



## Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

Honors Thesis

Honors Program

---

5-5-2023

## Off The Beaten Path - A Podcast Interview Series

Shaun Holmes

Loyola Marymount University, sholmes9@lion.lmu.edu

Jason D'Mello

Loyola Marymount University, jason.d'mello@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/honors-thesis>



Part of the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#), and the [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Holmes, Shaun and D'Mello, Jason, "Off The Beaten Path - A Podcast Interview Series" (2023). *Honors Thesis*. 461.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/honors-thesis/461>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Thesis by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu).



**Loyola Marymount University**  
**University Honors**  
**Program**

# **Off The Beaten Path**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements of the University Honors Program  
of Loyola Marymount University

by

**Shaun Holmes**

**May 5th, 2023**



For my Honors Senior Thesis, I wanted to create a project that related directly to my own personal story. I was born and raised in a suburb in Kansas, and the first 18 years of my life were shaped significantly by my time there. As the daughter of two physicians, I grew up constantly hearing that I should pursue a profession in my future that was stable and would allow me to make a lot of money. More specifically, this meant choosing a career for which there was a predictable, laid-out path that one could take in order to achieve success in that field. For instance, if I were to become a doctor, my path would involve going to college, then medical school, then residency, then working the rest of my life in my chosen specialty. I would easily be able to foresee my 5 year, 10 year, and even 30 year plan with such a job, as there are many people before me who have taken the same path.

Throughout middle school and high school, I was surrounded by various influences (teachers, friends' parents, other kids, local cultural trends, etc.) that shaped my mindset to make me feel that this expectation was the norm. Regardless of what I was actually passionate about, I needed to choose a career path that was tried and true - one that would set me up to achieve a high salary if I just followed the right steps. All other options were unstable and risky. They were

not things that your parents would want to brag about when you're in the developing stages of bringing that pursuit to life. Endeavors in industries such as art and entertainment, as well as the realm of entrepreneurship, seemed to me like things that should be kept as side hobbies rather than life pursuits.

I had convinced myself that I wanted to be a doctor for the first 14 years of my life, and it was year 15 of my life when I started to realize that the prospect of dedicating my life to medicine did not excite me at all. While I learned an incredible amount from my experiences shadowing different doctors and volunteering dozens of hours in hospital settings and working in a medical clinic, my main takeaway was that I wasn't passionate about medicine whatsoever, and I would need to rethink my future.

During year 18, when the time finally came to choose a college, I stepped outside my comfort zone and chose to attend Loyola Marymount University. As the overwhelming majority of my high school chose to remain in-state for college, my decision made me quite nervous, but also deeply excited. Little did I know that my move to Los Angeles to attend LMU would impact my mindset, my self-imposed horizons, and my self-confidence in ways I never imagined.

Almost immediately when I arrived in Los Angeles, I began to meet a variety of individuals in exciting industries who had pursued the types of careers I had always been told were impractical to go after. Actors. Inventors. Founders. Producers. Hosts. Creators. It was incredibly refreshing to be surrounded by such people who were so excited about what they do for a living. Many of these people had based their life pathways around something of their own new creation, and getting to hear how creativity could be tied in with the pursuit of financial success was invigorating. All this inspiration made me feel invited to expand my own horizons and dive deeper into my own passions to see what could potentially become of them.

After four years here on the bluff, I've realized how crucial to my own growth it was to be surrounded by such motivating figures during such a formative time in my life. This is exactly what inspired me to start my podcast series "Off The Beaten Path", in which I interview individuals who have been unafraid to grab life by the horns and choose a less traditional path in



pursuit of their passion or bringing their own new creation to life. One of my goals for this podcast was to dig into the mindsets of these individuals who did not let themselves be held back by fear or a restrictive mindset when going after their endeavors. My interest in this would be to hopefully integrate any takeaways relevant to



this mindset into my own personal perspective. In addition, I was curious to hear about what happiness looked like for these individuals and their perspectives on the concept of “purpose”. While these intentions were some of my driving points for these interviews, I also knew I wanted to give each speaker the freedom to lead the conversation and share with me what they felt was important, so I remained open to any new focuses or trends that would come about with each interview.

Before even considering the content of each interview, I must say I learned a significant amount during the process of actually creating the podcast itself. This includes my experience finding a recording studio, inviting guests onto the show, preparing for each episode, editing the recordings, and more. In the beginning, I found myself a bit nervous to actually reach out to



potential guests and ask them for their time. The people I was hoping to have on my podcast were very high-achieving individuals, so there was a voice in the back of my head that told me I’d be bothering them if I reached out. Looking back on my various experiences reaching out to guests, one of the biggest things I

learned was that the worst a person could tell me was no. The fears I had of reaching out to

people were slowly overcome. It was amazing to see how the individuals I had on the show were so willing to give their time and advice, and even keep in touch after recording the episode.

After conducting all the interviews for the podcast series, I definitely noticed a few different themes and ideas that were similar across much of what the speakers had to share.

**1. Having a support system is a significant factor with regard to motivation.**

Most of the speakers were aided in their pursuits by other people who provided mentorship, support, partnership, or inspiration. Whether this came through their business partner, their parents, a friend, or a mentor, having someone supportive around them at the right time seemed to be a big factor that magnified their excitement and motivation in going after their specific endeavor or getting over a hardship.

**2. Knowing that what you are doing is creating an impact is huge.**

Many of the guests I had on shared a story or experience about how their work has impacted other people and how that ties into a deeper sense of their own personal purpose. This factor definitely seemed to be a very positive part of their life story, with a few of the guests even having gone on to start their own nonprofits or philanthropic organizations. To me, this shows that the most meaningful work we can do is in the service of others, and how important it is that we strive to raise other people alongside us in everything we do.

**3. It is crucial to have the willingness to invest time and money into yourself or your pursuit.**

In the beginning stages of starting a new career or company, it's important to have enough faith in your ability to follow through with your pursuit so that you have no doubts that investing in it



is a good choice. Such investments may seem scary at first, but it was interesting to hear how a few of the speakers were coming out of previous industries and jobs that they were not as passionate about, which made them more motivated to jump into their next

pursuit. It also seemed to be a key to success to go all in when putting your time and money into a new endeavor - don't spread yourself too thin or only commit halfway. You should try not to let the fear of failure lull in the front of your brain, and instead find enjoyment in every step of the process or else you'll get burnt out.

#### **4. Success in school doesn't necessarily equal success in life.**

Many of the interviewees were open about how they were definitely not straight-A students in school! Success within an institution such as our education systems is generally determined by how well you can follow instructions and stay inside-the-box. Oftentimes, students with strengths in non-academic areas are not recognized for their abilities with the same appreciation as they would be if their strength was school-oriented. In addition, students with learning disabilities or who struggled in school are more likely to be influenced early on to believe that they won't be as successful as their peers, whereas this should not be considered a determinant of their future whatsoever.



#### **5. You don't have to know exactly what you want to do early on.**

For many of the guests, the knowledge of what they wanted to pursue as their primary life endeavor came at a later point in their life journey. They were able to stumble upon their idea or passion through the various experiences they had. This insight reminded me directly of something my acting coach tells me: "One of the best things you can do to become a better actor is to go out and get more life experience". You are able to see where opportunity lies in both the world and within yourself by getting outside of your comfort zone and pushing yourself to experience new things.

#### **6. Mental health should never be neglected.**

One of the topics that came up throughout many of the interviews was that of mental health and how crucial it is to maintain it while pursuing your endeavors. When necessary, it's important to



take a step back away from everything you're busy with in life in order to return to a state of mindfulness. It can be easy to succumb to the pressures of dedicating yourself to your work in a way that is detrimental to your mental health, but ultimately you will be able to take your pursuit



even further if you keep your mental health intact throughout the process. Some good practices include finding what makes you feel physically and mentally better, then making these rituals a part of your daily life.

Overall, getting to speak directly with inspirational figures who have found success in pursuit of their passions or creations has given me so many great takeaways that I will no doubt implement into my own mindset. I have seriously appreciated how much each of my podcast guests opened up to me, as well as how raw and honest they were about their experiences. It's been really beneficial to receive advice and insights from people who have gone before me succeed in doing the exact kinds of things I was always told were too risky - it gives



me the motivation to keep my horizons open and never to doubt myself. Being surrounded by individuals like the ones on my podcast since I've moved to Los Angeles has been one of the biggest catalysts of change to my sense of personal potential when it comes to planning out my own future. As this semester comes to a close, I hope to

continue with the podcast and invite more guests on who are in different industries that I am less familiar with. The more people I can speak with who come from different backgrounds and experiences, the more well-rounded I can mold my own perspective to be.

**To access the podcast, please head to this website:**

**<https://shows.acast.com/off-the-beaten-path-podcast>**

**To see video clips from the recording sessions, head to the Off The Beaten Path Youtube Channel here:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLormkMSv0xeo575GM2JQSA>**