

FT: Chris Brogan, welcome to So Money. I'm so pumped to have you on the show.

CB: Thrilled to be here.

FT: We're very fortunate to have you on the show, given the timing, I mean I don't want to be negative here but let's be honest. A lot of folks on the podcast, including myself, we're probably not going to complete our New Year's resolutions. This is around February. We're recording this interview and stats just show that a lot of us depart from our goals, resolutions, whatever you want to call them around this time of year. But, we have you, which is good news because for some time now, for a few years, you have created and delivered the Brave New Year program. I'd like to start there, Chris, and have you share with us why you think we are just so bad at sticking to our goals and how Brave New Year program can get us over the hurdles.

CB: Well, a lot of times what people do with resolutions is that they just sort of pick something somewhere randomly and it's weird how people come to this. A lot of times they might be at some holiday party or something and they'll say, "Oh, here's what I'll do." And, it's usually around our misgivings, which is also kind of a weird place to come from too. I mean we almost always think for in the perspective of 'here's something negative I feel about myself that I think I'll change.' And, one thing that humans are really powerfully good at not doing is really trying to rally around something negative. No one wants to get around something and say, "We're not number one. We're still really bad, you know, hooray." Right, like they don't have parades for that. I mean we're good at feeling bad but we're not really good at trying to fix it by rallying around it. So, I have a thing that I do at the very beginning of every year called My Three Words that I've been doing since 2006 and then that sort of evolved into something called Brave New Year, which was just a way to really launch the year in a process instead of just launching it through a resolution you're going to forget a short while later. So, the program I put together, it's just an 8-week course. There's a little group of people that are hidden inside a little private group and the point of the whole thing, I guess, if you looked at it from a really far distance is a framework to work on some goals and challenges and a group of people to help support that because I think that those 2 things together, capabilities plus connections is really what gets us moving forward.

FT: Well, I'm considering taking a closer look. It's only, it's less than a hundred dollars, right now, which is pretty hard to beat. And so, that's I think more than my monthly coffee routine so I think I can probably make the investment. You created this program, Chris, because you, yourself struggled with accomplishing goals. I kind of have a hard time believing that.

CB: Well, you know, in my case, it's more that I wanted to get an even higher level. I mean when you reach some level of success at all, there's a real strong possibility that what you might end up doing is choosing not to do anything further or bigger or whatever. There's just a lot of ways to get at that. So, for instance, you feel like "Oh, well I've really kind of hit some sort of stride and now everything's great but what we learn is that if we're not really trying to advance ourselves then we're going to slip backwards. There really is no solid set state, you know, we're always either improving or, you know, decreasing our abilities.

FT: What I really like about the program from what I can, what I've read is that there is a private community which I think, especially when it comes to financial goals and career goals, having an accountability partner or partners in this case is priceless and it can really be the difference between

not accomplishing your goals and finishing and crossing that finish line. For those of us who do have financial goals, Chris, is there a specific muscle that we need to flex in order to have success?

CB: One of the things that we tend to do is that we tend not to align ourselves very well. So, for instance, we say something like, you know, my goal is to make a million dollars this year and then we never really think about what does that really mean and it's about \$22,000. And then, once we get to even that number, we go, "That's a lot." and that's the end of that. But, a lot of times no one's real goal is to make a million dollars. Their goal is to live with this, say, improved comfort. Their goal is to, you know, pay off such a bill that they've been feeling bad about for such a long time or to be able to go to such and such a vacation. So, with alignment, what we do is we take all these separate things, we take all these separate little pieces of what we're doing and we try to align them into a better world story. So, we understand stories really well and, unfortunately, the stories we believe the most are the negative ones we tell ourselves. If, you know, if somewhere early in life we found out we were bad at money then we just keep saying "I'm bad at money." But, that's like a But, that's like a toddler saying, "Man, I can't get this walking thing figured out." You know, we're all toddlers in something and so I think that the next goal, Farnoosh, is to kind of move it forward. So, I just try to help people find other methodologies to get towards that.

FT: I like that. We are all toddlers at something, meaning it's only a matter of time that you might get better at it but you need to be deliberate about it and hopefully have some support. I've a 7-month old and just this morning I was trying to teach him how to move his legs. So, if he can just understand kind of like "Okay, this is standing. This is walking. You actually have the ability to be mobile." I don't know. I'm probably ruining my life right now by doing that because they say once they start to move, life is over.

CB: Well, right, I was thinking that like 'Why rush it?' you know.

FT: Why rush it, right?

CB: You can grab lots of things, you know?

FT: Exactly. I want to pull a quote that you had on your blog that I love and I want to ask you about it. You said once on stage that "The stranger I became, the weirder I became, the more money I made. The more true I was to who I really was and the more I started making money." What did you mean by that? I love that.

CB: It's almost quite literal. What I found was that a lot of our life, since maybe, let's say, 5th grade or so, age 11 maybe age 10 we started trying to hide who we really are and it usually comes because either our parents or most often some kid at school says, "Why are you doing that? That's weird." And, you suddenly go "Oh, I've just stepped past some line and I didn't even know there was a line." And, that's where things get crazy. So, I think once that happens and we start trying to figure out how to fit in and then we, there's a lot around us that forces us to try even harder to fit in. And so, as we kind of go through life, we towards like high school age and, oh my gosh, there's that, you know, that's the only thing you want in life is to be invisible. We get to college sometimes and we do that thing where we try to stand out but we do it in fake, you know, ways that don't really match who we are. And then, somewhere, so usually in our 30s, if we're lucky, we start to go, "Oh, here's who I really am." And, you know, that might be someone saying, "Look, I don't like New Year's Eve and I

don't ever want to go to a New Year's Eve party again." Or, it might be, you know, "I like business casual, I like casual-casual, I don't think I ever want to dress formally." Or, someone will say, "Hey, I want to wear a suit everyday even if I'm not meeting anybody, if I'm just sitting in my house talking to myself I'd like to be in a suit. But, I think that, you know when we get to those places that we start understanding who we really are. And so, again, it's the alignment thing and for me, I'm weird. I see things different ways. I communicate in a different way than other people. I use words that people don't tend to use the way I do and, you know, I talk about things that people are really not intended on talking about, you know, like pooping, and I find that, you know, if you're on a stage with 17,000 people and you say, you know, "Think about the last time you were pooping and checking your e-mail at the same time." Almost always the audience will go, "Oh." And then, I'll pause and make a face, I'll go, "Oh, like you don't poop."

FT: Right.

CB: And, the truth is we do and we do check our e-mail whether or not we want to tell other people we do and my point as a marketing person in that moment is to say 'don't make your e-mail 8,000 words long because you know you don't want that kind of, wish that kind of poop on anyone.' And see, there's the bad joke. But, Farnoosh, there's a point because the other opposite of that is saying the same thing everyone says using the same language everyone says and it's the same as me saying to you, "When was the last time you saw a mile marker on the highway?"

FT: Right.

CB: You haven't.

FT: Don't you think it's a shame that we don't encourage weirdness in school? I've done a lot of research on risk and what keeps us from taking risks and I think being weird is a risk sometimes especially in a conforming society. School is sometimes where we are turned off by, you know, taking risks and being independent and being really tapping into our individualism because it such a conforming institution. What do you think about that? Should school start to be more cognizant of promoting, you know, independence and weirdness?

CB: Well, your most recent guest, Seth Godin, talked to one of your other guests, James Altucher, about this and it echoes something that I've been saying for a long time which is that 'school's really, since the 1950s, have been part of the factory system' and we built schools to teach people how to, you know, sit still and we taught people how to sit still because we wanted them to move a cog along a belt somewhere. I live in what used to be a factory in Massachusetts. Before there was Detroit making cars, I live where carriages were made for horse drawn carriages for most of the US. And so, the beams around me are echoing from taking people off their farms so they could come here and put upholstery in horse buggies. And so, I think that school is built around that system whether or not they want to be and imagine what the whole process is. The whole process is to teach kids that are full of energy and wild and athletic to sit still and to burn them into sitting still so that we can say to them 20 years later, "Man, you got fat," and you better move [inaudible].

FT: What happened? Yeah. You let yourself go. I'd like to transition now to some of my So Money questions if you're game.

CB: Go for it.

FT: Okay. Well, we kind of touched on a philosophy which is that being weird is good for you. It helps you make money. Would you say that is your financial philosophy or is there one that's even greater that encompasses, you know, the Chris Brogan money mentality?

CB: I would say my money mentality is probably worked for one thing but I can say that what I've done all along is I believe that 'in the service of others is where you find your money.' So, whenever I'm not where I want to be with money, I don't say "How do I make more money?" I think, "What haven't I done lately to help someone?" And, quite often that's where the money comes. So, my money mentality is all around service.

FT: I love that. How about a financial fail, if you wouldn't mind indulging us really, because I think we've all gone through failure and it's almost cathartic to hear other successful people talk about their biggest failure, in this case, a financial one, but then, one that ultimately I led itself to more success perhaps.

CB: Well, you know, one of my favorite things to talk about entrepreneurship with people is that most people look at it as like you hit a certain success level and then you're there and what's really more true is it's like a saw tooth. You know, there's an up part and down part, an up part and a down part over and over again. And, no one ever says that, no one says "It'll level out and you'll just be great all the time." Last year, I almost did it the same time, about March of 2014. It was the first time my company wasn't able to make payroll. So, I paid my, there's only 3 of us full-time time, we have some contract guys as well and I paid one of the full-time persons, I paid myself a little and my President a little and that was about it and like it hurt. You know, it wasn't like I had a, you know, "Don't worry. I'll just go to the bank and take some extra out there to cover it." It was pretty much down to the bone because I think that's how entrepreneurs tend to operate if they don't take other people's money, which I think of as getting a job. So, that's happened a bunch of times, I mean I've had situations in months since then where I mean the whole rest of the year we recovered and we were great but then January came around this year and now it's the same thing. It was like, "Man, we're just not where we need to be numbers wise." And so, I had to really work at it. Besides that fail, all across 2010 and this number sounds so big to some people but believe me, I didn't have this money. I spent \$400,000 on a whole bunch of things that didn't work and when I say that I didn't have \$400,000. I basically spent everything I was earning on all kinds of projects that didn't ultimately pan out. So, what I learned from that, Farnoosh, is a couple of things. One, it turns out I'm not Richard Branson. I do not have 400 companies worth of employees to execute my wild ideas so I really need to focus on one or two ideas at a time. Two, I found that if you shoot big then you're going to fall big but that's the only way to go. Three, overhead walks on two feet which I got from the late Felix Dennis who founded a whole bunch of magazines in Britain and then Maxim here in the US and I think the final lesson is just that, you know, you can't ride two horses well. You just really have to be on one horse and serving one kind of group of people.

FT: Yeah and sometimes it's scary to just focus on that one thing because in the meantime you're perhaps turning away business but I'm learning more and more speaking to people like you and others who are very successful that that ultimately needs to be part of your journey and your destination is like really just figuring out 'what is the one thing you want to be best at in the world' as opposed to the jack of all trades.

CB: Absolutely and there's a few things that make us nervous about that. I mean everyone says to go into some specific niche and I disagree. I think that we really need sort of a wide palate to work from so that we can really encompass all the things that we're doing. You know, yours is wealth and wealth acquisition and that's a big topic that you can look at with lots of different angles and I like that about what you do. In my case, what I work on is I work on the principles of ownership which is the whole concept of how do I help somebody figure out 'what are the real baselines they need to own their life and thus own their business'. So, I teach people to be owners inside of companies as well as outside of companies so they can either run the shop or just work at a desk. So, I think that with that in mind then everything aligns up in a much better place.

FT: How about a So Money moment, a moment in life where you really achieved financial greatness and I'm sure there are more than a few moments like this but one that really stands out and had some really great takeaways for us.

CB: I'm sort of laughing because this is similar to, I was interviewed by Tony Robbins a long time ago for his internet Money Masters Series and I kept teasing him saying, "Dude, I'm like the poorest dude on this list so I don't know why you have me here. But, okay, because I get to hang out with him." The answer is, you know, the moments in my life where something financially happened were those rare times where you get to either make someone else's dream come true or handle one of your small dreams. So, for instance, one of my best years, I had never ever had like what anyone would consider a nice car or whatever and it's such a material thing to say but I bought myself a Camaro and I was like, "Yeah, I have the Batmobile." I also live in Massachusetts so that car is right now under several feet of snow.

FT: I was born in Worcester which I hear they got like 81 inches so far.

CB: Well, Worcester is, Worcester gets all the horrible weathers so I could tell you that, you know, if you were...

FT: We get pooped on a lot.

CB: You'd be doomed. But, you know, so my big financial idea was to buy a car that I could barely drive you know 3 or 4 months out of the year. Now, the other about financial moments, just to go with this So Money moment is that my favorite ones are just when I was able to make something else happen for somebody else. So, working on something like invisible people which deals with homeless people, dealing with Skipit.org or Skip1.org, sorry, which is feeding people, those are my moments, the moments where I can put some kind of money in somebody else's pocket for a charitable experience are the ones that have lastingly made me feel good because as much as I love the Batmobile, like I said it's under a pile of snow.

FT: Well, it's been proven that when we invest our money in things that create experiences, good memories, charitable actions, those actually correlate to higher levels of happiness. Whereas, buying the Camaro or buying a sweater from Banana Republic, you know, whatever, whatever you're jam is like that is not going, maybe in that moment you're excited about it but it really doesn't last.

CB: Right. No, absolutely, I think that it's a, I think it's one of those things where if you're someone who's not come from money there's that moment you have to go through or you have to spend your money and you have to go "Yey" and then, you know, luckily if you're lucky you kind of grew up

about it, you go “Okay. Now, I’m going to try to live like somebody different.” And, that’s the way I look at it. I don’t need 20 really fancy watches. I have 2 that I like, that’s all.

FT: How about habits, Chris, what are some habits that you practice that necessarily help keep your business and also your financial health in check?

CB: I’ve been working on this awhile and I think that, you know, really good discipline is basically based on good commitment, which is based on loving yourself. So, for instance, I go to the gym quite often and I think that habit of really working my body helps me in a lot of way with my business because it reminds me that, you know, your goals sometimes don’t look like they’re as close as they are but they’re made out of what you do every day. I think that the other kind of habits that I do that are a little bit more tactical for people are: I don’t read e-mail first thing in the morning, I always tell people that your e-mail is the perfect delivery system of other people’s priorities. And so, why would you ever want to start your day...

FT: That’s genius.

CB: Reading other people’s stuff, so.

FT: Thanks for framing it that way. I’d never thought of it like that.

CB: Well, if you think about it, that’s what we do in the morning because we’re sort of wired to be reactive and we’re wired to think, “I hope somebody who bought my something or rather isn’t mad at me.” I mean it’s kind of how we’re all built or the opposite, “I hope someone has some great opportunity that will stir me astray from my mission.” But, I think that if we really kind of work from our mission first and we work from our real intentions, our goals and what we committed to ourselves then we have time to slide in other people’s stuff and I think that I’m not one of those people that has those horrible e-mail ‘out of offices’ that say “Thank you. I check my e-mail twice a day at my convenience but I check my e-mail at my convenience.”

FT: Yes. I’ve gotten a lot of bounce backs like that. It’s a little annoying. “I check e-mail at 12 o’clock every Tuesday, so if I don’t get to you right away that’s why. Thanks.”

CB: Exactly.

FT: And, last but not least, Chris, I’d love to know and I have a few questions but I want to respect our time. We only have a couple of minutes so I’ll ask my favorite of my So Money Fill in the Blanks which is that ‘what is the one thing that you spend your money on that makes your life easier or better or both?’

CB: Wow, that’s a great question. Wow, you know, I’m trying to think a lot deeper than I think I probably have to but, you know, I would say that I keep my technology pretty up-to-date and I’m not usually Mr. Needing the Bleeding Edge but I think it’s kind of important to have the right technology to do your job. So, I have a big old computer on my desk. I have a nice thin laptop and a tablet and a phone. So, I would say that that’s probably what makes me happy. It makes it all better and easier and everything works better that way.

FT: Alright, that’s a great answer. You don’t have to think about it too hard. That was a really, really good answer. Chris Brogan, thank you so much, CEO of Owner Media Group and I will be checking

out the Brave New Year, totally you're not, you know, this is completely on my own. I'm very much interested in this and I hope that listeners will also check it out. Thanks so much.

CB: I'm so happy to be here. Thanks, Farnoosh.