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POWDERKEG PODCAST TRANSCRIPT: JENNY BLAKE

Intro: “Pivoting” might seem like a dirty word in business, but Jenny Blake has learned to embrace it. Not only that, but she’s built her career around it, becoming a business strategist, keynote speaker, and author who teaches others the positive value of pivoting.

“When it comes to our careers...pivoting is often a product of success—that you’ve outgrown some previous direction or previous idea, or career incarnation, and you’re ready for something new,” Blake said.

Blake is the author of *Pivot: The Only Move That Matters Is Your Next One*, and the creator of the Pivot Method, which distills all the wisdom she’s gained throughout her career to teach you how to change your business direction without falling on your face.

Blake learned the virtues of pivoting by doing it many times throughout her career. After spending two years at a technology startup in Palo Alto, she landed a job at Google as a product trainer for AdWords. She stayed there for five years, training more than 1,000 employees and building her public speaking and career coaching skills, before she pivoted once more and set out to become a solopreneur.

She now speaks and holds workshops on the Pivot Method around the world, at companies like Intuit and Pimco, universities like Yale and MIT, and conferences like TEDxCMU and the World Domination Summit. She also runs the Pivot Podcast, which started as a passion project while she was writing *Pivot* and has grown into a forum for world-renowned authors and businesspeople to share their advice on how to seize opportunities and pivot like pros.

Jenny has so many great stories and insights to share in our interview, from the health benefits of practicing yoga to why reading will make you a better person. She also talks about how to get over your fears of public speaking, how meditation will make you a better entrepreneur, and how you can use the Pivot Method to succeed in business and improve your personal life.

“Success, to me, is enjoying every day. If I’m running my own business and I’m miserable...what’s the point? It’s very important to me to, on a day-to-day basis, take care of my mind, my body, my spirit, my business. They’re all equally important,” Jenny said.

To learn more or connect with Jenny, visit the Pivot Method website or her personal website. You can also check out Momentum, her private community for solopreneurs and side-hustlers, or consider signing up for Pivot Coaching if you're looking for some help to make your own pivot a success.

Matt: Jenny, thanks so much for being here today. I really enjoyed reading your book and getting into some of what you're doing with *Pivot* and the Pivot Method. Your podcast is amazing as well. It was really cool to see you featured in that article on Entrepreneur.com with all of these other amazing female podcasters. How's everything going there?

Jenny: Thank you so much. The podcast has been this secret love that emerged out of nowhere. I was not expecting to enjoy it as much as I do. I was working on *Pivot*. It took about three years from start to finish. I thought, "I'm interviewing people anyway. I might as well record these and have a podcast companion that goes with the book, so that as people are reading *Pivot*, they can also hear live stories from the people and the experts that I'm interviewing." As I was working on the book, it just became this passion project. I had so much fun—and I still do—getting to interview my author heroes and getting access to people in a way I never anticipated. People like Kevin Kelly. He's the cofounder of *Wired* magazine, for anyone who isn't familiar. Things like that. Kevin Kelly, Martha Beck, some of my author heroes—getting to have them on the phone and talk to them one-on-one is just incredible. And then talking to you, Matt. Getting to be a guest on podcasts has also been really, really fun. I found with this book launch—it's my second book—it's my favorite way to get out there, because it's so authentic. We get to just shoot the breeze, have a conversation, and people get to listen in. It's been really rewarding.

Matt: Absolutely. You do such a good job with it. You really get a sense of who you are, what you're all about, and how you're going about continuing to learn. I love that you're a bookworm, always consuming all kinds of different books. Of course, writing books of your own. And I want to make sure we dive into your most recent book, *Pivot*, at some point during this conversation. I'd love to learn a little bit more about what makes you tick, because you're clearly passionate about learning. You're clearly passionate about technology. I'm curious to know if some of that is because you grew up in San Francisco.

Jenny: My mom was really good about getting computers when they first—when, like, the Apple 2c came out. Early computers—I really started teaching myself software, desktop publishing early on. I taught myself coding at my first job out of college. I've always enjoyed figuring out technical things, and then I've also always enjoyed learning, and sharing, and teaching. I used to make my brother play school when we were kids. I would make him worksheets and make him fill them out, because I wanted him to be learning what I was learning and get ahead of the game for his age group. That's not much different from what I'm doing now, with the blog and a book. I'm creating worksheets for people to learn, and grow, and accelerate their life somehow.

Matt: It's the new version of school, right? It's continuing education for us people that needed out when we were in school.

Jenny: Totally. And you asked what makes me tick. Yes, it's reading, and learning, and growing, but also, whenever I go through something challenging, or I feel that I've been through a really inefficient process, I love to synthesize whatever I've learned and figured out and try and somehow make a map that makes it easier for other people who might go through the same thing. My first book, *Life After College*, that came from reading hundreds of books, just trying to figure out how to be an adult in the world. I felt it was inefficient, so I created this book. I call it "a portable life coach for twenty-somethings." Same thing with *Pivot*. I went through a time—multiple times—where I felt like I was losing my mind trying the answer the question, "What's next?" It was rewarding for me to channel those dips, those low moments in my life, and as I figured them out, become really determined to improve and help people go through that process in the future.

Matt: One of the things I really appreciate about how you describe that in your writing, and even in your talks, is that a lot of people could frame this as all glamorous, you know, stars and sunshine and rainbows. One of your quotes that stuck with me was, "Courage is a hot mess."

Jenny: Yeah. That was from when I spoke at the World Domination Summit in 2012. I said, "Sometimes courage is a hot mess." It's not always pretty, it's not shiny, but it means that we're afraid and we're taking steps anyway. It's not always just this shiny, perfect image of perfection that gets translated through social media. So, to not take it personally if you feel anxious or fearful as you're starting a business, growing a business, pivoting a business. Courage is to continue. It's not about looking good all the time while you do it.

Matt: I think that makes things much more, not only relatable, but interesting to read. It's educational. If we're not willing to share our failure, or share our struggle along the way, you're not getting the whole learning.

Jenny: I agree. There's nothing interesting to me about a sanitized version of success. Even when I'm on stage—I recently got feedback as a speaker. A lot of people loved the speech that I gave, and one person said, "She didn't spend enough time establishing credibility. I wasn't sure why I should be listening to her." I tend to focus so much on what my challenges are, and my struggles, and what's not working, because that's what I find most interesting and what people can relate to. I found that feedback interesting. Now I kind of—going into an event, I kind of have to go out of my way to establish for people, "Oh yeah, and this is why I'm up here." But, it's not as interesting for me to talk about.

Matt: I can tell that you love and are eager, always, to kind of get into the lesson. Get into the story. I'm curious: you mentioned that your mom had an Apple 2. Was it the Apple 2c?

Jenny: If that one was before the Apple 2e, then yes. I remember we got the 1 and then upgraded. Was “c” before the “e”?

Matt: I remember the upgrade to the “e” as well. My mom was a teacher. Was your mom a teacher as well?

Jenny: No, she’s a landscape architect, but funnily enough, she almost majored in computer science at UC Berkeley in 1969. She always looks back, and she’s like, “I could’ve been rich by now,” because she’s right in the heart of the Valley, studying computer science. But, she pivoted to history and landscape architecture.

Matt: I wasn’t sure. We always had our Apple because Apples were in the schools that my mom worked at, which is the only reason that we had a computer at home. All teachers had an Apple. At the time, it was 2c. We played Number Munchers and Word Munchers and Oregon Trail.

Jenny: Oh my gosh, that’s so fun. I used to make newsletters on the typing software. All I remember is a lot of stars and weird symbols, and that’s how you would divide the page up. Making two columns was really a big deal. Anyway, so fun. I love nerding-out on all this stuff.

Matt: I’m curious to know how that prepared you for some of your early careers. I know even before you were at Google, you were working at a startup, right?

Jenny: Yep, I took a leave of absence. I was at UCLA, and one of my professors was going to join this online political polling startup. It happened to be in Palo Alto, which was where my mom lived at the time, and where I went to middle school and high school. Kind of on a leap of faith, I took a leave of absence from school, moved home to Palo Alto, and started work as the first employee at this startup. It later grew to 30 employees and got acquired. It was such a great experience, because as the first employee, I was the office manager, marketing assistant and webmaster. They kind of would just throw anything and everything at me that was entry-level. I really loved just learning from experience, and hands-on. Also, partly, I think they expected that I was just going to file papers, but the more that I took on and proved myself, and taught myself new things, the more responsibility they gave. It was really a training ground. One of my many tasks was managing our Google AdWords accounts. I developed a relationship with our customer service rep at Google, and when I hit a plateau at the startup after about two years there...I later went back to graduate with my class at UCLA, and everything, so I finished school. But, when it came time to move, I loved the startup, I had stock in it, I wasn’t going to leave for nothing, but I thought, “Google’s worth the jump.” So, I reached out to our rep and ended up moving over to Google to become an AdWords product trainer. It was my experience as a client that helped me get that job on the training team.

Matt: Wow, that’s amazing. What year was that, that you moved over to Google?

Jenny: 2006.

Matt: What a time to be at Google! What was that like?

Jenny: It was amazing and crazy. I was there as the company grew from 6,000 to 36,000 people. Because I was in a training function, I met a lot of those new hires. I trained over a thousand people in my first year and a half at the company. I got to know a ton of people. When I go back to Google—I'm still working with Google today, just from the outside, as a consultant—still, I'll be at a training now, and someone will say, "You trained me ten years ago on my first day at the company." It was really rewarding, and wild. The best business school: to be at the heart of Silicon Valley, the heart of one of the most innovative companies, and then watch. Even the infrastructure. How do you scale to—by the time I left, 36,000, now 60,000. It really taught me how to be efficient. How to communicate. How to create things with global scale in mind. I never thought I was cut out to be an entrepreneur. I really didn't. But once I left, I realized how many skills I had acquired from working there that serve me now today.

Matt: I want to make sure we talk about scale, but I'm curious to know: what were some of those soft skills that you learned as you trained a thousand people at Google that you use now, today, with the work that you do as a consultant and career and business strategist?

Jenny: On a physical level, I actually used to get hives when I would speak in front of a room. Even in college, I would get nervous in a—I forget what they called the breakout classes. Where it was the TA and, like, 12 students. I would get nervous just to say my name, to go around the room and say my name. Yet, at the same time, I knew I wanted to be an author and a speaker someday. Having this training job at Google—I kind of took it on purpose to inoculate myself against this fear of public speaking, because I knew it was something I wanted to get better at. Being in front of the room every single day, and troubleshooting tech problems, and keeping people awake, and entertained, and learning, was really good practice, to the point where: when I gave my very first public speech—it was at TEDxCMU. I was the first speaker of the day. Five hundred people in the room. Three thousand streaming. And the slides started going haywire.

Matt: I think I watched that one. Is that one on YouTube?

Jenny: Yeah, it is. [laughing] I would say we could link to it in the show notes, but oh God, that would be so embarrassing. It was so long ago. But the point is, I could have panicked and just stopped altogether, but because I had been through the trenches of already being in front of a room everyday, I stuck it out. It wasn't perfect. It's definitely awkward, but I finished it, and I gave the speech.

Matt: No, you crushed it! Your first public speech? That's pretty amazing and very impressive for your first public speech.

Jenny: I have to share, too: one of my favorite quotes is from a book called *Confessions of a Public Speaker*, and this has helped me ever since. He says, "Anytime you're an animal

standing alone on an open plain, with no weapons and nowhere to hide, and dozens—if not hundreds or thousands—of eyeballs staring at you, evolutionarily speaking, you're about to die.” So, if any of you listening tend to get nervous when you're giving a big presentation or public speaking, it's normal. It's our bodies' evolutionary response to fear, from being an animal, standing alone on an open plain, with all these people looking at you. Once I learned that, I started to get into the physiology of calming the body: yoga breathing, opening and closing your fists. That's why some speakers pace before they get on the stage. Some make the mistake of pacing while onstage. That's less desirable. You just need tricks to get the adrenaline out of your body. That alone was a great soft skill that I learned in my time at Google.

Matt: I've definitely made the pacing mistake and then watched myself in video later. I look like I'm a lion at the zoo, just pacing the bars there. I try not to do that again. Talk to me more about some of these physiology tricks. I've heard a few of them—some of the things like focusing on breathing. Maybe you could talk me through a breathing exercise you do before you do one of your talks.

Jenny: One I do is called “controlled breathing.” The original name for it is pranayama. You can do—counting to three on the inhale, or five on the inhale, and five on the exhale, really slows your breath down. It's just like, inhale...one, two, three, four, five. Hold. Exhale...five, four, three, two, one. Hold. That slow. Sometimes, when I'm waiting for the person to introduce me, I'm doing that. If any of you have taken a yoga class, they call it Ujjayi breathing, where you constrict the glottis muscles at the back of your throat, and you make the sound of the ocean with your breath, and you're breathing in just through your nose. That really filters the breath and calms the system. Another breathing technique is: you take an inhale—everyone listening now can do this—you take an inhale, and just give a sigh. That kind of a breath says, “I'm relaxed. I'm not being chased. There are no predators.” It activates your parasympathetic nervous system. You can even do one more just to really feel the effects of it. Deep inhale...[sighs]. And just shake out your hands and your arms. If you're being chased by a lion, as you mentioned, it's not that kind of breathing. It's good to notice when your breathing gets tight, when you constrict the muscles in your face. Let's say you still have adrenaline, and I often do. It can manifest as a shaky voice, shaky hands, even shaky leg syndrome. This one—I always get laughs. I was the speaker coach for TEDxBushwick, and one of the things that I told the speakers is: the biggest muscle in your body is your butt. When you're onstage, if you get really nervous, you can clench your buttocks, and no one will know. No one will see them. You're not pacing, you're not doing yoga breathing while you've got the mic in your hand. At the TEDx run-through the day of the event, everyone would come up to me and be like, “Jenny, I'm clenching my butt!” But I think it worked. You may laugh now, but try it some time when you're nervous. The bottom line, the goal, is you've got to give that adrenaline something to do. The other thing is a lot of people make that fear magnified by taking it personally. “Ugh, I'm doing it again. I'm nervous. Oh my God, you're going to notice. I'm freaking out.” I started to learn—this year, I spoke six times in front of a thousand people. I've never done that before. I've never spoken to a room that big. It's pretty overwhelming to look out and see a thousand people. That's two thousand eyeballs, now, staring at the person on the stage. I would notice myself

getting nervous, and just keep going. It wasn't a problem, it wasn't like, "Oh my God, I'm going to botch this. I'm going to ruin it. I can't believe I'm nervous right now." You are going to get nervous. Expect it, and therefore you won't magnify it when you're in the moment. Just accept it and keep moving, and then you're not producing extra adrenaline on top of the initial adrenaline.

Matt: That makes a lot of sense. I want to get back to yoga, because I just discovered yoga in 2015. I say "discovered"—I knew of its existence, but I actually finally tried it in 2015. That has been a total game-changer for me. But, I wanted to share: the breathing side of things is something that our team has started to do together now. We all do the pranayama breathing. There's actually an app on iTunes. Have you heard of this, Jenny?

Jenny: I don't know. What's it called?

Matt: It's literally called "Pranayama."

Jenny: Whoa, no.

Matt: You can download the app, and it has different breathing patterns you can do. One, if you want to get more excited, say we're about to go to a networking event together, we might do that breathing pattern together before we go to that event. And we don't do it for a long period of time. We try not to be too weird about it. There's also sort of the mid-week—you're starting to realize you're not going to get the whole to-do list done during the week. It's like, "Let's get together and do"—similar to that same breathing pattern you described. "Let's just all get back to calm baseline again, to where we can just approach, and everyone be in-sync again. Bring those cortisol levels down so that we can approach our work from a creative mindset." That's been a huge, huge help, and I would recommend to our users to start by using your exercise that you recommend here. And then, if they're open to it, taking a leap of faith with their team—their more forward-thinking team members, anyway. Maybe try the breathing exercise as a group.

Jenny: That's awesome. It's so cool there's an app for it.

Matt: Oh, it's awesome. It's my go-to now if I start to feel overwhelmed. I saw in your bio, you mentioned you've always got some sort of soundtrack going in your headphones if you're walking around New York. My go-to now is to have that pranayama app, just to kind of get myself into a more meditative state. Because I used to always listen to podcasts, or music, or audiobooks, but at a certain point—I was just always filling my time with content as opposed to just allowing myself to be present, and be with myself, and be with my thoughts.

Jenny: Yeah, totally. Especially if you're a creative person, or an entrepreneurial person. It's so easy to fill our minds with other people's ideas. I just bought a book called *How to Be Bored*. The School of Life put it out. It's a small little booklet, really. Because, I agree. I think it's so important to take the time that we have to breathe and slow down. Silence can be so beautiful.

And be able to hear ourselves think—or not think, if the goal is to slow our minds down. Either way, I noticed the same thing. I haven't listened to a podcast—even though I love doing them and being a guest on them—I really have taken a break from listening. I'm just appreciating more quiet right now.

Matt: I love that. That makes a lot of sense. I wonder, is yoga part of that intent for you?

Jenny: I've been doing yoga almost 15 years now, so yoga is just a staple of my sanity. It definitely serves a function. I meditate every day. I would say meditation is more directly related to creating that space and silence. When people will sometimes say to me, "I don't meditate, but I do yoga," or, "but I go walking. But I run. But I, fill in the blank." Those things are all amazing, and they're still different from meditation, which is sitting still, with your eyes closed, for five minutes or more. I do 25 at the moment, but I've 45 in the past. Some days, if I only have five, I'll do five. Meditation is really where I find myself able to slow down. A lot of people might feel: "I don't know how to meditate," or, "I'm doing it wrong." There's no such thing. Just think of it as stillness. Just sit in stillness with your eyes closed and do that slow breathing that we talked about, and that alone can help calm—I kind of use the metaphor of a beehive in our mind. Just bees as thoughts, buzzing all around. If you can drop down below the mind into, let's say, your heart-center, deeper into your body, that's where things start to quiet down. You can...I'm writing haikus lately. One of them starts as, "Melt, soften, release your grip." So, in that stillness, can you soften? Can you melt? Can you release your grip on the day, on stresses? Another breathing exercise is called tonglen. You breathe in on the inhale any stress, or tension, or fear, and on the exhale, you picture yourself releasing it, or breathing out all the toxins, all the stress and tension. Or you breathe in fear, breathe out love. Just doing this exercise—sometimes I picture myself as a tree photosynthesizing the day. I breathe in the day and things that are on my mind, and by the time that I'm breathing out, I'm transforming it. I'm creating oxygen from whatever toxins have arisen.

Matt: I really like that imagery of photosynthesis. I don't know if I've said that word since junior high, but I really like the imagery of it.

Jenny: [laughing] I know, same.

Matt: I'm going to have to try that. I'm one of those people that...I tried to get into meditation probably back in 2012 or '13, or so. Couldn't really stick to a habit, and I think it took something more physical, like yoga, to get me to a point where I could let go. Now I find I can do the sit-still thing. But it's only after having done yoga for the year-plus that I have, that now I can actually be alone with my thoughts, and then allow those thoughts to drift away, and get to that meditative state.

Jenny: Totally. I love that you're willing to get into yoga, too. I think at first, with something like yoga, it's easy to feel inflexible, or a little bored, or restless. But ultimately, it is such good lengthening and strengthening for your body. It's such good mind-body-spirit integration. It just

serves a really nice function that can complement any other aspect of a person's workout or active activities.

Matt: It was actually another podcaster, Chris Ducker, who finally convinced me to do it. I was visiting him in the Philippines, actually, a couple years ago. He's living the life out there, for sure. His reframe for me that got me to try it was, "The reason I could play basketball as late in life as I did, and do, is because I discovered yoga." I was already beginning to feel some of the aches and pains of—I play basketball at times, right? I'm an Indiana Hoosier. It's in my DNA. And I'm 6'4", so that doesn't hurt, too. But what does hurt is playing basketball in the post a couple days out of the week, and not doing any sort of stretching, or physical therapy, or mobility work. Adding that in made that difference there, but I would say, looking back now, the mental effects of it are even more than the physical effects.

Jenny: That's so awesome. The thing about...when I first started pilates, I hated it. I did a pilates class, and I hated it. It was so hard. I couldn't make it through a five-minute set at a time. I couldn't finish any of the five-minute sets. But the fact that I hated it so much made me keep going, because I was like, "I had no idea these muscles existed, so clearly, if it's this hard for me, and I can barely even make it through five minutes at a time, I must need this thing." I think with yoga it can be very similar. I love you describing how you play basketball. I notice such a difference. When I haven't done yoga for two weeks, my whole body feels creaky. My whole body needs some WD-40. And yes, you could stretch at the gym for ten minutes, but a yoga class will really wring you out like a sponge. And then, therefore, the mental relaxation comes with it. A lot of teachers have said shavasana—the corpse pose, the very last pose of yoga—that the entire practice is for that one pose. By the time you release everything and...corpse pose. Die to the moment. Die to the day. You're so relaxed. And only then would they sit for meditation—after the body had been wrung out. Because, no wonder. Of course we can't sit still if we're just caught up in our mind, and we're so restless and haven't yet gotten out that physical energy that we have.

Matt: That's my move, right there. I'm not good at all the yoga poses, but I'm really good at corpse pose.

Jenny: [laughing] I bet, yeah. It's the best one.

Matt: [laughing] I wonder if this "letting go" mentality...if you feel like that really powers the way you approach your career and everything you've done as a speaker, and an author, and as a strategist, or if you see it as almost...you do these "letting go" mental exercises so that when you are in the mode of career mode—Jenny Blake the author, Jenny Blake the public speaker—that you can just be super focused and super engaged. Do you see it as almost a balance of the two, or is it more integrated than maybe it appears at the surface?

Jenny: All of the above. It's very...everything supports everything else. I find with meditation, I'm more strategic, and clearer, and focused. So, while part of it is about letting go and unwinding or

relaxing, a huge part of it is also being very strategic about how I spend my time, and being able to completely hear my intuition so much that I really take targeted, focused action, and I don't waste time and energy running around like a crazy person. If I can just get centered, answers will come to me about challenges or strategy, even launches. Even writing the book. I kind of co-created that through meditating, and imagining my book, and imagining it connecting with people. What did it need, and what's going to really reach people? Every day while I worked on it. People sometimes ask, "How do you define success?," or, "How do you become successful like you are?". Success, to me, is enjoying every day. If I'm running my own business and I'm miserable, and I'm running myself to the ground, and I'm burnt out, and all of these things—what's the point? It's very important to me to, on a day-to-day basis, take care of my mind, my body, my spirit, my business. They're all equally important. I hate phrases like, "I'll sleep when I'm dead." I think it's a misconception among... "The only way to be an entrepreneurial ninja is you sleep when you're dead." That's just not going to work for me. My body is too sensitive. I will get sick right away if I'm getting too little sleep or not taking care of myself. A lot of these practices are to really treat my body like a well-oiled machine so it can support everything I want to do in my business. I learned that when I first left Google and started running my own business. I really realized, I'm my main employee. I'm a solopreneur. I work for myself. I have a few—VA and an assistant who are not working with me directly or full time. They live in other locations. Essentially, if I'm sleep deprived, or hungover, or haven't exercised, or I'm frustrated or impatient, my business is operating at 50%. I really treat my body—is my business. My body is just as important to earning a living as whatever activities I'm doing on my to-do list.

Matt: I find it interesting that you grew up in San Francisco, which has become the Silicon Valley that it is and is all about thinking big, and growth, and making a massive impact on the world with technology, but you currently reside in New York City, the city that never sleeps. And yet, you are of the mindset that it's not, "I'll sleep when I'm dead," it's, "I want to enjoy this journey as I go." Do you find yourself at odds, at times, with the culture and vibe of New York?

Jenny: The reason I love it is because I may be quiet and have my own little sanctuary in my studio apartment during the day, but I love being able to leave the house and feel so invigorated. Every day is an adventure. The serendipity of being here. The type of people that New York City attracts. I love it. I thrive on it. I just find a way to create my own container for living here, where I really don't feel burnt out because of the city. People ask, "Isn't it overwhelming?". I want this level of energy, and chaos, and serendipity. That's what really brings me alive. I just make sure to have the personal practices that support it.

Matt: That's cool. It's like you know that you want it, but only when you want it. It's cool you've kind of designed this sanctuary in New York, but then you can walk out the door, and you're in the energy and getting that hit of—probably—adrenaline.

Jenny: Yeah, and it's so different when people come through and they're just visiting. So, kind of tourist mode, and even if it's not tourist mode. I used to come here for a week at a time when

I was working at Google. My manager was based in New York. If you're only coming in for a week, those trips are so packed. You're meeting with people. You're going from meeting to meeting, and then out to dinner, and then, if you're going out for the night, or having cocktails, or having alcohol, and then it starts all over the next day. And then you want to see some sights and touristy things, and...oh my gosh, of course at the end of a week like that you're absolutely dead. You might've had the best week of your life, but you're dead. That when I think a lot of people say, "Oh, I could never live here." But if you do live here, every day isn't like that. You can find yoga classes, meditate in the park, go for a walk. Yes, sometimes things are crowded and a little crazy, but it's not like you're on that 100%-on mode that a person would be if they're just coming through for a visit.

Matt: Sure. And I imagine having that sanctuary space and that personal practice of giving your time to reflect and be with your thoughts—and maybe even without your thoughts—in a meditative state...it's almost like the first couple steps of the Plan, Scan, Pilot methodology of the Pivot Method. Is that intentional? I love that you actually do the things you recommend in your book, first of all. Second of all, is that what you mean in that sort of Planning and Scanning phase?

Jenny: Very interesting. No one has ever connected those two things. The Pivot Method and just a way of living. Love the question. Let me think about this. In the Pivot Method—which is essentially a method to map what's next. So, if you find yourself at a pivot point and you're saying, "What's next?", I developed this four-stage cycle that you can go through, even for pivoting a business or pivoting the strategy on a single project. Plant is about what's already working. Doubling down on that. What are your strengths, what are you most enjoying, and what does success look like? Where do you want to end up a year from now? So, yeah, in the context of living and day-to-day-life, 100%. What personal practices are working, and then how do you feel? If it's different from what you're experiencing now, then the second stage, Scan, is for people skills and projects that are compelling. So, people: who do you want to connect with? That can also go for your local community or online community. Skills: how do you want to learn and grow in the coming year? Projects: what small experiments might you want to tackle? And that's really the third stage: Pilot is about small experiments. For example, when considering moving to New York: first, I would travel for work. Then, my friend Julie and I rented out an apartment for one month. That was our Pilot to see: Could we really hack it here? Is it different when you're—maybe we were just in love with it because we were only here for five glamorous days at a time. What's a month going to be like? We loved the month so much that she and I moved together later that year, and I've been here ever since. We would call New York our Yellow Brick Road to Happiness. The pilot worked. Piloting is all about small experiments to help you test three E's. Do I enjoy this new thing? Can I become an expert at it? And is there room to expand? In the context of a living experiment: we enjoyed it? Yes. Could we become an expert? Could we get into the New York swing and make it here? Not 100% sure, but we damn well knew we wanted to try. And is there room to expand? Could we see ourselves here longer than a month? The answer was "yes." Whether it's where to travel, where to live, or what you want for your project, or your career, or your business, you can repeat Plant, Scan, Pilot over

and over until you get enough momentum that the fourth stage, Launch, is more clear. And you've reduced risk enough so that when you pull the trigger on the new direction, it's a smoother transition.

Matt: I love that, and I must've missed the fourth stage of the book, because I didn't have it in my notes. I always take notes when I read books, and it's been awhile since I've read yours. I must not have gotten the fourth stage, Launch.

Jenny: Well, the first three are, like, 90% of it. I would say—if we were going to 80-20—the first three stages are the bulk, and I always want to call it a three-stage method because that's where you really get the momentum going. Every now and then, the Launch is pulling the trigger. Like, quitting your job. Folding the business. Shifting the business. That's kind of where Launch comes in. It's just as accurate to really think of it as a three-stage model.

Matt: I think it's interesting that the Pivot Method—and your book, *Pivot*—is very much focused on the process of planning the pivot and whether or not it's the pivot to make. In the startup and tech world, it's sort of like, "Oh, it's not working. Just pivot." It's like, "We're going to do it really quick, and we're going to move fast and break things because we're quoting Mark Zuckerberg. We're going to do things, and we're going to make it the right choice. If it's not the right choice, we're just going to pivot again." But what I hear you saying is, "90% of the pivot should be in the planning of it, and Planting, Scanning, Pilot. If the pilot works, and you feel 80% good about it, then maybe go and launch." Am I hearing that correctly?

Jenny: Yeah. The Plant and Scan stages are about planning, and Piloting is about, "Get out there." At Google, we had a motto—a mantra, basically: "Launch and iterate," or, "Be scrappy." Do not wait until you have the perfect thing to launch or to try and monetize your business. If we wait until things are perfect, we're never going to do anything at all, and that's where we feel a sense of paralysis. Piloting is about taking action, but small action. Small steps, small experiments that get things rolling. That's what it's about. It's the planning and then the experimenting, because none of us have the answers up front, especially not in an economy like we're in. Just take the pressure off to have to know. I beat myself up for so long because I didn't know how to answer that "What's next?" question. When I started doubling down on what was working, and rolling that into new and different but related experiments, that's when things started to take off again.

Matt: I imagine you have a lot of readers and people in the community—because I know certainly in the entrepreneurial community we have this—of people that get stuck in the planning stage and feel that resistance between them and actually launching a pilot. Piloting or launching. They almost get into this self-perpetuating cycle of "want-repreneurship," which means that they're always in the planning stage, always got some amazing plan because that's all they're spending their time doing. Can you talk to me about what you would consider minimum viable planning, or what needs to go into planning before you have a viable pilot?

Jenny: The most important part of planning is not the business plan, even though, like—the most intricate way things are going to unfold. The part that most people skip when it comes to planning is looking at what's already working. What their strengths are, and what has worked in the past. What has gotten them clients in the past, or customers. What are people saying? Putting your ear to the ground. Listening. What do your customers want? What are they actually signing up for? What are they struggling with? How can you be most helpful? That's the planning that's really important and that people often skip because they're so focused on these kind of sexy ideas that you would read about, or how to grow something, or how to follow some new business template that someone's written about online. The real key is: once you know your strengths and what's working, you can shift very naturally and very methodically right from where you already are instead of stretching too far outside of yourself, especially with too much planning that's not anchored in anything that you're doing currently.

Matt: I imagine that's when things can start to feel a little bit out of control—when nothing is anchored to what you currently do or what you currently do well.

Jenny: Exactly—out of control or they're just not working. There's no traction happening. Someone might feel stuck, and like, "Why aren't I getting any momentum here?". It's most likely because it's not well enough connected to existing strengths, and relationships, and experiences.

Matt: I like that a lot. That makes a ton of sense to me. I think if people just had this framework of the Plant, Scan, Pilot and Launch, people would be piloting a lot more frequently, and the launches would be a lot more meaningful and therefore have a much bigger impact.

Jenny: Absolutely.

Matt: Have you had some success stories come out of the talks that you've given and the work that you've done with the book and with your coaching, or some of your favorite transformations?

Jenny: One of the biggest things is—and for myself included—people who just say, "I thought I was crazy," or, "I've been pivoting my whole life, and I always thought there was something wrong with me." But now, through this lens, they're the pivot pro. They're the one that's the most agile, because they have been shifting dynamically at every turn. And for me, too. I remember feeling like—when I was hitting my head against the wall every two years, wondering, "What's next?"—there was something wrong with me, and I must be destined to be unhappy for the rest of my career. But actually, what I discovered, especially since the book came out, and talking to people, is pivots are much more often a product of our success. In the startup world, pivoting is kind of Plan B. The initial strategy for the company is failing, and now you have to pivot to stay in business. But when it comes to our careers, and if you're a solopreneur or entrepreneur, pivoting is often a product of success—that you've outgrown some previous direction or previous idea, or career incarnation, and you're ready for something new. While it is

intimidating, it doesn't have to be taken personally that you've done anything wrong. That alone frees us up to be much more creative and eliminates some of the fear of the unknown. I think the other thing is recognizing that some amount of uncertainty is a good thing, because that's how we know we're engaged, and we're learning and growing. In the book, I call the people I wrote the book for, "high net growth individuals." Money is important, but it's not everything, and ultimately we're asking, "How am I learning and growing?". And once those needs are being met—or simultaneously—"And how am I making an impact?". Growth and impact are two sides of a coin that—I call them "impactors" for short—that's what we really care about. Of course we're going to have some more uncertainty, because we would be bored otherwise. If we knew exactly what we were doing, and what's next, and how to get there, and how to monetize the shit out of our business—pardon my French—and crush it overnight, we would be bored. So, lucky us, that we get to play this game of business and entrepreneurship, and problem solve, and troubleshoot, and go through dips, and go through failures and successes, and keep learning. That's what Joseph Campbell calls, "The rapture of being alive."

Matt: I love that you just quoted Joseph Campbell. That's awesome. And I love the "high net growth individuals" phrase, as well. I'm curious to know if there's one person in particular that helped you become a high net growth individual, because I would absolutely say that you're a high net growth individual that has achieved some amazing things, and I would venture to guess we've seen nothing yet compared to what's to come.

Jenny: Thank you, Matt. Same to you. I've been fortunate to have many amazing mentors, and "friend-tors," and friends in my life. My family, too, loves learning. I'm fortunate to have that always be part of the conversation. I would say authors. Just books. The availability of books, where an author has poured years of their life, and you get this thing, you get to just unpack all their wisdom for fifteen dollars, or however much you're going to pay for their book. That's magic to me. It's absolute magic. I'm a complete bookworm. My apartment is overflowing with books here in New York. I love it. I love always being able to—I like following author rabbit holes. Once I find an author I really like—for example, lately it's been Byron Katie and a guy named Gary Zukav, who, Oprah read his book, *Seat of the Soul*, in '87, and it completely changed the game for her. Once I read one book, and I resonate so deeply with it, I'll read everything the author has ever written. There are some authors like that, where I just go to town on their whole body of work. In that way, they become a mentor from afar. It's fine if I never get to meet that person in person or talk to them live. They've already changed my life in countless ways. And now, with the podcast, it is actually a small possibility that I could talk to them, so that's a mind-blow beyond belief. But, the books alone are what feed me. They're soul food—brain food—as a high net growth individual.

Matt: I think that's a pretty good philosophy and perspective to have. I would highly recommend as a reader, although I clearly didn't take good enough notes on it...please go read and pick up a copy of Jenny's book, *Pivot*. Jenny, if people want to find more about you or your book, where should they go?

Jenny: The best place is pivotmethod.com, and if you go to pivotmethod.com/toolkit, there's a bunch of free resources and templates, and even a "pivotability" index to see what kind of pivoter you are. I also have a private community called Momentum for side hustlers and solopreneurs where I do twice-weekly Q&A calls. It's just an awesome group. I have a team of six pivot coaches now, so if any of you listening really would love one-on-one support, you can sign up for a two-session jump-start. That's at pivotmethod.com/coaching.

Matt: So cool. I didn't check that out yet, so I will be going to that immediately following this interview. Thank you so much, Jenny, for taking the time to share your story and share a little bit about pivoting and learning along the way.

Jenny: Thank you so much, Matt. I loved all your questions. You get an A+, because you didn't just read the book, you also checked out all the latest, greatest stuff. I really, really appreciate it. You're great at what you do, and a big thanks to everybody who's here listening, too.

Matt: Thanks so much, Jenny.