



This interview of John Scherer by Robert Middleton comes from the Action Plan Marketing More Clients Club.

This interview really gets to the heart of what holds us back in our business and marketing and points to powerful ways of going beyond our current self-imposed limitations. I promise that you'll find it both interesting and valuable.

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**Robert:** Hi, everyone. This is Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing and the More Clients Marketing Club. Today, I'm interviewing a very special guest. His name is John Scherer. He's written a book called *Five Questions That Change Everything*.

First, let me tell you a little bit about John. He is widely recognized by both peers and clients as a pioneer in recognizing the role, and nurturing the growth of the human spirit in the workplace environment, though the reach of his teachings extends into all areas of life.

His mission is transforming the world at work by unleashing the human spirit - starting with his own.

John is a writer, consultant, speaker and coach and his background includes a distinguished academic career, a stint in the navy, serving as a Lutheran minister and as a gestalt therapist. He now runs the Scherer Leadership Center, serving a vast array of clients from both the public and private sector.

You can learn more about John on his website:

<http://thescherercenter.com>

John has written this book, *Five Questions That Change Everything*. John, interestingly enough, was on my email list. We were exchanging some email back and forth. At the bottom of his email, he listed his book. I said, "That looks interesting," so I went on his web page and said, "That looks even more interesting." Then I went onto Amazon and ordered it.

It's one of those books where I sat down and I could not put it down. I've read a lot of good books, a lot of interesting books, a lot of useful books and a lot of powerful books, but John's book was so compelling, so interesting, so fascinating. It's a 250-some-odd-page book, and I read it in three sittings.

It just blew my mind. There were so many fabulous ideas in there and things I could apply to my business, my clients and my life. It just amazed me.

I emailed John back and said, "John, this is just an amazing book. I want to interview you." So here we have John on the line. Hi, John.

**John:** Hey, Robert. This is great!

**Robert:** The trouble with the book, John, is that there is so much information and so many ideas in it, and so many deep things that really make you think, that we can't go over everything in the book, but we're going to try to cover some territory.

John, I know this is kind of a big thing to do, but I'd like you to give us a thumbnail sketch of what the book is about. Then we're going to dive into this area of the book called "The Shadow." It's such powerful material.

I've read a lot of things on personal growth and transformation, and this was brand-new material for me.

**John:** Great!

**Robert:** The way you expressed it was so interesting and so compelling that it really awakened my imagination. I saw some fabulous possibilities for it.

With that introduction...

**John:** So you want the Cliffs Notes on *Five Questions*?

**Robert:** Yes!

**John:** Okay. If I could have put more words on the cover, I would have put on the cover, “These are five questions that change everything except the one thing that never needs to change.” The next sentence would say, “You don’t need to change yourself. You need to come home to yourself, and that changes everything.”

So the fundamental concept of the book is that a lot of people think they have to be somebody else. They’re trying to change their weight or their business. They’re trying to change something.

What I’m suggesting is that rather than changing something, which implies negating what is there now and that there’s something wrong with what is there now, that rather than take that approach which takes you down one path, why not just become more fully who you are? In that process, things just begin to change naturally in the way they need to change.

The point is you couldn’t have any other body size or life partner or business success or client base or whatever. You couldn’t have any other of those given who you are now, so why not become more of who you are and discover deeper in yourself aspects of who you are that actually begin to transform things rather than change things?

Change implies becoming something else. Transformation means something much more profound.

**Robert:** This is something that we all want to do. We want to change things. “I’m not satisfied with this. This isn’t good enough. I’m not making enough money right now. My marketing isn’t good enough.” There’s a lot of resistance.

**John:** Of course, the reason for this is that when we were little, we figured out what the game is. I call it the “somebody training” in the book. It’s from Ram Das, that when we’re born, we’re automatically enrolled in a “somebody training” program where we’re trained to grow up to be a certain kind of somebody.

We figure out what the game is very early on, by the time we’re 5 or 6. We figure out what’s missing, which may or may not be missing as adults. We figure out what’s missing then and what we need to do to get it and what to avoid.

We figure out what our persona is. It’s this sort of person we’re supposed to be or this person we’re trying to be or how you want would people to gossip about you.

Then there’s this other list of things that we’re not supposed to be. So, we’re on automatic. These are the five questions, if I could lay them out quickly.

### **Question 1: What confronts me?**

What tigers do I need to face? I use the analogy of if you run from a tiger, you’re history. The point is if you’re not facing a tiger right now, it’s already eating you, so what

are the decisions you need to make, the things you need to take on?

**Question 2: What am I bringing?**

What's my history with this person, let's say, or what's my history with this kind of situation? What are my hopes and my fears? The most important question is what are my predictions based on my past, which is where we always look to predict whether or not to go forward?

The reason we're hesitating with something is because of some prediction or estimation or belief we have based on the past.

**Question 3: What runs me?**

I'm aware of what I'm bringing. If I ask you, "What are you bringing?" you can tell me all that stuff, but what runs me is under the radar. We don't know what's running us. We're on automatic and we don't know it.

What I'm suggesting is that that "somebody training" that comes from way back is still running us. I think one of the most fun parts of the book for me to write was that section with a lot of stories from my own life and other people.

**Robert:** Your insights into that and the letters that your mother wrote you, which you found and had access to, which is amazing in itself, were very revealing.

**John:** When I got those letters, Robert, I realized that I was actually seeing and writing the curriculum for my "somebody training." It was just incredible.

**Robert:** It created the whole pattern for your life, your belief system, and what you thought you should and shouldn't be like. It's all in what our parents tell us. There it was in letters from your mother. It was amazing.

**John:** What that means is that we think we have free choice. We're walking around now, we're adults, and we have free choice. What we don't realize is that like if you go to Nordstrom to go shopping, there's only one or two departments that you shop in. You don't shop any other departments because you have the thought, "That's not me."

Of course, what we do then as we're going through life is only the clothes on this rack are optional for us. We think we're choosing, but we're choosing from a very, very narrow band of possibilities.

So when you get stuck in your life, what you don't need is another piece of clothing from that same rack, which is change. You need to go to another department, which is transformation. You need to expand the size of your rack.

What runs us is this automatic way of operating, which is based on the "somebody training." The only way to break out of that is to look at what calls me, and that has two dimensions.

#### **Question 4: What calls me?**

There's what calls me from inside. Like what are those bone-deep gifts, talents, that are in you that just yearn to be expressed, that just must be expressed into the world in order for you to feel like it was worth being here for this tour of duty? What calls from inside?

Then what calls you from outside? What's the difference that you want to make in the world? When you walk in a room and just walk through the room without even intending it, what would you hope would be the impact that your presence in this life would make, either on the world or on other people? That's a huge one, what calls me.

### **Question 5: What will unleash me?**

This is how you get out of it. Now in my last book called *Work and the Human Spirit*, I tell a story about what happened when I was an air controller in the Navy.

I was a stutterer, believe it or not, Robert, when I was a kid. I could hardly talk. So the Navy, in their infinite wisdom, made me an air controller, so I'm on the radio all day long. Anyway, God has a sense of humor.

We're out in the middle of the ocean, and one night a phantom jet crashed. So there's two guys in the water out there, and the admiral put me in charge of the search-and-rescue operation. Here I am, right out of Officer Candidate School, right out of air control school, a stutterer. And the captain says, "Mr. Scherer, can you handle this?"

There's only one right answer to that question, you know. "Yes, sir, absolutely." My heart's pounding. And after I was on the scope for 20-some hours, we found the pilot. We lost the guy in the backseat, but we did find the pilot.

After a couple of hours, I had this awareness that for the first time in my life, not only was I not stuttering, but I

hadn't even thought about stuttering, 'cause when you're a stutterer, you worry about it all the time.

**Robert:** That's amazing.

**John:** It occurred to me that, "There are two guys in the water out there, John. If you don't get over yourself right now, come home to yourself, get away from all that neurotic stuff, the story that you made up about yourself, and come home to who you really are, those two guys are going to die." It was my first experience of really transformation. It drove me away into this work.

Those are the five questions: What confronts me? What am I bringing? What runs me? What calls me? What will unleash me?

**Robert:** Great! So, everyone listening to this call is probably wondering, "Well, what does this mean to me as a self-employed professional?"

**John:** Oh, boy! Where do I start?!

**Robert:** And, "What does this mean to me as someone who is trying to attract clients and grow my business?"

This is the kind of book that you can really apply to any area of your life. It can apply to your work, relationships and just anything. I want to explore this and use you as a coach.

Here I am, as an independent professional. What I notice about myself and other people out there is that we resist marketing. We're afraid of marketing. We have, as you say, a "somebody story" about marketing.

Just by the way, everybody, everybody has some similarities in their “somebody story” about marketing because society tells us certain things about marketing and selling that are not exactly uplifting and inspiring. It’s kind of like, “Marketing is hype. Marketing is not being really truthful. You can’t really be yourself. “Selling is manipulation,” and all that kind of stuff.

Given those kinds of stories that we have around that, how can we apply some of this material?

**John:**

Wow! Great question! I’m in the same situation. I mean, that’s why I was on your mailing list for a year and why I love it. I’m an independent professional. I have a small business. I mean, it’s international, but I’m an independent professional.

Now, I’m in Poland a lot lately, and in Poland, marketing looks very different. The exaggeration might be L.A. or someplace where you have to be sounding like you’re the best in the world and there’s a lot of exaggeration and so forth. In Poland, boy, that just does not work at all.

I think what’s happening is that both cultures have some self-esteem issues, but they’re handled in an entirely different way. Every human has this self-doubt. That like comes with the program. Remember, “I’m Okay. You’re Okay?” Everybody goes through this thing of, “I’m not okay. You’re okay.”

There’s this sort of core belief that whatever it is you’re supposed to have, “I don’t have enough of it” or “I don’t have the right kind of it,” whatever “it” is.

In America, the marketing is like covering over this core belief that I'm not really who I should be. So there's an exaggeration about who we are. In Poland, that sort of shyness and that sort of, "I'm not okayness," permeates the marketing itself. You get very little bragging or very little saying, "We're the best." You just sort of wave a very tiny flag.

In fact, when I got to working with my colleagues over there, they said, "John, you're waving too big a flag. We just don't call attention to ourselves here."

Using the book, using an analogy from the *Five Questions*, I think what stops us from marketing ourselves is not actually a belief because a belief is something that you can actually talk about and explain. Some people may be able to explain it, but it's underneath all that, and it's like a part of the operating system.

When you boot up in the morning, what comes on is your operating system. So you don't think about it. You think from it. This operating system "knows" that you're really not as good as you should be or you're really not all this kind of stuff, so why in the world would you market something that isn't worth marketing?

**Robert:** After all, if you do put the word out, you'll probably be rejected anyway.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** If you try marketing, it probably won't work anyway. This is my experience from talking to thousands of self-employed professionals over 25 years, that I see this stuff come up over and over again.

Another big one is, “I don’t know where to do or how to start. Not only that, I can’t start until I can do it perfectly.”

**John:** That’s great!

**Robert:** That really stops everything in its tracks.

**John:** I think the five questions would make a great framework for somebody in that situation, like, “What confronts me? Okay, I’m not marketing as well as I could be. What am I bringing?” It’s the stuff we’re talking about now. I think the breakthrough would start with, “What runs me?” which we’ll get into in just a minute when we get into the shadow work.

Then “What calls me?” because I want people to think about, “Who are the two guys in the water out there?” See, that’s what got me beyond myself.

What does the world really, really need that you are sitting on because of your fear and all your garbage you’re telling yourself? Once you get over yourself and realize, “Those people actually what I have.” Of course, if they don’t need it, then what the heck?

When you get to the point of realizing that your hesitation is actually a withhold, something that you’re withholding of real value to the world, that can be a motivator.

Then of course, “What calls me?” is the whole point. “What is it out there that needs me, and what are my gifts that I’m sitting on here?” Then finally, “What will unleash me?”

I think the shadow work and the stretches are a great way to get unleashed. Let me know when you want to step right into that.

**Robert:** This section on the shadow work I just found fascinating. Why don't you just walk us through that in the context of all these issues, fears, hesitations, doubts and all the stuff we have? We have an interesting relationship with it. We don't like it, but it's there. We resist it a lot, and we try to get past it. You have some amazing insights about how to work with that.

**John:** Great, Robert. The fundamental side is that we're walking around with this persona, which is like a front. In a sense, marketing is presenting ourselves to the world, so that's our persona.

Then as we'll find out in a minute, back behind that is this shadow, which is all the stuff that we would never want the world to think that we were, and we actually are not. "I'm not this. We're not that."

What drives the whole process is what we're addicted to and what we're terrified of, and these are the two drivers. I'm addicted to being adored. Like, I just want to be adored all the time.

When I'm on automatic, my persona, which is the Eagle Scout, just wants to be loved and appreciated for all the clever solutions to the problems that I present. I want to be so transformational that people will adore me.

What I'm terrified of is of not mattering. I'm just afraid of not mattering. Just like a shark can detect one part per trillion of blood in the water, we, by this time in our life,

can detect the faintest possibility of the thing that we're afraid of.

Do you happen to remember what your two drivers were, what you're addicted to? Was it to be wanted, loved or appreciated or valued or honored? There's all kinds of possibilities there.

**Robert:** I want to be thought of as being really smart, really enlightened and like that. I want to be appreciated and thought well of.

**John:** Yeah, deeply appreciated. And what would be the worst thing that people could do to you? Would it be to abandon you, hate you, mock you?

**Robert:** It's just the opposite. It's for them to not pay attention to me or to disregard me. We all have similar kinds of things with subtle differences.

**John:** Exactly! That's the point.

Now, from a marketing point of view, what I'm suggesting is you probably don't need more persona. I'd like you to think that you've maxed out on your persona. You've gotten about as far as you can get telling everybody how wonderful you are, or not telling people how wonderful you are.

The power's going to come from that next layer, which is the shadow. The way to get access to the shadow is just to start making a list of words that you *would hate to be*, that you would never want to be. In fact, they're the worst things people could say about you.

On my list, I have “to be cruel, destructive, slow, stupid, lazy, spiritually dead.” It’s a whole list like that, “to be bigoted, narrow-minded, power-hungry, self-absorbed” and all those things. Those would be terrible, terrible.

**Robert:** I can relate to some of those. Also, for me, are being a fraud and being a phony. I think of some of my background and the fact that I don’t have a college degree. I want to be known as knowledgeable. “If people found out that I didn’t have the right education, blah, blah, blah.”

**John:** The mind will find something to grab onto as a reason for not being fully who you are. Isn’t that amazing?

**Robert:** Yes.

**John:** I don’t have a Ph.D. I was a therapist for a number of years.

**Robert:** “You don’t have a Ph.D. Oh my god!”

**John:** Exactly. Finally, one of my clients was the US Army back in the ‘80s. I was training a lot of their internal people in conflict resolution. Finally, I was telling this one colonel I didn’t have a Ph.D. and how was he about that. He said, “John, we actually don’t trust Ph.D.s in the Army quite as much because we think they’ve gotten a little bit too far away from reality.”

I said, “But my master’s degree is in divinity, for goodness’ sake. I was a Lutheran minister in an earlier lifetime.” He said, “That’s fine. At least you’re in touch with reality.” That just handled that whole Ph.D. thing for me.

Now, let's get into the shadow. Figure out a character from history or literature that you just can't stand or who has a lot of those shadow characteristics or at least a mass of them.

For me, lately my shadow character has been Dick Cheney.

**Robert:** Dick Cheney, someone we all know and love!

**John:** You said who yours was in our earlier conversation. Do you want to say who that is?

**Robert:** Donald Trump.

**John:** Immediately, as soon as I hear that somebody's shadow character is Dick Cheney or Donald Trump, I know a lot about that person, if it's accurate.

Right away, it tells me that this is what the person needs to stretch into. I say that there are stretches in the shadow. We're going to look right at the shadow. We're going to go right into the shadow and find out how valuable it is.

**Robert:** For the people who are listening, so that they can track with this, how do you pick your shadow character? I think that would be useful for everyone. It's sort of someone in some ways you despise or don't want to be thought of. See, I don't want to be thought of as a Donald Trump type. I want to be successful in business, but I don't want to be thought of as something that's nothing but hype, hype, hype. That's the negative characteristic of Donald Trump that just drives me crazy. (Note: this interview was conducted in 2009, six years before Trump's presidential

bid that has uncovered even more distasteful aspects of Trump's personality.)

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** I used to watch his *Apprentice* show, but after a while it just wore so thin. "You can be a billionaire too!" as if the pinnacle of life is having more stuff, and gilded as well. That's just what I'm not about, although I am a small-business person. He's a business-person I just can't emulate in that way.

**John:** If you share with people who your persona is, then the whole picture will be present.

**Robert:** That would be Gandhi.

**John:** See? Right away, I know, "Here's a guy who is obviously dedicated to making a difference in the world, who has a very strong values base, who wants to be good and do good, and wants to be uplifting and make a positive contribution. And he's trying to do it without some qualities that Donald Trump has that he needs to have."

In other words, I'm trying to be running around helping everybody all the time, and there's something missing in me that Dick Cheney has, but he has too much of it.

What we're looking for is if you squeeze everything that's bad out of Donald Trump and you're left with some qualities or skills or attributes, what are some of those things that he's really, really good at?

**Robert:** Well, he's an extraordinarily good dealmaker and closer. He knows how to get the money and ask for the money.

He knows how to run things really well, and he's, from what I can see, an extraordinarily good delegator.

**John:**

Yes. He's also not afraid to be the center of attention. See, there are a lot of wonderful polarities between Gandhi and Trump that you've touched on here, opposites which are very important. Gandhi was a servant of the people. That was his leadership model. Donald Trump has the top-down leadership model. Both of those have a time and place.

That's the whole point. We've thrown the baby out with the bathwater. When I threw out Dick Cheney, I threw out the ability to be tough and clear about what I want, the ability to not care about feedback and just go forward with my own idea, and the capacity to build loyal followers.

We can argue about maybe how he did that, but the Eagle Scout pretty much works alone. He walks in a room, and he's the hero. He's the star. He's the one that helps the little old ladies across the street, but what do you do if there are two or three Eagles in the room? How does an Eagle get along with another Eagle?

When I walk in a room and I'm in my Eagle Scout persona, I'm automatically seeing people that need help and opportunities for me to be of service. What I may be missing is other people that have resources in the room. Or I may be missing how things are just fine, thank you very much, just the way they are.

When you go in as Gandhi, you see what I'm saying? There's a really great section in the book about in order for us to stay in our character, we're in a sense creating a play, a drama, that allows us to stay in our central

character without changing. That means the other people around us have to play certain kinds of roles.

If you would design a play with Gandhi as the central character, what kinds of situations and people would you have to have around Gandhi? Followers, people who would look to you for guidance and advice. You'd have to have a cause, like the British government or something. You know what I mean? There'd have to be a large mission or issue.

**Robert:** I have the mission of helping people be more successful in their business, of course.

**John:** Exactly!

**Robert:** That's a mission. I have a cause, and I have principles. I've written things about it. I'm very committed to that.

**John:** Yeah! It just means that every now and then, it might be really, really helpful to you and your business, and I know this is true for me, to have a little more access to something of Donald Trump.

**Robert:** Yeah, I guess so.

**John:** It's really hard to admit.

I tell a story in the book about this guy who was a Navy Seal, and he had had two tours in Vietnam and everything. He came to the seminar, and he was this very shy guy. You'd never know he was a hero and everything.

At one point, he said, "It's really getting kind of cool in here. Is it okay if I turn off the air conditioner?" People were kind of kidding around saying, "I don't know. What

do you think, guys? No, I don't think so," and he said, "Oh. Okay."

His shadow character was McEnroe, the tennis player. So I said, "Now, just a second. How would McEnroe handle this situation?" He stood up and said, "All right. Here's the deal. I'm friggin' freezing to death, and I'm going to turn off the air conditioner. If you don't like it, you can blahdy-blahdy-blah."

Everybody stood up and cheered, and he had this big grin on his face. He said, "Wow! That felt really good." From then on, he told me later, whenever he faced a situation where he was stuck, he would say, "How would McEnroe handle this situation?"

**Robert:** This is really worthwhile underlining and keep coming back to this a bit. The point is that we're always trying to manifest through our persona, our Gandhi. For everyone on the call, you really want to think of someone you admire and try to emulate and...

**John:** You like, and you'd like to be like.

**Robert:** You might not have thought of this person as a hero, but they might be a hero to you, someone you really admire. There's that person.

The point you're saying is that that persona simply cannot give you everything. Nevertheless, it is still limited. It's not the whole picture. Yet the shadow side, even though there are dark, nasty, not-so-pleasant parts of that, there are some very useful, strong and practical things that you can borrow from that shadow part of you. That's essentially what you're saying, right?

**John:** Exactly. If you're listening to this and you start making a list of the things you would never want to be seen as, like cruel, mean, destructive, lazy and so forth, I'll show you how we look into each one of those words and turn it into what I call a "stretch."

Just like in yoga, it's something that you have to consciously practice. It will have a little bit of a burn. Like when you're doing a stretch in yoga, you get to that point where you don't want to do any more. You just have to kind of be there and just relax.

These are things that don't feel right when you do them, but you will know immediately when you get it that, "Yes, this is something I need to do."

For instance, "lazy" is one of my shadow words. Well, what is it that lazy people are really good at that every now and then I wish I had more access to?

**Robert:** Do you want me to guess?

**John:** Yeah! That'd be great.

**Robert:** Well, they can be very efficient at doing things because they don't like to take a lot of steps and work too hard.

**John:** Yeah, and when they're being lazy, one thing they're doing is they're just not working. They're taking it easy. They're taking time out for themselves. That's a stretch for me because I'm always in action on behalf of other people. I'm always there for other people.

**Robert:** So for the people reading this who resonate with this one, you might be people who can never take a vacation. You have to work 18 hours a day. You're always driving

yourself. That has its place, but if just the thought of laziness makes you want to recoil in horror, there is a positive side to that that is very useful to us, and that's the stretch.

**John:** Exactly. In fact, the stronger your resistance is, the more angry you are or upset about a particular word, the more value it will have for you. You see what I'm saying?

**Robert:** Yes. It's interesting. When I got married to my wife, she stretched me in certain areas. It just brought up this thought. She stretched me into taking vacations. I hadn't taken a vacation in so long I couldn't even remember what a vacation was. We ended up going to Europe and Hawaii and all these kind of things.

Now, I work very hard, but I spend a lot of time relaxing and taking it easy without being guilty about it. That was a stretch.

Another one was I couldn't save a dime. I don't know what that was about.

**John:** See, Trump knows how to hold on to money, see?

**Robert:** Right. I couldn't do that, and she really got me to save a lot.

**John:** That's great.

**Robert:** I was infuriated when she suggested we open a savings account. As stupid as that sounds, it was very, very threatening to me.

**John:** Yeah!

**Robert:** So I'm starting to get some insight into that. Ultimately, I surrendered to her and realized that maybe that was a smart idea. She takes any money I give her and opens extra savings accounts. She just has a whole different reality about that.

**John:** Exactly. There is a woman on TV in Poland named Doda, and she's, I guess, a kind of maybe like Pamela Anderson. Who's the woman who's just famous for being famous, the young woman with the blond hair?

**Robert:** Paris Hilton.

**John:** Yes, Paris Hilton. In the seminar in Poland that I was doing recently, there was a woman and that was her shadow character-type person. One of the things she realized, and this woman was like a vice president in a fairly large organization in Poland, is that Paris Hilton has no problem being the center of attention.

**Robert:** Yeah, really.

**John:** Yeah, right. And this woman, whenever there was a meeting, she always sat back. She never really spoke up, even though she had things to say because she was so afraid of being the shadow character. It was starting to affect her life and her career. People thought she didn't have anything to offer. Every time she even thought about opening her mouth, she just shut herself down.

I think people on this call who are having a challenge marketing themselves, what they need is going to be in the shadow. I absolutely know this. I absolutely can promise this.

**Robert:** You have a fantastic chart in the book. It's on Page 145. It shows this kind of continuum or gradient of the shadow character. On one end, you have "ruthless."

**John:** Right. That's the deadly no-no.

**Robert:** What we're not saying is you should go into the darkest part of it. You take it and scale it down until it's something that you can see is useful.

It goes from the dangerous no-no that you really don't want to express which is being ruthless. The next is "it's not okay" which is "mean and selfish," but that's not as bad as ruthless. Then with "sort of okay," we're going down into demanding. People can see that sometimes being somewhat demanding is necessary to get things done.

That morphs into "assertive" into "strong and clear," which is crucial. Being strong and clear is an aspect or transformation of being ruthless.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** When I saw this chart, I created a whole chart for myself about, "Here are all the deadly no-nos." Impatience and anger, that's one for me, and several others. I just scaled them back and saw that these are really things that I need to develop and that I can embrace instead of running away from.

**John:** That's great! That's exactly what I hoped people would do with that chart. You can also take your shadow character and just write down three things you hate about them and then scale them back using that same chart.

Or anybody you hate, by the way. This is the whole point. When you start doing this work, you begin to realize that you can identify with more and more people more quickly and more deeply. You become a little more forgiving, in a sense because you're basically forgiving yourself.

So, for Dick Cheney, I had "imperious," like "my way is the only way," "win at any cost," and the third one was "go to war as a way to solve problems." I took each of those and put them on this scaling grid and backed them down.

Being imperious, which is like the emperor in "Star Wars" or something, when I ratcheted that down, turned the rheostat down, that turned into, "John, you need to be willing to stand in your rightful power and authority."

**Robert:** Right. And who can argue with that? That's a good thing.

**John:** Well, obviously I've been arguing with myself about that for many, many years.

**Robert:** Because you're resisting the imperiousness of it.

**John:** Exactly. So people treat me as an elder sometimes, in a sense, or like a guru in some circumstances because of my experience. I fight that and fight that. Well, if you fight something, you're giving it energy. Actually, by fighting it, I'm actually, in a sense, creating a problem for me around that. If I could just go ahead and just say, "Well, actually I do know a few things about some things," it's okay.

Like I had never read the book before, Robert. After I got your email, I thought, "I'd better read this book."

**Robert:** Everybody, he's saying he didn't read his own book! He wrote it, but hadn't actually read it, which I thought was very funny.

**John:** Exactly! So I'm sitting in the airport in Krakow on my way back to America, and I started reading the book. By the time I got to Frankfurt, I thought, "This is a pretty good book. There's some really good stuff in here."

So anyway, Dick Cheney, you see, would have no problem standing in the power. He would never wonder whether his book was any good. He would just absolutely know that his book was good. Well, somewhere in there is a stretch for me about just trusting the validity and the rightness of what I do.

I would guarantee that many people on this call will have things like "arrogant" or "show-off" or "self-absorbed" or "manipulative" or "phony," some of those kind of words, and every one of those words, when they put them on that grid and back it down, it's going to turn into a stretch that will transform the marketing.

**Robert:** Actually, let's look at some of these because I'm very familiar with some of these ones that people resist or revile. I just have to say this. With this whole thing about marketing and selling, there are a lot of triggers for a lot of people.

If you have this stuff, if you're listening, if you have these fears and these beliefs and these preconditioned ways of being about it, you're not alone. I've talked to hundreds and hundreds of people. You see these same things coming up over and over again. They're very common.

Let's talk about "manipulative."

**John:** Good one!

**Robert:** That's one thing that people hate about marketing. They don't want to be manipulative at all, so instead of being manipulative, we don't do anything. We sort of wait around and hope for people to discover us because to actually say anything about our business and try to put any kind of spin on it, we see as, "Well, I'm just manipulating them, and I wouldn't want to do that."

Let's look at what the stretch is for that, the spectrum for that.

**John:** Great! Here's a great question, Robert. I would ask the person, "What is it that manipulative people are able to do that every now and then might be a good thing?" In other words, if you squeeze everything that's bad out of manipulative people, what is the capability that they have that every now and then you wish you had?

**Robert:** Well, it would be to get people to do what you want, but get them to do things that were in their self-interest as well as yours, not just yours. "Manipulative" is "I'll get them to do what I want, not what they want. Obviously, they wouldn't want it."

The other side is to come to an agreement or an accord about doing something that everyone is happy about. It's a win-win.

**John:** You want to be careful. That could be the stretch. Sometimes by saying, for instance, that somebody wants to be "clear and direct, as long as it doesn't offend

anybody,” it takes the stretch out. Sometimes you have to allow that to just hang open where you don’t know whether people are going to be offended or not.

Maybe with manipulative, you need to promote yourself and speak positively about what you do to try to influence people about the value of what you have, and then full stop. If you say after that anything like “but also it’s going to be good for you,” then that takes the stretch out.

In order for it to be a stretch, you have to live in the ambiguity for a short while without knowing whether they’re going to be offended or whether they’re going to judge you as being manipulative. That’s why it’s a stretch. The power comes from just saying, “I’d like you to do this.”

For instance, I had a book tour thing the other day at a bookstore. At the end of the thing, I said, “Look. This is a stretch for me.” I had already talked about this in the thing. I said, “I’m going to ask you to buy the book in a minute.” I said, “I’m just going to come right out and tell you that I want you to buy the book and I want you to buy it for your friends as well.”

In my mind, my mind was saying, “John, John, that’s manipulation.” But if you put it out on the table, it’s not manipulation. So I was just saying, “In a minute, I’m going to do my best to manipulate you to buy this book.” It was great. People laughed, and of course they went out and bought the book.

That’s how that works.

**Robert:** Instead, we triple-hedge our bets. It's sort of like, "Well, I think this book is kind of good" or "I think this service is kind of good, but I wouldn't want to be pressuring you or anything. Don't think I'm trying to sell you or anything, but if you see it in your heart that this just might..."

I'm exaggerating a bit, but a lot of people come across in that way. In the selling situation, for instance, people are so conditional about it, they never actually even ask for the order.

**John:** Exactly. Your shadow character, whoever it is, will have no problem asking for the order. I can almost guarantee that. So whoever your shadow character is, if you're listening, that person or that character is not bound by the same rules as your persona.

Your persona has to play in a very small playing area, and your shadow is actually free to move. Your shadow can buy clothes from any rack in the store, basically, or at least from more racks in the store, so ask yourself, "How would my shadow character handle the closing of this conversation?" Then let the best of that character speak.

"How would Dick Cheney handle this thing? How would the best of Dick Cheney handle this thing?"

**Robert:** Or the best of Donald Trump.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** Let's look at some other ones, and we can perhaps brainstorm a few, but I think these are really valuable for people.

One thing I've noticed is that the category of people that I work with are independent professionals such as coaches and consultants and sometimes therapists. They're very much in what you'd call "helping" professions. They're very selfless. They want to help others. They love to contribute to others. That's part of their persona, and that's a great thing.

On the other hand, being supported and getting support from others and doing that is very uncomfortable for them in many cases. Or instance, if they're in a brainstorming group, they will want to give a million ideas to everybody else, but when it comes to them, it's like, "Oh, don't worry about me. I'm fine."

What's the no-no here? It's asking something for myself. It's being supported. That sounds not like a no-no in a way, but it really is for a lot of people.

**John:** Absolutely.

**Robert:** It's maybe selfishness. The no-no is selfishness or self-centeredness.

**John:** Self-absorbed, any of those things. So the stretch there is to do something to either nurture myself or to attend to my needs or to listen to my needs or express my needs. It depends on the situation.

There's another place that comes to mind here, Robert, which is about the sweet spot. What I say is that in any given moment, a conversation, meeting or whatever, there are these three demands or pulls that are operating on us at the same time. There are our needs in the situation, the needs of the other people and then the needs of the larger

circle, like the needs of the organization or the needs of your business.

For instance, I've had to fire people occasionally, which is the hardest thing in the world for me to do. The only way I could get there because I didn't want to do it and they didn't want me to do it, but I said, "My business needs it," that third circle. I knew that my business was what's requiring that I do that.

But sometimes people are so focused on the other people, like, "I'm going to serve you," that they forget about themselves and they forget about their business.

Here's an example. When you get on an airplane, the flight attendant will say something like this, and I think this is the United Airlines version. "In the unlikely event of a loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will fall from the compartment above you. Place the mask firmly over the nose and mouth and breathe normally. Even though the bag is not inflating, oxygen is flowing."

Then they'll say, "If you're traveling with a small child or someone who needs assistance," what's the next line? "Secure your own mask and then render assistance." If you're not taking care of yourself, you will not be able to be of any use to anybody else.

Early in my career when I was a Lutheran minister and started my consulting work, I worked a lot with clergy and social workers and people in the helping professions. I found a tremendous amount of anger and resentment in those folks.

As I drilled deeper, what we found out is that the resentment came from the fact that they were not getting their needs met. They ended up blaming their parishioners or their clients or their patients for the fact that they were not putting their own oxygen mask on.

There's a story about Mother Teresa just before she died. There was an American magazine reporter visiting with her. There was a problem at the gate one night, so she walks out to the gate with one of the sisters, and there's a group of people trying to get into the treatment center.

She's pushing, trying to close the gate. They finally get the gate closed, and they're walking back across the courtyard. This reporter says, "I can't believe I just saw that. You just shut the gate on those people that are trying to get in here for help." She said, "If my sisters and I don't come in here every night to rest, renew ourselves and pray, this place would be closed in three days."

There's a balance. Those of you listening to this call, you have to strike a balance between taking care of other people and taking care of yourself.

That third circle is "What does my business need me to do right now?" It might be just to take a break or take a vacation. It might be to speak more powerfully about who I am and what I do. That's another place to go for strength to do what you need to do as a marketer.

**Robert:** Great! So that's the stretch for the so-called negative or bad side or dark side or shadow side of self-centeredness. There is a real purpose to that.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** I'm on a roll here, and I'm looking at some other things with the Donald Trump character. I think for a lot of self-employed people, I think a lot of people have the same kind of reaction. Here's a very extraordinarily successful business-person, but they kind of revile him for his dark side.

Another one of his dark sides is greed. It's not just a win-win deal. It's like the more money, the better, always, in every case. It's a "The more I have and the more I win, then the happier I will be when I die" kind of thing.

**John:** The one with the most toys wins, right, at the end.

**Robert:** A lot of people when marketing themselves say, "Well, Robert, I just want to serve and make a difference and have a decent living, but making more and more money just is not what I'm about," which I can definitely relate to. But there's the other stretch side to that as well. Let's look at the positive side of greed.

**John:** Yeah, greed is a good one. Just to go back to my roots for a minute, there's a saying in the Bible that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" and that you "do not muzzle the ox while it's stamping out the grain." In other words, the ox is walking in a circle, tramping out the grain, and the ox gets to eat some of the grain while it's walking around.

I'm a Zen Lutheran, right? There's a karmic reality that says, in fact, if you're not being supported and replenished, if there's not a circle of energy and the energy's only going out, then you're actually violating a fundamental law of the universe and it will not work. It will not be sustainable. People have to be giving you something in return.

The shadow stretch might be something like, “to allow myself to have” or “to allow myself to acquire and enjoy.”

**Robert:** Yes. There’s the whole basic thing of providing and the reality of retirement. I talk to a lot of people who have zero retirement savings. This was the stretch that my wife got me into.

You think the reality is, “Maybe I love my work so much that I want to work until the day I die.” However, we don’t know if that will be possible because when we hit the age of 65, 70, 75, 80 or whatever it is, we may simply not have the physical or mental capacity.

If we haven’t taken care of ourselves by investing in ourselves, we’re going to be like a whole lot of other people out there who weren’t smart about their financial condition.

**John:** Exactly. It’s being “greedy” or “self-centered or something else.

**Robert:** Really, it’s being responsible financially. You have to make a decent amount of money in this society to have a certain standard of living, and we’re not talking about gilded palaces here.

**John:** Exactly!

**Robert:** I make quite a bit of money compared to certainly what I did 10 or 15 years ago, but I have a house, I have a mortgage, I have expenses, and there’s nothing wrong with taking a vacation once in a while to Europe or Hawaii.

**John:** Oh, sure there is. I'm sure that your persona has something wrong with it.

**Robert:** Probably. Of course, it's like, "I don't want to be greedy. There are people in the world who are starving to death, after all."

In resistance to the greed, we go in the polar-opposite direction, which is a poverty mentality. We don't charge enough for our services.

One of the things I'm working on a lot today in the Mastery program is if you create a higher-end program that people pay more for, oh my god, you'll actually be able to render a higher level of service and produce better results, which is what people want.

Often, we shortchange our clients because we don't offer enough. Then we have to bend over backward to try to produce miracles with not enough time because we haven't really charged enough for it. Then we burn ourselves out.

**John:** And then we blame them. We get angry at them, and we get resentful for that. Anything that we resist, we give power to. This is a really important principle.

I had these friends who are off the grid. They hate money. They hate society. And so they're off the grid, so they raise their own vegetables and eat totally off the grid, no electricity or anything.

**Robert:** They don't pay taxes.

**John:** Don't pay taxes. They live out in the woods. When I was visiting with them, I was trying to get them to realize how

important money was for them. You see, every day they woke up, they hated money.

**Robert:** It was running them!

**John:** Exactly. Anything that we are resisting runs us. If you can't keep money, then money runs you. Like, if you have to give money away, then money runs you. When you can allow the money to flow to you and away from you in a circle where there's no attachment either way, then money loses its power. But when we're resisting because of a concern about being greedy, then actually greediness runs us.

In the shadow, the harder we're fighting some word in the shadow, the irony of it is the more we're actually operating under the power of the thing that we're resisting.

**Robert:** Very interesting.

**John:** Here's a key point, and I didn't have space to put this in the book. There's an exercise that we do in the weekend where there's a continuum again where let's say that your default is to never call attention to yourself because that would be showing off. And let's say that your stretch is to allow yourself to be the center of attention.

There's a continuum. You don't have to go all the way from one end to the other, but what would be one step that you could take today, what is one thing that you could do differently today, that would be a small, profound step in the direction that you want to go?

For instance, being greedy, you don't have to be greedy, but what if you just took \$1 and moved it from your left pocket to your right pocket with the idea that at night, you're going to put that in an envelope somewhere? I mean, it sounds stupid, but even that might be a breakthrough for somebody.

**Robert:** It might be raising your rates just infinitesimally to start with.

**John:** Exactly Five percent, you know, or 10% just to find out that the sun comes up tomorrow, the newspaper's still on the front porch, lightning didn't strike you dead, and you're making more money.

**Robert:** Exactly. So the stretch is to think more abundantly, at least at this level of sufficient, that it's okay to have enough. There's really finding a balance here.

We kind of go overboard with it, and there's a whole abundance mentality, which I think is thinly disguised greed, yet there's abundance that's very healthy. "I feel I have enough. Also, if I have more money, I have money that I can give to worthy causes and charity."

I was talking to one of my clients who I'm doing a joint venture with in which I'm going to be contacting some people who I have relationships with, have large lists, can introduce him to their list, etc. for his service. I'll say, "John, let's call this the 'Economic Stimulus Package.'"

**John:** That's great!

**Robert:** By me introducing him to other people and other people buying his services, money moves around the economy

and lifts everything. If we're out there earning money, spending money, and not being so tight with our money, the economy will loosen up a bit. We have to keep things moving in the economy. That's a very good thing, and it's very different than greed.

**John:** I got an email this morning from somebody. It had a saying. It said, "It's not just the early bird that catches the worm. The second bird, the third bird and all the birds catch the worm because there's plenty of worms to go around." I thought that was a great saying, you know?

**Robert:** It's not only the early bird, for god's sake.

**John:** Exactly. There is a market out there. I would say to someone, "People out there need what you have to offer." Marketing is simply getting that to them. I heard a saying. I can't remember who it's attributed to, that "Marketing is making the truth interesting or fascinating."

**Robert:** There's a famous saying that's sort of the other way of looking at that. David Ogilvy said, "You can't bore people into doing business with you," so you have to make the truth interesting and fascinating.

**John:** I think there's a key issue of making the truth interesting. What people need to understand is that there is a validity. You are a valid human being just the way you sit right now listening to this. You are valid. Your work is valid. Your gifts are valid.

You just need to come home to yourself and to figure out what calls you, what is calling from the world, what is calling out inside of you, and just get in action. Get over

yourself and just take a step. Take one step in the direction of one or two of your stretches.

Once you do your shadow work and you figure out two or three stretches, you look at those and you realize, “Yeah, I’m going to have to practice these.” Just ask, “What is one small step that I could take in the way of implementing this in my marketing of my own practice,” and then watch what happens.

**Robert:** Great! We’re not finished. I have more.

**John:** Cool! Hey, I could go on for years and years about this.

**Robert:** Really getting into these specific ones I hope is really useful for everybody. Another Donald Trump-ism is arrogance. I think a lot of people would agree that Trump comes across as pretty arrogant sometimes. He knows the way, and he’s arrogant. He’s kind of a know-it-all.

**John:** What was the stretch you found?

**Robert:** Well, before the stretch, the conditions of that are that we really resist arrogance and we were told so many things growing up. “Don’t toot your own horn,” especially women. “Women don’t ask for things; they wait for things.” “You want to be seen, but not heard.” There is all of this, as you say, “somebody training.”

Arrogance is definitely looked down upon, as in, “Who do you think you are to do X?” And yet, the fascinating thing is that the people we put on pedestals in our society are often very arrogant people or very bold people.

**John:** “Bold” is a great word.

**Robert:** There definitely are stretches. I just bought a biography of Richard Branson. Talk about a bold person! He's adventurous and takes risks. He's a better role model for me than Trump.

Anyway, arrogance is frowned upon, so let's look at some stretches to arrogance.

**John:** Great! The key is to figure out what does that word turn into when you dial it down? It'll be different for different people, but "bold" is a great word. It sounds like a great word for you. It might be "entrepreneurial" or "risk-taking." Arrogant for me turned into being more expressive of my positions on things or trusting the validity and value of my work, or something like that.

It'll be different for each person. The stretch will be slightly different for different people because of that reason.

**Robert:** Right. There's something about boldness. Another one that fits in to this for me is decisiveness.

**John:** There you go! Uh-huh. Exactly.

**Robert:** It's like, "This is what I want. I'm clear about what I want."

**John:** We're going to cut the rug.

**Robert:** But that doesn't have to put anybody down in the process. It doesn't have to say, "I'm better than everybody else."

**John:** Exactly, but you have to run the risk of that, Robert, or it's not a stretch. In other words, if you're always tiptoeing around being decisive, then it's not exactly being decisive.

**Robert:** Right. There's a saying in marketing among a lot of the various marketing gurus. If you put out a marketing message or campaign, if you send out an email or do some kind of promotion or whatever it might be, we're often so careful and cautious about not wanting to be seen as manipulative, self-centered, greedy or arrogant that we're so unusually careful that it doesn't make an impact.

Somebody said this. If you don't get any pushback, if it doesn't upset anybody, you're probably not going far enough.

**John:** Exactly, exactly.

**Robert:** I have to tell this quick story. Early in the day when I decided to do my ezine, one of my clients had started an ezine. This was over 12 years ago. I told him, "You ought to put a little bit of promotion in your ezine. There's no promotion now, it's just good ideas. That's fine that it's good ideas, but just like good programming on TV, people get used to the commercials and they understand that that's how you pay for the program. Put at the end a little promo for something about your services."

He did that. It was pretty low-key anyway, and he said, "I got this email from someone, this rant about how dare I do this." I said, "Wow! That really tells me you're doing the right thing!"

**John:** Exactly, exactly. That's how you know. Exactly.

**Robert:** Let me tell you. You might upset some people, but on the other hand, some people will say, "Oh, that's interesting," and look at your website, etc.

Some people revile me for sending more than one email a week. I tell you, I really try not to do overkill. I do the ezine once a week, but if I have a teleclass or something, I find that if I only promote it in the ezine, I get a certain response.

If I send an email that says, “By the way, you might have missed this in the ezine. I’m doing a teleclass. Here’s what it’s about. I think you might be interested. Here’s the link to sign up,” I get literally 10 times the response, in some cases, that the ezine message got.

**John:** Wow! What do you think that’s about?

**Robert:** One thing is because it’s only focused on one thing. There’s no article. There’s no content. It’s just an invite. It’s a pure promotion. “Here is the teleclass.” Whether it’s free or paid or whatever, it gets response.

Some people would say, “Why are you sending so many emails?!” My thought is, “Well, there are some people like that who wouldn’t buy anything from you anyway. They just want free stuff forever.” A lot of people have trouble with that. “If anybody reacts negatively, then I should never, ever do it.”

**John:** Can I say one thing here? I’m not sure this is a universal principle, so I’ll be a little more conservative. I would say that most of the time when we, human beings, have a reaction to something someone else does, it is almost always connected to a shadow quality of our own.

I’m an old Gestalt therapist, and the shadow is stuff in ourselves that we do not believe or want to have present in ourselves, and so we see it in other people. It’s called

“projection.” So we basically see meanness or cruelty or whatever in other people because it’s not allowed in ourselves.

Whenever somebody says, “You’re just trying to sell me something,” even when your motives are absolutely pure, you don’t have to worry because they’re into their shadow stuff.

**Robert:** It’s about them. It’s not about you.

**John:** Exactly. I have a saying, “When you’re hooked, you’re history.” Any time we’re hooked by something that someone else does, there’s some piece of our history that has come between us and what’s happening right now.

That’s how you can use other people as a developmental lesson. Any time you’re looking at someone on television or in your office or somewhere and there’s something about them that hooks you, right away you know you’re into some aspect of your own history. So you just say, “Who does this remind me of? What was the lesson I was taught about this? What is it about them that I can’t stand?”

If I were talking to someone who was reacting to you sending out an email like that, I would say, “What would be a word you’d use to describe Robert when he does that?’ They might say “pushy” or whatever the word would be. Right away, I would know that’s a stretch for them. There’s something inside of “pushy” that they don’t have access to.

**Robert:** Exactly. That’s definitely in them.

**John:** Absolutely. In fact, it will leak out. The other neat thing about this is that whatever your shadow characteristics are that you don't think are in there, they will leak out.

I could ask that person who reacted to you that way. If I could ask their friends, "How is this person pushy?" they would be able to tell me, and yet the person would have no awareness of how they're pushy. It would come out in more indirect ways.

I think this is great, Robert. You're really on to something important here.

**Robert:** I have one more, and maybe more.

**John:** Yeah, go!

**Robert:** The other one is the general concept of hype. Marketing and hype, for many people, are synonymous. "Hyperbole" is stretching the truth. "This program will do this" or "This service is this." A lot of people resist any and all marketing because they feel that it just can't be true. It must be a lie. It must be exaggerated.

Therefore, in my marketing, I will try to avoid any appearance of any hype whatsoever because that means I am being untruthful and I'm lying. I'm a professional; a professional doesn't hype. So, that is the no-no, the hype or even beyond that which is real deception.

Let's look at what the stretch is for hype. We've touched on some of these issues in the conversation so far.

**John:** Yeah. What is it that the people who aren't afraid to hype what they do are good at that every now and then you wish you could be good at?

**Robert:** Just very clear, compelling communication.

**John:** “This is who I am. This is what I do. This is why I think it’s valuable,” and, here’s the key, “Let the chips fall where they may.”

See, it’s the prediction of a possible negative reaction that stops people from doing what they need to do. So, the thought that someone might read an email and think, “That Robert Middleton. He’s just a whatever-whatever,” stops you. You see what I’m saying?

Ironically, in order to be a fully alive and aware human being, you have to come home to yourself and authentically be yourself and let the chips fall because people are going to have a reaction no matter what.

In the latter part of the book, we do that section on how to shift from automatic living to authentic living. If you’re putting out an email and you’re writing it from your automatic place, you’re going to be very careful, and you’re going to be worrying about looking at each phrase and thinking, “Okay. I wonder how people are going to respond to this. Is this okay?” and so forth.

When you shift over into that authentic way of operating, you’re going to put yourself in the service of your greater-purpose statement and practice your stretches.

On the left-hand side, when you’re in automatic living, the whole goal, the objective of the game, is to avoid the thing that you’re trying to avoid and get little hits of what it is you’re trying to get. That’s the objective of the game.

When you shift to authentic living or authentic being, the objective gets to be about being of true service and authentic contribution. And oh by the way, people might still adore you and they might still think you're stupid, but it doesn't matter because that's not what the game is about anymore.

The breakthrough comes in saying, "I'm going to be myself, and I'm going to let the chips fall where they may. I'm going to speak the truth about myself and what I do."

I have like 4,000 people on my mailing list, and I'm about to start a subscription-based online thing about my work. My mind is telling me, "Oh my god! You're going to lose people. They're going to drop off the list because they're not going to want to pay money," and yet that's exactly what I have to do and what I'm going to do. That's the stretch, see.

**Robert:** If we're going to be successful in business, we have to risk something. We have to put ourselves out. If you see the great successes in business, they're not all positive, obviously. They have their dark shadow and express that in some ways, but they were bold, they took a risk...

**John:** And they let the chips fall.

**Robert:** They let the chips fall as they may. Hopefully in the process, if they learned something that didn't work so well, they altered it. I mean, we see some pretty despicable things in business these days: downright cheating and lying, and cooking the books and stealing money from shareholders. The whole financial crisis came out of greed, out of the consumers and out of the institutions and all of that.

The problem with that with us, as professionals, is we say even more, “Well, I definitely don’t want to be like that. I have to be more cautious and more circumspect than ever before,” but we’re looking at this in a more expansive way. There is the stretch side of all these dark sides. There is a very positive part about risking things and trying new things and inventing things.

**John:** Exactly. My concern about being seen as ruthless stops me when I’m on automatic from just being clear and direct. That’s how this whole thing works.

**Robert:** There’s nothing wrong with clear and direct. There’s nothing wrong with speaking positively about your value and expressing your needs in abundance and boldness and clarity. Those are really things that are very hard for a lot of people because they’re seeing that as a bad thing. They take it to the extreme, to the limit of manipulation, self-centeredness, greed, arrogance and hype.

**John:** Exactly. And the “somebody training,” which evolves into an autopilot that controls us and runs us, will stop us every time from doing the thing that we would need to do that would not only be appropriate, but might actually release us into more service and bring more people to us. And in the process, we’re going to lose some people.

Okay. So what? I got two guys in the water out there that are going to drown if I don’t get over all my stuff. So, okay, who’s out there in the world who really needs what you have to offer if you don’t get over all this stuff?

**Robert:** You have a contribution to make. You have a difference to make. You have a service. It will take a different part of you than you habitually go back to in order to have a

breakthrough in getting more clients, serving more people and making a bigger difference. It will just take that kind of breakthrough.

**John:** Absolutely.

**Robert:** There's one other. I'm not sure quite how to fit this in, but this is such an issue for people. I don't know how it relates to Trump, but I'm getting so many great ideas from you, John, that I have to use it. That is that people stop themselves.

Maybe it's a couple of things. One is that they can't find the time. Maybe that's just an excuse for all of it. It's an easy sort of catch-all. "Well, I don't have the time to read this. I don't have time to market. I can't fit it into my schedule." It's funny. When you talk to these people and really dig into it, they have a ton of time. Time is never the issue.

**John:** Yeah, it's never about time. It's always about what we're talking about here. If people don't have time to market themselves or don't have time to take care of themselves, there's probably a shadow word like "selfish" or "greedy," like we said, or "self-absorbed" or some word like that or "lazy" that would stop them from basically nurturing themselves, taking care of themselves.

There's a great thing from Stephen Covey's *7 Habits*. It's a story that I hear before his book, but it's in his book. You have to stop periodically and "sharpen the saw."

In other words, if you have two people cutting wood of equal skill and strength and one of them stops several times during the day to just look at the trees and the birds

and have a drink of water and sharpen the saw, guess who's going to cut more wood?

These people that are working 18 hours a day are actually working against themselves. You got to remember the Mother Teresa story and the airline oxygen mask story.

**Robert:** Right. There always is time for vital things if we can stop and look and see the bigger picture of everything. There really is.

Another one that...

**John:** This is great! You really are on a roll. This is awesome! This is great, Robert.

**Robert:** You know, I embarked on a search many, many years ago to figure out not only how could I give people good marketing ideas that work, but also how could I help people get unstuck. This is all part of that program, you might say. I've used a lot of tools that I've discovered.

**John:** That's why I wrote the book.

**Robert:** This is really, really useful stuff that we haven't really discussed in this way before.

**John:** Wonderful!

**Robert:** It's very powerful. Another big thing that stops people cold is perfectionism. I hear, "I can't get started until I know exactly what to do," as if that were possible. You can have a basic game plan, but how can you ever know exactly what to do?

It's sort of like, "I will not start playing the piano until I know exactly how to play Rachmaninoff." That's insanity.

We can see that, but it makes sense to us when we say, “With marketing, I have to know exactly what I have to do before I do anything, before I take a step.”

Therefore, we do nothing. We think about it, we read, and we don’t take a step. I think that’s a smokescreen for fear of rejection or something like that.

**John:** To go back to Trump, who’s your shadow character, he’s been bankrupt, what, twice or something? He’s gone into Chapter 7 two or three times, and I don’t know any successful entrepreneur, at least, who hasn’t either gone bankrupt or almost gone bankrupt.

There’s a story in the book that I tell about when I was at that point and almost went bankrupt. It was one of the most important years of my life because I had to shrink down and tighten the belt and figure out what was important.

I would say to someone who’s hesitating like that, “Go ahead and fail. Just fail. Please. Please fail.”

**Robert:** Hit bottom.

**John:** Exactly, exactly. Hit bottom. Fail. It’s very liberating to go on down that trail and say, “What would failure look like? Well, it would look like only a handful of people respond to my marketing program” or “People might think, ‘Boy, that’s really stupid.’” Okay, go ahead. Please be stupid, and I’m sure “stupid” is on your shadow list somewhere. “Failure” is implied in every challenge.

**Robert:** You don’t necessarily mean ultimate failure. It could be just failing on a project.

**John:** Yeah, run the risk. Take the risk. Basically, go ahead and “fail.” It’s kind of like grace from a spiritual point of view or theological point of view. It’s like, “Go ahead and fail, please. Please fail.”

As long as you’re worried about failing, you’re not going to be making your contribution. You’re going to be sitting around sucking your thumb and hoping everything is going to work out and wishing it were perfect before you started.

Of course, coming from an alcoholic family, I learned a long time ago that “perfect” is the enemy of “good enough.” So why not do something that’s good enough? Just get started, get in motion, get over yourself, get out there, and then hold your breath, watch what happens, take a step.

Then if the sun comes up tomorrow and the lightning doesn’t strike you dead and the newspaper’s on the front porch, maybe, just maybe, you’ve expanded the size of the racks that are available to you for the human being you’re capable of being in the world.

**Robert:** Sometimes I do promotions that don’t work as well as I’d like.

**John:** Welcome to the human race, you know.

**Robert:** I have another saying which is related to this, “Fail fast.”

**John:** Exactly. I love it!

**Robert:** If you try a bunch of things and fail fast, it’s like, “Okay. That didn’t work, that didn’t work, that didn’t work, but I’m sure that something in it works, so I’ll keep trying

something.” It’s not that I have my whole business at stake, but it’s promoting a workshop or something.

**John:** Fail fast and learn.

**Robert:** The great thing now is that if I try something and it doesn’t work, I don’t get depressed anymore. I get curious. “I wonder why that didn’t work. Let’s look at this.”

**John:** Isn’t that great?!

**Robert:** I sort of look at it simply as a problem or puzzle to solve that I simply haven’t found the right moves, the right combination or things. “When I did that before, that worked, but when I did this, that didn’t quite work. When I send the email that says that, maybe now I’ll try this.” Either I’ll succeed or I’ll fail with that.

Then sometimes with a product, service, program or something you’d like to promote, it may be that, for whatever reason, it’s time has not yet come.

**John:** Exactly, exactly.

**Robert:** It’ll come later. The big breakthrough I had in my business was creating my Marketing Action groups and discovering that people would pay a decent fee for a program. At one point, I had five of these going at one time. Then I created my certification program. Now I’m doing my Mastery program. They’re all building on the shoulders of the other.

What people don’t realize is that I tried and failed utterly with a program before the Marketing Action groups that was just a bust.

**John:** See, you're turning into a regular old Donald Trump!

**Robert:** Yeah.

**John:** Do you understand what I'm saying? You're stretching.

**Robert:** That's something that Donald does, for sure. He takes the best advice. He uses everything. He tries things and tries things. He risks. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** He did some pretty gutsy things in that "Apprentice" program. He launched a whole water line called "Trump Ice." That's a pretty gutsy thing to do, and he put it on his program for the whole world to see. Now, I don't know if that ultimately succeeded and is still selling or not, but I thought, "Wow! That is a pretty gutsy thing, to launch a whole product in New York City for the whole world to see."

**John:** Shameless self-promotion. Somewhere in that shameless self-promotion, there's a beautiful nugget, a stretch for everybody listening to this.

Your mind will tell you that what you really need to do, what your business wants you to do, what the world is yearning for you to do, the voices from your "somebody training" will tell you that's shameless self-promotion or some awful thing, and that's exactly what you need to do.

It's like you punch through that membrane, get on the other side, send the email that tells people about the course or whatever it is that you're afraid to do. You get

on the other side of that membrane, and you find out that there's life on the other side of that.

**Robert:** Real life, real excitement.

**John:** Energy. New life, actually.

**Robert:** Energy. I've seen that with some of the people I'm coaching in my Mastery course. What I'm challenging them to do is create a bigger program at a higher price that they've ever created before.

**John:** And I would say before they get there, they have to create a self-concept that's big enough, that's actually as big as who they really are.

**Robert:** Yes!

**John:** That's why I think you're saying that this book might be helpful to them because it might help them do that. That's great.

**Robert:** Are you promoting your book on this call, John?!

**John:** Shameless self-promotion here.

**Robert:** How dare you do that?!

I'm definitely recommending this book and working on other areas to expand their sense of self.

**John:** Your marketing program is a manifestation of your self-concept.

**Robert:** Absolutely.

**John:** That's something that just came to me. I'm sure that's why we're on this phone call. You saw that early on. I'm just

coming to it. I'm slow. That's one of my shadow characteristics. I'm stupid. I'm finally getting it.

I'm seeing, now, how in my own case my marketing and anybody's marketing is an expression of the whole complexity of their self-concept, which includes the beauty of who they are and the hesitation about who they are.

**Robert:** Then they're playing in that fully.

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Do you shift your perception of yourself, or do you take you take on a big project? I say it can be either or both, and they're all sort of intermingled.

We have sessions in which we're talking about marketing plans and strategies. Then we're having sessions in which we're talking about our limiting beliefs and getting beyond those. We're talking about big-stretch goals, and then we're talking about, "Here are some of the nuts and bolts that you have to work on." All of this is part of the game.

**John:** Marvelous.

**Robert:** Then people produce a result that they didn't think was possible. In producing that result, their concept of self increases and they say, "Oh my god! This can work. I can make this work. People bought a program."

We had a fellow in the Mastery program who was very afraid to sell his programs at a package price versus a time-and-materials. That's often the big breakthrough for people.

I said, “Look at the value they’re getting. Look at the difference this will make. Look at how you’re being compensated in comparison to what they’re gaining, and it’s miniscule. You’re really worth more than that. You could package your services at a higher level.”

He went out a couple of weeks later, and he’d done this pre-program for these people. They said, “How can we take this to the next level?” He said, “Well, what you need to do is roll out this whole implementation program at all 12 of your locations over the next five years. You’re looking at an investment of about \$100,000 per location.” They said, “Sounds great to us. When do we start?”

**John:** And he tried not to pass out from hyperventilation. That’s great!

**Robert:** Exactly. Ultimately, we’ll see how it goes, but they said yes, and that represents \$1.2 million in revenue over the next few years. He realized, “I was just holding myself back.”

**John:** Absolutely.

**Robert:** “I was being too careful. I was being too cautious.” When he really looked at it, what we’re doing is we’re just looking at ideas objectively and rationally and reasonably and thinking things through. We’re seeing possibilities beyond the limitations.

**John:** That’s it, and I think it starts with taking the first stretch. Just take one stretch.

**Robert:** “What’s a stretch for you today?”

**John:** Right now, in this phone call, moment-to-moment, what would be a stretch right now in this phone call?

**Robert:** I have a stretch for everybody in the Club. Spend some time every week studying material in the Club. Let go of your little thing of “I don’t have time, and I can’t fit this in. This is overwhelming me,” and just say, “I don’t even know what I’m going to do. I’m going to look at the Club. Oh, that sounds interesting.” Print out the PDF or click on the MP3 recording.

Just do it for five minutes, and that will take you for longer, but just five minutes a week. Commit to start listening to and learning something new. Who knows where that can lead you?

Every time I pick up a new book or attend a course or something, “There’s a new idea I can apply to my business. Isn’t that great?!” You become a learning machine.

**John:** Exactly.

**Robert:** I think that John’s book can be an important part of that. Now that you’ve listened to the interview, go to Amazon right now and buy his book. It’s called *Five Questions That Change Everything*. It’s a miniscule cost. I think it’s \$19.95, and you’ll get it for that or less on Amazon. It’s another little step to learn something more, to expand your mind and your possibilities. (Notre: John’s book is now available on Kindle and through Amazon Resellers.)

I think you’re going to enjoy it a lot. It’s so well written, John. It’s so fun and so real with your life story and your experience. As you’ve gone through this interview, John,

he's thrown in, "Well, I used to be a Lutheran minister," and "I was a Gestalt person," and "I was in the Navy."

This guy has a breadth of life experience that's unusual and extraordinary, and he brings all of that understanding into this book.

**John:** I'm actually 95 years old now.

**Robert:** And he's not 95 years old. You're in your 60s?

**John:** Yes.

**Robert:** John has a few more miles on him. I think he's going to create some incredible things. I was just so excited to be able to connect with him and do this interview.

John, are there any parting powerful words of wisdom that you have for us?

**John:** Just continue to come home to yourself in any way you can. That's I think why we're on the planet is we've been given an assignment, so to speak, to come here, to continually discover and be who we are and express that into the world in a way that makes a creative difference. There you go.

**Robert:** Part of doing that is to tap into your dark side, to the shadow side. There's some real power there.

**John:** That's it. Be all of who you are, not just half of who you are. Be all of who you are.

Thanks, Robert. This has been a wonderful, wonderful experience with you.

**Robert:** Thank you, John. Thank you very much.

**About this Interview with John Scherer**

This interview with John Scherer was conducted in 2009 at the very beginning of the More Clients Club. I feel it's one of my very best interviews as it touches on so many of the issues that are key to being successful in marketing your professional services.

However, this is just one of about 60 interviews included in the More Clients Club. They run the gamut from interviews on marketing messages, written materials and strategies, to other articles on mindset, pricing and serving clients.

The club also includes five in-depth marketing tutorial programs detailing the how-tos of marketing for Independent Professionals. In addition, it includes monthly support in the form of Live Videoconference sessions, an active Club Support Forum and a matching service for Accountability Partners.

If you liked this interview, you may find much value in a membership to the More Clients Club.

To learn more simply click on this link: <http://actionplan.com/fasttrack>

Thanks for reading this interview and good luck in your marketing.

Cheers, Robert Middleton

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