

EDGE OF SANITY

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*Dedicated to my daughter,
Smritha.*

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Preface

Since childhood, I've always wanted to become an entrepreneur. I've always wondered how it would feel to be the CEO of a big company, and for most of my adulthood, I've been chasing the dream. And I feel I'm still a kid, prioritizing this dream over everything else in my life.

After a decade of graduating from my engineering degree in 2008, all the hustle has led to something. Today, I have a small digital marketing startup at Bengaluru, and the bigger dream is still alive. I have tasted success, and I want more of it. We entrepreneurs are success junkies, and we do not hesitate to admit it.

I want to grow my company and increase the value I create through my products for my customers, the opportunities I bring for the people who work with me,

and want to give higher returns for the investors who trusted in our dream and invested their time and money. This dream knows no bounds.

However, that being said, I am not a kid anymore. I am a grown-up adult who has gone around the sun for more than 32 times. I still have the dream alive, but now I know the cost of it. There is no such thing as a free lunch, and success requires hard work and sacrifices. If it was so easy, it wouldn't be so scarce, and it's valuable because of its scarcity, not abundance.

Have you ever heard of the quote, "Be careful what you wish for, you might end up getting it?" I feel it is the most ironic quote of our times. It tells you that you will definitely achieve your dreams, but you will not be ready to pay the price for it. There is a price to be paid to bridge your wishes and reality, and we wish without thinking too much about that price to be paid.

When you desire something, you are making a deal with yourself not to be happy, until you get what you want. If what you desire is very big, you might put yourself in a position where you are pushing yourself harder to achieve what you want. Pushing yourself harder might come at the cost of your physical health, your relationships, your savings and most important - at the cost of your mental health.

Don't worry; this book is not going to ask you to dream any less. And a guy like me is never going to advise anyone

to dream anything less than intimidating dreams. Dream all you want, but be aware of the cost. The chapters in this book are just reminders of some good practices that you already know, and following these practices will keep the cost of achieving our dreams as low as possible.

End of the day, that's what we all want as entrepreneurs, we want the maximum returns (in terms of manifestation of our dreams), with the least effort possible. Without paying for it in irreversible damages. Without paying for it in health, relationships and security. And it's possible. Many people have achieved their dreams without paying a stupid cost for it. Let's achieve our dreams, but let's not sell our eyes to buy a beautiful painting. If we are not careful enough, we might regret the cost we've paid, and not be in a position to enjoy what we have achieved.

Steve Jobs once said, "The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones that do." Now, there was a very high chance that I would have ignored all the inspirational quotes and videos from YouTube about entrepreneurship and success, but I didn't. I didn't ignore them because I've been lucky enough to have spent time with people who have dreamed big and achieved. And they achieved it right in front of my eyes.

Having big dreams, and making a deal with yourself to get what you want, can drive you insane. Almost.

If you are not yet an entrepreneur, believe me, it's not for everyone. Nearly every startup entrepreneur who has

run a company for a few years or more would agree with the fact that you remain one step away from insanity, trying to manage everything and keeping your startup ship afloat. We stay at the edge of sanity.

This book is a set of notes that I wrote on my blog, DigitalDeepak.com. Most of the notes are just notes and reminders to myself, to stay at the edge of sanity, but not fall off on the other side.

Each note is a chapter in this book. Each chapter talks about a small thought, which, if applied regularly, can have massive impacts on the speed and efficiency of the manifestation of our dreams. I wouldn't even need to convince you otherwise because most of what you are going to read about in this book, you probably already know it deep inside.

If you have picked up this book, then we are all in the same boat. We are dreaming big, and we want to achieve big things. We have already made a deal with ourselves, and there is no way to escape this deal. We are not gonna give up. We are going to achieve success, at any cost. And in the process, let's keep ourselves sane.

Let's achieve our dreams, and I will see you on the other side.

– Deepak Kanakaraju

Acknowledgements

This book was possible, not because the people around me helped me write this book, but because the people around me helped me run a startup.

All my family members have had an opportunity cost. The cost is - me not being available for them, as much as I would've liked to, and as much as they would've deserved. So thanks to all my family (past and present) for having supported me in writing this book.

It wouldn't be fair if I didn't mention about my team. Since the time I've started up, I've fired a few people, but no one has ever left the startup. The team we have right now have been extremely focused, dedicated, loyal, and hard working.

A startup can drive you nuts. That's why this book is called 'Edge of Sanity.' And if I can make enough time

to write a book, while running a startup, then that's the ultimate edge of sanity. Fortunately, I'm not insane yet, and I'm glad that I've reached this point, where I can see my book getting published. This book wouldn't have been possible without the team.

And not to forget, a huge thanks to my co-founder, Sanjay Shenoy, who has been running the startup, while I was writing my book. Most of the things in my startup that has a high chance of driving me nuts has been handled by my co-founder, and without his dedication, this book wouldn't have been possible.

Finally, thanks to all the authors, successful entrepreneurs, and mentors I've had in my life to learn from. I'm standing on the shoulders of giants, and none of my success would've been possible without them.



CHAPTER 1



Entrepreneurship is a Lottery of Efforts

When we can get something in return for our efforts, we are usually motivated to do it. If I tell you that you have to do a certain work for 30 days, I will give you X amount of money in return, you would usually take it if the money is good enough.

One of the reasons why there are a very few entrepreneurs and a large number of people who work for entrepreneurs is because most of the people out there are uncomfortable with investing time, energy and money into something that might or might not give returns.

The people, on top of not willing to play an uncertain game, they also buy into a lifestyle that traps them into a financial commitment. Financial commitments reduce your risk appetite and that's bad for entrepreneurship.

People in general want to live a comfortable life. They end up buying a home, a car and they sign up for other things where their requirement of having a monthly income becomes very important.

If someone living in a city in India with a wife and one kid tries to become an entrepreneur, there are high risks. If the cost of his lifestyle is around \$3,000 a month (2 Lakh Indian rupees), then it will be very difficult for him to become an entrepreneur. This person is more likely to be an employee for the rest of his life. He cannot take risks.

If you want to succeed as an entrepreneur, you need to make sacrifices in the short term that most people will not be ready to do; for long term benefits that most of the other people will not have a chance to get. If you can live like no one else now, you can live like no one else in the future.

Invest Your Time and Energy Unconditionally

Though I encourage debt for startups, your initial debt will not be with money but with your time. You will have to invest your undivided attention into your startup and make the startup the top idea in your mind for a few years if you want to increase the chances of your startup succeeding.

Your startup requires you to work as if you are going to get guaranteed returns when in reality, the chances

of getting a huge ROI from your time invested is pretty slim.

You are investing your time, and playing a lottery. You might get a huge return, or you might not. It is very difficult emotionally to handle the investment of time and energy when the returns are not guaranteed. This is why people call entrepreneurship as a tough game.

On top of your emotional strength that is required for entrepreneurship, you should be lean with your life. Embrace minimalism and don't have a heavy personal lifestyle. Having a high cost lifestyle reduces your risk appetite to invest your time and energy in to your startup.

When you get started as an entrepreneur, you will find great difficulty in putting in your hard work for something that might or might not work. And if you do not invest yourself fully in what you are doing, your startup will fail and it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Since you are not sure about the results, you refuse to put in your 100% and because you did not put in your 100%, you are going to have a mediocre result. And in the end you will say, "I told you so, it was not worth it." This is how most entrepreneurs succeed as being failed entrepreneurs for the rest of their life.

Love What You Do

The only way to put in your 100% is to love what you do irrespective of the results. I have no idea how the book

that I am writing right now is going to perform in sales. It might become a million copy best seller, or it might sell just 1,000 copies. I honestly don't know.

If success was guaranteed for me as a book author, and if someone told me that if I put in my 100% I will get a great ROI on the launch of the book, I would do it. But the problem is that, 1000 other people will do the same. When the results are guaranteed, the competition is high.

What makes me become a successful book author is the risk that I am taking by investing 100s of hours into writing this book, not knowing if it will result in anything significant. And I am able to do it because I love writing. Even if 100 people read my book and if their life as an entrepreneur is shaped because of the chapters I've written, I would succeed.

Most of the people do not get success in their professional life and with their startups is because they refuse to put in their 100% into their work. It will always be difficult to invest everything you have into something that is uncertain, but that's what entrepreneurship is all about.

Sometimes it makes me think – it is the uncertainty of entrepreneurship that makes me successful because, if the results were certain, I would be competing with many people and success would be more difficult. It is usually said that “Deciding where to compete determines half your

success”. The competition in the area of entrepreneurship is low, and that’s a good thing.

In the long term, if you keep investing quality time and energy into what you love to do, you will find out that as long as you did your work with 100% involvement, you increase the chances of winning by a huge margin. You will become better at this game and success would find you faster than you can handle.

The Lottery of Efforts

Entrepreneurship is a lottery of efforts. Play every game in the battle as if you are going to win the war for sure. If you lose a few battles, don’t give up and play harder. If you think that you mostly would lose the war, you will not fight the battles hard enough – and that will lead to you losing the war.

Since most people have a high resistance to hard work and investment of time into something that might or might not work, most people don’t do it. They have chosen not to become entrepreneurs because they are not capable of handling their uncertainty.

Entrepreneurship can take you to the streets, or it can take you to the stars. Most of the people don’t want to end up in the streets, and they comfortably give up the prospect of reaching for the stars. They trade their whole life’s time, energy and money for certainty and predictability.

Most people are attracted to a “safe & secure” job, so that they can have a predictable life. And that’s also good because they are clear about what they want out of their life, and you can also hire them to build your startup! Just don’t get stuck on the other side, if you want to become an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs Make their Own Luck

People who want safety and security in their life, can’t wrap their heads around the success of entrepreneurs. Such people call entrepreneurs who have become successful as lucky.

People want to enjoy the benefits that comes from successful entrepreneurship, but since they are not ready to pay the price it takes to become successful. They sell their future and dreams for some safety and security in the present.

When people become jealous of entrepreneurs, they can’t wrap their heads around the fact that they could’ve had that success if they paid that kind of price. Since they are unable to accept the possibilities of their own success and the missed boat, they blame other’s success on luck. And luck is overrated.

Yes, successful people are lucky. But they did not wait for luck to fall on their lap. They played the game so many times that Luck was tired of calling rain checks and it finally gave up.

Successful people grab luck by its tail because they play hard, with full investment of their time and energy. It is difficult for luck to escape their clutches.

So think about it. Are you strong enough to play this game?

Are you ready to play the lottery of efforts?

You might need to give it a serious thought because, if you dream big and not achieve anything, that pain will be lesser than the pain of regret where you did not even give it a try.



CHAPTER 2



You Can't Build a Profitable Startup Without Debt

Money is one of the most important things to think about when building a startup. For many entrepreneurs, it is an emotional topic. As soon as we bring up the concept of money, people get uncomfortable.

One of the reasons why people focus so much on vanity metrics in startups like reach, followers, page views, brand value, market share and so on is because they are not comfortable talking about money. Money takes you on a date with reality and people resist it.

To be brutally honest, the only metric that matters for a startup is its finances.

Revenue, profits, investment and debt is all the language that is required to define how well a startup is

doing. And it is amazing how people do not think about it often enough, let alone talk about it.

If money is an emotional topic, debt is even worse. Almost every entrepreneur has some experience with debt. More often than not, it is a negative experience.

If you go into debt in the wrong place and time, it can kill your startup and your career. And you probably know people in your friends and family circle who destroyed their lives and careers because of mismanaged debt.

If you have made it up to this point in the article, chances are that you already have some emotions surface around money.

If reading about money makes you uncomfortable, think about me. I am writing about it.

It took a long time for me to get comfortable with the topic of money and debt so that I can write a chapter on it. This is a result of lot of learning, experience and introspection.

So let's talk about money and debt without shying away from it.

What is "Value"?

Before we dive deep into understanding the importance of money and debt, we need to zoom out one step and talk about "value".

Every transaction that happens in this world at any point in time is an exchange of value.

As I am writing this article right now, and as you are reading it at this very moment in time, 1000s of transactions are happening across the world. All the transactions are exchange of value created by human beings using division of labour.

What is division of labour? Let's do a thought experiment.

Think about one man in an island. (If you can see the movie *Cast Away* by Tom Hanks, you can visualize it very well.)

If this one man has to take care of himself and survive, he has to do everything by himself. He wouldn't be great at anything. He has to build his own house, grow or hunt his own food and take care of himself if he is sick.

He cannot build a great house, because he doesn't have the luxury of time to invest years into learning how to build a house. At best he can build a hut.

He has to do everything himself, and he will not be great at anything. His quality of life wouldn't be good.

Division of Labour Builds Productivity

Now imagine ten people in the same island. They can agree to develop specific skills and divide the labour among themselves. One person can focus on one thing and really get good at it.

One person can focus on building houses for everyone. One person can focus on fishing. Another one can focus on growing vegetables and grains.

Since every person has only one job to do, he/she becomes better at that specific skill over time and therefore becomes more productive.

Someone who is just going to focus on catching fishes is going to catch more fish for all the 10 people than what people would have caught fishing by themselves. The fisherman's skill compounds because he is focusing on one thing. He can become more productive.

The productivity that comes from focus creates wealth for all the islanders.

We have more than 7 billion people on this planet. Everyone can afford to become a super super specialist in one thing. And exchanging value among 7 billion people has now become highly efficient, thanks to technology.

As a planet and human civilization, we are growing in our overall wealth because of the insane scale of division of labour. (This also proves the point that more population creates more wealth for everyone, a topic for another day).

Division of labour allows a person like me to focus on one topic and become an expert, in my case, Digital Marketing. Someone can be an astronaut. And someone else can be a neurosurgeon.

The more number of people there are in this planet, the deeper one person can go in one subject and build

a unique skill. But to build that skill, you need to invest time, energy and money. That means you need to go into debt.

Your Debt as an Individual

If someone is dedicating 10 years of their life to learn a specific skill, and you have only 5 years experience, they will always beat you.

The more time, energy and money you invest in a specific skill, the better you will become. The better you become, the more you will earn, because you will be the best. People would want to pay you for a skill than someone else with lesser experience.

If you think about yourself, you've gone into a debt of almost 20 years to become a mentally healthy and functioning member of the society.

You have invested the time and your parents invested money to make you "profitable".

If you did not have school and college education, you cannot make money. You wouldn't have any skills that other people are ready to pay for.

Even as a professional, we go into debt.

If your parents are great, you might not need to necessarily repay them for their investment of time and money in raising you. But it is a debt. A debt that is waived off by your parents. If you get an educational loan, you have to repay, with interest.

A Startup's Debt

A startup is not too different from a working professional.

A startup needs an incubation period where it is nurtured. Time, money and energy has to be invested upfront.

During the incubation period the startup goes into a debt, and in the future when the startup has created a product or service of value, it can repay the debt, with interest.

A professional who has more time and money to invest in personal growth ends up becoming a renowned expert in one field.

A startup that gets better nurturing with time and money, ends up creating highly valuable products and services that people would be ready to pay for. Longer the nurture period, stronger the startup becomes.

The more time and money the startup gets from its founders and investors, the more valuable the startup becomes and gives a healthy return on investment.

If you have saved up money for a while, and if you invest that money into the growth of your startup, you are still going into debt with your startup.

You are “lending” money to your startup in the hope that your startup will pay back with interest in the future.

Can Your Startup Pay Back the Debt?

Many entrepreneurs would argue with me that they are not going into debt if they are just investing their time and not their money. I would like to disagree.

If you are working for no salary in your own startup, you have an opportunity cost. You are giving up making money somewhere else, and working on your startup for free.

Though you are not spending your money, you are spending (investing) your time. And you “invest” your time into the startup, because you know that you can create something of value and then get a higher returns on it later.

Your startup goes into debt, because it is taking up your time, but not giving you returns instantly. It is yet to throw up a profit and it takes time.

Until your startup becomes profitable, your startup is in debt, with you.

Consider this... If you work as an employee for 3 years and make \$100,000, your 3 years of time is valued at \$100,000.

If you later you quit your job and build your startup for another 3 years without paying yourself, you are technically “lending” \$100,000 to your startup and your startup would theoretically be in debt of \$100,000.

It has taken your time, and hasn't paid you back.

In the long term, the startup starts making money for you. It is paying you back the principal – with interest.

If your startup does exceptionally well, your startup is “paying” you back with a very high interest rate. And it can afford to because it is making a lot of money. Your startup is the most generous borrower you will ever find, if you can make your startup work. It would pay back everything to you and the shareholders.

If you cannot make your startup work, it would be like your distant friend who borrowed money and never showed his face again. You wouldn't get back anything for your investment of time (and may be money).

Debt at the Right Time

Once you understand the truth your startup can never be built without debt, you will get more comfortable going into debt.

Valuable products and services create a good return on investment. You need to go into debt (of time and money) to create valuable products and services.

As long as you make sure cost of debt is less than the value you are creating using the debt, you will end up building a profitable startup.

More often than not, many startups go into debt without knowing how it is going to translate into value.

If the money is not used well, then the startup wouldn't do well, and the startup cannot afford to pay back the

borrowed principal with the needed interest. The startup would fail.

A startup needs both time and money but if you have to prioritize, time investment comes first.

A startup flourishes when the founders of the startup spend quality time growing their startup. A startup is in need of founders time more than money at a very early stage, just like a sapling requires more care, and not resources, from a gardener.

Right now, my startup is not a funded startup. Nor we have borrowed a large amount of money from a bank or a financier. But I am investing my time into my startup, and my time is translating to value for my customers.

My startup right now depends on my time investment, more than money. There will come a time, when my startup needs money to scale more than my personal time. And that would be the right time to go into debt.

Types of Debt

There are different types of debt that your startup can leverage.

The simplest form of debt is the time investment by the founder and the founding team.

Beyond time, money is required to grow.

If I need money...

I can invest my savings or

I can go into a financial debt where I have to pay an interest on the borrowed money or

I can go into equity debt by selling shares in my company.

If I am raising money (going into debt) by selling a part of my company to investors, I would pay back in the form of a higher valuation of a slice of my company that the investor owns.

The debt can be funded by private investors in the case of a private company.

If the company goes public, any buyer of stock is a lender of money, wanting better returns in the future in the form of dividends and increased stock value.

Having access to all the types of debt is very important for the growth of a startup.

The more debt (capital) a startup has access to, the higher the possibility of investing time, energy and money to build something of great value, that people would be ready to pay a premium for.

Final Words

Money is a topic that we all tend to shy away from. Don't. Think deeply about debt, money, value exchange and division of labour. The more uncomfortable it makes you, the more you need to come to terms with it.

Do not stay away from debt because it looks dangerous.

Debt looks dangerous because it is very powerful. The better you learn how to use it, the faster you can grow. Debt is the biggest growth engine a startup could ever have.

The art of entrepreneurship is the art of leveraging debt.

So tell me, how does your understanding of debt and money from this post going to impact your decisions?



CHAPTER 3



Never Hire Your Friends or Family at Your Startup

As a founder of a startup company, entrepreneurs know the challenges involved in growing the startup. Things might look rosy from the outside, but founders know that they are on thin ice.

Even if your startup has survived for a few years, you are always in constant threat of the business failing. Market changes, competition, government regulation updates, changes in the management team and many more threats are just around the corner ready to kill your startup.

However, friends and family see you differently. As soon as you have a startup with an office and more than five employees, people see you as successful.

Maybe by their definition, quitting a job, starting a startup and giving employment to people is seen as a

success. As soon as you reach this stage, they start asking for favors.

Friends might want to work with you or become business partners. Family and extended family will start asking if you can give a job opportunity for them or for someone they know. It might be tempting to say yes, and sometimes difficult to say No.

I've made the mistake of hiring friends in the past. This almost always never works. Though I am very good friends with my team members, all of us understand that business comes first and friendship second. Even my co-founder Sanjay Shenoy is my business partner first and a friend second.

You can always have friends outside of work and spend time with them. In fact, your best friends should be outside the scope of your work to really enjoy time with them. If you hire friends and family in the workplace, they will put the relationship first and the work second.

If someone is really intelligent and has put in the hard work required to grow some professional skills, they would be in demand and probably would be working somewhere else. They might be getting paid more or even be earning more than you.

Only people who do not have the required skills to be in demand in the job market will be looking for opportunities among friends and family.

You have no obligation for their careers and no pressure to hire them. If you do, they will always be performing sub-par and this will not only spoil their career but also your friendship and relationship with them.

If they do not perform up to the expectations, it is going to be very painful to fire them or let them go. They almost would never understand that they are costing you money and they are not contributing enough revenue to your business.

People behave in weird ways when money is involved and you don't want to see their other side. Apart from the unpleasantness of having to let them go, you might also get into some ugly scenes. This is an opportunity cost to your business.

Having to deal with a painful team member who you cannot strictly deal business will soon take up your mind-space and become the top idea in your mind. You cannot afford to let a trivial matter become the top idea in your mind.

If anyone in your friends or family network requires help, you can always give them career advice, or connect them with the right people who might be able to give them opportunities. Just tell them politely that you are not hiring right now.

You have an obligation to make your startup work, for yourself, for your team, and for your customers. If

you ever let one thing that derails from the focus of your startup's growth, you will be paying the price in terms of opportunity cost.

In rare cases, people might contribute and be a great asset to your business. Sometimes brothers start a business, and that's different. People have created billion dollar companies as brothers. If you have someone in your company that is a friend or family and things are working well, you don't have anything to worry about.

If you have already made the mistake of hiring someone, and if you are now not too happy with it, make a decision soon. If the thought of letting go of a team member has crossed your mind, it is very unlikely that it will go away.

If you are thinking of firing someone, then you will eventually end up firing them. People do not magically turn around and become productive overnight. There is no point in giving them more time to turn around. You will be able to smell their attitude from far and you need to make a decision sooner or later.

The sooner you let go of a team member, the easier it is going to be for both the parties. If you let people be unproductive in your team for a while, you will end up making them comfortable. You are going to send a false signal to them that that's all that expected of them.

If you have decided to let go of someone, do it yesterday. You are going to help their career take shape sooner than

later. They can move on to other things, find out what's working for them and they are going to thank you for it later on. Even a 3-month head start for someone in their career is going to help them leaps and bounds a few years down the line.

If you already have hired friends and family and if you think it was not a great decision, cut your losses fast. If you have hired someone who is really bad, they might even throw the friend/family card on you if you let them go. Some people might just want to take rest in your shadow as you grow. You cannot afford to have such people in your team.

Even if financially it is not a burden for you to have a friend or family in the team, it could still cost you. If someone is not contributing at their best capacity, it sets a wrong tone with other team members who are working hard.

It morally draining for one team member to work hard while others are getting paid similar remuneration and are not working **THAT** hard.

Your team is going to work as hard as the laziest person in the company. If someone is working at 50% of their potential, all team members will synchronize themselves to that level of productivity and potential. It destroys your company culture. You need to guard your culture the most.

Your startup's culture is your invisible co-founder powering your business. If you lose money in your

business, nothing is lost. If you lose your customers and brand, something is lost. But if you lose your startup's culture, everything is lost.

With your team and your culture, you can bring your startup back up from dead, but you need a team for that. And the culture has to encourage it.

So pay very good attention to who you make part of your team. Think twice before you hire someone.

And always say No to friends and family.



CHAPTER 4



Your Startup Should be the Top Idea in Your Mind

Modern life in the 21st century is rich with many possible experiences but it is also very demanding. There is so much to do, so much to take care of and so much to achieve.

There is a Russian proverb which goes like “If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one.” You have to focus on one thing at a time.

There can be only one thing that occupies your mind at any given point in time. Paul Graham calls it, the top idea in your mind. What you think about most of the time will have more solutions and results in real life – because you are thinking about it all the time.

You might think you know what is the top idea in your mind, but it could be something else. The best way

to find out the top idea in your mind is to check where your thoughts are gravitating towards when you are in the shower.

If you think you should be investing all your time, energy and money in the growth and success of your startup at this point in your life, but if you observe that your thoughts are drifting towards some other things in your life, then you have to do something about it.

You cannot control directly what's on the top of your mind, but you can control it indirectly. If you eliminate all the unimportant things that are at the top of your mind, the most important thing will automatically raise up.

If you are a startup entrepreneur, your startup should be the top idea in your mind, until you get to a stage where your startup can move on its own wheels. If something else is taking up most of your mind-space, either realize what's your true priority, or focus on what you think should be at the top of your mind.

A startup takes the life out of you for a few years. If you succeed and once your startup has gained some momentum, you can focus on other things in your life. You will have the luxury to put something else at the top of your mind, like personal relationships.

Health need not be a thing at the top of your mind if you have installed good habits into your routine. As long as you keep yourself healthy, your health should never be

at the top of your mind. It should be the enabler running in the background.

Health, relationships and money are the three big areas of your life. Focus on only two at a time, one of which is going to be health, because it is non-negotiable. It is the foundation on which your relationships and wealth can be built.

Weed out things in your life that take mind space but will not yield anything useful. If you have unresolved disputes in your life with people, many times, it takes most of your mind space. Some people have regrets about the choices they've made in the past. Some people put too much energy into feeding their fears that might be impractical.

There are many useless thoughts that can accidentally, without your conscious awareness, become the top idea in your mind. You will not be able to identify it, unless you spend a lot of time with yourself and observe your thoughts.

If you discover that you have something at the top of your mind that is not leading to anything useful in the future, then make a strong decision to close that loop.

A broken heart, someone who cheated you, someone who did the wrong thing and landed you in trouble. You can be forgiving, not because you want to forgive, but because you are selfish. You are choosy about what thoughts you want to let inside your mind. Only ideas

that can change your future are worth having in the top of your mind.

There is an opportunity cost when you are putting your mind to something. Always think about that before you hesitate to weed out things from your mind that you think shouldn't be there. You are not going to change the past by thinking about it.

You should also be careful on what you are signing up for which might change the top idea in your mind. For example, if your startup's success is the top idea in your mind and you change your city of residence, get into a new relationship or become a parent, then you are going to risk dropping one of the balls.

Multiple things in your life will fight to become the top idea in your mind, and that can tear you apart. It is unhealthy and unproductive to keep switching the top idea in your mind. None of the ideas will get enough attention to get tangible results.

Most of the growth in my startup has come from deep thought and keeping one idea as the top idea in my mind.

I have launched 12 training courses so far in the past 2 years and more than 40% of its revenue has come from a single course – the 100-day blogging course. The idea for this course came to me when I was in the shower.

I was able to come up with a new course idea that worked because the top idea in my mind was – “How do

I come up with my next course idea that can create great value in the marketing place and help my business grow?" Pure, unadulterated focus on one problem at a time.

A startup needs intensity at continuous intervals. Intensity needs focus. Focus means, you can see only one thing at a time.

So next time you are in the shower, observe where your thoughts are drifting towards. And you will know what is the top idea in your mind.

If the top idea in your mind doesn't help you achieve your dreams, then try to close the loops on other ideas occupying your mind-space.

There is no way to fail with your startup if your startup becomes the top idea in your mind.

Where attention goes, energy flows.

Where energy flows, change happens.



CHAPTER 5



Pay Your Consultants and Professionals Well

As an entrepreneur, there are certain things you can't do yourself. Though you might try to understand it, you might not be able to master it. Many professional verticals require years of learning and experience to achieve mastery level.

In my business, I understand design and copywriting to some extent, but I am not a master at it. And as long as I can have consultants and professionals help me in areas that I am not strong at, I don't need to master it.

I don't mind mastering other subjects, but there is an opportunity cost. I will be taking time and resources away to master a different subject than my own area of expertise.

Though I recommend entrepreneurs to be frugal and very calculative with their spends, I would always prefer paying professionals well. I do not bargain with

professionals and consultants to get work done at a cheap cost.

Qualitative work like design and copywriting cannot be measured. If someone is better at a skill than me, I would always prefer to pay what they ask for. They power my business and help me make more revenue. It is an investment and not an expense.

To encourage your professionals and consultants to give their best work, make them part of your team. Share your vision with them and the purpose of your entrepreneurship journey. Without involving them at that level, you can expect work from them that surpasses your expectations.

Take part in the work they do and give feedback at appropriate intervals. Do not micro-manage them and at the same time do not be completely uninvolved in their work. Strike a balance when working with professionals and consultants.

One of the biggest challenges that you will face when you are working with consultants is that you cannot measure their work easily. Since the work is qualitative, you have to make sure that they really care about their work. The only way to make them care about the work is to make them part of your team in as many areas as possible.

Make sure that they give their best by working with them. Their work will be so much of value to your

business that no matter how much you pay them, you will always end up making more money with their work than without them.

If you do not pay your consultants and professionals well, your competitors will. Most of the freelance work professionals are genuine in what they charge for.

If they are charging high for something, its not that they are greedy, but their work is worth that much. As an entrepreneur, it is your responsibility to make sure that good work can be converted into revenue and profits.

If you cannot take the best work by the best professional and turn it into revenue. You will not be able to take mediocre work from mediocre professionals and turn it into revenue either.

If you want to be at the top of your game, the best in the business, then you need professionals and consultants who can deliver the best. And the best doesn't come cheap.

Finding The Best Professionals

Now that I have convinced you to work with the best and pay them well, the next question is – where to find those people?

It is easier said than done to find the best professionals and consultants in the market. You have to find talent below the carpet. Most of the good ones are hidden in a hay stack of bad service providers.

Some professionals will market themselves very well and might say the right things at the right time. Superficial consultants do superficial work. They market their work as extraordinary when it is mediocre.

You need to dig deep looking for the best professionals in the market. Once you find good professionals, work with them on a project that doesn't require a lot of involvement in terms of time, energy and money. Date them before you marry them.

Apart from the quality of work they do, good professionals are also good listeners, good collaborators, will be punctual and will be a little more straight forward in their communication.

Start working with multiple professionals on an experimental basis and see which one sticks. You will strike a chord with one of them and you will be able to build a good professional relationship with them.

The best companies in the world have the best working for them. You cannot build a great company without great people. And certain people might never want to work full time with you, nor you need them full time.

The effort invested in finding the best professionals will never go wasted. If you can't work with a professional for the long term, you will still make good friends with them and even learn from them.

“Don’t ask for the price of the spade, when you are digging for the gold.”

So what do you think?

Are you paying your professionals well and getting the best in the market?



CHAPTER 6



Be a Great Bookkeeper

Bookkeeping is a hard habit. Even if you get into that habit, it is easy to fall out of that habit. Humans have a tricky relationship with the concept of money.

If the topic of money makes you emotional or makes you uncomfortable, then you have to overcome that to succeed as an entrepreneur.

Most entrepreneurs at the early stages of their startup will not have a financial team looking after their transactions. Startup founders have to do bookkeeping themselves.

Though for small businesses bookkeeping is not mandated by law, accurate bookkeeping helps you see clearly where you are financially and how far away you are from your financial goals.

A good bookkeeping practice starts with personal accounts. Keep a good track of what you are spending your money for.

If you start bookkeeping for personal transactions, you will be shocked to see the data. You might be spending a lot of money on something and you probably never paid much attention to it.

You cannot improve what you cannot measure. Be frugal and measure everything. When something is in abundance, you need not manage it.

Money is never in abundance like air or water and it is a scarce resource. If you do not manage a scarce resource, you will end up consuming everything.

A Google sheet with personal and business accounts might be the most boring thing that you might have to do, but it is hygiene.

Go over your financials at least once every day so that you have a clear idea about your where you stand. Best to do it by the end of the day or just before you go to bed.

Liabilities, Assets, pending income payments, pending invoices and other such data should be at the top of your mind. Without that knowledge, you cannot make the right business decisions.

If you make it a habit to capture income and expenses as it happens, you don't even need to spend a lot of time with finance and accounting.

You also don't need any advanced tools to keep track of personal spends. Start with a Google sheet and spend as much as possible with credit and debit cards.

Everyday, add the spends to a Google sheet across each date. That's all it takes to become a bookkeeping ninja.

There are certain hacks that I do to make this process easier.

I always use separate accounts for personal and business transactions and never mix the two together.

It might be tempting to use the corporate credit card for a dinner with family or friends, but I never do it. Financial discipline is mandatory to succeed as an entrepreneur.

I withdraw a salary from my own company and top up my savings account every month. I do not exceed 50,000 rupees per month in personal expenses.

If I can pay a bonus for myself from my company, then I would pay it to a different savings account which is meant for investments.

It might be tempting to spend more money for personal reasons when the business makes more revenue, but you should reinvest money into the business and grow the business.

You should not be a financial burden to the business' growth. While you might not be able to work for free, it is advisable to withdraw as low as possible from your business.

For my business accounts, I use multiple current accounts for different segments of my business. The income and expenses for the agency go into a separate account. The income and expenses for our training business is maintained in a separate current account.

When you have clean books and different pockets of accounts, even if there is a mistake in your bookkeeping, it will be easier to figure out in which pocket you missed a transaction.

Every month, as an entrepreneur, you should know how much you spent for infrastructure, marketing, salaries, R&D, branding, parties, bonuses and so on. You should make quarterly reports and yearly reports as well. This will help you make data driven decisions in your business.

Most of my insights in my business is derived from looking at financial data.

You need to master financial data and be comfortable with numbers. If you think you are not good at it, then find a business partner who can have an eye for financial transactions.

As you grow as a business, you might have a financial team working for you, but you should always know what's going on. Many businesses who have got the product market fit right have still failed because of their lack of financial discipline.

Daily bookkeeping is like brushing your teeth everyday. You might never get to a point where you enjoy doing it,

but you have to do it anyway because if you ignore it, then it will cause you pain.

Start with bookkeeping for personal and household transactions and make sure that everyone in the organization follows the same habit. It is a cultural thing to be frugal and economical.

Save more, spend less, and have an eye on every incoming and outgoing transaction. There is no other way to succeed as an entrepreneur. You can delegate many tasks but not this.

When you are frugal and economical, your investors will also take note of it and they will have a higher comfort level in working with you. Your customers will also take note when you use the money in a good and efficient way.

So what do you think about being a good bookkeeper? How good are you with your financial life? What are your biggest challenges?



CHAPTER 7



You Don't Need a New Idea to Start a Business

Many people who want to start the entrepreneurship journey get stuck at a point where they think that they need a brand new idea to start a business. Good ideas are important, but not mandatory to start a business.

Most of the time, we see startups with new ideas being highlighted in the media. Media loves stories of how a simple idea changed everything and such stories have a lot of demand in the market. It installs hope in people that they can also start something – if they just had the right idea.

To be honest, having good ideas are over-rated. Sometimes, people come up with “brilliant” ideas but they do not execute it properly. If you know

how to execute well, you can succeed in business. An idea without execution is not going to be of any use.

Google is not the first search engine in the world. There were many search engines before Google such as Ask.com, Excite.com, Yahoo and so on. Google did a better job with their website rankings and Google has become the most used search engine in the world today.

Facebook is not the first social network in the world. Orkut, MySpace, Friendster, Hi5, and a lot of other social networks had the first mover advantage. Facebook was able to beat all of them because they executed the project well.

There are plenty of opportunities in the world that can be tapped into. If you keep your eyes open and look for problems in the world, you will get ideas on how to get solutions for the problems and get paid for it.

You have to make something people want. It might look like a simple thought, but many people get married to an idea and do not let go of it. People build something that they think people want and try very hard to convince the market to buy their products.

Instead of building something and then trying to convince people that they need it, you can go ahead and spend time in market research, understand what people want and then create a product that you are sure people would pay for.

Competition is a Good Thing

If you are entering a category where there are no competitors, it might not be as exciting as you think it might be. Many new entrepreneurs think that they have to enter a market where there is no competition. They think it will be easy to make a startup succeed in a market place where you are the only player.

Nine out of ten times, competition doesn't exist in a category only if there is no opportunity in that category. If there is money to be made, there will be at least a few players who are already in the market.

When I started selling my digital marketing courses, there were plenty of people who were selling digital marketing courses already. I came in and did value innovation which helped me penetrate a crowded market.

One out of ten times, it could be an opportunity that no one else saw. May be you got lucky. In such cases, you might be having a first mover advantage and you can capitalize on it.

If you are the first mover, you still shouldn't get too excited about it. As soon as you enter a new market that has a huge potential, others will start competing with you if they see that there is money to be made. You have to execute better than your competition to stay ahead in the market.

Many people enter a market and then lose out to the competition because of lack of resources and poor

execution skills. It will be very rare that you can find a market segment that is yet to be tapped into.

Make sure that you have really found a gold mine before you get too excited about a new opportunity. 90% of the time, if there is money to be made in the market, then you should look for competitors. Observe what they are doing, what their customers lack and serve it to them.

If you can find a niche within a market, you can be a leader in that market segment and co-exist with your competitors. For example, Facebook and LinkedIn are social networks, but one focuses on personal life and the other focuses on professional life.

For professional networking, people prefer LinkedIn. Both the social networks can co-exist because they have focused on different segments and needs within the same market.

Create Value

There is no need to over-think what you are going to do to make revenue and profits. Whatever product or service that you create, you just have to make sure that your customers are getting more in return for what they are paying for.

If you are able to give 10x value for the money that you charge for your products and services, you will be in business for a long time to come. If someone pays you

1000 rupees, the value of what they get in return should be at least 10,000 rupees.

Once you learn how to create value for your customers, you will not worry much about the competition. You will be able to rise above your competition and create insane value for your customers that they become your marketing machine. A good product is naturally spoken about and that will be your key to success as an entrepreneur.



CHAPTER 8



Collaboration will Always Beat Competition

Competition is a good thing. It pushes businesses to create better products and services at a cheaper cost. But sometimes competition can become unhealthy. In the pursuit of trying to gain the maximum market share, businesses cross ethical and moral boundaries for profits.

A well known example of such a business is VW. They installed defeat devices in their cars which have lower emissions during test conditions and have higher N₂O emissions on the road.

Competition can drive corporations to do things that can take the human race backwards. Such activities arise out of the thought process that you can get ahead of others by any means possible. In the larger picture, the whole of human kind is taking a step backward. Sometimes, cut-throat competition is not good for civilization.

One of the best ways to keep competition in check and the ecosystem healthy is to collaborate. If you partner with your competitors by understanding their strengths, you will be able to gain a lot more through the partnership and it makes the competition your friend. Collaboration is also good for the consumers as they get best of both the worlds.

Elon Musk's Tesla is helping Mercedes-Benz with electric car technology though Mercedes and Tesla are competitors.

If you want to collaborate with your competition, do not wait for them to make the first move. You can make the first move and invite people to collaborate with you.

Collaboration can be powerful in almost all the industries. Collaboration happens all the time in the music and movie industry.

When a well known musician features another musician in their music, the track performs well because they get the combined fan following of both the artists to listen to one music track.

In movies, a star who might look like a competitor to an actor actually ends up making a guest appearance in the movie. This always makes the viewers feel good because the general public is always used to see people fight with each other when they are trying to gain from the same market.

It is not nice to get into trouble with the competition. It may look like you are gaining mileage in the short term but in the long term, both the players damage their brand and reputation in the eyes of the consumers.

Consumers do not have the patience to find out who is wrong. They will simply discredit both the brands if they fight with each other.

If you are a teacher at school and if two kids show up fighting with each other and blaming each other, you are going to punish both of them without worrying too much about who is wrong. You just want to discourage fighting. That's what consumers do to businesses.

Now that you have got the mindset to collaborate, what would you do if a competitor is trying to attack you? My answer: don't respond. Keeping your cool is the best way to react to petty tactics of the competition. Keeping your cool shows maturity and your customers are going to take note of it.

Here are some ideas to collaborate with your competition, whatever industry you might be in:

- Write a blog post about your competitor's products
- Interview the founder of a competing business on your blog, YouTube Channel, or your book
- Invite competitors as speakers to your conferences or events

- Develop a product or a service together
- Be on the advisory board of each other's companies
- Help your competitors when they are in trouble, it will be reciprocated
- Have a mindset of abundance and encourage other people to have the same
- Once you experiment collaboration on a small level, you will see the results for yourself. You will grow faster when you collaborate.

Another benefit of collaboration is that you become bigger together with a competitor than all the other competitors who are not willing to collaborate.

If two major players in a specific industry start working together, the rest of the competition becomes obsolete. The 3rd and 4th player in the market will become very small when the 1st and 2nd player start working together.

If the business in No. 1 position is not open to collaboration, the 2nd and 3rd player can join hands and they will become bigger than the No. 1 that was not willing to collaborate.

As humans, we have evolved with a mindset of scarcity. We play the zero sum game by default because we have been playing it for so long and we don't know how to play better.

We live in a world of abundance, there is no need to fight for the scraps. There is enough for everyone and when you collaborate, you will have abundance for everyone.

So what do you think?

Are you going to collaborate, or are you going to compete?



CHAPTER 9



Learn to Fall In and Out of Love with Ideas

Entrepreneurship demands creativity and open-mindedness. When you are creative, you have the gift of many new ideas that you can fall in love with. Not everyone has a creative personality trait.

The gift of creativity also comes with its costs. You will have too many ideas and you can't execute everything. You have to choose the stronger ideas and weed out the bad ideas.

There is also a huge challenge in weeding out bad ideas because as entrepreneurs we fall in love with ideas. We get attached to it. But on the other hand without loving an idea, it can become insanely boring to execute it.

Entrepreneurship is hard in many ways, but one of the biggest pain points is the emotional ups and downs of having attachment with ideas. When you get a new

idea, don't get carried away with it. Don't get emotionally attached in an unhealthy way.

Many amateur entrepreneurs fall in love with ideas overnight. Ideas are plenty and you might not be the first one in this world to think of that specific idea. The challenge is in the execution. When a new idea crosses your mind, think through the idea deeply and let the love grow over time.

Why You Should Love Your Ideas

To persevere with a strategy for years if not decades, you need to fall deeply in love with your idea. Being in love with an idea enables you do things that others wouldn't normally do. It helps you go the extra mile that others would refuse to go and that's a huge competitive advantage.

For example, Elon Musk has fallen in love with the idea of making every automobile in the world electric and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to a sustainable level. His love for the idea is what drives him and his team at Tesla forward. He has made his team, customers and investors fall in love with the idea as well.

What Elon Musk is doing with Tesla is difficult but not impossible. There are many well established automobile companies in the world that are far more capable than Elon Musk to build an electric car company but no one did it.

No one fell in love with an idea of building an electric car that is better than a gasoline car. Automobile companies just want to do business and make money.

Love makes humans do things that defy common sense and logic. Working 80-100 hours a week, pushing the boundaries of what's practical and taking insane risks might look crazy to the outside world, but for an entrepreneur they are trivial things in front a grand vision.

Business for the sake of revenues and profits will always fail in front of startups that are driven by entrepreneurs madly in love with an idea.

There are exceptions, but impact and positive change cannot be created without love. There is no other way to make an impact. Love is the only way.

Break-up with Bad Ideas

Loving an idea is good, but sometimes you might fall in love with the wrong ideas. If you don't learn to fall out of love with a bad idea, it can kill your startup and the entrepreneur in you.

Many entrepreneurs get emotionally attached to an idea and have a hard time shutting down a project even when it clearly doesn't work anymore. Sometimes it is ok to break-up for the sake of a better future, whether it is relationships or ideas.

Startups fail because of many reasons. Market conditions change, government policies will be updated, some new technology comes that makes old technologies obsolete, and above all people might not want what you are selling. It is ok to accept failure.

Even if you are deeply in love with the idea, it is good to shut it down when logic and data tells you that you can't make it work. Fall out of love.

Only take the risks you can afford to. Don't end up believing that the idea will work just because you are in love with it. Do not invest money that you cannot afford to lose.

When Elon Musk started SpaceX with an investment of a \$100 million dollars, he was in a capacity to lose that money and still be ok with it. He clearly knew that there was a 10% chance for SpaceX to succeed. He did not invest money that he couldn't afford to lose.

When you grow as an entrepreneur, you develop the capability to fall in love deeply with an idea and also have the maturity to break-up with the idea when the time comes. When you do it, do it with full intensity and when you have to walk away, have no regrets.

Pain and Pleasure

It might be very tempting to be emotionally detached and just carry on business activities. Many people

do business just for the sake of revenue and profits. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

If you choose not to love your ideas, it's your call. It's ok just to be in business to make money for personal gain.

Think deeply about what do you want out of your work. If the goal is to support yourself financially, you need not go through the pain of an entrepreneur.

I choose to experience the pain and pleasure of falling in and out of love with ideas. I just don't know any other way to drive myself. And the reason why I am an entrepreneur is not just for pure financial gain.

Entrepreneurship is emotionally taxing, intellectually challenging, spiritually draining and physically demanding. But without pain, there can be no pleasure. Most mature entrepreneurs understand these challenges on a sub-conscious level and they choose to go ahead with it anyway.

New entrepreneurs who get excited about an idea and think that they can become rich overnight, often have a harsh surprise waiting for them within a few months of their startup.

So make a choice. Choose based on your priorities. What are you going to do? Be an entrepreneur, business man, or choose to work for someone else?

What's your choice?

Leave your thoughts in the comments below.



CHAPTER 10



Trust Your Intuition for Making Important Decisions

If you are an entrepreneur and trying to build a startup, it is important to have high conviction in yourself and trust your instincts. When you decide to start a new business, make a solid plan and do not get swayed by other people's opinions. Once you come up with a plan, just execute it. Follow your intuition.

Many new entrepreneurs get tempted to take a lot of opinions from a lot of people. No one knows about what you want to achieve with your startup and your life. Everyone will give advice based on their own world views.

There is not a single person in this world who can give you advice on what exactly you should do in life, because only you know what you really want. And to get what you want, you have to follow the path guided by your intuition.

People refer to this as following your heart, or gut. The truth is, there is no other body part making decisions for you except your brain. But the brain has a conscious mind as we know it, but a super powerful subconscious mind that we often forget about.

When we use words like “going by the gut” or “following the heart”, what we are really meaning is that we have to trust the decision made by our subconscious mind by taking in so many inputs that your conscious mind cannot handle.

Our conscious mind is not great at decision making. It can process language, do tasks, yield to the demands of the emotional and physical brain from time to time, but it is hard to trust your conscious mind to make important decisions, in a short period of time.

If you have to make a very important decision that will change the path of your future, you can never sit and think for it a few hours and come up with a perfect decision with logic. Our conscious mind doesn't work like that.

In our brain, each neuron is connected to 1000 other neurons, and decision making is done at a very deep level by the subconscious mind when we are in a flow state or when we are asleep. That's why the term “sleep on it” is still around.

When you go to sleep, you let your subconscious mind process all the available inputs and come up with a

decision. When you go ahead with the decision, you will just “feel right” about it. That’s your intuition at work.

Learn to tap into this vast resource of intelligence. As you get into the habit of trusting your instincts, your life will change for the better.

As startup entrepreneurs, we have to come up with a lot of decisions through the week. Firing a client, hiring an employee, making an investment decision, choosing the right marketing campaign and the list keeps going on.

I am not undermining the importance of hard facts. I trust data over God as many people do. In fact, I take facts and data from people all the time to augment my decision making. When you have data, let the decision making be driven by data.

Intuition is not a substitute for analyzing data. However, for a lot of important decisions, you will not have any data to make decisions with. Many important decisions like choosing a name for your product, getting the product designed the way you want, hiring certain people and giving them important responsibilities and the list of things like this is endless in a startup.

For all decisions that don’t have supporting data, you need to go with your instincts. A startup moves as fast as its decisions. And the best way to make the right decisions fast and keep moving forward is to trust your instincts.

You need to get into that habit if you haven’t made tough decisions in life before. It might feel frightening

to make important decisions without facts. And entrepreneurs get tempted to talk about it with everyone around them. Some people even ask advice from their spouse and parents. Such behaviour only makes the startup journey more difficult.

Do not try to come up with a logic for every decision you make in your startup journey. Sometimes, the decision of the founder cannot be put down on a map. If it feels right, go ahead with it and do not look back.

People who know what they want, make decisions quickly and stick with it. If their decision has to change, they take a long time to change, only after a thorough review. People who do not know what they want, take a long time to make decisions and they change it very quickly when some suggests them otherwise.

The ability to make good decisions comes from knowing clearly what you want, and having the discipline to do what is required to get what you want. As you get more experienced in listening to your instincts, and as you get to trust it more over time, you would be able to make mega decisions in the future, but tapping into your inner voice.

You can never go wrong listening to yourself. You will end up being proved right, or you will learn a hard lesson. You will own your decision.

People who make decisions based on other's opinions end up failing and they blame others for their results.

They waste their time, spoil their relationships and don't learn anything.

So the next time you have a tough decision to make, take some time off, and don't force yourself to think about it. Once you give it some time, you will just know what to do, and you should have the courage to do it, without backing up the decision with facts.



CHAPTER 11



Balancing Idealism and Realism to Grow

Entrepreneurs come in different personality traits. There are many ways to classify one's strengths and weaknesses. But one of the most important thing to look for is the balance between Idealism and Realism.

People who are realists, look at present reality. They are grounded to what's real and logical and very emotionally stable. Such people are also highly analytical. For example, Warren Buffet is a realist. He is very vocal about his inability to be creative and do entrepreneurial things.

Some entrepreneurs like Elon Musk are great idealists. They create a ideal world in their minds and try to achieve things in the real world. He dreams of new products and services and actually gets it done. Though Elon Musk is a great idealist, he is not an extreme idealist.

Extreme idealists are not grounded to reality. They will expect too much from the world and the world doesn't change as fast as they would want to. Because of this, even though they have the capability to make change in this world, they usually don't go anywhere towards success. It is like trying to push a boulder with bare hands, because you just want to move it very badly.

Many entrepreneurs make products and then expect people to use them. If people are not interested in that product, the entrepreneur tries to push more marketing budget to convince people that they really need it.

Motorola's Satellite phone was one such example of extreme idealism. They invested \$3 billion dollars into a project to make a satellite phone that can work anywhere on earth. You can call from the Amazon river or the Himalayas. Later they found out that no one really wanted it and people were happy with their existing cell phones. Most of the people do not move out of a regular town or city where there is 100% network reception available for the phones.

As discussed in the previous chapters, it is important to make and sell what people want. If you want to change the reality, do it slowly, being rooted in reality. For example, Elon Musk wants to world to get comfortable with electric cars and moving around major cities in the world in rockets. But he has a proper strategy for it.

Tesla is making electric cars a reality by making it better than gasoline cars. Many electric car companies have tried to convince people to go electric for the benefits of the environment and the future of the human race, but most of the people did not want to buy electric cars because they were not as good as gasoline cars.

As an entrepreneur if you should not be an extreme idealist nor a extreme realist. If you are an extreme idealist, you will not be grounded to reality and will fly off the hook making decisions that do not help you manage the reality of the world.

If you are an extreme realist, you will do better as an investor or an analytical person involved in finance or legal systems. Being an extreme realist comes with its pros and cons. You can see the world for what it is, but you cannot see the world for what it could be.

Entrepreneurship requires innovation and thinking out of the box to stay on top of the market. Extreme realism doesn't help with that and many people realize that. If you know yourself very well, you will choose a career path where realism helps you rather than hurt you. Being an extreme realist is at least better than being an extreme idealist.

On the other hand, extreme idealists are like mad scientists and they many times over estimate the capability to put a dent in reality and put themselves and their families in financial risk.

There are many sad stories of enthusiastic entrepreneurs burning their savings to start something and then failing. People start hotels, theme parks, invest too much in bad real estate, gamble and then lose all the money they invested.

You should never find yourself in a position like that by being an extreme idealist. If you think you might be an extreme idealist, either try to become more real, or get a business partner who is an extreme realist.

As with anything in life, balance is the way to. When it comes to idealist and realism, the person who can balance it the most will succeed the most as an entrepreneur.



CHAPTER 12



Entrepreneurship is about Contribution

Many people become entrepreneurs because they want to escape their 9-5 jobs, be their own boss and have more financial freedom. They are all good goals and the perks of entrepreneurship. But if someone gets into entrepreneurship with the sole purpose of its benefits, that person will not be successful.

Most of the entrepreneurs in the world who have succeeded financially did so because financial success was not their primary goal. They made their money because they solved a problem. They filled a gap in the market. They contributed to the world. Their money is good money, not dirty money. They made their wealth by contribution and not by taking it from other people.

Of course, I am not asking you do to a charity. If you are only focused on contribution and ignoring your

personal needs for success, that might not be good either. Let's not go to either extremes and let's find a balance.

Have your personal life success in mind, but also mind that without genuinely contributing to the world, you can never succeed. And don't think you don't want to contribute. Everyone has a gift and you need to work long and hard to find what your gift is. Once you find your gift, you will have immense pleasure in contributing to the world.

I have my own personal success goals, but I am also genuinely interested in changing the face of online education. Right now I am mostly in the digital marketing training market, but in the long term, my dream is to put a dent in the online education space by executing my unique ideas in this domain. I've discovered that my gift is teaching.

There is a lot of hard work involved in being an entrepreneur. Building a successful business is 100x more difficult than raising a human child. And it takes 1-2 decades to build a business that can stand on its own.

Many people who only focus on their personal success cannot stand the test of entrepreneurship. They will always be looking at the results they are getting and disappointment will make them quit.

I have been trying to succeed in my business for the past 10 years but I am not yet tired. I am yet to achieve

success in a big way, and I will continue working for another 10-20 years before success materialises itself.

I am able to work hard because I love my work, I love contributing and I love to see the impact I am making on the world. My digital marketing courses have helped 1000s of people and they have learned the subject because of me.

So your goal is to find your balance. Be genuinely passionate about your field and contribution to others and the rest will fall in place. Success will manifest itself when you deserve it and when you are ready for it.



CHAPTER 13



Sell What People Want

Humans have evolved over thousands of years. Until 100 years back, most of the humans were still struggling to get their basic needs fulfilled. But the world is changing.

In a few decades, most of the population in the world will have access to basic food, clothing and shelter.

If you want to be an entrepreneur and start a business, you need to think about what you want to sell. There is a heavy competition in the basic needs sector. It is pretty much impossible to enter one of the primary industries and build a big company.

Yes, you can start a hotel, an apparel shop or a construction company, but the competition is extremely hard.

Because of this, many entrepreneurs end up coming up with a product or idea that people may not want. They

first make the product they think people should want, and then try to market it to convince people that they want that product. This is a losing game. It can never work like that.

The best way to enter a market and make profits as a business is to make something people want and need.

If you make something people want, the job of marketing becomes easy. As a marketer you just need to make sure that the people who want these products are able to discover the existence of your product. Once they discover it, they will buy it. Marketing doesn't need to convince them to buy the product.

Peter Drucker, one of the thought leaders in the marketing space said:

“The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous. The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself.”

This changes the definition of what marketing could be. Instead of trying hard to advertise and convert people into buyers, marketers should focus on understanding the customer well. This will naturally lead to creating products that people want and it will sell itself.



CHAPTER 14



Your Startup is Your Plan A. Have no Plan B.

Almost every startup founder goes through a phase of uncertainty. 95% of the businesses fail in the long run. When you are six months to one year down your startup, you will face a period where you think that all this might not work. And you will start thinking about a plan B. What if the startup fails?

The tricky part here is that, your business is more likely to fail if you have a plan B. Entrepreneurship can be very hard and taxing for the founder. Entrepreneurship demands time, money and energy. Even if the startup is working well financially, many startup founders think about quitting because it just takes so much of them to keep things running.

If you have a plan B, you are more likely to give up along the way. If your mind drifts towards thinking about

plan B, very soon, the plan B becomes the top idea in your mind. Your startup cannot afford a plan B.

Your startup would fail naturally, and it will end up leaving you thinking 'I thought so'. If you are a pessimist, you will be proved right.

You will live the rest of your life with the plan B, but you will always wonder if you had a chance to make the plan A work if you had given your 100%.

And the sad part would be that, you might not have given 100% to plan A, because you were thinking about plan B all the time. You were too afraid of the plan A failing.

Fear of failure with your startup is an emotion that all startup founders face. I recommend people to face their fears and emotions with full presence than run away from it. Trying to run away from the fear of failure with plan A is what creates plan B in the first place.

Make fear your ally and do everything possible to overcome the fear. If you are afraid of competition, then study your competition. If you are afraid of cash running out, then study about debt and equity finance. If you are afraid that you cannot build a great leadership team, then read books about building great teams and think deeply about it.

The next time you think about your startup, and then think about alternative plans if your startup fails, stop.

Don't think what if this doesn't work. It will work. Your startup will fail only if you decide to let it fail.

If a new idea is not working like you thought it would, then try something new. You can lose battles in your startup, but not the war. The war is to make your startup work in the long run.

Putting all your chips in is the price you need to pay to have massive results with your startup. You might look up to other startups who have succeeded and sometimes even feel jealous of them. But you have no idea the pain they have gone through to take it to that level.

If you are going through pain in your startup journey then you are in the right place. By going through growth pains in your startup, you are crossing a path that your competition will hesitate to. It makes you stronger.

100% commitment to one thing can be scary. But going all-in also releases tremendous amount of energy required to make it work.

When you have no back up options, no alternatives, no plan B, a part of you wakes up. That part is going to push you to the limits. This is the true startup fuel that makes a startup work.

Don't be afraid of testing your limits on productivity and decision making. Growing as an entrepreneur to become insanely productive and make tough decisions doesn't come by reading books. You grow as an entrepreneur when not-growing is not an option.

When you face challenges in your startup, you grow. And as you keep facing challenges, you are growing to face bigger challenges. The incentive to face tough challenges head on comes from not having a plan B.

Killing your plan B is the best startup growth hack I know till date. Many times, you might not even consciously realize that you have a plan B at the back of your mind.

You might want to spend some time with yourself, pondering about the seriousness of your startup commitment. You might have to think if everything else in your life is aligned to help the success of your startup. Even if you have one thing out of alignment, your growth will be stressful.

Actively identify your plan Bs in your mind and kill them one by one.

If your startup fails, what will you do? Do you think that you might be able to get a job? Think about how boring a job can be after a sprint of growing a startup. Think about how everyday of your life will look like an employee.

If you give some time to think about your plan Bs, you will realize that plan Bs are bad plans. If plan B was a good plan, it would be a plan A, not B.

The more time you spend going over every plan B and visualising it, the more you will realise that how impractical plan B actually is. And how much you would

hate doing the plan B. And that's the best way to kill all your plan Bs.

Bet everything you've got on your plan A. In this context, the Plan A is your startup. Accept no possibility of failure.

The only way to reduce the possibility of failure near to zero is to realize that failure is not an option for you. Plan A is your Plan A because plan A is your dream. And a dream deserves not to have a plan B.

A dream with a plan B is not a dream, just a fantasy.

Kill all your plan Bs and your plan A will have no option but to work.

All the best!



CHAPTER 15



Start Something Early. Start Today

My blog gets more than 50,000 new visitors a month. I sell my marketing courses to 1000s of students. I have a team of around 10 people. We work out of a cozy office in Bangalore. And the future looks better than ever. The growth is exciting.

If I had a chance to look at myself in the present situation 5 years back, I wouldn't have believed it. Just like it is hard for me now to believe that I might run a company with 1000+ employees 10 years later.

Maybe one day I will run a large organization, but right now it is out of my reality. No matter what I do, it is very unlikely that I will have a 1,000 employees working in my company within the next one year, or even five years. Maybe I will one day, maybe I won't. I honestly don't know.

It is hard to predict where you will be 5 years, 10 years and 20 years down the line. But you don't need that clarity when you are starting.

Right now, what I do is in my comfort zone and I am slowly pushing the boundaries as I grow along with my company. It is a slow process and it is difficult to see visible change happening over a long period of time.

What took me to this point with my business and blog is not about what I did in the past one week or the past one month. It is about what I have been doing for the past 10 years.

My blog DigitalDeepak.com, the corner stone of my business was started in 2013. Until 2016, the blog did not make any revenue. I was not working too much on my blog either.

If I look at my archives, I have posted around 2-3 blog posts a month, but I have done it for the past 5 years consistently.

Having started early has helped me grow the blog and the business around the blog to this point where I am today.

If you haven't started anything yet, you can't do anything about the past. You can go back in time and start a business 10 years back. But you can start today.

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years back. The next best time is today.

And just like a tree takes time to grow, a business also takes time.

Starting today doesn't mean that you have to leave everything and just focus on growing a startup full time. You can start with a business plan. May be a Facebook Group. May be a blog. May be a newsletter.

When you start something, it gains some momentum. When it gains momentum, it is very enticing to add some more work to it and give it more momentum. And it becomes easier over time.

Today, I have more than 50,000 unique visitors to my blog every month and that happened because I have published more than 250 articles on my blog over the past 5 years.

I have a huge email list and I pay more than \$2,000 a month just for tools and hosting services. I could have never reached this point if I did not publish the first article on DigitalDeepak.com in 2013.

If I tell you that one day you will have 100 employees, have offices in 3 cities, and make millions of dollars a year in revenue, it might be very hard for you to wrap your head around it. But when you get there, it is not going to be as complex as you think it would be.

We all grow through life and get new capabilities.

You are able to read and comprehend what I am saying in this blog post and it is not very complex for you. But if you were a 7 year old kid who just started learning

the English language, it would have been impossible for you to get what I am saying.

Your business and your capability to manage a large business grows over time.

When a tree grows, you cannot see any visible change on a daily basis, or even a weekly basis. But you know that if you keep nurturing the tree, you would have a fully grown tree that gives shade and bears fruits in a period of 10 years.

Even for a large tree, you start with a small seed. A tree grows effortlessly. It doesn't "work hard" to grow. But it grows everyday, a little bit at a time. Given enough time, it becomes magnificent.

If you start early enough, if you start today, 10 years down the line you will have a business that creates value for its customers, provides work opportunities for employees and vendors and creates massive good wealth for yourself.

You don't need to do everything today, or even this week or the month. You just need to start today.

The power of initiative is not too hard to tap into. You just need to stop listening to the voice inside you that tries to come up with a reason for you not to start today.

A voice inside you that wants to keep you from changing would come up with reasons like:

- “I need more preparation and learning before I begin.”
- “I don’t think there is enough opportunity”
- “There is too much competition”
- “I am not good enough for this kind of work”
- “I am too tired today, I will do it tomorrow”
- “I need to complete the other work that I started before starting new things”

The above reasons are the most common ones I have heard of inside my head. If I listen to this voice, then I cannot start. If you start thinking about it, you will be able to identify the thoughts that prevent you from starting.

So whenever I think of something, I just start it. It could be something as simple as tweeting about an idea. And then it takes a momentum of its own and adding more things on top of it becomes easier with time.

If I have a team of 10 people, adding the 11th member in the team is going to be very easy. If I have a blog with a monthly revenue of \$5,000 and 50,000+ visitors a month, investing thousands of dollars in creating a product is going to be easy and natural.

None of growth would happen if I don’t start a blog. If I haven’t made my first information product. Built my first newsletter. Added my first subscriber.

The secret to big, great, amazing, awesome, massive success and all the other superlatives associated with

success and entrepreneurship is not hard work. It's not luck. It's not who you know. It's not getting funded. It's not about finding the right team members. And it's not about the right idea.

It's about getting started. Today.

So tell me, are you going to start today?



CHAPTER 16



Be Genuinely Excited about Technology and the Future

If you want to succeed as an entrepreneur, you need a genuine excitement for the technology and the future.

If you are in the tech business, you have to love technology. Most people in the tech business have no problem with falling in love with technology. But even if you are not in the tech business, you should not shy away from technology.

Human life is far more exciting and comfortable than most other species because we are good with technology. Every piece of technology that we have invented has made our life easier. Language, the printing press, radio, transportation, electricity, internet and the list goes on.

If you love technology and get excited about the future, you will also learn how to use technology to the

maximum extent. Making a good use of technology is an advantage that you will have over your competitors.

For example, many people in the lending and finance business became obsolete because they couldn't computerize their business. Companies who could embrace technology and upgrade their process became more efficient and won over people who were less efficient.

If you do not embrace technology, you will lose out to the people who can embrace it and learn to use it to the best.

The Layers of Technology

You also have to understand that technology comes in different layers. Some layers are built on top of each other and some layers run parallel.

For example, the WordPress blog that I am using to publish my thoughts to the world is a piece of technology. It is built on top of a technology called browser. Which is built on top of the operating system. The OS sits on top of the hardware.

The hardware is made possible because of the manufacturing technology. Manufacturing is built on top of transportation. Transportation is built on top of many things including the technology of a wheel.

Once you start identifying how technology is shaping our lives and how they are built on layers, you will make

technology your friend. You will become eager to learn about new technology.

Technology will no longer create anxiety for you. And you will understand that there is no such thing as complex technology.

If you try to approach a layer without understanding the layers below it, it will look complex. But if you understand the layers, you will also understand the simplicity of each layer.

For example, if you do not understand that computers are made of hardware and software, learning to use an operating system could cause anxiety for you. If you understand how the layers come together, you will be able to master a layer of your choice.

You do not need to understand every layer in depth. But you need to have a basic understanding of how they are built.

For example, I do not know how a semi-conductor and a processor works. But I do understand how the OS works and how to use technology that sits on top of the OS, like apps and websites.

Invest in the Right Technology

When you are running a startup, you have to be frugal. But just like I advise entrepreneurs to pay professionals well, I would advise you to invest well in technology.

Investment in people's learning, technology and branding gives the highest ROI for a startup.

You also have to be careful not to get carried away by the latest and shiny object that claims itself to be "technology". There are many businessmen who understand that there is a huge demand in the market for "new and improved". They will package something that is regular and make it shiny.

If you understand technology and love it, there is a very little chance that you will fall for it. One easy rule to keep in mind when evaluating technology is that: Does the technology make human's life easier?

A technology that can consume less time, money and energy for the same kind of output is a better technology. Some technology is disguised as the next big thing but it doesn't necessarily add any value to human life.

Understanding how technology works and being excited about it also helps you become a better tech entrepreneur.

In the long term, tech entrepreneurs will always have a competitive advantage over the competition who cannot be innovative with technology.

Innovation is one of the key strengths in a business that cannot be easily replaced or outsourced. Startups that embrace technology and innovation will always have a competitive edge.

Growth Hack Your Way to Success

Growth hacking is simply the ability to be an early user of the right technology. Every good growth hack in the long term becomes a traditional business practice.

When search engines started becoming mainstream, many people did not understand how search ads worked. It was a piece of new technology. People who were not uncomfortable using the new technology were able to reap the maximum benefit out of it.

Young teenage kids who figured out how search ads worked starting making as much as \$10,000 a month promoting products as an affiliate.

Businesses who started using search ads to their advantage were able to gain a massive advantage over their competition. It was a growth hack to start with. Now all the companies are using search ads. It has become a traditional marketing activity.

So always be on the lookout for new technology. Subscribe to tech blogs and magazines. Understand technology across different streams. Be curious about how a car works, how a lamp works, how a computer works and so on.

Unless you are curious and excited about technology, you will not be able to spot an upcoming trend. Unless you can spot an upcoming trend, you can never be an early mover to use that technology.

To be honest, technology is not THAT hard to learn and understand. All you need is some curiosity.

There are plenty of videos nowadays that makes technology very easy to understand technology. Watch more documentaries and tech YouTube channels. Understand physics.

Read user manuals and learn to use the technology you already have in a better way. We all have gadgets around us that are not being used to its maximum potential because we are too lazy to learn to use it better, starting with the washing machine.

Start small and over time learning about technology could become your most rewarding hobby. And it will give you a massive advantage over your competition.

So go ahead and start learning how to use that piece of technology that you always shied away from. Change your interest to technology from other interests which do not serve you as an entrepreneur.

As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, entrepreneurship doesn't demand a part of you, it demands all of you.

So unless EVERYTHING in your life is somehow aligned to help you in entrepreneurship, you will always lose out to the better men that can align everything towards entrepreneurship.

Every aspect of my life is going to contribute in a small or a large way towards my entrepreneurship success.

That's how I have chosen my life priorities. That's what the best entrepreneurs in the world do. That's the kind of obsession you need to have, to make your startup succeed.



CHAPTER 17



Stay at the Edge of Sanity and Hold on to that Dream

If as an entrepreneur, you think you have bigger problems in your life than making your startup succeed, then you are not prioritizing your startup enough to succeed as an entrepreneur.

I personally do not know anyone or have heard of people who succeeded as entrepreneurs by giving second priority to their startup venture.

You have to prioritize your startup's success above everything else in your life.

When I say that, it doesn't mean that you have to prioritize it at the cost of other areas of your life.

Never give up health or relationships for the success of your startup. That doesn't mean that you cannot keep your startup's success as your first priority.

As an entrepreneur, you will be required to invest insane amounts of time, energy and money into making a startup work. This will give you very little time for everything else in your life.

However, be productive and disciplined and make sure that you keep your health, friends and family while you are building your startup.

Make your family and friends understand that for a short period in your life, your first priority is going to be your startup. During this phase, you might feel like things are getting out of control.

Since entrepreneurs need 48 hours a day and still feel there is no time, most of us feel like we are just one step away from becoming insane. Endless to-do lists, business plans, strategies, capital management and so on is enough to drive us insane. And on top of it we have to take care of our own health, family and friends.

It is going to be madness. But let that madness be around. You will be missing a few things, but its ok. Many entrepreneurs re-think if they are built for this. They feel uneasy about staying in madness and juggling so many balls. But to be honest, there is no other way.

No entrepreneur ever succeeded but creating a plan, and following that plan like clock work. We have wrong expectations from startup life. We expect a straight four lane highway to our destination, but the path is full of twists and turns.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to embrace the fact that the madness and near insanity is a part of the journey and learn to overcome with personal growth and maturity.

You grow as an entrepreneur when you are at the edge of your sanity. When you are stretching yourself, you will discover how long you can stretch. And you will be amazed at your capabilities.

A few years back, I would have never imagined that I would be able to manage a team of more than ten people and run my own startup successfully. My productivity levels are at least 5x of what it was a few years back. As I tried to do more things, I discovered my capability to do more things and this personal growth never stops.

The number of problems in your life and startup that can drive you insane becomes less overtime, not because the problems have gone away, but you have grown to become the person who is not driven to insanity by the same problems anymore. And such a growth comes only when you push yourself.

Make strong decisions that you have never done before. Have tough conversations that you've never had before. Set unrealistic deadlines for projects that looks impossible.

Dream so big that the dream is intimidating to yourself. Keep pushing that boundary of sanity. What looked insane before will no longer be out of your reach.

If you don't go to the edge of the map, you will not know where the edge of the map is. And believe me, the world is round, you will not fall of the edge!

When you start pushing yourself, your definition of what you can achieve will change. Most of the people around you will be amazed at your work ethic and will power.

They will not be able to wrap their head around your grand visions, if you share it with them. That's because you have surpassed a level of growth that they cannot even see on the horizon.

Pushing yourself to your limits is a habit that is learned over the years. It is easier said than done to push yourself to a point where you might go insane.

Let the Dream Pull You to Push Yourself

Most of the entrepreneurs who work hard, do it in the initial few months of their business where the enthusiasm of something new in their life is driving them. Everyone has a beginner's luck and there is a push when you start something new.

Within a few months to a year the enthusiasm of the new venture dies off. What will make yourself push is the pull of the dream.

As an entrepreneur, you should constantly remind yourself of the dream you are pursuing. It might look like it's madness to constantly think about a future reality

when you are so far away from it, but the more you think about it, the clearer your path will become.

The dream will help you push harder. When you push, you will grow.

You will become faster, stronger and more capable to achieve your dreams. And eventually you will achieve your dreams.

Holding on to the dream will make sure that you push yourself to the edge of sanity.

Holding on to the dream also influences what you believe. What you believe influences what you think. What you think influences the actions you take. What you act on influences your results. Your results change your reality.

So thoughts do become things.

So dream. Dream without boundaries. If something cannot exist in this world, it cannot exist in your mind. What might look like your wildest dream might be one day be a reality.

Whether you can make it a reality or not wouldn't be the problem. If you tried it, and still couldn't make it, you will not regret it as much as not having tried at all.

So as long as you are alive and functional, give your 100% to your dream. No one has ever regretted giving their best to pursue their dreams. You have one life. You can take one bet. You have one chance to achieve your dreams.

Drive yourself to the edge, and you will see that the edge is farther than you thought. If you do not feel like you are at the edge of sanity, then you are probably not putting in your 100%. No one has ever achieved anything worthwhile with a half-assed approach to their dreams.

Never put any effort in suppressing your dreams. More often than not, the effort required to achieve your dreams might be less than the constant effort you have to put in suppressing your dreams.

If you are not pursuing your dreams with everything you've got, it is probably not a dream and just a fantasy.

You might have to introspect to find out the difference between fantasies and your dreams. Fantasies are just dreams without consequences. You can give up anything for your dreams, but not for your fantasies.

Expand your horizons so much that the dream you once had is now within your reach. Never hesitate to expand.

Once you stretch your imagination, your reality will stretch itself to accommodate that imagination into reality. You just need to let it stretch, without fear. Don't stand in the way of your dreams.

Give your 100% to your dreams and when it is time for a dream to come true, let yourself 100% into the dream to make it a reality.



CHAPTER 18



Build Fast and Sell Fast. Don't be a Perfectionist.

When entrepreneurs build products and services, they need to strike a balance in the level of perfection they can practically achieve and still manage to sell the product.

If you ship a product into the market that is substandard, people are not going to care. If you try to build the most perfect product, you will never be able to complete building it. Unfortunately, most of the entrepreneurs today live in the extremes.

It's a good thing to create a perfect product, but if you are too much of a perfectionist, your product will never mature to a stage where it is going to be satisfactory for you.

Perfectionism has killed most startups than any other challenge in entrepreneurship. Getting it done is better than not getting it done perfectly.

So as an entrepreneur, you need to strike a balance. There always will be room for improvement in the product but you need to accept a level of perfection which you think is right for yourself, and the market.

Once you get it to some level of perfection, be ready to ship it and make revenue.

How do we find out at what point in time the product is ready to be shipped?

You have to build the product in such a way that the value in your product is much better than the value in the products of your competitors and also priced competitively. That's why Value innovation is very important for startups.

Value Innovation

You need to value innovate and come up with an incredible value proposition. You should be able to provide a higher value than your competitors at a cheaper price.

There are 4 steps in value innovation:

Eliminate – Eliminate some of the things that your competition is offering to its consumers.

For example, I eliminated offline classroom training for my education business which is one of the biggest factors in high cost of training.

Reduce – Reduce some of the things that your competition is offering.

For example, I reduced the amount of direct teacher to student interaction. However it is not eliminated and teaching automation makes up for the lack of real interaction.

Increase – Increase certain aspects of the product to make it more appealing than the competition.

For example, I increased the quality of my content and made it way better than the competition. This makes up for the eliminated and reduced features.

Create – Create new things and have new features in the product that your competition doesn't have.

For example, I created online forums and accountability partners which other digital marketing training institutes do not have. This added a unique value proposition to my products.

Because I eliminated and reduced things that cost a lot I have been able to reduce my prices. And since I have increased value and created new things that my competition doesn't have, I make my product more appealing to people, apart from the reduced price.

I have launched a lot of digital marketing courses as one of the core offerings of our company. Most of the content is created by me and my co-founder Sanjay Shenoy. These courses are priced at one tenth of what

people charge in the market. The training efficiency is definitely less than an offline training institute, but it is made up by the cheaper price and higher quality of the content with new offerings.

Any kind of innovation disrupts the competition. In this case, there is no innovation in the product itself, but how it is delivered and at what price point. This is called Value Innovation. Your Value proposition for the asking price needs to be unique in the market if you want to raise above your competition.

I need to do a lot of improvements on my course and the product is far from perfect. But as long as I can take it to a stage where it provides higher value than the competition at a cheaper price, people are going to buy it. I have innovated value.

If I have a higher quality with higher price, then it might not be enticing enough for people to buy. If I have low quality with a low price, people will not care. If I have a higher quality at a lower price, people will buy. This is the law of the market and it is as good as a law as Newton's third law.

You just need to be more appealing than your competition. But also remember to take your eyes away from the competition and focus on your customers.

The whole value innovation cycle is based on your customer's needs and not what the competition is doing. Value innovators can create value because of their

obsession with customer success, not because of their obsession in beating their competition.

Get Market Feedback with an MVP

Your new but simple product will be an MVP (Minimum Viable Product) to test if there is some real opportunity in the market.

Instead of waiting for years to launch your 'perfect' product into the market and burning cash on salaries and other expenses, launch the product early so that the revenue starts coming in.

Launching your product early not only eases the cash flow but it also gives you a face off with reality.

Do People Really Need Your Product?

If your Minimum Viable Product doesn't sell in the market even if you had higher quality at a cheaper cost than the competition, then people are not refusing to buy because of your quality level. People are refusing to buy it because they don't need it.

If you are building something people don't need (the no. 1 cause of failure of startups) then people are not going to buy it even if your quality is insanely high. I can build the best and the highest quality bullock cart in the world and people wouldn't buy it.

So build something based on what you think customers want, take it out into the market as early as possible, and

get the validation you need to continue building your product.

Over time you can improve the quality of the product and the price of the product. You will be able to invest the time, money and energy to improve the product quality because you that people will be ready to pay. Your sales of minimum viable product is a solid evidence that the market is out there wanting what you are selling.

You need to have a ready, fire, and aim approach with your product cycles.

Though too much perfection is not good for growth, you cannot take the product to the market too early and with too little value. If you ship a mediocre product, you will still fail.

If the quality vs. price combination is less appealing than your competitor's products then people are not going to buy. In this case, you will make very less sales and then no sales at all. But this doesn't mean that there is no opportunity in the market.

Balance is the key. To business, work and life.



CHAPTER 19



Long-term Thinking in Entrepreneurship

In the previous chapter, we talked about how entrepreneurship is a form of art. If you see yourself as an artist, then you would enjoy doing what you do for work. Art by nature is not stressful.

Many people who start a business purely for the intention of making money cannot sustain through the highs and lows of the initial few years of the business. They will quit early and they will blame a 100 different things which contributed to their failure.

It is not good to accept failure early. Any business takes time to grow and it wouldn't be fair if the person running it doesn't give it enough time for it to mature. We have to keep going even when things look bleak and it feels like you are not getting anywhere.

Growing a business is like growing a tree. You put the seed and wait for a while even before it sprouts. And then you wait for years to grow and bear fruit. It is very hard to see a tree grow on a daily basis. There is hardly any visible change, but you know that it is growing.

When people start a business and do not see results in two years, they lose hope. They change strategies and do not persevere through the hard times. People fail to do the important but boring tasks.

After the initial startup enthusiasm goes away, there is a lot of work to be done before you can rejoice again. It takes true grit to make a business succeed and it is not for the faint hearted.

In today's fast paced world, people often forget the power of compounding. When you keep growing something for a long enough time, the power of compounding gives you a hockey stick growth in the future.

If a business makes \$100,000 a year and grows its revenue by 50% year on year, in 20 years, the business would be making \$332 million per year in revenue. 50% YoY growth is actually conservative for a startup. Many billion dollar companies have been built this way and there is nothing wrong in growing slowly.

Startups fail to think long term when they have investors and have to show growth in the short term. Their business strategies change to give short term growth at the cost of long term growth.

Many startups die of financial indigestion than starvation. More often than not, it takes time to grow a startup more than money, at least in the beginning.

A human being that has evolved for millions of years still takes almost 20 years to become a contributing member of the society.

A business, which is a collection of people's efforts, a much more complex being than a human, at least needs 10 years to reach massive success.

Making \$100,000 on the first year, \$150,000 on the second year and \$225,000 on the 3rd year might look like slow growth in today's hyper invested startup world. But if a startup continues this pace of 50% YoY growth, it will become a multi-billion dollar company in a decade or two.

“You can't produce a baby in one month by getting nine women pregnant.” – Warren Buffett

Some things just take time and there is no need to hurry. The phrase “slow and steady” is still relevant, and as technology becomes better, humans have longer to live.

When technology adds a few decades to the average lifespan of a human being, there is more time to learn, build, raise a family and experience life.

If you decide to become an entrepreneur and startup, sign up for the long term. Dedicate a decade to your startup to succeed. It takes years to get things right with many aspects of running a company. Some things are only learned and built with time.

You cannot accelerate learning with books, experience has to play itself out. You cannot accelerate growth with money alone. Deep thought and application through time is required to build a strong foundation for the business.

One of the best ways to sign up for the long term and not put pressure on yourself is to be lean financially and not cost the business.

Frugality, both personally and professionally is not just helpful but mandatory to build a billion dollar company. We will talk about frugality in another chapter.



CHAPTER 20



How to Overcome Fear of Failure with Your Startup

If you fear that you might fail with your startup venture, hold on to that fear. That fear is real because the chances of failing with your startup is high.

Many people wishfully think that they can succeed with their startup. The excitement of starting a new business is usually high in the beginning and then the reality sets in.

If you want to grow a startup into a successful company, fear is not your enemy, but your ally. Do not try to eliminate the fear. Use the fear to think about possible outcomes and make a plan to overcome the fear. Necessity is the mother of invention. When you look at your finances and fear that your company might fail, feel that fear fully because it is real.

Many startups fail because they refuse to look at the status of the company in an objective way. Wishful thinking has destroyed more dreams than anything else. If you are strong enough to look at things in an objective way, you will be able to make tough decisions that might save your company in the future.

We recently had to fire two people in our company and it was one of the most difficult things I did in 2018. The extra burden in salaries was weakening our firm when it was in a critical state.

A part of me wished that the company would magically do better in the coming months and I could keep the team as it is, but I couldn't take that chance. I had to do it because I had to ensure the survival of the company.

I had a strong fear about the failure of the company, and I had to muster up the courage to let people go. Fear can be painful and entrepreneurs need a lot of pain tolerance.

Even as you grow the company, the fear will always be there. Never try to eliminate fear. Fear goes away when you lie to yourself about certain realities, but it is not healthy to lie to yourself. Feel fear to its depths and let it drive your decision making. Prioritize your fears. What do you fear the most?

When you prioritize your fears, you will make the right decisions in life. I thought about both my fears

deeply when I had to let people go and made a decision on which one is a bigger fear.

Do I fear the unpleasantness that comes from firing people? Or do I fear that the company will shut shop in the future because we didn't take the right decisions at the right time? What do I fear the most?

When you let fear in, you will be able to think on it. Thinking on fear let's you prioritize your fears, which leads to making the right decisions.

When you think through things, prioritize fear and take the right decisions, you will overcome fear. There are only two ways to avoid fear. Make it invisible by lying to yourself, or face the fear.

If you face the fear, you will be able to grow out of your fears. If you lie to yourself, you will be always running away from fear, and that would take away most of your available time and energy.

I fear every day. I fear that the landing pages would go down. I fear the funnels would break. I fear that the ad costs will hyper-inflate. I fear important team members leaving from me. I fear change in government regulations. I fear a pissed off customer that might ruin our brand image. I fear my hard disk would crash. I fear my website would get de-indexed from search engines. And I feel all this fear to its fullest intensity, and then do the necessary things to overcome it.

I take backups, I plan for the future, I talk to my team members about what they feel, I develop business models that are recession proof, I make sure that customer complaints are attended to. I check off the fears one by one and then face bigger fears.

So that's how you deal with fear. You don't run away from it. And make overcoming fears a habit. Look forward to things that frighten you. You will grow stronger over time and that strength is required of you as you grow your company.



CHAPTER 21



Entrepreneurship is a Form of Art

When we think about the word “art”, we think about painters, designers, musicians and movie makers. Entrepreneurship and art are usually considered as two different things.

But give it a deep thought. What is art really about?

An artist has something on his mind, and he is going to do certain tasks to manifest it in the real world. Isn't that the definition of art? Art is all about the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination.

A musician imagines a music pattern in his mind and he is manifests it using musical instruments. A painter dreams of a visual image and she brings it to life using colours, canvas and paintbrush.

Kids are Born Artists

Art comes naturally to kids. When we were kids, we were fascinated by the world around us. A piece of pencil and paper was enough to keep us engaged. We would imagine a stick figure, draw it on paper and derive happiness from it.

A simple drawing was exciting because we could see the power of our imagination manifesting into reality. That was a new experience for us, because we didn't know we had those powers.

When our brains are just developing, we imagine simple things and manifest simple things. As our brain grows in complexity, we as artists want to take up bigger challenges.

Every time an artist manifests a piece of art from imagination to reality, there is a rush of dopamine in the brain. That rush is the same rush that a kid gets when it plays with creative toys.

Kids are very excited to make a small toy house with building blocks, making shapes with dough or colouring on a piece of paper gives happiness. The happiness comes from the fun of manifesting imagination.

A kid is not as much focused on what the world thinks about his art as much as the fun of manifestation. Kids might show what they made to their parents and siblings, but as soon as they make something, they move on to create more art. It's about the fun, not the fame.

Refusing to Grow Up

As we grow up, we are taught that art doesn't pay. We are told to stop having fun with expressing our imagination. We are told to work hard, accept certain things that are not pleasant and do what the world expects of us.

Some people listen to such advice and stop becoming artists. But some people refuse to grow up.

Some of us are still addicted to that rush of manifestation. Some of us continue to be kids throughout our lives. We are called artists.

As adults who cannot stop doing art, we are looking for bigger challenges and deeper rush. There is no excitement with pencil and paper anymore because we know that if we wanted to draw something simple, we can actually do it. There is no fun in doing predictable things. The thrill of art lies in the risk of not getting the reality as we imagined.

Art is exciting because there is an element of uncertainty in it. An artist thinks something very complex inside his head but he is not sure if we can convert that thought into reality as it is. And he gives it a try anyway.

The uncertainty of the ability to manifest the imagination is the most painful aspect of being an artist. And that uncertainty is also what excites the artist. The uncertainty keeps the artist alive.

When the imagination takes expression as expected, there is pleasure. The artist imagined and manifested something that one other human on this planet has done before. Some people just want to live a human life in God mode. Artists want to create new things, at all costs. Artists go to great lengths and sometimes even risk their lives for art.

The Tools of an Artist

An artist is always challenged by the limitation of the tools and instruments he has at his disposal. And that's what contributes to the uncertainty. If everything was predictable & possible, art wouldn't exist.

Art is always about pushing the boundaries of reality. There is no art in inventing the wheel anymore, it has been already done. The first time it is done, it is art. Then it stops becoming art.

We are in the best of human times. We have every luxury we need. Life is comfortable. But you have people like dreaming about going to Mars.

Art is about imagination and possible future reality, not about reality in the present moment. Imagination always lies beyond the edge of reality, else it is not imagination, it's just a memory. And that's why an artist is always limited by the tools available to express the imagination.

An architect could have dreamed about a specific type of structure but he cannot bring it to reality with

100% accuracy. The architect wouldn't dream about building a structure that can be made, because that wouldn't be art.

Some artists wait for technology and tools to improve. Some can't. The artists who cannot wait for things to change are called entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs go to the extent of pushing technology to an extent where the imagination can be converted into reality. They are pushing the boundaries of reality. They are taking on a mission that's impossible.

Higher the difficulty in manifestation, higher is the kick when it manifests itself. That's why as we grow up as artists we like to take on bigger challenges in manifestation. We dream more complex things and work harder to manifest them into reality.

Business vs. Entrepreneurship

All artists in this world are looking for a high. A kick. A rush. A feeling that you get when your dream actually turns into reality. We are creating something which didn't exist before.

That's why entrepreneurship is very much about art, but doing "business" isn't. There are many people who just want to be business owners. Doing business and being an entrepreneur are two different things.

When you do a commercial activity just to make some money, like opening up a grocery store, there is no art in

it. Entrepreneurship has nothing to do with predictable business models.

Business and entrepreneurship are as different as painting Mona Lisa vs. printing a copy of Mona Lisa.

If all you want to make is some money without working 9-5 in a job, a business that is going to give a descent ROI on return is all you need. But do not call yourself an entrepreneur when you are just executing a proven business model.

Entrepreneurs Create the Tools They Need

An innovator/entrepreneur invents the tools he needs to convert his imagination into reality. A guitarist playing music on his guitar is an artist. George Beauchamp who invented guitar is an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurs need a complex set of tools to express their imagination. The set of tools they need involves people, data, technology and creative breakthroughs.

Entrepreneurship is the most complex form of art there is. When Elon Musk dreams about going to Mars, he knows that he needs to build a business model, which will enable him to hire intelligent engineers, which will enable him to build the technology required to go to Mars.

When entrepreneurs get closer to their goals, the feeling is no different than an artist getting a rush with every stroke of the paint brush. Because with every stroke, his imagination is a bit more closer to reality.

De-Pixelate

An idea or a thought that flashes in the brain is the seed of art. The more energy you give to that idea, the more it grows. It grows to a point where it becomes reality.

Here's an analogy you won't forget.

You can imagine the simplest unit of the idea as a single pixel. A single pixel doesn't have much information. But as you increase the resolution of the idea by adding more pixels to it, it starts taking a life of its own.

I love to call this process de-pixelating.

The more you think about the idea, the simplest form of idea (a single pixel) starts gathering more ideas, facts and opinions around it.

The image de-pixelates and goes higher in resolution, letting you see more clearly. You keep de-pixelating it to an extent where the single thought (pixel) becomes something of infinite resolution: the reality itself.

You can now touch and feel what once existed as an idea in its most simplest form.

Every piece of technology you have around you was once an idea in the creators mind. The creator is the artist who manifested it.

Entrepreneurship has all the ingredients of a form of art. But it is a lot difficult to convert ideas into reality because the tools are complex and sometimes the tools do not exist. That's why Entrepreneurship is the most mature form of art.

Art for the Sake of Art

The satisfaction of expressing one's imagination is more pleasurable than the fortune and fame that art often comes with great art.

A startup venture might bring in millions or billions for the founder, but the founder has already got what he wanted...the kick from actually creating what he imagined up long back.

That's why many entrepreneurs who get insanely rich after an exit do not buy an island and retire. They startup again. Because it was never about the external rewards, its about that kick.

I hope you got a new perspective on entrepreneurship with this chapter. What do you think?



CHAPTER 22



The Importance of Personal Branding for Entrepreneurs

In certain chapters, we talk about finding a business partner for your venture. There are many ways to find the right business partner, but the best way is through personal branding.

When you brand yourself and are easy to discover in your industry, there is a high chance that you will be able to bump into the right person who you think is worthy of being a partner.

Personal branding also helps you in many other areas like finding the right people to join your team and also converting clients. Personal brand also helps to get connected with investors who are ready to invest in your company. I started my personal branding efforts long before I started my venture.

If you want to start building a personal brand for yourself, you can start with blogging. If you are not exactly sure of what to write about, just start a personal blog and write about anything you feel like. Make sure that your blog posts are actually useful and adding value to people.

When you have decided on your niche, you can start a blog on that topic. My niche is digital marketing, so I started this blog where I mostly blogged about digital marketing in the initial few years. Now I have gained enough follow and I also blog about marketing and entrepreneurship.

Your personal brand is built when you are being useful for other people. And blogging is one of the best ways to deliver value that helps others.

If writing is not your thing, you can start a YouTube channel, attend seminars and conferences, organize casual meet-ups, speak in colleges and do free consulting. Any value addition for other people with your knowledge and skills will help you grow your personal brand.

Many people misunderstand personal branding as self-marketing. And some people actually try to build a personal brand by advertising themselves. That can actually have a negative impact. If you are being discovered in a lot of places by people but if you are not adding value to their lives, you are just trying to get more people to know you. That will not build your brand. So do not advertise yourself in a magazine or a hoarding, ever.

Personal branding is not about many people knowing you. There is no use of being known or being popular. People should respect you and look up to you. That's when you build a strong personal brand.

People will respect you only when you create value for them. The easiest way to create value for other people in your industry is to create content that will be useful for them.

If you want to take personal branding to the next level, you can also consider publishing a book. Self-publishing a book is easy with the services and tools you have nowadays. Being an author gives a lot of authority and respect.

A self-published is going to cost very little for printing. You can give away free copies of this book to other people, potential clients, industry contacts and even your potential investors.

If you become a published author, many doors open up. You will be invited more frequently to seminars and conferences as a speaker. As a speaker, your personal brand will grow faster. Corporates will invite you for training workshops. Colleges will invite you as a guest speaker.

Before you consider publishing your book, make sure that you have chosen your niche carefully. Your niche should have the right balance of your passion for the subject, your unique talent, and the market opportunity for that specific subject.



CHAPTER 23



Do You Need a Business Partner?

In your entrepreneurship journey, one of the most important decisions to make would be: whether to have a business partner or not. There are pros and cons to both scenarios. Running a company solo has its benefits and pitfalls and so does running it with a business partner.

There are successful companies in the world which has been led by partners as well as by single men. Amazon, one of the largest public companies in the world is led by Jeff Bezos. Facebook, the largest social network in the world is led by Mark Zuckerberg. They are not being run with active partnerships and they seem to be doing very well.

Companies like Google, Dropbox, Apple, Microsoft and many more successful tech companies are run by two people. The co-founders compliment each other's skills

and that leads to certain benefits that you would miss running a company solo.

There is no right or wrong way when it comes to making a decision about partnership. What is important is that you find what's right for you.

If you feel that running solo is what would work best for you, then that's what you should do. If you want to have a business partner, then you should get one. But either way, you should know about the pros and cons of both to make an informed decision.

In this chapter, let me shed light on both the scenarios based on my entrepreneurial experience. Apart from my inputs, you should think long and hard about the right path to take.

Running a Business Solo

Running a company, all by yourself, for decades can become quite boring and frustrating. Many times, we are encountered with tough decisions in running and growing a company, and it is difficult to make decisions by ourselves.

Also, not all leaders have all the required leadership personality traits and it might be difficult to cover all the required leadership skills for running a successful company.

At the same time, running a business solo will help you make a lot of decisions fast and grow at a healthy rate. If

you cannot get along with a partner, it will waste excessive time and energy in trying to get both founders on the same page. This will delay the growth in the company and it can also be morally draining to have difference of opinion or various matters.

Some people, instead of getting equal 50/50 business partners, they would hire junior employees and give them significant equity which is much more than ESOPs to get them to commit long term. This strategy has worked for companies like Facebook, where few of the early and important developers have as much equity as 4% of the company.

Having a Business Partner

If you can find someone who has the same goals as you and want to work long term to build a company, it is best to give it a try. If it doesn't work for you, you can always close the partnership and do your business solo.

There are plenty of benefits to getting a business partner who can be the co-pilot for your journey. I have a business partner who owns 50% of my company and one of the biggest benefits for me is that he makes up where I lack.

I am an open-minded creative person and a workaholic. I am an introvert and I am not too good with sales and people management. It is hard for me to agree on things with people and I like to stay away from such responsibilities.

My co-founder is an extrovert. He can be great at sales, people management and client management. He takes care of closing clients and managing people's productivity and output. I don't do these things.

It's not that I can never do sales or people management, it's just that he can do a better job at it than me. He is also a realist and balances my idealism, which is very important for a healthy growth of a company.

I believe, I compliment my co-founder as well. I love spending long hours in front of my computer and doing accounting, revenue management, marketing automation and analyzing data. These are my core strengths.

I enjoy doing certain tasks and that leads me to work more on them. And because we focus on different things in the company, we get better at the things we focus on. My co-founder can also do the tasks I do, but he delegates these tasks to me because I am naturally drawn to do it, and better at it due to the experience.

If you decide to get a 50% partner or near 50% partner, make sure that you give it enough thought before going ahead with the decision.

There are major pitfalls if you hire a wrong co-founder. Many companies have failed because of co-founder conflict and you should avoid such scenarios at all costs.

In the next chapter, we will talk about how to go about finding a business partner or co-founder.



CHAPTER 24



How to Find a Business Partner?

In the previous chapter, we discussed about running your business solo vs. running it with a partner. In this chapter, let's look at how to find the right business partner, should you choose to go ahead with partnership.

The most important criteria in choosing a partner is that they should have strengths that are complementary to you. If you are an introvert, partner with an extrovert.

If you are an extrovert, partner with an introvert. Introverted business leaders are great at doing deep work necessary for the business. Extroverted business leaders are great at selling and getting along with people.

Find out your strong leadership traits and discover your weaknesses. And start looking for a business partner who can be strong in the areas that you are weak.

Do not make the mistake of choosing a business partner because he is very much like you. Many people make the mistake of partnering with people who are like them rather than hiring people who come with different strengths.

Discovering Potential Partners

It is important to partner with someone who has a similar world view as yours and yet have a different set of skills and strong points. Partners with similar worldview can get along better than partners who have different world views.

I once had a business partner who was extremely religious. And I am almost an atheist. Things did not work out great between us. I wouldn't attribute the failure of the partnership just to religious beliefs, but I strongly feel that a partner with similar worldviews is going to be much more easier and fun to work with than someone who comes from a different school of thought.

Many people partner with people who they've come across during education. It can be a great way to find partners because you know who can be trusted and who is skilful. Though most of the best partnerships I've seen come from knowing people during the educational phase, you need not restrict your choices to only people who you know from school or college.

I found my co-founder because of my personal brand, and as we will discuss on the chapter about personal branding, getting yourself out there can be a great way to get noticed and find the right business partners.

I found my co-founder in a meet-up that was organized by me. I then invited him as a speaker in one of my digital marketing workshops. We built a professional relationship over time without rushing it. You cannot and should not find a business partner overnight. It takes time to get to know people.

Keep Family & Business Apart

If you do not find partners from your education or from networking in the industry, you might be tempted to partner with someone from your family.

I do not recommend partnering with family members or extended family members because if the business doesn't do well, there will be a lot of tension within the family. Many people will get involved in the details of the business and things can go haywire.

In my experience, I have seen more failures than success stories when partnerships are made within the family. Family and business should be kept separate.

One of the reasons I do not recommend partnering with someone in the family is because, if the partnership fails with someone who is not a part of your family, the change can be managed with ease.

But, if you get into trouble with someone within the family, it is going to be a life long pain, because you can never stop running into each other. This is just my personal opinion. You have to decide for yourself.

Exit Clause

Partnerships can fail as much as marriages do and it is important to lay down the exit clause before commencing the partnership.

Partnerships fail due to dishonesty, miscommunication, external factors, change of priorities or due to difference in world views.

It is better to have a plan for a smooth exit if the partners want to stop working together. You should know how to split the ownership of the assets in case of a break up.

Many business partners have a bad breakup when they discover they cannot work together. They get into unnecessary legal battles which is a waste of time, energy and resources for all the parties involved.

It might be very counter-intuitive to think of a break up even before starting the business, but it is a necessary evil for protecting everyone's interests in the future. It would be wishful thinking and immature to have unrealistic high hopes on the partnership and believing it can never fail.

Having said all this, my personal recommendation to you is to do business with a partner. Entrepreneurship is a very stressful journey and it helps to have a partner or co-founder with a shared vision and purpose for what you are gonna do for at least a decade.



CHAPTER 25



The Boredom in Entrepreneurship

Most of the entrepreneurs would say that it is exciting to be an entrepreneur. From the moment that you get a spark to start something, all the way to having an exit from the startup, there are many highs in entrepreneurship.

However, while building your startup, you will encounter many areas where you just have to get a lot of boring tasks done. Doing the same thing for years that helps your startup grow is often underrated.

Many new entrepreneurs are looking for the constant highs and sometimes get disappointed to discover how boring some things can be. That's why as mentioned in the other chapter, your venture should be driven by a higher goal of contribution than personal success alone.

A few years down the line, you might feel like you are getting no where near to the personal success that you

dreamed of when you started your business. And it is very important to keep going at such dips for many reasons including: your progress thus far cannot go waste, you might be quitting too early, and it wouldn't be fair to your employees and customers if you quit.

If you have a higher sense of purpose with your venture, you will be able to go through that dip and get on a growth path again in the near future. Even if you feel demotivated by the lack of results for personal success, you will be motivated by the value you are creating for the world. That will keep you going and eventually you will achieve the personal success that you dreamed of.

So if you are committing to start a business and grow it to insane heights, be mentally prepared to do the boring stuff. Some of the most boring tasks that I do in my business include data analysis, accounting, keeping up with regulations of the government, managing employees' feelings around work, payment processing and travelling long hours for meetings and events. When the boredom gets to me, what keeps me going is the higher sense of purpose and contribution that I am able to give back to this world.

Getting the WHY right is very important before you decide to become an entrepreneur. WHY do you want to do it? Do you want to do it purely because of financial gain, or do you want to create value and make this world

a better place? There is nothing wrong in creating a business purely for financial gain.

In fact, many people become entrepreneurs just for the money and they actually end up making a lot of money. But you need to do what it takes for that, even if you have to work hard on things you do not enjoy. You need to make a choice on what works best for you. For me, entrepreneurship with a higher sense of purpose and value creation for the world around me is what drives me to work.

Discipline helps a lot in getting through the boredom. If you have a good routine where you live a balanced life, you will be more capable of doing what it takes to grow in your personal life and business. Take care of your physical and psychological health with good habits.

Surround yourself with positive people and eliminate the negativity from your life. Read good books, attend seminars, exercise, do volunteer activities, make new friends and bring a positive vibe in your life. Your business will only grow to the extent you do.



CHAPTER 26



Learn to do Deep Work and Eliminate Distractions

Entrepreneurship involves juggling a lot of balls. There are many things to take care of from finance, legal, human resources, products and clients. It is normal for entrepreneurs to get distracted during the work day because there are just so many things to do.

However, if you are doing all the things and not focusing on your core work, your business can take a beating.

With any startup venture, the creation of the product and marketing it (the two most important activities in a business) is usually done by the founders themselves. For example, in my business the core activities include creating content and marketing it.

I create both free content and paid premium content. If I do not focus my core energies on this, I might hurt the business. That's why I make sure that I do not lose focus on the primary activities.

Bill Gates used to write the code for software himself during the early years of Microsoft. He did build a multi-billion dollar company with 1000s of coders, but he did not lose focus from the core of his work even as his empire expanded. He used to code for 10-15 hours straight and doesn't interact with anyone during his work sprint.

To make sure that you do not lose focus on the primary, most important work in your business, you should allocate a time for deep work and make sure that you do not get distracted. Work with your social media tabs closed and your cell phones switched off. You will be amazed at how much you can get done in such a session within a short period of time.

If you are a night owl or an early bird, work in your office during late night after people have left or early in the morning before people walk into the office. I do that all the time and that's why I like to keep my home very close to the office. It helps me work at 6 am if I feel like or at 11pm. Sometimes I take a hour long nap in the afternoon which gives me insane energy till 1 am.

Another way to do deep work without distractions is to go to a hotel or a resort and lock yourself

for a few days until your work is complete. In his book *Deep Work* by Cal Newport, he refers to this method as ‘Grand Gestures’. If you pay for a hotel or a resort, you are going into a new environment without distractions and you also get reminded that you have limited time.

A few days of deep work is all you need to finish some of the most critical tasks in your business that only you can do. I like to write articles and create written content throughout the week in my office, but my course videos are done in grand gesture sprints. I finish off my ‘workation’ only after I’m done with my work. It is one of the best hacks I’ve discovered in recent times.

The human mind is not designed to multitask complex tasks. Of course I can talk on the phone while I am walking, but I cannot have a conversation with someone while I am writing content. I’ve given up trying to focus during work hours because no matter how much you try, distractions cannot be completely eliminated during the work week.

Deep work is very important for creating high quality work. You need to be productive and create works of art to become successful. Being busy all the time and completing the tasks in your to do list is not going to take you forward if you want to build a successful company.

If you are tired of distractions and if the constant demand from people is not letting you work, I suggest you try one of my methods: work in your office early morning or late night, or you can take a 'workation' and focus on one task with all your concentration.



CHAPTER 27



Learn to Ask for Help, Shamelessly

Humans are hard-wired to hold on to their pride. More often than not, the fuel to grow as an entrepreneur comes from being jealous of other successful entrepreneurs. That's not a good way to fuel growth.

If you want to become successful so that you can feel better in front of people who you had jealousy on, you are probably having a misguided goal. You need to redefine your goal and have a purpose that is larger than you. Your growth shouldn't be fuelled by your need to feel superior.

You should want to become successful because you want to contribute back to the world, create value and feel good about yourself for achieving things.

An opportunity to create something that is larger than yourself, should be the single biggest purpose of your entrepreneurship journey.

The top entrepreneurs in the world did not reach the top through narcissism. The more you focus on yourself, your ego and your pride, harder will be your growth. Your growth will be hard because you will refuse to ask for help.

Your hard work, knowledge and experience is a drop in the ocean compared to what others know collectively. You probably will never figure out certain things by yourself because your life experience is limited.

People have spent decades trying to solve a certain problem and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Realise that everything that is required for your success is within you, but around you as well.

If you can learn to pick people's brains, you will grow faster and will have more fun in the growth. There is no need to beat yourself up pondering over a question that you don't have an answer to. Just learn to ask.

When you make sure that your ego and pride doesn't get along the way, you will not hesitate to ask for help from the people who you look up to. And asking for help is important for your growth.

If you have a lot of pride, you will try to come up with an answer yourself, and waste precious time in your growth. You probably have no idea about your own pride, unless you think about it and introspect.

Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

Though I have had some level of success in my line of work, I have a lot to achieve. And even the small success I've had so far, I would not attribute it to myself. I learned from the best and I mostly followed their footsteps to come to where I am.

I wouldn't hesitate to say that I am standing on the shoulders of giants. I wouldn't be here today without getting help from people. My mentors, business partners and friends have definitely helped me sail through the dark jungle of startups. And if you think you can sail alone in this journey, your pride would have prevented you from the success you deserve to have.

If you understand that you are not that great or intelligent, you will become humble. When you become humble, you will also understand that there are many humble people out there. And all those people are ready to help you, only if you ask for it.

There have been very little occasions where people have refused to help me. If they have, it is usually because they are very busy and not because they don't want to help. People in general like to help other people, but they cannot help you if you do not ask for it.

Learning to ask for help is a habit that you can grow over time. Just like you might have felt a lot of friction before speaking on stage for the first time, you would feel

a lot of friction to ask for help. If you have a big ego and pride, you will have even more friction.

You will also have friction if you are afraid of rejection. What if you ask for help and they say No? It would hurt a bit. But you need to be strong enough to get hurt, because without asking, you are not going to have a chance at getting anything.

I know it doesn't feel good to face rejection, but it is a small cost to pay for the potential upside – what if they say Yes?

No One Went to the Top Alone

Most of the people who went to the top did not go there alone. They asked for help from people at the top and got there.

Once you start asking for help, you will find that surprisingly a lot of people are willing to say “Yes” to help you. And that will make you less hesitant to ask for help from more people.

You do not need to find answers to puzzles yourself when people are ready to give you the answer. You will get the answer if you are ready to ask.

You will be ready to ask if you are ready to face rejection. So your startup's growth and your growth as an entrepreneur depends a lot on your ability to face rejection.

Once you are strong enough to face rejection, you will ask for help more often. If you ask for help more

often, you will have more chances at getting a Yes from people. If you get more Yes, the more help you will have to accelerate your journey towards your goals.

And once you reach the top, you would know that you did not get there without help, and that's precisely why you would be ready to help anyone who asks you for help.

You will want to pay it forward, because you have a debt to repay from the people who helped you. They don't need your help, so you can help the people who need your help. And you will find out that if you give, you will get 10x back.

So what help are you gonna ask, and from whom? Let me know in the comments below.



CHAPTER 28



Be Open to Opportunities and Connect the Dots Backwards

I'm the guy who advocates thinking big and having intimidating dreams. However, if you get too fixated on your dreams and goals, you might be hurting yourself.

Its common among entrepreneurs to have an obsession towards dreams and goals. If the obsession is not balanced, it might hurt your chances of achieving your dreams. It is important to introspect because you might be over-obsessed without realizing it.

When you develop an unhealthy obsession towards your goals, you become narrow minded. You choose a path and get fixated on it. You might still be making progress, but you might be in the wrong path, or a path you might not enjoy that much.

We don't have a direct control over how our life unfolds but we do have some indirect control. It's like steering a

ship. You might be swayed by the winds and might not always be able to stick to a specific route, but you can always turn the rudder to get back on track.

If you worry too much about the path to take to reach your goal, there is a high chance that you choose the most obvious path that leads straight to the goal. This “obvious” path is usually based on your life experiences and what you have at this point in time. But your life experience is limited.

If you make a plan to go from A to B, there is a 0% chance that things would unfold exactly the way you expect them to be. You can only find out with little bit of trial and error. You need to let yourself get swayed by the wind of opportunities that is presented to you. (In fact, if things always unfold as you predict, there would be no fun in life. Topic for another day).

When you are too fixated on your goal, you will try to plough through this path.

And you might be closing other doors and pathways that can lead to the same goal. And the other pathways could be shorter, more enjoyable, or the right path for you, based on your life experiences and what you have.

Many Roads to the Same Destination

There are too many roads to the same goal and sometimes you need to let your intuition do the work. If some

opportunity comes up in your life and if you are going to enjoy doing it, say Yes.

You don't necessarily need to know how it would take you to your goals in the long term. If you feel right about going in a certain path, go for it. You will be able to connect the dots backwards.

To communicate better what I am trying to say, let me give you a few examples from my personal life. I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur and run my own startup. I've always wanted to be in a profitable market and work with an amazing team. I've always wanted to build a personal brand and be known as an expert in one thing. Those things are my reality now.

If I was too fixated on this goal, I wouldn't have taken up certain opportunities that has led me here to this point. I had no idea on how the dots would connect. But I took up some opportunities anyway.

For example, when I joined my first job in Bangalore, it didn't look like that job was going to help me get to my eventual dreams. I couldn't come up with any logic for it. However, the things I learned in the job, the connections I made led me to another job that helped me get where I am here.

The second job was a digital marketing manager at a well known startup, and it helped me in my career. And the second job might have never happened without

the first job, which I was not too sure about, but took up anyway.

Dreams Take Time. Don't Rush

Sometimes dreams take time to achieve and its a good thing. If dreams manifest overnight, you cannot undo certain decisions. If I dream of living in London for the rest of my life, and if I achieve that dream next month, I might have done certain things that are irreversible.

What if my dream was to be a nomad and travel the world? Buying a home in London would be a sunken investment. I might not be able to come out of that commitment easily. And my family wouldn't be ok changing the decision overnight.

When dreams take time to achieve, it gives you time to refine your dream. You get plenty of opportunities to find out what you really want for the future.

And since big dreams are going to take some time anyway, why do you want to rush through it?

When you are too fixated on a dream or a goal, and if you try to accelerate yourself to reach that, you will crash.

When there are a 100 different roads to achieve the same dream, you will be fixated on one, based on what you know, and who knows, the road you think is the only road...might not even lead to your dream. And when it doesn't you will be devastated.

When you get opportunities in life that might seem a little bit tangential to your ideal path to your dream, don't say no to it. Listen to your instincts. Does your heart say yes? Will you enjoy doing it? If yes, go for it. It will connect to your dream in strange ways.

I would like to give you another example from my work life before ending this chapter. Our goal in our company PixelTrack was to build a Digital Marketing Education startup. When we got an invitation from Mercedes-Benz to train their marketing and sales professionals on Digital Marketing, it was tempting to say No.

Spending time, energy and money on doing an offline workshop would not help us grow our online business. But we said yes to the opportunity anyway. The dreams of an education startup can wait a bit. We aren't in a rush.

After doing the training for the team for the past six months, we learned so much about how sales and marketing works in a very big corporation like Mercedes-Benz.

This new information has helped us update our courses for a new persona – a corporate marketer. Until now, most of our training was focused on students and professionals wanting to up-skill themselves in digital marketing to get a digital marketing job.

The offline training opportunity gave us insights into the challenges marketers face inside big corporations. This has opened up a new segment of B2B customers

for us. And now it is contributing back to the growth of the education startup. The dots are connecting backwards already.

Create Your Own Path

I have learned that saying Yes to opportunities when it feels right, can actually accelerate your process towards your dreams. That's the path that is unique to you. That's the path that others will get inspired to follow.

Your subconscious mind and your intuition is more powerful than you imagine. There is no way to process 1000s of data points consciously when making a decision. Sometimes you have to let your intuition take you forward. Don't shut yourself to any new opportunities, unless it looks extremely tangential to what you want in life.

Entrepreneurship is a complex game. It's a survival game. It would often feel like you are in the middle of the forest, blindfolded. There is no way to find the path out of this forest by trying to know the exact path.

There is no map. There is no map because no one has ever gone to a place where you want to go. The only way for you to find out the path is to be open to all the possible paths.

Enjoy What You Do

The tangential opportunities might not only take you to your goal, but it could be shorter and a more enjoyable

route as well. If you do not enjoy what you do, you will not go through the most obvious path anyway – even if that path leads to the goal.

Think of a short 10 km bumpy ride on a bad road to your destination, and another longer but a smooth, scenic route to your destination. Which one would you take?

The longer road of course. If you try to go in the short road, you might reach your goal faster than you think, but you wouldn't have enjoyed the ride. And you wouldn't have another big goal in your life. Who wants to have a tough ride anyway.

Work hard because you want to, not because you have to.

Enjoy the process of achieving your dreams. Because in the pursuit of happiness, you will eventually discover that happiness is in the pursuit.



CHAPTER 29



Invest Time and Money in Learning New Skills

The world is changing around us faster than ever. The internet is hardly a few decades old and it has changed the way humans live in this world. Technology is growing at a faster pace than we could catch up with.

Before the internet era, things did not change much. Life was pretty much the same. Things changed over half a century or sometimes a century.

Invention of electricity, radio, TV and telephone did change civilisation for the better, but it happened over a long period of time. Nothing like what's happening right now with the internet.

When people carried out their business in the olden times, they did pretty much the same thing for a long

period of time. Some businesses grew fast and some stagnated.

Businesses were not under threat of closing down all the time. There was no dire need to keep learning new skills all the time. Learning new skills was a luxury. Not anymore.

Today, we live in a world where everyone is connected, it is a level playing field and competition is at an all time high. You will be facing competition from countries that you wouldn't have heard of.

Being the best in what you do is not an option any more. It's the basic requirement for surviving in this world and thrive in your career. And the best part is that we have the resources at our finger tips (literally) if we want to learn and grow.

For the first time ever, any knowledge that you want is accessible. Books, ebooks, courses, podcasts, workshops, free blog posts, free videos and the list goes on. All you need to do is make a choice to learn.

As you improve your skills and become good at something, you will also enjoy doing it more. When you enjoy doing your work, you will become experienced and your competition will find it harder to catch up with you.

Until you make learning a daily habit, you might have some friction. Once you build a daily habit of learning something new, it becomes almost addictive. Once you

get into the positive spiral, you will become unstoppable. Competition will not worry you anymore.

We live in a knowledge economy. The only leverage you have compared to your competition is what you know. Access to everything else in this world is bottlenecked by what you know.

If you are an entrepreneur, it is very easy to get lost in the daily grind. During the most difficult phase of my business, I did not invest time in upgrading myself. If you do not upgrade yourself, it only makes things more difficult in the long run.

As an entrepreneur, you will be working so hard throughout the week and yet you will have pending tasks in your todo list. In such a circumstance, learning new skills might look like a luxury you cannot afford right now. But learning is not an option anymore.

You **HAVE** to find out a way to learn something everyday. Learning something new takes a lot of will-power. It is going to burn into the limited will power reserves you have. You shouldn't consciously try to put your mind to learning everyday. You need to make learning a habit.

When you learn something everyday, your knowledge compounds over time. The brain has an amazing capacity to remember things. You might feel like not everything you learn is being stored inside your brain, but believe me, it does.

Just like you do not remember what food you ate one week ago, you might feel like you don't remember much from the book you read or the video course you enrolled for a month ago. What you eat makes what you are today, and so does learning new things.

The No. 1 goal of learning is not to memorize facts, but to change your behaviour. When you learn new things, your belief system changes. When your belief system changes, your actions will change. When your actions change, your results change. Your results change your reality.

Learning a new skill triggers change in your personal and professional life for the better.

So learn something everyday. And make it a habit. Just like going to the gym is a habit, form a habit around learning something new everyday.

There are different ways to learn new things. You can listen to a podcast while you are driving or working out in the gym. You can read a book on a weekend. You can subscribe to an online video course and learn on your mobile whenever you have some free time.

Different people learn in different ways and you need to find out what works best for you. I like to use a combination of all the media options to learn.

Never hesitate to invest time and money in learning something new. It usually has the maximum ROI in your business compared to all the other channels of investment.

Apart from investing in yourself, invest in your team as well. And learn with them. In our startup, we make sure that we attend a professional workshop at least 6 times a year. We've attended productivity and leadership workshops recently and I could see an instant ROI on the investment.

The best part about workshops is that you will be able to focus on learning without distractions. It's not enough to just invest money in learning. A lot of businesses have money in abundance once they have carved out their niche in the market. It's harder to invest your time than your money to learn new skills.

So make learning a habit. And learn something everyday. What are you going to learn today?



CHAPTER 30



Learn to Feel all Your Emotions on a Deep Level

Entrepreneurship is the toughest sport that I know of. Most of the sports demand a certain aspect of you. Some sport demands you to pay your full attention, some sports pure creativity, some demand your speed and some your stamina. Entrepreneurship demands all of you, nothing left behind.

When entrepreneurs succeed, people call them risk takers, courageous and fearless. Media portrays a very superficial image of entrepreneurs and that leads most people to believe that they have to be fearless.

People who have not been entrepreneurs, and people who never will be have very wrong notions about entrepreneurship. This false belief systems leads certain people to throw logic out of the window, depend on

luck and think that their reckless behaviour is the same as being fearless and courageous. That's why 95% of the businesses fail.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Unlike what people think, successful entrepreneurs feel their emotions on a deep level without any filters.

If you were asked to run as fast as possible, you will run pretty fast. If I let a big dog chase you, then you will know how far can fear take you.

When you feel real fear, you have an unfair advantage of extra performance, thanks to millions of years of evolution. Feeling fear on a deep level could be your biggest growth hack to succeed as an entrepreneur.

It's not just about fear. It helps to feel all the emotions, both positive and negative on a deep level. Entrepreneurs are not very good at suppressing emotions.

Anyone can suppress their emotions and feelings. There is no glory in that. Instead of resisting emotions, entrepreneurs are strong enough to let their emotions felt without any filters.

The best analogy to understand this is to think about concrete and steel. Being strong like concrete and being tensile like steel are two different worlds.

Being "strong" means not feeling emotions and letting yourself feel the depth and intensity of it. Being tensile means to allow all emotions to be felt at a deep level.

As a Civil engineer, I can say that the tensile strength of steel is more important than the compression strength of concrete. When a building is over-reinforced with concrete, it won't show any signs when it is about to collapse because of overload. At one fine moment, with the last straw on the camel's back, the structure collapses.

When a building is reinforced with steel more than concrete, the structure would show up cracks when it can't handle the load. Steel has tensile strength which helps the building yield to the pressure and it doesn't lead to a sudden collapse of the structure.

When you are tensile like steel, you are going to let all your emotions felt at a very deep level. This makes sure that you feel fear when you have to, and feel excitement when you have to. This gives you a long life as an entrepreneur because you are letting the emotions pass through you. And it helps you fix yourself.

If you try to block your emotions, it will build up over time like water getting collected in a reservoir and one fine moment, the dam of emotions will burst open.

So don't be fearless, instead feel fear on a deep level.

Don't be a risk taker, but take calculated risks independent of the outcome.

Don't resist boredom and solitude, experience it fully and let it pass through you.

Once you have let emotions pass through you, and once you have felt the full intensity of it, you will grow stronger.

You will no longer fear fear. You will become immune to negative emotions and it becomes less of a concern over time. You will be able to tackle bigger problems as your organization grows beyond your wildest dreams.

Letting your emotions play through you also applies for positive thoughts. If you see that there is a true possibility for changing the world with your idea, don't try to suppress it. Maybe you can change the world. If you don't believe it, you cannot make anyone else believe it.

The size of your dream might intimidate you. But don't try to be "practical" with your dreams, let the excitement take a life of its own and get carried away.

Be crazy enough to think that you might change the world, and one day you actually might.

Letting emotions play itself out is necessary for growth. If you do not have the strength to experience massive fear and failure, you will not have the strength to experience massive success either.

If you have 1,000 crores in your bank account, what would you do?

If you do not have the strength to experience the fear of going broke, you might not have the strength to handle the excitement when you have 1,000 crores in the bank.

You might redirect such a reality away from your life even if such a dream wants to express itself through your reality.

You don't need to change who you are. But you need to grow. You need to grow out of your fears, not by resisting the feeling of fear, but by experience fear fully.

A kid never stops fearing a dark cave by trying to suppress the feeling of fear. That kid will stop fearing dark caves by letting fear 100% through him and going into the dark cave once with all might. Once he does it, in spite of his fear, he will know that there is nothing to be afraid of a dark cave. If the kid tried to avoid fear, then he would never know that the cave is harmless.

Only if you go beyond where you think you cannot go, you will discover how far you can actually go.

Once you let fear run through you and do what you fear anyway, fear disappears.

Fear is an illusion of danger. Then the only way to make the illusion go away is the get in touch with the danger. The illusion will be at its wildest just before the point of contact with danger. Once you make contact, the illusion disappears. And so does the danger.

If you run towards fear, it will start running away. If you run away from fear, it will grow bigger and wilder behind you.

As an entrepreneur, you need to keep testing your emotional boundaries. When you are at the edge of your emotions, your emotional intelligence will grow.

Entrepreneurship is a long journey of breaking the brick walls and expanding your comfort zone. The more the strength you have to experience pain and fear, the faster you will grow.

Your startup will only grow to an extent that you grow. You can grow only by being on the edge of your mental and physical capabilities as a human being. It takes courage to live life on the edge. And it's addictive. Once you experience life on the edge, you will never go back. Growth will become a way of life.



CHAPTER 31



Entrepreneurship Demands a Healthy Mind and Body

There is a lot of hard work in making a business work. As the business grows, it creates a lot of foundations and assets. Within a few years, a business starts growing roots and becomes more stable.

The business depends on many foundations, but the biggest asset of a business will always be its founder. If the founder cannot continue working to grow the business, the business might fail. Very big corporations which seemed to big to fail have shut down in the past when the founder was no longer involved.

It is very rare that a founder will choose to stop working on a business if it has been built by him from scratch. But sometimes nature forces founders to step aside.

When you are not mentally and physically fit to run your business, whatever you have built can come crashing down.

Keeping yourself in peak shape both mentally and physically is a very important factor in the success of your entrepreneurship journey.

Many billionaire entrepreneurs have become billionaires in their 50s because you need to give that much time for things to compound. If you are a billionaire and you don't have the health to enjoy it, then what's the point of having worked so hard?

Even if you decide to give away your money to charity, you need to be in good health to make sure that you hard earned money is used in the right way.

Entrepreneurs nowadays have a sense of urgency to achieve massive success. The media keeps highlighting billionaire startup founders in their 30s and 40s and founders buy into the urgency to achieve big success early in life.

This also gives a dangerous mindset to entrepreneurs that you can buy success by paying the price with health.

Entrepreneurs nowadays push too hard. And it has become a cultural disease. Working 15 hours a day, not getting enough sleep, eating junk food, having alcohol, smoking and having a poor work-life balance has become the norm.

When you are trying to sprint in a marathon, you are borrowing from the future which you have to repay with heavy interest. It doesn't make any sense.

If you keep yourself healthy, you will have a lot more time to achieve what you want to achieve, and you will be in better health to enjoy what you have achieved.

Ten full years of extra work hours might help you achieve massive success in the 10th year, but in the 11th year your business might fail because you are not healthy enough to put the same kind of energy and attention into your work.

If you moderate out your work and have better balance, you might achieve 10x more success in the 11th year and still be healthy enough to continue growing your business.

A big tree that has taken deep roots and grown magnificently never forced itself to grow. It grew at a pace it is supposed to grow. There is no faster or slower way when nature expands.

Your business came into life because you nurtured the idea from your mind. Your idea is the seed. Keep nurturing it for a long enough time and let it take deep roots and grow taller and stronger.

The only thing you can do is to make sure that you don't stop nurturing it. Over-nurturing can kill it. Ignoring to nurture it will also kill it. Consistency will always beat intensity.

There are certain things in your business that should takes its own time to grow. And you should consistently nurture it. If you are over-working on your business, you have a higher possibility of not being able to work on your business for a period of time.

When you are not nurturing your business, things can go dry. A short period of ignorance on your business can kill your business more than anything else. All your over-nurturing previously is not going to help.

Work for 50-60 hours per week on your business. If you can work for 80-100 hours, do it without affecting your health.

Take good care of your body during your entrepreneurship journey. A healthy mind and a healthy body is non-negotiable for an entrepreneur. Set an example to other people in your team on how to have a good work-life balance.

Your investment in health in terms of time, money and energy will give huge returns for your business in the long term. It might not be very visible in the beginning when you are working 10 hours less every week to spend time at the gym. That doesn't mean that you can sprint in a marathon. You better be at your peak health when you are at 50 and have insane financial success.

People try to stimulate themselves with caffeine and nicotine and then they want to intoxicate themselves with alcohol and THC. Try to reduce your dependence

on external drugs to accelerate or decelerate. When you push and slow down with external help, you are damaging your mind and body.

Maintain consistency in your energy than having multiple highs and lows. A car accelerating and decelerating all the time will consume more fuel than the car that is going at a stable speed.

Over work and lack of sleep are like credit card debt. The short term benefits are irresistible but you will pay back with health and vitality.

So take care of the vehicle that takes you to your destination. There is no spare vehicle and your vehicle doesn't even have a spare tyre.

Life is a long journey and so is your entrepreneurship. There is no rush. Do it the way nature does it. Slow and steady but magnificent over time.



CHAPTER 32



Give and You Will Get 10X Back

As humans, we always have a mindset of scarcity. We are really not to blame because our ancestors had to hunt for food. If I gave you the food I had then I would have less food to eat. If I take from you, then I would have more. Through evolution, that's what our brains have come to believe. It was true until the 19th century.

When humans started farming, we had food in abundance for the first time. This meant that all the human beings in the tribe weren't busy hunting for food all the time.

The productivity of food production through farming gave us extra time in our hands. We invented language, then the written language and many technologies to make our life easier along the way.

Today most of us have enough food to last for the rest of our lives even if we do not work anymore. We are in an information and knowledge economy where technology and human comfort levels would go up as we share more information with each other.

There is no need to be in the scarcity mindset anymore because if I help you with intangible things like teaching you what I know, connecting you with other people and guiding you when you need guidance, I actually do not lose anything.

In February 2018, we did our first grand digital marketing event called HighTraffic Summit. We invited speakers who were our competition. We did not hesitate that they would take away our customers.

In fact, having tough competition pushes us to create better products at a cheaper cost. It forces us to focus on value innovation and create the best product that wins the market.

When we invited other people in the industry to our event, our goodwill in the industry went up. People started reciprocating the favour. They started calling us as speakers to their events.

By the act of inviting 5 speakers from our competition for our event, we got more than 5 speaker invitations in return. This helped us be known in the market and get a branding value 10x more than what we could have got by not sharing our audience with others.

The market is too big and the world is too large for one player to eat up the market. There are certain markets where one or two market leaders end up taking the majority share of the pie, however in the markets involving creative work like games, music, movies and publications, there can never be one person who can capture the majority of the market share.

When people collaborate with each other, they are not taking away from each other. They are growing the size of the market to such a high degree that even after splitting the market share, each one ends up with a larger portion than the size they would have had trying to play solo.

What goes around comes around. If you have a mindset of scarcity and try to take things from others, you will end up with scarcity.

If you have a mindset of abundance and help other people as if you had unlimited time, energy and money – you will end up with so much abundance that giving becomes a way of life. You will never run out because for every coin that you throw into the well, you are getting 10x back.

Getting out of the scarcity mindset is easier said than done. It comes with practice and not something you can learn overnight. If you want to have the abundance mindset, start with small acts of abundance.

If you think you have some secret ideas and business plans, try sharing it with others. I have shared so many of

my business ideas with other like minded people and no one have ever stolen my idea to start their own venture. People are busy and they don't have the time to pursue someone else's dream.

In fact, as I shared my ideas more, people started giving feedback about my plans and helped me refine my idea. They also took me seriously and we have deep conversations. They play the devil's advocate which I can never do because my business idea is my baby. It is difficult to find flaws within your idea, but others can.

If you are in business, and if you have the resources that can help other people doing business, share your resources.

For example, if you have an office and a conference room and if someone wants to use your conference room for conducting a meet-up or a small event, share it with them. They will give it back ten fold someday. Also, if you know someone who can help you, do not hesitate to ask for help. You can give back to them someday.

When someone in the abundance mindset meets someone who needs help, they will not hesitate to help them when they can feel the sense of abundance in the receiver. The giver knows that the receiver will give 10x back in the future.

Once you get into the mindset of abundance, creating wealth becomes extremely easy. It becomes a way of life.

You might not be able to grow your assets 10x by yourself. But you can get access to 10x more assets by sharing your asset with 10 people who have different assets of their own.

Now 10 people have access to 10 different assets which they never had before. It is foolish for one person to try to buy all the 10 assets for themselves.

You cannot have abundance for yourself when others don't have enough. Abundance by definition is having enough for everyone that no one needs to take things away from each other.

When you have an apple and give it to someone, you lose the apple and they gain the apple. If you have an idea and share it with others, you have an idea and they also have an idea.

So share things that you will not lose when you are sharing. Do it without hesitation. The world is too big and most of the people are good people who will reciprocate.

As you start giving, you are making investments for future returns, without an expectation for returns. When it comes back to you, you will be pleasantly surprised. It's a fun and profitable game to play.

As you start giving out in small portions, you will start seeing the returns.

When you see returns, you will be encouraged to give more. You will create abundance for yourself and the world.

“There is a sufficiency in the world for man’s need but not for man’s greed.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Greed is having abundance for yourself at the cost of others. No matter how much you have, you will always feel that you don’t have enough.

But why try to create wealth for yourself when you might be having a hidden power within you to create wealth for everyone.

Greed is not a good thing. But abundance is. Lack of greed does not lead to scarcity. Lack of greed leads to abundance.

You will live a rich life, when you do things that help grow other’s wealth.

Now that you found some amazing value and perspective about wealth and abundance from this book, please give back 10x by sharing this book!:)



CHAPTER 33



Entrepreneurship Demands Thinking Big

When you start out as an entrepreneur, your confidence will be low. You will not even be sure if you can sustain yourself and keep the venture alive. But in spite of all the doubt, you have to think big anyway. If you do not think big, your imagination and creativity will not stretch itself.

Many entrepreneurs do not think big. They are afraid that if they think big and do not achieve it, it will cause a lot of pain. But entrepreneurship has a lot of parts that are painful.

Thinking big is going to be the best kind of pain you will have. Do not be afraid that you cannot achieve your big dreams. Be afraid of what would happen if achieve your small dreams and do not know what to do next.

Entrepreneurship has a lot of dips in its journey and sometimes things might just seem too difficult. In such

times, having a big dream definitely helps have a sense of bigger purpose towards the work you do.

When you do your work with purpose, you will be able to achieve great results and your big dream will come true.

If you are required to work for 90 days straight to complete a project that has a assured reward of a million dollars, would you do it? Of course yes. You can retire for the rest of your life and a million dollars for 90 days is a lot of money. How would you do your work? With full of passion and energy. Full of attention. Because if you screw up, you will not get that money.

Now, such a situation doesn't exist. No one can give you assured returns for your work. Entrepreneurship is all about the maturity to work with the same passion and enthusiasm even if there is a good chance that you might not get anything after 90 days of work.

It can get pretty tiring and difficult to work for long periods with intense passion without assured returns. That's why having a big dream and believing in the big dream helps you go through the grind that is required today to reach where you want to go tomorrow.

Your big dreams need not always be in financial terms. I have a dream of getting a million email subscribers for my blog and to create 100 courses within 5 years. Your big dream can be your version of what you think you are capable of achieving.

Thinking big can be intimidating. But it works. If you can conceive it in your mind, you can achieve it.

I don't think the universe will conspire to help you achieve your dreams, but your subconscious mind surely does. Subconscious mind guides our conscious mind on how to move forward to achieve our dreams and goals. Everything you input into your subconscious mind, it will have an impact on your actions. Your actions will have an impact on your results.

Can you open your bank account right now, take a screen of the balance and add a zero to the balance? How about two zeros? And how about 3 zeroes.

Try how much you can stretch your imagination. Adding a zero might seem manageable. If you have 1 lakh in your bank balance, how about 10 lakhs? Does it make you comfortable? Excited? Try to observe the feelings. Try to believe it is really there and see what goes inside you.

Try adding one more zero. How about 100 Lakhs? One crore rupees in your bank account. If that was your bank balance, what would you do with it? Can you even imagine that? Do you have space in your mind to hold that thought? Is it even conceivable?

How about 10 crores in your bank balance? Can't even wrap your head around it right?

The mind just defies such big thought, because a part of you wants to stay where you are and just seek comfort in the known.

The biggest challenge in human development is that the mind resists change assuming that change is risky, but the real risk is refusing to change and not move from where you are.

You have to constantly fight the resistance to growth and chance until growth becomes a way of life. That's why making your first million is a lot tougher than making your first 10 million.

Once you get used to growth, it will become easier over time to grow faster. Going from 0 to 1 is the tough part. Then you can keep adding zeroes to the 1.

Thinking big is important because if you cannot wrap your head around the idea of having 10 crores in your bank balance, then you can never achieve it in reality.

Even if there is a possibility that you can achieve it, your subconscious mind will drive your conscious mind away from it because you are truly uncomfortable with that kind of money in the bank. If you cannot conceive in your mind, there is no way to can manifest it in reality.

If you keep reviewing the idea of having 10 crores in the bank, you will get more comfortable with it.

As you get more comfortable with the idea, you will be able to see more opportunities that can lead to it. Because having 10 crores in the bank is not an impossible task. 1000s of people have done it in India and hundreds of thousands of people are millionaires around the world.

If you are looking at a grid of different colours and want to see only one colour, you will only see that colour and everything else will fade away.

Think about a grid with 25 squares where you have red, blue, green and many other colours. If you only want to see the red colour, every other colour would fade away and you will see only red. If you only want to see green, you will see all the green squares stand out in a pattern and all the other colours will fade away.

When you have a goal in your mind, it doesn't matter if it is a big goal or a small goal, you will start seeing opportunities to get there. You will start seeing patterns around you that will lead to your goal.

Since we have only one life and no time to waste trying to achieve small goals, we might as well get comfortable having big goals. If you really dream big, the path to it will appear in front of you. You just need to be aware of your surroundings and learn to pickup the opportunity when it shows up.

You have one life to make it big. This is your only chance. Dream big. As big as you can. The pain that comes from not achieving your dreams is not going to be as painful as the pain that comes from the regret of not trying at all. You miss 100% of the shots you don't take. If you never try, you will never know. So dream big with courage. You might end up achieving it.

Aim for the stars, you might at least land on the moon.



CHAPTER 34



Learn to Have Tough Conversations

As humans, we naturally tend to avoid having tough conversations. If someone behaves inappropriately in public, we don't confront them. We are constantly running away from having tough conversations with people.

While trying to correct everyone around you in the world is impractical, we shouldn't avoid conversations with people at work.

One of the biggest challenges that you will encounter as an entrepreneur when your team grows more than five people is that it becomes challenging to maintain harmony at workplace.

People get jealous, insecure, angry, disappointed, selfish and the list goes on. They are basic human emotions and not everyone can be expected to be a grown up all the time. Instead of trying to suppress people's emotions, learn to deal with it in a better way.

People will be people and it is wishful thinking to expect that issues will not surface. If you do not create an environment for people's emotions to surface, it will be buried and its toxic to bury people's emotions.

People have a hard enough time in maintaining harmony with friends and family. Workplace is not going to be easier. When people from different backgrounds are expected to work together for 50+ hours a week, disagreement between people should be expected.

Most of the time, people are not looking for solutions but they just want someone to listen and understand them. If a team member has an issue, just listen and you will observe that the problem goes away magically just because they had someone to talk. What looks like a big issue might not actually be that big of a deal when people blow off steam with someone they respect.

If the issue is bigger and cannot be dissipated just by listening people out, intervene and have the tough conversations that makes you and everyone uncomfortable.

Cleaning the house is not a pleasant task but it is necessary to keep the house pleasant for the next day. Have deep and tough conversations with people and keep aligning the energy at the workplace to a common goal.

When one of my team members was disrespectful to another team member, I had a conversation with both of them even though I wanted to ignore it. When you ignore small cracks in the relationship between people at

work, you will let that cracks go wider as the organization grows. This will affect your workplace culture.

If you think that someone in your team is consistently disrupting the harmony at the workplace, you might have to let them go even if they are good at their work performance. Maintaining a positive vibe at the workplace is super-important to keep work exciting and meaningful.

I've had to take decisions to let go of people in the past, it was not easy, but ignoring it would have made things difficult for everyone in the long term.

Even if the work that you do is amazing, if it is created at a stressful workplace, there is no fun in the process of creation. In the long term, the organization can become so toxic that it implodes.

Take care of the vibe of your workplace. Work is sacred, meaningful and significant. Just like a mother-to-be needs to be happy to give birth to a healthy child, a workplace needs to be happy to give rise to amazing products and services. Your place of work is your temple.

Have one to one conversations with people to understand different perspectives. It is very rare that you wouldn't come to know what's going on if your office if you are ready to listen. People like to talk about their problems and all they need is someone to listen.

Take a genuine interest in the well-being of your team and they will take a genuine interest in the well-being of

your customers. And your customers will take a genuine interest in the well-being of your company.

You will observe that in a period of time, your A-team will form around you who are in the same frequency as you. And your A-team will make sure that the culture of your company is maintained going forward. You don't need a HR to work on people's issues all the time.

Culture is the invisible co-founder of your company who can make or break the future of your company.

When your company loses money, nothing is lost. When your company loses its customers, something is lost. When your company loses its culture, everything is lost.

So take disturbances in the workplace seriously and have tough conversations required to steer the ship in the right direction again. And be watchful if your ship is going in the right direction.



CHAPTER 35



Entrepreneurship vs. Relationships

90% of the businesses fail within the first one year. If you just survive for more than one year, it's great leap forward. It is a well known fact that it is not easy to be a successful entrepreneur. Starting a new venture and growing it can be extremely difficult. It will not just consume your time, but your time and energy as well.

Many self-help business gurus try to convince us that it is easy to build certain businesses. When people talk about an 'easy' method, they are usually referring to a temporary opportunity.

In the long-term, no business venture is actually easy. There are many tough calls to make and it can become very emotionally demanding. Most of the entrepreneurs go through cycles of self-doubt, depression, fear of failure and anger. Anger could be on the government, team members, investors and/or partners.

What keeps most entrepreneurs going is that there are also cycles of happiness, satisfaction of work done, feeling of success and the excitement of the future. The up and down cycles eventually become more stable as one gets entrepreneurial maturity.

Many people think that a startup fails because of the idea. And many people are attracted towards new business ideas that have no competition in the market. If there is no competition, there is no opportunity.

The success of your venture not about the type of business that you choose and it is almost never about the idea. Any business idea can work as long as the execution is done well. The barrier of entry to good execution is really high because most people cannot be very productive with their work week.

Highly successful entrepreneurs work as much as 80-100 hours a week in the initial stages of their business. Without putting in that much effort, it is easy to become obsolete in a world where tough competition is just around the corner.

If you are going to spend 80+ hours per week on your work, the biggest challenge you will face would be in personal relationships.

If you are single and yet to get committed, build your startup first and then look for a life partner. Work-life balance is a myth if you want to build a startup. There is no way to balance work and life in the first 2-3 years of starting your venture.

If you've just got into a new relationship and if you also want to build a startup, think twice. Your significant other will feel that you are not spending enough time with them. You might not make your partner happy, and you might also fail with your venture and then blame your partner for that. In the long term, you might lose both.

If you are a few years into your relationship and committed for the long term, it might be easier to build a startup. Your partner might be much more co-operative and would let you spend more time on your work, as long as you give them the assurance that this is not going to be forever. You just need to grind it out for the first few years.

If you have a partner that is not very supportive of your startup venture because it takes too much of your time, you might need to make a decision. You have to choose based on your priorities. If you think the relationship is more important than your startup success, either be in a job and be a consultant or freelancer. Try starting up after a few years.

If your startup success is more important than your relationship, and if your current relationship doesn't give you the time and the mental space to grow your startup, you might have to take a tough decision.

I know many entrepreneurs who have had tough relationships that were pulling them back from achieving success, and they took tough calls. Most of them feel that their decision to break-up and focus on the startup was the best decision they've made in their life.

Relationships take time & energy. It is always going to be an opportunity cost affecting the growth of your startup. Be single, or make sure your partner supports you on your venture. If your partner is unsupportive of your startup venture, give it some time and then take call based on your priorities.

Having said all this, it is still not a bad idea to put your startup ideas in the back burner and focus on your personal life first. You can start 3-5 years down the line when you think your personal life is more stable.

Whatever you do, think about your decision for at least 6 months before you take a call. Talk to friends and family, and if required a therapist. Growing a startup can be very demanding mentally and it is ok to have someone to talk to, if you think you need to.



CHAPTER 36



Creative People Need Creative Output

As an entrepreneur, if you are a creative person, you should make sure that you have some creative output. Leaders and entrepreneurs come in different personality traits and it is important to discover your strengths so that you can do what you are good at.

In the strategic leadership seminar that I attended recently, I found out that I am open-minded and conscientious. I am not an extrovert and I am not agreeable. I am also emotionally unstable like most creative people.

I have done many different things in the past 10 years. I have also been working in companies as digital marketing manager for almost 5 years. Being an open-minded and creative person, it was extremely difficult for me in certain job positions where I had no creative work to be done.

Implementing new business ideas, writing articles, coming up with marketing campaigns are my strongest areas. I enjoy doing it and because of that I am better than most people at it. Of course I can manage campaigns and do analytics as well, but if that's the only thing I have to do, then I cannot sustain for long.

Right now, in my business, apart from managing a digital marketing agency, an education wing which focusing on digital marketing coaching and training and managing a hiring wing for placements, I also write regularly. Articles like these are an example of letting my creativity flow.

Writing regularly helps me organize my thoughts and also helps me with content marketing. Though I have a content marketing team for my business, writing regularly helps me grow my personal brand.

If writing is not your thing and if you are still a creative person, you can focus on music or painting in your free time. You can also start a YouTube channel on a topic that you are passionate about and grow the channel.

If you have an opportunity to be creative at work, it is great, but many people are stuck in work with mundane but important tasks rather than creative tasks. And as a creative person, you cannot keep pushing yourself to do analytical tasks which only engages your left brain.

Making sure that you have some channel which helps you output your creativity is very important. If not, you

might be drawn to substances that helps you get new experiences, and that could go down in a negative spiral.

Understanding the level of creative output you need for your unique personality is the first step in the process. If creative work makes you feel good, do more of it and in the long term create your life in a way that helps you be creative most of the time.

