

THE **GRIT 'N' HUSTLE** SHOW

WITH **TODD HERMAN**

Interview with **TUCKER MAX**

**EPISODE
5**



How Tucker Max Turned A Funny Email Into A Blockbuster Writing Career & Overcame Toxic Behavior To Build A Successful Start-up



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ABOUT TODD HERMAN

Personally I am:

- A husband to a beautiful, smart and financially sharp woman, who really wants a third baby (unfortunately we haven't mastered two),
- A father to two little girls, whom aren't very good sleepers, giggle a lot and are obsessed with 'horsey's' and merry-go-rounds,
- A daily letter writer. I've written over 3600 personal letters to people. (5 a week since I was 23),
- A farmboy from Schuler, Alberta, Canada.
- A New Yorker, living in Chelsea.

Professionally I:

- Created the 90 Day Year. A program for business owners who are frustrated with their level of performance and want to learn the art & science of execution,
- Failed at several businesses. (One of those I lost my entire life savings.) But, I also won at enough to turn them into seven and eight figure ventures,
- Worked all over the world. 82 countries total,
- Coached thousands upon thousands of athletes on developing their mental game,
- Advised & Mentored hundreds of business owners on high performance and personal leadership.
- Built a software company.
- And, I'm not done yet...

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Episode 5 – Tucker Max

Show notes at: <http://bit.ly/MaxGrit>

How Tucker Max Turned a Funny Email Into a Blockbuster Writing Career and Overcame Toxic Behavior to Build a Successful Startup

Todd Herman: Welcome to Episode #5. In Episode #4 you heard from an eight-figure eCommerce powerhouse and the stressful call from the Philadelphia Major Crimes Division when he was summoned to come down to the office immediately. You'll want to check out that interview with Gary Nealon in Episode #4.

Today's episode I'm with three-time New York Times best-selling author, publishing innovator, and movie producer, Tucker Max. Warning, there is strong language used throughout this interview.

Welcome to the Grit 'n' Hustle podcast with your host, entrepreneur, and internationally acclaimed ultra-high performance and leadership advisor, Todd Herman. The place to hear 100% real and raw stories of how high achievers actually made it with no cotton candy fluff, no filler, and no fades, just actionable inspiration to keep you learning, growing, and striving to reach new personal bests.

Without any more delay, here's your host, Todd Herman.

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If you've ever heard about the value of having a mentor or mentorship, I just wrote the definitive guide on finding and becoming a mentor. If you just text the word "hustle" to 38470 it will magically appear in your hands through the power of good old technology.



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I have had the great fortune of having some incredible mentors in my life and those mentors easily accelerated my path to achieving new successes by steering me around roadblocks that would've normally slowed me down and also introducing me to better quality people to help me out as well.

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Now, on to today's show.

Tucker Max is the co-founder and CEO of [Book In A Box](#), a company that turns book writing and publishing into a service. He has written three New York Times best sellers which have sold over 3 million copies worldwide. He is credited with being the originator of the literary genre, fratire.

He is only the third writer after Malcolm Gladwell and Michael Lewis to ever have three books on the New York Times non-fiction best-seller list at one time. He co-wrote and produced a movie based on his life and book also titled, [I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell](#).

He was nominated to the Time Magazine 100 Most Influential list in 2009. He currently lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Veronica, and son, Bishop, who you will hear in the background of today's interview.

Not only are you going to hear about the exact process of taking a book from idea to execution, but you are going to get a chance to hear about how a law degree graduate became one of the most polarizing figures in pop culture as well as the deep inner work he had to work through to get out of his own way and grow into a successful entrepreneur.

Enjoy the interview with Tucker Max; but, beware there is, shall we say strong language, used throughout.



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Todd: Tucker, thank you so much for joining us today on the Grit 'n' Hustle podcast.

Tucker: Of course man, thank you for having me.

Todd: And a little audience awareness, we have got Tucker's little one joining us as well so we might get some squeaks and squeals in the background too.

Tucker: That's vicious.

Todd: Keeping it real. So I just did a little intro and bio on you, Tucker. I would love to know or for you to fill everybody in on some of the exciting projects that you're doing right now.

Tucker: Aside from fatherhood, obviously, the sort of big thing I've spent the last year on now, and is pretty much my full-time job, is [Book In A Box](#). It is a company that I developed with Zach Obront. We kind of stumbled into it but it became a huge thing pretty quickly and now this is all I focus on.

We basically turn writing and publishing into a service. If you have a good book idea or you think you might have a book idea, before you have to spend anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500 writing it and dealing with the publishing process and all of that nonsense, now all you have to do is talk to us on the phone for about 12 to 15 hours and we do everything else.

Todd: That is a perfect lead in because we're going to pull the thread all the way back to the beginning of Tucker Max's life, which has actually led you to where you are at, and we can get into some of the tips and tricks and core strategies on how to actually become a best seller; because you are a three-time New York Times best seller.

You were essentially the first person that became famous from launching a blog. Would you say that's a pretty correct assessment?



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Tucker: Definitely the first one who became famous in terms of writing. There were people who did stuff on the internet but they were mainly tech people. I launched before the word blog even existed in 2001 or 2002 or something like that.

That was back even before MySpace. That was when GeoCities was still up.

Todd: GeoCities.

{laughter}

Tucker: Right, exactly. I was the first one to put legitimate, serious, funny writing up on the internet for free.

Todd: Where did that idea come from? Were you doing it as a project because you wanted to get into becoming a published author or something? Where was that inspiration?

Tucker: Man, like most things in life, it was sort of a combination of luck and right time, right place. It really was more turning a disadvantage into an advantage. My long story short, after law school I got fired from being a lawyer in three weeks and then I got fired from my dad from the family business.

My friends were like, "Look dude, you're obviously not very good at the things you're trained for. But these emails that you are writing that talk about the funny, ridiculous drunk things you do are really funny. That's the best thing you've ever done and you should focus on them."

This was in 2000 or 2001. Of course, even now people still think a little bit that the only way to be a writer is to be chosen by the establishment. But that's a diminishing view now. In 2001 there was no other view. That was not just the dominant view, it was the only view.

Of course, I sent my stuff out to every publisher and every agent and got 100% rejected; 90% of the people totally ignored it and maybe 10% responded. They were all rejections. Most of those were boilerplate and then there were a few people that actually took the



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time to write personalized rejections to tell me I was the worst writer ever and that I should quit writing forever.

After that I kind of had nowhere to go. If it had been pre-internet there literally would have been nowhere else to go. But in 2001 there was a thing called the internet. I decided to pull my stories up for free. I didn't know what else would happen but at least people would read them.

I put them up and for a while there was nothing. And then they kind of caught on and they blew up from there. It's not a straight line from there to my books but you can think of it that way.

Todd: You got some aid, to have some friends around you who actually gave you good advice. There are a lot of people who have some great skills that their friends in their circle know they are good at but few of them would actually tell them to go and pursue when they have a law degree behind themselves.

Tucker: That's what most people said. Don't get me wrong, there were an extremely small number of people who thought I should do this. My dad and everyone else questioned what I was doing. I was a lawyer and they said that was what I had to do. It was all conventional path bull shit.

Todd: You have this exceptionally contrary lens that helps kind of bring your name into the public conversation. Was that always a bent that you had? Were you always a bit of a rabble rouser when you were growing up?

Tucker: If you try to be a rabble rouser, generally speaking, you are just going to be annoying. It's not that I try to be a rabble rouser. The quote basically goes something like, "Just tell the truth. And, because no one else does you'll come off as a visionary."

All I ever did in writing was just say, "You know, what, I'm just going to tell the truth" and that's it. Good, bad, ugly, funny, whatever, I found out really quick that just telling the truth really is a crazy act of defiance and creates all of these amazing outcomes, both positive and negative.



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Todd: Was there, by chance, some sort of legal osmosis because your dad was a lawyer?

Tucker: My dad was not a lawyer.

Todd: Oh he wasn't?

Tucker: No, my dad owns restaurants.

Todd: But did this whole idea of being blatantly truthful always come very easily to you? Were you that way in school too?

Tucker: It's not that it came easily to me. Honestly man, I think I just grew up and it was a function of how I grew up. I didn't have very good parents and I didn't grow up in an environment of a lot of love and support and comfort. It wasn't like a terrible, abusive time. No one is making a movie about how terrible my life was.

It was bad in the way that a lot of people's lives are bad. Their parents just weren't very good at being parents. Mine kind of fall in the same camp. They aren't bad people but are just bad as parents.

You can react to that in a lot of different ways. I think the way I reacted to it was sort of to go against it and be oppositional in a lot of ways. One of the things my parents and family have never really been good at, and a lot of families aren't, is telling the truth, especially to themselves.

Most people, even people you would never call a liar, lie to themselves about everything. My reaction was that I was never going to be like that.

Todd: When you were in school, in the formal years of high school and stuff, what kind of crew were you hanging with? Were you one of the cool kids, were you a jock, what was your situation?

Tucker: I was very weird. I played sports and I was pretty good. But I wasn't so amazing that I was going to college to play sports. I went to high school in Kentucky and New



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Jersey and the places I went to high school, if you were good at sports there was a minimum level of coolness that you have.

I was never uncool. But, at the same time, I didn't fit into any of the groups. I was smart so I was in all of the AP advanced classes. But I didn't fit in with those kids. I liked some of them and they were nice. But they weren't my style.

At the high schools I went to the popular kids tended to coalesce around other activities or identities. I didn't like any of those people. So it was like I could have picked any number of groups and been in that group but I just didn't like any of the groups. So I was the weird maverick loner.

I wasn't a loner in the awful way like black trench coat. I was sort of like a loner but only mostly by choice, not because I couldn't fit in. I didn't want to because I didn't like most of the people at my high school.

Todd: What was that about? Back then did you think you were better than other people or was it anything like that?

Tucker: There was definitely an arrogance to it, part of it, no doubt. It wasn't elitism. It was much more...

Todd: Like a higher function intellectualism?

Tucker: No. You know how a lot of intellectuals can decide to be intellectual because it proves how much better they are than everybody else. I would extend that to all different groups in different ways.

Part of it was not wanting to connect with a lot of different people. Someone with a lot of emotional intelligence, I think, would have found a common ground with a lot of these people and even if they didn't fit in they would have become at least a part.

You can go across different groups and, not necessarily fit in, but be part of those groups in a way. I kind of took the opposite. That's sort of the emotionally intelligent way. I took the opposite way and just isolated from them and just didn't engage most of them. Part



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of that was probably a true function of not liking a lot of them and the other part was probably whatever, just lack of desire to connect.

I had a lot of issues from my childhood played out through my life because it's not always easy for me to connect with people and it's not always easy for me to be vulnerable. That's part of what friendship is. So, a good way to avoid that is to just never do it.

Even though the reasons I told myself I wasn't friends with a lot of these people were true, probably to some extent they were also rationalizations to avoid unpleasant emotions that I didn't want to deal with at that point in my life.

Todd: That part of you has had to have changed. I have gotten the chance to get to know you over the last five to six months and you've got a fantastic rolodex of people that surround you so you have obviously been able to overcome the whole not being able to get to know people or want to maintain relationships for a long time then.

Tucker: Yes. It's gotten better, no doubt, obviously. When you're a kid you don't get to pick who's around. You don't get to pick your family, you don't get to pick any of this but as an adult you do.

To some extent, I have been able to find the awesome people in the world and create relationships with them. The other part is that I really kind of dug into my own emotional issues and I've started dealing with those.

Todd: Tell me about that. What was that process? Did you seek someone out or was it just a ton of self-work? What was that?

Tucker: It is both. Basically there are a lot of different therapeutic modalities you can use to deal with emotional issues. I chose psychoanalysis. That is basically a form of talk therapy. It worked really well for me. I was in for about four years, four times a week.

Toward the end of that I paired it up with meditation and that was really, really beneficial to me.



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Todd: What prompted you to go into that? Was it kind of a come to Jesus type moment that some people have or was it just being tired of grinding away at life and it being emotionally hard?

Tucker: It wasn't a come to Jesus sort of thing. Drug addicts always talk about having hit a bottom or whatever. That never really happened for me, at least not the way you would ever think of the bottom. I think for me it was just a function of the fact that after years of struggle and hard work in about 2009 I realized I was a multi-millionaire. I was famous, I had done ten times more than I thought I needed to when I started, to be happy. But I still wasn't all that happy.

I wasn't sad. Being rich and famous is almost always better than not. But I was maybe 20% better than when I started. That is just not much of a change. Most of the change was stability based. I didn't have to think about eating and stuff like that.

I think for me, it was a function of realizing if I fixed all of my external stuff and there had been very little change, then the major problem is internal, and I needed to address that.

Todd: It's interesting, just to overlap the timelines. 2009 is when your movie came out as well, right?

Tucker: Yep.

Todd: You went into psychoanalysis then.

Tucker: I started about six months after the movie.

Todd: Let's get to the actual movie part. For people that don't already know, your first book is probably the most famous of them all, I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell, was adapted into a movie. Did you co-produce it or did you fully produce it?

Tucker: I was one of the producers. I wasn't the main producer but I was a producer.



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Todd: I remember when that was coming out. I couldn't see how that thing was going to be a big hit. Then it came out and it didn't surpass expectations, right?

Tucker: No.

Todd: What was that experience like? Leading up to it you had your people around you who were super excited. And I am sure you would be too.

Tucker: I can go through the whole explanation but, honestly, what it really boils down to is it should have worked and it didn't, mainly because of me and my emotional issues and my problems. It took me a while to see that and accept that. That was really where it started.

Todd: Was it because you were controlling things too much or what?

Tucker: To begin with, I assembled a terrible team for this movie. It was a shitty director, a shitty production team. I got almost no one right. It would be easy for me to blame them but the reality is I picked most of them. So what is the decision process that led me to pick them? It was things like that. It is not just about control. It is much, much deeper than that. I honestly don't think we have good narratives in our culture to talk about these things and to explain these things.

Almost everything in Western culture is about avoiding or suppressing painful, deep emotional introspection. But the reality is my emotional state led to create a lot of problems with how I made decisions and how I saw the world. The movie process basically brought all of those to the surface.

All of the issues on the movie could be traced back to how I made decisions. In the intermediate stage you could say that I could blame every problem on the movie on someone else and I would be right. But at the end of the day the only commonality was ultimate me and how I made decisions.

Todd: Do you have a good example of how it actually manifested into a glaring and bad decision?



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Tucker: There are so many, man. Really. It would almost be easier to tell you about the good decisions because there were so few. The director we picked was a total shitberg. He was just a disaster in every single way.

I picked him because I didn't listen to anyone else's advice. I didn't listen to what very smart, very accomplished people were telling me, that I was making a mistake. They were outlining it in sort of very clear terms. Even if I didn't say it to their face my response was, "What do they know? I'm right, I'm the exception."

I think the reason why I sort of let that happen was because this director did a very good job of manipulating and telling me what I wanted to hear to feed my ego to get the job. That's a great example of how my emotional problems led to a poor decision. I didn't make him a shitty director. He is a piece of shit director. But I should never have picked him for the movie and smart people told me I shouldn't and I didn't listen to them.

Todd: By the way, you're probably giving me the best tweetable I'm going to have on my blog ever, or for this podcast, "My director was a shitberg."

Tucker: Well, he was.

Todd: So, just to kind of rewind things again and go back to your writing. When you first launched your...what would you have called it back then because it wasn't a blog...would you have called it an online journal?

Tucker: No, it was just a bunch of short stories on a website.

Todd: When your stuff started to really pick up steam how long were you writing before that happened?

Tucker: Before...what do you mean?

Todd: How many stories had you put out there or how long had you been writing before it really started picking up traction?



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Tucker: I think I am getting the dates right, in fact, I remember when I put up my website because it was two days before 9/11, no wait, it was two days before the anniversary of 9/11. It was September 9, 2002.

I think it really blew up in May, 2003. It took six months.

Todd: And when you look back at that writing that you were doing in the beginning and the type of writing you can do now, would you shake your head? Everyone has that point where they see that growth happen. Do you look back and really love that writing still or not?

Tucker: The first five stories in my book all came from emails I wrote to my friends. It was fucking great. There's no doubt about it.

Todd: I don't believe in the whole talent thing, that innateness that people like to throw around. Were you curating and developing that skill for a long time?

Tucker: Sort of, but not in the way most people would think of. Here's another example of how I sort of got lucky in a way. First of all, I had been a great writer most of my life. I wrote during college in law school. You write over and over and over.

In terms of the basic mechanical skill of writing, I had a ton of practice, obviously. But that's very different than comedic writing. The New York Times said the writing I had done really invented a new genre. Here's the difference, most people who get into writing do it for themselves.

Writing is a form of expression for them. It is really a form of feeding their ego. That's why the vast majority of writing is fucking terrible. That's why most people's writing never goes anywhere; it's worthless.

I never got into writing that way. Writing, for me, was a way to entertain my friends. I started writing emails to my buddies once we all left law school. Writing was a social bonding form. So I basically created the shortcuts in my head for writing success without realizing it.



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I asked whether it was interesting to my friends and why. Everything I wrote had to pass that test. If it wasn't, it got cut. I got better and better and better. So it's almost like, if you read Daniel Coyle's work about deliberate practice and how to create the conditions of rapid improvement, I did that inadvertently.

Email is short and to the point. I was writing for a small audience that was very intelligent and very harsh and knew me very well. I created this style that adapted to that without really understanding what I was doing. Lo and behold, that style was revolutionary and I ended up selling millions of books and created a new genre.

Todd: You are right. When you describe the process that way it sounds accidental but it's smart too. It was smart.

Tucker: It was. It was both a lot of hard work and a lot of determination but it was also accidental because I wasn't sitting down questioning how I could become a great writer. That is how most writers start off and that is why most people who identify as writers never accomplish anything and never achieve that. They start by thinking of how to become a great writer. They don't think about what the writing is for and whether it is serving that purpose.

Todd: Or how to entertain an audience. Instead they are writing for impressing their peers.

Tucker: Right. Exactly.

Todd: Of which they have none yet because they aren't even a writer yet.

Tucker: If there is a major problem that most people don't understand with writing, it's that writing is not for you. If you want to write for you it's perfectly fine. It's called a diary. Go do that and then leave it in your closet or wherever. Leave it in your cabinet and don't show it to anyone.

But if you're writing for anything other than just yourself, then you need to start and end with your audience in mind.



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Todd: What was the first thing that happened where you realized your writing was really taking off. Was there an email that you got from someone or was there someone that reached out to you?

Tucker: It was before I had ever put my stuff up on a website. My friends would send my emails to their friends at their firm or office or whatever. I would get those emails forwarded back to me from other friends in other social circles.

You probably remember 15 years ago how email forwards were the original form of social media. If you go back, I don't know if there is a repository of these because it would be amazing if there was, but some of my original stories were the biggest email forwards in existence before I put my site up.

Todd: This is actually making me feel really old all of the sudden. I actually have my 40th birthday coming up so I don't really need any help on that anymore.

Tucker: Actually, so do I. I turned 40 this month.

Todd: You do? Me too! Crazy. It's funny that you bring up the word accidental. We are both around a lot of accomplished friends or peers and business friends. How many of those people, when you're talking to them, do you think that a lot of their business successes came out of complete accident? How frequent do you see that?

Tucker: Probably the overwhelming majority. Here's the thing, you say accidental. But it's not. It sort of is but it's really combining the right characteristics and right personality traits. I don't know how much you can change your personality traits but you can change your habits and if you create the right habits then opportunity comes along.

All luck really is, is the meeting of preparation and opportunity. I got prepared by developing the right skills and the right habits. There is always an endless amount of opportunity. But that's what's so ridiculous out there. I have no tolerance for people who say they want to accomplish stuff but don't.

There is so much opportunity and it's so easy if you actually could develop the right habits and put them into place. I don't have enough hours in the day or years to live to



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accomplish all of the opportunity that I see. I wish I had ten more lives because there are so many amazing things that I could do, just me! There are a lot of things I can't do at all that other people can do.

Todd: All of this fame and fortune that came your way because of your writing led you down some different entrepreneurial experiences as well. You have invested in lots of different businesses and you've got a great article on the web right now, almost the myth of being an angel investor. What were some of the big assumptions you had about being an entrepreneur?

Tucker: Oh man, that was a place where I really, really had a lot of assumptions. Almost all of them were wrong. I screwed up a lot at the beginning. I'll start with the biggest one. It is the same as writing. I knew this in writing and wish I had applied it to entrepreneurship.

If you think you're company or product or whatever it is you are building is about you then you will fail. And you should, because it's not about you. It's about what you're creating that's valuable to other people. If you understand that then you're going to have the right mindset in almost all areas.

You're going to create better products that are more likely to succeed, you're going to attract better people to your team, you're going to create an environment where they are more likely to stay and help.

Todd: You know what, just at a completely right angle off of that, I know you would have some strong opinions on this because you brought up if you are starting something because of you then you are already traveling down the wrong path, there are a lot of people out there that are sort of advising people or selling programs on how to cultivate and create an amazing personal brand. If anyone would struggle with where they are in life and the public's perception of who they are and their history it would be you.

My experience of you, when I actually met you for the very first time, was that you're a loving dad. We hung out together in California and your wife was hanging out with my wife by the pool with our kids. I have a completely different frame of reference than other



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people. But, what are your thoughts on people who are going out there to cultivate a personal brand to try to use it and leap frog their business and stuff like that?

Tucker: It's hard to say. Generally speaking, I would say most people who are doing what you just said, trying to cultivate a personal brand, are people who have deep emotional issues they need to address instead of trying to work them out in public.

Getting attention and adoration is not going to fill the hole in your soul. Ask anyone in Hollywood and anyone who is famous. Ask anyone anywhere. But, that's not what most people want to hear.

If you're trying to build a brand around yourself in order to help promote something else that can be a viable business strategy. But I would say 5% of the people are doing that.

Todd: Who is doing that well?

Tucker: I would say Elon Musk actually does a good job. Here's the reality, he is a fucking monster in real life. I'm not going to tell you how I know, but I know very, very well, he is really kind of a terrible person in a lot of ways as a human being. But he is fabulously brilliant and has created some amazing stuff.

In terms of how he approaches business he is very smart and very effective. The way he deals with media is actually very smart. In America all you have to do to be thought of as a good person is win. That's just the way the American ethos works. Look at Donald Trump, there's not a more malignant, awful narcissist on the earth. But right now, because he is up in the polls and stuff everyone in America loves a winner.

Elon Musk is winning on many fronts, many valuable fronts. He doesn't do a lot of press and a lot of media. He kind of takes the approach that Steve Jobs takes. When you are an awful piece of shit the best thing you can do is create great products and let other people build the aura around you. And they will. They absolutely will. But that requires you to build great products which is not easy to do.

Most people take the other path and try to build their personal brand. The idea that Donald Trump is a good businessman always makes me laugh. You do realize if he took



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the fortune that his father left him when he died and put it in a Vanguard no-fee mutual fund it would be worth three times what he got. He is a terrible businessman.

Literally, he is awful. He is really, really bad at investments. He is almost like the king of baby boomers. He is the iconic baby boomer, the dumbest generation of narcissists that ever lived. He is their leader. He has taken the other route which is to be so dumb and so narcissistic and ridiculous that it's almost like you can't call him what he is because he's so far beyond it. That is an effective strategy if you are an awful, narcissistic, toxic idiot the best thing you can do is go all the way and be seen as successful because that actually works for a long time.

Todd: In this race he is by far and away the most media savvy of the bunch. He gets 10 to 20 times the media play than the second person, whoever that is this week. America is built off of one liners. Unfortunately, in America, people don't want to go too deep to find out someone's actual platform, what they are really going to do to solve something.

That gets to your point about when it comes to building a personal brand in order to affect people. The real core of it is an emotional issue.

Tucker: The reason most people want to build a personal brand, when you break it down, what they really want is to be loved and respected and adored, generally by their parents. The emotional chain from building a personal brand back to parental neglect or something like that (maybe high school or whatever), just some sort of emotional trauma is almost always very easy to see.

That is a very different thing than talking about how media works on sound-bite principles and whatever. Those are totally different arguments. They are covering totally different things. I actually don't think people don't want to know what platform...

It is hard to understand media. But, the best way to understand media is to understand it as an extension of entrenched power. If you understand that the goal of the media is to have everything look like change but never change then you understand exactly why Bread and Circus Media is sort of prevalent and you understand why actual reform is essentially impossible from inside; that is a very different discussion than the one we are having.



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Todd: For sure. Part of a lot of the good things that have happened for me have been the result of just having good, smart mentors or advisors around me as I have come up through the years. Is there anybody that you would point to? Did you have that same experience for yourself where you had some great mentors to help you on the way?

Tucker: No I didn't, and it sucks. I wish I had. I have been that mentor for a few people but I have never really had anyone in my life. I wish I had but I haven't.

Todd: Is that something that you would look for now or not?

Tucker: Man, I'm 40 years old. At this point it's like, I don't want to say the cement is set because it's not, at least not for me, but here's the thing. I'm past the point in my life where a real mentor could exist for me, I think. But, I think over the last five years I have really learned how to listen to people who know more than me, at least in certain areas, and how to take their advice and how to set my own ego aside.

I don't know if I'm ever going to find someone, I highly doubt I would ever find someone who I would consider a mentor. That would be great but I just don't know who that would be. I say that as humbly as possible.

What I do instead of looking for one mentor, I try to find the things I can learn from anyone in any situation. It is exceedingly rare for me to meet someone who has absolutely nothing at all in any way shape or form to teach you.

Todd: That's a good lens to look at life through.

Tucker: It's definitely better than thinking you know everything because hubris comes before the fall, pride comes before the fall.

Todd: Sure. To kind of get nearer to the end here, we were talking at the very beginning about [Book In A Box](#) and the new venture you have out there. Of course, I'm going to be biased because I'm involved in the business in the way that I am using your services right now and it's been an absolutely fantastic experience working with super smart people who know this far better than me. That is exactly my point.



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I've been told for years to write the book on the subject that I have. It's not that I don't have the time but that whole system and structure of writing isn't my kind of forte. But, I know how to talk it out. Anyway, the process has been great for me.

Where do you see this going in the next few years?

Tucker: We started with books because of a very few strategic reasons. We have already done a good job with books and getting that process nailed and locked down, but honestly, I think we can expand it to other fields. I have never seen us as a book company, I've always seen us as a company that can develop the processes to unlock the world's wisdom.

That, to me, is what seems so exciting about what we're doing. You are the perfect example of a client. Either because of time or because of lack of specific writing skill or because of an inability or just no desire to learn, you are never going to turn your ideas and wisdom into a good book.

Having great ideas are totally different than having the ability to turn them into a book. They are unrelated skills. So, that was the genius insight behind the company that I didn't really come up with. I kind of got lucky with that too. But once I realized it, that's it. What we do is create the process to help people like you share your wisdom with the world.

Unlock it from your head, put it down into a form that is easy to understand and easy to share and then share it with the world. Why limit that to books? Why not do it for speeches or for PowerPoints or pitch decks or movie scripts or TV shows or whatever. Honestly, what I see us as is sort of what the iPhone did to photography, I think we can do to written material.

Todd: I've been approached by a lot of different people with different writing services in the past who have said, "You've built a living off of doing speeches and presenting. So we will just get on the phone and record it because no one has speaker's block or talker's block. We'll take that transcription and put it into a book."



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That just didn't ever feel right to me. I read books and I don't want my book to look like it was a transcribed conversation. I wanted to have the structure that I would see inside of Made to Stick from Chip and Dan Heath or people like that who have put out some really great, intellectual property.

I've worked hard at this and I want it to be represented in the right way. So when you said you take what I say but then the expert writing team puts it into a coherent format, that's what kind of won me over. So, tell me about why you wouldn't have gone down that path or why it is so important to structure it that way?

Tucker: What path?

Todd: Why it's so important to structure the book in a way that it's not just a transcription; that it's written in a format that is suited for written material?

Tucker: People who don't understand media don't think about these things. But different mediums of communication have totally different rules. Speaking is totally different than reading. It uses distinctly different cognitive parts of the brain and pulls on different skill sets.

Even though they both feel very similar they are totally different. You can even see in FMRI's, totally different parts of the brain light up. You are pulling different cognitive neuro processes, etc. That is why, if you've ever seen a transcript of a podcast, even if you listen to the podcast you think it was a brilliant podcast and you learned so much. But, if you look at the transcript it is barely readable and it seems like the two people are retards.

Seriously. You are taking one medium and just putting it in the other medium without accounting for the changes and the differences. Everyone else that does this tries to pretend that speaking and reading are the same thing. Of course, they don't know what they are doing and are trying to do it cheaply. They are all scam artists.

We approached it from a totally different perspective. We asked what we had to do to take the ideas and wisdom in someone's head and turn it into a book, an actual book that reads and feels just like a book. We basically totally reconstructed, step by step, the



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entire book process until we came up with a set of questions and a way to talk and interact with people that got all of their ideas and wisdom out of their head in a way that felt almost like magic to them but fit right in with the skills of someone who is good at writing and editing and organizing.

We just came out with a book called [The Book In A Box Method](#). It explains our process. You can read that book, it's on Amazon. You can read it and it tells you exactly what our process is so you can literally do it yourself. We charge \$18,000 and have actually had to raise our prices since we signed you, Todd, because we had too many clients.

We charge a lot of money. So if you want to do this yourself, by all means just go read the book. It's all in the book. The way we lay it out, you will see, "Oh wow, yeah, now I understand. There is an entire structure to this."

It's got to go on but the way we do it with our clients, it feels kind of like they aren't doing anything. It feels a little bit like magic. They are just talking about what they know and what they want and we put the structure on in the background.

Todd: I'm experiencing the magic just going through the process. That's the great part. That's one of the reasons I like hanging around with people who are great at what they do because I'm a curious person.

But I can see the magic happen when working with the few people I've had, my book team. A) Their resumes are phenomenal, and B) I'm learning even more about my content because of the quality of the questions they ask me about it. They are just curious in extracting the information and it forces me to become that much clearer with it or give even better stories and examples so that the reader ultimately gets a great experience with it.

Tucker: That's actually a super good point that I usually don't bring up. I think most people don't understand this, but the reality is most people like you who are experts in their field and really know their stuff, a lot of times you've known it so long and so well that you don't know how to explain it in a lot of ways to someone who doesn't have your experience. That's a big part of what we do.



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We act as advocates for the reader. We don't ever tell you this, actually. You are our client right now and we never told you this. But we see our job as acting as the representative of your future reader. That means we have to make sure, not only do you have a good book in you that is valuable to readers and then we help you figure out who those readers are, but then we kind of pretend we are those readers and ask you all of the questions we think those readers would ask to need to get everything out of your head to get the information that they would want.

Todd: You're dead on. That is exactly what they are doing and that has been my experience with it. Just to kind of wrap things up, I have two final questions for you, Tucker. I know you are busy. What is the one piece of advice that, if you were to actually travel back to when you were in your early 20s, you would give?

Tucker: I guess that assumes I would listen to advice in my early 20s because I don't think I would. I was a fucking idiot. If I would listen, the thing I would tell you is to stop talking so much and start listening to other people; especially, find people that you trust and respect who are smart. Stop thinking you know everything. And, of course, I would say I don't think I know everything and then I would act like I did.

That would be a big one, stop that! That was my big problem. I really was so arrogant. I was beyond confident. I was arrogant and I had hubris. That never leads to anything good.

Todd: That's the advice I would have given myself too. I was lucky in that I got a mentor at a very young age who beat that into me. Finally, you mentioned that [Book in a Box Method](#) had come out on Amazon already. But where can people go to learn more about you and connect with you and the things you are working on?

Tucker: The best thing is probably just Book In a Box. If you are interested, just go to <http://www.bookinabox.com>. The book is on Amazon. I am on Twitter [@TuckerMax](#).

Todd: Thanks again. You dropped some great stuff, as expected. Thanks for just the actual truth and honesty behind the back story of Tucker Max too.

Tucker: Of course, man. It's my pleasure.



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Todd: Cheers! Thanks again. There you go, my friend, a fascinating peek into the life of someone hustling hard to make things happen to chase down their goals and show a ton of grit and perseverance to make it all happen.

I hope you enjoyed the interview with Tucker. Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast on iTunes. Just type in Grit 'n' Hustle in the search and click the subscribe button. All the show notes, tips, links shared, and the transcript are over at the blog at <http://toddherman.me/blog/episode5>.

We have great social media stuff already ready and waiting for you to share over there. When you do, just tag me @Todd_Herman and @TuckerMax as well. There is a private community on Facebook where more discussion happens behind the scenes, access to myself, and requests for show guests occurs. Just type in toddherman.me/group in your browser and you'll be directed magically straight over to the community.

Alright my friend, let's wrap this up and get you back into your day. Remember, there's no easy road, there's no elevator to the top and there's always a back story of Grit 'n' Hustle to any great achiever. Go out there and live a story worth being talked about. That's it for me.

Todd Herman is out!

Show notes at: <http://bit.ly/MaxGrit>

Links mentioned in this episode:

[The Grit 'n' Hustle Blog](#)

[Book In A Box](#)

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