Earn More, Compete Less

The Obvious Choice

Timeless Lessons on Success, Profit, and Finding Your Way

Jonathan Goodman

Jonathan Goodman is the creator of the Personal Trainer Development Center and host of the popular Obvious Choice podcast, a top show for coaches, entrepreneurs, and small business owners. Jon's been featured in most major business and fitness publications including Men's Health, Forbes, Entrepreneur, Robb Report, Inc., and many more. Over 200,000 coaches and small business owners in more than 120 countries have purchased business development materials from him. Originally from Toronto, Jon spends his winters exploring the World with his wife and two young sons.

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Introduction: Business Was Great, Once

Jonathan Goodman opens *The Obvious Choice* with a deeply personal story about his rise, fall, and recovery in business. At the peak of success, six-figure sales days were normal, especially during the early pandemic when demand for online fitness coaching soared. However, as external consultants steered him toward complex strategies, he lost sight of what made his business work: simplicity and human connection.

The turning point came when Jonathan's wife, Alison, was diagnosed with cancer. This personal crisis forced him to strip everything back to essentials, fire his team, and rebuild his business with newfound clarity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Content creation** is overrated for short-term business growth but powerful for learning and long-term connection.
- People don't care *how* you achieve results; they care about what *they become* as a result.
- **Small, targeted audiences** are more profitable and effective than chasing mass appeal.
- The path to business success lies in doing less, but better—leveraging timeless principles amplified by modern tools.

Jonathan emphasizes that *The Obvious Choice* isn't about unicorn businesses or fame. It's about earning millions sustainably while maintaining a high quality of life through strategies anyone can apply.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You open with a powerful story about Alison's cancer diagnosis. How did that moment redefine your priorities in life and business?
2. You argue that business success and online entertainment are separate games. How can people identify which one they're playing?
3. What's the "Underpants Gnomes Problem," and why do so many entrepreneurs fall into this trap?

Chapter 1: When Ambition Results in Recklessness

Jonathan Goodman begins the journey to becoming *The Obvious Choice* with a counterintuitive idea: success begins with **subtraction, not addition.** Chaotic ambition—unchecked and fueled by comparison—often leads to recklessness, which undermines our ability to succeed.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Ambition Without Focus is Chaos:** Ambition can become harmful when driven by comparison and a constant need to prove oneself. It leads people to overcomplicate their lives and businesses.
- **Jason's App Story:** Jonathan illustrates how a business owner, Jason, abandoned a simple, profitable model for a complex one. Enticed by the success of others, Jason invested in an app and marketing tactics he didn't understand, ultimately burning out and realizing that simplicity often beats scale.
- **True Ambition vs. Chaotic Ambition**
  - *Chaotic Ambition* is reactive, comparative, and rushed. It leads to burnout and frustration.
  - *True Ambition* is proactive, strategic, and thoughtful. It drives calculated risks and sustainable progress.

THE BUG CALLED "YOU"

The chapter introduces a practical tool for self-awareness: **The Bug Book.** Inspired by business author Jim Collins, the exercise involves observing and documenting your emotional state objectively throughout the day.

How to Create Your Bug Book:
1. Set an alarm 5 times a day.
2. Rate how you feel on a scale from -2 (awful) to +2 (amazing).
3. Write objective observations about your environment, actions, or behaviors —without commentary or judgment.
4. At the end of the week, review patterns in your highs and lows.

Jonathan emphasizes that studying yourself like a scientist will help you identify what energizes you and what drains you. This self-knowledge allows you to focus on what truly matters and remove the recklessness caused by chaotic ambition.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Subtraction—removing what doesn't matter—is the first step to clarity and success.
- Constant comparison to others online can distort reality and inflate expectations.
- True ambition is **intentional** and **measured**, not reactive.
- Tools like the Bug Book help you objectively understand your natural rhythms, strengths, and weaknesses, reducing chaos and increasing focus.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You talk about the dangers of "chaotic ambition." How can someone identify if they're being driven by it?
2. Jason's story is a cautionary tale. Why do you think entrepreneurs abandon simple, successful models for complex ones?
3. You mention that success comes from being "consistently not stupid." Can you unpack that idea further?

Chapter 2: Trust in You > Your Credentials

Jonathan Goodman debunks the idea that credentials or qualifications alone drive success. Instead, he argues that trust, familiarity, and specificity are what truly make you The Obvious Choice. Customers rarely want the best solution—they want one they can trust, justify, and that feels "good enough."

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Your World ≠ Their World**
  - Customers don't think about your product as much as you do. They want easy, reliable solutions—not perfection.
  - "Satisficing" (good enough) often trumps maximizing (the best). Most people optimize only in areas they deeply care about.
- **The Power of Trust and Familiarity**
  - Jonathan shares a story about *Bolton Foods*, a meat company that maximized trust by showing up with a van in targeted neighborhoods. This human-first approach cut through the noise of online competition.
  - Trust is built through three key ingredients:
    - **Affinity:** Relating to the customer.
    - **Specificity:** Asking the right questions to tailor solutions.
    - **Familiarity:** The mere-exposure effect—people like what they see often.
- **Market Deep, Not Wide**
  - Target a small, well-selected audience and become strategically *omnipresent* in their lives.
  - Example: A meat company that physically shows up in neighborhoods builds trust faster and cheaper than through digital marketing or big-box store competition.

THE MARBLE METHOD: FINDING PERFECT CUSTOMERS

To identify your "perfect customers," Jonathan introduces the **Marble Method:**

1. List your **Top 10 Most Valuable Customers** (highest lifetime value).
2. List your **Top 10 Most Liked Customers** (the ones you enjoy working with).
3. Cross-reference the names that appear on both lists.
4. Deconstruct who they are—where they live, their interests, habits, and how they found you.

Key Insight: These patterns reveal where to *"park your van"* metaphorically or physically to find more customers like them.

EXAMPLES OF PLAYING A DIFFERENT GAME

Jonathan encourages readers to play a game others can't win. For example:

1. **Bolton Foods** competes with big players like Costco by offering a premium, high-touch service in local communities—something Costco can't replicate.
2. **Real Estate Agents** hosting "nosy neighbor" open houses to build trust in tight-knit areas.
3. **Personal Trainers** targeting affluent neighborhoods and combining in-person outreach with local marketing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Customers want trust and ease—not credentials. Your expertise matters, but only to the extent it builds confidence in the *outcome* you deliver.
- Scaling doesn't require technology or online reach. Sometimes, the least scalable methods—like showing up in person—are the most profitable.
- **Start by optimizing for profit, not scale.** Profit gives you flexibility; a l lack of money creates constraints.
- Build trust locally, deeply, and consistently. It won't feel like progress until one day, it all happens at once.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. What is the **Marble Method,** and how can business owners use it to attract their ideal customers?
2. You write, "Market deep, not wide." Why does focusing small often yield bigger results?
3. What's an example of a time you played your own game instead of competing with the big players?

Chapter 3: Success Shouldn't Be a Surprise

Jonathan Goodman challenges the romanticized idea of "against-all-odds" success stories, arguing that they distort reality. The outliers we celebrate often succeed despite reckless decisions, not because of them. Instead of hoping for luck, success should be the predictable outcome of deliberate action, measured habits, and long-term consistency.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Outliers Make for Great Stories, Not Great Strategies**
  - Inspirational tales of unexpected success (like a podcaster struggling for six years before going viral) are outlier events. They are remarkable because they are improbable.
  - Success stories are visible, while failures are invisible—a phenomenon known as **survivorship bias.**
- **Struggle Isn't Necessary—It's Just Good for Storytelling**
  - Life isn't a Hollywood script. Most successes don't involve dramatic adversity; they come from boring, consistent execution of the fundamentals.
  - "Terrible story, great life" reminds us that routine, reliable habits compound over time—even if they don't make headlines.
- **Neon Monsters and Roller Coasters**
  - Monster Beverage, one of the top-performing stocks over two decades, appeared to fail 95% of the time, with multiple 50% losses along the way.
  - This is a powerful reminder: long-term success is filled with short-term setbacks and volatility.
- **Cheating (Well) at Blackjack**
  - Edward Thorp, the mathematician who beat the casino, took a conservative approach when he had an edge. Instead of going "all-in," he made calculated bets to ensure he stayed in the game.
  - Recklessness might occasionally pay off, but over the long term, consistency always wins. The tortoise beats the hare.

- **Connecting the Dots Backward**
  - We often explain success after it happens, smoothing over chaos with tidy stories. But as Søren Kierkegaard wrote, "We understand life backward but live it forward."
  - The key to predictable success is to focus on habits, take deliberate action, and trust that the dots will connect in the future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Success shouldn't surprise you. If it does, it means your process isn't deliberate or repeatable.
- Outliers make for entertaining stories, but they shouldn't guide your strategy.
- Focus on habits and decisions that skew the odds of success in your favor. With time, the odds will play out.
- "Good luck" is the result of consistent action, not reckless gambles.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You challenge the value of "against-all-odds" success stories. Why do you think people are so drawn to them?
2. What is survivorship bias, and how does it warp our perception of success?
3. You mention the idea of a "terrible story, great life." Why do boring fundamentals lead to extraordinary results?

Chapter 4: Fix What's Inside Your Fence First

Jonathan Goodman emphasizes that success often comes from focusing on opportunities **closest to you**—before chasing distant, digital, or overly complicated strategies. By addressing the needs of your immediate environment, you become the Obvious Choice for a small, yet valuable group of customers.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Start With What's Right In Front of You**
  - Jenny, a personal trainer, fixated on growing her Instagram following to get clients, even though her gym had **20,000 paying members.** She only needed **20 clients**—just 0.1%.
  - "Most people overlook opportunities right outside their door, chasing an illusion of success on social media. The simplest path is often the most effective.
- **Famous to the Family > Famous on the Internet**
  - Janet, a fitness trainer, built her entire business through a local bridge club, using only a **WhatsApp group.** Her clients' trust and referrals created a tight-knit, self-sustaining community.
  - Local or niche connections have built-in advantages: higher retention, easier referrals, and less effort compared to marketing to strangers online.
- **The Power of Niches**
  - Accountant **Daniel Breez** found success by serving a hyper-specific niche: coaches in Ontario who charge USD for high-ticket services. By being laser-focused, he quickly became the Obvious Choice.
  - Niching down doesn't limit your vision; it creates clarity, reduces competition, and allows for operational efficiency.
- **Dominating Small Markets First**
  - Jonathan references **Peter Thiel**, who advises starting small to dominate a market. Successful companies like PayPal, Facebook, and Nike began by serving hyper-targeted, specific audiences before expanding.
  - **EXAMPLE:** Love Your Centre, a deep-cleaning company, launched 12 targeted brands like *Love Your Shoes* and *Love Your Gear.* Each focused on a niche market but funneled into the same operational hub.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Before looking outward, fix what's inside your fence: opportunities in your community, existing customer base, or immediate network.
- Being **famous to the family** (trusted by a niche group) is often more profitable, efficient, and fulfilling than being famous to strangers on the internet.
- **Specificity** creates clarity and makes you the Obvious Choice.
- Customers value specialists more than generalists.
  Start small. Dominate a niche. Expand strategically over time.

PRACTICAL FRAMEWORKS & EXAMPLES:

The Riches Are in the Niches: Focus on a clearly defined audience
- Fitness trainer → Postnatal military wives on base.
- Tutor → Students in one school district applying to key college programs.
- Lawn service → A few specific neighborhoods.

Satellite Brands for Growth
- *Love Your Centre* created niche sub-brands like *Love Your Tailor* and *Love Your Hockey Gear.* Each targeted a small market but funneled into the same system, maximizing profit and efficiency.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You say it's better to be "famous to the family" than famous on the internet. Can you explain why local connections are more effective?
2. What advice would you give to someone struggling to find their niche?
3. You mention "fixing what's inside your fence." How does this concept apply to larger, more ambitious businesses?

Chapter 5: Tech Changes, Humans Don't

Jonathan Goodman explores the impact of technology on business, arguing that while tools and platforms evolve rapidly, **human nature remains constant.** To thrive in a digital-first world, focus on what makes you uniquely human: trust, creativity, and strategic inefficiency.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Technology Levels the Playing Field—But That's the Problem**
  - New tools create short-term advantages, but as adoption spreads, everyone ends up neutralized. This is called **The Parade Problem**—standing on tiptoes doesn't improve your view if everyone else does the same.
  - Example: Posting yet another photo with the hashtag #photographer doesn't differentiate you from 254 million others.
- **Trust is Declining in the Digital World**
  - AI-generated influencers and deepfake videos are eroding trust online.
  - Consumers increasingly rely on **recommendations from people they know** over content or ads. Word of mouth remains the gold standard.
- **Tech Innovation Isn't New—Humans Have Always Feared It**
  - From Socrates fearing writing to workers striking over Gutenberg's printing press, history shows a consistent pattern of panic over new technology.
  - Yet, innovation doesn't erase jobs—it **evolves them,** creating new opportunities for those who adapt.
- **The Power of Not Making Sense**
  - Computers thrive on efficiency. Humans thrive when we're **strategically inefficient**—dabbling, exploring, and making unpredictable connections.
  - To stay valuable, do things that algorithms can't predict:
    - Talk to different people.
    - Gather random experiences.
    - Read widely and expose yourself to unexpected ideas.

- **Find Your Own Parade**
  - Avoid competing in oversaturated spaces where everyone is doing the same thing. Differentiate yourself by being unique, not slightly better.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Technology creates short-term advantages, but long-term success comes from **what doesn't change**—trust, relationships, and creativity.
- AI and digital tools can replicate efficiency, but they can't replicate **human randomness** or real-world connections.
- Aimless exploration—dabbling in unexpected areas—will lead to unique insights that make you the Obvious Choice.
- Avoid falling into **The Parade Problem.** Instead of competing in the same space as everyone else, create your own game.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Luay Ghafari:** An urban gardening consultant who charges $175/hour, combining niche expertise with a human-first business model that's impossible for machines to replace.
- **Printer's Devil Paradox:** Just like the printing press revolutionized society despite initial fear, today's technology will evolve jobs rather than eliminate them.
- **Strategic Dabbling:** Goodman's personal story of connecting with his literary agent at a fitness event highlights the unexpected benefits of random exploration.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You talk about **The Parade Problem**—how technology neutralizes competitive advantages. What's the solution for businesses trying to stand out?
2. Trust online is rapidly declining. What can entrepreneurs do to build genuine trust in a digital-first world?
3. You emphasize "strategic inefficiency" as a human advantage. What does that mean, and how can entrepreneurs apply it?

Chapter 6: Figure Out What Game You're Playing Online

Jonathan Goodman explains that building a business and becoming an influencer are two **very different games.** Each has its own rules, rewards, and challenges. Problems arise when you play one game while expecting the rewards of the other.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **The Underpants Gnomes Problem**
  - Many people, like the gnomes in *South Park,* work tirelessly without understanding how their actions connect to real results (Phase 1: Collect underpants; Phase 2: ???; Phase 3: Profit).
  - Social media often traps people into mindlessly "collecting likes" without knowing how it leads to business success.
- **Good Information Can Be Bad Advice**
  - Advice depends on **context**—your goals, resources, and life circumstances matter.
  - **EXAMPLE:** Hustle culture might work for someone without kids, but not for a parent juggling other responsibilities.
- **The Two Games You Can Play Online**
  - **Game 1: Become Famous on the Internet**
    - Focus: Content creation, algorithm mastery, and entertainment.
    - Time Horizon: 3–5 years without significant earnings.
    - Rewards: Fame and potential business opportunities down the road.
  - **Game 2: Leverage Online Media to Build Your Business**
    - Focus: Use social media as a tool to **network, convert, and showcase value.**
    - Time Horizon: Immediate cash flow and real-world business impact.
    - Rewards: Customers, referrals, and profit today.

- **Social Media Goals Aren't Your Goals**
  - Platforms are designed to maximize your time on them, not to help your business.
  - If you're not intentional, you'll end up creating free content for social media companies without meaningful returns.
- **The Intent Mismatch**
  - Build a following that aligns with your product or service.
  - **EXAMPLE:** An Instagram fitness model selling *How to Date Girls Like Me*—a brilliant alignment of audience intent and product.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Conor O'Shea's Podcast**
  - Named his podcast *Limerick High Performance* to target local executives for corporate wellness.
  - The show isn't trying to be a global hit—it's a direct, focused tool to build local business relationships.
  - **LESSON:** Niche-specific content is more effective for business than broad, influencer-style media.
- **Engagement Metrics vs. Business Results**
  - Likes and comments are superficial measures of success.
  - **Better Metrics**
    - Inbound inquiries
    - Foot traffic (e.g., Bar Ape Gelato)
    - Customer retention and revenue
- **The Savings Account Mindset**
  - Treat social media like a savings account—make deposits (content) with excess time and money. Don't rely on it for immediate returns.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Know **which game you're playing:** building a business or becoming an influencer. The rules and time horizons are different.
- Good advice for one person isn't always good for you—consider **context** before applying it.
- If you want to use social media to grow your business, align your content with **customer intent** and track meaningful business metrics.
- Avoid creating free content for social platforms without a clear strategy for your goals.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You introduce the *Underpants Gnomes Problem.* Why do so many people work hard at social media without clear results?
2. You challenge the value of superficial metrics like likes and comments. What better metrics should businesses track?
3. You describe social media as a **savings account.** How can businesses balance long-term growth with short-term profitability?

Chapter 7: Remain Optimistically Ignorant

Jonathan Goodman explores the dangers of overinformed pessimism—how knowing too much about challenges, competition, and risks can paralyze ambitious individuals from taking action. Instead, he advocates for embracing ignorance, stacking complementary skills, and making consistent progress.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

- **Overinformed Pessimism Stops Action**
  - Today's information abundance exposes us to all the reasons not to try something.
  - **The more we know, the more we second-guess ourselves.**
  - **EXAMPLE:** Jonathan questions whether he could write *Ignite the Fire* today because it's impossible not to notice how unoriginal ideas feel in an oversaturated world.
- **Good Enough Solves the Problem**
  - Most people don't need experts—they need someone to solve their problem.
  - Industry-specific expertise hits **diminishing returns** quickly. Customers care more about results than credentials.
  - **EXAMPLES:**
    - A nutrition coach succeeds not by knowing the Krebs cycle but by helping clients eat better.
    - A financial advisor's grades don't matter as long as they deliver results.
- **Combining Skills Creates Exponential Value**
  - Mastery of one skill is valuable, but **combining complementary skills** (even at a mediocre level) creates disproportionate results.
  - **EXAMPLE**: Jonathan combined decent fitness knowledge, writing, and sales to stand out in his industry.
  - **Range > Expertise:** "1 + 1 doesn't equal 2 anymore; it equals 10."

- **Focus on Timeless Leapfrog Skills**
  Leapfrog Skills are valuable across industries and time:
  - **Business writing:** Communicate clearly, tell stories, and provide actionable takeaways.
  - **Behavioral psychology:** Recognize cognitive biases and use them ethically.
  - **Conversation:** Learn to ask questions that make people talk about themselves.
  - **Sales:** Help people get what they want to achieve your goals.
  - **Wealth management**: Build and grow wealth patiently over time.
- **Leapfrog Learning Framework**
  - **60-Day Sprints:** Focus intensely on one skill for two months.
  - **Teach to Learn:** Teaching solidifies knowledge retention far more effectively than passive learning.
  - **EXAMPLES:**
    - Master social media → Teach it to friends.
    - Build a wealth philosophy → Share it with family or record a podcast.
- **Progress Lights the Way**
  - Success doesn't require knowing every step in advance. **Take action, and clarity will come.**
  - "Let your progress pull you forward, lighting the way as you go."

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Firefighter Analogy**
  - You don't need to be an expert—just good enough to solve the problem.
  - Example: Knowing not to throw water on a grease fire is enough to make a difference.

- **Skill Stacking for Exponential Growth**
  - Jonathan improved his value by combining fitness, writing, sales, and marketing.
  - Complementary skills lead to disproportionate success compared to focusing on expertise alone.
- **The Learning Pyramid**
  - Teaching what you learn retains 90% of knowledge versus 20% from listening and reading.
- **Leapfrog Skills in Action**
  - Focus on practical skills like communication, sales, and psychology—they are timeless and adaptable across industries.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Don't let overinformed pessimism stop you**—good enough is often more than enough.
- Combine **complementary Leapfrog Skills** with your expertise to stand out.
- Use **60-day sprints** to rapidly build skills, and teach them to solidify knowledge.
- You don't need all the answers—**progress reveals the next step** as you move forward.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You discuss *"overinformed pessimism."* Why do people often know too much and act too little?
2. You emphasize the value of **Leapfrog Skills** over perfecting one area of expertise. Why does skill stacking often lead to more success than hyper-specialization?
3. You mention that combining *mediocre skills* leads to exponential success. Can you share examples from your life or others where skill stacking created disproportionate results?

Chapter 8: "G–E" Good Enough

Jonathan Goodman explores why consistent, small actions outperform perfect plans and why *good enough* beats chasing an unattainable "best." By embracing systems over goals, learning through rapid testing, and building daily rhythms, success becomes an inevitable byproduct of consistent execution.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

The Power of Small, Consistent Actions

Impactful tasks require a surprisingly small percentage of time when approached with focus.

EXAMPLES:

- Writing 500 words daily → A first draft of a 50,000-word book in ~3.5 months.
- Exercising 3 hours weekly → 1.8% of your time reduces major health risks.
- Calling 10 leads daily → 2,600 personal touchpoints annually.
- Consistency compounds. Most distractions arise from *indiscriminate thinking* and jumping to trends.

Smart People Achieve More by Doing Less

Hard work can be misdirected. Jonathan highlights the importance of avoiding tasks that don't matter.

EXAMPLE: General Hammerstein-Equord rewarded the lazy-yet-clever officers, recognizing that *efficiency* creates impact.

Systems > Goals

Goals are binary, fleeting, and often demotivating. Systems focus on behaviors, progress, and long-term sustainability.

- Goals are *waypoints* that provide direction, not endpoints.
- Systems are reliable processes:
    - **EXAMPLE:** To exercise, start by putting on your workout clothes—most days, this small action leads to a workout.
    - **Neil Gaiman's advice:** *Give yourself two choices—"write or do nothing."*

The Need for Ongoing Rewards

Humans are wired for immediacy. Delayed gratification sounds ideal, but for most, big goals are too distant to stay motivating.

Strategies:

- **Fail better, faster:** Normalize small failures like a bee sting—the more it happens, the less scary it is.
- **Build tactile micro-rewards:** Break large tasks into smaller wins with visible progress:
  - Example: Drop a paperclip in a cup after each sales call.

Finding Your "Good Enough"

Instead of searching endlessly for the *perfect* path, run a series of rapid, short tests to identify what's sustainable:

      1. Test different strategies in short 1-2 week sprints.

      2. Evaluate by asking:

          Did I enjoy this?

          Do I feel I could get good at this?

          Would this put me in a better place after a year?

      3. Focus on execution, soft skills, technical know-how, and building a network.

        Jonathan's advice: *"Figure out what you're good at without trying, then try."*

Wayfinding Over Perfection

Success isn't about finding the "best" way; it's about finding a *good enough way* and starting.

- Perfection stops progress; consistency compounds it.
- "You can make it up as you go"—execution creates clarity over time.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Daily Rhythm Beats Discipline:** Small, simple systems (e.g., putting on workout clothes) trump reliance on willpower.
- **Rapid Testing:** Experiment with podcasting, videos, networking, etc., before settling on your path.
- **Fail Faster:** Normalize failure to reduce fear and build momentum**.**
- **Micro-Rewards:** Tactile systems like flipping cue cards or dropping paperclips provide ongoing reinforcement.
- **Good Enough Over Best:** Avoid endless optimization. Choose a sustainable process and stick to it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Success comes from small, consistent actions—not perfection or exhaustive planning.
- Systems provide sustainable progress, while goals create fleeting satisfaction.
- Rapidly test ideas, find your "good enough," and stop looking — consistency creates compounding results.
- Embrace small wins, build visual/tactile rewards, and fail faster to reduce fear of starting.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You talk about systems versus goals. How can adopting systems make success more sustainable and fulfilling?
2. You highlight the need for *micro-rewards.* How do small, tactile reinforcements help sustain progress in big projects?
3. You discuss *failing better, faster.* How can someone learn to embrace failure without losing momentum?

Chapter 9: Let Your Geek Flag Fly

Jonathan Goodman explores how leaning into your unique, nerdy obsessions can help you stand out in crowded markets. By embracing what makes you different, you can connect with *your* people, find the quiet space in a noisy world, and build an Obvious Choice business.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

Quiet Spaces > Loud Places

You don't need to scream louder in an overcrowded market. Success comes from finding a quieter space where you naturally stand out.
Example: At an EDM festival, no one can hear even the loudest scream—but a whisper in a quiet room is powerful.

Irrational Obsession Attracts "Your People"

The key to success lies in:

- **Sharing what you're geeky about**—your irrational obsession gives you boundless energy.
- **Finding others who share it**—surround yourself with *your* good people. **EXAMPLE:**
    - **Brian Pirrip:** A sports card collector turned influencer and entrepreneur who launched the M1NT case to protect cards. His authenticity attracted loyal fans, professional athletes, and even Ken Griffey Jr.

Combine Your Passion With Profitability

Choose a niche that meets three criteria:

1. It's unique.
2. People are *irrationally* passionate about it.
3. People are *willing* and able to spend money.
   EXAMPLE: Ben Mudge shifted from creating a cheap fitness membership for CF patients (who couldn't pay) to serving Warhammer enthusiasts who could.

Lean Into Your Unique Interests

Rather than blending in, let your "geek flag fly" to carve out your 1% Uniqueness Factor:

- Find a specific submarket within your expertise.
- Add your unique twist that makes you stand out.
    EXAMPLES:
    - **Christina (SNASA):** A fitness coach obsessed with space could rename exercises (e.g., "Big Bangs" for medicine ball slams) and market to space lovers.
    - **Rhonda:** Focused on canine fitness, she built promotions around dog-related holidays like "Dress Up Your Pet Day."

The Algorithm & Niche Communities

The internet personalizes content into *filter bubbles.* As a result, obscure niches now have loyal communities and online "celebrities." Lean into this. **EXAMPLE:** Christina's space obsession (cometology) gave her a unique edge in the crowded fitness industry.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **The Quiet Space:** Markets are crowded and noisy—find a niche where you can be the clear leader.
- **1% Uniqueness Factor:** Identify what makes you different and use it to connect with your people.
- **The Right Customers: S**erve people who are passionate and have the means to pay. Cheap customers cost just as much to acquire but leave little profit.
- **Special Days = Easy Marketing: B**uild promotions or collaborations around niche holidays relevant to your audience (e.g., National Golden Retriever Day).

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- You don't need to be the best—you need to be *different.* Lean into your irrational obsessions to stand out.
- Quiet spaces on the internet exist. Embrace your unique interests to find and attract your tribe.
- Serve people who are both *willing* and *able* to pay for what you offer.
- Use your 1% Uniqueness Factor to become the Obvious Choice instead of blending into the 99%.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You mention that success comes from finding a *quiet* space, not yelling louder. How can people identify their "quiet space" in noisy markets?
2. You say irrational obsession creates boundless energy. Why is sharing your geeky side such a powerful tool for building a loyal audience?
3. You talk about the power of niche communities online. How has the internet's personalization created opportunities for people to thrive in obscure markets?

Chapter 10: Discover the Easy Answer

Jonathan Goodman challenges the assumption that progress must be difficult and complex. By focusing on the *easiest solutions*—working backward, identifying where skills are already on display, and leveraging referrals—you can bypass unnecessary effort and achieve outsized results.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

Hire the Easy Way

Early hiring doesn't have to be complicated. Instead of formal processes, find people who are already demonstrating the skills you need.

EXAMPLES:

- **Issy Sharp** (founder of Four Seasons) hired through a casual conversation—he knew he didn't know how to interview and kept it simple.
- **Blender company:** Recruited toy store performers who already demonstrated crowd engagement.
- **Fitness curation:** Jonathan hired obsessive fitness readers by posting on Facebook at 7:45 p.m.

LESSON: Start where the skill or trait you need is already on *display*.

Referrals Are the Easiest Sales

Referrals are often overlooked despite being the simplest and most effective way to gain customers.

EXAMPLES:

- **Bodies by Design:** Partnered with local businesses, gave them offers to distribute, and quickly became the Obvious Choice in the community.
- **StrongerU:** Celebrated clients' weight loss success with clothing gift cards, leading to organic referrals and an eight-figure exit.
- **Super Fun Time Sports Camp:** Placed lawn signs celebrating kids' awards, prompting neighbors to inquire and enroll.

Rules for Referrals:

1. Give before you get.
2. Make it easy for others to promote you.
3. Make it compelling for the end customer.

Work Backward to Solve Problems

The best solutions come when you ask better questions and avoid injecting assumed answers.

EXAMPLES:

- **Embrace Infant Warmer:** Reframed the question from "how to make cheaper incubators" to "how to keep babies alive," leading to a life-saving innovation.
- **Jonathan's Friend:** She wanted better customers, not Instagram growth. By mapping her past referrals, she built a scalable plan for outreach and partnerships.

The Sesame Street Razor: Never disguise your *hypothesis* as the question. Start with the problem and work backward to the simplest solution.

Break Free From Convention

Conventional wisdom feels safe but is often suboptimal. Data-driven risks (like pulling the goalie earlier in hockey) can yield better results.

EXAMPLES:

- **Pulling the Goalie:** Statistical analysis shows teams should take the goalie out much earlier than convention dictates.
- **Philadelphia Eagles (2018 Super Bowl):** A risky fourth-down trick play led to a game-changing touchdown.

LESSON: Doing what's expected preserves status but limits success. Don't be afraid to challenge norms when data supports a better way.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Hiring Made Simple:** Find people who are already demonstrating the qualities you need—no complex interviews required.
- **Referrals as Social Trades**: Design systems that make customers or partners look good when they refer you.
- **The Sesame Street Razor:** Solve problems by asking better questions and working backward to an easy, elegant solution.
- **Challenging Conventions:** Just because "everyone does it" doesn't mean it's right. Pull your goalie early.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Hiring** doesn't need to be hard—find where the right skills already exist and recruit from there.
- **Referrals** are the easiest way to get customers. Make others look good for talking about you.
- **Work backward** to simplify solutions—don't let assumptions overcomplicate problems.
- **Challenge convention:** The easiest, most effective solutions often feel risky or unconventional but yield better results.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You challenge the idea that progress must be hard. Why do people resist "easy" solutions, even when they're effective?
2. You share the "Sesame Street Razor" and emphasize asking better questions. How can someone recognize when they're injecting assumed answers into problems?
3. You share examples of simple hiring practices—finding traits already on display. How can small businesses rethink their hiring approach to make it easier and faster?

Chapter 11: Become Famous to the Family

Jonathan Goodman reveals how to leverage small, intentional actions—like starting a niche podcast or giving "Four Coffees"—to build a strong, connected network. By focusing on specific communities and people, you can become *famous to the family* instead of chasing broad, impersonal internet fame.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

Use a Podcast to Build Targeted Connections

Podcasts don't need to reach millions of listeners; they can be powerful tools to connect with high-value individuals in a niche.

EXAMPLES:

- **The Best of Etobicoke:** A hyper-local podcast idea that connects with small business owners while subtly marketing your services.
- **Greg Finch:** Launched *Surf Strong* to connect with wealthy surfers, landing premium clients through podcast interviews.
- **Billy Hofacker:** Created *Your Fitness Money Coach*, a niche podcast for personal trainers, making him the Obvious Choice for financial coaching in his market.

LESSON: Niche, focused podcasts don't need large audiences—relationships with guests can directly lead to referrals, partnerships, and clients.

Build Once, Market Twice

When creating content or systems, leverage existing networks to scale your visibility.

EXAMPLE:

- Print cards promoting podcast episodes featuring local businesses (like *The Best of Etobicoke*). Businesses distribute the cards to customers, promoting your podcast and your business.

LESSON: Provide tools for others to share your work easily—it's a win-win for them and you.

The Power of "Four Coffees"

Simple, repeatable gestures build relationships and foster reciprocity.

EXAMPLES:

- **Chris Cooper:** A cafe owner built her business by bringing coffee to four neighboring businesses every day.
- **Luka Hocevar:** Built a community network with charity boot camps and face-to-face outreach to local businesses.
- **Jonathan's Book Promotion:** Jonathan systematically builds relationships online by engaging with people's content and supporting their work for 30 minutes a day.

LESSON: Small, consistent acts of generosity create relationships that lead to opportunities and referrals.

Focus on a Targeted Family

Choose communities that align with your knowledge, passions, and goals. Build genuine relationships within those groups.

EXAMPLE:

Jonathan's Four Coffee plan for *The Obvious Choice* targets four markets:

1. Writers/indie authors/self-publishers
2. Personal trainers
3. CrossFit enthusiasts
4. Minimalists/digital nomads

LESSON: People who share publicly—whether online or within communities—are ideal to connect with because they amplify your work.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Niche Podcasts:** Instead of chasing downloads, focus on podcasting as a tool to build a network and referral base.
- **Leverage Local Businesses:** Collaborate with local establishments to tell their stories and gain mutual visibility.
- **Four Coffees:** Give small, meaningful gifts (literal or metaphorical) to people you want to connect with—expect nothing in return.
- **Target Communities Strategically:** Engage with groups where your expertise meets their needs, and amplify people who already share publicly.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Podcasts** are powerful for building relationships, not just broadcasting—focus on niche guests and audiences.
- **Build once, market twice:** Leverage others (like local businesses) to spread your content and story.
- The **Four Coffees** principle shows that generosity and consistency build strong relationships over time.
- **Choose your family:** Identify key communities where you can add value, engage meaningfully, and grow visibility.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You emphasize starting niche podcasts for relationship-building rather than mass broadcasting. Why are smaller, focused audiences often more valuable than large ones?
2. You share the *Four Coffees* principle—simple, repeatable generosity builds relationships. Why does this strategy work so well in local and online communities?
3. You outline your strategy for systematically engaging key markets online. How can busy professionals adopt a similar 30-minute-a-day networking habit?

Chapter 12: #MonkeyFirst

Jonathan Goodman explores the idea of tackling the hardest, most important task first—teaching the "monkey to juggle fire"—before building pedestals like logos, websites, or systems that feel productive but don't create meaningful progress. He shares powerful frameworks for launching ideas, building momentum, and avoiding the trap of false progress.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

Focus on the Monkey, Not the Pedestal

Businesses fail not because of missing logos or websites but because they lack sales. Productive procrastination on *pedestal tasks* (like branding or content) won't matter if you can't sell.

EXAMPLES:

- **Monkey Task:** Selling your product or service.
- **Pedestal Tasks:** Creating content, designing logos, or setting up legal paperwork.

LESSON: Tackle the hard, uncertain work (sales) first—#MonkeyFirst.

Avoid Productive Procrastination

Using the analogy of electricity in 300-year-old Belgian breweries, Jonathan warns against undifferentiated heavy lifting: tech, systems, or tools that feel productive but don't improve the product.

LESSON: Focus on what directly adds value or creates demand—"make the beer taste better."

Steal This Idea: Why Getting Copied Is Good

Piracy, imitation, and "stolen ideas" validate demand and spread awareness.

EXAMPLES:

- **Marc Ecko:** Counterfeits of his brand signaled relevance; the real worry is when no one wants to copy you.
- **Paulo Coelho:** Supported piracy of his books to build buzz, saying readers would buy the full version if they liked the sample.

LESSON: If your work is good, imitation isn't a threat—it's free marketing.

The Founding Client Challenge: A Permission Launch

Jonathan introduces a simple, proven method to launch a new product or service quickly while validating demand.

STEPS:

1. Create a new program or service.
2. Offer it to *5 founding clients* at a heavy discount, with a money-back guarantee upon completion.
3. Reach out to your network, asking for advice—not a sale.
4. Paint a picture of future success during the program, offering clients a chance to continue.

EXAMPLE: Jonathan helped fitness trainers generate $846,706 in seven days by following this process.

LESSON: A permission launch reduces risk, validates demand, and builds momentum—all while being simple and scalable.

If You Want to Dance, Ask

People don't live in your world—they don't know you're in business unless you make it clear.

EXAMPLE: Standing at the edge of a dance floor won't get you a dance. Ask.

LESSON: Don't wait for customers to notice you—be clear, direct, and intentional about asking for business.

Permission to Launch: Turning "Favors" into Momentum

Borrowing from Benjamin Franklin's favor principle, Jonathan emphasizes asking for small favors (like feedback) to create buy-in and advocacy.

EXAMPLE: Standing at the edge of a dance floor won't get you a dance. Ask.

- For QuickCoach, Jonathan asked 60 colleagues for advice, resulting in 5,000 users on day one because those people felt ownership in the platform.

LESSON: People who help build something are more likely to champion it. Ask for input and feedback before launch.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **#MonkeyFirst:** Prioritize sales and demand validation before focusing on secondary tasks like logos or systems.
- **The Founding Client Challenge:** A proven framework for launching new products or services by starting small, offering value, and creating urgency.
- **Imitation as Validation:** If your work is copied, take it as a sign that there's demand.
- **The Permission Launch:** Engage people early for advice to create buy-in and support before launching.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Focus on the monkey**: Sales come before pedestals like branding or tech—hard tasks first, always.
- **Productive procrastination** feels like progress but often isn't. Stop optimizing processes that don't create demand.
- **Validate ideas through demand,** not secrecy. If no one's copying you, it's probably a bad idea.
- **Permission launches work:** Ask for advice, build excitement, and involve others early to create a successful launch.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You use the "monkeys and pedestals" analogy to emphasize priorities. Why do so many people focus on pedestals instead of tackling their monkey first?
2. You tell the story of Benjamin Franklin borrowing books to build connections. How can small favors create buy-in and lead to greater opportunities?
3. Your QuickCoach launch relied on asking for advice and involving others early. Why is this approach more effective than traditional

Chapter 13: Find Your "So That"

Jonathan Goodman explores how to transform boring, feature-driven messaging into powerful, benefit-driven communication that connects emotionally and drives action. Using simple frameworks like "so that," he shows how to position your work in a way that resonates with people's hearts, not just their heads.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

Features vs. Benefits: Speak to the Heart

- **Features** are logical and speak to the head (e.g., gigabytes of data).
- **Benefits** are emotional and speak to the heart (e.g., sharing adventures with friends abroad).

LESSON: People act on emotion, not logic. Connect features to benefits that tap into fundamental desires like love, security, or recognition.

The Bed of Nails Paradox

The more features you highlight, the less impactful they become. Powerful communication focuses on one clear benefit—your "nail."

EXAMPLE: Shaquille O'Neal dominated basketball by focusing on the paint, not his free-throw shooting.

LESSON: Find your "nail," focus on it relentlessly, and ignore the temptation to talk about everything you offer.

RASA Framework: Listen with Intent

Julian Treasure's RASA (Receive, Appreciate, Summarize, Ask) provides a structure for active listening:

1. **Receive:** Give your full attention.
2. **Appreciate:** Show you're listening (nod, smile, respond).
3. **Summarize:** Use "so" to recap what they said.
4. **Ask:** Use open-ended questions to dig deeper.

LESSON: People don't want a product; they want what the product *gives them.* Listening helps uncover what truly matters to your customers.

The Power of "So That"

To turn mundane features into compelling benefits, add a **"so that"** statement to connect the feature to an emotional outcome.

EXAMPLES

- "We offer fitness programming **so that** you can feel confident and energized every day."
- "Our blender has a 1,560-watt motor **so that** you can make healthy smoothies your kids will actually drink."

LESSON: Always connect features to benefits that align with people's emotional needs.

Information Asymmetry: What You Know Is Special

The knowledge you take for granted may be groundbreaking to your audience.

EXAMPLE:

- Bulletproof Coffee marketed its "mycotoxin-free" claim, even though all modern coffee already met the same standard.
- A youth coach recognized his unique system of incorporating cardio into strength workouts—something parents didn't know.

LESSON: Your expertise may seem common to you but not to others. Find the "nail" that sets you apart and highlight it.

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- **Features to Benefits:** Connect every feature with a "so that" to make it resonate emotionally.
- **Focus on Your Nail:** Highlight one clear, standout benefit rather than diluting your message with multiple features.
- **Active Listening:** Use the RASA framework to uncover what really matters to your audience.
- **Information Asymmetry:** Identify and market what seems "obvious" to you but valuable to others.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Emotion drives action:** Focus on benefits that connect with core human desires like self-regard, security, or peer recognition.
- **Simplify your message:** More features reduce impact. Focus on one clear "nail" that differentiates you.
- **Use "so that":** Turn features into emotionally compelling benefits to make your offering obvious and irresistible.
- **Your knowledge is special:** Highlight the insights and value you assume are common knowledge—because they aren't to your audience.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You introduce the "so that" framework. How does adding this simple phrase transform the way people perceive your product or service?
2. The Bed of Nails Paradox highlights the power of focusing on one standout benefit. How can businesses identify their "nail" and avoid diluting their message?
3. The RASA framework emphasizes active listening. Why is listening so crucial for uncovering a customer's true needs, and how can professionals improve their listening skills?

Chapter 14: Social Media Is Not Enough

Jonathan Goodman dismantles the myth that social media alone can drive success. He introduces smarter strategies to engage customers at different awareness levels, create purposeful content, and prioritize quality over noise.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

The Five Levels of Customer Awareness

Adapted from Eugene Schwartz's *Breakthrough Advertising*, the customer journey consists of five awareness levels:

1. **Unaware:** They don't know they have a problem.
2. **Problem Aware:** They know they have a problem but haven't looked for solutions.
3. **Solution Aware:** They're exploring options but aren't ready to decide.
4. **Product Aware:** They're comparing solutions.
5. **Most Aware:** They're ready to buy but need a final nudge.

LESSON: Meet people where they are, not where you want them to be. Tailor your content to their awareness level.

Case Study: Sara's Play Couch Sales Funnel

The more features you highlight, the less impactful they become. Powerful communication focuses on one clear benefit—your "nail."

> **Stage 1:** Targeted review blogs to capture customers who were product-aware. Result? $85,000 in sales.
>
> **Stage 2:** Partnered with "how-to" articles (e.g., "*How to Entertain Kids on Rainy Days*") to reach solution-aware customers.
>
> **Stage 3:** Addressed tiny home owners and occupational therapists (problem-aware) through blog partnerships and targeted ads.

LESSON: Moving "up the funnel" from product-aware to problem-aware customers expands reach and generates demand.

The Four Stages of Content Creation

Creating content doesn't mean becoming internet famous. Start where it makes the most impact:

1. **For Yourself:** Document your learning process to deepen your understanding.

    "Create selfishly first to learn."

2. **For Your Customers:** Serve the people already paying you. Answer their questions and solve their problems.

    "The best content genuinely helps a specific person, not the world."

3. **For Your Industry:** Share valuable insights with peers. Build credibility and create career capital.

    Focus on building an audience and ask what they need before selling to them.

4. **For the World:** Amplify your impact once you've earned a reputation.

    Thought leadership is built on credibility, not content.

Content That Works: Viral, Value, and Depth

Combine three types of content to attract, convert, and connect with an audience:

1. **Viral Content:** Designed to attract attention and followers.
2. **Value Content:** Solves your audience's problems.
3. **Depth Content:** Builds connection and loyalty.

LESSON: Early on, focus on viral content to grow. Later, prioritize value and depth to convert followers into customers.

The Quality of the Trade

Social media makes it easy to create, but easy equals noisy. Value lies in quality, not quantity.

- Instead of chasing viral fame, focus on delivering **high-value work** to smaller, specific communities.
- *"If it's easy for you, it's easy for others. Quality will win long-term."*

PRACTICAL INSIGHTS & EXAMPLES:

- Use customer awareness levels to plan content: *Review blogs (product-aware) → "How-to" articles (solution-aware) → Blogs/ads for specific groups (problem-aware).*
- Follow the **Four-Stage Content Creation Framework:** Start by learning for yourself, then scale content to customers, industry peers, and finally the world.
- Viral content builds reach, but **value** and **depth** convert followers into customers.
- The more noise on social media, the more premium quality work stands out.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Social media is just a tool:** It's optional for success, not mandatory. Define what "success" means for you.
- **Meet customers where they are:** Understand their level of awareness and tailor your messaging to guide them through the funnel.
- **Quality > Quantity:** Providing consistent, high-value work to smaller audiences generates more income and impact than chasing attention.
- **Content progression matters:** Start small—learn for yourself, help your customers, build credibility in your industry, then amplify your reach.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You mention the four stages of content creation. Why is it crucial to start by creating content for yourself instead of immediately trying to impress the world?
2. You stress that customer awareness levels determine your messaging. How can someone identify where their customers are in the awareness funnel?
3. What advice would you give to someone frustrated that their content isn't getting immediate traction?

Chapter 15: Whales and Minnows

Jonathan Goodman closes the book with a powerful lesson: **charge what you're worth, choose your customers intentionally, and embrace the simplicity of saying "yes" or "no."**

This final chapter combines practical business strategy, life philosophy, and a reminder to focus on what matters most: creating a sustainable, fulfilling path for yourself and the people you serve.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CHAPTER:

The Whales and Minnows Framework

- **Whales:** Customers willing to pay premium prices for high-value offerings.
- **Minnows:** Customers with limited budgets who may benefit from free or lower-tier content.

LESSON:

- Focus on whales for profitability.
- Use that profitability to create free or low-cost resources for minnows.
- *"Sell to the whales, serve the minnows, and use the minnows to attract more whales."*

The Functional Flywheel

Raising prices and serving high-value customers creates a sustainable cycle:

1. High prices → Better customer service and product quality.
2. Better quality → Happy customers and referrals.
3. Referrals → Higher retention and more profit.
4. Profit → Resources to attract and nurture more customers.

LESSON: Undercharging hurts everyone. Prioritize profitability to serve all customers better.

Life Philosophy: Binary Decisions
- Successful people make binary decisions: **"Yes"** or **"No."**
- Mediocrity stems from avoiding commitment and living in the middle.
- *"We can't do it all. Trying to do it all is a great way to do nothing well."*

EXAMPLES:
- Leaving a concert early after the peak moment.
- Taking 20 great photos during a family trip instead of thousands of mediocre ones.

Sexy Pictures: Selling Transformation, Not Products
A boudoir photographer's service isn't about pictures—it's about self-worth and empowerment.
- **What you sell:** The "thing" (e.g., photos, coaching, software).
- **What they buy:** Who they become as a result (e.g., confidence, self-belief, status).

LESSON: Sell outcomes and transformations, not features.

Broke Fighters and the Power of Perception
- Fighters are broke, but fans of fighters aren't.
- Frank Benedetto worked with fighters for free and sold a premium "Train Like a Fighter" program to wealthy fans.
- **LESSON:** Understand who pays, where the money is, and build your model around it.

Passive Income Fallacy
Passive income sounds enticing but often distracts from good, profitable businesses.
- Active businesses with **high margins** (like coaching) are sustainable and lucrative.
- True passive income often feels too easy to be fulfilling.
- *"If we've found work that's meaningful and fulfilling to us, we should do that work."*

Cash for Life Analogy
- Taking $1.3 million upfront and investing it generates far more wealth long-term than $1,000 per week.
- **LESSON:** Optimize for cash flow today. Reliable, high-profit businesses are the most sustainable path to success.

FINAL TAKEAWAYS:

- **Charge what you're worth:** Prioritize high-value customers (whales) and serve others (minnows) with free or low-cost options.
- **Make binary decisions:** Commit fully or not at all—avoid the middle.
- **Sell transformation, not products:** Customers care about the outcome, not the process.
- **Embrace the "simple, not easy" path:** Success doesn't have to be hard, but it requires discipline and focus.
- **Play your own game:** Stop chasing better ways. Find what's good enough and execute.

POWERFUL CLOSING

Jonathan's final message isn't about chasing perfection—it's about showing up, playing your own game, and finding fulfillment in the work you do.

"Wherever you go, and whatever you do, just remember that the Obvious Choice, after all, is you."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You emphasize choosing whales and minnows. Why do so many people default to trying to serve everyone?
2. The locksmith parable highlights the disconnect between perceived and actual value. How can businesses communicate their value effectively without over-explaining?
3. You say, "Charge high prices and deliver great work." What advice would you give to someone afraid to raise their prices?

Afterword: How I Structure My Own Obvious Business

Jonathan Goodman closes *The Obvious Choice* with an intimate reflection on his priorities, values, and how he intentionally designs his business for **freedom, simplicity, and enoughness**—not endless growth.

KEY THEMES

1. Define Your Own Success

Jonathan contrasts societal expectations of success (money, power, status) with his personal priorities:

- **Freedom:** To have breakfast and dinner with his family and exercise daily.
- **Happiness:** Traveling, writing, and living an intentionally simple, fulfilling life.

QUOTE: *"What I've learned is that it's okay to admire what others have without desiring the life they have had to live in order to get it."*

2. Life Stories That Shaped His Philosophy

1. **Thailand (2014):** Living in a cave with limited internet helped him decide to focus on *writing* over audio and video—choosing the game he wanted to play.
2. **Costa Rica (2015):** A conversation with Dandapani taught him that *"enough" isn't a number but an idea.* Wanting "too much" can trap you into compromising your values.
3. **Watterson's Wisdom:** Like *Calvin and Hobbes'* creator Bill Watterson, Jonathan embraces a philosophy of "enough" and the freedom to stop when satisfied.

3. Whales and Minnows in Action

Jonathan applies his **"whales and minnows"** framework in his business:

- **Whales:** Premium coaching groups for fitness professionals.
- **Minnows:** Free or low-cost content, books, and tools like QuickCoach.Fit.

Result: High margins and reliable cash flow allow him to:

1. Help the masses (minnows) sustainably.
2. Focus on fewer, higher-quality relationships (whales).
3. Avoid unnecessary complexity and stress.

4. How Jonathan Makes His Money

His revenue streams prioritize simplicity, freedom, and profitability:

1. **Books:** Low-cost, lead-generating tools that Jonathan writes because he *can't not write.*
2. **Coaching:**
   - **OTA:** Helps new trainers get their first clients.
   - **OTM:** High-end mentorship for the top 0.01% of trainers.
3. **Software (QuickCoach.Fit):** A B2B SaaS platform for fitness professionals.
4. **Investments:** Profits from his businesses fund long-term investments in stocks, Bitcoin, and real estate.

KEY INSIGHT: Each business is optimized for profit and freedom—not growth.

5. Lessons on Enoughness

Jonathan's philosophy rejects the hustle-for-hustle's-sake culture:

- Scaling for the sake of growth adds complexity without purpose.
- True freedom is found in defining "enough" and being at peace with it.

QUOTE: "If you're an entrepreneur, stop adding complexity into your life that you don't want with time that you don't have for rewards that you don't need."

FINAL MESSAGE

Jonathan leaves readers with this:
- Stop chasing external definitions of success.
- Play the game that makes you happiest.
- Embrace "enough" and build your business intentionally, with the life you want in mind.

"Time to go exploring!"

An homage to the final line in the last Calvin and Hobbes comic strip.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR PODCAST USE

1. You talk a lot about defining 'enough.' How did you come to that realization, and what advice do you have for others struggling to define it for themselves?
2. You've intentionally chosen simplicity and freedom over growth for growth's sake. How do you resist the pressure to scale wider, and what benefits has this approach brought to your life and business?
3. You've lived and worked in places like Nicaragua, Thailand, and Costa Rica. How has embracing location independence shaped your business and the way you view success?