

On creating value



Entrepreneur Justin McClure (The Mighty McClures) on
YouTubing, homeschooling, and staying focused.

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As told to Paul Barman, 2075 words.

Tags: [Culture](#), [Beginnings](#), [Success](#), [Process](#), [Focus](#).

How do you juggle everything you're doing?

By being very focused and minimizing the things I don't want to do. I say no a lot. I'm not much of a networker.

How does it feel going from influencer world to product world?

It feels great. Our story is, we had a viral video back in 2017 when my little daughters, identical twins, realized they were twins. And it was this adorable moment that put us on the *Today Show* and [Good Morning America](#). We got 100,000 followers overnight and then it gets keeps growing. And I realized I'm a good storyteller, but I also realized I don't like being in front of the camera as much.

And the machine kept getting bigger. People realized quickly that I run a business and I'm also in front of the camera. Over time, I've just kept my ear to the ground, and asked, "What are good ideas I have that I want to bring to market? Why isn't there a light that works with a phone and a camera and a tripod?" I don't want to be setting up lights all the time and I want something that's portable.

I never liked the term "influencer." I never feel we're influencing anyone. We're just making entertainment.

How did you start as a businessman?

I was working in Silicon Valley for a startup. I was the third person of eventually 500 out there. Then I moved to McAfee and I was a lead engineer. And then I quit all that to do stand-up comedy. For a while, I got a manager, and they put me out on the road.

And that's a business as well. You're an entrepreneur as a stand-up comic. You are trying to get gigs. You are trying to produce shows. You are trying to get billed on a show more than the next guy. It's pretty cutthroat and margins aren't good. You don't make a lot of money. But that was my first intro into entrepreneurship where I was doing everything myself.

Who were some of your favorite comedians in general and who are some that you were happy to share the stage with?

Well, I was happy to share the stage and work with Dana Carvey, Seinfeld, Jim Gaffigan. Daniel Tosh was a favorite of mine.

I got into comedy because of a guy named [Bill Hicks](#). [He died very young](#). He's more famous now than when he was alive. He was this voice of reason guy who kind of looked at things in a different way. He was more of a preacher. I got into it thinking I could be like a Bill Hicks and realized quickly I was just more of a ranter.

And I wanted to womanize and I was an alcoholic. And I kind of went down a spiral out of control for a while. I got arrested a couple of times from DUIs and did my time in jail cells. And I was a really wild person. So I had to shake all that. And that took most of my twenties.

You're presenting such a wholesome image as a Mighty McClure.

As an older man now, I don't need a midlife crisis. I've lived a great life. I made all all my mistakes. So now, you know, I love being a dad.

How do you create healthy boundaries between real life and camera life?

I try to make it fun. My kids are kids and I'm not here to exploit them. They get one childhood. I'm not here to mess it up. Mine was messed up. I know that my 20s were very difficult because of a lack of childhood. There was neglect.

I try to make what we're doing really fun, but at the same time, teaching my kids accountability.

They show up when they do videos with ideas. They show up to be present. If I say we're shooting today at 3 o'clock, they don't show up at 3:10. They show up ready and prepared. And I think that's a great thing to teach kids. You don't learn that in school.

We're going to be done in 45 minutes, and then we're going to get something to eat. We're not a family that walks around all day with a camera like, "Oh, what can we capture? Let's capture every moment."

I run it like a film set, meaning we're going to start at 2, we're going to be done at 2.45, and nobody's touching a device the rest of the day.

So you have limits.

I'm around so many kids and they're on their devices all the time. And the mom and dad let them. My kids will stare at them and they'll come back to us and say, "These kids are on their devices all day. Why?" And that's because we've taught them to find more interesting things in the world.

And instead of dad saying, "Go take a walk," I say, "Let's go take a walk." Parenting is hard when you do it well.

Why do you homeschool?

We homeschool because as an entrepreneur, I feel I should if my kids wanted to, and they wanted that. If you work out of your house, there's no, "Oh, I don't have time."

They get one childhood. Don't mess it up. I do this thing every day called Daily Dad. It's a book. And I actually wrote a book called [Daily Sober](#) inspired by it.

I was reading a lesson in *Daily Dad* and at the end, I opened the floor to my kids. What does it mean to you? We started talking about it and all of a sudden, my daughter, Alexis started crying. And I'm like, why are you crying? And she said, because I don't want to get shot at school. And I said, "That's it. We're going to homeschool them if that's what they want."

So we homeschool, and I'm a teacher every day, pretty much till 11:45. I teach two classes, and then I can run the rest of my business after that.

I try not to waste time. Sometimes it takes extreme focus as in putting your device down, not checking your

email, and just saying, "Hey, for the next 50 minutes, I have to get this done. I have to write this thing. I have to make this graphic."



First day of homeschool, 2024

How do you keep them from getting a big head if they're getting all of this digital clout?

By being a dad who's 12 years sober, who has no ego of my own, who's very grateful everything. I told the girls early on, I said, never in your life will you ever take this for granted.

There's so many kids out there who are bullied. Nobody wants a picture with them. People come up to you and they want pictures. They want to talk to you. They tell you they love your YouTube channel. They're very grateful because they understand how difficult the world can be for kids and how great they have it.

Feedback is important.

Because how else do we learn? I'm part of a group of people with Kickstarter. We evaluate each other's landing pages. And I'm the only one who will just really rip up a page.

"This graphic sucks." Or, "This copy is terrible." But I will also offer suggestions. Other people who just say, "This is wonderful. You're going to kill it."

When I have a skill set in an area and I think I can contribute, I don't want to say this is great if it's not great. I'm that way because I changed my life from people who looked at me and they said, "Justin, you have a lot of potential, but you are the problem in your life."

Is your Kickstarter group Atlanta-based or is it global?

It's online. It's called [LaunchBoom](#). They help you through the Kickstarter process by teaching you about ads, and they teach you about copy and marketing. A lot of successful people that have done Kickstarter have gone through it. It's like an accelerator.

How much of your Kickstarter is marketing and how much of it is you actually need the seed money?

All marketing. I realized was good at making ads. So I made a few ads and I had really good conversions on it. And that's where all the leads came from. What I realized, even though my project is successful, is the people that really blow it out, that [raise] a million dollars, they have like 12 or 14 people working it. It's a whole company.

For my Ultralite, it's me. I made every ad. I made the landing page. It's a lot of work. You got to be really self-motivated when you're running other things. I'm looking forward to getting into e-commerce. Then I can target creators, people who run podcasts or who have a nail business or a hair business, or vloggers.

I designed a light that I wanted to use, meaning I want to buy this light because it will make my life easier and I've never not used it. And that's kind of how I met [Daymond John](#), too. Daymond's like, "You always got this shitty light, this prototype looks like you made it in jail." And I said, "Because it it's great. It hugs the lens. I can put a phone on it."

And once I get the right creator to use it, I think it will have a great life.

So he went from calling it shitty to becoming almost the face of it.

He did that in a very affectionate way. He's just like, "Justin, with all the access you have to buy any light you want, you have this light that you made." But you know the way Daymond worked, he's a people guy.

People asked, "Justin, how'd you get close to Daymond?" I said, "Every time I was around, I tried to bring more value to his life than he could bring to mine," which is very difficult because he's Daymond John and he's got great relationships. But so many people are around a guy like Daymond John and they're like, "I want him to help

me with my business or maybe he can give me a loan."

I didn't look at that at all. I was like, "How can I help him?" And once I did that, he was just like, "Wow, you know, I really like Justin. He's always offering value. He didn't really ask for anything."

And then after a while, he just started suggesting things and helping me. And then one day he was just like, "Justin, man, I want to rock with you. I don't care if the light works or not. If it doesn't, we'll do something else."

Tell me about the impact of Atlanta on your life and work and ideas.

Well, Atlanta's had a great impact. As creators or quote unquote influencers with large followings, it's like the second Hollywood. There's two shows talking to us. There will be a documentary out later this year on Hulu. It was following us for five years.

When other people get successful, they're like, "I'm going to take a month or two off." We've never *not* uploaded videos. Every week we upload a video. I don't care how much money we made at the height of brand deals. And we always made videos because I've always lived in this area of being scared, meaning that it's going to be taken from me. So I got to keep working hard.

I've never been complacent about it. We have thousands of videos in the backlog and you never know what video is going to take off, what video is going to make you money today that you made in 2021.

That's how we sustain it. I don't mind being transparent about it. We probably make around \$30,000 on YouTube per month. That's great money. And all we do is keep the machine going.

Justin McClure's recommendations for longevity

Sleep.

Walk barefoot outdoors.

Move every day.

Get your biomarkers.

Face everything now.

Be curious all the time.

No sugar.

Name

Justin McClure

Vocation

entrepreneur (The Mighty McClures)

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