



## **Achieve Your Goals Podcast #109 - Living with Passion and Helping Others (An Interview with Carey Smolensky)**

**Nick:** Welcome to the Achieve Your Goals Podcast with Hal Elrod. I'm your host, Nick Palkowski, and you're listening to the show that is guaranteed to help you take your life to the next level faster than you ever thought possible. In each episode you will learn from someone who has achieved extraordinary goals that most haven't. He's the author of the number one bestselling book, "The Miracle Morning," a hall of fame and business achiever, and international keynote speaker, ultra-marathon runner and the founder of vipsuccesscoaching.com, Mr. Hal Elrod.

**Hal:** All right, Goal Achievers. This is exciting. It's cool when I get to interview not only brilliant, talented people... I think hopefully, everybody I interview is pretty brilliant and talented for the Achieve Your Goals podcast. Welcome, by the way, welcome to the Achieve Your Goals podcast. But, sometimes I also get to interview people that I have looked up to for a long time and mentors of mine. That's always really cool. And then the other really cool thing, the third category, if you will, or bucket, is when I get to interview my friends, which also fall in the category of people that I admire, and that I learn from, and that are mentors, and that are doing really great work and making an impact for other people. And today that is the case, I get to interview a good friend of mine, Carey Smolensky. And if you attended the Best Year Ever Blueprint, if you attended our live event, Carey is the energy team, he is the audio, visually, so much more than that. He really is what makes our events go off without a hitch. And he wrote his first book and so

we're going to talk about that today. His book is called "Living Life with Passion and Helping Others."

And it's a simple title, very straightforward, but I'll tell you, Carey is a man who truly lives life with passion and he really cares about making a difference in the lives of other people. And if I had to really define him, I'd say he's a dynamic businessman and entrepreneur. He's a great husband, very loyal, a great father. He was born in Chicago and he began his family of companies while he was in high school. So he's got a variety of companies. Actually, I don't want to take up too much of the story that he'll share, but he, at last year's Best Year Ever event, had a mindset shift seeing what we did at the event, and all the people, and what they were going through, the attendees. And he decided to pursue one of his dreams, which was to write a book. And this is his new book, his first book. It just went to publication and you can get it on amazon.com. We'll talk more about that. But, Carey, are you there, my friend?

**Carey:** I am here. Excited to be here, Hal.

Hal: This is exciting, dude. I'm pumped to have you, I just got your book in the mail the other day, that was such a cool experience. It brought me back to the feeling of my first book coming in the mail, and it's real. And I know you and I talked the other day. It was a pretty cool experience for you, of course. But let's do this. Normally I would have you start sharing your background and where you got started. But I would love to kick it off with the story that you actually opened your book up with, which was where the idea for the book came to you at last year's Best Year Ever Blueprint. So you want to start by sharing that story and then we'll dive in?

**Carey:** Absolutely. My whole life has been pursuing different passions just because I don't know if I'm wired that way, or I'm just excited. And I think it all

comes down to my hatred of mortality. And that's actually one of the other chapters in the book called "Mortality Sucks".

**Hal:** Nice.

**Carey:** But I think that's why. I think I've always realized that life is way too short, and there's so much to experience that, for years, I've struggled with, "How do I pursue all of these different things?" And at Best Year Ever 2014, a lot of it came to a certain amount of clarity where it wasn't that I needed to pursue all of these different things, it was really the concept of passion that I was pursuing. And I know some people talk about doing one thing, and focusing on thing, but that's not me. I can't just do one thing. I can do one thing at a time and be effective at it, but my whole life is filled with things that I've experienced and I've been proficient at. And, even in my family of companies, we do a number of different things from full event production, as you know with the Best Year Ever, from starting as a DJ, like you have, as well.

And all of these different passions of mine have really come together and I enjoy my life. I enjoy what I do. So really, the Best Year Ever of 2014, I'm on the plane coming back from San Diego to Chicago, and I just had this moment of clarity after meeting the people that I met and striking up certain potential networks, and realizing that my message is what I wanted to share. And I've had so many experiences throughout my life, and I've done so many different things that I wanted to be able to inspire others, and I wanted to put it all together.

And the best way to do that, the best vehicle was putting it in a book. And, yes, I've spoken to my industry and I've done different things in the special dance industry, but my real passion for speaking and getting the message out is to help inspire others, to help people find their passions, to help people live their dreams, and to realize the importance of helping others. And these are the ways that I live my life,

and I get to this within the book, as well, that it just happened to come full circle December 8th to December 8th, from 2014 to 2015, and I literally finished the last aspects of my book on the way back from the 2015 Best Year Ever Blueprint. And it really was a testament to the event, and what you have put together in creating this.

And, at the same time, it allowed me to focus by taking me away from everything else. And that's the biggest component to accomplishing something in any depth, is, "Focus on it." And I've learnt to focus on the different things that I experienced, but while I was writing the book, I was completely immersed and focused on that. When I'm producing an event, I'm completely focused at that moment, in that of entertaining. So, again, for me, it's not just one specific thing, but it's one thing at a time. But when I am doing that one thing, I'm all in. I'm immersed and I'm giving it 150%.

**Hal:** And you're speaking to, A, to me, but I think to the right audience in terms of, I think our listeners, the majority, don't want to just do one thing. We've got a lot of dreams, a lot of goals, a lot of passions. And I think that you put it really well, which is, "You can do it all, it's just that you focus on one thing at a time." And, I think, for me it's the writing books, and making the documentary that we're doing, "The Miracle Morning", and putting on the events, and doing speaking, and doing private coaching, and group coaching. You and I, we're cut from the same cloth. We'd be bored just doing one thing, but I can attest, you are one of the best event producers. [Inaudible 00:07:56], you've scaled your company toward, you've got events going on same day all over the country. You've got crews and teams across the country putting on events or CSP worldwide, is the name of your company, correct?

**Carey:** Correct. And it's our family of companies Carey Smolensky Productions, and entertainment brands like Storm Interactive or Mobile Music Interactive. So we do all different types of aspects of an event, and it really comes full circle

because, again, number one, I like to be in control of the situation because, then, I can be accountable to not only my clients, but I can also control the direction. If there are certain components that I have no control over, then that's what worries me, and we've really developed an amazing team over the years, and really working. And one of my goals also, is focusing on events that change lives and inspire others. And we have a wide variety of clients, and we always do large celebrations which are amazing. But when it comes to things like the Best Year Ever Blueprint, or motivational speakers, or creating the correct environment that enhances whatever the presentation is. And, in the old days, old school concepts were ROI, but really it's experiential, and it's edutainment, and it's constantly evolving. And that's why I love what I do. I started the company 37 years ago and we're still evolving. And, if we weren't, I wouldn't enjoy it and I couldn't do it.

**Hal:** Got it. That makes sense. So Carey take us back a little bit. What were you like growing up? And then I'd love for you to share the story, I think it's just so fascinating, of the first notable award that you won, that you were recognized for, that got you in the papers and all of that. So take just a minute to tell us, what were you like coming up to become the serial entrepreneur that you are now? What led to that, in terms of your mindset, or your upbringing? And, please, entertain us. I love the story of your first notable award. Go ahead.

**Carey:** I know where that's going. Through my younger years, I was really involved in acting and I did some modelling. And it came to a point where there was a competition. And this is during my college years. To back up even before that, I really don't even remember my freshman year of high school. It was a transition year for me. And sophomore year in high school, I became very involved in the radio station, had a radio show, started doing parties. I was on wrestling and swimming, and got involved in just about everything. Before that, it was really a blur. Something just sparked the end of my freshman year of high school. And, from that point on, there were a lot of unique things. I really became adventurous and tried to challenge myself. And I've always lived to want to push myself mentally, physically, emotionally. And, the interesting thing was in my junior year

of college, this was 1984, actually, I applied for a competition. And there were many levels, first you send things in. And I kind of forgot about it, and never told anyone about it. Then, all of a sudden, I get correspondences that I made it higher up in the competition. And then I was supposed to go out to Long Beach for a finalist competition. And what it was was the first ever Mr. United States Men's passion.

**Hal:** Pageant, you mean?

**Carey:** What's that?

**Hal:** Men's pageant?

**Carey:** Yeah.

**Hal:** You said passion. You're such a passionate person, Carey, that passion just slips out of your mouth here and there. But the first men's pageant like Mr. United States, okay?

**Carey:** It was the first men's pageant. It was similar to the Miss America pageant, and there was everything from the formal wear, the bathing suit competition, Q&A, and the talents competition.

**Hal:** What was your talent, by the way? I don't know if I remember that.

**Carey:** It was a nunchaku taekwondo routine.

**Hal:** Oh, God! Do you have a video of that? Is that possible to air at next year's Best Year Ever? What did you say?

**Carey:** It's on VHS. We can test it off.

**Hal:** Nice. You've got the technology. You can bring it to the screen.

**Carey:** Yeah, it was a taekwondo kata, which turned into a nunchaku routine, to Irene Cara's "Flashdance... What a Feeling".

**Hal:** That is amazing.

**Carey:** But the cool thing was, I went in there just because I wanted to challenge myself. It would seem like a fun thing. And I ended up winning the competition. And what ensued was a year of travelling around the country, and doing appearances, and television interviews, and escorting celebrities like Heather Locklear, I did appearances with Glenn Scarpelli, trip to Hawaii because there was a crew in Manila where the original trip was. So we went to Hawaii, which was awesome. I was on the Phil Donahue Show. They did a whole show about the pageant and me. And for those of you who have no clue about Phil Donahue, he was before Oprah.

**Hal:** He was the male Oprah, yeah.

**Carey:** Yes, he was. That was a very interesting part of my life. And what I'd learn during that time is that people are people, and the best way I can say that is there

are so many stars that you see in the news, that, once they're no longer in the limelight, they can't handle it. They turn to different vices. And I learned very quickly that famous fleeting, and whether it's a 15 minutes of fame, or whether it's periodic, that's not going to sustain you. It's something more substantial behind it. Yes, at that moment, that's what the interest is, but you're more than that. Anyone is more than that. You're not the same person you were yesterday, you're not the same person you were 10 years ago. We're always evolving, always changing.

And, at that point in my life, that was an awesome experience, and you move on from there. I expanded my family of companies after I graduated with a degree in biology, I have a bachelor of science in biology that I've never used. And my passion was really in entertainment, and it grew into event production. And, throughout my life, it's been filled with experiences that, when it came down to the book, it allowed me to use the book as a vehicle to express all of these experiences, to share with others, to hopefully inspire, to make people think twice about, "Yes, they can do it. Yes, they are enough. Yes, they can achieve anything they want in life."

And, as you know, we're both very involved in the Front Row Foundation, and that's another aspect of my life, of helping others and giving back. And recently we just had another of our annual company Warm Clothing & Giving Hearts Drive, where we took donations, we created meals, and we prepared them, and we delivered them out to the homeless before the holidays here in Chicago. And we caravan with three SUVs, and we found the people that were living in the underground, Lower Wacker Drive in Chicago.

And we found the people that were under [inaudible 00:15:46] in small communities, and we gave back. And all the people that came with us, if this was their first time doing it, it changed their lives. And these are the things that make up life. So I'm passionate about a lot of different things, but it's interesting, everybody has a different moment in time that they'll reflect upon for a certain

feeling. And it's really great to be able to look at all of these experiences as a combination of one's life, and to be able to share that and create a message out of it.

**Hal:** Fantastic. And I think your book encapsulates that. Now, I'm going to go off topic here a little bit. We have a lot of folks that are entrepreneurs that listen to our podcast. And one thing you've done really well is scale your business. Like I said, you've got events going on, which means revenue coming in. Multiple events around the country, some that you're at, some that you're not. And I know this is totally off topic, and you weren't planning on answering this question, but I would love just for you to share when did you first scale your business? And what can you talk to somebody, maybe a solopreneur or maybe they are a business owner, but they've got one location. What can you share about scaling business? And, by the way, this is really me asking out of curiosity because I'm in the process right now of scaling by business. So it just occurred to me that, hey, you're the guy to ask. So I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

**Carey:** Perfect. I think when everyone starts a business, if you're an entrepreneur, if you're selling knives, or if you're selling insurance, or if you're creating something, whatever you're doing, you're starting off your business, and you are the business. So, a couple of things. First of all, you're always selling because, before people ever buy whatever you're selling, they have to buy into you. They have to believe in you. They have to like you. So, first of all, you have to be the person that you can be proud of. You have to have the ethics that you're able to go bed at night knowing that you're living the life that your children would be proud to know, that your spouse is proud of you, and more importantly, that you are proud of yourself.

So once you're at that level, and you want to start scaling what you're doing, you need to bring people on board that have that same mentality. And delegation is something that, for a while, was very difficult for me because I didn't have the right

people to delegate to. So, as you are expanding, there's always the trials and tribulations of finding the right people to delegate that you can trust, that are going to represent your brand the way that you want it represented, and are also going to have the same business ethics and beliefs that you do. And, to me, a customer, whether it's a person that's celebrating a wedding celebration, a birthday party, a bar mitzvah, as a private client, a social client, that person should be dealt with as much respect as a Fortune 500 company.

And, to every person, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event. For a company, it's a very important event. So, again, it's dealing with the right people that can represent you. And, although you ideally can do everything in your business because then you'll never rely on anyone, you want to be able to have those people in place, and the things that are worth your time, meaning bringing in business, as opposed to things that other people can do at a lower wage. That's where you have to do the differentiation and understand, "Yes, I can do this, but is my time worth it to do this. It makes more sense to have someone else handling certain aspects while I can bring in the bigger business, while I can deal with these clients, while I can do other tasks that only I can do," meaning me in my business, whatever your business is.

**Hal:** Here's a question for you. I guess the bigger question is, how do you find the right people?

**Carey:** That's nonstop process. You're always looking, you're always engaging. And just as you're living life and you're meeting people, you're meeting potential customers, you're meeting potential people that could be part of your team. As a matter of fact, my very first Front Row experience, and for those of you who are unaware of Front Row Foundation, we take people with life challenging illnesses, and give them a front row experience, putting them to the theater, concert, spotting event of their dreams, and creating an event for them and their family. About half of the people that go on these experiences pass away shortly after, but the family is

left with amazing pictures and videos, and experience, and memories of this person living their life that day in the front row. And the very first person that I took on one of these experiences is someone from my neighborhood that happened to meet at an event we were donating.

And, as it turned out, as we were in the limousine, I didn't know the family, they didn't know me. I ended up getting to know the father, and he happens to be in the promotional products business, which is one of our companies, Custom Special Promotions, and he wasn't happy where he was at. And, three months later, he contacted me, and ever since then he's been my wife's sales manager. So you never know where you're going to meet someone or what commonality you're going to have. I treat the people that I work with like family, because if we're going to be working together, you're spending so much time together, you become friends, you need to have each other's back, and there's a certain environment that's created. And I wouldn't want it any other way. So you never know where you meet these people. And it's just always looking, and like-minded people will find each other.

**Hal:** Yeah, they will. And let me ask you this, for me personally, and anybody listening that's looking for good people, an experiment that I try that actually turned out to be fantastic was bringing on an intern. And I wanted to know if you had any experience with interns. Before you answer that, my executive assistant, Tiffany, who is just an absolute rock star, and this is funny, I actually didn't put out for an internship. We met at a restaurant, she was our server. She was amazing. I asked her if she wanted extra work, and, long story short, she ended up as an intern.

But the point is, for anybody that's looking at scaling their business, and building their team, which, Carey, as you can speak to, and you just spoke to, it's a game changer when you do. You realize, "Wow!" Like the first thing that happens that you used to do, and someone else does it for you, like the lightbulb goes off and you're like, "Oh, my gosh! That just occurred without any time, energy or effort

from me." That's really what scaling is about. But the point is, anyway, question is do you have any experience working with interns as a strategy to find good people and be able to test them out before you officially hire them?

**Carey:** We have. We do have an internship program in place within our company. And some of our interns have actually gone into having full-time positions with us, as well. And it's a usually beneficial relationship. And that's something I'm completely all about, because, whether it's with other people in business, whether it's a synergistic relationship between companies that can benefit from each other, or people within the same industry learning, and then some of the interns that no longer work with us will then go on to do other things in life. And, again, we've given them their start, and when they need our services, they've come back and used us, and now we have new clients as results. So really it's paying it forward, at the same time, it comes full circle.

**Hal:** That's great advice. And I think what's neat about, if you go that route of utilizing interns is that typically it's an unpaid internship. And when you're trying to scale your business or build a team, that could be one of the biggest humps. For me, I know was to hire someone and be paying them when I didn't even know what the hell I was doing to lead them. And I go, I'm paying someone and I'm having to learn how to manage people while I'm paying them. And I felt like it was inefficient. And that held me back for a long time, but the internship opportunity allowed me four months to work with somebody and see if they are the right fit, and also develop my own ability to lead and manage.

**Carey:** You just said something extremely important, and earlier you said that you met Tiffany as she was a waitress. So she was exhibiting certain skills, and certain professionalism that you recognized. You may not have had a position for her in mind at the time, but as long as you had the right person, that's the kind of person you can mold and work with to find out what their skillset really is. And there's been plenty of people that have come on for one reason or not, and we would find

that there's a better suited role for them, just because of the hidden talents we never knew about. So it's really about finding the right person.

**Hal:** Yeah, you're right. And if they have the right attributes, the right characteristics and character, you can train, you can develop them into the right person. All right, let's jump ahead now. I know we've diverted, but that was so valuable, and we have so many people on the call that have the opportunity to scale what they do, or start a business on the side and scale that, and even for team in life, or just having people that are able to help you with various aspects of life, whether it be a personal assistant or whatever. I think all those apply to that same concept.

**Carey:** Absolutely.

Hal: When it comes to your book, who is it for, and how will it help them? So, if I'm listening to this and I'm wondering who is this for, and how will it help them?

**Carey:** It's for everybody. And it's for everybody because everyone can be inspired. Everyone needs to be inspired. And some people will take certain aspects of it and use them to find their passions, to identify them, to set goals and achieve them, to find out how to achieve their dreams, things that they never thought could be possible. And for other people, it's something where it becomes part of a daily habit of what they can do to make their life more enjoyable, and what they can do every day to realize the beauty of the world, that not just go through the emotions, but to actually live life.

And there's people that are always looking to do something, whether it's a goal, whether it's a dream, first you have to define and identify it. And a lot of people are going through the set of kind of knowing what they want to do. Yeah, there's a lot

of things they want to do, but they're pinpointing anything. So, for anyone that is looking to achieve a goal, or to achieve a dream, or to follow a passion, they have to identify it and define it. And without this vision, there's no direction. Without direction, there's no plan to get to their final destination, just like a roadmap. So that will be the first step in goal achieving. Then, the second for me was to share that with other people.

The first thing I did when I decided to write a book, in the signature line of my email that goes to all my clients, goes to everyone I deal with, I put in there, "Author of the forthcoming book 'Living Life with Passion and Helping Others'." I've also told the people around me, my circle, my immediate circle of friends and family. And it's been out there, and I now had a deadline. My deadline it was to be done, and I decided to have it done by the end of 2015. And, believe me, it was a year in progress, but the last six months were incredibly intense. So, after you identify and you define what that goal is, and you share it, then you have to really commit to achieving it. And that's with complete laser focus. I have something in the book called "The No Excuses Mindset". And, as long as I've lived, I've never done well with hearing people's excuses, because, number one, that's not in me. I can't identify with it. I will never use an excuse, and I'll jump to another aspect of what I touch on in the book, part of that is to have the mental clarity to make the right decisions.

And that jumps into situations like road rage, or, God forbid, there's a death of someone close to you, or anything negative that can happen to you in life, I have something called the "5-Minute Rule", and that really is getting at the heart of dealing with that issue for five minutes. Now, obviously things will prolong longer, other things happen in life. But if you are in a situation and you have to make a decision, you have to move forward, and you have to have a clear head to make a cognitive decision, rather than an emotional one, then being and remaining in that emotional state isn't going to serve you or the challenge.

And I also look at problems as challenges, because challenges have solutions. So if you're faced with a challenge, and you are in the wrong emotional mindset, then your decision-making process isn't going to be where it needs to be. So that's another tool to be able to defuse that anger, and to defuse the process of just stewing with whatever is going on, and realizing you have to take a step back because once it happens, you can't undo it. And if it's happened in the past, you can't change it. So you need to accept it, good or bad, and then move forward, and be in the right mind to be able to focus on whatever those solutions are, to whatever the challenges may have been.

**Hal:** Again, Carey, you and I are cut from the same cloth. That's one of the most important lessons, I think, for all of us to learn is accept all the things that you can't change, and actively create the things that you want. Fantastic. What I love about this, and I saw Jon Vroman say this about you, which is that you're like the essence of what the book is about. And I think that it's not often that you find that level of congruency with people. Usually they write about topics that they think will make them money, or they write about topics that they research, or whatever.

But, I think that to so authentically live, even just the title of your book, I think really speaks to the value that the readers are going to get, because I think that when the authenticity meets brilliance, when it meets the content, I think that's where magic happens. And I haven't read the book yet, I just got it in the mail, I think, yesterday, the day before. But knowing you, and knowing what you've accomplished and achieved in your life, and knowing the congruency that this book will deliver, I can't wait to finish reading it, and I think our listeners are absolutely going to love it.

**Carey:** I appreciate it, and it's something I'm very proud of. I have goals throughout my life, and a lot of times they're timely, at the moment. People say, "What is your goal now? What is your focus now?" And, aside from all of the things I'm doing, one of my main goals is to share my message with the world, and

to really inspire others, help others, and make people realize that there is more to life than just going through it, and not just being a spectator but being part of it, making things happen. And I try to explain it through personal examples, through examples of other people that have done things to change the world, and just life lessons. And those are things that we all have, but it's sometimes hard to put it into a lesson. And I include many calls-to-action, and many things to do to really create, at any moment, a new direction in people's lives.

**Hal:** Well said. One thing, we did buy 325 copies of your book for the Best Year Ever Blueprint attendees.

**Carey:** And it was phenomenal, it was awesome, and I am very much appreciative of that.

**Hal:** Absolutely. Jon Berghoff and I were at the event, and we were talking, and one of us asked the other, "Hey, should we get a copy of Carey's book for everybody?" And it was, "Of course." No questions asked. I remembered that right now, and I just thought, I can't wait to see the impact that's going to happen even within our community already, because 300 plus of our community members are going to be reading your book here in the next week or so, when it shows up in the mail.

**Carey:** Yeah, I'm excited about it.

**Hal:** Really excited for you, Carey. Excited for the world that they now are get to know the Carey Smolensky that me and so many of our friends and colleagues know. If somebody wants to reach out to you and get in touch with you, what is the best way to do that?

**Carey:** Well, I'm all over the place. However, you can always reach me at careyspassion.com. That's C-A-R-E-Y-Spassion.com. And I'm on Facebook and Instagram, I have Carey's Passion pages where we're constantly putting out inspiration, quotes, videos and all types of motivational aspects. And if anyone needs to reach me directly, it's carey@cspworldwide.com. It's for Carey Smolensky Productions. carey@cspworldwide.com is my email.

**Hal:** Fantastic, Carey. I know where to get a hold of you, and I often do. We've got couple of events coming up together next year, for sure.

**Carey:** Absolutely, looking forward to it.

**Hal:** I appreciate you, my friend. Thank you for leading by example, and being a force for good in the world.

**Carey:** Hal, I appreciate it. Your audience already know you're an inspiration, You are awesome. I love you, brother, and thank you for the opportunity to spread the word.

**Hal:** You, too, buddy. And Achieve Your Goals podcast listeners, thanks for tuning into another episode. I appreciate you, and I will talk to you next week. Take care.

**Nick:** And thank you so much for tuning into this episode of the podcast. So, now we want to know, what were your big takeaways from this episode, in this interview with Carey? Simply head on over to [halelrod.com/109](http://halelrod.com/109) for Episode Number 109, and leave a comment there on the show notes page, letting us know what your big takeaway was. Also, if you haven't done so yet, please go, subscribe

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**Man:** If you're looking to grow your business using podcasting, but don't have the time to edit the audio, insert the intro and outro, write up the show notes, post the episode to all the different sites, and do all of the ridiculous backend work that's required, then you need [yourpodcastguru.com](http://yourpodcastguru.com), where you bring the content and we take care of the rest. We'll even cohost the show for you. Visit [yourpodcastguru.com](http://yourpodcastguru.com) right now to explode your audience and crush it in the podcasting world.