

The Maverick Show, Episode 31
HOST: Matt Bowles GUEST: Marisa Meddin

Matt Bowles: Hey, everybody. It's Matt Bowles! Welcome to *The Maverick Show*. My guest today is Marisa Meddin. She is a serial entrepreneur, a real estate professional, a clarity advisor, and career coach who helps individuals identify, pursue, and achieve careers and lifestyles that they truly love.

Out of college, Marisa worked for Pepsi in brand marketing, moving up the ranks in New York and Los Angeles over six years with the company. As part of a team of three, she managed the \$1.5 billion Diet Pepsi brand. Marisa also managed all music events and music partnerships, and worked directly with celebrities such as Sofia Vergara, Beyoncé, and Snoop Dogg, and attended red carpet events such as the Grammys, the Golden Globes, and the Clio Awards.

In 2016, Marisa left her corporate job and started an e-commerce business selling desserts. Less than two years later, she launched her second business, called Talk College to Me, where she built an online course that helps families in the U.S. navigate the college admissions process. That course now generates her enough passive income to cover her lifestyle expenses. Marisa is also a certified life coach, and in her third business, she works with clients from around the world as a clarity advisor and career coach.

Marisa donates 10% of all her profits from all of her businesses to Pencils for Promise, which works on poverty reduction through education, and builds schools, and supports teachers in low-income areas around Guatemala, Ghana, and Laos, and Marisa is a full-time digital nomad who runs all of her businesses remotely while traveling the world, and has now been to over 45 countries. Marisa, welcome to the show!

Marisa Meddin: Thank you, Matt. I'm so excited to be here today.

Matt: I'm so excited to have you here. We need to set the scene just to begin with. You and I are in Lisbon, Portugal –

Marisa: Lisboa.

Matt: Lisboa, and we have just opened a beautiful bottle of Portuguese red wine, which we are going to be drinking throughout the episode, and I understand this is your first time in Lisbon.

Marisa: It is, and it is exceeding my expectations.

Matt: I love that. What has been your experience so far? How has Lisbon been for you?

Marisa: It's been a blast. So, you and I just got off of the Nomad Cruise, so it is full of really wonderful people that we've met over the past week, so for me, that always makes things more exciting, but the city is a fun place to explore. There are winding streets that go everywhere. There are some really beautiful parks. We've listened to some really interesting fado music that you exposed me to, we've eaten some great food, and we've seen some pretty views. I like the waters.

Matt: Yeah, it's definitely one of my favorite cities in all of western Europe for sure. Before we came here, we also got to hang out in some other cool countries. We were in the Canary Islands for a while together, and we spent the day in Casablanca, Morocco, which I understand was your first time in Morocco as well.

Marisa: It was. We had some fun adventures there, we got some fun street food, and went to a mosque, all exceeding my expectations here. We've had some fun adventures very quickly.

Matt: We have indeed. The Hassan II mosque in Casablanca is one of my favorites in the world. It's a relatively new mosque – I think it was built in the early '90s – and I believe it's now the largest mosque on the continent of Africa, certainly in the top two or three, but I think it is the largest. It is just an amazing piece of architecture, and it's right on the beach.

Marisa: That's my favorite part. I love the water. It's beautiful.

Matt: It's really spectacular. You just go there and it's mesmerizing. You want to look at it in awe, spend time there, and you just don't want to leave.

Marisa: That's true. I love the beach, and the design of it was incredible, so it was a fun day.

Matt: It was super awesome. You and I were just talking about how before I came to Europe last month, I was at the South by Southwest conference in Austin, Texas, and I got to speak on a super cool panel on remote entrepreneurship. It was an amazing

honor to do that, and I met some awesome people. It was my first time at South by Southwest, and I was just totally blown away by everything about the conference: The people that I met, the events that were there – it was just cinema, art, entrepreneurship, and everything all together, and it just blew me away. But, you have been to that conference before. What was your experience like?

Marisa: I have. I've been many times. I used to go every year in my old job. We'll talk about that. I used to work for Pepsi in marketing, and so, I used to go to see the latest digital trends, music trends, and all of that, but it's an awesome experience. All of the people who are there – aside from the awesome conferences and panels, just the events going on outside, the people who are there – I've had some fun stories there as well.

Matt: I want to hear some of them. For me, it was just one thing after another, and I just kept having experiences that I didn't even expect. I would go to – I went to this hip-hop DJ event, which was one of these afterparties, and it was this whole DJ lineup, but in the middle of the DJ show, major '90s hip-hop artists would just appear onstage unannounced. So, Redman comes up on stage and does a 45-minute performance completely unannounced, and I'm three feet away, and it's surprise after surprise, one thing after another – the whole thing just left my head spinning. What was your experience like?

Marisa: I can relate to the surprises as well. You never know who's going to be there. I came from the brand partnership side, so we had some of those surprise artists – that's who we brought from Pepsi. But, one of my favorite moments there was when I was just walking down Sixth Street in Austin. For anyone who's been, it's a crazy street. It's busy. It starts pouring. We walk into a bar on the side of the road just to get out of the rain, and Ashton Kutcher and Mark Cuban walk in after us. That was quite a surprise.

We hung out, and there were probably 10 people in the bar in total, and we ended up leaving about 30 minutes later. Walking down the street – I have to say, I'd had a little bit of alcohol, though to be fair, it was 1:00 in the morning – and Mark Cuban was dancing down the street. Drunk me decided I should challenge him to a salsa dancing contest, which was a great idea. I knew who he was at the time, but I didn't realize he'd been on Dancing With the Stars. I don't think I won that contest, but I did salsa dance with Mark Cuban on the

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street in Austin, Texas, at 1:00 in the morning, so that was a fun one.

Matt: That's an amazing story.

Marisa: Special times in Austin.

Matt: That's so epic. You never know. It is truly amazing who you might run into or just see meandering around at South by Southwest. It is incredible.

Marisa: Absolutely. Great people.

Matt: That's awesome. Let's talk more about your experiences with Pepsi. You were there for six years, and over the course of that, I'm sure you had a lot of different experiences. Can you talk a little bit about the types of work that you were doing there, the types of events that you were involved with, and the people that you were working with?

Marisa: Yeah. Honestly, Pepsi was a fabulous experience. I worked in brand marketing there, and I can honestly say I worked among some of the top marketers in the entire world and incredible people who I still call my best friends. I keep in touch with so many of them. What I loved about my time there was that I rotated between different roles every year or two. I looked at global innovation trends when I first started. I worked on the Diet Pepsi brand, as you mentioned. There were only three of us managing a brand that, at one point, was a \$1.5 billion brand.

I was young, and the fact that I got to do it at a time was incredible. Sofia Vergara was the face of Diet Pepsi when I was working on that brand, working on different TV campaigns, and advertising, and radio, and writing the scripts for it, and learning how everything worked in terms of getting your product into the store, learning about the consumer, and understanding when they're drinking and where they're buying it. It was an incredible experience.

My last two years were spent working with our music team out in L.A., which was a blast. Anything that touched our music business – the Super Bowl halftime show, I was going to the Grammys, meeting with people from labels, going to these really small

concerts with Pharrell and 15 other people to see what his latest song was, just because they wanted to potentially do brand partnerships. So, I look back at the things that I did, and I'm like, "That was incredible. How did I get to do that?" I learned a lot, and it was a ton of fun.

Matt: That's awesome. So, let's start at the beginning of your Pepsi experience when you were coming into Pepsi for the first time and you were involved with some of the influencer marketing strategies that they were doing at the time. What were those like and what was going on then?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, between my junior and senior year of college, I was an intern at Pepsi. It was really fun, and a lot of my peers were just doing random paperwork and stuff. I was helping through – we called them Sobe Summer Fridays. I was working on the Sobe brand team, which is a Pepsi product.

At the time, this was before Instagram influencers, but we would throw these incredible parties at these Tribeca studios in New York every Friday in the summer I worked there, and we had artists come and perform like Robin Thicke and Asher Roth. There were all sorts of athletes. We would basically just invite all sorts of bloggers and influencers to come and write about their experiences to share the brand. That was part of my job during the summer as an intern. It was incredible.

Matt: That's amazing. And then, as you moved into the music department, you started managing the music events and relationships with musicians. What was that like, who were some of the people you worked directly with, and what were some of those experiences like?

Marisa: Yeah, that was a blast. The music world is a whole different ballgame to learn. I think one of the incredible things about working at Pepsi is the things you may not have otherwise come across – I probably never would have had music experience, but I learned everything from how licensing worked, to who you have to get permission from to post songs in commercials, to how to write out contracts for hundreds of thousands of dollars to do a live performance.

I was doing music videos. We recorded a music video with Snoop

Dogg, we did the Super Bowl halftime show with Beyoncé, had events with people like Dierks Bentley, and did a whole brand partnership with Florida Georgia Line, for any country fans out there, but it was an incredible experience just to learn. These artists are brands in and of themselves, so to learn what they stand for and how they can help our brands as a soda, a product, and a beverage. You use an artist to show what you stand for, which is really cool.

Matt: That's awesome. What was it like on the Snoop Dogg shoot? What was the scenario there where you were working with him?

Marisa: That was a fun one. The Snoop video was actually a video we did with Prince Royce, who is a Pepsi artist, and Snoop happened to be doing a song with him. So, I went out – we were in L.A. in the valley. Snoop was supposed to come around 10:00 p.m. I think we started around 1:00 a.m. with his scenes. He came and did a couple, was supposed to do a few more, and decided to just do what he wanted and head out, but he is a cool guy. I feel like he's got swag, right? He comes in and just does what he wants, has a feel of what he wants. He just flows in and leaves. He's the man.

Matt: Snoop will be Snoop.

Marisa: Snoop will be Snoop.

Matt: That's amazing.

Marisa: It was fun.

Matt: That's awesome.

Marisa: I think I was there until 5:00 in the morning thanks to Snoop.

Matt: That's amazing. So, over the course of your work at Pepsi and all of these different experiences, can you distill some of the business lessons that you learned that you were then able to extrapolate when you later went into your entrepreneurial trajectory and that business owners could learn from as well? Pepsi is obviously one of the most successful brands in the world. You were inside that right at the helm, so can you share any business lessons and distill some down that you took away from that experience in your six years?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, what I like to say about my time at Pepsi and brand marketers at these huge product companies, in general, is that you're really good and knowledgeable at a lot of things, but you're not great at any one thing. So, I like to think about it as a hub of a wheel with spokes coming out. As a brand marketer, you're the center of everything, and it's your job to make sure that all of your cross-functional teams are digging in and overseeing and talking to everything.

So, as a brand manager, I would work with our sales team, with our PR team, with our digital agencies, everyone doing print, radio, in-store, pricing, packaging engineering, packaging design, and the look and feel of the whole brand, and with our research teams, who are looking at how often people are consuming products, and as someone who's on the brand, it's your job to really dig into the analytics and understand where in the country people are consuming your product, where they're buying it, where it's falling short, and what is changing.

So, for me, as I went out and started my next business, it was fascinating because I really knew all the things I needed to know, but I didn't really know in detail how to actually execute everything myself, and we'll get to how I actually learned the next businesses.

But, what I really learned was how to build a brand at Pepsi – what it stands for, how to have a look and feel, how to know who you're talking to, and really just know your consumer in and out, understand how they're purchasing it, and how you come across as a brand, what your approach is, and what your style is.

Matt: Can you share some specific pieces of advice on how to go about doing that, how to build a brand for businesses of any size, including small businesses? So, what are the principles, tips, or pieces of advice that companies can put into action?

Marisa: One of my favorite ones is that when you talk to everyone, you talk to no one, so I think that – myself included – when you go out into entrepreneurship and you're building a business, you think that if you can just have a product that serves everyone, you have a better chance of making money. There are just more people out there who are likely to buy your product. Even if you think about a Pepsi brand, where so many different types of people throughout the

world are drinking it, as a brand manager, it's still your job to pick, target, and decide who they are, and just talk to that one person.

So, the lesson I took away was that for any brand you're building, whether it's soda, real estate, or a life coach – whoever you are – is to figure out your target consumer and pretend like they're literally a person. What is their name? Who are they? What do they do when they wake up? What do they drink in the morning? Who are they calling throughout the day? Who are their friends? What kind of families do they have? What kind of car do they drive? Where do they shop? What are they wearing? Do they play video games? How are they entertaining? What magazines are they reading?

The more detail you can write about who that person is, the clearer you can be within your marketing, and everything you do serves that person, and people are going to connect with that. You end up connecting with people who are more than that, but at least you have this consistent personality. Whether you're a person, a business, a brand, or a product, it doesn't matter. You've got to pick that person, know them in and out, and that way, you can pick your marketing strategies based on that.

Matt: That's awesome. So, after six years at Pepsi, having all these unbelievable experiences, getting access to red carpet award shows, hanging out with celebrities, and learning from the best of the best in the marketing world, why did you choose to leave Pepsi? What was the transition there that happened?

Marisa: It's a wonderful question because it confused many people. I think everyone on the outside is looking in, thinking, "Marisa is just hanging out with all these incredible artists, going to these intimate shows, and literally attending the Grammys and Golden Globes, walking the red carpet, and hanging with celebrities." This really was my life.

But, even though it was an incredible experience, it wasn't what I wanted to be doing, and I think that's so important for many people. When I was out of college, I felt like I wanted to work with prestigious brands and do things that I thought were cool and that other people thought were cool.

At the end of the day, when I was with my peers at Pepsi who were obsessed with the latest apps, the latest marketing trends, and

reading all about it, it wasn't what I loved. That wasn't what I wanted to be doing in my spare time. For Pepsi as a product, I don't really drink caffeine, I don't drink much soda, so while it was an incredible company with incredible people, it didn't resonate with me personally. I wanted to try entrepreneurship. I didn't want to have a boss. I wanted to do my own thing and live a different life. I wanted to travel. I'd read *The Four-Hour Workweek*, and I was like, "I need to do that."

So, that was the start of it, but I think what's really important is that even though I knew that, I had no idea what to do next. I sat there like, "I know this isn't right, but I don't know what else to do. It's easy. I'm good at this. The company knows me. They trust me. I'm working remotely in L.A." It was really easy.

And so, the decision to leave – even though I wanted to – happened because I was living in L.A., I was in a relationship, I was engaged, and I decided not to get married, and I didn't have a life in L.A. I left. I knew it wasn't right. It was just one of those moments that made me rethink everything I was doing, and in that moment, I just said, "This isn't right. I've got to do something new." And so, that's where the next business came into play.

Matt: So, let's talk a little bit about that transition for you. Once you made that choice to do a major life pivot –

Marisa: Major. Everything changed.

Matt: Everything changed. I can relate to that as well because as you know, all my academic career and my entire work background up to the age of 30 completely changed and pivoted. I got fired from my job, and I reinvented everything and went into the entrepreneurial direction, the location-dependent direction, and everything else. I became a digital nomad later on and all that. So, I can relate to that, but can you talk specifically about that pivot, what that was like, and what your next move was there as you entered the entrepreneurial path?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, as I look back, it was honestly probably the hardest time in my life for many reasons. As we just said, I was starting over for – I think if I was still in a relationship and still in the same place while I was starting, that would be one thing, but I restarted everything, and I don't regret it, but it was hard as hell.

As I did, I started this e-commerce dessert business, and I actually started because I got an offer for a promotion at Pepsi to start a new team, and I had to either be in New York or L.A., and I didn't want to be in either anymore. I was actually home over the holidays at this time when this offer came, and I was out walking with my mom, and she had owned these four bakeries in Atlanta while I was growing up that she had closed about 20 years ago, but as we were walking, she said, "This stranger tracked me down on Facebook and sent me a message. She asked me to bake these brownies for her for the holidays."

I was like, "Are you going to do it?" She said, "No. I'm not baking anymore. I don't want to do that." This happened time and time again with her – these people asking for her products – and so, my business mind is churning, and with my business background, I was thinking, "There's an opportunity, there's a demand."

As I was just talking about, it was building a story. There was this really wonderful family brand with a story. I didn't know how to bake her products, but I was like, "I'll do it. Why not? I'm serious. I don't want to take this new job. I want to be back in Atlanta. Why not?"

So, that was how it happened. I said, "Do you think this is a good idea, Mom?" She probably didn't, but she let me do it, and that was how it started. I decided to bring – it was her brand, her business – again, it's that brand story that I've been talking about, and now it's the second generation. People love a good family story.

So, I brought just one product of hers back, and again, I was trying to live the Tim Ferriss digital nomad dream, so I didn't open bakeries like she had. I decided I was just going to bake them wherever. I was going to figure it out and ship them all online, so I didn't need a store. I was going to outsource the baking as soon as I could and just run this business from my laptop, so that's how this business came about.

Matt: That's awesome. What you're saying about the family lineage is really interesting. Was it around the same time that you also decided to get your real estate license, and can you talk about the family lineage of that?

Marisa: Yes, the double side, great question. So, my mother did the bakery

side. She was an entrepreneur. My father is also an entrepreneur, so he does commercial real estate, and as I was quitting my job – this is terrifying, I’m losing this solid income that I’ve grown to know – and starting this dessert business, which I had no knowledge of doing, I decided as a backup to get my real estate license at the same time.

So, it took me about six months to launch this dessert business from the day I decided to start it, and during that time, I was waiting for graphic designs to come back, I was waiting for packaging samples, and figuring out all sorts of things, so I had some free time and got my real estate license at this time as well.

There were several reasons for that. First, it was a little bit of a backup. I decided to go south, and if I couldn’t make any money selling these brownies over the internet, then I have an interest and family background in real estate, so I figured if all else failed, I’d fall back on that. I found interest in residential real estate specifically, so that was a goal.

And then, just having it as a part of my family I would know was useful, and it turned out to be some surprisingly good passive income. I didn’t realize you could just send friends to other real estate agents, and if they bought with someone else, I got a commission just to be a connector, so I made thousands of dollars doing that, which was a side bonus, and now I’ve been introduced to Matt, and will send many more people his way for some residential real estate investing. I’m excited for that.

Matt: I love that. Our conversation about that was so cool because you were telling me about how you had just realized that with a real estate license, you could actually just refer people to other agents that do all the work, and as long as you made the introduction, you’d get paid something. I explained to you that with Maverick Investor Group, which is a licensed real estate brokerage, the only way someone can get paid for referring a client to us who buys real estate is if they have a real estate license. People ask us this all the time, and we’re like, “I’m sorry, it’s a heavily regulated industry.”

Marisa: Yeah, very regulated.

Matt: It’s unequivocally illegal to pay out referral fees, commissions, or things like that to people who don’t have a real estate license, but if

you are an active real estate agent with a license – I’m with a broker – then you can absolutely refer your clients, friends, and family to Maverick, and if they buy real estate through us, we absolutely have an affiliate network – we call it the Maverick Referral Network – for real estate agents all around the United States. And so, I told you about this, and you were like –

Marisa: “This is great! Ding, ding, ding.” Where have you been all my life?

Matt: Exactly.

Marisa: I think what you’re doing is incredible. It’s interesting since you and I are both digital nomads – you’d think real estate is typically an area where you have to be there and be showing places, and that’s all I knew. For me, I was surprised that I could be in Spain and send my friend, who lives in Michigan, to a random real estate agent who then sends me thousands of dollars for a percentage of their properties for selling or for buying.

And then, learning what you do, I was like, “Oh, my gosh.” I have friends and family who are interested in investing, income properties, and things like that. I think the thing that holds everyone back is that they have no idea what to buy or where to buy it, and you make that so easy. So, all the bells were going off the night we met. I was like, “This is exciting. I’m going to send people your way.”

Matt: Absolutely, and it was also really cool because on the Nomad Cruise, I did a meetup on how to buy turnkey real estate investment properties in the best U.S. real estate investment markets from anywhere in the world without having to be there. We probably had 30 or more people turn out at the meetup from countries all around the world that were like, “Wait a minute. You’re telling me I can buy real estate in the United States, I don’t have to be there, I don’t have to live near it, and I don’t have to manage the tenants and the be landlord” –

Marisa: That’s big.

Matt: – “but I actually own the deeded properties? It’s not a REIT or a syndicated thing? I can actually own the house and get all the benefits of owning the real estate, but I don’t have to be there to manage it or even come to the United States? That’s amazing.”

Marisa: Hell yeah. Sign me up.

Matt: So, as more and more people understand the model, whether they're agents like you who have potential clients or they're real estate investor/buyers that simply value their time and don't want to do all the legwork of figuring out how to do everything –

Marisa: Because it's a lot of work otherwise. It is complicated. You take that out of it.

Matt: Exactly. So, people have been super excited about the model, and it's been really fun to meet all these nomads who either buy rental properties or refer people to buy rental properties, so that's been a fun way to meet and hang out. There sure are a lot of real estate investors in this crowd. So, let's talk a little bit about – from the bakery, how did you transition into your next business? What was the thought process and transition there, and what exactly was your next business?

Marisa: You'll see a common theme with me. I take next steps as I learn them. As I said, Pepsi wasn't right for me. The dessert business was the next best thing at the time that made sense. And then, I got into the dessert business, and I was like, "You know what? I actually don't like baking very much. I actually hate baking, so it's probably not the right business for me."

I became a vegan at the time, so I couldn't even eat the products I was making, and again, I was making money, and it was really fun. I love connecting with customers and learning how this nostalgic brand of all their experiences – how they loved getting in touch with it again, but it wasn't quite right. It wasn't the end, but I didn't know what was next.

And so, I was scrolling through Facebook one day. I had become obsessed with just learning everything entrepreneurial I could. I was binging podcasts of any entrepreneurial tips, reading books, following people online – anything I could do. I came across this Facebook ad, and the ad was about how to grow your email list. For any entrepreneur, no matter what business you're running, the email list is the most important thing to grow your business.

And so, I clicked on the ad. I was like, "Yeah, I do need to grow my email list. Teach me how." It turned out that the webinar I

ended up watching was all about online courses, and this really blew my mind because I learned that you could build a whole business around packaging together information that you knew. So, I didn't have to bake products, I didn't have to bake brownies, and I didn't have to be anywhere. I could just sell my information. This really blew my mind, that people were making such a fortune doing this.

So, in this webinar – again, it teaches you to how to build online courses – it started asking questions. If you don't have an online business or an online course, what do you want to do? What are you good at? What do you like to teach people? What do people ask you for help with? I was answering all these questions, and long story short, I realized I had a strong love for college campuses, helping college students, and helping high school students get to the right colleges.

And so, I built my business. It was called Talk College to Me. It still exists and funds my lifestyle. It was an online course that taught families how to navigate college admissions, and again, I took my love of exploring college campuses and helping people – I really loved helping students and families – and then finding the niche of a target audience that would pay.

So, I realized that families were paying individual college consultants up to \$10,000.00 to help them navigate this, how to write essays, how to figure out what standardized tests to take, and what scores you need in choosing colleges. There was hardly anyone in the space creating online courses for this, so I just spent so much time studying it, learning everything I needed to know to teach families how to figure this out through an online course through my information without paying tens of thousands of dollars, so that's how that next business came about.

Matt: I love that. Can you talk about – I want to break down the tactics of what you did, what you learned, and what the process of building that was like because it is really hard to build any business that is going to actually be successful, let alone one that you are able to build and automate that can actually consistently produce enough revenue to finance your lifestyle expenses. That is an incredible achievement that you have done, and I don't want for two seconds to just gloss over it or suggest it's something that's not too difficult to do. That's really hard to do.

Marisa: It was hard.

Matt: And so, I want you to open up about that if you can and talk about how hard it was, what you had to do to do it, and then, let's talk about the specific tactical pieces that you had to put in place to actually succeed with that.

Marisa: It's so important that you say that, and I want to start with your point of what the experience was actually like. When I went into this – I don't regret anything. When I start new companies, I often have a lot of blissful ignorance. You see people online, on Instagram, on Facebook, and in these advertisements saying, "It's been just one month, and I made \$1 million on my first webinar and \$100,000.00 a month," and I'm like, "Great, sign me up. I want to do that."

What they don't tell you are the months and years of things that they've tried and failed or spent time learning in order to – yeah, I don't think they're lying. Maybe the first webinar they launched for some business was \$60,000.00, but they don't tell you about the 30 times that they tried and failed and all the things they did.

So, I like to be really transparent about my own experience doing it because, again, these were truly nothing I regret, but they were the hardest years of my life, for sure, and they were so worth it in the end. But, while I was running this dessert business, I decided to open this college business, so I overlapped them. I was bringing in money selling brownies and didn't want to let that go until I was running a side hustle from my business.

I probably spent about a year and a half from the time I learned about an online course to the time that I was launching it and actually bringing in revenue on a consistent basis. During this time, I was back in Atlanta, I was traveling here and there for a week or two, and my end goal was to be the digital nomad and set this passive income up so I could explore the world while I was running this.

But, in the meantime, it took a solid 18 months of working 16-hour days taking care of the one business and learning – binge-listening to truly every podcast episode that could teach me about it. I bought four or five online courses about how to build online courses, how to run a webinar, and how to build an email list, and I

was signing up for every single webinar that I saw an ad for online, just to understand – I would watch their webinar and study the process. I would study the emails they sent me when I signed up. What was the welcome email? What were the emails like that they sent week after week to guide me to learn to trust them, to encourage me to watch a webinar, and to build a sale?

As I was actually building out my online course, everything that I did in the 18 months, I could probably do in one month now, having done it, but I had never recorded anything, so I was like, “Where do I host this? Let me research all the different options. What kind of microphone do I need to record this? Let me research the options. How do I record my screen? What kind of PowerPoints do I need to build? Do I need to have my face in these videos? How do I link these webinars to my email funnel from the Facebook ads?”

It was a very complicated process. I want to say that it is absolutely possible; I think it’s an incredible business model, but there’s a big learning curve to start, and I just want to say to anyone listening who might be interested that I don’t say that to stop you, but you should go in with eyes wide open. It takes time and hustle, and truly, my family members and friends were like, “Marisa, you haven’t left your apartment in three weeks. We’re worried about you. You should go hang out with people. You need to see your friends. You’re a social person.”

But, I was just like, “I have this goal. I want to leave in September to go travel the world, and I want to get this done.” So, for me, I didn’t care what else was going on. I was going to study, learn, and figure it out, but it was hard.

Matt: I love that you share that because I think it’s super important. Building Maverick Investor Group was amazing, but it was also grueling, arduous, and an incredible slog, and it was very difficult at times, and the number of hours that you have to put into learning, then executing, then learning, and then executing is just enormous. People that have successful businesses – it is not something that’s easy and simple.

And so, I think it’s really important that you’re able to share what that was like at the time, but also that you had the motivation and the incentive, and you were creating incentives for yourself. You wanted to travel the

world and be a full-time digital nomad. You needed to create this stream of income to allow you to do it, finance your lifestyle, and finance your world travel, and you did that, and you achieved that, and you're now traveling the world full time, having epic adventures, and all that kind of stuff. You hustled, you grinded, and you got it done.

So, let's talk a little bit about the specific tactics and granularity on some of this stuff in terms of all that studying you did when you were bingeing on listening to podcasts, reading books, and studying courses 16 hours a day, and studying everything you could learn about all the different pieces that you needed to put into place. If you can distill down now the best practices that you've learned from all of that research in some of the key areas – so, the actual...

Let's start with product development in terms of how to actually build an online course that people want to watch and pay for, and then move to how to market it and find your customers, and then how to sell it and create a funnel and a nurturing sequence, and actually create a webinar that converts, sells, and closes people, and convinces them to give you money. Let's take those pieces one at a time and provide tactical advice about the best practices that you've come to find actually work after trying so many different things.

Marisa: Yes. I love that you've broken into it because as I was exploring, it just seemed like I could build an online course and have it figured out, but there are all these different parts that create the passive income. So, as I was learning and studying, I was like, "Okay, I'm going to build my online course, and that's it." And then, "Okay, now I've got this course. How do I sell it? How do I bring people in? How do I nurture them? How do I sell?" With each step I took, I thought I was done, like when you get to the top of a peak when you're hiking, and you think you're at the top, and then you get there and you're like, "Oh God, there's five more peaks." So, that's kind of how it felt.

Keep me in line with what you want to know. We'll start with what you actually put in an online course. A lot of people are like, "Okay, I've got this thing I want to teach and this information I want to share, but what do I actually put inside these modules?" A tactical exercise that I love is that as you think about it, you are most likely going to create a course that will help a past version of

yourself. Usually, the information that you're sharing or whatever you're teaching, whether you're teaching things as a life coach, how to fly a drone, how to paint watercolors – whatever it might be, you were once in a position where you didn't know how to do that.

So, as you're thinking about the modules, what you want to write down is thoughts about yourself and where you were when you didn't know how to do these things, and then write out bullet points that talk about the pain points, what you were struggling with, and what you found hard. List out everything you can think of.

And then, underneath each of those bullet points, you put sub-bullet points that talk about what you had to learn or overcome in order to get past that hurdle, and that's what you want to teach people. The big bullet points are each of the modules, and each of the videos within those are about how to overcome those things you had to do. It's easy, right? Those are your courses.

Matt: And so, when you've finished your entire course, you've created it, and you've recorded each of the video modules, now you have to sell it. So, what was your approach to marketing and sales for the course? Break it down piece by piece into what the best practices were to actually market, sell, and convert.

Marisa: Market, sell, convert – all the easy things, just those little things.

Matt: All the easy things that you spent a year and a half figuring out how to do. Can you summarize for us what works? What did you find out?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, what works in terms of sales – and, this is something I learned in Pepsi, and I'm going to give you a bunch of tactical lessons – people buy from somebody they know, like, and trust. That's something I learned at Pepsi; that's something that's important for any business.

So, one way to do that is through your email. Email is king. No matter what anyone says, if you are building an audience on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or through a podcast, whatever it is, you do not own those audiences. This is so important. The algorithm can change and something can shut down. You want to

have an email list. That is the No. 1 way. You should bring anybody who's coming into your world onto an email list, and then you want to nurture them.

So, you want to basically use your email list to send – and, this can all be automated, which I didn't know before. It's fantastic. Someone signs up for a freebie – five ways to do this, three simple steps to do that. Bring them into your world, offer them value, show that you can help them, and then show them who you are as a human. I think this is something that a lot of people forget that I think is the most important. People want to buy from someone they like.

So, as I set up my college business, I saw that there was this whole trend of people who were very scholarly and uptight, and it was not a fun way to learn, so I came into the spaces like, “Hi, I'm Marisa, I'm a human, I can help you learn this in a fun and easy way. Here's who I am, here's where I'm traveling, and here are some tips that can actually help you.”

So, create a nurture sequence – a welcome sequence – that gets people to figure out who you are, what you can offer them, and how you can help them, and then you offer them what they need to know, but not how. “These are the things you need to know about college. Did you know you need to write these essays? Did you know you need to sign up for these test dates?” But, in order to really dig into it, they're going to need to sign up for my course and learn step by step how to write these essays, step by step how to know which test to take and when to take them – all of that – so that's the next piece of it.

Matt: Can you talk a little bit about how you identified the target market for your product and how you got your message in front of that target market?

Marisa: Yes, great question. One part is easy and one part is really hard. So, in terms of figuring out who it was, I spent so much time in Facebook groups. This is something I would highly recommend as a tip for anyone thinking about starting a business or if you already run a business. There are Facebook groups filled with thousands of people who will talk about and share their experiences about anything.

I am not a parent. I do not have a kid going through this process, so I would go into Facebook groups with these parents asking about college admissions or parents asking questions in general about what they're struggling with, and I would go in and just say, "Hey, what's your biggest concern about a college admissions process?" I would pretend to be a parent just to relate to these people. I'd get 85 comments from people like, "This is my exact fear. This is exactly what I'm struggling with. This is exactly what I want help with." It was like, "Okay, thank you." I would literally take the language they used and serve it back to them, and they'd be like, "Marisa understands what I'm going through."

So, that's one example with college, but you can do that with any business. It's like a free focus group. At Pepsi, we would spend thousands of dollars to find the right people, and they're available for free on Facebook groups, so take advantage of that.

In terms of how to then get them into their own business, that's a little harder. There are several different ways. Think about the top of the sales funnel. You have to find the way that resonates best with your personality. You can do this through Facebook ads, you can do this through podcast episodes, and you can do this through posting on Instagram.

My personal favorite way that I've learned is through partnerships. I have people who have similar audiences who sell different products. With my college business, for example, I don't actually tutor people how to take what are called SATs or ACTs in the U.S. – the standardized tests you have to take to get into college.

For example, I would reach out to someone who does help with tutoring for standardized tests, and we would trade email lists by offering value to each other. Basically, you build your own email list by finding people who have the audiences you want to go after, but sell a different product.

Matt: That's awesome. I love the tip about the free focus groups.

Marisa: Free focus groups – they're out there, and they will willingly tell you anything.

Matt: That's a really smart guerrilla marketing tactic for how to get exactly the information you want from your target market.

- Marisa: Use their language really precisely. Spit it right back at them.
- Matt: That's amazing. That's really smart. I also like the concept of leveraging other people's audiences, other people that have already built an audience and client base of the people that you want to sell to, and then creating a relationship with them, and it could be an affiliate-type relationship or it could just be an exchange where you introduce their stuff to your crowd and they'll introduce your stuff to their crowd. It's just a business relationship exchange, or any number of other things, but that's a great way to get in front of a large number of people who are interested in what you have to sell, and you're doing it through a warm introduction.
- Marisa: Exactly. That's so important. When someone introduces you, they have an audience who knows, likes, and trusts them, so when they say, "Hey, my friend Marisa has this product or this tip, you should follow her," then they're coming in – when you do Facebook ads, it's a cold lead, so it takes away longer weeks or months to nurture them to get to know you, whereas when someone comes in through a trusted partnership, they already come in feeling trust – they trust you already, so they're willing to buy more quickly.
- Matt: Absolutely. So, let's now talk about the sales conversion process. You've built a fantastic product that really adds legitimate value –
- Marisa: Yeah, that's No. 1. You have to have a product that really adds value. We haven't talked about that, but it's so important.
- Matt: Well, you talked about how you built your product, put a lot of effort into it, and all that, and so, assuming that you build a product that really adds legitimate value that can really help people and deliver the value that you say it does, then you need to find who you're going to sell to and the language to use to sell to them, which is where the free focus groups come in. Then, you need to figure out how to get your message in front of that audience, which is where the business partnerships come in.
- So, now you're there, you get your message in front of them, and you give them a free gateway offer to come in, learn about you, and ostensibly meet you through a free piece of your content, where you're going to be friendly, personable, and cool, and be yourself, and also deliver substantive value and position yourself as an authority, so they

know they can trust you now in addition to the person that referred them. Once that happens, what happens in the actual sales process? How do you nurture the lead, how do you move them through the sales funnel, and what are the most effective strategies for actually converting those leads into a paid sale?

Marisa:

I love this, and there are a lot of pieces to this that I don't want to simplify and say, "Now, go out and build an online course." You've done this, and you've done this, and there are a lot of different steps. Again, once it's all set up, it is an easy-flowing passive income, but it has a big learning curve.

So, after I get to this point, the way I typically do it is through webinars or different Facebook Live videos and things like that. I studied this process – I think Russell Brunson does an incredible job teaching about webinars and step-by-step instructions – but there truly is a craft, an art, and a science to the sale. So, I set up webinars, I took an online course about how to structure, how the flow goes, and it's hard to convey just on this, but the lesson I want you to take away is that you must study this process. There's an art to saying, "Here is valuable information."

When anyone comes to you, you want to start by offering them value, and you want to give them so much value that it makes you uncomfortable. You should feel like you should be charging for this, that you're giving away a lot of secrets, but it's just the top line. You're giving away that "what," leading them to say, "Okay, I know what I need to know, but now I need to buy Marisa's course." So, learn how to do it step by step.

There's a whole process to get into the sale. So, you offer value, and then you say, "Hey, you've come all this way. You're interested. I want to take you to the next step. If you want to learn more with me, if you like what you've seen so far, if you trust me, I have more to give," and that's where the sale comes in. You really have to be comfortable with your price point. You have to learn how to offer the sale in an easy way that makes them feel good and makes them feel like you're offering them so much value that it's impossible to say no.

Matt:

So, can you distill down some of the techniques or the best practices you've found for structuring webinars in a way that optimizes conversion?

Marisa: Yes. So, before I go into it, I just want to say you should buy the book *Expert Secrets* by Russell Brunson because he will do far better justice than what I can explain in this brief time as part of our podcast episode, but if you are truly interested in building a converting webinar, buy the book and thank me later.

But, in theory, you want to spend the greatest amount of time in the middle of your webinar saying – basically, think about the hurdles that they would need to overcome and share some really actionable value tips of some things that they need to know and why they would want to buy your course. That’s the start.

If I were to take your business, for example, and you were saying, “Come buy real estate with me,” the first thing I would want to overcome is thought “Oh, the market is doing crazy things. There are these external factors that I can’t control.” I would talk about that in my webinar. There are the internal factors that say, “Who am I to buy real estate? I don’t know anything. I travel. I’m across the world. I don’t know how to invest.” Let me tell you why I can help you do that. You give them value whether they buy from you or not.

And then, in the end, you want to have basically said, “Here are the things that you need to know, and if you want to take it a step further with me, I’m going to teach you how to actually do it all.”

So, that’s the flow of it in general, but there are some really special – as I’ve said, when I go into something, I binge how to do it and what to go in, so there are some other sales tactics to get people to say yes to you along the way, as simple as asking – as you’re saying, “Hey, there are these external factors in the real estate industry, but here’s why that’s not important. Do you understand?” “Yes.” “Here are these reasons why you can do it. Do you see how powerful this is?”

You’re asking questions. You’re bringing them along with you. There are these simple mental factors of getting them to say yes, making these micro-commitments along the way, that will end up helping them to convert. So, that’s one piece of it.

The second piece comes as you get to the end of how you actually convert. Again, what you want to do is truly know you have a product that is killer, that is really going to help them, set it at a

price point, give scarcity so it only lasts for a certain time while they're live, because the truth is you really can help people, but if you lose them after the sale, they're going to go back to their families and their jobs.

They're traveling, they're making dinner, they're busy, and even if they want to buy it, they might forget, so you really want to give them incentive to buy it with you in that moment, whether that's a price discount, a special bonus, a special call with you, or a special resource. Whatever that is, it only lasts for an hour within that time that you are interacting with them.

And then, again, just stack on the value. It should be a no-brainer. If I'm selling a course, I offer bonus after bonus or the resource of things to anchor the price point. For my college business, for example, you're going to spend \$10,000.00 doing this one-on-one work where you can get hundreds of dollars doing it with me in this moment. It's going to be the same information. It's going to change your world. Here's what you're going to get from it, and here's why you need to buy it now. Again, that's the overview, but go buy *Expert Secrets* if you're interested.

Matt: Awesome. Those are really good tips and recommendations. So, after you built and automated this business to continue to generate revenue for you because you had lead flow, they were coming into your funnel, you had already recorded the webinar, you knew it was optimized and functioning, you were converting leads, there were sales, and you had made this into a passive business that was generating you enough money to finance your lifestyle, your world travel, and all this kind of stuff. At that point, can you talk about your next move in terms of your next business venture, where you went from there, and why?

Marisa: Great question. As I got this set up and finally got it to the term – when I'm working, I'm working on finding new partnership and finding new sources of lead generation. That's where I spend the most of my time now because the rest – after a year and a half – is automated. After that happened – again, I had this goal where I was going to finally pack up, rent out my place at home, and travel the world. It led me to my next clue of what I was passionate about.

I love helping families with college admissions, but as I started

traveling the world, I came in contact with so many new, incredible people and built these relationships where I had been through so many transitions, and just the way I interact with people in general, people will come and share these stories with me of their lives and say, “I’ve never told anyone, Marisa. I don’t know why I’m telling you this, but I just feel the need to share.” They were asking for help, and I was helping them with relationships, breakups, building businesses, building online courses, and figuring out what careers they were interested in.

Truly, I can’t tell you – Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Philippines – everywhere I went, people kept asking me if I was a life coach, so I was like, “There’s something to this.” I love helping people. I think that’s just where I truly find my joy, is helping people live lives where they’re finding jobs they actually care about. There’s this whole “What’s your purpose?” thing, and I think that’s a really scary question, but people are really miserable in their jobs, and I found that I love helping people.

So, that was my next clue. I need to become a coach and help people. This is what I truly feel is my calling, so that’s what I’ve shifted into now.

Matt: Can you talk a little bit about that business and your clients? I want to get into some of the value that you deliver in that business and some of the things you’ve learned and helped your clients with. Let’s start off with who your clients are. What types of people are you working with and what are you helping them with?

Marisa: Absolutely. Like I said, with any business, you’re typically helping a past version of yourself. For me, what I really love helping people with are people who are unhappy or not as happy as they could be in their current job or lifestyle, whether that is the job that they’re doing 9:00 to 5:00 or a side hustle they’ve started that’s not quite right, but they don’t know what is. Maybe they’re in a relationship that they’re unsure of, or they want to become a nomad and travel the world, and they’re too scared to do it.

My goal, my love that I love to help people with is figuring out how to take those next steps to live the life that you love, and so, those are the types of people who I most like to help.

Matt: Awesome. Can you talk a little bit about in working with those

people and getting to know them? What do you find really holds people back from achieving the life that they really are passionate about and that they really love? What are those primary obstacles that you've found?

Marisa: When it comes down to it – and, I've done a lot of one-on-one coaching at this point, I've done some group work, I've talked to tons of people, and what it comes down to at the very basic level is fear. Our minds, everything we're taught, our society, our family, and our friends want to keep us safe. They want to keep us in this little bubble where we go to our 9:00 to 5:00 job, someone pays us, we make money, and we're just living to work and maybe traveling two weeks a year.

What I've found that's holding everyone back is fear of taking a leap. You might not want to travel the world, but maybe you've invested all this time in becoming a lawyer, and you don't like it, and you're too scared to try something new, to take a leap and do what you actually love. It's this fear of doing what's not prestigious, or what you don't know how to do, or what you've never done before.

That's what I love to help people overcome and find safe next steps to actionably take to figure out – maybe you don't know what you actually want to do. How do you figure that out? What questions do you ask to take those next steps? Then, once you've figured that out, what are the steps that you can take and what mental barriers do you need to overcome in order to live that life that's going to make you so much happier?

Matt: And, what can people do to start proactively trying to overcome those obstacles?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, there are two different parts. If you are a person who is unhappy with where you are, but you just don't know what's next – I've been there many times, and for that, it's about asking the right questions. This is something that I think we vastly overlook as a society. We just assume that we know what we want to do and what to do next, but we honestly have no idea.

A lot of times, I wish that I had had somebody to ask me these questions when I was in high school and college and at each step along the way to really understand, "Who are you? What do you

like to do? What do people tell you you're good at? What do people ask you for help with? What do you enjoy doing? What is there a market for?" I work on all these questions with clients to walk through. Surprisingly, nobody's asked them those questions before. They've never thought about it.

You know all these answers inside of you, but again, a lot of people don't take the time to walk step by step, to think about it, and think about how they all might connect to clearly say, "This is what I'm meant to be doing." And, it might not be forever. I've done this along the way. What's the next step? From there, you might learn something new, and you take this little course where you keep listening to these clues to get to where you want to go, and the first step is having someone – whether it's me or someone else – to ask you these questions to start to figure it out.

So, from there, the other part is the fear that holds you back. Let's say you get through those questions or you already – many of you listening might say, "I already know what I want to do. I have this intuition. I want to start this business or I want to go into this industry." But, you're in a safe little bubble that you don't want to leave, and it's really hard, and I don't say that lightly, but your life will be so much better when you take that leap.

So, from there, I work heavily with people to overcome those fears, overcome the limiting beliefs, and it's different for every person. One tactical exercise I can give you to do in your own time is what I call limiting beliefs that are stopping you. It's the fear that's holding you back from doing what you need to do.

Over the course of three days – and, we'll give you a worksheet that you can download at the end of this – as you're thinking about what you want to do, write down whatever is coming into your brain, that voice that is not yours that you think is yours, that is stopping you, that is holding you back, that says, "I can't afford this, I've never done it, there are other people doing it, there are other people doing it better. Who am I to teach this? Who am I to start a business? Who am I to travel the world and leave the corporate world behind?"

Whatever it is that comes to your mind, I want you to write it down, and then, as you do it, I want you to write three bullet points underneath each of those that says why that's not true. Your mind

is there to protect you. It's there to keep you safe. The things your family, your friends, and society are telling you are there to keep you safe. So, write down – again, if I were to say, “But, the college admissions business...” I wasn't a college admissions officer.

I might have had this fear of “Who am I to teach college admissions?” And then, I would go and write down, “Okay, but I can learn everything I need to know. I've been through the process. Actually, I can teach this in a better way because I do know less, and I can relate to these people more, and once I learn it, I can explain it a whole lot better than people who forgot what it was like.”

So, as each thing comes, whether it's that or whether it's “I can't make money while traveling the world,” go find four people on Instagram who are doing that, and go write it down and follow their story. Write down any reasons you can think of why that fear that's holding you back isn't necessarily true. I think you'll find that the fears that are in your head are somewhat real, they're valid, they're there for a reason, but they shouldn't hold you back, and once you realize the reasons that they don't need to, it all becomes more doable.

Matt: Yeah, and I feel like that exercise and that piece of advice is really applicable to people at any stage in their journey.

Marisa: Yes, absolutely.

Matt: Even if you already are a business owner, you've already left the corporate world, you already are an entrepreneur, or you are a digital nomad, traveling full-time, and you're living that particular dream, then there are tons of other stuff that you may be afraid of or having limiting beliefs about. I could never write a book, be a keynote speaker, be a TEDx speaker, do this, do that – whatever the next level is for you, then that is also applicable to this exercise.

Marisa: I love that. That's so important. Right now, we're talking about the beginning stages, but these mindset shifts – again, I love to work with anybody because whatever level you're at – they say if you're not growing, you're dying, right? So, whether you want to take it to the next level of making more money in your business, or starting a new part of your business, or writing that book, or becoming a speaker, becoming a thought leader – whatever it is,

you have limiting beliefs, and even Oprah and the most successful people – you don't stop experiencing those things.

Your brain is there to keep you safe, to put those fears in your head, and you're there to know in your gut and your heart what you want to be doing. Again, no matter where you are, this exercise is so fabulous because we have all these negative thoughts in our heads of why we can't do things, and this exercise really gets you to look simplistically. "Okay, I can do this. There's no reason I can't."

Matt: Exactly. I think the mindset stuff is super important. One of the things you said earlier when you were in – you were creating incentives for yourself to be successful in this business, and once this business was successful and started producing passive income, you used that to travel the world to do this epic stuff. Can you talk a little bit about creating vision for what you want to achieve with this thing you're working on, or this transition you're trying to make, or this next level you're trying to get to? How do you create that incentive and that vision in an effective way, and what is the mindset work there?

Marisa: The vision is so important. There are so many parts to this. The mindset – I think when I became an entrepreneur – mindset is 90% of it. The execution, the ideas, the tactics – you can learn that, but to have the mind to feel confident, to overcome the fears, to overcome the limiting beliefs and do these things – it's all the work, and if you listen to any podcast, any entrepreneur, any book, you'll see that's absolutely the case. That blew my mind when I started.

In terms of the vision, it's so important to know what you want to achieve because if you're just doing things blindly, you're going to end up nowhere. Do you want to write that book? Do you want to become a speaker? Do you want to travel the world? Start with the end in mind.

So, for me, becoming a digital nomad and traveling the world while I was working – that was everything for me, and everything I did in my business, back to when I was baking brownies – I didn't want to open a store because I wanted to be traveling the world. When I started my college business, I didn't want to do one-on-one coaching even though that would have been easier because at the time, I didn't want to have time zone restrictions. I didn't want to

be tied down, and so, that's why I built my online course. So, it's okay to do that. Again, start with the lifestyle you want, what you want to do, and build backward.

In terms of the vision, I really love to create a vision board, and I alter mine about every six months, and it's a really fabulous way to write your goals down on paper, but I think text and words only go so far, and you're not going to look at it all the time.

So, I have a process that I walk through. I have a guide I can share with you guys of how exactly to create these. You write down all of your goals, the things you want to achieve, the things you want to do in these next six to 12 months, and you find visual images that are really stimulating, that inspire you. Do you want to travel to Machu Picchu? Do you want to buy that new car? Do you want to make new friends? Do you want to go to dinner with your family? Do you want to exercise?

Whatever it might be that is a goal, you find a visual image that stands for that and excites you. For me, I have it as a background on my computer because I'm traveling. If I was home, I would tape it up in my closet, on my bathroom mirror, or whatever works for you. Your mind is so powerful. Your mind doesn't know what's real and what's not, which is kind of wild.

So, if you are looking at these pictures and visions day in and day out of somebody that's standing on the stage – if you want to be a speaker – or these incredible destinations that you want to get to, it's almost like subliminal messaging day after day. “These are the things I want, these are the things I want.” You are more likely to take action to get there because of it.

Matt: I agree with that 100%. I think it's important to bombard yourself –

Marisa: Ha! “Bombard.”

Matt: – with sensory stimulation that is going to motivate and inspire you to do things, and that certainly includes visual stimulation of the vision board concept. It also includes audio stimulation of the most inspiring podcasters, the most inspiring books and videos – that kind of stuff. Figure out this entire content ecosystem that you can just pump into your brain, into your eyes, into your ears, into your

head, and just push it into yourself every day. It's a hundred times more important if you're not currently surrounded by people that are doing exactly what you aspire to do, and if you're surrounded by people who are not doing what you're trying to do, and they might even be holding you back...

Marisa: Let's just say they might be.

Matt: Some people I've heard have family and friends and social circles that maybe are not doing insanely epic stuff that they want to do, and they might be telling you that you can't, or you shouldn't, or it's not responsible, or it's not realistic. Under those circumstances, it's a hundred times more important.

Marisa: Yeah, and I want to talk about that. During the past three and a half years that I have flipped my life upside down and changed this, my friends – my circle – became people on Instagram, people on Facebook, people on podcasts and in books that I was reading. Again, I love with all of my heart my friends, my family, and everyone at home, but they're living a different lifestyle than I live, than I want to live. I want to be traveling the world, and no one that I knew was doing that while working.

And so, for me, I started following all these people on Instagram who were traveling the world and running businesses. I joined Facebook groups of communities who were learning like I was, and they became – I feel like everyone says this, but at this point, you're the five people you spend the most time with, and I was spending the most time with people on Facebook and Instagram as I locked myself in my apartment and built these businesses.

No one wants to – they're not purposefully holding you back. They want the best for you. They want you to be safe. They want you to be happy. Your friends and family love you, but if you're trying to do something different, you've got to – now, I'm here with you, surrounded by people who are doing it, and my life changes, and I am so inspired when I'm in this group, but if I'm ever back home, I turn to social media, podcasts, and books to remember that it's possible.

Matt: You have to do it. It's vitally, crucially imperative to surround yourself with people that are doing what you want to do and people that are at your level, or beyond and above your level, and just surround yourself – get the inspiration and motivation – and if you

can't physically do that because they're not in your physical location right now, it is incumbent upon you to just pump that information and stimulation into your dome on a daily basis. It's the only way to do it.

Marisa: It truly is. It's just so important – I can't say that enough – to inspire yourself through any means possible that you can.

Matt: Let's talk a little bit about those transitional moments when you are transcending, making those major transitions, making those major leaps, and overcoming those fear barriers. Can you talk a little bit about the concept of identity adjustments? You're very invested, and you've developed a level of expertise in a particular area, and then, if you're like, "Hmm, you know what? It's really not quite fulfilling for me. I want to go in this other direction." But now, all of a sudden, you're starting from ground zero, and you have this massive learning curve, and you're not the top person in the space – in fact, you're very far from being an expert. Can you talk about the transition and the role of your identity in that?

Marisa: I'm going to talk about it from my own experience first, then I'll give you some examples, and I know you have some as well. Again, I spent six years at Pepsi, and for all my friends and family, it was a cool job, and I was working at this huge corporation, and getting paid well, and working with celebrities, and walking red carpets. And then, I quit my job and I started baking brownies.

There was a year of time when if anybody asked me what I was doing, I wanted to take a knife and stab myself in the gut. I would always say, "I used to be doing this. I used to work for Pepsi. I used to do marketing. I used to live in New York. I used to live in L.A. I used to do all these things." I would think to myself, "Oh my God, I quit my job to bake brownies. Who am I? What am I doing?" My identity was a marketer for Pepsi.

I work with clients now who have spent money and time going to law school, and they have an identity as a lawyer, as an important person, and they hate it. It's not what they like. But, there are these sunk costs of the time, the money, and the prestige. "I am a lawyer. People know it. People get it." When people ask me what I do now, it's hard to explain. No one gets it, and there's something to be said about doing something that people understand, that's easy, that's prestigious.

I work with so many college students, for example, whose families are all doctors or engineers, and they get to college and they're like, "That's the identify of my family, but it's not what I want to do, but it's what I need to do." There are all these barriers to overcome, and I want to explain that they're really important. I think a lot of people overlook that identity, that prestige, that ease of doing something important versus trying something different that's going to make you happier, and that's where the mindset work comes in. That's where I love to help people.

It's not easy. Your friends and family are going to judge you until you're successfully doing things, and it's a lot to overcome, and it's real. It's very real.

Matt: Yeah, it's super real, and I feel like it also – this is the same phenomenon that happens with a lot of retirees. At the late stage of someone's career, they've often been working in the same career their entire life, and they're at a very high level. It's really funny because my parents are now retired in Asheville, North Carolina. My parents are literally my two favorite humans on the planet, and I know you have an amazing relationship with your parents too, which is awesome.

But, my parents have retired in Asheville, North Carolina, and my dad left his job, and he was a CEO before he left his job, and of course, there's a lot of prestige and all this kind of stuff that goes along with being a CEO, and there are tons of other people that are retired that are living near them that are also CEOs. They were high-profile people in their spaces, and now they're not. Now, they're retired.

Marisa: What do they say?

Matt: It's amazing that different people handle that in different ways. Fortunately, my parents – I'm really happy and pleased that my parents are crushing retirement.

Marisa: How so?

Matt: They're crushing it. They are just living life to the fullest, and pursuing their passions, and continuing to learn and experience new things. They're traveling to places they've never been.

They're about to go to the Galapagos Islands and Machu Picchu. They just booked a trip to Egypt. They've never been to the continent of Africa.

So, they're doing new things, they're experiencing new things, they're taking classes at the university – they're in Asheville, so they're taking classes at the University of North Carolina Asheville. They're learning things. They've got season tickets to the men's and women's basketball games. They are at every single game early. They stay until the end. They mentor the athletes and the students and they're contributing to the community.

My dad's golfing five times a week. They're doing the stuff that they love. They're contributing. They're socializing. They're really living life to the fullest, and they're taking advantage of the fact that they don't need to spend time in an office to do insanely fulfilling things, which are the real things, right?

Having meaningful friends and doing things that you love and enjoy, mentoring and helping others, traveling and having exhilarating new cultural experiences – all the stuff that's important in life. They're doing it, and they're crushing it, and they're actually thankful that they don't have to spend eight to 12 hours in an office every day. They're like, "Okay, how can I leverage this?"

But, a lot of their neighbors are not – it's this whole identity shift. And so, there's this joke in the area my parents live where there's a lot of people they call "PIPs," previously important people.

Marisa: I love that so much because that's everything that holds us back – a previously important person. I couldn't have said it better myself. People get stuck in that. "If I leave, if I try something new, if I do something, I'm not going to be important anymore. I was previously important in this role, in this career, in this and that." And, we let it define us.

When I work with clients, what I love to coach is to realize – so many people think about "When I meet this person, when I get married, when I get this promotion, when I have kids, when I get into this next business that I want to do." It's "when I do this," "if I do this" – that's how we judge ourselves.

What I help people with is "You are a person right now. This is

your life right in this moment. No matter what you're doing, it doesn't matter." And so, it's all about who you are, what your mission is, and what you're experiencing. Something that I truly love about the digital nomad community and about travelers compared to my old life – when I met people in New York and L.A., it was like, "Hey, who are you? What do you do?" That's what people ask. "What do you do?"

I'll meet people traveling – I was on a trip to Indonesia last fall, and I went on this weekend trip to these islands, and I was with these people for three days. On the car ride back on the way, someone said they had a business thing to do, and I was like, "What do you even do? I don't know." Someone else in the car said, "That's what I love. You don't even need to know what she does."

It's purposeful. I think travelers are more about experiences. Who are you? Who are you as a person? What do you enjoy? Where do you like to travel? What do you like to do in your free time? Who do you like to help? What are you interested in? What excites you? It doesn't matter – maybe that involves how you make your money and maybe it doesn't, but I want it to feel like – again, the previously important person.

There are next steps to take. Who are you as a person and how do you want to live your life? That is more important than what you do.

Matt: Yeah, 100%, and I feel like there are a lot of people who really put a lot of investment in this sunk-cost fallacy. "Oh man, all my academic work was in this, all my work experience is in this, and now I'm at this point in my life where I'm really good at this thing. If I were to totally transition and go in a totally new direction, I'd be starting from ground zero. I wouldn't be good. I would not be above average. I would have to learn everything all over again. I'd have to reconstruct my whole identity, so maybe I should just stay where I am."

Marisa: And, that's what 90% of people do, and people are so unhappy. You have this calling to do more, and it might be – again, this is where I love to help and coach people – it might be that you take what you've learned, and whether you do something totally new or you use those skills in a new way that only you can uniquely do

with your passions and your past experiences, that's where it becomes so strong. How can you leverage your personality, your experience, and your past career to do something new that no one else can do?

Matt: That was really important for me in my transition. As you know, my entire academic background, graduate work, and all my work experience was in nonprofit advocacy stuff. My nonprofit advocacy stuff was from the heart. I cared about it, I knew every single day that I was making a positive impact and creating positive change in the world and helping to support people that were struggling, that were marginalized, that were oppressed, and I was really doing important work –

Marisa: That was your identity, right?

Matt: Yeah, and then I was like, “Oh, if I go the business route, am I selling out? Am I not helping people?”

Marisa: So, how did you overcome that?

Matt: First of all, I recruited as my business partner my best friend Valerie, who did her master's degree with me. We both have a degree in international peace and conflict resolution, and we've done human rights activist work internationally together, and we've both worked in the nonprofit space, so I knew that was going to keep some grounding there.

But, what we did is asked ourselves how we could maintain and continue to contribute – have the same moral compass and the same contribution framework, the same worldview if we went the entrepreneurial route? We asked the question “How could we?” Not “Can we, yes or no?”, but “How could we?”

Marisa: I love that. That's such an important frame. “How can I do this?”

Matt: “How can we?”

Marisa: You can. You'll find a way.

Matt: So, we said, “Okay, we're going to set up a business that is going to help all of our customers by purchasing cash-flowing real estate, they're going to be building income-generating assets, they're

going to produce passive cash flow that's going to help fund their lifestyle expenses, allow them to have more time and control over their life, more location independence, and help them build their wealth in a way that gives them the freedom to spend more time with their family, travel the world, or do whatever they want to do."

So, we literally improving people's lives by what we were selling. Second of all, we institutionalize a component into our company where we donate 10% of all of our net revenue to causes that effect positive change in the world. So, when you're working at a nonprofit, you're not making any money yourself. You're getting a salary that covers your bare-bones living expenses, so you're donating your time, but you're not donating any money because you don't have any money to donate.

So, we were like, "Okay, let's build this business, and we're going to have more control over our own time so we can direct our volunteer work as we choose with our time, plus, as the business becomes more successful, we're going to financially incentivize ourselves. As that happens, so too will all the causes that we care about become – because they're going to get more money because it's percentage based."

And so, we really thought about that – how could we build a socially responsible business that benefited our customers and benefited these causes we cared about? We were motivated for the business to do better because in addition to facilitating our own lifestyle of location independence and being able to travel the world and spend time with our own families each year, we were also helping our customers and contributing to these causes all at the same time. We established our "why" really early on, and that was the core motivator for our business.

Marisa:

I love that, and that's something I really struggled with in the beginning as I started my own business. I used to feel bad about wanting to make money and starting the businesses, and exactly as you're saying, I too have the same model of donating 10% to a cause I care about and that I'm excited about, and I realized that the more money I can make to become my best self, to travel to meet new people, to learn new experiences, to learn about cultures, the more I'm able to help people, and it trickles down.

Again, the more money I make, the more I learn, the more open I become, I can then pay to go to conferences, to learn, to explore and grow, and become my own best self, and that was a huge mindset shift that I love to help other people with because it's a real thing to grow, become better, make your own money, and help other people in a new and different way.

So, again, whether it's your time, whether it's your money, I truly believe that by living your own best life – whether that means travel, starting a new job, doing a different type of work – whatever it is, if you're a better person and you're happier, you are going to bring joy to more people, and I believe that with all of my heart.

Matt: I agree authentically and sincerely with 100% of that. That's totally true. So, let's talk a little bit about our shared passion for travel.

Marisa: Yeah!

Matt: I want to just start by asking you – you've now been to over 45 countries, and you're a full-time itinerant nomad, which is amazing, inspiring, and awesome, and you and I have now been to multiple countries together and hung out in incredible places. But, let me ask you – at the macro level, why do you travel? What does it mean to you?

Marisa: I love that. So, when I first started traveling and wanted to start getting to new countries, to go to new places, in my head, it was about checking off a new box, checking off a new country, and going to bucket-list places. When I went to a country, I would look at the top five things that tourists would do, and I would go there with friends I knew, go explore, and then go back home.

The reason I became a digital nomad, the reason I wanted to travel, was to keep doing it in this way, but I felt like I didn't have enough vacation days to get to countries. I felt like I would never get places. But, when I first started, I really thought that was what it was about. I wanted to get places to see the things I was meant to see.

About nine months ago, I started traveling in a different way, and I went for months on end, left my apartment, left my friends, and

everyone said, “Isn’t it scary to travel alone? What are you going to do? Who are you going to meet?” I was like, “No, it’s fine.”

But, I quickly learned was that as I looked back – I spent my first four months abroad in this more permanent way in Southeast Asia, and I had wanted to go to these bucket-list places in Thailand go to the islands. I quickly learned was that it didn’t matter where I was going or what I was seeing. That was an added benefit. What was so incredible were the people that I met. The type of people who are traveling, working, or backpacking or whatnot, or even the people you meet locally – it’s incredible. They just have a different mindset.

As I look back on my favorite memories, they are just weird travel things that have happened and incredible people that I’ve met, and it happens to be that I’m in crazy places or new countries, but now, for an example, we’re in Lisbon, Portugal at this moment. There are some places where, if I had come five years ago, I would have said, “These are the five places I want to see.”

There are some towns in the south that I know I would like, but I’ve met all these awesome people on this cruise the past five days who are all going to be in Porto this weekend, and I don’t care where I’m going. I want to be with them because it’s about the people that I’m with and experiencing and less about where I am or what I’m doing. It’s this total shift, and I would love to know your thoughts on it as well.

Matt: Yeah, 100%. For me, the community aspect has been super important. It’s been really exciting to see the proliferation of companies that have come into the space over the last five years or so. When I started traveling full-time, I gave up my apartment in L.A., which was my last location where I had a base.

Marisa: Last known address.

Matt: Last known address, where I had a base. I gave up the apartment in the summer of 2013 – six years ago. I’ve now been traveling the world with no permanent base as an itinerant nomad, and I’ve lived in 51 different countries since 2013. What’s been amazing to see over those six years is that companies have come into the digital nomad space to cater to people like me, who are professionals that work remotely and want to travel the world, but want to have a

socially sustainable life. That pillar is super important – to have community.

So, I traveled for years prior to plugging into any of these organized work travel communities, and then, as soon as I started to, when they came into the space – there's a company called Remote Year, which is the first one that I patronized. They said, "We're going to bring a community of 30-50 people together, and we're going to commit to traveling the world for a year together as an intentional community and live in a different city each month for 12 months with the same group. We're all committing to be a community together."

I'm like, "First of all, where do I sign up for that? Sign me up now." Second of all, I want to meet any person that's willing to sign up for that because anybody that's willing to do that – leave their friends and family and everything they know behind, and commit to traveling the world for a year up front with 30-50 strangers – at minimum, it's an interesting concept.

Marisa: You will meet some interesting people – the best people.

Matt: At minimum, it's interesting, because who does that? And, I want to hear their story. I want to hear the story of every single one of them, and second of all, I want to roll with those people. That is my squad. Those are my people. I want to explore the world and have epic adventures with them, and that's exactly what we did for a whole year, on four continents.

Marisa: You meet people at a whole different level.

Matt: We just had epic adventures, and basically, by the end, everybody that finished this program with me was my family for life. Since then, I've been patronizing other work travel programs, like Hacker Paradise and Wanderers for Life, and I'm hopefully going to participate in Wi-Fi Tribe soon, which I know you have done.

Marisa: Come and join us!

Matt: Tell me about that. How has your experience been in plugging into some of those programs? What has that been like?

Marisa: Absolutely. So, Wi-Fi Tribe has been really important to me the

same way Remote Year was the kickoff for you. Remote Year was the first one I read about, and I was like, “This is incredible. People are traveling the world and going to these different countries.” For me, it was less flexible that I wanted to be – I had certain places that I wanted to go – and I don’t knock one or the other. I think everybody I met from Remote Year has absolutely loved it.

So, I started with Wi-Fi Tribe, which is similar to Remote Year in terms of living a month at a time with like-minded people who are actually working – they’re not just backpacking, they’re working and living in these places. What I loved about Wi-Fi Tribe specifically was that it was really flexible. They have several places at any given month that are new places throughout the world. They might be in Lisbon for a month. I started in Bali for a month, and then Thailand for a month, but at any given time, they’re in Africa, Central America, Asia, or all over the world.

The best part about it that I love is that you’re all starting the month and ending the month at the same time. So, you’re going in together, it’s a brand-new group of people, and they become your family so quickly. So, compared to my friends at home who I might see for a couple of hours a week if I’m lucky to grab dinner with them after work or hang out with over the weekend, you jump into these new places.

I showed up in Bali – and, I want to backtrack for a second to say my family and friends thought I was insane. They’re like, “You’re going to Asia? You don’t know anyone.” I was like, “You don’t get it. There are people there waiting for me. They’re going to be my friends and family. I’ve never met them, but I just know.”

The first day, I got to Bali at 3:00 in the morning. I was a couple of days late because I had a wedding. Somebody was waiting up for me at this home at 3:00 in the morning to let me in. I woke up the next day, went to breakfast with a couple of friends – I had never met them, but they were my friends – and then worked in a café with them all day on the first day I landed on a new continent.

I went to a gym, went to boxing class with a friend, and then had this family dinner with 15 people – part of Wi-Fi Tribe – in Bali, and I was like, “These are my friends. These are my people.” I get there, and it’s all set up, and I can keep doing my work without skipping a beat. I have this built-in group of friends who are

like-minded people, who want to travel, explore, and do all the things, but are actually working and have a business. You have your fun, and you're serious as well. I continued to travel with Wi-Fi Tribe for several months. They are my family.

I've met incredible people who I meet – I'm in Lisbon right now, and I'm meeting up in Croatia with a friend who I met in Wi-Fi Tribe in Thailand whom I traveled through Southeast Asia with afterward. It's this incredible community that I will keep calling on. I'll be in Guatemala with them in a month. I'm going to Bolivia, maybe Oman... It's incredible. So, for those of you who are worried about "Will I be alone? What if I travel?" The first four months, I spent three nights alone, and I was like, "This is nice. I could use this. There are people everywhere, and they're incredible people."

Matt: It's amazing. First of all, you and I actually know a number overlapping people – shout-out to Leah –

Marisa: Shout-out to Leah, if you listen to this.

Matt: – who's amazing, who I met on the Nomadic Cruise, and I actually met – so, to go all the way back in terms of my meeting Wi-Fi Tribe people, even though I've literally never done the program –

Marisa: We're recruiting you.

Matt: I've been promising Julia that I'm going to do it ever since I met her.

Marisa: You're coming to Oman.

Matt: But, my super amazingly good friend who did Remote Year with me, Nicole, started doing Wi-Fi Tribe after doing Remote Year. She was in Taghazout, Morocco with Wi-Fi Tribe, and I was in Marrakesh. I was doing a Remote Year alumni – I was plugging into a different Remote Year group with alumni, which you can do after you finish the program, which is amazing. So, I was in Marrakesh and she was in Taghazout, and so, I went out to visit her and stayed with the Wi-Fi Tribe people. I basically hung out with them for 24 hours, and I was like, "I'm going on the Nomadic Cruise," and they're like, "We're bringing 15 Tribe people on the Nomadic Cruise."

So, I hung out with our mutual friend Leah, who is amazing, and she actually jumped into my workshop and was such an amazing contributor to my minimalist packing workshop. It was really funny because I was doing a workshop on how to travel the world for a year-plus with carryon luggage only, and she was like, “I am the greatest in need of this workshop of any human being on this cruise. I’ve basically just gone on this nine-night cruise, and I have an obscene amount of luggage for nine nights.”

Marisa: She’s traveling carryon now.

Matt: I know she is, because she came to my workshop. It was so amazing. She literally approached me –

Marisa: Change your life.

Matt: She was like, “Let me be your case study, and during the workshop, let me bring my gigantic luggage, and you bring your suitcase. I want to downsize what I’ve brought and fit it all into your suitcase, and whatever I can’t fit, I’m going to leave behind on my next trip, and I’m only going to take the stuff that fits in the carryon, and let’s do it together as a case study.” So, it was hilarious.

This was literally the night before my workshop, and all of a sudden, now I have a case study with Leah, which was amazing, and of course, we hung out, did vineyard tours in Greece, and just had this totally epic time together over the course of the nine days that we were together. Of course, she turned out to be one of your best friends, and we know each other through that.

So, the way these nomad circles and the social circles and ecosystems overlap is amazing, and you’ll see these people again and again over the course of the year on these travel circuits and these different nomad events. The way that I travel the world now is I am regularly plugging in everywhere I go. It’s either as a remote year alumni plugging into our new Remote Year group, or plugging into a Hacker’s Paradise group, or a Wanderers for Life group, or hopefully, in the future, a Wi-Fi Tribe group, or any of these programs. I fully support all of them with all of my heart, and I hope they all succeed incredibly well.

But, every single place that I go, I know that there is a community

waiting for me to come. They know I'm coming. They can't wait to meet me, explore the city with me, and hang out with me. Those are my people.

Marisa: I think it's so important that a lot of people – I didn't fully understand it before I started it, and for a lot of people, fear holds them back. You have this dream to travel, but you don't want to go alone. You're afraid to do it. And now, the world is different. There are so many different – Matt just named five different ways that you can plug into these communities, whether it's Remote Year, Wi-Fi Tribe, Hacker Paradise – these co-living spaces.

They're everywhere, and you'll find that – I almost compare it to my college experience. I went to the University of Michigan, which is this huge school, and everyone was like, "Well, isn't this so giant? How can you meet anyone?" I said, "I can't walk around campus without seeing a million people I know." You find your group, you find your people, and they're everywhere.

It's the same with travel. We just spent this week on Nomad Cruise, where there were 222 of us. These are people that are now part of our network wherever we go, and I feel like now, no matter what country I go to, no matter what city I go to, wherever I am, I'm going to know people from all over the world, and they're incredible people, and you keep experiencing them. You are never alone. Even if you want to be alone, you can't be, because you'll find people you know.

Matt: It doesn't matter where you go.

Marisa: It does not matter.

Matt: And, in addition to the people that you have personally met, when you do these programs, you get put into the alumni networks, and so, even people that you've never personally met but who have done the same program – all of a sudden, you have access to them, and as soon as you meet them, you have this shared experience so your family immediately – even though you've never met them – on the first night...

So, last year, just as an example, I was going to Nairobi, Kenya, for a month with a group called Wanderers for Life. They curated a community of people that were going to do this work travel

program and be based in Nairobi, Kenya, for a month.

So, in addition to that community – by the way, one of the people I met in Hacker Paradise, who listeners will know – Ali Greene from Episode 12, because I interviewed her on *The Maverick Show* – Ali actually came to Kenya, which is where we did the interview. I knew her from Hacker Paradise. I met the rest of the people through the Wanderers for Life group that was curated there.

Then, from the Nomad Cruise that I had gone on just prior to going to Kenya, I had met three Kenyans, and I said, “Hey, I’m coming to Kenya,” plus a Ugandan who had invited me to come to Kampala and show me Ugandan, so I knew all these East Africans who were back in East Africa and wanted to show me their homelands.

Then, I just did random post. Now, Kenya has never been a Remote Year country. Remote Year has never taken a group there. They’ve never been. They have no presence there. But, I posted on the Remote Year alumni network, “By any chance, is anybody going to be in Nairobi in September?” Six people were like, “I’ll be in Nairobi.”

So, all of a sudden, I now have six Remote Year people who are going to be in Nairobi, one of whom is Kenyan. So, we do a Remote Year meetup, and the Kenyan guy brings his whole Kenyan crew, and I start talking to them, and they’re like, “Oh, where are you going after this?” I’m like, “Oh, I’m flying to Kyoto, Japan. I’m going to be in Japan for five weeks.”

And, his Kenyan friend, who I’ve never met before, was like, “Oh, I just got back from Japan. I lived there for seven years. I speak fluent Japanese.”

Marisa: What? Crazy.

Matt: Yeah, a Kenyan guy. I’m like, “What?” He’s like, “You want some recommendations?” I’m like, “Of course I do!” So, these networks just proliferate. Any city that I end up in – it could be in East Africa, as in this example I just gave – and all of a sudden, I know tons and tons of people, or I’m in networks with people that have such a close affinity and shared experience that they want to meet up and want to hang out. You’re never alone when you’re traveling the world.

Marisa: Never. And, for anyone listening, I want to point out that this is not just Matt's experience. This is for anybody. It's so easy. When you're at home in these safe places, you're friends with the people you used to know, and that's your circle and you don't need to know anyone else. But, travelers are so open to meeting new people because you want a community. You need to know people wherever you go. Truly, there are people everywhere, and if you want to do this as a lifestyle and take the leap, you will not be alone. You will never be alone.

Matt: And, you'll have insanely –

Marisa: And, the most incredible people.

Matt: Incredible people, and you'll just have epic experiences and stories to tell. I want you to share at least one travel story. You've done one thing – I've lived in Spain for probably four months, and I've seen almost all of the country, but you were just telling me about this experience that you had in Spain with this tomato fight, which I've never been to. Can you share what that was like and what it is?

Marisa: Yeah, it's really special. It's called the Tomatina Festival. I had a friend from college who'd been dying to do this for five years. Every year, she was like, "Let's go," and I said, "Maybe another time." Finally, I just said, "All right, whatever. I like to travel, go wherever. Let's go to Spain."

So, the Tomatina Festival happens about an hour outside Valencia every September, I believe, and you go to this small town in the middle of nowhere, and it's filled with tens of thousands of people lining these streets, and they throw 20,000 pounds of tomatoes. If you can imagine being at the most crowded concert you've ever been at, where you can't move, you can't walk, someone's basically holding you up, and if they move, you'll fall.

Imagine that on these small streets in this small town in Spain, and you're just waiting – everyone is wearing goggles for what's about to happen, and these garbage trucks come through with tomatoes that are the perfect ripeness where they're not so hard that if they throw them at you, they will not hurt you. They come through these thousands of people, so you're even more packed in, and they're throwing

tomatoes at you.

It's not like a tomato here and there. It is thousands of pounds of tomatoes, and you're covered in tomatoes. Your goggles are so tomato-filled, you cannot see. By the end of it, you're – imagine this town. The streets are knee-deep in tomatoes. You never want to eat a tomato again. People are just throwing them – it's a food fight. I'm pretty sure it's the biggest food fight in the world. And, it's one of those experiences that I went to that was the most fun thing I never wanted to do again, ever, but it was an experience for sure.

Matt: And, you've got a story to tell.

Marisa: It's all about the stories to tell, right? That was one.

Matt: It is. It's amazing. You go around the world, and you just see this insane, crazy stuff –

Marisa: These crazy, weird, wild things. Why not?

Matt: – that you participate in, and you've got these wild, epic stories to tell. So great. Awesome. All right, Marisa. At this point, are you ready to move into the Lightning Round?

Marisa: Let's do it.

Matt: Let's do it.

Announcer 1: The Lightning Round!

Matt: All right. What is one book that has really influenced you over the years that you'd most recommend that people check out?

Marisa: The No. 1 – this is not unique to me – Tim Ferriss's *Four-Hour Workweek* changed my life. I read that book in 2014. I was living out in L.A., working for Pepsi. I was on vacation in Hawaii, reading on this beach I will never forget, and it changed my life. Since becoming a nomad, since talking to those people – I am not unique, he changed so many lives by writing this book – I realized that you can live a different life. You can work online, travel the world, live and work a different way, and if the stories Matt and I are telling sound appealing to you, go read that book. It's impacted so many nomads.

That's the first one, and as a second – because I feel like that's a cliché at this point – a really important one for my is *It Starts with Why* by Simon Sinek. If you're wondering what your purpose is, what you want to do next, who you are, and what your mission is, I think that's a really fabulous one to read to get to know yourself and to learn what's important to you.

Matt: Awesome. What is one app or productivity tool that you're currently using that you'd recommend?

Marisa: I'm going to go with Canva for that one. It's kind of like an easier version of Photoshop. You can use it whether you want to create Instagram posts – I use it to create any PDFs, any freebies, any guides. You can use it for just about anything to create imagery or any kind of tools that you need to use for your business. It's awesome and super intuitive. It's not hard to use.

Matt: Awesome. What is one blog you read, podcast you listen to, or YouTube show you watch – one content medium you highly recommend that people check out?

Marisa: There are so many. I binge everything. But, if the online courses resonated with you throughout this podcast, there's a woman named Amy Porterfield whose podcast is called *Online Marketing Made Easy*, and when I was – I bought two of her courses. I can't recommend her enough. If you want to learn to build a webinar or email list, she has tons of free podcast episodes. I would just go through and click on the episodes that resonated with me at the time, and she is incredibly step-by-step and super tactical about things you need to know to build an online course or online business.

Matt: If you were able to have dinner with one person, either an author, celebrity, public figure – anybody that's currently living today – and it was just you and them for a few hours of dinner, wine, and conversation, who would you choose, and why?

Marisa: I'm going to say Tony Robbins. I recently – just a few weeks before I came here – was at one of his events, called “Unleash the Power Within,” and I actually have my own coaching certification through Tony Robbins. I think he is one of the most incredible humans on this planet. I think he's an incredible businessman. The

things that he has accomplished business-wise as a salesperson and an entrepreneur are off the charts, so I'd love to learn from him from that. And then, in terms of – he's a coach. He helps people with their lives and mindsets. I would just love to talk to him for any amount of time I could.

Matt: If you were able to go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, knowing everything that you know now, what advice would you give to 18-year-old Marisa?

Marisa: One piece – I'm going to mix a couple into one, but basically, when I look back at my 18-year-old self, my high school and college self, I thought I had to be on this path to be perfect, to do things that people felt proud of, and I would tell myself, "Don't be afraid to fail. Don't be afraid to do things that aren't perfect, to try things that aren't impressive, and just follow what excites you, no matter what anybody else thinks. Whether you fail, whether you try, whether you do it, just keep following those clues that are exciting and don't matter to other people."

Matt: Awesome. All right, now we're going to get into the really important stuff.

Marisa: I have a feeling I know where this is going.

Matt: When you and I first met, literally the first conversation that we had, we got into hip-hop really quickly, and I learned that you are a major hip-hop fan, and that hip-hop has been really important to you in your life –

Marisa: ATL.

Matt: Exactly. Share a little bit about that, about where you're from and what it's meant to you. Feel free to give that context first, but then, I want to ask you for your top five hip-hop artists of all time.

Marisa: All right. So, to give a backtrack, we haven't talked about where I'm from. I am from Atlanta, which is a really special place in terms of hip-hop music, in terms of rappers, and as I grew up, my friends in high school – that is what we lived and breathed. It's a really important part of Atlanta culture. So, when I met Matt, we quickly got into the hip-hop space.

I'm going to list off the top five I gave to you in that moment. I think I would have to do some thinking, and there are a lot of incredible artists, but the No. 1 I gave to you was Luda. I've got to go with Ludacris. I've got to rep ATL. He's in a lot of really important songs in my life. Ludacris is No. 1.

No. 2 is Li'l Jon. I want to preface that. The music is fine, but just in terms of the joy he sparks in my life – I've always said if I had a GPS, he would be the voice of it. That's the important part of Li'l Jon. So, that's No. 2. No. 3 is Twista. I love the speed at which he spits his rhymes. No. 4 is Kanye, and No. 5 – I think you actually reminded me of my love for him – Bubba Sparxxx. ATL. I fucking love Bubba.

Matt: College Park, Bubba Sparxxx. Represent! I love it. I love this. It's so awesome. That was such an amazing opening night conversation that we had, and how deep we got into that, and of course, I asked you for your top five right off the bat, and you dropped them. That was the thing – and then, well after that, we began talking about business and travel, but we got to the very important stuff first.

So, I have two final questions for you with respect to travel. You've been to at least 45 countries now. What are your top three travel destinations of all time?

Marisa: It's an impossible question, truly, because I think that each piece of a country and the people you meet add different things, but to the best of my ability to answer that question, I'll say No. 1 was Machu Picchu in Peru. I think it was an incredibly magical place to hike up to the top and see this incredible village that people built on top of this mountain. I went with my mom for her birthday, and it was a really incredible travel experience. That's one.

For No. 2, I'm going to go with Myanmar. I did this hike from a town called Kala to Inle Lake. It was a two-day hike. I slept in a monastery. I was hiking with people from France, Japan, and South Africa, and had one of those moments with incredible people, incredible landscapes, and incredible locals. I think it's not yet overrun with tourists, and if you're listening to this right now, go before it is. It's awesome. That's No. 2.

For No. 3, I'm actually going to say Torres del Paine in Chile. I

think it's one of the most incredible natural landscapes. I love hiking. Matt knows – I've told him many times – I don't like to be in cities. I'm here in Lisbon, but I love the outdoors. I love to hike. I love to be in beautiful, beautiful landscapes, and there's something magical about it, so those are my top three.

Matt: That's awesome. I've never been to Myanmar. I have been to Chile, but I've never been to Torres del Paine. The W Circuit hike is totally on my list, and those are –

Marisa: Yeah, do the W Circuit. I'll go do it again.

Matt: Those are on my list big-time. Those must be some of the most amazing scenery in the world, for sure. So, of the places that you have not yet been, what are the top three bucket-list destinations highest on your list you've most love to go to where you've never been?

Marisa: I love that question. First, I want to go to Rwanda to see gorillas in their natural habitats. I love animals and love the outdoors, so that's a big one for me. No. 2 would be the Maldives. I love a good tropical beach. I could live my life on the beach. The sun is my place, and I think that's the most beautiful place in my mind. The Maldives are No. 2. And then, No. 3, along that theme, would be the Polynesian islands like Tahiti and Bora Bora. I just want to explore the beaches of the world, basically. Those are mine – and the gorillas.

Matt: I love that. That's awesome. All right, Marisa. I want you to let people know how they can get ahold of you, how they can follow you on social media, and how they can learn more about what you're up to.

Marisa: Absolutely. So, there a couple of places. To start with, if you go to – you'll link this in the show notes, I'm sure – www.MarisaMeddin.com/maverick will give you some awesome tools and things we've talked about. First, it'll teach you how to actually build a vision board. Step by step, it will give you the goals to write, how to do it, how to use Canva – my favorite tool – to build it.

It'll give you a worksheet on how to overcome those limiting beliefs. It will give you some questions to ask yourself if you're not sure what to do next.

So, if any of those topics resonated with you along the way and you want to enter that world, we'll like in the show notes – again, www.MarisaMeddin.com/maverick - to download some of those worksheets and helpful tools. That's No. 1.

And then, Instagram is a fun place to follow me. I post stories and pictures of my travels @MLMeddin, which is my last name. We'll link to that as well, but if you just want to see where I am and what I'm up to in my normal traveling, nomadic life, come follow me there.

Matt: Awesome. And, we are definitely going to link everything from the show notes, so if you just go to www.TheMaverickShow.com, we're actually going to have links to all of the resources that we talked about on the show – the books, apps, and everything Marisa's recommending – in addition to the website where you can get her free stuff and that awesome bundle of things. Can you spell the URL just in case anybody wants to take it off the audio? We are going to link it up to the show notes, but how do you spell it?

Marisa: It's Marisa – M-A-R-I-S-A – my last name, Meddin – M-E-D-D-I-N – dot com, slash maverick.

Matt: Awesome. You can go there to get your free bundle of cool stuff and get into Marisa's ecosystem. Come into her world and learn more about the amazing stuff that she's up to and the people she's inspiring. So, Marisa, this has been amazing. It has been awesome to have you on the show. Thank you so much for being here.

Marisa: Thank you, Matt. It's been a blast, as always.

Matt: All right. Good night, everybody.

Announcer 1: Be sure to visit the show notes page at www.TheMaverickShow.com for direct links to all the books, people, and resources mentioned in this episode. You'll find all that and much more at www.TheMaverickShow.com.

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