



Transcript of “296 with Tony Stubblebine”

Bulletproof Radio podcast #296



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Speaker 1: Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave: Hey, it's Dave Asprey with Bulletproof Radio. Today's cool fact of the day is that based on a 2012 study there may be a use for ambient noise, it can boost your creativity. In a paper published by Oxford University Press, researchers found that modest amounts of ambient background noise, around seventy decibels, would stimulate the creative centers of your brain which means that your capacity for abstract or creative thought can increase. Which is cool, that's about the level of noise in a coffee shop or television on normal volume.

The only problem though I might add is that ambient noise might help abstract or creative thought, but what if you want is focused thought that might actually be really, really bad for you. The right type of sound environment completely changes the state of your brain. Another very small note about this cool fact of the day that's going on and on because it's cool is that this is very different for babies. There are white noise generators for babies that actually are harmful for them, their brains don't put neurons down very well when they're listening to white noise. Babies like silence unfortunately, because white noise generators are nice because they mean you get to talk if you're an adult.

All right enough about noise, let's talk about today's episode. Today's episode is brought to you by Choline Force, well not really, it's just brought to you because I love doing Bulletproof Radio and because I get to talk to all sorts of cool people. Choline Force is a rocking nootropic, this is the thing that I make that increases your levels of acetylcholine by both giving you raw materials to make your own acetylcholine as well as by making your body break down acetylcholine less. If you're one of the approximately, I'm guessing around two thirds of people who generally are like, "Wow, I feel a difference from this." Give it a shot, Choline Force on Bulletproof.com. It is one of the things that belongs in a typical stack for cognitive performance. Unfair Advantage, which is a whole body nootropic as well as Choline Force, that combination will totally rock it for you.

Today's guest has been on the show before and he co-founded the popular coaching application called Coach.me, which was formally known as Lift. The whole idea is that by focusing on positive reinforcement and having community support you can get to your goals faster. This is a hack for getting to your goals. The reason that I like him, his name is Tony Stubblebine by the way, Tony welcome to the show.

Tony: Hey, so good to be here.

Dave: The reason I like Tony is that Tony's actually a geek. He was an engineering lead at O'Reilly Media, he was the director of engineering at Odeo.com, and he eventually became the CEO of CrowdVine. The point here is when you take one of these dirty engineering minds, I only say that because I come from the same general world, and you have us start looking at what happens to human performance what you get is you get a hacker doing things that normally hackers wouldn't do. That's the essence of bio hacking, so here those two things. Oh, people don't follow through on stuff, what helps? You look at the data, then you build a system to take

advantage of the knowledge from the data. What do you know, there you go, you've got Coach.me.

Welcome to the show, I think I already said that. Tony I'm always happy to get a chance to talk with you because you're working on a different part of biohacking.

Tony: Yeah Dave, good to be here. How many of your guests get two chances to hang out with you? I just feel very lucky about that.

Dave: Not very many, it happens on rare occasions, usually when they're doing something new and interesting which is actually something that you're doing which is cool. I'm guessing because the audience for Bulletproof Radio has grown so much, we're about to cross our twenty-five millionth download.

Tony: Wow.

Dave: This week we were again number one on iTunes in our category. I'm blown away, I'm grateful and it's amazing because I would've had this conversation with you just to see what was going on anyway. Now I'm like, "Oh, a quarter million people are hearing it this week, that's cool."

Tony: It's perfect, it's perfect. I love your intro because the thing for me that it's like ... Let's talk about that dirty hacker mind. Last time I was here all I was talking about was the behavior in design. Now working on something I think a little bit bigger but we're not just trying to reinvent how you do behavior design, we're also trying to reinvent an industry. I love that dirty hacker mind walks into an industry and goes, "What the hell are you guys doing? This is the worst possible way to do everything that you're doing." I think this is the thing that you and I are actually both doing right now. I know Bulletproof just put out, just started doing coaching certification. You and I are both in this moment looking at the coaching industry and just shaking our heads going, "No, no, no. There has got to be a better way to do this." Does that sound right to you?

Dave: It does, and there's also just a better set of content. I look at this as, where can I do the maximum good, but also like you ... in fact because we're both engineers this will make sense to you. When I first started out in tech in the early mid nineties I was like, "Okay my job is to automate everything that I do." I was a sysadmin so I was running servers, which is now something that you do mostly with software. I'm like, "You know, if I just can automate ninety-nine percent of what I do my boss will have no idea that I've automated that. Then I can sit here and do whatever I want and I'm still doing a great job, in fact I'm doing a better job." That line of thinking by the way became cloud computing as we know it today, it's just the evolution of, "I don't want to touch it anymore because it's boring to do the same thing more than once."

When you take that and you're like, okay, I want to do that in the kitchen, I want to do that in my coaching practice, I want to do it everywhere. You remove the repetitive and you automate the repetitive, and then you just do it more effectively and more efficiently and you're like, "Wait a minute." It's a different mindset but it's terribly disruptive because so many things are reliant on just old, old paradigms that came about from two hundred years ago, and things like that. What I think people listening would want to hear right now Tony is, why did you go into

coaching? You've been a CEO, you've been a tech guy, so what made you decide this was the area that you were going to disrupt?

Tony: It started with, first of all I knew that I wanted to be working on human performance, this is the thing I considered my life's work. A lot of people are very stressed when they start a startup because they don't know if it's going to work. I had this calmness about me because I know no matter what happens with the company, tomorrow I might be working on human performance, I'll find some way to do that. Last time I was here we were talking about Lift, and Lift in a lot of ways was incredibly successful at helping people form habits, but I wanted to go much further than that. As I was making that transition I joked with a lot of people in my close orbit saying, "Look, Lift is the kind of company that's going to put me on the stage at the American Dental Association annual meeting, I will keynote as the person who helped more people floss than any other person in the world. I think we've helped people floss more than a hundred million times."

Dave: Yeah, they actually call you floss master on the street right?

Tony: Right, I'm floss Master T. I'm just interested in bigger things. As the way to get bigger, to do bigger things is to make that behavior change intervention even stronger. The thing that was stronger than our software was our power users who had, let's say a ... We had people with a nine hundred day streak getting back zero, who had all the potential in the world to be potential coaches. We started testing out coaches very early on who had a subject matter expertise and then we just expanded way beyond that. That was my initial interest in it. I could just see that this was even better. An example that comes up recently that we started putting out, leadership coaching, and our goal there is that the person we're coaching either gets a promotion or a significant change in responsibility within the first month. You compare that to kudos from your dentist. They're just at different levels. I think that's why I'm really excited with coaching, what Coach.me is now, is a place to find and hire coaches. We're built on the initial Lift community but everything that we're putting our time into right now is, how can I deliver a top notch coach to you?

Dave: We should probably have a conversation there about how to hook some of the Bulletproof coaches up with this. We've got about three hundred people finishing the Bulletproof coaching program. I should say enrolled in process, none of them are finished yet. It's a nine month coach certification program, but after they get out, they're like, "Okay, where do we connect with clients, how do you do that?" What it comes down to is, there's a bunch of people, want to be coaches. There's a much smaller number of people who are qualified to be coaches, and then there's an even smaller number of people who are qualified to be coaches and want to be coaches, right? That's what we're focusing on finding and teaching, but even when they come out, they're like, "Okay, now, if I'm qualified to be a coach, and I wanted to be a coach, and I'm trained, how do I get clients?" If they don't see that there can be clients, they won't become quote coaches or they'll just hang up a shingle but they won't become certified and they won't become trained. Knowing how to kick ass and knowing how to teach someone to kick ass are just different skills, right?

Tony: We actually did something with Bulletproof about a year ago, thirteen, fourteen months ago for the release of your book.



Dave: The diet book, right.

Tony: For the diet book, for the Bulletproof diet book. We recruited from your community and we trained them to be Bulletproof coaches because we like that subject matter expertise.

Dave: These are Bulletproof diet coaches though right? The fully fledged ones are those personal growth and all the other stuff like that right?

Tony: Right, that's right, let's be clear about that. A very narrowly focused, just for the diet, and to help people understand, get through the issues, ask questions, have someone who has been through the Bulletproof diet before actually guiding you through your own experience. This came back around for me about a month ago, because I put out a call for clients that I wanted to coach. I often do a small amount of coaching myself in order to test our methods.

Dave: Me too, if you want to stay focused you should be coaching one or two people, just because it's important.

Tony: Right. It's such an important part of experimentation for me. I got a client who had originally joined through that Bulletproof coaching that we were doing, Bulletproof diet coaching. She lost 75 pounds.

Dave: That happens pretty frequently when people need to lose it.

Tony: She's going through the Bulletproof certification right now, and is signed up in our system to be a coach. What you're talking about, that whole cycle of bringing these coaches and helping them find customers, we're on that a hundred percent. The thing that I like that you said right there, in that too, was the idea that not everyone is qualified to be a coach. When I walked into the coaching industry, the thing that made me shake my head is, "Wait a second, nobody here has enough clients. Shouldn't some of you have too many clients, and a lot of you have no clients?" It just is evenly distributed, regardless of merit.

When we started bringing coaching online, we get a digital trail of every coaching interaction. I know exactly which coach is good and which is not. You've probably done a lot of AB testing and a lot of times what you're doing, when you're looking at the data, you're trying to find things that are three percent or five percent better. When I first started measuring the effectiveness of coaches, there was a group of coaches that had client retentions that were three times longer than the average coach. That's not a tiny signal, this is huge signal and quality, because that's how wide the coaching quality variance is. That's what I want. That's one of the things, when I say we want to reinvent coaching, is that bringing technology to it, lets you bring quality control for the first time ever. It's insane to me that this never existed before. Now it can exist and now we can actually find the top coaches and then make sure all the clients are only going to those top coaches.

Dave: It's a really interesting idea, so let's say the vast majority of people listening to this though don't want to become coaches, or maybe they're thinking it's a way to escape their daily doldrum if



they have such a thing, and if that's the case, then check out the Bulletproof coaching program, check out Coach.me, and look at getting a certification. Actually my strongest piece of advice there would be, learn how to coach. A lot of people just don't know the skills involved and there's a process and there's a skillset just like anything else. You don't take a job as an executive chef, you first learn how to cook, you learn how to run a kitchen, and then you become an executive chef.

I've worked with guys like Jeff Spencer, who was the team physician for nine years, for the Tour de France teams. He's coached me, and he knows how to coach, it's legit and you can feel a difference in your results from that kind of thing. Assume that most people who are listening though, they're not in that category but they're in the, "Why would I want to coach, and what would I get from it that I don't get from, say, getting a book about how to train?" While we're at it let's talk about life coach, executive coach, and exercise coach, because they're three different things. Walk me through all that, why does this matter for someone listening right now?

Tony:

First of all, let's say it's not that you want to coach, it's that you want better training or education. It's what is the best format for that? Almost always you would prefer a subject matter expert giving you individualized instruction for your goal over a book. If you're a winner you probably agree with that a hundred percent. If you're a slacker, a coach might be the worst possible educational solution because there's nowhere to hide. They will find a way to motivate you, to teach you, to train you to get to your goals. I know when I was in high school, the last thing I wanted was individual attention. I was a total slacker, I wanted to sit in the back of the classroom and have no one even know I was there.

Once I actually knew what my goals were, what my mission in life is, I want every advantage possible and whenever I meet the lead performers, that's how they think. They think, how can I do this better, faster, probably a topic we might have touched on last time I was here, this idea of deliberate practice. Which is the way that you get better has two components, and we're overly focused on one of those components. Yes, you do have to work hard, of course, you practice, right. The deliberate aspect of it, of how smart are you, about the time you spend practicing? That's really the differentiator once you're going for the bigger goals, because everyone works hard.

I'm a big sports guy, I'm a big basketball fan, and right now we have the most unlikely basketball superstar, like Hacky Hose, Stephen Curry, who's undersized, not that athletic. He won the MVP award last year, and then this year came back and he's scoring five points per game more. Normally an MVP does not take the leap after winning the MVP. When you hear his backstory, it's all about how he trains. Not how much he trains, but how he trains, in the off-season. That's basically true for everything, and so our goal is that if you have something that you're trying to learn and practice, so diet was a great example because it's both ... You have to learn what to eat, when to eat it, what's going to taste good, what's really allowed, where is their flex? Then you have to hold yourself to it, because knowing about a diet does no good if you don't actually practice it.

That was a good example, probably more than two thirds though of what people are using Coach.me for is professional coaching. That we just put out leadership coaching is for, I think

what you would call executive coaching. The thing, again, that I thought was backwards when I looked at executive coaching, is that it exists to fix people who are already executives. I was a terrible CEO for years, before I got my first executive coach. If you're thinking about what's the smart way to do this, you wouldn't fix people, you would groom them. You'd get them much earlier, and so our leadership coaching for the early managers, the new team leads. It's been selling like crazy, because there's so many people who are in that position that say, "Yeah, I want to be a VP, I want to be an SVP, I want to be a CEO one day, but I just got my first team, I'm managing for the first time, and I don't know what to do. I'm in over my head. I want to learn how to do this well as quickly as possible."

Dave: Okay, so those are the categories and your point there ... I talk a lot on Bulletproof Radio about getting a mentor. It really makes sense to have someone who's going to help you there, but a mentor is one thing, but they don't necessarily hold you accountable, they give you advice. If you want someone to help hold you accountable, that's one of the things a coach can do really, really well. They can do the advice thing and they can also say, "By the way last time, you said you were going to do this and you didn't do it, so what the hell's your problem?" Maybe they'll have some more positive language around that or whatever, but the bottom line is very few people are that self-accountable. We all want to be self-accountable but having an external measure of that helps to keep us doing what we want to do, versus what we said we were going to do. There's that thing, and for me that's why I'm a fan of getting coaches for the people who work for me, as well as having coaching myself, because it's actually part of how good leaders operate.

Tony: Right, and so when you guys are putting together your coaching certification, there's actually a debate in coaching communities about how much advice to give. Is that a debate that you've had?

Dave: It's not, because the Bulletproof coaching is different, we teach our coaches to have a personal presence. So there's some actual personal transformation, personal growth stuff that has to happen to be an effective coach. If you're coaching out of ego like a lot of coaches do, from my understanding of the world, you're not going to be an effective coach. Any advice you give is going to be tainted by your own desires that you're less conscious about.

What we're working to do there is give you a sense of presence, a sense of awareness, and then a set of tools to offer. We do tell you, "All right, look, let's for instance work with a client, and let's tell the client, all right, you have some things that slow you down and make you weak and make you less productive. Let's use a framework to help you decide what they are, so you can do fewer things that make you weak. Shocking, it works nutritionally, it works organizationally, it works when you go to sleep. You pick those things off, and then let's help you add in more things that are going to increase your strength."

There is an advice component that I think is always going to be there in the style of coaching we do, but a lot of prepping someone to be a coach is putting in the infrastructure they need to be able to offer this kind of advice and this kind of ongoing measurement and feedback. It's a complex thing because it's not a Paleo certification by a long shot. It's not even a nutritional, or a functional, anything certification. It's a coaching certification and if food is what you need to

kick more ass than we'll teach our coaches to talk about food, but it's ten, fifteen percent of what we do.

Tony: I find I learn a lot about the clients by learning how we need to train coaches. We train the coaches, and then we see the results of that training. Whereas a lot of people don't have that feedback, and so one of the mistakes we made early on was because we recruited coaches to coach things that they had personal expertise in, we saw a lot of coaches just really jump into sharing their expertise. They just really want to share, which is a hundred percent about their own ego. I think that's why a lot of the coaching world is about facilitation.

Or actually the number one psychological skill that we teach in our coaches ... it's not number one because we teach a lot of it, it's number one because the data says, this is the top thing you need to be able to do. It's just the ability to listen. Because our coaching is online, we can see a transcript of the interaction between the coach and the client and a lot of times the coach will say, "I don't understand why the client canceled on me, because I was giving really good advice." You'll just see in the transcript, the client said something really important, the client did not respond to that in any way, not acknowledge it, and then went on giving advice. Then they never got another message from their client. Statistically this was the thing that differentiated good coaches from bad coaches.

This is why, when you say the Bulletproof certification is partly about personal transformation, that you need your coach to be very grounded in order to be able to work with you, because it's about you and not about them. Actually every coach I've ever worked with has had a little bit of them, will peak through, but you really have to be conscientious about that. Are there other things you've learned as you put coaching together?

Dave: That's definitely been the ... There's a bunch of stuff we've learned but I don't want to make this too much about the Bulletproof coaching. I want to pick your brain, because last time we talked about building specific habits, but I want to talk about your personal habits. You're running Coach.me, you have your own coach, you've been a CEO in all the stuff, and we talked about meditation when you were on the show, but I keep hearing about it over and over. Almost half the people want to ask, "What are the three most important things you can do to kick more ass?" They're like, "Meditate." It's gone from ten years ago, only a fruitcake is going to do it, you're completely a loony tunes, crazy person, if you meditate, and now it's, "Okay, now, of course you meditate, you're a high performer." I love that it's changed, but I wonder, what do you specifically do in your meditation practice?

Tony: I have a very simple meditation, because the thing that I learned, actually from our research, we did a whole research project on this. It is the value of consistency. As was explained to me ... Let me just say my practice which is, I try to meditate every day. So far this year I actually have meditated every single day, ideally I will meditate on BART which is the Bay Area subway, on my way to work.

Dave: I just have to say this, is that a Bart opening meditation? Anyway, sorry. I just lost half my subscribers with that pun by the way.

Tony: I might as well leave, no one's listening anymore. No, jokes are good. A lot of people, a lot of beginner meditators, they ask a lot of questions about, "What is the right way? What is the right way for me to sit? Am I allowed to do this? Am I allowed to do that?" Which is ... There's many ways to meditate, is what it turns out.

Dave: I call that prison meditation.

Tony: Prison meditation?

Dave: Do it exactly this way.

Tony: Right, if you want to be a prisoner to someone else's rules, then yes, you do have to be seated a certain way. The thing that I learned, is that I can sit on BART, I can wrap my arms through the straps of my backpack, so no one secretly runs off with it, while my eyes are closed. The vast majority of people on BART will think that I'm asleep. I sit there and I do a meditation and I love that time, because it is guaranteed. No one is competing for my time on that BART ride. That guarantees me a three to five minute meditation.

Then I'm very lucky, in my office space, three days a week there's a guided meditation run by a meditation teacher out here, Will Kabat-Zinn. Who's actually really well known in the Bay Area but also globally. Also his father is even more well known, Jon Kabat-Zinn, wrote the definitive works of American mindfulness. Brought a lot of that culture over here. He's a great meditation instructor, and when I have time, I'll sit with him.

The thing that makes it a performance practice for me, makes it a key performance practice, is that I don't use meditation to be calm. Which I what I think a lot of people come to, it's like, "I might meditate, and all these crazy thoughts in my head will go away." I use it for focus. When we describe meditation to people for performance, we say, first of all, this is push-ups for your mind. This is the one exercise that we can all do to make our minds stronger and then each push-up, each repetition of a push-up is this one particular thing that happens in a standard breath-based mindfulness meditation which is, your mind wanders. That's good, the more times that your mind wanders, the more push-ups you're going to get.

Each time your mind wanders, you become aware, what is it that I'm thinking about? I'm always thinking about lunch, and email, or conversation, always one of those three things. I'm rehearsing a conversation, that's a little later in the day, and I think, "Oh, that's interesting." I become aware of it and I acknowledge it. Will actually gave me a sentence that I use which helps me really move it into the foreground of my conscious thought. When I acknowledge my thoughts I say to myself, I am aware that, I'm aware that I'm thinking about lunch. I'm aware that I'm rehearsing a conversation with an investor later today.

Then, having become aware of it, you bring your thought back to your breath, to the point of focus. That happens over and over and over again. That practice translates into the rest of your life. It's not what happens in the meditation that's the performance practice. It's the skill that you build that then you apply later on. Let's say, there's actually a window behind where I am right now, where all sorts of people I know have the potential to walk by and make goofy faces,

right? If that happens I could become distracted, lose my train of thought, or I could just take a breath and say, I'm aware that so and so walked by, but I'm here to talk to Dave. Then I just get right back into that focus. That's essentially how I would describe my meditation practice.

Dave: Okay. You talk about meditation and this new research, and you've got a very simple practice, but you're also focusing on that early leadership thing we talked about. Coaching people before they're executives. What do you recommend someone who's maybe a first time manager, might want to do for their meditation?

Tony: In a lot of ways the meditation practice is not the tricky part. I think there's a lot of places ... You could download Headspace, you could download Calm. Coach.me has meditation practices built in, there's meditation coaches built in who are great, so strong in helping your client. What I would want to do is describe to you how to apply it. When you're a first time manager, a lot of what is happening is your gut is telling you you should have a conversation, but your skills and your anxiety are preventing you.

Dave: Well said, yeah.

Tony: Right? Maybe your senior manager is asking you if you can complete something and you just say, sure, because you want to please the people around you. The reality is, you haven't thought it through. "Do we have time? What is involved? What are the details?" Your gut is, on the one hand, your anxiety is saying, "I have to be agreeable." You might say yes. But your gut is saying, "I'm not sure." When that practice of awareness is saying, "Wait a second, my gut is saying something. All right, I'm aware that I don't really think that this is possible. Now let me do something about it." It's really not rocket science at that point. You just say, "I'm not sure, let me look into it and get back to you."

The actual actions aren't super complicated, but catching yourself is really, really hard. This happens when you're managing people, where they'll tell you something, what if ... that you don't think it's true? A lot of times what happens to me is someone will give me an answer and some part of me just wants to accept their answer. I want to believe what you're saying. A lot of times what is actually going on with that answer is either they didn't understand what you were asking for, or did they did not examine all of the potential options. I always have to catch myself and say, "Someone just delivered bad news to me. What do I want to do about it?" That awareness of your subconscious, so that you can catch these things that actually ... Put into practice the skills of management, to me that's what mediation brings to the new manager, the new leader.

Dave: I've worked with a lot of new managers over my years in Silicon Valley, and even at Bulletproof. You talk about some things with young leaders that I think are really important for people listening to the show. It's important because you either work for a young leader, you're working on becoming a young leader, or you work with young leaders, or you manage young leaders, or you're not working at all in which case you still run into them all the time.

This is something that, everyone who is a leader now, was once a young leader. This is where mentoring can become really helpful. It's amazing what someone who's managed for twenty

years will know how to do in a situation where you think it's the end of the world and actually it's not, you just haven't been through it before. You talk about going from responsiveness to responsibility, and from certainty to uncertainty. I want to know, in your own career, what was that like for you when you realized, "I don't have to respond to that, but I own it."?

Tony:

This was actually the most pivotal moment in my career, because like a lot of engineers, you end up in some project that's failing miserably. You just complain about it, you feel bad about yourself, because it doesn't feel good to fail. I was on this one project that, when I'd been assigned to it, what they told me is, "We're ready to launch it in three weeks, can you just fix these things and then can we launch?" It's funny, they always phrase it to me as, "Can you fix these things so that we can launch?" I thought that, "Sure, I think I can fix those things therefore we can launch." Of course, there's a hundred things to fix, and so I was answering one half of that question correctly, and then incorrectly answering the most important thing.

This went on for six months, and every week someone would ask me, "What's left?" I'd tell them what I knew was left, and really it was a failing of the project manager to recognize that we kept being late, over and over and over again, and he needed to go back and restock the company. I think what most people would do is put their hands up and say, "Well this is not my responsibility." I think that the reason people say that is because we've been poisoned by the educational system to think that there's always a hierarchy. It's like when I was a kid, my parents knew what to do. When I went to school my teachers knew what to do. When I was in college my professors knew what to do. Then when I got my first job my supervisor knew what to do. I always thought the person above me knew what to do. Really it was six months of pain before I realized in fact my project manager didn't know what to do and he was not going to fix it.

This is I think in a lot of ways, it's what I did was such a leap of initiative that I can't imagine very many people would do it, but on the other hand, as you'll see, it was not that much work for a pretty gigantic payoff. On a Friday I was so fed up, I went to the bookstore, this is back when there were lots of bookstores. I bought this book, "Rapid Development", which is by one of my favorite software development authors, Steve McConnell. It was a great book on software project management. It starts with thirty-one classic mistakes enumerated, and I just went through this list, checking them off. I checked off seventeen, and we were making seventeen of the classic mistakes that you can make in software development. That hooked me, I was like, "Right, I'm going to fix this thing." I read the entire book over a weekend, and then on Monday, instead of going and doing my job, I went and found an office in a quarter of the building, where nobody could find me. I spent two days spec'ing the entire project.

Then I went and then I called a meeting with the project manager, and then my actual boss, who I think was someone who had a feeling that this project was a disaster, but just didn't know how to deal with it, I said, "We've been late for a long time, I just happened to spec out the entire project. You've been asking me, can we just fix these three things until we launch. Actually, it turns out that there's a hundred and ten things that we needed to fix. Over the last six months, we've only fixed seventy. My calculation of when we can launch is that we'll launch in seven months. The project manager was like, "Well, that's unacceptable." I was like, "Well, you do the math differently then, but I've done the work to say this is the reality."

That was four days of work where I was not doing what I was told, it was very much about initiative. From that moment on ... Well, first of all, that project did eventually launch and I did win that argument because I was more prepared. That's the thing that when we teach young leaders, is that a lot of times, you're losing these arguments because you're not prepared. If you go in and be overprepared, no one was more prepared to discuss the reality of that situation than me, because I was the only one who actually looked at all of the details and planned the whole thing out, laid the whole thing out.

I might not have been entirely correct, but I was sure as hell more correct than anyone else that I was talking to. If you think about that, that was a four day investment, my actual boss who watched that whole thing go down was so thrilled. She was tired of all the bullshit she was seeing, and she was like, "Well, here's someone that can actually get stuff done." I got promoted immediately, I ended up getting noticed by a bunch of people who are tangentially related to the company. I got submitted to be head of engineering at the start of Odeo, which is where I ended up working on the first version of Twitter. I became really good friends with the CEO of Odeo, Evan Williams, who is the founder of Blogger, of Twitter, and now of Medium. I think it all came from four days of initiative. That's the best four day investment that I've ever made in myself.

Dave:

Sitting down, getting the facts and being ready, it's a great strategy. Go and hide in a room and do what needs doing. I work from home, a lot of people do that now, but when I worked in big office land, the last thing you want to do is be where people can find you if you want to get work done. What you're doing is you're cutting out distractions, I always figured that if you go to the Fleur, that's accounting, legal and HR. I don't know that they do that much, so you could just go into their conference rooms and just hang out. You're unlikely to be harassed by other engineers or marketing people, whoever your normal customers are.

That's a cool story, and you go in and you do that, and you can really change things. What you did is instead of being responsive, where all stuff's coming in, you're just responding to it, you became responsible, and you figured out what's the strategic plan. I will hire people who can show that they have that skill, because any good manager, they want to hire people who are responsible for things. Once you know, when you're a manager, "Okay, I'm responsible for it," now you need to shift responsibility down to a layer of people who you know will be able to take responsibility and own it, and deliver results. You're ultimately responsible but you're not responsible for day to day.

That's how companies work, but I don't think a lot of coaches teach this. Maybe some of them do, and the ones who do are not the ones who teach you how to lift heavy, or the ones who teach you how to eat. Those are organizational coaches, those are executive coaches, business coaches, whatever you want to call them. If you don't have a good mentor or you don't have someone who teaches you this, either through the School of Hard Knocks, or through some other things, you're probably not going to be that effective. If you're wise enough when you're young, to get this kind of knowledge, you'll probably end up with a lot less scar tissue than the average manager who's been doing it for a while, who just has to learn these things by failing over and over, something that worked for me.

Tony: It's one of the big career hacks, because it's almost a secret. No one tells you that this is going to happen. You could have an epiphany one day and realize, "Oh, I could be the person who solves that. I had a coach explain it to me, this is really a confrontational framing. They said, he looks at the work world as essentially having adults and children. To be a good child you do your chores, you do your homework, you do what your boss says. That mindset is so ingrained in you that you continue to be a child for a long time when you enter the work world. Almost the worst possible thing to happen to you is that you never wake up from that, that you become a very senior child. The subject matter expert who's a complete jerk to work for him, because they never really realize the big picture. The adult is the person that's like, "My house burned down. I don't know how to get a new house but I'm going to find out." Right?

Dave: Right.

Tony: You're responsible for those things, no matter what. The funny thing to me when he gave me that framing is, wait a second, for twenty-two years my parents told me I was going to become an adult. They prepped me for the idea that one day, I would ... Actually, they believed in college, one day I would go to college, I would graduate college, and then I would be on my own, I'd be an adult, paying my own rent, having a job. I was very prepped for that idea. That realization I had, going to buy the book to fix this project, no one had even told me that was coming down the pipe.

I was just like, I had no idea that that was a possibility, I just assumed ... I don't know, I didn't know how it went, but I just always assumed that people above me would know what's going on. I had the very hierarchical view. That's why I say I feel like in a lot of ways, the educational system poisons you to think in a way that's not very big. You're very much a robot, you're trained to be a robot, and how do you break out of that? I think it's an interesting question and it's, I think, wait, very ad hoc. That's something we would do with our coaching, is to make it less ad hoc.

Dave: Cool. It's a big challenge but it's one that can change a lot of lives, which is really cool. Last time you answered the standard Bulletproof interview question, and I doubt you remember what you said. I'm got to ask it to you again, and see what the changes are. We're going to do an AB test here, and see what's shifted for you. If someone came to you tomorrow, and said, "Tony, I want to kick more ass at everything I do. I want to be better at everything, what are the three most important things I should know?" So you've run Coach.me, you've had a lot of coaching, you've looked at coaching, you've got a unique perspective on this. What are the three things everyone needs?

Tony: That's a great question. As I go through it, these are philosophies of life, the first that I would start with is a mission. The underlying mechanism that makes a mission important is this concept of compounding interest. This is something I learnt from Warren Buffet. If you switch every year, if you switch every month what you're doing, you're never going to develop true expertise or mastery. Even our friend, Tim Ferriss, who is very much ... tries lots of different things, is very experimental. Through that whole process, I think he personally develops a mastery over learning. He has a mission in that role, right. I would start with that.

It took me a long time before I knew ... even understood that or knew what my mission was. I thought, well I wanted to be a great programmer, and then I realized that programming wasn't fulfilling unless people used it. I thought, impact has to be a real part of that. Then I started a business that had some impact, but it wasn't in a subject area that really mattered to me. Coach.me was the first time that I really had my passion for technology matched by desire to make an impact, matched with what is just intellectually fascinating to me, the pursuit of human performance.

In fifty years ... I'm curious for you to ask me this question fifty years from now. I think I might have this genius answer, because this is my mission, my life's mission. The second ... When we talked about, I think meditation is this key skill. Although I didn't frame it the way I usually do. I think a lot about the Daniel Kahneman book, "Thinking, Fast and Slow". A lot of our ... We're very emotional creatures, and the most rational of us irrationally deny that. As I've worked in self improvement with more and more gurus, is I've actually come to respect the emotional impact of a lot of what I'm doing. If I'm not being trained emotionally at the same time as being trained rationally, then I get that it's not going to work at the level that it should. A lot of why I meditate is to be able to work more effectively with who I actually am. Which is all hovering at the subconscious and below. That would be the second, and you want a third, huh?

Dave: Yeah, three big things, they don't have to be too complex, but usually people, they think about it and think, "Oh yeah." If someone came to me and just didn't know, and I want to kick ass at everything, what are the common elements of that?

Tony: Here's a third that I'm trying to put into practice. This is the struggle right now, is how to make this really work, is joy. One of the things I've observed about this coming up, in human performance, is these places where we make it really fun, people perform even better. I think fun has a bad rap because it used to be used to disassociate. "Running is not fun, let's listen to music," right? It's actually most serious runners, which I used to be a very serious runner, know that in order to run fast, the best possible thing is actually not to disassociate, but to associate. What am I feeling? What is this pain feeling that I'm experiencing right now? Which of my legs are burning more? Just to be with it, in the moment.

Then of course, I got this from sports, I started paying attention to how the Golden State Warriors run their team. They won the championship last year. They do this really funny thing to start their practice, which is ... They're one of the most disciplined, most analytical teams ever. They run very complex offense, a very complex defense, but the way that they start their practice is not by running the plays or looking at tape. They just turn on really loud music, and the whole team just flings full court shots. No one on the team is even going to take one of these shots in a game, the whole thing is just goofing around, there's zero pressure on that part of it, but it gets you fully engaged in that.

I was thinking about that when I rearranged my morning routine. The first time I rearranged my morning routine, I wrote everything down in the most efficient way possible, and then I practiced it. I actually spent a Saturday afternoon getting into bed, getting out of bed, getting into the shower, doing the whole thing. I do shampoo, then soap, towel, and I got the time down, narrowed it down more and more. Then it dawned on me that I wasn't super excited to



get out of bed, even though I had a very efficient morning routine. I redid my morning routine, where the first thing in my morning routine is to get out of bed, get on the couch, and invite the dog into my lap. It just made the whole morning work for me.

I try to write first thing in the morning, because that's the part of work that for me that is unadulterated joy. Whereas I've got lots of other things that are fine. We're doing our taxes, we're getting a 409A valuation. I'm making all these things happen, but that's not the thing that actually gets me out of bed in the morning. That third piece I think is very under-appreciated. I am working a lot more of that into my work and my performance habits.

Dave: More joy it is. Tony, thanks a ton for coming on Bulletproof Radio and sharing those secrets about coaching and talking about the things that have made the most difference for you. Where can people find out more about you? I know Coach.me is pretty obvious, anywhere else you want them to go to find your work?

Tony: I think that's the main thing. I'm very active on Twitter, I think I'm the sixth user on Twitter so I have a lot of my stuff there, and people can follow me on @tonystubblebine at Twitter.

Dave: Nice, I'd definitely follow you. Tony, thanks for coming on. Have a beautiful day.

Tony: You too, have a great day, have a joyful day.

Dave: Ah there you go.

Tony: All right.

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