

Underground Secret Society



# **Underground Secret Society Success Interview:**

## **Tim Storm**

### **Confidential Information Strictly Reserved For Yanik Silver's Underground Secret Society Members Only**

**Yanik Silver:** Hi, everyone. This is Yanik Silver. We're interviewing another fabulous Maverick Business Adventures member.

This is Tim Storm from FatWallet.com, and I'm real excited to actually interview Tim because Tim is one of those guys that I didn't know at all. I met him at a Verne Harnish Gazelles event actually. I think we were in the bar talking, and I think, Tim, your words to me were, "Where have you been all my life?" Or something like that... or where's this group been all my life?

**Tim Storm:** Actually, I think the exact words were, "Why am I not a member yet?"

**Yanik:** Yeah, there you go. So Tim – I've been really impressed. Had a chance to hang out with him on a couple different adventures that we've done and just really impressed at what he's done and built FatWallet up. And we're going to get to hear the story of that and what he's doing essentially as a super affiliate but with a really cool twist to it.

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They also have a really amazing company culture that they foster, and they've grown from using some of the Gazelles tools. Tim's a fabulous student of business, of management, of a lot of different things, so we're going to get a hopefully tremendous education here. So welcome, Tim.

**Tim:** Thank you. And when you say student, I'm assuming you mean I make a lot of mistakes and learn from them.

**Yanik:** Um... well, that's the best way of doing it a lot of times. And I mean, somebody that – you always are out at seminars. I mean, you're at the TED conferences. You're at the Gazelles group. You're coming to Underground in 2 weeks here.

You're always learning, and like you said, sometimes that means making mistakes. And sometimes that's the best way that we move forward.

**Tim:** Yeah, learning from the mistakes of others is also a good way.

**Yanik:** Yeah, well fill in a couple of blanks here. I think you started in '99. Is that right with FatWallet?

**Tim:** That's right – started the site in December of '99, had literally started the company with 100 bucks. It was back in the days when a domain name was \$70 for 2 years, and 30 bucks for a month of webhosting. That first month I think Amazon paid me like \$105. I made \$5.

**Yanik:** Where did you come up with the idea or what was the trigger point?

**Tim:** Well, a couple things happened at the same time, and I was running the websites for a consumer electronics company. One of the projects I was given was to set an e-commerce website for audio products that consumers in the United States had never heard before – that we were imported products from overseas.

They also gave me the challenge that there was no marketing budget. Well, there's no way to get the word out. So this is kind of interesting. We sold a couple of items a day just by accident.

And then one day we sold – I forget what the exact total was – 10-20 units of something. I'm like – what the heck's going on? I went through the weblogs and found out there was a website that had come across one of our clearance deals and had posted some information about it.

And I got in contact with the website, and I said, "Hey you might want to tell your readers about this deal too." And it was even a better deal. It was like 10 bucks more, but it was a much better product, and we sold another batch of products.

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I'm like, wow, this whole third party endorsement really means something. They weren't getting paid to promote the product, but they were just helping people out. I thought that was pretty cool.

And the other thing that happened about the same time was that I was going to go place an order from Amazon, and they had sent me an email coupon that I wanted to use.

Well, back in '99 it wasn't the case that you had email everywhere. I had downloaded on my machine at home, and I was at work and I was going to place the order.

And I'm like – it was like wintersave or some common word coupon like that. And I couldn't remember what the word was, so I did a search on, I think it was AltaVista at the time. And the websites that came up for Amazon coupon either weren't up to date or they weren't done professionally.

And being a computer geek since I was 10 years old, I was like I can do that. I just started on a hobby of putting together when somebody would send me a coupon I'd post it online thinking, that's something I could do part-time. It wouldn't be a big deal, and I'll help a bunch of people out.

And so literally one day put up a website one Sunday morning and that was the beginning. That was the start.

**Yanik:** And now how – so tell us how it's grown now. I think we get it wrong in the bio that we keep posting for Maverick. We're off by a zero.

**Tim:** Well, you add a zero. We just need to take a little while to catch up to that.

**Yanik:** You know, we're hopefully optimistic for you.

**Tim:** That's fine. I mean, realistically we get 180,000 – on average – visitors a day. We've got, last I looked, something like 1.2 million registered members to our website. And those members can post on our forums, participate in that online community.

They're also eligible to earn cash back on their purchases. We do that with a majority of the merchants that we deal with. We share our commissions with the person that makes the purchase.

**Yanik:** Yeah, so that's probably the biggest twist that you guys added, which I guess is the name for Fat Wallet because it makes your wallet fatter, right?

**Tim:** Well, we started with the consumer rewards back in 2001 for the first time. We

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actually contracted with a third party who could do that because we didn't really have the technology at that time to do it ourselves.

And we started a website called FastCash.com to do it. And it was kind of a little bit of a risk because giving away the largest part of our commission seemed to be quite a bit of a risk.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** And what we determined was that our core customer – the people who are using our forums and doing that, what I refer to as bargain hunting with a couple hundred thousand of your closest friends.

It was a bit of a risk to start giving back the commission that we made, but we also realized that people were using the information that was available on the website, and they would then go to another website that would give them the reward on the commission that they would earn.

That could have been any number of reward sites, whether it be on a credit card or a specialized website. And we said, you know what, why not try to serve the customer ourselves? And we gave it a shot, and it turned out to be a pretty big deal for us.

**Yanik:** And so that became your USP in way.

**Tim:** Yeah. Our brand promise to help people save money when they shop online. It's as simple as that.

And sometimes it means getting a coupon or a discount. Sometimes it means getting cash back. And sometimes it means not even making the purchase at all. And that's just helping people be better consumers.

**Yanik:** Well, give us a little bit of – from \$100 getting going to now 1.2 million registered users – what were some of the big milestones and how did you get there?

**Tim:** Well, starting in 2000 was when we turned down our user community, and we started adding on our forums. And that was the first time we got interactive with our users, where we became something more than just a simple list of coupons.

That was a key point because we had a good amount of users that just joined up right then. We went from having no registered users to like 400 in the case of a weekend.

At this point, it's still a hobby for me. It wasn't a full-time gig. And that was pretty cool that it started exploding with activity. It was about 10 months after

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I initially started the website when I was able to get the cash flow to the point where I could walk away from the job that I had and take a shot at going on my own.

**Yanik:** How many months did you say that was?

**Tim:** 10 months.

**Yanik:** 10 months. Did you have ... you had a family back then at that point?

**Tim:** Yeah.

**Yanik:** That made it riskier and ...

**Tim:** It made it riskier, and my mom specifically, you know, she'd been in the educational field her whole life, and her thought was you don't leave a good job. And I had a good job.

**Yanik:** Right.

**Tim:** And I started it. I took the shot. Yeah, I hedged my bet. I already knew what my cash flow was going to be for the next couple of months, but it was a chance I had to take.

I can fast forward to, I guess, 6 years later when we're opening up a new 12,000 square foot office building. It was actually, I guess, our second complete space after we left the basement.

We were standing in the lobby of our new place, and my mom looks and me and she's like – did you have any idea this is what we were going to do? And I'm like – no I didn't. I didn't know what was going to happen 3 months or 6 months out, to say that 5 years later we'd be having a place like this.

We just wanted to help people save money, and if we could pay the bills along that way, fantastic.

**Yanik:** Yeah, and I love that pivotal point, I mean, when you... and that to me is really exciting about the internet is you know for 10 months it was a sideline. It was a hobby-type thing, and then when it started, I assume, making you more money or made you enough money that you thought – hey I could live on this. We can go for it for real.

**Tim:** There's no way that when I started the website that I had visions of what's it become over the last 10 years. Early on when it started picking up, I'm like – man we can turn this into something that makes 6 figures. This is huge. And now we're beyond that.

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A funny story – a couple years ago, I guess it's about almost 2 years ago now. I was at a conference, and I was talking with one of our competitors. He made comments about Fat Wallet being huge, and I'm like – we're a private company. We don't release our revenue numbers.

Yeah, you can see how many registered users we have, and that type of thing, but you don't know what our numbers are. You don't know what our profits are.

**Yanik:** Right.

**Tim:** And he looked at me, and he's like – ok, how many employees do you have? At the time, I think we had something like 30-some or 40 employees, somewhere around there. I said, "Yeah, we got 30-40 employees."

And he said, "And you're profitable, right?" And I was like, yeah, we've not really hidden that fact. We've never had an unprofitable quarter since the beginning of the company.

He just looked at me and said, "You're huge. Look around this room, and you'll see..." I think the room was probably 75 people in it, and he's like, "There's not a single one of these people in here that have more than 2 or 3 employees, and you've got 40. Dude, you're huge."

Basically just looking at... you can see just externally just looking at what we have is number of employees, and it's like – oh well I guess when you recognize that 40 employees and yeah we pay well and we take care of our employees that you can say yeah, so I can deduce that we're doing ok. (laughs)

**Yanik:** That's pretty good. Yeah, it's pretty... that moment that you talked about with your mom, looking at the 12,000 square foot building. That's pretty awesome to have one of those moments where you're like, wow we really have come a far way.

**Tim:** Yeah, and since then just over 2 years ago, we had a custom built 30,000 square foot office building that will hold us for our growth for the next few years.

The pride that they showed and the pride that the whole company showed when they bring their family in and they say, "Look what I'm part of." And it's a physical embodiment of our company's culture.

**Yanik:** Yeah, and we're definitely going to talk about the company culture because that's something that you do incredibly well.

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Let's talk a little bit about affiliate marketing since that's obviously a core of what you do here, and we'll break it down for people that are either that affiliate marketing space or possibly want to get into it.

What's some of your best advice around what you see working right now in that space? Because affiliate marketing has so many great advantages. We don't have to stock product. We don't have to deal with customer support typically. And then we just get paid a commission, or that's the siren song anyway.

Give us some input there.

**Tim:** Right. Well, our revenue stream has been affiliate marketing since day 1. I mean 90+ percent of our revenue... we have some direct ad sales, but the majority of it is we don't get paid unless we drive a sale for someone.

From the get go, our thought was – or my thought when I started the company – was I wanted to help people save some money.

The information's out there. Let's provide some organization to this information and help people save some money. The profit was secondary.

The affiliate marketing model is what allowed us to start from zero because we didn't have to invest in inventory. We didn't have to invest in any type of infrastructure. It was just something that turned on in a few hours.

So the barrier of entry 10 years ago was pretty darn low, and I would assume it's the same today.

You know, it's a much more competitive space than it was then. The environment of affiliate marketers has certainly matured.

From that perspective, find something that you know. And find something that you're passionate about that you can give value to a person that's surfing on the internet.

Be able to connect those consumers with the right solution for them, whether that be an information product or what I would consider our wheel house, which would be items that I would describe as things that get shipped in a brown box via FedEx or UPS. I mean, a commodity item – that's our strength. That's our wheel house.

But the whole space is so huge, and everybody's got their thing of what they're passionate about.

You know, where we're general help people save when they shop online, someone may be passionate about physical fitness or personal goal setting.

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You know, whatever that may be in an information product.

So there's so many niches that you can just jump in and find your space and go with that.

**Yanik:** And would you tell people not to be overly broad in general, like the way that you originally started, but now pick a specific marketplace?

**Tim:** I think, you know, you just have to look at what the competition that's out there. You jump into the space where I'm at right now, and we're running in front of the steamroller. And there's just so much competition in the space.

Unless you can come on and bring some new value to the equation, you're just going to floundering and nobody's going to pay any attention to you.

But if you can find a space that isn't being served, then you can start building up your knowledgebase and what it takes to do affiliate marketing.

**Yanik:** What do you think is the best avenue for affiliate marketing or the best platform for a blog, which has personal recommendations or a review site or something more along the lines of what you guys have done where it's kind of consumer, content-driven and where other people can just post?

**Tim:** Hmm...

**Yanik:** Is there any... because obviously it's changed now in 10 years.

**Tim:** Yeah. I think where a lot of folks have gone the route of putting up a blog, and it may be general towards a particular topic, and then they throw some Google AdWords or AdSense ads on there.

**Yanik:** Right.

**Tim:** But one thing you can do is look at what type of AdSense ads are being thrown on your blog and see what Google thinks and what the people who are visiting your site are interested in.

Then look for some affiliate programs and see if you can do a better job with the affiliate programs that are out there to fill that space in a way that is ... You know, cause a lot of people are putting those AdSense ads are affiliates.

**Yanik:** Right.

**Tim:** So you know why let Google take their cut if you can just put that ad on yourself and breed that relationship?



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It may be that the AdSense is the right way, but if you're building your content around AdSense, I think you're leaving quite a bit on the table.

**Yanik:** Ok, well let's shift gears a little bit. You guys have so many categories, lots of stuff going on.

For people that have a site that really is a little bit more of a store, store kind of a site, what do you recommend for layout on their pages or what's some of the best practices that you've found to work?

**Tim:** Keeping it simple is a straightforward point to start with, and that's something that we're challenged by.

We've got 20 categories, and it's overwhelming – the thousands and thousands of pages that we have. And how do you get that and find that one our website?

It's overwhelming to us. That's a battle that we constantly have. But one thing when we're designing a webpage (and sometimes we get away from that), what's the one thing we want somebody to do on that webpage?

**Yanik:** Mmhmm.

**Tim:** And make sure that we make that really obvious because there are so many options on the internet. If what I'm looking for isn't really obvious on the webpage, I'm going to go find someplace else.

So looking at what is the #1 thing that you want to be in alignment with your customer on that page and get them closer. We've kind of found that it's better to have fewer options to get them closer to what they want than to give them 50 options and they have to discover which one.

It's much better to give them 3 or 4 options of which direction to go, and then the next page there's 3 or 4 options, then on the next page there's 3 or 4 options.

We've found that to be way better for someone than someone who would just come along and say ok here's the 30 options that are available to you.

**Yanik:** Are you using any sort of off-the-shelf tools to figure out where people are heading on your site or what they click on or what their behavior is?

**Tim:** We have some processes that we've built in internally. We use multi-variant testing for just about any change that we make on the website just to be able to monitor how many conversions do we get.

We can segment by the traffic source. We can segment a sub-section of a traf-

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fic source, so commonly we would do a section of new visitors that are arriving from search that have never been here before or a key term other than Fat Wallet.

So we're just looking at virgin users that are just arriving. What is the impression that they get to be able to compare before we throw it at our existing user base.

So we'll test in small segments of users before we flesh it out. The tools we use to measure how many new accounts did we get? How many transactions did we get? What are the commissions?

Things like that... we're able to track that in that test. As far as actually measuring the user behavior, we've built in some of our own methodologies to be able to track which link within a page that somebody clicks on.

I tell you what, I love Crazy Egg.

**Yanik:** Yeah, Crazy Egg.

**Tim:** Crazy Egg for the money that you spend with those guys, the realizations that you can have are just fantastic. I think one of the things that you can miss if you're just looking at your Google Analytics or some other analytics software, it only looks where people have gone on your website.

What it doesn't necessarily tell you is where people wanted to go and Crazy Egg can give that for you.

We actually had a situation. We were analyzing a page. We had no idea that people were clicking on one section of a webpage. And we're like – why the heck are they clicking there?

And we figured out what was going on and why they wanted to do that, and we made it easier for them.

And it turned out that one simple change that we made on the website turned out to be mid-6 figures as far as the impact that it had on the revenue for the company over the course of the next year.

**Yanik:** Wow.

**Tim:** Yeah, it's just being able to leverage some small thing that you would have never seen unless you're really looking at what the consumer behavior is.

**Yanik:** And by the way, the Crazy Egg – the founder of that, Neil Patel, is going to be at Underground. I don't know if you knew that.

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**Tim:** Fantatic.

**Yanik:** Yeah. That'll be very cool. Alright let's talk about... you have 1.2 million registered users. Do they get emails everyday? What's your email strategy to those people?

**Tim:** You know, email has been something that's been not a priority for us. And I know there's a couple things that other affiliates do and other websites do where they're really heavy on the email or they're really heavy on the search engine marketing and paid links. And those have been areas that we haven't really focused on.

We've primarily focused on the website experience of someone being able to come along and do some bargain hunting specific to where they're at right now.

Are they just looking to see what bargains are out there? We've got general daily email that goes out, but the sheer volume of information that we have is overwhelming when we try to present it in an email.

So we do topic alerts. Like if somebody wants – let me know when something gets posted about “laptop”. That we can do something well with, but it would be... I mean, Google's at a whole different scale, but imagine getting an email from Google on a daily basis with all the changes and updates. You know, it's ...

**Yanik:** It'd be overwhelming.

**Tim:** Yeah, there's 200 hot deal topics and 100 free stuff topics, and you know you just can't keep up with that.

So that's one of the things where we just look for ways of making the information more accessible and when someone has an idea – ok I'm looking for laptops – we want to be able to present that information to them in the best way possible.

Or I'm going to go order places and order at Widget Store, what are the special offers and the discounts? We want to make that information available to them.

**Yanik:** Ok. Very good. And then what's ...

**Tim:** At any point in this discussion are we going to talk about your Baja navigational skills?

**Yanik:** (laughs) I think we should probably talk about that when we get into the more

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fun aspect of our talk.

**Tim:** Ah, ok.

**Yanik:** I appreciate you bringing that up.

**Tim:** Are you afraid that I'm turning the tables on this interview?

**Yanik:** No, I'm never afraid of that.

(both laugh)

That would be a good one. I'm sure everyone would love to hear your side of the story.

**Tim:** Uh huh. And when you say, "my side of the story," you mean what really happened.

**Yanik:** The truth. (laughs)

**Tim:** Yeah (laughs)

**Yanik:** Exactly. Well let's talk about – you know something that I don't think we've really talked about in any other interview since you have a "real" company, which is 40 people, you've done a great job of building company culture.

I mean, on the trips we've talked about some things here and there. We haven't really dug into it.

Give me just some I guess maybe the progression of how you got up to 40 or some of the key hires originally. And then this idea of company culture and what that means to you and what you've done with it.

**Tim:** Right, well today I think we're at 57 employees.

**Yanik:** Oh, that's awesome.

**Tim:** We've continued to grow. We really started figuring out... we've always had kind of a quirky culture since the day the company started. When we started FatWallet the website, it was me rolling out of bed, working on it a little bit in the morning and working on it at night as a hobby.

What I consider now is – it's the same thing. Instead of being in the spare bedroom or in the basement, it's still that same room in my house, but it's now 30,000 square feet, and it's not in my house. It's the same type of feel, and that was kind of the essence...

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We've all had jobs that sucked, you know? And when I became an employer, and I started hiring people to help us out, I wanted to treat people in such a way where they don't have that feeling of, well work sucks. We want them to be involved in the effort of and believing in the cause of what we're doing.

It's not just I'm doing this for a job, but we're doing this to help people save money or we're doing this to help people be better consumers. It's not just a programming job. It's not just a customer service job, but it's getting people to understand why we do the things we do.

And just that basic premise is the starting point to setting that company culture so there's an alignment. If that doesn't resonate for somebody, they're going to have a hard time dealing with why do we care about this customer?

A couple years ago, shortly after we got involved with Verne Harnish's Gazelles group, we went down the path of defining what our company core values are.

There was an interesting exercise that we did, which I believe Verne calls it the Martian exercise. Essentially if you were to take people from your company, and you were going to put them on a spaceship to send to Mars so that they were going to demonstrate the things that make our company unique and make us different, who would you send, and why would you send them? And what would the Martians see and observe these people doing?

So it was like, you know, this is an example of somebody in the company or a situation in the company that that really resonates for us.

So as we were doing that, we were coming up with different thoughts as to what our company core values were. And we came up with words like commitment, integrity, change, balance. We ended up adding respect. We ended up adding fun, and I'm blanking out.

So we've got balance, integrity, passion, fun, respect, commitment, and change. So we've got 7, and initially we had 5. We didn't have respect or fun.

Fun was just kind of one that we forgot about because it's been so ingrained in our company since we first had our office... or even before the office when we had remote employees - the things that we would do when we did get together.

The company culture, boy, when you first start out and you have a couple people, and you know these people really well, you don't even have to articulate the company culture because everybody sees it and they know what it is. But as you grow...

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**Yanik:** Yep.

**Tim:** ...it's really important that that culture and what's important to you is defined.

We had a couple instances, interestingly, as we were... we had defined what these core values were, and we had an employee situation where they had submitted a false timecard.

We gave them the opportunity to fix what's going on, and we had all the records to show that no they didn't do what they said they did. And we gave them an opportunity to fix the mistake of what they had, and they didn't choose that option. They were choosing to go down the route of not showing integrity.

My simple statement was we have a choice. If we're going to keep this person onboard, we need to go rip that banner down that says integrity because that's not what we stand for. And I'll say right now that that integrity banner is still hanging above our cafeteria.

That's recognizing what's important to us. When it comes to something like respect, one of the stories that we have there was we had an employee that was off one day, and he was on a field trip with his son.

And I'll get back to this story in a second, but this field trip with his son relates to a policy that we actually have written. It's called the Never Miss policy. That means that you can never use work – you can never use your job at Fat Wallet – as an excuse to miss something in your family.

**Yanik:** Mmm...

**Tim:** You know, you can't use work as an excuse to say – oh I can't go to this graduation because I've got to work. I can't go to this family event because I've got to work. You can't do that.

**Yanik:** Great policy.

**Tim:** Now, the policy even says – if you \*want\* to use work as an excuse, go ahead.

(laughs)

But the reality is, we don't want to stand in the way of someone doing what's right for their family. We recognize that while we believe and we're passionate about the work that we do, there's other more important things. And our work supports the really important stuff.

So back to our story.

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We've got an employee that is out of town. He's hour and a half on a bus trip for a field trip with his son, and he gets a phone call from a wife of a friend in another state that says, your friend's been in a major accident. We don't know what's going, but I needed you to know.

So here he is. He's been in a school bus, away from home, doesn't have a car, wants to get to his friend. He calls, and he's flustered. He doesn't know what he should be doing next.

I said, ok your son's going to be fine. You can send him back on the school bus. We'll make sure your family can be there to meet him on the school bus coming back.

I said, you've got your company card. Hop in a cab. Go to the airport. Get on the next flight. Go do what you need to do.

And these are the things that ... it just was doing the right thing for what that employee needed right then. And that story will never be forgotten – not by that person. You know, of how we helped him out in a time of need.

And you know we've got stories like this for every one of our core values recognizing those important things that you do. So it cost us a little bit for a taxi cab and a flight...

**Yanik:** Right.

**Tim:** ...but we took care of what he needed right then when it was important.

**Yanik:** Where... well I've got actually two questions on that. This has really been fascinating to me because I've been online for over 10 years now. It hasn't been until recently where I started thinking about values, and it's all kind of, I guess, sort of osmosis has happened. But I'm really starting to get it down right now, and originally I thought it was all complete bullshit.

**Tim:** Uh huh.

**Yanik:** And companies that had mission statements and values and all that were, I don't know, like Enron-esque.

**Tim:** Well, quite often they are just crap. (laughs)

**Yanik:** Yeah. You guys actually live them. When did you start realizing that it actually was important when you start hiring more employees and it was beyond just a handful of people that it could really be an osmosis-like thing?

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**Tim:** Well you had mentioned earlier in the call that I go to a number of conferences.

**Yanik:** Mhmm.

**Tim:** At one time I had gone to a conference called a Fast Company conference. It was done by Fast Company magazine. I think it was called Fast Company Real Time, and it was just a collection of authors and big thinkers from all different types of categories, just like the magazine.

**Yanik:** Yep.

**Tim:** It's just all different from all walks of life, and I thought – wow what an amazing event. And the one event that I went to was the very last one that they ever did. I felt... you know, I just had gone to this one, and I felt it was something missing.

And I was flipping through the Fortune Small Business. It was a magazine put out by American Express. It had an advertisement for the Gazelles Growth Summit, and I'm like, what the hell is this?

But I recognized some of the authors and the books they had written that were going to be speaking at this event. At the time I had not heard of Verne Har-nish or Gazelles or ... you know, that was my first exposure.

I just saw – hey here's a collection of interesting people that I want to hear from. So I went out to Las Vegas for the Gazelles Growth Summit. That would have been in 2007, I guess. It opened my eyes to the concept of coaching, and we hired a coach in 2008.

We brought him in, and it was a bit of an eye-opener. I had never been one to really open up to outside coaches. It had just been something that I'd always just done it myself.

I'm a college drop-out, but I always found a way. I would find the answer myself. I wasn't one to divert to consultants to tell me how to do anything.

The example that opened my eyes to being open to a coach was the – and it's kind of strange now to bring up Tiger Woods. But here's the best golfer in the world, and he's jumping from one coach to another to be better.

This coach isn't going to be better than him at what he does, but somebody who can look and see what he's doing and be able to explain to him what he's doing or to take him in the direction that he feels he needs to go.

It's still Tiger making a decision, but it's a third party that's helping him to do



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what he needs to do. So we brought in a coach. Actually, I've met your coach at one of the Maverick events.

**Yanik:** Yep, Cameron Hill.

**Tim:** Cameron, who's been fantastic. We brought him in, and we started going through essentially the Rockefeller habits from Verne Harnish's group.

One of those elements was the core values, and we started articulating those things that we'd been living, but they hadn't been articulated. Once you articulate them, and you start telling the stories, and it starts coming to life, and people recognize – oh this is how we go about doing things, and it just makes me excited when I hear someone referencing our core values when they're making decisions.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** And we know that it's just part of how we do business. You can walk up to anyone of our employees and ask them what our core values are, and they're going to be able to tell you. And it's not just the words. They probably know a story for each one of them.

**Yanik:** Yeah, the stories are definitely what make it stick. Are the stories told every week in a meeting or is it anytime that they come up? How's your process for disseminating that?

**Tim:** You know, we have from a leadership team point of view, we'll address it on a quarterly basis, make sure are there any new stories, anything interesting that's gone along.

Basically adding them to the repertoire of stories that we can use, and the most effective way to use these stories is in the moment. When something comes up about whatever the situation may be, we have this repertoire of stories that we can draw upon.

It's not – ok well let me go read this to you off of our wiki. We know these things. When you called today or when I called in today I had no idea I was going to be telling the story about respect...

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** But any one of our core values, depending on what the situation is, we just draw upon the stories that we've got available. It's not just – oh here's a fable. These are real examples. This is what really happened.

**Yanik:** Yep. Yeah, I think that's great. Alright, well let's shift gears a little bit into our

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other main topic here, which is have more fun.

And as entrepreneurs, what do you think is... what's the biggest thing that stops us entrepreneurs from having more fun or enjoying our lives more?

**Tim:** Well, I know you've got a – I think you've got a call scheduled with Cameron to cover a lot of the entrepreneurial roller coaster.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** I mean, I won't steal any of Cameron's thunder, but when I sat across from him in Las Vegas last year at the Air Combat event, he started talking about the entrepreneurial roller coaster, the emotional roller coaster, that we go on. It was enlightening.

I knew we had the high highs and the low lows, but all of the points in between what you should and shouldn't be doing was really eye-opening to me.

Recognizing that experience as an entrepreneur, that was pretty life changing for me. It's those moments from the Maverick Business Adventures, and boy does this sound like a testimonial.

**Yanik:** (laughs)

**Tim:** No, I'm not getting paid for this. It's just a function of getting exposed to people who have been there, have done that. And it may be that you're able to apply value to them things that you're good at.

I sent feedback to Cameron on some of the things that he's doing, but I feel I like I still owe him for the information that he was able to share with me.

Being able to learn those things, and the crazy things that we do – the Air Combat or taking bad directions from Yanik through the bog in Mexico...

**Yanik:** (laughs)

**Tim:** ... that's just the icing on the cake. But as far as keeping from doing fun things, we can spend so much time getting wrapped up in the urgent things as opposed to the important things, and we just need to remember what the important things are and not let the rest of this mess get in the way of that.

Remember why we're doing the things that we're doing, and it's for those important parts.

**Yanik:** Yeah, and I know you're a big car guy. Is that how you get most of your kicks?

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**Tim:** Um... you know I've got a few toys. The Test Roadster's a fun one.

**Yanik:** Yep.

**Tim:** That's a lot of fun. I just got back into ... got back on a motorcycle last year after I hadn't been on one for 20 years – really enjoyed it.

What a psychological shift it is to get back on a bike and emotionally be able to be worked up and go out for a 20 minute ride and everything's completely reset.

But that's what works for me, doesn't mean it's going to work for somebody else.

**Yanik:** Do you think part of that comes from, well especially for the bike because you have to be completely disconnected. There's no cell phone. There's no radio, really.

**Tim:** Yeah, unfortunately I've got blue tooth on my helmet.

**Yanik:** (laughs)

**Tim:** Anyway, I don't have it connected to my phone. I've got the blue tooth connected to the blue tooth on my riding buddy's helmet so we can talk and go for a ride.

**Yanik:** Oh, ok. That's great.

**Tim:** It makes a 300-mile ride go like nothing.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** You know, when you are on the bike or you find out what are those things that do let you disconnect.

When you're on the bike, you're watching out for everything, whether it's an animal, whether it's a car or the road conditions. You're hyper-aware of everything around you. You are not thinking about your latest pay-per-click campaign. You are not thinking about your latest email.

You're paying attention. And being able to shut your mind down off of work for a while is such a good reset. I've looked for different ways of doing that, whether that be flying through a cactus field at 80 miles per hour...

**Yanik:** (laughs) Right.

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- Tim:** You're not concerned about those other things. And what it opens your mind up to for the other big thoughts that you need to do. I enjoy playing poker, playing golf, going to watch hockey, which I think there's a game starting pretty soon.
- Yanik:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah, we're going to jump off here in a couple minutes.
- Tim:** So it's important to look for those opportunities to disconnect to allow your brain just to work in the background on some of this stuff because it may be that you're doing 80 miles per hour through a cactus field and something pops up.
- Yanik:** Yeah, I couldn't agree more, and I guess that's a good segue into the Baja story since we've been twice together now. Which one do you want to share Mr. Storm?
- Tim:** Umm...
- Yanik:** The first one?
- Tim:** I think just the simple story that all of my Baja stories involve Yanik in some way.
- Yanik:** (laughs)
- Tim:** I kind of enjoyed the one last year. I mean, the one that actually gave me physical pain.
- Yanik:** Yeah, that's always a good one.
- Tim:** Yeah. Did you want to give your version of that?
- Yanik:** Sure. Well, many of you have seen our blog, [InternetLifestyle.com](http://InternetLifestyle.com), where we have pictures of dune buggies and so forth. There's radios in between each car because they're spread out many times a mile in between each car. They only work when you press them down. Only one person can speak.
- There's a long back story to it, but needless to say, Brad Fallon decided that he wanted a victory lap when we arrived at the ranch in Ensenada. They never do victory laps, which is probably a good reason. Our guide – I can't remember who our guide was at that point. Was it Andrea?
- Tim:** I think we had James.
- Yanik:** James, ok so James. James says – yeah ok we'll do a... yeah it was James. He said, "Yeah, we'll do a victory lap." And so there's 4 or 5 cars in our little

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group, and Tim is in front of me with Kim Jacobson, our operations manager.

There's a big huge cloud of dust, and all I hear on the radio is, "Where are we parking? Where are we parking?" (laughs) Until a big crunch, and I'm like oh shit. And I ran into Tim and Kim pretty hard.

**Tim:** Yeah, there was so much chatter on the radio, I couldn't call back slowing for dust.

**Yanik:** Yeah.

**Tim:** And you know because we slowed for the dust, Yanik, and had you done that, that would not have been a crunch.

**Yanik:** That is true. I got a nice little bill, and I knocked out a light and dented in the front bumper. So that was fun, but as long as no one was hurt.

**Tim:** And my neck was a little sore, and I've got something I can harass you for the rest of my life.

**Yanik:** Yeah, absolutely. (both laugh) It's always a good time, and they've become great stories. We call the Maverick moments, and we never seem to have a shortage of them on trips.

**Tim:** That is very true.

**Yanik:** (laughs) That's what makes it fun.

Well, let's in the last couple of minutes that we've got here, let's talk about the third aspect that we always cover, and that's giving back or giving forward, as our friend Jim Spano likes to talk about more.

Is there a responsibility for an entrepreneur to do anything like that? Is there something that enhances our success when we do that? What's your philosophy? What's your thoughts around that aspect, Tim?

**Tim:** You know, we've been trying for years to support things that are good in our community. It's not just what's good for the community. It's what's good for the employees. It's good for potential hires.

So we support the pro sports teams in our area. We're in Rockford, Illinois, so we've got an AHL hockey affiliate. We've got minor league baseball. We've got indoor soccer teams.

We do the types of events that help make our community a better place to live. Now Rockford, Illinois, I think, was just ... and this isn't the Chamber of

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Commerce talking, this is – I think it was Forbes magazine just came up with the most miserable places to live, and I think Rockford was like #14 in the country.

**Yanik:** Interesting.

**Tim:** So, here we are a .com growth company in the middle of cornfields in the most depressing place to live in the United States. And we're a bright spot, and we feel compelled to help make it better.

Basically the area that we're in has long been a manufacturing area. The manufacturing just isn't there anymore. We stand out like a sore thumb here with the things that we do from our company culture to our building. We stand out.

One of the things that we're doing this calendar year is we're looking at what can we do to bring in the big business thinkers that I travel to go see. We're going to do a series that's targeted at the CEOs, the presidents, the people who can make the change in the companies that work here.

I can't change the political climate. I can't change the way people complain about being in this depressing area. I can't change those people, but I can try to give people the tools by exposing them to some ideas, whether it be the concept of core values, whether it be the concept of the emotional roller coaster, whether it be company culture by design.

I mean, whatever these elements are to give them the exposure and hopefully make a shift from the people who are running these companies and making decisions to be better employers because it pays off.

We see it. We don't have a turnover problem. Other people do. Focusing on the right things for their business. So, that's a way that we're giving back. Why do I do it?

**Yanik:** Yeah, why.

**Tim:** When we've got so much time on this planet, and I'm not going to try to get existential here, but we can make the planet better for our time here or we can make it worse.

There was a philosophy I heard a while back that said, "A person has multiple deaths. They have the time when they physically die, and they have the last time that person's spoken of." And I don't plan on dying for a long time.

I want to have a more lasting impact on the world that we live in, on the community that we live in. I want to make it a better place, and that gives significance.

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I know the number of people that are listening to this are just starting out. They're scrambling. They're struggling to find what their methodology is. At some point when you have your success and you have your money and you have your cars and you have your toys, there's something beyond that, and that's the significance.

And you really have to find what that is. So we basically dedicate that we're going to spend at least 5%, and we typically go over that 5% of our company profits in things that don't drive an ROI, and we don't care about that, but helps make the community a better place. So that's a sense of the types of things that we're doing.

The why?

The right thing to do.

**Yanik:** Yeah, that's great.

**Tim:** You feel good doing it when you know that you've made an impact. For me, ok, we've been profitable. We make money. My financial needs are met. I'm a 100% shareholder in the company.

To me, the most significant part of my day is when I pull into the parking lot, I see 50 cars in the parking lot, and I know that 50 people have good jobs that otherwise wouldn't if we weren't doing what we do. That is significant, and that's something I can be pretty darn proud of.

**Yanik:** Great. That is awesome. I appreciate it. So I'll send – if people want to check out [www.FatWallet.com](http://www.FatWallet.com), obviously, if you buy anything online it's probably worthwhile to go there and register and save some money. Is there anything else that you'd like to send people off to?

**Tim:** That pretty much sums it up. We focus on FatWallet, and that's our gig.

I will give a quick shout out. If you are in the affiliate marketing space, check out the [www.PerformanceMarketingAssociation.com](http://www.PerformanceMarketingAssociation.com). I'm a board member with Performance Marketing Association.

Please sign up. Become a member. I think a membership's like \$500 for a basic membership. Help support the things that will keep Performance Marketing as a viable alternative for us that started our work from home or the businesses that we have now.

There's a number of legal fights going on making sure that we can keep doing the things that we're doing. It's a great cause to support.

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- Yanik:** Cool. What was that link again?
- Tim:** [www.PerformanceMarketingAssociation.com](http://www.PerformanceMarketingAssociation.com)
- Yanik:** Perfect. Tim, really appreciate it. I think we are in time to go watch the face off.
- Tim:** Fantastic.
- Yanik:** Alright, go USA.
- Tim:** Go USA.
- Yanik:** Thanks, Tim.
- Tim:** Thank you.
- Yanik:** Bye bye.
- Tim:** Bye.