

**Transcript for Jeff Goins | Real Artists Don't Starve (Episode 662)**

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/662/>

**JEFF:** There's something really special here that might get destroyed if we keep doubling down and try to get bigger, bigger, bigger. What if we were forced to get more value out of a smaller group of people. Could we do that?

**JORDAN:** Welcome to The Art of Charm, I'm Jordan Harbinger. I'm here with producer Jason DeFilippo, as always. On this episode, we'll be talking with my friend Jeff Goins. Jeff is a talented guy. He's a best-selling author, he's a great speaker, he's a popular blogger -- This guy built a huge audience before I even knew that you were supposed to do that. And of course, he writes about how to do that but he's not just another "You can do it," motivational type of guy, he actually will teach us, in this episode, how to go from hobbyist to someone who actually makes money from their craft or their art such as consulting, speaking, writing, or anything creative for that matter.

And his book Real Artists Don't Starve is loaded with practicals on just how to distinguish yourself in a crowd of amateurs, ways to utilize your day job to help support your side hustles and your craft, and how to stay motivated and stick to your guns when people don't want to pay you what your worth. There's a lot of practicals and advice in here for anyone, especially creatives who want to make money from their creative pursuits, even if you want to keep your career as well, or if you don't, for that matter.

Usually this type of businessy stuff can be a little niche, but I really enjoyed this conversation and I think you will, as well. It's a fun show, so enjoy this episode of AoC with Jeff Goins.

Jeff, thanks for coming back on, man. I know you just got back from a conference, and I've got to ask you just as someone who is a writer, speaker, entrepreneur -- you run a conference every year. When you get done with things like running a big ass conference, do you feel tired or do you feel energized? Because I

think a lot of folks, when they think about, "Oh, I want to run my own thing," they're only thinking about the energy level and they're thinking about this pleasant exhaustion they might experience, and I'm curious how that matches up with your reality.

**JEFF:**

Yeah, thanks for having me, Jordan. I love being a part of The Art of Charm and I'm glad to be back. I feel both, to answer your question. I'm an extrovert, so I get a lot of energy from being around people. Our conference is called The Tribe Conference, it's kind of a niche boutique conference, I would call it. A smaller -- intentionally small -- conference for writers and creatives to teach them how to market and sell their work. We make community probably the most important part of that event, so lots of long breaks, talk times, speakers connecting with the attendees, and me connecting with a lot of people, as well.

I get so much energy from that and I leave that and feel great, and I've got all these ideas and all these things that we're going to do better next year, and then there is this crash. I actually took two days off after doing this conference over the weekend. I spent time with my family which was fun but it was also kind of tiring too, in a different way. My wife had the kids for the weekend so I was on dad duty and she got a break. And then, after that, I really crashed. After a two day break, I was still really, really tired. And it took me about a week to fully recover. I had to come down from that high, then process it, then re-enter my life, and then finally, last weekend I told my wife -- I was like, "Hey, I just need some recharge time for me. Is it all right if I go to a movie by myself?" We put the kids down early one night and I just went and did a little bit of self-care.

**JORDAN:**

Yeah, I think a lot of artists especially, get burned out, because as you wrote in your book *Real Artists Don't Starve* -- and we're not just talking about painters, we're talking about writers and creators of all type. We have this mindset, early on especially, that, "Oh, look, I'm supposed to be broke and this is supposed to be painful. And this is all about squeezing this out of me." And

you hear this with writers a lot too, right? It's like, "It's a disease I have to write," and it just sounds miserable. And they revel in it. They roll around in it.

**JEFF:**

Yeah, I agree. I think you can be a starving artist in any vocation. I think being an artist means that you have the creative gift to share with the world. You don't have to be an artist but you can be if you want to and Seth Godin, I think described this really well in his book *The Icarus Deception*. Anything that you create that is inherently generous and interesting that you want to share with the world is your art.

And a starving artist then, is somebody who is unnecessarily suffering for the sake of their gift. So, I think you could be a small business owner. In fact, I think a lot of small business owners are starving artists. They think that this is their lot in life to make a million dollars and spend 960,000 of this dollars and this is the plight of being a small business owner. Just making a middle class income running a bakery or something. And I think you can do that in business, you can do that in art, you can do that in any industry. Any time you are unnecessarily suffering or struggling for your passion, I think you're being a starving artist.

**JORDAN:**

Yeah, why do people do this? It's sort of a mindset, right? "I'm a starving artist. I was born this way." It's like this romanticized thing that really prohibits people from, in the long run, maybe enjoying what they're doing because they have to work at a crappy cafe where the manager is a dick because they're an artist and they can't make money doing it because they're selling out, or something like that.

And you see this a lot in Hollywood, of course, but you see it everywhere and you see these small business owners or people who don't even consider themselves small business owners just really going through this painstaking process for seemingly no reason because they feel like it's just part of the game. And it's not. The example you give in your book -- one of many -- is that Michelangelo was freaking loaded, man. He

wasn't broke. He was always a wealthy artist. That was his thing. He had patrons and he crushed it.

**JEFF:**

Yeah, I see it in Nashville, too, not surprisingly to anybody, a music town. One of the reasons I wrote this book was because I kept having two different kinds of conversations with creatives and as a writer who makes a full time living off of his writing and writing projects, I constantly run into artists, musicians, creative entrepreneurs, who are going, "How did you do that?" And I didn't know if it was dumb luck or it's something that anybody can do, and I tend to distrust when somebody has that survivorship bias where they go do something and they're like, "Everybody can do this." I didn't want to be one of those guys but I kept running into two different groups of people, one were these typical starving artists, a lot of musicians here in Nashville, who were waiting tables or working retail, or whatever, and they hated that but they had to do that to make a living because then they'd go to tour for 100 or 200 days a year and make basically 100 or 200 bucks a day, and this was their passion, but they couldn't make a full time living off of it. And they would always say something to the effect of, "Well, you can't make any money off of that. You can't make any money off of art or music or whatever." There's all these limiting beliefs about, if this is your gift, this thing that you want to share with the world, surely you can't actually make good money off of that. That would be selling out. And there was this kind of fear and distrust of money. Then, on the other hand, I would meet regular people -- I'm not talking about hanging out with Taylor Swift or anything -- just not famous people who are killing it, who are making a living off of their art, and I call these people thriving artists. And I noticed that their mindset was very different from that of the starving artist. They just thought of their art as work. It wasn't precious to them. At the same time, they weren't sellouts. So, over the years, I've realized that there's kind of these two groups of people and the thing that seems to separate them is mindset. And as you mentioned not too long ago, I came across this story that I'd never heard before about Michelangelo being the richest artist in the Renaissance. And not only that, when he came along, nobody

had ever done what he had done, which was become a very wealthy artist. When he died, he had \$50 million to his name.

**JORDAN:** In today's money.

**JEFF:** Yeah. And that made him, at the time, the richest artist who had ever come along at any point in history. And what was interesting about Michelangelo is not that he was an outlier or very wealthy, but after him, there were many people who followed in his footsteps. And so what he did in the renaissance was he set a new precedent for what was possible for creative people of all types during that period. And that endured for hundreds of years until we came to the mid 1800s and they myth of the starving artist, the story that you had to starve and struggle and suffer for your work. That's when that was born.

**JORDAN:** Yeah, I think it might be good to go into something that's a passion project thinking, "Well, there's no way I can make money off of this," but then if you still want to do it bad enough, maybe that type of art is for you. But then once you get in it, you kind of have to turn it around so that you're not miserable all the time.

**JEFF:** Yeah, and I don't think that every passion you have, and I think we agree on this, you should turn into a business or an income stream.

**JORDAN:** Definitely agree.

**JEFF:** Like, I like making guacamole. I don't think you should go --

**JORDAN:** Oh, you should turn that into a business, bro. The Guac Guy.

**JEFF:** At the same time, nobody wants to do drudge work. Nobody wants to do something that they're good at that other people want from them that they hate. And so, what I found, and in the book what I did was I researched hundreds of years going back to the time of Michelangelo and even before, hundreds of years

of history of artists, authors, successful creatives and the things that they consistently have done throughout history.

And then, I compared that to what thriving artists of all different kinds of fields and industries are doing today, and what I came up with were these 12 rules. I call them the 12 rules of the new renaissance. And it turns out that these are the things that successful creatives discipline themselves in doing and they do things well as part of their job description. These are things like marketing, not working for free, finding influencers to promote your work in the right way, kind of the modern-day version of patronage and a lot of these things are what starving artists actively avoid.

And so, I interviewed hundreds of these people, starving artists and thriving artists, and it was fascinating. I was looking at all these different data points going, "Is there some correlation here?" and there was. It's not just that these are things that successful creatives have done and this may or may not have led to their success, but these things that they did, these 12 basic commonalities that they had in common, were all of the things that starving artists were not only not doing, they were actively avoiding them because it didn't feel like art.

So, I do think that if you want succeed in any kind of passion or any kind of creative work, there has to be a discipline that you bring to it, where you're willing to surrender the ideal that this is not just a hobby. So the myth that you get to do your passion and eventually you get so good that they can't ignore you and people are lining up to pay you money for it, that's not true. Not in my experience. It wasn't true for Michelangelo, it wasn't true for the hundreds of people that I talked to, and the hundreds of biographies that I read. If you want to make a living off of your art, whatever that is for you, then you have to think of your art as a business.

**JORDAN:**

How do people make that shift, though? Because, look, we talked about a lot of times artists don't want to go down that road because they feel like, "Oh, I'm ruining my mindset or my

art somehow," or, "This isn't the way it's supposed to work." That's fine, but suppose we realize, "Okay, I kind of know I need to do that with my writing, drawing, painting, latte milk pictures, or whatever," what do we do to then start shifting our mindset?

Because, right now, there's probably a lot of folks listening that go, "Yeah, I kind of know I'm doing that and I kind of know I'm shooting myself in the foot." They do that other extreme. "I don't want to become some pushy sales guy where I'm walking around with my art everywhere and forcing it and shoving it in people's faces." They draw that sort of false comparison as a defense mechanism because they feel like, "Well, if I really don't want to be one, then the only option is the other."

**JEFF:**

Yeah, I think that activity follows identity, that before you go do something, you have to become someone. You have to figure out, "Who am I? Who do I want to be?" and the good news is if the story that you're living isn't the one that you want your grandkids to be telling their grandkids, you get to change it. At any point in our lives, we get to change the story that we're living. We get to reimagine who we are and who we want to be.

And so, I don't believe that artists are born, I think that they're made. It is a choice, a decision to become this new thing. And I love the story of how John Grisham did this. John Grisham was a new lawyer, a brand new dad, and he didn't start with this passion of, "I know that I was born to write novels." Quite the opposite, he said, "Can I do that? Can I be a writer? I don't know but I'm interested. I'm curious enough in it to give it a try."

And so what he did, was he went to work a little bit early every single day, and he wrote one page of a novel, just to see if he could do it. And I love the humility in that, especially in this day of fake it 'til you make it. Everybody's trying to appear more legit than they actually are, and that's inflated by social media. Here's a guy who goes, "I don't know if I can do this, so I'm just going to try it," and every day gets up and writes a page to a

novel. He does it for a year. "Oh, that was a fun. I'm going to do it for another year."

By the end of two years, he finishes his first book -- it's called *A Time to Kill* -- sells it to a small publisher, it doesn't go gangbusters, it doesn't really sell that well at all, but he had fun, and he did it. And so, he starts another novel. Still gets up every day, kisses his kids goodbye, goes to work a little bit early, writes a page a day, does this for another year, finishes a book called *The Firm*, ends up selling that to a publisher. This starts doing a little bit better. While he's working on the second book, he went back and bought 1,000 copies of his first book and he starts marketing it, trying to get it out there, selling it himself, because the publisher isn't doing anything.

*The Firm* becomes a mega-best-seller and he becomes an overnight success, three or four years in the making. It is at that point that he decides, "I guess I'm a writer. I guess I'm a novelist. I guess I can go do this," and I love the humility of that, almost the lack of audacity in that simple daily practice, where he goes, "I think I am this thing and I'm just going to take one small step in the right direction," and I call this the baby step strategy, which is pretty self-explanatory.

So, before you say, "Hey, I am this thing, look at me," and you start creating a website and doing all these things, what if you picked one small thing, almost as an experiment that you could do every single day. Basically, you're practicing becoming this thing. So, I don't think we fake until we make it, but I do think we believe it until we become it. And so it's this process of imagining, "Who do I want to be?" then "What's a daily behavior that I can start participating in. I could start practicing, and then eventually, maybe, I'll become it."

**JORDAN:** This concept of John Grisham thinking, "Maybe I'm not a writer," -- he was a lawyer before that, right, you'd mentioned?

**JEFF:** Yep.



**JORDAN:** So, what is that concept -- I'm drawing a blank right now -- where people who are highly capable, smart, intelligent, they often underestimate their capability and the people who are just kind of really not that capable, they can't conceive of the nuance so they think, "It's so easy," and they overestimate their capability? This sounds like a classic case of that phenomenon in action.

**JEFF:** Yeah, I don't know what it's called but Steven Pressfield talks about it in *The War of Art*, and he says, "The amateur is wildly self-confident, whereas the professional is wracked with self-doubt," and I think that's true. So, if you're going, "Is this good enough? Is this good enough? I don't know," you are more of a pro than you realize, because most amateurs think they're better than they actually are and everybody is kind of whispering behind their backs saying, "They don't know how bad they are."

And those of us who are trying to actually master a craft realize as we get closer and closer to what we understand mastery to be, we realize how far away we are. Hemingway said, "We are all apprentices in a craft nobody masters." I mean, this is Hemingway. He was arguably the most influential author of the 20th century and he's going, "Yep, still haven't reached mastery."

**(COMMERCIAL BREAK)**

**JORDAN:** I like the baby step notion here but where do we start turning things into a business? I think what people are worried about, especially artsy types, is they're worried about ruining it by going, "Oh, I've got to have a great Myspace profile now," or I don't know. People probably don't use that anymore. But, things that sell art and music, you've got to be on there hustling all the time, instead of just performing and doing what you like. And they feel like they're going to ruin it with making it into a business. And frankly, I think a lot of times it's possible to do that quite easily, if you do it wrong. You really could turn your band, which is a bunch of friends that enjoy what they do, into a

miserable experience for everyone, if you decide, "Look, we've got to market this," and you're making everybody do things they hate.

**JEFF:**

I do think mindset is important and you've got to wrestle down this idea that art and money can co-exist. And if there's a spectrum, on one side I would putt sellout, which means you're just doing it for the money. Most creative professionals I know who are very successful, they're not actually doing it for the money. They're being smart about the necessary business decisions that they need to make, but as Walt Disney once said when somebody accused of basically being a sell out, he said, "We don't make movies to make money, we make money so that we can make more movies."

That is what I see most professional artists, creative entrepreneurs, writers doing today. But, certainly there are those examples you go, "Ah, I don't want to be like that guy or that person because it's just not interesting work," and then on the other extreme, would be somebody who's starving. And that's not fun either because if you're starving, you don't have money for supplies, you don't have time to produce good work because you are in theory, working a day job, just trying to scrape by to make a living. Or, maybe you've got golden handcuffs, you've got some great job and it's stealing all of your time. Somewhere in between those two extremes there's this idea of what I call the thriving artist, who's somebody who makes money so that they can make more art.

So, I think it's very important to understand that money is a means, not a master. It's a means to doing more of the work. The goal of an artist is to just make money. The goal of money is to make more art. In order to do that, one of the disciplines that you have to acquire, is you have to charge what you're worth. And so, one of the surprising things that I've found -- especially in an era where music is practically free, content is practically free, this conversation we're having right now is free, there's so much stuff that you can get for free -- as a creator of content, art, music, material of any kind of

**entertainment or artistic value, how do you charge for your work?**

**And one of the things that I found was really fascinating among all the thriving artists was they very rarely worked for free. And the corollary there was they're always working for something. Now, that something is not always money, but they're not just randomly giving away their work for something.**

**So, if they're writers, they're running a blog and trying to get subscribers so that they can eventually sell more copies of their books. If they're public speakers, maybe they've got a podcast where they're generously giving away their work, but they're not doing it in a way where they're not getting something out of it. They're building an audience which they can then eventually monetize or maybe they're just getting started and they're doing work to build a portfolio or do something. But I found that really true starving artists have gotten into this really bad habit where they've been giving away their work for years, without any understanding of what it's leading to, except this kind of elusive opportunity. So, I think you have to discipline yourself to always work for something.**

**So, if I'm going to do this speaking gig, and they don't have a budget, then I'm going to get a free video out of it, that's worth literally thousands of dollars if I had to produce that myself, that I can then use to produce a speaker real. Again, thinking in terms of beginners, I'm going to do this consulting gig, whatever, at a discount, but I'm intentionally telling them that this is a one time deal, and you're going to have to give me recommendations to five people as a form of payment. So, what I tell people is -- I go, "You can't work free." Especially writers and artists, they get bent out of shape because, "How am I going to get noticed?"**

**And I think there's a difference between marketing and just giving all of your best work away for free. And if you do that on a consistent basis, you set a precedent that your work is basically work nothing. And so, any time you go to perform,**

**you're going to share your art, your craft, your skill in some way, you better be getting something out of that exchange, and you better know exactly what that is, and what that can lead to, otherwise, you are setting a really bad precedent, which is that, "My work isn't valuable. There's no value to it."**

**JORDAN:**

**Right, so you have to have that plan before going into it. And I know this from speaking. "Well I'm just going to keep speaking at all these things and then people will give me referrals or I'll get my name out there."**

**Getting my name out there is this phrase that artists, speakers, writers use, which means, "I don't have any plan for distributing my ideas. I'm just going to keep doing things for free and eventually a great opportunity will land in my lap," and I can tell you from experience that that is extremely unlikely to happen. And if it does, it's going to take so much longer than if you actually had a plan. And I learned that really early on from Michael Port who helped me learn how to speak. I was speaking for free before that and he goes, "Just don't ever do it again."**

**I'm like, "Well a lot of these places don't have a budget," and he goes, "Then ask them," like you said, "for video, make sure it's professionally produced, it's exclusive, it's royalty free, for eternity you own that video like you filmed it yourself in your own living room, only they get to do the work for it, and they've got to write you a letter of recommendation, and they released the rights for you to use their corporate logo on the website, and they've got to invite a few of your friends and they've got to pay for this and that and the other thing."**

**And it's just like, "Wow, I thought there's no way they're ever going to let me do that," and I would reply and say, "I can't speak for free but since you don't have a speakers budget, I'm going to ask you for the following," and I don't remember anybody ever saying no except for one opportunity which turned out to be vapor. They didn't even have a conference, they were just seeing if they could stack the deck and then they were going to sort of take it from there. I dodged a bullet on that one and that was the only one that said I wouldn't have an exclusive video**

and all the rights and at least my travel and all that stuff comped.

It started to work out well because even though I wasn't initially, early on, getting paid to speak, I would show up at a conference and come away with an ad deal for the show that was 150 grand a year.

**JEFF:** Wow.

**JORDAN:** They keynote of that event didn't make a fifth of that. So, it can start to work but you have to have a plan. It's like going to the gym and going, "I'm just going to sit on this bench and eventually I'm going to start sweating and that's going to count as my workout and then I'm going to go home." You're going to get that much out of it.

**JEFF:** Speaking is a great example because it's something that a lot of people do for free. There are these skills that you have that other people kind of think they can do. Everybody kind of thinks they can write, everybody kind of thinks -- Like photography and design, "Well I can't do that but you could just do that real quick for me," or, "Anybody can talk so I'm just going to ask you to come and talk at my conference and I can't imagine paying you 15 or \$20,000 for a keynote, because anybody can do that."

And so there's this undervaluing of certain abilities. I would never ask an electrician to come fix the electrical work in my house and go, "Well, you could just do me this favor. Anybody can do this," because I have no idea how to do that and it's really important to my house that that works. And so, I do think that you have to understand that there is some inherent value to this work.

The other thing that I love about that exchange you had with Michael is you go, "Can I ask for all of these things? Aren't they going to be mad at me?" and you're not trying to be a jerk, you're just going, "Look, this is worth something to me and so I've got

to get something out of this," and I still think you can be humble, especially when you're just starting out.

But I had a similar exchange with a guy named Ken Davis, who trains a lot of speakers. He used to perform at Ray Charles' concerts. He was the opening comedian. He kind of mentored me in this. He says, "You've got to charge something," and I like this as sort of a practical exercise, whether you do consulting, coaching, any kind of service work, or even commissionable kind of work where you're making whatever prints, you're writing copy, you're performing of some kind --

Having sort of a low bar and high bar -- The high bar is, "This is what I'd really like to get paid," the low bar is, "I can't make less than this, otherwise it's not worth my time," and then gradually, over seasons of your career, which could literally be months or it could be years that you start changing this, but you're gradually raising both the low and high bar so that you begin to create this precedent that, "My time is valuable," that, "I do charge something," but, in certain circumstances, you may be willing to negotiate on that.

And eventually, you get to a point where you've got such a reputation that you don't necessarily have to negotiate anything. You go, "This is what my time is worth. You can take it or leave it." But when I started speaking, I was doing the same thing. I was speaking at a lot of conferences.

As a writer, this is something that we're told. "You've got to get your name out there. You've got to share your message," and it's a good idea, but if you aren't directly connecting to say, book sales, at the back of the room, or getting email sign ups on your blog where you know that for every 1,000 people you're going to get 50 customers or something, then you really kind of are doing it for no reason, and if there is something that you're getting out of it, you don't know because you're not really tracking it. So, how do you know if this gig was better than that gig? So I set a low bar. I said, "I need to be making I guess about 500 bucks a speaking gig," this was very early on. "I'd like to be

making a few grand. That would be great. But, I need to be making about \$500.”

As soon as I made that decision, I was like, “Okay, so that means that I’m going to turn a gig down if I won’t get at least \$500,” which was really scary for me. At the time, I made basically \$3,000 a month working for a non-profit, but I really wanted to do this and I understood that if I was going to write and speak full time, I was going to have to charge something.

So somebody called me and said, “Hey can you come speak at my event?” and this was a friend, and I said, “Hey, do you have a budget?” They go, “No, we don’t have a budget.” I said, “Okay, well I understand. I really can’t do this for any less than \$500. That’s \$500 plus travel and lodging and all that. I understand that you don’t have a budget. It totally makes sense, and if I can recommend anybody, let me know.” They said, “Oh, no, we can do that. Yeah, we can do 500 bucks, no problem,” and I was like, “Okay.” And I never asked for an amount of money after that without somebody coming back and going, “We could probably do that.”

And so, even when they say they have no budget, they often have a budget, and it really does begin with you valuing the work. Because if you won’t value your work, nobody else will.

**JORDAN:** Because they’re thinking, “Oh, man. I can’t give you what you’re worth which is 5, 10, 15 grand. And then you go, “Well look, I need my travel comped, I need an honorarium of X so I’m not going out of pocket on meals and you’ve got to pay for my travel, and they go, “Well, yeah, of course.”

**JEFF:** Yeah.

**JORDAN:** They don’t mean zero dollars. Sometimes, of course they do. But you’ve got to figure that out.

**JEFF:** Yes.

**JORDAN:**

**And I think one of the reasons that people don't value their work is, like you said, something that maybe a lot of other people can do in their mind, or they've been doing it for so long but not professionally, that they don't value it either. For example, I volunteered to MC a big event called Thrive. I did it because it's my friend and it's for charity and there's all this stuff going on. It's a really fun event in Vegas, coming up actually, really soon here.**

**And, I had a couple of people say, "Oh, You MC events? Will you do this event for me?" and I thought, "Well, no way. I mean this is three days. It's going to be grueling, I've got to be backstage the whole time. I'm going to be living on coffee and very little sleep and if I screw up it's in front of 1000 people and blah, blah, blah. No, I have to do this." And people are going, "Well, I really want you to MC our event. It's going to be so great," and the same thing, "We don't necessarily have a great budget for this, but da, da, da, da," and I think, "Why don't you just hire a real MC?" is what I said to a couple of other folks. And they said, "Well, you are. You're going to be great for this, are you kidding?" and I thought, "Well, I don't really know that and neither do you," but the truth is, I've been talking for 11 years and I do speak in front of large groups. So, it's really the same thing only a lot less talking.**

**So, of course, it's something that I can do but I didn't really value it at first because I've never charged for that. And the problem is if you never charge for something, you have to decide when you're going to start doing that. And often, there isn't really a plan, like we talked about before, for when that's going to happen. So, what happens is, you do end up writing, painting, speaking for free for a decade thinking, "Well, you know, at some point I'll be worth it," but meanwhile you're just as seasoned or twice as seasoned as most professionals.**

**And on the other side of the same coin, I think that a lot of people who have day jobs that are not necessarily something they do just to pay the bills -- like John Grisham was a lawyer for example. He probably wasn't thinking, "Man, I've got to get**



out of this lame loser job and start showing some face. And hopefully one day I'll be a respectable writer that everyone looks up to," right? That was not the dialogue, I assume, he was having in his head. And so he probably never thought, "I should be charging for this," because he thought, "Well, I'm a professional attorney, but I'm not a professional writer. I don't really have the right to do that." And that's a big problem if you're trying to eventually transition from your profession into the artist phase, or the creative phase, because you don't have a plan or your plan is, "One day I'll feel worthy of doing this." But usually it's, "I'll feel worthy when I'm getting paid and I'll ask for money when I'm feeling worthy."

**JEFF:**

Yeah, you know, Jordan, people often ask me, "How long do I have to give my work away for free before I can start charging?" and I actually think that's a really bad plan. I think a better plan is to start from day one saying, "This is worth something. It may not be worth a lot because I'm not at the top of my game yet, but this is worth something." Here's an example that I tell in the book that I just love. Michelangelo was a teenage young man and he wanted to apprentice under a guy Domenico Ghirlandaio, who was one of the most influential painters in Florence at the time, and Michelangelo was a little bit late to the game.

And so he goes to Ghirlandaio -- this is the story -- and he knocks on his door and he says, "Hey, I want to apprentice under you. I want to be an artist and I understand that I'm not a pro yet and I need the practice under a professional in order to this right. So, will you take me?" and Ghirlandaio goes, "No, I've got enough apprentices. I don't need somebody else." Michelangelo goes, "No, I'm not done yet. I need you to take me under your wing as your apprentice and I need you to pay me," and this was at a time when apprentices did not get paid. In fact, many times, they paid for the opportunity to mix the paints, learn under the tutelage of a master. Their parents would pay for them to have this opportunity because it was an education that would hopefully lead to, at the time, kind of a middle class job.

**Michelangelo grew up hearing a different story. His parents told him -- his whole family told him -- growing up that they were of noble descent. They had a last name. To have a surname in the Renaissance, meant that you were of nobility, because not everybody had a last name. Their last name was Buonarroti and they believed that they were connected to various noble families including de Medici.**

**And so, Michelangelo grows up thinking, "I'm a nobleman and so I've got to act like an aristocrat," and so when he goes to be apprenticed, which typically is the equivalent of going to college as an artist, he says, "No, no, no. I can't pay. You have to understand, I'm noble. You're actually going to have to pay me a little bit for my time." Ghirlandaio was so blown away by the audacity of this request, and maybe a little bit impressed, that he goes, "Okay, let's do it."**

**And a year later, Lorenzo de Medici, who's basically the ruler of Florence at the time, the richest guy in town, comes to Ghirlandaio's studio and says, "I need two of your best apprentices. I'm going to bring them into the royal palace and we're going to be the patrons to these artists and raise them up." Who comes to mind? You've got all these apprentices doing all the same work and then there's this one audacious guy who stood out from everybody else, who ended up getting really special opportunities that nobody else got. One of the ways that he stood out from everybody else was that he started from day one charging something for his work.**

**And I think we can all do this. Whatever craft we're pursuing -- and I learned this when I was interviewing all these different thriving artists. One of them was a woman Melissa Dinwiddie, and she's started doing these and lettering custom prints and commissions for friends. And she was doing them for free and then one friend said, "No, no, no. I want you to do this for me and I've got to pay you something," and they both agreed on the massive sum of \$20. She could have bought a print at Target for \$20. But for Melissa, going from zero to something, for her**

changed everything. Because then after that, it was just going from 20 to 50, 50 to 100, 100 to 1,000, and so on.

So the point is that you need to set a precedent for yourself, "My time, my skill is worth something right now, so I've always got to be working for something. And then, over time, as I get better, I can gradually increase what I'm worth."

**(COMMERCIAL BREAK)**

**JORDAN:** Jason, did you want to jump in?

**JASON:** Yeah, so what I'm seeing right now in podcasting is kind of like, we do have this glutton of amateurs, and they're all coming in and giving it away for free, trying to build their name, which you were kind of just talking to. And it's to the point where it is such a noisy marketplace, where it's really hard to stand out, even that little one percent above everybody else, to be heard. I'm seeing that it's a real struggle for a lot of people who are really talented and are charging to get ahead because there's so much noise in the marketplace.

I was a professional programmer for 20 years before I became a podcaster and the amateurs came in and basically ran the professionals out of business because they came in and undercut us. I think that's a real problem with going from being an artist that is starting off, to getting to that next level because there's so much noise nowadays. How do you kind of work around it?

**JEFF:** There's a great Harlan Ellison video. Harlan Ellison, if you're not familiar, is a well known sci-fi writer. He's done all these shows and movies including Babylon 5 and just a bunch of crazy stuff and he has a video on Youtube that you could Google, Pay the Writer. And he's got this incredible rant about that. But, he says that very thing. He says, "It's the amateurs who make it harder for the professionals," and I think that's a real thing. I see this in the world of writing and publishing now. You've got so many people, self publishing so much junk and to the average reader,

it is hard for them to discern the difference between John Grisham or me and somebody who's just starting out. I think that's a real thing where it makes the professionals -- it makes their work harder. My solution to that is to niche way, way down and to find out who is this work actually for? How can I find, as Katherine Kelly says, those 1,000 true fans -- and it can be tens of thousands -- but how can I find that small group of people that when they read the book, when they listen to the podcast, they don't feel like they're one of a million, they feel like you're talking directly to them?

I was recently talking to Mike Herrera, the lead singer of a punk band called MxPx, and they were huge back in the day and have been playing music for 25 years and are not on the radio and not as big as they once were, in terms of mass culture because the music industry, obviously, in the past 25 years has changed a whole lot.

And so, they kind of rethought their business model and one of the things that Mike told me is they realized that they were playing so many shows but certain shows they were actually losing money and there was this idea that they had to be all things to all people. They had to be out there in the stadiums. Living in Nashville, I've become aware of the fact that if you're an opening act, you're a smaller band opening for a bigger band, often you're paying. You're not getting paid, you're paying to be on that tour to get that exposure, which is honestly something that the music industry has noticed.

If you're a new band, you're going to pay to open for Taylor Swift or something and we can take advantage of that, where in reality, you as the artist maybe just digging your own grave. And so, Mike and his band members at MxPx, said, "Well, what can we do? We know we have fans. Most of them have been listening since they were teachers, so like 30-40 year old men and women. What can we do? Well, we can pick a city, and we can pick a venue that we know we can sell out, and we can do two or three dates back to back to back in these particular cities and we'll sell it out and we'll just travel on the weekends,"

because they have families and stuff. And it's low, low overhead, high margin.

They go play these dive bars in many cases, they sell them out and they're there all weekend long playing different set lists and so people are driving are driving six to eight hours because they were hardcore fans. They'd grown up listening to this music. They went there, they bought tickets to both shows both nights, and everybody stayed to buy all of their merch.

And so I think one solution to that, Jason, is when everybody is trying to be all things to all people, like especially with what you guys have here, finding out, "Why are we actually reaching? And instead of trying to reach more of the same, could we go deeper with the existing fan base that we have?" I recently hosted a conference and in my mind, I was thinking, "Okay, year one, 100 people. Year two, 250. Year three, 500, 1,000, 2,500, because that's how I'm going to get the big sponsorships."

And we got to year two and got in 200 plus people and I was like, "I like this," and then we got to year three and it was like 250, and I was like, "I don't want to keep growing this much more than this because there's something really special here that might get destroyed if we keep doubling down and try to get bigger, bigger, bigger. And instead, what if we were forced because of the demands of the market, what if we were forced to get more value out of a smaller group of people? Could we do that?" and we did that.

We decided we're going to have a smaller event, we're not going to sell them a bunch of stuff, we're going to sell them one thing at the event, an opportunity to go deeper in this process and just make it way more profitable than having to double or triple the conference attendants and then bring all these different sponsors in and throw all these different pitches at them. So, I think that's one way to do it.

The other way to do it is to very intentionally identify the influencers in a particular niche and befriend them, connect

with them, because I think it's one thing to be just another voice in the world of podcasting or whatever, it's another thing to be the place, the show, the thing that all of these other trusted experts and influencers are talking about. And I do believe that over time, the cream does rise to the top. I think *The Art of Charm* is a great example of this. I also think what Tim Ferriss has done with his podcast is a great example of this -- kind of came to the game semi-late and just said, first of all he's Tim Ferriss, on top of that, "I'm going to bring a level of quality to this. I'm going to get my audience in front of people that they would never be able to talk to," and I do think that being able to not just be the best, because that's subjective in many ways, but to find a way to get this influencer and that influencer and this person to talk about you in a way where you are now showing up in multiple niche channels because there is no one single channel anymore. I think that's one way to cut through all the clutter and not just be somebody else vying for listeners' attention.

**JASON:** And to be honest, Tim Ferriss did have two excellent tutors to get him jump started, isn't that right, Jordan?

**JORDAN:** That's right, yeah. I saw their names in the back of his book and I was very impressed.

**JASON:** And Jeff, I'm sure you're familiar with Mike Monteiro's famous video *F You, Pay Me*.

**JEFF:** Uh-huh, yep.

**JASON:** That's one of the things that I struggled with when I first started with the podcasting side of things, to get new clients, besides doing *The Art of Charm*, just trying to teach, was that self-doubt. That kind of imposter syndrome. I always go back to that video and it's like, yeah it kind of gives me bit of jazz to get up and get people to pay me, but it kind of fades really quickly. How do you keep that drive to make sure you want to get paid over time and just stick to your guns say, "No, I am worth this amount of money and I'm going to charge it, and I'm not going to give a

discount just because you say you can't afford it." There's always more money. We always know that.

**JEFF:**

Something that I don't talk a lot about and I don't know if you guys know this, is I used to work for a non-profit and what we did was we worked with individuals and churches and we would do service projects all around the world. We did mission trips. And I actually fundraised my salary for seven years. So, when I entered the business world -- I think a lot of people don't intentionally go, "I'm going to go into business." It's typically some sort of personal need. A desire to get out of a day job and/or make enough money to support yourself and have more freedom.

And of course there's folks who go get their MBA and go, "I'm going to start something big," but a lot of small business owners, people like me, just kind of fall into it. And that was what happened with me. I had this very weird relationship with money and I've been doing this now for six years. I went from basically fundraising, asking friends and individuals to donate to the organization on my behalf so that I could get a salary, which was hard.

Basically I had two jobs, I had to manage all of my donors and supporters, and then I also had to do my job, which was being a marketing director of a medium sized non-profit organization. And so when I went into business and started making more money than I'd ever made before in my life, I felt guilty about it at first. And so, to compensate for that guilt, I would do lots of favors for friends and I would give money to charities, which I'm a big fan of. We still do a lot of that.

But then I would give my time away to friends and friends of friends and just try to help other people out who were maybe struggling writers, and they wanted to start a business of their own. And it got really frustrating that so many people that I was generously giving my time to, did nothing with it. Now, I'm not saying nobody did anything with it, because there were some people, but the majority didn't.

And then this actually happened recently where I realized that the people that had paid me the most of money for coaching or an online coach that I teach or bought all my books, in most cases, they were the ones doing the stuff. They were actually doing it and it was kind of this paradigm shift for me where I realized -- I sort of separated, "Here's money and then here's generosity. Here's business, here's how I make money, and then here's how I help people." And recently, it was actually at the conference where I was talking to hundreds of people who were like, "I bought this course and I bought that book and I did this thing and I did that thing." And initially I was like, "Oh, you bought all these things. Did you get your return on investment?" and then they started telling me all the things that they had done. It was a paradigm shift for me.

I realized, "Wait, I don't have to have a business and make money so that I can help people. My business helps people and the more I continue to charge for my work and deliver great products and services, the more, obviously, I'm able to keep doing this." I don't have to go do something else. But this exchange of, you paying me, me delivering valuable information and advice and solving a problem that you couldn't solve on your own, this has helped too. This is generous work too, where we're giving our best to somebody else and getting paid for it. And what's more, it's sustainable.

So, I do agree that that feeling fades but there was this light bulb that came on for me recently, where I was like, "Wait, business is actually a way of helping people. It's a sustainable way to solve a problem."

**JORDAN:**

One angle I want to take a look at real quick is using your job as a patron so that you can create. Because we talked about finding influencers and people that are going to promote your work, I think a lot of people right now are going, "Okay, yeah. I'm so far away from that. I don't even have time to work on this stuff," or, "How am I going to work on this stuff?" and you have a



great example of Kabir Sehgal, who was a former show guest. This is the busiest guy ever.

**JEFF:** Yeah.

**JORDAN:** He's like a trumpet player and he's in the Navy and this and that and the other thing. It's amazing, he used his job as a patron and he ended up winning a Grammy. So it's not like, "Oh, yeah, in my spare time I do a little bit of music," it's like, "No, in my spare time I win the highest award that you get, basically, in music."

**JEFF:** Yeah, well I did this interview with Kabir for the book right before he was deploying to Afghanistan, I think. And, definitely the busiest guy ever. He told me, when he was working in the New York investment banking world -- I mean, obviously that's a busy career. You don't have a lot of time and so there are two ways to use your job as a patron.

And we all understand patrons are these very wealthy people in the 1500s who paid people like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci to paint and create art, but they don't really exist today. Except, I think they kind of do, they just look different. So, the patrons are the people around us, they're the mentors, the influencers, and our bosses and people who are literally paying us to let us practice our art. And you don't necessarily have to do it on the side, you can integrate it with your job.

And Kabir is an example of this where he wanted to be a writer and he didn't really have any extra time to be writing a whole bunch before or after work because work was more than an eight hour day. And so what he did was he started writing memos to coworkers and he would write them in the form of haikus and he would use his creativity and he would put into, in his words, a boring job.

And it did two things. One, it allowed him to practice his desire to be more creative, and it also made him better at his job. People started reading those memos, because you're getting

hundreds of them a day about this investment or that thing, and he was writing it in a poem. And people were going, "What is this?" and they were reading it. It was grabbing their attention.

And so I think the best way to this, because we live in this era -- And I'm not saying some jobs don't suck and some bosses aren't jerks, I get that.

But we live in this era where everybody wants to chase their passion and make the day job the enemy of your passionate self-employed career, which I don't think most people should do. And if most people did that, we would not have good, large businesses that provide so many great services and opportunities and products for the public good.

And so we make the day job an enemy when in reality, I think more often than not, you can partner with your boss, with your day job, to find a way to practice your art, not just in the margins but all day long. I did this when I was working at a non-profit. I was a marketing director and I wanted to write. I was kind of like John Grisham. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do with it but I wanted to write and I wanted to in some way do this professionally, where people were taking it seriously and it wasn't just a hobby.

And so, I told my boss. I said, "I want to write," he goes, "Great, help me with this book that I'm working on." And I thought, "Well, I don't know. Okay, I'll do it," because this is one of the things that we have to realize about Renaissance era patronage. Michelangelo didn't say to Lorenzo de Medici, "I don't want to sculpt that." Leonardo da Vinci didn't say, "I don't want to paint that." The patron supplies with you the money and resources to do your work, you say, "Okay."

What they would do, however, is they would accept the commission and then they would interpret it in their own way. They would do it in their own creative way where sometimes they were even being subversive but they were bringing their creativity to it, their style to it, so that they could do it their way.

**But often, the idea came from the patron. So, I helped my boss write and publish a book and through the process, I learned how to write and publish a book. And then after that, I started working on my own book and wrote and published it. And I used my day job as an opportunity to practice. And I even said, "Hey, I want to start a blog and everything that I learn, basically testing how I'm going to grow my own personal brand, I will take all of those lessons that I'm basically using in my free time, and I'll apply them to what we're doing to market the organization. There's no conflict of interest. I'm not going to compete with interests or anything like that," and he said, "Great."**

**And I would say things like, "Can I go to this conference and will you pay for it where I can learn more about social media marketing?" "Sounds great." And all the while, I was using my day job as a means of practicing my art. And I was getting something out of it but the company was getting something out of it too and I think this is the best kind of exchange where if you want to go quit your job, you totally can do that. I think this is a really great ramp to get there, and it took me about two years.**

**I talked to Amy Porterfield, somebody who's kind of big in the online marketing world, same deal. Went to her employer and said, "I want to learn more about online marketing." She wanted to do this for herself and a mentor said, "Don't do this. Go practice this at your job. Even if you have to take a pay cut. Find a way to get paid to practice this thing that you think is your passion."**

**Because first of all, it may not be. You may not like doing this eight hours a day. Second of all, you need an apprenticeship. You need to practice. And so many times are employers are open to you saying, "Hey, I want to learn this new thing. Can I transfer departments or take on this extra work? Can I find some way to add value to the organization while I am also learning a new skill?"**

**JORDAN:**

**Jeff, thank you so much. There's a lot more in the book including these 12 rules for the new Renaissance. Things like, "Real artists don't wait to be discovered. They cultivate patrons, they collaborate more than they work alone." Working in public, selling your own work, masters of many crafts -- there's all kinds of really good concepts in here for people that want to start doing the creative thing and actually making it work for them, which I know -- Honestly, there's a larger percentage of the audience that doesn't care and they're doing a career and they love it, but there's also a large percentage of the audience that goes, "Well I'd never really thought that it was possible for me to do anything creative for a living," and so these baby steps, even if they don't lead to you leaving your job and becoming a boat maker or I don't know, whatever.**

**It doesn't matter, you can still utilize some of these to make sure that you're able to do the creative thing and have it be fulfilling and not come so far out of pocket or so far away from your core competency that it becomes a liability. So thank you very much for coming on the show today, really appreciate it.**

**JEFF:**

**Thanks for having me. It was a pleasure.**

**JORDAN:**

**Great episode. Jason, this is really interesting. I know for you, you were kind of like, "Oh, wait, I've got questions." I wasn't sure what to do with this because I stumbled upon this, frankly. I got laid off from my law job and I'd already been doing this for fun and it was kind of making some money so the transition was easy.**

**But I'll tell you, this stuff applies even when you're in business because you'll still do things even when you're in business as say, a broadcaster, or someone asks you to speak. And then after a year of that, you're like, "Why am I still doing this? It takes up so much time," and then you realize, "Oh, wait a minute, I'm treating this element of my craft as a hobby that's not worth squat to me but is worth something to others, and I'm treating this other element as a business," and it can be a blind spot, and it was for me. Like I said, I should have been charging**

for speaking, presenting, MCing from the get-go and it just never occurred to me because, well, I'm a broadcaster and that's not my line of work. What about you?

**JASON:** Yeah, I was a freelancer for over 20 years. So for me, I always had -- I think it was basically imposter syndrome most of the time. I'm like, "Well if I can learn this, anybody can learn it, so it's not that valuable," except I was completely wrong. So your whole Dunning Kruger effect was really kind of driving my career for so long and I wish I'd have had this episode when I was about 25. That would have really helped. But I really loved all the practical advice that Jeff gave in this. I love Jeff and he's welcome back any time.

**JORDAN:** Great big thank you to Jeff Goins. The book title is Real Artists Don't Starve. And of course, that will be linked up in the show notes for this episode. And if you enjoyed this, don't forget to thank Jeff on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes, of course, as always. Tweet at me your number one takeaway from Jeff Goins. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. You can also reach us by dropping note on Fanmail Friday, that inbox is [friday@theartofcharm.com](mailto:friday@theartofcharm.com), and you can find the show notes for the episode at [theartofcharm.com/podcast](http://theartofcharm.com/podcast).

We've also got our practicals packed into the AoC challenge. If you want to find out more about that at [theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge), it's about improving your networking and connection skills and inspiring those around you to develop a personal relationship with you, a professional relationship with you, it's free, a lot of people don't seem to get that. They think, "Oh, that's bootcamp and you've got to fly to L.A." No, this is online, it's a fun way to get the ball rolling, get some forward momentum.

The challenge is -- the idea is unisex, it's so that you can start applying the stuff you're learning on the show. A lot of people go, "How do I get all this stuff and internalize it?" Use the challenge. It will make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. And that's at

[theartofcharm.com/challenge](http://theartofcharm.com/challenge) or text 'AoC' to the number 38470. We'll also send you our fundamentals toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on body language, nonverbal communication, attraction, negotiation techniques, networking, and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm.

This episode was produced by Jason DeFillippo, Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and the editor, and the show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. Theme music by Little People, transcriptions by TranscriptionOutsourcing.net -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger.

If you can think of anyone who might benefit from the episode you've just heard, please pay AoC and myself the highest compliment and pay it forward, by sharing this episode with that person. It only takes a minute and great ideas are meant to be shared and you just might change someone's life or their business, and that's worth it, right? So share the show with your friends and enemies, stay charming, and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.



