

[Intro]

JAISON DOLVANE: JP Michel is the creator of The Challenge Mindset and the founder of SparkPath. The company that helps kids answer, what do I want to be when I grow up. SparkPath helps the next generation discover their values, interests, and talents, and figure out how they can make their own impact on the world.

JP has inspired tens of thousands of students worldwide to identify the challenges they want to solve and figure out what they want to do when they grow up.

JP holds a master's degree in industrial organizational psychology from the University of Manchester and a degree in psychology from the University of Ottawa. His career has taken him from working in rural Africa for nonprofit organizations to consulting with multinational corporations in the United States and across the world. Based in Canada now, he is the recipient of the 2017 Outstanding Career Professional Award in Canada.

There is more uncertainty among young people today, and it's no wonder. The world is changing so rapidly that it's harder than ever for them to envision the future and imagine their role in it. Many students are confused on how they answer the question, what they want to be when they grow up.

Traditional career resources have failed young people by focusing on obsolete tests and job titles, instead of helping kids understand themselves what they enjoy and figure out how to navigate the modern world of work. JP is passionate about taking youth who feel hopeless, guiding them to understand who they are and what challenges they want to work on so they can thrive and reach their full potential.

Okay. Welcome JP. It's great having you here.

[Transcript]

JP MICHEL: Jaison. My pleasure to be here. How are you?

JAISON: I am great. I'm great. We are really excited to talk about the big question that all of our kids have, which is what are they going to be when they grow up? So why don't you start by telling me just a little bit of kind of your story and how you

got started with this.

JP MICHEL: Sure. Early on in my career met these wonderful inspirational career coaches at an industrial organizational psychology consulting firm. We had a big project with Dell Computers. We're both based in Ottawa Jaison, you might remember that Dell had a huge call center base here, and they laid off almost 500 people. And our company was tasked with giving these people, our career coaches to help them find the next job. So, I met all these amazing people that we're helping people discover their potential, the impact it could have on the world, their next company, it was positive, it is exciting. And I wanted to do exactly that.

But I was 22. So, I was not going to become an executive coach to someone who been laid off, you know? So instead I said, I'm going to start my own business and it'll be different. I'm going to go into high schools, and I'll help students transition into university. I love going to university by the way. So, I thought what a better way of helping students by sharing what I had learned with them.

So, I would go into high schools for free and do presentations with the guidance counsellors on how to sign up for your courses. And then I would hand a pamphlet over to the students and said, can you please share this with your parents? That was my selling. That was my business model. It was a terrible business model to expect, a 15-year-old teenager to sell their parents on something that they barely understood.

JAISON: Hand them a piece of paper. Right?

JP MICHEL: Exactly. It would've had to have been a beautiful pamphlet. I can testify that it was not. I made it myself using words, thankfully though, a pivot happened. One day, a mom called me, and she said, my daughter's not going to university yet. However, she needs help figuring out what she'll do when she'll be there. Can you help her with that? Now, if you're a good listener and you have a bit of an entrepreneurial mindset, you know that you need to answer yes to that question. So, I answered, yes. And I built a coaching program to help that young woman prepare herself for university by choosing the right program for her. And I really enjoyed doing this. So, did she. But we didn't know the impact until her mom called me and said, you'll never understand the profound impact that you had on my daughter.

Well, when she said that, I thought, wow, like that's meaningful, right? Like, how come, what does she mean by that? And that's when I understood that this work of helping young people discover their potential, the impact they want to have in the world and what they need to study to be able to do that. It meant a lot. And I decided I was going to pursue that. And I actually did Jaison for six years in parallel to my regular career. You could call it, in consulting, human resources consulting. And eventually I quit that career to do this career coaching full-time.

JAISON: Wow. Okay. Well, a couple of questions come to mind. So, one, how did you sort of like arrive on career coaching? So, you saw these employees at Dell that have been laid off. I mean, was there something within you that really wanted to like go and solve this problem or cared about sort of, where people ended up in their careers? I mean, just give me a little bit about like, how did you realize that's something that would be of interest to you?

JP MICHEL: That's what gets me the most exciting. For me it's about helping people reach their potential. That's the problem, the challenge that I'm going to keep working on in my life for, in one form or, and I saw it being done in class when I was studying industrial organizational psychology, that's the psychology of the studies of the workplace. And then I saw it in practice when I watched these career coaches meet one-on-one with employees and just giving them a sense of empowerment about what they could do in their lives. And I just thought, wow, I'd have to find my own version of empowering people like that because it's exciting.

JAISON: Got it. So basically, I mean, you kind of like had studied in this field and when you actually saw it kind of in action, you were like, hey, something's missing here. You feel like you could make it better.

JP MICHEL: Yes.

JAISON: Excellent. And going back to the girl whose mom called you up and said, you'd had a big impact, how did you help her? Are you able to sort of like talk a little bit about, sure you build a coaching program, but you know, how did you figure out, like, how did you help her figure out like what she wanted to really do?

JP MICHEL: Great. This comes from asking good questions and then listening. An opportunity that unfortunately we don't have that much right now in our busy world. But by really listening to this young woman, I

understood some of her greatest strengths, her talents. She happened to be a writer and the way she could craft a story and put her ideas into written words was so far beyond what you typically see for someone that age. And there's so many reasons that led her to have this skill. And for me, that's something that you honor in a person.

so, after we did some self-awareness work to discover her strengths, then we looked at where in the world can you apply those strengths that would have a strong impact. And for her, she had decided to do screenwriting. Because the types of stories she wanted to tell would lend themselves very well to that. So, then she decided to pursue, like, what are the best opportunities for me to learn about screenwriting and she ultimately chose a university program for that.

JAISON: Wow. Okay. So, as I hear you speak, I think about my daughter, who's almost 13. And I think I've asked her this question as to like, what interests you and the answer that I tend to get back is, I don't know. So, I'm sure a lot of our listeners and our parents would be, would probably face the same thing. What can they do to like, is there sort of a next step? Cause like, when you kind of faced with, I don't know, like where do you go from there?

JP MICHEL: Yeah. I'm going to give you a few examples, but that's the classic question that we get. Let me add some more to that bucket first. What are you interested in? What's your passion? What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you like doing? I would call these front door questions. They're very direct, but in my work and having coached dozens and dozens of students directly and hundreds of students through my programs, I find the front door does not work. That means I've worked with students who had no idea what they wanted to do. The ones who struggled the most, those are the ones I would see. So, I very quickly had to find another approach.

So, let's call those the backdoor approaches. And to do that, I had to study what are the greatest minds in career development doing to approach this. And I learned about thought leaders and authors that had a way stronger methodology. So, I'm going to tell you about one.

One of the authors that I admire is Mark Savickas and he built the career construction interview. And one of his first questions in this interview is who did you admire when you were growing up? That's a question that

actually recommend to parents who are listening, that they could ask their, sons or daughters. Because, through that question, you will learn about perhaps some sports heroes that they admire, people in your family, older siblings, cousins, neighbours, coaches, teachers. The next question after that Jaison is what did you admire about them? Now you're going to hear characteristics. The person was courageous. They were intelligent. They were wise. They made others feel good. What they're really telling you Jaison is who they are or who they want to become. Imagining listening to your daughter, explaining who she is or who she wants to become. It's a beautiful thing.

JAISON: They are using their own words.

JP MICHEL: They're using their own words. And there's something really special you need to do as a parent when they use their own words is respect their choice. Honour it, celebrate it. This is the worst time to criticize it, to challenge it, to push back, which we might be tempted to do, right? Because we might have a different interpretation of the word, or we might not see what they see, but they need to really own this part of their decisions about what they want to do in the future. So, I think that's one great example of an exercise that any parent can do with their student to help them learn more about who they are.

JAISON: Yeah. That's excellent. Very, very, very, very helpful actually. I'm going to use it with my own children. As you were talking about that, I started thinking about that they may actually say the same thing, which is, I don't know who I admire, but I think back to like I've got three kids and I think back to their school projects and I'm almost pretty sure that at one point or another, they've had to do a project on someone, whether it's a musician or whether it's someone famous or whether it's a historian or something, and they've kind of already gone through that process in their heads. So, we just need to kind of unlock that with your questions.

JP MICHEL: You're right. And it's not going to be instant. You might have, one of your kids that will know right away, three people and another will need to take 15 minutes to think about it. But we're not rushed. We don't need to lock them into who they are right this second. So if they take time to think about like, what are tv shows that they watch, their movies, characters in books, they'll think of someone, it doesn't need to be a real person that they admire. It could be a fictional character. They'll eventually land on

someone.

JAISON: That's great. Okay. So, you kind of helped the student and that sort of sets you off on this journey around trying to figure out your own coaching programs and things like that. So, what did you do next? Did you just continue coaching programs and you kind of built a way of being able to get out of students, the answer to this all-important question? Give me a sense on sort of what was next.

JP MICHEL: I did. I did continue. However, I ran to a huge problem that really kept me and the students from doing what we needed to do. The problem was that they were obsessed with job titles, meaning when they were asked, what do you want to be when you grow up? They heard, I need to pick one thing, meaning one job title for the rest of my life. And then I started digging deeper. Well, wait a second, how many job titles do these teams really need? And then I was kind of seeing, well, I think they know 10, 15, 20, I've asked this question to hundreds of teachers and the most I've ever heard is about 50. Okay, great. So, if they know 20 to 50 job titles, the next question is how many job titles are there in the world? Well, based on my research, there's at least 20,000.

So right away you identify a huge gap. If all we're doing is introducing career exploration through the lens of job titles, there's no way we're going to succeed. There's way too many to know of. The ones that they do know of focus on procedures and salary. Maybe it's doctor, lawyer, engineer, maybe it's tv characters that they see. Some job titles have not been invented yet. So, it's just a poor proxy for the labour market that doesn't work. So, my problem, going back to the issue of them being obsessed with job titles is they needed to help them look beyond job titles, to something else. And the something else are problems to solve. Challenges, problems, and opportunities that exist in the world of work.

For example, I want students to decide, would they rather protect biodiversity and landscape or reinvent the healthcare system and working this way beyond job titles on challenges completely changed my practice and completely changed the business that I was in.

JAISON: Yeah. What a great way of looking at it. I mean, I think about titles and they're just little boxes that you put people in and it really prevents them from thinking outside of that box and they start thinking, like, they need to figure out

some sort of education that's going to put them in that specific box. And this is even before they know whether they're going to like that or not.

JP MICHEL: You nailed it. You're completely right. So how many people did you manage for example, when you were CEO?

JAISON: Hundreds.

JP MICHEL: Hundreds, and how much change would happen in the organization? Like how often would they change job titles? Did they change job titles?

JAISON: Funnily enough, they changed roles a lot of times and we never liked to carry job titles. And I mean, there were lots of employees that were always very, very concerned about job titles, because for them that's what they would put on their resume. And that's what would dictate how they be viewed and be perceived by the outside world. So, it was actually kind of an issue. And I mean, what I would have loved in hindsight, it would be no one has a job title, and we'll create roles and we'll put people into those roles because those roles were ever-changing.

JP MICHEL: That's illuminating for you to say that because one part of me wants to say, you know what, I don't blame your employees, that we're obsessed with jobs titles. That's the system that they were brought up in. They were trained to think that way. And clearly, we both don't think that that's served them well.

And now what you've done by giving that example is show that this is an issue that doesn't just affect students, right. It affects adults and workers and professionals as well.

JAISON: Yeah. We come through the system. But here we are. I mean, you're talking about job titles. I kind of look at, I hear what you're saying. It's kind of like basically saying the job titles are almost like this chain around your neck that you are being forced into. So, tell me about kind of your way and what did you do? And I liked this concept of, hey, start with like the problems you want to solve, start with the challenges. So, tell me more about sort of like, how does that work? I mean, how do you go about doing something like that with a student? And is it just a set of questions? What is it?

JP MICHEL: The first time I really did this with was a student named Anna. And the way I got her to explore challenges was by looking at examples again, not a front door question. It's not what challenges do you want to solve. Because if you ask your daughter that she will look at you with her eyes wide open, she'll say what are you talking about?

JAISON: I hear the answer. I don't know.

JP MICHEL: Yeah, exactly. So why don't we just do examples because could you imagine Jaison, the number of challenges, problems, and opportunities that your daughter could work on? There are so many.

So, let's start with examples. With Anna, the student that I worked with, I gave her a copy of a magazine called the economist, and I said, simply choose your favourite article. She'll see, flip the pages. And eventually, she found this green picture. It was a specialized type of algae that was being used to clean, polluted waterways. That's a cool challenge to work on. So, what we did next is we work backwards. We said, okay, that's the challenge you want to work on at the top, moving down, like, what's the company that's working on that challenge. Okay, we found out in the article, it said is hypertrophic. We looked them up online, they're owned by algal scientific.

And then we did more research. At that company who works there. And then we're using LinkedIn and the company website, we found the names of employees, their track record. And eventually we went even further. We said, well, what did they have to learn to be able to do that? What did they have to learn to be able to work on that challenge? And then we discovered Materials Science and Engineering, and we both had never heard of that. It's more embarrassing for me as the career coach, isn't it? To not to know, but we use the challenge mindset to discover it because for Anna, she clearly understood, oh, if I study material science and engineering, it would help me work on this specific challenge. That's actually what she chose to do. She took an undergrad in materials, science, and engineering. She studied at Penn State in the United States and now she's doing her Ph.D. at Stanford on the same topic.

And for her, we can definitely highlight in the short term, it helped her make a much more thoughtful decision about what she wanted to study, but what's even more important in the long-term is that Anna has the challenge mindset. Now she's systematically looking for challenges, problems, and

opportunities to work on, and that's going to serve her well over a career that's probably going to change several times.

JAISON: Right. Right. So, what you've really described as kind of a system or a framework. And the fact that you don't didn't know the specific job title that you arrived at with Anna it's not surprising because you said there are over 20,000 job titles out there. So that's a great example of actually demonstrating that, if you start with a job title, you're actually starting with a very small universe because it's only the universe that you know.

JP MICHEL: You bet, and that universe, for example, is linear when you're in a high school. Linear in the sense that you study math, you think you'll become a mathematician, you study biology, you think you'll become a biologist. And if that's your only window through which to look at the labour market, there are so many things you're going to miss.

JAISON: Yeah, no, that's a good point. So, I call it a system. I heard you use the word challenge mindset. I think that's kind of what you call it, right? In terms of how you've developed this system inside of your business.

JP MICHEL: Exactly. I call it The Challenge Mindset because it's an accumulation of different skills, behaviours, and attitudes that conserve a student. And I was inspired by the growth mindset and the impact that it had in education to shift people's thinking about how much people can change. I thought that the field of career development was also due for a mindset shift. What are we shifting from? We're shifting from the job title mindset. And I'm just going to highlight that in case some parents are still stuck in the job title mindset.

If you are stuck, you're going to ask your students, what do you want to be when you grow up? And you will also be very, very interested in matching them, being a matchmaker to find the right job title and success means commitment. Success means certainty. At the dining room table when they're sitting down with their aunt and they're explaining exactly why they want to be a lawyer, one of 10 job titles that they know.

I hope I'm painting a terrible picture, Jaison, because that is not the future of career exploration, the future of education or the future of work. Instead, we need to help students develop the challenge mindset, where they explore

inspiring challenges to work on. They learn by working backwards what they need to learn to be able to do that. And success means they're ready to adapt and change as the world of work will change. We all know about the impact that artificial intelligence is having on the labor market. We can only anticipate based on all the predictions that change will be even more frequent. And we need young people to be equipped, not locked into one job title, but ready to solve different challenges.

JAISON: Yeah. So, JP, you bring up some really great points around the rapid change and you also painted a picture around a particular dinner table conversation. What would you suggest should be the conversation at home? What, you know, because this is hard, right? I mean, as parents, we're trying to figure out kind of like how to guide our kids in the right way and how to get them to be successful. But we're also busy and there are lots of things that are actually going on. So, what are your sort of, what is your advice to parents in an everyday situation at home, how should they be talking to their kids or what should they be watching for?

JP MICHEL: Some parents like to start with themselves first, which I think is a very enlightened way of getting changed in your kids is when you start with yourself. And I'm a parent too, and I read conscious parenting and all of those types of books. So that's the approach that I like. So how could you start with yourself as a parent? How can you describe what you do without using your job title, but instead explaining the challenge you're trying to solve and how can you explain it so that a third-grader or a fifth-grader can understand?

Some of us in life, we don't even talk about what we do at work because it's too complex and we assume the other person won't understand, but if we challenge ourselves to, instead of framing it in very technical terms, as a challenge to solve, maybe our neighbours will understand. Maybe our kids will finally understand what it is that we're working on, and we can provide examples of inspiring challenges to work on. So that would be a great way to start.

And then second would be encouraging young people to explore what challenges exist in the world. This could be done through a newspaper. This could be done through talking to people that inspire them. This can be done by asking them about their favourite YouTube channels, Instagram accounts,

etc. So that you can ask them, well, what challenges is that person working on?

JAISON: Right. I kind of feel like all of those are what you termed as kind of backdoor approaches, which are so important because I almost feel like if I were to ask them what challenges they have to solve they would just close up. Like, I don't think there would be answers.

JP MICHEL: It is too big. And I asked the same question to adults who are in the current transition when I was coaching and guess what? It was too big for them too. So, I'm not going to expect teens that have limited exposure to find the question easier to answer.

JAISON: Right. Right. So, tell me about, so you've given me a couple of examples around what parents can actually do. Play that through a little bit. So, they look at, I go and ask my daughter or, as a parent and we start talking about what are they like, who do they admire? What kind of YouTube and Instagram things that they're actually looking at right now. So, how do you then take that information and what do you do with that?

JP MICHEL: Yeah, let's say that you do have a productive conversation and you get a few new data points that both of you didn't have before. What are the data points? You hear about some strengths. I really like planning and getting things done. Oh, you know what? I noticed that in this class, I noticed that here. Okay, great. I really liked the challenge of protecting society from crime and improving mental health. Oh, cool. Those are cool problems to solve. And then you've already thought about, what can I learn that will help me do those things. Well you know, I found a psychology program. I found a business program, and this is what I learned about both. After that Jaison, what the young person needs to do is talk to someone, talk to someone who's working on that challenge now. And I should tell you, that's quite an intimidating proposition because they've never done it before.

But again, I used to recommend the same thing to the adults I work with. And they were just as intimidated as the teens. So, you can make this come to life by helping them think ahead of time of which, what questions they would ask a professional. So, the professional maybe there's someone like a counsellor who works in a mental health clinic. What questions do you want to ask them? Typically, the first question should be, what's the challenge you're trying to work on. How did you get to where you are today? And then

a third one could be what advice you have for me. And just like that in this way of fashion, parents take themselves out of the equation. So, parents stop pretending that they can be the matchmakers, that they will find the right opportunity for their kids. You won't find that, because you're very biased by your professional trajectory, your purview over the 20,000 job titles is also limited. So, you should help them connect with professionals in their areas of interest because their advice will trump yours.

JAISON: Right. Yeah. So, we really have to be conscious about this whole process.

JP MICHEL: I think so. One choice is for you not to be in the sense of you could just send them to school and hope they kind of figure it out once they graduate. The amount of pressure though when they do that is so high because they have so many moments where they think, why am I even in school, some students drop out and then you graduate and you haven't thought through The Challenge Mindset yet, and you need to get a job. You're not a very strong job applicant if you don't have the challenge mindset, because you're approaching it the same way you did before. You just want someone to give you a job description and you follow it to a T. And you know from being CEO that that does not make a very good employee. You want someone who's proactive, who already understands the problems we're trying to solve.

JAISON: Right. So really, it's like start earlier. Earlier the better, because that just gives you time to do that exploration.

JP MICHEL: I love that idea. So, let me ask you, how early do you start?

JAISON: My youngest is a seven year old and I feel like just from what some of the things that you're actually saying, I feel like I got a couple of tools to be able to go have that conversation.

JP MICHEL: I'm with you. So just to double down on what you said, seven years old, if someone tunes into the podcast now, without having heard the start, they will completely disagree. Why? They might be from the job tunnel mindset. Jaison, are you serious? You're going to match your seven-year-old son to a job title for their son. You're going to match them to a job title for the rest of their lives. How terrible, that's not it at all. That's not what we talked about today.

Today we talked about how he's going to learn more about who he is, the impact he wants to have on the world and what he needs to learn to be able to do that and I agree with you. That can start very early on. I would argue that it's happening anyway.

JAISON: Yeah. My guess is it will change also. But starting to move in that direction is very interesting.

JP MICHEL: It will change for sure.

JAISON: Yeah. You talked about some various different tools. Obviously, we chatted about the social accounts. We chatted about; they could look at people that they admire. You brought up some really great things around newspaper articles. I heard Anna with the magazine articles. Now you took a lot of these things and you kind of made it a little bit simpler, with some cards that you've actually created. So, tell me about those and how did you figure out how to build those.

JP MICHEL: I did. After I worked with Anna, I said, well, you know what? The economist, that's not the best fit for every type of student. I wanted to make a tool that would help every type of student find inspiring challenges to work on. And I did that. In 2017 I wrote the challenge cards. So, if you can imagine it, it's a deck of cards with engaging bright colours, powerful imagery on the front. And there's this list of inspiring challenges to work on. And I've named maybe six or seven on this podcast already. I put this tool out into the world so that not only I could use it with my clients, but maybe other people will want to use it.

And I created a Shopify store. It was the fastest way I thought I could put this out into the world, and it took off. People started buying it that I had never met before, that I never heard of. And I wasn't even sure how it was spreading. It turns out that people who are using them were telling other people about them. And now four years later, we have 17,000 decks of challenge cards in use all over the world from Canada to the United States, to the ministry of education in Singapore. It's really changed the way that people do career exploration in high schools, elementary schools, as well as colleges and universities.

JAISON: And your deck of cards has been used by, they are been used by counsellors and educators. So, you're impacting hundreds of thousands of people worldwide right now in terms of helping with this.

JP MICHEL: I think so. And I would say from having spoken to them a lot and working closely with them, they just felt the same way that we did. They're fed up with the job title mindset. They know that it doesn't work. They know that it's way less likely to work in the future and we needed a better approach. And they've embraced the challenge mindset to help them do that.

JAISON: How does this work? So obviously, you've been focusing on people that are helping others with figuring out their careers. So, it's counsellors and educators and things like that. I mean, I would think that every parent could probably use this particular tool. So, is it easy to work with, how does it really work?

JP MICHEL: Yeah. You mean the physical deck of cards?

JAISON: Just your physical deck of cards.

JP MICHEL: Yeah. So, what counsellors use, they order online and then they use it directly with their students one-on-one in person, pre-COVID-19, it's quite a simple formula, right? You meet people in person, you use the cards with them. And I would argue the parents could do the same thing by getting the challenge cards with their students. Now, the next step, after they pick an inspiring challenge to work on that's where things get interesting. And just to tell you how they get there. The deck of cards is really simple. They take it and they separate into three piles. The challenges that they don't like, the ones they like and the ones they like a lot.

And the beauty in that simplicity is that you do take a student who just like you said, Jaison says, I have no idea what I want to do. And then at the end of a three to five-minute card sort, that's engaging, tactile fun. They have something that they're interested in. There are cards in that top pile of very interesting challenges. And now you can start the discussion.

So, once they pick a card like one of my favourite cards in the deck is foster understanding and respect. What a beautiful challenge that we're actually actively working on as a society. If your son or daughter picks that card, you may ask them, why did you pick that card? What difference do you want to

make in the world when it comes to that? What skills do you have that could contribute? And if you're really listening, you're going to hear their beliefs, their values, their strengths, their ideas about the future, their skills, and then this will unlock a lot more possibilities about who they are and what they want to do.

JAISON: That's excellent. So, once we know that, once we have that, how do we then link that up to what we want to do. And I think you had gone through this a little bit of this with Anna because you kind of did that exercise. And then what were the next couple of steps to sort of conclude that exercise two words in Anna's case, you ended up at materials sciences. But for parents, like what would they do next?

JP MICHEL: Yeah. Let's call it research. So, if you choose, I want to protect biodiversity and landscape. Why don't you research companies that are working on that challenge, but this one it's simple. You would google companies that protect biodiversity and landscape, and then on Google, you're going to see the list of companies, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. You know what high school guidance counsellors are doing, or co-op teachers, they don't google that. They search it on Google Maps. This is because they want students to know how far they have to bus to get to that co-op or internship how close it is. And that's one of the things that teachers have taught me about how to use the challenge cards. They've taught me so much actually about how to use the cards. And that's one example. So, if you're a parent that may be one part of the research.

So now your son or daughter is reading on a company website, you know, the about us page, the mission. You're reading the people page, who works there, what kind of jobs do they have? And then you might go even further and use a tool like LinkedIn, or even Glassdoor to see who works there. What did they have to learn to be able to do that? And now you're reading names of degrees, names of college programs, internships, and now the students can sort of say, oh, these are some of the interesting options. Things I could do, things I could learn that would help me contribute to a challenge that I care about.

JAISON: Yeah, it's amazing. So, you've taken this deck of cards, and I believe you've turned it into a digital product also, is that right?

JP MICHEL: Exactly. Some schools said, two years ago, like we love it, but we need to do it remotely. So please make a digital version. And we did that in November, and then of course COVID-19 hit in March. So people, or even more interested in finding a way to do this work virtually, and we've been able to deliver that with a digital version and the biggest benefit, however, has been guiding them in those next steps in the research and giving them reports and exercises that are much easier to deliver through a website.

JAISON: Yeah, that's excellent. So just before we forget, and before we move on can you just tell us the website if parents want to get a deck of cards or look at anything more.

JP MICHEL: You bet. It's www.mysparkpath.com.

JAISON: So mysparkpath, all one word.

JP MICHEL: Exactly “.com.”

JAISON: Awesome. So, JP, tell me, so this seems like work that is just so helpful to this new generation of adults, youth and kids that are coming, growing up right now. And you certainly have achieved various things with your new business and you continue kind of grow that, on a personal side of things and really for kind of the kids, what's your hope, what do you feel like you sort of got out of this outside of just the sort of monetary benefits of it?

JP MICHEL: My mission is that we transform the way that people prepare for their future. And I want the challenge mindset to be taught in every school. And I've had to learn a lot about being a career coach, a product founder, the CEO of a small educational technology company. So, I've gotten a lot of growth and learning out of it. And it's something that I'm very grateful to be on, on this journey. And going right back to the, you know, the early days of my career, I knew I wanted to help people reach their potential. And I think for me this is the best way of achieving that.

The big transition for me has been transitioning from doing it one-on-one to doing it at scale. And that's where the most learning has come from me.

JAISON: Sure. I mean, you're able to impact thousands more people by being able to do it that way. And what about the kids? I mean, the people that you've actually

helped. Do you feel like there are emotional benefits that are associated with sort of this path versus the title path?

JP MICHEL: The title path causes them a tremendous amount of anxiety. When I did research in high schools collecting student's rationale for why they made a decision about what they wanted to study. A lot of them talked about their fears, their anxiety, and the phrase they use is the rest of my life. I am picking something for the rest of my life which is just not true for most of them, there'll be so much change in their lives. And they just don't know that. And I'm really sad and by them not being excited about their future. I'm very excited about their future. And I communicate that energy when I speak to them through my training, through my YouTube videos. And I want them all to get that feeling. I want them to know the world needs you. I don't think they're hearing that.

And let me tell you why the world needs you because there are so many challenges, problems, and opportunities to go out there and work on. This year has not given us a shortage of good challenges to work on. I think students are hearing different things. They're hearing about how competitive the job market is. They are hearing about underemployment, unemployment. They're seeing adults who are disengaged at work. These are tough messages. Some of them are true, right? They're part of the reality, but the other side of the reality is that the world needs them.

And I think once they learn this by exploring inspiring challenges to work on, they will have a greater sense of hope, hope for the future hope for their future and all the literature around hope shows that it has huge impacts on someone's self-esteem, their agency, what they're likely to do in their future. So that's part of my mission is to give them a greater sense of hope.

JAISON: That's wonderful. As you were talking through that, I kind of had this vision, which was, you know, when you talk about titles, you have a child thinking about something that they will do in the future that they don't quite understand. Whereas if you talk about the problems that they may be interested in solving, you talk about something that they could get excited about today.

JP MICHEL: Yeah. You're right. It's concrete and exciting for me, it's not just a nice bonus, but it's part of a core assessment of your career intervention. They need to feel excited and empowered about what's coming next.

JAISON: Yeah. Excellent. Well, JP this has been wonderful. Thank you so much. I think that you've given everyone a lot to think about, and there's some been some wonderful insights.

JP MICHEL: Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

JAISON: Thanks a lot, JP.