

Tucker Max: Think about this: what marketing material will people pay for and sit down and consciously read. Almost none, no one would do that with a brochure or something like that, right? But with a book, if it's done well, that's exactly what they do.

(Intro Music)

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity, and helping others do the same.

Lenox Powell: This episode was previously recorded and published as part of the Outperform Podcast

Robert Glazer: I am Bob Glazer AP's founder and managing director. And today's quote is, "Ideas are easy, implementation is hard." Wise words from Guy Kawasaki. Our guest today, who I'm really excited to have here is Tucker Max. Tucker's a guy who has a lot of fantastic ideas. He's been the author of several New York Times best selling books. And he also knows too well how difficult it can be to carry out those ideas. Tucker's only the third writer after Malcolm Gladwell and Michael Lewis to ever have three books on the New York Times best seller list at one time. And this intimate understanding led he and Zach Obrant to co-found Book in a Box, an industry leading and disrupting company that helps make it easier for people to develop their ideas into books and get them published.

And even though he's an expert on thought leadership and helping others become expert, this is part of the reason why he fired himself as CEO of his company. And we'll talk a little bit more about that. And so I know you'll really enjoy the wisdom of Tucker. He has some great ideas to share and you'll appreciate his no BS style. So without further ado welcome Tucker and great to have you on man.

Tucker Max: Thanks Bob.

Robert Glazer: Well first, let me extend my gratitude to both you and Zach for coming up with Book in a Box. You guys were very instrumental in helping me get my first book Performance Partnerships published. And working on a few more books and saved me a lot of time and energy. So thanks for that.

Tucker Max: Nah dude, it's my pleasure dude. It's the reason we started the company, is so people like you can share your knowledge and wisdom effectively instead of sitting there for 10 years wishing the book would be done and not getting it finished.

Robert Glazer: So that jumps into my first question, which I'm sure a lot of people have. So before starting Book in a Box as I mentioned, you're a best selling author, and you had three New York Times best sellers. All of them were known for being outrageously entertaining and your crazy story telling. What lead you to move away from being a best selling author, to starting a firm that helps others self publish, and tries to disrupt the industry that you participated in?

Tucker Max: So before I answer, that's a great question. Before I answer it I got to brag a little bit. Because I actually have four best sellers. Four because the fourth is on the list right now. A lot your readers will probably know Tiffany Haddish's book, The Last Black Unicorn. I'm sorry listeners will know. It's been on the list for like two months. She's a pretty famous comedian. She was in Girls Trip. She did her book with our company. And I was actually the scribe on that. She asked me to co-write it with her. So it's actually my fourth book on the list. That has nothing to do with your question.

Robert Glazer: It's good to see you're still in the kitchen cooking.

Tucker Max: Sometimes man. I got to be. You know because comedy is one of those things that you kind of can't hire people to write comedy. You can hire comedy writers, but it's really, really hard. People trying to do comedy, we don't normally take as clients, but her I did. And I kind of partnered with her, and so whatever. But that book is really good.

All right but to answer your question, so how did we get to this point? I was at an entrepreneur dinner and I met a woman, probably very similar to you Bob. Like had her own business, people have been asking her to write a book for a decade. She just didn't have the time or the desire to sit down and go through the awful horrific process of writing a book yourself. And she like didn't know who I was, but she knew I had written books. And she comes up, and said, "You're the book guy right?" And I'm like "Yeah, of course, that's my only identity on earth. I'm the book guy." And so, you know, kind of like teasing her. And she's like, "Okay, okay, enough. You need to help me get this book out of my head." And she's like basically "How do I get it out of my head without writing it?"

And I kind of looked at her, and I'm like, "Are you asking me how to write a book without writing it?" And she's like "Yeah, exactly." I'm like "You can't do that. Writing is literally in the word. You know, there's no other way to write a book without writing it." And I started lecturing her about hard work and all that kind of stuff. I think I threw out the quote like everyone wants to be a star, but no one wants to put in the work. All the stuff that snobby elitist writers say, like I said it all to her. And she rolled her eyes at me, stopped me, rolled her eyes at me, and said "Tucker, are you an entrepreneur?" I'm like "Yeah, of course." She's like "I'm not sure about that. Because a real entrepreneur would help me solve my problem and not lecture me about hard work." I was like va fangool, like I was so pissed at her. But she was 100% right.

And so of course I became obsessed, like anyone who gets called out on something that their wrong about, they become obsessed with it. And I became obsessed with solving this problem. How do I get a book out of somebody's head without them having to go through the process of writing the book? And then it hit me like two months ... It took me two to think of this, because I'm slow. People have been doing this for 2,000 years. They were called scribes. You know like Socrates never wrote a word down, Plato did, right. Jesus never wrote a word down, the apostles did. Buddha never wrote anything down, his disciples did. Malcolm X didn't, Marco Polo didn't, you go down the list of incredibly influential authors who didn't physically write their own words down.

I was like, Jesus can do it, why can't Melissa, which was her name. And so I called her up, I'm like all right, we're going to try this thing. I'm going to do everything except the content. When I need content I'm going to call you, and then you're going to tell me everything you know, and we're going to go from there. And she's like great. And I honestly didn't think it was going to work Bob, but it did. It worked really well. And now whatever, three and a half years later here we are.

Robert Glazer: So that was your first book?

Tucker Max: Yeah. It was called The Pop Up Paradigm. Like that's how crazy ... Zach and I were ones who worked on the book. The book is about pop up retail, which I literally know nothing about. And even to this day, even though I helped write the book, I kind of don't feel like I know anything about it. My job was just getting her knowledge out of her head, structured properly, and then like, the book in her words in her voice. Because it's not ghostwriting, right. A ghostwriter is like you hire someone to go write you a book about something and then you put your name on it. That's BS, we don't do that.

Robert Glazer: So what was the before and after? This will lead to my next question. But what was the before and after for her on that book?

Tucker Max: Yeah. So the business results you mean?

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tucker Max: It was massive. You could tell your own version of this story like almost all our authors can. But it was like one of those things where it was like ... Let's see, in one year she tripled her leads into the business and doubled top line revenue. She went from being invited to speak on panels for free, and having like ... By her own words, she said like men used to speak over me all the time. And she was like it was very annoying. She went from that to like keynoting, getting paid keynotes for conferences. And all those men in the audience watching her and listening to her instead of talking over her. She signed some of the biggest clients in retail. So like Macy's is a client of hers now. Chanel, like the biggest people in retail are her clients now.

And now she is basically the expert, the number one thought leader in pop up retail. There was no books about pop up retail before. Because it's a subcategory of a subcategory, right. And so no publisher's going to want a book about that. But she wrote the book on it. It's probably only sold a 1,000, 2,000 copies, but she now is like on all ... She's on Cheddar all the time. She's on CNBC all the time. There's a New York TV show about fashion and that sort of industry, she's on all the time. She is like the go to person for this now.

Robert Glazer: You said a couple of things that are key there and I've had the benefit of having this discussion with you and really getting your deep insights on this. I'd love to give everyone a mini MBA on this. When you're writing a book, you work with a lot of business authors. They need to start with the end in mind and understand the goal, and the economics, and what the industry looks like. I think one of the things I heard you

say, is there's a different on making a million dollars from your book, versus making a million dollars on book sales. So can you really walk listeners through this so that they understand. I am usually repeating what you've told me, but I'm sure it's much better coming directly from you. Because I think it's a really important point. You just in the last sentence mentioned that she sold 2,000 books, which would be by most publishers considered a failed book, yet she's making millions of dollars and has raised her profile.

Tucker Max: Yeah, exactly. So here's the thing. The model for book marketing for most people, they have it in their head, are famous authors. When they think about a book, they think Seth Godin, or Tim Ferriss, or Malcolm Gladwell. And that's true, those are famous authors. But the thing that they're forgetting is that those people are professional writers. They make their living from selling copies of books. So the thing that they should be doing is writing broad books that appeal to a lot of people, and then hustling like hell to move copies of them, because that is literally their business.

Whereas take someone like you. You own a company. And your company is how you make money. That's your day job. A book is a thing that you want to add to that. So the difference could be summed up, the book is the thing that Tim Ferriss markets. For you, a book is a thing that helps you market yourself and your company. A book is a marketing tool for you, whereas the book is the product for Tim Ferriss. So for someone like Melissa or like you, what a book does, you can make hundreds of thousands from speaking. And even if you speak for free, you can sell millions of dollars worth of consulting or services or whatever to people in the audience. You can use that book as a hook to get media attention, which converts into both authority and business. You can use the book to help get meetings, to help close deals. I mean there's a million things.

Think about this. What marketing material will people pay for and sit down and then consciously read? Almost none. No one would do that with a brochure, or something like that. But with a book, if it's done well, that's exactly what they do. Even if they don't pay for it ... A hard cover book. They will take it and value it as if they had paid \$25 for it, because that's perceived value of it. It's \$25. That's what a hardcover costs. And so you hand them a hard cover and they're going to think "Oh wow, this is really cool this guy just gave me \$25. I better take this seriously." Then they're going to read at least some of it usually. They're going to look at the cover, and so they're going to judge you by the cover. Is the cover professional? And if it is, they're going to think more of you. They're going to read kind of the back cover. They'll look at who gave you blurbs. And they're going to look at what the back cover copy says. And if it's good, they're going to think better of you.

And then if they start reading it ... And like in your case Bob. How many clients already, have you guys signed or are going to sign, who like think, well maybe we can do this, or I'm not sure what they do, and then they read your book and they're like, "This is brilliant what they do, this guy obviously knows what he's talking about, why the hell would I do this myself? I'm just going to hire him."

Robert Glazer: Hey, we should hire the people that wrote the book.

Tucker Max: Exactly. That's the thing. When the media is looking for an expert, or when clients are looking for experts, how do you define an expert? By definition it's the person who wrote the book. Even if you are an expert you can get away with it for a long time without having a book. There's no doubt. But you're always going to finish second to the person who has the book in your field. Because they're the certified expert. Because that's the thing with a book to man, is that like it proves you know what you ... Getting published is not enough. It used to be if you had a book at all that was good enough. That day has passed. Now your book has to be good. And it has to be applicable, and it has to show your professionalism, and your intelligence, and your ability. But if you're a professional that's been doing this for 10 or 20 years, then that shouldn't be a problem. You know?

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Didn't you say that having a book is the new masters degree?

Tucker Max: Yeah. People used to say a book is a business card. And I think that was true for a while. But now that it's not true ... Think about that. Anyone can go to Home Depot and buy a business card. So like having a business card doesn't make you a professional, and it's not a valuable credential. It's not an honest signal of credibility because anyone can just buy it. But a cool thing about a book is, now look on one hand, anyone can just buy a book. Not with us, because you got to know what you're doing to work with us. But like you can go hire some other, there's down market companies that you can hire that will just spit a book for you.

But that's the thing about a book is, people can read it. And they can judge you based on it. And if your book is bad, then they're going to not hire you. And they're going to think less of you, as they should. So it's like a way for people to credential you themselves. It's an honest signal of your ability, and your intelligence, and your experience, and your authority. That's why it's so valuable especially to people who know what they're doing.

Robert Glazer: Can you give a quick lesson? So I know there's going to be some people there. There's a lot of ego, you were a New York Times best seller. There's a lot of ego around getting on these best sellers lists. Again I'm not a professional writer, I'm the head of the business. I'm going to write a book. I want to get signed by a publishing house. Will you explain, because I don't think I really understood this until I lived through it, the reality of what that is going to look like for most first time authors?

Tucker Max: Dude, I'm laughing because how many calls did we have to have on this before you believed me? Like it was three, or four, or five.

Robert Glazer: Everyone's got to go through their own pain.

Tucker Max: I did to. I had to do it with my company too in a different thing. So yeah. So here's the thing. Again, it gets back to what is your model for a book's success? If your model is Tim Ferriss, or Seth Godin, then you need to build a big audience, so you can sell a lot of copies. And then you should worry about hitting the best seller list because that's a credential that matters to authors, to professional writers. But if you are just an author and if you have a day job, and the book is a marketing tool that you use to make your

day job better, then the credential that you need to worry about is, is it attractive to the people that I'm trying to bring to me? So for someone like you, it would be, is your book relevant to people who are thinking about partnership programs? Whether it's CMO's or anyone into like ... Whereas like there's no possible way that that book is going to sell. You know you got to 10 to 20,000 copies the first week to hit the best seller list.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Walk people through the economics. What they're likely to ... If they got a publishing author as a first time author, what it's going to look like? And what they're responsible for, because I don't know that people realize, and I realized this after writing a book, that I think marketing is probably 70% of the work of the whole project. And I don't think people perceive that. I think they say, "Oh well if I get publisher they'll do everything, and it'll be great."

Tucker Max: No, publishers don't do anything. Like they do nothing basically. So here's how it works. First off, getting a deal, everyone thinks oh yeah, once I get a deal. You can't skip over the getting a deal part. At this point in the history of publishing, the only way you're getting a publishing deal is if you have a pre-existing audience that you can convince the publisher that you have 25,000 people pre-existing audience who are ready to buy your book. That's basically the standard. That's the benchmark. If you don't have 25,000 people sitting there ready to buy your book ... Well you have to convince them it's true, whether it's true or not actually doesn't matter. You have to tell a good story, right.

If you can tell that story, then you can get a deal. If you can't tell that story, you cannot get a deal. I'll tell you, like we've worked with 700, 800 authors now and we've taken 10 of them through the traditional publishing process. We can do that. And we will with people for whom it makes sense. But the only people that we'll even take on are ones that have big email lists, they have big social media followings, or they have some other channel that they can guarantee sort of book sales.

Like one of the people we work with is Joey Coleman who you might know. He's a huge keynote speaker. He makes 30, 40 grand a keynote speech and he doesn't have a book yet. So to make 30 or 40 as a keynote speaker without a book is unheard of. And just the speeches he had booked when we went out to publishers, if he took his fees in books sold he was looking at 50,000 books sold. So getting a book deal was super easy for him, even though he didn't have an email list. He had a channel to sell books that was basically guaranteed.

Robert Glazer: Right. He can go to all those conferences and say pay me, buy \$40,000 worth of books. And I will come and then it drives his sales.

Tucker Max: Exactly. And then they pass the books out and all that kind of stuff. So yes, exactly. So you have to have an immediate channel, and audience that you have as a permission asset. That's number one. Now let's say you have that. Let's say you have a 50, 100,000 person email list. So then the next question becomes, can you get a deal? Yes. You almost certainly can get a deal. But then it becomes like a pain in the ass, because you don't own the rights to the book. You don't own the royalties to the book.

What the publisher is expecting you to do, is to go sell that book to not just your audience but other audiences. And what the publisher is going to do is ... We're talking about the traditional like Harper Collins or Random House. They're going to give you an editor who has literally 30 or 40 other books in progress. They're going to give you a few content edits probably and that's about it. So they'll copy edit the book. They will help design the cover. Although most of the time their cover designers are really bad. They will hire the world class freelance cover designers if they're really into your book.

I'll tell you, there's about 10 book cover designers that do all the best book covers in the world. We work with six of them at Book in a Box. And they're all freelance. So we hire the same people they do. And they have their inside people but their inside people are terrible. So all their good people leave. So they have to hire them freelance. So you can tell how much they believe in your book by who they have designing your cover. They'll do that, then they'll put it in bookstores. Like they'll get bookstores to carry it. And again, how many bookstores carry it is entirely dependent on how confident they are it's going to sell copies. And how many pre-orders you've driven to your list and all that kind of stuff.

So if they're not confident in your book, then it'll be in 10, or 15, or 20% of bookstores. If they're super confident in your book and they really push it, it'll be in 90 or 95% of bookstores. Totally depends. They have a marketing person but again, if you're good at PR, you're not working for a book company for 100 grand a year. You own your own agency and you're making 500 grand a year. They'll do something, they'll try to do something book it's usually really bad. Unless you're one of their top one or two books, they're not going to do much, they might book you on a radio tour, which is awful. You sit in a studio and then you get beamed into the Topeka morning drive, and they're like "Bob tell us your pick for the Super Bowl." And your like "What the hell are you talking about? My books about performance marketing." It's that sort of thing. That's basically it.

And the other thing it gets you is that it does give you some prestige with some media. Like the New York Times, if they were likely to cover the topic of your book, if you're published with Harper, or Random House, or whatever then they're more likely to cover it than if it's self published. But not a whole lot. It maybe increases your odds 25 to 50%. And that's only if they were likely to do it otherwise. We've gotten to the point in history where pretty much no one outside of the gray old lady media like New York Times cares who published the book, or anything like that. They care how professional the book is, that's super important. Does your cover look good and all that sort of stuff.

Robert Glazer: And the list?

Tucker Max: So the list. So sorry, so getting on the list, the only way you can get on the list, because the New York Times is like the most elitist ... That list is ridiculous dude. Gabby Bernstein, do you know she's like super big in health. She's been a number one New York Times best seller before. Her book just came out, it sold 40,000 the first week and the New York Times wouldn't put her on the list. They wouldn't put her on the list, because, they don't say, but the list is an edited, curated list. It is not a list of best selling

books. Because if by best selling books it would have been number one. Gabby's would have been number one.

They actually lost a court case about this. They don't pretend that it's a list of best selling books. They say very explicitly, that it is an edited, curated list. It is the books that the New York Times thinks is important. And so even if you can write a book that you can convince The New York Times is important, then you've got to sell basically ... Sometimes you can squeak by selling 5,000 books to get on the list, but normally you're going to have to move 10,000 to be sure. And so 10,000 books in the first week, unless you have that audience, then you've got to go buy those books yourself. And we don't do this as a company, but there are shady companies out there that will essentially manage that process for you, and help you buy 10,000 books. Because they've all got to be through book store reporting. They've got to be through places that report their sales to the times. Which are independent bookstores, Barnes and Noble, Amazon, places like that.

So it's this massive ridiculous system that is all gamed basically. Just to make people feel good about like, status with their book. And it has nothing to do with impact. Nothing. Like nothing. We've had a couple of authors who published with us, and then against my advice, went and like kind of played The New York Times best seller game. And not Tiffany Haddish, she published with a traditional publisher. They played that game, and one of them even like basically bought their book onto the list. And he had a big company and literally he called me back six months later, he was like "Dude, I wasted a quarter million dollars. There was no reason for me to do this. It was just ego. It didn't move the needle in business at all."

Because what he did was, he positioned his book to a broad audience, that he thought would make The New York Times happy, instead of focusing his book on who his customers were. And so he's actually doing his second book with us now, and now he's listening. Bless his heart that he has enough humility to realize, oh wow, if I want to have a business impact, I can. Or if I want to try and be famous I can, but I can't do both at the same time. Does that make sense?

Robert Glazer: I think that's a great point. And there's a quote that I love. And when people have now asked me advice about this I'm just channeling a lot of your stuff. But it's what I would give in general around, start with the end in mind. What is it that you are trying to achieve with thought leadership or with a book? And think about that, because that will determine which way you go. I think it sounds like the notion that a first time writer will write a New York Times best selling book, that's like LeBron James making the NBA.

Tucker Max: It's very rare.

Robert Glazer: Or Facebook ... I once heard the founder of 37 Signals talking about this. In the respect of why business should make money. And he was equating it to LeBron James making it into the NBA. And he said "Because every 10 years, they'll be a Facebook or an Amazon, but everyone else should really stay in school. Because they're going to need their education." And he was correlating that to, you should make profit. And I think that's what you were saying too. The chance of just coming out of nowhere, and obviously I

think in those cases the content is extraordinary and it markets itself. But that is the exception and not the rule.

Tucker Max: Well then it gets back to your first question. What are you trying to do with your book? And what I was trying to explain is, if you are a business person, then a book has a different purpose for you than if you are a professional writer. And so all of the models of book that you import over from professional writer, don't work for you as a business person. They're wrong. And so a huge part of what we have to do as a company is educate people on newer, better models that work for them and their purposes.

Robert Glazer: Seth Godin you're saying only ... I mean he gets paid to speak, but he gets paid to write books. So that's-

Tucker Max: Exactly. He's a professional writer. His money comes from writing books. Whereas you, you've sold copies of your books, you've done pretty well. You should look at it like a bonus. Like oh wow, this is marketing that actually partially pays for itself just in terms of like, this is paid lead gen. But the real benefit for you is signing Adidas and Reebok, and Dell, and other fortune 500 companies to work with you.

Robert Glazer: Absolutely. So you are passionate about this subject. You're the founder, you were the CEO for a few years. What did you learn sitting in that seat? And then we'll talk about why you decided to fire yourself from that seat. But what did you learn you liked about being the CEO, and not like about being the CEO?

Tucker Max: Nothing. I didn't like anything about ... That's not true. I got to be more honest. There is one thing I liked.

Robert Glazer: The title.

Tucker Max: Exactly. The status. Everything I was just railing against that authors come in thinking they want. I fell victim to the exact same thing in my own life for a different thing. Because you know from the outside the sexy people, the ones who get all the press and all the status are the CEO's right? So I'm like of course I'll be the CEO. I'm smart. I'm good at things. I've accomplished all this stuff in other parts of my life. Why can't I run a company? And then I got into it and I realized, oh wow, the skillset you have to have. To start a company is one thing, but to scale a company the skillset you need is not the skillset I have, at all I'm very bad actually at the things you have to be good at to scale a company.

Robert Glazer: Well you have to both have the ability, and you have to want it. I think a lot of people, like you said, their ego makes them think they want it, but it's not actually what they want to be doing on their day to day.

Tucker Max: You know what I wanted man? To be totally frank, I wanted the status of being a CEO, but I didn't want to do the work. It's everything I criticized Melissa about in the first story I told. I was completely doing what I was accusing other people of doing. It was terrible.

Robert Glazer: So what was the moment when you decided, I need to not be CEO? I think companies go down in flames because the founder doesn't come to this realization. But what was the proverbial sort of needle in the haystack for you?

Tucker Max: It wasn't one moment. There was a series of moments, but I can tell you what the time that it really hit me in the face. The guy who replaced me, JT McCormick, he's our CEO now. I had already met him. He was a client of ours. And I went to his office. He used to run a 100 million dollar software company in Austin. And I went over. Instead of doing a sales call, I went to his office because he's in town. And like walking into that office and watching the way he interacted with his staff.

Looking at him I knew, okay this is what a CEO looks like, and that is not what I'm doing at all. And so after the ... I had sold him in the room easily, because he knew we wanted to write a book so it was kind of like simple. And so walking out, I kind of jokingly said, "Hey man, you're obviously, you've got this CEO thing nailed. I'm kind of just learning this. You got to help me out, man. I'll do your book, and I'll make sure it's amazing. But you got to help me be an amazing CEO." And JT, he kind of stopped, and he looked at me, he was like, "Are you serious about this? Because I'll help but you've got to be serious."

And he was really serious when he said that. I'm like, yeah. I was kind of taken a back but I'm like "Yeah, I'm serious." He's like "Okay. I'm going to call you every time I have a thought. Every time I interact with your company, and I have a thought about your service, or your process, I'm going to call you and tell you what it is." I'm like "That'd be amazing."

And so like, dude, he was serious man. Every time I would see his name on my phone, my heart would sink. Because he would say like one or two good things, and then he would list off 15 things we were doing wrong or we could get better. And he was right about everything. He wasn't being critical or mean. It was like aw man, he's so write about that. Or oh, how did we not see that? Something like that. And so then I asked him to come to an executive meeting. It was me, Zach co-founder, and kind of our director of ops at the time.

By the end of that meeting dude, he had taken over the meeting. He was running the meeting but it felt like the most natural thing on earth. It was like of course he should be running this meeting. He wasn't like pushing in. It was just like it was who he was. And that what like when I knew, okay, I'm not the CEO. We need to get someone like him. I didn't even think we could get him. We did get him luckily, thank god. It was when he did my job better than me in front of me, that I just kind of let go, and I thought you know what, I'm good at other things, I need to focus on those things. I need to let go of this ego thing and just stop trying to be what I'm not.

Robert Glazer: So for all the founders out there who are listening to this. Sitting their uncomfortably being like I need to do this. Tell them about your new job. What is the founder role when you bring in someone to be the CEO role look like? And what do you like about it and what's different?

Tucker Max: Mostly I just sit around and hope for the best. Wouldn't that be great? That'd be a great job.

Robert Glazer: Actually before I let you answer that, I just wrote an article last week, how every business owner owns two businesses and they don't realize it. The business of the product, and then the business of the business. I think a lot of times the founders really love the product. And what they need is someone to work on the business of the business, which is not the stuff that they like or want to do.

Tucker Max: You're exactly right. I basically head our product now. My job is, I am hands in the mud deeply involved. At this point we've got our Book in a Box product pretty dialed in. It's not perfect at all, but we have kind of head of Book in a Box that works really closely with me but she ... Megan McCracken is her name. She's really good. She kind of owns that. And so I'm developing new products now. So our next thing is going to be book coaching. So it's our exact process except you spend two days in office with us, like a workshop. And we kind of work you through the positioning of the outline. Like 20 or 40 people in a group. And then we kind of give you your writing plan and accountability. We assign you an editor. And you pay like five grand and you basically get our process except you do most of the work yourself instead of it being an interview process, it's a guided coaching process.

And so developing that process has been like my focus for the last two months and it's awesome dude. Like you can hear the ... Like I'm excited and energetic because I get up every day and I work on stuff that's like super exciting to me. Creating new things and solving those problems is super exciting. Taking solved problems and then scaling them as a business, it's like torture to me. It's the worst. I can't do it and I hate it.

Robert Glazer: Well you're one of the few people to I think acknowledge that openly and be vulnerable about it. In fact, Tucker wrote a great post titled ... I probably need to sensor this. But from bleep hole to CEO, which we'll include in the show notes for this episode. Where he really openly talks about how he made this decision and why it was the right one and when he knew he wasn't the right person to be CEO. I mean you've gotten some good attention from that article.

Tucker Max: Yeah, well because I think a lot of people, a lot of entrepreneurs feel that way. The conflict of like this is the thing I think I'm supposed to want, but I'm doing it and now I hate it. And so what do I do now? Most of the happy entrepreneurs I know, have at a minimum they've brought in a COO or director of ops, and so even though their CEO in title, they spend most of their time on the function of the business that they love.

The other thing that JT does man that I was really not good at, that I didn't even understand I was bad at until I saw him, is leading people. Like I'm pretty good at inspiring, like I can give a great speech. I can recruit. I can sell. Like I can sell all day long, that's easy for me. But leading and selling are totally different things. Leading is about really truly putting people first. It's about coaching and mentoring, and working with them on the basics, and the fundamentals, and like the little things. And I got to be honest man, that stuff is really tedious and hard for me. I hate it. But JT loves it. Nothing makes him happier than helping people get better.

Robert Glazer: But you've continued to also own the culture side. I mean you put the entire company's culture doctrine online in a Google doc and let people comment on it. Is that still where it lives?

Tucker Max: Oh yeah. Absolutely. No our culture is pretty amazing. I definitely work on the philosophy of the culture but that emerges organically from who we are. My job is kind of to like record that and systematize it and think about it. But it doesn't go top down. Our culture comes bottom up.

Robert Glazer: You know I think that are a lot of similar elements in our cultures. What do you think are the core elements that a culture needs to have for a business to be successful these days as the nature of work really shifts?

Tucker Max: So the way we structure our culture doc ... And if you want to link it obviously you can, I mean it's public.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, we'll put it in the show notes.

Tucker Max: So we only have three values and then from that we've derived like 10, I think we're up to 10 principles. A value is basically what you believe to be true and a principle is sort of how you apply that. So our three values are very simple. We value results. We value people. And we value learning. Results, because we are a business. We all love each other. We consider ourselves a tribe, but we also recognize that we're a work tribe and not a family. Because family is about unconditional love and acceptance and all that kind of stuff. That's not true in work. In work you got to carry your weight. Because that's the whole point of this tribe existing is to do this work. So results are super important. We always anchor off, we all have a job to do and we have to do our job, or we just don't belong in the tribe.

And then the second part is people. And we put people second because we understand if we don't get results then we don't exist, but as soon as we're getting results then we have to understand that the only reason we're working is because we care about what we do and how it impacts people. So we always want to keep people in the front of mind. And not in a vague way. Our principles are things like do right by people.

Robert Glazer: They're operational. Yeah, they're not idealistic.

Tucker Max: Right. So many companies pay lip service to people but then when it comes down to it they put process and procedure and other stuff in front of people. We don't do that. We refuse to do that. Everything is are we doing the right thing by our people or not? And if the answer's no then we change until we are.

And then the third one is learning and I think eventually learning is going to be very important for everybody, but for us it's crucial because the way we do things today is almost certainly going to be different than the way we do them tomorrow and the day after and the day after. So we have got to, at the core of our being, it's got to be part of our culture that we're always, not just trying to get better, but we're always willing to

change. So the principle we have that ... We've got a couple, but there's one that really summarizes that. It's called the glass is already broken. It's from this Buddhist story about this Buddhist scholar who basically said ... It sums up to he said "You can understand Buddhism if you understand that this glass that's sitting on the table holding water is already broken."

And you go "What do you mean?" They're like "Well, whether it's in five seconds or 500 years, this glass will break and I know that it will break at some point. And so knowing that I'm able to enjoy it and appreciate it for what it is without clinging to what I wish it could be but it never can be." So that's at the core of our being. Every process, every procedure, everything we do can be different and will be different. We know it's all going to change. We have to do it in the moment, but we also know it'll be different tomorrow so we're all looking for ways to make everything better all the time. And I think most businesses, whether you know it or not are close to obsolescence if you're not thinking that way.

People are always going to share ideas. We're in the business of helping people share their ideas. And maybe it won't be books in 10 years or 20 years. Maybe books will be a small part of it.

Robert Glazer: My favorite quote is by a general that says "If you don't like change you'll like irrelevance even less."

Tucker Max: Yeah, right. I forget who said you're either growing or you're dying, but that's exactly right.

Robert Glazer: That was a sports coach. So last question for you. This is the Outperform podcast. Tell us what are some of the things that you've done or ... You've accomplished a lot. So what have you done to work on yourself physically, emotionally, and mentally to outperform both your own expectations and the competition.

Tucker Max: Dude, that's a great question. There's so much I could talk about. Okay.

Robert Glazer: What are your top couple hacks where you say I do this and this allows me to outperform?

Tucker Max: All right, so I'll let you pick. I can go one of two ways. I can give you my top two or three hack type things, where it's like you need to do this thing this way because of this reason, or I can talk a little bit about I think I've kind of broken through to a new frame recently and I can talk a little bit about how I see the world in a different way now than I did a while ago and it's had, I think, a huge impact on my life.

Robert Glazer: Let's go with the second part because I've been on a similar journey and I think it's for a lot of people the key to really getting ahead is pulling it all back and figure out what it is that you want and if that story is related to that I'd love to hear that.

Tucker Max: Yeah. So this is relatively still raw in my head, but one of the things that I think I realized is how poor identity is to our perception, not just our perception of ourselves but our perception of our limits and our abilities and our deeply unconscious sort of traits. And I knew that intellectually. I've known that for a long time. I've done a lot of psychotherapy and a lot of other things and everyone says they know that. But I didn't really fully, deeply understand how many limits I put on myself, and they were all unconscious of course, until I really started unpacking both what I wanted from life and what I was doing or not doing to get me there.

So the thing that I've done over the last three months is I've really unpacked. I've gotten very specific. Where exactly am I trying to get to? Not vaguely. Directly. Where do I want to live? What do I want my family life to be like? What do I want my relationship with my wife to be like? What do I want my company to be like? What do I want my relationship to my company to be like? I had to be very specific about where I wanted to go and then unpack did I actually want that, which for me, because I think about that stuff a lot, that was just getting specific about things that I knew broadly. But for some people even sitting down and asking those questions, most people don't do those.

But I had to get much more specific and then I had to really unpack what was I doing to advance that goal or what was I doing that was not advancing that goal? And I'll give you one that's not business related that's ... The one that really rocked me was my relationship with my wife. We have a great relationship, but when I sat down and thought about where I wanted that relationship to be in 10 years and I thought about what was I doing today and tomorrow and this week and this month, it was great now, but I wasn't ... Well, we just said it's growing or dying. I wasn't doing anything to consciously grow it and in fact I was doing some things that were unconsciously, subconsciously, eating away at the relationship.

So I had to first unpack, okay, what am I doing that's eating away at it? Why am I doing that? Because it's all my baggage. My wife and I really have an amazing relationship. The only problem with our relationship is baggage either that she brings in or I bring in and how that baggage interacts with the relationship. So the foundation of a great relationship for us is us working on our own things. Whether it's together or in tandem we've got to identify them and work on them. So I had some things with vulnerability and opening up and trust with her that I just wasn't dealing with my baggage. So I had to start dealing with that very specifically. Which I'm in the process of doing. It's not like I'm done. It's never really done. But I'm doing it.

And then the other thing was we had to sit down and think okay, we want to be here, what else do we have to do to make sure we start going in that direction? And so we started adding things to our life that are very consciously going to push us in the direction we want to go.

Robert Glazer: Yeah and it ties to that quote we were talking before about start with the end in mind and really thinking about what it is that you want, and I think a lot of us are doing a lot of things that really we are not congruous with either what we say we want or what we really want and when you figure that stuff out it's amazing how it becomes really clear about what you should be doing more of and what you need to stop doing. I've had a lot

of stop doings the last few weeks as I've tried to pair back stuff and get to the core, so makes a lot of sense.

Well, we could talk forever, but want to make sure we wrap up here. You're an incredible ambassador for thought leadership and helping people get more out of their own lives and elevate their statuses in the world, and I'm a big believer that we grow the most when we step back, look at our failures, and focus on strengths and clearly that's something you've been able to do really well and describes a lot of your success. So thanks for being so honest about your journey and sharing it on Outperform.

Speaking of honesty, if you enjoyed this episode or Outperform in general, we'd love your honest feedback by rating it on iTunes or in the review. And so to our listeners we'll include links to Book in a Box's site, Tucker's personal website, and some of the things we talked about more in our show notes and until next time thanks for listening and keep outperforming.