[I'm your host, Elisa Doucette, and I'm here to talk about all of that, and have some fun with Chris Guillebeau today. You can find the links, resources, and transcript of our chat on my website at elisadoucette.com/episode2.]

Chris Guillebeau is an author, entrepreneur, and world traveler. Over ten years, he visited every country in the world; built a massive audience and following for his popular website, The Art of Non-Conformity; gathered thousands of creative, remarkable people in Portland, Oregon where he hosted the World Domination Summit—all while starting numerous companies and divisions like his Unconventional Guides and the Travel Hacking Cartel.

His first book, *The Art of Non-Conformity*, has been translated into over twenty languages. And his second book, *The $100 Startup*, was a New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller. His newest book, *The Happiness of Pursuit*, will be published by Crown Random House in September of 2014.

Elisa: Thanks for taking time out from all of that to chat with me today, Chris.

Chris: Thank you, Elisa. That's an awesome introduction. I appreciate that.

Elisa: Did I leave anything out?

Chris: I have a cat.

Chris: She's my assistant, actually. She only works in the middle of the night.

Elisa: At the vital time when you need her there.

Chris: Pretty much. Two to four AM, she's on duty.

Elisa: Now, I'm going to go back. I'm guessing you didn't start out just writing books when you started writing.

Chris: That's correct. I started writing term papers that no one ever read in my graduate school program. I liked the process of writing. It was just a little frustrating that I would spend, like, weeks in the library and doing all kinds of research, and then writing multiple drafts, and then maybe two to three people in total would read the papers. So I wanted to go a little bit broader.

Elisa: We've all felt the pain in anyone who's had to write the papers in school of pouring blood, sweat, and tears in just to get a little number in the corner of a paper and call it a day.

Chris: Right.

Elisa: How did you make the jump from grad school writing papers to extremely popular website and everything else?

Chris: It was definitely a jump. It wasn't like graduated right from grad school and then, all of a sudden, popular blog or whatever. I mean, I did start a blog that was the step, and that was a small step in the sense that it was really easy to do it. Like, anybody can start a blog—there's no hindrance, or there's really not that much technical difficulty in doing so. And it made a really big difference in my life right away. Not in terms of thousands of people reading it, but I just really enjoy the format and the process of blogging. I love being able to just write something and then have it out in the world. And even if it was just a few people in the beginning engaging with it, I found it to be really powerful.

And so I guess I knew right away, like once I started publishing content online, that it was something that I wanted to continue to do. And then I did want to write a book. So probably for the first six months that I'm publishing content online, I'm also trying to think, "Okay, what would the book be about? How does the process work? How does one get an agent? How does one write a book proposal?" and all that kind of stuff. So I was exploring that world at the same time that I was publishing the content online, and trying to just recruit an initial audience.

Elisa: So the blog that you started—was that The Art of Non-Conformity?

Chris: It was indeed, yup.

Elisa: And how long between starting… Actually, let me back up, because I'm a huge fan The Art of Non-Conformity.

Chris: Thank you.

Elisa: …Did your "Guide to World Domination"—was that at the very beginning of Art of Non-Conformity?

Chris: Not at the very beginning, but pretty soon thereafter. I would say maybe it was like month three or four. So I was also writing that, "A Brief Guide to World Domination." It was a manifesto. It was free online content. It was just kind of a document that kind of offered the perspective of how I view the world, and here's what I'm doing with my project, and I'm going to be visiting ever country in the world, and I want to invite you, the reader, to come and join me on that. So that was something that was happening in the process of beginning to blog—publishing the manifesto, trying to get the book deal, or whatever would turn out with that.

So, there was a lot in the first year, but I've also been thinking about it a lot. The whole time I was wasting my time in the library at the University of Washington for a year and a half before I started to blog, I was thinking about what it would be like. I knew I wanted to do something like this. I wanted to travel and start businesses as I've always done before, but I wanted to do so in a more public way and sharing it with people. So I actually spent a lot of time writing drafts and preparing some initial content, so I would know, like when I started, that I would be able to at least keep it going for a while.

Elisa: And when you started, you already had your own business that was supporting your actual lifestyle, as writing free blog posts probably wasn't making you a ton of money to begin with, I'm guessing.

Chris: Correct. [Unintelligible] an entrepreneur, so I did have a small business that I ran, but I could also see the writing on the wall, because I actually wasn't making a ton of money from the business. Then I was making less and less money every month. And so, even though it was great to have my bills paid and be able to focus on the writing and the travel, I knew something would have to change at a certain point. I didn't really have a great business monetization plan for the blog in the beginning, but as people started to engage and to subscribe, they ask a lot of questions—they ask questions about how I travel and how do I book the airfare. And I've always used a lot of frequent flyer miles. People wanted to know how that worked.

So I kind of did evolve a business model, maybe in between six months and one year of having the blog. And so, probably within a year, I was relying solely on my income from the blog. And I've published another manifesto called "279 Days of Overnight Success" that actually shared all those details, and talked about the money in specific detail, and how it came to be, and the mistakes I've made along the way.

Elisa: Speaking of mistakes, because none of us start us start out as you've already clarified: writing a New York Times Best Seller. Or very few people, I should note, start out writing New York Times Best Seller. Do you remember what your—not in the grad school rooms, but starting out with the blog, with writing your first drafts of your book—what was your writing routine? What was your daily routine looking, like, way back when?

Chris: I don't know if it's changed a whole lot. I mean, I'm doing different projects, but I guess the routine has always been really focused on outcomes and focused on tasks. I'm a big fan of lists. I like to write lists. I love to, like: "Okay, here's my projects. Here's what I got to do." And I'm going to write down all the goals and objectives for it. So I was really focused on deliverable based schedule of, "Okay, here, I'm up today; I'm going to try to write two posts. I'm going to try to write a guest feature today. I'm going to make progress on the manifesto."

Once it came to book writing time, and I'm going to figure out, "Okay, how does one write a book?" And it can't be complicated, because there's lots of books out in the world, and there's an average word count, so how many words is that? and how can I break that down into series of days and steps. So I guess it's always been very much driven by the desire to produce, and the desire to go from having nothing to having something. And I'm focused much more on that, and I'm focused on like a specific time schedule. I feel like focusing on the outcome is a lot better, more helpful—at least for me.

Elisa: Definitely. One of the things we first noticed when we started interviewing people is how many people were like, "I can't write a specific word count a day, or write for a specific time of a day. I would rather get something out than worry about how many words I'm writing."

Chris: Yeah.

Elisa: So, starting out with this writing, and jumping from really only having your university professors and thesis advisor giving you feedback to "279 Days" becoming successful, and a lot of people were giving your feedback: how did you feel starting to put out that writing that first? It's kind of a daunting experience for lots of folks.

Chris: It was so fun. I loved it. It was so good. I mean, like I would say, there's a couple of negative things. One thing would be the guy had an unrealistic expectation, that even though we are talking about how it was ultimately successful and I got to write books and stuff. Like maybe I had unrealistic expectations of like: in the first week, all of a sudden thousands of readers are going to subscribe, and it's going to be huge. And it definitely wasn't that. There were definitely periods where there were lulls or not much is happening, and like no coverage is coming in and I pitch people, and they turn me down or whatever. So I had to adjust to that.

And when you said, like, most people don't have a New York Times Best Seller right away—well, my first book wasn't a New York Times Best Seller. My first book was turned down by like, fifteen publishers, I think. And people would always say, like, "Why did you choose the publisher that you did?" I'm like, "Well, they were the first one that said 'yes.'" It wasn't like I was interviewing a dozen people who really wanted to be a part of this. I mean, most people didn't. So I try to be cognizant of that. But overall, it was great. It was so fun; the immediacy of it, of being able to share online and to write about whatever you want. The freedom and the independence of it, but also the collaboration of it, of the engagement of people who would comment or subscribe or email me. I mean, it was probably the best decision I've ever made. I wish I had started earlier.

Elisa: So the fun of it is absolutely such a great feeling. And the good parts are always the good parts. But do you remember how you kind of pulled yourself out of… I can feel like a lot of creative people, or just people in general, get to that point where they start going through some of the doubts that you were talking about or having those feelings. What do you think made you decide to err on the side of "head down, push forward, keep going" instead of accepting defeat or accepting the rejections?

Chris: I feel like I can answer it in present tense, not just in past tense, because I feel like we kind of demarcate this line of success in weird ways. We look at people who are sort of called successful, and we wanna talk about their past as if they no longer experience the same doubts or fears. I guess for me, I still have these creative challenges, and I still get down and depressed. If someone sends me like a rude email, or like a negative comment or something, it still makes me sad. There can be a hundred positive comments, but that one negative comment is still going to make me sad. And I haven't really ever found anybody who can truly solve that problem. It's a question everybody always talks about, but most creative people that I know have various struggles of many different kinds.

So with that said, I guess that the way that I've solved the problem in the past, and the way that I solve the problem when I encounter it now, is lots of things still go wrong; I do kind of fall off track from time to time, but as you said, I am able to kind of keep my head up or keep going or whatever. And I do that by thinking about what I want to achieve in the long term. What I want to achieve and who I want to be, and what I know I enjoy if I can just kind of keep going. And I guess I think about regret a lot. And I know

if I just kind of stop, then I'm always going to regret it. I don't have any guarantee of continued success. I don't have any guarantee that things are going to be amazing. Maybe I'll go totally off course, but that's something that's kind of out of my control. I guess what is in my control is, like, can I keep going? And I know that if I stop, then I'll regret it.

Elisa: The number one question we got from people is, "How do you get past the fear of rejection?" And regret is a pretty good way to do that.

Chris: Well, yeah. As I said, rejection is common. And it's not just in the past. There's still things that I pitch and then get turned down. And that's just how it goes, but I try it as much as possible to be focused on what I hope to achieve. I wanna say, "Focus on the positive," but that also sounds kind of fake. You know, it sounds kind of like I'm always happy or something. There's plenty of times when I'm not happy about something, but I still try to be focused on the outcomes. Maybe that's better.

Elisa: So how do you deal with the haters that so many of us do encounter in a daily basis, while they were writing online or running businesses, or just interacting with other people?

Chris: Well, I keep a small bar here in my office.

Chris: Keep a bottle of bourbon. And the cat is usually asleep, so I can't get her to help, but I go and pour myself something. But no, I don't know. I guess I get depressed. I get sad. And I'm like, "Oh, that sucks." And then I just move on because what else can you do? You know?

Elisa: Gotcha. So you are not like flailing out, just off-the-cuff angry emails at the people.

Chris: Well, that I feel is strategic question because…

Chris: Yeah, it's like, what are you really getting by doing that? Like, you are probably just going to continue a dialog that's not helpful. I'm not going to say I've never done that, but usually when I do… Speaking of regret, usually like, "Actually, that probably wasn't the best idea." So maybe it's more like a tactical thing to do that. But I think everyone struggles with it. I know it's a common question. I know it's what everyone wants to know, but I also feel like it's also important to just provide a counter point and say, "Yes, for every one of those things, there really are like so many amazing people out there in the world who, if you share your writing online, they are going to benefit from it. They are going to be encouraged. You are going to make their life a little bit better." And ultimately, if you can objectively look at it and kind of emotionally detach yourself from whatever the negative thing is, you are going to realize there's a real reason why we do this, and it's for all those amazing people.

Elisa: Right. And as you said, I think some people would probably listen to that and interpret it as focusing on the positive, but you're really focusing more on the outcome and what you are trying to achieve through your writing, through helping people, through your businesses, instead of focusing on what people are going to resent about it.

Chris: That's what I try to do. I'm not always successful, but that's what I hope.

Elisa: That's why you are human and not a Marvel super hero.

Chris: Still working on that.

Elisa: So, your business is kind of is your writing; would you say?

Chris: It is, for better or worse. It is very intertwined in my personality, and I haven't created a structure that's independent of myself. And that's fine. It works for me.

Elisa: So as we noted in your introduction, you're kind of a busy guy. After I had to unfortunately cancel the first schedule of this, we had to postpone so that you could just jump on a plane and quickly head out to the Middle East for a couple of days and come back. You love your traveling and running businesses and meeting people—how do you get all you writing done with doing all of that?

Chris: Yeah, since we're being very honest in this interview, Elisa, I would say that that is definitely a struggle. I definitely find myself writing less than I used to, and it bothers me. It's something that, if I don't actively make time for it, then there are so many things that will come and encroach upon that. So, I do still try to be deliverable-focused as we discussed. I do try to realize like, "Okay, I still need like—this content needs to happen." And I just try to work on deadlines. I mean, I think deadlines are our friends. If I have something that has a loose deadline, that's a very dangerous thing, and it just means I'll just continue to defer it. So I do like things with forced deadlines.

I do try to have a writing practice, but it's also a struggle. I think I don't know if all the listeners exercise, but do you ever had an exercise program of some kind, whatever it is? You probably know that if you miss a day or so of your program, like, it's okay; life is fine. You can miss a day or two, and then go back to it. It's all right. But if you start missing multiple days, then you really notice that it has this effect on you. It's just like we mentioned drinking in a private bar earlier. Like if you have on drink, that's fine; maybe two drinks is okay. But after a while, it definitely has a real impact or effect—a negative effect. And so I guess for me, if I miss a day or two of the writing practice, it's okay, but if I miss more than that, then it really starts to bother me. And hopefully that's a healthy thing, because it's helping me back to something I know I value, and I want to do.

Elisa: Do you find that similar to the exercise stuff—that first day back at the gym when you haven't been for a week and a half or whatever, is generally an exercise—no pun intended—but an exercise in hating every single piece of gym equipment and weight machines and everything that you encounter over an hour long period? Do you find the same struggle when you haven't been writing for a while, and that first day back is kind of an uphill battle?

Chris: Yeah, that's a great question. I don't know if I've thought of it that way before. I don't know why, because it's definitely good analogy. I think maybe it's like you expected it to be effortless, then you realize, like, "Oh, there's this work aspect of it." Like we keep talking about how it's fun, but there's also the creative process is not always fun. So, I think I agree with that.

Elisa: Speaking of fun, we have a fun little section on the show that I like to do with everyone. It's the Writer's Lightning Round. It's just a handful of questions. We're going to ask you as many as we can in

two minutes, very quick, to see if we can kind of jump into the inner psyche of your mind, and kind of understand our writer a little bit better. So are you feeling up to it?

Chris: Awesome. Yeah, I'm pouring the bourbon right now.

Elisa: Perfect. That will make the answers much better. All right, pen or pencil?

Chris: Pen.

Elisa: Mac or PC?

Chris: Mac.

Elisa: Coffee or tea?

Chris: Both!

Elisa: Night or morning?

Chris: Morning.

Elisa: Noise or silence?

Chris: Ambient noise.

Elisa: Ooh, what's ambient noise?

Chris: Like, there's some good Pandora stations. There's a Pandora Chill station. There's one in Spotify as well, like good, instrumental music. It doesn't have words that can distract you, but it does provide a good mood.

Elisa: Gotcha. Good writing or correct writing?

Chris: Good writing.

Elisa: Lefty or righty?

Chris: Righty.

Elisa: Weird or typical?

Chris: Weird, I guess.

Elisa: School or no school?

Chris: Shool-ish.

Elisa: Outside or inside?

Chris: Inside.

Elisa: Clean or messy?

Chris: Clean.

Elisa: Teacher or student?

Chris: Err… pass.

Elisa: Ooh, crafty. Town or city?

Chris: City.

Elisa: Trains or planes?

Chris: Planes!

Elisa: Skiing or surfing?

Chris: Neither.

Elisa: Fantasy or reality?

Chris: Reality.

Elisa: Love or money?

Chris: Both.

Elisa: Introvert or extrovert?

Chris: Introvert.

Elisa: Good content or good marketing?

Chris: Both.

Elisa: Smile or game face?

Chris: Game face.

Elisa: Money or fame?

Chris: Wow, that's good. Let's say fame.

Elisa: Call or text?

Chris: Text.

Elisa: Be older than you are now, or be younger than you are now?

Chris: Younger.

Elisa: Think before you talk, or talk before you think?

Chris: Talk before you think.

Elisa: Have a dragon, or be a dragon?

Chris: Have a dragon.

Elisa: Best-selling book or a multi-million dollar business?

Chris: Best-selling book.

Elisa: What is one website you're loving right now?

Chris: Hmm… one website I'm loving right now—I'm actually loving Feedly. I'm actually trying to read RSS more by Feedly.

Elisa: Nice. And as you heard from our little buzzer, time is up, but you got through a remarkable amount of questions there.

Chris: Those are some fun ones. I actually like that. I never know what I'm going to get for something like a lightning round, but that was good.

Elisa: We like to do it so that people can kind of get an idea of the questions beyond what a normal person asks during those lightning rounds. Because who doesn't want to know if Chris Guillebeau wants to be a dragon or own a dragon?

Chris: Yeah, the masses are just clamoring for this.

Chris: There would be at least five downloads to this episode.

Elisa: Speaking of good content or good marketing that's just released right now, that will be the marketing line for this particular podcast.

Chris: Awesome. Sounds good to me.

Elisa: All right. So, thank you again for joining me on the episode. Where can listeners find your writing and business stuff?

Chris: If they can manage to spell my name, they can go to chrisguillebeau.com. They can type in something similar to that in Google. It will probably send them to that. My new book is called *The Happiness of Pursuit*, and I'm doing a tour to more than forty cities, where I would love to see them. So the information of that is also on my website.

Elisa: Fantastic. And do you have any parting thoughts for our listeners?

Chris: My parting thoughts are I'm glad that your listeners are engaged in writing and interested in hearing more about it, and I hope they will go do something with it today.

[You can find this episode's notes and resources at elisadoucette.com/episode2, and the Writer's Rough Drafts full archive at elisadoucette.com/podcast. If you wanna talk more writing with me, or just say hi, you can always catch me on Twitter at @elisadoucette. This show was produced and published by my outstanding content management team over at WritingBusinessWell.com.

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[Outtake]

Chris: Well, the alternative isn't so great, so.

Elisa: The alternative is telling a lie and then consistently having to remember the lie for the rest of time.

Chris: Exactly. I mean, like now, it's going to be hard to remember later if I said "have a dragon" or "be a dragon."

Chris: Because sometimes there's going to be like a Gawker article that's like… you know. I don't know. Who knows?