



**WOODS:** First of all, I love the book, and I'm glad we've connected. Maybe you remember how we first got to know each other? You wrote an article on Bitcoin a long time ago, and Bob and I used that on *Contra Krugman*. And then I think I contacted you, we got to know each other, now you're a member of the Supporting Listeners group. Now you have this book, and you were thinking about advertising the book on the show, and I said, nuts to that. I mean, keep your money. I want to talk about this book, because this is a topic that is on a lot of people's minds. But yet, at the same time, I want to know why should this be interesting to people, other than that fairly small sliver of people who are at risk of, let's say, being booted off a major platform or losing access to some platform? Why should this have a broader appeal and be interesting to a broader audience?

**JEFTOVIC:** Well, I think it's relevant to anyone who earns their living online or any business that relies heavily on their internet presence. And maybe you're not facing deplatform pressures or maybe you're not saying anything controversial, or at least you don't think it's controversial today. Tomorrow it might be a whole different story. But it can serve as an informal disaster recovery blueprint, and it's a sensible way to position your brand. The Australian entrepreneur I mentioned in one of the chapters called "Own the Racecourse" — I mean, James Schramko, out of Australia, he coined that phrase, and it really captures what you want to do when you're branding yourself online, because too many people, they build other people's brand online. They go out and they get a million YouTube subscribers or a million Twitter followers. Those aren't your followers. That's not your brand you're promoting. You're promoting Twitter. You're promoting YouTube.

And so what you really want to do is you want to brand everything under your own name. And even if you're referencing resources out there on YouTube or Facebook or Twitter, you do it through your own domain. So even if you suffer some kind of vendor failure down the road — let's say you have a blog and it's all on WordPress, but you don't want to be on something.wordpress.com, you want it to be you.com that references a WordPress domain. That way, if something happens to that vendor, everyone is still referencing your resources by your name that you control, and you can move things around in the background. I mean, I will say you're an example of it done right. I mean, I've always seen everything you do, you reference through the TomWoods.com domain. Even your podcasts out there on Stitcher and Apple, you say TomWoods.com/apple, and that's exactly the right way to do it.

**WOODS:** Well, thanks. Thanks, and there are a lot of benefits to using redirect links anyway, because sometimes if the target link changes, then I don't have to change TomWoods.com/apple; I just change where it redirects to, or if I want to — there are a million reasons that that benefits me.

But when the reader gets to part two of your book — and maybe we'll discuss this, and I'll just jump around because I can't discipline myself when it comes to discussing this kind of topic — we get to strategies as to how to cope with these kinds of problems. And you've got what I thought was a very interesting and important distinction between good and bad revenue models when it comes to building up some kind of an online business, or doing something online that you want to make a living out of.

And I've seen a lot of people who have a big YouTube channel, or they've got a huge Twitter following, and there's nothing per se wrong with that, except I then want to know how big is your email list. And the reason I want to know is, what if YouTube goes away or you get demonetized? There are people who you would think are in areas of life that are so far removed from anything that would run the risk of getting them deplatformed or demonetized who find themselves demonetized, and there goes their whole business model because they didn't plan for what happens if YouTube gives you a problem. So talk to me about the distinction between the good and the bad revenue models.

**JEFTOVIC:** Yeah, I mean, that's what it all comes down to in the end, because you're exactly right. And so where I come from, my background is easyDNS is in the DNS business, and so we have trained ourselves to always think in terms of: single points of failure are bad. If your DNS goes away – and it's a little technical. We don't have to get into what exactly that is. But if your DNS on your domain goes away, you disappear off the internet and it's gone. So we spent years and years and years thinking of ways of how do you make things redundant. How do you make it so that one thing going away doesn't take you off of the internet?

So you translate that to the revenue model. If all of your revenue comes through your YouTube channel and YouTube demonetizes you, what are you going to do then? And so it's a temptation, because it's so easy to just start making videos, and you put them on YouTube, and they start spreading virally, and suddenly, you've got a following, and you've got momentum, and the algorithm is smiling favorably on you, and you're going up and getting more page views, more subscribers, more money. And then it can end at any moment. And I guess the main thing is, is it in your control or is it out of your control? And that's how you differentiate between a good revenue model and a bad revenue model.

So even Google AdSense, Patreon – I mean, everybody's using Patreon now, but Patreon, they make judgment calls on what's good content and what's bad content. And so what you want to do is you want to cut out external influence or external decisions or external whim out of your revenue model. So going directly to sponsors and getting sponsorship deals with them, going directly to advertisers, having a subscription revenue model – again, that's another thing you're doing right – and content marketing, having other kinds of content, other products and services that your company sells, and then what you're doing in terms of generating content is just getting you brand awareness and getting you more leads and contacts.

And again, you're absolutely right: it's the size of the mailing list that counts. I mean, that's the most important thing. The rule of thumb that I hammer on in the book is the customer or the lead or the prospect or the user or the follower, they belong to whoever's database they reside in. So if you have 10 million Twitter followers, they're in Twitter's database. They are Twitter users that Twitter is allowing you to access as long as they're happy with your compliance to their rules. If you've got 100,000 names and email addresses and contact info in your database, well, those are your customers, your prospects, your leads, and you can talk to them directly, regardless of what anybody else has to say about.

**WOODS:** Now, here's the issue that can arise, though. I want to go to the most extreme kind of case, because you're right that you can protect yourself against this by making sure that your business model is not dependent – I mean, nobody's saying you can't have a YouTube channel or it could never be a benefit to you. But you want it always to point back to your home, which in my case is TomWoods.com. You'll always want that to be your home base. You want the email list to be the basis on which you contact people so that if anything – because you can download your email list and keep it on your hard drive. That belongs to you. You can always back up your email list.

**JEFTOVIC:** Exactly.

**WOODS:** I can't back up my Facebook followers or people following my fan page or whatever. I can't do any of that. But here's the thing. We have seen people, though, who get even access

to an email autoresponder service taken away from them. And that doesn't mean, I suppose, that no other one would take them on. But even that, or even in extreme cases, the hosting company won't host you, or the payment processor won't let you accept payments. Is there anything in your book *Unassailable* that deals with that extreme case, where really the entire world – so yes, you've done everything right, you have focused on your website, but now they're taking that away?

**JEFTOVIC:** Yeah, well, we have a chapter on each one of those aspects, actually. So in terms of the mail systems, those companies like MailChimp, AWeber, they can censor content or they can moderate content. MailChimp has been known to do it, and they just – who did they just suspend? Stefan Molyneux, I think. And your payment processors can cut you off. Absolutely.

So for the mail system, you can actually buy standalone self-hosted autoresponder suites that, it's like an AWeber or it's like a MailChimp, but it sits on your own server, or you can buy hosted versions of them. And so that is your mail system, and you basically are running your own AWeber or your own MailChimp. And what you do then, there's a couple things that we mention in the chapter, then you have to worry about deliverability, because the larger mail services have more established IP reputation, so what are you going to do to improve the deliverability of the emails that you send from a self-hosted server? But there's things you can do, and they start to get towards the technical side, but we mention those in the book.

The payment systems, I mean, that's the huge bogeyman. That's the one that really gets to me, Stripe, PayPal. So I try to frame it that try to have as many different payment gateways and payment entrances into your system as possible, including diversifying out into Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies. Now, it's hard to earn a living off of the cryptos, but what you can do is you can earn a steady trickle of crypto and just kind of put it aside, and if the price ever moves to another super spike, you've got that sitting there. But having either your own merchant account or multiple payment gateways, again, it's that redundancy factor.

As far as the web hosting goes, the important thing is to have your content, your data, and your configurations backed up and have them away from where you're hosting them under your own control. And combined with having control over your domain name, if your web host takes you down, you then have the ability to set back up on another platform and just you change your domain and your DNS to point to the new platform. You can even have what I call hot spare setup, so you have a complete copy of your data set up, like a second TomWoods.com set up on a completely different provider, and if something happens to the first one, you can just flip your DNS to move over to the second one. That can even happen automatically, actually.

**WOODS:** All right, so in other words, are you saying that even in the last resort, where the whole world has thrown everything it has at you, if you are really determined to stay afloat, it can be done?

**JEFTOVIC:** It can be done. It can be difficult. There are some places that are – it's getting to the point where some places really are almost too hot for the internet, and then what happens – and I mentioned this in the chapter where we talk about if deplatforming even works – is a place like 8chan. They're trying to come back online. They're doing it with a mixed degree of success, but then they metastasize out onto the dark web, and so now they're out there on onion sites where they're truly beyond the control of everybody. So as a very last resort, you can end up there. But for the most part, yeah, if you keep control over all of that infrastructure yourself, you are pretty unkillable from that perspective, and you can always get back online.

**WOODS:** All right, well, this is actually fairly encouraging to hear. As libertarians, of course, we have to deal with this question about you get banned from Facebook. Well, you know, Facebook's a private company. And there are several different ways people have dealt with that. One is to say, Facebook is a private company, but it's so, so influential, that if it takes you down, it ruins your life, and so they should be regulated as a public utility. Or some

people have said, if they take you down arbitrarily, they're violating their own terms of service, and we should believe in upholding that. Or you'll hear it said, Facebook is not really a private company because it gets this or that subsidy. So you get all this sort of thing. Or you get libertarians who say, *yeah, Facebook can do anything they want*. But okay, so what then? Why can't we criticize them for it? Or why can't we prepare ourselves for when these things do happen?

And then you get the libertarians who just dance on the graves of people who get deplatformed and say, well, that's the free market speaking. They look at five or six transactions on the free market, and they say that's the free market speaking. It is absolutely bizarre to me. If somebody sold you a broken toaster, you wouldn't say to them, "Well, that's the free market." What is wrong with these people? And even if I accept that Facebook's a private company and in principle can do whatever it wants, I see no reason why I'm not allowed to be concerned about this, why I'm not allowed to comment on it as a libertarian. Why not? Why can't I be interested in other things? I just don't get that.

But how do you handle that whole *You're a libertarian, and so what's the big deal?*

**JEFTOVIC:** Yeah, I mean, I've struggled with this question probably more than any other question for all of the reasons that you just went through. I mean, if they violate their own terms of service, like to us libertarians, your contract is a contract between us. It's sacred. So voluntary agreements entered into by both parties is above everything else. So if one side violates that agreement, then you have a legitimate grievance against that party. Unfortunately, the reality today most of the time, most of these platforms their terms of service are written in one-sided, take-it-or-leave-it manners, so usually it's probably hard to actually get them on that front.

And the other thing about this aspect that I hope happens someday is there's a tortious interference aspect to this, as well. If I have a deal going with, let's say you, and then suddenly a bunch of hysterical social justice warriors come along and start calling one of us racist or whatever till the other one sort of says, *Well, I'm going to drop this person because these people are leaning on me to do it*, that's interference into a third-party contract, and I would love for someday somebody to take action on that and win. But it's really hard to do that.

But when I think it through in terms of the long-term vision of this or the long-term implications of this, I really have to fall back to I guess almost a faith in market forces to say that when these companies are doing this, they are basically incentivizing their own disruption. And if this day and age has proven anything to us, it's that no matter how entrenched and how big and how ensconced an incumbent is, they can be disrupted over time. And so I really do think that if they continue to enforce their AUPs or ToS in very one-sided, capricious manners, then they're going to incentivize challengers to disrupt them away.

And you see that happen with alternative platforms coming up like Mastodon and Gab and Minds and other things like that. So I think it is happening, and this is the kind of thing that actually gives momentum to all of those rising challengers.

**WOODS:** Yeah, of course, we all know that it's hard to be a challenger here. You're right that there are these alternatives, and some of them had a decent number of people. It's not clear how many of those people are really active on those platforms, because it's hard to get somebody to adjust his normal social media behavior and say no, start this brand-new one where there's nobody over there yet. And then you've got to get enough of them — we all know that problem.

**JEFTOVIC:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. It's network effect working for you or against you. I think that's why approaches like Mastodon actually show the most promise, because people are moving on to Mastodon and it's interoperating with Twitter, so it's this gradual effect over time

of users are sort of diffusing out of the centralized Twitter onto the decentralized Mastodon. It doesn't change the user experience for a lot of these people. They still see the same material coming across their timelines, but they may not even be aware that if you follow me on Twitter, most of the stuff that you see there is coming off of my Mastodon feed. And then eventually, hopefully some catalyst will occur that will get the Mastodon decentralized federation some critical mass to really, really blast off.

**WOODS:** You have a point in here about publicity and good publicity and the old expression about all publicity is good publicity, or there's no such thing as bad publicity. And by the way, I agree with that up to a point. But if somebody went around and said, "This person is a pedophile," over and over and over — like, I don't think Harvey Weinstein is getting good publicity. I think that's all bad publicity. That genuinely is bad publicity. But there may still be something to that insight.

And I was thinking about — not that I would do it, but I was wondering about the viability of a site called something like the Banned People Network, where you take people who have been deplatformed — and some of them, like Daniel McAdams of the Ron Paul Institute, are you kidding me? Like they took him off Twitter on the most preposterous grounds imaginable. So the Banned People Network, so you actually take the thing that the social media people want to brand them with, *they've been banned*, and you play it up as a favorable thing. Like, look, I'm the sort of person who's enough of a dissident that I actually get banned from these sort of platforms.

The problem with that would be if you have a platform whose contributors have only in common that they've been kicked off something, it's not a good enough thing to unite a platform. And secondly, some of the people, if I were running it, some of the people who've been banned, I wouldn't want to feature on my platform. I wouldn't want to invite them. So then if I didn't, then I would be accused of being inconsistent. And I'd say, eh, yeah, to heck with it. But at the same time, there is a sense in which if you position yourself as the most banned name in such-and-such field, well, that does generate a little curiosity. You might as well run with it.

**JEFTOVIC:** Yeah, I mean, that is starting to happen. I call that the Secret Society of Supervillains in the book, right, after there's an old DC Comics series by that name when I was a kid growing up. But you see that happening now, you have even people who haven't been deplatformed yet, like Jordan B. Peterson and Sam Harris are starting Think Spot. And so that's their whole ethos, is that we're going to create a place for people who are being cancelled, and we're not going to do that, where the content creators are in charge. So they haven't launched yet, but I still get the emails. There's also Subscribe Star, which is like an alternative to Patreon, that specifically says no arbitrary cancel decisions, no inscrutable Terms of Service. It's just create your content and put it out, and we're not going to be a nanny, helicopter-parenting your content.

So that kind of thing is happening. You're right. There's this effect that sometimes if all of these people who have been banned from various platforms coagulate into another platform, then it almost kind of disincentivizes what I call the normies from using that platform, because it's all these scary banned people over there. And I think to some extent, that's what's affecting Gab these days, because people just equate Gab with all kinds of — I mean, people in the mainstream who are maybe on side with all of this deplatforming look at Gab, and they go, oh, well, this is where all the crazy banned people go. But there's a lot of normal people over there, as well, but it tends to get that kind of stigma about it. And that's a real problem, too. And I don't have an answer for that other than those platforms or those destinations have work to do to sort of advocate for themselves, to say no, we're a legitimate place, we're a legitimate source, and anyone who's just going on hearsay or stigma, you have to sort of somehow overcome those objections. And it's an uphill battle. It's not going to be easy.

**WOODS:** Let's wrap up with this. Tell me, if we're dealing with somebody who wants to have a voice, wants to not just have a blog about his stamp collection, but really wants to be part of, let's say, the political conversation, what is the bare minimum that that person should do with his platform to make him, to quote the title of your book, unassailable? What's the bare minimum that everybody should do that doesn't require huge technical know-how or a tremendous amount of work?

**JEFTOVIC:** So get your own domain name. Get a website, like us an easy-to-use CMS, like WordPress is the most popular one, or Drupal to a lesser extent. Get a web hosting service some place. Start collecting emails. Get user contact in your own database. And have everything backed up on a system control. That's the bare minimum.

**WOODS:** Okay, and all this stuff is talked about and described very nicely in your book. And so I almost don't think I need to sell this book really to people, because it should be obvious why they need it. And it doesn't take that long to read. It has a foreword by Charles Hughes Smith, whose writing I like very much. So the book is *Unassailable: Protect Yourself From Deplatform Attacks, Cancel Culture, and Other Online Disasters*. So of course I'll link to the book at [TomWoods.com/1588](http://TomWoods.com/1588). How else can people get it? And tell me about your own website and company and all that as we finish up.

**JEFTOVIC:** Great. Well, my day job is I am the CEO of EasyDNS.com. So we're a managed DNS provider, we're a domain registrar, and we do web hosting and email hosting. And we also put out a weekly tech digest. It's called *Access of Easy*, and it's not like a corporate newsletter; we cover cyber security, privacy, censorship, free speech issues. So it's different from your typical company newsletter. And a lot of people actually — if we don't send it out some weeks, people email me and they say, "Where's *Access of Easy*? How come it's not coming out this week?" So you can get to that easily on [AccessOfEasy.com](http://AccessOfEasy.com). That just redirects to our opt-in page. And that's about it.

**WOODS:** All right, so there it is, folks. Go grab a copy of *Unassailable*, especially all you content creators or would-be content creators out there. You're going to be glad you took Mark's advice. Mark, thanks for your time and for the book.

**JEFTOVIC:** Thanks, Tom. Thanks for having me.