sites that have been created to help them. Your *Top 101 Experts* is a great place to start if people want to begin that process of taking on the career challenges, the relationships or goal setting. You have a resource for them to find their way through.

David Riklan: Absolutely. That's what we're trying to create, and we're adding to it on a daily basis.

Scott Martineau: I know at Conscious One, we're trying to make sure that our entry into *The Top 101 Experts* gets longer and longer.

David Riklan: Okay; we're working on it, as I'm sure you are.

Scott Martineau: Absolutely. What is the one thing you'd like to leave our audience with?

David Riklan: If I leave everybody with nothing else, I'll leave them with one thought: *start*. Take action toward your passion, take your first action. What I urge folks to do when they get off the call - write down one thing you're going to do tomorrow and get it done. Write it down and think about it - just one single action. It could be something small or large; whatever it is, something you're going to do - do it.

You'll find out a couple things. One, you'll feel good about the fact that you did it and it's going to help you get to the next step. It's also going to be a driving point to fuel your passion. If nothing else from this call, if everybody can think about one thing they want or desire, one passion they have, and take one small step toward it, that's my single idea - what one, small step could everybody take?

Scott Martineau: David, I thought of this question as I was thinking about Chris's quote from Kierkegaard that there are "marching orders" and our "special gifts." Along the way with SelfGrowth.com, you must have discovered that you have



some special gifts, maybe ones you weren't aware of prior to starting down this path.

What special gifts do you think you've learned about and that you bring to your work each day, that you might not have known about prior to starting on this passionate quest of yours?

David Riklan:

I'd say one of the things that I've developed over time is at least attempting the ability to learn from everything. Early on in my life, there were a lot of experiences like we all have, where you're angry, frustrated or left resentful from people or situations you've had.

What I've grown to learn, for me personally, and developed, that's taken some time and it's not easy, and I don't do it all the time, is that every situation - good, bad or indifferent - is something I could learn from. Every person I meet is somebody I can learn from.

There isn't anybody I meet who doesn't have some knowledge that I can learn or gain. That's probably one of the big things that I've developed, and it's kind of enabled me to work with more people and to realize that everybody has something they can offer and contribute. That's probably one of the big things that's changed about me.

In the early days, I'm sure I thought that those with certain ideas or certain people I didn't want to have anything to do with - what do they have and what can they offer me? Over time, as I'm working with folks, I really see that you can learn from everybody and everything.

Scott Martineau:

One of the things I want to share with everyone is that I've found David Riklan to be one of the most helpful individuals in the personal growth area and he really walks the talk when it comes to being a person who is there to help others. So while he's learning from everything that's going on around him, he's also putting out his hand and helping others.

You've been very helpful. One of the special gifts I've noticed about you is your ability to reciprocate, return a



favor, or even put yourself out there to others. I think that's a special gift that not everyone has and I really appreciate that about you.

David Riklan: Thanks. One of the things that I've found, also over time, is that a lot of times, people want somebody to give them something first before they do anything for them. I've found out, time and time again, that if you help folks first and you do something for them, it's going to come back double or triple. It might not come back that day. It might not come back for some time, but one way or another, it's going to come back.

Scott Martineau: Is that something you'd recommend for those who might be contemplating starting out their business, to be prepared to extend themselves at first, and wait for people to reciprocate?

David Riklan: Absolutely, because one of the things I've found, in general, is that you can't start out expecting everybody to help you. They don't know who you are and they don't necessarily have a reason to help you. You need to go out there and help them. Once you've demonstrated that you're willing to help folks, people will help you, and the more people you help to succeed, the more people will help you succeed.

Scott Martineau: Certainly that's one of the mantras in our personal growth business. I've found that to be more the operating rule than not, that people understand the value of reciprocation.

David Riklan: Absolutely. It's integral to what we do.

Scott Martineau: And it's a great core value, I think, for a personal growth or a personal improvement business, don't you?

David Riklan: Absolutely. At SelfGrowth.com, one of the things we started was this whole concept of reciprocal links on our website. We were basically contacting people, saying, "We like what you're doing and we want to put a link on our website to tell people about it." We weren't asking anything in return. We just said, "We'd like to tell people about what you're doing."

What we found, over time, is that literally thousands and



thousands of people said, "Thank you very much. We like what you're doing also," and they started linking back to us. So in its purest form, in terms of our Internet website, that describes it. We started helping other folks and in turn, they started helping us.

Scott Martineau: I think, from a ConsciousOne.com standpoint, that was the one critical element that we learned early on, that allowed us to grow, and you were one of the people who reached out your hand and helped us. We learned that that's the way it was done and we started doing it just in kind to everybody else who called and asked us.

That's one of the ways that I would suggest for anyone, if you want to grow your business, just be prepared to pay it forward, backward, sideways - whatever way you can put it out there. You'll find that you'll grow your business exponentially faster. Wouldn't you agree, David?

David Riklan: Oh, it's worked for us and I've seen it work for countless other people.

Scott Martineau: We've come to the last few minutes. Chris, I wanted to say thank you for the opportunity to work with David. David, I'm a raving admirer of your work and what you do. I feel honored that I had the opportunity to speak with you and share what you're doing through your great answers.

Chris, thank you for the opportunity to work with the people at *Healthy Wealthy nWise*. I look forward to a long and very abundant and prosperous relationship among all of us.

Chris Attwood: Likewise, Scott. Thank you so much for co-hosting this interview. Again, I want to encourage our listeners to go to [www.ConsciousOne.com](http://www.ConsciousOne.com) and look at the great work that Scott is doing. Join us also in July when we'll be interviewing Scott about his just-released book at that time.

Scott Martineau: I look forward to it. Then I can be called an author, just like David.

Chris Attwood: Very good. David, thank you so much for being with us and sharing your wisdom and experience. You're in a unique



position in being able to access the knowledge of the top people in this personal development and personal growth industry. You have shared some great kernels of wisdom and knowledge.

I love this one that if there's anything we take away from this interview, it's that the most important thing we can do is to take action. Even if it's not the right action straight out of the bat, it's going to lead us in the direction of achievement. That's what I got. We will have the ability to make corrections as we go along, and from that action is where we'll build the life of our dreams, which we're aiming for in the first place. David, thank you for being with us.

David Riklan: Thank you very much for having me. I want to thank everybody for listening in.

Chris Attwood: Great. For our listeners, I want to encourage you to get a copy of David's book, this fabulous resource on *The Top 101 Experts Who Help Us Improve Our Lives*. You can do that by going to:  
[www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth](http://www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/SelfGrowth).

I want to also let you all know of our upcoming interviews. On December 6<sup>th</sup>, we're going to dive deeply into the field of passion when we interview Mike Love, one of the founding members of the Beach Boys, one of the most incredible rock groups of all time.

Along with the other band members, Mike is a member of the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and he's been the author or co-author of many of the number-one singles that the Beach Boys have put out. Whenever I've talked to him about this interview, he's said, "I want to share this song and I want to share that song," so it's going to be a fascinating interview, I guarantee you.

I'm also very excited that our co-host for that interview will be Chris Decker, the founder of EarthDance International, one of the great, global events that's been happening over the last 10 years. They're peace events built around music and dance. Chris will be the perfect one to interview Mike on December 6<sup>th</sup>.



We will not have a second interview in December because we, along with you, will be celebrating the holidays. In the beginning of January, we will have as our co-host, Mark Victor Hansen of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and we will have a great, great guest. We're just waiting on final confirmation for that guest, so I will be announcing that to you in our next call with Mike Love.

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, we will be interviewing Dr. Ivan Misner, who is the founder and CEO of Business Networks International. BNI has over 4,000 chapters around the world and over 80,000 members. He is the master of networking and we look forward to that.

For those of you who were with us last month and missed our interview with Les Brown because he had an emergency arise and wasn't able to join us, Les will be joining us on February 7<sup>th</sup>. At that time, Stephen Pierce, the author of *The Whole Truth*, the Internet marketing ebook that took the Internet by storm, will be co-hosting that interview, as he did with Stedman Graham last month.

Then on February 21<sup>st</sup>, we have the great delight to interview Jennifer Hawthorne, the best-selling author of a number of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* for women books - *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul*, *Chicken Soup for the Single's Soul*.

Over 13 million of Jennifer's books have been sold. She will be joining us and talking to us about the latest book, *The Soul of Success: A Woman's Guide to Authentic Power*.

We've got a fabulous set of interviews coming up and we look forward to being with all of you. Good night, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us.