

## Billionaire Secrets with Rick Sapio

**Yanik Silver:** Welcome everyone to a very special call that I'm doing with my buddy, Rick Sapio.

It's all about billionaire secrets. I'll let Rick fill in a few details on his bio in just a minute, but where Rick and I met and bonded was actually on the private island of one such billionaire, which is Sir Richard Branson on Necker Island. I think it was maybe 4 or 5 years ago.

So Rick and I were always out late enjoying the island, enjoying a lot of fun times. We both actually ended up having a letter given to us at one of the last dinners that essentially said... well mine said Mr. Silver. I'm sure yours said Mr. Sapio. It said, "I hope you enjoyed the time on this island. It's one of the world's most exclusive islands, and some of your behavior has resulted in guests having a less than optimal experience. You can carry on as you wish on another island, and please have your bags packed by 8:00PM."

So Rick and I have one of the distinctions of being one of the few people to be kicked off Necker Island as part of a joke that our mutual friend Joe Polish and Richard helped organize, which is nice.

I remember handing the letter to Richard, and he looks at it and he's like – "Yeah, yeah... the manager is a bit of a serious bloke, but I'll have a word with him." And that's when I was like, "Oh shit, maybe it's for real." It took about 15 seconds, and he was like, "I got you guys!" So that was a good time, and that was an interesting way of spending time with a billionaire.

Rick's official bio... Rick's one of those business people that I really look up to, who started multiple businesses. He has a holding company that has a lot of different companies from real estate to private funds to even publically traded mutual funds, healthcare, medical device companies.

He's been at this a while, starting in the financial sector and then building up his own kind of portfolio of companies. He's also been president of Dallas' chapter of Entrepreneurs Organization (EO), president of Dallas Roundtable, a member of YPO, all sorts of things, chairman of Gathering of Titans where, Rick, you brought me in to speak at one point with a great group of entrepreneurs. Anything else that we should know about from your background there?

**Rick Sapio:** I think that you nailed it. One thing I always like to add when people ask is – we spend a lot of time making sure that our kids have a life of

luxury, in a sense. We don't want them to have any hurt feelings. We don't want them to go through any drama or chaos or negative trauma, traumatizing situations, etc. But I think one of the reasons why I am who I am is when I was 11, one of 9 kids, and my father came home to tell the family that he had cancer. He was given 6 weeks to live. He ended up living for 2 more years, but he died when I was 13.

He gave us a gift just before he died, and that was he went bankrupt. Due to all that we went through, my mother had a very, very serious nervous breakdown. So we went from normal American family, dinner on the table every night to no parents.

Had that not happened to me, I never would have become an entrepreneur because we really banded together as a family. I started my first small business when I was 13. I think it's incredibly important that we teach our kids how to be entrepreneurial, how to make money, how to save money, how to invest money.

We need to teach them to fail often and pick themselves back up. So that's a part of my bio that I'm proud of. It's funny when that happened to us. I'm 48... so that was 37 years ago when he got cancer.

It's an interesting thing to watch now that all my siblings even (I've got 37 nieces and nephews.), and they do the same thing. They protect their kids from everything. I try to explain to them that the reason we are who we are is because of what we went through. So I wanted to share that.

There was something else I wanted to share, but it got lost in that story somewhere, but the point is this – I believe that the way for us out of the crisis we're in as a country and as a world is through entrepreneurship, and I'm going to keep tooting that horn. So that's it. So where do you want to get started?

**Yanik:**

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Let's talk about what took you on this journey to kind of meet and interact with now it's I think the number is up to 20 billionaires. I'll chime in with... I've had the privilege of spending some time with a couple of them aside from Richard on a bit of an extended period of time.

I think one of your values that you've always talked about and comes up in conversations a lot with you is this idea of simplicity. There's a great quote that you abide by, which is, "I wouldn't give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." And that's by Oliver Wendell Holmes.

And that's been a recurring theme in your life, so let's start there maybe – what your journey has been, how you interacted and why you decided to spend time with these 20-some billionaires, and then how this idea of simplicity has found itself woven in with some of the lessons that you've found.

**Rick:**

Alright well let me start with what you ended with. First this presentation that we're talking about is called, "Lessons from the Billionaire Mind". When we talk about simplicity, it's important to understand that the average entrepreneur that I meet, or would-be entrepreneur, they think of a business idea. They get into this gotta-gotta-gotta mode. Gotta get a website. Gotta hire somebody. Gotta get an office. Gotta-gotta-gotta-gotta-gotta.

But when I was with these billionaires, and I spent serious time with them, I never saw any of that. In fact, I saw them on the other side of simplicity. You've got a guy like Warren Buffet with 90,000 employees. 90,000 employees, and he reads for 9 hours a day.

You've spent a lot of time with Branson, as have I. Here's a guy with tens of thousands of employees – I don't know what the count is – and he's sipping champagne on an island 9 hours from civilization. These are people that have realized that true success is on the other side of simplicity. So they're, if you will, on the simple side of simplicity and on the far side of simplicity.

People need to realize that in order to get to the far side of simplicity, they have to understand some critical principles about it. That is #1 – your life has to be on purpose. It makes me sick to my stomach when I talk to someone who's 40 years old, I ask them what their purpose is and they say, "I don't know."

So if you haven't taken time out of your life – I don't care if it takes you 10 minutes, 1 week, 2 years or 5 years. Go somewhere. Figure out what your purpose is, and then come back and execute on it. That will get you to simplicity faster than anything.

Your original question was, "How did this all evolve?" It's funny – if you want something bad enough, the universe will conspire to give it to you. How this all started was a friend of mine, and I live in Dallas, asked me to help get Rudy Giuliani in the White House. I know nothing about politics, and since that experience I actually hate politics.

My wife and I got involved, and we ended up raising a lot of money for the campaign – the campaign to nowhere. When he was 20 points ahead of McCain we had a fundraiser at our home, and Rudy came over. It was a great event; I had a lot of fun. I got to hang out with him and Rick Perry and other people that were big donors.

Well little did we know at the time that we had raised... I think the second most amount of money in this particular period of time. I get this call from the first billionaire, T. Boone Pickens. He says, "Listen, I don't know if you know, but I have a need to get Rudy Giuliani in the White House. Thank you for raising the money. I had a prize out there – anybody who raises over x, I will take hunting with my out at my lodge."

So I did some research on his lodge. It turns out he has a \$300 million house on a 66,000 acre ranch. I said, "Mr. Pickens, thank you so much. All due respect, but I can't go because my wife is about to have a baby next week and the baby would be like 3 or 4 days old." I don't share this part of the story often, but I went home, told my wife this story, and she said, "Are you nuts?! You better go!"

So we had the baby; it ended up being 4 days later. My house was filled with outlaws, I mean in-laws. And so it was a good time to go for 3 days and hang out with Pickens, an unbelievably giving guy. So I spent 4 days with the guy that George W. called a few times. Mike Milken is calling him. He's setting world policy. I mean, it was amazing how powerful the guy was.

I got to pick his brain. Then when I got back – this is December of '07 – New Year's was around the corner, my wife and I were getting together. She said, "You came back from that trip on a high. Why don't you meet 10 billionaires this year?" So it started there, and like I said if you want something bad enough it will happen.

The first or second week of January in '08, I went to a charity event here in Dallas. It just so happened that in my mind I remembered this thing on the radio I'd heard that to have lunch with Warren Buffet costs \$500,000. This is a charity event. Are you familiar with that?

**Yanik:** Yeah, I think it's auctioned off every year on e-bay or something like that.

**Rick:** Yeah, so I go to this big charity event, and there it was in the corner. It said, "Have lunch with a billionaire." There were 4 billionaires' names there, and I put my name next to each one. And the price is really low. The starting price was I think \$250. I can't remember.

So rather than sit there and wait to make sure I was the final bid, I just handed my credit card to the organizer. I said, “Whatever the highest bid is on these four guys, call me tomorrow and charge my card.” So I was real nervous when the call came in. I think you know this story.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Rick:** But to have lunch with four separate billionaires was only \$1,500. Crazy. People were bidding on Cowboy tickets and private jet trips, but to me the most valuable thing is sitting across from a billionaire. So it went from Boone Pickens to those four, and those were Ray Hunt, Phil Romano, Craig Hall, and SamWyly.

Then I get an email from Joe about the Richard Branson trip. So it just started unfolding from there. Of course I always go to the Warren Buffet Berkshire Hathaway meeting. I met Warren Buffet before, but I now saw him in a new light. If you haven’t been to the annual meeting at Berkshire Hathaway, it’s this coming Saturday. Where else would you get two billionaires answering questions for 6 hours? It’s just incredible.

It just went on from there, so that’s how it evolved. Once it happened I decided to commit money and time to meeting as many as I could. I’ll wrap up the story by saying I think it ended up being thirty total people because I switched. I went from billionaire to people who have had a billionaire impact.

So I spent time with Stephen Covey. I spent time with Brother David, a guy named Ken Wilber, Adyashanti. I think you were there, too, when we met the Dalai Lama.

**Yanik:** I wasn’t, but I wish I was.

**Rick:** That was incredible. I spent the day there. I got to spend about four hours in his presence in a small group. It just went on from there. It almost got to the point now where people were emailing me. I’ve got this billionaire cousin, uncle, friend – do you want to meet them? And I was like, “No I’ve met enough billionaires.” What I realized is they had some certain attributes, and once I found the attributes I was done.

**Yanik:** Yeah, ok, well let’s dig in a little bit. What are some of the key ones? Let’s start with what you found.

**Rick:** So we could start with kind of the softer things, and I call it the “3 G’s”. The first “G” is graciousness. I have to tell you. In all the

meetings I had, and there were a lot of meetings and a lot of one-on-one time, I never saw a cell phone. I never saw somebody in a hurry. I never saw somebody who wasn't fully present to me.

So the first "G" is graciousness. I found that they were extremely gracious all the way around. What you have to be asking yourself if you're listening to this is – did they become a billionaire first, or did they have these traits first? I believe that they had these traits first. You have to be fully present in order to be fully successful, in my opinion. So graciousness is all about respect for humanity, respect for the world, respect for yourself, etc.

The second "G" is gratefulness. Unless you're truly grateful for what you have, no matter where you are – you could be the poorest person in the world. Until you understand gratefulness, I don't think you can get there. Brother David, who wrote a book called *Gratefulness* who was one of the people that I met, is clearly a billionaire in the spiritual world.

He said there's this continuum. On one side is this serving ego, where you get up in the morning and you look to serve the world. That would be someone fully serving, like Mother Theresa. I'm not asking anybody to be Mother Theresa. But on the complete opposite end is the selfish ego. Everybody resides somewhere on that continuum – from serving to selfish.

I found that most of these people had serving egos. If you think about somebody like Bill Gates, people say – you know the guy has a lot of money, and he set out to make a lot of money. The truth is he didn't.

Here's a guy who slept next to his desk for years. I just spent some time with Ross Perot, and he told the story about him offering \$100 million to Bill Gates before they were a big company. Bill Gates said, "No I don't want your money. This isn't about the money." If it was about the money, he would have taken the \$100 million. You know what I mean? So that's what gratefulness is all about.

Then the last "G" is generosity. I read the book *Titan*. It's about John D. Rockefeller. From the day he got his first check at 16, 10% went to charity or to a cause or to his church. So they understand that money flows that way.

There have been a lot of books about the spirituality of money. They all are extremely generous. Again, the same thing – were they generous first or were they billionaires first? I think they were billionaires first.

The “3 G’s” were profound, and I noticed it across the board. People have said back to me, “Well I don’t think all billionaires have the ‘3 G’s’”. I respond, “You’re absolutely right, but the ones that I met had that.” So I think I was attracting what I want to see in the world, in a sense.

**Yanik:** Right. You know it’s interesting. For one of our Maverick trips, we brought in John Paul DeJoria, who is on the Forbes 500 list, top wealthiest Americans... well I think worldwide, co-founder of Petron Tequila, co-founder of Paul Mitchell Hair Care products. People have probably seen him in commercials and cameos and different things.

He totally represents those “3 G’s”. It’s just amazing. When you spend time with them, it’s almost like a zen-like presence that when you’re with JP. It was absolutely fascinating, and I think you’re absolutely right. I think they have to had those first. I’ve always had this saying, Rick, where I think money amplifies who you are.

**Rick:** Mmhmm.

**Yanik:** So if you’re a complete jackass, very selfish, scarcity-minded person, the money is only going to let you become more of that jackass jerk because it gives you more possibilities. If you’re generous and you have each of these “3 G’s”, it gives you more ways to expand that generosity and abundance and so forth. That’s really fascinating to me.

**Rick:** I like that – whoever you are expands. So they would be exponential jackasses. (laughs)

**Yanik:** Yeah exactly. (laughs) Well, you know, there’s certainly good-natured jackasses, and then there’s people that are just complete jerks.

**Rick:** The other thing, and I could rattle through – I could do it any way you want. There’s a lot of common attributes of the ones I met, so how do you want to do it?

**Yanik:** Yeah, just any way that you feel good about with what really jumps out at you next as something that...

**Rick:** Alright, the second thing I noticed is that – and this is something that I didn’t notice until later. Oftentimes I would think back to what I learned and what I could apply. I want to talk about some things that I actually applied that weren’t the things that I learned directly, but I created some applications for what I learned. It will come together when I explain it, but this is something that I noticed.

They lived their life in seasons. So the only way to explain this is to talk about the typical entrepreneur. They always have their foot on the gas. It's always time to plant. They're always planting and planting and planting, but if you think about truly successful people, they have a spring, summer, fall, winter schedule.

They know when to plant. They know when to cultivate. They know when to harvest, and they know when to rest. All of them had a retreat. Interestingly, all of them had a retreat early in life. So I'm going to keep revisiting this, that they had these traits early on.

You think about a guy like Branson, who we both spent time with. Here's a guy that bought this island when he was very young.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Rick:** He realized that if he's going to have a life that aligns with his vision, he had to be away from the rat race. They all thought that way. This is a tough one for me because I love what I do. For many, many years my office building was very close to my home. I just recently moved three miles away for simplicity's sake. I'm still three miles away. I don't like commuting; I think commuting is asinine.

I've never figured out how that works, to sit in a car for two hours a day, but people do it. The point is I have not embraced this retreat thing, but I did notice it across the board. Oftentimes it was a long journey to get to their retreat center. It wasn't like a shore house an hour away; oftentimes it was another country or at least several states away, which I found interesting.

**Yanik:** Let me add something to that, which I think is kind of cool. Rich DeVos is the co-founder of Amway, owner of the Orlando Magic, and one of my friends. He's as rich as his mentor, Frank McKinney.

Frank brought Rich in to a very small outing that we had, and Rich talked about that he bought this huge yacht for that very purpose. You know what's interesting, Rick and I know your family is a huge value for you, is that they combined it with family.

So they said that we bring our kids, and then the kids could bring their friends. Then they couldn't get off the yacht, and that meant that they had to spend time with them.

It's the same thing on Necker. Richard talked about how his kids would bring their friends to Necker. It's the same deal. It's

concentrated family time as well as a retreat. I found that really interesting.

**Rick:** Mmhmm. You think about too when it comes to seasons... so we talked mainly in the last section about the resting part, but you have to know where you are at any point, meaning are you harvesting? Are you planting? Are you cultivating?

I think too often with most entrepreneurs that I encounter are just always in plant mode, if that makes any sense. They don't realize that you have to then shift to harvest at a certain point.

For me as an investor, I have often missed... I've had opportunities to sell investments for a lot of money and missed many times, which is part of my learning process. I've had to learn the hard way that it's important to have all four seasons in your career.

**Yanik:** Rick, do you see that throughout one year, or do you see it as multi-year, a couple years of planting and a couple of years of harvesting?

**Rick:** Oh I think it's throughout the year. It's just like regular seasons. It's the natural order of things. So you can have multiple projects going on at the same time. But for you as a human being you have to figure out when your winter is. When are you just going to fold up your tent and relax?

I just read an article about Jeff Bezos. I don't know him at all. He goes away by himself and gets a hotel room somewhere. He doesn't tell anybody where he is, and he just thinks with no electronics. So here's a guy that's wired in the electronic world, and yet since he started the company – I think he said once every two months, I can't remember.

It's very important to just shut down and tap into your inner drive and your purpose. Another thing I learned from these guys is that it takes the same or less effort to succeed at a small project as it does to succeed at a big one.

So if you're going to set out to work 80 hours a week or whatever it is you decide or four hours a week... I have to throw that in. (laughs) *4-Hour Workweek*. My point is if you're going to set out to put effort into something, why not have it be something that has a massive outcome?

Oftentimes you'll sit across the table from an entrepreneur, I had lunch with somebody today, and I'm thinking even if you're successful you

will not move the needle on your finances or the world. So I'm very intrigued by social entrepreneurs – they move the needle in the world.

So do something big because it takes the same effort. The reason why it takes the same effort, and that's what I learned from these guys. When you set a stake in the ground for something really big, it creates a vacuum behind it. So when John F. Kennedy said that we were going to send a man to the moon and return him safely to Earth, even though he died, it still happened because it was so massive and it involved a lot of people.

So the other thing they all had in common is the fact that they chose big things, clearly. You don't end up a billionaire by accident. You want to comment because I have one other thing to add?

**Yanik:** No, I mean I think that's a great point. It's like serendipity takes hold or whatever you want to call it, or enough people get on this bandwagon that you've created. A big idea attracts people that are interested in being part of something bigger than themselves.

**Rick:** It's a huge distinction. It's huge. See, when you declare something so big, what you have to be is vulnerable as if I don't really know how we're going to do it. But most of us declare things that we know how to do, so it forces you to get way outside your comfort zone.

This is one of the big hammers over the head for me. I'm starting to declare things much bigger than I know myself to be, and I was inspired by these guys.

Here's another really big one. I just love telling this story. So through this process Phil Romano became a very close friend and mentor. He's 73. He founded Romano's Macaroni Grill, Fuddrucker's, ET's, Cozy Mill, Rudy's Barbecue. He's the only entrepreneur that has three restaurants that have done more than a billion in revenue – three, that's crazy. He's also an investor, private equity, etc.

I'm having lunch with him – this was about two years ago now. He said, "You know a lot of people. I'm looking for somebody about your age to run a company that we're considering buying, and they need this resume." He described the person, and he said, "Do you know anybody?"

He was excited like a little kid about this concept he was pursuing. He's got a little kid's energy for an older guy; it's amazing to watch. He's always excited about his next project.

About a month later (I have lunch with him about once a month), I said, “Phil, what’s going on with that project you were talking about?” He looks at me like he’s puzzled and he goes, “What project?” I said, “What do you mean ‘what project’? You couldn’t stop talking about it a month ago.”

He looks me right in the eye, and he says, “The difference between a billionaire and a millionaire is this: If I don’t find somebody to run it, I don’t do it.”

**Yanik:** Wow.

**Rick:** I mean, that’s massive because where we started – most entrepreneurs are gotta-gotta-gotta-gotta. His attitude is I’m going to be on the far side of simplicity, and from this far side if I can’t find somebody to run it, I’m not doing it. So it really changed my view on business.

**Yanik:** I mean, you’ve been doing this on your own level, too. How did that affect what you do now with your holding company?

**Rick:** Since this project, it’s really accelerated, but I’ve started to evolve into just owning as opposed to running and finding people to run the entities we invest in and compensating them both long-term and short-term for hitting objectives. To me that’s the only way.

I don’t think if you follow around the Forbes 400, well 200 of them were lucky enough to come out of the right womb, but the other 200 that actually had to work – they worked early but they knew these principles. They knew that if they weren’t going to leverage through other people, it wasn’t going to happen. The next thing I want to talk to you about is pretty funny. It’s more of a tactical thing.

**Yanik:** Well, let’s get a little more on this last one. I think that’s actually really huge, and it’s all in the way that you think about it. It ties back to thinking big versus thinking small on the projects and so forth. It’s like you think that they’re thinking on that evolved... and they all started as operators, or do you think that they really had enough elevation and altitude that they could say that this is the only way it could really work?

**Rick:** That is an awesome question, and I’m glad you asked it. Before I answer it, I want to ask the people who are listening to it whether you are listening to this live or you’re listening to this in a recorded way, I would like feedback on this interview. I’m very curious how it landed with you, if it was valuable, what value you’ve found in it. So please

give us feedback. Yanik and I thrive on it. We want to know if we're making an impact with you.

So here's the thing, Yanik, it's so funny that you asked that question. I think that these people at a very early age understood leverage. They understand delegation. They may not have the skill yet, but they understood it. You've read and I've read Richard Branson's book and many other entrepreneurs. They all seem to understand that if I can't enroll people and if I don't have a good CEO or COO next to me, it's going to be a lot harder. Almost all of them did that early on.

I don't know if you remember, but Branson hired his first CEO – I think he called them a COO – when he was 16. Who would have the presence of mind to do that? But if he didn't do that and didn't have that awareness, he would probably be on a different type of island.

**Yanik:** Yeah. Well it's one way of thinking about it versus being the operator. You know, I wonder if sometimes their makeup is that they are much more of a generalist, and it forced them to have to have delegation and bring in the person to operate their companies because if you're really, really good at something, then a lot of times you end up being stuck there.

Like if you're a really great... I don't know. Like from my point, I was a really good copywriter, and I'm trying to move away from that being my kind of sticking point in the businesses.

**Rick:** Well, it's funny because all of the things I learned from billionaires actually evolved into something called Business Finishing School. Business Finishing School is I've created modules to teach this stuff. One of the modules is called the Superman Syndrome. The Superman Syndrome is most entrepreneurs – you're a copywriter or you were – they start a business and they're Superman.

Billionaires were the opposite of that. What I mean by they're Superman is all roads lead to Superman. In a small company, all decisions go through you. Your employees are kind of in the dark because they have to wait until Superman is there to make a decision. All of the vendors, all of the clients, they have to deal with Superman.

Superman-oriented companies typically have the founder's name on the door. The problem is that Superman never made any money. There's a great crash dummies song by that title, "Superman Never Made Any Money".

When you are Superman, you are the opposite of billionaire-mind. But most small entrepreneurs think – yes I am the person that all the decisions have to go through. They don't even realize that their ego is running the show, which goes back to that selfish versus serving ego.

This is all deep stuff. Nothing that we've talked about is surface. This is deep, which is why I want your feedback. If you can understand that Superman drive and get it out of your life and think about yourself as at service to your employees and at service to your vendors and at service to your clients, it totally changes the game.

**Yanik:** By the way where can people find that information on Business Finishing School?

**Rick:** Just go to [www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com](http://www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com). It's a monthly program. We've put it in video modules, very simple. What we've found is that the average revenue increase topline is 50% in the first six months of doing the program. So it's been fun for me to do this.

Actually a mutual friend of ours, Patrick Gentempo, said, "Rick, you teach these principles inside your company. Why don't you teach them outside your company?" I said, "Oh I don't want to do that stuff. It's not me." And he got me in a studio and pulled it out. It's been a lot of fun. It's been a two year project. If you want to learn more about all of this, just go there.

**Yanik:** It's a very cool thing and something that you never expected to teach. It's something that's grossly underpriced because you're not really in it to make it this windfall for yourself but to really impact other entrepreneurs.

**Rick:** Yeah, so well let me tell you. Thank you for bringing that up too. From this project I realized that my purpose in life (I've now embraced it for four years) is to inspire entrepreneurship. When I look at the world, I envision the world with a successful entrepreneur in every family.

If we could have a successful entrepreneur in every family, we wouldn't have all these political and entitlement issues that we have. So that's my mission right now, and that's why I'm on the phone with you. I want as many people as possible to beat this drum of entrepreneurship.

**Yanik:** I love it. Ok, what else is on the hit list here?

**Rick:**

Ok, so the next thing I want to talk about is... I'm in a restaurant with Charles Wyly, and Charles Wyly is an unbelievable guy. Him and his brother Sam had sold six companies for more than a billion in profit. It's crazy. They had humble beginnings. I think they grew up in Louisiana. So he was one of the people that I met from the have lunch with a billionaire.

I ended up having a three hour lunch with the guy, and he was about 70 at the time. He was pretty much done. He had committed his life to philanthropy. He recently passed away in a car wreck, of all things, in Colorado. I'll never forget. I'm sitting there, and I said, "Charles, let's cut all the crap. Tell me what's your secret. How does a guy do what you do?"

He thought about it for a while, and he leans forward and he looks both ways and it was as if he was going to tell me about the Holy Scrolls. He says, "Here's the secret." So if you're listening on the phone, just get a pen and I'm going to tell you the secret. Actually I changed my mind. Join the program, and I'll tell you the secret. (laughs)

**Yanik:**

(laughs)

**Rick:**

No, I'll tell you the secret. There are actually many secrets that I learned, but this is what he said, which I found unbelievable and simple. He said, "I didn't know what to talk to my employees about. You know, you pass them in the hallway. I'm the owner; they're the employee. I didn't know what to talk to them about.

So I decided that every employee in every company that I had, in order to work for the company, they had to have in their pocket at all times, a card. The card said the company's top five objectives for the quarter and their individual top five objectives."

I'm like wow that is incredible. Think about a culture in a company where everybody knows exactly what they need to get done, that their boss is going to ask them about it, and they know what the company needs to get done. Talk about complete and total alignment. Wow.

I know there's a big push out there. I think his name is Daniel Pink and others have written about the fact that objectives really aren't what they're meant to be. I think that is total and complete nonsense.

If the employee doesn't know what the company's objectives are, how can they be fully engaged? If they don't know what their objectives

are, how can they be fully engaged? So that was one secret I incorporated immediately.

We had always followed management by objectives, but this took it to another level. So now when your employees go home from work, and they're complaining to their spouse about my boss is this or my company is that. The conversation shifts.

Now the spouse is saying, "Hey let's look at your objectives. How can I help you get them done because when you get them done, you get bonused?" And so you create more team that way.

**Yanik:** Interesting. You know that brings up an interesting question about questions. When you're sitting at lunch or spending time with these billionaires, what do you think has been the best one or two questions that you've asked or maybe that people that are listening or reading the transcript later can apply to other mentors or potential mentors that they meet?

**Rick:** One thing that I wanted to learn from all these guys is – clearly they were all lifelong learners. I think if somebody is on the phone, they're a lifelong learner. But I wanted to know what were they studying.

**Yanik:** At that moment?

**Rick:** At that moment, yeah. What I found is that when you asked them what they are studying, they lit up like little kids. So they had a childlike enthusiasm about life and learning. I wanted to know what they were learning, number one.

And then the other thing I wanted to know is what are they most proud of. When you ask people what they are most proud of, that's when they generally talk about a failure that they overcame. Then lastly what I wanted to know is what did they want their legacy to be.

The thing that they all had in common is that they were all older, in general. I mean the average age was probably 70. So what do you want your legacy to be? And that's when it really makes them think.

So those were the questions that I asked. And then you know you sit there and you do some research. Here's another thing that you'll find interesting I think, Yanik, and that is that they weren't as intimidating or bright. They weren't as bright as I thought they would be, and I don't mean bright as a negative or positive way.

I mean, they were simple people, very simple. It wasn't what I expected. I would say the most intimidating of all of them would be T. Boone Pickens. He was just intimidating because he was so intelligent, but he was a normal guy. He was humble. We had breakfast, lunch and dinner together. The guy was just a regular guy, but he was intense. He had an intensity about him.

But other than him, I would say everybody was pretty normal. They knew what they wanted out of life. They set a plan to get it, and they executed on that plan. I'm sure there are some lucky billionaires. I didn't meet people like that. I met more intentional people.

**Yanik:** Right, great. Ok, so let's keep rolling here. What else -

**Rick:** Why don't we go for about ten more minutes because whenever you go up to an hour, you don't have time to wrap up? So here's another thing I've learned. I'm not sure if you executed on this. I think I've talked to you about this. The other thing I noticed that they all had in common, which I did execute on, is every one of them had a lifetime assistant that was more of an accountability partner.

I like to say hire a lifelong, committed, right-hand person with one responsibility. That is keeping you focused on your objectives and keeping people and things out of your life that don't belong there.

So it's not someone to make plane reservations and all that. It's someone whose sole responsibility is for you to achieve your objectives. People have said to me, "How do I afford that person?" The ironic thing about that question is all of these guys realized this early on in life and had their lifetime assistant early.

Now lifetime assistant doesn't mean that they have to be with you forty years, although I calculated that the average billionaire had the same assistant for twenty years. So what it means is that you understand that you need an accountability partner. That's what it means.

When I set out to hire Christy, the ad said lifetime assistant. I wanted somebody walking into the interview with the right mindset. Normally we hire an assistant and we say – you know if you're really good, you can move up to marketing. That's nonsense. I want somebody whose mindset is all about service and that they love doing it.

Just like people like Dan Sullivan say, there is somebody to fill every role in the world and that's their purpose. So no matter how much you make, even if you're making minimum wage, I think an important

thing for you to do is find that lifetime assistant that's going to hold you accountable.

If you ever go out to Hollywood, and I've seen these stars walking around, they've got five people handling their every need. If you ask that person, "Are you satisfied carrying Sylvester Stallone's luggage?" (I actually met that person.) And they love it. That's what they want to do. There's always somebody that can help you do that.

I think it's important for you to create that job description for a lifetime assistant for you and an accountability partner for you and refer to them as... It was funny when I first met Branson's person, I said, "Who's that?" He said, "That's my CEO." He makes them feel that way.

**Yanik:** What are some tips on finding that person do you think, Rick?

**Rick:** Well, for me I made them jump through hoops. I've actually created a module on this. I call it the 5200% rule. The reason I call it that is because there was a study that was written about years ago that I remember reading.

Microsoft is one of the hardest companies to get a job at, used to be. The reason is because Bill Gates realized that the difference between the profit contribution of an average employee and a top 1% employee. The difference in profit contribution – you know, most people think it's 30%, 40%. Well now you know the answer; it's 5200%.

**Yanik:** Wow.

**Rick:** So I wanted to find what I call a 5200%-er. I made a lot of hoops to jump through. So how did I find it? I went to all of the assistants that I had met that I respected, and I basically said here's what I'm looking for. I'm looking for you with these attributes.

If it was coming from someone who was... in this case I found Christy through Phil Romano's assistant. I started there. I think it's very important. If you want to find somebody, go to somebody who is already successful in that position because they know exactly how to explain it.

I made them jump through hoops. I got 52 resumes. I sent an email to all of them and I said, "It's very simple. I'm looking for this type of person. Please download this book or buy this book and do a book report on it and send it back to me." The book report was on a book

called *Managing Up*, which was written by Jack Welch's assistant of 30 years. Her name was Roseanne Badowski.

You're probably thinking – would somebody actually do that? Would they actually get a blind email and it says buy this book, read this book, and do a book report on it, and the answer is no. Normal people wouldn't do that. Only a 5200%-er would.

I think it's important when you're hiring people to look for 5200%-ers and put hurdles in the hiring process that only a 5200%-er would jump through. If you have crappy employees, it's because you have a crappy interview process.

**Yanik:** Wow, that's good. That is good. Alright, let's go a couple more minutes and then we'll wrap up here. What's a good last concept?

**Rick:** Last concept I want to talk about, and this was not universal but it was more than half so it's worth talking about and something I've embraced. It's the principle of accountability.

Since this project unfolded, I have been in a weekly accountability group for 90 minutes. The reason is... one of the billionaires I met is a guy named Bill George, a famous billionaire who ran a company called Medtronic. He's been in a weekly accountability group for 37 years.

He actually just wrote a book about it that came out a couple of months ago. It's called *True North Groups*. I fully embrace this, so much so that for the last year and a half I've actually been in two weekly accountability groups.

One meets on the phone for 90 minutes on Wednesday morning, and one meets in person on Tuesday morning. The objective of the meetings is very simple – to hold each other accountable to being great men. That means your values. That means your marriage. That means your objectives. That means whatever.

I mean, this morning we had a deep conversation for 90 minutes about what it means to be a vulnerable leader. So I think accountability is huge. Ben Franklin talked about this with his Junta Groups. *Think and Grow Rich* talked about this with their mastermind group.

So I call them accountability groups. I'm thinking about making a business out of it because it's had such a huge impact on me. What I've found is more than half of the people that I met were in some form of accountability.

You can't be your best self, you Yanik, if you don't have somebody holding you accountable that's outside of you. I can't work out fully unless I'm in the gym and my trainer is busting my ass. It's just not going to happen. It's worked wonders for me, and it's worked wonders for the people that I've met.

Now every single person I met had some form of accountability; they just didn't have it formal. Half of them had it formal. That was my last nugget, and we're starting to get to wrap up time. How do you want to go from here?

**Yanik:** Yeah, that's good. Let me ask you one thing on the groups that you found there, so Bill George. Is it really about everything? It's about any objective or any goal that they're working on, or is it more business oriented?

**Rick:** It's funny. When you think about their group, and they talk about this in the book, but there's eight of them. Thirty-seven years, no divorces, unbelievable success, and they all started as regular guys in their thirties. They've created billions of dollars in wealth. In their case it covers everything – family, career, politics, everything.

My in-person group is more spiritual, not in a religious sense but in a purpose sense. Why are we here? My Wednesday group is more about goals. We focus strictly on accountability about goals, which is great. So I've got both bases covered. In 37 years, you can imagine, Yanik, that they're going to cover a lot of topics.

**Yanik:** Yep. Now have you found the in person versus virtually to be a difference?

**Rick:** No difference. We actually use Skype conference where you can see, so there's no difference. The only thing is when you're in person we have a no electronics policy. When you're on Skype who knows what people are doing because you can't see their hands. Maybe we should have the camera on their hands.

I think we live in a distracted world – information overload. I think the reason that accountability groups work is because it's the only 90 minute period that people have where they're not bombarded with technology. I think it's killing society. It's crazy.

I was just at my friend's house this weekend, and his four-year-old was texting. I said, "Why did you give a phone to your four-year-old?" He said, "Well I want him to get used to electronics." I thought that

was insane. You could start electronics when you're 20 and get used to it from 20-21. You don't have to get used to it from four to... you get the point.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Rick:** Crazy. So another thing that was born out of this whole project, which I know you had one in your hands, is I realized these people knew what their life was about, knew what their purpose was, knew what their values were.

So I decided to create this thing called the family placemat. It sits on our dining room table. On it are things like your values and your vacation plans and your family rules and our wedding vows and the coat of arms for the family and our family sayings, quotes, Ben Franklin's thing. From this project was born a lot of other things that have helped me manifest, like the accountability group, etc.

**Yanik:** Yeah, and that's [www.familyplacemat.com](http://www.familyplacemat.com), right?

**Rick:** Mmhmm

**Yanik:** So you set up a whole site for that. I thought that was a really cool idea, and I really loved it.

**Rick:** But all of that is really... So the project happened which led to Business Finishing School, and then a component of that is Family Placemat.

I don't want to confuse everybody. But I will say this. One of the things I want to leave you with is the difference between successful people and extremely successful people is that extremely successful people say no to almost everything.

That's something that Warren Buffet says. I want to leave you with take the nuggets out of here, say 'no' to all the crap in your life that doesn't matter. I think unfortunately too many of us are addicted to 'yes', and we're just 'yes' addicts. We run around saying 'yes' to everything. We don't realize that 'no' gets us a hell of a lot further than 'yes' does.

Be careful of information overload. I get teased because I have a phone that only dials, my cell phone. It broke recently, so I got another one. I had to find a... you know, it's a 2001 model. All it does is dial. It's just awesome. So I'm not walking around with my children

texting. I wanted to share that Warren Buffet quote. I think it's powerful.

**Yanik:** Yeah, how do you know what to say 'no' to and what to say 'yes' to?

**Rick:** Well first figure out what your purpose is, which we talked about. Then understand what your values are. I call it the values doorman, or the Doorman Principle is the name of the principle, which we've trademarked.

Once you understand what your values are, have an imaginary doorman in your life, and don't let anybody in your business or in your personal life that doesn't value what you value.

I will assert that every single problem that you've ever encountered and I've ever encountered started when we let somebody past our doorman that didn't value what we value.

It's always the same response. "Yeah, but I thought they were going to bring in a lot of sales." Or, "Yeah, but she was good in bed. That's why I married her and destroyed my life." When you choose opportunity over values, it's always a bad decision long-term.

**Yanik:** Do you rank your values?

**Rick:** I do. My first is simplicity.

**Yanik:** And then that matches up against anything that you do.

**Rick:** Yeah, if it's complex I'm not going to do it, period. It's a battle because I have to clean my life out occasionally, but I have really strong values around simplicity with my family.

I recently spent time at a friend of mine's house on a Saturday two weekends ago in New York. Saturday afternoon – he's got three kids under ten. It was total chaos. Each one of the three kids had three separate events.

This is a Saturday. This is when you have time to teach your kids values, and all I heard was the husband and wife argue over who was taking this one to baseball practice and who was taking this one to soccer practice and who had piano lessons and what kid just showed up and I can't find my uniform.

I was like, “Let me get this straight. You’ve got nine separate events to go to, unrelated, with three kids. Are you insane?” And they said, “Well that’s what life’s like nowadays.”

So I think you have to be at cause in your life. At cause when you’re not doing what everyone else is doing. You’re actually doing what needs to be done because it aligns with your purpose and your values.

**Yanik:** Yeah, I agree. I think that’s a great spot to end on because I think if ... I’ve always said if you want to do what everybody else does, you want to follow the norm, you want to follow the mediocre majority, that’s where you’re going to end up. It’s only the people that are willing to do what’s extraordinary that will end up with extraordinary success in their lives.

**Rick:** This has been fun. You ask good questions. I want to implore whoever is listening to go to [www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com](http://www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com). Sign up. It’s inexpensive. All of the things that we talked about will be from a practical perspective put into your life as habits. It’s fun. If you ever want to do this again, Yanik, let me know. I’d love to do it.

**Yanik:** Yeah, absolutely. I’m going to have to have you back. [www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com](http://www.BusinessFinishingSchool.com) – I mean, like I said, it’s so underpriced. Actually you and I had a conversation about that last week, and we were talking about the different price points. Until Rick takes my advice, it’s going to be underpriced, and it’s well worth signing up right now. It will have a tremendous effect.

He was telling me some of the results from some of the clients who have gone through it, and it’s been extraordinary. As you can tell, Rick has just an immense amount of expertise, not only from running his own businesses but then he’s just this lifelong student and always taking what’s working from people that have gone above and beyond where he is even, and he’s pretty far along.

So, Rick, thank you so much.

**Rick:** You’re welcome. And I want to shout out to you. Thank you for continuing to push people to be the best that they can be. I think everything that you do underneath it all is a big heart. So thank you for continuing to push.

**Yanik:** Thanks. You and I are in alignment with working with entrepreneurs and creating something that matters. So I’d also suggest people also check out – you have your own personal site where you got your own

simple rules that are listed that I think are great for people who lead a more engaged life.

You can check out Rick's site also at [www.RickSapio.com](http://www.RickSapio.com), and then click on his simple rules at the bottom. I think you'll find some good stuff there. So, Rick, once again thank you. I'm sure you and I will be talking soon about this stuff.

**Rick:** Awesome. Thanks, Yanik. I enjoyed it. Thanks everyone for listening. Bye.

**Yanik:** Take care.