

Smart and Simple Matters 008:

Personal Brands and Blowing Up Your Box with Colin Wright

Show Notes at: <http://valueofsimple.com/smart-and-simple-matters-podcast-008-with-Colin-wright>

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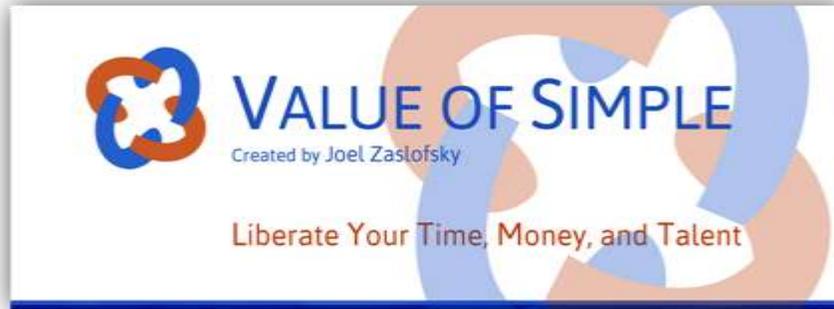
- The smartest way to build your personal brand
- The "grandma" test for an ethical business
- How telling people what you're not is putting you into a box
- Why the majority of people everywhere are almost identical to you...
- And how the small differences are as delicious as icing on a cake
- Why religion, sports, and politics give people a "team" to be on
- Why it's dangerous to look at business as something separate from yourself
- **Colin's** view on the importance of curating (and it's not what you think)
- What kind of accomplishment it takes for **Colin** to stop being so damn modest
- The majesty of road tripping across New Zealand (and an awesome travel hack)

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Now for the transcript.





Joel: Hey there, and welcome to the [Smart and Simple Matters](#) show with your host, **Joel Zaslofsky**. Wait. Was that my dog barking at phantom objects again? This is episode number eight. Hang on, I'll be right back.

A big-time welcome today to all you smart listeners of the Smart and Simple Matters show! I'm continuing a personal trend by having another scholar of the school of simplifying on today. And he's a fellow who has been impressing and inspiring me for years. That means I'm super jazzed to have **Colin** Wright chatting with me today.

Welcome to the show Colin!

Colin: Thank you for having me.

Joel: Yeah. First, I want to ask you, can I get your permission to do a disservice and attempt to sum up just the coolest of all the awesome stuff you've done and will be doing?

Colin: Oh, please do. I'd be happy to hear it.

Groovy. So for those of you who have never been to Colin's Internet basecamp – a content rich and beautifully designed place called [Exile Lifestyle](#) – you should check it out pronto after listening to this episode. Through it, Colin shares his experience and wisdom traveling the world and moves to a different country every four months. And get this: his community gets to vote where he lives next! That definitely gets a “**whoa**” from me.

He's a young guy but already, he's a prolific author of a [ton of great books](#), some of which we might discuss today. And with his new publishing platform [Asymmetrical](#), he's helping the next generation of great authors get their mission and message across. Did I mention his popular travelogue called [Exiles](#) yet?

Yeah, Colin seems to pop up everywhere and you don't have to worry about him hiding because he's been interviewed in half a bazillion places. I'm probably the baldest and tallest guy who's ever recorded a chat with him though, so he's got that going for him. Which is nice.

Colin: How tall?

Joel: I'm six-foot-six.

Colin: Holy crap. Okay.

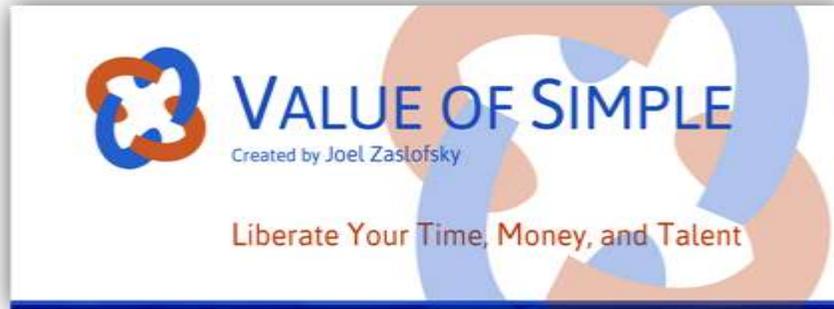
Joel: Yeah, I'm slightly above average height.

Colin: No kidding. I'm like 5'10" so I'm very average. But I'm enormous in South America and Asia.

Joel: Oh, I suppose so.

Colin: In Peru, I was like Gulliver.





Joel: Most days I wish I was 5'10". The long arms, awesome; I love having them. But the long legs and everything else that goes along with it, especially on flights, not my idea of a good time.

Colin: You'd make a terrible spy.

Joel: Yes, I would. I do not blend in well. All right, so, I'm done doing a disservice to your coolness and your reasons for being proud.

Colin: No, that was an excellent service. You summed it up nicely.

Joel: So, let's tell the folks listening what they're getting from us today. I'm going to throw out a couple of questions about your story and background and then we're going to pivot to some commentary about articles you've written on Exile Lifestyle that have been influential on me, the concept of curating, and then we'll wind down with the discussion about old school Nintendo games and maybe even New Zealand.

In between, we'll have some unpredictable stuff going on. Sound good?

Colin: Perfect.

Joel: All right. So, people probably want to know more about your travels and recent crazy adventures. But there's a ton of places they can get that already. Now I want to ask you some things about your somewhat distant past. How about we start with this: was there a major event that set you on your current trajectory to becoming a globetrotting entrepreneur or a series of minor events that got you exploring the world?

Colin: There were probably a series of events that I don't remember quite so well. But the big thing that really set me off when I was living in L.A. and decided, "Hey, I need to get out of this lifestyle and I need to build a new one that involves traveling somehow," was the fact that I had never left the country. I have never been out of the U.S.

I wasn't against it, I wasn't afraid of it. I just hadn't because I hadn't made time for it.

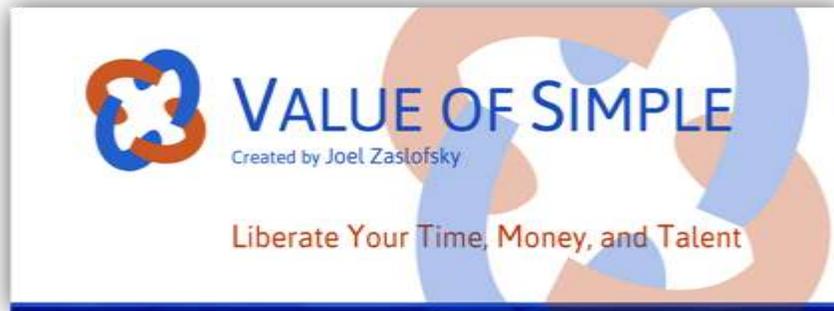
As soon as I realized that this was something I always wanted to do but never made the time for it because I was always in school or running businesses or in school running businesses, whatever it happened to be, there was always something that seemed more important that I was doing to build toward the future. I was investing my time so that someday in the distant future, hopefully not too distant, I would be incredibly wealthy and then could afford to travel in style.

At one point, it locked into my mind and lodged there that "Oh my god, if I keep doing this, one, no amount of money is going to be enough because I'll always be just on the verge of making toward that next step." I'll be right near the finish line of some new goal. But also, probably by the time I stopped I'll be like 60 and way too old to enjoy it in the way that I wanted to enjoy it – to enjoy it as a newbie.

Not that you can't travel and enjoy the world when you're 60 but it's the first time that it'll be much more difficult. And if you're in your twenties you can go out and make a lot of mistakes and maybe get horribly injured and still heal.

Joel: All right. I believe your first business was running your own branding and graphic design shop, right?





Colin: It was actually in tandem with a culture magazine that I was running. I was working for a glossy magazine and quit, started up my own magazine and then started up a design studio which led into another studio later. But both of those was when I was in school so they weren't very large businesses.

Joel: I don't quite understand, I have read a little bit about it, but what was the appeal of helping people with their brands or their visual need? Did you transition away from that intentionally or did you transition away from that to pursue other things that you just felt were more valuable at that point in life?

Colin: I kind of see what I was doing then and what I'm doing now as part of the same continuum. They were both different ways of communicating and helping people communicate for themselves. Back then, doing branding work for people, doing visual work for people, it was helping them express something that they are not able to express themselves because you might say it's a language they don't understand or it's just a skill set that they don't have.

Communicating visually for somebody who doesn't know how, that's helping them express something to a new audience. And that's getting more information out to the world and that's very much what I'm doing now. I'm just doing it primarily with writing and speaking and with other things like that.

I still do graphic work. I just don't tend to do it for as many clients. It's far more difficult to do something that's very file heavy, that requires very large images to be created and that requires deadlines like design and branding do.

If I'm in a country where I have very slow internet, and this actually came to a head when I was in New Zealand when I transitioned away from a lot of client work. Their internet is just terrible. It's just so, so bad. It sucks for them because it's not really their fault. It's just the infrastructure, the undersea internet cables that's really bad.

But I couldn't work and I was disappointing my clients. And these are people that I have a massive amount of respect for and I wanted to do good work for. But I would design something for them and I could not get it back to them and it was costing me hundreds of dollars to ship these things, these images like website images and stuff like that.

So now, I'm able to do something similar but in a different way. I work with people, I help them communicate, I communicate my own thoughts and then I take other people's thoughts, think about it, regurgitate it in a different way as well.

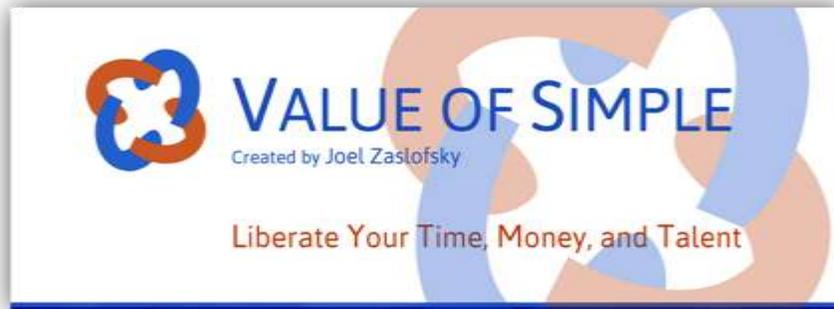
And it's all the continuation of the same concepts. It's clear communication, it's sharing what I've learned and it's trying to increase the worldwide knowledge that we all have, trying to increase the dissemination of knowledge.

Joel: Wow, that's a mouthful. It sounds like you have a diverse set of skills and experiences and passions and you blended them in something pretty darn cool, huh?

Colin: That's kind of the smartest way to build your own personal brand, really. For me, it's kind of a necessity because I get bored very easily. I constantly need to be changing and evolving. Otherwise, I really feel kind of depressed like I've slowed down and that I'm not learning and doing as much as I could.

And this is probably like what I'm doing now, authoring, is maybe my sixth serious career, completely different fields but the continuation of that idea of communication.





But if you're smart about it and you don't want to be replaceable, you don't make yourself just an author; you don't make yourself just a designer. You create a synthesis of multiple different fields and interests and skills and experiences. And then you're you. You're Colin Wright, for example.

Anybody can replace a writer or replace a designer with somebody cheaper, with somebody outsourced, with a robot sometimes. But nobody can replace Colin Wright because I have this unique collection of skills and experiences.

Joel: All right, well, I wasn't planning to try to replace you with a robot, but now that you've warned me against it, I definitely will not try to replace Colin Wright with a robot.

Colin: I know what you're thinking about.

Joel: Thanks for sharing some of your story and your background with us. And now, I know a lot of people asked you about this. I'm not going to ask a bunch of questions about your current lifestyle and your recent adventures, not because they're not interesting (I've just said the word 'not' a lot of times), but I get the sense that so many people key on that aspect of your life and personality that I'd rather talk about some nontraditional stuff, like your thoughts on a statement on your About Page on Exile Lifestyle and you wrote:

"I believe that we're all human first, and anything on top of that (nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, whatever) are all just icing. The most important thing about a person is that they are a person in the first place. That's the cake." End of quote.

Now, that's the kind of thing that I read and I think, "Man, I'd love to know the origin behind those words!" So, I get my chance today. Can you tell us is there a certain event or just some general experience that you had where you've come to feel this way about humanity?

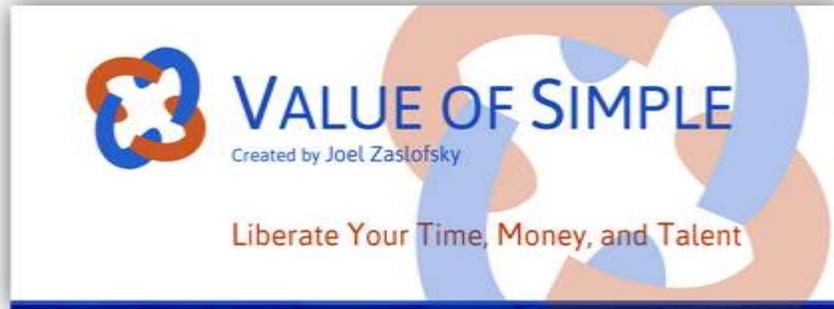
Colin: Probably the biggest influence for that has been the traveling itself and the people that I've met. Everywhere I go, the places even that people warn me against. They say, "This place, everybody is very rude or they don't like Americans or they are all very poor or they're all too rich and haughty," or whatever it happens to be, the warnings are totally untrue.

There are good people and bad people everywhere, but the majority of people everywhere that you go, they are essentially the same as you. They just were brought up in different circumstances. And the more places I go, the more people I meet, the more diverse people that I meet from different economic situations, different religions, different countries, different political beliefs, whatever it happens to be, the little things tend to be what we focus on for some reason. The little things are so arbitrary compared to all of the things that we have in common.

If you sit down with somebody like this that you might be initially afraid of or initially not want to talk to or initially you have such different beliefs from them you can't even stand it, you realize that actually, you don't.

In general you want the same things out of life, you believe generally the same things, your goals and dreams and the people that you love and whatever it happens to be, it's 99.99% similar. For some reason, we fixate on that 0.01% and that's just icing. It really is.





It's good, it can be delicious, it can be really cool stuff but that doesn't mean you should have a diet of only icing. You need something more substantial than that. Focus on the cake and then add the icing on later.

Joel: Can you give us an example? What are a couple of those little things that people really focus on a ton that just drive you nuts?

Colin: Religion is a very big one, all over the place, everywhere that you go. I find that the more successful people tend not to focus on it. It's not that they're not religious or that they're atheists or Christian or Muslim or whatever it happens to be. You find all different religions among successful people. But they are the ones that don't care what religion other people are.

Unfortunately, when you're in situations that are troublesome, when you're poor or you're struggling to eat or whatever it happens to be, you cling to what you can. I know that, and I know that religion or politics or sports or whatever it happens to be, these provide kind of a soothing relief to people that something better is coming or that I'm part of something bigger than myself.

But to focus on that in an exclusionary way instead of saying, "This is something that's good for me and good for everybody else so I'm going to be better because of it," and saying, "This makes me better so I'm going to exclude you or get you or be violent against you," or whatever it happens to be, that tends to be a very, very negative thing.

Religion or sports or politics, they all fill the same role in a lot of ways – it gives somebody a team. I think we need to realize that we're all on the same team, as corny as that sounds.

Unfortunately, we just don't realize it because there is no other team. Not yet. Maybe we need to go further into space then maybe we can find some other teams to compete against.

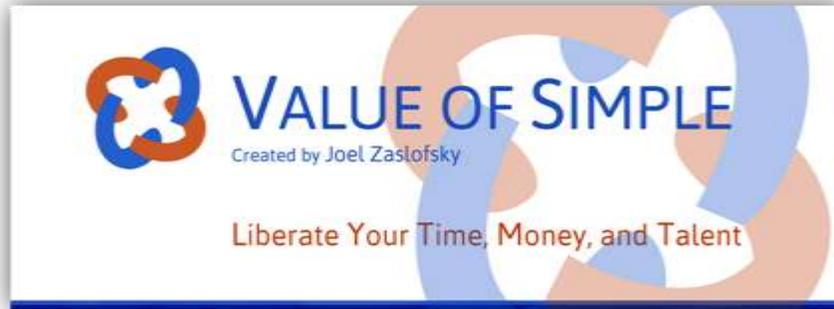
Joel: So, other than humans, all the other types of life on this planet, they're not part of the same team? I kid. There's lots of other teams but I get it from a human perspective. I feel the same way too.

I remember even back in my corporate days where people would argue about me on the same thing and I try to explain to them, "Look, we're on the same team. We're trying to achieve the same goals. We have the same needs. We have the same desires. How are you forgetting that? We're all on the same team here."

That's something that I constantly remind myself, too, maybe not in those words, not in the way that you expressed it. Of course, I can't eloquently express my thoughts as well as you have been doing so far but...well, your focus on the commonalities, on what we are and not what we're not is something that I wanted to transition into and this is a perfect lead into that.

You wrote an article on Exile Lifestyle a couple years back called "[Tell Me What You Are, Not What You're Not](#)" that's really stuck with me. I still remember the takeaway and describe it to others as "Focus on things that define you, not on those that *don't* define you." Why did you think it was important to write that post and how do you embody the message of it?





Colin: Well, it seems like, have you ever meet one of those people who are just incredibly negative about everything? I'm actually thinking of somebody that I just met recently, here in Romania that I met at a hostel, really nice guy. Every word out of his mouth was negative. I did not hear a single positive thing from his mouth even though he was a nice guy.

It made me not want to be around him because all it was was limitations. "I don't like this." "Did you see how bad this was?" "This is bad." "I'm not this and these people are and that makes them bad."

It's a very unappealing type of thing and it makes anything that he says kind of irrelevant to anybody that he's talking to because all he's saying is "this is the negative of the situation."

On one hand, that's a bad aspect of it. But on a grander scale, using only negatives to describe yourself is putting yourself in a box. It's essentially saying "This part of the world I'm having no part in." So, even if something changes, I don't want any part of that. You're slapping a very hard to remove label on yourself.

On the other hand, if you say something that you are, if you define yourself in a way that's very flexible and that allows yourself to change if you need to in the future, which everyone should be able to, if you're being dogmatic about everything, you're leaving out options and you're leaving out the ability to change based on new information.

It's such a small world that you're living in. A soon as you create a ceiling for yourself and throw up a bunch of walls and you put yourself in a box just by choice, and I know that makes people feel more secure and it's an easy way to define yourself, I guess, if you're not really wanting to think about it too hard. Putting up a box is a great way to create a shape.

But what you should be doing over time is creating a nice sphere because it's nice round sides that things can slip off of. It takes a whole lot longer and it's a lot more mathematically difficult to define it and to do it but it's worth the time. To do anything else is really just kind of showing that you're a little bit insecure possibly with what you believe.

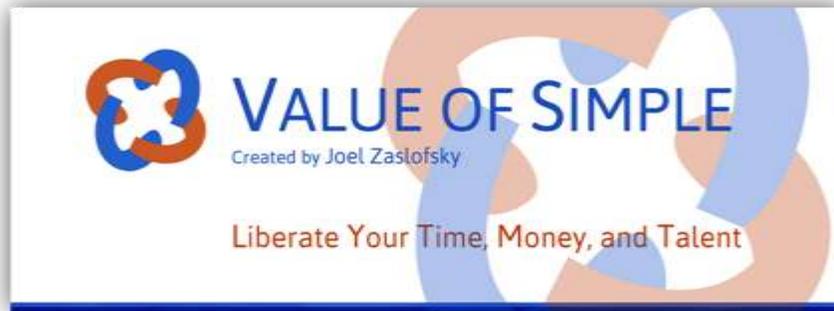
It's not necessarily a bad thing. When you're young you're insecure and we see people do this all the time. But if you really want to be a well-rounded person you go for the sphere; you don't go for the cube. That works as a metaphor and in practice because you can't be well-rounded if you decide at what you're not. You can't bring in enough facets to make that take shape.

Joel: I think it's ironic that we talk about being well-rounded and the shape that that takes. I'm loving the analogies that you're throwing out there, in terms of the shape of the world and the fact that it's a sphere and all the boxes that we put around ourselves, a lot of them are the physical manifestation of it. Right now, I'm in an office. I'm sitting in a room, it's a box. My house is essentially a box and I physically box myself in.

Mentally, emotionally and spiritually, I feel like I'm outside of that box and hopefully people would also agree with me if they saw me interacting with others that I'm leading a "spherical existence" as opposed to a box-like existence. But you brought a little bit richer context than I've ever thought in that way. I'm going to have to listen to that one back in order to fully absorb it. But I like it.

Colin: Hopefully you don't listen to it back and think, "Well, wait a second. That was utter [bleep]."





Joel: Speaking of things going back. I wanted to ask you about one other article that you wrote a couple of years back. It's probably my favorite post that you've ever written of all-time, at least that I've seen. It's called [Ethical Business Practices and Your Stomach](#). Remember that one?

Colin: Yup.

Joel: You probably remember them all.

Colin: I go back sometimes and I'm like, "Wow." It's nice when I can say, "Wow, that was good. Good job, Colin." And sometimes I look back and I'm like, "What the [bleep] where you thinking, Colin? That's stupid." And I end up rewriting it.

Joel: I rewrite some stuff too. It's always a good practice - every six months, every twelve months, to revisit some of your stuff. It's one of the beautiful things about digital words, you can rewrite them and turn it into something a little bit different as long as you're not being disingenuous about it I don't see any problem with it.

Colin: Oh yeah. Usually I republish them. I repackage it. I like to leave the old stuff so people can see how stupid I was once and how brilliant I am now so that then in the future I can look back on how I am now and say the same thing.

Joel: All right. I digress for a moment. So, you and other people like Pat Flynn, The Minimalists, and Raam Dev, posts like this have made a major impact on how I view business ethics and how I want to engage the community I'm growing around Value of Simple.

To give people the flavor of your ethics, you stated in the post, "If you're running a business, you likely have customers or clients, and the first step is simple: do not do anything to these people that you would not want done to you." You also wrote, "There is evidence that having a pop-up on your site can increase your newsletter subscription rate, eBook purchase rate, or whatever else you want to advertise. But is it worth it? Why would I do something to my readers that I know annoys me? Am I better than them in some way that they should have to stomach it and I should not?"

I know this is already a lengthy lead in to my question, the words that stick with me the most are when you wrote, "If you wouldn't be comfortable telling your base all about every decision you make, every tactic you use and every scheme you come up with, you've got a problem on your hands."

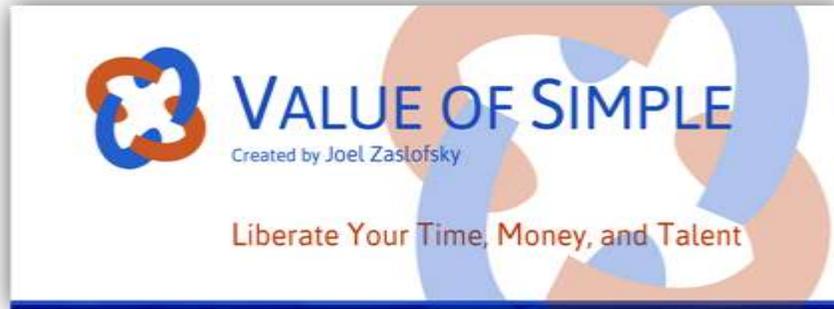
I think you've done a great job in terms of rationalizing that and explaining a little bit, but is there anything that you'd like to elaborate on when it comes to that overall life philosophy it seems like you have?

Colin: Yeah, it's something that evolved kind of organically with me because I am a self-taught businessperson. I never took a class on it, I never had anybody advising me on it so I had to make all the mistakes.

A lot of the early mistakes I made were essentially looking at business as something separate from myself. It was something I did to make money and it didn't reflect on me.

And you see a lot of people doing this. Anyone who ever says, "Hey, it's just business," as making an excuse for something immoral that they're doing that they wouldn't do in real life but they're doing in business.





But I've gone to see that there's not much of a difference especially today and maybe way back in the day if you were a big tycoon you could be separate from your factories and the bad things going on in the factories because you never touched them, you never visited them, you might not even know.

But today there's no excuse. Everything is so transparent. You know what's going on with your business and anything that happens with your business is directly your fault. It's your doing; it's your morality made manifest in a lot of cases.

So, for me to do any type of business that I could not tell my grandmother about, if I would be ashamed to tell anyone about what I'm doing, I don't do it.

I think that's just good practice in general. One, for your own stomach. for you to feel good and fall asleep well at night. But then also to maintain an audience that cares especially in the content creation industry. There's no way you can keep people from pirating your stuff. People will. Everybody pirates everything. They really can. The only way to keep that kind of business model afloat is to make people want you to succeed.

If I come to my audience and I say, "Listen [bleep], you're going to buy whatever." They're going to say, "[Bleep] you, we are," and they are going to download it on a torrent.

But if I say, "Listen, guys, here's what I'm doing. Here's the business model. Here's why I think it's valuable. Here's what it costs." And I put it at a reasonable cost I think anyone can afford. People buy it. Even if they don't intend to read it sometimes, they buy it because they appreciate what I'm doing, they appreciate what they can take away from it. And I like to maintain that type of relationship where people are rooting for me as opposed to considering me a necessary evil.

Joel: It sounds like that's one post that you have and evolved past and that you don't need to go back and rewrite. Everything stayed constant in terms of your feelings about your business ethics. It sounds like you established them at a pretty early point in time in your entrepreneur journey and they have evolved little, unlike the rest of you. True?

Colin: They've evolved quite a bit because I started my first business at 19 and I probably wrote that post several years after that so it took a little while. I probably will rewrite it at some point just to add in more details because I can probably say and flush it out a bit better now.

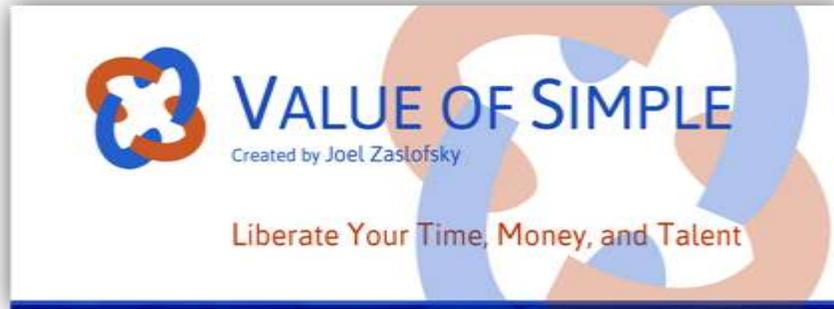
But yeah, a lot of the stuff that I've said going back even several years, I'm amazed to realize that the core concepts, a lot of them haven't changed and I'm glad to see that in a way, too, because that probably means they're good.

I leave myself open to change all the time. I'm one of the few people I know that if I have an argument or a debate with somebody, my mind can be changed. I think that's important. I don't have debates with anyone else, anyone who can't have their mind changed.

So the fact that those opinions haven't changed despite the fact that they've been challenged or that other people have had completely different opinions about it, people who I respect.

Hopefully, that's a good sign. They still could change in the future. Who knows, if I learn something new, have a new experience, but to me that's what makes sense and it makes sense on a long term scale. For me anyway, because that type of morality and being able to sleep at night requires that I have that relationship with people.





Joel: Right on. Well, we've been talking a lot about the past. I'm going to transition to the current because people probably want to hear about some of the current stuff that's going on with you. Lately, I've been a huge personal fan of curating. I'm not sure if you know the context that I'm talking about that in and everyone that I've been talking to these days I've been asking them whether they understand what it is, what their thoughts are on it and if they do it in their lives. So, I wanted to ask you about it.

Just to help you out a little bit, the way that I define curating is the act of intentionally sifting through your experiences and what you consume, categorizing and archiving the best stuff and making it accessible and shareable for your future benefit and use of others.

Some folks do it through **Evernote** or **Pinterest** or maybe even a good old-fashioned notebook. Do you curate books, recipes, your thoughts on a certain kind, of experience or your favorite stuff online?

Colin: I curate personal experiences, definitely. My blog you could say it's a collection of stories and thoughts that I've had. I don't share everything, but I share the ones that I think would be valuable to share and that kind of forms a collection, a library or gallery of thoughts that I think are important.

I do something similar on Twitter and Facebook where I share interesting things that I find. A good portion of my day actually I spend reading. I set aside an hour or two to answer emails, I set aside a couple hours to read and then the rest is out exploring.

But those hours that I spend reading are not hours that everybody has so I feel like it's valuable for me to take the cool stuff, the stuff that I find interesting and share it with other people.

And that's garnered a pretty sizeable social media fan base now because people just appreciate me sifting through the stuff that isn't so good. As you know, curation is so big now because there is *so much stuff* that's bad. Finding the good stuff can be incredibly difficult sometimes.

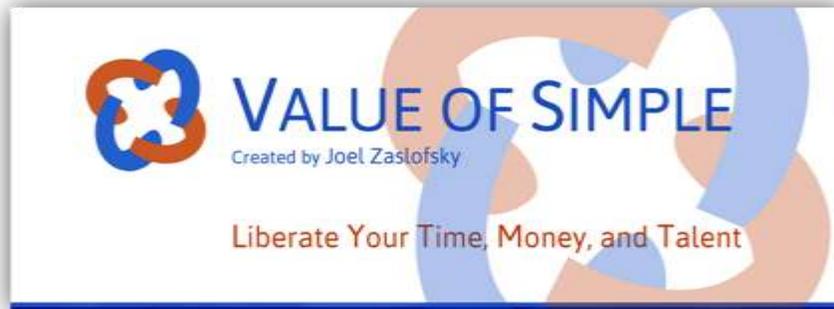
But then I guess my books are kind of the same way too. [Iceland India Interstate](#) takes the best stories from a year of my life which took place over three different continents.

Putting those together into a story and making them cohesive is exactly the same thing that you would do if you're the curator of a gallery or a museum where you say, "Okay, well, we're doing from the Renaissance. Which are the best pieces that we want to be in this gallery?"

I kind of look at telling stories in that way where you have to be very picky about what you choose otherwise you lose people.

Joel: How do you--, for the stuff that you share on Facebook or Twitter or other social media, once you share it, how do you find it again? How do you know if it's still relevant in your life, two years from now, five years from now? Because you're right, a lot of the best stuff is not something--, it could be from the Renaissance. Everything that's new is not gold and a lot of the best stuff that's out there was created a year ago, two years ago, five years ago, or centuries ago. Do you have a method where you can recall or find out all the cool stuff and save it and then access it at a later point in time?





Colin: Thankfully, social media or the social networks take care of that for me keeping backups of everything and you can download your Facebook profile and there are ways to back up your Twitter and things like that as well.

I don't organize or catalog those so much. A lot of them are very in the moment and the ones that are not are pretty easy to find. If I think, "Oh, I want to read that article on whatever." It's very easy to Google or to search through my old tweet posts by putting in my Twitter handle and then some kind of keyword.

Whereas the blog stuff and the book stuff obviously are much more heavily organized. The books are very heavily organized because that's an unchanging thing. It's kind of like a permanent collection on a museum whereas the blog perhaps is a cycling collection and the Twitter and Facebook stuff that I post are the graffiti out back in the alley.

Joel: Let's talk about your books for a moment. You just recently had a new one come out a couple of day ago called [Real Powers](#). I haven't had an opportunity to read it yet although I plan to. Sci-fi is a pretty cool category. Not something that I read for a while but I'm intrigued by your take on it and your first foray into it.

I know you've written your share of books already and it sounds like they're very diverse and they cover just a different range of subjects. Do you have some kind of driving force shared amongst the books that you've written already? Or does each one serve a different purpose and have a different muse, if you will?

Colin: A lot of the non-fiction, non-narrative ones, the ones that are not telling stories that are actually giving information like [How to Travel Full Time](#) or [How to Be Remarkable](#) or the [Start a Freedom Business](#) type of stuff, they're all things that I wish I would have known.

I essentially write the book for myself, a version of me 7 or 8 years ago. Before I started doing anything or right when I was starting to do business stuff, the things that I wish I would have had on my fingertips and I wish somebody would've told me.

At the time, I was in Missouri, too, in the southwestern part of Missouri, right above Arkansas. That's not to say that you can't get good information there, but, there are fewer personal tangible inspirations in a place like that, the type that I wanted, fewer really serious business people, fewer media personalities.

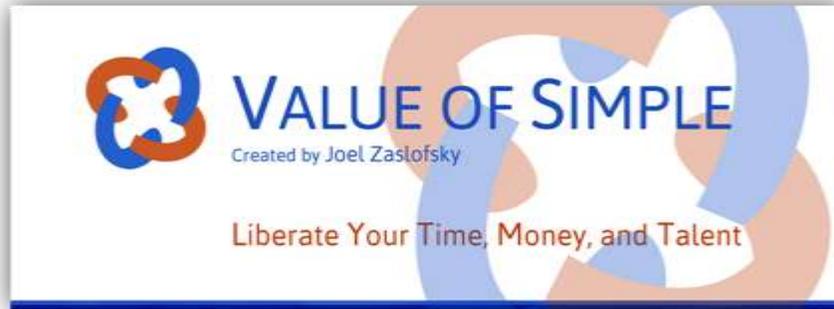
It wasn't until I moved back out to California, I'm originally from there but went out there after university, that I started to actually meet people that I could learn some of this stuff from.

Having these books out there, and most of them are priced at like 99 cents, putting them out there at a price that I could have afforded when I was in college as well, that's pretty important to me.

And then the stories that I tell, the memoir, narrative, non-fiction style stories are somewhat memories for me so that I can catalog things that happened, but also to kind of explain to people what this type of lifestyle was like.

I do my best to show the ups and the downs, the positives and the negatives, but then also show what I'm able to get exposed to, that I am passionate about pursuing knowledge and new experiences.





I feel like a lot of other people are but they don't want to take the risks associated with finding them. So, if I can tell these stories in the correct way and put them in a format that people want to read or want to enjoy, then that's giving them some of those experiences.

It's doing my best to convey what I learned and what I saw and the kind of change in perspective that it gave me and communicating it to other people.

And then, fiction, who knows? For me, that was kind of a shot in the dark. I've always been a reader. I was always the kid who at recess they had to force me to go play because I wanted to read instead.

It was kind of a long term thing where I always said, "I'm not a fiction writer," because I have way too many good authors to compare myself to. But after writing enough narrative non-fiction stuff which is essentially writing fiction that really happened, I mean it's storytelling, it's the same thing.

So, coming up with concepts based on my interests and things that I know about like what happens in the world and technology and politics and these types of things that I really keep up with and then just extrapolating it and saying, "Well, what would all these look like in fifteen years?" And then taking compilations of these amazing people that I know and myself also and putting them into six different characters and seeing how those people would play on that format.

Joel: Yeah, you can lump yourself in with the amazing people that you know. It's okay to feel that you're amazing in some way. Are you sure you weren't the kid who at recess who was on his Gameboy playing Tetris? Because I've heard that you can play Tetris at a master class level. That's true, isn't it?

Colin: ...machines at my high school have my high score on it. That's up on the upper three hundred thousands on a lot of them which come nowhere close to the highest score in the world, but most Tetris machines have like in the two hundred thousands, so yeah, I'm pretty impressed with myself which is one of the things I probably shouldn't be impressed with myself over.

Joel: Hey, I know enough about Tetris to be impressed by that, too. But were there other classic Nintendo or Sega or Super Nintendo games that you were just awesome at?

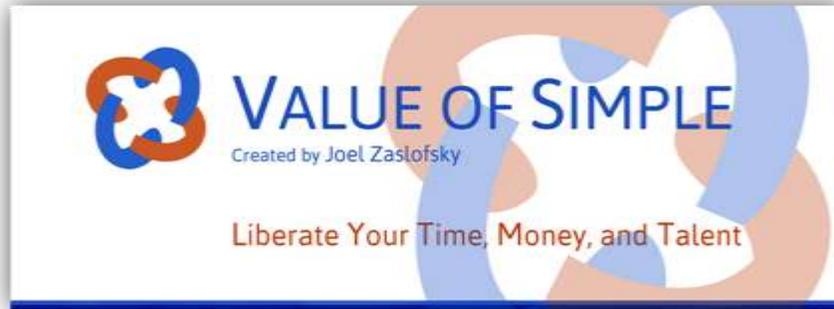
Colin: I was always a big Final Fantasy guy, so, Super Nintendo onward. And then, more so--, I don't really play many games anymore. Life, I play like a game. Actually, I feel like I learned a lot from roleplaying games and from strategy games that I apply to life today.

But now I play more like the Civilization series and things, Civ 5, I play it. That's actually kind of the only game, that and Tetris are the only game that I really play anymore.

I try to play other things when I go home and visit my siblings who still have all the fancy game systems that I feel like I am too old to know too much about now. But I get to kind of see that world a little bit. I get to see the Halo generation that passed me by while I'm sitting at my computer beating the Mongols.

Joel: Yeah, I got to tell you, once controllers go beyond four directions and they started having more than four buttons on the controller, I just kind of gave up a little bit.





Colin: Going back to joysticks.

Joel: Yeah, we'll have to talk some other time about Final Fantasy because I was a huge roleplaying game guy and it sounds like we have some shared experiences when it comes to the rich history of video games in our past.

Colin: Oh my gosh, those games, when Palom and Porom turn themselves to stones in Final Fantasy II, I still get kind of welled up thinking about it.

Joel: I really, really hope that people get that reference because it's hilarious.

Colin: The uber geeks in the audience.

Joel: All right, I wanted to ask you one more thing in terms of sharing experiences. You mentioned New Zealand before and about how there is horrible Internet there. I experienced the same thing, too. We were there at roughly the same time, not exactly the exact same time, but I went skydiving. It sounds like you went skydiving when you were in New Zealand. Did you ever hike the Tongariro Crossing and head up the Devil's Staircase?

Colin: I don't think so, no.

Joel: If I were to go to New Zealand again, is there something awesome that you experienced that I might have failed to check out or do that you recommend?

Colin: Yeah, it's a simple thing, actually: road tripping. I have the opportunity because of friends there to road trip all over, like literally over at the north end south islands. There is just so much amazing stuff there, it's unbelievable.

I've often said that New Zealand is unfairly beautiful and it really truly is. And you know, being there, you cannot take a bad photo. You can hit the timer on your camera, throw it up in the air and whatever photo is taken would be like a postcard, an award-winning postcard. It's just ridiculous.

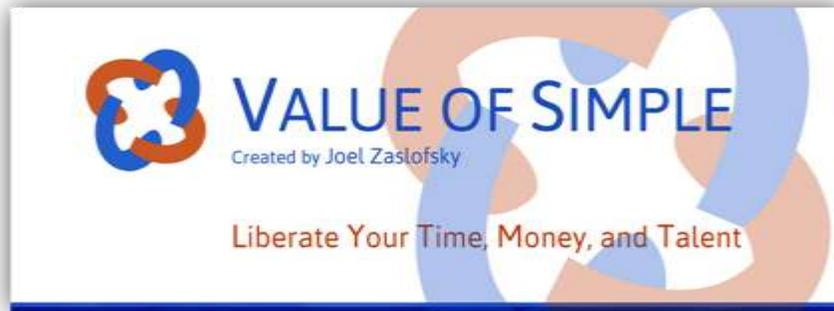
Going around the countryside, especially the parts that have not been touristed up, I mean Queenstown and Christchurch, all of those are really beautiful and the wineries outside of Auckland are all really great.

The tourism industry there is excellent especially the way that they treat the landscape. But the place where there's nothing, there's just glacial lakes next to the ocean, next to the forest, so incredibly gorgeous.

And it's really cheap to do. There is actually a trick down there where you can do returns for a rental companies. Several times while I was there with a friend we just called up the rental company and maybe from Queenstown, you say, "Hey, you have anything that you need taken from Queenstown up to Christchurch?" and then they rent it to you for a buck and all you do is pay for gas.

You can really spend some time going around the island on a budget. We had, at one point, a van that was nearly a bus and then you just go around and pick up hitchhikers. It's a very safe, fun thing to do, meet some interesting people and just see incredibly gorgeous landscape.





Joel: I have not heard of that trick and I wish I would have known about that because Melinda, my wife, and I, we drove all the way around the north and the south island but that cost us a good amount both in terms of the gas and the car itself. But wow, that is a cool travel hacking tip.

Colin: It's only when they have them available and if somebody else hasn't scooped up all the returns, and you're kind of limited, they give you an extra day or so, so you can take it out of the beaten path if you want. But if you wanted to go all over the place you have to make lots of phone calls.

It's kind of one of those things that if you're really on a budget, it's great. But if you want to save time, then sometimes it's not worth the time.

Joel: Got it. Well, we've covered a ton of ground today. I'm just going to ask you one more question and it's the question that I ask everybody to wrap things up a little bit. Is there anything we didn't talk about that you would like people to know?

Colin: I would like more people to know that traveling does not cost a lot of money. This is something that I get more, not complaints, but concern, more people saying "I would love to do what you do or something. I would love to travel more but I don't have the money."

It seems to imply that they think I'm a billionaire or something to be able to do this. But honestly, the way that I live my life and the things that I get to do and all the places that I go, it is cheaper for me to travel full time than it was to live in L.A. It's cheaper for me to do this than it was probably even when I was living in Missouri.

It is not expensive if you do it correctly. If you take the time and live like the locals do instead of trying to stay in fancy hotels and eating out at restaurants all the time. It can be incredibly cheap. You can make money traveling. You can actually save money compared to living in the United States or in other countries if you happen to be living in other countries.

It just really depends on how you live your life and what your priorities are. If your priorities are to go and get massages every day and to eat only at that four star restaurants and things like that, maybe traveling is not the best option for you. Maybe you can just do it from time to time and save up in between.

But if you just want new experiences, if you want to meet new people, if you want to expand your world view and become a well-rounded person who questions everything about yourself all the time, then it's a very, very cost effective way to do all of those things and the best way that I've found so far to do it.

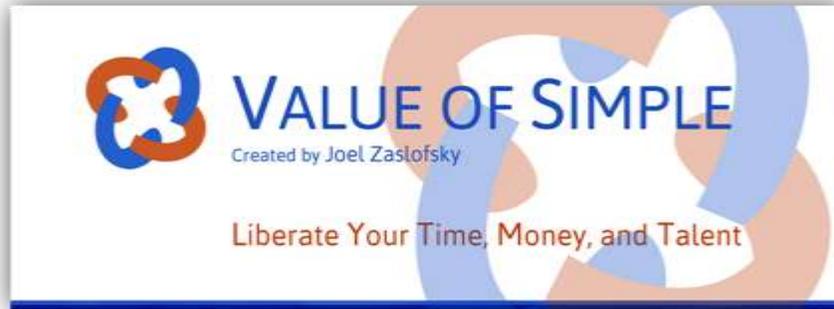
You question yourself more and learn more things in an hour on the road than you do in a week sitting around doing the same thing that you did the last week.

So, I would encourage more people to do that; to look it up and see the facts and the numbers because then that's one less excuse. And if it's one less excuse, maybe it's the one that pushes them over and gets them out into the world.

Joel: Sounds like a great way to change from a box into a sphere. I like it.

Colin: Exactly. I like it. I see what you did there.





Joel: Yeah. Well, you've given us something to think about here. Would you like to give us something to do? As soon as people are done listening to us talk, is there some action they can take to help me out, to help you out, to help your mission, to help your message out? Is there something that you like people to do?

Colin: Yes, if they want, they can shoot me an email and say hello. I kind of encourage people to do that so I know who's reading my stuff. That way it's not like a one-way communication, it's a two-way thing. I can learn who they are, where they are or maybe a bit of what they're up to.

Actually, I have a thing send out the day after people subscribe to my newsletter asking them to do this because it really is a benefit to me and it's a big favor, really, for people to tell me something about themselves.

But it also creates a nice conversation. And even if it's not a conversation that's back and forth multiple times a day, it's something that starts so that it's they're coming where I am or I'm going where they are, then you have somebody to meet for coffee. If nothing else, it gives us an equal opportunity to expand our horizons a little bit.

Joel: Cool. And I've seen that on your newsletter. I like that approach. It's a pretty cool one and I know that you're completely genuine in it, too. I've seen other people do them and they are like, "Hey, hit reply and let me know how you feel," but you get a sense of warmth, a sense of authenticity when it comes from you. But I guess that's the kind of way that you roll.

Colin: Yeah, well, it's part of why I'm doing what I'm doing. If I wanted to avoid people and just preach at them I would have become an Internet Marketer probably instead of moving more towards the authorship and other things. And not that there's anything wrong with that of course, it's not the way that I roll. It doesn't fit with my business ethics, a lot of which...

Joel: Gotcha. Well, I'm not going to tell people to do too much for me. Normally I might tell them to do subscribe to my newsletter or go and leave me a review on iTunes for the Smart and Simple Matters show.

But instead, for the folks that are listening, I'd just like you to think about the morals and the ethics that govern your view of the world and how you interact with people because after my chat here with Colin, I know that I'm going to be reflecting with those for a while and seeing if I'm can refine them to be even more aligned with the core values that I live by and it would be really cool if you join me for that.

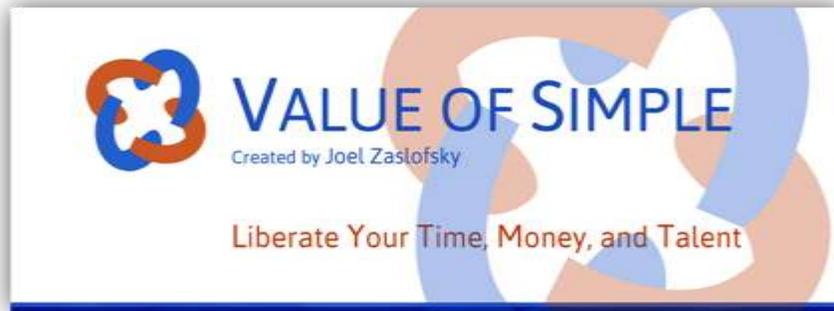
So, Colin, thanks again for joining me and helping me on my journey and all of your inspired writing has really helped. It was an absolute pleasure.

Colin: Likewise, my pleasure.

Joel: Okay. For everyone listening right now, it's time for your partner in simplifying to sign off again. You've just listened to the Smart and Simple Matters podcast with Joel Zaslofsky, creator of all things Value of Simple.

Thanks again for reading the transcript of the Smart and Simple Matters show folks!





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