



Episode 23: Mastering Productivity and Focus with John Lee Dumas

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00:17 Justin Johnson: Hey, Neon Noise listeners. Welcome to the Neon Noise Podcast, where we decode marketing and sales topics to help you grow your business. This is Justin, and with me, I have my co-host Ken. Hey, Ken, how's it going today?

00:29 Ken Franzen: It's going fantastic. How are you?

00:31 Justin Johnson: It is going great. I'm super super excited about our show today. Our featured guest John Lee Dumas, also referred to as JLD, is the host of EOFire, an award-winning Podcast where he interviews today's most successful entrepreneurs. JLD, has grown EOFire into a multi-million dollar a year business with over 1500 interviews, and 1.5 million monthly listeners. He's the author of the Freedom Journal, The Mastery Journal, two of the most funded publishing campaigns, on Kickstarter. These are just some amazing numbers without further ado, let's chat with today's featured guest, JLD. I've been waiting to do this. I wanna know if you are ready to ignite?

01:16 John Lee Dumas: Let's burn this place to the ground, boys. Burn it to the ground!

01:21 Justin Johnson: JLD, tell us a little bit about yourself and fill in the blanks on anything I missed.

01:23 John Lee Dumas: Well, you guys did a great job. Basically, I'm just a country boy from the state of Maine. When to college on an Army ROTC Scholarship, so did a 13 month tour of duty in Iraq, post college during my four year active duty stint. Then I just spent the rest to my 20s, failing. Trying law school, corporate finance, commercial real estate. Fail, fail, fail. Not being happy either by the way. So, both failing and being unhappy in my late 20s is a bad combination, and so I started listening and learning to a lot of great books, via audio books and the reading of, and learning a lot.

02:03 John Lee Dumas: And finally being clued into podcasting, and this free on demand targeted form of media really just struck a cord with me. And after a couple years of listening I said, "Hey I can do this," and decided to create the show that I thought should exist but didn't. Which was a daily show interviewing the worlds most successful entrepreneurs. And you and I are talking now, almost five year later, over 46 million, listens to date later. Over 1.5 million monthly listens, and we've turned the business of podcasting into a multi a million dollar a year business. So it's been quite the journey a lot of fun and I'm excited to chat more today.

02:45 Ken Franzen: Awesome. That's an amazing story. One of the things that you've recently launched here is the Mastery Journal, and it is got some focus on productivity. And I'm interested to learn more about,



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because you have a lot going on. A lot of... Let's say balls in the air. How do you approach being productive? And how do you get the most out of your day? How do you accomplish your goals?

03:12 John Lee Dumas: So, honestly, The Mastery Journal is me downloading all of the knowledge that I've acquired over the years on being productive, disciplined, and focused on an inter-day basis. All the lessons I've learned. All of the mistakes and failures that I've personally encountered trying to accomplish this very elusive, productive, disciplined, and focused approach. But, as I sit here in 2017, I've mastered these three skills. And I continue to work on them, of course, but I wanted to create a journal that would show others what I've learned and how they could maybe start mastering these skills themselves.

03:51 John Lee Dumas: And so for me, in a nutshell, the reason why The Mastery Journal's very special is because it holds your feet to the fire using proven methods. We're talking the Pomodoro Technique. We're talking Parkinson's Law. We're talking the Pareto Principles. Using these great past studies and just analysis and applying them to us on a day to day basis.

04:15 John Lee Dumas: And so in a nutshell, within The Mastery Journal, there's a lot to it, but the core of The Mastery Journal is every day your gonna have four focus sessions. Which you're gonna choose how much time each session will be depending on what task you're gonna focus on, but during that one focus session you're gonna have one task, you're gonna start a timer, you're gonna press go on that timer, and then you're gonna focus on nothing else for the rest of that time period. You're gonna have your cellphone in airplane mode, you're gonna have any notifications flashing, beeping, everything's off. There's nothing but you and that one task. Which you will complete in that time allotted.

04:51 John Lee Dumas: And then an important factor after that, by the way, is you have a refresh time. Where that's the kind of carrot that you've been dangling in front of you. Where, "Oh, my god, it's so hard to focus for 40 minutes, I wanna just stop real quick and check Facebook." Well, stop, because you will but not until your refresh time. And make yourself be held accountable to that, and you'll win, frankly. I mean, again, this is me having created this over five years. Over five thousand people are now consistently using The Mastery Journal on a daily basis, and just seeing massive strides in what they're accomplishing in their life. So, it's a system, it's a guide, and it's meant to be difficult, and it is, but it also produces outstanding results.

05:36 Ken Franzen: Awesome. So what type of individual does The Mastery Journal best serve? Is it fitting to a certain type of person in a certain in a certain industry or a certain job type? Who does it best fit?

05:50 John Lee Dumas: An individual that can honestly look at themselves in the mirror and say, "You know what I could improve upon my productivity." And by productivity that means the content that you're producing throughout the day, is that actually meaningful to your business in life? We can all be productive

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doing the wrong things, but are you being productive doing the right things? And that's an honest question only you can answer.

06:14 John Lee Dumas: Number two, someone feeling like they're lacking a little discipline. I love to break down that word discipline down into the word disciple. Are you being a disciple to a plan of action that you've set, and you will execute upon. If the answer is no, you need some help on discipline.

06:29 John Lee Dumas: And then finally FOCUS, Follow One Course Until Success. That's the acronym for FOCUS. Are you able to do that, or are you a scatterbrained? Are you a flibbertigibbet, who's just jumping from one task to another never completing anything? Likely you're in one, two, or all three of those. I know that I was at one point in my life, and I know that most people are. And if you find yourself in one, two or three of those scenarios, it's time for The Mastery Journal.

06:57 Ken Franzen: Awesome! So, I'm curious, how do you go about planning for each one of your days? What does your day look like in detail; are you an early riser? Are you... I'm a bit of a night owl myself in the... My children get me up early in the morning. But what is your day look like each and everyday, how do you plan for your day?

07:19 John Lee Dumas: Well number one, The Mastery Journal, we have a section at the end that's called, The Win Tomorrow, Today. And this is a really important section because you need to set your morning routine up the night before. Cause if you don't, you're setting yourself up to fail, because, hey, we all wake up the same way. A little groggy, a little tired, wanting to roll back over in bed. I don't care who tells you they wake up jumping out of bed doing...

[chuckle]

07:44 John Lee Dumas: They're lying, frankly, that person doesn't exist. They're kidding themselves and they're trying to kid you as well. It just doesn't happen, we all wake up tired, cold, groggy like whatever, fill in all the blanks.

07:55 John Lee Dumas: And if you then have to actually turn your brain on to think about what your next few tasks should be, you'll fail. Because, that's no the time to do that. The time to do that is the night before. And when you set that task up; that morning routine task list up, then you wake up you can mindlessly follow that morning routine and crush it. It's like when I wake up in the morning, it's still dark, and I'm stumbling down to my gym cause I know that the first thing on my list is a 20 minute row on my rowing machine. And I'm doing that without a second thought because I wrote it the night before that that was the first task that I was doing. That I move into the next parts of my exercise regimen in the morning. Then it's showering, then it's

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meditating and then it's reading a business book for 20 minutes and then it's journaling. And then and only then I'm I actually turning to my first task of the day.

08:45 John Lee Dumas: And by the way, I have not done emails or social media or anything of the above yet, I will because it's a necessary part of my day. But I believe in using the best part of my day, which is post-exercise, post-shower and breakfast, post-meditation and journaling. That next period of my day is the best part of my day. Why would I use that period of my day on OPA, which is Other People's Agenda. It would be a huge mistake, I need to use that part of my day for what's gonna make my business in life the best. And so I do that.

09:21 John Lee Dumas: And frankly, you said that you're a night owl, my response to that is, if you say you are, you are, but if you say you're a morning bird as well you can be that too. It's a total decision on your part or maybe being a night owl works for you. Frankly, if your kids are gonna get up in the morning as well I would say it doesn't because I think that eight hours is a minimum amount of sleep that a human needs to really be at their A level game. But to each his own, and I just think that a lot of time we label ourselves without even realizing we're doing it, it can often times be a mistake.

09:54 Ken Franzen: Believe you me, I wish I could find myself to get up... I know it's a label, it's something that I can definitely change...

10:01 John Lee Dumas: That's my thing, you wish but you can, it's just a matter of doing...

10:03 Ken Franzen: Alright sure.

10:04 Justin Johnson: Ken, when's the last time you got eight hours of sleep?

[chuckle]

10:08 Ken Franzen: Been a long time. It's been a very long time. And I understand rested minds are clear minds and focused minds.

10:18 Justin Johnson: Right. I love that routine.

10:22 John Lee Dumas: Yeah, and hey, it didn't come naturally. It's been something that I have been refining over the years. A lot of people they say like... I don't really consider people that have kids in the same scenario because that's just a whole different ballgame that...

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10:33 Ken Franzen: Exactly.

10:33 John Lee Dumas: You completely have to play for, I mean, it's just the reality of life. But a lot of people that come to me that don't necessarily have kids or a lot of responsibilities will say, "John, I'll just never be an early bird." And I'm like, "Umm... " 'Cause they're like, "'Cause I can't go to sleep early enough at night, I'm not tired at 9:00 PM, or 10:00 PM." And I'm like, "Well, wake up at 4:30 AM for the next 60 days and you tell me how tired you are at 9:00 PM, and guess what, you'll be pretty tired.

11:02 Ken Franzen: You'll figure it out. [chuckle]

11:02 John Lee Dumas: You'll be falling asleep, and you'll be getting eight hours of sleep, and you're also gonna be a morning person. And guess what, I'm not trying to force the idea that being a morning person is the cure all, be all, cause it's not. It's what works for you. I know what works for me is being a morning person, so I set myself up and my life up for success in those areas.

11:24 Ken Franzen: Really cool. So what metrics do you use to measure success. How do you quantify that your day was successful? You have this morning routine that sounds like it's pretty much a staple every morning; has very similar routine and then you get to it. What are you using to measure... How are you determining what is a successful day?

11:47 John Lee Dumas: My four focus sessions. I look back at the end of every day and I say, "What did I accomplish during my four focus sessions within The Mastery Journal?" And some days I look back and say, "Pfft... Not enough", and I grade myself accordingly, 'cause part of being The Mastery Journal is, you self evaluate yourself. And sometimes they say, "Wow, I knocked it out of the park." And then again, I evaluate myself accordingly. So I look back at my four major sessions that I do throughout the day and say, "Did I utilize those best to move my business and life forward?" And sometimes those focus sessions might be actually writing a chapter in my book, or sometimes it might be going outside and finally... Or going out to my garage and finally tidying up the mess out there for 45 minutes. And that's a success as well. It's all on your metrics. But what's great about The Mastery Journal is that you should be able to look back every single day at the ends, and you will by the way if you follow the system, and see four very meaningful tasks that you've accomplished that day.

12:55 Justin Johnson: Now each one of these sessions, if I get this right, the duration's approximately how long?

13:00 John Lee Dumas: There's not set durations. It's all on you. And that's one thing that I take a lot of care at the beginning of The Mastery Journal. To guide and teach and say, "Hey, number one, you alone know how

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long each one of these focus sessions should take, approximately. And you'll get better with time at estimating how long that should take." But I know that if I am going down to "tidy up my garage", that I should be able to knock it out in about 30 minutes. So that might be the focus session, is 30 minutes. But if I'm coming back and I'm looking to write two chapters in my book for my next focus session, that might take 60 minutes, and I know that, so then my next focus session will be 60. It's really important to be able to self-evaluate yourself, and that's one tool and skill that I really try to teach and impress upon people throughout The Mastery Journal is, "Hey, as much as you might want me holding your hand and walking you every step the way, and telling you there's a perfect minute for every focus session, and exactly what to do during your refresh sessions, I'm not gonna be there. It's time to start being self reliant, and do your thing. And you're not gonna hit a home run the first time or the 10th time, but you're gonna get better every single day."

14:11 Ken Franzen: Sure. If I'm getting this right then, there's four sessions and I'm looking at the average American workday being the traditional eight hours. Most of my sessions... If I was gonna break my day down, and I'd converted myself into an early riser, got up and did my morning routine, and I begin the actions, email, and the other peoples agendas, so to speak. I have four core sessions that come into play. I would probably have to average those out at about two hours I guess, if I was gonna fill my traditional eight hour work day, correct?

14:51 John Lee Dumas: Yeah, but I think that would be a mistake, and that's one thing that I talk about in The Mastery Journal leading up to you actually starting it, is these focus sessions are meant to be powerful, not traditional. There's a reason why we got herded into the mentality of eight hour work days, because back in the Industrial Revolution, which we won't get in to believe me, but we had to clock in and clock out at a certain time, 'cause everybody had a job to do, so we just now fill these eight hours mostly with nothingness. But The Mastery Journal gives you back those eight hours, and says, "Hey, how can I, in just four sessions of... " By the way, maybe just 45 minutes each so you might just be talking about three hours of real work. And people say, "What do I do with the rest of my day?" How about live life?

[laughter]

15:34 John Lee Dumas: Like how about do something you wanna do, 'cause now you just done, in three hours what use to take you all day, and probably, frankly, all week, because you're actually focusing now on meaningful and diligent tasks. So live life. It's 2017. We're not building Model Ts for Henry Ford in 1904 right now. [chuckle]

15:54 Ken Franzen: Sure. You've interviewed, we said over 1500 in the intro, and I know it's more than that to date, but entrepreneurs, daily podcasts, new entrepreneur, I know you've had some that came on more than once, but you've talk to quite a few successful entrepreneurs over the last couple of years. What

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commonalities do you find in the individuals that you talk to? Are there any common denominators that they share?

16:27 John Lee Dumas: Hard work is one that's always present in every successful entrepreneur that I've found. There's just no shortcut for that. Number two is the ability to set and accomplish goals, and that was actually the inspiration for me creating The Freedom Journal, which was my first journal that I wrote back in 2015, and then launched on Kickstarter back in 2016, which is accomplish your number one goal in 100 days, cause that's what I saw people were lacking.

16:54 John Lee Dumas: For me, it's the hard work combined with setting and accomplishing of meaningful goals that actually matter. And then number three, building and nurturing meaningful relationships. That's what I seen has really been the ingredients of success for entrepreneurs in 2017.

17:16 Ken Franzen: Now, you had talked about setting goals, accomplishing goals, and even made mention of The Freedom Journal which is focused on 100 days and accomplishing your number one goal. And this kinda goes hand in hand with The Mastery Journal. There comes times when you're going through your day and things don't go as planned. What do you do with these pitfalls that pop up? What do you do to try to avoid them? When they do happen how do you overcome? Because I know so many can have a bad day and make that compound into a second bad day or get them offtrack on their goals, or being productive. So what do you do, or what advice can you provide in getting back on track when you hit a bump in the road?

18:00 John Lee Dumas: Well first off, chill out. You're a human being, you're going to make mistakes and you're going to hit bumps in the road, and you're gonna be on this roller coaster. Frankly, and many people don't believe this but it is true, life is about the ups and the downs. If we just had this straight up into the right success, it'd be boring because there'd be no reason to celebrate wins because everything would just be a win on a minor level, going up, up and up. So just chill out, recognize you're a human being and now that's one reason why I've implemented not just the four focus sessions, but right on the heels of these focus sessions are the mandatory refresh sessions where you're just meant to relax and chill out, and sit down with a fiction novel, or go for a quick walk outside, or go play with your dog or your kid for 15 or 20 minutes. I know there's a lot of times that people will pick their head up at the end of the day and they'd be like, "Wow! I haven't even been outside one time," or, "I haven't even gone into the next room where my three-month-old is sleeping and picked him up and held him." That's things you should be doing throughout the day, and you will when you take these refresh times, and that will allow you to reflect and to realize that, "Man, maybe I got a little bit derailed here, but let's come back stronger with the next session." And you just learn from it, you relax and you drive forward.

19:22 Ken Franzen: That sounds like my day.

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[chuckle]

19:23 Ken Franzen: Too often. [chuckle] 2:30 rolls around and lunch hasn't even happened yet. Exactly.

19:32 John Lee Dumas: You're not following The Mastery Journal.

19:32 S?: I have it now.

19:34 John Lee Dumas: Yeah!

19:36 Ken Franzen: Right now, do you... 2015, you had The Freedom Journal launch. Just recently, The Mastery Journal launched. What's next for you? What do you have in the horizon? I know that on your website, eofire.com, you have a lot of great courses that you provide for free on several different topics. What's next for you? What do you have on the horizon?

19:46 John Lee Dumas: So, I'm writing my first traditionally published book which I'm pretty excited about 'cause, again, I'm on a journey, making a ton of mistakes, having a lot of frustrating days. But I keep sticking and going back to, and utilizing The Mastery Journal to keep moving forward because frankly, again, I'm a believer in the process that I was able to create through this. And for me, over the last five years I've gotten thousands of emails that have said some variation of, "John, I'm tired of losing," or, "I'm afraid to lose," or, "I don't want to lose." I kept hearing this word "lose" all over the place and finally I kind of just had this aha! Moment one day when I was on a run and I said, "It's not about how not to lose, which is what everybody seems to think all it's all about."

20:53 John Lee Dumas: 'Cause I lose every single day. I lose every single day. And on those rare days that go by in a row that I'm not losing, I actually reprimand myself because I'm like, "If I'm not losing, I'm not pushing the envelope, I'm not trying hard enough. What's your problem? Get out of the comfort zone JLD." And so I lose all the time. And I talk about those losses very openly on my monthly income reports, etcetera, etcetera. It just kinda hit me that everybody's mindset's just screwed up here. It's not about how not to lose, it's about how to finally win, and that win being singular. It's about how to win. My win, singular, my one win back in 2012 was launching EOFire. And all the success and the millions of dollars that I've made since then has come from that one single win, of launching EOFire.

21:48 John Lee Dumas: So I wanna bring that to other people and just say, "Listen, it's not about how not to lose." And that's why the title of the book, as I've just mentioned is, "How To Finally Win". That's what it's all about. And the tagline is, "Create your dream life one step at a time." So every chapter is taking you on that

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next step in your journey of creating that dream life starting with that one singular win, which can be that domino that once you knock it over, now you've started that chain reaction of awesome. So, that's what I'm focused on. It's not an easy journey, as I said. I lose and have struggles and frustrations daily with it, but I keep bouncing back.

22:32 Ken Franzen: That's pretty exciting to look forward to. Is there an ETA on when this might come?

22:36 John Lee Dumas: Thinking September of 2017, so sometime Q3 of this year. But again, I'm gonna keep this book behind the wall, so to speak, until it's ready. I'm not gonna rush or force a launch. We'll see what happens. But I'm thinking, sometime around September.

22:56 Ken Franzen: Looking forward to it. Now, you made mention about your income reports and you're pretty transparent about the revenue and the expenditures of your business right on your website. And again, much like the traditional eight hour work week we're all ingrained in to, talking about how much money we make or our finances is another... It's a taboo topic, let's say. So you take a different route. And I was just curious, why you chose to share your numbers on your website?

23:26 John Lee Dumas: I think it's sad that it's a taboo subject, and I think that's really an outdated mindset, just like the industrial revolution and the eight hour work day is an outdated concept. Because, listen, if we're looking to build our dream business, if we're looking to build a brand that people can know, like and trust, why are we hiding the most important part of most businesses, which is generating revenue? We can all say, "Oh, it's not all about the money," and it's not, but let's be honest, if you can't make some money in your business, you're not gonna be able to keep creating that content. I'm not gonna be able to keep creating free courses and, \$39 journals that can really change somebody's life. Like I wanna be able to keep doing it. So, I feel an obligation to make money, and I feel other people should as well because if I'm able to keep generating revenue then I'll be to keep creating great content.

24:17 John Lee Dumas: A lot of it is completely free like my daily podcast, the free courses that you mentioned as well, so why is it taboo? Sharing how we make our money and how much we make etcetera, etcetera? 'Cause it can now help people make educated decisions about what they wanna do. To me, the worst thing about the online entrepreneurs of old were they were all smoke and mirrors. I'm not saying everybody was, but what I'm saying, they're just were people that were renting a Ferrari...

[laughter]

24:46 John Lee Dumas: Driving it in front of a house, and then do a a quick video, and saying, "Look at my house, look at my Ferrari." And then getting chased out of that by the actual owner, driving the Ferrari back

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to the lot, having their check bounce from that rental Ferrari and then putting it up on YouTube and saying, "You should follow me because I'm successful." But I wanted to say, "Hey, this is how I'm actually making money and here's my CPA, that's joining me today to prove it and to validate it. And my lawyer, who's gonna give you some great tips on legal, so you don't forget the dot an "I" and cross a "T" that could bring your business down."

25:22 John Lee Dumas: Let's just bring it out into the open because guess what? Being an entrepreneur may not be for you. Not everybody should be an entrepreneur, not everybody should be a number one, maybe you are meant to be a number two, or seven, or 10, and guess what? As Gary Vaynerchuk loves to say, "Number 37 of Facebook's not doing too bad right now and that's okay," and so let's just bring it all out in the open so people start making these life-changing decisions on very limited to no knowledge.

25:50 Ken Franzen: Sure. So I know we're running close to the allotted time, and I wanted to just ask, was there anything that you'd like to share to our audience we haven't touch on?

26:00 John Lee Dumas: No. I think you guys have been asking great questions and I appreciate it. I appreciate the opportunity to talk candidly about some of my passions which are The Mastery and The Freedom Journal, and my upcoming book. And for me, I like to approach these shows where saying, "Hey, the host is in control, and I wanna give it as much value along the questions and the topics they wanna talk about. If the audience wants to find out more about me, of course, they could check eofire.com" but besides that, it's been a fun chat.

26:28 Ken Franzen: Thanks JLD.

26:28 Justin Johnson: Awesome.

26:30 John Lee Dumas: Thanks guys.

26:32 Justin Johnson: Absolutely. Alright guys, well that's a wrap for today. Great, great show. I don't know about you guys but I'm super pumped and ready to go out and start focusing more and more on getting stuff done. I hope that everybody enjoyed our conversation today with JLD. Super exciting having you in the show, we will post links to the awesome resources that JLD mentioned on the show today in the show notes at neongoldfish.com/podcast. Until next time, this is Justin, Ken and JLD. Go out and start crushing it. We will see you again next week.