



Transcript: Jama St John and Brian Bagnall

Jama: Hello, and welcome to your Strategic Business Building call. I'm your host Jama St John of Strategic Virtual Solutions. I started my business in 1996 and have grown it to a successful, multi-virtual assistant and Infusionsoft consulting and training business. I know the challenges that online business owners face on a daily basis and started Strategic Business Building so you can get quick strategies from experts who have been there.

The goal of these calls is to help you get strategies and tips that work. We're talking about a plan of attack that you can take action on immediately.

Today we have with us Brian Bagnall the inventor of The Happiness Coin. It's a new kind of charity where people directly help other people and then pay it forward. Brian has been featured on the CBS Evening News, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, The Huffington Post, and countless other radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. Get your pen and paper handy because Brian is going to share some great information and it's free! Welcome Brian and thank you for being here!

Brian: Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

Jama: So, let's start off with The Happiness Coin. What is that?

Brian: Sure. Well, it came about because I think a lot of people like to do nice things for other people. It's just that we get caught in the daily grind of things. We wake up at a certain time, we have breakfast, and we do the same routine every day – we get in our cars, we look straight forward, we have our hands at 10 and 2, we have this look on our face, we face an hour of traffic to work and then we get to work and then we get to do it all over again. We just kind of forget to do nice things for people and so the Happiness Coin sort of helps you. You keep it in your pocket and you do something nice for somebody and you pass it along. It reminds them to keep paying it forward. It has worked out really well with a lot of viral stuff and all of that. It doesn't have to be anything big either. It doesn't have to be giving someone 20 bucks. It can just be helping someone on the side of the road or helping an elderly person with their groceries. It's just something we all can do, but we are usually so caught up in our own routine that we just forget that there are other people around us and that we are all in this together.



Jama: Can the small deeds really make a difference?

Brian: Yeah, absolutely. A lot of us feel like we are alone. We walk down the streets with our heads down and we don't look anyone else in the eye or we are afraid to look at other people in the eye because of what their reaction might be or they might be afraid or they might be this. Or, what are they going to think of me? They are going to think I am a creeper or whatever the story is. Even just a friendly smile really communicates to people that they are not alone. Even just something as simple as that. You know, we see people struggling all of the time – whether it's the homeless guy that needs a meal. We say, "Well, I'm not going to give him money because they are going to go and spend it on drugs" or whatever. Well, then take him into the diner next door and buy him a meal or buy him a cup of coffee or something like that. There are lots of things you can do. Probably every hour of every day there are at least a few things...a few people that we run across that we can obviously help, but we are usually so caught up in our own selves, so it is nice to have The Happiness Coin to remind us – it's in our pockets. What's cool about it too is that we recently added a tracking feature to it so you can go on the website and each coin has a unique tracking number on it. You can punch in the unique tracking number and the good deed that you did when you passed it along, the system will notify you whenever future people enter that coin number and what the good deeds they did and the location of the coin and that kind of stuff. That's really the viral thing. People want to see when they pass on the coin what other good deeds are done because they've passed on...they've initiated that coin and they've passed that coin on themselves.

Jama: Very interesting idea. How did this idea come about?

Brian: Sure, it is actually a funny story. I was selling my mom's house back in Chicago for her and we had this house full of stuff and it was Black Friday and the house was due to close in a couple of weeks and I didn't know what to do with all of this stuff – and there was some of my stuff I had left there as well. You know, when you leave your parent's house, you always leave a bunch of stuff there for years and years! So, when I looked around, it was basically filled with my stuff! We saw on the news that people were fighting at Walmart over pillows and stupid stuff and there were riots and police and mobs of 100 people fighting over 100 PlayStations and that kind of stuff so I think my girlfriend actually came up with the idea that we



just post it on Craigslist – post everything in the house and just give away everything in the house. It was beds, it was TV's, it was couches, and it was other types of furniture. Anything you can possibly imagine – food in the freezer. Literally everything in the house we kind of gave away. And that kind of sparked - I really saw the need people had and just how grateful they were and how the national media picked it up. That's how I got on CBS news. It just showed me that doing something to help people is national news when we all could do that. It doesn't have to be on that scale every day and I certainly don't do it on that scale every day, but that's what sparked it. We saw the looks on people's faces and how grateful they were. It makes you feel good as the giver.

Jama: Why did you choose to do it through Craigslist as opposed to donating to Goodwill or the Salvation Army?

Brian: Well, that's a good question. Around the time of this, there were some stories that came out about top donation centers like Goodwill. There was a story about one of them hiring disabled workers and they found a loophole in the minimum wage requirements where if they hired disabled workers they could pay them pretty much whatever they wanted so they were paying them \$2.00, \$3.00, \$3.50 an hour and doing some shady things. It's like a lot of charities and people would be very surprised to know how much goes towards administrative costs. This unknown black hole that never really goes to the people who need it. Some charities are up to 80% that go towards administrative costs and fundraising costs and all of those kind of stuff. I figured why not just give it directly to the people that need it. There is no middleman, there are no costs in there, nothing goes to waste it just goes to the people who need it. That's what we thought when we did that.

Jama: Awesome. Do you have any unique stories that go along with The Happiness Coin? Some success stories that have happened.

Brian: Yeah, there is a lot. There is somebody that gave somebody a car. Somebody that was disabled and they had one of the ramp lifts for wheelchairs and it was a car they were done with so somebody posted, it was actually on Craigslist too – somebody posted on Craigslist that they had a need for this van with a wheel chair lift and the person that wanted to get rid of their gave it to this person for free. There are tons of great stories. It makes you feel good.



Jama: What do you think it means to be happy?

Brian: What it means to be happy – in my opinion it's paying attention to how many times per day you feel negative feelings. Our current definition of happiness is really the definition of success in our society so it's go to school, get a good job, find someone to marry, have 2.5 kids, move up in your job, work for the same company, be loyal, wait for retirement, enjoy life, but it's the same narrative and it's obviously not making people happy. You can look around and see that. In my opinion it's the absence – happiness is the absence of...or not the absence, but the goal is to get to the complete absence of negative feelings, but it is the diminishing of those negative feelings. Those things like fear or anger. You pay attention to how many times that stuff comes up in you day and you can kind of figure...that stuff doesn't make us feel any good and that's the exact stuff that makes us feel unhappy; all of the negative emotions, so the more we can limit that and potentially eliminate that, that is what I feel is true happiness.

Jama: What happens when we start to feel that negativity? Is it having the mindset to stop it and reverse it?

Brian: Mostly it's being conscious of our day to day lives. We spend most of our days on auto pilot. We do things strictly out of habit and you can recognize this is you've been in a car before and maybe you are on an hour long trip or a trip you make frequently and you get there and you kind of forgot half of the trip. You just...you got there, but you don't remember. We spend a lot of our time on auto pilot and so the key is to be more conscious of what we are doing and even me, I'm in the car and sometimes one of my things is road rage. Its like, "I can't believe you just cut me off." Sometimes you don't realize it until an hour late, "Oh geez that was stupid. Why did I do that?" The key is to catch it as quickly as you can and not be mad at yourself for doing it. The first time you catch yourself an hour after. The second time maybe 45 minutes after and soon enough (a couple weeks, a couple months), you are going to catch yourself in the moment and you have a lot more control over that. Really that line of thinking and most of our reaction to things are nothing more than habit. It's just because we've always react that way. We saw our parents act that way and we learn something from somebody else the way they reacted. It is really key to just be a lot more conscious and take ourselves off auto pilot.

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Jama: I understand at one time you were young, influential and successful. You may still be young, influential and successful, I don't know! But you were not happy then.

Brian: Yeah, I had a lot of successful businesses and trying to tell somebody that it's not about the money who doesn't have money, they are not going to listen to you – it's really hard for that. So I had to go out and find the money to really realize that. When you don't have money, you think it's 90 percent of the pie – that it's going to solve all of these problems and I won't have to worry about this and worry about that, yadda, yadda, yadda...It opens up a new can – a different can of worms, but it won't make you happy. I had to get there to realize that what I am doing, I'm doing it for the money and its prestigious in society to do it. Being a business owner is great and it is one of the top things you can do like a doctor or a lawyer or that kind of stuff, but it really doesn't matter. So then you go on the search for your own happiness. I wrote a book called *The Happiness Bible* and I detailed what I found and my results on that journey which is still ongoing.

Jama: You brought up the money situation and a lot of folks think that if they had the money that it would make it all better. Can you kind of delve into that a little bit more?

Brian: Sure, it comes down to several different angles. The way we live our lives we try to keep up with the Joneses so you go in a certain neighborhood, you take out a certain loan and this can go on and on and on and you find yourself in having \$4,000, \$5,000, and \$6,000 in monthly expenses that you have to make in finding yourself; finding happiness, or even just doing whatever it is that you know will make you happy. A lot of people stay in jobs that they hate. In speaking to a lot of clients, almost 80 percent of the time it's their job that they hate. Then I ask them, "Why haven't you changed?" "Well, I can't. I have a wife. I have a family. I have kids. I have this – I have that." They have 50 million reasons why they can't change jobs. "The job market's bad, this is bad..." Anything in our lives that we're not happy with, we can change no matter what it is. Now, it may not be able to be an instantaneous change like if you have a job and you have people who rely on you maybe, you can't quit your job today and try to be happy doing that. Maybe it will take 6 months. Maybe it will take a year to find another job, but actively doing that and actively trying to change what is not working. Happiness isn't some magic



pill. It's really not. It's really just taking a tally of things that you do throughout...Here is an exercise I give to people. Set your alarm on your phone or your watch or what have you, every hour and you can increase the time as you go along, but any time that alarm goes off just ask yourself if what you are doing at that specific time is making you happy or sad and then just jot it down. You can use just simple yes or nos. So at the end of the day if you are up 16 hours, you will have 16 yes or nos. That will give you a great idea and insight as to whether you are really happy or not. Don't make excuses for the nos. "Well, I can't change it because of this, this, and that". Come up with a plan to change each of those things. You will notice recurring things coming up. Maybe the entire time you are at work you are saying no, except at lunch breaks. Maybe that hour is yes. It just comes down to being conscious of things. Taking a mental tally of things you really don't like in your life and setting up a plan to change them and working towards it.

Jama: Awesome! Let's get back to The Happiness Coin. Why is having The Happiness Coin in our pocket, or whatever, why is that such a good reminder to pay it forward?

Brian: Well, because it is something physical. It is something in our minds that we tend to forget. We get wrapped up in things. Doing something nice for somebody else maybe becomes a checklist item that is very expendable. I have to pay bills, I have to go to work, I have to get the car repaired, I have to get the kids...there are so many...when you level those things out in your mind there are so many more important – more urgent – things to do that it's easy for doing stuff for other people to get pushed down the list. But, imagine how many time you reach into your pocket during the day – whether to grab your phone or whatever – you are going to touch and feel that coin at least a few times throughout the day and it's kind of a friendly reminder. It's not only a friendly reminder for you to do something cool, but when you do something cool for somebody else, it's reminder for them them to do the same. We have people do nice stuff for us throughout the day but we are like, "Oh, that's really nice for that person to have done that," and then we kind of move on with our day. So, it's a way for everybody, yourself included and everyone else down the line, to not forget.

Jama: Yeah, so when you do something nice you hand off that Happiness Coin to the next person.



Brian: Yes, absolutely.

Jama: So, how can our listeners get started with their Happiness Coins.

Brian: Sure, I send them out for free. They just have to pay a little shipping charge to cover that, but they can get that at www.thehappinesscoin.com and on that same site they can track their coin and see what other people are doing, the good deeds that they have done and that kind of stuff.

Jama: What if somebody wanted to get more than one. Say they wanted to order a dozen. Is that something that they can do?

Brian: Yeah, there's a link on there. I think we send out 5. I think that's the one option on the site. We can send out 5 to you and I think it costs \$2.00 or something like that, or maybe it's \$10.00. I'm not sure, but there is a link below that that says if you want more Click Here, and they can send us an email and tell us how many they want and we can work it all out through email with them.

Jama: Awesome! Thank you so much! What would be the one thing that you want our listeners to take away from this call if they didn't get anything else out of these last two minutes, what would you want them to take away?

Brian: It might be something entirely different that we didn't talk about. One of the biggest things and I work with a lot of clients – one of the biggest things I see as a barrier to happiness is expectations. We have these expectations as to how other people should behave. How the world around us should react. How things should go. And the thing is that every single one of us has a different version of that. It's based on morals, it's based on how our parents raised us. It's based on our habits. It's based on a lot of different things. There is not one thing that everybody can agree on on this planet. You can take something as sacred as human life that brings us here to this planet, some people think it's okay to kill in war. Some people think it's okay to hurt somebody if they hurt one of your family members. It goes on and on and I'm not getting into the dynamics of all of that, but we can't even agree on something as much as human life so we have to drop the expectations, especially as business owners. We work hard – sometimes we work years before we have success in a business and we have this expectation that, "Oh gee, I have been working at this for 2 years and that seems like such a reasonable time frame to have success," and then we get all down because it didn't meet our – the world's

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reaction to us – didn't meet our expectations. That is what I see as the number one cause of unhappiness. So, the more that we can be conscious of these expectations and really just drop them and you just have your goal, you work towards it, life isn't fair. It's not going to throw you what you think it should. People aren't going to react to you the way they think you should and you aren't acting the way other people think you should so we all kind of need to drop the expectation thing. That is the source of a lot of unhappiness.

Jama: Cool. Well thank you and you have a gift for our listeners.

Brian: Sure, they can get a free copy of my printed book *The Happiness Bible*. We will mail it off to you. It is 260 pages of goodness. If they just pay shipping and handling and I will send it off to them. They can grab that at www.thehappinessbible.com.

Jama: Okay, and thank you Brian for being here. It's been great talking and for our listeners, we will have the links to *The Happiness Bible* and The Happiness Coin on our website and they can get a transcript of this call also and that's at www.strategicbusinessbuilders.com/brianbagnall and thank you again Brian.

Brian: Thank you for having me.

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