

Jason Leister & Craig Ballantyne

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Jason: I'd like to welcome everyone to today's call. We are fortunate to have Craig Ballantyne of Turbulence Training fame on the other line to talk about clients, life after clients and all the good things he has going on. Craig, welcome to the call and thank you for making yourself available for this.

Craig: I'm happy to help, Jason.

Jason: Awesome. A lot of people listening to this right now will certainly know who you are but for those that don't, let's start with the *Reader's Digest* version of the last few years of your life and how you came to be where you are now in terms of business.

Craig: I'm not sure what the *Reader's Digest* is, but I will give you the Craig Ballantyne Canadian version. I started out as a fitness expert. I always wanted to do reading and writing and so I designed my life over the course of the last 15 years to be able to do exactly what I want all day long which is read, write and share information with people.

I started in the fitness world but when I discovered *Early To Rise*, written by Michael Masterson around 2003, I knew that I wanted to move more towards that. Over a long time I eventually switched to doing a little more personal development stuff and now I fit myself between fitness and *Early to Rise*, which is a company that I bought with my business partner Matt Smith.

I am really just about helping people have better lives in a million different ways from fitness to financial and building Internet businesses. It's all that type of stuff that will help people eat better, sleep better and do everything better. That's what I'm all about.

Jason: And you do help a lot of people in many ways on many levels. When you got started, you began by going down the personal training route, is that right?

Craig: Yes. My undergraduate thesis advisor told me that the strength and conditioning coach from Michigan State made \$100,000 a year. I thought that was the be-all and end-all of everything and if I could just achieve that, I would be super happy. So my ultimate goal was to be some type of professional strength and conditioning coach.

Then I started writing for *Men's Health* during the summer of 2000. I realized that it was so much easier to help more people with short workout stuff and so I got into that, personal training and writing and eventually Internet.

Jason: I remember reading your stories about how you would get up really early and do training back in the beginning because that's when people wanted to be trained. How long did it take for you to realize that there were definitely benefits to being out on your own but there were other drawbacks to working one-on-one with people? How did that process happen for you?

Craig: I knew that when I was still in university, what we call college up here. I knew that I really wanted to be leveraging my time. I just didn't really know how to do it properly. One of my biggest weaknesses is that I am cheap in stubborn and so I didn't get the coaching that I needed or invest in the resources that I needed early enough.

I definitely spent more time trying to figure things out on my own than I should have. I saw things by Corey Rudl (*rest in peace*), and even Yanik Silver and Dan Candy. I saw things from those guys in 2002 but I was just very sceptical. That served me well in university in my research days but it didn't serve me when it came to building an online business. I just didn't trust anyone and so it was several years until I found the right resources.

In 2003, I bought this book called *Info Millions* by Bob Sirloin. It's a \$97 manual and I probably got a 1000-to-1 return on that if not more. It was \$97 and I must have made six figures from it. That was the first thing I bought and the first thing that helped propel me to what I really wanted to be able to do.

Jason: One of the biggest things lacking in the life of the average service provider is leverage. Certainly with the Internet, dealing with that is way easier these days than it has ever been.

Can you talk to the person who is working all day long with clients who knows there is a huge ceiling and needs some perspective on how they can take what they're good at and build business into their business, either by the path you took or by other things that you know exist. How can they package up what they do and help more people?

Craig: I think the first thing they need to do is be really cognisant of what they say all day. When I was starting out, I was answering the same questions over

and over again for my friends. They had just gotten in real jobs, were no longer in school, had young families and wanted short workouts.

I realized that instead of writing a different workout that was pretty much the same for every single one of my friends that would email me on a weekly basis, I could just make one manual. That's what I did and that's what a service provider can do.

I've done coaching calls with people and I know that the first three coaching calls are almost always the same for nearly every client in order to get that base background. You are probably doing a lot of beginner coaching that could be built into a product that could help more people and then funnel them into more expensive coaching and more advanced coaching. You can charge more when you are giving more advanced advice.

So one thing that people really need to do is to figure out what they are doing all day long that could be automated. That also applies to outsourcing daily tasks. Instead of taking phone calls, answering email or providing technical support, you are technically just outsourcing the beginner stuff to a manual instead of doing it manually and delivering it in a phone call.

I am sure there is plenty of opportunity if people just sat down and thought about it and jotted down some notes. "What do I say again and again and how can I turn this into a product that will add value to people's lives and free up my time to help more people by delivering them more advanced value?" That is really what people should be working towards.

Jason: I know that you hate excuses. For anyone listening, a kind recommendation is that if you are ever face-to-face with Craig, don't ever consider making an excuse for anything because it doesn't end well. It's the best version of tough love.

Obviously, the number of hours that you have in a day is limited. When you were making the transition from a one-on-one service worker to a business owner, how did you find time for all of it?

Craig: There are two things you can do. You are going to sacrifice sleep one way or the other. Either you will get up early or you will stay up later. We both know a lot of guys like Mike Geary, Rob Poulos, and Joel Marion who used to stay up until 3:00am, they stay up really late and work and then get up and drag their butts to their real jobs. That's what they did for years.

I was the other way. I went to bed a little earlier, but I got up extra early and worked on my business because that is when I was really excited and most creative. That's when I worked on leveraging my information and my knowledge into something that could give me more freedom so that I could eventually start cutting away at a regular workweek.

It was easier for me because I was in personal training. Clients will move away and come in and out and you just won't replace them. That way, you can free up more time and it is an easy, natural way for trainers to do that. That is essentially what it is.

You have to make the time. You don't find the time, you make it. It is just a slight change in the wording of the sentence. When you make time for something, that means you're planning ahead in your schedule and are proactive. If you want to find time for something, that is reactive and in most cases you are never going to find that time.

You have to make time for your priorities and that way you will be able to work when you work best. If you work best at 6:00am, get up earlier. If you work best at 11:00pm when the family has gone to bed, commit to that and make sure that you don't do anything that will suck away your energy for those times.

One way or another, it will be a sacrifice. There will be some big sacrifices made but it is like investing now for future payoff.

Jason: When you started this call, you used the phrase "I designed my life". It is obvious to anyone around you that the wording is very deliberate. One of the things that strikes me about you and the people you hang out with is that the design seems to be built on a really clear foundation. For lack of a better word, I would call it a philosophy.

It's life according to Craig. Maybe you have gotten things from other people or philosophers but you have obviously worked it out and it makes your decision-making so much easier. If you are starting from zero and want to design your life, how does that process go?

Craig: I think you have to have a list of things that you will do and things that you don't want to do. A lot of my life design started out because I am really lazy. I really don't like to do certain things. Certain things that I like to do in terms of work and physical activity are tough, but I don't want to do a lot of things that most other people do.

I don't want to cut anyone's lawn. I don't want to cut my own lawn. I don't want to ever move furniture when I am moving places. When I move, for example, and I do move every couple of years in the city of Toronto where I live. I disappear on moving day and I have people do all of the packing and all of the moving, I show up to a new place that's put together. I don't even want to do that because I'm lazy.

I am willing to work really, really hard at the things that I like to do and the things that I'm good at so that can have the power to make that decision, to be able to say, "Good, move me". I don't care if I move three times in a year. I am not doing it. Someone else is doing it anyway so what does it matter to me? It's not a big deal. I just show up to a new place.

That is the mentality that I have some things. I basically need to know what I am not willing to do. That is pretty easy for me because it is pretty much everything except for read, write, train, add value, do coaching and show people how to be successful. That's what I do. Everything else, I do not do and people are just going to have to deal with it.

I think there is a bit of an air of superiority that you have to accept and embrace, it's not to the point of being negative toward someone's life but you have to know and do what is right for you. When you do what's right for you, you end up being able to help many more people.

If I was doing all this manual labour, I wouldn't be helping hundreds of thousands of people per day. I would be saving \$20 an hour by doing the moving myself, cutting my lawn or going to the grocery store.

It's not normal thinking. I think that's the bottom line. I don't know if I could teach that to someone when I say that I am not a normal person, I don't ever want to be one and I don't ever want to think like one. That is really what it comes down to for me. Like you said, it is a personal philosophy. No one normal has a personal philosophy so you have to start thinking differently.

Deep down inside, if someone is going to be a successful person, they have probably thought about this. They have probably thought about doing things differently but need permission to go ahead and finally take action on it. By all means, let this be the permission because you will know whether or not this is right for you.

Jason: One of the things that I encounter over and over again in the people that I am trying to help is the realization that very few of us were trained to think

very highly of ourselves. Can you talk about what someone's self-image has to do with their ability or lack of ability to live life this way and to set their course and follow it?

Craig: Absolutely. I have a fitness publishing business where we do marketing of trainers and help them get their products out to the world. Those people that we partner with often do not have the confidence at first in order to connect with people. They don't feel like they are worthy. All that stuff is really bizarre because they have all of the credentials. They have success stories from their real world training but they are just very hesitant.

They like to say that they are shy and humble but it gets to the point where it becomes really annoying to have to listen to this over and over again when you tell them exactly what to do and that they have more proof about their products than anyone else. You tell them they should stop being like this and it takes a little while for people to get over it but it is like anything else.

It's like talking to your first girl when you are 12 years old. You are pretty nervous about it but then you do it and you get a little bit of good feedback. The next time, you readjust your course and it goes even better, and so on and so forth.

That is what you have to do with your business. You have to keep on pushing the limits and testing things. In people that are less successful, we tend to see that they just don't have that air of superiority. Dan Kennedy at one of his events called it supreme self-confidence to borderline arrogance.

He has got the same type of attitude that I have about stuff. It's the attitude that your time is more valuable than most other people's time. It's just a fact. If you are able to charge someone \$500 an hour, your time is literally more valuable. I go into a grocery store the same way that Dan Kennedy does. It's to get in and out as quickly as possible and to beat all the other people to the cash register.

That's how we operate. We know that our time is so valuable and also because we are very competitive people and we feel that for some reason we deserve to get to the cash register first. Again, I don't know if I could ever teach this to someone or if it is just naturally inclined to someone but maybe we can bring out more of it.

I am not going to elbow some old woman to get to the front, but I am going to move pretty quickly because I have things to do.

Jason: You'll let her keep her marble rye if you see her on the street.

Craig: I will let her have the last cupcake.

Jason: Very good. You mention competitiveness. I know enough about you to say that it seems like the person you are most competitive with is yourself. Things don't always go right. How do you keep that drive to realign yourself with what you know is really important to you when life happens sometimes and your gaze gets broken? How do you reenergize that commitment for you?

Craig: I think it's important that you always have the things that are important written down. Then on the days when you are not really sure what is important, you can go back and review it. I also find that commitments I make to other people are very important as well as the relationships I have with them and their expectations of me. If I am feeling as though I am failing at something and want to quit, I would never do it because all of these people think certain things about me and as you said before, I wouldn't accept excuses. I can't go around making excuses if you think that I don't accept excuses from people.

You have to show and tell people what you believe in. Once you do that, if you don't follow through and live that way and live by example, you are being a hypocrite and that is one of the worst things that a person could possible do. It is almost like the most unforgivable thing that a person can do is to be a hypocrite in today's society. You have to live by what you believe in and always remind yourself what you believe in. You've got one shot at this thing.

I am also very inspired by history. No matter how hard of a day I'm having, it is still inside and not in a foxhole. I'm not in the middle of Europe in wintertime getting shot at. I have got it easy and I need to do the best that I can all the time.

Jason: If you ask people what the purpose of working with a client is, fairly often you will probably hear, "So I can make money and put a roof over my head." You have what I would consider a very unique definition of what business is all about as it relates to value creation. Can you talk about that?

Craig: I definitely started out with the attitude that I wanted to get into a business where I can make money and have this great life that I designed. Over time, referring to the hierarchy of needs, you have the house and the food and want to get more satisfaction from it. Really what that comes down to is how to help more people.

One of my goals is to help more people than anyone else and that is tough when I have some friends that are very, very good at helping a lot of people. That's another thing that drives me. At the end of the day, if you can make everyone else around you better, you are going to become wealthier and better yourself. You are going to improve as a person, have more friends and more freedom. You are going to have whatever you want if you can just make everyone better.

Zig Ziglar is champion of this and he said many years ago that you can have everything you want if you help everyone else get what they want. It's not an original thought to me but it's just great. Help people, over-deliver and add value. Become known as this person and build the reputation. Then things are going to go so well for you that you will get to the point where it is easy.

We both know Joe Polish and he is a guy that just knows everyone and connects people. He will never have to worry about where his next meal is coming from because he knows so many people and adds so much value. He is really the most connected person I've ever met. He is a funny guy and a nice guy and out of the blue he is helping people and connecting them. He is a great model as well.

Jason: It's a strategy that works.

Craig: Absolutely.

Jason: Let's go back to the client world a little bit. Now you are on the flipside, right? You find people to help you with things and so you become their client. Can you tell me about some of the things that you notice from this side?

What are the biggest things that a service provider can do to really deliver that excellent level of performance so that they get noticed and remembered and have some sort of special place in the minds of their clients. What are the things that stick out to you when someone does them?

Craig: I think that it's making the person a better person. It's challenging them not necessarily on marketing skills or other skills like that. When I have hung around with Matt Smith, he has not accepted any of the excuses that I try to make every once in a while. He demands that you think better, be better and become a better person. That has helped me out exponentially more than anything he has told me about copywriting, sales, marketing or anything like that.

It's really about getting over the weaknesses within you. Any time that I have had someone do that in a coach, mentoring or even a friend role, self-improvement is the most valuable thing that people can add to you. Kennedy talks about this a lot. He says, "In 12 months of my newsletter, you are going to get everything that you could possibly need to become a good marketer. It is not as though I am teaching you anything you if you sign on for two years. I am helping with self-improvement and helping to develop you as a person."

If you can do that for your clients, they are going to build that confidence that they might be missing as we talked about before with the publishing partner being insecure about contacting people. It isn't that she doesn't know how to contact people or doesn't know how to write emails or create great products. It's that she just doesn't believe in herself enough.

You have to make better people. If you make better people as a coach and still do great technical stuff, that is how you are going to be a most successful coach and service provider.

Jason: How do you install the "make Craig better" in your life? What does that look like for you?

Craig: There are many things I do. Starting with a gratitude journal reminds you to be a better person. Dan Sullivan has a thing where you write down things that you achieved over the course of the day, so I do that as well. I have a couple of things that we do with our team. With Matt, we use a system called iDoneThis.com. You update how you have made improvements in your day and your life and what you did that day.

Matt and I also go back and forth on what we can do every day twice as big as what we would normally do. We are always pushing those limits. I have plenty of documents that I review on a daily basis and then every day I spend five or ten minutes allowing my brain to do what I call "Big Thinking". I write down the craziest things that come to mind and review those on a weekly basis and try to keep the best and chuck the rest.

I also have pages and pages of goals specific to fitness, finances and things like that. There isn't a lot that people haven't heard of but it is just a matter of continuing to push yourself and not getting complacent.

One other thing is to always hang around better people than you, people who are wealthier, smaller and fitter. Research shows time and time again that if you hang around with someone who is better at you at something you are trying to improve in and you are improving too, then you are going to get better. The easiest example is from the fitness world. If you go to a gym where everyone benches 500 pounds and you bench 250, you are going to be benching 300 pretty quickly.

You want to hang around guys who are in the Maverick group or in the Atlas 400 group that I'm a part of. These are some smart, wealthy guys and they remind you what is possible if you do more and you don't get complacent and think, "I've hit the \$100,000 a year goal that I had when I was 22 or 23 so I can just coast now."

Jason: Exactly. You said that a lot of the things that you do are simple but you do them every day or on a consistent basis.

Craig: Yes, I do them every day and I make sure they get done. I don't let a day go by without doing them.

Jason: That is my last question. I know you have written about this before but I would like you to talk about it quickly. I don't know where you think you are in terms of how much of your potential you've realized but compared to the average person, you are a Superman producer. Could you quickly run down what that looks like in one day? What does the life look like that you have designed to do exactly what you want to do and as little as possible of what you don't want to do?

Craig: I get up really early in the morning around 4:00am and I'll write until about 6:00am. I will post things to Facebook at the same time but those are usually things that I have thought of the day before such as inspirational quotes.

I'll take a look at some numbers and then I'll walk the dog. I recently started about ten minutes of daily meditation. That's the traditional sitting and meditating for five to ten minutes. I've only been doing that for ten days but I am not letting a day go by without doing that. That's been very good so I've added that in.

People will probably say that they don't have time for even five or ten minutes of that but that is the whole point. You are supposed to do it when you're overwhelmed and you just sit there, relax and breathe. It's been really good and I have really enjoyed it.

After that, I will usually do a little more writing and then go to the gym and do my workout. Then I'll come back. Sometimes I do Facebook Q&A and I really enjoy that. I like seeing what people are thinking and it gives me a lot of ideas for content creation.

The most important project that I work on over the course of the day is done first thing in the morning. That's a rule that you hear from everyone and it's really the best thing. Do the most important thing first thing in the morning.

Around this time, I do reading. I do read a lot of news. I know that a lot of people say don't read the news, but I like to read it. I mostly like read as much European news as I can just to get an idea of the zeitgeist of the world. I read that and I read some Bill Bonner stuff, who I think is a tremendous author and he influences my writing.

By then it is probably time to take the dog outside again so I do that. Then I go back inside and it's around noon that I'm checking my email. I can stay there for two hours especially I'm writing an email broadcast to my list. I have just kind of found a way to cut that down or eliminate that.

Then I'll probably have some time on another project or for phone calls. We are doing this phone call in the afternoon and that's my phone call time. I create workouts and stuff. I do things that aren't necessarily super focused on creativity and where I don't have to be really detailed. One thing that I am really bad at is the last 10% of the essay. I struggle with making an essay really, really great and I have to improve that. I work on that all the time and that's why I block that time off in the morning.

Then I read and then it's 5:00pm and I'm done. That's it. I do walk the dog a lot, two to three times a day. I'm not going to outsource that but anything else that a normal person does over the course of the day, I don't do. I am lucky that I don't have to commute. I stay at home. I do take out the garbage though.

Jason: What strikes me about that is that you went through the whole day and nothing was an accident.

Craig: Most times. Today was not a great day. I wanted to hit the reset button, because I did get into my email too early and we did have a problem with some email stuff that we made a really stupid mistake in our Early To Rise business. Today wasn't the greatest day, but I got it back on track with workouts, positive thinking, and getting some other stuff done.

Jason: Awesome. I want to thank you for taking the time because I know how valuable it is to you. What you said is really going to be very helpful to a lot of people. Where can people go to find out more about the many things you have going?

Craig: The best place to start is EarlyToRise.com or TransformationContest.com. To quickly summarize the Transformation Contest, we are doing these 90-day contests and giving away \$100,000 in prizes. As of today, the contest is closed but we are doing these twice a year. It is allowing us to help so many people. It is really fun and cool and it's great to see people transform.

For people that want to add one or two of the things that I have mentioned today, the best way to do that is with support, accountability, incentives and a deadline. All four of those things are in the transformation contest and that is how you start changing your life.

Jason: That's awesome. Thank you very much. It is much appreciated and best wishes.

Craig: Happy to help. Thanks, Jason.

Jason: Thank you.