



## TEL EPISODE #019:

### *Dream Year with Ben Arment*

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-019-dream-year-with-ben-arment/>

*Welcome to The Entrepreneurs Library, the only book-centric podcast that reviews all the top-selling business books and shares author's perspective, firsthand. This is your resource to finding the next great book that will enable you to grow personally and professionally. Welcome your host, Wade Danielson.*

**WADE:** Thank you for joining us on The EL. Today we have Ben Arment, author of Dream Year. Welcome, Ben, and thank you for joining us on The Entrepreneurs Library.

**BEN:** Thanks for having me.

**WADE:** Definitely. Will you take just a moment to introduce yourself and tell us just a little bit about you personally?

**BEN:** Yes, my full name is Ben Arment, and I am the founder of an organization called Dream Year. We coach people in pursuing their passions and helping them turn them into businesses.

**WADE:** Okay, great. Thank you for sharing that. Now let's jump right into your book, Dream Year, which is about to be made available for purchase on August 5th, 2014. Ben, we're going to move quickly, but here are some of the top questions our listeners would love to get answered.

The first one is, what was the inspiration behind writing Dream Year?

**BEN:** Years ago, I was blogging and actively logging my experiences in starting businesses and launching projects. I began getting a lot of emails from people asking how I did it, and I found myself answering all of their questions in the exact same way. It was the same process.

I realized after a year of this that there was a real need for someone to lay out what it looks like to bring a business to life, bring a project to life. There are a lot of entrepreneurs out there who are gifted at it or people who have gone to business school, but for everybody else, they found themselves stuck in a job that they didn't like or doing something that limited their time. They were looking for a way to bring these projects, these dreams, these ideas to life, and I found that I had a real niche for doing that.

So I began coaching people, and it went for 4 or 5 years, and all of my writings, all of my emails and all of my research, and certainly all of the stories that came out of my coaching relationships, yielded this beautiful book that I'm really proud of. It's the culmination of nearly 5 years of hard work, and I'm excited for people to read it.

**WADE:** Great. There's going to be probably over 100 different entrepreneurial type books that'll come out this month and almost every month thereafter, so the next question is what makes your book different from others regarding the same topic?

**BEN:** I spend a lot of time at the beginning of the book showing people how their passions or their ideas are rooted in their past. I don't know many business books that start that early on in an entrepreneur's journey, but I really do believe that the greatest ideas come from experiences when we were children.

I think it's interesting; Jeff Bezos, who started Amazon, when he was a kid he had a summer job at McDonald's, and he hated it. So he quit it and he started an organization called – I believe it was the Dream Institute or something like that, and he would charge other kids \$600 a pop, their parents would pay it, and he would guide them through reading books and all sorts of other adventures.

It's interesting to see that even as a child, he was that enterprising and had a great passion and love for books, which ultimately led to Amazon. So I really do believe that every dream has a history. It didn't just start now; it started when you were very young. The fruit of that is something that you can trace all the way back to being a child.

**WADE:** All right, Ben, now that we know a little bit of background behind the book and the inspiration, this is my favorite part, where basically we just give you the reins and allow you to give us a deep dive of your book. Like I said, whether that's chapter by chapter or section by section, if you can just really give the listener/reader a great opportunity to know what your book's all about.

**BEN:** Sure thing. The first chapter is called "Daring to Dream," and it is dealing with all of the issues that keep people away from pursuing their idea. It's fear, it's risk, it's talking about all of the things that frighten people about pursuing an idea. I really try to crack open this notion that fear is really just unfamiliarity. If you have enough exposure to something, the fear reduces. But you've got to expose yourself to it, you've got to take action.

The next chapter is called "Defining the Dream," and that is really about looking back at your history, realizing that your dream didn't just start now, but it's something that you can trace back to your childhood. There's not a single experience in your life, there's not a single talent or ability or circumstance you've had that doesn't come into play. No moment in your life has been wasted. And certainly all of those things have to be pulled together to help you identify what is the best expression of that? What is the best business idea or organizational model that comes from that?

The third chapter is called "Your Idea Model," and I call it "your idea model" because not everybody wants to start a business. Some people want to start social justice organizations, some people want to launch churches or nonprofits. So we call it the idea model versus the business model, and it's helping people understand that the world is too full of ideas. It's a saturated place if you've got an idea. What you need is a new idea model. It's basically taking an idea that other people might be familiar with, but flipping it on its head. When you do that, when you create a new expression of that idea or a new offering, it removes the competition, it reinvents the industry, and it offers a really unique experience to the world.

Chapter 4 is called “Your Financial Model,” and really this is the backbone of the book. This is not a book about pursuing a hobby, which is something that you don’t get paid to do, but love; this book is about helping you turn your passion into something that can be monetized. I have this expression that goes “a great idea is a spreadsheet with skin on,” and that really is about helping people understand what the financial model of it will be long before it launches, and the goal is to make a profit and to make sure that the effort you put into it is worth it financially.

Chapter 5 is called “Executing the Dream,” and it’s the notion that every dreamer, every entrepreneur, is made up of two people. You’ve got Ordinary You, and then you’ve also got CEO You. Most of us go through life living as Ordinary You. We have bosses who tell us what to do, or we have teachers in school that guide our learning. There really has to come a moment in our life when we decide that we’re going to take the reins. We’re going to be the ones that tell us to get up at 7 a.m. or 6 a.m. and the ones that tell us to make the phone call, the ones that tell us to get on the airplane and go. We’ve got to turn ourselves into someone more capable in order to achieve our goal and our dream.

Chapter 6 is called “The Big Ask,” and it is all about rainmaking. It’s about the idea that revenue is important to bringing your dream to life, and the only way that’s ever going to happen is if you get in the business of making asks of people and you become the Chief Friend Maker of your dream – not just the Chief Executive Officer, but the Chief Friend Maker. Someone who is out there building relationships, high-trust relationships, in which sales can result.

Chapter 7 is called “Branding the Dream.” It is about crafting what your offering to the world is. Not just what the idea is, but how it will engage with the world. What kind of experience will you give your customers? So it’s not just the logo, it’s not just the website. It’s how you answer the phone. It’s the paper stock on your business cards. It’s the total user experience. In fact, Steve Jobs once said that branding is not just your logo; it is customer service.

So understanding how you want your customer to engage with you, what the experience is going to be like, we talk about how you create that whole brand.

And we do talk about logo, website, all of that sort of thing as well, but it's much bigger than that.

Chapter 8 is called "Building Your Platform," and it is about – really, it's the fact that if you have a great idea, it doesn't really matter if no one's aware of it. It's important that we as entrepreneurs, we as dreamers build a platform of people, a following, a fan base, while we're also constructing our business. These days, the world is saturated with advertising and marketing, so we really need people that we can go to who are glad to hear from us. Chris Anderson calls this your 1,000 true fans. You've got to build your 1,000 true fans so that when you launch your offering, there are people ready to receive it, ready to buy it.

Chapter 9 is called "Marketing the Dream." Really, it's sort of tongue-in-cheek, but I also really mean it, at least for me personally. Marketing is about creating demand for your dream; sales is about trying to convince people to buy something that they don't really want. So we talk about how you create demand for your dream, how you frame it in such a way that people will want it, so that sales is really moot. That it's not something that you have to work so hard to do. Great ideas spread; they can't help themselves. So really, the goal of this chapter is to help people craft a property that excites people and builds demand for what you do.

Chapter 10 is "Growing the Business." It's once you've got the faucet of your idea dripping with money, it's the idea of helping to get that faucet gushing. It's about building the business. A lot of people, for them to get their business to work, they have to continue to adjust it, adapt it, change it.

I often say this, that creating a successful business is like trying to open the combination lock when you don't know the numbers. You have to keep turning the tumblers, one by one, and trying different factors until finally you crack the code. There are many businesses that have cracked the code and have seen just unparalleled growth in their businesses. So we talk about how you do that. How do you turn the tumblers? How do you make things work so that they're successful?

And then the final chapter is called “Sustaining the Dream,” and it’s really about encouraging the entrepreneur to not quit. I think some of the most successful businesses in history have been those who have suffered early failures, and they just didn’t quit. So the last chapter is really where I feel like my gifts as a writer and as a thinker shine. I’m such an encourager of the entrepreneur. I don’t want them to quit; I want them to persevere. I want them to grow in their emotional fortitude so that the near brushes with disaster are not enough to wipe them out of the game.

I think most people think that failure is really just a reduction in standard of living. They don’t like that they might have to sell their second car or pick up a second job. But that’s not failure. You can survive that. There’s nothing wrong with that. And in fact, that’s the way that many entrepreneurs have succeeded. So that’s a look at all of the chapters in the book.

**WADE:** Ben, that was an excellent summary. It sounds like there’s a ton of passion that you put into this book. It also sounds like there’s a ton of content and context, and that’s what makes this next question so difficult, because we’re basically asking if the reader could only take away one principle or concept or action item out of the entire book, what would you want that to be?

**BEN:** I would say that it is that I don’t want – I call them dreamers, but it could be entrepreneurs or makers or creators – I don’t want them to believe that you have to be special in order to work for yourself or launch your own business. I think we have mystified the entrepreneurial startup community. We have turned successful entrepreneurs into celebrities, and so we think that “they’ve got this special something, and I don’t have that, so I have to keep my passion to a hobby, and I’ve got to go work a real job.” I think that’s just a dangerous assumption to make.

I think Dream Year will do is it will demystify dreaming and it will break down the process of bringing a great idea to life, into very actionable, practical steps. That is a huge passion of mine. Years ago, I was watching a video by John Maxwell, who’s one of the leading business authors out there, and he had this video called “How I Write.” He basically said that he’s asked by all these people all over the country

how he writes so many books, and he said “Well, I simply pull out a piece of paper, a pen, and I write.” He went on to explain that many people don’t write books because they never sit down to actually write.

So I think there are a lot of principles in this book that people will be able to come away with and realize, “I don’t have to be a celebrity or special or have these unique mystified gifts. I can do it.” I think it’s a permission-giving book, and that’s what I hope people will come away with.

**WADE:** Excellent, very good. This next part is hopefully an opportunity for you to kind of brag on yourself, and that’s to pick a favorite quote out of your book that you actually wrote. It can be one that you pulled from someone else, but ideally I’d love to give you an opportunity to – maybe through the writing process you were like, “Wow, this was a great sentence I just put together.” So take humility out of it; is there a quote that you really loved from your own book?

**BEN:** I think that there are two or three that I’ve seen get traction. I wouldn’t say I walk around proud of these quotes; I’ve seen them get traction with other people. One of them is “From 30,000 feet, creating looks like art, but from ground level it’s a to-do list.” That is all about execution. It’s that really at the end of the day, this great idea that you have can be broken down into actionable steps that are really doable.

The other quote is this, that it is worth pursuing this dream, it is worth pursuing this idea. The quote is “If it doesn’t work out quite the way you wanted, you can always get another job, you can always rebuild your savings, you can get your dignity back, but you can never recover what you never tried at all.”

**WADE:** That’s excellent. That’s very good. And this last one, this is the last question, but obviously we have a huge reader base; that’s who’s listening right now. If there were only one book you could recommend to our listeners based on the way it has basically impacted your life or created a paradigm shift for you, what would that be?

**BEN:** Wow, can I give you two? Is that okay?

**WADE:** Yeah, absolutely.

**BEN:** I was on an airplane the other day, and after watching Paul Coelho's book *The Alchemist* sit on the New York Times Bestseller List for 320 weeks straight, I finally picked it up, and it took my breath away. It was an amazing parable of pursuing a dream, a great idea.

The other book is Michael Gerber's – and this is a classic; I'm sure all of your listeners and readers have read this, but Michael Gerber's *The E-Myth*. But I would recommend listening to the audio book. Michael Gerber has this really amazing way of conveying his own principles that I feel like the voice in your head just doesn't do justice when you're reading the book on your own. So I would say the audio book for Michael Gerber's *The E-Myth Revisited* is just an amazing book, and it's impacted my life in tremendous ways.

**WADE:** Okay, great. Ben, before we depart, can you recommend the best way for our listeners to get more information on you and your book, *Dream Year*?

**BEN:** Yes, thanks for that opportunity. It is [dreamyear.net](http://dreamyear.net), and that website has not just information about the book, but also my own social websites as well.

**WADE:** Okay, great. Ben, thank you for coming on today. And I know this is hard to say after someone's just coming off another book, but I hope you write another one, and I hope we have you on again soon.

**BEN:** Thank you so much, Wade. I appreciate it.

**WADE:** Thanks again for listening in today. If you would like to get your hands on *Dream Year* or any of the other resources mentioned by Ben, just look at the show notes at [TheELPodcast.com](http://TheELPodcast.com).

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**LINKS AND RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS EPISODE:**

Buy [The Alchemist](#) by Paul Coelho on Amazon

Buy [The E-Myth](#) by Michael Gerber

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