

#40in240

**the e-book |
the intrepid mini-MBA project**



introduction |

my life didn't exactly turn out the way i planned. i made mistakes. did things wrong. and my career today looks dramatically different than i imagined upon college graduation.

i wish someone had told me this is how it would turn out. i would have had a lot more fun along the way. and so, that's the genesis of the idea behind this book. to hear from real people, telling real stories, sharing the hard lessons they learned from their personal successes and failures.

the goal: to make your life more meaningful.

so when i put out a call for atlanta's best and brightest, i wasn't sure i'd fill all forty slots. but soon, i had more requests to participate than i could handle, and i even considered offering two volumes.

in hindsight, i shouldn't have been surprised. not only did my friends respond in glorious form as you'll soon see, our loving community responded in ways i never imagined. and as you'll observe, they were most willing to give a little of themselves to help others. i expected nothing less.

so, enjoy this book. in spirit, this was intended and written for our young people. but there is stuff here that we all can benefit from.

my sincere thanks to those who contributed. you lifted my spirits. and my dream is that, together, we will give some lift and vision to the next generation of leaders. thank you.

todd schnick, january 2011 | toddschnick.com | @toddschnick

thegoal |

the guide, for our young people, to live an intrepid life and career.

therules |

40 people. in no more than 240 words.

stephaniefrost |

If time travel were possible, I'd jet back to 1991 where I would find myself, a recent college graduate, searching for my first job.

The last semester of college, we worked with our career counselors to make our anemic resumes look a little more substantive. We attended career fairs. We were coached on what to wear and how to interview well. This was all in the name of finding a "good job"—one with a steady income and decent benefits. Hindsight is 20/20 so does no good to lament the fact that this approach was 100% wrong (for me anyway). I didn't like the sameness of a job. It was like the movie Groundhog Day in real life. Boring.

I would go back and tell my younger self to forget about a "job" and focus on my passion. Back then, it might have been challenging to figure that out, but I know that I didn't even try. As long as it paid well, I probably would have taken just about anything that came along. It wasn't until later in life that I discovered what I truly enjoy. I love being an entrepreneur. I love helping other entrepreneurs. It's creative, energizing, and rewarding. As clichéd as it might sound, take some time to discover your passion(s). Do something that wouldn't even feel like work but that you could make money doing. Then do just that. I promise you won't regret it.

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williejackson |

Just do it

You will probably not go hungry chasing your dreams. You will probably never have to move in with your Aunt in Omaha. People will probably not surround you while laughing and pointing. Your old college sweetheart probably won't pull up at the stoplight sitting next to a wealthy athlete and laugh as they speed off. Now that we've thought through the worst that can happen, it's time to get started.

Get started

Regardless of how ambitious your goals are, start making progress as soon as you can (which happens to be the moment you read this). I can't stress enough how fast life is about to move for you. Days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months. You don't want to be in a constant state of preparing to do something—get started and keep moving.

Keep moving

You will have setbacks. You will be discouraged. There will never be enough money, you will never have enough confidence, and there will never be enough people on your side.

And none of that matters.

In order to get better at something, you need experience doing it. Make a habit of procrastinating and you will build that skill in short order. Make a habit of deferring your dreams, and you've made the first steps towards a life of wasted potential. Make a habit of taking action, however, and you've made the first steps towards a life of *actualized* potential.

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stephaniealloyd |

Upon starting my career in corporate America I was young and *very* aggressive, and I advanced quickly. Perhaps too quickly for my own good.

My mentor often pulled me aside to provide me with wisdom and guidance, and the best advice he ever gave me was, "Ms. Lloyd, in negotiations, *you don't always have to start with the jugular*. Sometimes a nip at the ankle is all it takes. Start there, and if you need to, work your way up until you get what you want."

To this day, nothing I've learned in business has served me better.

It somewhat reminds me of something I learned from Dale Carnegie around the same time when I read his book, [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#). "Make the other person happy about doing what you suggest."

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the most important lessons i learned

My career as a salesperson began more than 40 years ago by working for what many thought to be the best company in the world at the time - IBM. During the very first day on the job, the company indoctrinated each employee with the company's three basic beliefs. Those three beliefs were:

Respect for the individual
Superior customer service
Excellence in every task

Respect for the individual meant that you should always treat each person you interface with, be they your employee, co-worker or client - with the utmost respect, treating each individual the same way you wanted to be treated.

Superior customer service meant that you should always deliver the best possible customer service - whether you were repairing computer mainframes, developing computer programs or simply responding to customer requests for brochures. IBM became known around the world for its superior levels of customer service.

Excellence in every task meant that for both internal company projects and for those that would ultimately touch the customer, your focus was always to be on delivering excellence in every assignment.

Those basic beliefs became absolutely ingrained within me and have served me exceedingly well over the years - but I can't tell you how many people I've worked with who didn't subscribe to those beliefs.

What valuable lessons I learned - on the very first day of my working life!

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davideckoff |

Overcoming Obstacles

In August 1994, I was one of the unhappiest people in Chapel Hill. I was an accountant in a large computer company and despised my job.

But I was one week away from publishing the first issue of a magazine covering UNC sports. My dream to launch a business was about to become a reality. Until I received a call from our photographer, saying he'd be unable to provide photos.

I was stunned. The plan was to launch our first issue with preseason coverage before the first football game. But you can't have a sports magazine without photos.

In that moment, I saw my first business circling the drain. I felt incredibly discouraged. In short, I reached that moment of decision all people who tackle a new endeavor reach. To either give up or forge ahead.

I decided not to give up. I jotted across the top of a notepad: "How to Make This Work". Ideas flowed. And immediately took action and executed that plan.

I didn't know it then, but that decision completely altered my future. It enabled me to leave the accounting field and follow my passion, the intersection of media and technology.

My point is, problems will happen. Don't let them stop you.

When faced with even the greatest obstacle, the exciting thing to know is: one small change now can lead to a change in DIRECTION. Which over time can lead to a new DESTINATION.

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Freedom is one of the most exciting aspects of being on your own... It's the freedom to do whatever you want, pursue your unquestioned dreams and be self-accomplished. You can get an idea or set a goal and move full speed to accomplish it all on your own. This is often the problem. We naturally take on the role of doing... EVERYTHING. Since we are on our own with limited budgets, we justify overinvesting our time trying to do everything ourselves. This, my friend, is what separates the good small businesses from the great ones.

If I could go back in time and give myself any piece of advice, it would be this: learn how to delegate effectively. It is natural for entrepreneurs to be challenged by this as we are not actively taught that it's okay to ask for, and receive, help. But getting help accomplishing things via delegation is not a bad thing, we're not giving up creative control but freeing our time to focus on what we do best to be more productive.

No matter where you are in your business, starting today, it is OKAY to ask for help. Find the things that you struggle with that take away from your strengths and focus and find competent people to handle them. This is a bonafied, JUSTIFIABLE investment and will make all the difference in growing your business. If in doubt, consider reading the "4 hour Work Week."

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tomroyce |

Conquering Fear:

Every top athlete is nervous before the big game. It is a natural reaction to the challenge of the unexpected. The achiever will fight through the sweaty palms, the butterflies in their stomach, the urge to flee and instead engage the opportunity.

So many of us have great ideas yet we let fear stop us from achieving our potential. But once we begin the challenge the fear typically goes away.

So embrace the fear and make it your own. Know that every one has it and it will give you the adrenaline burst to push you to success.

- Make that sales call even though your pitch isn't 100 perfect.
- Take the risk and release your new product.
- Post that blog post that pushes the boundaries.
- Send out the email to your friends telling them about your new business and ask for their help.

Here is a question, has there ever been a groom or a bride at a wedding ceremony that isn't nervous? Here they are just going to spend a few minutes in front of people they know and love and profess their devotion to a person they have committed to typically a year or so in advance. And they are sweating bullets.

Expect to fight fear. Recognize it, give it a name, and then look your fears squarely in the eye and tell it to get lost. Then you will be a winner!

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jacquichew |

Career Food for Thought

As a transplant from another country with my family 10,000 miles away, I had the freedom to pursue my non-traditional career in the concert industry. I leveraged my college hobby of concert marketing and promotions into a career. This first set of rules is for those who want to pursue careers in industries where entry-level positions don't always pay the bills.

1. If your entry-level job doesn't pay the bills, "fund" your career with a part-time job. But be sure to spend at least 35 hours in the job that gets you closer to your dream. Anything less could derail your efforts.
2. Be the first to arrive and the last to leave.
3. Take the initiative to learn new tasks. Observe, ask questions and be prepared to take jobs that others shun.
4. Be the calm, reliable one. (This got me noticed among colleagues who were pathologically late, no-shows or too star-struck to fully tend to their duties.)
5. Network your way to your next job.

I transitioned to strategic technology marketing when I arrived in Atlanta 13 years ago and here's a list of the top five truths for those starting over:

1. Sweat the small stuff.
2. Always stay two steps ahead of your boss.
3. It's **always** about the people.
4. Success doesn't define you; you are defined by what you do in the face of failure.
5. Perfection is your biggest enemy to progress.

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rondavis |

Figure out your skill sets and what your passion is and then chase it with everything you have. This is a message I wish someone told me before I spent the next 20 years working the wrong career. It took the trauma of being laid-off before I took a completely different view of what I did and what I should do. I found where my passion and my skills intersected and followed that path. For me it was starting a business that deals with business processes. While this does not exactly sound sexy, it is what I am good at and what motivates me every day. The best part is that this passion is visible to my customers which helps increase my business.

We all can't be CEO's of Fortune 500 companies, lawyers or doctors, nor should we. I remember meeting a guy who gave up his Fortune 500 executive job to start a business installing baby fences for pools. He told me that he had never been so happy in his life.

So don't wait until your 40 to figure out what you want to do when you grow up. Talk to every executive or business owner you can to find out what makes them tick, read everything you can to gain knowledge and take time to look within yourself, you might just find an entrepreneur waiting to get out.

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terrybarber |

For anyone who would dare enter the field of free agency, here are four principles that will help you accomplish more faster.

1. Seek out people you can serve in their endeavor. Fact is, help others get what they want and you will eventually get what you want. Serving others by sharing your expertise, your connections, your encouragement, will pay huge dividends.
2. Be counter intuitive. Learn to look at things from the front of the binoculars. Don't get caught up with the fear that everything good has already been said, noticed, written, or invented. It is just not so. Look at the conventional and take it to task. Be known as an outlier.
3. Hold on to your vision - allow the tension between what **is** versus the way you know it should be to propel you forward. The mission may change but the vision must live to the end. Remember it is your vision. No one handed it to you and no one can take it away. As long as you are holding on to your vision, even when you fall down, you fall forward. Vision is what energizing people. Vision is what drives the market. Vision is what will drive you. in the best of times and in the worst of times.
4. When you get in trouble, don't try to get out of trouble all by yourself. In other words, don't "do life" as a loner.

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I was never one of those people who knew exactly what I wanted to be when I “grew up.” I loved writing and performing and pretty much anything creative. Which is how I now find myself, more than a decade and two unrelated degrees later, the owner of a public relations and communications agency—without a single journalism, communications or marketing class to my name.

People often ask me how I got into PR, especially since it seemed an unlike detour for a girl with a political science degree and a master’s in arts administration.

While the story is quite complicated, the answer is simple: because my education didn’t end when I got my degree. Because I never stopped learning. Because if I wanted to learn something new, I volunteered. Or asked questions. Or took on a new project. Or aligned myself with smart people who could teach me.

Because the truth is, the REAL education begins the minute you step outside of the college bubble. Gone are your advisors, your supportive classmates and your course catalogue. The choices are endless, and you needn’t feel confined by your major or your GPA or your internships. Because five years later, no one will care about any of those things. What they will care about is your experience, your initiative, your creativity, your passion, your willingness to learn and your ability to bounce back from failures. Those are the things that will set you apart from your peers, that will enable you to create your own “graduate school,” choose your own adventures and find the path that’s most meaningful and fulfilling to you.

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chrisjordan |

Living and Learning

May 2003: college graduation. I recall the months leading up to it like it was yesterday. Interview after interview, I couldn't find a job. *Anywhere*. Then, graduation happened. With no job and my back against the wall, I moved to Atlanta to wait tables. *Wait tables*. I felt like I had just caught the game-winning touchdown pass, but it was called back for holding. While some of my friends landed "good" jobs working for the government and in medicine, I was memorizing the seafood menu. I felt like I had *lost in life*. But what I later discovered is that it was the perfect setup for true self-discovery, and the start of a winding path of success.

Getting started in the professional world is like becoming a parent for the first time; no matter how much you study, success doesn't happen until you've been thrown into the fire. Success isn't necessarily a desk job, or a benefits package. Success *really is* a journey. And results may vary.

Equip your toolbox with blinders, gut-instinct, and thoughtless-action. These free tools come complete with all of us. We just have to practice using them. Critics are everywhere; wear your blinders. There are right and wrong options at every turn; trust your gut. You'll be wrong sometimes, but sometimes not. And take action, because mere ideas are nothing.

Remember that nothing is perfect, and nothing is final. This includes success.

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christyannis |

Trust your crazy ideas

When I was first starting out, I wish I would have had the courage to trust my crazy ideas. I tried to live a “normal” life doing what other people told me I “should” do. The problem was, it wasn’t my life.

I know now, I wasn’t meant to have a “normal” life. I was meant to have my life. A life that began when I stopped living for everyone else and began living for me. The success that emerged when I gained confidence in myself and had the courage to trust my crazy ideas.

People still think some of my ideas are crazy. And some of them are! But, it really doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks. The only person who matters is me.

I know that as long as I have passion, I can do anything.

It doesn’t matter what anyone else does, says, thinks, or feels.

Work to make yourself happy. And trust your crazy ideas.

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brandonsheats |

Sometimes, nothing will make sense.

Never take that as a moment to be stressed or depressed, make it into something new that changes your world.

Remember, everyone's path is different - be kind, mindful that you never know how the two of you can compliment each other.

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jamesball |

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you" – Own up to your mistakes and learn from them. When you're just starting out you have no past, no experience, & no foundation to fall back on. Stand on your own character, wisdom will come.

"If you can dream - and not make dreams your master" – Dreams are important, partner them with realistic and obtainable goals. If you master this, hindsight will be a fond friend to you in old age...you will live your dreams.

"If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew to serve your turn long after they are gone" – Although it may not feel like it now, you are building a legacy. Be true to the kind of person you want to be remembered as. Don't ever behave as if you're simply building income.

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with kings - nor lose the common touch" – The people that surround you matter. Find mentors and others that you are willing to be accountable to...and you'll never walk alone.

I found "If" by Rudyard Kipling and adopted it as my cornerstone. With it I am never really lost. I can't tell you the times it has helped me through. Find something outside of business, something larger than all of it. Adopt it and reflect on it til' it resonates.

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The ONE thing I wish I'd known when I was just starting out is that, despite a stellar college GPA, an ivy-league education, an impressive degree, and what might seem like a wealth of "real world" knowledge, success in the "real world" doesn't always come easy--or quickly!

I know it's hard to believe, but, when you're fresh out of school and fresh into the job market, you actually *don't* know everything there is to know about a particular field--even if your glossy new diploma says you do. The best piece of advice I can give is to not only accept that you'll be starting out at the bottom of the totem pole--but also to EMBRACE it!

This is the one time in your life when making mistakes (and learning from them, of course) is expected--and even allowed.

Be humble. Always strive to learn more. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Never assume that you are better or brighter than the next person--even if his or her position is beneath yours. Be thankful.

And, last but not least, don't ever feel pigeonholed into a career discipline just because you majored in it. You know your skill sets and interests better than anyone else; never let anyone tell you what you should or shouldn't do. Pursue what feels right for you, and the rest will work itself out on its own!

Rachel Rose Belew blissfully followed her heart by walking away from her career as an on-air TV talent and starting over as a communications professional in the "green"/sustainability industry. | www.certifiablygreenblog.com

jennyschmitt |

In any career, often we focus on seeking 'next': the next move, the next position, the next title, the next raise. Instead of focusing on advancement, seek out organizations that interest you and people with whom you want to work. When you seek out organizations you believe in and people whom you trust and share work values, you lay a firm foundation for a rewarding career.

Today, you have an opportunity to choose the organization that can benefit best from your unique talents and skills. Create your own 'company description' to define the kind of company and work environment you want - think of it as a flipped-version of the job descriptions that companies create before they hire. This seemingly simple step assures that before you send in a single job application, you're focused only on places to work that match where you want to be.

It's not just about the organization, it's about the people. The dynamics of work, the interactions we have with co-workers and colleagues every day can be the difference between an enjoyable work experience and a miserable time-suck of an existence. Seek out people who you admire, trust or who share similar work values. Meet and ask questions of as many of the team members with whom you'd work with before signing on.

Bottom line: focus on organizations and on people and you'll advance faster and happier to the 'next' that you seek.

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As a child, you enthusiastically told anyone who would listen that you were going to be an astronaut, doctor, or rock star when you grew up. We all did. Yet, in 2010 the most popular careers in the US are: network analyst, physician's assistant, medical assistant, health information technician, software engineer, physical therapist aide, fitness trainer, database administrator, veterinary technician, and dental hygienist. Seriously, who dreamt of being a database administrator? The shrewd reader also noticed that 60% of the careers listed above are subordinate roles. Shrewd reader, is it your passion to be an accessory to someone else's dream? I think not.

Somewhere between the wide-eyed avidity of youth and adulthood's discovery of the "real world", something regrettable takes place. People let pragmatism guide decisions, and override zeal. They lose touch with their passion. Don't let this happen to you.

I'm not advocating everyone pursue rock stardom or space exploration, but to listen to the voice of passion inside you. You hear it already, you need to *listen*. There are many articles on finding and following your passion. Read them, find it, and follow it relentlessly. There is no greater satisfaction than succeeding at something you truly enjoy doing.

If your quest is to become rich, your success will be empty. If your goal is to be famous, your fame will be lonely. But, if you follow your passions to greatness, your wealth and satisfaction will be endless.

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johnncloonan |

Don't be in too much of a hurry to find and start a career after you finish college. Take some time to live, to bust and kick it out in the streets, to do all kinds of crazy things that you may not have the time and opportunity to do once you've chosen your path. Some of the most valuable experiences in my life and career come from the things I did prior to deciding what I wanted to do when I grew up. The pressure to "get on with it" is great. Don't succumb.

Oh, and about that growing up thing – don't do it. Come to every new experience as if you were a child – with open eyes, maybe a little fearful, but embracing it for its newness. Always make fun a priority. Live and love without limits. Try everything that you want to do. Fail repeatedly and frequently, but learn from it. If you find something you love to do, keep doing it, even if you suck at it.

For your career, it's important to do what you love, but it's more important to love what you do. There is a difference. Once you decide, give it everything you have.

Learn as much as you can about everything you can, whether you think it's relevant or not.

Don't worry about money. It will come, or it won't. You'll find ways to live with it... or live without it.

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torri+johnwestmoreland |

Give. Now.

No, we're not necessarily talking about money (though if you have some laying around...).

Give by getting involved in something you're passionate about...pro bono. Whether your dream is finding a cure for cancer, building a neighborhood park, or stocking a soup kitchen, your individual skill set is needed by a charity right now. Maybe you can literally build that playground, perhaps you can help with an organization's accounting system, or you might use your social media skills to create awareness. No matter your talent, YOU ARE NEEDED.

*Give through your talents...*and you'll be inspired with every interaction. You'll wake up each day thinking "how can I make a difference today?"

*Give through your talents...*and gain a new perspective. The insight you gain working for a cause will keep you focused on what's really important in life. You can become enmeshed in office or PTA politics...or you can realize early on that it's not worth the energy drain. Involvement in charity work will help you quickly realize that your energy is better spent in living each moment.

*Give through your talents...*and you'll find immediate balance. Regardless of the professional path you choose, you'll need work/life balance from the get-go. Utilizing your talents to support your passions will create immediate balance. In fact, you'll gain an appreciation for your life that you just won't find anywhere else.

So, go. Go find out where you can make a unique difference.

And give...now.

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marnafriedman |

Color outside the lines. I always thought that I was the type of person who followed the rules. But right after graduate school I was offered a freelance opportunity. Becoming a consultant afforded me an opportunity to learn so many new things. I was constantly being asked to take on new projects, none of which were related to what I was supposed to be doing. But when you are a consultant, your “job description” is a work in progress. So you begin to color outside the lines.

The other thing that being a consultant taught me was that your education is never finished. You are more open to change. If Facebook, Twitter and many other social tools and open source platforms we use today had been created by employees of major corporations would we even know about them? How many of us would have adopted them in our daily lives?

While many of my experiences overlap, I have worked in several different industries. And each one has afforded me invaluable lessons and experiences. Be open to change, new experiences and try anything. You will be amazed at what you learn!

Life is like the electives you were allowed to pick in college. They may not fit into your “major” but they offer you the opportunity to learn something different. An education opens your mind to thinking about what is possible. Success means you made the possibilities a reality.

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garethyoung |

I grew up in an academically arrogant family, and the achievements of the first fifteen or so years of my business career were won by intellectual horsepower. I could not see how hard I was fighting, or the stresses that I was creating in my personal life as I strove to be the smartest person presenting the best project.

It slowly dawned on me that my career was being shaped more by friends and colleagues who genuinely cared for me than by my intellect, and I came to understand that success and happiness are based on building successful human relationships. My business philosophy is now about getting to know people well enough to put myself in a position to help them. As a result I am happier, more relaxed, and a more effective person, and opportunities for financial and business success routinely appear.

So next time you take a business meeting or make a sales pitch you should use all the tools available (online utilities such as LinkedIn are an invaluable supplement to your personal existing network) to research the people you are meeting. Of course you should master your material, but you should also look at the photos on peoples' credenzas and seek opportunities to talk about their families or passions or the hobbies you have in common.

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robbyncobb |

From a very young age, we are taught to avoid risks at all costs. I know I was. However, the truth of the matter is, taking calculated risks can lead up to our greatest successes and happiest moments. One of the things I have observed and experienced throughout my career is that successful people are not afraid to take risks. Essentially, I believe that playing it safe is really not safe at all. In other words, if you do what you have always done, then you will get what you always got.

Don't be afraid to pioneer new territories, investigate and embrace new opportunities regularly. You will make some mistakes along the way but often you will learn from those mistakes. Sometimes the lessons you learn from a mistake will lead you to your greatest accomplishments. And on those occasions when those risks payoff the return is always more than you calculated.

I'm not suggesting you take a risk for the sake of taking a risk. If you have done your homework and feel confident, even passionate, about something then don't let the naysayers keep you from it. This applies to small things and even the larger ones, work or personal – don't let your fears keep you on the sidelines get in the game you will be so glad you did!

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jeffsheehan |

Regardless of where your career path may take you, I can't stress the critical role that travel can play in your overall development. Whether it's knowledge of other places and cultures, the understanding of people, or the realization that we are all but one in a world of many, travel is a huge catalyst in assisting you in maximizing your total potential.

Having had the opportunity to travel extensively for over thirty years to countries from Mexico to China and in between, I have seen the world from the eyes of those within these countries. Although some things are the same, there are many differences which you learn to appreciate and which you can integrate in your daily thought process in business dealings both here and abroad. You'll also develop empathy towards others and realize what a struggle life is for so many throughout the world. You'll truly gain an appreciation for what we have and want to reach out to help those who are less fortunate.

Rather than going to the local beaches in Florida, make the extra effort and save your money and explore some of the remote areas of the world and take in the beauty of the environment and the people. You'll discover so much. Or save your money and take a gap year between college and a job, or between jobs, and travel around the world staying at hostels.

The world will truly mold you.

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marisasharpe |

Whether you are just starting out in life, or starting over, my message is simple:

Follow your dreams!

The fact is, you already know this.

The question is do you *really* know what your dreams are? What are you really passionate about? What motivates you? It's okay to not know. The important thing is figuring it out and making adjustments along the way. Start by learning everything you can about yourself and what it will take to reach your goals. For me, the best way to do this has always been to write things down. I suggest keeping a journal or starting a blog to track your progress and keep you accountable.

Make a list and consider this your roadmap for life. Get creative. Use color. Add pictures. Write in crayon. Create a website. Do whatever it takes to visualize your dreams. You cannot get to where you are going if you don't know what direction you are headed.

The good news is you *can* take the scenic route and I encourage exploration. You never know when life's little detours can offer new opportunities.

Everything you learn along the way, every mistake you make or set back is another experience that will make you stronger, more determined and more appreciative of reaching your goal.

Do not compare yourself to other people and only focus on what you can control, which is not much.

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amyotto |

After 25 years of selling, I have been told that I could sell ice to Eskimos. I don't really believe that to be the case. I couldn't sell something I wasn't excited about. I attribute my success in selling to the words of wisdom my Mom gave me growing up. She always said, "don't be afraid to approach people- no matter how important and powerful they are, they put their pants on one leg at a time just like you". I was also taught at an early age to always be kind to everyone- even the janitor because you never know when you made need their help. Remember the Golden Rule?

My advice: be like-able! People do business with people they like. Work on developing relationships and getting to know people. Make the goal of every meeting to make someone feel good about themselves. Ask questions. People love to talk about themselves and their interests. Read. Stay informed. Never stop learning. Be open minded and willing to think outside of the box. You need to believe in yourself and realize that for every "no", you are that much closer to a "yes". Grow your heart. The smartest person in the room isn't always the most successful. Find someone you look up to and ask them for help. We are surrounded by wisdom and just need to ask for help. Have passion and let it show.

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justin+moniquehonaman |

Find something that brings you joy, and do it. If you can make a living at it, even better! Take calculated risks. Speak up. People want to hear what you have to say, and you have good things to contribute. Believe in yourself. Have an opinion. Switzerland is a country, not a leadership style. Know the 'book on you.' Never do anything that will damage your reputation. PACE: Positive Attitude Changes Everything. Integrity above all else. Continually develop your network and built authentic relationships. Never lose faith in your ability to learn more. Be a lifetime learner. Learn to give sincere and constructive feedback. It's a skill many are lacking. Find a way to give back to your community. Travel the world. It keeps getting smaller and smaller. Keep away from idle gossip. Learn your leadership style and preferences, and more importantly, how to leverage them. Connect people. Treat everyone with respect. You never know when you may be working for them. Always deliver results. You have to be known for something. Smile. Be kind to others. Make time for hobbies and outside interests. Know what is going on in the world. Understand and relish the latest technology, but don't lose the art of the handwritten note. Stay healthy and fit. Take your vacation days. Do more. Give more. Be more. And remember, the high road has less traffic.

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stonepayton |

Faster Is Better.

The most effective parents, the best teachers, the most inspiring clergy, the finest social and political leaders, and every championship athlete share one distinct characteristic: They all produce Better Results In Less Time. High Velocity Leaders are fiercely committed to increasing the ratio of results to time invested for one simple reason . . . Speed is the most consistent and durable source of competitive advantage.

Ultimately, all business results are measured against the one constant in the universe . . . time. Revenue is measured against time. Service is measured against time. Customer loyalty, production, earnings per share, debt, turnover, cost of goods sold, tax burden, gross profit, net profit -- any metric you, your employees, your leadership, or your competition can come up with is inextricably tied to time.

Faster Is Better.

Top Performers know this, and consistently express, model and reward these 5 SPEED Disciplines:

Structure, Repeatable processes and transferable tools for key tasks.

Personal Accountability, Taking and expecting personal responsibility for corporate results.

Empathy, Understanding how and why a person / group thinks, feels, and acts.

Education, Establishing learning as a 24/7/365, job-critical responsibility.

Direction, Clearly communicating where the organization is going, and why.

Speed amplifies talent, training, timing, technology, and tactics. Like compound interest for the diligent investor, speed works while you sleep. It magnifies original effort and rewards consistent discipline.

Faster is Better.

*stone payton literally wrote the book on SPEED . . . never fry bacon in the nude: and other lessons from the quick & the dead, and has dedicated his entire career to helping others produce **better results in less time.** | highvelocityradio.com | @stonepayton*

carolflammer |

Looking Back. . .

My freshman year in high school my Dad was prodding me to take Basic Computing. The year was 1982 and basic computing was a computer language NOT a class on how to use a computer like the one my 6th grader is taking today. Needless to say, I told my Dad that I'd never need to use a computer for anything in my life. How funny is that statement today? If I knew then what I know now, I would have taken every computer class they offered (Fortran, Cobol, all the ancient programs) and taken design programs. At least I took typing, no not keyboarding but typing. I remember the sound to this day of the electric typewriters going click, click, click or a, a, a, zing (return). The ability to write well (and type) is a skill that everyone needs, so don't skip that keyboarding class. My advice?

Learn to write. This is still how we communicate today whether it is over Facebook, through email or a new business proposal. Your writing should be succinct and easy to understand the point.

Embrace technology. It is ever changing. Learn to type, understand Microsoft and Google programs, launch a blog and use technology to embrace life – not replace life!

Find a passion. Whether it is riding horses or hiking, snowboarding or football, find a hobby that you can use as your release throughout your life.

carol flammer, managing partner of mRELEVANCE, is an author, mother, wife and farm girl who loves to blog and help businesses become more effective with their online marketing. | www.mrelevance.com | @atlantapr

kellyecrane |

Expect the Unexpected

When I graduated from college, I was a control-freak with specific plans for how my life and career would play out. I wish I'd known how many events can arise that are out of your control – the only thing in your control is how you react to them.

What can happen? A challenging job market can necessitate moving to a new city. A spouse's job transfer can require you to move 3,000 miles from home. The illness of a parent and personal health challenges can cause you to veer off your pre-conceived stratospheric trajectory. The largest natural disaster in American history can displace you from your home and uproot your business, forcing you to start over yet again somewhere else.

In fact, all of these things happened to me (and I'm not even halfway through my career yet!). Fortunately, confronting these challenges with energy, enthusiasm, and a fire in your belly to do big things can lead to unforeseen opportunities.

If you take an entrepreneurial path, it's easier to adapt and change course when life throws you a curve. It's never too early to prepare – start now by seeking out as many diverse experiences as possible.

I fought my lack of control over life vigorously at first, and it only made the journey more difficult. So I urge you to expect the unexpected, and enjoy the ride!

an entrepreneur since 1995, kellye crane is an in-demand consultant, speaker, and trainer, addressing the intersection of social media and pr on her blog, which serves as a resource for those working as independent consultants (and those who'd like to be). | soloprpro.com | @kellyecrane

victoriadunmire |

It's All About You

Yes, you heard me right. YOU. Not the company, not colleagues, not the product, but you. It's your career, not anyone else's, so take responsibility for your own success (but don't be a jerk).

At my first job, my boss promised extras if I "delivered." I closed myself off to other opportunities and buried myself in the job, trying to "deliver" something. But my boss never set "deliverables", and therefore never intended to increase my compensation. I was swimming upstream, and had been too naïve to get anything in writing. Finally I realized he didn't care about my career.

My thinking changed. Hard work alone does not mean a company will give you opportunities. You must produce quality work, but YOU must be the one to take control of your professional future. Be open to a new job or opportunity for growth, even if you're happy where you are. You don't have to actively seek a job, but you should always network and make connections.

Companies are not loyal to you, no matter what anyone ever tells you. Be loyal to yourself and in doing so, you will be a good team member and productive employee. You'll be confident in your abilities and take pride in your work, something every company looks for in its workers. And if you ever are let go from a job, you'll have plenty of options to continue on your path to success.

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erikwolf |

You're going to feel like an idiot. Often.

You heard me right. Your career — whether spent as an employee, entrepreneur or freelancer — will make you feel like an idiot, a moron, ignoramus, nitwit, imbecile, fool, jackass, simpleton, twit, dolt, nincompoop, and — on occasion — an imbecile.

Wait, did I say imbecile already? Shows you how smart I am.

Irregardless though, let me stress again how dumb YOU will feel as you hurdle through the next few decades of your life. But here's the good news:

The stupider you feel, the closer you are to success.

That pile of rocks at bottom of your stomach, the throbbing headache that wants to launch your eyeball straight out of your skull, the voice singing, "*I'm a friggin' idiot*" in your head over and over and over again while you're trying to sleep isn't a sign that you're out of your league.... Usually, it just means that you're out of your comfort zone.

Successful people LIVE outside their comfort zone, it means they're learning, adapting and willing to try things that don't come naturally to them. Getting outside your comfort zone will help you grow both as a person and a professional so treasure those "short bus" moments, they may be the most important ones in your entire career.

And by the way, irregardless is not a word. Don't use it unless you want people to think you really are an— well, you know.

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katcole |

One guiding principle I learned very young in business and consequently have taught for over a decade is the principle of "You Never Know". The person behind you in line at the coffee shop may be able to positively impact your career, life, or just your day; how do you treat them? The new employee at your job may one day be your boss; how do they view you? An executive considering you for a promotion asks others what they think of you as a potential leader; what do they say? You must remember that everyone has value and could have direct potential to influence your life....You just never know! Think of the person who has made a powerful impact on your life. What did they do to help you? Was it a formal coaching session, a phone call or something they said in the meeting, an introduction they made for you or to you, a chance at a new task or job? Your interactions create a lasting impact on those with whom you work. Think back to the people who have positively impacted you, and remember... you are that person to someone... or you're not. It's your choice. You have the opportunity to positively affect your life and that of others each day. Everything you do sends a message, and how you present yourself, treat others, your ability to build genuine relationships, and the example you set all say something about you. Remember, EVERYTHING COMMUNICATES.... And YOU NEVER KNOW!

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toddyoungblood |

It's your network

Establish, nurture and grow your network of contacts. Start now. Never stop. Exclude no one. Expect nothing. Over the long haul, continuous help and support from lots and lots of other people is paramount. Doesn't matter if you're with a huge corporation, a solo entrepreneur or somewhere in between. Doesn't matter if your expertise is very broad or narrow and deep or somewhere in between. Doesn't matter if you prefer to work alone or on a team.

You might be smart, but you're not the smartest. You might be knowledgeable, but you're not the knowledgeablest. You might work hard, but you'll never outwork everyone all the time. We all need help always.

How to nurture and grow a network of contacts? Serve, give and share. Especially your knowledge. Do it aggressively. Even with your competitors. Do it all for free. Avoid the Don Corelone, "Some day, I will call upon you to do a service for me" attitude. Many folks will prove to be selfish jerks. That's their problem. Many more will gladly lend a hand or idea or contact or something Even if it takes years.

It's impossible to ever have enough contacts. Do it. Do it now.

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leekantor |

The greatest advice I received when I was starting out was to....Do more. Think less. It is much better to execute half thought out ideas than it is to over-analyze and polish an idea until it is "perfect". There is no "perfect" idea. There is no "perfect" time to launch an idea. And there is no "perfect" market for your idea. The more ideas, products, services, blog posts, tweets, web pages, etc. you put out there - the more feedback you'll receive from the marketplace. And with all of that information you'll have actual data to learn from and to move forward with - that is a lot more valuable than theories which are based on nothing more than thoughts from your own head. So bottom line...Don't be afraid to take shots. Learn. And then tweak as you go.

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kevinmetzger |

Wasting Time

It's harder to get a job coming out of college now, then when I graduated 12 years ago and that's a good thing. When I graduated it was easy to take a job that paid well and start working for a large company that paid benefits, and made you slave doing work you only sort of liked. Today's environment makes it much harder to find a job let alone a good paying one and if you do find a job there is a good chance it won't be exactly what you want.

When you take a job immediately out of college it is very easy to get trapped in the money cycle and have golden handcuffs slipped on before you even know what has happened. Then five years down the road you see that you are doing something you don't really like and are not 100% suited to. Trying to change your life has become more difficult especially if you have a family who relies on your income. It requires you taking a longer path to independence and happiness.

On the other hand start doing something you love regardless of the money when you graduate. If you practice your art every day and become an absolute expert in your area then five years out you will be making all the money you want because you are an expert at your craft. No Time Wasted! Success is your choice!

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davidcohen |

Take permission.

1996. I'm web designing at a startup. Some bad-a\$\$ submits a portfolio. Gorgeous work! My shameful first instinct = trash it, bury it - total lizard-brain protect-your-turf thought. I was the resident web ninja and I didn't want no Hot Dawg piddlin' on MY hydrant. Thankfully, I shoved that thought aside with this one: bring the kid in. If we were to become the startup that was walkin' the smack we were talkin' then we NEEDED a bad-a\$\$ design ninja on the team. Moments earlier that ninja was ME, but the portfolio didn't lie, the bad-a\$\$ bar had been raised.

So I show my boss the portfolio and tell him I'm gonna bring Hot Dawg in for an interview, if it goes well I want him on my team.

Got quiet.

You see I didn't have a team.

Nor hiring authority.

I had gone permanent three weeks earlier.

The glare in my boss's eye whispered "who the bleep do ya think you are?" Then it changed - the glare turned into a gleam - he saw what I saw: to grow we needed bad-a\$\$ designers AND people with vision and initiative. Ninja power!

My ego got a bruise when I saw that portfolio, but my career got a boost when I gave myself permission to do (and be) what the company needed. If you know it's right, don't wait to be authorized, take control, take initiative, take permission.

David Cohen, Brand Therapist and Founder of Equation Arts | www.equationarts.com | @davidscohen

bertdumars |

Wish I had taken more time off between graduation and work to explore Europe or hang out on the beach. Follow your passion wherever it leads, you'll be much happier. Never let geography hinder your career. Birthdays are ALWAYS a holiday.

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The one thing I had known earlier on in my career?

That I should trust my gut and not expect "older and wiser" people to know what's best for me. They are human and make mistakes too. Everytime I've listened to the quiet inner voice I have been right. When I blindly followed I was wrong. Also, it truly is "who you know" more than "what you know". Spend as much time as possible cultivating relationships. This will make all the difference long term in your career.

In life, take time to think through what it is *you* want for yourself. Don't just go to college, graduate, get married and have kids because it's what's "the norm". Think through where you want to make your impact in the world. Responsibility can dampen enthusiasm. Add responsibilities slowly and with thoughtfulness.

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Find a focus that can be uniquely yours and be the best. Ensure it aligns with your values and that you'll be passionate about it. Don't copy what someone else does; be more specific or different somehow. You don't have to maintain the focus your entire life. Better to be best at many things over time than never best at all.

Do the most important things first. Deliver on commitments and don't over commit. But don't forget to address the details or they will soon overwhelm you.

View each difficult situation as an opportunity to grow. Seek out things that make you feel uncomfortable and master them.

Always add value in whatever you do. Never fixate on just what's in it for you; society collectively rewards those who benefit others.

Seek beginnings and endings; without them nothing marks the passage of time. With them you'll be able to rest and feel accomplished without feeling you've left something undone.

Strive to be whom you would most respect. Imagine you are the person your actions effect and act accordingly. Help others just to be helpful. Search for and befriend those who help others too. Treat everyone as if they were the most important person in the world.

Life is about experiences with people; the more you have the richer your life will be. Travel to meet new people and immerse yourself in different cultures. Serendipity only occurs in the presence of others.

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now go. be intrepid. live intrepid.

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[front cover doodle by david cohen]