I’m Fine, Thanks | FEE012

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Episode Transcript

Host: Scott Plaskett, CFP

Scott: Adam, I want to thank you for taking the time today to, you know, spend some time with us and my audience to really shed some light on what you're doing. I was really intrigued by the whole "I'm Fine, Thanks," documentary that you're putting together. And I tell you, when I saw the trailer for it, I had to wipe away some tears from my eyes because it was pretty moving. And it resonated with me, so I just, I felt I had to A) become a backer for the project. And I noticed, I saw an email come through today that you've got…how many backers have you got so far? Thirteen hundred?

Adam: Yeah, as we're recording this, man, we just crossed over 1,300 and thank you so much for that, not only talking with me today, but also you know, backing it yourself and telling me about you tearing up because we had the same reaction and I've heard that from literally 100 people that they've teared up. And we didn't go through the process to like try to create a [inaudible 00:07:23] that was going to make people tear up, but it's such a…it's so humbling because I'm like wow, this may people are resonating with this issue. I definitely didn't expect it, I can say that, so thank you.

Scott: Well, you're welcome and you know, we're talking about the issue here and I think where we should have jumping ahead of ourselves because a lot of the people who are listening to this live cast right now really I don't think they have much of an understanding about what's going on. So maybe you can give me some background as to what your…first of all, what the project is and what the high level project's about, and then maybe talk a little bit about what your motivation was behind putting it together in the first place.

Adam: For sure. Your audience is probably like why are these two guys crying? I don't understand. So the project is a documentary, feature-length documentary that we filmed starting in February. We went around the country and we interviewed 60 people on the issues of complacency and specifically it's about the decisions that we make as we go through life and what those decisions are based on and what sort of life path, if you will, those lead us on. So the best way I can say this is through my own life story and that's that I was sort of defaulted into a scripted lifestyle, a very, go to school, get good grades, get a job out of college, start a family, have 2.5 kids, so this and that.

And many of those decisions have been wonderful. But not all of those decisions were made by me, myself. Many of those were made unconsciously and just because I was following a predetermined script and that was easier than defining my own life. So that's where I come from. That's where my story comes from and we wanted to kind of capture that essence.

My partner, who is Grant, the director of the film, has the exact same story. In his heart he's a filmmaker. He wants to tell stories to video, but he's been putting it off for 15 years. And when we started talking about this concept to people, we realised that Grant and myself are not the only people in the country, at least our country, and in the western world, that go through a very similar process where they feel like they make life decisions because it's what they're supposed to do and then they wake up one day and realise they've kind of put off all of their dreams and passions that they used to have in order to kind of fit in a lifestyle.

So we wanted to explore that issue and we wanted to sort of touch on that for people, and most importantly, incite action. Like, through these stories that we captured across the country, we hope that people re-evaluate their own priorities and tweak their own lives to make those passions more of a priority going forward.

Scott: I mean, what did you find then, because you've got, from what I understand, a handful of interviews and again I'm really coming at this just from simply seeing the trailer and I can't wait for the movie or the documentary to be released. So did you find it difficult to find people who shared your experience?

Adam: Absolutely not. We found it overwhelmingly easy, so I built a little bit of a community online through sharing my own journey, specifically my financial journey, but it was the greater journey that I shared online was this very journey. My journey did not be complacent anymore. And I have an online community and I shared this out with them and we got hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of response from people that were like yes, please come film me; I would love to share my story on camera.

And normally it's kind of a topic that's hard to get people to talk about, right? I'm saying let me come to your house, let me set up with a film crew and I want to ask you about all the choices you've made and how you feel trapped by those choices. I mean, that's kind of a hard sell to people, but it wasn't at all hard to find people who were willing to do that, because they all felt very passionate about it. Now, some of these people are more of "success stories," in their own way, however they define success, meaning that they started in one place and now they've transitioned into a newer place that is much better, that is much more in line with where they want to be heading.

And those people were interesting to talk to, but some of the most interesting stories we captured, Scott, were the ones that they didn't have a resolution. They were people that were still stuck; they were people that were still bewildered or frustrated or confused in their passion and their intensity and how they described the problem was even better than the people who had gone through the whole gamut of being stuck and then getting out.

So we have a diverse set of stories and it wasn't hard at all to get people to talk about this issue because I think they've wanted to talk about it for so long and maybe haven't had the right avenue to talk about it, so people just opened up, Scott.

Scott: See, that's amazing to me. I mean, I would have thought that, you know, off the top I thought okay, well there's a whole bunch of success stories of people who have been challenged with the issue, of coming face-to-face with the issue, have overcome the issue, and this is their success story. But you're saying that people who haven't succeeded yet, who haven't solved the problem yet.

Adam: Oh yeah, for sure. I would say that maybe most of the people we talked to over those 60 interviews are people that have succeeded or are on the path to succeeding. Maybe they're not wildly successful by society's definition, but they are starting to be successful by their own definition. But we did have people who were stuck…we also talked to a few people who never followed that path. Maybe they never got stuck and sometimes their observations were interesting as well, maybe how they were raised or something happened very early in their life where they never really got that scripted lifestyle and they've always kind of been a little bit renegade, if you will, and their perspective was interesting as well.

So we tried to be as diverse as possible, although many of the people we talked to did have a before and after kind of success story, which is great too.

Scott: That's interesting because you don't know much about my background, but I'm a certified financial planner and we work with business owners and retirees and we assist people in planning for their retirement. And one of the reasons why the documentary resonated with me is because I've often…I look at this concept of retirement and I really see that whole concept changing as time has gone on and I have clients who are retired, I have clients who are approaching retirement and I have clients who are trying to get to the point where they can retire.

And I find it very interesting that each demographic has a different sense of what retirement means to them and I do find that, you know, it's probably more of the younger professional, younger generation are more in line with the idea that retirement is not a date in the future where suddenly they're just going to stop work and suddenly they're going to move on to a new life where they don't have to work, where they can just do whatever they want.

They do have a sense, I believe that their sense is that retirement's going to be a point at which I call their financial freedom date, the date that they want to be able to…they want to be able to stop working if they so choose to, but chances are they're probably going to continue because they're having so much fun doing what they're doing.

Adam: Exactly. When you're working around something that's so passion-based, there's no real reason to retire. And that's an interesting concept and I do agree with you that it's a little bit of a generation on. I'm 28 years old. I speak for, you know, I guess my generation in this aspect, but you know, a lot of my peers aren't looking to work and retire and frankly the landscape for working for a company for 30 or 40 years and retiring and having your pension and social security isn't realistic. I mean, it's not even close to realistic.

It's not even a possibility if you wanted to do that. So the landscape has changed for many people, but we're still living by that same old American dream, and there's nothing with the American dream except it's stale and many of us are adopting those same principles that people were trying to live by 20, 30, 40 years ago, and that worked for those people and we're trying to apply them to life today and it just doesn't fit. It leads us to unfulfilling lives.

Scott: So what is the…how has the definition changed then from the people that you've talked with? What is it that they're doing now or what has changed in their outlook, because if they don't see, you know, the magic date of age 65 as their focus, what is it that they're doing now that's different?

Adam: Well, you're going to have to watch the movie. No, I'm just joking. But there are some fundamental things that have changed and I think that for me, Scott, and the people that I witnessed, I saw that flexibility was now king, if you will. It used to be that you, and I can't speak for that generation, but in my research it used to be that you really wanted to find a secure industry or secure job and then follow that path, and that security and comfort were the biggest things and that security and comfort were defined by a house that you owned, and a job that you worked and you were respected at and in an industry that was respected.

And that was a generation's view of security and comfort for many people. That, however, has changed to one that's more of flexibility. So you have to be agile and flexible to adapt to different opportunities that may come up. Even if you're an employee, you're going to work for many different companies, the chances are, in this new environment, so you have to be flexible and willing to adapt and willing to change when your circumstances change.

And the old construct of let's get a huge mortgage, let's fill our house with a bunch of crap and let's live in one place for the rest of our lives even is starting to become hard for people to do that and be flexible. So in my own life, it came through simplifying. That's how I kind of changed my definition in how I was approaching things. We got rid of our apartment, we got rid of much of our stuff. We're not perfect obviously but we downsized a lot of our stuff. We got rid of our debt that was chaining us to the jobs that we didn't like to work, and all of a sudden we became more free to pursue things that were more in line with ourselves.

So we were no longer chained until we were 65. We were more flexible and more free now to start working on things we love or things that we're passionate about at the very least, or at least companies we believe in. And when you're doing that, you don't have to work for 40 years to retire. You can sort of more enjoy the process now and that's definitely an oversimplification, but that's the trend that I see happening from the people we interviewed.

Scott: So it's not about the profit anymore; it's about the passion?

Adam: Exactly. And I think that if you have low overhead, if you will, if that's just a general way to say it; if you have low overhead and follow your passion, it's not as hard as people think, to profit from your passion.

Scott: Right, right. Do what you love and the money will follow.

Adam: Yeah, as long as you keep your expenses down, right? Like if you have this inflated lifestyle, and you do what you love, you could end up on the street, so there is a give and take and it's much more complicated then just do what you love. But there really is a movement of people that are saying I can make money, I can work for a company that I enjoy, that fulfills me, or I can make money as a freelancer or a business owner in a way that really fulfills me as well. So there is that passion first kind of model.

Scott: Now on that topic about passion first, did you find technology playing a role in being able…in people being able to focus on their passion without being constrained by a company so to speak?

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Adam: Oh God absolutely. Like, it not only plays a role. It's usually one of the most fundamental things for people in determining whether they're successful in doing that. So the internet and technology is our biggest tool to be able to be flexible for many people. Now, I should say that it was specifically talking about the documentary. We didn't only talk to people who were using the internet to make money, right? This is not a quit your job and start a blog movie. There's a lot of diversity in the people, but we did talk to several people who started a business and then leveraged online to help build that business.

And I think that's the key for many people. You still have to help people. You still have to deliver value through a business. It's just that now you can reach out in the online world and you can find people, resources and mentors to help you, and you can find customers to help much more easily with the internet than you can by putting a sign in front of a store on Main Street. We still need both. We need brick and mortar businesses and online businesses, I believe, but there's a much quicker way for people to get the value that they deliver out to the world and that is through the internet.

I mean, it's much quicker, it's much easier, it's much more fluid to get their value out into the world than it traditionally has been let's say 20 years ago especially.

Scott: Yeah, well I mean the barriers to entry into getting involved with a business that leverages the internet, they're so much lower than they ever have been, you know, so I think that makes a lot of sense, that people will, you know, take advantage of that. Now, has social media played a role in any of this?

Adam: It's played a role in my life. I would say that social media, across again everyone we interviewed, would be maybe a few people, but social media has helped my business. Once I got my business set up to this is how I can help people, then social media again helped me get the word out about that, and if you lump blogging into social media, the basic idea that I can help people for free by producing content and by doing interviews and by doing videos and by having people share their case studies on my blog, well sure that helps benefit everyone.

And a small percentage of those people that do read that may need even more advanced help and that then of course helps my business. So social media and the internet definitely play into this, but it's not required. We talked to people on the road who don't use the internet or social media and who made radical changes in their life to follow their passion and don't have any interest in using the internet of social media in the future. They're just…they changed their life to a different job and they're working for a company they love now and that's it. That's the end of the story as it comes to social media, you know what I mean.

So it's definitely helping me, Scott, but I wouldn't say it's a prerequisite to sort of realigning your life with your passions, right? You can do that without the internet.

Scott: Yeah, I know. I bring that up because I agree with what you're saying, that it's not a requirement. It is something that…it's just another tool in your toolbox that you can use, but you know, I think that the media tends to jump on other social media and Twitter and Facebook and Google Plus and you name it. You know, if you're not there then you're not going to make it. The reality is no, that's not the case.

Adam: Yeah, that's just, you know, that's just the hype of the industry right now, but truth is, it can help once you have…once you know what you want to do for value, but if you don't know how you're going to deliver value or how you want to change your life, creating a Facebook profile or a Twitter profile is not going to change that.

Scott: Did you find people…was it difficult for them to find the thing that they…to find their passions, because you know, I've experienced situations where I've asked people what it is that they're passionate about, and they really can't answer that question. Were these people just people that you spoke with that were dealing with demons for the longest time and always had this deep desire to do something, that they were just afraid to own up to and then finally they decided to move forward with it and just realise how much they loved it? Or was it very difficult for them to come to terms with what their passions were?

Adam: They were both, they were both. There were some people who knew. There was a waterskiing example. A lady named Karen out of Wisconsin who had a waterskiing accident when she was 18 where she lost, I think, 90, 95 percent of her hearing. So basically it made her deaf. She gave up the hobby for like 25 years until she was in her mid-40s I think and in her mid-40s, as she described, she was overweight, she was kind of not happy with where her life was on some levels, and was out one day on a boat watching people waterski, and she said you know what? Like I've been putting this off. This has been my passion the whole time. I've been scared and now I'm getting back out there and doing it.

And now, in her mid-40s, she is out there competing and as a sponsored barefoot waterskier and a mother and it's just a really cool story of someone who knew their passion all along, but just never returned to it. On the other hand, we talked to an attorney in Texas who, you know, spent her whole life, the early part of her life, going to college, getting her law degree and getting a great job and going six figures into debt to do that. After a couple years of working, she had a kid. Even right after she had the baby, she went back to work and she was fine being an attorney, but as the girl's now 18 months, she's realised that all she wants to do is stay at home with her daughter.

And so she talks about the struggles of being a successful, powerful woman attorney, right? Like this has been her whole life is building up this prestige and going into debt to do so, and now she can't even stay at home with her daughter if she wanted to because she has a huge mortgage and a huge student loan debt. And one way, you can kind of say it's hard to feel sorry for a lawyer, but it's not. Not when you hear her story because she made all those choices for a reason that may have not been in line with what she wanted and she's realising that now she wants something different.

And so she's working towards that flexibility, but she has frankly no idea what she wants to do other than the fact she wants to be able to stay home with her daughter. So she doesn't have this like waterskiing passion or this passion for helping people pay off debt or helping people retire. Like, she doesn't have a passion like that. She doesn’t know, but what she knows was oh God, like I've built my life on these decisions and that may have not led me into the fulfilling life that I have sought all along. I should have decided for myself, or maybe now I should step up and decide for myself. So we have people on both sides of the equation.

Scott: Yeah. That's fantastic. Well, I mean, it does. When you see the trailer and I'm going to have a link on the show notes for these episodes, this episode, on our website so people can take a look at the trailer. When you see the trailer it really does inspire, you know, inspire you to sort of look in perspective to say, you know, ask yourself the question, am I doing what I loving doing? Am I passionate about what I'm doing? And if people are not, you know, that's why I'm so anxious to see the documentary because I believe it's going to share with people information on a conversation they've been having with themselves and they think they're alone in that conversation, but the reality is it seems like there's a lot of people having that same conversation.

And a documentary like you're putting together, I believe is going go be something that's going go bring that topic to the masses to at least get people talking externally instead of just internally a little bit more.

Adam: Yeah, that's our goal. Let's make this the last taboo. I think you get…right, you hit the nail on the head. People have this conversation but they think they're alone and almost everyone we've talked to, I've not met almost anyone who has not gone though this at some point in their life, right? So I hope and it's our vision that we can do just what you outlined.

Scott: Yeah, well that's fantastic. Well listen, how can people support this because, you know, I found out about it through Kickstarter and through, actually with Pat Flynn [ph] that I found out about it from an email that he sent out? And I know he's actually in the documentary. But how can people help you? Maybe you can just give them some insight as to how they can connect with you and help you and really support this project and just find out more about it.

Adam: Yeah, for sure. I mean, I think the first step would be to watch the trailer that you've talked about and I know you said you would link it. It's also at Manversusdebt.com/movie and that actually doesn't even go to man versus debt. That just transfers you straight to the Kickstarter link. That Kickstarter links just kind of long, so it's hard to say, but if you go to Kickstarter or follow the link that you provide, Scott, that will show the trailer. That's the first thing really. Watch the trailer and see if it resonates with you.

The second thing is if you want to back the project, you can do so right there on Kickstarter and for as little as $5 we actually give you the full download of the movie when it comes out in July. So we're not like inflating the money and saying you have to pay $50 for the movie. Like, we're giving the movie away for as cheap as we possibly can because we really do want as many people to see this as possible.

So if it makes sense to back the project for you, then you can do that on Kickstarter, but even more important than just backing the project financially is really sharing this out with the world, just like you have, Scott. I mean, we're very flattered to come on and talk with you and your readers and your audience, excuse me, and very flattered to have you as a backer and supporter. And that's just what it is. Sharing the trailer out on Facebook. There's a Facebook like button right under the trailer. I mean, that does wonders. You would be surprised, maybe not, but you might be surprised on how well this can reverberate. Like, you share on Facebook and a friend of a friend who knows somebody else who's, you know, can help the project in some way and it's just getting the word out.

There's a tremendous amount of opportunity that happens, so just sharing it with your family and friends on Facebook or anywhere else would be more than enough. I mean, it we would be very gracious, Scott.

Scott: No, absolutely. And we'll be doing as much as we can to support that as well. Well listen, is there anything else that I haven't touched on that you wanted to make sure we talked about during this call?

Adam: Gosh, I mean, you've done an amazing job. I'm not sure there is anything, but I guess I would just say I'm available if you need me. I mean, you have my email address, but…you can email baker@manversusdebt or I also have an email address on the Kickstarter campaign and Scott, you just reached out to me. We just met recently over the last few days and I would love to try to help, so if anyone has any more questions or any just comments, they can always just email us, get a hold of us. We'd love to chat.

Scott: Absolutely. And obviously any of my listeners, if they have any questions for me they can just touch base with me as well. Well, that's super, Adam. I know you've got a lot of…you probably have a lot of other interviews that you're going to be doing this week. It sounds like it's a busy week for you. How long is the Kickstarter campaign available for?

Adam: We just completed our first week as you and I are recording this, Scott, and it's available to the June 22nd I think it is, so we've got, like a little over 20 days left in the campaign. It was as 30-day campaign total.

Scott: Okay. So 30-day campaign, as little as $5. Are there any other more robust for backers that really want to put more backing towards you? Are there any other benefits that they can get from doing so?

Adam: Oh for sure. I mean, we have a $25 level that gets you the DVD shipped anywhere, like anywhere in the world literally, that you live we'll ship it out to you. And then one of the cool levels that we have is $100 to actually get you like a swag pack with the movie poster and the DVD and the download, but it also gets your name in the credits. So we've had a lot of people say thank you, this is going to be awesome, I can't wait to see my name on the big screen type of thing.

And the $100 obviously really helps support the project and get this out to the world in a much bigger way. And we even have levels above that, but it's not nearly as important as sharing it out with its people, but if there are people who want to come to like the world premiere or any of the premieres before it's out online, there are some VIP tickets and stuff that are up there if they live in one of the cities we're doing the premieres in. So people can check that out, but most importantly it's just what you've done, Scott. Like, back it and help us get it out and we're just so flattered that people are doing that.

Scott: Yeah, well that's great. Well, Adam, thanks so much for your time and I really appreciate it. And love the fact that you've touched on a topic that I think, again, we talked about it earlier, but people have just been quietly suffering with. And I think with the information that's going to come from this documentary. It's going to be just a quiet movement to get people, you know, more in touch with their passions and to live life to its fullest, because life can sometimes be pretty short and if you're not enjoying it along the way then you might just…you're missing out.

Adam: Yeah, thanks man. I appreciate you having me on.

Scott: All right, Adam. Thanks so much.

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