

Does College Matter?
Episode 3: Jordan Harbinger

Introduction: In an age where tuition is on the rise, high school students are skipping out of college to start their own companies, and technology increasingly offers alternative ways to learn, we wanted to ask the question, does college still matter? Welcome to the *Does College Matter?* podcast, episode three.

Jordan: I'm not anti-college. I am anti-following what other people are doing because you're not really sure what else to do. I would have learned a lot more if I didn't apply to law school and just started doing other things. It's so hard to say 20/20 hindsight, right, because then it's, like, oh, well, you never would have met Dave, and you wouldn't have learned this, and da da. Maybe that's true, but maybe I would've done something totally different and been equally or more successful.

Jody: Hi, everyone. This is Jody Hoff, and it is great to have you back this week for what I think you'll find to be an intriguing discussion on the value of college, with Jordan Harbinger. Jordan's the CEO and cofounder of the Art of Charm, a lifestyle and relationship coaching firm that offers a variety of online and in-person resources, including a training academy, a blog, and this really interesting podcast that I've been listening to now for about a year. I'm excited to talk with Jordan because while he took a fairly traditional route through his formal education, what followed next is anything but traditional as he made this fascinating pivot into an entirely different line of work than his original field of study. In our conversation I'll ask Jordan what he learned working as an attorney that set up the eventual founding of the Art of Charm, why people tend to discount the power of networking, and how following your passion without a plan is a terrible mistake.

Jody: Jordan, it's really great to have you in the bank today. This podcast that we're starting up is dedicated to this exploration of education and its value in today's society, and this path that you've been on is such an interesting story, and so with that in mind I want to start a little bit with that younger you and maybe talk a little bit what you were like in high school, and I was curious if you actually go to your class reunions and you've had any people come up to you and go, like, wow, who is this guy.

Jordan: I don't go to my class reunions, not because I have some sort of policy but because I've just missed the last few because I was doing things. You know, now we have Facebook, so I have friends that I

haven't seen in twenty years or whatever, and they'll go, wow. One comment I got that was interesting was someone said, hey, it's good to be in touch with you. You know what, I'm proud of all the things that you've done, this Michigan boy, but also you never complain on Facebook. My parents had no patience for any of that stuff anyway.

Jody: Oh, is that right.

Jordan: I was an only child so the only people I could whine to was them, and after a while they were like, whatever, man. Get over it. So I got over it, and I think that people who I've known since I was really young that I'm still in touch with and close with they're either also doing really impressive things or, frankly, we don't talk that much, and I think that's important because if you don't protect your mind and you listen to what everybody else is thinking and doing and saying, even if they're your own family, you can really get wrapped up in what naysayers and things like that have to say, and you can easily go nowhere if you get trapped in all that mud.

Jody: I've heard this phrase somewhere—I'm not going to get it just perfect—but that people end up being the product of the five people they hang around with the most.

Jordan: Right, definitely. And that's more true than people realize. People think it's some sort of metaphysical thing, well, okay, if just get near these folks it'll rub off on me, but the truth is when you hang around people that complain and whine a lot, you start to feel really down. It's emotionally draining. They're energy vampires. So what happens is if you listen to your family complain and tell you that, oh, don't get excited about this. It's probably not going to work, and business is rough, and you might fail, and then you're going to lose everything. You should play it safe. What are you really going to have energy to do after you get done with that? Are you going to really be a risk taker and put your neck out? I mean, that's very unlikely.

Jody: Well, you know, in sort of talking about that college piece, I know I've heard you mention this in a few of the interviews that you've done for other podcasts about after you finished college, you, I think, we're interested in working at Best Buy and kind of thinking about that as maybe a good fit for you, but then that didn't actually turn out to be the case, and I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about that, and what's your takeaway from that experience?

Jordan: I would say I was interested in working at Best Buy, but I think I had to work at Best Buy because I didn't have any other options.

Jody: Oh!

Jordan: So all of my friends were going off to do business-school stuff or they were doing graduate school or they had some sort of job, and I didn't know. I needed to figure it out. So I walked into Best Buy, and I was like, well, I shop here a lot, and I know a lot about this stuff, so maybe I'll fix computers because I already know how to do that.

Jody: Is that what you studied as an undergrad?

Jordan: No, I studied foreign languages and political science because, you know, whatever, it's undergrad. You don't think about that stuff in advance.

Jody: Okay.

Jordan: So I thought, well, I built my own computer. I know how to diagnose problems. I know how to build these things from scratch, pretty much. I mean, aside from soldering things together, I can do a lot of the rest, and I was doing that a little bit on the side, and I thought, this is going to be great, and they probably pay, I don't know, twenty bucks an hour or whatever it was back then, and they said, oh, well, you can't just start there. You have to get trained to do that. And I thought, well, that's dumb. I already know how to do that, and I have a college degree. I know how to do this stuff. Well yet, you start in the music department, and I'm like, wait, I'm going to have stand next to this life-size cutout of Britney Spears for three years before I can do something I already know how to do. I'm not going to do that. So I applied to law school because I had nothing else to do, and I ended up getting into Michigan Law as well, and then that became sort of a default path that was encouraged by everyone. Because it was a really tough school to get into and a really good profession, people were like, this is great. Meanwhile I was going, I don't want to be a lawyer. What am I doing here? And all these kids are going to be smarter than me, and this is expensive. I mean, what's the plan? No plan. But when you're following this really clear-cut beaten trail that other people think is great for you or they wish they could have done, you're going to find very little support and going, yeah, this just isn't for me. And you hear this all the time when kids go, oh, I dropped out of school because it wasn't for me. No matter what, there's a majority of people who go, what an idiot. This

guy's never going to make it. Oh, it's not for me? What, are you afraid of a little work? So if you don't go to a grad school that you get into because you don't want to be in that profession, people have a similar reaction. Well, what are you going to do? I don't know. Well, you better go to law school, then, because otherwise you're just wasting your life, and it's really easy to fall down that hole. And the problem is it's not like that's free. You get out of there, and if you don't want to be a lawyer, oh, that's fine. You only have to do it for five years because you owe us a hundred eighty thousand dollars, and maybe you can pay it back in five years, if you live like a college kid.

Jody: So, what's one thing you wish that someone had said to you that day you graduated from college that might have been more helpful?

Jordan: That's a great question. I think what they would have said is, well, what are you good at? If I had spent twenty minutes, what am I good at, what do you like to do, I probably would have had a different answer because nobody ever really asked that. It's not like my parents didn't care about my happiness or something, but they were raised in an environment where if you went to college you had a massive advantage, and then me going to grad school was just a natural extension of that strategy, which was great when auto companies were saying, yeah, if you want to work here, we'll pay you tons of money, and you'll never get fired, and then you can retire and you're all good. And that was a great strategy back then, but now you can graduate from a top school, with decent grades; you can come out and get a mediocre job or no job, and you owe all that money. I mean, you don't get a pass because you couldn't find work. So you're in trouble. You are in real trouble. You have real debt, like, as if you bought a nice house, but you don't have a house or anything, for that matter. You have a piece of paper that says you should be able to do a job but you don't really know how to do it. You don't have experience. You're just qualified to maybe be trained by somebody else at their expense. Nobody wants to do that now.

Jody: You mentioned, I thought, two really interesting points about figuring out what you're good at but also what you're interested in or what you would like to do.

Jordan: Yes.

Jody: Is that what's happened here with the Art of Charm, that you kind of found your wheelhouse in terms of what you like doing and what you're good at?

Jordan: Yeah, I think the most successful people get really good at a couple of things and then they mash them together. Like, if you look at Elon Musk, he's a really good engineer, I mean, brilliant-level engineer and also a really brilliant businessman in a lot of other ways. Mostly, I think his skill sets are probably more discreet, like, he can bring teams together and inspire people and make them see his vision through his own eyes in a lot of ways, but he wouldn't be doing what he is doing if he was just a really smart engineer, and he wouldn't be doing what he is doing if he was just a really good businessman. But for me if anybody had said, hm, well, you can repair computers, and a lot of people have computers, and a lot of people have computers that break, so maybe you should look into doing that and scaling that, but that never happened. Nobody ever taught me to think that way. I just thought, I can do this and make a couple hundred bucks a week, but I never thought, well, I can find other people that can do this and pay them more than they're making at Best Buy. I mean, I basically would have invented the Geek Squad, right, because I was setting up stereos. I was setting up computers. I was repairing computers. I would go to someone's house and sit on their floor and eat their Doritos while I fixed their computers, and I had friends who were taking little tiny jobs from me, too, but had I ever thought that this was what I could be doing, I would have scaled it, but, instead, I thought, well, this is some temporary stuff that I have to do between getting the rest of my "real" education, dot, dot, dot live happily ever after. But I could have easily done something like that—not easily—I would have definitely been in the frame of mind to do something like that, but it never occurred to me that that was an option for a real career, because if you didn't go to college and graduate from college and then get a job in that field, you were somehow a huge failure, and that's not true anymore. It wasn't true then either; I just didn't know it. Now I think people at least are educated that they can do pretty much anything as long as they can monetize it, and it's, hopefully, an honest endeavor that there are other options other than yes, I have to go to college, then go interview at a corporation, then work my way up the ladder. Twenty years ago no one thought differently, and the people who did are here in Silicon Valley and they own Apple computer and Tesla Motors. Those are the people that were thinking differently in the eighties and nineties.

Jody: And you don't even have to be young to have that mindset.

Jordan: No.

Jody: I think looking ahead and that being innovative and being open to opportunities is just kind of a great way, I think, to move through one's career and through one's life.

Jordan: Yes. It's important to continually try to have that beginner's mind. It's increasingly challenging, obviously, you know, when somebody tells you, well, this thing could work this way and you've done it a different way your whole life, it's tough to go, hm, maybe you're right, person I've never met. You know, there are credibility issues, trust issues. You have to figure out whether or not you trust yourself enough to execute that, as well. I think that's one of the key problems that is unaddressed with this. Yes, there are tons of information about being an entrepreneur, going off on your own path, but do you trust yourself enough to execute it? Do you have the skills required for it, because you don't just need to know how to use social media. You don't just need to know how to create the product that you're selling. Otherwise, you could just sell stuff on Etsy. I don't know too many Etsy millionaires, but if you're going to create a business, you need to be able to market it. In order to market it, you need to be able to create relationships with people who can help you do that. In order to create relationships, you need to have a different skill set that, largely, what we teach at the Art of Charm, because if you don't, somebody else who has a crummier product but better people skills is just going to run laps around you, and you're going to, again, you're going to cry on Twitter about how you have a better model or a better prototype and no one cares.

Jody: So, tell us a little bit about where you got that insight that it's these, you know, a lot of people call these soft skills, right?

Jordan: Right.

Jody: Those kind of people skills, but as you just very clearly stated, that can be the make-or-break skill, and how did you recognize that, and how are helping people get better at that?

Jordan: Sure. So I recognized it pretty—it was pretty obvious. Here's what happened. So in law school I realized quickly that everybody was smarter than me, by a lot, most of the people there, because this is University of Michigan. It's one of the top law schools I got in, I don't know, error in the system, whatever, and everybody there just seemed to be absorbing—it's like they could put the book under their pillows and wake up and know everything that was in it, those kind of people.

Jody: Yeah, I hate them.

Jordan: I know. Everybody hates them. And they hate each other, so it's okay. And I would go to the library and study for ten hours and then somehow just not get the point, right? I wouldn't get what the heck was in any of those cases in those books, and so I started to really feel like I'm not going to make it through here. I'll be very lucky, and then my friends were like, hey, man. If you just pass you'll be fine. I mean, professors were saying people who get A's become professors. People who get B's become judges, and people who get C's get rich because they don't want to become lawyers. So I thought, I'll take it, right? But what happened was I couldn't just sit around and slack and fail and get hired at some law firm, which, by the way, that doesn't work anymore either, because they want top grades and, otherwise, you're out of luck. But these smart, smart kids on the first week of school were like, let's make a study group, and everyone else was like, oh, we're not going to do that. We're going to resist that for a while, and I said, I'm in because I need a jump start, and if you guys are going to do this, I'll work with you, but, warning, I'm going to be the weakest link in this thing, and they said, it's fine. Just show up. So I had all the smartest kids, and I was in their group, so I said, guys, I have questions. And then I started asking questions, and what that evolved into was all the smart kids teaching me everything that was in the book while I learned from them. So, essentially, they were learning by teaching, and I was learning because I was being spoon fed everything by the smartest people in the class. And I thought, I'm onto something here. This is working for me. We had that group for three years and in every core class that we were in, and so this was kind of like the first bit of human hacking that I had seen inside the system that was working really well for me. I got great grades in law school. I went to Wall Street. I had a really good job, and they have this "mentorship program," which, on Wall Street, means somebody has to, like, by force has take you out to lunch once a month, and my mentor was never there, and he was supposed to be this rain maker, this guy who brought in all this business, and I finally kind of had an incident with HR, where they said, how's your mentorship program, and I said, what mentorship program. The guy's never even here. So he took me out for coffee, and he said, ask me whatever you want, you know, like, I have to check off this stupid check box for HR. So I said, how come you're never in the office but everyone says you make the most money of all the partners, and he put his Blackberry down. Of course, at this point I think I'm getting fired at Starbucks. And he says, oh, I bring in all the deals. I bring in all the money. I have all the relationships. This is why I don't worry about my billable hours, because I get a commission when I bring in a seven-figure law deal

that's bigger than anyone's billable-hour commission. And I thought, wait a second. You are from Brooklyn, and you have a tan. This means you're playing golf, you're going on cruises, you're going to dinners, you're doing all these charity events. So your job is to get people to like you and trust you enough to give all of us a bunch of work, and you get paid more than everyone else for that. And that was basically the case, so I thought, all right. I'm never going to be a guy who sleeps under his desk and outworks everyone. That's highly unlikely. I'm certainly not going to be the most technically skilled attorney, because I didn't even understand the stuff that it required to take the exams in the school to get his job in the first place, so I'm never going to be that guy, but what I might have a snowball's chance in heck of doing is gaining the soft skills to be able to persuade people to do business with this firm.

Jody: I see.

Jordan: So I started to focus on that, and that turned out to be the lever that all successful people in pretty much every single industry use universally. And the reason that more people don't know about it is that they are oblivious to the secret game being played around them. So they work on these technical skills, which, of course, are important, but I will hire you for that. Right now my company, if I need somebody highly technically skilled, I'll hire them for that, and they work for the Art of Charm; it's my company. If I need somebody who's going to work really hard, I offer them a bonus for working more hours. I'm not going to work any more than I need to, because now I have that lever, right, and the sooner you get that lever, the better off you're going to be.

Jody: And why do you think that lever, that networking piece is so underrated?

Jordan: Well, one, maybe it's an American thing, a lot of people think it's cheating. They go, oh, well, yeah, I see it's all about who you know, and I say, yeah, it's all about who you know, which is awesome because you can know a lot of people or you can sleep under your desk and study books on the subject in your spare time so that you know the technical ins and outs. I'll chose the it's-all-about-who-you-know thing because that's deeply within your control because creating and maintaining relationships in your industry, outside your industry, broadly, widely, whatever you want to call it, you can do that. That's something that you can figure out how to do. I will teach it to you. You can use it. People like you for doing it. If you're going to outwork other people, they're competing with you. If I'm creating relationships

with you, we're helping each other, and if you want to be more technically skilled than me, I have to study more than you and go to more seminars, but if I'm creating relationships with you and you're doing the same thing, again, we're still helping each other. So this cooperative mindset works really well. It's like capitalism, whereas if you're just trying to outdo the next guy, you're fighting the whole time, and you end up cutting off your nose to spite your face.

Jody: Right. I think one of the ways that we sort of describe that in economics is kind of that zero-sum game.

Jordan: Right, yes. I knew I was looking for something like that. Yes. It's a zero-sum game because I will literally stay—if I'm playing the outwork-you game, I will literally stay in the office until you leave, and you have to do the same thing for me. If I'm building it on relationships, I leave at 11:00 a.m. because I have brunch with an investment banker and everyone goes, yes! Jordan has something in the works, man. I remember being in the elevator with Dave, the networking, mentor guy, and the managing partner of the whole firm was in there, and the managing partner looked at him and said, what are you doing here? something wrong? And they were joking but kind of not joking, because it's like well, if Dave's in the office, why aren't you doing something else that's more important than being in the office. And what he said was, yeah, there's an all-hands meeting, and he goes, oh, that's right. I called that meeting, and they had a good laugh about it, right? The only reason he was in there, ever, was that the managing partner of the whole firm just wanted everyone there.

Jody: I see.

Jordan: That was the only reason he was there, and what that meant to me was Dave's time is more valuable outside the firm than it could ever be in the office. There's nothing he could be doing in the office that would be more valuable than the relationships that he's creating outside, and that was huge. At that moment I remember—really didn't all coagulate—but a few weeks later I thought, wait a minute. If they could pick whether or not you're good in the office or you're good at developing business for the firm, they would never want you in the office. The reason that Dave is more valuable is that he's rare, and so if I can develop a rare skill set, I will make more money. That's why professional athletes make so much money, because it's rare. It's a scarcity. So I'm going to work on that because finding drones that will stay in the office for twenty hours a day, that's not that hard. You just throw money at the problem. If you want somebody to be good at relationship building and maintenance, you can pay people all you

want. They're not going to get nicer, more charming, or fun to hang out with, and they're certainly not going to be better at following up with people and being more persuasive. You can pay them millions of dollars and they won't do that.

Jody: Right. But you've somehow cracked that, right? You have a curriculum around helping people become more skilled. How can you teach people to be good networkers?

Jordan: Yeah, it's an uphill battle because it's something that is never focused on in school; is looked down upon by a lot of folks, right, it's all about who you know, wah, wah, wah, you're cheating; and people don't really see it for the most part until they get to the top. So the way that we teach it is there are a lot of little components, and we have to sort of distill it down to things like nonverbal communication, reading nonverbal communication, exhibiting positive nonverbal communication, because if you walk into a room and you're like, I'm at this stupid networking event. Man, I hope no one talks to me. I'm just going to go stuff my face with hors d'oeuvres and then you're going to sit in the corner with your arms crossed and just kind of, you know, look at your phone, you're probably not going to meet that many people. But if you walk in, you own the place, you're open, you're positive, you're looking at people, you're saying hi to people, you're introducing them to each other, now you're kind of a machine. And so in order to do that we have to delegate some of the things that we'd normally have to manage ourselves consciously into habits. So I want to have people look open, friendly. I don't want them to be thinking about that, so we have to change your body language. We have to put a smile on your face. You can't just go, all right, I'm going to go in there and stand up straight and smile, because then you're micromanaging your nonverbal communication, so we have to make that into a habit, so we set that up for you when you come in. We have skills and drills that will make it so that that's on autopilot. You have to be reading and able to read what other people are putting on their faces, micro expressions. What they really think will shine through. You have to also be able to look and see where there's an opening in a conversation so that you can join, whether or not you should be joining, things like that. Then there are a lot of strategies that have to do with subtle persuasion. Nobody likes the, hey, you're looking for financial management? Here's my card. Give me a call, and then they email you seventy-five times, like, hey, what about that IRA? That's annoying. But if you and I end up becoming friends because I help you find other things that will plug into your business...and so the process of relationship develop is essentially

asking for and giving generosity. If you're not working both sides of the equation, you're only doing half of the job.

Jody: You've interviewed so many interesting, inspiring, and accomplished people, and who are two people that stand out in your mind that you've talked to that sort of had a diverging kind of path, that they ended up someplace different than they actually started? Does anybody come to mind that was along that kind of crooked, if you will, path?

Jordan: Sure. A lot of the people that I talk to are divergent in a lot of ways. I mean, honestly, my business partner AJ is quite—I mean, he used to be a cancer biologist.

Jody: So a scientist, basically.

Jordan: Right. He was a scientist, and the way that we met and the way that the Art of Charm started to form was because I decided that, hey, I have to dedicate myself to this networking thing. So I started going out by myself, and I met him through a mutual friend, and I was talking about all these things I'd read in books, like body language and vocal tonality and eye contact and here's how you start conversations, and he was really good with women but not so good with making friends with guys. So I was like, well, here's all this relationship stuff and meeting guys and hanging out and relating to people's stuff. That could be really helpful for you, and then he was like a wizard with the opposite sex, and I was like, this is a really good match up because you have the other half of the equation that everybody wants to know about, but you don't really know how to articulate it, and I have this really sort of academic knowledge of this area that makes it really possible for us to—so we started talking every night, and we would go out every night, and then we would say, okay, what's going on with these people, what's going on with those people, what happened in this interaction, and we'd start articulating things, and then people would listen in and go, this is the most fascinating conversation. So we started the podcast because they suggested we write a book, but we thought, well, we're already talking, so—podcasting was brand new at this point, it was eight years ago, and so we started recording it, and that's how we started, and his path is so divergent because he was a cancer biologist. He was in with a bunch of analytical types. He felt suffocated because he was kind of the opposite in a lot of ways, and now he helps run this company.

Jody: That's amazing in terms of that, starting in one place and ending up someplace totally different. Would you have been able to predict any of that path for either one of you, do you think?

Jordan: No. I mean, he was in a PhD program, and I remember going, well, you know, I'm a lawyer, sort of.

Jody: Sort of.

Jordan: So I have to figure this whole thing out. You know, this has been fun, and then I kept it going because I really liked it, and it was sort of a creative outlet that I didn't have, and then we got picked up by satellite radio, and I thought, wow, I'm kind of moonlighting here. This is really cool. I have this weird New York City life where I have two identities: one on the radio and one at the law firm. And then the legal market started to slow down, and everybody started bailing and looking for jobs, and then they thought they were going to lay us all off, and I thought, okay, I have a choice here. I can either hustle hard to get another job in an industry where I'm not interested to do something that I don't want to do and basically start all over again or I can just give this a shot and see what happens, and so here we are.

Jody: Would you say your success has been beyond any expectations that you might have had as well?

Jordan: Oh, yeah. I think our success five years ago was beyond any expectations. Everything that happens now is just kind of like, is this real life? I can't believe this is happening.

Jody: Well, it's been amazing as I learn more about your background, and it's obviously been a lot of fun talking to you today. I was wondering, too, when you were first starting the Art of Charm and even as you're growing your business and your program now, are there any mentors that really stand out in your mind? I know, obviously, your mentor from the law firm.

Jordan: Yeah, in air quotes, mentor, right? Not really, because in a lot of ways people always have advice for you and usually it's bad.

Jody: Could you say that one more time?

Jordan: Yeah, everyone has advice for you and usually it's bad, and it's not based on experience. It's not based on any of their experiences, and if it is you have to evaluate whether or not their experiences are even remotely relevant to what you're doing. So, for

example, my dad would always say, be careful who you hire, because you're in business with that person. You have to trust them. That's good advice. That's totally true. He hired a lot for Ford. He knows you can hire some scumbags and you're in trouble. However, he also told me that nobody would use Yahoo because they can just go to the library. That was terrible advice, right? I got that advice from him when I was sixteen, and I got some money, and I wanted to put it in stock, and I thought, there's this company that we should figure out how to invest in because they're putting all this stuff online.

Jody: Wow!

Jordan: And he was like, that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. It's not that he's a bad person or a moron, it's just that his experience said, I'm never going to use that. Well, he uses it every—I mean, this man is an Internet addict right now, but you don't know that. People don't know this, because it's not based on their expertise. Even now people give me advice because they're trying to protect me. My mom will say, don't get too excited if doesn't work out, right? And she'll tell me that about, like, getting flown to the Pentagon to give a speech. You know, well, if it doesn't work out, it's okay. I'll be fine, Mom. I've had disappointments in the past. It'll be okay. So there's a group of people that are trying to protect you, so they'll give you advice or they might look like naysayers. There's another group of people that don't want you to succeed. They might give you bad advice to be risk averse because that's what they would do. It's based on their insecurities. You have to protect your mind. If you don't do that, you're going to end up with input from a million unqualified sources.

Jody: So, how do you filter?

Jordan: It's tough. What you have to do is you have to, first of all, graciously accept everybody's advice and opinion, and either let it go in one ear and out the other or filter it as such, and the way that I do that is I look at them, and I say, okay, what real experience does this person have in this area? How does that mesh with my experience in this specific area, if any? And, of course, if they don't have any experience, there's an expression I won't share that we would use for that, and it would go away. You don't apply it. If they do have experience but it's not quite the same, now you're going, well, that worked in the auto industry. Does that work in the digital area? If not, maybe I should qualify it by bouncing it off somebody else that I know in my same market, because you should never get advice from just one source. It's kind of like if a doctor says, hey, man, I'm going to have to chop your leg off, you'd go, well, hold on one second. I

want to talk to some other people and make sure this is the right move. But people will do this with their business all the time. Someone will say, oh, you know what your problem is? You don't do enough social media, and you go, well, that guy's rich, and he has good social media, so maybe that's why, and you spend a hundred grand on social media, and you find out the reason that guy's rich has nothing to do with social media. That was a side effect. Is it causal, right? Is what they're telling me the reason for their success or just something that they think might be? I get this advice all the time—and I think it's terrible—they go, follow your passion. That's terrible advice. That's some of the worst advice any one can ever get, and it's irresponsible because the people that are telling you to follow your passion, they're sitting in front of a microphone, successful in some area that may or may not have ever been their passion, and just because they're passionate about it now has nothing to do with the fact that they followed it. There are many people that follow their passion. Most of them live in their parents' basements. The other few people are going, man, how do I distill everything I've done to be successful for this interviewer right now? I don't know...follow your passion. That sounds good. But the people who did that and didn't succeed are not in front of the mic, so it's a self-selecting group of people who followed their passion, and that's a problem because that invalidates the advice. It's like those people who walk under streetlights and go, that turned off. Hm, I have some sort of magical power that turns off streetlights. That's confirmation bias. It's not a real power that they have and following your passion doesn't guarantee success any more than waking up every day guarantees you success.

Jody: Obviously, you have a lot of passion around the work that you're doing, so tell us a little bit about how you have applied that, I think, really good advice about, hey, you have to be careful about following your passion because you need to sort of check and see if there's a market out there for it. Is that kind of what you're saying or...?

Jordan: Yeah, yeah. I mean, passion's great if you can monetize it. Let's be realistic here. You don't have to be super passionate about what you start doing for business. If you want to be like one of those lifestyle entrepreneurs where you make all of your money that you need for the month in ten hours of work every other week then that's fine. That's great. You slog through it; hopefully you don't hate every minute of it, but you slog through it, and you have rental properties; it's not that exciting, but now you can travel around and do your thing. That's okay. You don't have to be passionate about it. If you want to

do something artsy and you want to make a modest living doing it, that's great if you're passionate about it, but it's not a recipe for success. It's you being very fortunate that you're able to monetize your passion. The better piece of advice I would say—and I don't give this either, but I will here—is bring your passion with you. If you are doing properties, vacation rentals and that's how you make your money, fine. Be passionate about it. Make your properties amazing, add a little extra touch for your customers, do a little bit of marketing for it. You'll see huge returns for that, if you bring your passion with you. You can be a guy who cleans bugs out of sewer grates. If you bring your passion with you, you'll have a much better enjoyment of that. But following your passion, that could lead you just about anywhere. Most of us are not finding success where that takes us.

Jody: I love that: bring your passion with you. That's really a great summary statement, I think, Jordan. I know we've covered a lot of ground today, and I want to circle back a little bit on the value of education and the relevance of college, and I want to ask you what wisdom you would impart or what advice you might offer to a young person considering their college options.

Jordan: Sure. So, I'm not anti-college. I am anti-following what other people are doing because you're not really sure what else to do. I would have learned a lot more if I didn't apply to law school and just started doing other things. It's so hard to say 20/20 hindsight, right, because then it's, like, oh, well, you never would have met Dave, and you wouldn't have learned this, and da da. Maybe that's true, but maybe I would've done something totally different and been equally or more successful. I don't know. So, I answer it like this: whenever people say, should I go to college, I say, I don't know. What do you want to do, and if they go, I don't know, then I say, well, you can go to college later. Right now start getting a ton of experience doing as many different things as you can in different parts of the country, working of different people, because then you'll have a much better idea, mostly of what you don't want to do, but that helps narrow things down. On the other hand, if someone says, I have a business. It's going okay, but I feel like I should go to college because I need an education, because my parents, or because successful people have education, I would say, give your business a shot. You're twenty-one. You're never going to have less responsibility than you do right now. You're probably not even twenty-one. What are you, seventeen, now when you go to college? You have no real responsibility. There's very good chance that you could make pretty much every mistake that doesn't land you in prison and you will be just fine. So spend all your money. Go all over the place. Try everything that you want to do. Be

as careful as you need to be to stay alive, and you'll land on your feet, most likely. You'll be fine. And a lot of people are like, that's terrible advice. I can't believe it. But really terrible advice is go study a bunch of stuff that you're probably not interested in, spend a ton of money, and then come out and be exactly where you are now only four years older and having, what, gained some social experience and you have a piece of paper to hang on your wall that right now is, quite frankly, not that valuable. I'm not hiring you because you graduated from college.

Jody: I wanted to say thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to come in today. It was really exciting and fun talking to you, and you have a lot of great thoughts about education and how to go about approaching one's career, which is really helpful.

Jordan: Well, thank you for the opportunity. I love the ability to address people and tell people all the mistakes that I was making so that you don't have to repeat them. Unfortunately, I know that if I were listening to this at my age back then, I would probably not listen to about half of it and have to learn some stuff the hard way, and that will happen and that's okay, too.

Jody: It is, and okay, but even if we get fifty, forty, thirty percent of it in, that'll be fantastic.

Jordan: Exactly. Yeah. If you take one thing away from it, I'm happy.

Jody: All right, Jordan. Thank you so much.

Jordan: Thank you.

Jody: I hope you enjoyed the conversation with Jordan Harbinger as much as I did. Jordan shared with us his first bit of human hacking, why bringing your passion with you is a great career strategy, and when choosing a work experience over the college experience just might be the best route to follow. We'll put links in the show notes, where you can find more information about Jordan, his cofounder, and the Art of Charm. I hope you'll be back next week, where I think you'll really enjoy this slight shift in our focus as we begin to explore how entrepreneurship is transforming the question, does college matter?