

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Kevin Systrom | Life Lessons from an Instagram Founder (Episodes 335 & 336)

When our guest **Kevin Systrom** co-founded Instagram back in 2010 with Mike Krieger, no one knew the photo-sharing site would become the social media outlet of choice for influencers, globetrotters, food bloggers, comedians, artists, musicians, fitness enthusiasts, poets, podcasters like me, and the fine ladies and gents like you who kindly listen to this show.

But Kevin, being a bit of a statistics maniac, might have had a few inklings that it would be a site worth making — in spite of all the naysayers telling him the market was too saturated and he and Mike were wasting their time. In this two-part episode, we discuss the Jedi mind tricks Kevin uses to solicit honest feedback even when his sources are resistant, how to know which feedback to follow and which feedback to ignore, How Kevin and Mike made decisions at Instagram to best avoid project-crippling bottlenecks, and the strategy Kevin employs for reading books with optimal efficiency.

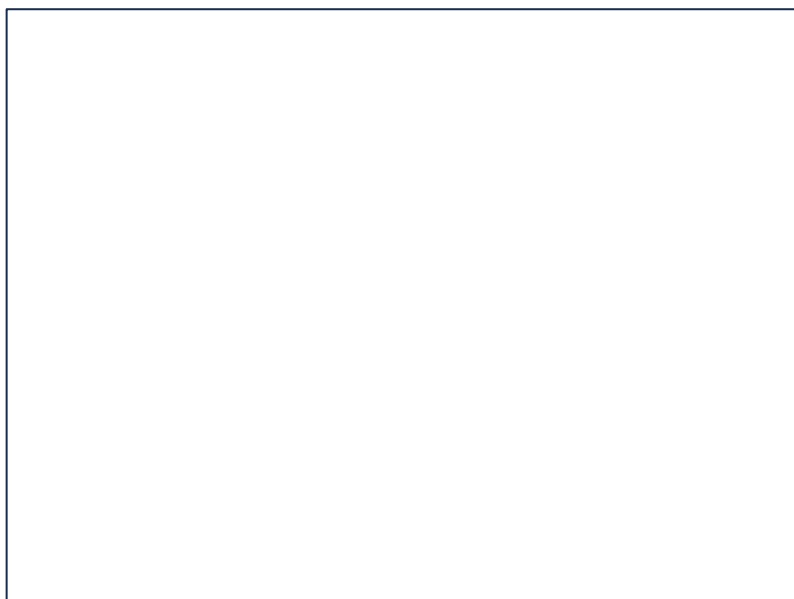
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How to Get Honest Feedback

The only way we can get better at anything — whether it's playing flawless piccolo, baking the perfect batch of cookies, or providing a service that keeps customers coming back for more — is by receiving honest feedback from others. But because people are resistant to offer such feedback — usually to avoid hurting our feelings — we have to get creative with how we solicit it.

Kevin offers an example of how he might get his family to critique his Thanksgiving dinner, and it's as simple as it is brilliant. "I said 'Rate everything from your favorite to your least favorite.' Then they don't have a choice. They have to rank something on the bottom."

The next time you need to solicit feedback, try framing it in a way that forces a ranked series of choices from best to worst. Practice your hand at it here!

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Consider the Source

While wrenching honest feedback from other people may be as close to pulling teeth as the non-dentists among us may ever experience, deciding how to process that feedback is another challenge entirely. What sort of feedback should you take seriously, and what should be politely cast to the wayside? As with anything else: consider the source. If a relative you see at family reunions once a year tells you you should become a lawyer because you're "good at arguing," or a bunch of random people tell you shouldn't start a photo-sharing app because they haven't considered how your unique blend of filters and mobile phone features might change the game, you probably know better than they do how to proceed.

On the other hand, Kevin says: "People have dimensions of expertise, and I think the idea is you have to seek out people who aren't *just* impressive, but rather are impressive on that *specific* thing. I wish someone would write the opposite of *The Wisdom of Crowds* book because it's so clear to me that you need to find people who are good at that thing and just go deep with them and don't overgeneralize."

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When you *can* get it, how do you parse the feedback that comes your way? Consider how you've made decisions based on feedback in the past and trace the sources that have guided you wisely — and which have not. What patterns do you notice, and how might this inform the way you filter feedback going forward?

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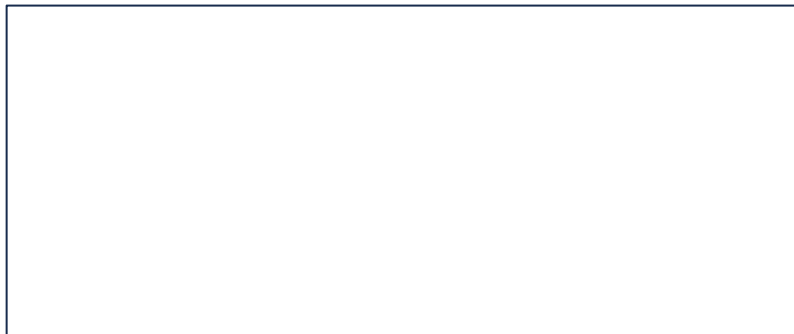
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The Decision Gauntlet

After reading *The Goal* by Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox, Kevin understood that maximizing the efficiency of how decisions are made in an organization can minimize the bottlenecks that put progress on hold.

“We just need to inventory all the outstanding decisions, all the things we just need to blow through, and list them and go one by one,” says Kevin. “And if there are hard ones, let’s mark it and come back to it. And we would go through all the easy ones. Then we’d narrow it down, and then we’d get to like two or three really hard ones, and sometimes they’d be related and complex. But we’d be able to have really ended up conversations about that decision and schedule a meeting for that decision — all the right people in the room for that decision — and that was really helpful.”

Make a list of the decisions you need to make this week — whether they’re personal, professional, or both — and use this gauntlet method to get decisions that can be made quickly off your plate so you can properly focus on the ones that require a little more brain power. Over the course of a year, even a five percent improvement of efficiency is huge — and the more you do it, the more efficient you’ll get.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down their list of decisions.

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Catch Up on Your Reading List

Sure, you've probably been reading since kindergarten or before, but are you *efficient* about it? Like a lot of people, your nonfiction reading list may have hit a bottleneck; thanks to absorbing *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, Kevin has a strategy for powering through that bottleneck that's akin to the decision-making gauntlet above.

1. Familiarize yourself with the structure of the book by looking over the table of contents — what Kevin considers the most important part of any book.
2. Next, skim the last paragraph of each chapter to get an understanding of the author's main points — this is where they'll usually be summarized.

Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here](#).

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About



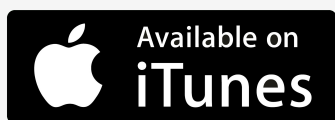
Join us as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers — from legendary creators to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth — and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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