Jermaine Griggs Interview

DARYL: Hello everyone and thank you for joining us. I’m Daryl Urbanski as always and today we have a very special guest and I know I say that often and that’s because everyone I’ve brought here are really people who accomplish great things and have a lot of value to give to us. We are joined by Jermaine Griggs; he is the founder and CEO of hearandplay.com, a company that has helped thousands how to play music by ear. He is a two-time marketer of the year, recognized as a man of character by the Boy Scouts of America. He is a self-made man with a multiple seven-figure business and in my honest and sincere opinion he is in the top 3% of marketers in the world. Jermaine really, really knows his stuff; he’s a marketing automation, direct response, and branding guru, he’s a great father and husband and when he talks, everybody listens. Jermaine, thank you for joining us.

JERMAINE: Hey Daryl, I am thrilled to be here.

DARYL: So can we talk about how you got started?

JERMAINE: Yeah, I consider myself an old young man. The story starts 7 years before my entrepreneur business. I was one of those childhood entrepreneurs because for me, it actually started when my grandma won a piano from The Price is Right and I admired her and that piano. She would play the blues or church music and I would bang on the pots and pans with her. We were like the little duet; grandma and her grandson. One day, I hopped on the piano and had a knack for playing it. I started to play Disney songs, church songs, and then a couple years after that I made a kids group that would play for church in local communities. That escalated to parents wanting their kids to learn and someone said, “You should put this on the internet” and this was the time of dial-up. In 2000, I wanted to show them my style and be a resource for all the people out there that didn’t learn on sheet music or listened to Beethoven. There aren’t a lot of places that cater that; they say to learn the music sheet instead of by ear so that’s why I named the company Hear and Play and that was the dream. It wasn’t easy in the beginning, but that was it. I know you’re going to ask me about some of the challenges.

DARYL: Yeah, we’ve all had a lot of challenges. What were some of the big ones? How else were you trying to make sales in the early days?

JERMAINE: In the very early days, the sales came from my actual students. I didn’t know what the word ‘leverage’ meant back then, but it’s not surprising that I’m the leverage guy now because I didn’t want to show up every week and teach the same thing. I realized I needed to put this in a leverage book. We put that online and I had the first order by October. A month after that, I had 5 orders a month. I went to the university and had 10 orders a month. It really speaks about getting things in motion and people get into the mind of ‘I have to get this right, wait to get this right’, but by waiting they might be too late. Just do it and I did it and I had 5 and 10 sales. I didn’t have any money to put in marketing and that was my struggle. This was even before AdWords. I think one of the biggest problems is the time vs. money thing; you don’t have money, but you do have time. When you have the money, you should reinvest it.

DARYL: You were probably a king back then.

DARYL: What was your EPC for the campaign for your launch?

JERMAINE: My latest automation launch was 227 and it was a small list compared to my Hear and Play. I’d rather take the control and the economy and that’s what gives me the feeling of freedom. There are entrepreneurs that wonder where their customers come from when they to sleep, but I don’t have that and have never felt that way. I am proactive about it. Just being able to convert and learning about it is the best thing an entrepreneur can do. That was something I didn’t know at the beginning. I took a photo of my book and wrote a few sentences about it with the retail price and they would click to buy. Even that still produced 5 to 10 sales a month.

DARYL: Yeah, but what were some of the early challenges you had?

JERMAINE: Back to that free verses pain, I was a teenager and didn’t have any money. There was also the speed of the revenue and being in the position that I could wait. You hear about these people that hear about making money overnight but when it doesn’t happen, they give up, surrender and go back to the status quo. But you have to keep going at it. When I was young, I had to go to message boards and start a lot of groups like Yahoo groups and get a lot of link directory. The 3-5 sales was the frustrating part. Some people say that’s great because I was a teenager, but there were full-working people that made more than that. Then I started to ask myself the right question, which was inspired by Tim Robbins’ quote, “If you want to find a better answer, you need to find a better question.” After that, I started doing research how to grow sales and I stumbled across a man named Cory Rudl. I bought his course for $200 and it was January 2002; it was named “The Inside Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet.” It was introducing me to a world that I only seen in a limited fashion. He said if you have a catalog site, which I had, switch that thing to a 26-page sales page. You have to have this red headline at the top and gave me examples of other headlines and most of them did not look like my headline. Everything he said in his formula I applied it to my business and within a week, I had a 26-page sales letter. I have it to my college roommate and he said that no one was going to read it. I ignored that and by March 2nd, I was ready to go live, I sent it out and one day I woke up I was able to make $1,100 in a day.

DARYL: That’s great. How did you manage your growth?

JERMAINE: Now I have 8,000 and it grows to 10,000 and when I was 18 or 19 years old, I had a lot more money than I could deal with; that’s a lot of money. I think it was chapter 7 or something. He talks about the leverage of paid media and he’s talking about paper clicks and I don’t think Google AdWords came out until the year before. So I go to goto.com and I start bidding on wares per click. And now the traffic starts coming in consistently, 500 visitors a day. We’re giving like 5, 7, sometimes 10 sales a day. When you make your transition, you have got to be smart about how you use that money and reinvest that money; it was not the time to party. That’s what I did and we were able to grow from $4,000 to multiple figures.

DARYL: Were there any big fears when you were growing the business? How did you know where you needed to reinvest your money into?

JERMAINE: For me, I guess I was naive enough to take one man’s course and there were 20 chapters in it. When he said do this, I did it. He was the man; he owned his profession and internet marketing. I bought what he told me to and when he said “You need to invest in organics,” I did that. I wasn’t afraid to actually hire out and put money into businesses. Anything I would do in marketing is an investment. I was always in school; I told people that as of 2005, I was a full-time student so my business was never my 100% full focus. I had my grandma who wanted me to go to college and become a lawyer and didn’t really understand the Hear and Play so I hired people work for me or a ‘family’. That was the hardest part; being 19 years old and managing my own mom, sister, my aunt and my friend in college. Entrepreneur doesn’t mean a sea-level manager or executive; they don’t mean the same thing at all. Other things like getting an office, getting 6 or 7 employees, managing and those were the things that actually slowed me down. I loved it when it was just me, but everyone went through that. In 2007, I had to fire so many people except for one person because it wasn’t working. I probably would not hire people very close to me now, although I am slightly scared to hire strangers but every entrepreneur has that fear.

DARYL: What were some of the key leverage points? You’re like a hunter with a buffalo; you can find 15 uses in it.

JERMAINE: That’s basically my philosophy. I was a full-time student and had to make sure things were efficient and that I had systems in place. I always begin with the end in mind. If I’m producing content, I could write the content, but if you look at the chain on what slows it down, my written content would be at the bottom. I could make a video of the written content. Before the assembly line, one guy had to build a car and that wasn’t efficient until someone came in with the assembly line. I kind of see myself as the beginning of the assembly line. The great thing about the ‘triple threat’ in content, video, audio and written format, when you go out and generate leads you have different things to test. When you deliver it, it gives you three reasons to follow up. We teach follow-up and an example is I teach in InfusionSoft and I can say, “Hey, Daryl has a clip to go get my free report, let me send a reminder.” Well, they can tend to get a little naggy. Another thing I do is a lot of people have launch assets, like your buddy he wants to launch something and it would be short-term. Even if the launch is successful, what happens to those assets? I would have that launch in a long-term, automated sequence. Look at all your assets. Another thing I do is I would go through my sent mail. A lot of people don’t do this but if you do go through your sent mail, you will see your assets and possible things that you’ve forgotten that could be rejuvenated.

DARYL: I think this applies to a lot of different businesses.

DARYL: Do you have any other habits that have helped you to success?

JERMAINE: Yeah. When I compare to other entrepreneurs, I think really investing the time. If you come over you would notice that I have over a thousand books. I haven’t read all of them, but they are on my list. I would rather have books around me than DVDs. It teaches my kids too and would probably be nostalgic and have a desire to read. I think the answers are in a book. Now, not just any book. I know people want to read fiction, but I can’t get into that as a hardcore marketing book and psychology. They gave me practical skills to be a natural salesperson. I am not afraid to use that word; I had a friend who got mad when I called him a salesperson. As for the psychology, if you’re at a restaurant and wanting to have extra fudge on your sundae, you ask for the sundae first and when they have it, then you ask for the fudge, instead of asking for the fudge at the same time you ask for the sundae, and they will most likely say yes. That is just fascinating to me. A lot of people are scared of the word ‘no’ and these books help you with that. There is that argument of ‘generalist vs. specialist’: generalist are great consultants, but I found it helpful to be a specialist in marketing. What that does is that it makes me service level and ignorant in other areas. I wouldn’t be able to tell you pop culture stuff because I’m into other things. I could never understand why they are infatuated with other people’s lives; I’m more infatuated with my own life and how to improve it and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

DARYL: What are some of the books that you recommend?

JERMAINE: There are a number of books. If someone is really sold on the idea of being a world-class marketer salesperson, writing compellingly, being able to communicate or use persuasion, anything by Dan Kennedy is great. There is a psychology department professor named Robert Cialdini; he wrote the book “Influence” and I believe there are six weapons of influence. I remember I read it 8 years ago and it gave me life-changing view of how things work. When people try to sell me things at the mall, I feel like I know the science behind why it’s working and he talks about that. He also gives you the sociological research and findings behind it. That book was just fascinating. For personal development, a modern book by Darren Hardy “The Compound Effect”, I enjoyed that book. It uses the analogy ‘would you rather have $3 million or a penny and it doubles for 31 days?’ Most people would go with the 3 million because they don’t want to do the math. On the 31st day, it would be about $5 million. The concept is that penny gives you 100%.

DARYL: I think that comes with the idea of investing your time.

JERMAINE: He uses so many good modern analogies in his book. In the database marketing, there is a book by Jim Novo called “Drilling Down”. It’s an $80 book, but think of it as my $2000 course with a discount. Those are a couple of categories to keep in mind. I like the practical stuff, nuts and bolts.

DARYL: What are you excited about now?

JERMAINE: At least the last few years I have been in a small retirement. I remember reading a book about working 4 hours a week and I decided I wanted to try it. We closed the office for four years and we now just had that physical team. I got married, had kids and that all happened in those 4 years. I also got fit and ran marathons so I kind of needed that 4 hours a week thing. Now I’m back to working and we’re launching something called “Hear and Play U”; you can’t say university unless you are a college. Hear and Play U is going to be a mainstream portal and my goal is a million members. That’s going to be like Rosetta Stone with teaching languages, but I want to be teaching music playing. If you just want to play, it doesn’t take that long and you can pay a monthly fee for an instrument. This is what we can do to do mass marketing and just going for it with technology. We’re just trying to make things happen for the new year.

DARYL: I think we all go through phases. You should check out automationclinic.com and learn some of the tricks that they have. You can also check out hearandplay.com. Is there another way they can get a hold of you or are those the best ones?

JERMAINE: Yeah, those are good. I do have a pre-video sequence at automationvideos.com and there you can see things that can get you going.

DARYL: Jermaine, thank you for coming and I really appreciate you and your content.

JERMAINE: The pleasure was mine, Daryl, thank you.