

EPISODE 945

*“**JL:** The ceiling of every person’s business is them at some point and at that point, you have a choice. You can either allow yourself to stop there because you’ve hit your bandwidth and you have become the bottleneck or you can continue to expand and move past that point in the business and really shift away from you doing everything to having systems and automation and team and even from a marketing standpoint, going from one-to-one to one-to-many.”*

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:34.5] BB: In today’s episode of Author Hour, I sit down with author Jess Lenouvel to discuss her new book, *More Money Less Hustle: Becoming the Seven-Figure Real Estate Agent*. Here’s a brief description of the book. Unlimited earning potential, personal freedom, and self-made success, these are a few of the reasons you may have become a real estate agent but the rules of the game have changed thanks to social media.

In the digital age, if you want to stand out as an agent, hit your goals, and build your team, you need a new mindset and a fresh outlook, you need an updated roadmap with strategies to improve relationships and elevate performance in a world of shortening attention spans.

Jess is here to share her methodology and help real estate professionals leverage online marketing, systematizes and scale their business and create a transformational workplace culture. This book is your chance, no matter the market, to abandon the hustle and uncertainty of the industry you love for consistency, clarity, and enduring success.

Here’s my conversation with Jess.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:38.5] BB: Welcome into The Author Hour Podcast, I'm your host Benji Block and today, I am honored to be joined by Jess Lenouvel. She has just authored a new book titled, *More Money Less Hustle: Being the Seven Figure Real Estate Agent*, and Jess, congratulations on the book. Thanks for joining us here today.

[0:01:55.9] JL: Thank you so much for having me, I'm really excited.

[0:01:58.6] BB: Jess, give us a picture, give us a snapshot of the work and maybe just the genesis of this book because of your background?

[0:02:06.3] JL: Yeah. So honestly, I was never the person growing up or even like, for the first several years that I've been doing this whoever thought I would write a book. It came out of nowhere but it was what I started realizing is that there wasn't a book that was saying the things that I felt like needed to be said and I kind of grappled with it for a while and honestly, writing a book is like birthing a child, not that I've birthed a child but to me, it was like birthing a child.

But like, I really just felt like, "Well, if no one else is going to say the things that I feel like in this industry need to be said, then I guess it's going to have to be me" and that's really where this book kind of grew out of. It kind of poured out of me in a way that I didn't expect. I thought that writing a book was going to be really tedious and it was going to take me a really long time and that it was going to feel like a million edits and that's not at all how it came about.

It really was just everything that I had inside me, like kind of regurgitated, like it kind of flew out of me like while we are going through the process. So yeah, it's been a bit of a crazy ride but it was one of those things that these are all the things that I feel, like need to be said but nobody was saying.

[0:03:18.3] BB: Did you feel like there was a moment where you went from, "Okay, no one's saying this, I should say it" but like, "Okay, now I'm actually going to say it." What pushed you over the edge to actually do this?

[0:03:28.0] JL: Well, I think that it was a couple of conversations that I started having. My social media, I'm pretty outspoken on but there's a weight to a book that's a little bit different, I think and it's given a little bit more space than social media where videos or things like that, up until this point and I think it's because there's a permanence to it that a lot of social media doesn't have.

I started having conversations with a couple of people and they said, they were reading these other books, these other real estate books and they were using them almost as like, their bibles for their business and I disagreed with everything. There was nothing that was in any of these books that really resonated with me.

I was finding that this entire industry is being driven towards this hustle-struggle-grind mentality and we have this huge number of people in real estate that are so unhappy. I just thought, "Well, I guess it's time." If I don't do this then, if I don't do it now, I'm going to end up doing it later and imagine the number of people that this could help in the meantime.

So it was the push that I needed. Everyone around me really thought, "Oh, of course you're going to write a book, except me." I wasn't on my radar until it was.

[0:04:46.5] BB: Yeah. Okay, so tell me a little bit about who you're writing this to because you're talking about this hustle culture that's so convenient, you're talking about these agents that have these books that they're viewing as bible and you're going, "Okay, no-no-no-no" but, are you writing it for that person that is stuck in the hustle culture? Who is this for?

[0:05:03.8] JL: I think that the way that we went about the messaging for this book was really geared towards two different sets of people. The first one are the agents who are just about to scale. They're like, "I love this business, I'm ready to go. I want to create something bigger and better" and the second group of people are the people who have built the bigger business but are finding themselves really stuck inside the business.

I think that so often, people view from the outside that real estate is like this incredibly lucrative thing that doesn't take a lot of time, that you get to have all of this freedom and then when you actually get into the business and you start growing quite a successful business, you feel like you've built yourself this golden cage and just like most entrepreneurship, people get into real estate for three main reasons.

They want unlimited income potential, they want the ability to set their own schedule or time freedom and they want to help people, and all three of those often get capped because of the way that people are taught to grow these businesses, which real estate, for the most part, is 10 to 15 years behind. Everything is still taught to be very manual, a lot of the trainings that are available out there are very old school originally built in the 70s and the 80s.

This is an industry that is still door knocking and cold calling and as like a primary business generation tool, which is in any other industry as seen as insane because we have this incredible –

[0:06:32.5] BB: Yeah, it seems archaic.

[0:06:33.4] JL: Yeah, we have this thing called the Internet that isn't being used particularly well in the real estate space. So it really came down to a lot of the stuff that's out there, and it's being kind of quoted as law, is very old and is very, like you said, archaic but it's archaic because it's not using the tools that we have available to us today in order to build something better than was available in the 70s and the 80s, which is the reason why people get into the business in the first place.

So, it really just kind of came down to, I got sick of seeing all of these really unhappy, burnt-out agents who were really struggling in their lives because they were dedicating their lives to their business and everything around them was suffering. Their happiness, their freedom, their mental health, their relationships, everything was suffering around them because they built their business the wrong way.

[0:07:30.8] BB: Okay, so tell me your personal story a little bit here Jess because was it one where you came in, just guns blazing, you had the hot takes, you're going, "Nope, you're doing it wrong, I'm doing it right" and you had it figured out or was there a moment of enlightenment where you're going okay, I'm running my business this way of maybe it was in the scale or you just felt like you were in that cage of sorts and you're going, "Okay, now, I need to break out and do this a better way" and now you're trying to help those that were once you.

[0:07:57.2] JL: It's a little bit of both. I got into the business when I was pretty young. I was 21 and I went to the training that said, "You got to door knock and you got to cold call and you got to flier and you got to network and all the things." 21-year-old, incredibly shy, introverted me who looked like I was about 16 thought, "There is no way" and I tried it. I did, I went out, I door knocked, I hit the pavement and I hated every second of it.

I remember thinking, "If this is how I have to build my business, this industry is not for me. There has to be a better way for me to do this" and so, there was this brand-new thing called Facebook that I'm going to date myself really here but this brand-new thing called Facebook that nobody was using for business at the time, it was literally a news feed and classifieds and you had like your wall is what we used to call it and I started networking and I started building relationships and giving value through the Facebook platform and I grew my business initially that way.

I did fall into the trap of the hustle and the grind and doing everything and not scaling and not getting proper leverage as my business grew, and then five to eight years later, I found myself with a seven-figure business, incredibly burnt out and unhappy and crying when my phone rang.

So again, I had to rebuild and I had to restructure and I had to grow a team and use technology and figure out how to not move backwards in terms of the amount of business that we were creating but also, being able to do it in a way that I could take vacations and I could not get divorced and I could make sure that everything in my life was set up in a way that actually served me and it took another restructuring.

I think that just like anything, I learned through mistakes that I made but instead of getting caught in the trap and not being able to move forward, which is what happens to so many agents, they ride this take a vacation, do no business, come back, burn out, then try to take a break, then come back, burn out and instead of doing that, I just restructured everything within my business so that I could take a vacation and work a couple of days a week and not feel so tied to my business 24 hours a day because I had proper leverage.

I used technology, I built out really great systems and I had a team that was there and was in some cases, better than I was at certain things. So I was able to actually create the balance that, like elusive word, balance that so many people are craving but have no idea where to find.

[0:10:31.9] BB: I love one line in particular you said around building a business. You said “If you build a business, that’s purely based on your own motivation, then you’ll set yourself up to fail because no human being is motivated every single day.”

I think there’s several ways that you can get into some career like real estate and you could have kind of the big eyes and go, “Oh man, unlimited potential” and then you have this motivation early on and then you burn out. You also talk about symptoms of scarcity mindset.

What are some of those recurring things you see in agents that sort of stand in the way of becoming a seven-figure real estate agent and really taking whatever they’re doing to the next level?

[0:11:07.8] JL: I think a lot of it comes down to feeling like people only want you, “But my clients only want me. They don’t want to be passed off to somebody else. No one’s going to treat my business the same way that I have.” A lot of the times, when people make one hiring mistake, then they move backwards and they never try to realize or fix the fact that they had made that mistake.

The first assistant I ever hired was an absolute disaster. Worst decision ever, she stole a bunch of money from me, it was just like couldn't have been worse but imagine if I just decided that I was never going to scale, I was never going to hire an assistant, I was never going to grow a team because I had one bad experience.

Most people who are in real estate are really terrible at hiring. They hire someone who they like, or they hire someone that's like them. Instead of looking at, where are my strengths and weaknesses, what holes do I leave, how can I hire someone who is better than I am at certain things so that overall, we are better?

When it comes down to that motivation piece as well that you brought up, I think so often, we're taught that there's something wrong with us because we're procrastinating or there's something wrong with us that we're not waking up every day, full of fire and motivation to build the business, bigger and better and louder.

I don't think any human being is full of gusto every single day. We have seasons of life, we have things that happen in our personal lives. The way that I look at it is, you should set up your business so that if you can't be there, your business continues to run, otherwise, it's not a business.

Otherwise, what you've done is you've built a super successful hustle that at some point, has no insurance policy and if anything ever happened, that we're in a lot of trouble because if you go, all of the business goes. In my opinion, that's not a real business. A real business functions and has the ability to keep growing and keep scaling, not off of the sweat of one person's back.

[0:13:09.7] BB: That's real estate but that is so many businesses, right? Like those that are in that wanting to grow but man, when it's the founder's baby, when it's the person that started it and then they still feel like it's their thing, you start getting in the way at a certain point of growth so –

[0:13:25.2] JL: Yeah, we all become the bottleneck at some point, the ceiling of every person's business is them at some point. At that point, you have a choice, you can either allow yourself to stop there because you've hit your bandwidth and you have become the bottleneck or you can continue to expand and move past that point in the business and really shift away from you doing everything to having systems and automation and team and even from a marketing standpoint, going from one-to-one to one-to-many. Everything is scalable, it's just, it requires a different business model.

[0:14:03.7] BB: Yeah, we're going to actually talk about marketing here in a second because I want to start diving into some of the content around the seven pillars that you see and you set to becoming the seven-figure real estate agent. I wanted to ask because you have, alongside the book, you put together a resource called, "The seven-figure agent starter kit." Talk a little bit about that, how that coincides with the book, how you see that tool complimenting the writing?

[0:14:25.0] JL: Well, I think that if I wanted to put everything that I wanted to say into one book, we'd be here for 10 years, right? So, I wanted the book to really be the foundational pieces of changing the way the people are thinking, looking at their businesses differently.

It's really the overall strategy for how to build a seven-figure powerful business with freedom. But then, there's some smaller pieces, there's some implementation pieces, there's some how-to's that we just can't fit into a book and that also, may not age well, which is also incredibly important.

I wanted this book to be somewhat timeless in terms of the way to think about a business moving into the future and social media changes, platforms change. There's so much movement that's happening in the tech world, in the automation world that I didn't want this book to age in two years.

So what we did with the starter kit was really, create or add in trainings and they're trainings that I've given live that have been recorded live that will give you the today's version of what to

do, how to do it, what are those next steps for each of the pillars that is incredibly important as like a next step.

“Okay, I have the strategy, I have the understanding, I’m looking at my business differently, I see what I need” and then, what’s next? Well, the starter kit breaks all seven pillars down and allows us to go into that – like, what’s next answer.

[0:15:53.6] BB: Yep, I think they go hand in hand so well and I love that idea of going, “Okay, this is something that is timely for now” and then this is also something that’s timeless and stands the test of time. I think that’s a great way of going about this. So let’s say of the seven pillars, I’m a marketer.

You had me nodding in agreement from really the outset of looking into this content but as a marketer, I know the power and the necessity of niching down but I am sure also within real estate that’s extremely scary and going like, “What does effective niching look like in real estate?” so break that down for me a little bit and your thoughts there?

[0:16:28.5] JL: The way that we used to go about real estate in the 70s and the 80s, a lot of what I talk about is old school versus new school, traditional versus moving into the future and back in the day, how we focused in or how we I’m going to say niche because I am Canadian, how we niche down was very much about geolocation, so we did. We farmed, we farmed an area because it was the only way to be consistent and frequent in front of people.

That is the only way to have market share, consistency, and frequency. So the way that we used to do it was cold calling, door knocking, flyers, billboards, farming. All of it had to be done by location because everything had to be done manually. Now, we look at niching in a very different way because we had this beautiful thing called the Internet that allows us to get in front of people on a regular basis.

We get to be consistent, we get to be frequent but the messaging gets to be better and we don’t niche down in terms of geolocation anymore because again, it’s old school. It was the

only way we could do it before but if you really truly think about marketing messaging being a psychological journey from stranger to client, it becomes impossible to do that in a geolocation because let's say as an example, we're using a zipcode or a postal code, right?

You could have upsizers, downsizers, first-time buyers, investors, you could have a million different types of niches living within that one area. So your messaging has to be incredibly vague, which is where all of the crappy real estate messaging of, "I am here for all of your real estate needs. I can help you buy, sell, rent, and invest from here to Timbuktu" which is no messaging. Basically, what all anybody is saying, "I'll take what I can get."

Now, when we look at effective niching, what we're looking at is, what is the driver behind people's moves, what are they doing, what is the life transition, problem solution, right? Which is all sales but real estate got away from it because it was so difficult for them to target. Now, we don't have that issue so because of that, we can work with upsizers, downsizers, dog owners living in condos, the LGBTQ community because we get to go deeper from a psychological standpoint and wider from a geo location standpoint.

[0:18:48.0] BB: Interesting. So the core marketing methodology is kind of broken into three pieces. You say relevancy, omnipresence, and intimacy, talk about the omnipresent side of that. Relevancy and intimacy to me feel like you just hit on those but omnipresent is like I would want you to go a couple more layers deep there.

[0:19:05.1] JL: Omnipresence is really the idea of feeling to your ideal clients like you're everywhere.

[0:19:09.4] BB: Okay, yeah.

[0:19:10.2] JL: It's just that concept of, "Oh my gosh" and again, like when someone is relevant and omnipresent, it just makes such a huge deal, right? It makes such a huge difference. Let's say you're thinking about buying, I don't know, a new Bronco. You're going to see them everywhere.

[0:19:25.0] BB: How did you know? I do see them everywhere.

[0:19:28.2] JL: I'm also looking at buying a new Bronco. I live in the Bahamas, right? It's the perfect island car. So it is really one of those things that like once you think about it or once it's on your radar, it's all you see but it is taking it to that next level. When you have the relevant messaging and you become omnipresent, meaning like you are showing up everywhere, I mean everything that we do for the most part is digital.

So they're seeing you in their email, you are being retargeted on Facebook and Instagram, you're showing up in articles that they're reading, the retargeting piece becomes really important and I really think that there is this element of people are just trying to do things in such a basic way that, how do I say this nicely? People don't want to see a million listings in their newsfeed just because they clicked on a listing one day.

People I think forget and real estate agents specifically forget you don't sell real estate, you sell services and then you consult on the sale of real estate and I think that that is an incredibly important distinction to make because agents market properties but they forget to differentiate themselves, niche down and market their own services. So again, that's why people are like, "Oh, well I want to be treated like a doctor or a lawyer" or whatever.

Well, when you decide that you want to get a nose job, you're not getting retargeted by a whole bunch of different versions of nose jobs, you are choosing a doctor that specializes in that and you are choosing that person who is going to give you that service and real estate has really lost track or forgotten that this is a human-to-human business and that it's that basic, for a marketer, this is like a no brainer but people forget it's that know, like and trust.

To build that, you have to be consistent, you have to be frequent, you have to be top of mind of course but you also have to be relevant and people have to feel like you are speaking directly to them. It is the emotional purchase before the logical purchase. People buy or make decisions emotionally before they make them logically, so they need to feel a connection to the

agent or the person or the team or the service or whatever before they're going to actually look at the logical side of who they're going to use.

This is a huge deal for them. Real estate for the most part is the biggest transaction that people ever do in their lives and it's not about just the right home, but it is also about the right person guiding them through the process.

[0:21:57.5] BB: I mean, real estate is one of those prime examples of you can be hyper-personal over social and show off who you are as a person and your knowledge in a niche that I'm like, "It's a gold mine."

[0:22:12.3] JL: If it's done well, yeah.

[0:22:13.7] BB: If you are willing to go that way, yeah, if you are willing to go that route and if it is done well, again, because it is a hyper-personal buying process so you have a lot of potential there and again, knowing your niche, knowing what you specialize in is going to help and be a big step along the way. There is so much we could talk about there Jess, but I won't make you stay on it too long because there are seven pillars.

So I want to hit on one more pillar here because I think to me, operations is one of those pillars that when we talk about all the issues of getting yourself in a situation where you saw all the potential but then you're constantly working, it comes down to like how do you effectively execute on operations like do you have things in place that allow you to operate a well-run business and that's where so many struggle, right?

How do I actually scale my operations? How do I actually know what to hand off? So talk a little bit about that pillar and what's all involved there?

[0:23:10.2] JL: Yes, so there's this element of tech that again, the real estate industry thinks that all they need is a CRM and I think that we've kind of lost track of what our systems and this might rub people the wrong way but a checklist is not a system and you can have standard

operating procedures through checklists and things like that and that's fine but when we're really talking about doing something effectively at scale, it requires an element of automation.

It's the manual button pushing and so often, traditionally in real estate, your first next step once you get maxed out is to hire an administrator. I got this from Tim Ferriss, this isn't me but we have this new way of going about things that's eliminate, automate then delegate and real estate agents always go straight to the delegate and it's super expensive to do it that way because there is so many teams out there or so many agents that are trying to scale that are paying someone \$30 to \$50,000 a year to do something or that half their job is taken up by something that a piece of technology could do for \$200 a year or \$50 a month or whatever that cost is, so there is financial and time inefficiency.

So one of the very first things that we have people do once they hit a certain level of business is an energy audit or a task audit. What are you doing every single day, what are the lowest value tasks on that list at the end of the week and then also, what are some things that are just so outside your zone of genius that you don't enjoy doing them, they drain you and they should be handed off immediately?

Then what we do is we start making a plan, can it be eliminated, can it be automated and then can it be delegated and so, we go through strategically everything that happens within the business and we ask those three questions and then those problems get solved and it can seem like a super overwhelming thing to do but six months down the road, when you're working half the time and you have the capacity within the business to handle five times the amount of transactions, it's worth it.

[0:25:15.8] BB: Are there some specific examples of things that you think real estate agents hold onto, they don't automate like recurringly and you're like, "Okay, you can automate this so easily" can you give me an example?

[0:25:25.9] JL: Emails. It is shocking to me how much time realtors spend in their email like essentially regurgitating and writing out the same emails over and over again and answering

the same questions and even team management, right? There's team leaders out there who have a handful of people on their team and they spend 10 hours a day supporting the team answering the same questions over and over again because they don't have a knowledge database.

They don't have somewhere that their team can go and can reference those answers and they're also not necessarily training the team to be resourceful.

[0:25:58.5] BB: So then I guess my next question would be, at what point should you be talking about within your team implementing some sort of operational system because I think what happens is we got more business, we need more hands, "Oh, now I'm busier" and it just becomes this reoccurring cycle if you don't stop to think about the operational system when do you advise implementation of that?

[0:26:18.1] JL: So usually what I say is you need marketing up until 250,000 in commissions a year. It depends on the market obviously because 250,000 in Southern California is going to be a few deals. 250,000 in the heart of Wisconsin is going to be a lot of deals, Toronto versus a small town somewhere in the middle of the country. At the end of the day, it comes down to when you start hitting the bottleneck piece.

When you start being the reason why the business can't grow, when times starts feeling scarce, then it's time to look at what can be done more efficiently and yeah, for a short period of time, there is going to be more work on your plate than less in order to build out those standard operating procedures, in order to work on those systems so that they look and feel like you. Your clients should never feel like they are in a piece of tech.

But on the back end, there's absolutely no reason why everything has to be done so manually. So the idea of contract to close, all of that should be automated and so many people are paying transaction coordinators and all of these people so much money to do something that really a lot of the tech can be set up to do with a small amount of human fingers in the pie but a lot of the thinking has to shift first.

The way that we look at automation has to shift because I think a lot of the time, people will say, “Well, I am not tech-savvy. I am not good at this” even social media and marketing, retargeting is automated. Once you build out really effective funnel, it doesn’t have to be touched that much and so it comes down to, are you using your time extremely effectively and when we do that audit, that energy audit, or that task audit, the goal at the end of the day is to get that team leader to appoint where they’re generating seven, multiple seven figures a year.

Their time is only being used on the highest value tasks, so those thousand, \$2,000 an hour tasks and these things that they absolutely love doing that make them happier rather than feel like draining work.

[0:28:25.6] BB: If that’s not compelling, I don’t know what will be. I love this and I think even if you’re outside real estate, that idea of an energy and task audit is something you should implement. I know I have seen tremendous value from just taking time outside of my day-to-day to do that and to renegotiate what I spend my time on.

[0:28:42.0] JL: That resource is in the starter kit, so not only is there a training in there of what it looks like and how to use it but the actual simple basic spreadsheet is in there as well.

[0:28:51.5] BB: Perfect. Well, we hit on two of the seven pillars. I will give you a chance here Jess as we wrap up and kind of land this plane, to just kind of discuss briefly what people can expect from the rest of the book and then I’d love to hear what you hope just the main takeaway is when someone walks away from this like, what are you hoping the mindset shift that they walk away with?

[0:29:12.1] JL: Everything that feels impossible right now is just because you haven’t yet discovered the path and I really hope that this book allows people to see what’s actually possible. There are parts of it that are going to feel like they’re challenging to you and you are going to feel challenged by some of the things that I say in this book and that’s intentional.

There are parts of it that you're going to think, "Hell yes, I have been thinking this forever and nobody says it like this" and there is also going to be a period where you have to ask yourself, "Do I want that? How big do I want this?" and I think that what I want you to realize is you don't have to sacrifice life for a bigger business. In fact, the bigger business will give you back more freedom and more life.

[0:29:59.0] BB: Well, it's again, a fantastic book. The title is, *More Money Less Hustle: Become the Seven-Figure Real Estate Agent*. Jess, for those that want to connect with you beyond just the book and purchasing that on Amazon, where can people reach out to you?

[0:30:12.9] JL: I would say Instagram is my current favorite place to play. So my handle is just @jesslenouvel. Find me on there and message me and talk to me. I am pretty much an open book in every possible way.

[0:30:29.2] BB: Well Jess, thanks so much for stopping by Author Hour, and congratulations on the book.

[0:30:33.2] JL: Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:30:35.6] BB: Thanks for joining us for this episode of Author Hour. You can find, *More Money Less Hustle: Becoming the Seven-Figure Real Estate Agent*, on Amazon. A transcript of this episode and all of our previous episodes is available at authorhour.co. For more Author Hour, follow the podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Thanks for joining us, we'll see you next time. Same place, different author.

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