

EPISODE 392

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

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[INTRODUCTION]

[00:01:22.6]

FT: Welcome to So Money everyone. I'm your host, Farnoosh Torabi. 24 hours until the new CNBC show premieres. Follow the Leader, starts tomorrow, April 6th at 10 PM eastern pacific. DVR that, set your alarms or be awake while it's airing and then I will also be on Twitter just live chatting. There'll be like kind of a behind the scenes after hours live Twitter chat.

So if you have questions about the show, want to know what's really going on, I'll be live on Twitter taking your questions. So I just wanted to remind you of that. Very excited and also really looking forward to unveiling today's guest. He's a New York Times bestselling author, Chris Guillebeau.

He's written *The Happiness of Pursuit*, *The \$100 Startup*, you might have heard that one, it was a New York Times bestseller and now, he has a new book out called *Born for This: How to Find the Work You were Meant to Do*. It's actually out today, April 5th. It's his latest book which talks

about the intersection of joy, money and flow which he believes are all key to helping you mind the work that perfectly suits your unique interests, skills and experiences.

More about Chris, he has spent his lifetime self-employed, so he knows a thing or two about being an entrepreneur and his real passion is travel. He's visited every single country in the world, a 193 countries all before his 35th birthday. He also hosts a yearly summit every summer in Portland, Oregon called the World Domination Summit.

You know, just a small title, where creative people come together to attend key notes, attendee led meet ups, workshops, a city wide scavenger hunt and even a Guinness World Record attempt. So if you're planning on being in Portland, Oregon in August, this is the event to checkout.

Some of the things that we talk about with Chris. He talks about how this book is really meant to help people win the career lottery but what does he actually mean by that? That's actually a term that makes me nervous because when I think of career lottery, you have no control over your career path and I would hate to believe that and did you know that Chris has been to Iran?

Kind of putting me to shame because I'm Iranian and I've only been there once and I was way too young to remember. I was an infant and he was there not too long ago so he tells me a little bit about that experience. I was dying to find out and then what is his \$10 rule? What is a \$10 rule? What? So we talk about money as well.

Here is Chris Guillebeau.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:03:53.3]

FT: Chris Guillebeau, welcome to So Money.

[00:03:55.3]

CB: Hey Farnoosh.

[00:03:55.7]

FT: You are a hard man to nail down but I'm so proud that I've got you on the show.

[00:04:00.7]

CB: I am so honored to be here, thank you.

[00:04:02.6]

FT: Congratulations on your new book, your latest is called *Born for This: How to Find the Work You were Meant to Do*, and of course, your previous books were bestsellers, *The \$100 Startup*, so famous and of course *The Happiness of Pursuit*. I love the title of that book. With *Born for This*, the goal here as I understand is to really help readers win what you call “the career lottery”.

I have to say though Chris, to here you call — to put those two words in one sentence like “career lottery” makes me nervous. It makes me feel like I don't have control over my career destiny. But what are you really trying to get across with that?

[00:04:41.5]

CB: Yes, it is an interesting word, “lottery”. I do a lot of research for all my books and this one in particular, it's been a three year process of talking to all kinds of people from many different backgrounds who had all found or created their dream jobs and they actually tended to use this phrase, “career lottery”.

“I feel like I've won the lottery, I go to work every day because I want to go to work. I would do it for free but fortunately, I don't have to because I also get paid well.” So I wanted to extrapolate the lessons for these people, you know, what have they learned that other people can follow, what are the actionable strategies? What is unique just for them and what are things that

everyone can do to get closer to winning the career lottery? because the lottery itself is not hackable, it is random as you said, you have no influence over the results.

But what I found is that the career lottery, there actually are things that you can do not just to get ahead. It's not like a rat race thing, it's much more about fulfillment and purpose and true wealth which of course includes money but it also includes life satisfaction working on something that you believe in and using your skills to the best of your ability.

[00:05:49.2]

FT: I can see this book as being the next iteration of perhaps *The 4-Hour Work Week*, where that is the very first career books I guess in modern times that really transformed the way that people think about structuring their careers and so in that context, where does *Born for This* fit? How does it differentiate? Do you find that people are still interested in this “work smarter not harder attitude”, what did you find?

[00:06:20.7]

CB: Sure, I actually am a big believer in hard work. I do think it's important to work, to work smart but when I look back at my career, I've actually worked pretty hard for what I have done. When I think of a trajectory of the philosophy, I go back even way before that. I think about the book, *Your Money or Your Life*.

I think about Barbara Sher, a book called *Wishcraft*, which was very, very helpful, I believe in the early 90's in terms of helping people how to visualize, “Okay, I don't actually have to follow a traditional career path. I can create something for myself.” There is power in dreaming but it's not just dreaming. It's not about manifesting something or visualizing something. It's that I can have this dream and I can take practical steps to get closer to that dream.

So my goal with the new book is that readers won't just pick up the book and say, “Oh that's interesting,” or, “I like the book.” My goal is always that they will read the book and say, “Oh I read this and I applied this. I did something different in my career. I kept my day job maybe but I started a side hustle to bring in some extra income.” Or, “This helped me transitioned out of my

day job into something more valuable and more meaningful for myself.” My goal is every page there’s something that the reader can do. I know that you do this in your book too. But I really want it to be prescriptive and practical and actionable.

[00:07:37.9]

FT: Yeah, it’s very important. What did you learn through this process that you were able to apply to your own life? What was the big lesson that you came across that was a big aha moment for you personally?

[00:07:50.5]

CB: Yeah, great question. I think I had this moment of awareness that I have not followed a linear path in life and I’ve done a lot of different things. I was an aid worker, been an entrepreneur for 15 years. Started this career as a writer, had this quest of going to every country in the world and maybe this is egocentric, but I guess for a while I thought that was unique. I was like, “Well I guess I’m special because I have followed this non-linear path”.

What I found is that actually most successful people or at least a lot of them, they all have zigzags and they all have made different choices. They have gone down one path and they have actually gone back and done something different. Most of the really successful people who had found their dream job didn’t necessarily know what that was going to be when they were six years old and thinking about what they wanted to be when they grew up or even when they went to college or decided what they were going to do about their education.

Lots of them have more than one career and as I said, non-linear path and eventually, it brought them to whatever that dream job was. I guess I realized maybe I’m not that special, maybe it’s awareness of looking back and there’s a lot of people like this which is great.

[00:08:55.4]

FT: Well really, what it’s teaching people is to embrace uncertainty and I think it was Tony Robbins and probably many people before him who preached that the more uncertainty that you

can stomach in your life, the more you're able to embrace that wholeheartedly, I think the more success you'll have.

Because people like certainty. We like knowing what's around the corner, it's reassuring, it's less scary but maybe you just have to embrace the unknown sometimes in order to get ahead and to leap further along than somebody else who's just staying the course.

[00:09:35.3]

CB: Yeah, I think so and it's not just about taking risks necessarily. Maybe it's about thinking about risk differently and so it's not like, "Be bold, take this leap of faith into uncertainty." I think it's about building this foundation. There's this Steve Jobs quote that says, "When you look back, you can't connect the dots looking forward. You don't necessarily see that everything is building towards something but when you look back later, you're able to see."

So you have to trust that the dots will connect to something and I really like that quote but I guess what I'm trying to add to that philosophy is not just about trusting, it's not just about making this leap of faith. There are actually steps that you can take to build a bridge from one dot to the next. So that it doesn't feel so uncertain, so that it doesn't feel that I am taking this huge risk all the time.

[00:10:19.1]

FT: What I like about *Born for This* is that it's not just another book about how to become an entrepreneur which is obviously one way to win the career lottery for some. But for others, it's also like, "How do I actually win the career lottery at a company, working for somebody else?" Someone's got to do it.

[00:10:37.6]

CB: Of course. Well I have my own bias of course and I wrote a book how to quit your job and being an entrepreneur, that was *The \$100 Startup*, and I think what I have learned — another thing, I've learned through this process is you can actually be very fulfilled working at an

organization or a company and it's very important to pay attention to not just our ideal work but our ideal working conditions.

Those are things like how we like to spend our time, how much time we prefer working on our own versus working with other people, how we're motivated when we're working and incentivized for our work, and so lot of people are going to find their dream job within a company or an organization. I talked a woman who was the first female firefighter on Mississauga, Ontario more than 20 years ago and she's been a firefighter for 23 years now and it was her dream and she kind of went through all the challenges and obstacles to overcome and achieve that dream.

That's a great example because if you want to be a firefighter, obviously it's a hugely rewarding career that's going to save lives and make a tremendous difference in the world. But you can't be an entrepreneurial firefighter, you can't be a freelance firefighter. You have to go through the process, the discipline and all of that. But I think it's good if you are an employee, no problem, but you have to take control of your own destiny. You have to take control of your career.

So I wrote a lot about being a self-employed employee, where you are essentially becoming the sensible employee, you are looking out for yourself. Maybe you are building something on the side to create security and give you increased confidence even if you decide to stay in a day job. That's a great place to be in. When you go to work because you want to go to work not because you have to.

[SPONSOR BREAK]

[00:12:11.9]

FT: Most nights, usually around 6 o'clock at night at my house, you'll hear, "What do you want to have for dinner?" Yeah, my husband and I are the worst at meal planning and too often, we end up ordering in or making bowls of cereal neither of which is healthy, appetizing or cost effective. It's no way to live people.

So it is with such joy and relief that I'm introducing today's sponsor, Prep Dish. Prep Dish is a subscription based meal planning service that takes the stress out of planning your meals. With Prep Dish, you get an e-mail every week that contains a grocery list of seasonal ingredients plus instructions for prepping your meals ahead of time and for just two hours of prep, you get a week's worth of delicious meals.

I'm talking Romesco baked salmon with roasted sweet potatoes, turkey and zucchini lasagna. Prep Dish is offering So Money listeners a special rate of \$4 for the first months' worth of meal plans. It's a dollar per week. Go to PrepDish.com/somoney to start today and by the way, they specialize in gluten-free, dairy-free and paleo meals for all you health nuts out there. PrepDish.com/somoney.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:13:20.5]

FT: Chris, you've been to every country in the world?

[00:13:24.1]

CB: I have, yeah.

[00:13:24.9]

FT: Have you been to Iran?

[00:13:26.9]

CB: I have, yes.

[00:13:27.9]

FT: When were you there? My parents were Iranian, I was in Iran when I was eight months old. I had my first birthday there. I was born in the States but I've not been back since for a host of reasons, but when did you go and what was that like?

[00:13:42.7]

CB: Yeah, so this was an 11 year quest and it wasn't like I was doing it all full time but it was my big focus for at least six of those years while I was writing and building the business. So I spent about half the time navigating the process of visas and flights and all of that. So for Iran in particular, I actually haven't done a proper tour of the mainland.

I am actually hoping to do that later this year but for Iran, I went to Kish Island, which is in Iranian territory which is just a little bit off the coast of the UAE, the United Arab Emirates. I did that maybe, when was that? I think 2011 or 2012 and it was a nice place.

[00:14:20.2]

FT: So you went to the Bahamas of Iran basically.

[00:14:23.2]

CB: The Bahamas of Iran, yeah. Well, yeah sure. I mean it's a little bit different than Bahamas off of coastal US, but sure.

[00:14:30.0]

FT: Yeah, well okay so that's cool. I was like, "Really every single one?" How about North Korea?

[00:14:36.3]

CB: Yeah, the countries that people ask about are not necessarily the most difficult ones. People ask about Iran and people ask about Iraq and North Korea but the more difficult

countries actually is a visa situation. It was small countries in Africa that don't have a lot of tourism, maybe they have a dictator that runs the country that doesn't want a lot of people to go in.

So those were actually the bigger challenges like Eritrea, Somalia, Central African Republic some of those kind of places. But I persisted and I was willing to show at places without a visa also just in hopes of it working out — speaking of uncertainty.

[00:15:11.1]

FT: Wow, I have a guest coming on the show later in May, a female traveler, who like you her goal is to really travel as many countries as possible and every year, she goes to a few destinations that are quite challenging to enter including North Korea and it turned into a book just because it was such an experience and so I'm dying to get all the details from her when she comes on.

So given that you have now this amazing career that you have designed, that you're helping people with finding their career passion and of course, you have this other passion of travel, I would love to learn how money plays into all of that for you whether it's a lesson that you can teach us, whether it's a financial lesson that has helped you support you in your career maybe even as you're travelling. What is something that you feel that is maybe your money mantra?

[00:16:05.9]

CB: Yeah, absolutely. So I'll give you a big picture thing and then a very practical thing. So the big picture thing is, I didn't begin the quest to go to every country in the world when I hadn't travelled at all. When you kind of work towards something, your goal increases, you gain confidence and so I travelled for quite a bit.

I was living in West Africa as an aid worker, was there for four years in Sierra Leone and Liberia. So I'd been to maybe 30 countries or so and then there was this moment that changed everything for me. I was riding a train in Eastern Europe and I was making notes in my notebook

of all the different countries I've been to. I was always a big list person. I like to make lists and I love checking things off.

And so I wrote a list of all the countries I've been to and I was also very goal oriented. I always had goals every day, every week, every month and so I set a goal to go to a 100 countries and I did kind of like some rough math and rough calculation and I realized that it would cost approximately \$30,000 to get to the 100 countries.

So once I realized that, I was like, "Wow, I don't have to pay \$30,000 tomorrow. This is an investment I can make over a number of years. To me, it was absolutely worth it to say all of those experiences that I'm going to have. I'm actually choose to value this and even if I don't have \$30,000 in the bank, my friends are buying cars back home that cost \$30,000 or \$20,000. My friends are going into debt for all kinds of things," right?

So it's my investment. I'm going to choose to invest in this life experience because I believe it's valuable and rewarding and I'm going to be frugal elsewhere in order to do that. So that was the big picture that guided things for a long time and maybe the smaller practical thing is, I do actually have a habit of being too frugal. For a long time when I travelled, I would be in situations where I was unwilling to spend money for something that I believe was too expensive and so for example, in an airport I would not buy any food because I'm like, "Oh it's ridiculous. I'm not going to pay \$9 or something."

[00:18:01.1]

FT: The markups.

[00:18:02.1]

CB: Right, exactly and so then, I was self-defeating because it was like, "I'll show them. I'm not going to pay their \$9 sandwich. I will just be tired."

[00:18:11.6]

FT: I'll just starve.

[00:18:13.2]

CB: Yeah, I'll just be really tired at the end of the day. I won't have any energy, I won't actually be able to do the work that I'm supposed to do which is probably going to make a lot more than \$9. So the rule I set for myself was the \$10 rule and maybe it's actually gone up a little bit now but at the time, it was like if I am travelling and there's something that I can purchase for myself that will cost \$10 or less that will help me feel better or help me be a little bit more comfortable, I will buy it without thinking about it.

I will ask myself that quick question, "Will this help me? Will this \$9 sandwich be good for me?" If yes, then I will buy it and the \$10 rule overtime, it doesn't actually add up to a ton of money but it adds up to a lot more wellbeing. So once I started doing that, I was a lot less stressed.

[00:18:54.0]

FT: And of course, maybe it's a few \$10 purchases. It's not like if I come across 16 things that are all worth \$10, so there were some parameters around that I suspect.

[00:19:05.3]

CB: There were some parameters, yeah but the idea was like I'm not going to wait two hours in the rain to take the bus if there's another way to do it, I'm going to do it that way and I've spent so many experiences of waiting two hours in the rain for the bus that I was like, "Okay, I'm done with that. And there's a time for that, that's great. But now, I actually want to focus on some other stuff."

[00:19:27.9]

FT: What was your upbringing like and specifically, your financial environment? What were some of the lessons learned as a kid growing up, maybe just one that was very pivotal for you

and now as an adult, you look back on it and say, "That that was a very defining money moment for you as a kid."

[00:19:46.3]

CB: Yeah, that's really good. I don't really know if I thought that much about that. My parents were divorced and for a while, my mom married this guy who was an in the Air Force so we moved around a lot and we were in the Philippines for about two years when I was six to age eight or so and my dad was back in the States.

I remember he sent me an allowance and he would mail, it was either one dollar or \$2 I forgot, every week and so I look forward to that and I can remember saving up my dollars. I would try to save to get to \$10 or something and then I think he changed it at some point, maybe here's what it was.

It was a \$1 a week allowance and then he started adding an additional dollar and the additional dollar was to buy something or to have some kind of experience. The \$1 was for me to do whatever I want with and there was some kind of next level thing with the additional dollar. I'll have to go back and ask him what it was.

But I remember being careful about that and separating the money and seeing it as this early form of a savings account. So between that and some other stuff, I think I did actually learned some good habits in terms of money. I actually was a big believer in saving, in delayed gratification, in investing for the future from a young age.

[00:20:58.3]

FT: I love that your dad sent you the money weekly so it was something to wait for and anticipate and maybe probably inherently taught you some good discipline.

[00:21:09.0]

CB: Right and I'm also looking forward to it arriving, there's this moment of anticipation. That was probably smart of him to do it weekly because now as an adult, I can think, "Well, he is mailing it to the Philippines, maybe it's easier to send \$4 once a month." But it's that thing for a kid, I think it's actually better to get it on a more regular basis like every week it's coming. So he was probably smart that way.

[00:21:28.1]

FT: I love that and I hope you do reconnect with him and ask more about that because I'm sure he has a perspective too that he hasn't shared with you on that.

[00:21:36.3]

CB: Absolutely, yeah. I will send him an e-mail after this call.

[00:21:39.3]

FT: You can thank me later. Chris, tell me a little bit about your number one financial habit if you have something that you do regularly. I know you're big into lists and you're very organized but when it comes to money, what's something that you do?

[00:21:53.2]

CB: Yeah, so here's something I do that affects my money, my life, my career, everything. Once a year, I do this process called an annual review and I actually spend a few days or even up to a week to looking at what I've done, everything, all the lessons of the year. So I am looking at career lessons, life lessons, relationship, projects, but also financial.

In financial, I am looking at three categories like the income category, the savings category, and then the giving category. I want to maintain healthy habits and all three of those and then I set goals for the next year. So there's this whole process that I go through and then the goals are like, "Okay, I have four or five different projects. Here's my number and my matrix that I hope to achieve for each of these and then I hope to save either a certain percentage. Or it's a dollar

figure and then I hope to give to charity, some appropriate percentage that is challenging for me that I actually feel like I'm giving substantially."

So I've been doing that process and it helps a lot. I think it was a year or two ago, I realized I'd actually could have gotten off the giving track. I continued to give but I didn't increased my giving as the income was increasing. So by doing that review, it really helped me because I could look back and see. I'm like, "Okay, I say that I am giving. I say that I have this life of gratitude but here's the data. The data is very clear. I get to put the numbers in my spreadsheet. I am actually not giving as much as I say I do or as much as I intend to so now, I can force correct because I know exactly what I need to do."

[00:23:22.5]

FT: Chris, I want to thank you so much for your time. You're heading on a how many country tour for this book?

[00:23:29.1]

CB: Yeah, it's just 30 cities. So it's 30 cities mostly North America.

[00:23:31.1]

FT: 30 cities, got it.

[00:23:33.1]

CG: But then a few places in Europe and Australia as well.

[00:23:36.3]

FT: Well, we can't wait to cheer you on, on the sidelines but thank you so much for stopping by on our show to give us the goods about *Born for This: How to Find the Work You were Meant to Do*. Chris Guillebeau, thanks so much.

[00:23:49.8]

CB: Thank you so much Farnoosh.

[END]