

## Transcription - John Tarnoff Part 2

---

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and we have with us John Tarnoff, our guest and our guest host Jamie Wadley. Today we're continuing our discussion with John Tarnoff and we're going to look at how you plan, when you're in this middle career stage, to make some changes and whether they have to be, in fact, very dramatic changes or whether they can be refining something that you really enjoy doing at the moment.

I apologize for all the technical issues and a bit of a croaky voice, I'm delighted to meet you and I'm enthralled by what you're talking about. I think I'm a prime candidate.

Great.

I said to John, you're our case study, so sit there and be patient.

I'm happy with being your case study, that's good. Look, how can I put it? Since I started to work for myself or beyond that actually, I feel as though I need to change careers about every 10 or so years and have been fairly true to that. What you were saying before about not identifying with the position so much, it's about more who we are and the skills we bring to the table, is the common denominator with everything I've done. That's becoming more and more clear as time has rolled on and in the last few months, especially with the new journey I'm on.

It actually leads perfectly into the second question because I know the background of what you're talking about. The second question was how do we give ourselves permission to pursue a career that is based on a passion or a hobby? And I know that this particular career change for Jamie, this time around, is based on a passion that perhaps up to this point in his life, he didn't give himself permission to follow. I know and our listeners know that for me, some years ago, I turned what was a passion into what I would like to see as something that is more of a career but I have struggled with giving myself permission to do that because for 20+ years I saw it as a passion, as an interest, and it's that switch from, okay, I'm doing this now as the focus of what I'm doing not the relief from the other things that I'm doing. Where and when and how do I give myself permission to do that and to continue to do it when it doesn't work all of the time, when I don't get the immediate success that I want?

Right. It's a really interesting question and I've got a lot of thoughts about this and so I'll kind of jumble a few together. This goes back to me to this, this Joseph Campbell idea of follow your passion and the money will follow. This was something, I think all of us on the call are of a certain generation, we kind of came up at a time where there was a lot of idealism and we felt like we didn't want to do what our parents had done. We didn't want to just go, you know, belly up nose down into the corporate world and we wanted to have some kind of sense of purpose. I kind of fell off that path somewhere along the ways, but interestingly younger generations have kind of picked up the charge, particularly Gen Z are very, very intent on combining meaning and purpose with the work that they do. The problem, of course, is that it's not always easy to figure out what your passion is.

That's a question that I think comes up a lot. Certainly for me, people looking at transition,

they're going well, this work is no longer satisfying me in my 40s or 50s and I don't have that same sense of certainty about it, it's purpose and I'm looking for something more, but I don't quite know what it is. Or if there is a long held, but unrealized dream or passion, the question becomes, well, how do I go about doing that today? I think there are pitfalls associated with that for many people because in some ways that passion or that dream may be outdated. It may be something that they've held on to for many years, for decades, but it's important, I think as a starting point, to re-examine the passion, to re-examine what held you back from doing it. The fear associated with that in many cases, this is a family dynamic that kind of pushes us into a particular career that we're not necessarily happy with or suited for, but we have no other reference point. I won't tell the long story, but when I got into the entertainment industry as initially a literary agent and then a film production executive and producer, my family was not too pleased about this. They were not too keen on the idea of me going to Hollywood and being part of this dirty business. Even when I was doing well and getting promoted, at one point my father came to me and said, "look, if you still want to go to law school, I'll support you on that." I'm thinking, why would you kind of deny that passion and that purpose that I'm experiencing? So these things are hard to sort out.

But one thing I would say for those of us who are making the pivot, is that we really just have to do some research. I mean, there's some common sense steps that we can apply to this to really make this work out and not be a kind of an all or nothing proposition or something that we decide to do in a vacuum without any feedback or any exploration of what that could be. So that would be the first step, is to really look at this as a kind of a business proposition and say, well, if I'm going to go off and invoke that passion or kind of really give it a shot, let's be practical about it. What does this look like? Who's the buyer for this and it goes back, and I'd use this in my practice, to the four ikigai questions, the Japanese questions around life's purpose.

What do you love to do? What do you do well? What does your world need? The typical thing is what does the world need, but the world is too big. It really needs to be about what your world is about, whether it's the business world, the personal world. What can you get paid for? Right. What is something that's viable out there? So these are explorations that we can do and we can do them, should do them in concert with our closest friends, family and advisors to help plan this thing and it doesn't have to happen overnight. And the final thing I'll say about this is is that you want to inject this concept of prototyping into the process where one way or another before you leap, you do a little bit of experimentation.

Now, whether this is shadowing someone who is an existing professional in the world that you want to get in to or increasing research into this, this world or kind of setting yourself up with it. If you're employed and you're thinking about making the transition, don't just quit your job. Do this is a side gig for you to sort out if you can build some traction, if it actually is as good as you thought it might be when you were fantasizing about it. So there are lots of steps you can take to make this a more of a gradual process and really kind of feel good about it and overcome some of the obstacles that may be in your way, avoid some of the mistakes that you would otherwise make and set yourself up for success.

It seems to be on the premise that it's going to be a big change, a complete change. I know that for many of our listeners who have traveled Fulyana's journey through her career, that she made these decisions moving away from the corporate world for all sorts of reasons, but she refined what she was doing in the corporate world to what she is doing outside of the

corporate world. I just want to reinforce for people that it's not about a complete change necessarily, even though Jamie will talk about complete changes because that works for him. It might be about refining what you're doing or finding something in that review of all of the things you do, you find one thing that is the passion that you wish you could do more of, that you find the rewarding part of the job and bring that down into the refined details that you're doing.

I think that's a great observation. I just want to say that the majority of the clients that I work with are in that latter situation that you're describing, Kim, where it is not about making this complete and utter change, but it's really about kind of understanding what are the things that you want to keep doing. What are the things that you want to stop doing and negotiating with yourself, as well as with others, to take this into another phase.

Thank you. I'm just really echoing on what Kim said there. What I've found with each change I've made, even though they've been quite different areas of expertise, I've taken more and more to the party each time by bringing experience I've had in one field to another and it hasn't blurred the lines. It still allows me to pursue the new passion, but it often adds tools to what I can bring to that new area that I never waste at all. I think my underlying drive has been to do things with people, I find recently, with people and that's been the corner stone of everything I've done. You mentioned marketing before. I've done the marketing, I've been in the corporate world, I've done a whole slew of things, but none of these things ever gets wasted. It's just like another tile in a mosaic that can make us better when we finally do achieve that place where we're in a place about passion. As we get older, I think it shouldn't get harder, it should almost get easier because we're so more skilled in our world view, our tools that we can bring to a new profession.

I think that's right and I love your analogy of the mosaic. And I think that's that spot on because none of this gets lost. It all works. What I find interesting is that so much of the value that we bring as older professionals is just this life experience. The experience of just getting stuff done and working with people and understanding how and when to speak, when not to speak, when to ask questions and feeling like, you know, we've been around a while, we're kind of entitled to be okay with ourselves and to really have a sense of equanimity and acceptance about who we are, going forward. That can be enormously engaging to other people. If you kind of walk into the room and you're not trying to sell someone or make an impression or try to puff yourself up or whatever, you're just kind of there about them to really serve the room, well, that makes a big difference.

It's interesting because we have a recurring theme with our guests, talking about this servant leadership approach, but also about how often, when they move careers or they move industries, that something that was almost in built and basic in one industry, they will suggest in another area and it's like earth shattering. What a change. Thank goodness that we got you in because you knew this thing that we'd never thought of and it amazes me that. I guess because I've always worked across all sorts of industries and not thought about, well if this works here, it will obviously work there. It's about when people are in one industry that they don't look at other industries, they'll see other things happening around them, but they don't relate it to their industry. For example, you go into a restaurant and you think that there's no system for ordering the coffees or whatever else it is. In any other environment outside of the food service industry, this is a process. There has to be a system and maybe that's just how I

work, there must be a system because I'm based in quality management system, so there must be a process, it must be written down so anyone can do it. I'll go somewhere and think, why don't they do that? If you suggested it, it's like, oh yeah, that'd be a good idea, but they don't know where to start, yet they also experience this in other places that they go, so they're aware of it. They just don't relate it back to what they're doing themselves. We do have a lot to offer if people will listen.

I guess that the other part of that is having the confidence to know that what you're saying or what you're suggesting or what you're choosing to do will be heard in the way that you're feeling it. It's about the communication. So how do we fine tune our communication skills about our changes when we've perhaps have not allowed ourselves that kind of a discussion?

Well, I think you said before, it's about servant leadership, right? If you walk into a room as a servant leader, then it becomes a lot easier to develop a relationship with someone and actually be much more effective. It comes back down to Steven Covey, you know, the Seven Habits of Highly Successful People and the idea of first strive to understand, then to be understood. So ask questions first. Then voice your opinion. I think in our competitive culture, there is this tendency for people to expect and reward the more assertive in the room who lead with their idea. I think that's changing. I think that perhaps if that's a more masculine trait, I think we're getting a little bit more feminine into the equation, which is a good balance where there is more listening, more understanding, more accepting going on because that happens out of that.

Do you think that the rise of interaction via technology has assisted that, in that we have to wait for the next person to say something, that we can't ignore people in a room as easily?

I don't know. I think, for example, this meeting that we're on right now talking across continents and it's interesting, I know this is an audio podcast, but we're recording this on Zoom where we're seeing one another. As we were saying before, the advantage of that is that we do get to see one another's faces and we do get to get a sense of the expression. So that's a positive, I think, for communication. On the other hand, for years, we used to do everything on the phone. So we had to communicate through the nuance of audio only. I think that had its own set of skills that we mastered back in the day. I think we were very valuable as a species and we're very intuitive, even if we're not particularly aware of that, but it does come down to intention, I think, at the end of the day. If you're going into a room with a particular intention to listen, to support the efforts that's going on, or to share value that you believe is relevant, that's a great way to start.

We'll move on to our next question and I think we've kind of talked about it a little bit. Do you see an emerging trend for late career change?

Absolutely. It's a necessity because we're no longer in this era of the 40 year career where the stages of life, where you get a good education, you to work for 40 years and then you get to retire. For all sorts of reasons, some of them having to do with longevity, some of them having to do with economics, some of them having to do with identity and spirit, that's all gone. I think the new paradigm for me, that the three stage paradigm, is not so much education, career and retirement, is it starts with self awareness and I talk about this when I

work with young people. Figure out who you are, back to those those four ikigai questions. If you can figure out who you are, why you do what you do, what you love, what you don't love, how you want to serve the world, that gives you an opportunity to go to work, but to be generative, just kind of start off delivering value. Then you don't work for 40 years and retire. You work in various capacities. It's not going to be a 40 year career anymore. It's going to be a 60 year career. It's going to have various modes. You're going to be working for companies, then you're going to be taking sabbaticals, you're going to be getting more education at some point, you may be working on your own, then you may be working back for a company later. It's all very non-linear. The end of it is going to be about giving back, taking all of the experience and the wisdom that you've accumulated over these years as a professional in your world and helping the next generations that are coming up behind you to do well. So that's the way I think it's changing.

Time for a break once again. Join us for part three, the final part of this discussion with John Tarnoff. For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and we have guest host Jamie Wadley with us, this is Inside Exec.