

Defy Gravity: Unleashing Your Greatness Within
(Book Segment)

Chapter 4) Position Yourself for Opportunity

One of the main reasons that successful people are where they are today is because of one simple reason. They positioned themselves for opportunity. Contrary to what you may believe, everyone who is more successful than you is not smarter than you, more talented than you, or more gifted than you. Sometimes, it is simply because they showed up and you didn't. There is a saying that "success is when preparation meets opportunity." This couldn't be any more of the truth.

Many people who are unsuccessful lack the drive and the mindset. They may have talent, but they are devoid of stamina to even give themselves an opportunity to be discovered. They aren't prepared nor present, and most of the time are not connected to the right people.

Networking is an extremely powerful tool for any professional looking to elevate themselves and be recognized for their work. It is kind of like a sweet science. The more you practice and experience interacting with people from various backgrounds and walks of life, the better you are at navigating situations and understanding what makes people tick. You also learn through networking what people may be experiencing, what their goals are or even what they need. This opens the doors for you to share your

gifts, talents, advice or services and showcase why you are an asset.

Your next opportunity, client or partner may be one networking event away. Once you build enough relationships, you may also benefit from referrals, so that when an opportunity becomes available – whether for a career or business opportunity, your new associates will think of you.

Many people are afraid to network, because they dislike the idea of going somewhere and initiating conversations with people they don't know. However, relationships can't be built at home sitting behind a desk. Their lack of connecting will block them from forming valuable relationships and drawing the necessary attention to their talents. Without relationships and attention, no one knows who you are or what you can do. This means they cannot help you. It's also important to note that before people buy into what you have to offer, they must first buy into you.

If you happen to be someone hoping to improve your networking skills, allow me to offer a few suggestions.

- 1) Prior to any networking event, conduct a bit of research. This will enable you to familiarize yourself with the kinds of individuals and companies that will be present. It will also assist you in mapping out your priorities, figure out the types of conversations you are most likely to have and developing some talking points to guide you in the process of initiating your conversations.
- 2) Don't be a selfish networker. Focus on how to bring value to others, instead of how they can help you. This requires you to pay attention when you are having conversations. Be genuinely interested, so when you are talking to another

- professional you can respond to them and say, I understand what you are working on, I like what you are doing...how can I help? Now, you have a strong entry point into building a positive and productive relationship. Sometimes, you may even gain a new friend.
- 3) Don't be the judgmental networker always chasing the people who you think are highest on the totem pole. Of course, everyone wants to connect with the CEO's, the celebrities, the millionaires. Yes, network with them too, but do not ignore the everyday working professional. You never know who they know or the opportunities they can bring to you. Also, the purpose of networking is to connect with like-minded people who are there for the same reasons you are...to build and to grow.
 - 4) Follow up! The average person is not going to remember you after 24 hours, especially if they are at an event with many other people. Take a second to touch back via email or through a phone call and invite them to a lunch meeting to discuss real action steps on how the two of you can be of support to one another.

Another thing that prevents many people from finding themselves in the way of opportunity is their narrow-mindedness. The world is far bigger than your thoughts and your experiences. The sooner you realize this and broaden your horizons to meet new people, to consume new information and to consider things from a different perspective, you find yourself being able to navigate territory that was once closed off to you.

Now, this doesn't mean that you have to agree with or accept any and everything. But simply knowing your perspective and understanding the cultures and perspectives of people around you

can go a long way. Let's look at travel, for example. As crazy as it may sound, there are people who have never been outside of the country. Even crazier, there are people who have never ventured outside of their city or state! Imagine what they are missing out on and how small their understanding of the world around them is. On the other hand, think of the perspective a person has who has traveled around the country as well as abroad. Or, the individual who has taken the time to learn another language and can now communicate and build relationships with people in different countries where that language is spoken.

Growing up, I studied Spanish in school, and took on the language as a minor in college. Now, when I visit Madrid, Spain; Mexico City, Cartagena, Colombia, or any other Spanish speaking country, I am able to communicate with the locals. Granted, there are some variations depending on the country, but any place where Spanish is spoken, I can survive and get around. Being bi-lingual gives me a unique advantage over people who only speak one language. It also allows me to better understand and truly appreciate another culture, including enjoying some of my favorite food and music. I love Salsa, Merengue and Bachata. Take a look around, and the United States and many other countries are becoming melting pots. In America, the largest minority is now Hispanics. Whether people like it or not, Spanish is a language they will have to get used to. There are 572 million people in the world who speak Spanish as a first or second language. Instead of fighting it, the smart thing is to learn and to seize the abundant opportunities that may be open to you as a result – such as friendships and business opportunities. Is it hard? Yes, but like Wayne Gretzky said, “you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. Take your shot and see how your life changes.

Have you ever looked at someone and wondered “how in the world did they get there?” At first glance, you can’t find anything unusually eye catching or spectacular about them. You feel like you are just as good, if not better than them at what they are doing. On top of it, they make their success look as if it came easy while you are struggling. However, most likely you are just unaware of the sacrifices and hard work that took place in the background. You didn’t see the hours invested honing their skills and working on their craft. You don’t know what adversity they had to face, the pride they set aside, the doubt they had to overcome or the bold leap of faith that they had to take in order to reach their current position.

Definitely, it is possible that they are not as skilled or talented as you. Perhaps they just wanted it more than you do. Maybe they just worked harder! They saw an opportunity and instead of stalling and making excuses, they rose to the occasion and launched into action. I always tell myself, I may not be the best or the brightest, but a person will be hard pressed to outwork me. If you lose to someone for no reason other than the fact that they outworked you, they deserve it, and you have no one to blame but yourself. I often hear people talk about their upbringing, or the trials and tribulations they had to face, which they attribute to why they failed to accomplish one thing or another. Some of them complain about a lack of support or resources. Yes, some people have more obstacles in their way than others, but every person has their own set of struggles. Whether you come from poverty or not, there is still no excuse. Many of our world’s greatest men and women have risen from the depths of darkness to accomplish extraordinary things, whether in business, sports and entertainment, healthcare, you name it. In fact, they may not have been successful had they

not experienced hardship. Dealing with adversity makes you sharper and battle tested. It makes you creative. No matter where you are from, if you want it bad enough, you can have it. No excuses...seize your opportunity.

One of my favorite books is *Succeeding Against the Odds* by John H. Johnson. For those who are unfamiliar, John H. Johnson, a black man, founded the Negro Digest, the first widespread publication chronicling black life and issues. He later was the founder of Johnson Publishing Company, which housed the renowned Ebony and Jet magazines, which documented the lives of successful African Americans, and he launched a cosmetics line called Fashion Fair Cosmetics. Johnson was born in Arkansas City, AK in 1918, a period when racism and Jim Crow were still very prevalent in America. Once he finished eighth grade, the high schools were segregated in his hometown, so at that point, his family moved to Chicago so that he could receive a better education and make something of his life rather than wasting away in what he referred to as the "Mississippi mud." Johnson always knew he wanted to be successful. Even in Chicago, there was still racism, but there were far more opportunities. He was often teased for his raggedy clothes and country accent. However, he did not let that stop him from achieving. He became the student council president and editor of the school newspaper at DuSable High School, where he attended with classmates such as Nat King Cole and Redd Foxx. He received a scholarship to the University of Chicago and acquired a job at Supreme Life Insurance, working under successful black entrepreneur Harry Pace, in order to pay for his college expenses and utilize his scholarship.

Johnson's life consisted of constantly overcoming the odds stacked against him as a black man. When he was told that his magazines

would not sell on the newsstands, they sold out in extraordinary fashion, forcing reluctant investors who had never worked with a “colored” man to jump on board. When he sought to purchase an upscale office in downtown Chicago and was rejected for his race, he sent a white friend to handle the paperwork and purchase the building on his behalf. Johnson initially posed as the maintenance man, only to stroll in later as the owner...much to the shock and dismay of his neighbors. If the situation arose again, he said, without hesitation, that he would do it all over again. When he went to purchase a luxurious condo in Chicago’s “Gold Coast,” his neighbor, a white woman, complained that she did not want to live next to him. Instead of allowing the incident to discourage him, he bought her condo as well, owning the entire floor! Johnson never let anything separate him from his goals and the vision he had for his life and legacy. Not racism, not discrimination, not fear or adversity. If he saw an opportunity, he didn’t delay, but he pursued it until he reached his desired outcome. It is for that reason that in 1987 he was the first African American to be featured in the Forbes 400 – as one of the 400 wealthiest Americans. He is the most prolific black publisher and one of the nation’s top business leaders in history.

When I attended Howard University, his name adorned what was then the John H. Johnson School of Communications, up until it was named after another legendary media figure, Cathy Hughes. John H. Johnson, who died in 2005, was someone from the Jim Crow era whose grandparents were former slaves. His life and legacy is a clear indication that regardless of your background or the obstacles stacked against you, if you push to succeed at all costs, nothing can stop you. Opportunity is not there for those who

want it. It is there for those who seize it, and who understand that when a door opens, you tear it off the hinges.

“If you lose to someone for no reason other than the fact that they outworked you, they deserve it, and you have no one to blame but yourself.”

Chapter 5) Activate Your “Mamba Mentality”

When it comes to life and business, I have always found sports to be the perfect example of how to tackle anything that happens in day to day situations. Every quality you need to succeed from strategic vision, leadership, patience, trust and teamwork – to conflict resolution, perseverance adaptability and hunger, can be found in sports. Have you ever marveled at the championship mindsets of the best athletes and teams in the world, and their abilities to deliver under pressure and even pain? What about those that faced extreme doubt and scrutiny from critics, only to reach the top and win it all? In football, basketball, gymnastics, boxing, tennis and many other sports, you can see these extraordinary displays of excellence.

One of the best basketball players ever to grace the court, and my second favorite hoops player of all-time after Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant was an athlete who made a major impact on my life - especially considering that I came from an athletic background. He impacted me as a leader, a doer and a change-maker. People across the globe have heard the phrase, “Mamba Mentality,” which was coined as an ode to the relentless drive, work ethic and

championship mindset that Kobe (who was nicknamed after the venomous snake, the Black Mamba) displayed in every aspect of his life. He was a married father of four girls, a speaker of three languages, a basketball genius and someone who gave some of the best, most insightful interviews in my opinion.

It still stings to this day to know that at only 41 years old, he, along with his 13 year-old daughter Gianna, died with seven others in a tragic helicopter crash on January 26, 2020. The one positive aspect of the entire situation is that despite the horrific way in which his life ended, his legacy will live on. People all over the globe mourned his loss, erecting makeshift memorials and hosting vigils in his honor from Los Angeles to Manila, Philippines. He was a source of inspiration to millions and cemented his spot as one of the best ever at his profession, which is what he set out to accomplish all along. Although he was on the way to achieving great things in the business world that we will never get to see fulfilled, his life was certainly not in vain. Kobe's remaining children, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, whom he will never meet, will know how special he was.

Everyone cannot say that. Sadly, many people every day leave this world with nothing but untapped potential and greatness entrapped by a casket. Some lived many years without contributing much to society due to a lack of drive, confidence or both. Others have had a life full of possibilities cut short and the world never had the chance to see what they had to offer. There is a saying, that the richest place on earth is the cemetery, because that is where million dollar ideas go to die. If there is anything to take from this, it is the idea that time is our most precious commodity and it is important to give it your all each day, because you never know when your time will expire. Kobe showed the world the importance of never

taking a day off, never backing down to the man before you and leaving it all on the line every minute, every game, every day. He won 5 championships with the Los Angeles Lakers, an MVP Award, 18 All Star appearances, two Olympic Gold Medals, a Sports Emmy Award and an Oscar for his short film, *Dear Basketball*. The crazy thing is, he was far from done. He had set out to conquer the next chapter of his life outside of basketball.

Athletes who have played with Kobe will attest to his drive and constant push for greatness. NBA player Tracy McGrady, who was friends with Kobe, once shared how the two of them would watch videos of Michael Jordan and Kobe would study him to no end, applying everything he learned from the Chicago Bulls legend. He did not want to be as good as Jordan, but his goal was to be better than Jordan. Others would share how Kobe would arrive in the gym to practice early in the morning, far before the rest of his teammates. When practice was over, he was still shooting jump shots, always the last to leave. This quality – desire, is not something that can be taught – you either have it, or you don't. However, the principles to success are something that everyone can learn and channel into what it is they are most passionate about.

Kobe was quoted as saying: “I have nothing in common with lazy people who blame others for their lack of success. Great things come from hard work and perseverance. No excuses.”

To truly find the highest level of success, you have to possess what author Napoleon Hill described as a success consciousness. You have to be so obsessed with achieving your goal, that you see no other way. In his famous book, *Think and Grow Rich*, Hill writes “every person who wants to win in any undertaking must be

willing to burn his ships and cut all sources of retreat.” Meaning, when you are out to battle with your goals, there can only be one outcome. Success. You either win, or you perish. You must not give yourself a Plan B, or in other words, an excuse to not follow through until the end. In today’s society, there are more opportunities than ever for the everyday person to achieve massive success. The world is constantly craving innovation – the next brilliant young leader, new ideas and new strategies.

Understanding that YOU are that person to deliver is what “Mamba Mentality” is all about.

One strategy that can prove very beneficial to the person with goals is to set specific goals and deadlines for yourself. When I was writing this book, there would be times where I was completely focused, knocking out a couple of chapters in a short period of time. Then, there were moments when I was distracted by other responsibilities such as with my wife and three kids, or my companies. I would sometimes allow an entire month to pass before sitting back down and writing some more.

That was until I gave myself a strict deadline, setting other deliverables in place so that I had to meet it. I scheduled to have the book completed and edited by a certain date. Then, I scheduled a photo shoot, a date to have the book cover designed, promotional videos and also my book signing, which of course could only happen with a completed book! Deadlines help you to map out your goals to complete a task, and they also hold you accountable. What you learn from this simple step is that we actually have more time than we think to get things done. It comes down to setting priorities, eliminating distractions and staying focused until you are finished. As someone who likes to follow through on my

promises, to others and to myself, this was a very effective way to meet my objectives. Now, I can move onto the next set of goals.

So, let's dig a bit deeper into goals. Are your goals crystal clear to the point you can actually visualize what the end result looks like when you have accomplished them? If not, you have some work to do. Your goals should never be general and vague, otherwise, you will never reach them.

In order to help you on your goal setting journey, here are some of my recommended steps to take.

- 1) Specify your goals, by clearly illustrating what the environment looks like once you have accomplished them. You should know what your goals look like, feel like and smell like.

One time I was invited to speak to 5th graders during a conference at an elementary school. The focus of my talk was to help them to identify their gifts and talents, and establish career goals. Now, of course at 10 and 11 years old, many young people are still trying to figure out what they enjoy and would be interested in doing. However, I was surprised to find that some of the students not only had goals, but a few had a clear vision for them. I remember one student wanted to design an electric car that would outcompete Elon Musk's Tesla. He was very knowledgeable about his competition, the perceived flaws of the Tesla, and what he would do differently. The young man was adamant that his electric car would be faster than the Tesla and have more miles between charges. He described to me that his vehicles would be a mix between sport and luxury – possessing speed rivaling the world's fastest car, the Koenigsegg Agera and an interior similar to that of a Rolls

Royce. Sounds extraordinarily ambitious, indeed, but he will likely be among the next generation's young leaders in innovation. For an 11 year old to be thinking and setting goals with that level of detail was very impressive. Many adults even struggle to do that.

Kobe Bryant once told the world that he wanted to be better than Michael Jordan, who is widely considered the best basketball player ever. So, what do you imagine his goals looked like? Perhaps they looked something like this.

- Becoming the Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the league and the face of the NBA.
- Winning multiple championships
- Having major endorsement deals and being featured in numerous commercials
- Securing his own sneaker deal
- Having fans all over the world wearing his jersey
- Having a statue erected in his name

These are just some of the things that Kobe most certainly set as goals as he approached his basketball career. Even though he fell short of Jordan in some categories, he actually accomplished everything on this list! Crowning a player as the absolute best in basketball history is more of an opinion than a fact. However, by setting these goals and never wavering in his pursuit of them, Kobe undoubtedly cemented his legacy as one of the all-time greats.

2) Develop Action Steps that are needed to make your goals happen.

Serena Williams is one of the most recognizable faces in tennis history, and also one of the most successful athletes of all time. Raised in Compton, California, Serena picked up a tennis racket at a very young age. She would practice constantly with her sister Venus while her father coached them. Tennis is a pretty expensive sport, so in order to play, their family had to make many sacrifices. Fast forward years ahead, and both Serena and Venus were among the very best on the tennis court, defeating formidable champions individually, and doing even more damage as a duo reaching the number one ranking in doubles. Serena is the most decorated female tennis player in the Open era. She has four Olympic gold medals, 73 World Tennis Association (WTA) titles, including 39 Grand Slams. She was ranked no. 1 in the world eight times. Sports Illustrated named her 'Sportsperson of the Year' and she was listed by Forbes as one of the most powerful women in the world.

Even at the tail end of her career, Serena proved why she remained at the top for so long. Not only did she work to stay sharp on the tennis court, but her powerful brand and influence required work in other areas as well. Here is how she prepared for her goals each and every day.

8AM – Tennis Practice w/ Sister Venus and Father

12PM – Lunch Break

2PM – Strength Training

4PM – Dance Class

5PM – Rehab

6PM – Dinner with Family

8PM – Social Media and Promotional Work

12AM – Sleep

As you can see above, Serena and her team identified actions steps, which she applied regularly to stay in peak physical condition, sharpen her skills and perform at a high level. She understood that in order to stay ahead of the competition and maintain her rank atop the tennis world, structure was critical. Discipline was imperative. We must all take the time to apply structure and applicable steps to our lives, otherwise we will never reach the level of success we desire. Think about what you want to accomplish. Consistent thoughts become a mindset, which leads to certain actions. Repeated actions become habits. Habits become a way of life!

3) Outline your conditions for success and failure.

A lot of people are scared to do this, so they don't specify their goals at all. Instead, they are vague with the requirements to escape the feeling of failure. What they fail to recognize is that the end result will be the same whether they wish to acknowledge it or not. How will you know if you have reached your goals if you have not set the terms? Easy, you cannot. You will fail, over and over again. By setting the terms, applying a sound strategy and giving everything in your being to make it happen, you can and will win!

Imagine three children setting up a lemonade stand in their neighborhood on a hot summer afternoon, with the goal of making

\$150 in a single day and splitting the profits. They set their price at \$2 per cup, which meant their goal required that they sell at least 75 cups of lemonade. To begin, they erected a big and bright sign, stood behind the stand and promoted their product to all who passed by on their street. Gradually, people in cars, families riding their bikes, and walking pedestrians began to patronize their stand. As the sun began to set after a long day, they counted their money. Their lemonade had earned them \$96, which totaled 48 cups sold. Therefore, they would each have a share of only \$32 dollars. Two of the mini entrepreneurs were satisfied, but had they reached their goal? No. They had failed to reach it.

The third kid reminded them, “We were supposed to make \$150, and we are \$54 short. We didn’t reach our goal, but, I have an idea, so we have to try again tomorrow. Trust me, it’s gonna work!”

The other children reluctantly agreed. “I don’t think it’s going to work, but if you say so,” one of them said.

The next day, they again set up their lemonade stand in the same place. However, the ambitious kid had decided to make another sign the previous evening. Also, he would bring three of his walkie-talkies that he and his friends often used when they played cops and robbers. He determined that there was no need for three bodies at the same location. So, he would walk around the corner to another street with his sign and direct those who passed him over to the other kids at the lemonade stand. This way, they would not only engage potential customers who traveled the street with the lemonade stand, they could also attract customers near the other street. Then, using the walkie-talkies, he could communicate with his friends and alert them of how many customers were on the

way so they could have the cups of lemonade prepared by the time the patrons arrived around the corner.

At the end of the second day, to the kids' amazement, they had earned a whopping \$200, exceeding their goal by 25%. Now, not only did they make money on the first day, but because they tried again, their total earnings were nearly double the amount they initially set out to earn. This is a prime example of mamba mentality – refusing to accept defeat and trying again until the task was completed. It is also an example of having an established goal with action steps, terms for success and failure, and then utilizing strategy and teamwork to achieve the goal. This is how success is obtained!

Failure is essential to growth. Michael Jordan considered his career a failure until he was able to win multiple championship like Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Isaiah Thomas and others. This is despite already achieving individual accolades such as the MVP award. That means, no matter how many games were won during the regular season, or even in the playoffs, until he was able to win the big games, it did not matter.

A famous quote by Michael Jordan is a sound demonstration of how failure contributed to making him arguably the best basketball player in the world, someone that even Kobe Bryant would want to emulate. He said:

“I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

Everyone fails, no matter how big, strong or talented they are. It is an inevitable fact of life. The key is to fail early and often, so you

can get the failure out of the way, learn from your mistakes, make the adjustments and apply the new knowledge to correct your errors. That is how you develop a mindset for success.

In order to reach your goals and to have everything you want in life, you have got to push yourself! No one can tell you to get up and exercise, no one is going to study for the MCAT for you, no one is going to write your company's business plan. You have to do it. You have to defy the laws of human biology, push beyond your comfort zone, and like Buzz Lightyear, soar to infinity and beyond!

“When you are out to battle with your goals, there can only be one outcome. Success. You either win, or you perish. You must not give yourself a Plan B, or in other words, an excuse to not follow through until the end.”

Chapter 6) Is Entrepreneurship for You?

If you were asked to describe the qualities of an entrepreneur, what would you say? Maybe hardworking, passionate, creative, or a problem solver would be among them. Or, risk taker, troublemaker or even insecure?

Who are some people you know that have not started a business, but you can imagine them doing so?

Entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our society. They are the ones that formulate brilliant ideas that shake up entire industries, improve lives and strengthen communities. Business owners

provide millions of jobs to new employees providing opportunities for them to grow in their careers and support their families. They also stimulate the economy. Entrepreneurship typically implies that an individual possesses great ambition, leadership, a strong vision for innovation, and is solution oriented. Recognizing that there is a large degree of financial risk, they still chart the course understanding that they can bring immense value to themselves, their families and society as whole if things pan out. Sound familiar?

In most cases entrepreneurs are people who have sought to fill a void that is missing in society, create a sense of ownership and leave something behind for the generations behind them. However, other times, people find themselves starting businesses out of pure necessity and desperation, such as due to the loss of a job or a loved one, financial hardship, or because they have lost their sense of purpose.

The interesting thing about life is, oftentimes when your back is against the wall that is when your creativity and hunger is at an all-time high. Some of the greatest entrepreneurs fell into business ownership, as opposed to actively seeking it. If you happen to already be an entrepreneur I am sure you can attest to much of what I just explained.

According to data from the 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor United States report, 27 million Americans are starting or are currently running their own businesses. The most active group of entrepreneurs is between the ages of 35-44. I personally happened to launch my business at 31 years of age. Some people are bit by the entrepreneurial bug as early as childhood, and others have mustered the courage to launch their visions into action during

their fifties and even sixties. Harland David Sanders, known as Col. Sanders, franchised Kentucky Fried Chicken for the first time at the age of 62. Leo Goodwin founded the well-known insurance company, GEICO, when he was 50. Carol Gardner launched her multi-million dollar greeting cards company Zelda Wisdom at the age of 52. There are many other examples. Age is nothing but a number when it comes to business ownership. If you have an idea to bring to the world that can benefit the masses, as long as you have the courage and the patience to see the idea through, it is never too late to pursue your business success.

Now, for those who may be considering becoming an entrepreneur, or have just recently started a business, how do you know if entrepreneurship is really for you?

Here are some ways to know if entrepreneurship is for you.

- You don't think small, but you think big
- You have strong leadership qualities
- You are highly competitive and hate to lose
- You like calling the shots in your own life and making your own money
- You are hungry to make a difference in the world
- You are constantly seeking greater opportunities
- You have learned to view your mistakes and failures as lessons
- You prefer to be around people smarter and more successful than you
- You don't allow people's doubts and opinions to discourage you from pursuing your goals

- You read a lot, you are constantly learning, and you have committed to bettering yourself in every way possible
- People have heard your goals and think you are crazy
- You have started a business, and no matter how hard it has gotten, you could never fathom quitting. It is not an option.

Here are some ways to know if entrepreneurship is NOT for you.

- You are risk averse
- You are afraid to step outside of your comfort zone
- You stall and procrastinate instead of taking decisive action
- You see the glass as half empty and have a pessimistic view of life
- You have a victim mentality and blame others for what you have not achieved in life
- You are not a leader and lack the ability to influence others to take action
- You care too much about what other people think of you
- You are bothered by discussions about money and becoming wealthy
- You are insecure about yourself and your abilities
- You are afraid of confrontation and addressing problems head on
- You can't identify any problems that need solving
- You are looking for a "get rich quick" scheme as opposed to putting in consistent work over the long haul

The fact is most people want to be in charge of their own businesses, but usually only because it sounds impressive. This day

in age, being an entrepreneur and saying that you are your own boss is sexy. Many people do not take into account the sleepless nights and the risks that must be taken in order to catapult a mere vision into something realistic and tangible, potentially impacting the lives of the thousands or even millions. Not everyone is willing to do what is necessary to achieve it.

Not everyone has the desire to undergo the necessary amount of self-analysis and self-improvement in order to make successful business ownership a real possibility. They may not be willing to endure the judgment and skepticism often directed their way by those who may not see or believe in the vision. Entrepreneurship comes with a great deal of vulnerability as well as responsibility.

Corporate employees focus on specific roles and responsibilities within a company. In the corporate set-up, employees on salary have a protected income where they can rely on bringing in a set amount of money – and they are not responsible for making sure payroll is met. Business owners on the other hand, must rely on customers as their source of income. They have to juggle various responsibilities and contribute to every aspect of the business. Particularly those that are in business by themselves, they must handle everything from bookkeeping, sales, branding and marketing, networking, customer service and everything you can think of. When they reach a point where they can hire employees, the load they carry may be substantially lessened, however, it is then where their vision, team building and leadership skills must come to play. Keeping people on task, garnering results, and maintaining a positive energy and work environment within your company is imperative to get the most out of your team.

Entrepreneurship is not a 9 to 5 job. Instead, it can very well be seven days a week, at least until a solid foundation is established along with substantial financial growth. You must eat, sleep and breathe your work. Long hours may at times require entrepreneurs to isolate themselves from family, friends and others in order to focus and ensure the health of their businesses. It is nothing personal, but sometimes it is perceived that way. I am certainly not trying to steer anyone away from being an entrepreneur, for I absolutely love entrepreneurship and could not imagine doing anything else. Though, I think it is important to provide an accurate depiction of what is required to survive and thrive.

Take a look at the lists above to determine where you are. If you fall into the second category, entrepreneurship very well may not be for you. Or, you may just not be prepared at this moment. People do change over time, so just because you are not there now does not mean you will never be. Continue to work and focus on your growth and improvement. If starting a business is something that you truly aspire to, it is possible to make the adjustments. Anything is possible. It all depends on your mindset and what you are willing to learn, invest and sacrifice. Although they have not taken the leap, I can think of some of my family members who could be great as entrepreneurs. It's a personal decision that is not for everyone, and that is okay. I do not want to come off as saying that people who work jobs and do not own their own businesses are not to be admired. I have a family full of medical professionals and individuals working in corporate America. They do great work and as long as they are happy, that is what matters. However, there are people who toy with the idea of venturing into business, underestimating the knowledge, vision, strategy and tenacity that it requires. You've got to pay the cost to be the boss.

Paying the cost is something I established that I was willing to do, and that is why I not only became an entrepreneur, but a successful one who grew my companies and the companies of others. As I mentioned, in my formative years, I had a much more passive attitude. Although I always had a certain level of maturity, I cannot say I was a leader, I was decisive, or that I wanted the pressure on me to deliver. I was reserved, unless something really excited me. That was one of the missing pieces, the excitement. The other was discipline. As I grew older, I was able to identify the things that drew the passion and excitement out of me. Once that happened, my desire grew to be the best at those things. I grew bolder and stronger. My expectations for my life skyrocketed and I embraced being the go-to person who people leaned on to make things happen. I did not shy away from competition. Instead, I welcomed it with open arms. I was not afraid of taking losses, or enduring the bumps and bruises that would come along with my quest for success. I had developed moxie, becoming fearless in the pursuit of my goals and willing to stand in the face of anyone in order to reach them. Still, with my ambition, strength and laser focus, I have always made sure to maintain sound moral judgment and integrity. I strongly believe that those are the ingredients that make a successful, respected entrepreneur. Once you figure out where you stand, it is up to you. Just remember, again, you have to pay the cost to be the boss.

The interesting thing about life is, oftentimes when your back is against the wall that is when your creativity and hunger is at an all-time high. Some of the greatest entrepreneurs fell into business ownership, as opposed to actively seeking it.

Notes:

If you have started a business, or if you are leaning towards starting a business of your own, here are some questions that may help you along the way. Answer them to the best of your ability.

If you desire to start a business, what kind of business are you thinking about starting and why?

Is your business or product in high demand? If your answer is yes, what information do you have to support that? If not, how do you intend to articulate the need and create demand?

Are there other companies in your industry doing the same thing or something similar? What might you be able to offer that they are not?

What is a void in society you plan to fill with your business?

What are your financial goals for your business?

How do you intend to market your business and build public awareness?