



## STSE Podcast Episode #002

Starting a Social Emotional Educational Consultant Business with Scott Heydt of Refined Character

**GERALD:** You're listening to the Self-Employment Podcast with Gerald Vinci Episode 2

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**GERALD:** Hey everyone welcome back to another episode of the self-employment podcast and [stepstoselfemployment.com](http://stepstoselfemployment.com). Thanks again for listening. Before we get into the podcast I do want to encourage everyone to please visit our website [stepstoselfemployment.com](http://stepstoselfemployment.com). We have a lot of great content at your fingertips and will be adding to all that we offer you to help get you on your way to self-employment everyday, such as daily articles written by a panel of self-employed business owners and entrepreneur's resources to help you run your business. Also, a weekly newsletter full of actionable advice, info about the upcoming weeks show, and website updates as well.

As other premium products such as one on one coaching, webinars, and video tutorials, we are in the fledgling stages of making [stepstoselfemployment.com](http://stepstoselfemployment.com) a powerful resource for you. We hope you will all help us build it together into a business community that will truly help you on your path to success. So today we have our first interview. This interview is very special to me.

I have a good friend of mine Scott Heydt with us. I've known Scott since college so that takes us back about 13 years or so. We are fraternal brothers of Delta Tau Delta fraternity. I have a lot of fond memories of my college days, many of which Scott was a part of. Now we both find ourselves on our self-employment journey's helping to inspire, lead and educate others. Scott is a tireless leader and educator with over a decade of experience under his belt and a strong background in education leadership and educational consulting.

He's also heavily involved with our fraternity at the International level, currently serving his third term as International Director of Academic Affairs. Scott's interview is very important for me because proper education and guidance for kids today is what will make them well-adjusted and prepared for society. Most of what our kids learn has so much to do with cognitive learning, which is actual knowledge. They acquire things like memorizing definitions, figuring out math problems, writing English papers, and learning about history fall into this category. They also learn a great deal related to psycho-motor skills, which are physical skills, like movement coordination,



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dexterity, and strength to name a few.

Being a father of two kids less than ten years old, there's one area of education in my opinion that's solely overlooked and holds a greatest value in terms of childhood development. That is social and emotional learning which is sometimes called effective learning. Scott has recently established his business, Refined Character, which you can check out at [refinedcharacter.com](http://refinedcharacter.com), to tackle this very issue. Scott helps students develop the coping and developmental skills that allow them to face life's toughest challenges. Bounce back, move forward, and stay on track towards a goal or dream. Even if a challenging life event tries to steer them off course.

I wanted Scott to be our first interview because he has such a powerful message about the need for a more well-rounded approach to education and character development. We are recording this interview less than a week from Christmas 2013 and Scott officially launched his business on December 1st. So Scott is literally three weeks into his self-employment journey. I'm excited that we get to be with Scott from the start.

I think it will be exciting for all of you to see how someone with good job security and future growth is still willing to take the leap into self-employment, and make a bigger and better impact for everyone.

So without further ado I give you Scott Heydt with Refined Character. Hey Scott did I sum up what you are all about?

**SCOTT:** Absolutely! It's been a really interesting journey the last three weeks as I've launched Refined Character. It really supports the idea. I like how you mentioned that even at a point when you feel secure in a job and you feel like you're at a point where you're able to really make a difference.

I still had that desire and that inkling to want to come out and do more. I felt like being able to start Refined Character and be my own boss but also reach out to multiple school districts, multiple communities, and multiple college atmospheres, was the way to go. So it's been a really exciting, anxious, tense, but at the same time rewarding three weeks as I've started to look at how all this is coming together.

**GERALD:** That's great! Yeah, and we'll get more into that in a moment, but I just want to



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say, "Thanks for being here and thanks for being the very first interview on the Self-Employment podcast."

**SCOTT:** No, I appreciate you having me. This is exciting for you and for me as well.

**GERALD:** My very first question, and I'll be asking this of everyone I interview because I think it is interesting to hear people's response, do you define yourself as a business owner and entrepreneur or both? And, in your opinion, what is the difference?

**SCOTT:** So I see myself as both of those terms. When I think about the two terms separately, I see some overlap, but at the same time I can really see how there is separation between the two terms. The way I approach it, you watch the TV show "Shark Tank" and you've got these entrepreneurs that are coming in and proposing a business idea. Even the angel investors there that are looking to support an entrepreneurial idea and certainly those people are taking risks.

They have big ideas that are really going to change an industry or change a discipline and that is fantastic, but some of them might never transfer over into the actual business owner side of things, where they are doing the day to day tasks that are more managerial and ministerial tasks that need to be done in order to own a business. So I think its two different mindsets that certainly you could have someone that is embracing both of those mindsets, someone who is beginning their own company, and is thinking big but is also managing the day to day operations.

In my experience, the reason I see myself as both is because being only three weeks in I still have to think really broadly and entrepreneurial but I also need to make sure I am handling the day to day operations. I'm the only one behind the scenes at the current time.

**GERALD:** Yeah, it is almost like left brain, right brain syndrome. You have to have both and they may overlap somewhat. You will be creative and methodical at the same time.

**SCOTT:** I'm staring at a strip of chalkboard wallpaper that I've written all over with big ideas and broad concepts. Then you've got the meticulous day to day things where I can see where I've got to make sure I'm handling where I put my bills and how I'm managing my bank accounts. That is two totally different conceptual platforms for me to be on and this all has to happen within a day, each day.



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**GERALD:** I almost think that entrepreneur really only applies once you're getting to that higher level of thinking or planning. Like in the beginning when you are a soloprenuer there is no possible way you can avoid doing the mundane business task. That is just part of the job. You have to employ both areas; there is no other way to do it.

**SCOTT:** Agreed.

**GERALD:** So tell us about your business and why you chose this idea.

**SCOTT:** Refined Character, the specialty is social emotional learning. You had mentioned that in the introduction. This idea of affective learning there's always been and school has always been the home for the academic content, and the facts, and figures, and what we need to know in order to eventually be successful in whatever discipline we are going to be successful in. But what I'm not saying is that the concept of social emotional education is new but at the same time it has really gained momentum over the last few decades.

Seeing that when we are able to address the needs of a student as the whole child, we're focusing on developing relationships with them. We are focused on getting them social skills and pro social skills to be successful. Then the academics actually ends up improving as well. So Refined Character is all about being able to bring in those services that are going to provide a safe and community oriented environment where the child feels supported. Then in essence that's going to create the ability for academics to be absorbed as well.

On a K-12 level, Refined Character works a lot on things like anti-bullying. We talk a lot about creating classroom communities making sure that staff are knowledgeable on ways of including all students. Making them feel welcome, especially students with special needs and then a collegiate Refined Character really works with. I have, obviously, as a Greek, a mean passion and focus on creating healthy Greek organizations.

Working a lot on the collegiate side with anti-hazing education, also coming from a collegiate athlete background working with college athletic problems on some of that social emotional education as well. So it's a little bit of a mixture between K to 12 and collegiate. It gives a lot of neat exposure and it always keeps me on my toes because I'm able to work with a lot of different aged students and different experienced staff members as well.



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**GERALD:** Great! For the K to 12 groups, what role does social emotional learning play in things like participation, trophies, or eliminating the winners and losers from most school related activities or do you think that is plays a role at all?

**SCOTT:** If done well, I think that social emotional education plays a critical role in having the child have that self-awareness and that self-esteem where the external and the extrinsic reward system, while at first, that maybe something that they were very interested in, to I get to have this particular prize because I've done X, Y, Z. In the end that doesn't really pan out to work over the long term. So the social, emotional educational, I think, is critical for them to have a really healthy self-concept.

Realize that where the real motivation and real success is going to come from inside and also helps them to build resilient skills. So that they understand that A) failure is okay and is a necessary process in any kind of learning. Helping them deal with, okay, I failed. What do you need in order to move past this? How I develop relationships so people can build up to move me past this. And B) besides the resilient skills that are being built, they're also understanding that they are part of a broader community. Where it doesn't have to be a competitive community, where there is one winner, one loser.

I know a lot of people will say "well that's how society is, you have to be competitive. There has to be a winner and a loser." I challenge that concept from the standpoint that there are so many different examples of people being successful when they're working collaboratively and within a community. There doesn't need to be that competitive atmosphere all the time. It allows, social emotional education, allows the student to understand that, and experience that in a very secure setting.

**GERALD:** So do you think that the message we're sending to students when we level the playing field is good or bad, though? It sounds like you kind of you can look at it from both sides and see the benefit?

**SCOTT:** I think that if you're talking about with leveling the playing field, that being the common language out there. I think you mentioned it a few minutes ago, was trophies for everyone. That concept, I think, in many senses, it takes away from the ability for a student to understand that failure is going to occur and then being able to build from that. I don't agree with that mindset of 'let's make everyone feel good,' in the immediate instant gratification portion.



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That's not life, what life is though, is you're going to have the successes that are going to be well earned. You're going to have the failures that are going to be great learning opportunities. And how do you have a healthy environment of people around you and also a healthy esteem of yourself to be able to get past that.

**GERALD:** I can share a little story with you about that, too, with my son Gavin's' little league. It seemed like every year it was getting more and more into this participation trophy route. This past year it just blew my mind. Essentially the entire league decided that every single team was going to make the playoffs regardless.

Regardless of how they performed, they told the kids they were going to make the playoffs. So what happened is none of the kids put in any effort throughout the season at all because they all said, 'oh well we'll just wait playoffs to start trying.'

**SCOTT:** That sounds exactly the reverse intent that ends up happening when that message is sent.

**GERALD:** I just couldn't believe that. Like, "ah we don't care if you lose, we're still going to make the playoffs." Then they all get a trophy in the end. I've never heard of that before. That was the first time I've seen an entire league make a decision like that. I'm sure there's some disgruntled parents out there, or something that raised a stink, now everybody else is suffering for it.

**SCOTT:** Sure and that right there is a really good example of a misunderstanding of what, I don't want to say of what social emotional education in totality is, but there is a mis-perception of this idea of teaching the whole child needs to be all about lifting them up in a very outward positive way.

I say that in the sense that I don't mean that we shouldn't be uplifting these children in a positive way, but there needs to be those learning moments too. We're uplifting them and supporting, but it may be a really dark time for that child, or they've made a very poor decision. Now we've got to help them work through it. So it's not always going to be trophies, and roses, and cupcakes, and parties for everything that they do.

**GERALD:** I totally agree. How did you get started in this industry?



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**SCOTT:** So when I was employed as a fifth grade teacher in Pennsylvania, this was several years back, I had been interested and had been working with my own students on some leadership development content. I was always interested in leadership as an undergraduate. When I decided to come into the classroom I knew I wanted to try to implement just some leadership qualities and principles with my students.

So, at the time, I had started what I had developed was called the six pillars of leadership. It is actually funny because at the time I didn't know that what currently existed was a program that's several decades older that's called the six pillars of character. Again, at the time I had no knowledge of that, I hadn't read about it. What I was discussing with my students was a yearlong curriculum, if you want to call it that. I worked with my students and we looked at things like courage, service, benefiting off of your own strengths, following your passion, living with integrity, and having vision.

We would, every once in a while, do some different activities. We would have discussions and I would bring in guest speakers. So that's where I really got started with seeing the impact that social emotional work could have even though I didn't even have the term, social emotional, in my mind yet. I still have students to this day that write me back and tell me that they remember the leadership program that we did. Then I had a happenstance interaction with someone who ended up really investing me in this work.

We had a staff development and a man named, Tom Sobiek, who has been in this work for many years now, in the educational consulting world, doing social emotional work. He came and provided this staff development. It was completely different than any staff development we had ever had. Typically, you're sitting there in a chair, you're watching a power point, but in this we were in the gymnasium. We were interacting, we were doing activities, and we were having rich dialogue.

So after this was over I approached him and I said, "Hey, I think it would be great if you came in and spoke to my students about one of the principles that we're covering." He was very open to the idea. So long story short, that one interaction, once he came in, I just continued to remain really interested in the work he did. As I kept corresponding there were more and more opportunities for me to stay involved with this kind of work, through Tom.

I owe a really deep debt of gratitude to him, for even being able too finally now step out on my



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own. To be able to open Refined Character because he provided me with the foundation of, not only the experiences to reach out through this, but also the knowledge base of social emotional education.

**GERALD:** Finding or working with a mentor is something most self-employed individuals should really consider look into. More often than not there's always someone out there who's been working in a similar field or industry longer than you and willing to help carve out a path.

**SCOTT:** I think that's especially true with someone who has, again, that they've had that entrepreneurial experience. They've had to make that giant leap and they appreciate the leap that you're making. It's just really amazing what others will do if they've been in your shoes.

**GERALD:** The entrepreneur community, in general, or just self-employment genre has so many people out there that are just willing to reach out and help. There's so many different groups out there that are established. Just like steps to self-employment who are there just to lend a hand to people. I never realized when I started my business ten years ago; I wish I had reached out to some people in the beginning because I wouldn't have made as many mistakes as I did. What kind of leadership development can be done or did you do with your fifth graders? Maybe there might be some teachers out there looking for some 'out of the box' ideas for their own students.

**SCOTT:** I think there's so many really reliable and fantastic programs out there that are being implemented in school districts that focus on leadership or focus on anti-bullying. I think the best thing that we can do is to get just the leadership language and the experiences into the classroom. I remember how powerful it was to talk about courage and what courage really means.

Really looking at the definition closely, looking at examples of what student's thought was courage, and what students thought wasn't courage. And then being able to give them experiences, whether it was little games that could be used as a model of courage or bringing in someone who could speak to that. How powerful is it for a student to learn about courage when they have someone who is a two-time cancer survivor and is now competing in Iron Man's and Marathons?

We had a woman her name is, Jen Polo, and she came in to visit our class and talk all about her



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journey, and the courage that it took and it really helped to align with that definition. So when it comes to leadership programming, it's bringing in the terminology but then it's giving them a context rather than just stopping at the terminology and saying, 'hey guys this is important,' they need to have.

**GERALD:** Real world.

**SCOTT:** Yeah it's got to be a real world experience, someone who is just living it or showing it every day. Then more importantly if you're going to talk it you got to walk the talk as well.

**GERALD:** So while no one likes to think about this, what happens is after the first few months if things don't progress, or the first year or so, things don't progress as planned what happens then?

**SCOTT:** Well let's knock on wood and hope that doesn't but I think the other thing that is good about the sector that I'm in is that if you're willing to work towards it there are always going to be opportunities somewhere. One example I'll share with you is, so I'm working currently as I mentioned, with K to 12 environments and with colleges and universities.

Let's say that those aren't going as well at the current time. Something else that the state of Pennsylvania currently offers is there's a lot of educational needs for people who are working in childcare organizations. So whether that's an after school child care or whether these are service providers that are pushing into a school to work with as a paraprofessional with students with special needs. These individuals need staff development hours as well.

So Pennsylvania has created a certified instructor network that, once you are certified, you can be able to offer your kind of an elite network. You're able to offer education to these individuals and it's in constant need. So there's always these different opportunities that if you're willing to put in the time to invest in them and more to look at them, then you're opening up another avenue.

**GERALD:** What happens if things take off faster than expected?

**SCOTT:** I think what would be, or what is good, is that through my work with Tom Sobiek and some of other associates, I have a number of people who are either independently in this arena already as educational consultants. Maybe not all of them focused purely on social emotional education, but also teachers in the classroom who if I said to them, 'hey I've got this



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opportunity, I need three other people to join me for a day.' These are the kinds of people that would say, 'yeah I'll take a personal day and come out and do this with you. So I think that if it took off to fast in the interim there's enough of a network there to be able to help support what I'm looking to do.

**GERALD:** That's great. That's the one thing that a lot of people don't really think about is what happens if you grow too fast? You see a lot of companies that have growing pains, where they might be selling a product, and all of a sudden the demand is so high that they can't match supply with demand. That happens a lot.

**SCOTT:** Absolutely, and with me being only one person, there's only so many hours in the day. So if it accelerates to the point where you're working seven days a week for multiple weeks on end that becomes a burden where you're not as effective either, so got to be cautious of what I'm accepting and allow to grow at a good pace, but not an overwhelming pace.

**GERALD:** What would you say are the top skills needed to be successful with self-employment? Can you talk about why they're so important, in your opinion?

**SCOTT:** Sure, so the first one I have noticed is that self-discipline is extremely important when it comes to being a business owner and starting up. I've even gotten to the point now where I make sure that every day I get out of my pj's, get out of my wind pants, or my fleece, or whatever I'm wearing in the morning. I get into; now, I'm not dressing up in shirt and tie but I'm getting into jeans or whatever it might be so that there is that mental change and that shift over to 'okay it is work time now' and, especially, working out of the home there.

I'll stop there for a second. Especially working out of the home you've got these little distractions. My dog wanders in the room, and 'Oh, hi, let's play, or the cat wants to sit on your lap for a while you're in the middle of trying to type. Then also having the computer in front of me now, where I was used to working in front of students all day. Never really having time to sit in front of the computer before and you know much of a distraction that can be, too.

So being able to just discipline myself to say, 'alright the initial temptation is okay let's take five minutes, play with the dog, or jump on this website for no reason.' I've really got to be disciplined about this time period that I'm spending is my work day. Then I can do all of that other stuff on the outskirts, or when I have some additional time.



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**GERALD:** I remember when I first started out my friends would joke with me and be like, 'oh it must be nice to be able to work in your underwear.' You'd laugh about it but if you don't take the time to physically separate your personal life from you work life it's going to cause that little bit of lack of self-discipline, I guess. That even goes to say people who don't have a home office but work from home, they have a harder time focusing than those that have a dedicated work space that they can close off and stay focused.

**SCOTT:** Absolutely the second thing I would say would be patience, which I'm always attempting to improve on my patience. It's funny, my wife will say to me, 'but you work around kids. You're the most patient person I know.' When it comes to working with students, I really do have patience and I can really sit down and take the time and work with them. But I don't know why that doesn't always transition over when it comes to waiting on a reply from someone or working off of someone else's time table, especially when you're looking to, in a sense, make a sale in my instance because I'm selling my services to someone else.

Trying to be patient while the process works itself out and having that affirmation that it will turn into something that's going to be of value, but it may not be immediately. It's so ironic that I say that, having talked about that instant gratification, about tending to go solo. Having to teach myself that patience and understanding while I'm running the business solo from my standpoint, other people are out there involved in networks of so many other responsibilities that I'm not priority one and I've got to be willing to be patient with that.

**GERALD:** You almost have to get over the fact that when you start out you have that expectation that almost everybody's running their business the same way that you are. Everybody almost has their own standard when it comes to email. They either feel like it's something they need to immediately respond to or they like the fact that email doesn't require that immediate response and they can just, kind of, tackle it when they have time.

**SCOTT:** I agree.

**GERALD:** What were your biggest fears that held you back from starting your own business?

**SCOTT:** The fear always comes down to money and is going to be financially possible. So the first fear was that financial aspect of if I leave my job, what if something happens within my wife's role in her company. Then we all of sudden now have someone starting up a new company



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and someone who just lost their job. That remains a fear. It's still in the backs of our minds, but it was not going to stop me, or both of us, from being able to make Refined Character work.

Then from a more personal standpoint, really, always the fear of failure. A perfectionist, I admittedly am, sometimes neurotic about the protectionist tendencies that I have. I think that probably anybody who's going to start their own business has those perfectionist tendencies any way. They're going to be willing to take that risk and they're going to want it to be successful.

So I have that fear of 'what if.' You mentioned earlier, what if down the road it doesn't work out? Again, I have to be confident in the fact that if I'm putting in the real effort every single day, and continuing to think about the strategic ways that I can approach things, that in the end it can't fail.

**GERALD:** I almost have like a combined fear of failure and money at the same time. With over ten years of self-employment under my belt I'll still be the first to admit it's scary. Even with over 100 active clients I still find myself fearful of failure. Letting everyone down who's grown to depend on me, including employees, and just people depending on the business itself.

I fear I won't be able to provide for my family and I don't know if that ever really goes away. I think, us, while men, in general, I think it's our nature to be providers, and the hunter/gatherers. And when we're not able to do that, or fearful we might not be able to do that, it scares the hell out of us.

**SCOTT:** Absolutely, in your case, I can't even, at this moment, imagine what it would be like if I had individuals that were my employees - that were relying on me. Right now it's if the failure happens it's going to affect me. Certainly it's going to affect my wife as well. That would be something that the two of us would deal with. When you're talking about someone else's livelihood, you're right. That, I'm sure, would keep someone up at night.

**GERALD:** I don't know if it's something I'll ever get over. I don't know if that's just a personal thing or if that's just what every business owner does. It's like a lot of people when they have kids and people ask them when will you stop worrying about your kids. It's like, 'Never! When I'm dead, that's when I'll stop worrying.' So it's, kind of, the same thing with the business. You just always have it in the back of your mind. You just have to kind of mitigate the fall out and not let it bother you too much.



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**SCOTT:** Absolutely.

**GERALD:** So what has been your biggest self-employment challenge in terms of getting started?

**SCOTT:** For me, that challenge is exposure of who and what Refined Character is, who I am, and what value I can provide. When you talk about K to 12 environment, there's so many different pockets and silos if you want to call them. Admittedly, a lot of school districts will admit that their departments are, kind of, in little silos and they don't often operate collectively as a collaborative unit.

So finding out the challenge has been who do I reach out to that will A) be the person who is going to be able to make a decision on whether or not they can afford to actually have programming or consulting provided by me. But also, B) who's going to be most interested in this kind of work? So being able to get that name out there and what is the best delivery mechanism, because I'm tempted at times to rely a lot on technology and because email seems in easy form. But at the same time, I know that the most successful ways to get my name out are those face-to-face opportunities, those individual connections.

Finding the balance of how can I make sure that there's some exposure there in many different outlets. Finding out who the people are rather than trying to drive myself crazy with reaching out to everyone and just hoping that something sticks.

**GERALD:** Just CC'ing the entire school department and educational department would probably be a difficult task. So with your business, how do you get the person with the financial influence, and the person who believes in you, or your business, on the same page, or into the same room?

**SCOTT:** What I've found is that most individuals who are really invested in their students or invested in education are going to be receptive to it. At least sitting down and hearing about it. What can be offered? So often the meetings and those initial introductions, I don't want to say are easy, but there are more opportunities for those. And where, I think, we make a really big difference in how to get that person to want to invest in you is finding out, and this is true, of any consultant, is finding out what their goals and objectives are for their students.



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Them matching your skill set or what you can offer to that rather than coming in blindly and saying, 'well I have A, B, and C package to provide to you. You can pick from any of the three, otherwise I can't help you.' It really needs to become a, 'you tell me what's your priority and then I'll tell you how, hopefully, my skill set or what I provide can help you to further your goals.'

**GERALD:** I was interested in that question because in my business I follow a system called the BANT method. I don't know if you've ever heard of that. Basically, it stands for budget authority, need, and timing. The second one in particular, authority, just implies that the person you're meeting with has the authority to sign the checkbook, essentially. So you know that person doesn't then have to go relay the message to someone else and then you end up wasting your time dealing with people who can't make any kind of decision.

**SCOTT:** Makes a lot of sense.

**GERALD:** So the next question, it's a two part question. Some people say that the hardest part of starting a business is taking that first step forward and taking the plunge into self-employment. While others say that it's sustaining and building what you have started is the real challenge. Personally, I'm on the fence about that one. In my opinion, it varies depending on the plan you put in place when starting the business. Some people go all in. They put all their chips on the table and roll the dice. And others build up their business, and keep their day jobs until the time is right, then go out on their own. So what is your view on this - Given the fact that eight out of ten businesses fail in 18 months or less? And what about your plans set you up for success in this industry.

**SCOTT:** Well, say you mentioned, kind of, the two different mindsets. I think that when it comes to my view on which one it sounds like the isolation via question is which one I feel is more difficult - that initial startup, or that sustaining. And the initial startup, I think maybe it's just because I'm in this world right now seems to be the more difficult. It's the finally convincing yourself and, I don't want to say convincing others, it's more about convincing yourself.

That the time is right, that you have the skill set, and that you've put the time and the effort into the planning to be able to say, 'let's just make this happen.' Finally getting to that point where you've reached that acceptance that it's time to do this and making that leap is such a different psychological leap to make. Once you get into it and, hopefully, what you're doing is that you're pursuing your passion. So once you're into it you start to realize this is exactly, not always exactly,



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what I was looking towards, but it starts to come naturally because this is what you've been wanting to do for quite some time. That psychological leap, for me, was the most difficult. Now I'm finding that I'm completely in my element. I'm getting to do a lot of the things that I've wanted to do as I start to get more and more client based. I'll get back to one other component that's missing, which is student interaction, certainly, has always been a passion of mine as well. So that first step really becomes the most difficult.

As far as my plan that, I think, is going to allow me to be successful is that I've taken the time to really think out what I wanted to do and what specific areas I wanted to influence in regards to the educational consulting. I don't want to just put my name out there and say, 'I'll cover anything you possibly want to when it comes to education.' I made sure I sat down and specifically created unique value statements of where exactly I wanted to focus my efforts. It might seem broad right now when I say K to 12 and collegiate environments it's like, 'Hey that's every educational component you can have,' but at the same time, within those, I'm very specifically looking at ones where I know my skill set will be valuable and selling that skill set.

The other part of my plan that, I think, is really just innate to who I am is this constant learning mode that I am in. So, I'm not the kind of person who's going to set there and say, 'well I know everything now and I'm just ready to go and dish it out to everyone else.' I'm really engaged in the constant learning with others and my own education. I'm going to be prepared to be able to offer even more to someone else when I work out an agreement with them.

**GERALD:** So why should clients choose you over your competitors? What are you doing that's different or better?

**SCOTT:** So the first thing that I would mention would be just to focus on whole child education. It's not only in the state of Pennsylvania where I live but it's nationwide. There is such a focus on the performance base, and the metrics, and the accomplishments on standardized tests. While I understand the need to track that and to be successful academically, what makes my business different is that you're going to get there by supporting the whole child.

So it's that mechanism of engaging the student first so they can be successful. That's a different approach rather than just saying, 'hey I've got this really good way to teach kids how to take standardized tests or I have this really interesting way to provide digital technology.' I'm not saying that those things aren't needed as well. I think that's just what makes my business unique, is that



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whole child focus.

Then the other thing that I'm really proud of and, again, I get this information from my mentor, Tom. The work that we do is not we're you sitting in a chair and you're listening to a power point or someone lecture for an hour, for a staff development, or you're talking at the kids. It's constant movement, its constant activity, it's constant experientially, and dialog. It's really tapping into as many learning styles as possible so that everybody is able to engage with the information. Then eventually take it back to their students. Or if they are a student, to take it back into their own life. So that's the uniqueness there, too, is that it's not just this hey, 'Come in and sit down.' It's they come in, and we're going to move around, and we're going to engage and we're going to have fun in the process.

**GERALD:** This is a general question for anyone looking to get into consulting early on in their career while keeping an open mind to learning and absorbing as much as you can while meeting with veteran educators. How do you avoid coming across as less experienced or even amateur? Consulting comes down to experience and professionals. So do you find you have to tow the line in terms of how much you work with experienced educators versus how much you work with students themselves? Is this an issue in your line of work or do most people seem receptive even though you're relatively young?

**SCOTT:** That's a really good question. I found that, and I'm very thankful and fortunate for this, I found that now, although I am young, the experiences that I've had have created the credibility in many people's eyes. That would it necessarily be there had I just had classroom experience. So the fact that I've had opportunities working with, Tom, and others to teach graduate level classes on some of these social emotional issues and continuing to do so. To have worked as an Adjunk professor in collegiate areas outside of social emotional education but within other education department at other universities.

Then also serving on a national level as a volunteer for Delta Tau Delta. It's created that simpleness, or for lack of a better way to say it, I know what I'm talking about. At the same time not having that pompous outlook of, 'well I know what I'm talking about and I'm the only one that does.' That's what makes this job exciting is that I can go in and I can say, 'look I have done these things and I've been exposed to these experiences, here's what I have to offer. I also want to hear everything you've got so that we can both learn from one another because in the end it's got to



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benefit the students. So I really feel blessed that I've had the experiences now where I'm not seen as the youngster coming in. I do have a lot of, kind of, that youthful enthusiasm and willingness to learn that comes with it so

**GERALD:** I think the fact that they're looking for you to kind of customize what you're offering based on their needs too. I think that leaves a little bit out there in terms of not the professionalism but, just the overall expertise, because you're going to come in and have what they need before you can really come up with a plan to help them.

**SCOTT:** Sure and something I failed to add but, I think, is accurately a notch in my favor, is the youth aspect. When you're working with college campuses and even with K to 12 atmospheres. it can actually be a benefit as well because of the connection to students. I found that when I first started on the volunteer level for Delta Tau Delta there was a lot of questioning of, 'oh he's way too young,'

At the same time there's a better connection with the undergraduates because I'm able to, kind of, bond that fence between generations. Where I'm understanding what some of the other generations might need that are teaching these students, at the same time this is a whole new generation of students with certain needs as well. Being able to communicate and, kind of, be that path in between since I'm in between as well in my own age.

**GERALD:** You're not the stuffy old fuddy duddy.

**SCOTT:** And I hope I never am.

**GERALD:** How do you go about pricing your services? Are you trading dollars for hours, or do you have another plan or methodology in mind?

**SCOTT:** No, I know that sometimes, for example, lawyers will go pawn or per hour type of basis and then dollars for hours that way. I find that the work that I'm doing comes more on a project based. So, for example, right now I'm putting together a project about how students will be able to become the teachers of teaching anti-hazing education to some of their peers.

So when it comes to a project base I need to sit down and think, 'okay how much time do I believe that it will take me to create some of the source materials?' Then, also, how much time will be, kind of, invested in some of the meeting and some of the actual implementation of this. I'm



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making my best guesstimate and then I can, in some ways, I can use an hourly rate to compute that out.

If it turns out that it ends up taking me a whole lot longer when I've actually secured the deal, well that's on me. I have to be able to eat that and be okay with that because we've agreed on a price. If it takes a lot less time than I've got to set back and realize, 'Hey, am I really providing the value that I thought I would for what the client's paying for?'

**GERALD:** Be prepared; because that's something that you're going to have to do the rest of your career, is constantly reevaluate your pricing. Try to figure out if what you're giving for the time is valuable or if you're giving too much. That's something that I've run across too, is giving too much for what we're charging. At the same time, it's like you take that personal pride in everything you do so you don't want to give less than 100 percent on anything.

**SCOTT:** Sure.

**GERALD:** Do you believe that there is a formula to success?

**SCOTT:** I really don't. I think that if there's anything formulaic it's going to be the effort. I hate to say that anybody who puts in effort can be successful because that's a little misleading. I could put in a lot of effort but it could be very unfocused and scattered and non-systematic. So I don't want to mislead and say that, 'I think everybody that's putting in an effort can be successful.'

I do think that if there's any type of formula that's going to go toward success it would revolve around the effort component rather than just saying, 'if you do this, this, and this, you're automatically going to be successful.' If that were the case than every business, hypothetically, would be successful and the statistic you shared, which is really, kind of, scary; about eight out of ten businesses failing in the first 18 months.

If that were the case, that there were a formula then those statistics wouldn't be as high as they are. I'm sorry to pause you for just a second, Gerald; I have to ask you on a side note, can you hear the cat howling outside of my window? I want to make sure that is not being picked up in the sound.

**GERALD:** I did hear that one time.



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**SCOTT:** Oh my gosh, I'm sorry.

**GERALD:** I was like man.

**SCOTT:** If it gets annoying, I just got to make sure that.... We have a neighbor cat...Oh, it's because our cats are fighting. "BANG, BANG, BANG!" Alright I scared them away. There's two neighboring cats and they like to fight and howl at each other outside. I know it was picking up on the sound. So anyway...

**GERALD:** I might keep that in here, that's kind of funny.

**GERALD:** So while no one has or will figure out the perfect formula. Do you think within your niche you could map out a plan for success with a high degree of probability? Or are there always going to be too many unforeseen factors to move ahead with more than just confidence that it'll work out?

**SCOTT:** I personally do not think that there will end up being a formulaic way to be successful in the educational consulting or even in education, in general ,because of the constant shift in student needs, as well, as how change in society affects the way that education is delivered and absorbed.

I just think it's too... We have that society changes too quickly and in some capacities education changes too slowly. So we have that mixture where we can never really find that happy medium. Where both are meeting at the same road, at the same time, where that formula for success could be possible.

**GERALD:** What will be the biggest challenges you'll face in the future with this type of business?

**SCOTT:** Well one of the big challenges that we continue to face in education is the economy and how it has limited the accessibility to not only materials but, also simply to faculty schools that are hitting huge budget losses. And how that's affecting the staff and that they're even able to provide on a daily basis. So when it comes to me I'm an even more ancillary service and that's certainly going to play a role in being a challenge.

Another thing that, I think, in this work is challenging is I keep coming back to that instant



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gratification concept. Social emotional work doesn't happen overnight. So seeing the success and seeing the success of a program that might be implemented. It might not happen within a couple of months or even a year it's going to take some time. So for people to be invested in it and to believe in it beyond just the first few days if I don't see anything, 'oh no what am I going to do,' that is a challenge. Just to be able to help them see the long term benefit of something like this.

Then lastly is, eventually, being able to expand out the business. From my stand point I can serve only as many individuals as I can handle. So I would eventually love to broaden out my experiences to where I'm able to serve a lot of different areas and a lot of different places but that can't just happen with just me and so many hours in a day.

**GERALD:** So your first challenge with the economy. How does that affect your marketing or planning for future growth? Do you just avoid certain sectors of the education industry and focus on others or do you find a unique way to still work with them even with their financial or budgetary constraints?

**SCOTT:** It does change the approach and the model a bit but I don't know that I avoid any particular area. I know that when a school or when any individual sees value in the work, they will find ways to make that work if they truly believe in the value of that. Whether that's through grants, or whether that is through the money coming out of the district coughers. But what has been an interesting phenomenon with the economy impacting education is because there is not those day to day staff. For example, there are some schools that are existing with no guidance counselors right now. In some capacities it's easier to bring someone in a couple of times a year as an educational consultant to work with the staff on social emotional issues rather than employing over the term like guidance counselor, who you're going to paying not only a salary but benefits. So in some spaces there's actually a desire for a consultant to be able to come in.

They don't have the man power on the ground that happens at the University level as well. Where in Greek affairs offices, for example, budgets have become so restricted that they don't have the manpower in the office to deliver all the programming they can to their undergraduates. So having somebody to come in from the outside, to be able to do that, and you don't have to pay them salary over the long term, it becomes desirable.

**GERALD:** One question about your second point about instant gratification. What happened to education that all we focus on is test scores? How come the other major temples or well



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rounded education have nearly disappeared from our school curriculum?

**SCOTT:** That's a really good question, a really philosophical one.

**GERALD:** You can speculate I guess I mean if nobody has an answer.

**SCOTT:** No, I think, many people will say, 'well it's things like no child left behind and it's some of the different governmental acts that have placed really rigorous criteria on standardized tests rather than being able to focus on some of these other social emotional issues.' I don't know that I could pinpoint one exact thing that changed the environment. What I think has unfortunately happened is, it's all been done with good intentions, meaning that I believe, that the changes that have been made over the last few decades have been to improve how teachers are instructing.

To reach students better and to make them more successful in life. The intention there is, really, in the best interest of the students but the delivery, again, in how we do it has become so my optic in saying, 'well success is termed as this child leaves with this particular academic score,' rather than having success also be what education was originally centered around which was building that whole person and building that mind that was ready to critically think and handle an ever-changing world. So to define your question it's the delivery system of how we focused in on rather than one particular instance. That kind of changed the scope of everything.

**GERALD:** What is your favorite success quote?

**SCOTT:** A good friend of mine from high school passed it along to me. It was the quote from, Teddy Roosevelt. I have it in front of me. It's a long one but I really enjoy what it has to say and I think it speaks to what you're trying to do with steps to self-employment. It's from Theodore Roosevelt and it says, "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could've done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly. Who hears. Who comes short again, and again, because there's no effort without error and shortcoming. Who does actually survive to do the deeds. Who knows great enthusiasms the great devotion. Who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best knows in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worse, if he fails at least fails while daring greatly so that is a place she'll never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor



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defeat." I just think it sums it up pretty well.

**GERALD:** That pretty much sums up what it means or what it takes to be a self-employed individual. I think because you have to fight, and be in the trenches and everything else, just to make it through in the end and be successful. So I really like that quote, it's great. If you could give someone looking to start a business one piece of advice what would it be?

**SCOTT:** I'd come back to what I mentioned earlier about that physiological jump into following what your passion tells you. The advice would be just don't let the naysayer and those who may try to give you excuses for why you shouldn't go into what you're looking to do. Don't let them convince you out of it. You really need to feel confident in yourself that you know something is speaking to you and making you want to move into an environment where you can make a bigger difference.

So as long as you have done your homework, as long as you have thought this out rigorously, and as long as you know that this is an area of passion for you, don't let those people who can always try to find a loophole or a reason why not. Don't let them convince you that somehow this isn't the right decision to make.

**GERALD:** A lot of successful entrepreneurs will also tell you to eliminate all nay sayers from your life if you can, because misery loves company. Some people, for whatever reason, love to see others fail. I've done that over the years. I've tried to distance myself from anybody who tends to tell me that what I'm trying to do isn't going to work.

**SCOTT:** Absolutely, there's another mentor mind and this is just a really intra-fraternal connection here with you and I Gerald but Mobinel, a fellow member of Delta Mu Delta. He owns his own business as well, Bundle Idea Group, and he talks about a term that comes from the Greek world and it's actually used within Delta Mu Delta. Its protocol which means first among equals and he talks about your protocol people who are those people in your life that need to become your focus.

Your first among equals because you know that they're going to provide the greatest value to you and the greatest sense of encouragement. Those others that aren't you protomy people, that's not where you invest a great deal or maybe any of your time. They're not going to be the ones that are going to get you to where you want to be



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**GERALD:** Well that about wraps up all the time we have for today. Scott, I want to thank you so much for all your input and valuable feedback today. I know our listeners will be all the better for having listened to this. Tell us where we can find you and how we can reach you and then we'll say goodbye.

**SCOTT:** I appreciate the opportunity as well Gerald. So if you're looking for more information on what we offer you can go to [www.refinedcharacter.com](http://www.refinedcharacter.com), you can also find us on Facebook, and on twitter. There are links off of the website in order to be able to provide ways to follow in Facebook and on twitter. I'm always sharing some different research and articles that follow social emotional spectrum of things.

Then also I encourage you to read my blog on a regular basis. On Monday's I always try to provide more of an inspirational type of entry. Then on Friday's I always try to do a more practical approach, something that teachers or educators can use immediately in their classrooms and that's connected on my website, as well.

**GERALD:** Great and we'll have links to all that in the show notes so you guys can access that on our website as well. It was great to speak with you Scott. Thanks again, best of luck to you and your self-employment journey. We'll definitely talk again real soon I hope. You have a Merry Christmas and I'll talk to you in the New Year.

**SCOTT:** Thanks Gerald, thanks so much.

**GERALD:** Well there you have it folks. Episode 2 is in the bag. Thanks again to Scott Heydt with Refined Character for joining us today. If you enjoyed this interview on podcast please take the time to head over to iTunes or Stitcher Radio and give us a five star review. Also, come check out all the great stuff we have going on at [stepstoselfemployment.com](http://stepstoselfemployment.com). Thanks for listening and we'll catch you next time.

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