

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 99: How to Build a World-Class Network in Record Time

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Tim Ferriss:

Well, hello, hello. This is Tim Ferriss and welcome to another episode of The Tim Ferriss Show. This is a special edition. It is brought to you sponsor free, and I would like to ask a favor in exchange. But we're going to get to that in a second. The first thing is a description of this episode. This episode is actually a presentation by yours truly that I wanted to share because I get asked all the time, how did you build your network? If you look at the guest list from this podcast or people that I invest alongside, it seems like a very impressive list – and I'm impressed by a lot of these people – but it was built in a very strategic, a very methodical way.

That doesn't mean it has to be artificial; I'm not looking at these friends as transactions. These are relationships that I value. But there is a right and a wrong way to network. In fact, I think the best way to build a world-class network is to spend very little time networking, per se, collecting business cards and whatnot.

So this presentation really encapsulates my approach and what I've done, particularly since about 2007. I gave this presentation at South by Southwest, which is a huge conference. It started off with music, then the interactive technology portion exploded. Don't worry about the slides or the visuals; in each case, if I bring up a slide, I explain it via voice. So you really don't need the visuals. I was able to experience a tipping point for The 4-Hour Workweek when I gave my first presentation at South by Southwest.

I won't go into all the story because I do it in the presentation, but it really triggered everything that came after it. So it was a game changer, a life changer for me. So what did I do, exactly, at South by Southwest that helped it become “The most surprising self-help hit of the decade,” according to Men's Journal? How did that happen? In the session, I talk about exactly what I did that led to a higher likelihood of that type of Black Swan event, in the positive.

So I talk about bio-hacks for surviving and optimizing the booze marathon or sleep deprivation, which is inherent to events like this, whether it's South by Southwest, TED, or any number of other

events that are multi-day. This is an important point and a very important subject to master: the top mistakes that I think 90 percent of attendees make; how to pick your sessions, parties, etc. to make the most of all the madness; how to interact with A-listers or not (and this is a very important subject that I delve into); and how to set yourself apart, enjoy the ride and come away from the whole thing smiling.

Because it is my opinion that if you choose one event properly and you build a network there in the right way, in a methodical way that really focuses on long-term mutual relationships, as opposed to transactions, and a lot of the advice I think is counterintuitive or non-obvious, but it's very specific; that you never have to network again, ever.

Once you set that ball in motion, it's like a snowball going down a hill and before you know it, you have this unstoppable Goliath of inertia that can carry you forward for years and, in fact, decades. That is what happened for me at South by Southwest in 2007 and I want to explain exactly how that happened, which is what this session will go into. And the favor that I would love to ask you guys is, I would love to try to minimize sponsorships, if possible, because I only take sponsorships from companies whose products I use and have vetted and so on, at the very least. So I don't want to take a lot of sponsors. I want to really limit it to that subset.

But the way that I can do that is by having you do something like subscribe to my newsletters. So, for instance, 5-Bullet Fridays, if you haven't been receiving these, every Friday I send out a very short email of five bullets containing the coolest things that I have found or been playing with that week, which could include favorite articles that I've shared with friends.

It could include gizmos and gadgets that I've dug up somehow through experts and purchased and played with. All sorts of randomness, but a lot of awesome stuff that you can use immediately. And it's a very, very short – hence 5-Bullet – email. So check that out; it's free. And you can sign up very easily. Try it out for a week and see what you think at fourhourworkweek.com/Fridays – all spelled out. If you would like me to cut back on sponsors, then please go sign up. It would mean a lot to me and I think you will love it.

If you go on Twitter and just look at #5bulletfridays, you will see a lot of people are excited about this. That is it. So without further ado, or volume peaking, I hope you enjoy this presentation on

exactly how I built my network, which is one of the most common questions that I get. So enjoy it. Please let me know your feedback. I am @tferriss on Twitter. And thank you for listening.

Hey, guys. I'm flanked by dignitaries. I used to have a rat tail. How did I get invited to this party? Well, thank you all for coming. I feel a huge debt of gratitude to South by Southwest because in 2007, prior to that, The 4-Hour Workweek had been turned down by 26 publishers – violently, in many cases. And then that year at South By was the tipping point for The 4-Hour Workweek. It went on to hit the New York Times; it stayed there for almost four years unbroken, millions of copies, 30-plus languages later, here I am presenting. Kind of crazy.

And I've been back basically every year since. So I feel like I have a playbook, a couple of tips, tactics that hopefully you can use over the next few days to get the most out of this event, because I really feel like if you do South By properly once, you never have to network ever again.

You don't have to schmooze; you can just coast and ride it out. So I'll try to give you quite a bit of actionable information. The subject matter of the previous presenter and the one after me – far more important – but I guarantee probably more profanity and crassness in this one. So this particular slide is me at Burning Man 2008, after being thrilled which what happened at South By. I have very little recollection of this particular instance and I suspect that may be true for many of you over the next few days.

So let's start with avocados. No, not avocados. We're going to talk about booze. Specifically, how you can mitigate the damage that you're going to inflict on yourselves over the next few days. I'm not going to necessarily stop you from getting drunk; I think that's part of the fun of being here. I'm not going to stop you from getting dragged out of a club yelling "Do you know who I am?" You can do that, too. But I want to help minimize the hangovers and the missing of sessions, the missing of days here, because that's a real travesty.

So a couple of recommendations: If you've ever time traveled on alcohol – what I mean by what is, you're at a club, then suddenly you're at Denny's eating Moons Over My Hammy, and you're like, "How did I get here," you've experienced a lack of vasopressin. Vasopressin is a hormone that is associated with short-term memory and ethanol (the booze) inhibits its release. So you can compensate for that by inhaling desmopressin, which is

the synthetic version. Don't do that; I don't recommend that. But you can retain more water.

Why is this key? Because it's also an anti-diuretic hormone. The reason you piss like a racehorse is also related to this vasopressin. The reason you feel so hungover is because you've been dehydrated for a long period of time. So a very easy way to get around this, especially in Austin, is to have a bunch of guacamole before you go out. Have some avocados. It has more potassium than bananas; also a bunch of things that counter inflammation.

So super simple, put a bunch of salt on it. If you want to be indulgent, you can put some balsamic vinegar in the middle as well, which will lower your glycemic response to the pizza that you have five pieces of when you're drunk later. It actually has a tremendous effect. Have one glass of water for every alcoholic beverage you have. Another way that you can mitigate the damage is to have clean drinks. What would be an example of a clean drink? Well, if you want to get as drunk as possible with the least amount of effort and the least hangover, you could have something called a NorCal margarita.

A NorCal margarita, popularized by a guy named Robb Wolf in the Paleo community, is quite simply two shots of high-grade tequila (Reposado is a good choice), mixed with a bunch of club soda and as much lime as you can tolerate. Lemon will also work, it just doesn't taste quite as good. The club soda will allow you to absorb it very quickly, so you can be a cheap date, and the lime will also, just like the vinegar, inhibit your glycemic response to food later.

So if you end up bingeing, you won't have a carb and insulin coma the next day. All right, the last tip related to booze, because I think this is such a key subject to master while you're here, is activated charcoal or carbon. So if you want to, again, minimize some of the damage, you could go try to find that. Probably late for a lot of you to try to do that. Burnt toast, okay? Eat some burnt toast before you go out. If that doesn't sound appealing, you can scrape off the burnt bits into yogurt and eat that, which has actually been done in studies looking at trying to alleviate overdose of acetaminophen. So it can work, surprisingly enough. Burnt toast, avocados, NorCal margarita, there you go.

All right. Who is this person and why is she very, very important? So this woman, lovely, lovely woman is named Miriam. I went Miriam when I went to CES for the first time. The Consumer

Electronics Show. I never made it to the trade show and this is highly relevant to South by Southwest.

I instead went to a sponsored lounge, which was the Seagate Blog Haus, and it was where they gave bloggers – at the time, that was social media, basically – gave bloggers free booze, power outlets, a place to rest and do work. And I just went there and I hung out all day, for several days. I had a laptop, so I was able to do work. I struck up casual conversations with people – “Hey, what’s the most interesting session you’ve seen so far? Any cool products you’ve bumped into?” Didn’t pitch anyone. I got to spend time with Miriam because she was checking people in. We just very casually got into long conversations about where we were from, etc.

Now, the big dog at the time – and he’s still very influential – is Robert Scoble. So he was in the Blog Haus, everyone was crowded around him, dozens of people vying for his attention. I knew I didn’t stand a chance. I didn’t have a [inaudible] to pitch for him. I didn’t even try and that’s generally what I recommend. Now it turned out that Miriam is Robert’s wife.

And Miriam said, “Oh, yeah, you should totally hang out with Robert.” Like “Shoot me a text or send me an email and we’ll just meet up when you’re back in the Bay Area.” Fantastic. And so Robert ends up getting a copy of the book. He sends out a short mention in a blog post. It takes the book to Top 10 on Amazon for several days. Compared to morning television at the time, which would only take it to say the Top 50 for several hours. That all came about because I followed these rules: Don’t dismiss people, don’t be a dick, and don’t rush. Those are the three core tenets of success at an event like South by Southwest.

Don’t dismiss people. You should behave here like everyone you interact with has the potential – I can’t wait to see the drawing for this – everyone has the potential to get you a cover story in the New York Times, because many of them do. It’s just a good way to behave, all right? But you should behave like everyone here has the potential to get you a cover story at the New York Times.

Don’t be a dick – pretty self-explanatory. But let me give a couple examples of all three. So don’t dismiss people. I already gave you one. I’ll give you another one specific to South by Southwest. I was going to a few movie screenings. I went to one called “Big Rig,” pretty cool movie. I was standing in line and the guy in front of me, older gentlemen, had huge forearms. This is the kind of

thing I notice. I was like, “Dude, what is up with the forearms?” We started talking. It turns out he’s a rock climber. We talked, we talked, we talked – about nothing business-related whatsoever.

He turned out to be Morgan Spurlock’s brother. Morgan Spurlock showed up maybe ten minutes later. We sat right next to each other at the movie, and then a few years later, I ended up collaborating with him and he profiled me for “A Day in the Life.” So again, treat everyone like they’re important, because they are. Don’t dismiss people. I’ll give you the converse example. Last year, I was here with my girlfriend at the time and had dozens of people basically face palm my girlfriend to push her out of the way to try to talk to me. Not good politics.

Don’t be a dick – again, pretty self-explanatory. Not limited to men, by the way. I’ve seen a couple of instances where, for instance, a friend was speaking to a female attendee and she asked if she could see the apps on his home screen and he did this. She grabbed the phone, turned around, and then sent a text to her number from his phone so she would have his phone number. Don’t do that. Don’t rush – this is the most important because it turns otherwise good, reasonable, wonderful people into those who do the aforementioned two. Don’t rush. Play the long game, all right?

And the mission that I would like to offer to all of you – the job should you accept it – is to realize that at South by Southwest, there are hundreds of people who could change your life completely, who could satisfy all of your wildest dreams: financially, reputationally, phantasmagorically, I have no idea.

They can really make magic happen for you. Your job should be to try to have a deep human connection with one of those people before you leave. That’s it. It makes South by Southwest very, very manageable. An example of rushing – and this has happened to me perhaps at South By, is the urinal encounter.

What is the urinal encounter? It’s when I’m trying to have my moment of Zen, I’m at a urinal, and I’m like, deep breath, deep breath, you know, I’m thinking of the penguin in the cave, chilling out. I’m like okay, I’m getting ready to go back into the melee and some startup founder will come running up to me and skid to a stop, who’s sweating because he’s nervous and starts panting on the back of my neck, giving me a pitch. If you want to make any human male that I’m aware of really uncomfortable, wait until they’re staring at a wall, holding their penis, and come up and

breathe on the back of their neck. Don't rush. It makes good people do bad things.

I promised crass. Next – read bios, not sessions. So how do you choose among all of the sessions? You probably have some big, fat book and you're like, oh, my God, how am I possibly going to tackle any of this? No. 1, read the bios not the sessions. The session titles may not tell you the whole story. Look for interesting people, not titles of sessions. Secondly, don't just look at the people on the panel, look at the moderators. So what I did my first time to South by Southwest is I would go to a panel, I would listen to these amazing people on a given panel, and then I would go up not to the A-listers on the panel afterwards – I would go up to the moderator, many of whom are equally impressive in their own right.

I would go up to the moderator, who is usually not nearly as mobbed, and I would give them a quick explanation. I would say, “Hey, this is my first time at South By, I don't know anyone. Kind of lost. I just finished my first book. It's about A, B, and C. Personally, I'm interested in – at the time, say Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, this, this, and this.”

“Is there anyone here you think I might really hit it off with? Anyone you think I should talk to? I'm pretty good at this and this.” And they'd be like, “Yeah, sure, yeah. I think you should talk to this person and this person.” And I just repeated that line of questioning over and over and over again. That's how I met many of the people who led to the tipping point for the book. When I went up to those people who were referred, by the way, don't say “So-and-so said we should really meet.”

Don't oversell it. Just say I went up to them, I asked them this, they said this. I figured what the hell, maybe we'd hit it off. Can I buy you a drink? It's a very methodical way to go about tackling this deluge of sessions. Next one – don't make an impression, leave a memento. I did a lot of research online, pinged my audience on Facebook, Twitter, asked for questions. One of them was, how do I make a positive first impression? Your job at South by Southwest is to not make a bad impression. All right? Because if all you're doing is trying to sell someone – and there are many ways to do it aside from coming to South by Southwest.

What I would recommend, especially in an instance where you're trying to reach an A-lister, right? Somebody who is getting mobbed and pitched all day long, like an Anthony Bourdain or

whoever it might be? Don't try to give the pitch in person. Give them a folded-up piece of paper with a page that you've painstakingly crafted that is the perfect pitch. Include your phone number. You'd be surprised how many VIP folks like to call folks via Skype to have a conversation, as opposed to sending you their personal email, for instance.

Don't make an impression, leave a memento. Just say, "Hey, I realize you're super busy, you've got this long line of people. You're under a lot of pressure. I've thought about this. I think this will be of great interest to you." Just give them a teaser, right? Like if you have an impressive number, a stat, a client who's using it, something like that. "Here you go. I hope you have a great South By. Read it when you're on the toilet or have an extra five minutes on the plane. Thanks so much." And you leave it at that. That also shows that you know how to play the game. You know how busy they are. You know the stress they're dealing with.

Immediately that will separate you from everyone else, as opposed to getting up and just micro-machining through a pitch. They won't remember. Even if they have a spectacular memory. Ignorance is bliss – be the idiot. I don't have to try very hard for this one. The key here – and this is mostly a problem with men, in my experience, or boys or guys or anything in between – is we try to impress people. So we stroll up and we're like, "Well, that's a good point. You know an even better point?" Or someone says something and you're like, "You know what? That reminds me of this story that one-ups your story." Don't do that. In fact, you should do the opposite.

So one of the experiences that I had and challenges that many of you will have, is how do you get into a group conversation? How do you interrupt people? So my rules for that are: No. 1, if it's two people who are deep in conversation, don't interrupt. Okay? Remember, don't rush, play the long game. If it's two people, just don't interrupt – wait.

If it's more people, three, four, etc., you can saunter up and do what I did in 2007, which was say, "Hey guys, do you mind if I join you just to eavesdrop? It's my first time here, I don't know anybody. I'll buy you guys a round of drinks." It's usually a place where you can get free drinks, so it works out really easily. And they're like "Okay, sure." Now, the reason you don't just walk up and say "Hey, guys, I'm just going to eavesdrop" is even though they're never going to say no, at least you asked. Be polite, all right? So then they'd be like, "Whatever, man." So I'd hang out.

Typically there'd be a lot of engineers. I'm not a coder, I'm not an engineer. And if someone said something that I was genuinely interested in clarifying, so they'd be like "We did ... and of course we ended up with Ruby on Rails." And I'd say, "I'm really sorry to interrupt, but I'm deep in the ignorance pool here. Why was Ruby on Rails the obvious choice? I don't know what it is, but why was it such an obvious advantage?" And that will oftentimes spark a debate among the people in that group. So every once in a while, you throw out one of the questions. Again, being the idiot, which is what good NPR hosts also do, by the way.

Eventually, someone will say, "Wait, who the hell are you again? What's your story?" And then you give them the shortest answer possible. Do not launch into a really rushed, long ass pitch. So I would say, "Well, it's my first time here and I just finished my first book and the publisher is basically controlling everything except for digital, so I'm here to try to figure it out." Pause. Then you wait to see who asks, if they do, what's it about? Great. Then you say, "Well, it's about this, this, and this. But I think most people here would probably find this interesting." And you see who digs deeper, all right?

You'll see the logic to this in a second. Let's say you have a group of six people; there's one person who has expressed extreme interest by digging and digging. In the case of The 4-Hour Workweek, maybe they're interested in world travel, virtual assistants, that type of thing. Then at the very end, we bounce around, talk about all sorts of subjects.

I'd say, "You know, zero pressure, I would never expect you to write about it or do anything like that, but I have a bunch of promotional copies from the publisher I could very easily just tab the 15 to 20 pages that I think you would find most interesting based on what we just talked about, and I can mail it to you and you can use it as a doorstop if you want." Because I'd already honed down to the point where I knew who was interested, I would say probably 90 percent of those folks said yes and were enthusiastic about it.

At least half of them ended up promoting it in some way because they loved it and not because I asked them to do it. Does that make sense? If you say "no strings attached," do not fucking follow up and bug the shit out of them. That's a great way to get a huge amount of negative backlash. Don't do it. And we'll come back to

that, but I tend to do very little follow-up, except for something people have asked for. Because people get enough email as it is.

Don't be a traffic bigot. What does this mean? This means that you may be, if you have something to promote – if you have a service, website, startup, book, album, whatever it might be, movie, you might be tempted to go straight for the person who has the biggest megaphone, the biggest site, the most Twitter followers. The problem with that is that you are going to be one of 1,000 people who pitched this person while they're here. 99.9 percent of the time, it won't work. You can try; there's no harm in doing it tactfully. It usually won't work.

What I did in 2007 – and there were blogrolls at the time; do you remember those – is I tried to figure out – and you can ask people right up front; moderators are good people to ask as well – who do these people view as a thought leader? So you have this group of ten traffic leaders, who do they read? Who are the niche folks that they read who are very influential, who are the thought leaders? And then you approach the thought leaders. Invite them out to a drink. And you do the same thing that I just described.

And be very, very candid. Basically do the Puss 'n Boots, you know, holding the hat with the big eyes? And it's amazing what miracles can come of that. Because if you get covered by one of those thought leaders – in an interview, for instance or anything like that – or you send them an exclusive excerpt – even though they have a small site, you send them an exclusive excerpt of the book – what happens? They put it up and you're like who cares? 20,000 readers. But guess who those 20,000 readers are, okay? It's like being in front of 20,000 TED attendees. Okay? So don't be a traffic bigot.

And I would also say don't necessarily focus on the people who you perceive as the A-listers or VIPs now. Try to find the pre-VIPs. Does that make sense? You're trying to find the up-and-comers. So you ask, again, ask people who have been here a few times, who are the best up-and-coming hot designers? The folks that are not very well known who should be well known. Who are the hot up-and-coming filmmakers who haven't had any press? Who are they?

Go meet those people. And by the way, if you did that just in film, but you're actually based in tech, you did that in film, you met the best up-and-comers? The best up-and-comers know one another. The best VIPs and A-listers know one another. It's not industry

specific, okay? So don't be a traffic bigot. You'll also have a much better time while you're here.

Questions for A-listers. So if you're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, all right, Ferriss. I'm still going to go for the gold. I'm going to sprint up to Al Gore and give him the pitch." Well, how should you do it? What are the questions? What are the icebreakers for the A-listers? The first rule, as far as I'm concerned, is ask if they have a second. Don't just run up and pitch. Because a great pitch, the perfect pitch at a bad time is a bad pitch. It won't work. Like I said at the beginning, it's not about making a good impression, it's about not making a bad impression. If you make a bad impression, they won't want to communicate with you later, even if you correct things.

So "Mr. or Ms. X, may I bother you for 30 seconds?" "Mr. or Ms. X, is now an okay time for one question?" If you say that, don't ask three questions – one question. Now, No. 2 and No. 3 here actually work very well together. "Mr. or Ms. X, is now an okay time for one question? "Who on your team could I email about" whatever you're interested in. They're not going to give you their personal email. They're not going to give you their personal phone number, usually. It's going to make them uncomfortable to say no, so realize that and ask about their team. That will immediately put you in the pro category, as opposed to the amateur category.

Another thing, if you're in a group, let's just say at a book signing or something like that, you have to realize even if they wanted to give you their personal email or phone, they can't say it out loud because ten other people are going to hear it. So "Who on your team could I email about" blah. And if they have entourage around them – meaning, let's just say you go to a book signing for fill-in-the blank, right? Michael Pollan.

And you see someone who is just kind of patiently waiting there ten feet away that is probably his publicist or his publisher or someone along those lines. Get to know them. They are probably the gateway to communication with Mr. Pollan. So you don't have to pitch directly. This relates to everything I've just said. I'm not going to spend a ton of time on it, but you have to prove the messenger before the message. You are the messenger.

So, for instance, I had a startup come up to me while I was headed to this room today – I'm not going to mention their company name – but they came up and the first thing they said was, "Hey, your assistant hasn't replied to my emails." So I'm like, what do you

expect me to respond with? How do you want me to respond to that? I get a lot of emails, I don't know. My assistant is pretty good. You had a shitty email. I don't know.

And then his buddy with him is like, "Yeah, Mr. 4 Hours," and gives me some 4-hour quip. And then he gave me his business card. I'm like, all right, if I go to your site – let's just say it's the most amazing site I've seen in my life, am I going to want to be associated with that? So that he can go up to somebody else and be like, "Yeah, Mr. Pollan, Mr. Ferriss works with us." And I'm like, no, hell no. That would destroy my reputation. So you just screwed the pooch. So be a good messenger before you deliver the message. It doesn't matter how good the pitch is if you fuck it up first. F-bombs are coming.

How to pick people out of a crowd. These are all really the questions that I get repeatedly. How do you pick someone out of the crowd? You're scanning the room; you want to work the room. No. 1, don't work the room. No. 2, if you had to pick people out of the crowd, I would say go for the most relaxed, unrushed-looking person. Not necessarily the A-lister surrounded by a huge phalanx of people, if that's the right word.

Unless you just want to listen. If you want to listen, that's fine, but you're not going to get a lot of air time. Look for the most relaxed people in the room. They either have very little going on or they've already made it and they don't feel rushed. Hit or miss. But if you have to pick people out of the crowd, I would say go for the most relaxed, unrushed-looking person.

Icebreakers in general. As a preface to this, and I know you're reading this live while I talk, that's okay. The small talk is the big talk, all right? I'll repeat that. The small talk is the big talk. That is an expression that has been said to me in many different words. Small talk is everything. By friends of mine like Ido Leffler, who is a co-founder of Yes to Carrots. They are distributed in more than 30,000 locations. The point that he would make and the point that I would also make is that if you're just going to pitch people, you can probably do that in a more effective way by staying at home, not coming to Austin, and just sending out cold pitches and working on your email skill.

Here, in person, you have an opportunity to dig deeper and talk about other things. That is how you become memorable. That is how you have that one deep human connection that I was talking about. Instead of asking, what do you do? And there are people

who will ask that of you, and you can be like, “I shoot a lot of heroin. What about you?” That’s a good way to end it. Or you can give them a really boring answer. Sometimes, I’ll just be like, “I’m a freelance writer, trying to make it work.” And they’re already scanning for their next prey. So instead of, what do you do? What do you ask?

I understand why this is difficult because people are like, “I don’t know,” and then they come up with something like, “If you could be a breakfast cereal, what breakfast cereal would you be?” And people are like – what? What the hell’s happening? So don’t do that. You can make it pretty natural.

So for instance, if you say, “So-and-so, nice to meet you. Where are you from?” And they say, “I’m from New York City.” “Are you from New York City originally?” They’ll say “No, I’m from Cincinnati.” “Well, how’d you end up going from Cincinnati to New York City?” You’re going to get all the information you could possibly need for context. Okay? Boom. You’ve got it. And you’ll oftentimes have a very good personal story to go with it. Now, if you don’t want to do that, or later on if you want to sort of expand a little bit, you could ask “What session are you most excited about? What’s been your favorite session so far?” If it’s a few days from now, for instance. “What are you most excited about these days?”

And it’s not that you can’t talk about work, but you can do that anywhere, via any medium. In person is a unique opportunity. So optimize for meet space. Take advantage of the face that you probably have some booze involved and you have a chance to talk about the personal stuff. How to escape/pause conversations. So what do you do if you get cornered by someone selling timeshares?

What do you do if someone is just on meth and will not stop talking about their startup and they’re just going and going and going. What do you do? Well, I would say a few things. And I put escape/pause because I think pause is the better way to think about it. You could try to pull the bathroom maneuver. People always try this. It can work. You can be like, “You know, that’s awesome. So fascinating. I really have to go to the bathroom. I’ll be right back.” The dangers of doing that: No. 1, if you don’t come back, you look like a dick. So it violates the “don’t be a dick” rule.

If you don’t even go to the bathroom; if you’re like, “Yes, I need to go to the bathroom,” then you just walk 20 feet and then just start talking to someone, they’re going to be like [picture] @so-and-so –

what a dick! So don't do that. The easiest way to do it – you don't have to make up – “oh, my God, my house is on fire,” “my wife is calling, I have to go.” You don't have to do that. You can just say, and this is what I do. And I do this with people I find very interesting also, if it's just like okay, we've been talking for an hour (in your head you're thinking this) I just want to wander around a little bit, say that.

So you ask them, “Hey, James (or whatever), are you going to be here for the rest of South By? Are you going to be here for a couple days?” “Yeah, I'm going to be here for the next two days.” “Cool, do you have a card or something? I'd love to connect, but I just want to wander around, maybe take a little breather, or grab a cup of coffee.” You're done. That's great. It's polite, it's honest. That's all you have to do. “Are you going to be here for the rest of South By?” “Are you going to be here for the next couple of days?” “Cool, can I get your card? Great. I just want to wander around, take a break, hit the bathroom and grab a cup of coffee, but I'm sure I'll see you around.” Nobody's offended and you accomplish the purpose of pausing the conversation.

Next – follow-up. So during the event, after the event, how do you follow up? First of all, don't do anything to keep in touch. It will just make enemies, all right? You don't need to ping busy people and just be like, hey, how's it going? How you doing? Imagine that you are calling them at 3:00 p.m. So you call them, it's an investment banker running around, oh, my God. And you're a startup, you're like, we need an underwriter.

So you call this busy investment banker at 3:00 p.m. and you're like “John, hey, it's Tim from South By.” He's like, “Uh?” “Tim, Tim Ferriss. How you doing? How's it going today?” Don't do that. He'll be like, “What the fuck? I'm really busy.” Don't do that. So follow-up is a dish best served cold. What I mean by this is most people are going to walk out of South By with pockets full of business cards, big ideas, people to follow up with, people to ping, brains to pick. Don't ever ask anybody if you can pick their brain over coffee, by the way. But that's a separate story. So follow-up – wait two weeks, okay? Wait two weeks.

Why two weeks? Because if you do it now, it's going to get lost in the avalanche of similar stuff. If you do it right after South By, it'll be even worse. You're going to get lost in another hundred follow-up emails. So it takes people time to catch up from neglecting other things during South By.

Wait two weeks and then in terms of time, I would do it on a Wednesday afternoon their time, or a Friday afternoon their time. Sunday night also works pretty well. So for responses, for max response rate and read rate, those tends to be the times that I find most effective. Play the long game. All this means is you don't have to rush. Why? Because you just have to have one deep human connection with one person. That's it. If you can accomplish that and develop a long-term relationship, you can potentially never have to network again. I know that sounds like an exaggeration.

But if you look back at the people I spent the most time with in 2007, realistically, you'd probably be able to have a couple of these human interactions. Try to get out of tech, by the way. Don't do all tech. If you look at the people I spent the most time with in 2007, about 90 percent of them – this is 2007. What is that? Seven years ago? Oh, my God. They're still some of my closest friends to this day.

That is what you want. Because if you don't do that, you play the short game. You have to then do this very time-consuming, very energy-consuming, very likely-to-offend transactional stuff every year for the rest of your life. Do you really want to do that? No, no you don't. So play the long game, guys. That is it for my formal presentation. So I am going to open it up to the rest of Twitter Q&A. But I hope you all have a wonderful, wonderful experience at South by Southwest. If you do it right, it will change your life. So again, just in summary, don't dismiss people, don't be a dick, and don't rush; play the long game. Thank you.

Female Speaker: Cool. Thanks so much, Tim. So if you guys have specific questions that you want to ask, if you want to hashtag your Tweet with #asktim, we will pull them up and he will answer all of your lovely questions, concerns, and ponderings. And here is our first question; I really should have worn my glasses for this.

Tim Ferriss: I can read it. I'll do it. All right. So, this is from Wendy Perry. Can you guys read this as well? Maybe I don't have to read all these. But I will just for those who are getting this on audio. After I read *The 4-Hour Workweek* years ago, I took my family on a mini-break once a month. Can you have too many? This is in reference to mini-retirements and taking these sabbaticals. So distributing retirement throughout life, as opposed to waiting until say 50, 60, 70 to load it up at that point. I think that this is a deeply personal question.

So in terms of mini-retirements, I try to take one to three months – usually two to three months of these mini-sabbaticals per year. I think that if you use these mini-retirements as a way of postponing other important decisions, of course it could be too many. If you look at your to-do list, and usually the most uncomfortable item is the most important. If you're using these trips to avoid that, then I'd say it's too many.

Next is from Zachary Barker. If you were relaunching a new company with only \$1,000.00 to get started, what would you start? So I get a lot of questions like this. So it's like, if you had no connections and no money, how would you make \$100,000.00 in the next quarter, and what business would you start? What I would say is I would spend the first \$10.00 getting "The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing," and I would figure out what market you're going after first and then design your product.

And specifically, I would also read "1,000 True Fans" by Kevin Kelly, and identify what the demographic and psychographic is of the thousand people you want to have as die-hard fans. First and foremost, non-celebrities. In my case, with the The 4-Hour Workweek, I knew that my first market – not my entire market, but my first market – would be 25 to 40-year-old tech-savvy males in New York City and San Francisco.

How do I reach those people? How can I seem ubiquitous by being on five websites? When, in fact, I'm not ubiquitous, I'm just everywhere that they happen to look. That's where I would start. But I can't say put all your money in Bitcoin or something like that, which I think would be dangerous, especially if you only have \$1,000.00. So test often, test small. I think Facebook is a great place to thin slice. That would be my advice.

Do you meditate to do yoga? I do meditate. I meditate almost every morning for ideally 20 minutes. It's only something that I've done consistently for the last year or so. I personally use TM – transcendental meditation. I find some of the guru stuff a little woo woo. I'm not for that. But just the repetition of a sound I find very effective, as opposed to concentrative meditation or other types. Vipassana also very helpful.

I don't do a lot of yoga. I've become fascinated with Acroyoga, which is more like a Cirque du Soleil of strength performance than anything else. But those are the two. I meditate a lot more than I do yoga.

Anthony Blattner – how do you find the good events and parties instead of the over-packed events? Good events and parties. All right. So I plan my sessions – although there's room to improvise - I let the parties pick me. What that means is I choose the sessions. I interact with people in the way that I described, and then you just ask, okay? Try to have some spontaneity. Just wander around and get lost. In terms of events, if we're talking about conferences in general, this is going to sound haphazard, but my policy has generally been go to at least one event per year, which is the most expensive event you can afford to go to. You're going to end up with a smaller crowd and I find that at least interesting to experiment with. But obviously you don't want to bet the farm on it.

Next question from Littlest Gator. I kind of like that name. Have you ever heard little baby alligators? They go [makes noise] when they're calling their mother. It's amazing. I really want this guy to make that noise. Now that you're a big deal, what are your goals at South by Southwest?

I don't think I'm a big deal compared to a lot of folks. But my goals at South by Southwest, honestly, I was offered the opportunity to do "How to Rock South by Southwest," and I feel a huge debt of gratitude to South By. I think it's one of the most incredible events out there, and if you do it right it could be totally life changing. So I don't have a new book; I don't have a new thing to promote. This time around, it's really just to have fun, eat some barbecue, and hopefully allow you guys to do the same.

Next – Mark Moshel. What thought leaders do you follow? Or are there specific writers, bloggers that I read? Right now, at this point in time, there are some very interesting folks out there.

Nassim Taleb is one that comes to mind immediately. But in terms of reading, I'm trying to read actually really old ideas right now. So I'm trying to focus on books that have been around for 100-plus years whenever possible because in an age of ephemera and sort of neo-mania and obsession with the new, the new, the new, I like ideas that have stood the test of time for a while.

How do I stay focused? I'm not convinced I am focused, but meditation helps a lot. Really the purpose of that session in the morning – I might just be thinking of some guy who cut me off in the salad line in college that I want to punch in the nose for 19 minutes of that. But if I'm thinking of that and I'm like, not productive, and then I go back to what I'm supposed to be doing

just once, that will translate to being able to do the same thing in your normal life. So I think that's very helpful. In terms of books on meditation, the first book by Thich Nhat Hanh is very good.

Melody Towle – how do you deal with criticism you get for not replying to email right away? You know what? I'm going to dodge this one just because I answered it at length in The 4-Hour Workweek. So I apologize, guys, but that's a long answer. So that one we're going to save for The 4-Hour Workweek. I'm sure it's on Torrent somewhere if somebody wants to read it for free.

Herbert Moreal – what part of your 4-hour workweek do you personally find hardest to follow? What I found hardest and what I still find hardest is saying no. You have to say no to a thousand things before you can say yes to the one big thing that's going to change your life. I still find that difficult. I think we all like people to like us. Some people take it very personally when you don't get back to them quickly, like the startup founder who kind of accosted me outside. I feel badly, but at the same time, I'm just like try to walk a mile in my shoes if you could. Just think about it.

Because I used to take it personally do. I'd send an email to a really busy person and they would never respond. I'd be like, wow, what a dick. You have to try to imagine yourself in their shoes. And the reality is, they're getting thousands of email, thousands of pitches. Probably 90 percent of the interactions I have at South by Southwest will be people pitching me. So just imagine how that would feel and how tiring it would be before taking it personally. But I still find saying no quite challenging.

Ryan Bonhart – How do I want people to remember me? I would say I don't need people to remember me. If they remember the ideas, that would be fantastic. Most of which I've borrowed from other people are just collected, but I would say that my goal is to be a world-class teacher and to create people who are better than I am. So if I can create armies, thousands, tens of thousands, millions of people who are world-class learners and in turn can be world-class teachers, and better than I am, which is necessary, then I think the world would be a better place. So hopefully that's something I can do.

John Adley – what tricks do you have for retaining info? If it's factual, declarative information (facts and figures), there's a book written by a gentleman named Higbee – I think it's called "Your Memory and How to Improve It," by the last name is Higbee. Pneumonic devices, as used by Cicero, and for several thousand

years work really well. Ed Cooke, also a fascinating guy, a world-class memory competitor I interviewed on the podcast.

What's the next project book that I'm working on? Well, more details to come shortly. Well, okay, I'll give you guys some breaking news. No one knows this. I was able to negotiate back the rights for a TV show that I filmed some time ago and I will be digitally distributing The Tim Ferriss Experiment to – well, I would like to say the world. There are some constraints geographically.

But I will be distributing it and making it available to as many people as humanly possible in the next few months. So that's very exciting for me. Thanks. Hopefully I can come back to South By next year and do something in the film track and talk about these new avenues for distribution, which I think are really exciting.

Homeless Coder – that's a good, that's funny. I saw a guy two days ago in San Francisco; he was slow-motion karate chopping this tree. And in my mind, I was like, either that guy is high as balls on LSD or he's coming up with the next billion-dollar idea and he's a coder. It's got to be one of the two. Homeless Coder – you've advocated mini-retirements and travel. Where is the best place in the world besides Austin? You know, this is like what's the best pair of shoes in the world? You have to find the pair that fits. It's not the same for everybody. Some people like those crazy, pointy, witch of the west shoes. I've seen a lot of guys in those. Not my thing, you know? I'm a flip-flop guy.

I love Japan. I have a huge affinity for Japan. I lived there for a year in high school. Argentina is a lot of fun too. It's amazing how they can get anything done with those beautiful, hilarious people. Great wine, great steak. Japan is amazing because it is a place where you can be completely confused and illiterate and lost and not be in danger. So if you want to be really uncomfortable but not really in any particular danger, Japan is a great place to do it.

Melanie Curtin – what are you most excited about for this year's South By? I'm most excited about eating a lot of animals. I don't have a real agenda while I'm here. There are a number of friends of mine who have moved to Austin because it is the best place in the world.

I'd like to just reconnect with some of my friends, many of whom I met in – actually two of them I'm meeting in the next three days, I

met for the first time at South By 2007, and they've continued to be two of my best friends. So that's about it.

This is from BKurtz77 – on your podcast with Matt Mullenweg, you guys spoke briefly about poly-synchronous sleep. Have you tried it? Does it work?

So poly-synchronous – I've never heard it phrased that way. Most people have heard, if they have heard it, poly-phasic sleep, where you take instead of a single block of eight hours, you can break it down into fractions, where you can get down to two, two and a half hours of sleep if you take a 20-minute nap every few hours. I have tried it. And it can work. I still am a huge believer in naps, huge, huge believer in naps, despite the fact that I have a lot of trouble with them. Pro tip for naps – and I've realized it's not about falling asleep. It's about laying down and closing your eyes and blocking out some sensory input. So don't get stressed out if you can't fall asleep for 20 minutes. Just lay down. Chill out.

I've tried it; it works. It's massively antisocial. You can have no social calendar whatsoever, so I don't typically follow it.

Luigi Linguito – what's the most memorable thank you note that I've received? That's a good question. I've been very fortunate. I've had a good tear over the last couple of years. There's a luck component, there's a timing component. Hopefully there's some kind of competency component. The first one that's coming to mind, I've received a lot of really lovely thank you letters, but the first one that comes to mind has nothing to do with The 4-Hour Workweek. It's actually a collection of thank you notes from, I think they were third graders or fourth graders – from doing work with DonorsChoose.org, which is an educational nonprofit I really love and spend a lot of time with. I'm on their advisory board and I got this collection of thank you notes for supplying some basic materials like books or pens or pencils.

So that's the first one that comes to mind. Just these hand – I'm not a parent yet. So I don't have the poorly drawn Brontosaurus to stick on my refrigerator. I got 30 hand-drawn letters from these kids, which was just awesome.

JDML – are you recording a podcast while here at South By? If yes, with whom? I don't have any plans to record here at South By. I might. Who knows, I might. Maybe I'll do a man on the street, walk around, see how many drunk people I can get to say incriminating things. I don't know. But no plans right now.

What animal best describes you. Edwin Lee. Also a good question. This is a good one. Alexis Ohanian of Y Combinator likes to ask people in job interviews, what is your spirit animal? Which I think gets a pretty good answer or causes some awkwardness at the very least. Coyote, I would say. I would say prankster, joker.

We could go into that for a while, but I'll just leave it. I think coyote is a pretty good one. Jackie Blum – I have a 9-to-5 job. Can The 4-Hour Workweek actually transform my life? I'm not in a position to leave my regular job. I would say yes and the reason I say that is that The 4-Hour Workweek is really a portfolio of tools for maximizing your per-hour output. So there was somebody actually on Twitter a couple of days ago, if you look at my favorites. If you look at my favorites on Twitter, @tferriss, you can see tons and tons of real-life case studies from The 4-Hour Workweek and The 4-Hour Body.

And one of them was, it took me five months to negotiate it, but I now have a remote work agreement. So he's in his current job, same job, getting the same amount, but he has complete freedom of mobility. That's a big deal because that helps to reward performance over presence and it leads to great things. It's not about getting to a 4-hour workweek for everyone. It's about maximizing your per-hour output and then making better decisions with more options.

Andrew Berg – what are the three to four best body-weight exercises for body travelers? Well, I would say you can keep it really simple. Push-ups, planks. If you want to make planks harder, you can put the soles of your feet against the wall so your feet are off the ground and you have to press back into the wall to make it work. That's quite challenging. And pull-ups, if you have access to pull-ups. I would say that if you do just that – pistols if you can handle it, but pistols are hard for a lot of people. Those are one-legged squats.

Otherwise, just two tips. If you train your abs and your grip, you can keep your entire in really good shape. Abs – we already talked about planks. Listen to my podcast with Pavel Tsatsouline for more details on that. Get some hand grippers, as a dude. I'm not sure all the ladies want thick, callused, meat hooks, but grippers are incredible to travel with.

And you can also, if you're really aggressive and want to go for it, you can get a kayaking dry bag that people use to put their wallets

and so on, iPhones, inside to keep dry. Well, it turns out, you can use a dry bag to contain water also. So you can roll up a dry bag, travel with it, fill it up with water say in the bathtub and get it up to like 30, 40 pounds and you can just use that as a kettlebell or as a dumbbell, so you can get around the space constraints.

Jesse Konover – what’s the best way to respond to, do you have a business card, when I don’t have one? I just say, I’m sorry, I’m really unprofessional, I don’t have business cards. That’s it. I think that does the job. And then usually I say, I’m sorry, I don’t have any business cards, but I’ll shoot you my info. If you mean it. If not, then don’t say that.

Next question. Eric Kaulman – what do most entrepreneurs do wrong?

Most entrepreneurs invest too much in their business before they test product market fit. So do that I mentioned before – read “The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing,” read “1,000 True Fans” by Kevin Kelly, which is free, and figure out exactly who your ideal customer is and who those thousand people are, where they’re located, what they read, where they’d be on Facebook, which pages they’ve probably liked, and test your landing page. Use something like Unbounce or Lead Pages or something to test the offer before you invest in a ton of inventory or a ton of software development. I think that’s the right way to approach that.

Along the same lines is Luigi@Dell – what’s the most memorable memento I’ve received?

Again, it’s just the first one that comes to mind. I was in Japan at one point filming a TV show where I was attempting to learn Japanese horseback archery in a week. Really dangerous, it turns out. I don’t recommend it. You can find it online if you just search Japanese horseback archery and my name. Of all the things. The teacher there gave me an out-of-print on yabusame, which it’s called in Japanese that he was featured in, with an inscription from the foremost family who used to work with the Shogunate teaching and the prodigy right now, who is an incredible rider, incredible archer, has a jacket – he didn’t give me the jacket; I would’ve loved the jacket. But it said, [speaking Japanese]. Since 1157 or something like that. Since 11-something. I was like, that is amazing. I want that jacket. I didn’t get the jacket, I got the book, but that was enough.

Advice for introverts. Advice for introverts is take time outs. So I can play the extrovert, but I get exhausted at events. I get exhausted in crowds. I get exhausted at book signings. I get really drained. I recharge my batteries by myself. So if you need to take a break, go outside, chill out for 10 minutes, lean against a wall, lay down in the park. Take time to recharge. If you try to play the extrovert for too long, you'll just get burned out and then the next day you won't even participate. So drink a lot of water and recharge.

Josh Jansen – what are some of the biggest lessons you've learned from starting my podcast? The podcast started as a lark. It was really a commitment to do six episodes because I wanted to get better at conversation and asking questions. My favorite part of writing books is not actually the writing, it's the research, and it's interviewing world-class experts and trying to deconstruct what they do.

I view the podcast as a way of practicing that and getting much better at it. I've had some wonderful experiences being interviewed on Joe Rogan's podcast or Mark Maron and I wanted to see if I enjoyed being the host. So I would say first and foremost what I've learned is that it's not enough to have the right answers; you need to have the right questions. So you can get a great answer to the wrong question and it ends up meaning very little. But if you have a portfolio of really good questions, man, you can do just about anything. That's No. 1.

No. 2 is to ask simple follow-up questions. So someone says well, I did this, I did this, I did this. Why did you choose to do that? What did you learn from that? What did you learn from that that you haven't talked about before? These follow-up questions are often where the gems really come out.

Next question – Gabby de Leon – what are some tips for executing on all the great ideas gathered at IA? Iowa? Interactive? What is IA? I'm not sure. Once we return home. I'm guessing that is from the conference. You don't want to execute on all the great ideas. It's way, way, way too much. I would look at your ideas, the potential collaborations, and all of that and ask yourself, which one of these, if executed, will make all of the others irrelevant or easier? And then focus on that one. So find the lead domino and focus on that.

Female Speaker: I think we'll take one more question and then direct everyone to the signing?

Tim Ferriss: Sure. All right.

Tetris Great.

Tim Ferriss: Next one is – Gingrich Fiborski – let’s do one more question after this because I don’t think I have a good answer for this. Is there any particular session at South By that you want to attend? AT least one.

I wasn’t able to get my badge yet, so I haven’t had a chance to get the book with the sessions. Let’s do one more. This is a good one – Alex Wykoff – what questions do you use for reflection and why?

So reflection and meditation, I view those as the same thing. I will journal in the mornings quite often. I’d say every four to eight weeks at longest, I will wake up in the morning and I will do an 80/20 inventory of my emotional state. So what does that mean? That means that I’ll sit down, before checking email, doing any of that, checking my phone, and I will ask the question, what are 20 percent of the activities and relationships that are producing 80 percent of my positive emotional states?

And then what are the 20 percent of activities and people who are creating 80 percent of the negative emotional states? That overwhelm, guilt and so on. I’ll put together a to-do list and a not-to-do list, accordingly. Specifically the not-to-do list, the things to cut out. That is the set of questions that I find most valuable.

Female Speaker: Good question and good answer. Well, cool. Thanks again, Tim. And thanks everyone here for joining us.

Tim Ferriss: Thanks, everybody. Have a great South By.