

Obliterating Financial Shame

An Interview with Perry Marshall,
Glenn Livingston, and Sharon Livingston

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<http://www.coachcertificationacademy.com/Shame.php>

Glenn: Hi, this is Glenn Livingston from www.becomearealcoach.com You're about to hear an interview which I didn't originally do for my coaching audience but rather what Sharon and I gave to a large audience of entrepreneurs who were struggling at the time with severe financial difficulties. It was shortly after the severe financial downturn. My colleague, Perry, knew that Sharon and I had been through a tremendous financial downturn many, many years before. He asked me if we've come on and kind of lay it bare and talk about everything we went through and how did we survive. He kind of knew that I wanted to declare bankruptcy and Sharon didn't. Eventually, we decided not to and that we made a very full recovery and better. He did. He got us to lay it bare. I was actually kind of embarrassed.

In the years following this interview, I've had literally over a hundred people come up to me personally to tell me that it changed their lives. When I'd speak at seminars, I'm asked to talk on radio shows, whenever I get people talking to me and telling me they heard this interview and it really changed their lives. I felt like it was an important thing to share with my coaching audience and that's why you're hearing it.

Excuse the fact that it was done for a marketing audience. I think that it's kind of a good way for you to know Sharon, I, and our story a little better. But more importantly, I think that the fact that here we are, two coaches and very psychologically introspective sensitive people, very successful people, otherwise who went through a tremendous downturn. We had a lot of observations we felt like we could share with people to help them to dig themselves out of that kind of a hole. I guess that's enough said. Without further ado, here's the call. Thanks.

Perry: Mr. X is an accomplished professional who decided to do something entrepreneurial about maybe eight or nine years ago. It kind of went okay for a while. Then 9/11 happened. With it, his business went in a very bad direction. He lost a couple of million dollars. He ended up, all total, about \$700,000 in debt. He had borrowed money from relatives and all kinds of really fun stuff like that. He had a whole platoon of bankers and lawyers and piranhas and everything and slowly started digging himself out. He and his wife did.

I knew that there had been a big failure way back when I didn't find out until -- I've known this guy for quite a long time but I didn't know the extent of it until relatively recently. He told me that he was about to get out of debt. I don't remember grasping the magnitude of it. But anyway, as of the beginning of November 2008, Mr. X is free and clear and has completely

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reinvented himself again. Much congratulation goes to Mr. X. It's been a long road. Is that right, Mr. X?

Glenn: That's very correct.

Perry: Mr. X is actually Glenn Livingston. Now, a lot of you know Glenn. Glenn is well known for his market research methods and products that he sells. He also now has a pay per click management company LivingstonPPC.com. A lot of you know him as the guinea pig guy. He sold more guinea pig e-books than anybody else in the world. That's a distinction. I'm sure your family of doctors and psychologists is proud of that one, aren't they, Glenn?

Glenn: Oh, exceptionally.

Perry: Those of us in the online marketing world sometimes find ourselves in interesting situation. Glenn, welcome.

Glenn: Well, thanks again, Perry. It's an honor to celebrate with you. I asked my wife if she could join us. I'm not sure if she's on the line as well.

Sharon: I've been listening, listening, listening.

Glenn: Believe me, I thought of the idea and I thought it was particularly important because the truth is when I saw the e-mail that said, "Glenn fought back. He didn't declare bankruptcy. He did everything right and now everything is here." The truth is, that the reason we didn't declare bankruptcy is because my wife would not let me.

Perry: Okay.

Glenn: She had more faith in me and in herself than I did. I just didn't think it was fair for me to be on the phone, celebrating and getting credit without having her because I would have in a heartbeat declared bankruptcy. I was arguing that that's the reason the laws are there. We need to clear ourselves so we can get more productive again. She was saying, no, she couldn't live with it. She thought it would be a blow to our egos. Sharon honey, welcome.

Sharon: Thank you.

Perry: Welcome, Sharon.

Sharon: Thank you, Perry.

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Perry: I'm really excited to have both of you. To whatever extent you guys are willing -- this could be a kind of mean and bleed conversation. When I was struggling away as an employee, the worst that I ever had was maybe 1/10 of \$700,000. I thought that was like impossibly huge. I'd chafed over it for a long time, did get out, but you know, this is big.

The other thing I want to say is lots of people are in this kind of situation. I mean, this is turning out to be a pretty popular tele-seminar here. I had almost a couple of thousand people sign up. I'm sure a lot of people will listen to this one on their iPods for a long time. Why don't you guys tell the story of what actually happened, where you guys come from, a little bit about your background so people have a picture.

Glenn: Sure. Hopefully, then we can end by talking about everything that we learned from it and --

Perry: Absolutely.

Glenn: -- what we might have done differently, how we could have suffered less, how we might have gotten to it faster, that kind of thing. But Sharon, you want to go first, honey?

Sharon: No. [laughter]

Glenn: I will. I think that when you're talking about the sheer size of the numbers, one of the interesting things is that it all depends on your perspective. At that time, a few years prior to 9/11, I had largely been focusing on my clinical practice. Before that, I'd been doing corporate consulting. I had done these large multiple six figure projects. Sharon was doing those kinds

of things all the time so \$700,000 didn't sound as large to me although it really took a lot out of my hide. But the few years leading up to that, I had really wanted to get out of the corporate consulting world. I was focusing on my practice. I think I was making \$125,000 a year charging anywhere from \$25 a session for people that really couldn't afford it to \$125, maybe \$150.

Perry: You were a psychologist?

Glenn: I was a psychologist. You know what, Perry? \$700,000 is a lot of session.

Perry: Yeah.

Glenn: I mean that's a lifetime of paying someone for psychoanalysis. That's a lot of session.

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Perry: That's a lot of dysfunction too.

Glenn: A lot of dysfunction, yeah. On the one hand, I think that it really forces you into a place where you have to think at a different level because I was not going to pay back \$700,000 doing therapy sessions anytime soon. Really, we had a bunch of money in the bank before. We were pushing towards changing our lives around, maybe adopting a child or something. We had a lot of other really important plans. It wasn't just paying back the debt. It was really restoring our dreams.

I had to think at a different level. Very quickly, both Sharon and I were thinking what can we do, how can we dig ourselves out of this. It was all I was thinking because there was also a lot of negative thinking that was crippling for me. I can talk a little bit more about that later. We kept the boat afloat for a couple of years by taking something that we were doing offline and developing a software project for it and starting to sell that to same corporate audience but now we could administer it a little less expensively. It was sort of a very large projects to do that. Sharon worked her little tush off selling to consultants. We just barely managed to stay afloat.

Here's the story. The story is Sharon and I, in the corporate consulting world, were, I guess you can call us brainiacs. We understand the reasons that people respond to advertising, how to evaluate that for companies, and give them very specific advice after talking to consumers about how they should change their advertising. We got the bright idea that we should switch to the other end of the industry.

I talked to so many entrepreneurs who get tired of one element of what they're doing. They totally forget about their core competency. They just totally forget what it is that brought me to this place in the first place. They think they have to change everything about their lives. In retrospect, that's one of the worst mistakes that we made because we should have just kept on selling, consulting intellectual capital and just changed the way that we were selling it. But instead, we decided that we wanted to open up a very large focus group facility with all of the bells and whistles accommodated for the emerging internet technology for broadcasting video and audio.

Sharon had been renting focus group facilities across the country and felt like she knew the industry better than anybody else and she really does. She knew what it takes to have a great focus group facility.

But we didn't have a lot of the other experience. Now, we're not selling to corporations. Now, we're selling to people who are essentially our

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competitors with totally different budgets, price resistance points, reasons to purchase, and reasons for complaining. All of a sudden, we're in a situation where everybody is niggling for nickels and dimes with us. I remember that even before 9/11 happened, even though we were starting to get some people in, it was really upsetting to us that we were pressed into a whole different market. We're doing okay. We're doing kind of sort of okay. But this facility was in the New York area, most specifically it was in Long Island. It's about 25 miles east of Ground Zero.

One of the things about the focus group industry is that people have to fly to go from group to group to group. As soon as 9/11 hit, companies said, "I'm not sending my people around anymore." None of the moderators wanted to fly. The industry just basically dried up.

On top of that, well, everything was pretty much right about the facility. We hadn't done the research to figure the right location. We just really, really wanted to do it in Long Island because we live on Long Island. But I'm talking about our research methodologies, I say, if I did then what I do now for researching a niche market or evaluating a business, I would say, well, "Glenn, why didn't you take out an ad in a trade magazine and see how many people would call you first?" Then I would've found out, if I'd take out an ad in Long Island, if I'd take out an ad in New Jersey, I would have found out that 90% of the focus groups are in New Jersey for a reason, that people don't really want to travel to Long Island because that's where all the companies are. We were fighting that vulnerability until 9/11 happened. Then after 9/11, it was just no business. We had 20 people working for us. We had \$150,000 a month of expenses. I really freaked out. I know Sharon freaked out also.

Sharon: I only freaked out when we had that big error that we did by accident because we had somebody sent out an e-mail right after 9/11.

Glenn: Oh my God.

Sharon: You have to tell that story because that's when I thought I was going to die.

Glenn: Well, this is kind of an ancillary story – well, this is an internet marketing story...

Perry: I know this story. This is a good one.

Glenn: Okay. In the year 2000, I was not extraordinarily faciled with e-mail, marketing, and opt-in lists. I didn't know which service to use. I did have a programming degree so I tried to piece together my own e-mail server which I did badly. I'm afraid it's a programming degree, it's not a bachelor's degree. It's just a certificate. I hired some programmers in

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Russia to fix it for me which they did, we thought. We've put together a system for e-mailing our database of respondents. When you run a focus group – lile if Nabisco comes to us and says "We want to talk to people who are interested in a new diet cookie. They've got to be this age. They've got to be 25 to 34." We needed a system that could e-mail that to a set of people. We've done a lot of recruiting to get them into that system. We had about 20,000 people who were responding to our e-mail invitation. When we would want to recruit a focus group, we would put them on the top of the focus group, the data of the group. There was some automated things that the e-mail program would put into the subject line and the body. One of them was the words "get paid" in capital letters. It would say "GET PAID: Diet Cookie Focus Groups". Then in the body, it would say "please respond if you'd like to come".

Sharon: You have to back up just for a second because the reason that we sent out this e-mail which is we haven't heard it coming yet, you will. What happened was I had a major anxiety attack with 9/11. I really thought they're coming to get me. They're going to bomb my house. There's going to be Anthrax on all my letters. I was totally, totally freaked out. My business is going to be ruined all that kind of stuff.

Glenn came up with this really, really cool idea. Well, we came up with it together but Glenn came up with this idea now that he knows all about Internet marketing and how to invite people. We were going to take a really bad situation and feel good about it because the best revenge is having a good life. Instead of letting terror guide us, we were going to go do

something positive and invite everyone we knew to our facility to come and share their feelings about the whole 9/11 disaster. It was going to be inspirational. It was going to be heartfelt. It was going to be anybody -- because we had all these webcams set up and everything, people could actually observe. If they couldn't come, they could be watching on their computer. It was going to be this momentous thing. We were going to save the world. Anyway, now you can continue.

Glenn: Well yeah. The one thing that I want to point out is I think that was the right idea. I think that in a time of panic, and this is certainly a time of panic, the thing to do is what you've done best. I think we were on to the right idea. We just did it too impulsively and didn't have all the pieces in place. But rather than trying to -- thinking about the entrepreneurial call, trying to think about how to sew up the holes in their business, and the question I'd asked them is, "What is it that got you here? What's your core competency? What do you do best? This isn't the time to jump from thing to thing to thing, this is a time to really focus on that core competency, strengthen it and rely on it more than you ever have." Okay. Our core competency was that we were raised first and foremost as

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psychologists and we wanted to provide that service. We sent out an e-mail.

Sharon: This is the exact day after 9/11. This is 9/12.

Glenn: This is the morning of 9/12. We sent out an e-mail that says, to 20,000 people, I told my programmer we were going to do focus groups on the World Trade Center tragedy. Could you send out an e-mail to recruit them for me? The e-mail goes out and because of the way that the system was designed, it says, "GET PAID: World Trade Center Tragedy." "GET PAID: World Trade Center Tragedy." You'd think that will be enough to make this a story. Then the rest of the e-mail says, "Please respond back with your gender and age if you'd like to come." You'd think that will be the end of the story but it's unfortunately not because the programmer set it up so that when anybody responded to that e-mail, the response went into the broadcast queue.

What it was was that when they responded back, that response was broadcast out to the whole list. It's almost like it was a list server. Any response went out to the 20,000 people and any response to that response went out to 20,000 people. One of the first responses we got was, and remember, the e-mail says, "GET PAID: World Trade Center Tragedy. Please respond back with your name, age, gender and phone number." Because we we're going to call them and recruit them. We were going to separate them all into unique groups so we could have groups of women,

groups of men, groups of older men, groups of younger men. I'm shaking a little bit as I tell the story. I forget sometimes. Someone writes back – among the first to write back says, "Hi, I'm Kim. I'm 28. I'd like to come."

Sharon: In hot pink. In hot pink.

Glenn: Like literally, you can imagine on the morning of 9/12, that 20,000 people receiving that response say, "You little B-I-T-C-H. I can't believe you're taking advantage of this already. You cruel and inhuman thing. Isn't it enough that all these people were killed?" Those responses, every last one of them, get broadcast out to 20,000 people. At which point, all of those 20,000 people start responding "What are you talking about? I never said that. You stupid bastard." In the morning of 9/12 in New York, you know how upset everybody was, everybody knows. We had started a war on the Internet and we were in the middle and --

Sharon: And the president of my association calls and starts yelling at us. We were getting all these like horrible calls. Again, e-mails that went out to 20,000 people saying how awful Sharon Livingston was for trying to take

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advantage. By the way, nobody was going to get paid. This was going to be a place where you could just come and talk. We were going to feed people. We were doing it really to get over our own anxiety and...

Glenn: Well, we were doing it to nurture the community which was our way of getting over our anxiety.

Sharon: Right, our own anxiety. Right, exactly.

Glenn: The last part of it was that a virus got attached to the e-mail. Now, we've got this war on the Internet, there's a virus associated with it. Everybody in our industry is saying, "What's wrong with you?" Sharon looks at me and she says, "Glenn, you handle it."

Sharon: I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown. I mean this was my reputation for my little place in the world that I've been functioning for 10 years or like 13 or 14 years. I thought, "Man, I'm dead. I'm just dead. I'll never be able to show my face ever, ever again." I left. We had our dog Zac who was, I guess around a year and a half old or something and I decided I'm going for a walk with Zac. Three miles away from home, this big dog got out from its invisible fence and literally chased us biting Zac the whole way, all the way back to my door. You know when you think it can't get any worse, it always can. That probably wasn't in the part you were going to tell but that's the part I remember.

Glenn: The end of the story is I stayed up for about three days straight. We kept the vice president with us. We got our management around us and the big people we had around us and we made phone calls. We let everybody yelled at us. We patiently explained to one person after the next what happened. We had to meet with some people who were threatening to sue us. We had to talk to attorneys.

Sharon: We had to pay that girl.

Glenn: We had to change her phone number. We had to settle a lawsuit possibility with her. I don't really want to dwell on that. But the thing is, what I wish I did at that point was said to myself, "Glenn, you just went through the worst of it." Because nothing worst had happened after that externally. The worst thing that happened after that for me was I started eating. I started eating chocolate and pizza as much as I could.

Perry: Hang on there. I mean 9/11 happened which was the beginning of the end of your conference center, true?

Glenn: Yes. We really knew that.

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Perry: But just to make it worse, you had this horrible, horrible black eye with everybody on your e-mail list. You unleashed this bedlum, I don't know. I kind of have a hard time imagining the worst thing that happened on the Internet than that. I mean, it's like the worst. So thus beginnings the decline of the end of the conference center. Yeah, so you start eating.

Glenn: You know, there were some good things that came out of the e-mail fiasco. A lot of people, once they understood what was wrong and they had an opportunity to talk to us, we made a lot of connection. This went beyond just a respondent who started going to clients. We got a lot of connections with people that winded up doing business with us because they kind of empathize to what we went through. That's kind of an interesting experience that -- you know how they say, out of chaos comes opportunity? I think that that's really true.

For me, the worst thing was that I gained 60 pounds. I'm a pre-diabetic guy, very bad triglycerides and there are heart attacks up and down my family. The bottom line was that all of my beliefs about what was going to happen, that I was going to be in debt for the rest of my life, and that I'm never going to get out of this. I was never going to accomplish what we wanted to. Our dreams were never going to come to fruition. It wasn't the actual events. It was my belief about the events that got me fat and sick.

In retrospect, let's say, that I had gone broke. Let's say, we had gone broke. It would've been so much better to have just gone broke than to

make myself fat and sick over it, you know? I mean, nothing really much worse happened after that... nothing really much worse happened after that.

We end up arguing back and forth because I kept on pushing for closing the facility and going bankrupt. Sharon wanted to fight it out. It was the right thing to do, that we fought it out. We kept people from having to lose their jobs. We really saved a lot of face. But there's a lot of arguing and going to family for money which is really, really embarrassing, as a 36-year-old doctor.

There were endless meetings with bankers, accountants, and attorneys. In retrospect, what really bothered me about that is that none of them really helped you make any more money. It was all about how to prevent the damage. It was all about damage control. I hate spending my time on damage control. I want to spend time building the dream. I don't want to spend my time on damage control. I think it's a necessary evil. That was no fun. How about if we talk about some of the good things that came out of it?

Perry : Yeah, absolutely.

Glenn: Sharon, do you want to add anything?

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Sharon: I think you did a really, really good job. I think, Oh My God, the meetings with the bankers and the accountants and the attorneys and the people who helped you get rid of your furniture and stuff like that, that was grueling, painful and really kept us from doing what we do best which is doing our work. I don't know how we would have done over but boy that was unpleasant.

Perry: Isn't this kind of a story about distractions compounded upon distractions compounded on distractions ... ? because you got a little bit itchy to have a change of scenery and so you said, "Hey, let's go from this part of the business to this totally other part of the business. Let's do this great idea." Maybe a little bit grandiose?

Sharon: Just a little.

Perry: A little, which we all do, okay. And then 9/11 and then the email fiasco, then the arguing about well, do we throw in the towel, do we keep rowing, right?

Sharon: Right.

Glenn: I'm aware of how uncomfortable it is to tell this story. I've kind of used it as the story so that people can hear me say – oh well, I lost \$2 million and now, we're doing great. Everybody says, well, that's great because maybe I can do it also. It's another thing to really tell the story. It was not a fun time. But here is what really came out of it for me that I think made me stronger. Of course, learning to do the research before going forward with any venture. I mean everybody knows I'm the research guy. I won't belabor that point.

We learned how to run a cash-strapped company. I used to think if you got more than 60 days behind on your bills to your vendors, let's say, we'd never do business with you again, that they would be forcing you into bankruptcy quickly. I think I had this standard theme in the back of my head that there were these men in pristine white suits with moustaches that would come to my house, kick us out, take all the money that they possibly could get and we'd be living on the street.

The truth was that if you don't hide, if you just get on the phone with people, you tell them what's going on and you don't lie, because people kept pressing us, could we make a plan, could you pay me \$500 a month. At the time, I didn't even know if I could do that. There were times when I had to say to people, "No, I can't make that plan. I really want to pay you. I'm going to pay you as soon as I can. I'm happy to stay in contact with you but

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I can't make that plan." You know, we're living on fumes, we're running on empty. It was very uncomfortable but it was the first time in my life that I saw that the floor was a lot stronger than I thought the floor was. I thought you put a little bit of weight on the floor and it was going to crack. The truth was that it was made maybe not of stronger type of steel but it was fairly well re-enforced. It was going to take an awful lot of weight to crack that floor.

At our worst, I think there might have been a time when we were over a year behind with a lot of vendors for a lot of money. Now, we have relationships with these people for years. It's not like a guy you just hired and then they have nothing to do with you. But even some of those went a lot further than I thought they were going to go. The key was, don't hide, don't lie.

Sharon: We gave people little bits. I mean we took out of our mouth to feed the other little birdies. I mean, we did. That's what it was like.

Glenn: I love your analogy. I love that.

Perry: You know what? I had a friend who owed me some money a few years ago and I just stopped hearing from him. I'm not going to go try to pound this

out of him. He's probably in some kind of financial difficulty, I'm sure he is. That's why he's not paying me. But I just didn't hear from him for like, I don't know, six months or a year or something. He didn't return my phone calls. Finally, after like this long period of time, I got a phone call from him. He says, "Okay, a check has being Fed-exed to you. Thanks for waiting." I told him, I said, "You know what? I really appreciate that but you know what? I missed you more than I missed the money."

Glenn: That's a really good point.

Sharon: Glenn?

Glenn: Yes?

Sharon: I miss you, honey.

Perry: The things that these situations create is shame, being ashamed of yourself that, why am I such a screw up? Why did I come up with this stupid idea? Why can't I check on the programmers work and make sure I'm not going to create this massive disaster? Why did I borrow all these money? Why did I go ask relatives for money when my wife told me not to ask relatives for money? I mean you can beat yourself up, beat yourself up. What you end

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up doing is hiding from the whole entire world and being on the run. It just makes it worse.

Glenn: It cycles, it cycles downwards. As soon as you start that isolation, it really cycles downwards. The memories were the best during this horrible times was realizing with Sharon, first of all, we got through it together. If we survived this, then what could really threaten our marriage, right? But even during the worst of times, there were times when we would cuddle up and watch a movie, just making jokes, we'd go hiking, and we'd hang out with friends.

Sharon: All the things that we like to do in best of times.

Glenn: Right. I actually sent out an email to my list about a month ago which is one of the more popular emails that I sent out. It wasn't selling anything. It was about -- Sharon had been at a store, Sharon, could you describe what you saw at the store with the guy with the apple?

Sharon: Oh, that one, sure. We were at this wonderful apple place up here in New Hampshire, a few miles away from our house where they sell their own apples that they grow. It's a farm stand. I was on line to buy some apples.

There was a man and a woman standing in front of me. She had, I don't know, like 10 apples or something. They put in on the scale. He is taking two apples out of her bag because he doesn't want to spend that much money on apples. He's arguing with her about two apples. It was just so humiliating to her, to him, and to me as an observer, like, oh my God, to argue over two apples? We're not talking about two new cars or two computers or two headsets. I mean it was two apples.

Glenn: Something that was really healthy.

Sharon: Yes.

Glenn: She was trying to take care of the family and the guy lost perspective, in the middle of the panic, he lost perspective. I know that it happened to me over and over during that time. Now, being in a position with hundreds of students, clients, people who are very focused on their business, and what happens when the money becomes scarce. I know it's so easy to lose perspective about what's important. The truth is, I have the idea that that guy would probably make more money and do better financially if he could really appreciate the fact that his wife was putting those two apples in the basket. I really believe that. It's easy to say that, it's hard to live by it. It's easy to say that. It's a philosophy that I came away with after this

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experience that I try to live with.

There's something else that I really want to make sure we get to which was, I think that if you're ever going to be bigger than you are, if you're ever going to really live out your vision, then there's got to be a point where you reach and you risk the shame of failure and where you're incredibly anxious the whole time that you're doing it.

In retrospect, even though there's a lot of mistakes, and I kind of wish we didn't do it - We paid a heavy price for it. The fact that we had the vision of building this conference center and watching it come together, I mean here we are, Sharon and I never went to business school. I was raised by a family of 17 psychologists. I was going to be a guy who sat down behind the couch and said, "I'd like you tell me about your mother." Sharon was raised by people who owned a Deli and wanted her to be a caterer, maybe a telemarketer. Here we are, these two people, we get together, we had this vision. And all of a sudden, we put this whole conference center together.

Sharon: From scratch.

Glenn: From scratch, from scratch. I used to walk into a bank and marvel at the big marble columns and all of the architecture, how well the people work together, the systems and the structures. I'm still like a child, like it was never possible to do that. This thing came together out of our heart, soul, brain power, and vision. Even though we lost a lot of money on it, the ability to take that risk, experience the shame, stay together regardless of what we experienced. I mean look what we've done after, right?

Sharon: To this day, people tell me that they wish that facility was still there, that they loved it. It was beautiful. It was different. It really met their needs.

Glenn: Instead of being just a sterile, focus group facility with a one way mirror and all these gray walls, Sharon called this place the looking glass. She built it after Alice in Wonderland. She had fabulous characters and decorations and creature comforts and...

Sharon: We went up to New Hampshire before we lived here and found an antique place where they had old furniture but not really antique. They were selling it for like a song. We loaded up two big truckloads of stuff that cost not that much really. I mean, even though we've lost a lot of money on the facility, we actually did it on a really good budget. It was a unique place. People loved being there. To have that experience of creating a homestead for

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people away from home, it was almost like the best hotel. That was really a fabulous, fabulous thing.

Glenn: It really was. It really was.

Sharon: Glenn, you know what you reminded me of? The archetype cards that we just introduced. I think that part of the experience of building the facility from scratch lead into that because they were also a vision, not knowing how to produce a product ever before, using something that had to do with skill sets that we had, we know what they were and we transformed them into something that came out of the vision but we had the experience of doing something from a vision.

Glenn: Exactly.

Sharon: This is a successful product.

Glenn: Exactly. We even built software to make the protocol run. I guess, the question for the audience is, "What is it that you are envisioning for your dream and your goal? How is the fear of shame stopping you?" I'm not encouraging anybody to be impulsive. I want everybody to do the planning

and refer to everything they need to do but in the context that, I think if wait until it's perfectly safe and there's not is going to be any risks whatsoever of feeling that shame then it'll never happened. There's always going to be this gap between what you think you might be able to do and what you're 100% confident that you can do.

Some of the best sales people I've met, they stand up and they say, "Oh, I can definitely do that." They'd never done it before. Then they deal with the anxiety and they figure it out. It's not like they're lying because they've got enough judgment to know what they might be capable of doing if they research and coordinate their resources and work it out. I think that, that's an integral part of achievement of any type in dealing with that anxiety and the possibility of shame. So for me, I think is what we're all saying is that, "So what? We lost \$2 million dollars. So what? We went deep into debt. We failed. We failed. We failed. We failed. We failed. So what? So what?" What didn't kill us, made us stronger. Now, we have more belief that the worse that can happen if we fail is in a grand vision is that we will live through it together.

I think if it were to happen again, I don't think it will because I think that I put enough effort into developing the research systems and identifying risk management flags that I think that I wouldn't make as a grand mistake as we did last time but if it did happen again, we would make it through it again.

[0:32:01.1]

Sharon: There are some things you can't control no matter what you do. Things will always happen. Things always happen. Having gotten through something difficult -- Glenn, what do they say? If it doesn't kill you, it's make you stronger.

Glenn: If it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger, right?

Sharon: I really feel stronger after that. I feel very much stronger.

Perry: I got a few things that I want to ask you about. Now, the first thing I want to say here is, some people are sitting here and you're probably thinking, "Okay, Glenn is like a rocket scientist. Maybe Glenn can get out of debt but I don't know if I can." Now, I want to address something here. What I do is like half of my customers are like real brick and mortar businesses that are just trying to advertise. The other half are people that are trying to figure out how to make businesses work. I sort of straddle the line between traditional businesses and also business opportunity people.

Now, in the whole business opportunity world, if you're in the business of selling that, a lot of that is the art of making smart people look dumb so they could convince you that you could do it too. When I was Amway years ago,

I noticed that the Amway guys were really, really good at like sort of picking their nose and looking like idiots when they needed to so people, and kind of have this aw, shucks thing. You follow what I'm saying?

Glenn: Yeah.

Perry: But what I observed when I really paid attention to them was that whatever aspect - they would be good in various different things but they had somehow honed a skill for doing something that was unusually good. It was a game of trying to make it look like anybody can do this when in fact, anybody cannot do this. I am very emphatic in saying that if anybody comes up to you and says, "Hey, I got business for you and anybody can do it", run the other way because it's either a bad business or they're lying.

Glenn: Good point, yes.

Perry: Now, Glenn and Sharon Livingston are very smart people. They are very resourceful people but nonetheless, part of the reason that they got in over their head was they kind of got outside of their talent zones. Is that true?

Glenn: That's 100% true.

Perry: The way you end up digging your way out of this is you went back into your talent zones.

[0:34:44.5]

Sharon: Exactly.

Perry: Right?

Sharon: Yes.

Glenn: Yeah.

Perry: Everybody has talent zones. Everybody has things where to you, it seems very ordinary but to almost everybody else, it's like, "How do you do that? You make that look so easy?" Then I'm not going to sit here and pretend that Glenn and Sharon just kind of stuck their fingers in their nose and started working hard and got out of this. They had to use all their brain power. Their brain power got them in the mess and the brain power is needed to get them out.

Glenn: I should just clarify that I did occasionally stick my finger in my nose.

Perry: [laughs] Yeah, me too. Having said that, because a lot of people on this call sort of know who you are, they're tempted to put you on a pedestal like you're superhuman or something like that and that is not true.

Sharon: Well, Perry, I mean he is superhuman in some ways but not with this.

Perry: Yeah.

Sharon: Bad joke. It didn't work. Sorry.

Perry: Well, you know... [laughs].

Glenn: If anybody knows, it's Sharon. There is a part of me that I don't really let out publicly on seminars and everything because I just generally want people to identify with my strongest elements and be able to walk away with that. But there's part of me that I'm always fighting that's very negative. All of the voices you were describing before that says, "It can't be done. I'm really a failure. My father was Dr. Livingston. I'm not really Dr. Livingston." It's a big fight.

The other thing is, Perry, is that I'm smart but I'm not rocket scientist smart. I actually had a lot of training in intelligent testing so I know the difference. I've had the test and I'm smart. I'm smart of an average. I'm not rocket scientist smart. I've got a lot of weaknesses. A lot of guys could work 10 hours a day, six days out of the week, six days a week and I can't. I just can't. I work in spurts. Then I get really frustrated. I have to have time off. I have to have time off. No matter what's going on, I just got to get away.

[0:36:43.0]

It's a liability, I would probably get more done if I could work more consistently and just deal with the frustration like a lot of people do but I can't. I know that about myself, it is what it is. I work around it.

Perry: Guess what? Everybody has work pattern idiosyncrasies. Brian, for the last year or two, he's figured out that there are certain times of the day when he's really productive and there are certain times of the day, he shouldn't be trying to get anything done at all. He used to beat himself up for it. He used to literally believe he was a bad person because he always had this big productivity slump at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. He would just berate himself and get out the whip and whip himself back into shape. He figured out, hey, you know, there are certain patterns to how you should do things, for how he should do things because of the way he is built. The other thing I want to say about -- let's say, Glenn was rocket scientist smart. There are an awful lot of rocket scientists who are totally broke, right?

Glenn: I meet a lot of them. A lot of them buy my course. They totally get all the left brain stuff. They totally understand how to do the surveying, statistics and make the prediction but they can't put together how to translate that into empathic, sales copy and actually building the relationship with people to develop a customer service center and do the kind of things you need to do to have a business. Yeah, I mean, we definitely all have our weaknesses.

I hear people say, "Well, Glenn's too smart for me to do what he does a lot." I get a little frustrated with that because I think that it's easy, that some things are easy to say. It's something easy to say. It gives people an excuse for not doing stuff. I wouldn't want to encourage people to do something that they're not going to be able to do but I also think that most people can do a lot more than they think that they can do. I think most people can do a lot more than they think that they can do. If they don't succumb to panic, they're not terrified of failure, they're not terrified of the shame, and they keep connected with the people that they love, I think that most people could accomplish a lot. Regardless of even if you into a depression, I think that there are people that got wealthy into depression, there are people that held their own, people that started businesses, there is people that felt like their depression come at the best time of their lives. I just think that most people think less of themselves than they really should. That's why I was willing to do the call.

Perry: There is something else I definitely want to have you guys talk about which is in the beginning of call you said, \$700,000 is a lot of therapy sessions. It might have been mighty difficult with a certain set of skills to get out of this. You re-tooled a bunch of things and made yourself more productive.

[0:39:23.0]

Glenn: We did.

Perry: Talk about that. Talk about some of your online businesses. Talk about what Sharon did.

Glenn: Okay. Sharon honey, you want to talk about what you did first?

Sharon: Let's see, a little background about that. I run focus groups. I'm a qualitative marketing researcher. I do that for large corporation. When we opened the facility, I had to go and tell everybody that I was no longer going to be doing that because I was inviting all my competitors to come to this conference center. They wouldn't want to come because if they thought I might try to steal their clients and who would blame them. I told everybody in the world that I was no longer running groups. I was no longer being a moderator. That was my job title. I had to go back and call everyone that I

knew to say, “Oops! Only kidding, I’m moderating.” That was a very, very big deal.

I also took the opportunity to start training people to do what I do. I opened up a school for moderator training and that was a very big deal for a number of reasons; one, because it gave us another venue for earning money. Also, people who would do training are seen as experts so it helped to rebuild, re-establish my expertise as someone, a go to person for clients to come to me because I’m teaching others what to do. I tried to do all kinds of things to rebuild my situation because when you tell people that you’re leaving, they feel abandoned. They’re not so crazy about coming back so quickly so that was a huge deal.

Perry: I remember when I was in high school, this guy was moving to Iowa and we were never going to see him again. We had this tearful goodbye. Then the next fall, he came back. I was like, “Bob, you were supposed to leave. We cried over you and everything. What are you doing here?”

Sharon: Exactly. They’re not crazy about having you back once you told them that you left. It’s like you leave for another suitor and, “I was only kidding. I love you. You are the one.” “Well, but wait a second, you just had this affair with another person. What you are doing back? I’m not sure I want you back.” That was a huge deal to get over.

Perry: Well, yeah, yeah.

Glenn: Perry, for me, I would describe the progression as once we got out of the facility and I’d acquired some online skills but I was really exhausted from the corporate consulting again. I want to come back and talk more specifically about that protocol, it was kind of interesting but I really got the bug to make money filling electrons.

[0:41:51.3]

I really wanted to hide behind my computer and sell eBooks. That’s why, besides the fact that I had no money anymore to experiment with, that’s why I started researching guinea pigs and rabbits and radon and all the things that I was working back then and building all those eBooks. For a couple of years that’s all I wanted to do.

Then I guess it was around the time that you were asking me if I would tell people what I was doing. I got up and spoke at your seminar and I realized that I actually didn’t hate people as much as I thought. Hate is a wrong word. I didn’t need to hide as much anymore. I needed to go some place and lick my wounds. I started to enjoy getting up and talking. I also realized that it wasn’t a good business model to have 17 different eBooks even if they were all profitable because you can’t really develop any back ends for

that or do anything. You could do six figures with that, you can't really do seven figures and certainly not eight figures. Once you start adding zeros, I was asking myself what do I need to do.

What I started to do was that I was going to teach in research. I really enjoyed that and I still do that. But as I've healed, I've come to the conclusion that to really service people, you need to be willing to do some things for them. Not just to sell them information or a book or a course but actually to do things for them. The primary Internet competency that I developed was the pay-per-click marketing.

I developed this pay-per-click proficiency and a lot of credibility in the industry because I was speaking at seminars and had a lot of relationships. Then I started to have some of the people I was working with ask if I could show them what I was doing and would they -- managed some pay-per-click clients. I wrote little sales letter. Before you knew it, I had a pay-per-click business. Then I started partnering Jeff Hughes who spends million dollars a year of his own money in pay-per-click. I already had 55 employees and was good of developing systems.

Long story short, I don't want to turn this into a sales pitch. I am building an agency. I'm building an online agency starting with pay-per-click services. I'm finding that, that's really my calling. I'm just loving the people that I'm working with. I'm loving actually being able to take someone's business and help them get an immediate impact without having to wait for them to do it themselves and all they have to do is trust us. I really feel that that's the direction that my business is going to grow. That's what I'm doing. I'll probably always speak and do seminars. I love teaching people about research even though it's hard to get them to do it. I'm very fascinated by that. I enjoy meeting new people at the seminars and everything. But I'm trying to build the world's most credible online agency. That's what I'm doing.

Perry: You got the bug – you said, I want to sell electrons which you did and still do.

[0:44:25.3]

You've got these eBook businesses and these different niches. How did you go about getting good at this? I mean, they didn't teach you that in grad school.

Glenn: I hired you as a coach many years ago and I still pay you to focus on my stuff. I hired Jonathan Mizel. Like many other people, I bought course after course after course and gradually narrowed it down to two or three people that I felt knew what they were doing and studied them intensively. Then I

had to go through a period of teaching myself not to study so intensively and just to focus on really integrating the things that the two or three people that I really respected were doing. I joined your mastermind group for awhile. I went to every mastermind groups. I networked with people. When I find someone that I think knows something that I don't in the field and a lot of this has to do with copywriting. I've had three or four different people that I talked too once a month, some of them once a week, just to review all of my stuff, just to literally rip me apart, tell me what I'm doing wrong, and what I can learn.

One of the benefits of having been an academically raised person is I know what the value of school is. There really isn't any school that teaches you direct response. There really isn't any place you can get a four-year degree in direct response. I really know what works. There's too much politics and intertwining with the advertising agency's desire to not be accountable so you really don't get in the business schools what you need to get for becoming a direct response marketer. So I say, "How am I going to put together my own PhD? How am I going to put together my own PhD in Internet marketing?"

I spent a fortune. Even when I didn't have money, that was one of my priorities. That's what I did. You know, when my parents asked me, "How much did you spend on coaches this year? How much did you spend on -- did you spend \$1000 on a bunch of gifts?" I am uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable. Its goes against the norm. But the truth is, that's where I got the knowledge. I got the knowledge from all the information marketing products and seminars. I got the focus from coaching. But also, I have to say some pain. Somebody should have told me not to build 17 eBook businesses. I had the formula done by the fifth one. Someone should have said, "Pick your direction. Build a company. Don't build 17 little advertising machines." Part of it is pain. Part of it is making mistakes.

I mean, I've made mistakes along the way. I'm billed as this guy who gets everything perfect. I've got that straight up graph and everything like that. I made a lot of mistakes. I didn't really understand how to work with partners. I've come to the conclusion that you need to either partner up a

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level like for example, one of the more successful things I did was convince you to do joint venture partnering because you were a level higher than me and you brought me up. But when people approached me to partner with me, I didn't hold them to the same standards as I was offering you. I was just kind of honored and I was a little bit enthralled with being famous. I wound up with a lot partners that were not really capable of going up a level because I feel horrible about disappointing people, I let it go on way too long. One or two of them have worked out but I lost a year and a half doing

that without making a lot of progress. Now, I mean, look what's happening as soon as I partnered with Jeff who had almost \$10 million company, really knew how to scale things, make sure that the systems were in place, and how quickly this agency is growing? That was a really key learning. Did that answer your question?

Perry: Yeah. I don't start with this so much anymore but it used to feel very strange to me, well, first of all, when I was in debt, struggling, and all this kind of stuff. Okay, I'm going to spend all this money, buy all these CDs or going to these seminars or whatever, that's all strange. Sometimes I felt like, "I'm giving all my extra money to some guru or something." Of course, you could also look at it like, "Oh, you've given all your extra money to unnecessary birthday parties where all the kids are supposed to buy presents for the other kids. They already got more toys than they could play with." Like what aspect of out of control spending are you going to criticize? Hopefully, not the one that is actually going to get you out.

Education of what we costs a lot of money but you know what? So does Harvard and so does Stanford and so does your local community college. When I do coaching program and stuff, I have guarantees. When I sell products, people can return them. You can't do that with a Stanford education. They don't guarantee anything. It might be respectable and your relatives might be proud of you but there's a lot of educated derelicts out there.

Glenn: I guess what I wanted to underscore what it was particularly hard for me was when were so close to bankruptcy. Truthfully, Sharon pushed me to do this more than I was willing to do it myself. I mean Sharon was saying, "How are you going to get out of this without talking to people who are already making money online? If that's what you want to do, how are you going to do that without talking to them?" For us to find the money to do that back then - I don't want to sound like a pitch but it's the truth. I had to bite the bullet and say, "This is where the knowledge is going to come from. This is where it is. If I can't the pay the vendors this month but I really need to hire a coach then that's what I got to do."

[0:49:49.0]

Perry: Let's talk about the celebration part. You guys are out of debt. Things are different now. What did you do after you like sent off the last check or whatever? What happens after that?

Sharon: We went for a hike. It was really good except that my socks were too scratchy. We went for a 10-mile hike. I came with scratched up ankles but it was worth it.

Perry: It's a simple thing, isn't?

Sharon: It really is. It really, really is. Not being able to cuddle up and watch TV and do simple things like that, have dinner with friends.

Perry: That's beautiful. I remember the day that I got all paid off. It was like I don't recall that we did anything like really super fancy or anything. I do remember we bought what we wanted to buy each other for Christmas for the first time. That was pretty cool. Mostly, it was just like, "You know, I think I'm just going to enjoy this feeling for a really long time."

Glenn: You know what? Perry, I think that we're both so busy. I've got so many things doing. I'm moving a product this weekend and running the agency. Sharon is busy building Iconicards and taking care of her clients. We're just so happy to have the time together that it's kind of not like -- I remember when I defended my dissertation, that was the day when I felt like I was free. I don't think the freedom has really hit me yet. I think that maybe on December 1st when we don't have to write that \$7,000 check to the bank, maybe that's when it's going to hit me. Mostly we're just - this is the day we're focusing on the emotions most because we're talking about it with you and we're just enjoying each other. We're just enjoying each other and --

Sharon: I'm enjoying my work. The biggest deal was that we had moved away from our core competencies. Someone had actually said that to me, a friend of mine said, "Well, are you surprised? You know, you moved away from what you do." It was like, "Wow." I mean, it was fun to do but it was really different. So now whatever we do, we do with that in mind and that, you know, Glenn when you wrote the Cheese Story, the Cheese Factory Story?

Glenn: I don't think we have time for that now. I don't really remember what it was.

Sharon: You know, about everybody has to do their job and do what they're best at. It was a huge aha to me that, "Oh my God. I can't be everything to everyone but I can be this. I really can be this."

[0:52:10.2]

Perry: Absolutely.

Sharon: satisfying

Perry: Congratulations to both of you guys for doing this and sticking it out! Congratulations to Sharon for sticking your guns and not for throwing in the towel and wish you a best next chapter of your life doing what you like to do!

Glenn: Thanks, Perry.

Sharon: Thank you so much.

Perry: Thank you for being with me. Thanks everybody for being on the call. You guys all have a great weekend, okay?

Glenn: Okay. Thanks Perry.

Perry: Thank you.

Glenn: Bye.

Sharon: Bye now.

Perry: Bye.

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