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Announcer 1: This is The Maverick Show where you'll meet today's most interesting real estate investors, entrepreneurs, and world travelers and learn the strategies and tactics they use to succeed. And now, here's your host, Matt Bowles.

Matt Bowles: Jennifer Magee is an entrepreneur, business owner. She has a Master's degree in real estate development from Columbia University and she's the founder and owner of Retail in the City, an architecture and design company based in New York City.

Over the past 10 years, Jennifer has designed and planned over 10 million square feet of retail space for over 100 different clients – including widely recognized and acclaimed projects such as the duty free shops at JFK Airport in New York City, Saks Off 5<sup>th</sup> Department stores, Barnes and Nobel bookstores, the Sharper Image, and many more that you would certainly be familiar with. She's also designed millions of square footage of retail space outside the U.S. in countries ranging from Russia to China to the Caribbean island of Barbados.

One of her most impressive achievements – from my perspective – is that she's built her business so that she can run it from anywhere around the world with total location independence. She has utilized that to travel to 53 countries. Jennifer, welcome to the show.

Jennifer Magee: Thank you, Matt, for having me.

Matt: I just want to set the scene for people. We are now in Prague in the Czech Republic and we are drinking a bottle of Chilean Carménère wine – which we started doing back in Kuala Lumpur, in fact – when we had our first Carménère party.

Jennifer: That's right. We started the precedent there.

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Matt: Sort of a recurring theme. So, we're doing this interview. It's about 11:00 p.m. and we're about to get into your life and your entrepreneurial adventure and all sorts of other fun and exciting things. So, let's start off with your story. You're from Texas originally. You moved to New York City in your 20s to pursue your dreams, wide-eyed, and what was that like? Set the scene for us. Tell us what New York was like when you moved there and what happened.

Jennifer: Well, I moved to New York –yes, wide eyed and bushy tailed I think you could say – in 2000. It was actually July of 2000. I was moving there from Tennessee where I had been teaching at the University of Tennessee in Architecture. I was prompted to go there by some of my fellow colleagues and professors that I was teaching with. They were all from New York and they said, “Get up. You need to go to New York. Go see what the profession's about up there. Go check it out.” So, sure enough, I followed their lead and I went up there and took a job.

This was pre-9/11. So, one year before September 11<sup>th</sup>. My first job was actually working at a large architecture firm down in downtown financial district at the time – working in the World Trade Center towers. So, I worked right across from the two towers. We did the planning and site development and tenant plans for basically Lehman Brothers and J.P. Morgan Chase. Lehman Brothers at the time was looking at a strategic takeover, shall we say, of one of the towers. That was my first intro into New York. I lasted at that firm for about a year. I quit jobs and went to go work for a small firm right before 9/11 happened and that sort of started my whole career, I guess.

Matt: And how did your entrepreneurial trajectory take place? So, you were working at an architecture firm. Take us from there to your decision to become a business owner.

Jennifer: Well, it was definitely not a linear process. I started at a very large firm – one of the biggest firms basically practicing in the world – decided that the kind of corporate approach to things was just not my style. So, I jumped ship and went to a very, very small firm. There were three of us – basically, two partners and myself – and we kind of grew the business to about seven people. It was still pretty small the whole time I was there for a couple of years, but what I loved about it and what I learned that I loved about it is just that I was involved in everything.

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That meant cleaning bathrooms, taking out the trash, answering the phone because we didn't have a receptionist, working out of my boss's apartment in the East Village, all kinds of things. I just loved being hands-on. I wanted to know everything about the practice. I wanted to know what it was like to talk to a client. I wanted to know what it was like to make a business decision, know how the finances worked, and just be part of a complete and total team.

So, the limitations of that, of course, are like, "Where do you move up? How do you move up in advancing your career? How do you expand?" So, I felt like I learned everything that I needed to learn at that and then I kept moving. So, I moved on, went back to grad school, was looking for new opportunities. That eventually led me to basically start my own business.

Matt: So, take us to that juncture and talk a little bit about that transition because I think there are a lot of people who are in a particular profession. They know it very well. They're very good at it. They're maybe disillusioned with the corporate environment and they dream of potentially starting their own business, but there's oftentimes a big – shall we say – chasm or perceived chasm between wishing you could do it, wanting to do it, even envisioning it, and then actually taking the leap.

Jennifer: Of course.

Matt: So, can you talk about your leap, if you will – any fears that you had to overcome or what it was that got you to make the leap – and how that leap went for you?

Jennifer: Well, you know it's very challenging. You can always look back on your trajectory and realize what you did at the time and why you did it, but it's very hard trying to formulate it from the beginning and project it forward. It's not a linear path and anybody who thinks it's a linear path, I think, that's where people get hung up because they think that it's supposed to go a certain way. All I can say is that you just have to keep believing in yourself and what you want to do and you have to keep learning.

My big thing was that I was just interested in learning. I would jump ship when I felt like I had learned all I was going to learn and that there was a new opportunity out there where I could learn something new and get more excited. So, I went back to grad school because I thought that would at least catapult me to

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something else. I didn't know what it was, I didn't know how it would work out, and I didn't know if I would like it, but that was it. I went back.

I did a degree in real estate development, went to Columbia – completely challenging environment, completely fascinating environment with people from all over the world, people who were coming in with all kinds of different backgrounds, pure chaos – total chaos really – but you come out of it just a whole different perspective, right, a whole different mindset. But then, of course, reality can kick in as well and my next thing was, “Okay, what do I do next?” So, one of my first things coming out of grad school was to do a startup. That failed three years later. But again, it was something that came out of my experience.

I was basically trying to meld sort of a tech/ concept, introduce it into the real estate world, do a LinkedIn sort of concept for the building industry, and put all my energy – all my effort – behind it but, at the same time, I don't know the market wasn't ready for it. I wasn't experienced enough to deliver it. There were all kinds of issues or complications with it. But that step led me to eventually closing the business, starting with another company, just getting my bearings again. I went into retail design, worked for a midsized firm, again found my foothold and just kind of, again, kept going from there. A lot of this is like you just keep going, just keep going and see what happens.

I couldn't have predicted that – after that 2008 and the 2008 crash would happen – that basically killed the firm for which I was working. I mean it went from a 35 person firm to 20 people. Then we went down to ten. Then we put everybody on part-time. I was one of the last people standing before the firm was completely dissolved. It was only out of the ashes of that that I was able to – for the first time – successfully start to build the company I have today.

Matt:

Amazing. So, let's talk about the company you have today and how you built that. So, starting from that point at which you just left off, take us from there through the story and talk about the difficult parts. Talk about the early days of being an entrepreneur. You and I were just recently discussing some friends who are starting off in their businesses and really having that early stage struggle and just grinding to try to get by and get through and get to the next stage.

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I think entrepreneurship a lot of times is romanticized and things like that, but talk about the slog and the grind. What were those early days like? Also, any failures that you had and the struggles that you had. Paint some of that picture for us. Tell us some stories about that.

Jennifer:

It's a very lonely time I'll tell you that because you have a great idea, but that idea probably nobody understands what it is. You don't know how to communicate it. It's kind of in your head. You think you're going to change the world with it maybe. I mean I thought I might change the architecture world and the way that business was done. I was really disillusioned coming out of school with the whole real estate industry and the way that construction was done.

We had learned in school how all these amazing software and different technologies could help integrate and help with collaboration and you hit the real world – where construction is messy and the contractors don't get along with the architects and the architects don't get along with the interior designers – and there's just all this sort of mess and consternation. You just think, “Well, what if we could just create a better system, right?”

A better system that would help these people communicate and streamline.” But all of that great idealistic thought – when you try to start putting it onto paper and create things in these systems – we were trying to create this basically online network where people could sign up. We would have different networking events. We would try to get developers and architects and contractors in the same room and we would try to get them to have different resumes related to projects, all these kinds of things, right? We were overly ambitious. The problem is that you, as an individual – as one business owner trying to make this change – it's hard. It's a lot.

You need people. You need supporters. You need enthusiasm. You need workers. You need to actually take the idea and do actionable things that will create a working product. You need to test that product. You have to get your followers and your users onboard. All of these things it takes time – not just energy – but time. However long you think it will take, you just multiply by three and add about 100 days onto that. I mean it's all of these kinds of crazy things that you – So, it's pure chaos. It's very lonely.

The key thing is really to get the right people involved that can

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support your idea, but also can put the time into it. A lot of times, time is money. And the hardest thing about being an entrepreneur is if you're starting with no capital and you're burning through capital and you're trying to do this and you're not paying yourself and you're trying to pay some other people, trying to keep everybody afloat. It can just totally, completely wear you down. I think one of the biggest challenges is how do you get through those periods? How do you find people to support you and take it to the next level? It's hard. It's very hard. Yeah, it's not talked about a lot, but that's the hardest reality.

**Matt:** And so what were some of your strategies for making it through that initial period in terms of when it was that difficult and when it was that hard, what did you do and how did you get through that? What was your maybe moment when you finally said, "I've made it. This is going to work. This business is going to happen."? Take us from there to that moment and what were your strategies for getting there.

**Jennifer:** Well, I think a lot of it was just pure ambition and just pure everything. But the first startup I did – which was the one I was talking about this LinkedIn for the industry – was called Upworld at the time, Upworld.com. I had three other partners, all of this, but what I realized is I was doing most of the work and I think – as a young entrepreneur – part of my struggle was, "How do I delegate?"

One of the biggest questions to me and it took me a long time to learn was how to delegate, how to let go, how to talk to people about the idea, get people on board with the vision, and then to pass the responsibility off to people you trust, and to continue to help them take your vision and implement it – hard, very, very hard. It takes a while to understand and to figure out how to do that because that's a key element I think to growing or scaling or just also having a life. Because as an entrepreneur, I was running myself initially into the ground working almost 15 to 18 hour days seven days a week and it's exhausting.

So, I think, for me, a lot of it was learning. I eventually closed that company. I couldn't do it anymore. And when I started the next company with another partner that was more stable that had more experience, I learned that you have to build a team around you that knows what they're doing, that you can train, and that you stay positive with, and that is interested in helping the company grow. Finding those people and getting them to subscribe to your vision

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is, I think, one of the most important things.

I think once that started to happen – once those things clicked into place – just things got easier. And when things got easier, you started realizing you were on the right track. And when you realized you were on the right track, yeah, you started to feel like you were going to make it.

**Matt:** So, for you and your business, what was your “I made it” moment? Was it when you landed a particular client or you had a particular breakthrough of some kind in your business? Take us to that moment. What was that for you?

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. I mean I started the business coming out of the ashes of the 2008 market crash. So, a lot of it was I partnered with someone else. Our business – the retail design business – was totally wiped out and I don’t say that lightly. I mean it really was. Many, many firms in our industry basically closed their doors. I mean we had staff leaving, going back to their hometowns, moving in with their parents. I mean it was total chaos. So, at that time, I took this huge job as a freelance consultant to do this project in Seoul, Korea.

I was flying back and forth to Seoul on a regular basis, exhausting myself still, and then finally – with this other partner – we were like, “You know what? Let’s just go back. Let’s try to get these old clients that we had ten, 15 years ago. Let’s go start talking to them again” and we did. I knew we had made it when we got Barnes and Nobel and Barnes and Nobel invited us in and we started working for them and they started coming to us like, “We need a new store concept. We want to be more innovative. We need to be fresher. We got Amazon coming up. Borders, at that point, was still sort of around. It hadn’t quite gone into bankruptcy yet and closed its doors.”

They were like, “We need help.” We worked for them for over two years on a retainer. Yeah, I mean when we first got that, yeah, you know. You’re kind of like, “Okay, we’re doing something right again. This is good. We’re on the right path.” That was definitely a moment where you’re feeling confident that you’ve gotten hired by a large corporation that looks to you, trusts you, and is looking to you to help them innovate.

**Matt:** So, after you landed Barnes and Nobel and you were getting clients of that caliber and you knew the business was working and was

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going to work and you had your team around you, from there, there is still this concept about which there have been books written and a lot of entrepreneurs talk about it or refer to it – which is the concept of the entrepreneurial rollercoaster – which is that there are very high highs and then – even when you think you’re doing really well – then, all of a sudden, things change and there are very low lows. Sometimes that can be a financial setback, but other times it can just be emotional just debilitation and loneliness and just really tough days to slog through.

I certainly experience that as an entrepreneur. So, I wanted to see if you could talk about that as a business owner over your trajectory now of the last eight or nine or so years. How have you dealt with the downside of the entrepreneurial rollercoaster? What have been your stress management techniques? What types of things can you share in terms of how to get through those difficult times and continue to be productive and move forward? How have you dealt with that?

Jennifer:

Well, yeah, I mean the rollercoaster is real. It’s intense. When you’re having a high, it’s great, but when you’re having a low, it’s rough. So, the main thing I do is exercise. It’s a very basic one, but you know what? You have to get your oxygen into your brain. You need to get your heart pumping. A lot of times you just need a break and exercise, I think – if you do intense exercise – it just transforms your mindset. It lets you step away from whatever sort of maybe depression or stress that you might be having. I, personally, am a dancer. I love to go dancing.

The thing about dancing – whether it’s at a club or I take specific lessons somewhere – in New York, we have access to some of the best dance studios that there is. Anytime there’s a workshop or something on the weekend, I sign up all day, like an eight-hour workshop or something even. I mean it just, I don’t know, partly because dance requires so much mental as well as physical. I’m not really a runner. I’m not somebody who can go out and just like you know – Some people need that for clarity of thought, but I want to be challenged. So dance, for me, if I’m taking dance lessons, somebody’s teaching me things.

I actually have to learn those dance moves. I have to translate them. I have to perform. I mean it forces me out of my normal, little bubble of introspection and I have to really get out and I love it. That’s my personal thing. The other thing I do is I jump on a plane and I go somewhere because getting out of your familiar

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environment sometimes you get into these ruts and you see these things and you're on this pattern and sometimes you need to break out of that mold. I book trips last minute a lot of times. I just get on a plane.

I'm like, "I need to go somewhere. I need to clear my head. I need to see things fresh. I'm getting into a rut. I'm saying the same old things and nobody's listening. It's not making an impact. I'm not breaking molds. I'm not looking at things in a fresh perspective." If you can afford it, get on a plane, get on a boat, get on a train and just go somewhere. Even if you don't know where you're going, just get on a train. It'll stop somewhere and you can get off and then roam around and clear your mind and then get back on again, you know? That's all you have to do.

Matt:

That is amazing advice. There are two parts of that that strike me as amazing. One is the concept of the exercise I think, of course, has certainly proven as important, but what you're adding to that is it doesn't necessarily have to be, "Go to the gym and get on the treadmill." It can be things that are more important and directly connected to you like the dance stuff and things like that and giving yourself an outlet in some way that is really intense, but also something that you really connect with and that really works for you.

So, you can figure out what that is and have that as a consistent outlet that you use. Then the travel, I mean, I, of course, agree with that 100% and it's just amazing to be able to get out into a new environment and just the different sensory experiences that you have and the way that affects your mentality and your emotions and everything else is really significant – so, good, good advice. Let me ask you this. What advice have you received over your life that sticks out to you or that still kind of resonates with you or that you think has really helped you along the way that you can think about that maybe somebody gave you that was particularly useful?

Jennifer:

Well, I would say I mean I come a little bit from an academic background. I've always loved school. I never wanted to leave school. I was one of these people that I would have lived in the school environment forever if I could. So, for me, a lot of that comes from professors and stuff just saying, "Make life a journey and just enjoy the journey and learn as you go." I mean the thing that will always keep you active until the end of your age is to be curious and enjoy learning. What else do you have? You get into ruts when you put on blinders, when you're not open, when you

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shut yourself off from a lot of different things, you know?

There has to be a balance in there. I mean, obviously, repetition and following a routine can also be good because you can be productive but, at the same time, sometimes you need to break that and move to different levels. I think you just have to get out of that and the only way you do that, I think, is to stay curious.

Matt: Let's get into your productivity habits and how you structure your day. I guess, in general, but also particularly when you are traveling because you are now a digital nomad.

Jennifer: That's right.

Matt: You are an itinerant world-traveling entrepreneur who travels through different time zones. You run your business from different continents around the world. And so let's talk a little bit about, I guess, in general, and then if there are specific caveats for the different time zone thing and all that. I know, of course, I remember in Kuala Lumpur you were closing deals on the rooftop bar. Around midnight, you had to leave to go close a deal and then you came back.

So, there's all of that, but let's talk about productivity habits. How do you structure your day, generally speaking? What time are you going to bed? What time are you getting up? What does your day structure look like? How do you optimize your productivity?

Jennifer: Well, it's a bit challenging. I mean my staff is all around the world. That's been since we started the company, we have a basically distributed workforce. So, my renderers are in Serbia. My graphic designer is in Chile. I have an interior design in China. Part of it is trying to maximize their efficiency because I have to get them work and I have to know what they're doing on their time zone. So, that makes me have a 24/7 schedule. But in general, it's about getting in front of them.

So, it just means that if I know we have a certain project, I assign them a certain project, we work together on that project, that I'm generally available at the start of their day or at the end of their day before their next morning to prep them, to work with them, to make sure that they know what they're supposed to be doing. So, I don't have to work a typical 9:00 to 5:00 day. I have to work a day that's based on their time zone – if that makes sense – and trying to get them to be productive. We communicate everything sort of,

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again, online. We'll do chats or we can do Skype calls or we can do whatever. So, my day is very much broken up. I don't work any set hours.

I like to sleep in. I'm a creative, so I'm a night person. I come awake at night. So, some of my best work is at night. I'm happy to sleep in in the morning. Europe suits me very well for U.S. clients because I can sleep until, well, almost 3:00 p.m. if I wanted and soak it up and have a fully functioning work day with clients. But I think the biggest challenge of working with a staff that's distributed and clients and all of that is just time zones, managing time zones. It's all in my head, I have to admit, and the Google calendar.

Matt:

So, let's talk about a little more details about your specific business. So, one of the things that I think is really interesting and impressive about you is that you – as a business owner/entrepreneur – have built a business that is a real business and it's not an online business. It's not an e-commerce business. It's not a traditionally virtual business. It's an architectural design company and you've built that and you have the caliber of clients like Barnes and Nobel and Sharper Image and so forth and yet you've built it in a way that allows you to be location independent.

So, talk about that because I think – as entrepreneurs come into the space and people want to start businesses – really the vision, I think for a lot of people increasingly – and I think it should be for every entrepreneur – is to maximize their location independence. I think there are some sort of restrictive, limiting beliefs about, “Oh, if I want to be location independent, I need to start an online business” or something like that. But how do you build a business that's not a traditionally virtual business – like an architecture design company – and create that location independence for yourself?

So, talk a little bit about how you built that and how it works. How are you able to live in Prague or Cambodia or an island in Thailand like you did last year and run this business?

Jennifer:

Well, I mean I'll be honest. A huge advantage is that I do have a partner that's still based in the U.S. So, obviously, it still helps to have somebody on the ground, but we trade off. I mean he does a lot of the marketing and new business. So, he's able to meet with the clients first off and then I work with the team. We do all the design work. We do all the production work. We're the concept

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people. So, that can be done more with a distributed team and part of that has to do with the fact that we now design digitally, right? We have computer systems.

All of our computer systems, I mean we use CAD, we're using 3D modeling software, we're using just basic email and pdfs. I mean everything that we produce anyway is digitally-based. It's not physically-based. I mean very little of it is physically-based. The second thing is that we've established ourselves in a very niche market – the retail market. Retail is very specific and we're the concept people meaning that we help companies basically reposition themselves in the marketplace. So, we do marketing. We do branding. We understand how a company actually works, how they do sales, where they are, who's their customer.

We're also working with them to design a retail experience that is different than any of their competitors. So, that is different than traditional architecture because traditional architecture, most architects are not trained in, "How do consumers shop? How do they buy? How would a retailer make more sales?" A lot of architects are just trained in making a beautiful building or making a functional building or saving a certain amount of costs. But we're really looking at it from a retail perspective and a different perspective.

So, in a way, that helps us. It frees us up from some of the logistics and the technicality of the architecture and we partner with local architects to help with the implementation. So, it doesn't require us, therefore, to be on the ground in all of these different locations and it allows us to focus on what we do best, which is helping retail stores innovate.

Matt: All right. Let's talk a little bit more about your travel experience and what your life looks like as a digital nomad and how you have made choices to go to these different places, live in these different places, visit these different places. Talk a little bit about what travel means to you and some of your experiences and how this whole lifestyle, for you, has come about with the centrality of traveling and living in different places.

Jennifer: Well, I've always loved travel. That's just hands down. I mean this is my 53<sup>rd</sup> country, I guess, to be in – which is sort of crazy – but I've always seen travel as part of my lifestyle. I don't see it as this thing that you do that's separate necessarily. I think travel is life. It's about understanding different cultures. There's just so much

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enrichment that comes from travel that you can't get anywhere else and it gives you perspective. I think it makes you humble. I think it makes you appreciative of what you have.

You realize just how different everyone's lives are and most people are very gracious. I mean when I travel, I'm just always blown away at how nice people are and welcoming other cultures are. It just blows me away and it's one of the treats, I guess, of traveling to be welcomed into a new country and get to see how people live and have them host you. I mean I don't know it just does it for me every time. I don't know, I guess coming from architecture, architecture is one of these professions that encourage travel as well.

I mean study abroad programs and everything. I mean you can't study architecture in the U.S. and expect to be a good architect if you haven't traveled. It is part of the culture and it's always sort of professed that. So, when I meet other people in other professions whose professions don't encourage them to travel, it confuses me. I'm like, "How can your profession not encourage you to travel? You get so much more perspective. You understand what you're doing in the world so much better." So, it's one of those no-brainer things that I often don't think about, but I forget that not all professions have that ability or that opportunity.

Matt: And you also do a lot of spontaneous and last minute travel decisions.

Jennifer: Terribly so.

Matt: Which I think even increases the caliber of the experiences that you can have doing that. Tell me about the Peru story that you were mentioning to me a while ago and how that went down.

Jennifer: Yeah. So, I mean my business, obviously, runs a lot on what – we have clients, we have ups and we have downs during the year. We're very busy in the summer months, but sometimes we get a lull and sometimes I don't know that lull is going to come until a couple weeks before – sometimes a couple days before. And when it comes, I like to take advantage of it because I may not get a break again for another three months. So, I want to go somewhere. I want to do something. I want to enjoy myself. So, yeah, Machu Picchu has been on my list for a long time.

This was a couple years ago. It was August and I was sitting

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around and – all of a sudden – I was like, “You know what? All my clients they’ve kind of gone off on holidays for August. Labor Day is coming up. Nothing’s really happening.” I was like, “You know what? I need to go on a trip. Where am I going to go?” So, I just start you know, “Where’s my top 10 list? What am I going to do? Machu Picchu, why haven’t I done that?” So, I sign up, go to a group, try to find basically a trip there. I sign up. I can’t get the Inca Trail. Obviously, permits are very important as part of going to Peru and doing the whole hike.

So, when I was talking to one of the agencies, they were like, “You know what? We have the Quarry Trail. Quarry Trail, very little known trail, but it’s quite good. You should try it.” I was like, “All right.” This is two weeks out. “We can get you a permit for the Quarry Trail. Six months in advance is what you need for the Inca Trail. Quarry Trail, two weeks out, I think we can swing this.” So, sure enough, they pull it off for me. I get there, get down to the place where I’m supposed to be, and I’m, of course, assuming you know I’m going with a whole group of people and that we’re going to do this five-day trek basically to get to Machu Picchu.

I’m the only one there. They introduce me to the guide. “This is your personal guide. Here are your two horsemen. Here are your three horses and basically your cook. It’s all for you because nobody else is on this trip.” Why? Because I signed up last minute and they basically moved mountains to make it happen, but there was nobody else to go. So, it was very funny. The guy greeted me. He said, “Hi. You are the queen for the week – whatever you want to do.” I just laughed at him. But he was the nicest guy and we had a great time.

They were amazing. I mean it was a private tour for basically a group rate. Yeah, phenomenal experience and the Quarry Trail I would argue is just as good as the Inca Trail – not that I’ve been on it – but phenomenal views, phenomenal everything.

Matt: Amazing.

Jennifer: And all to myself.

Matt: Amazing. I as well did Machu Picchu last year, although I did not do the long hike. I did the train down to Aguas Calientes and then the bus ride up to Machu Picchu for the day.

Jennifer: Amazing.

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Matt: Yes. So, I saw Machu Picchu. I did not do the extended hike, although I have heard it is amazing. I think it's where the Inca Trail ends. Now you know the Quarry Trail as well, and you might even get to be a queen and have an entire entourage of people attending to you and you alone if you book last minute and there's nobody there.

Jennifer: You might.

Matt: Excellent, excellent advice. What would be – of all of the places that you've been, 53 countries and I'm sure multiple cities within a number of those countries you've probably been to – what would you say if you had to pick your top three travel destinations that you've been to or that you might recommend to somebody else to go to? Let me caveat this by saying if you were to go there to live for a month like places you've been that you would really just love to go back and just live and immerse yourself and spend time there, if you had to go back to three places for a month, what would be your top three?

Jennifer: Well, I mean always a challenge. Barcelona is one of my top favorites. I just think it's a beautiful city, but it's also an engaging, active city and lots of youthful energy. So, it's changing. Europe is amazing, but sometimes it can feel a little museum-like. It can feel a little bit quiet, maybe not the energy that you expect from somewhere like New York or LA or the cities that we're used to in the U.S. or even London.

But Barcelona is one of those cities that I just feel like has a really interesting blend of the old and the new and just a lot of great energy. Just walking down the streets, getting lost, the architecture, the food, the nightlife, I mean it's just one of those cities.

Matt: It's amazing.

Jennifer: I lived there for over a month. I lived there for five weeks many years ago and it was one of those cities that just, yeah, stole my heart.

Matt: It's amazing. I lived there for five weeks just last year, in fact, and I have to imagine as an architect I mean the Gaudi stuff is just I mean it's unbelievable.

Jennifer: Yeah. The old Gothic Quarter just getting lost in the streets of the

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Gothic Quarter and Las Ramblas is just an amazing place.

Matt: Yeah. I lived in El Born, which was my favorite district in the entire city. The food and just it was just the whole thing just blew me away. I mean it may be a little bit less out of the touristy – just slightly adjacent to the major tourist section –but just amazing. So, I agree, and the Montjuïc you can go up and see the whole city and you can go out to the Park Güell and see all of the amazing, amazing, amazing things there – so, yeah, very special place.

Jennifer: And right on the water so there's the whole–

Matt: Yeah, the beach, the Mediterranean Sea.

Jennifer: Trains everywhere. You can go off to France so easy to just get up to France and then get over to the rest of Spain. I mean, to me, South Spain is beautiful too – Cordova and Granada and Seville.

Matt: It's all amazing. I fell in love with Spain. I spent about three months there last year and I just fell completely in love with it. You know the wine there is so good–

Jennifer: Yes. Let's talk about wine.

Matt: Yeah. We should talk about wine because we're drinking it now. We're doing this Chilean Carménère at the moment, which is amazing.

Jennifer: It's a whole other story as to why we're drinking this.

Matt: Why are we drinking it? Yeah, we do these Carménère parties periodically. So, we did one in Kuala Lumpur and then we did another one in Phenom Peng, Cambodia. And now we're doing a Carménère night in Prague in the Czech Republic. So, we're doing international Carménère nights. So, I lived, yeah, I guess just a context for this is I lived in San Diego, Chile last year for a month and had never heard of Carménère. If you've never heard of it, it's a varietal, right? It's a grape. It's a type of grape.

I believe it's originally from Bordeaux – kind of like Malbec and those types of grapes – and when they came down to South America, they brought those grapes down and they found that the Malbec grows probably the best in the world in Argentina in that particular climate – even arguably better than it does in some of the French vineyards. And then the Carménère grape grows the best in

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the Chilean wine climates arguably even better than it does in these European vineyards. So, arguably, the best Carménère in the world is in Chile and I had never even heard of the grape and never heard of the type of wine until I went there.

That is their specialty and I just started drinking it. It tastes so much different from other wines that I've had. It's a very distinct taste. So, I've just been telling everybody about it. When we got to Kuala Lumpur, I said, "You have to try this Carménère thing. I've just been drinking it for this whole month in Chile." So, sure enough, we did it and we've been having Carménère nights ever since.

But in Spain and most of Europe, the wine in Europe – and if people are from the U.S. and they haven't spent time in Europe – the wine in Europe is probably 25% the cost of the wine in the U.S., right? If you go to buy a glass of wine in New York, you're talking at least \$12.00 or more for a glass. The same glass of the same wine in Spain or a number of other European countries might be \$3.00. It might be–

Jennifer: Cheaper than water.

Matt: Yeah. I mean it might be \$3.00 as opposed to \$12.00 to \$15.00 for the same glass of wine. So, you can drink these amazing Rioja. Rioja is in Spain and stuff. So, it was so cheap and it was so good. I started drinking it for lunch because everybody drinks wine for lunch there, you know? I'm explaining this to people that I started drinking red wine with lunch all the time and they're like, "Yeah, don't you get super exhausted in the afternoon if you're drinking two glasses of wine for lunch every day?" I was like, "Yeah, that's why they have a siesta."

Jennifer: Siesta.

Matt: I'm like, "The Spanish culture makes so much sense to me now, you know?"

Jennifer: It's amazing. They know what they're doing.

Matt: They really do. It's amazing and the food is just absurdly good and it's just, yeah, Spain I really fell in love with that country. So, full endorsement for Barcelona and a number of other parts in Spain as well – the south also – and I lived in the north. I lived in Bilbao in the Basque country for a month, which is also fantastic.

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Jennifer: So different, yeah.

Matt: Totally different. Madrid is its own thing. That's an amazing place as well in its own right. Yeah, a lot of incredible stuff there. Okay, so back to your list. You got Barcelona. What would be your other two that you'd love to go back and live for a month?

Jennifer: Dublin. Dublin is kind of a second home for me. That's partially it. My father is originally from Ireland. So, I do have my Irish passport. I can go there. I've got a lot of friends from there. I just love the drinking culture and the community and the people. Again, for me, a lot of times it's the people – the energy of people, the openness of people, the welcoming-ness of people – and how quickly can you feel like you actually live somewhere versus being a tourist? If I go to Dublin, I feel like I live there within a couple of days.

Matt: And Dublin has a very special place in my heart as well. I'm also of Irish heritage, but Dublin was the first place that I traveled to extensively outside the U.S. I guess technically, it was the second. I went briefly to London with my father, I think, when I was probably 18 or something just for a short trip – less than a week – but what I did is I studied abroad in Dublin my junior year of college and I went to Trinity College for the year. That was just a completely life-changing experience for me. It was my first time being away from home for an extended period.

Well, no, I shouldn't say that. I was away for college from home, but it was my first time being out of the country – which means you're really far away from home. So, it was my first international residency experience and I lived in Dublin for the year and it was unbelievable, right? I mean Dublin was an extraordinary city. It was an amazing place to be and it has so much just nostalgic memories for me from that period in my life and what that did for me at that age being in another country and living and just being able to do that. And then, it also gave me the proximity to the rest of Europe.

So, over the winter break of the year that I was there, my roommate and I got one-month EuroRail passes, which – at the time for students – you could go to any of probably 17 plus countries, hop on, hop off on a whim, unlimited travel. We just bought it for the month and we just went. We got a flight to Rome and then just went up all through Italy and Germany and Austria

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and over to Prague, actually. I was actually here a number of years ago, but I spent Christmas Eve in Prague. It was my first time here.

Jennifer: Wow.

Matt: And then Budapest and then Paris, Amsterdam, and all that stuff – when you’re seeing it for the first time – are just unbelievable. So, Ireland and Dublin, in particular, has amazing memories for me as well. I was just back I think most recently in 2014. I think three years ago, I was back in Dublin and yeah, just an amazing city – so, also a strong endorsement for that one. So, number three on your list, what would you say?

Jennifer: Well, I’m going to throw in a recent one. I just – prior to coming here to Prague – we were in Split, Croatia and I loved it – absolutely beautiful coastline. I had been in Greece many, many years ago and loved Greece, but Croatia was sort of very special. I wish I was there during the sailing season. I’m definitely going back – maybe even staying the whole summer at some point – going sailing. We were there offseason so there were no boats in the water, but the coastline is absolutely phenomenal, stunning.

The sunsets, the sunrises, the old towns, getting lost in the city, the food, it just goes on and on. I mean I was just really – as a sailor, which is a whole other interest of mine that’s come up over the last couple years that I’ve gotten into – I’m totally into getting back and sailing the Croatian coast.

Matt: So, you’ve never been to the Dalmatian Coast in the summertime?

Jennifer: No.

Matt: Right. So, I was. I had the good fortune of actually going to spend a little bit of time on the Dalmatian Coast last summer. I was living in Belgrade in Serbia for the summer. This actually relates back to my Barcelona story. I learned about the Schengen region the hard way because I almost got kicked out of it last year.

Jennifer: That’s a good way to learn.

Matt: Yeah. So, for people who don’t know the Schengen region is a grouping of countries – how many are there, 27 or so or something like that – that are treated as one country for travel purposes. They include most, but not all, of the EU countries. So, Ireland is not part of it. The UK is not part of it. But most of the EU countries are

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part of it, but it also includes a number of countries that are not in the EU – like Iceland, for example, is part of it. So, the Schengen region you're allowed to go only for a total of 90 days in all of the Schengen countries combined and then you have to be out for 90 days before you can go back in.

Jennifer: Come back in, yeah.

Matt: So, I had spent two months in Portugal and a month in Spain. I was mostly in the Basque country, actually. Then, I was like, "Oh, I'll just go spend the summer in Barcelona." So, I literally book an Airbnb for five weeks in Barcelona for the summer and then I found out. Somebody was like, "Hey, dude, there's this thing called the Schengen and you can only stay here for 90 days." So, I'm thinking like, "Oh, each country individually would love to have me for 90 days." They're like, "Yeah, so no. You're only allowed a total of 90 days." So, I'm like, "Whoa. I'm on 80 something now. So, I can't even stay for the rest of my allotted time here."

So, I had to literally make a five-day trip to Morocco before my tenancy ended in the Schengen region to extend my arc so I didn't pass the 90-day mark. Then, there was no way I was going to be able to go to Barcelona for the summer for this five-week thing that I had already booked. So, I very politely emailed the Airbnb host and I was like, "So, I have this small issue with fulfilling this thing and arriving when I booked it. How would you feel about moving my five-week booking?" I said, "When it comes to your place, maybe like say three or four months forward. I'll just come three or four months later. I have to be out of the Schengen for 90 days."

She very politely said, "No problem. That would be fine." So, I said, "Great. I'll see you in October" I think it was. Then, so what I did is I said, "Okay, Google non-Schengen countries." So, Serbia is a non-Schengen country – at least at the time of this recording – and so I went to spend the summer in Belgrade and then went down to Cape Town, South Africa and then I was out for 90 days and then – after you're out for 90 days – you can come back for another 90 days. So, I came back and did my five weeks in Barcelona, which was unbelievable, totally amazing in every way.

Yeah, it was fantastic. But anyway, while I was in Serbia, I did the Dalmatian Coast trip and did about two weeks where I went to Dubrovnik and Split in Croatia and saw the whole coast and then

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went out to – this you need to do in the summer – the island of Hvar.

Jennifer: Okay, I have heard about this.

Matt: You've heard about the island of Hvar, yeah. It's pretty epic. It's pretty legendary. In the summertime, it is just completely off the chain. It's pretty amazing. So, you definitely want to go and do that. There are a number of other islands – which I didn't go to – but that really, I think, is the preeminent island you want to spend time on. It is just incredible on a number of levels – just beauty, but also just the party scene and everything else is just completely off the chain in the summertime.

Jennifer: Perfect.

Matt: So, amazing, but yeah, okay, so Barcelona, Dublin, and Split, Croatia are your top three and then bucket list items. You've been to 53 countries, but what would you say right now at this moment is the top of your bucket list for places you've never visited that you most want to go?

Jennifer: I really want to go to the Galapagos Islands. That has been on my list for quite some time. I will be in South America the rest of this year really starting in about April. So, that is – yeah. I just adore nature. The whole idea of getting to see these animals in their natural habitat – combined with sailing – because you must sail around these different islands to see them. Anything that's eco I just love, respect for nature, understanding, getting to get educated on the world that we live in and nature and how things have evolved and I mean just learning about when Darwin was there and what he learned and what he observed, basically. That's happening this year.

Matt: And so the Galapagos Islands are off the coast of Ecuador for folks that don't know.

Jennifer: Correct, yes.

Matt: Awesome, okay. So, Jen, are you ready for the lightning round?

Jennifer: Please. Is this rapid-fire?

Matt: It's kind of rapid-fire questions. They're short questions, but you can take as much time as you want to give an answer.

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Jennifer: Okay.

Announcer: The lightning round.

Matt: Okay. What would be one book that you would recommend to the audience that has most impacted you powerfully that you would recommend?

Jennifer: I'm going to go with Tim Ferriss's the Four Hour Work Week. The reason is – I mean I read it something like 10 years ago when it probably first came out – but it was one of those books where I was like, "How do I do this? How do I do this?" Because slogging away and doing work – just to pretend to do work – was not something I could ever buy into. It drove me nuts. The whole 9:00 to 5:00 being in an office and pretending to work – I mean most of the time you're pretending to work – or you're socializing. Socializing is fine too, but I was much more like I needed to be productive. I needed to have results.

How do you create results efficiently? How do you free up your time to do things that you love to do like travel and dance and party? I like to party and have fun and meet people and socialize. How do you do things more efficiently and do your work and do very good, quality work in order to free yourself up? I love that book. That book you know it was four hours. I've never quite gotten to that level – that's very impressive – but nonetheless, I think the message is right. How do you use your brain, use your fortitude, use your intelligence, use your sense of efficiency to really, really zero in on what's important and let everything else fall away and keep your focus?

That book, for me, really helped me energize me more than anything, I think, just kind of get into that rhythm and understand what that means. As I said, I'm still working on the four hour part, but –

Matt: Well, that also is usually the book that I also recommend when I'm asked about the most influential book for me over the last 10 years. I remember very vividly when I found it – when it first came out. I had literally just gotten fired from my job. I was working a 9:00 to 5:00 – which is actually more like a 5:00 to 9:00 – job and I had literally gotten fired unexpectedly. It was one of those, "You have to be in the meeting at 3:00." "I didn't know there was meeting at 3:00." "Yeah, there is."

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I walk in, and it's a whole thing saying, "Yeah, you're done. Sign this if you want a little severance thing. If you want to voluntarily resign, you'll get such and such, but get your stuff and get out by 5:00." I was floored. I was blown away. I was just emotionally reeling. But as I walked out of the office at 5:00 I said, "I'm done working for other people and I'm going to start my own business and that's it, no supervisors ever again." The only problem was I didn't know how to start my own business.

So, they took my phone. It was a company phone. So, I literally had to drive first to the Verizon store to buy a phone to call my mother to tell her I was fired and then, after that, I was like, "Okay, I'm starting my own business. But wait a minute, I don't know how to start a business."

Jennifer: Okay, and what is that business?

Matt: So, I'm going to go to Barnes and Nobel – which may have been designed by Jen Magee. I didn't know it at the time, but it may very well have been designed by you. Although it wasn't because it was two years before you got Barnes and Nobel as a client.

Jennifer: Yeah, I think–

Matt: This was the pre–

Jennifer: That might have been the pre–

Matt: this was the pre-Jen Magee era. This was the 2007 era, so prior to your design, but I go to Barnes and Nobel. I start looking and I remember that particular book. I grabbed it and I looked at the back of it and I read the thing and I said, "This is the book for me" and I bought it and I just immersed myself in it and I said, "This is what I want to do." The same thing stood out to me, right? When you read the book, it's not so much about the four hours specifically, it's about the concept – like the mind-changing concept – of understanding the freedom of mobility as a currency, along with income, and along with time.

Usually, people are trading time for money and people are locationally restricting themselves by having to go into the office every day and tying themselves to one location and living a life where they're just loading up – making more and more money – and loading up with consumer goods or mortgages and stuff and

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car payments that are just tying them to one place. This was just a completely liberating concept for me about the importance of pursuing location independence and the freedom of mobility and understanding that as a currency of equal or perhaps even greater value than income.

So, all of a sudden, I said, “Whoa.” I mean that just blew me away and so I knew from day one when I wanted to start my business that I am going to design a business plan that is going to create, for me, total location independence and the freedom of mobility and it’s going to give me control over my time and allow me to sleep in until noon if I want to and whatever else. As long as I can create enough income to cover my expenses and get by, income is literally the third most important of those currencies, right?

Location independence and freedom and control of your time are clearly more important than income and then income as long as you can cover your expenses, and then obviously, eventually try to get more and more of that. Okay, but that’s definitely third tier stuff, which is the opposite of the way that most people think about it as, “Oh, I have to make money and I’ll just surrender all of my time. I’ll work 18 hours a day and I’ll just restrict myself to this one location and go into the office for six or seven hours a day six or seven days a week.” So, that, for me, was just game-changing.

So, then I knew when I started my business – when I started Maverick – and I got my two business partners that went into that with me, we, from day one, said, “This is what we’re doing.” We were building a location independent business and my business partners and I never lived in the same state even from the founding of our company. We would just force it to have a virtual infrastructure and we just built it from there. So, I totally agree that’s a great book recommendation. And that was a long conversation about it in what’s called the lightning round.

Jennifer: Hey, that’s okay. It’s all about–

Matt: But I said –

Jennifer: It’s all about the tangential.

Matt: I qualified the terms though, which is that the questions are lightning fast, but the answers might take a little bit longer.

Jennifer: The answers do not have to be. That’s right.

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Matt: Okay, favorite app or productivity tool that you're using right now.

Jennifer: Box.

Matt: I don't know what that is. Tell me about it. I'm excited.

Jennifer: Box.com. Well, it started out as Box.net many, many years ago. Particularly it fits me and our collaboration style, which is we're project-based, right? So, we have a project. We get a project. We have to design everything around that project. It's a collaborative software, basically. It's online, purely online. I mean you set up folders, you share things, and you can share documents. I find it to be a glorified Dropbox. A lot of people know Dropbox. Box was around at similar times. It's just a slightly different style. Dropbox is not robust enough for me, in particular, but yeah, that's my lifesaver.

To be honest, without Box, I couldn't do a lot of these things. It allows me to organize staff. I can assign them tasks on it. We can communicate on it. We can chat on it. We post comments. I can track everything like who has downloaded what. It tracks everything. It's great. I don't have to watch it 24/7, but if I need a trail, if I need to know who's doing what, if I need clients to look at something, I can really control all of that through this platform.

Matt: Awesome. What is your favorite movie of all time?

Jennifer: So, you asked me that earlier and I was a little bit embarrassed, but I think it's Forest Gump, you know? I say that because it's a little bit cheesy. I know that and I'm not usually a cheesy person, but there's just something about that movie that I can watch over and over again about the storyline and everything. It's just sort of this very sweet – What I like about it is that it tells the story of this man's life and his journey through his life and sort of the unexpected things that happen to him through him just moving forward. I think it resonated with me a lot.

It was just like here's this guy who's not even – you know he has certain limitations even – and yet, in a way he's created this life that's very empowering and very phenomenal and worth talking about and just simply interesting. His journeys – each little journey – are this story in and of itself. It's just told in this way that's so charming and sort of naïve and sort of, I don't know, just I don't know just different and refreshing.

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Very few films breakthrough in that way, but it's always – I don't know there's a timeless aspect to it and I think it is relevant throughout. I just love it. It's charming. I mean Tom Hanks was amazing in it and I don't know if he's done any films quite like that since, but yeah, from a long-term perspective.

Matt: What celebrity or author or public figure who is currently alive and who you've never met would you most love to have dinner with?

Jennifer: Michelle Obama. I think she's free now, right?

Matt: I think she has slightly more time now, which means that could potentially be an achievable goal. Why do you pick her?

Jennifer: I think she had an amazing professional career before she entered the White House as Obama's wife more or less and she's a phenomenal, intelligent, brilliant person in and of herself and she's presented herself as a true partner in that relationship. I don't know all her stories, all her behind the scenes stories – and also just she has so much potential still. I mean both of them, actually, are very young in their career. I'm just fascinated to see what they will both do, but her in particular just because I mean a woman, very empowering, very representative, I think, of forward-thinking and I just think she'd be amazing to sit down and have a conversation with.

Matt: So, literally, if you were able to – like, let's say you actually prioritized that as a goal.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Matt: Let's say you literally said like, "Dinner with Michelle Obama is a real, live goal for Jen Magee."

Jennifer: Yes. I need to get moving on it.

Matt: I know. I want to try to support you in that goal too. I want to make that happen for you – whatever I can do – but let's say you actually got that dinner and you were sitting down with her. What would you ask her or how would that go? She's literally sitting across from you. What would you most want to know from her or ask her?

Jennifer: Well, I mean you'd have to break her down to the point where she

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could talk off the record. I mean that's key.

Matt: No, no. This is a private dinner. This is just you and her.

Jennifer: Yeah. I mean look, you'd want to know behind the scenes like, "What are all these great leaders really like? When you met them, what was your true perspective? What did you really think?"

Matt: Right, right.

Jennifer: "What did you really think when all these different people came traipsing through the White House and you had to put on your best face and you had to greet them all with the same amount of dignity and everything? What's the real story? What were they really like? What annoyed you? What did you find admirable in each of their personalities?" all of that. I mean she has seen so much that she can't talk about normally – like publicly. It would be just fascinating to hear her insight.

Matt: For sure. Okay. What is your favorite – personally your favorite – blog or podcast that you read or listen to that you would recommend?

Jennifer: Well, it's been hard on the road, I have to admit. When I was in the States, you know when you're riding the subway in New York, it's very easy to have your downloaded podcasts and you're ready to go.

Traveling it's always a little bit more challenging, but the latest thing that I've been really into is the whole Serial, which is just a very fresh perspective about pulling up these old cases and looking at them through a different perspective – somebody that's not in law enforcement or somebody who's not a lawyer – and just following the train of thought and digging through the old facts and the perspectives and just revealing how much human perception and bias can enter into cases and our whole basically understanding of how the world works.

Serial, to me, was this great series that – at least the first podcast, the whole first series – is just a refreshing taste of that, I think.

Matt: So, we are just finishing up our bottle of Carménère here, which means that we're getting to the conclusion of this podcast discussion. It's just after midnight here in Prague. So, let me ask you this. Where can people find you if they want to contact you, if

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they want to learn more about your business, if they want to learn more about you? Can they follow you on social media? Do you have a website? Where can people find you?

Jennifer: I mean LinkedIn is a great resource. I mean I have my professional profile on there.

Matt: Spell your name. How do they find you? Do you have a handle on social media? How do they get to you?

Jennifer: Absolutely. So, it's just everything is through my name basically, Jennifer Magee. So, it's J-E-N-N-I-F-E-R M-A-G-E-E. So, LinkedIn it's the same. It's like LinkedIn/JenniferMagee would be my profile. The same with Twitter if you look for me on Twitter, it's Twitter.com/Jennifer Magee, and Facebook as well. These are all I just go by my name, no other strange, mysterious stuff. I am who I am and you can find me by my name, web search, whatever. Also, you can just always email me at [Jennifer@retailinthecity.com](mailto:Jennifer@retailinthecity.com).

Matt: And that's your website also if they want to check out your-

Jennifer: Yeah, if they want to check out the type of work that we do. It's just RetailintheCity.com and we have different projects up there and a little bit about our mission statement, what we try to do to help clients, how we position ourselves differently. We're easily contactable. Reach out. I'm happy to share stories, advice, insight. I don't think that starting a business is easy. I think it is – like we talked about – a roller-coaster ride. It's easier now looking back on it. At the time, it was a dark tunnel. So, I mean I'm happy to help people, try to point them in the right direction.

At the end of the day, you would just have to follow your own path. Nothing that I can tell you specifically might be right for you. Most of what we can do is just talk about our own stories and maybe you'll find a nugget of information in there that's valuable or – if nothing else – be inspired. I think the key thing is just to be inspired and keep going and make something for yourself and see what happens. But it's hard and it's not the easy road. It's the hard road. There are easier paths in life, for sure, but not as rewarding.

Matt: So, I think just hearing that though you know, for me, when I was going through my entrepreneurial journey and hitting some of those hard times, just hearing from other entrepreneurs just validated that, "Yes, everybody has massive, catastrophic failures

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and everybody has incredible, difficult down times and hard times and depressing, desolate, lonely periods that sometimes go on for a long time. But at the end, if you're able to persevere and you're able to be resilient enough and you're able to be determined enough because you have the vision" that, for me, was it, right?

Reading the Four Hour Work Week and having that vision, "This is possible. This is what I want. I know that I can do it. I have confidence in myself and my business partners and the people around me that we can achieve it and I want to be able to live all around the world and run my business and have this lifestyle." You just have that vision and you just don't give up ever. It is possible to achieve and I think you are an amazing example of that and I appreciate you being on the show.

Jennifer: Absolutely loved it. Bring the wine anytime.

Matt: All right. Thanks, everybody, for listening and we will talk to you soon.

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**Duration: 71 minutes**

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