Ep. 26-28: Kevin Kelly - Co-founder of Wired Magazine

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Tim Ferriss

Tim Ferriss Show

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Tim Ferriss: Hello ladies and gentlemen, this is Tim Ferriss, and welcome to another episode of The Tim Ferriss Show. And to start off, as I often do, with a quote. This is from one of my favorite writers of all-time, Kurt Vonnegut, and it goes as follows: "Here is a lesson in creative writing. First rule, do not use semicolons. They are transvestite hermaphrodites representing absolutely nothing. All they do is show that you've been to college." I have the habit of using dashes in the same way, so I like to read this to remind me not to use that crutch. Also "pretty", the adverb, I overuse that. In any case, Kurt Vonnegut, lots of lessons, lots of amazing books. If you need one to start with, go with *Cat's Cradle*.

Today's guest is Kevin Kelly. Kevin Kelly is one of the most interesting human beings I have ever met. He's a dear friend. As for the bio, Kevin Kelly is senior maverick at Wired Magazine which he co-founded in 1993. He also co-founded the All Species Foundation, a non-profit aimed at cataloging and identifying every living species on Earth. In all his spare time, he writes best-selling books, he co-founded the Rosetta Project, which is building an archive of all documented human languages, and he serves on the board of the Long Now Foundation, which I've been honored to join as a speaker on one occasion. As part of the Long Now Foundation, he's looking into, among other things, how to revive and restore endangered or extinct species, including the woolly mammoth. I'm not making this stuff up, Kevin is amazing.

This is going to be a multi-part episode, so there'll be a number of different podcast episodes, because we went quite long. I hope you enjoy it. You can find all links, show notes, and so on, once we complete the entire series, at fourhourworkweek.com/podcast. You can also find all previous episodes I've done in this podcast.

Fourhourworkweek.com/podcast, all spelled out. Without further ado, please enjoy, and thank you for listening.

Kevin, thank you so much for being on the show.

Kevin Kelly: It's my honor.

Tim Ferriss: I am endlessly fascinated by all of the varied projects that you constantly have going on. But that leads me to the first question, which is, when you meet someone who is not familiar with your background and they ask you the age-old "what do you do?" question, how do you even begin to answer that? What is your stock answer to that?

Kevin Kelly: These days, my stock answer is that I package ideas into books and magazines and websites, and I make ideas interesting and pretty.

Tim Ferriss: Ooh, I like the "pretty". We'll come back to the aesthetic aspect, I think that's a really neglected piece of the entire puzzle.

You do have, of course, a background ... a lot of people are familiar with your background with Wired, but perhaps you could give folks a bit of background on yourself. Is it true that you dropped out of college after one year?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, I'm a college drop-out. Actually, my one regret in life is that one year that I came. (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: Oh, no kidding?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, I wish I had just even skipped that. But I do understand how college can be useful to people. My own children have gone through ... But for me, it was just not the right thing, and I went to Asia instead. I like to tell myself that I gave my own self a PhD in East Asian studies, by traveling around and photographing very remote parts of Asia at a time when it was in a transition from the ancient world to the modern world. I did many other things as well, and for me, it was a very formative

time, because I did enough things that when I finally got my first real job at the age of 35 ...

Tim Ferriss: (laughs) Wow. Which job was that?

Kevin Kelly: I worked for a non-profit at 10 dollars an hour, which was the Whole Earth Catalog. Which had been a life-long dream. I said if I'm going to have a job, that was the job I want. It took me a long time to get it. But in between that, I did many things, including starting businesses and selling businesses, and doing other kinds of things, more adventures. And I highly recommend it. I got involved in starting Wired and running Wired for a while, and hired a lot of people who were coming right out of college. They were internists and they would do the intern thing, and then they were good and we would hire them. Which meant that, basically, after 10 years, whatever it was ... this was their first and only job, and I kept telling them, "Why are you here? What are you doing? You should be fooling around, wasting time, trying something crazy. Why are you working a real job? I don't understand it." I just really recommend slack. I'm a big believer in this thing of kind of doing something that's not productive. Productive is for your middle ages. When you're young, you want to be prolific and make and do things, but you don't want to measure them in terms of productivity. You want to measure them in terms of extreme performance, you want to measure them in extreme satisfaction. It's a time to try stuff, and I think ...

Tim Ferriss: Explore the extremes.

Kevin Kelly: Exactly. Explore the possibilities, and there are so many possibilities, and there's more every day. You don't want- it's called "premature optimization". You really want to use this time to continue to do things. And by the way, premature optimization is a problem of success, too. It's not just the problem of the young, it's the problem of the successful more than even of the young. But we'll get to that. That's a long answer, too. (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: That might turn into a therapy session for me at this precise moment in time, in fact.

Kevin Kelly: (laughs) Yes, exactly.

Tim Ferriss: But when you are exploring that slack, I would imagine many people feel pressure, whether it's internal pressure or societal, familial pressure, to get a real job, to support themselves. A lot of the decisions are made out of fear. They worry about being out on the streets, or it's a nebulous, terror, anxiety. How did you support yourself, for instance, while you were traveling through Asia when you left school?

Kevin Kelly: I totally understand this anxiety and fear and stuff. But here's the thing, I think one of the many life skills that you want to actually learn at a fairly young age is the skill of being, like, ultra-thrifty, minimal, kind of this little wisp that's traveling through time ... in the sense of learning how little you actually need to live, not just in a survival mode, but in a contented mode. I learned that pretty early, by backpacking and doing other things, especially in Asia ... was I could be very happy with very, very little. You can go onto websites and stuff, and look at the minimum amount of stuff- food, say, that you need to live, your basic protein, carbohydrates, and vitamins, and actually, if you bought them in bulk, how much it would cost. I mean, you build your own house, live in a shelter, a tiny house. You don't need very much.

I think trying that out, building your house on the pond, like Thoreau, who was a hero of mine in high school, is not just a simple exercise, it's a profound exercise, because it allows you to get over the anxiety. Even if you aren't living like that, you know that if the worse came to worst, you could keep going at a very low rate and be content. That gives you the confidence to take a risk, because you say, "What's the worst that can happen? Well, the worst that can happen is that I'd have a backpack and a sleeping bag, and I'd be eating oatmeal.

And I'd be fine." I think if you do that once or twice ... you don't necessarily have to live like that, but knowing that you can be content is tremendously empowering.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely.

Kevin Kelly: That's what I did, that's basically what I did. Was living in Asia where the people around me had less than I did and they were pretty content. You realize, "Oh my gosh, I don't really need very much to be happy."

Tim Ferriss: Did you save up money beforehand with odd jobs, or did you do odd jobs while on the road? A bit of both?

Kevin Kelly: I did odd jobs before I left. I was traveling in Asia at a time when the price differential was so great, that it actually made sense for me to fly back on a charter flight to the US, and work for four or five months. I worked, basically, odd jobs. I worked from working at a warehouse packaging athletic shoes, working in a technical sense of a ... it's really just hard to describe, but it was a photography-related job where we're reducing printed circuit boards down to little sizes to be shipped off to be printed ... and driving cars, to whatever else I could find. That, at that time, made more money- I could live off of- I could live probably two years from those couple months of work.

I didn't really work while I was traveling until I got to Iran in the late '70s, and there was a very high-paying job which was teaching English to the Iranian pilots who worked for the Shah. But I had sworn I was never going to teach English, so I actually got a job in Bell Helicopter, who was teaching English to the pilots. But my job was running a little newsletter for the American community there. I worked there until I was thrown out by the coup. That was another story.

Tim Ferriss: Now, just a couple of comments. Number one, for those people listening who are saying to themselves, already perhaps creating reasons why they can't do what you did

now, due to different economic climate or whatnot ... it is entirely possible to replicate what you did. You just have to choose your locations wisely, for that type of …

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, absolutely.

Tim Ferriss: I should also just mention to people that part of the reason I'm so attracted to stoic philosophy, whether that be Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, is exactly because of the practice of poverty. Not because you want to be poor, but so that you recognize not only that you can subsist, but then you can potentially be content or even, in some cases, be more content with a bare minimum. For people who are more interested in that, I highly recommend a lot of the stoic writings, and you can search for those on my blog and elsewhere. But-

Kevin Kelly: Let me just add to that. There's actually a new-age version of that that was sort of popular a generation ago, and the search term there is "volunteer simplicity".

Tim Ferriss: "Volunteer simplicity"?

Kevin Kelly: Right. The idea is, poverty is terrible when it's mandatory, when you have no choice, but the voluntary version of that is very, very powerful. I think attaching names sometimes to things makes it more legitimate, but imagine yourself practicing voluntary simplicity. That, I think, is part of that stoic philosophy, but there's a whole movement ... a lot of the hippie drop-outs were kind of practicing a similar thing, and there was a whole "best practices" that resolved around that. You can make up your own. But I think it's, to me, an essential life skill that people should acquire. I mean, when you go backpacking and stuff like that, that's part of it. That's the beginnings of trying to understand what it is that you need to live as a being, and you can fill that out in any way you want, but that's a good way to experiment.

Tim Ferriss: Now, you have become certainly a world-class packager of ideas, but also at synthesizing and expressing these

ideas. I love your writing, I've consumed vast quantities of it. (laughs) In fact, I'm here right now on Long Island where I grew up, and I used to sneak into my parent's shed to read old editions of the Whole Earth Catalog for inspiration. It was, I suppose, the equivalent of my internet at the time. (laughs) And from that, all the way to 1000 True Fans, which of course you know I shout from the rooftops for people to read. How did you develop that skill of writing and communicating? A lot of people associate that with schooling, but it doesn't appear to be the source for you.

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. In high school, I would call myself a very late bloomer. I don't recall myself having a lot of ideas. There were a lot of other people and kids in my high school that I was very impressed with, because they seemed to know what they thought and were very glib and articulate, and I wasn't. I was a little bit more visual in that sense. I was trying to decide whether to go to art school or to MIT, because I was really interested in science.

I set off to Asia as a photographer, so it was basically no words at all, it was just images. And as I was traveling and seeing these amazing things ... I mean, again, I want to emphasize that this was sort of a ... for me, I grew up in New Jersey, I had never left New Jersey, we never took vacations. It's hard to describe how parochial New Jersey was back in the 1960s. I never ate Chinese food, I never had ... I mean, I never saw Chinese. It was a different world. And then I was thrown into Asia and it was like, "Oh my gosh," everything I knew was wrong. So that education was extremely, extremely powerful. I think that that gave me something to say, and I started writing letters home, trying to describe what I was seeing. I had a reason to try to communicate. That was the beginning of it, but even then, I don't think I really had much to say.

It wasn't really until the internet came along, and I had a chance to go onto one of the first online communities in the early '80s, and for some reason ...

Tim Ferriss: The early '80s? That is definitely ... early days.

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, it was in 1981. These were private, it wasn't the wide-open internet. These were little experiment- in fact, it was New Jersey Institute of Technology in Rutgers that had this experimental online community that I got invited on ... We can talk about how that happened, but it was just luck and a friend. And I found that there was something about the direct attempt to just communicate with someone else in real time, just sending them a message or something, that crystallized my thinking. What it turned out, is-

Tim Ferriss: How did it crystallize your thinking? Not to interrupt, but was it the immediate feedback loop?

Kevin Kelly: It was the idea that ... teachers have since done a lot of studies where they had kids write an essay on something, an assignment, and then they would also be instructed to write some e-mail to a friend or something. Then they would grade both of the compositions, and they would find that, inevitably, the e-mail that the kids were writing was much better writing. Because when you're trying to write a composition, we have all these attitudes, or expectations, or there's kind of this "writer-ly sense". There's all this other garbage and luggage and baggage on top of that. But when we're just trying to send an e-mail, we're just directly trying to communicate something. We're not fooling around, we're not trying to make it ...

Tim Ferriss: Literary.

Kevin Kelly: Literary, all that. Just direct stuff. So the writing there was always much more direct and concrete. That's the usual thing that happens when you're trying to write, is you're not concrete enough. But when you e-mail, it's all concrete.

So it was getting out of the whole writer-ly stuff and just pure, concrete communication, that really made it for me. What I discovered, which is what many writers discover,

is that I write in order to think. It was like, "I think I have an idea," but when I begin to write it, I realize, "I have no idea," and I don't actually know what I think until I try and write it. Writing is a way for me to find out what I think. It's like, I don't have any ideas, it's true, but when I write, I get the ideas. That was the revelation.

So by being forced to communicate online, there was none of this expectation. It was just like, "OK, just write an e-mail. I can do that. I don't have to write an essay, I don't have to write something nice. I'm just going to write 140 characters. I can do that." But while I was doing that, I had an idea that I didn't have before. It was like, "Oh my gosh, this is an idea-generation machine, it's by writing. It's not that I have these ideas and I'm going to write them down. No, no. I don't even have them until I write them."

Tim Ferriss: I'm so glad you brought that up, because I was just recently- a few things related to that. I was reading an interview with Kurt Vonnegut, who's one of my favorite authors. For people who aren't familiar, check out *Cat's Cradle* perhaps, as a starting point. Hilarious guy, and he, at various points in his career, taught writing to make ends meet. And he would, number one, not look for good writers, he would look for people who are passionate about specific things.

Kevin Kelly: Yep, right.

Tim Ferriss: That's something I want to reiterate to people who don't feel "writer-ly", is that ... go out and have the experiences and find the subjects, the things that excite you. As long as you're true to your voice, which is related to the e-mail point ... I threw out my first two drafts of, I'd say, a third of the four-hour work week, because they were either too pompous and ivy-league-sounding ...

Kevin Kelly: (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: Way, way, way too much. I mean, horrible. Or too slapstick, because I felt like I had to go to the other

extreme. And then I sat down and I wrote as if I were composing an e-mail to a friend after two glasses of wine, and that's how I found my "voice" so to speak.

As a side note, why - and I think this might be related - but why did you promise yourself not to teach English? I'm so curious. Because that can be very lucrative, it's readily available ... when you were traveling, why did you commit to yourself not to teach English?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, it's a good question, because there was lots of opportunities all around the world. By the way, I recommend it as a way for people to travel cheaply, if you want to support yourself, because it is a very desirable "skill", we call it, for the moment.

I think the reason why was I felt that ... I didn't feel like I was a very good teacher, and I also felt that it was maybe a little easy? But I think the main reason was that I was having trouble imagining myself enjoying it. I just felt that I would rather try to find something else. Now, I think I did, one time in Taiwan - which as you know, has a whole cram school system - I think I substituted for a friend once. And I think that maybe confirmed my idea (laughter), that while there was sort of ... you know, all I have to do is just talk, I mean, there was really not much skill involved at all. It was fun, but I didn't feel like I was ... I don't know, I didn't feel like I was maybe adding value or something. I came away thinking, "You know, I guess I could do this for money, but I'm not going to be happy."

I think it was just a personality thing. I don't think of myself as a teacher, I don't do many workshops or classes. I think a different person might thoroughly enjoy it and I know they do and they have a great time doing it. For me, it was just ... not for me.

Tim Ferriss: Mm-hmm, got it.

Kevin Kelly: No big deal. I think this is an important thing, is that it takes a long time to figure out what you're good for. Part

of where I'm at right now and where I got eventually, was really trying to spend time on doing things that only I can do. Even when I can do something well but someone else could do it, I would try and let that go. That's a discipline that I'm still working on, which is not just things that I'm good at, but things that only I'm good at. That was something I was sort of trying to start early on, which is like, "You know, a lot of other people can do this, and they're happy doing it. So I want to go somewhere where it requires more of me to do, and then I'll be happier and they'll be happier."

Tim Ferriss: I am currently having - and I seem to have these periodically - a crisis-of-meaning phase.

Kevin Kelly: (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: I'm wrestling with this exact issue. Trying to figure out what to abandon, what to say "no" to, to refine my focus, so I can really focus on the intersection of my unique capability or capabilities, whatever that is, and a need of some type.

How did you figure that out ... and maybe we could approach it from a different direction. What do you feel is your skill set or your unique skill, and how did you figure that out?

Kevin Kelly: Well, let me tell you the story of how this realization actually came to me in a very concrete way, was while I was editing Wired Magazine. Part of what Wired Magazine is about is that we would come up with ideas and make assignments to writers. Now, some of the articles in Wired would come from the writers themselves, they would approach us if they have an idea. But a lot of the articles would be assigned from editors. We'd have editorial meetings where we'd imagine this great article, and then we'd go and try and find someone to write it. And in that conversation of trying to persuade writers to write an idea that I had ... it would go through a very

typical sequence, where I would have this great idea, and then I would try to persuade, like, one writer, two writers, three writers, and they just didn't think it was a very good idea. They didn't like it, they didn't want to do it, whatever it was. I'd kind of forget about it, but then, like, six months later it would come back and I'd say, "Oh, that was such a great idea, I really think we should do that." And I would go again for another round of trying to persuade people, and then I'd get no takers. And then I kind of- "Oh, forget about that, it must have been a bad idea." But then, like, six months later or a year later, it might come back, "You know, that's still a great idea. Nobody has done that." Then I would realize, "Oh my gosh, I need to do that!" (laughter) It was like, "I'm the only one who can see this. I've tried to give it away, I've tried really hard to give it away, I've tried to kill it ... "

Tim Ferriss: (laughs) It just keeps on coming back!

Kevin Kelly: Keeps coming back! And then I would do it and it would be one of my best pieces. So I became really an important proponent of trying to give things away first. Tell everybody what you're doing ... basically you try to give these ideas away, and people are happy because they love great ideas. You can- "Hey, do it, it's a great idea. You should do it." I'd try to give everything away first, and then I'd try to kill everything, like, "No, that's a bad idea," and then it's the ones that keep coming back that I can't kill and I can't give away, that I think, "Hmm, maybe that's the one I'm supposed to do." Because no one else is going to do it. I mean, I've been actively trying to get ... and then of course, if someone else is doing it, you see someone else competing or trying to do it, it was like, "Oh yeah, go ahead, do it. I'm not going to race against you. That's crazy because there's two of us. No, you do it." So that generosity is actually part of this thing-

Tim Ferriss: Your vetting process.

Kevin Kelly: Exactly. That's when I kind of realized it.

But that doesn't answer the question of, "Well, how do you find out what it is?" All I can say is ... and I don't want to fib, but all I can say is, it's going to take all your life to figure that out. That is fact. Here's what it is - figuring out is what your life is about. (laughter) I mean, that's what life is for. Life is to figure it out, so every part of your life, every day, is actually this attempt to figure this out. You'll have different answers as you go along, and sometimes there may be directions in that. But that's basically what it is.

You were very transparent about confessing this, but I have to tell you that even from hanging around a lot of very accomplished people, a lot of successful people, that we would be on the covers of magazines ... they also go through exactly the same questioning. No matter how big of a billion-dollar company they have, they come up to the same thing - what's my role in all this? Why am I here, what am I useful- what am I doing that nobody else can? It's a continuous ... In fact, as we'll come back to, being successful makes that even more difficult.

Tim Ferriss: Why is that?

Kevin Kelly: Because of what I call the "creator's dilemma", which is very much the same thing as the "innovator's dilemma". It's a true dilemma, in the sense that there's no right answer. But the question is: is it better to optimize your strengths or to invest into the unknown, into places where you're weak?

Tim Ferriss: Or places you haven't explored.

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. Any accountant in any business would tell you that it absolutely makes more sense to take your dollar ... You'll get a higher return by investing into what you're good at already, whatever it is. This is pursuit of excellence, this is Tom Peters and the whole entire movement, which is you move uphill, you keep optimizing

what you know. That, by far, is the sanest, the most reasonable, the smartest thing to do.

But when you have a very fast-changing landscape like we live in right now, you get stuck on a local optima, you get stuck. The problem is, is that the only way you can get to a higher, more fit place, is you actually have to go down. You actually have to head into a place where you are less optimal, you have no expertise, there's very low margins, there's low profits, you'll look foolish, there'll be failures. And if you've been following a line of success, that is very, very difficult to do. It's very difficult for an organization- it's literally almost impossible for an organization who's been excellent and successful to do, it really is.

Tim Ferriss: Which presents a lot of opportunity for the ... the start-ups.

Kevin Kelly: That's why the start-ups all start there. The reason why start-ups start is because they're operating in an environment that no sane, big corporation would want to be in. It's a market with low margins, low profitability, unproven, high-failure. I mean, it's like, who wants to operate there? Nobody! The only reason why start-ups operate is they have no choice!

Tim Ferriss: Right. (laughs) Yeah, that's the gift of few options, right?

Kevin Kelly: Right, exactly. So in terms of success biting, I think you have to be unsuccessful. Who is successful, wants to be unsuccessful? It's very, very hard to let go of that success. That's one of the things that works against someone really continuing on this life journey of finding out what they're really good at it. Because here's the thing - successful companies and successful people generally try to solve problems with money. You buy solutions. And we all know that money is not the full answer for innovation. Basically, if you could purchase innovations, all the big companies would just purchase them. It's the

fact that these innovations often have to be found out without money, through other means. Again, that's the advantage to the start-up, and it's a disadvantage to the successful companies because they got money and they just want to buy solutions. But most of these solutions you can't buy, you have to kind of engineer in this very difficult environment of low margins, low success, low profits, that no one really wants to be in, but the start-ups are forced to be in.

Tim Ferriss: That's also an advantage, I would think, for beginners or novices compared to experts.

Kevin Kelly: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: They have less vested identify, less inertia, to have to reverse.

Kevin Kelly: And that's back to my suggestion in the beginning, of why slack and fooling around when you're young is so important. Because a lot of these innovations and things are found not by trying to solve a problem that can be monetized. It's in exploring this area without money. I mean, money is so overrated. It really ...

Tim Ferriss: Could you elaborate on that? Because I feel like this is a sermon I need to receive on some level.

Kevin Kelly: (laughs) There's several things to say about. One is, obviously, if you're struggling to pay bills and mortgages and stuff ... there's a certain amount that's needed. But here's the thing, accumulating enough money to do things is really a by-product of other things. It's kind of a lubricant in a certain sense rather than a goal.

Great wealth, extreme wealth, is definitely overrated. I've had meals with a dozen billionaires, and they're no diff- I mean, their lives, lifestyles are no different. You don't want to have a billion dollars, let me put it that way. You really don't. There's nothing that you can really do with it

that you can't do with a lot of less money. We'll set that aside.

Even just wealth itself, in this world where there is more and more abundance ... even the money for, say, middle class is less significant in a certain sense, in the sense that ... maybe their status, which is really not needed, but ... The things that you want to do, the things that will make you content, the things that will satisfy you, the things that will bring you meaning ... can usually- got better than having money. I mean, if you have a lot of time or a lot of money, it's always better to have a lot of time to do something. If you have a choice between having a lot of friends or a lot of money, you definitely want to have a lot of friends.

I think there's a way even in which the technological progress that we're having is actually diminishing the role of money. And I want to be clear that I'm talking about money beyond the amount that you need to survive, but even that reflects back to what we were saying earlier, which is probably less than you think it is, to survive.

So in a certain sense, most people see money as a means to get these other things, but there are other routes to these other things that are deeper and more constant and more durable and more powerful. Money is a very small, one-dimensional thing, that if you focus on that, it kind of comes and goes. And if you ... whatever it is that you're trying to attain, you go to it more directly through other means, you'll probably wind up with a more powerful experience or whatever it is that you're after. And it'll be deeper, more renewable, than coming at it with money.

Travel is one of the great examples. Many, many people who are working very hard, trying to save their money to retire so they can travel. Well, I decided to flip it around and travel when I was really young, when I had zero money. And I had experiences that basically even a billion

dollars couldn't have bought. And it's not an uncommon sight, let me tell you, for young travelers who have very little money to be hanging out, doing something, and then there'll be some very wealthy people on their one-week organized tour, looking at these young travelers, just saying, "I wish I had more time." (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I see it almost every time I go traveling. It reminds me of conversations I've had with Rolf Potts and also his book, Vagabonding, which I just absolutely love. It was that book and Walden that I took with me traveling when I had my own two-year or so walkabout. He points out, in the beginning of Vagabonding, that many people subscribe to the belief along the lines of Charlie Sheen's in the movie *Wall Street*, when he's asked what he's going to do when he makes his millions and he says, "I'm going to get a motorcycle and ride across China." (laughter) Rolf of course points out that you could clean toilets in the US and save enough money to ride a motorcycle across China. (laughs)

Kevin Kelly: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Let me ask you, this is maybe tangentially related, but you mentioned earlier that your middle age ... your middle ages- "middle ages" maybe sounds odd, but in your middle age, that's when you optimize. And I find that horrifying on some level because I am so tired ... I just turned 37 last week, and I'm really tired of certain types of optimizing, and the incremental slogging of making trains run slightly more efficiently on time. Even though, like you said, from a strictly financial standpoint, the advice that I would receive from many people and have received when I've asked for advice is, "Here are one or two core areas you should focus on to optimize for income." And on the flip side, I'm tempted to approach a kind of ... not "scorched earth" but "burned bridges" approach, where I somehow use creative destruction to force me into another direction, to have these new experiences that I crave so much.

And you, just for people who aren't aware, I want to give ... I remember going to the first ever quantified self meet-up, you're part of the Long Now Foundation. You've experimented in so many different arenas, and have looked so far into the future, and thought on such grand a scale, I aspire to do more of that ... What would be your advice to someone? I know I have dozens of friends in the same position. They're, say, in their early- or mid-30s, in my particular peer group, and they want to explore but they're feeling pressured to optimize this thing that they've suddenly found their footing with, whatever it is. Maybe they're a venture capitalist, maybe they're in start-up, they feel they should start a new start-up, and they want to step out of that slipstream. What would be your advice to those people?

Kevin Kelly: Well, first of all, I have to commend your honesty for this, and I will repeat that it is very, very difficult to do. I mean, I think the realization comes to people in middle age and they realize, "Oh my gosh, there's a little bit of a routine here and I'm not really happy with that." I think that scorched earth, that kind of, you know, "We'll just set fire to it and we'll walk away," I actually have ... I think we probably have a mutual friend, I won't use his name because I don't know how public this is, but one of his solutions was the most radical one I've ever heard, to force himself, was that he gave up US citizenship.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, wow. Yeah, that'll do it. (laughs)

Kevin Kelly: He was saying, "I just feel so-" I was like, "Oh my gosh, that is so radical." He was telling me about what is involved in that, and it wasn't for tax purposes, because actually before you can do it, the US actually requires that you square-up on all taxes. But that was so radical, and I don't recommend that. (laughter) That's all I'm saying. I mean, he's doing fine, but I'm just saying that's unnecessary.

I think the advice is ... I'm probably taking a page from yourself. I don't think it's necessary to ... I think you can experiment your way through this, you can do this incrementally. You can take small steps and do something, and then evaluate it, test how it's going, whether you're getting what you want out of it, whether it's working, and then you continue in that direction. That's sort of the pattern of people who have second careers or "reinvent themselves", you hear that a lot. And you can do that in a disciplined, Tim Ferriss way. I don't think that it requires you to walk out and leave a burning pile behind. I think it's something that you're going to ... I'm a big believer in doing things deliberately, and I think that you begin by looking at those areas that you get satisfaction out of, and those areas where ... I often find that people kind of retreat back to the things that they did as kids and really, really miss, whether it's art or other things. The truth is, you're not really going to be able to escape all the other things you have going. And that's a good thing because that is part of you and part of what you do well. So you'll probably just bend in a certain direction.

I think the one bit of advice is that you can't ... it's not going to happen overnight. It took you 37 years to get where you are, it may take you another 30 years to get where you want to go. I don't think you should feel impatient, maybe that's the word I'm saying, is that I don't think you should imagine that you'll have another hat on with a new label next year.

Tim Ferriss: Just to maybe redirect that - and this may or may not be accurate - but in the process of researching for this conversation, which is an odd exercise in and of itself, given how much time we've spent together. (laughs) But I came across, in Wikipedia, mention of your experience in Jerusalem and deciding to live as though you only had six months left. I want to touch on that, but one of the questions that came to my mind when I turned 37 last week is, "If I knew I were going to die at age 40, what would I do to have the greatest impact on the greatest

number of people?" So I find that constraint helpful and I worry that if I aim at not being impatient in that way, that I won't - because I could get hit by a bus - that I won't do what I'm capable of doing. Maybe you could talk about ... and I had no idea, I'm not sure if you would self-describe yourself as a "devout Christian", but that's certainly written here. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that experience.

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. One thing I would of course warn people is that, not everything on Wikipedia is correct. (laughs)

Tim Ferriss: No, that's why I'm bringing it up. (laughs)

Kevin Kelly: But it is true that I got this assignment in Jerusalem, which, by the way, if you want to hear the full version of it, listen to one of the very first "This American Life", which Ira Glass and I told the story for the very first time. It's a story about how I got this assignment to live as if I was going to die in six months, even though I was perfect healthy and I knew that it was very improbable. But I decided to take the assignment seriously and that's what I did.

My answer kind of surprised me, because I thought that I would have this sort of mad, high-risk fling, do all these things, but actually what I wanted to do was to visit my brothers and sisters, go back to my parents, help out. My mom was not well at the time. But that lasted for three months before I decided I needed to do something big. So I actually road my bicycle across the US, from San Francisco to New Jersey, where I was going to basically die. I kept a journal of that.

And that question was something that I keep asking myself now. I actually have a countdown clock that Matt Groening at Futurama was inspired and they did a little episode of Futurama about. What I did was, I took the actuarial tables for the estimated age of my death, for someone born when I was born, and I worked back the

number of days. I have that showing on my computer, how many days. I tell you, nothing concentrates your time like knowing how many days you have left. Now, of course, I'm likely, again, to live more than that. I'm in good health, etcetera. But nonetheless, there's something that really ... I have 6,000 something days, it's not very many days to do all the things I want to do.

So I think your exercise is really fantastic and commendable, and there's two questions - what would you do if you had six months to live, and what would you do if you had a billion dollars? And interestingly (laughs), it's the convergence of those two questions. Because it turns out that you probably don't need a billion dollars to do whatever it is that you're going to do in six months. So I think you're asking the right question. The way I answer it is, you want to keep asking yourself that question every six months and really try to answer it. I try to do that on a day-by-day basis.

I learned something from my friend, Stewart Brand, who organized his remaining days around five-year increments. He says any great idea that's significant, that's worth doing, for him, will last about five years, from the time he thinks of it, to the time he stops thinking about it. And if you think of it in terms of five-year projects, you can count those off on a couple hands, even if you're young. So the sense of mortality, of understanding that it's not just old people who don't have very many ... if you're 20 years old, you don't have that many five-year projects to do.

So I think it is ... that's maybe part of the philosophy of thinking about our time and whether ... even if you believe in the extension of life, longevity, living to 120, you still have to think in these terms of, what are you going to do if you - because you don't know if you'll live to be 120 - what are you doing to do if you have a year, and what would you do with a billion dollars? And what's the intersection of those two?

Ep. 26-28: Kevin Kelly - Co-founder of Wired Magazine

Tim Ferriss: Does religion play a large part in your life right now?

Kevin Kelly: In a certain sense, not in a ritualistic sense. I just wrote a book called
What Technology Wants.

Tim Ferriss: Excellent book, I highly recommend it.

Kevin Kelly: It was a theory of technology and I was trying to put technology in the context of the cosmos. I think what religion gives me is permission to think about cosmic questions. I'm right in the middle of finishing a Kickstarter-funded graphic novel that's about angels and robots. The intention there was to fictionalize the idea that robots would someday have souls, but these souls would be coming from angels and so that there was this intersection of these two possible worlds of conscious robots who were en-souled by angels.

The reason why this was interesting was that the idea was that the angels that in soul-less had been trained. They had been given moral guidance, but if you don't give the spirit some kind of moral guidance then they can wreak havoc.
It was this idea that when we make robots we're also going to have to train them to be ethical. We just can't make a free being and not train it. It was a way to rehearse and think about some of the consequences of technology today.

I think my religion gives me permission to ask those questions without embarrassment to say, "Well, what is the general direction of the arc of evolution? Is it pointed somewhere? How does technology fit into the greater cosmos? What does it mean? What drives it? Why is there more of it? Is this a good thing? I consider this and other views so I have another view. I'm sympathetic to other world views. I don't necessarily have to believe all the other world views, but I get the idea that if you

have another world view that can be very helpful in seeing other worldviews.

People have a world view even though they don't know it, but I have a world view and I know that I have a world view. Really, everybody has a religious or a spiritual orientation; even if they're atheists, they still have one. There are some assumptions that are at the basis of it and I like to question assumptions, including my own assumptions.

Tim Ferriss: Two things I can't resist asking and we can spend as much or as little time on this as you'd like, but recently grappling with a lot of these issues that I've been grappling with, some of which are existential, some of which are related to death, limited time on the planet, I have become deeply fascinating by indigenous use of plant medicine. I've had some very transformative experiences that are difficult to put into words because they make you sound like a complete crazy person. Yeah, there's a something-ness that is very difficult to communicate without sounding like you should be institutionalized.

What do you think the role for people who aspire to do the greatest good in the world, what is the role of that type of direct experience? Is it possible to benefit from that type of, for lack of a better descriptor "spiritual experience" without a religious framework around it?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, yeah, no. It's a really good question. My little personal story there, of course, is I was basically a hippy. I worked for the hippy catalog, of the Whole Earth Catalog, which was about hippies living in San Francisco. All my friends were drug-taking hippies, but I for some reason never did. I just had no appetite or inclination at all for ever taking any drugs or smoking pot or anything. When I was 50-years-old I decided that I would like to take LSD sacramentally on of my 50th birthday and I did. I arranged with, I had a guide and I

had an appropriate setting and I had some acid that came from a source that was extremely reliable and it was a sacrament. It was a very profound sacrament.

I think, "Yeah, you can use the drugs recreationally and for entertainment," and
I think that can go somewhere, but I think there's another powerful use for it which is kind of what you're talking about in which is to elevate one outside of yourself, to lose yourself, to be in contact with other things beyond your ego.
I think it can be done and I think unfortunately, because of the legal status that we've had for a long time, the rituals and the practice around that have not had a chance to be developed or communicated. Actually, trying to find this information was extremely hard. There was one book that I did find eventually from a guy who was doing LSD experiments while they were still legal and was able to accumulate enough wisdom about it that that would be the one place
I would point people to.

I think that it is important that the context and expectations and the setting they call it that revolves around it is very important and I do believe that these can be extremely profound and powerful experiences for good. They can remain long after and most people who understand this and don't abuse it understand that in fact that experience was not in the pill, it was not in the chemical. It was a real experience. Unfortunately, there's so much other stuff circulating around the use of these drugs and the misuse of them that that kind of information is often very, very difficult to find.

But I do think maybe we're seeing a moment now in the US where the second prohibition is being undone and at least pot will become legal and maybe we can return to revitalizing the traditions and the necessary settings around that. An expectation that not just pot or LSD, but even other synthetic drugs can be extremely powerful in

removing the ordinary guards that we have. We have an ego for our purpose. We have all these things to keep us sane on a day-to-day functional, exactly. If you remove it completely, you can become dysfunctional, but if you remove it deliberately and with great care you can be opened up.
I think it's that. I think there's an expertise there. I think there's a lot of other things that that if we have the freedom and the wisdom to not abuse it I think it can be extremely powerful.

Tim Ferriss: Do you recall the title of the book?

Kevin Kelly: This is …

Tim Ferriss: Or how people might search for it?

Kevin Kelly: Yes. This is one of the many resources that I recommend in my book
Cool Tools. *Cool Tools* is a big catalog of the possibilities. It has about 1500 different items. A lot of them are like hantels, pliers and the great cordless drill, but it's much more than that. I include things like, "What if you wanted to have a psychedelic experience that was transformative? What do you do?" I would recommend this book or there's lots of other things in it. I don't actually have the book right in front of me. I should. I think it's called … I don't remember.

Tim Ferriss: It's OK.

Kevin Kelly: In the show notes we will list it as the right one and there's also a little, tiny book that came from England. It was a cartoon guide. They gave a street, an unjudgmental view of all the different drugs there were and what each one did and didn't and what the plus and minuses are without recommending or forbidding them. It was just saying, "This is what it is." That information also believe it or not, is really in short supply. It's like, "What do you do with this and how does it work and tell me the facts. I don't

need to hear a lecture." Either way like, "Wow, this is great or this is terrible, but just tell me what's going on" As you know that kind of information sometimes is in extremely short supply.

Tim Ferriss: It's very difficult to find information that isn't politicized, inaccurate or like you said, so shrouded in either fear or irrational optimism that it's almost intelligible and certainly, generally useless. We'll put those books in the show notes for people. I want to come back to one of the things you said far, far earlier and that was related to the pieces that you tried to give away that eventually wouldn't die and came back. Were there any common threads, any patterns in those pieces that you can pick out as being a uniquely, Kevin Kelly theme, for lack of a better term?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah, one of the things that I discovered in my six months of trying to live as if
I was going to die in six months because as I was coming close to that date, which happened to be Halloween, October 31st, it was I kept cutting off my future. I may be like you. I tend to live in the future much more than the past. I'm always imagining. I'm saving this for someday when I'm going to do this. I'm looking forward. I'm going to do this here. I was very much in the future and then suddenly that future was being cut down day by day. I was thinking, "Why am I taking pictures? I'm not taking photographs because I'm not going to be here in another two months."

There was all these things that I'm cutting out and as I was cutting them out,
I had this realization, which was the thing I took away from this thing, which is that I was becoming less human. That to be fully human we have to have a future. We have to look forward to the future. That is part of us is looking into the future. After I came out of the, I embraced that. I'm saying, "Well, that future forward facing that's what I do. That's what I want to do and that's what

I write about it." In thinking about the future, one of the things that … It's very hard because the paradox about the future is that there are lots of impossible things that happen all the time.

If someone from 100 years from now would come back and tell us things, there's a lot of stuff we just not going to believe. It's just like that's crazy. Just like if we went back 100 years and told them what was going on now they would say, "That's just not going to happen." We could even go back 20 years. I could go back 20 years and say, "We're going to have Google Street Views of all the cities of the world and we're going to have encyclopedias for free that's edited by anybody." They would say, "There's no way." I would tell them, "Most of it's for free." They were saying, "There is no economic model in the world that would allow for that," and there isn't, but here it is.

The dilemma is, is that any true forecast about the future is going to be dismissed. Any future that is believable now is going to be wrong and so you're stuck in this thing of if people believe it, it's wrong and if they don't believe it, where does it get you? You're dismissed. There is this very fine line between saying something that is right on the edge of plausibility and at the same time, right on the edge of having a chance of being true. What I discovered that was helpful in trying to get away from the kind of assumptions that bind us to just extrapolate was to think laterally, was to go sideways. One thing just take whatever it was that everybody knew and say, "Well, what if that wasn't true?"

Tim Ferriss: What would be a good example of that or an example?

Kevin Kelly: Everyone says, "Moore's law will continue." What if Moore's law didn't continue? What would that mean? What would happen?

Tim Ferriss: Maybe I could say for the audience, but I'll just say even to remind me, Moore's law is … What is it? Every 18 months the size and cost of technology will decrease by 50%, something along those lines?

Kevin Kelly: Let's say even more simply.

Tim Ferriss: Oh no, there's speed involved as well.

Kevin Kelly: Right. Moore law it does say that, but let's say something right now we live in a world where every year the technology is better and cheaper. What if that wasn't true?

Tim Ferriss: Right, got it.

Kevin Kelly: What if every year starting a couple years from now stuff was better, but more expensive? That's a completely different world. Everyone assumes that things are going to get better and cheaper, but what if that wasn't true? You can take assumption, again that's something that's no one's really examining like one of the things I write about is the fact that we're going to have a population implosion globally. That the global population will drastically reduce in 100 years from now we'll have population, far, far less than we have right now.

Tim Ferriss: All right, I have to bite at that. I thought a lot about this in what they call the Malthusian dilemmas. Is that going to be you think pandemic-related, nuclear weapon related, all of the above?

Kevin Kelly: None of those.

Tim Ferriss: None of those?

Kevin Kelly: No.

Tim Ferriss: "AI" coming into the rise of the machines, no?

Kevin Kelly: No. It's just pure demographics. If you look at the current trends in fertility rates in all the developed countries everywhere, except for the US, they are already either below replacement level. Replacement level means that you are just sustaining the population just replaces itself. If it's below it means that there is getting less and less so Japan, Europe, they're all below replacement. The US is an exception because of only because of immigration. We need more people coming. Otherwise, we would be there and this would not be any news to anybody.

The real news is that people would point to developing world, but Mexico is now aging faster than the US. China is aging faster because of their one child policy. Of course, Japan is completely … They are way under water completely. Even the one exception is Sub-Sahara Africa and there's debate right now about how fast or whether they're slowing down, but generally around the world, South America, the rest of Asia, the rate of fertility continues to drop and here's the thing is that the demographic transition that is happening everywhere where people become urban.

Every forecast shows the urbanity, the citification of the population continuing and I can't think of any counter force to stop this huge migration at the scale that we're seeing into the city and as that happens, the birth rates drop down. Even in places like Singapore or other places where they have taken very, very active countermeasures of cash for having kids, day care forever, bonuses, none of these work in terms of actually trying to raise fertility levels.

You have to understand that to go above replacement level the average woman has to have 2.1 kids. Well, that means there has to be tons and tons of women who have three or four kids to make up for those. How many people do you know with that many kids living in cities? There's not enough of them. This is a projection. Some of these are UN projections. They have three. They have

a low, high and medium. The low one is not good news because there's not a large cultural counterforce for women to have three. A lot, a very high percentage of the population to have three or four kids in a modern world and that's why the population continues to decrease every year.

Tim Ferriss: This is perhaps a tangent, but one of the big debates in my head right now is to marry or not to marry, to have kids or not to have kids. I never thought those would even be questions in my mind and yet, here I am and now they are. What are your thoughts on having children? What type of people … This is very broad, but should have children or shouldn't have children, whichever way of answering is easier or how do you even think about that question?

Kevin Kelly: I think people who are privileged of which you are, should have children because you can bestow so many privileges and opportunities to your children and if the world is to be populated, why not populate it with children who have as many opportunities as possible? I also say from my own experience of growing up one of many kids and having … Well, I have three kids. One of my other regrets in life is not having a fourth, but we just started a little bit too late and we were unable to have a fourth, but all my kids wished that we had had a fourth, too. I would say that it's a gift to your kids to have more than one. I know that from hanging out in China where so many kids grew up only children and really, really missed that. There is a total gift of the siblings, the brothers to each other, that is really very profound.

There is also I know from my friends who have had lots of kids that there is a fair amount of teaching from the older to the younger and that's a lot of what they learn and that the curve of the amount of energy that you have to expend actually after three doesn't really matter in terms of the parents. I have one friend who has nine kids and I have another friend who has seven and basically, how do

they do that? The older kids were helping to parent the younger kids. That's the only way that it really works, but that is actually, basically they have five parents instead of having two parents.

Tim Ferriss: Right. It's very traditional in a way, traditional meaning reaching back thousands or tens of thousands of years.

Kevin Kelly: It is. Of course, in that the old days you may have had 12 born, but they rarely had 12 kids survive so that actually is a very recent … I mean it's like the 1800s onward. I hang out with the Amish a lot and they still have these very large families and they all survived so they have in some senses an unnatural expansion. One of my predictions, again going back to the assumptions, one of my predictions is that in America in 100 years from now there will be … The complete countryside is run by the Amish.

The Amish take over the entire countryside because they never sell land. They have eight kids and then there's all these people living in the city and it's like everybody's happy. You drive out to the Amish lands and it's just fantastic. They are very happy doing their thing and running the farms. I have been predicting for years that the Amish would come and start buying upstate New York and that's exactly what they're doing right now.

Tim Ferriss: Why do you spend so much time with the Amish? This is news to me, but very interesting and how long has that been going on?

Kevin Kelly: For a while. By the way …

Tim Ferriss: Does your beard have anything, is there any relation to the Amish?

Kevin Kelly: I had the beard before my interest in the Amish. I'm going to show you some pictures when I was 19-years-old. I have an Amish beard, which means I have a beard without a mustache. The reason why the Amish don't

have mustaches is that it was at the time that they were adopting their dress code, the mustache was all military men had mustaches and so they were very anti-military. They refused to serve in armies. They don't even vote. It was their rejection of the military by shaving off their mustache.

I hang out with the Amish because their adoption of technology seems to us totally crazy because first of all, they're not Lettites. They're complete hackers. They love hacking technology. They have something called "Amish electricity," which is basically pneumatics. A lot of these farms had a big diesel … They don't have electricity, but they have a big diesel generator in the barn that pumps up this compressor that sends high-pressure air tubes down tubing into their barn into their homes and so they have converted their sewing machine, washing machine to nomadic.

Tim Ferriss: Seems like a bit of a side-step of the word of God?

Kevin Kelly: Exactly. They'll have horse-drawn buggies and horse-drawn farm implements and the horses will be pulling this diesel-generated combine and you're thinking, "What are they doing?" In fact, if you look at our own lives and I have done this many times, I can ask you Tim or you can ask me, there will be some weird thing like, "We don't have TV in our house, but I've got Internet." It's like, "What is that about?" We all have these things, but here's the difference is that the Amish do it collectively. They are very selective. They are selecting their technology collectively as a group and secondly, because they're doing it collectively they have to articulate what the criteria is.

A lot of us are adopting, "We try this, we try that." We don't have any logic or reason or theory or framework for why we're doing this stuff. It's just a parade of stuff, but the Amish have very particular criteria and their criterion is there are two things that they're looking for. The main

thing they want to do, the main reason why they have all these restrictions like horse and buggy and all of this stuff is that they want to have these communities, very strong communities. They noticed that if you have a car that you'll drive out and shop somewhere out of the community or you go to church somewhere out of the community, but if you have a horse and buggy you can go only 15 miles and so everything has to happen … Your entire life, you have to support the community. You have the community within 15 miles. You have to visit the sick and you have to shop locally so you're shopping with your neighbors.

When a new technology comes along they say, "Will this strengthen our local community or send us out?" The second thing that they're looking at is with families. The goal of the typical Amish man or woman is to have every single meal with their children for every meal of their lives until they leave home.
They have breakfast and they have lunch and they have dinner so breakfast and lunch is they go to a one room schoolhouse and they pedal back for lunch that their parents had with them. That means that the business is ideally in their backyard. They have a lot of shops and stuff. If they're not a farmer and they have a backyard shop, which actually has to be cleanish because it is in their backyard. Well, it is in their backyard, so they really want to ensure that … Many of them have metalworking shops which they really try to keep non-toxic and work because it's in their backyard. That means that they can come home for lunch. They have breakfast and lunch so they're on the premise and they have every single meal with their children until they leave.

They say, "Will this technology allow us to do that? Will it help us do that or will it work against that?" Right now, they have been deciding whether to accept cell phones or not, even though they don't have land line phones. Basically, some of them are going to accept cell phones and they do that by there's always some early Amish

adopter who's trying things and they say, "OK Ivan. Bishop says you can …" He has to get permission. He says, "You can try this, but we're watching you. We're going to see what effect this has on your family, on your community. You have to be ready to give it up at any time we say that it's not working," and they do this on a parish by parish. It's very de-centralized. They try it out. Always trying out new technologies and they're always looking to see, "Does this strengthen the families? Does this strengthen the communities? If not, we don't want it."

Tim Ferriss: I have two questions. The first is since you're normally as I understand it based on the West Coast in Northern California, how do you get out to the Amish or is there a separate community closer by? Secondly, what have you incorporated into your own life or your own family that originated from the Amish?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. I don't get to see them as often as I want it actually, when I go east I have some contacts that I will exercise and I try to get to stay overnight and go to church in a buggy or something.

Tim Ferriss: This is Pennsylvania?

Kevin Kelly: Actually, Pennsylvania is the heart of it, but actually there are more communities in Ohio, where my brother lives, Iowa, there's a lot more happening in New York. The Pennsylvania are the Ground Zero, but in fact there are bigger, more extensive communities outside of Pennsylvania.

Tim Ferriss: I didn't realize that. The Amish Diaspora.

Kevin Kelly: It is. I'm saying they literally are just buying up farmland. They're expanding. They're constantly expanding. They have a very small attrition rate, very large families. They all are buying. Basically, they're buying farms and stuff for their children and they never sell. They also don't even move into areas as a ...

They have a minimum number of families that need to move in at once. What did I learn from them? One of the things that we've had, particularly when we had younger kids was technological sabbaticals or Sabbaths I should say. I've now seen other families who aren't even religious adopt that same thing which is once a week you take a break from either you can define it however you want, the screen or the keyboard or connectivity or something and you step back. You do that not because it's terrible or poison, but because it's so good.

There's lots of people who are like they're going to drop out from Twitter. They're kind of like, "This is like a toxin. I need to detox." I think that's entirely long way to think about it is you want to take breaks from this not because they're toxic, but because they are so good. It's like you want to step back so that you can re-enter it and with a renewed perspective, with a renewed appreciation, with having spent time looking at it in a different way. I think that kind of rhythm of having Sabbaths and then yearly vacations, retreats.
Then every seven years you take a true sabbatical, I think that kind of rhythmic disconnection or Sabbath I think is very powerful, something that works very well and was something that we had in our family.

Tim Ferriss: I take Saturdays off as it turns out as my screen-less day. I really try to make that a weekly occurrence and it's incredible the effect that it has, this galvanizing effect of just a mere 24 hours, not even that if you just consider the waking hours. Every seven years a vacation or sabbatical of how long in your case or your family's case?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. Partly because my wife actually is granted a sabbatical from the company she works for which is Genentech. It was one of the few companies that actually have an official sabbatical for all their researchers at least and it's very meager. It's six weeks. Of course, a six weeks sabbatical is basically a European annual vacation. For an American …

Tim Ferriss: Right. It's three years.

Kevin Kelly: That's a big thing. We're doing something different. This year we're taking one and we're going to camp in national parks for one month of it and then the other two weeks we'll go to Asia, but we haven't been to a lot of the national parks. I'm going to do a different kind of project that I haven't done before and we'll do some car camping. We haven't really done a big road trip like that so it's all new for us.

Tim Ferriss: What is the longest in the last few years that you've gone without checking email?

Kevin Kelly: Oh, probably two weeks and in China.

Tim Ferriss: How do you manage that?

Kevin Kelly: Well, it was not very easy. I was unable to pick it up because China was blocking Google.

Tim Ferriss: Makes it more challenging.

Kevin Kelly: I was in some remote places and so even the connection was hard, but it was like they weren't letting me get it. I'm not a mobile person. My first smartphone was the iPhone 5 and I'm still not using it properly. I use it for phone calls.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. I don't use my iPhone as an input device either. It drives me nuts.

Kevin Kelly: I can't type. When I travel I like to leave everything. I spend a lot of my time sitting in front of a computer. I'm like the Zen: walk-walk, sit-sit, don't wobble. I'm here. I'm really online. Then when I leave this studio I don't want to be connected at all and I won't be and I'm not checking email. I'm not checking this other stuff and I can go days, typically I'll go days without checking even in the US if I'm

traveling. If I'm overseas I will go probably three or four days before
I get the email. That's pretty typical.

Tim Ferriss: Let me shift gears just a little bit. I'm looking at LongNow.org. I recommend everybody take a look at it, Long Now Foundation. Humans are generally I would say pretty bad at thinking long-term, certainly when it comes to habit change, very, very high failure rate with long-term incentives. "You're going to get diabetes in 20 years," for instance, as opposed to "You'll have more sex if you have a six-pack when it comes to diet."

At the Long Now Foundation I just want to read a few things on this website for people. "The Long Now Foundation is established in 1996," written as 01996, "To creatively foster long-term thinking and responsibility in the framework of the next 10,000 years ago." Then you have 10,000 year clock, which is a monument scale, multi-millennial all mechanical clock. It's an icon to long-term thinking; The Rosetta project, building an archive of all documented human languages; Long bets, featured bet is here, Warren Buffett, Protégé Partners, LLC. "Public arena for enjoyable, competitive predictions of interest to society with philanthropic money at stake," and then "Revive and Restore," which is bringing extinct species back to life. There is a lot here.

Can you explain to people because I have greatly enjoyed many of the seminars and speeches of the Long Now Foundation. I'm a supporter. I suppose I've even spoken there on stage and love the email synopses that Stewart sends out. What is the function of the Long Now Foundation and what is the value?

Kevin Kelly: The Long Now Foundation is reactive. It's reacting to the very inherent, short-term bias that our society, particularly this technological society, particularly say the Silicon Valley exhibits, which is often a focus on the next quarter, the next two quarters, the next year, results needing to be

immediate, instant satisfaction, if something is not on Netflix streaming, we don't even wait for the DVD. It's this fairly very fast-paced, short term thinking and also, somewhat blinded by the fact that we don't have a lot of sense of history either that we're ignorant about what's happened in the past.

The term "The Long Now" came from Brian Eno who noticed that we have a very short now, which is the next five minutes and the last five minutes. The Long Now is an attempt to expand that so that we, as a society and as individuals, would try to think about things at a generational or civilizational scale. How about working on something that might take longer than your own lifetime to accomplish? You start something now that maybe make it so that it might take … Like the cathedrals of old, what if we were trying to make something that might need 25 years to accomplish? How can we do that?

We're trying to encourage people to think in that perspective, to take that perspective and then to maybe move in that direction. We're not necessarily saying we have to have the Asimov Foundation where we have to have a master plan for the next 100 years and we're going to plan out the future.
No, we're agnostic about what it is that people make or do. We're just saying that it would benefit thinking about the long-term. I've often heard some people who advised to counseling to individuals about thinking about the long-term in your own life, even though you might want to act locally and be spontaneous, but you do want to keep in mind the fact that you'll be around for a while, whether it's putting some savings away or working on a skill that might take some time, more than the six months or a year to acquire or whatever it is that you can have both perspectives.

We're not attempting to get rid of the need for people to survive, the need for companies to have a profit this year. We're saying there can be additional perspectives in

addition to that where we say we commit to a program, a science research where it's pure science and the results of this say in mathematics is one of the most profound things that we can invest in, even though most of the things in the beginning seem to be non-utilitarian. They don't have any purpose, but we know from our own history that in 20 years they'll pay off in some way or other. Being able to construct a society so that we can allow the rewards of long-term investment, long-term thinking, long-term perspective that would make us a better civilization.

Tim Ferriss: I love the Long Now Foundation. I encourage everybody to check it out, LongNow.org.

Tim Ferriss: I'd love to perhaps jump into some rapid fire questions, and they don't have to even be rapid.

Kevin Kelly: Just some fire questions.

Tim Ferriss: Just some fire questions. The questions will be rapid. The answers can be as short or as long as you'd like. What book or books do you gift or have gifted the most to other people outside of your own books?

Kevin Kelly: There is a short graphic novel by Daniel Pink called *Bunko*, and it's career counsel advice. It's aimed at young people. It's a graphic novel. It's a cartoon, basically, and it's aimed at young people as trying to teach them how to become indispensable. I've given that away to young people because it's, for me, the best summary of ... Again, it's not how to become successful; it's how to become indispensable, too.

Tim Ferriss: That's right. It's *Adventures of Johnny Bunko*, or something like that. I have that in my bookshelf back in San Francisco, in fact.

Ep. 26-28: Kevin Kelly - Co-founder of Wired Magazine

Kevin Kelly: If you know a young person who is just starting out, hand them that book. It's very easy for them to read. Again, it's graphic novel. It's not threatening. It's fun. It'll give this five great principles for starting out and helping them go orient themselves as they start working, in the working life.

Tim Ferriss: For someone who's facing a lot of the same questions let's just say, you have graduates asking the "what should I do? Why am I here? What am I good at?" If we fast forward to say, for the sake of argument, mid-30s, people in middle age hitting that particular point, are there any books that you would recommend they read?

Kevin Kelly: There is a book that I'm recommending by Cal Newport. It's called *So Good They Can't Ignore You*. This changed my mind because I bought into the New Age California dogma of follow your bliss, one will follow. He makes a really good argument and convinced me that's actually not very good advice, that what you really want to do is to master something and to use your mastering of something as a way to get to your passion. If you start with just passion, it's paralyzing because ... and I know this from my own kids. They're 18. They literally don't know what they're passionate about.

Some people are lucky enough to know, and a lot of people aren't. This is a book for people who don't really know what they're really excellent at, don't really know what they're passionate about.

His premise is that you master something, almost anything at all, just something you master, and you use that mastery to move you into a place where you can begin to have passion, and that you keep recycling that the way you find your passion is through mastery rather

than the other way around, which is people think that they're going to get their mastery through passion.

I believe that former ... that passion would lead to mastery, but after thinking about it, looking at his examples and his argument, I'm pretty sure that, at least, for most people, you can get to your passion through mastery.

Tim Ferriss: That would also give you a currency or a lever to use in getting to that point.

Do you have a favorite fiction book?

Kevin Kelly: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: I usually don't get one answer. This is great.

Kevin Kelly: *Shantaram*. It might take me a while to explain this, but it's author who wrote one book because this is very autobiographical. The premise of the book and the author's life seems completely incredulous and almost Hollywood-ish, but what you get from it and where it's set, it's set in India, it's set in the slums of India, and you get an incredibly vivid, immersive, deep, and in some ways uplifting view of India and the underworld in India, into that part of Asia.

The main protagonist is this very interesting Zen criminal. He's sort of a Coyote trickster blend of someone who is ... He does bad things, but at the same time, he's sorry about it, and he has a cosmic perspective. It's very, very unusual, but it's a long book.

I actually recommend that if people are going to try this, you actually to get the Audible version and listen to. It runs on and on, but it'd be one of those books that you

wish will never end. I'll just tell you the beginning of it, which is that, and this is the true part, which is that the guy, the author became a bank robber in New Zealand. He was hooked on drugs, started robbing banks, was eventually caught, and escaped from prison. He made his way to the slums of India, where because he had a medical kit, he was treated as a doctor.

Got involved and hooked on drugs in India; got involved with the Mafia; was put to prison, tortured, left, abandoned. Nobody knew he was even in there. Started writing a book. Hereafter, he wrote his book, they ripped it up, destroyed it. He was recruited, found a guru, an Afghani, was recruited in … was fighting there because entire company was wiped out. That's just the beginning. That's like the first day.

Tim Ferriss: It's really interesting that you would bring up *Shantaram* for those people who haven't heard Josh Waitzkin. I also had him on this podcast. Josh was the basis for *Searching for Bobby Fisher*, the book and the movie. World class chess player. Also very deep, soulful guy, and this is one of his favorite books as well. You would love Josh. Sometime, I will have to put you guys in touch, but any favorite documentaries?

Kevin Kelly: Now you've asked the wrong question because I have a cycle of true films, for the past 10 years. I have reviewed the best documentaries, and I actually have a book called *True Films*, which is the 200 best documentaries that you should see before you die.

Tim Ferriss: Oh my God! No kidding. You have no idea how timely this is. It's T-R-U-E Films?

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. True Films. There are a couple of films that I would say have served universal appreciation. They may have a rating of 100 on Rotten Tomatoes or something. The one documentary that I think everybody I know have seen has love is *Man on Wire*.

Tim Ferriss: That's such a good movie. Oh my God! Yeah.

Kevin Kelly: It's just transcendent. It's just a beautiful movie. It's based on fact that this guy basically he's going to walk the Twin Towers. The moment was he was a 14-year old kid in France, was at a dentist's office looking at a magazine, and he's hold ... There were had the plans to build this Twin Tower New York. He saw those two Twin Towers, and he said, "I need to walk between them." He didn't know how to tight walk. The towers had not been built. He was already planning this thing. He was filming himself the whole way. He does it, and how he does it is amazing.

Another great documentary that I love because it's very unusual among documentaries and that it films the villain side of the whole thing as well, which is *King of Kong*.

Tim Ferriss: This has been recommended to me. I still have not seen this movie.

Kevin Kelly: *King of Kong* is about a guy who becomes the video game, arcade game *King of Kong*. He becomes the champion, but he is basically competing against this cabal of people who are trying to subvert him and are doing all kinds of really terrible things to stop him, which was all on film. Here's this really Midwestern, really lovable guy, and you're rooting for him all the time while these really sleazy guys are trying to take him down. It's just fantastic.

Tim Ferriss: I have to watch that.

Kevin Kelly: That's the second one. The third one is when … but it's called *State of Mind*. It's about the spectacles in North Korea, which these two filmmakers had access to. They followed several different young athletes who were practicing for this spectacle, and these spectacles, of course, where there's these people are pixels.

They have this huge stadium size things, and they're like little robots. They're cogs in this machine, which is perfect. You can imagine a picture that's made up of pixels, but every pixel is actually a little boy or girl holding up a card, colored cards in sequence so these things move, which means that there's not a pixel missing. It means that nobody's sick. You're not allowed to be sick. You can't make a mistake at all, and it's getting inside of North Korea, which turns out to be a nationwide cult.

I think that in 50 years when they're gone, nobody will believe that, that was impossible, and this documentary will be here saying like, "No, no, no. There really was a nationwide cult, and they really did believe this." It really is amazing just to see what's going on there.

Tim Ferriss: I know what I'm doing for the next few days, next few evenings.

Kevin Kelly: I can't go on unfortunately because I have a lot of them, but go to the True Films.

Tim Ferriss: True Films.

Kevin Kelly: I only review ones that are great, so I don't do ... I'm just saying these are fantastic.

Tim Ferriss: Man, I've been looking for this. I cannot believe that I'm only learning this now. I'm embarrassed about that.

When you think of the word or hear the word successful, who's the first person who comes to mind?

Kevin Kelly: Jesus.

Tim Ferriss: Why would you say that?

Kevin Kelly: There aren't that many people who've left their mark on as many people in the world as he has. I think what he was up to, what he was doing is vastly been twisted, misunderstood, whatever word you want, but nonetheless, what's remarkable is ... and here's a guy who didn't write anything.

I think success is also overrated.

Tim Ferriss: I'd love for you to elaborate on that.

Kevin Kelly: Greatness is overrated. I mentioned big numbers, but it's more of the impact that they had on people's lives. I think we tend to have an image of success that's so much been skewed by our current media, just like our sense of beauty of women. In terms of all possibilities, it's in a very small, narrow, define ... ritualistic in a certain sense. I think our idea of success is often today it means you're somebody who has a lot of money, or who has a lot of fame, or who has some of these other trappings, which we had assigned, but I think can be successful by being true to, and being the most 'you' that you could possibly be.

I think that what's I think of as when you think of Jesus, whether you take him as a historical character or anything beyond, was about ... He certainly wasn't imitating anybody, let me put it that way. I think that's the great temptation that people have is they want to be someone

else, which is basically they want to be in someone else's movie. They want to be the best rock star, and there's so many of those already that you can only wind up imitating somebody in that slot.

I think to me the success is like you make your own slot. You have a new slot that didn't exist before. I think that's of course what Jesus and many others were doing, but they were making a new slot. That's really hard to do, but I think that's what I chalk up as success is you made a new slot.

Tim Ferriss: What is your new slot? You knew that was coming.

Kevin Kelly: Who says I'm successful?

Tim Ferriss: I'm not. I'm trying to not make any assumptions here. Or what would be your slot?

Kevin Kelly: My slot would be Kevin Kelly. That's the whole thing. It's not going to be a career or you would really ideally be something that would ... you had no imitators. You would be who you are, and that is success actually in some sense is you didn't imitate anybody, no one else imitated you afterwards.

In a certain sense you have, if you become an adjective, that's a good sign, right?

Tim Ferriss: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kevin Kelly: I think success is actually you make your own path. If they're calling you a successful entrepreneur, then to me that's not the best kind of success.

Tim Ferriss: Because you're being confined to that category.

Kevin Kelly: You're in a category.

Tim Ferriss: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Kevin Kelly: I could sing.

Tim Ferriss: Aha! You'd like to sing.

Kevin Kelly: Yeah. I seem to be unable to carry a tune. I can't remember when my wife can hear something once, she can just sing it back later. I can hear the same song or have heard the same song and I couldn't tell you three notes of it. I'm sure because I'm a Tim Ferriss fan, I'm sure I could train myself to … that. I know I could, but I guess I haven't, and it would be something that I have to really work at and I haven't, but I have trouble carrying a tune, staying in tune, remembering a tune.

I love music, and that I appreciate it, but in terms of actually singing and/or play ... I don't play an instrument, so maybe I would say if it was a little easier for me, that would be something nice.

Tim Ferriss: Have you take lessons or attempted to take lessons?

Kevin Kelly: No.

Tim Ferriss: I got it. Just in the spirit of trade. I've recently started exploring hand drumming with Jim bass and different types of drums. If anyone out there can get me a pen art hang, I would really love to hear from you. Those of you that ... won't mean nothing to most people who are hearing this, the research that has peaked my curiosity most recently, and, of course, you don't want to run out and just start swallowing these things, but there's a common anti-epilepsy drug called the Valproate, which

apparently has some implications for opening a window for achieving perfect pitch in mature adults. Very fascinating stuff. If I do any experiments with that, I will certainly report back.

Kevin Kelly: Now that you've talked about it, not the drug part, but I did, I remember I did take one class ... You mentioned drums. I took a one class at an adult summer camp, which I highly recommended. If your kids go to camp, you should go with them, and that was a steel drum course. I loved that. Like you, I think if I did take up an instrument, it would be drums of some sort because that, I seem to respond to it, and I did pretty good for the intro course on steel drumming.

Tim Ferriss: I find percussion to be so primal. It just satisfied some type of need that probably predates verbal communication even. Certainly written notes.

Kevin Kelly: I think it's your inner cave man that's responding.

Tim Ferriss: Are there any particular, let's just say in the first two hours of your day, any particular morning rituals or habits you have that when performed consistently, you find produce better days for you. I'm leaving better days undefined on purpose, but I love studying mornings and/or what people do when they wake up. What time do you wake up? Are there any particular habitual rituals that you find contribute to better days?

Kevin Kelly: I'm a very good sleeper. I don't sleep a lot. These days, I get up at 7:30 and I have some rituals, but I don't vary them enough maybe to know whether they are ... I'm not morning person to begin with.

Tim Ferriss: You're not a morning person. The fact that you don't vary them is perfect.

Kevin Kelly: I know, but I don't necessarily optimize it in any way, or I can't tell which is better, but for better or worse, one of the first things I do is I read the paper version of the New York Times. It's what I call a guilty pleasure. I don't know whether that makes me better at anything else I do, but I don't drink coffee or anything. It's a ritual, and when I'm not here, I don't read it, so it's like I don't miss it. I'm curious, but if I'm here, it's like I got to do it. It's weird.

Tim Ferriss: Is that immediately after waking you read the paper, or is there anything you do?

Kevin Kelly: Just about. In my pajamas, I walk out to the front gate, and I pick it up, and I read it. I don't read all of it. I just go through, and I usually don't even read the news part. I read the slower stuff. I'm not sure why. Now that you're asking, and that's it. That’s the entire ritual. I don't have the same thing for breakfast or anything like that. It's just that morning hit.

Tim Ferriss: Do you do anything throughout your day, regularly? Maybe it's before bed or anything else that most other people probably don't do.

Kevin Kelly: That's a good question. No.

Tim Ferriss: Really?

Kevin Kelly: I have no special sauce.

Tim Ferriss: But you're very consistent. Your days seem to be ... don't vary very well. At least that, in and of itself, might be something that a lot of people don't.

Kevin Kelly: Let's pick up two different things. While I'm here in the studio, have a lot of control over my time. What I do during the day is greatly varied though. I do a lot of things for short amount of times. I'll go into my workshop. I'll read, actually read books, sit down and read books during the middle of the day. I'll go out. I'll do a hike and bring my camera almost every day. Maybe that is something that most people don't do is probably they probably aren't taking pictures with their camera every day.

Tim Ferriss: More reading books in the middle of the day for them I think

Kevin Kelly: Maybe that's true, I guess.

Tim Ferriss: How do you choose your books? That's a paradox of choice problem for a lot of people.

Kevin Kelly: It is. It's like, what are you going to listen to next in music. The music becomes free, and everybody has all the music in the world, but deciding what you're going to listen to becomes the thing you pay for. That's been my prediction about Amazon is they will soon going to have any book you want for free. Amazon Prime, digital version of it. You can have it whenever you want, but you'll pay for us for the recommendations

Tim Ferriss: That's a great point.

Kevin Kelly: I have a network of friends, and I listen to lots of podcasts. I get it from all over the place. Like probably you are at this point, I long ago decided that in terms of the greater scheme of things, the cost of books are really cheap, and if I wanted a book, I would buy it.

The result is that I'm right now speaking in a two-story high library of books that I have. I don't do the same with digital books because I finally figured out that if I purchase it, a book before I'm reading it, it's not going anywhere. It's just sitting there. I shouldn't really purchase a digital book until five seconds before I'm going to read it.

Tim Ferriss: I have exactly the opposite habit.

Kevin Kelly: It's just there. The whole point of Kindle is that you don't have to have it until you need it. On the digital books, I don't buy anything until I'm seconds away from reading it, then I'll get it, but the paper books, I was near to the point of actually digitizing and getting rid of all my paper books.

I was that close about five years ago, but then I had an epiphany. I went to private library, and I realized that books were never as cheap as they are today. They never will be as cheap, and that there's some power about having these things in paper always available, no batteries, never obsolete, and that if you made a library now, you would never be able to make some of these libraries in 50 years, so I decided to keep and to cultivate this paper library as something that was going to be powerful in the future.

Tim Ferriss: I like that. Or at least I can use it as justification for keeping a lot of paper books around.

Kevin Kelly: I get tips for books from podcasts, from blogs, from friends, from Amazon recommendations, anywhere, and whenever I hear someone recommend a book, I'll go and check it out, and then I'm fairly free in buying it, but which means I read a lot of really mediocre books.

Tim Ferriss: What?

Kevin Kelly: That's part of my job in *Cool Tools*. The book that we were just talking about, which is this catalog of possibility for the self-published that has, oh I don't know, 15 hundred. Maybe there's couple hundred books that are recommended, but I probably read thousands and thousands and thousands of books in order to select those.

I see part of my job reading through, and I read a lot of how-to books. Most of the books I'm reading is nonfiction. A lot of the easy, instructional stuff on how to build a stonewall, how to do origami, how to send a cell, microcell to space, whatever it is, it doesn't matter. I'll look at it, and I've seen tens of thousands of them, 50 thousand how-to books over my lifetime. I can spot a really good one, but still I'll read through the other ones so that someone else doesn't have to and I can recommend the same, "This is the best book on building a tiny house if you want to build a tiny house."

Tim Ferriss: When you read these books on origami or stonewall, do you follow through and attempt these projects, or are you evaluating it purely based on your amassed experience of reading lots of these types of instructional books?

Kevin Kelly: No. Actually, maybe one of the other things that I don't do every day, but one of the things I do in general that maybe everyone else is not doing is that I have thousand hobbies. I dabble in things. I have built stonewalls, more than one. I have done origami. I have made beer. I have made wine. Whatever it is, I've tried to do these things in my life, and I continue to try and do that. I have homeschooled my son.

As much as possible, this is ... I was telling you before about my day. It's irregular in the sense that I'm here and

I have things, but I'm doing new things, and I'm reading new things all the time. When I'm outside, I'll make a go-kart or a wall; do something that I haven't done before. That's the basis for helping decide about these books. I don't have to be an expert in them, but I can know enough to tell whether or not the information they're telling me is useful.

Tim Ferriss: What odd project over the last year has been the most fun? Let's start there, for you.

Kevin Kelly: Just the last couple of months, I finally built myself a real workshop. I wish I could show it to you because one of the cool things that I did was if you go on to U Line or somewhere, this container, they have these racks of bins. I've filled an entire wall of hundreds and hundreds of bins so I can organize stuff.

I'm a big fan of Adam Savage. He has a principle for his workshops called First Order Access, which basically means that you don't want to store things behind anything. Everything has to be at the first level so you can look and see it. It has to be within reach. He says you have to be able to see everything that you have and it's accessible. You don't want things hidden behind other things.

That's part of what I was doing with this workshop is this first order access. It's tremendously powerful. The few days or the weeks I've had working, and it just transforms everything.

I had the same problem with my books for many, many years. I had books like multiple different bookshelves in the house. I had them in boxes. I had them this and that. Moving everything to one location, to a library where there

was two stories, I could see all my books, just transformed them and made it really useful because I could find them. Just really go and reach for them. The same thing was I'm finally bringing that to my tools, which is that you want to have things plugged in, ready to go, labeled, organized, first order access, and it can make simple jobs really simple instead of the hours of looking for something. Also-

Tim Ferriss: Like gathering all the tools.

Kevin Kelly: Gathering all the tools and also-

Tim Ferriss: Just like cooking. It's just like cooking. It's like having a manual, random access memory, right?

Kevin Kelly: Right.

Tim Ferriss: You have your mise-en-place right in front of you.

Kevin Kelly: You know the tools are.

Tim Ferriss: That's very cool. If there were one object, manual project, building something, do you think every human should have the experience of doing, what would that be?

Kevin Kelly: That's very easy. You need to build your own house, your own shelter. It's not that hard to do, believe me. Actually, I built my own house.

Tim Ferriss: Your house is amazing.

Kevin Kelly: Not this house. I built one from cutting down the logs, cutting down the trees in upstate New York, and doing the stone hearth. Unfortunately, I don't recommend this, maybe like 2 by 4s from trees. You don't want to do that because it's a pain. Standard lumber is very good. If those

things are off a little quarter of an inch as they are with rough sewn lumbers, it's a mess.

Nonetheless, a large portion of people in the world have made their own homes, adobe, rammed earth, bamboo, whatever it is. Going back to what we originally started off with, even if you don't wind up living in it, it's empowering to know that you can do it, and if you do wind up living in it, I have a friend, Lloyd Conn, who built his magnificent place in Balinese that he built with salvaged material from scratch over the many years. It gives you the power to alter it.

I believe that your house should be an extension of you, that really is another projection. It's another way of, and also, going back to what we're talking about, is just another way to discover who you are and discover what you're good at because a well-designed house should really reflect you. What I've discovered, lot of people designed houses, and they have this imaginary fantasy idea about themselves and what they're going to do. Whatever it is, they're going to have a swimming pool. They're never going to use a swimming pool. Whatever it is.

Very few people actually have a very good sense of who they are and what they're going to use something for, but if you really study yourself and really are honest and designed something that space can help you become successful in the sense of making a slot for you, making your own slot.

It's both a by-product of who you are, and also can help you become who you are. It works both ways.

Tim Ferriss: I like that. You're not just finding yourself; you're creating yourself.

Kevin Kelly: This is a larger philosophical question, but this is something I talk about a lot. In a very high dimensional space, which means space of many pending possibilities, the act of finding and the act of creating are identical. There's no difference between discovering something and inventing something. We could say that philosophically, Benjamin Franklin invented electricity. We could say that Christopher Columbus invented America. We could say that discovery and invention are the same, so that discovering yourself and inventing yourself is really the same things that bring about that process. You have to do both at once.

Tim Ferriss: I really enjoyed that. Last question. If you could give your ... let's say, you can pick the age, either 15 or 20-year old self, one or a few pieces of advice, what would they be?

Kevin Kelly: You don't have to do everything yourself. You can hire people to do stuff. I wish I had known that when I was younger. I wish that I had, when I was 20 working for Whole Earth catalog, I wish I had known that I could have hired a programmer to do something. I could have hired someone. It took me a long time to understand that.

Then recently, I'd been really big on it, hiring people through Elance. Because I came from a little bit of a do-it-yourself ... I made a nature museum when I was 12. I had a chemistry lab that I built myself, building that stuff. I could buy any glassware, but I had a whole chemistry lab. I had nature museums. I did all the stuff, and I did it myself, and then of course moving into the Whole Earth catalog, which is a do-it-yourself thing, I really was ... I just talked about building my own house.

Now, I will hire professionals to work. It just took me a long time to realize that there's something about ... Being able to pay professionals to do what they do really well is not a weakness. It helps them. I'm happy. They're happy. We're all happy. I can do a lot more. There's certainly a pleasure in doing things yourself and dabbling in it, but there's also this other thing, which I didn't realize, which is there's this leverage that you get by hiring people who are really good, paying them fairly, working with them to amplify what it is that you want to do. I wish I knew that when I was younger.

Tim Ferriss: That's a fantastic answer. You have, if I remember correctly, an assistant and a researcher. Is that still true?

Kevin Kelly: Yes, one and the same person.

Tim Ferriss: They are the same. I thought that at one point, you had believed that you needed those people to be two separate people but you-

Kevin Kelly: Here's what I was saying was that it's very unusual to find one person who can do both of those tasks. Both of those tasks are often not found on the same person because there's the hunting, the researching. There's a hunter aspect to research that's often found in a certain personality, and then they're the kind the admin. It's more nurturing, kind of making sure things, gardening a little bit. It's often rare to find someone who can do both, but it's possible.

Tim Ferriss: Was it luck that you happened upon this particular individual that you work with now? Or did you have a method for ... ? Was there a particular approach …

Kevin Kelly: I found that the place where I found … over the 14 years, I've had two, the place where I found that they're more likely than not to have a combination was librarians.

Tim Ferriss: I love it.

Kevin Kelly: We put out notices on the librarian mailing list and stuff.

Tim Ferriss: I said last question. This will be the last question. Is there any other thoughts or advice you'd like to leave with the listeners, and then where would you like people to find more from you, your writing, anywhere else.

Kevin Kelly: I would say congratulations to the people who have listened to the podcast. I think podcast are these fantastic new medium. I'm spending a lot of time there. I think it's this really great. We're in the early days of where this will go. I'm really impressed by the power of this medium to teach and to inform; sometimes to entertain. Again, I'm thankful to you, Tim, for having me on and having the chance to gab here, but to the people who are listening, I think keep going. Listen to more podcasts. Try to go wide. I know Tim mentions them here and there. Take a chance. Listen to some more.

That's one thing I would say as far as finding out more about me, I lucked out with a very easy website. It's my initials, KK. KK.org. I have very public email for the past 25 years. You can find it very easily on my website if you want email directly. I have not outsourced that unlike other people that I know. My writings and books and whatnot are www.KK.org.

Cool Tools is a book that I really believe that each of you out there should have. It's on paper. It's the best of the website, *Cool Tools*, which is me going on for 11 years

now where we review every day, one great tool. They're only positive reviews. Why waste your time on anything but the best? Tools in the broadest sense of the word of things that are useful, whether it's Elance, or a book on how to do psychedelics, or a book on how to build a workshop, or how to build a house, or how to hitchhike around the world.

I and others recommend the best here with some great contexts. It's printed on paper, available on Amazon. Not so easily found in bookstores because it's huge. It's like 5 pounds weighs. It's really, really big. If you don't find 500 things you didn't know about but you wished you know about, like last year, I'll give you your money back. Enjoy that. That said, *Cool Tools* or *Cool Tools* in Amazon.

Tim Ferriss: Kevin, this has been a blast. It always is. Every time we chat, I feel like we should chat more. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to spend some more time together soon back in Nor Cal or somewhere else?

Kevin Kelly: Nor Cal? In China.

Tim Ferriss: Or in China. It's been a long time. I could get back.

Kevin Kelly: I'm heading back to Japan again, and I know that you have lots of roots in Asia, but I go there to renew my sense of the future because they are ... They're bulldozing the past as fast as they can and headed, racing into the future. I want to see what Asia has in store for us because mathematically, we don't count anymore. 1.3 billion, whatever, the 3 billion Asians and 300 million Americans. What can you say?

Tim Ferriss: Study up, folks. Specialization is for insects. I think that was a hind line.

Kevin Kelly: Hind line.

Tim Ferriss: Enjoy your time on this planet and look broadly like Kevin said. Kevin, thank you so much. I will talk to you soon, and have a wonderful day. I will talk to you soon.

Kevin Kelly: Thanks for having me, Tim.

Tim Ferriss: Buh-bye.

Kevin Kelly: Bye-bye.

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Till next time, thanks for listening.