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(Intro Music)

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity, and helping others do the same.

Lenox Powell: This episode was previously recorded and published on the Outperform Podcast

Robert Glazer: Our guest today, Jeff Haden, loves to write. Jeff's a popular columnist and editor for Inc. Magazine, a sought after ghostwriter, LinkedIn influencer, and the author of his own book, The Motivation Myth. Back last year, Jeff had almost 50 million views of his LinkedIn and Ink articles. Jeff, welcome. It's great to have you on Outperform.

Jeff Haden: Hey, it's great to be here. Clearly, you're slumming. I see you had Daniel Coyle on not too long ago, so if you're now down to me, then the bottom of the barrel cannot be far away.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, we try to go in order, but ... You probably wrote his book, so don't sell yourself short.

Jeff Haden: No, heck no. I would like to grow up and be Dan, who, by the way, is a really nice guy.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, he was a great guy to talk to, and he really, just, into his subject matter. So you write a lot. You've ghostwritten a number of best-selling books and even more articles, presentations, scripts, reports, you name it, and even one eulogy.

Jeff Haden: Eulogies.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, eulogies.

Jeff Haden: Eulogies.

Robert Glazer: I'd love to ask you about that. What got you into writing and ghostwriting, in particular?

Jeff Haden: The short answer is, I worked my way through college in the manufacturing plant, and I really liked manufacturing. The jobs that I interviewed for after college were all with, like, 40-year-old men working in cubicles, which, today, I would love to be a 40-year-old man, but at the time, it seemed like hot death. And so, I went to work for another manufacturing company that had just started a plant in the town I lived. 17 years in, I was running a plant, thought I had achieved everything that I wanted to. Life was gonna

be great. This was my dream. About three years after that, I thought, wow, I do not want to do this anymore.

I'll say I was discussing, but my wife will say that I was whining about the fact that I didn't like my job anymore, and so she would say, "What else do you want to do?" I didn't really have any ideas. One day, I just said, "I think I'd like to write." I had no journalism background, or writing background, or nothing. The only things that I had ever written were for work, and so it seemed kind of stupid, but I kept talking about it. And so one day, she came home and said, "Hey, I got you your first writing job. I met a guy who needs a press release."

I don't know if this has ever happened to you, but have you had something that you thought you really, really wanted to do, and then you get the opportunity to do it, and then you get really scared because now it's real? Well, that was me. I had never written a press release, looked around, tried to figure out the format, tried to figure out how to do it. It's the worst paying job, I think, I've ever had, based on dollars earned per amount of time spent, but the guy liked it and hired me to do a couple other things. I still had my job, obviously. I wasn't gonna quit what I was doing, but I was trying to figure out how else to make a living trying to write. My wife signed me up on Elance, which I think is called Upwork now.

Robert Glazer: Upwork, yep.

Jeff Haden: Yep, so she signed me up there. She created an account for me. She actually was bidding on jobs for me, and she got me more jobs 'cause I was a little too scared to do so. And so every time she would get me a job, I would go, I gotta do that? I don't know how to do that, but I would figure it out. The whole thing about ghostwriting is, I didn't have anything, necessarily, that I wanted to say at the time. I didn't have something in me that was dying to get out. I just wanted to figure out a way, if it was possible to make a living doing that. I didn't do anything in my own name until my wife finally convinced me that my marketing problem with ghostwriting ... Ghostwriting is like Fight Club. The first rule of Fight Club is you can't talk about Fight Club.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Jeff Haden: And ghostwriting is the same way, and so it's really hard. Say you were going to hire me to do something for you. You would say, "Oh, tell me who you've worked for." Well, I can't do that. "Well, show me some stuff you've done." Well, I can't really do that, either.

Robert Glazer: So you can't even point to the book, if I had you write a book?

Jeff Haden: Oh, no. Oh, no, no. Some of my NDAs seem so comprehensive that my first-born child was probably tied up in there somewhere, but nonetheless, she convinced me. My wife, again, said, "You need some stuff in your own name." I said, "Nobody wants to read what I wrote. They want to read the stuff for the people that I'm writing for." Because by then, I had managed to work on some really good projects for some really great

people. That was going really well, but I didn't think anybody wanted to read anything by me, and so we looked around. I pitched, like, the top 10 business sites at the time. Only one of them responded, and it was a site called BNET, which now is just part of CBS, money-wise, but at the time, it was like their business, CNET. They took me on, and I figured out how to attract an audience fairly quickly. And so then, when the editor there went over to Inc., and he said, "Hey, do you want to come over to Inc.?" It's a bigger platform, and so I did, and so that's how I ended up on Inc.

Robert Glazer: Interesting. As I mentioned before, I think last year, your articles on Inc. were read by more than 20 million readers. You've got everyone in the world talking about content marketing, putting out volumes, trying to write things that people will want to read. You had 20 million people read your weekly articles last year. What is your secret? I know you have a following, but I mean, you're not marketing these things. You're not buying paid ads to them. What's the formula? You may not want to give it away, but for all these people desperate to have good content marketing out there, what's the formula or some nuggets of the formula that's worked for you?

Jeff Haden: Probably the first thing that I did that I was told not to do, especially when I started with BNET, they said, "You need to carve out your own niche because this is such a crowded marketplace." This is back in 2011 when it was not nearly as crowded as it is now, but they were saying, "You need your own niche." I thought, if I'm wanting lots of page views because I'm going to get paid that way, I want the biggest audience I can get. I want the biggest readership. I want the broadest topics that have the most chance of resonating with as many people as possible, happiness, success, achieving goals, networking, better relationships, interviewing, leadership, management stuff. I went that way. The editors at the time kept criticizing me for it and saying, "You really need to narrow this down." Then one month, I hit a million page views, and then they all got quiet, and so a lot of people also talked about the social media aspect of it. You need to be really active on social media. You need to respond to every comment. You need to build your audience that way. I thought, the social media thing, I guess, might pay off, but I'm better off ... Instead of spending an hour responding to people's comments and saying, "Oh, thanks for your input. Oh, great point." I'm better off just creating more content because that's where I live.

Where I got lucky is that early on at Inc., I was doing really well. Back when LinkedIn had LinkedIn Today and they were just aggregating articles, you couldn't publish directly, but they would go out and see what users were sharing. It was that whole algorithm. I had a bunch of stuff that popped up on category pages and sometimes even on their homepage, and so when they started the influencer program, they said, "Hey, we know you know how to generate audience, and we know you write things that our audience is interested in. Would you like to be an influencer?" Of course, I said, "Yes." It's the only time I'll be on the list with Bill Gates, and Branson, and all those guys, but that helped me a lot, too, because early on in that program, anything you wrote, they pushed at users hard because they were trying to build a platform, but that was kind of a lucky ... Well, I wouldn't say lucky. I guess I was at the right place at the right time and had the numbers that made that possible.

Robert Glazer: So, two questions based on this. One, I know Inc. is very focused on title, and I think they said the title matters a lot. If you write about anything, where do the topics come from, and what is the style that you think resonates? And then, how important is title to the article, itself?

Jeff Haden: Yeah, title is obviously a really big thing because that's people's entry into what you do. I stayed away, and have continued to stay away, from the inflammatory title or the contrary title. My goal has been to build an audience that maybe will come back. I think when you oversell in your headline or use bait-and-switch in your headline, then you're ensuring that that person is not going to come back. There's a little bit of a balance there. The headline is an important thing. To be honest with you, I forgot the second part of your question.

Robert Glazer: Topics, so if you're across anywhere, where do you get your topic ideas from?

Jeff Haden: For a long time, all I had to do was think about something I didn't do well and what I had done to try to get better at it. I figured that since I'm decidedly average, then if I wasn't very good at or I had to struggle with that, then other people probably did, too. That worked really well. Then now, I interact with lots of people who are very smart, and very talented, and very skilled, and I get to talk to them. That's an endless source of material because if I sit down with somebody really smart for 20 minutes, I can get 5 or 10 different things out of that that will spark an idea.

Robert Glazer: And you reach out to these folks unsolicited and ask them to-

Jeff Haden: Oh, yeah.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Jeff Haden: Oh, yeah. I wasn't always able to get to the people that I can get to now. I tried early on, and the silence was deafening, and so then I just took a step back and said, okay, I'm on Inc. That has a credibility of its own, so who can I talk to? It's the guy that started a cat litter company made out of coconut shavings or something like that. I could get those people. Then I would look at that and say, okay, I'm gonna talk to them. I'll find out what they do. I'll get practical, useful, actionable stuff, and then I try to do a really good job with that, and then if I leverage that and went to someone else maybe slightly up the road, so to speak, I could say, "Hey, I'd love to talk to you about this. Here's some examples of the things that I do." They would look at those and see that, oh, okay, well, this isn't the same stuff, different day. That's pretty interesting. He did a good job with that. That's kind of cool. That would be fun for me, too.

And so, I just kept clicking my way up, building off of the things that I had done, and then I got a couple lucky breaks along the way where people actually pitched me something and they got me in front of someone who was probably outside of my league, so to speak, but then I could use that to say, "Oh, hey, by the way, I talked to Ashton Kutcher the other day, and would love to talk to you about so and so." That was a credibility enhancer, too, and so now I've gotten to the point where I have enough

stuff like that and I've done enough of those things that I still can't open every door, but I can get in front of a lot of people now, but it was time, and effort, and building that base, as opposed to, wow, I'm just gonna go right to the top and hope that this works out, and then get depressed when it doesn't and quit.

Robert Glazer: Jeff, what I'm hearing from you is I think a lot of people who get into content, and particularly trying to run content related to their business, they write a lot of self-serving content that's really just not that interesting and doesn't create a lot of value. It sounds like the common thread here is focusing on creating value, multiple points of value, for your readers, for the people you're interviewing, and then that just seems to come back in spades to you. Would you say that's accurate?

Jeff Haden: Yeah, I run into this, especially with the PR folks. They've got their messaging for whoever it is. Let's pretend it's you and you want to talk about something relating to something that your company is doing. That's cool, but if that's all we're going to talk about, nobody wants to read it.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Jeff Haden: It's boring. They don't get anything from it. It only serves you. I always kind of pushback and say, "Okay, that can be part of this, and we can figure out a way to do this, but we need stuff that the person reading it can say, "Okay, I was either educated, informed, entertained, motivated," something. I need takeaways for the reader, and then you get to bask in their reflected glow of your wit, and wisdom, and expertise. You will look good because of that, and people will check you out, and way more people will read this than would have if it's just a thinly veiled PR piece. It has to be ... You read those things and say, your content can be 20% self-promotional and 80% value to the reader. It ought to be 100 to the reader.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Jeff Haden: If you don't do that, then people sniff it out instantly. If it's 2% self-promotional, people sniff it out right away and they're gone. You don't build a bigger audience by learning readers.

Robert Glazer: Well, I want to shift a little bit to talk about your own book, *The Motivation Myth*, but I can't let you off before we hear the story of ghostwriting the eulogy. Can you give that one to us quickly, how that came about?

Jeff Haden: Yeah.

Robert Glazer: Was it a last minute funeral? What was the [inaudible 00:13:21]?

Jeff Haden: I can't tell you.

Robert Glazer: You can't tell us [crosstalk 00:13:26].

Jeff Haden: I have an actual NDA for this, believe it or not.

Robert Glazer: I believe it.

Jeff Haden: But it was a person of some note who had passed away. One of the people that was asked to speak at the funeral was high-profile, as well, and was really worried about coming across poorly and that person knew that some other folks were speaking that were dynamic, and engaging, and whatever. He was petrified and said, "Hey, can you help me with this?" What's funny about it is that he really didn't even know the person very well.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Jeff Haden: So we didn't even have all these cool little stories, but it went across really well, and he was happy, which is always my main goal.

Robert Glazer: I read that it was actually the Metallica guitarist that sparked your interest in exploring the topic of motivation, a lot of the misconceptions behind it. Can you talk more about that conversation you had with him and how that led to the book?

Jeff Haden: Yeah. Before I talked to ... That's Kirk Hammett. Before I talked to Kirk, for whatever reason, I had gotten a bunch of either LinkedIn comments or emails from people saying, "Hey, I've read some of the stuff you do about achieving goals and things, and I just really feel stuck, and I haven't found this." If I summed it up, it was they were saying that they hadn't gotten this lightning bolt of inspiration that said here's my passion, here's my purpose, here's my goal, I've got all the motivation I need to get rolling, and they felt stuck. And so, I was talking to Kirk and just about playing guitar. He had played for a while when he was young, put it in the closet, happened to go to a Jimi Hendrix movie, came home.

This is how he describes it. He said, "I opened the closet door, and I looked at my guitar, and I said, 'I just want to play you better.'" That was his thing. If you think about it, that's been his mission ever since, but it wasn't I want to be a rockstar, I want to sell 113 million albums, I want to sell out 50,000 seat stadiums. It wasn't any of that stuff. He just wanted to get better. If you talk to him now, he is still trying to get better, and so it's process for him, not this eventual goal. I said to him, "Everybody else that I talked to that has done some incredible thing, none of them had that lightning bulb moment." Venus Williams, she didn't have that. Richard Branson did not start an airline because he had always dreamed of starting an airline. That was an accidental thing because a flight got canceled and he was stranded in, I think, in the Virgin Islands or something.

All these people just picked out something where they thought, I'm interested in that. I would like to get better. That created just enough motivation to have them put in a little bit of effort, which led to a tiny bit of accomplishment, or success, or improvement, which feels good, 'cause it always feels good when we get better at something, and that created this cool little virtuous cycle of effort, achievement, fulfillment. That gives you a little bit of motivation, which gets you to the next day and let's you start it all over again.

That conversation with Kirk kind of made all that click because I had kind of been floating around in my head, but I had never really articulated it before.

Robert Glazer: It's similar to a study a friend sent me, which we can include in the show notes, that someone had done saying that ... Around passion and that passions were really developed over time, rather kind of than found in this lightning bolt moment, and it was a real myth that everyone just found their passion, versus developed their passion through a lot of trial and error.

Jeff Haden: Yeah. Cal Newport, that's one of his big premises. I think his book is, *So Good They Can't Ignore You*. I have faith in if you pick out something that you're just interested in and you work at trying to get better at it, or gain expertise, or whatever that is, then the exposure to it, the improvement that you get, the depth of knowledge that you gain, it makes it more interesting, and it can become a passion. I started riding bicycles because I felt really out of shape, couldn't run because my knees are terrible, thought, okay, bikes are low impact. Let me do this. I hated the freakin' bike for the first couple weeks, just hated it. I'm serious. If that did not come out as contemptuous as it should, I hated the bike, but then I got a little better. I could ride a little bit farther. It didn't feel quite so bad. I started to learn a little bit about equipment. I started to learn a little bit about nutrition and stuff. I started to learn more about technique. That got interesting, and before long, it became this oyster or this onion that you keep peeling layers away.

As you do that, that interest becomes ... I wouldn't say cycling ever became a passion, but it was really fun and I really enjoy it. It's part of my life now, and it was not something that I liked going into it. I do think it's possible to go on pretty much any path, and if you give it time and effort, it can go from I'm indifferent to this to I really like this to it may become a passion for you, but you have to give it that time in order for it to transform from interest to passion, or that will never happen. I have never had a moment where I found a passion without going through that process. Have you?

Robert Glazer: No. You and I were talking about something, I think offline, as I was trying to work through it in my book around resilience, and which is the chicken and which is the egg? Are we physically resilient on something, and then we kind of become emotionally-driven by it, or is it all in our head and then we can physically complete something? In talking to a lot of people, it seems that it was actually doing something physically, and that doesn't have to mean exercise. That can mean with your hands or writing that people didn't think they could do or hadn't ... Then sort of surprise them. Then they thought about it more. Then they kind of did the next thing. It's sort of a hamster wheel.

Jeff Haden: Yeah. I think it can be either way, although I run into very few people where the emotional or the lightning bolt thing happens first.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Jeff Haden: For most people that I know, it's effort, and then that leads to a little more resiliency, a little more mental toughness, also more motivation, all of that other stuff, but the effort

usually produces the emotional stuff, not the other way around, and it definitely does not for me.

Robert Glazer: Sometimes it's about thinking less and doing it. I mean, a great example is my daughter and I were swimming in a lake. I wanted to do a swim. We looked at the swim. I guessed that it was about a quarter of a mile, and so we just swam across the lake together, and it was actually a half mile swim. By the time we got back, it was a mile swim. My daughter is 14, and she's picking up swimming, definitely the longest she ever swam. If I had told her it was a mile swim, she wouldn't have done it. We just went in, did it, we got back, and now in her head, she knows she can swim a mile. I'm guessing that will change how she thinks about it next time, but if she had really thought about it or [inaudible 00:20:08] say, "Yeah, let's do it," and we just went in 60 seconds, then I don't think she would've had that small physical win that then feeds back into, hey, maybe I can swim longer and harder than I believe.

Jeff Haden: Yeah. We have all these internal limits, and they're self-imposed, and we've dreamed them up. One of the fun ways to ratchet those up is to do things like what you just described. When I was training [inaudible 00:20:32], those are mass participation cycling events. The guy that was working with me is a pro mountain biker. He actually told me the night before that I was gonna go ride the shorter [inaudible 00:20:42]. It was like 70 miles [inaudible 00:20:46] 40 in a day. He said, "You can do this." I drove an hour and a half to where it was, and I did it, and it was hard, but that changed every day past that because then those 30 and 40 mile rides, they didn't seem so bad 'cause I had done 70, and so I know that in my head. That whole rationed it up thing, that works really, really well. That works well with work. It works with all sorts of stuff. I'm convinced that almost every limit we have is self-imposed. There's a seal that says, "When you think you are physically completely spent, you've done like 40% of what you're actually capable of." He's probably right. He knows better than me.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. A perfect example, and this will run, hopefully, after I've done this, but we are a company sponsoring a 24 hour London to Paris bike ride, 170 miles. I am going on Sunday. I signed up for it. I didn't really look at the details. I just started [crosstalk 00:21:41] this week about ... We're actually only sleeping three and a half hours on a boat, and it's 38 mile things before the break, and we need reflective clothing or we're breaking the law in Paris at 4:00 AM in the morning. Had I actually really thought through all of this stuff, I probably wouldn't have done it, but the fact that I just signed up and did it, and then after I do it, I'm sure it will bring down a lot of other self and limits that I have imposed on myself. I actually think that the more you just say ... Nike had something with the just do it. The more you say yes to something, rather than thinking through it, you're better off than analyzing it too much.

Jeff Haden: That's another thing that I talk about in my book. It's the whole idea of goals. One of the things we're taught is that you're supposed to pick out this ... Maybe it's a Big Hairy Audacious Goal, but some massive goal, and you're supposed to have a laser light focus on it and always be thinking about your goal because that's going to motivate you, and I think it's actually demotivating. Since we're talking about physical stuff, say you want to go run a marathon, but you're not a runner.



Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Jeff Haden: If your churning plan is, today, I'm gonna run a mile because I'm just getting started, and you come home, and you feel terrible, and your knees hurt, and you ache, and you're out of breath, and you lay on the couch, if you pop your head up and think, oh my gosh, I have to run 26 of these, you're gonna quit because the distance from here to there is just too darn far, so it's actually demotivating. What's you're [inaudible 00:23:04] is you signed up for this, so you're in. Now you're looking at all of the details, and what's interesting about it is that those have been laid out for you, basically. The goal, which is to ride from London to Paris, that's already set, and the process you will use, that's in forward by the goals. I think big goals should inform the process that you create that will get you there. Then once you have your process, you focus on your process. What do I need to do today? What do I need to do tomorrow? Whatever it is, and you kind of forget the big goal because your process will take you there.

At some point, you'll pop your head up and look across and say, okay, wow, I'm closing in on this, and this is actually working, and I feel good about my progress, and I will get there. But if you start out in London and you ride five miles and you think, oh my gosh, I gotta get to Paris, you're dead. Your role will be, okay, what's the first stop? Then what happens here? Then what happens here? If you just keep clicking those off, you'll get there. I've ridden up mountains where it had tons of switchbacks and I played the game with myself of, okay, just get to the next turn and see where you are. Then it's get to the next turn and see where you are. If you just keep clicking those off, eventually you get to the top. I would try desperately not to look up and see if I can see light between the trees, which would tell me I was getting closer to the top 'cause I didn't see it as really disheartening. Goals are great, but they should only inform the process you create that will allow you to achieve your goal.

Robert Glazer: It's funny. I wrote something similar on a Friday Forward that became apparent when I did my first Olympic triathlon. I actually oscillated. I think there were times when I was feeling good where it helped to look far ahead and know where the next thing was, and there were times when I just needed to look two feet in front of me because it was too demoralizing to look too far ahead. I think there's times we want to change to the peripheral vision, but basically, what you're talking about, and which I think a lot of people have realized who are high-performing in business and their life is this is the same process that great coaches work with in business. They say, "Look, [inaudible 00:25:10], where do you want to be at in 5 or 10 years?" But that's not helpful every day, but they reverse engineer that. If you want to be here in five years, then here's what we need to do in three years. Here's what we need to do in one year. Then when you go to set the quarterly goals, you look at the one year. You are just, as I say, you're making down payments.

Jeff Haden: Right.

Robert Glazer: You're doing the little things that after three or four quarters, you're gonna be like, holy bleep, we've done half of that big thing already.

Jeff Haden: Well, what's interesting, Bob, what you said a second ago, is that you oscillated between looking out and then thinking, okay, what's just the short-term is you got to that place through effort and experience at training for this and actually doing, and so you were smart enough to know when you needed to look one way and when you needed to look the other, and that comes from experience. But if you're just starting out, you don't have that under your belt, and so that, to me, is where the process part is really important because then you don't have to worry about having the experience in the sense and the perspective to know that this is just how it works, but if you do one really hard thing that takes a lot of effort and takes a lot of time to gives you to, that pays dividends for the rest of your life because then every time something else comes up, it'll seem really daunting.

But then you'll say, but wait a minute. Like in my case, I did 100,000 pushups. If I can do that, then I can certainly do this, or whatever it might be. You know how it works, and you know sometimes it's painful, and you know sometimes you just have to put your head down and ignore everything around you, and you know other times, it's cool to look up and go, wow, aren't I doing great? And so, that effort thing that we were talking about way back is really important. You have to start and put in some effort, and then all kinds of cool things happen after that.

Robert Glazer: Let me bring your two expertises together for this next question. I run into people every day. I've written book, and I'm finishing my second and third book, which you've been super helpful giving me feedback on the second book. Every guy talks about, "I want to write a book. I want to write a book." I see them a year later and they want to write a book. Knowing what you know about writing and motivation, if an aspiring author came to you for advice on how to get started writing their book, or a eulogy, or whatever they were doing, and stay motivated along the way, what advice would you give them?

Jeff Haden: All right. The first thing is you have to be willing to say, whatever it is that I write, it is in total service to the reader. The only thing I care about is that the reader will finish and will be motivated, educated, inspired, and whatever that whole package is, this is all for the reader and that's all I care about. If you can't do that, don't start because you'll get part of the way in and that ego gratification you're looking for is not going to happen and you're probably going to quit. That's the first place. Then you have to have something of value to actually give them. It's easy to talk yourself into whether it's valuable or not, but that's a good time to talk to friends and stuff.

Try this. If you're getting ready to write a book and you have a topic, spend five minutes talking about not the book, but just about the topic to somebody. If they seem interested and they seem engaged, then maybe you're on to something. If they check out, then you haven't figured it out yet. That's an easy little litmus test. You and I talked about your book early on just conceptually. I thought, yeah, that sounds really cool. That's cool. I was into it, not that I'm the perfect person to judge, but nonetheless, that gives you an indication.

Robert Glazer: And then the part three is making it happen. I assume that's where you're going next.

Jeff Haden: Part three, then, is to say, okay, and here's the best part, or here's the concrete part. Every book is a journey, if we're doing a journey, but every article is to ... You're taking a reader from point A, which is where they do not know or cannot do the things that you are going to help them with, and then you're going to drop them off at the end, motivated, inspired, [inaudible 00:28:56], educated, whatever those things are, you have something you're trying to accomplish. Break that journey down. You don't have to have some formal outline you were taught to do in high school. You just need to kind of bullet point it out. What's this walk look like? How will I get them there?

Then you can use that to inform your process as you go along, and it will change. Your book will not end up being the same way it was in your head early on. That's happened to you. It always happens to me. That's part of it, but you don't know what needs to change until you get going, and so then lay yourself out a little process and say, here's how I will actually accomplish this. When will I work? How much time will I put into it each time? What's my expectation? What's my outcomes? Turn it into a whole bunch of deliverables with yourself as the person you need to deliver to. Otherwise, if you wait for the moment when it's right to start writing, then you will never start writing. There has to be some process that you use. I'm big on processes, you can tell.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, and it's same advice you were giving before. Know why you're doing it, making sure it's valuable to other people, and then break it down into steps where you're gonna steal good along the way, that you're making progress.

Jeff Haden: It's like building a house. It's the same thing. You got a foundation, and you're gonna build your way up, but you gotta put the effort in and you have to figure out when you're going to do it. I know people that have great ideas, and they keep saying, "I'm gonna find the time to write at some point." Well, if you really want to do this, then figure it out in your schedule and make it happen. Once you get going and you see that it's going pretty well and it starts to feel good to you, then you won't have any trouble sticking to your schedule.

Robert Glazer: You mentioned earlier that Richard Branson ... And I know you dined with Richard Branson, who is an incredible entrepreneur.

Jeff Haden: Dined, put quotes around that, but yeah, okay.

Robert Glazer: They gave you half a sandwich, I think is the story, but what else? What did you learn, and what surprised you about him, particularly in the context of motivation and someone who is a highly motivated entrepreneur?

Jeff Haden: Richard is known for the stunts and the PR things that he's done. He's clearly an adventurous guy, but he does those things and services the company, and so I was talking to him about that. He said, "It's kind of crazy that you're willing to do this balloon ride across the Pacific just to promote your company." He said, "You got that totally backwards. Part of the reason that I built these companies is because they afford me the possibility to go on these adventures." I thought, that's actually kind of cool. If you had to construct the perfect life, wouldn't it be that whatever you do professionally affords

you the opportunities to do the things that you enjoy, personally? And that those that work-life balance thing, there is no separation of that because it's all just part of what you do and part of what you enjoy, so that was the coolest thing there.

Actually, one of the things that I started doing more of after I talked to him was finding ways to take either interests that I currently have or things that I was interested in, but had never been able to explore, and to use my business side to allow me to do so. Whether it's writing about that, or doing something for Inc. about that, or some of the ghostwriting stuff that I still do, I would seek out those opportunities to either learn about things I wanted to or get involved in things I wanted to and have that line kind of blend. I know that's not always possible for everyone, but then again, I kind of think it is.

To use a really cheesy example, if you really like helping other people out, I don't care what your job is, you can find ways to do that. That's not hard. If you like to mentor people, no matter what your job is, you can find ways to do that. I do think it's possible in almost every context, but that was probably the thing that I got most out of Richard, is just this whole idea of let your work, sort of your life, and your lives of your work, and if you can create that blend, then the work-life balance thing kind of goes away.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. We've actually banned the term "work-life balance" at Acceleration Partners, and for the reason, actually, you just said. We much prefer work-life integration, which is how do all these pieces of ... 'Cause balance assumes that you're perfectly in scale, which is never the case. You have-

Jeff Haden: Never, ever.

Robert Glazer: Right. Integration is like they're all puzzle pieces. They're connected. It fits together. Some weeks, you do more work. Some weeks, you do whatever, but you find all these things that give you energy and find them connected, so I agree a lot with what he said there.

Jeff Haden: The other thing I hate about the work-life balance thing is that a lot of people think that balance means spending the same amount of hours of work as, or a life, as you do with work, and that's really hard to do, as well, especially if you consider the life part to be me time, but what you can do is try and balance out the quality of those, and so the time you do have to yourself, are you just watching whatever happens to be on TV, or are you watching something that you really wanted to watch? Are you out doing things that you wanted to do? I ran into Michael Fassbender, the actor at Daytona in January, and he drives Ferrari like it's an amateur thing.

Well, in fact, they pay a ton of money to be able to do so, so it's a rich guy's sport, but he drives Ferrari race cars and loves it. You have never seen a more bouncy, lively, engaged guy, and I said, "You love this, don't you?" He said, "I do." He said, "Not to make it sound terrible, but we're on movie sets sometimes, and there's 12-14 hour days, and you're just kind of stuck there." He said, "Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining, but it is a grime." He said, "I look forward to doing this stuff, even if it's only a weekend every three months. It's the most fun thing I get to do, and that keeps me going." And

so, that whole idea of work-life balance, balance out the quality part of it because you probably will never get to balance out the hours part. You should focus just as hard on, how can I get the most out of my me time as you can [inaudible 00:34:50] the work.

Robert Glazer: All right, one last question for you, getting a little personal. What's the biggest mistake or failure you've made in your life that you've learned the most from?

Jeff Haden: Wow. That's a buffet of choices there. I'll go with a professional one, just because it's the first thing that popped to mind. I worked for [inaudible 00:35:09] like I told you. I had worked my way up to a very nice spot. There was ... I don't know how to describe this without it being really long-winded, but there ended up being a difference of opinion between me and someone else who had greater authority than me, and I did not back down, and I didn't realize kind of there might be other agendas at play, and so I basically got asked to leave over something that had I known we were going to get to that point, I wouldn't have made as big a deal over it, but I had gotten ... My ego, at least at work, had run away with me a little bit, and my sense of self was bigger than it was, and you add [inaudible 00:35:51] I guess is the word for it, but I had reached that point, and I didn't read the room, and I didn't read the situation well, and got asked to leave.

That was okay, and it actually turned out really well, not that I think fate had anything to do with it. I think if you're trying when bad things happen, you can always make them turn out well. You try when you look back, even though they suck at the time. And so I, from then on, have tried really hard to always take a step back, no matter what situation I'm in and say, okay, I'm a little too big for my purchase here. Is the hen a little bit too big? Am I missing something? Is there a question that's being asked, but there's an unasked question underneath of it that I need to be paying attention to? 'Cause a lot of times, people won't ask you the question they really want to ask.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Jeff Haden: But you can find that question within the one they are asking, and so I still have a big ego in some ways, and then I'm horribly insecure in others, but I learned a lot from that in that you're never the biggest person in the world, and you're never as smart as you think you are. I am definitely not as smart. I was definitely not as smart as I thought I was at that moment.

Robert Glazer: Good wisdom for everyone to take away.

Jeff Haden: And that also helped me, if I may finish, or if I may add to that, that also helped me from a leadership point of view because sometimes then I would look at people and think, why are you doing that? Then I would take a step back and say, okay, there's more to this than I'm seeing. There must be some motivation, other than that this person either doesn't want to do this, or has a different agenda, or whatever else. There might be something else underneath of that that I am missing, and that helped me be a better leader because I looked past the face value part and started to look for the underlying part. For the most part, people want to do well. They want to do a good job. If they are

not, there's usually something else there besides just their lack of willingness to do a good job. And so as a leader, it's your job to look for what that is, and maybe you can't fix it. Maybe the situation cannot be fixed, but you can try.

Robert Glazer: All right. Well, Jeff, I'm fascinated by the topic of motivation, as you know, and why some people are high achievers, and others seem to just struggle to get through the day and a few small goals. So, I find your work, your writing, and your research really inspirational. I will continue to be a reader along with your millions of other fans.

Jeff Haden: Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

Robert Glazer: I will include links to Jeff's website, his book, and his columns in our show notes afterwards, and we hope you enjoyed our discussion with Jeff Haden. If you got something out of it, or any of our episodes, we really hope you're motivated to give it a rating on Apple Podcast or Stitcher. It helps us know what content you're interested in so we can try to bring you more of it. Until next time, keep outperforming.