

CAREER LESSON LEARNED: GEIST USSERY

Disclaimer: Some of the content and information mentioned in this episode might no longer be applicable. This includes references to specific links, courses, or programs. As a result, all the links mentioned will now redirect you to our current website. There, you'll find up-to-date information, resources, and exciting new content to support your journey. We appreciate your understanding and unwavering support.

Hello, my friends. It's a great day today.

I just have to celebrate because first of all, this is my 25th podcast episode. I know 25 sounds like a small number, but I honestly can't believe it. I've been doing this podcast every week, except for one for the last 25 weeks. And for me, that's huge. I mean, 25 podcast episodes starting from nothing, not knowing how to do a podcast, not knowing what I was going to talk about, putting this whole thing together, and then consistently providing value to other people for 25 weeks, I am bragging. I feel like this goes to my brag book because I love this whole podcast thing.

I love doing the podcast, and I love talking to people. I just love putting this out there for you. I love the response I get as well. I'm so excited that there are people out there getting value from this. That has always been my objective. So I'm feeling great about hitting 25.

Today, in honor of this 25th podcast episode, I want to introduce a new idea to the types of episodes that I bring to you. This episode is going to be called *Lessons Learned from Real Careers*. I might just call it *Lessons Learned*. But the idea here is that we start interviewing people who have found themselves stuck somewhere in their career for whatever reason, learning about why they got stuck, and learning about how they turned themselves around and got themselves stuck.

This won't be every episode. But this will be something that I bring back consistently so you can hear the real stories of people and what they're doing. These people are not necessarily my clients. Some of them will be my clients. I just want you to hear real stories from real people, what's going on in their lives, the real struggles that they faced, the real evolutions that they took, and what they did that worked for them. I know that so many of you are going to be able to see yourself in these situations because confusing career situations happen to all of us. There's nothing unusual about that.

The whole purpose of this podcast is about you getting the support that you need to find your way through these situations, getting the support from others, helping you find your own strength, helping you sort through your

own mindset, all the BS that's going up on in your brain, cleaning that all out, and getting yourself in a situation where you can move forward.

So if you have a story that you want to share, that's going to inspire people, I would love for you to email me at mel@melsavage.com, and let's talk about your story. Let's talk about how your story can support people. But today, I am talking to Geist Ussery. I love his name, Geist Ussery. I met him just recently. As some of you may know, I am hiding out from the Canadian winter down here in Hilton Head, South Carolina. Part of my grand plan is to be able to build a business that allows me to work remotely so I can get the heck out how to dodge well when the winter comes.

I met Geist through a friend of mine named Laurie. Actually, Laurie is an ex-boss of mine. She was my favorite boss of all time. Honestly, just a fantastic leader. I've stayed in touch with her. And she's helped me so much in my life and in my career. She introduced me to Geist because Geist had a tough couple of years in his career. And he agreed to share his lessons learned as he worked through his career challenges.

The situation that he was facing wasn't a total career shift. He didn't change his career. He loved what he did. He just didn't love where he was doing it. He didn't love how his career was evolving. So it wasn't a career shift. I'll call it a situational shift. And a situational career shift also feels so challenging when you're in the middle of it is such a tough situation. It feels like such a tough situation that comes with its own unique challenges. So when I talk about the career reset, it isn't all about making a career change.

In fact, that is really a small percentage of what I work with. When I work with people, a career reset is also about changing or resetting your career situation to one that works for you. Sometimes, like I said, it's not about making a career change. Sometimes, it's about making the mindset shift that you need to make to allow yourself to enjoy what you're doing. Actually, all of that comes up in Geist's story. He's had a lot of key lessons that he learned along the way. Some of them are really common ones that we all face but we can't see when we're in it.

That's why I think Geist's story is going to be so relevant for you. Plus, Geist is just a really fun character. He's just a really nice guy so I know you're going to enjoy this. Let me introduce you to Geist Ussery. And I will talk to you after his story.

Mel Savage: Hello, Geist. How are you today?

Geist Ussery: Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you.

Mel Savage: I'm so excited. First of all, I don't think that I've ever interviewed someone live in their home before. You have a beautiful home here. Tell us a little bit about the history of this place.

Geist Ussery: A little cottage that was built in 1906. It was actually the rectory for the Methodist minister. It was on historic Calhoun Street and then in the 50s, I think they moved it here onto Confederate Avenue. The reason they call it Confederate Avenue is the house has mounds all around where the Confederate Army actually dug in during the Civil War. So there's a lot of history in the area.

Mel Savage: Wow. I hear there's a ghost in your house, too.

Geist Ussery: Yes, there is. And I'm pretty sure he's a Confederate soldier.

Mel Savage: Wow. This house is amazing. Thank you so much for having me here today. So you and I met through a mutual friend. One of the things she was telling me about is the journey you went through in your career where you found yourself in a place where you were unhappy, and the journey took to find a career that really makes you happy now. We had a chance to talk about that and you agreed to come forward and share that with my listeners so thank you very much.

Geist Ussery: Happy to do it.

Mel Savage: So let's start at the beginning a little bit. Let's talk a little bit about what you do.

Geist Ussery: I am a private chef and boutique caterer. So I do events for smaller parties of 50 people or below and I've done more but it's kind of the area that I play in. I do everything from florals to the whole event design to the food, and everything.

Mel Savage: I've been to one of Geist's parties and it was very yummy and it was beautiful. So you were doing that before you found yourself in this tougher career situation. So tell us a little bit about what happened.

Geist Ussery: I got bigger and as I grew, the best way to put it is it got out of control. I didn't grow with the business the way I should have. It got ahead of me and I lost control of it. Therefore, I lost control of myself.

Mel Savage: So you lost control a bit like it was growing faster than you could handle.

Geist Ussery: Absolutely.

Mel Savage: How are you feeling at that moment?

Geist Ussery: Panicked, stressed. How do I keep up? How do I do everything that I need to do to keep what I do and the integrity of my work? And so your decisions and choices are made quickly and not soundly. I guess it's the best way to do it.

Mel Savage: So you're in this panic state where your business is doing really well but you can't keep up. And so you decide to make a huge career decision at that moment.

Geist Ussery: Right. Desperate people do desperate things. That's always the case. My biggest takeaway from everything is that I made choices out of being desperate and panicked, which I will never, ever do again. Ever.

Mel Savage: So in this case, you decided to get into a business with someone.

Geist Ussery: Right. A partnership. It was based solely on the fact that I needed help. I didn't need a partner, I just needed to hire people.

Mel Savage: This was an easy solution that came right to you, right?

Geist Ussery: Right. Somebody presented themselves as *"Let me help you."* And it was not a very good choice. Those kinds of things, when you do stuff like that, you need to be in a clear place and a clear mind. You don't need to be making any decisions and choices based on panic, fear, or desperation.

Mel Savage: That happens so often. I know that you are an entrepreneur and this is what happened to you. But it happens even in the corporate world. Like you are in a job or in an organization where you don't like what you're doing and maybe you've lost your confidence, or if you've lost your perspective, and something shiny comes along. Someone says, *"If you're unhappy, I have this job over here."* Or *"You can come to work at this company."* And you take it without thinking about whether it's the right move for you and your career overall.

Geist Ussery: Yes. You bite.

Mel Savage: You bite because you're thinking, *"Okay, this is easy. I can just do this and try to get out of this bad situation. And I'll worry about what happens next later."* It's a very common situation that happens to so many people. You're freaking out for whatever reason, and then you hope something would happen.

Geist Ussery: You make a rash decision that should not be made. Ever.

Mel Savage: Right. So you got into this situation, which you found out quickly or not quickly that it wasn't working for you.

Geist Ussery: Oh, it was quickly. But when you're knee-deep into something, you're like, *"Oh, God, I got to see this through."* I didn't trust my decisions or choices at that point anymore. I figured, maybe I was overthinking this and instinctually, I knew immediately that I had definitely made a not-a-very-good choice or decision. But with that being said, all the things that came from it, there were health issues from just being worn out that I guess made me look at things even more.

Mel Savage: So you figured out this is the wrong situation, but you stuck with it because you got, *Okay, I got my big boy pants on. I'm an adult. I made this decision, I'm going to stick with it.* So many people stick with it, because they think *Okay, I made this decision even though I don't feel like it's the right thing for me.* What happened to you after that?

Geist Ussery: I stepped away from everything. I turned 50. I had some health issues. I was really unhappy with everything that was going on around me. When you think that you're being so, as what you would say, measure success is everybody wanting to do business with you, and you're busy; I didn't feel successful. So I was like, what the hell is going on here? I am not happy. I should be happy, everybody wants me. I mean, this is what people measure success by.

A girlfriend of mine, a really, really good friend of mine said, *"We're going to go Greece for your 50th. Are you ready to go?"* And I said, *"Yeah, I'm going to do that."* I stepped away. I stepped out of the woods, so to speak. I was with really good friends and they were going, *"What the hell was going on with you? Where is your head? Where are you?"* More importantly.

Mel Savage: That's what it feels like. It feels like you're in the woods. You can't see above the trees. You just are like, where's where's the next path? I have to go now. And it's stressful. It's almost cumulative. You made this one decision out of stress to actually get into business and it just kept piling up and a lot of people will feel more insecure, more angry, less confident, and you start just making more and more bad decisions out of emotion.

Geist Ussery: It's snowball. The bottom line is, what I realized when I realized what was going on. I had that aha moment. It really was on this vacation with really, really good friends and I was surrounded by so much beauty, and being the creative type that I am, every corner I cut, it was just like, this is gorgeous.

In Greece, I saw this little old man walking a donkey with a neckerchief. He's happy. He's taking the trash up and down this little mountainside. He could not have been happier every day. I saw people doing these jobs, and they were happy. And I was like, I want to be that damn man with the donkey. He was so content. I was like, guess what, the only person in charge of that's me.

Mel Savage: And your friends are holding up a mirror saying, "*What the hell is wrong with you?*" So you had this turning point. You still are doing the same thing. You're still doing decorating, organizing parties, doing the food, all of that stuff. It's not that you needed a career change, but you needed a situational change for yourself.

Geist Ussery: I needed to get me back.

Mel Savage: When you made the decision to get *you* back, were you clear about what you needed to be successful in that moment?

Geist Ussery: No, I really wasn't. I just knew that there needed to be a change. And I needed to make it. I wasn't quite sure what was going to transpire but I took a leap of faith. I was just like, whatever I'm doing now is not working for me so I need to go find me. Where am I? So I went back to what I know best, which was me.

Mel Savage: I want to explore that a bit because we talked about it at the beginning, like when you're feeling really emotional, or you're stuck or you feel trapped, and then you make a decision from that place, it isn't always a bad decision. So in this case, you were still feeling emotional and trapped, like you were in a corner. But this time, the decision seemed a bit more focused. So what what did you see as the difference at that moment?

Geist Ussery: To be honest with you, when I made the choice to get *me* back, that freed me. It was like a weight was lifted. I mean, there's fear involved, because you're like, Oh, my God, what am I doing? Is this good? This could ruin what I do, or is it going to hurt my reputation and my business? My name? But then I said, you know what, no. I mean, I do what I do, and people come to me because of what I do. I'm just going to go back to what I know. It was all based on, the bottom line – getting back my happy. Plain and simple.

Mel Savage: So getting back to the roots that you know. It's really in a way, even though you didn't go through a process of really understanding who you are, what you wanted and regret, you still regrounded yourself in that, in a less formal way, let's say. You just wanted to get back to your happiness. So you came back. What was the first thing that you did?

Geist Ussery: I got a lawyer to disassociate myself from the partnership. I was like, well, this is not going to work. So I had to make the punch. And again, the great thing about it is, that I've always surrounded myself with really

wonderful, supportive people, positive people who kept me in check. That is the biggest thing of all. If you don't have people around you that call your bullshit, keep you in check, and keep you accountable, that's important.

Mel Savage: It's so amazing. What you're saying is because when you regrouped yourself, you went back to a place where you said, *Okay, I need this to be about me. I need to be happy.* You didn't know all the actions that you were going to take but you started taking small actions. Some of them are scary, like getting a lawyer and you surrounded yourself with a support network, essentially, which really kept you honest and kept you focused on what you wanted to do; which is exactly what anyone would need to do in any kind of situation. Absolutely.

Geist Ussery: True. Unknowingly, I did that. It's not like I had this big grand plan. It makes sense to me now. But during the process, it's not like I set out and planned it that way if that makes sense.

Mel Savage: No, of course not. A lot of people don't. But I think that that is exactly what helps. It's getting grounded in yourself, getting focused on what your goals are, and taking small steps. You don't have to know. Like what you said like, you didn't know whether you were going to lose your reputation or your business was going to be over. You had confidence in yourself and you said you're going to start taking steps and see how it goes because you can't live like this anymore.

Geist Ussery: I just wanted to live a true and authentic me. I didn't feel like anything I was doing was authentic anymore. It's all just so fake. All I could think of was, I didn't feel authentic. Everything I do from this point forward is going to go back to what I know and it's being authentic. This is who I am, this is what I'm about, and this is what matters. It's those things.

Mel Savage: It's amazing. That's even what our mutual friend, Laurie said to me, actually, today. She said that you're a different person now. You are so much more comfortable in your own skin now than you were in that situation.

Geist Ussery: I talked about this earlier, I gained a lot of emotional maturity from it all. The thing is, again, it goes back to making those decisions when you're in that state of mind and emotions are involved. You have to remove that. Somehow, at some point, you've got to take emotion out of a lot of things that you do, especially when you're making choices and decisions because that can cloud it all up.

Mel Savage: Right. What I'm hearing from you is to make clear decisions. Don't worry about the end game, just worry about the next step. It's going to be uncomfortable, but you got to do it.

Geist Ussery: Do it now.

Mel Savage: Work on what's happening right now. And surround yourself with people. Because a lot of people will say that they don't like where they are right now. And it is draining them. They don't really know that if they go somewhere else, what if they won't like it? What if it doesn't work out?

Geist Ussery: But meanwhile, you're stuck somewhere where you're unhappy. Why do you do that?

Mel Savage: You have to make some clear decisions and take steps. Just take one step, you don't have to take a step all the way to the end. Take the first step, and see how that feels.

Geist Ussery: That's how it all starts. Wheels in motion. That's that's just how it works. And you just got to put trust and faith in it. That's when it all works out.

Mel Savage: That's it. And just stay focused. Tell me now what's going on with you.

Geist Ussery: I work with a group of people. I actually have signed on with a corporate organization that does what I do, and it's wonderful. It all came to fruition when I started laying out the groundwork that I was going to make a move. Everything was laid out for me. The universe just kind of opened up. It was like, Okay, leave with this direction. I was like, Okay, it's great.

I love what I do, I get to do what I love, and more importantly, I'm working with people who are amazing. Not only do they encourage me and build me up to succeed, I do the same for them. It is the healthiest work environment. It's almost like I have chaos-free anxiety, because I'm like, Okay, once this other shoe's going to fall, but it's beautiful. It's beautiful.

Mel Savage: It's interesting that you say that. I want to throw out an idea, too, and I want to get your perspective on it. Because you are in this amazing situation now and I wonder if you lucked into this situation, or because of who you are now, you continuously create the situation for yourself.

Geist Ussery: I would have to say it was the latter right there. I mean, I set it up. And I unknowingly planted little seeds with the people that I'm talking about. I said, you know what, when I get to a place where I know where I need to be, I would love to work with you guys. I love what you do and how you do it. So unknowingly, I was setting things up, and that's just from taking the little steps that I took.

Mel Savage: But now, you are someone who's comfortable in your own skin, you love what you do, you get to do it, and so you show up every day with that mindset.

Geist Ussery: It's not work. It's what it should be. I'm just doing what I like to do and what I love to do.

Mel Savage: I always say this to people, too, because they think that by changing jobs, they're going to change their situation. And that is the case sometimes. But sometimes if you just change how you look at the situation, or how you show up in the situation...

Geist Ussery: It's a mindset. You're in charge of how you feel and how you do things, your emotions, everything. You can either choose to be happy or you can choose to be miserable. Misery sucks. Who wants to reside there?

Mel Savage: Exactly. It's not helpful. It doesn't get you anywhere.

Geist Ussery: I'm telling you that little man in Santorini with his damn donkey and he was happy as a clam. And it was just one of those aha moments. I watched him, I was like, Oh, my God. He smiled every morning. And I was just like, I want to be him.

Mel Savage: I want his life.

Geist Ussery: I realized why he was happy. It's because he chose to be happy. He was happy with what he was doing, and where he was. He was in that moment, and life was good and the sun was shining, and all the things that we take for granted. And there it is.

Mel Savage: I love it. So we're going to wrap this up, but I'm going to ask you this question. You've answered it in a bunch of different ways, but if you're speaking to someone who was in your situation, who is sort of mired in misery, can't see the forest through the trees, lacks self-confidence, feels apathetic about making moves, just feel stuck; what is the first thing that you would tell them to do?

Geist Ussery: To go back to what they know, where it all started, who they are. Be authentic and take charge of your happiness.

Mel Savage: I love that. Take charge of your happiness.

Geist Ussery: Take charge of your happiness. And more importantly, own your crap. You made choices that got you where you are, nobody put a gun to your head and told you to do this. You did it all on your own. Own it. Accept it. Call it a day. Move the hell on. But go toward happy. Go toward happy. Plain and simple.

Mel Savage: I love it. Thank you, Geist. I love this. Thanks for sharing your story. I know it's going to help so many people.

Geist Ussery: Oh, I hope so. Thank you.

A huge thanks to Geist. So many of us have found ourselves in similar situations when we jump from one bad situation into another because we feel desperate because we can't see a way out. And when an easy solution comes into our lives, it's really easy just to jump on it without thinking. We want to jump out of one bad situation that's sucking up all our energy. We think, *Oh, this must be meant to be. It's just been presented to me.*

We don't necessarily take the time to think about whether is this the right situation for us. So then we end up just layering crap on crap, essentially, as we go through this. We don't get proactive with our situations, we stay reactive. It's very common. Geist's story is a great example of that and what he learned from going through that situation.

If you want to get proactive with your career; if you're in a situation where you're like, *Okay, enough is enough, I need to take control of this baby*, then I invite you to book a free strategy session with me and we can talk about some of the things that you can do right now to start getting some proactive forward momentum in your career. You can do that at melsavage.com/chat.

I hope Geist's story has helped you get some ideas on what you want to do next in your career. I look forward to chatting with you next week. Bye for now.