

**Yanik:** Hey guys, welcome this is Yanik Silver from Maverick MBA and I'm very excited to have Marc Ecko on the line with us talking about secrets of building an authentic billion dollar brand without selling out.

Marc is the author of the new unlabeled book which is *Unlabel: Selling You Without Selling Out*. And just a quick little background on Marc if you're not familiar with him and his amazing accomplishments, dropping out of pharmacy school, Marc declared his future without any connections or any type of leverage.

He used old-fashioned hustling talent to build an iconic brand, hitting over a billion dollars in sales and Marc's left his mark in tons of different industries from fashion to art to music to media, he's the founder of Marc Ecko enterprises - global fashion, lifestyle company, also founder and chairman of Complex Media which is a network of 110+ websites, more than 700 million page views and 70 million unique visitors per month, so Marc welcome!

**Marc Ecko:** Thank you

**Yanik:** I'm super excited. Let's keep it casual and keep it easy Q & A. So I'm interested in, you know, you talk about brand building, what do you think, what's your definition of a brand?

**Marc Ecko:** I use a metaphor that a brand is like a well of promises that seems to always be magically abundant and overflowing and people come to that well to fulfill that promise and it should delight those that are lining up at the well in wonderment as to how the hell are they seemingly having an endless supply.

I think really that's what a brand is - the ability to over-deliver on a promise of a good or service a feeling, a perspective and to do it consistently across the axis of time so it's not enough to be just one and done and say, "voila that's my brand"; it is something that is inherited over the axis of time.

**Yanik:** So you have this great formula in *Unlabel*, we're not going to go through the whole thing, it's extremely well worth the read and people haven't picked up the book yet, all the illustrations are done by you I believe which is amazing work but aside from the formula in there one of my favorites is, it's kind of an anatomy textbook, you look at the authentic brand is essentially your brand spine, talk a little bit about that for a minute.

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah I used the metaphor that authenticity is the spine of the anatomy of your brand. Someone who builds a brand in a business vertical that is dependent on vanity and ego, like fashion designing, so I think as someone who's kind of played in that business where your brand is perceived.

One of the trappings of building a public brand like built on your persona, is that there's the brand that is the perceived brand and skin to the world, and then the more important brand you have to nurture over time and is really kind of constructed of your values and is your guts to the skin brand.

So I talk about guts to the skin, skin to the world and how you're really only authentic if your skin layer is sufficiently transparent and truthful. So people could look through and see through an inauthentic projected experience, if it is a good service or a sentiment. I try to use the metaphor of anatomy because like anatomy despite us having hundreds of years of illustration and documented studies on anatomy from Henry Gray and even earlier, it's still one those bewildering things.

You look at an image like those body exhibits where there's no skin on the human form and you're like what the fuck is that? It still blows your mind. In some ways branding is another one of those conversations where despite my ability to be emphatic and sound like I know what the hell I'm talking about, it's one of those topics or sciences that's really still pretty exotic and often when you try to talk about it, you can't help but come off somewhat patronizing or almost saccharine.

So what I was trying to do in this book is perpetuate a book on self-branding that's not saccharine or patronizing, and it doesn't try to have all the answers in an absolute way like Henry Grey's *Grey's Anatomy* does. Even though all the answers seem to be on the pages you still close the book scratching your head, like wow it's still magical. And that's kind of the point and why I didn't use the notion or formula as if you could program authenticity, as if you could put steps in sequence to systematically create an authentic experience. You can't, it's absurd but it's almost as absurd as  $E=mc^2$ , and that's kind of the point.

We can talk about it and there's something that can come out for you individually, for your company, and its branded group and consensus and its own personal religion of brand in having an intellectually honest conversation about some of the best practices that you could apply to express what you really intended.

How do you hold on to that through growth, through bouts of hubris and ego, ups and downs? How do you sustain that, and how do you not begrudge it over time because there's going to be instances where the knife of success kind of cuts both ways, and how do you salvage your authentic self through that expedition?

**Yanik:** Yeah you do an amazing job of really being candid and honest with your ups and downs. I definitely want to get to those. I'm curious from you, what brands do you look up to right now? What companies?

**Marc Ecko:** So many great ones that are out there and doing really cool and exciting things. I think best practice brands or ambassador brands like Nike who just are really relentless about delivering on, and really are the epitome of selling without selling out. They are constructed to be as massively viable with massive amounts of distribution and all over the world they could do business in the Sam's Club or a JC Penney with a BBQ white sneaker, but at the same time mystify us and delight us with a Nike+ FuelBand or their new Flyknit technology. They know how to play the high and low, be artful and create the

magic out of the event of every product that they launch. At the same time they can be very commercially responsible and be unapologetic about wanting to be a successful company. So they're like the world class... they're the ones worth studying.

But then I think there's just so many exciting brands that are perhaps lesser known. I'm trying not to seem like I have any kind of favoritism. I'm trying to be sensitive not to sound like I'm trying to pick, like being like a brand whisper or assert too much of my personal view. I would say, Will Farrell has built an amazing brand in a platform around his celebrity, all of his idiosyncrasies. The fact that despite whatever character he perpetuates is all kind of the same voice and same punch lines. He's been a great example of a brand that's both obviously he's built his individual persona, he seemed to have a job of being unapologetic and not rubbing it in your face with his ability to be massively successful.

It was interesting to watch Anchorman II get launched because the media jumped on it right away when the early reads of sales figures came out and it seemed like a bomb, relative to the amount of viral marketing. And then when you did an analysis like six weeks later, it was a massive hit in terms of world sales, sales pre-digital distribution. It's a testament to a guy who can build something and still through it kind of maintain an air of aspiration for us fans even though we know what's coming. We're showing up to that well, and he delivers on that promise and it stills seems to sate us in a really cool and compelling way.

I think there's a lot happening in the music ecosystem. I think musical artists today, despite everyone saying that all those composite years, last decade, the music industry is dead, there's a lot of really interesting and important stuff happening in independent music that's really built around personal branding, not having the reliance of the back end of the big label and the big label's

inefficiencies and artists today being willing to commercialize themselves more in time without being goopy and saccharine.

There's a rapper out there I'm a big fan of right now. His name's Chance the Rapper, and he's done a really great job of challenging people's... like defying the lane in which he should sit in. Watching him even on small tours, consistently have very successful small touring and successful merchandizing and doing it in a very independent fashion, I think that's indicative of artists who historically would have been maybe emotional of tucking that away or making that the ugly part of what my manager or agent does to monetize. Now the artist has much more of a hands-on sense of authorship and is more unapologetic about it because they know this is what it's going to take to actually build more of a 360 degree experience of what their brand is about.

So I think Chance is really someone who's going somewhere and owning it. You could look at someone like Macklemore & Ryan Lewis. I, myself, personally met Mac years ago when he was coming up and what I met was an entrepreneur. Forget about whatever sentiment you might have about his music or not, let's put aside, this isn't a conversation about aesthetic or anything like that. But you got to give him credit in terms of being able to really to defy the typical laws of physics as it relates to the music industry. And he built something fucking massive, so it's really interesting to see how that's happening and despite an industry that people wrote the eulogy for 10 years ago.

**Yanik:** That's interesting. It brings up the notion of artists and artistry. When I saw you last in DC, you asked everyone in the room, "How many of you guys identify yourselves as artists?" I think a small sliver raised their hands, only 10%, if I remember correctly. I was one of those who raised my hand.

I've been funnily enough (if that's even a word) on forms for customs have been listing myself as an artist. Whatever you list yourself as on the customs form, that's what you are, so this notion of not being put into one cubby hole or

having that whole 360 degree view of what your personal brand really is, it seems like this convergence is going on, and it's really exciting.

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah I think culturally the idea of being an entrepreneur is the new black. It's very trendy; it's very on fashion. It's the word of the season, and it's been so really since the emergence of the celebrity dropout, CEO, the celebrity valley, venture capitalist. It's become this other way, we don't need to go... and I think maybe the unintended consequence of building up the sex appeal or deifying this idea of entrepreneur is really how restrictive it actually is as a concept.

I talk about it in the book and when I speak with folks I break down the etymology of the word entrepreneur, which means to undertake, from the old French root *entreprendre*, so to undertake. It seems that to undertake or to face off risk doesn't really sum up in a way my experience with success in business or even my association of the connotation of the word entrepreneur, but rather the word artist is an interesting alternative, or the notion of a creator, right?

We don't allow ourselves to think that way because creators culturally are the guys who wear sunglasses in dark rooms, it's like the rock stars, or they can manipulate plastic paint and sculpture and I can't do that. I can't play the guitar in rhythm; therefore, I'm not an artist. But when you break down the word artist and the Greek root *ars*, it means to fit or to join together.

When I really think about what I've done in my career, not the shit that I've painted on canvas or the ideas I expressed as art, but just business, I fit and join shit together. And I create something that didn't otherwise exist if I didn't do it. We don't afford ourselves in the context of entrepreneurship or business management speak to think of the messy kitchen that is in fact the creative kitchen of being an artist because that's not the rigorously-minded thing to do.

There are no artists that get rewarded the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year. Well of course the great ones really are in some way artists, but we're otherwise celebrating the rigor and the bean counting and the kind of just the finite expression of success as if it could be absolutely delivered at one bundle as a product in a finite number. A theme in the book is the point I'm trying to make is that it's an absurd metric; it's an absurd rubric to try to always hold yourself to, "I will succeed when I hit this finite metric."

As a guy who's hit those finite metrics at many points in my career, I can tell you it's more like a longitudinal differential calculus, curves of up and down, action in the x axis, time, brand rather in the y axis. It's your ability to keep those actions high and consistent over time and be measured on the body of work like an artist rather than, 'Oh look at me in this moment. I'm the shit, I'm a darling, and I'm the next founder of hot shit startup X. Therefore I've succeeded because this external force stated it was so. They said it was so; these gatekeepers said it was so.'

Some people fall prey to that metric and get caught in the trappings of that and lose sight of their personal brand along the way. They lose sight of why they got into it the first place. That's one of the uglier intellectually honest conversations that after 20 years of kind of deifying these best in class Type A, entrepreneur species, you know, that breed.

A lot of the softer-edged, a motive qualitative part of the conversation was looked at as like the warm and fuzzy, the nice to have or the weak part of the conversation. I think what this book tries to do and what my message around this book is to try to flip that on its head and make people a little flat footed on that and actually challenge them. Yeah it's great that you have the rigor, the academia, the best practice of either being a great administrator in sales or management or law or whatever, but do you allow yourselves the freedom to just fucking make a mess?

Because that's when you're going to discover your unique voice, where you can be truly differentiated in the market, and where you're going to have that heretical moment of, 'Wow that's a new path!' I think creators seek those out, where entrepreneurs perhaps because of the rigor, my next set of milestones, or it's not on my roadmap, or until we're from beta into alpha - what the fuck are you talking about? You know what I mean? That's the dilemma. I don't know from the latter for me personally.

**Yanik:** Yeah you brought up a couple of really cool points that I want to touch on. One is this idea of being a creator in a messy kitchen. As you continue being more and more successful, sometimes people get a) wrapped up in their success and b) they get a success trap of I have to do it this way or people know me for this thing and I can't go off and trying to figure out this other thing without looking stupid, any thoughts on that? You created this whole other division, and we'll talk about that, a whole empire building but with Complex Media.

**Marc Ecko:** It's funny I had this conversation yesterday with my twin sister who's my partner operationally on the apparel side of my business and explicitly on the Marc Ecko trademark. We were just talking about, tactical, in the trenches shit. I reflected, 'Isn't it funny here we are 20+ years from the first time we had this conversation and ain't shit changed?' You know, like, you're always auditioning, and I think one of the things in a media era where it's sufficiently easy to get the feedback loop of perceived success because of all the efficiencies of self-broadcasting and fractured broadcasting.

So people could laud incremental successes or often great achievements, but if you start to believe that shit then you get trapped by it. It's interesting that even once afforded the luxury or the rewards of a successful execution which you're entitled to, you're entitled to that transaction, stowed away, put that currency that you've collected, away. You're really not entitled to feel that you deserve it again.



That's the difference. Unfortunately, it's human nature. This shit is bred in us, as evidenced by my three kids. They do something good, and they have this false sense of entitlement of I want to feed that loop so they try to will it to happen. And really the fact is no you're starting over; you're auditioning again. You're never not done auditioning. Why even allow yourself... it sounds masochistic, it sounds like what a miserable bitter son of a bitch, he doesn't allow himself to pat himself on the back? No, you don't. Don't. Don't do that.

It's one thing to encourage the team, to keep the morale of an orchestrated group at a certain level a certain kind of glow in the stack of coals, so that the energy is there, but you can't just expect it to be glowing tomorrow. It takes fuelling it. You have to fuel it, work it, blow some air on it. You've got to poke this shit around, and sometimes you've got to rebuild it before it burns out.

I think people culturally today because of this kind of instant gratification of this feedback loop of achieving the veneer, the perception of doing good, getting the gold star, they often create a dullness. It dulls down their spear when they go into battle. I think the great ones for whatever reason, and I can't psychoanalyze why it is for me or the next guy but it's typically probably something that (inaudible). That's the funny part, right? It probably is that they're just never really satisfied, and it's kind of like sorry to spoil the illusion, but it's like we're a bunch of restless motherfuckers!

That's what it takes. You've got to be this restless, somewhat masochistic motherfucker to really want to win in being a self-directed, self-made entrepreneur. That doesn't necessarily make you the nicest person to be around. Newsflash - It doesn't necessarily make you the warmest. It doesn't make you the most socially fit. But I've seen that as a pattern in all the ones that I can classify in that manner, whatever he or she is.

There's a restlessness there. Some people have that composition, and some people don't. Some have the composition and they stifle it, you know? But

that's my observation of not getting caught in the success trap or being like DJ Khaled suffering from their success or whatever, which people do tend to do.

**Yanik:** So, for you, is it a hunger that continues to be there, or is it that you have this body of work that you want to continue getting out that you feel compelled to release out there as an artist?

**Marc Ecko:** I've learned to, at 41, appreciate it as a body of work, and I didn't always. I think it's funny. I think of the 41-year-old Marc Ecko talking to the 20-year-old Marc Ecko. The 20-year-old Marc Ecko wanted to be measured on what he just finished at that instant. He just hung it on the wall, whatever event or piece of art, physically, metaphorically.

I think the 41-year-old version of me has a much better perspective on the context of all these moves; therefore, it makes you, in some ways, more inhibited and conservative perhaps in swinging big but more willing to take the smaller swings and not begrudge them if they don't work because I know it's in the context of something larger.

For me I think there's a little bit of psychoanalytical view, that for me kind of always have a prove-yourself-underdog-thing. I'm not unique in having it. It's formed for different people for different reasons. It didn't really come because my parents were immigrant parents who were never satisfied, that's not my narrative.

My narrative is perhaps having people, trying to judge the book by the cover and telling me you can't do that. You're not supposed to be the guy that plays that part, and I find myself always being that guy trying to try out for that part like if you read it in the script and you're the casting director, you would never cast Marc Ecko for that. It's kind of like, but that's the thing that attracts me to try. I find myself trying in industries that are pretty disparate from perhaps the intuitive place that I should be going in business.

**Yanik:** That's cool. A way you would describe yourself is as a white-Jewish kid from Jersey, able to create a company based on the ethos of hip-hop.

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah, it's like... how does that makes sense? Or a guy that's got a successful clothing and media brand to media buyer, basically saying, 'No, now I'm a media broadcaster.' You know what that was like to walk into big brands, who I do great business with today, but it took... I have this pattern in my career, for better or worse, I'm dogged by it, of having to convince people otherwise.

But I don't get mad when someone gets cynical. I got a call yesterday with the buyer, and it was like a conversation he said the word perception in the conversation, and I said I'm in the business of reality. That's great that's what you perceive, but it doesn't make it so, so let's work through the reality. I'm kind of like always looking for my Tarantino. I'm the character-actor that just needs Tarantino to give him the shot and then they're like, 'Oh Wow he was really good! Did you see how good...?' Yeah motherfucker I told you I was good, if you gave me the shot it could have been your shot. But I'm dogged by that. It's all right; it's fun.

**Yanik:** That is fun to prove other people wrong.

**Marc Ecko:** And sometimes I'm wrong by the way. Massively. Massively. But that's the whole body of work thing. It's like, wrong as fuck but that's okay so I tried. Now I know. It doesn't mean I won't try again, I just will tune it because now I'm more informed, and perhaps I built up my skin to be a little bit thicker to try it differently the next time.

**Yanik:** What's your view of 'failure'? I don't normally label things as failure because I think it's all in what the frame is, but your view on failure and how do you leverage it? You talk about ups, downs, and all sorts of things in the book.

**Marc Ecko:** Failure is, it's a shame that in our K-12 prison sentence that we've taken the word failure, and we've made it this thing to be embarrassed by. We make it a measure of those that transgress, those that don't have the attention span, those that don't have the focus, those that are perhaps dumb or lazy. Failure has become... we don't have in our K-12 system and really all the way through college a more realistic view on the fact... on a more Eastern view and the yin-yang side of education and how failure as a device needn't so absolute and measured by only white or only black or in an absolute one or zero.

I think my relationship with failure is that that is the stage in the theater where you educate because the net result is ultimately of the success is really just the collection of your education that has you not fail again. But you only get to that net hopefully positive result, even if it's incremental, by collecting a bunch of failures or maybe not failures but obviously not great execution. So it's like, 'Is my child destined to be on crutches or a wheelchair because he falls the first time he stands to walk?'

No! It is the necessary and often violent and grueling yin to the yang of walking. Falling is the yin to the yang of walking, so I don't have that kind of view. Even with my staff, you have to tolerate a learning environment. A true learning environment tolerates and highlights in an honest way below desired execution, and you don't shame them into being like, 'Oh you fucked up now, if you ever do that again, I'm going to dock your pay, or all that.' There are people who're just social misfits or just like oil and water. You can't teach everyone to be great at everything, but if you're not going to tolerate and harness a learning environment that shames the notion of failure, I think that that's an intellectually dishonest view on how success is harnessed.

I think the Wall Street types, those Type A-for-asshole-types, that are like they only win and only walk on water, that blue bloody... When I say blue blood, I don't mean white. I mean they're blue blood every color. They're just like, 'Oh I'm a thoroughbred. I'm of the best pedigree. This is the only way; I don't fail.' I

think those types of guys and girls I don't have room for in my life. I don't really fuck with those types because I think they have an intellectually dishonest view of being overly critical or trying to be the judge and jury of what best in class is. I've seen best in class in so many different shapes and forms that I've learned not to discriminate on what that looks like.

**Yanik:** So I'm talking to Marc Ecko, author of *Unlabel*. I strongly suggest you go out and grab the book and tell your friends. It's an amazing book. One of the stories I really like in this book is about this guy Wu. It's pretty illustrative of partnerships and your growth in thinking of how partnerships have evolved. What you walk in with that you thought somebody could almost be like this magic pill for you, and it ended up being anything but. Can you share that a little bit and your thoughts on partnership?

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah, I think partnership is obviously, the intent of that story is just... I was at a phase of my career where I wanted to just will things to happen and take the friction out of the process of achieving this vision, of what the future of my brand could be that when I closed my eyes, it was right in front of me.

We often have these linear paths between what we visualize and what we would perceive as the correct course to achieve that then we all know in reality as evidenced by Row, Row, Row Your Boat, things are never really that linear and things don't really work that way.

That scenario... I was young and was not importing more complicated product. My industry and my core business at the time being just fashion and street wear, I met a Taiwanese operator who was an importer and operator of warehousing and could help me import the product, get it made, funded and then we would JV on and profit share. So it was away for me to "JV" in almost a licensed-like structure rather than him sharing an equity of the IP. It was one of those too good to be true scenarios.

The deal was that he wouldn't markup beyond administrative costs what it would take to make a said product – a snowboard jacket, a sweatshirt or whatever and that we would decide on a market rate wholesale cost and then we would split the revenue of the profit. I would fund the marketing; he would fund the warehousing and fulfillment.

So needless to say one day I'm getting the sample line together and the pricing is coming in, and the jacket is pricing at an obscenely high price point. And I can't figure out why it's more expensive than what it cost me to actually buy the sample. I would have been better off going to the retailer that I was influenced by, buying it, and just embellishing that. It made no sense.

So it turns out I get a fax from who was the middleman, the vendor who's actually selling the stuff, and it seemed to be that Wu was marking up on both sides, despite us agreeing to not do that. I had just been given the evidence where he was marking the shit up by 35-40% on top of what he was making once I sold it. So there goes that relationship; it blew up. And there we found ourselves in a really ugly quick strike divorce in a court, only to find out that he had kind of checkmated me because his financial partners, he had unlawfully pledged my trademark to them. Here's this bank out in Vegas that think that they're going to be first in line on that inventory, and here we are, we never gave that pledge away. And here was this guy Wu in the middle. It was a shit show.

The long story short is just because it should be so, doesn't make it so. I think this with the good intent of trying to take friction out of my supplier's side equation, what I learned is that there's still nothing more meaningful than when you want a problem solved, doing it yourself, not necessarily literally with your hands and your time, but with your currency of risk and getting the learning that comes along the way in that regard. So much learning went beyond that by building my own robust operational supplier's side

relationships, my own infrastructure to do that myself, and that's the Wu story. But in the subtext of that there's a bunch of pearls.

I still contend, though, that when I speak to entrepreneurs in the consumer product related industry, I still contend that with the right partner and it really is like getting married, and you have to vet it in that way. You can't be about one night stands, and like a quick T&A grab. There are some partners that can in fact take the friction out, and on industries that have a very expensive cost to enter like fashion or electronics, stuff that needs to get on a shelf.

In this world that's increasingly more fractured, I find myself prescribing many times as an out or a strategy to take the friction out and finding those kind of suppliers and partners rather than the company trying to be everything and have a AAA sales/distribution force from day one because those are very expensive propositions. I don't think my thinking in that relationship was wrong, perhaps my vetting and my wide-eyed jump right in on the first on that quoted me is probably where I went wrong.

**Yanik:** I think leverage through partners is incredible. You're absolutely right, it's that vetting process. I've had different relationships that have gone sour because I didn't do a good job of vetting. That one initial, like you said that one night stand versus just getting married in some way.

**Marc Ecko:** It's so romantic, you forget to do basic shit like can you give me three references? I'm almost offended... like I offer references. People know me so they're like I don't necessarily need a reference. No, I want you to speak with people that made money with me and perhaps who lost money with me. It's important to me. Don't bat your eye or get offended that I want to do a reference check.

I don't give a fuck if you're Barack Obama or Martin Scorsese. If we're going to be in business together, I want to hear how people who have won or failed with you talk because there's the psychology, the health of that environment that

matters. I just want to go home as best as I can and be less restless because I'm already restless as fuck, so if I have to be restless on top of my restless nature because you're a dick, I want to find out now.

**Yanik:** That's perfect. I love it. So do you think that, can you identify one or probably multiple, you've talked about these hidden yodas, which are one of my favorite terms that you use, but what's the mentoring relationship that's made the biggest difference in your life? Do they come at the right times and then they get out?

**Marc Ecko:** I think mentoring is one of those things, not to sound like a cynic, because there's a wantedness amongst self-directed, creative types out there for mentorship and it's reciprocal. There's the grey hair side of the equation and there's the young buck side and they want to connect. There's that sense to pay it forward. I see many mentoring relationships sometimes organized for not-for-profits or as trade groups where they organize themselves in this formal construct of mentor-mentee, apprenticeship style, and I think those can work.

I can tell you in my experience I have rarely, if ever, arrived at a meaningful mentor that came in a formal setting. It's like falling in love. It happens in the most kind of oblique way sometimes and it's the most meaningful. Maybe sometimes the subtext of the relationship is mentorship and not overtly on the veneer.

So I have people ask me, 'Will you mentor me?' and I tell them no because I don't have the time and not that I don't think that you're not charming and that I wouldn't get something out of this relationship, but if you want to be mentored by me, don't ask me. It's going to happen in a more Tai-chi like manner. My hidden yodas have been the types and my mentors have been those that have never even knew that we had a mentor-mentee relationship.

When I reflect on those, I couldn't even tell you today who my mentors are, and I do have them because I don't want to blow up their spot and change the



fucking chemistry of this very natural thing that's happening. Because the minute you assign it like a mentor then there's an obligation in the relationship. It kind of changes the paradigm in the relationship of what the give and take needs to be or what the taxonomy or hierarchy is.

I have found some of the most unassuming characters or those with the kind of most rugged veneers, that didn't dress to look the part, be the most meaningful mentors. I have been able to have mentoring-like relationships with people from afar just by being to extrapolate information and observe and study and then reaffirm it upon meeting that person or group in those scenarios.

I think, again, I don't want to sound cynical, and there are probably people listening who have great mentor-mentee relationships and have a tremendous dependency on them, but try to find those hidden yodas that don't overtly brand themselves to where, 'Hello my name is Mentor X patch,' in a very obvious way because you could often maybe get more out of them than if you assign them as your mentor.

**Yanik:** I would state that maybe... so a lot of my mentors had come through audio programs, books and all sorts of things, and I would venture to say that you putting out this book is going to be the case of you mentoring a whole lot of people and affecting a whole lot of people that you're not even going to know about. Some you're going to know about, but the whole big ripple effect that's going on.

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah, I mean it's much more scalable way for me. It sounds kind of self-indulgent. I'll be at a book signing or speech or an event or travelling or at a trade show or whatever, and have the nicest, sweetest, most kind interaction, and then it will end with 'Will you be my mentor?' Saying buy my book I sound like a real indulgent asshole, but it's kind of like that's why I wrote the book because I can't physically... I want to be with my dog and my kids. For the little bit amount of time that I have that could be your mentorship, I'm just not that scalable unfortunately.

**Yanik:** You brought up your kids. One of my favorite things when I heard you speak last was that, and I'll paraphrase and you can pick this up... You said, "I won as soon as I wrote the last word in this book because you wrote it for them and also put your heart and soul into this, which means there's no outside accolades needed to know you put something great out there."

**Marc Ecko:** That sounds goopy, but it's pretty true. It is true. I went in to, you write a book... your motivations... I'm not a professional author, right? The ROI on my time speaking vs. my time working, I get a better return working. So I can't convert this product of a book into a major career shift per se. I think it could help, and has helped, perhaps, in branding an older, wiser version of Marc Ecko to a new audience, an audience that wouldn't have otherwise connected.

So it does broaden the base to some extent, but I didn't go into this thinking this is how I'm going to define the metric so absolutely for success. Not that we didn't have important business goals, objectives from a strategy and marketing point of view, we did because you need goals. But I very early on conditioned myself in this exercise not to try to jack myself up on trying to win some prize.

This was for me a pretty serious endeavor. I'm the first person in my family and as many generations as I could discover - extended family and cousins and otherwise - who has written a book, and I think that is important to my family. That's why I did it, and I said, 'what's the lowest common denominator thing that I can achieve that I'll be gratified by?' I said, 'if I could write this without having to be beholden to some other master rather than just the master of my intention and my transparency, so that the final product would mean something to my family, and that's what I did.'

I knew that very clearly going in, and it gave me a lot of comfort in just being straight up in not trying to dress shit up or gloss things over. I figured if all else went hell, and my computer burns down and there's no record of me, and all

that's left is the book, hopefully this will be meaningful to my kids. That sounds somewhat corny, but that was pretty empowering for me selfishly.

**Yanik:** I think it's great, having the lack of attachment. I'm a little bit younger than you; I'm 40 - not too much younger. This is the first time in my life when I've ever felt like I have internally won when I put something out there because I put my whole heart and soul into what I've been doing lately, and that wasn't always the case. I can tell with your book and where you're going next, it's a powerful way of living. It's great. We've got about 3-4 minutes left. What's your definition of true wealth?

**Marc Ecko:** True love?

**Yanik:** No, true wealth.

**Marc Ecko:** True wealth. Oh, I thought you said true love. I was like, wow. That's my next book; it's all on love and relationships.

**Yanik:** Is it really?

**Marc Ecko:** No. I've often thought about that. I said I would never write a book after this, but I'm definitely getting a second book itch. I'm trying to make sure I really mean that. True wealth is, I think, to define it you first have to define or take an inventory of how wealth culturally is projected to us, of what it is projected to me because that's the goalpost that are set often by our cultural surroundings.

We celebrate wealth and typically these kind of entrepreneurs speak management, creative marketing books have slightly perverted views on wealth because the author will sit and vomit out all their greatest hits. They set this context to the audience and to the reader that's like, 'Look, I'm fucking successful, so I know what wealth and success is. Okay? Just trust me.' What I try to do is shift that some because I have found that upon achieving material financial wealth, there were times in my life where I was miserable.

So it was a lot of the same clichés that your grandmother used to say or whoever your aunty, you know, money doesn't buy happiness. That old cliché is really true. In a culture, especially amongst younger folks who want to project and get that skin to the world business of perceiving the perceived view of their brand, the veneer of wealth and material collecting of stuff has become a measure. It's a metric; it's a rubric. Look on his IG account, flying on the private jet or eating the indulgent five-course meal or in some cases just flashing money or stuff.

My relationship with wealth is more to do with the idea of trying to define success by a finite metric. Wealth because the culture we live in, we read articles - they sold it for this much and Snapchat said no to x billions of dollars, therefore they're wealthy.

I declare that wealth that matters can't be counted, that it's a currency of your values, a blend of your independent ability to create with really no master to serve but that creation. You're feeding yourself ultimately because at the very least you shouldn't just create an ivory tower and be indulgent and not share it with the world. Being an ivory tower artist who never sells anything because you're so tortured by your creativity, that's not good either.

So the wealth that matters to me in the world can't really be counted. It's meaningful sex; it's justice; it's intellectual honesty; it's being able to say Amen and meaning it; it's all of those things. It's not the finite collection of those dollars; it's the self-made path that hones the wealth because you get a sense of yourself, you get more actualized, for better or worse, what you're good at and what you're bad at.

It gives you a sense of being able to be comfortable in your own skin, and that's really the spirit of the book is that authentic brand, guts to the skin, skin to the world. How can you do that in a way where you can just own that, no matter what happens in your career, ups downs and otherwise? That's how I would probably define, in a really long-winded way, true wealth.

**Yanik:** Let me give an Amen to that, and that's great. So we're at the top of the hour, and we're going to wrap up here. Just once again, you guys grab Marc's book; it's exceptional. It's definitely one of the top five business books that I've read this year, and I read about a book a week. So just for its candidness, its authenticity, you know we talked a lot about authenticity here and Marc's story, and it's just one more chapter, and I'm looking forward to what's next for you, Marc.

**Marc Ecko:** Cheers man, I appreciate your support, man.

**Yanik:** Thank you so much. Anything they should check out, any websites or anything?

**Marc Ecko:** Yeah... I don't know. You've done a good job of framing what's up. I'm at @MarcEcko on Twitter and @BeingMarcEcko on Instagram. I'm not terribly good at all that stuff, but I tend to broadcast most frequently there, and just appreciate people actually giving the time to listen.

**Yanik:** Nice. Thank you very much. Thanks everyone for listening.

**Marc Ecko:** Peace.

**Yanik:** All right, take care, bye.