



DORM LIFE TO WORK LIFE

"A millennial's guide to being an adult, bridging the gap with older generations and finding business success"

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INTRODUCTION – THE BOOK I WROTE BY ACCIDENT

I'm an introverted public speaker and I'm pretty sure I wrote this book by accident. All in all, I am a walking oxymoron; however, I do it because I am passionate about helping young people succeed in business and in life.

Before I continue, do people actually read book introductions? I never do, so I was not sure what they consist of but here is what I was able to conjure up.

Generation Y and Z can be easily described as the “90’s and 2000s kids.” Gen Y are the last of the millennials ranging from roughly the late 80’s to 1995. Gen Z covers from 1995 till the early 2000s. Throughout the book I will refer to Generation Y and Z as young millennials, “twenty-somethings” and young people.

I naively assumed that young people knew about business etiquette, work ethic, and self-development. After speaking with peers and mentors, they informed me that I was indeed naïve and misinformed. They said I was the exception not the rule when it came to young people in business. This book was written based upon my experience as a young business professional as well as a curation of knowledge I have been lucky to acquire through self-learning. I also noticed that young people needed to learn more effective ways to work with more seasoned professionals and vice versa. After being asked by one of my clients to give a presentation on how millennials and older generations could bridge the gap in the work place, I decided to use my knowledge and “short story” – I have a long way to go – to help other young people navigate the world of business more successfully. I have always been interested in business and personal development, and I wanted to help others, but I did not know where my niche and expertise was. I did not have to wait long because my client sat me directly in my niche by giving me the task of speaking on bridging the gap. Now I am on a quest to help Gen Y and Z transition from the Dorm life to work life while also bridging the gap and finding success in business.

I personally started freelancing for corporate clients like Attorney Michael Uvalle when I was just 19 years old. Then I officially started my LLC at 21. Over 3 years of owning a production company I have learned business savvy and an abundance of “real world” knowledge. Through my production company I have had the opportunity to work with corporate clients like Southern Methodist University, Just Fab, WEBUYHOUSES.COM, Toyota, and Chick-Fil-A. It was a slow start at first but with growth and development I have been able to create a sustainable business in an ultra-competitive sector.

At first, I did not see myself as an expert or liaison for young people acquiring business success; however, after looking back on it, I guess I have been a few steps ahead of my peers. I wrote this book to share with my fellow young people what I have learned about business success as well as how I managed to facilitate the age gap with older professionals. I do not believe I have all the answers to the stereotypes associated with the twenty-somethings of this generation. Nor do I believe that everything I outlined in the chapters that follow will be effective for everyone. I simply wanted to share the ideologies, tips, suggestions, and strategies that have worked well for me in hopes of helping others achieve some success.

When I read a book, watch a webinar, listen to a podcast, or attend a keynote presentation, I consider it worth my time and successful if I can take away just one thing that will help me grow. That is my ultimate goal of this book. I want the reader to be able to take away at least one lesson, apply it to their life and achieve better results. If I can help just one reader with just one thing, then the time and money I put in was well worth it.

The first section of the book, roughly chapters 1 – 4, are full of suggestions and tips that will guide Generation Y and Z on how we can close the gap with more seasoned generations. The remainder of the book is a guide on self-development for young people. I firmly believe if we as young people can grow and develop personally, business success and closing the generational gap will come as a byproduct. I also wrote this book with the short attention spans of young people in mind. I kept the book rather short for that very reason. I understand that if it is not an NFL game or a binge worthy Netflix series, I do not have a very high probability of keeping young people's attention for very long. This book is designed to be completed in just one week. All it takes is a chapter a day, seven chapters, each taking about a half-hour to read – honestly, I would not be hurt if you skipped the intro, conclusion, and anything else that is extra; just get to the content and start your seven days.

Also, I know some people may think I am too young to write a book or that I am too young to have answers on how to acquire business success for young people. Well my mantra in life, which will be evident in later chapters, is to “just go do stuff.” If I want to start a business at 21 or write a book at 23, I am just going to go out and do it. I encourage you to do the same!

Next, I want to give a quick “shout out” to the editor of this book Tamia Brice; thanks for all your hard work!

Lastly, you may be wondering how I accidentally wrote a book. Well, it did become a deliberate action after a few thousand words, but at first it was indeed by accident. Author Ryan Blair noted in his book *Rock Bottom to Rockstar* that Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos requires employees to fully write out presentations before presenting them. Instead of just creating a Power Point or presentation with bullet pointed content, Mr. Bezos believes that one can learn and present information more effectively if the content is written and detailed out in prose form. I had done a few presentations on bridging the gap with millennials in business and I thought I would give Mr. Bezos' suggestion a try. Before my next presentation I started to write out my ideas, research, and bullet points in an essays style format. After a few days of writing and research, I began to think “Man, this is pretty much a book.” And that's how *Dorm Life to Work Life* was born.

I truly hope you enjoy reading this book and can take away valuable content that can be used to bridge the gap and find early success in business. But enough about me, let's get started!

PARENTING YOURSELF

*“Being an adult is parenting yourself and making you do the things you don’t want to do” –
Mel Robbins*

One morning you find yourself actually needing an alarm clock to wake up for class. Mama is no longer there to bang on your door and shout at you until you muster the strength to roll out of bed. You realize there is no one to hand you ironed clothes as you reach to put on your joggers. As you walk down your dorm room hallway to the same ole vending machine to get a pop tart for the fourth straight day, you start to appreciate how good hot cooked food really is. I know you are wondering about the residence hall cafeteria; let’s just say the pop tart was definitely the better tasting option. And as you walk to class in thirty-degree weather you really start to question is this what “adulthood” will feel like for the rest of my life?

The short answer: YES.

As the great Mel Robbins perfectly said, being an adult is parenting yourself. It is the idea of making you do the things you need to do even though you would rather not do them. For us young people to bridge the gap with more seasoned generations, find success in business, and make the transition from dorm life to work life, we need to learn the art of self-parenting, because it is the foundation for the growth and development of basic skills.

Some experts say millennials were overparented and sheltered therefore we now behave like prepubescent adolescences despite the fact that we are in our 20’s. Others argue that the school system coddled millennials and gave trophies to everyone; not to mention they prepared us for tests and not life. Indeed, there are a litany of reasons for millennials’ perceived shortcomings, but it is apparent many young adults lack the basic skills needed for corporate America, entrepreneurship, and working with older generations in general.

So, what are those basic skills?

HATE TO BE LATE

PUNCTUALITY! PUNCTUALITY! PUNCTUALITY!

Millennials are notorious for strolling into class or work a few minutes late (okay, a lot of minutes late) and think that that is completely okay. For some organizations, this behavior may be acceptable; however, for most of the “real world” – which is ran by older generations – showing up on time is a sociocultural standard. So, we should work on it! According to a survey by

PayScale.com 62% of 18-34 year olds admitted to being late for work at least once per week. After studying the behaviors of my peers, I am starting to believe many of us young people are not aware that morning exist before 10am; which poses a huge problem for closing the gap with more seasoned generations. How do we fix this problem? The real answer is one has to HATE TO BE LATE. If it does not absolutely grind your gears to be late then it will never be a priority for you to put in the work to be on time or early – which is even better! There are plenty of time management hacks and tricks to use in order to work on punctuality. However, the truth is, if you are not internally motivated to be punctual, no amount of tactics will help you become punctual. Being late is not a genetics thing, or a gender thing, or even an age thing. It is all about internal motivation and parenting oneself; learning to make you do the things you would rather not do. One has to have a mindset shift to believe that being late is simply NOT okay. We literally have to HATE TO BE LATE.

Remember how I mentioned that tips and hacks do not work unless you have the internal motivation to make you do things you do not want to? Well I am going to be a hypocrite and provide a few tips anyway because that is what a self-help author should do right? Okay seriously, here are a few hacks that will help in learning to be on time.

LIE! Lie to yourself; the more you do it the better you get. Probably not advice your parents would give but you are your own parent now. What do I mean by lie to yourself? It is simple. Set your alarm clock for twenty minutes before you have to get up (don't hit snooze, actually get up), change the clocks in your car so they will be five minutes ahead of time, and make all of your arrival times in your Google calendar for fifteen minutes early.

I initially believed that setting arrival times for earlier tricks the brain into thinking you are going to be late which will then prompt urgency to get out of the door and to the office quicker. However, if one is chronically late, then urgency from them does not exist because being on time is not a priority. Nevertheless, I believe lying to yourself works positively in two ways. The first is that if you arrive ten minutes late to an appointment in which you set for fifteen minutes early in your calendar, then in reality you are actually on time. The second is if everything in the universe aligns and you happen to be on time for an earlier appointment time then you are actually early. It sounds simple but it is highly effective – I have personally used it many times. One can also use the tactic on your millennial friends that you may supervise or work with to get them to arrival on time too. Just lie to them by saying the start time is fifteen minutes earlier. And no need to worry, this is lying with love for the betterment of everyone, so it is a win-win!

DEADLINES ARE NOT SUGGESTIONS

I am pretty sure millennials invented the idea of asking for essay extensions, and if we did not invent the idea, then I am 100% sure we perfected it. Maybe it is laziness, maybe it is that teachers were too lenient, maybe it is lack of effort, or maybe it is pure procrastination. Whatever it is, young people have grown to believe missing deadlines is not a big deal, and if a deadline is missed then a merciful extension awaits around the corner. Entrepreneurship, Corporate America, and the rest of the “real world” does not work that way. If Gen Y and Z want to close the gap with more seasoned generations and become better entrepreneurs and corporate America employees in general, we must change the way we think about putting in the work necessary to make deadlines. Making deadlines goes a long way in the “trust department” with the people we work with; therefore, it is a skill we must work to develop. I do not believe I am the smartest or most creative guy on the planet; however, I always find a way to finish projects by the deadline. My gift of being an on-time finisher allows me to consistently make deadlines. The skills of finishing and making deadlines has allowed me to build trust and accountability with my clients in the business world.

Once while giving a keynote presentation I asked a room with a decent number of people whether anyone had heard of Parkinson’s law. As you can imagine, no one had! Fixing a problem like missing deadlines starts with knowing that one has a problem with missing deadlines. Once one is aware of their problem and how it will negatively affect their professional career and relationship with older superiors, I believe they will naturally seek out information and help tactics, like Parkinson’s law, to correct the problem. Parkinson’s law states that work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion. For example, a project that has a due date in two weeks will be completed in two weeks; however, if that same project was due in two months, the work would expand to fill the two months given to complete the project. Shaan Patel, author of *Self-Made Success* explains that it does not matter if we are given one week or one year to complete an assignment, because many individuals will do the majority of the work the night before it is due.

Throughout college, I used Parkinson’s law numerous times without even knowing it! To alleviate the stress of the overwhelming assignments with crowded due dates, I would envision myself being done with the assignments by a certain day earlier than the due date (Just more lying to one self). Striving for that feeling of relief was one element; however, using Parkinson’s law and getting the assignments done sooner helped me achieve the feeling of relief and make the deadlines. For example, if I had multiple assignments due on Monday and Tuesday of the following week, I would convince myself that the work was due Thursday of the current week. I quickly noticed I was more efficient when I did more work in less time. Once again for the people in the back, I quickly noticed I was more efficient when I did more work in less time. By completing all the assignments by Thursday, making the deadline was no longer a concern, and I was able to achieve relief from the stress of the assignment a lot sooner than my peers who were working on them that Sunday night. Not to mention, getting the assignments done sooner allowed me to enjoy the weekend because the stress of the assignment was no longer a cloud hanging over my head.

Many millennials have trouble with making deadlines because there is a belief that we need “more time” to complete the assigned work, when in actuality young people need to learn to complete more work in less time. That is how deadlines are made, MORE WORK IN LESS TIME. One achieves this by blocking out distractions and having laser focus to complete the work. If millennials want to make an effort to make deadlines and close the gap with other generations, procrastination and believing that you need more time to do the work have to become excuses of the past. Richard Koch, author of the 80/20 principle states, “It is our use of time, and not time itself, that is the enemy.”

To make sure assignments get done when their due, millennials should also start on projects sooner! Starting the project when you are first assigned allows for one’s enthusiasm to kick in and help make early progress. Young people should also do away with procrastination and use Parkinson’s law instead. By lying to oneself and setting deadlines sooner than the actual due date, one will avoid missing turn in dates and will ultimately get more work done in less time.

OVER COMMUNICATE

Any time there is a disparity between two people, over communication is the key to filling that gap. As millennials, we must learn to communicate our needs and ideas more effectively. How can we improve? Through practice! Communicating to older professionals will be daunting and uncomfortable at first but practice makes perfect. We must break out of our comfort zone to grow and succeed. I have three communication keys for millennials.

The first key, do not be afraid to ask questions. If we want to over communicate and close the gap with more seasoned professionals, we must leave out any room for ambiguity. If you did not understand a question or task, do not be afraid to ask a superior to clarify – even in an interview. If a deadline or assignment is given with loose direction be sure to follow up to get concrete details like exact deadlines, and how and where to deliver the finished assignment. Terminology, processes, and beliefs will differ due to the age gap, so do what is in your power to make sure you interpret every message correctly.

The second key is, reach out before being reached out to. With my video production company, I make it a priority to initiate contact with clients during all projects. Whether it is to let them know the project is going well, or maybe the project will be delayed or just to let them know we are working hard to meet their needs. Reaching out before being reached out to is a great way to show someone you truly care about the work you are working on – not to mention it is a great customer service skill. As an entrepreneur, I use this key to reach out to clients; however, an employee can use the same key for managers and other superiors in the work place.

In the words of author Hal Urban, my third key is “Honesty is still the best policy.” Millennials must learn integrity, and communicate honestly when things do not go as planned. The third key

goes hand and hand with the second key. When a project is late or when we have completely screwed things up, reach out and be honest before someone comes looking for you. Ignoring emails and phone calls will not work. And do not wait for the problem to fix its self because it won't. Professionals of all ages will appreciate you if you conduct yourself with honesty and integrity in the business world. Remember, honesty is still the best policy, it will help you bridge the gap and find success in the business world.

FAKE HUMILITY IS STILL HUMILITY

Once, while on a panel of film industry experts, one of the panelist stated that her key to success in the industry was due to her simply being a nice person. This idea of being a good person sounds rather simplistic but it can be highly influential on your journey to bridge gaps and build professional success. I believe negative attitudes and unpleasant personalities are common to all people, not just young adults, however, millennials must learn positive personality traits if we want to bridge the gap and find early business success. It is true that people and good things gravitate to good people. Instead of focusing on the undesirable characteristics we have, lets focus on positive traits we can develop. Traits like compassion, humility, hard work, selflessness, meekness, objectiveness, and simply doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do – my favorite. Now I know you may be thinking that not everyone is born with a good “heart” to be compassionate or humble. You are right! However, we can change and recondition our “hearts.” How? By lying to our self some more. Once, while accepting an award for a 24-hour film festival competition, the MC of the program asked our team who was the director of the film. All four of my teammates pointed to me while I said we all directed it. The MC went on the tell the audience that he did not know if I was being humble or just showing fake humility. I pondered on his comment for quite a while and I still think about it 2 years later – that’s why it’s in this book. I concluded that “fake humility” is still humility to an outsider. As stated a few sentences ago, some of us are not born with naturally good traits like humility. Therefore, we must lie to ourselves and fake it till we make it. I continually tell myself I am humble and to be humble even when the little voices in side my head say otherwise. Life is a huge self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe if we lie to ourselves that we are humble and that we must act humble, humility will eventually manifest as one of our genuine traits.

I know the idea of lying to oneself may be controversial. So instead, you could also “convince” yourself that you are humble and to be humble until that self-fulfilling prophecy creates sincere humility. This idea of lying or convincing oneself can be used for other positive traits like compassion, giving, and objectivity. When it comes to bridging the gap, and building success in

the business world, lets fake those good traits until we make those same traits a part of who we really are. Because to an outsider fake humility is still humility.

DOING THINGS THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO

No more excuses and no more justifications, if Gen Y and Gen Z want to close the gap with older generations and be successful in business we must learn to grow. I am a firm believer that a young person's growth directly correlates to her ability to parent herself. So how do you make yourself do the things you don't want to do? It first starts with self-awareness. One must understand his/her strengths and weaknesses and how they will have an effect on his/her personal career. Self-awareness comes from reading, meditating, and self-evaluation. Next, she must have the internal motivation to change. Yes, external motivation from superiors or friends may be helpful but it will be short lived. The willingness to change must come from the inside to break bad habits like poor punctuality and turning in assignments late; because external motivation will never be as powerful as the power to change from within. Once an individual has become aware of their short comings and has the internal motivation to change, then all that is left is self-management. Self-management is the physical application of getting up and doing those things we don't want to. Self-management is holding oneself accountable for the changes you now know you need to make. Self-management is parenting yourself and making you do the things you don't want to do. For the generation that has been scrutinized for being a victim of too much parenting, young people still need more parenting to grow – this time from ourselves.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, the quest for business success and bridging the gap starts with the development of basic skills. For young people to mature and cultivate these basic skills we must first learn to parent ourselves through self-discipline. Through parenting ourselves we can change our mentality regarding punctuality and learn to hate to be late. Remember to lie to yourself by changing Google

calendar arrival times to 15 minutes earlier, making the clocks in your car 5 minutes fast, and setting your wake-up time on your phone for 10 minutes earlier. Next, we will use self-discipline in conjunction with Parkinson's law to increase our abilities to make deadlines. Once again, we don't need more time to complete assignments, we need to do more work in less time. We achieve this by blocking out distractions and having laser focus. Also, over communication is key for young people to bridge the gap with more seasoned generation professionals. The 3 keys to communication success are;

- 1) ask questions to clear up any ambiguity,
- 2) reach out before being reached out to, and
- 3) honesty is still the best policy.

Next, we need to convince ourselves that we are good people to be good people, because fake humility is still humility to an outsider. These basic skills are completed by self-awareness, internal motivation to change, and self-management, but it all starts with self-discipline and parenting ourselves.

UNNECESSARY FRICTION

I am not suggesting that young people should conform, become “yes men,” or blindly follow the advice of superiors; however, I will encourage young people to do their best to reduce any unnecessary friction as they progress in the business world. Us twenty-somethings must understand that our age and presumed lack of experience, in many instances, is a major hindrance and reservation within the business community. We must go above and beyond to overcome this stigma and minor setback. Areas that may cause unnecessary friction with older business associates include our appearance, wardrobe, and how we speak. My client and successful entrepreneur Saul David once stated in a speech on perception, “The business industry is a matrix and we must be aware of the game as we continue to move along.” There are unstated rules of the business world that we should adapt to if we want to find success and bridge the gap. I know adapting and conforming goes against young peoples’ innate instincts to stand out and be individuals, but if we want to play the business game we must first learn the rules; learn to respect or give value to the rules, then and only then can we learn to break them.

A GOOD MOUTHPIECE

Just like many of my millennial peers, I am a chronic user of filler words when I speak—and occasionally when I write; I’ll let you be the judge. My favorite phrases include “So on and so forth” and “Does that make sense?” I have worked hard to become aware of my filler word usage and I advise you to do the same. “Like”, “Um”, “Uh”, “I mean”, and my favorite “You know what I’m saying” should all be cut from our vernacular forever. These filler words will leave Gen Y and Z scorned by their elder business world colleagues and create bad first impressions. To an outsider listening to you speak, fillers words will make you appear unconfident, passive, inexperienced, and inept in professional speech. I have two practical applications for eradicating filler words and improving speech in hopes of eliminating unnecessary friction.

The first key to deleting filler words from your speech is to simply “slow down.” I am personally a fast speaker and because my mouth piece is moving much faster than my cerebral capabilities, filler words are often used to fill the gap between thought and speech. If we consciously slow down how fast we speak, we can more strategically select the words we want to use. When filming interviews for commercial video production I have encountered an abundance of interviewees who are both nervous and unsure of themselves. Their nervousness and lack of confidence leads to fast speech and countless filler words. My first comment is always “slow down.” It may sound simple but it is highly effective. I also explain to my interviewees that it is okay to take a mini pause here and there to collect the word or thought you want to use. I would argue that a mini pause for the gathering of a thought or word is more professional than using “Like” “Um” “Uh” “I mean” and “You know what I’m saying.” By consciously attempting to

slow down one's speaking, we allow ourselves the ability to "think" while and before we speak – which leads us to our next key.

The second key is think it before you speak it. I have witnessed many instances in class, meetings, and even keynote presentations where an individual presumably speaks without much thought. They just ramble on with filler words in every sentence while not making much logical sense or getting their point across. I am sure you have experienced situations like this too. Do not let this be you. I do not believe those rambling individuals were not capable of getting their point across more concisely or effectively, I believe they simply started to ramble before they thoughtfully gathered what they wanted to say. That is why we should think it before we speak it.

I am not saying to withhold your thoughts and opinions because you are scared that others will judge your speech and use of filler words. I am encouraging you to simply think about what you want to say before you say it. Just like the first key, the premise behind think it before you speak it is very rudimentary; however, I believe it is a major step for young people to speak more professionally and reduce the use of filler words. I am often complimented by potential clients while on sales calls saying that I speak "older" than I am. I directly contribute this compliment to my ability to consciously slow down the speed at which I speak and the skill to think before audibly saying something. If we want our speech to come out more pristine and direct, we must first think through our syntax and not leave it up to chance. To take it a step further, when preparing for sales calls, meetings, and especially presentations, I do not only think about what I am going to say, I also audibly practice it numerous times prior to my performance. Like many areas in our life, we must manifest and think into existence what we want our listeners to hear from us – and practice makes perfect.

THE WARDROBE

I like to wear snapbacks and sneakers as much as the next Gen Y or Gen Z individual, but I have also learned how to get "suited and booted" when needed. Young people have this weird offense against the professional attire of older generations, supposedly it is because we want to be "individuals" and "stand out." To an extent that is true, we do love to stand out, and as stated earlier, I am not here to tell young people to conform, but there are times when we must "follow the rules" to reduce any unnecessary friction. Despite the noble cliché, and if you are not visually impaired, you initially judge the book by the cover. That means we see race, gender, age, and clothing. And because we can physically see those characteristics, there are preconceived societal notions associated with each of them. When a twenty-something-year old individual steps into a business meeting or an interview, his age will be a dominant factor that older generations notice (especially if you're like me and look even younger than you actually are). Because our age can

be a cause for concern, we must look the part in every other way. The way we are groomed, the way we communicate and the way we dress. According to Dr. Frank Bernieri, professor of psychology at Oregon State University, “within the first 10 seconds of meeting your interviewer—otherwise known as the meet-and-greet—that person has decided whether or not you’re right for the job.” This is proof that our appearance does make a difference. I remember the first time I worked for one of my now good clients, my team and I were there to film a business mixer. We had never met the clients face to face since we were hired via phone on Craigslist. My team and I knew how young we looked at the time, so we decided to dress up in matching all black to look as presentable as possible. We also brought every single piece of camera equipment we had – even though we did not need it all – to give the impression that we were more than competent in our profession. We went above and beyond to reduce any friction that may have been caused by our young age. I assume it worked because we still work and partner with the client two years later and he has mentioned on numerous occasions how our appearance made him feel more at ease that day despite our young age. Now that the trust and respect is there between my client and I, I can wear jeans and a snapback to gigs here and there without worry.

Simply put, an easy way for young people to make progress in closing the gap is by looking the part and dressing professionally. There are no tips and hacks for this one. We must purely make ourselves do it.

I am sure it will not hurt too bad to put on a suit and put away the snapback for a day. We must learn to do the things we do not want to do on our quest for business success.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, the power of perception is a strong tool; therefore, young people must do what we can to reduce any unnecessary friction in areas like appearance and speech. Remember to slow down and think it before you speak. It is better to pause and gather thoughts than to use a large amount of filler words without getting a concise point across. Regarding appearance, we must understand that our age may bring apprehension to more seasoned individuals, consequently we should go above and beyond to “play by the rules” and look the part – even if it goes against our natural need to stand out. Once again, to grow and close the gap, we millennials must become self-aware of our short comings then use our self-discipline to correct the problem.

BE A FRANCHISE PLAYER

“There is no ‘i’ in team but there is in win” – Michael Jordan

For my non-sports junkies out there, a Franchise Player is an individual who is the cornerstone of a sports organization. This player makes the team go; he or she is the leader, motivator, and initiator. Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Diana Taurasi, and LeBron James are all prime examples of what a Franchise Player should be. They led their teams on and off the court, motivated their peers, handled failure well, and always took the big shots in the most important moments (Okay, maybe not LeBron). For a millennial to close the gap with our more seasoned counterparts while being successful in business, we must embrace being a Franchise Player. Now, I understand not everyone is built to be a Franchise Player and that’s okay; however, if YOU want to close the gap and acquire professional success while doing so, take the initiative and become a leader amongst your millennial peers and more importantly, become a leader of yourself! So how do you become a Franchise Player?

FOCUS ON THE NEXT PLAY

As a leader of young people, I quickly learned that we often take constructive criticism personally – I am not sure why that is. I just know that we should not! To be a Franchise Player you must learn how to move on to the next play. Sometimes a play will not go your way, but young people cannot let one play lead to complaining and poor attitudes, we must learn how to brush it off and continue to play on. Business and social media mogul Gary Vaynerchuck states, “If you’re happy and content, you’ve won. But if you’re complaining, it means you haven’t won yet and you should stop complaining and do something about it instead.” In basketball, many players will get upset after a missed foul call. Instead of getting back on defense and playing the next play at 100%, they tend to whine and complain to the referee which leads to poor play on the next possession or even a technical foul – which is even more detrimental to the team. Complaining has become an American phenomenon that is not very healthy – especially for us twenty-somethings. According to research from Stanford University, a half hour of complaining every day physically damages a person’s brain. To be successful Franchise Players, young people must learn to complain less and deal with adversity in more constructive ways.

For dealing with adversity I like to use the 3,3,3 rule.

The rule goes as such, will the adversity you are facing today matter in 3 years? If so, you have the right to be upset, complain, and acknowledge it. I am not going to debate you on that.

Will the adversity you are facing matter in 3 months? If so, acknowledge it but do not allow it to affect you emotionally. Instead, make an attempt to constructively grow from the situation. If you do complain, do so with a purpose. Focus on how to overcome the situation instead focusing on why the situation happened to you. Be a Franchise Player not a victim.

And lastly, will the adversity you are facing matter in 3 days? If not, do not waste time acknowledging it and surely do not let it affect you emotionally. And also, don't complain! Simply move on the next play, because that is what a Franchise Player does!

To become better students, entrepreneurs and business people in general, we as twenty-somethings must learn to deal with adversity more constructively. Autry's first law states, "You're not a product of your environment; you're a product of how you respond to your environment." When met with adversity, instead of getting an attitude, defensive and letting the moment shape you; we can remember the 3,3,3 rule, respond positively, learn to focus on the "next play," and shape the moment ourselves. It's not about the size of the problem, it is about how big you are in the problem.

BEING PREPARED

No matter how you put it, like any competitive sport, winning at life is hard. Life does not care who you are, where you are, or how much money you have; it is still rough. Young people must understand that there are no cheat codes or short cuts to achieve the things we want in life. If we truly want to bridge the gap with more seasoned generations, we are going to have to work for it. If we want to master the art of self-discipline, we are going to have to work for it. If we want to truly succeed professionally, we are going to have to work for it. If we want to be a Franchise Player, we are going to have to work for it. If you ask anyone who has anything worth having, how did they get it, I assure you that their answer will be time and hard work.

My client Coach Keith Spencer of Kingdom Performance Athletics has a famous saying that goes, "If you stay ready you don't have to get ready." Simply put, staying prepared is key to the successful navigation of achieving any goal. I truly believe being prepared is the best way to deal with life's hardness and hardships. Life is kind of like the sport of boxing, we must keep our guard up and be ready for the next incoming blow at all times. A blow that you are prepared for hurts a lot less than when you are caught off guard. I will be the first to admit that I have been blessed by God with a life absent of many tragedies and hardships, and I am truly grateful. I cannot attest if one can truly be prepared for all the tribulations and blows life has to offer. However, I have experienced the blows that life has to offer when it comes to college, starting a business, and being a young minority business professional. I have learned that millennials must understand that business and work life will be hard. We must understand that promotions may not come quickly in some organizations, or at all. We must understand as business owners, that client bases and revenue streams are not built over night. We must understand that we will fail from time to time. We must understand that things will not always go our way, and we may have to resort to plan B or plan C or even to plan I don't know how I'm going to make this work but I will still find a way. Some people call me pessimistic, I prefer calling it realistic. I am not saying that millennials cannot reach astronomical heights in business; because we can; especially if you are a franchise player! I am simply saying that there will be many reroutes and collisions on your course to success. So, buckle up and be prepared for the hit. It will hurt a lot less if you are. "If you stay ready you don't have to get ready."

BE COACHABLE

From Jordan, to Kobe, to LeBron, each of these franchise players had coaches during their careers – very good ones too. I am sure they did not always agree with their coaches, especially LeBron with Coach David Blatt, but at the end of the day they were all coachable. Michael Jeffrey Jordan once said, “My best skill was that I was coachable. I was a sponge and aggressive to learn.” If young people want to be Franchise Players and take the next step in their business careers, they must strive to be like Mike and learn to be coachable. I cannot speak for all Generation Y and Z but I know I am a “know-it-all”—my mother has been sure to inform me of this on many occasions throughout my life. I believe, majority of the time, my way is the best way and I think I am always right. From experience working with my peers, I have noticed I am not the only twenty-something suffering from the “know-it-all” disease. To be coachable is to be willing to take advice and follow instructions. Yes, being a Franchise Player is about leading; however, following, serving, and understanding you are not always right are all forms of leadership as well. Being coachable is being openminded and listening to whom you are instructed to take orders from. Being coachable is going along with a project or task laid out by a superior even though we might not agree with the processes at first. Being coachable is understanding we do not have all the answers (We’re not Sway or Kanye) and that by being attentive we have a high likelihood of learning from wiser elder individuals. Being coachable is an absolute must if we truly want to close the gap with more seasoned generations. When young people are coachable, we gain the respect and appreciation of elder business people and we are seen as easier to work with. Even though young people have access to more information than ever before and we possibly developed faster than any generation of the past, we are still infants in our development as business professionals. LeBron James was great as a 19-year-old right out of high school, but 19-year-old LeBron cannot remotely compare to the maturation of 32-year-old 4 time MVP and 3 time finals champion LeBron. We too can experience the same maturation process that LeBron went through to be a prime Franchise Player, but it all starts with our ability to be coached.

BIG SHOT TAKER

For whatever reason, I have come to find out young people are not prime initiators. To bridge the gap and be more affective in business, we must learn to step out of our comfort zone and initiate action.

I cannot remember the exact quote or the NBA player that said it but the quote went something like, “If I pass the ball to my teammates and it ends up back in my hands before the end of the possession, then I’m shooting the shot because obviously, they didn’t want to.” If we want to do better in business and close the generational gap, Millennials must learn how to take the big shots. We cannot fear failure, ridicule, or poor performance. We must take the shots anyway! As Wayne Gretzky so perfectly put it, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.”

I remember working a photography and videography gig and the second shooter passed me the camera when it was time to get the closing still shots (which were more difficult). I did not understand right away why they were giving me the camera to take still shots when my focus was on capturing the video. Then they said, “You got it, I’m not going to mess up the last shots.” Obviously, I took the camera and said to myself “Heck yea I got this.” Franchise players are never scared to take the last shot (with a camera or a basketball) not solely because of their skill, but because of their supreme confidence and lack of fear and hesitation. As a Millennial working with other Millennials in school, business, or sports, I encourage you to empower your peers and push them to their limit; however, if you pass the ball to your teammates and it ends up back in your hands before the end of the possession, then shoot the shot because obviously, they didn’t want to. Being the young person that takes the initiative will go a long way in bridging the gap with coaches, employers, managers, and business partners of different generations.

Now, if you are still struggling with taking the big shot and it is not a confidence or anxiety issue then it is probably “analysis paralysis.” Analysis paralysis or paralysis by analysis can be defined as, “the state of over-analyzing (or over-thinking) a situation so that a decision or action is never taken, in effect paralyzing the outcome.” I love to use the basketball metaphor for taking action because in a live game there is no time to over analyze a situation. A basketball player cannot over analyze and calculate ball trajectory and arch before taking every shot, and neither should you! Just like basketball, life has a fleeting shot clock. I have had peers ask me how did I start my business, what do they need to do to start theirs, what about marketing, is their product good enough to start? I always have the same response, stop analyzing and just go do stuff (I use a different S word for stuff but you catch my drift). When I was a junior in high school and decided to become a music video director I just got a camera and started filming stuff.

So, whether you want to start a business, start a new job, build a new project, or move to a new city, just do it now before life’s shot clock expires on this possession. And remember, Millennials that take the initiative will have better success at closing the gap with coaches, employers, managers, and business partners of different generations. Because being a “doer” is extremely apparent.

FRANCHISE PLAYERS ARE COMPETITORS

I understand not everyone is a professional athlete and some may not even be competitive by nature. However, to grow into a big shot taking Franchise Player, we must embrace our competitive fervor. Billionaire NBA owner Mark Cuban states, “I love to compete. To me, business is the ultimate sport. It's always on. There is always someone trying to beat me.” When you treat your passion as a sport, complacency is not an option because as Mark Cuban said there is always someone trying to beat you. Professional athletes are always studying film to increase their learning, practicing skills to hone in on their muscle memory, and getting coached up to develop new tactics.

Personally, competitiveness has always been in my DNA, and I firmly believe that that drive has aided in my success in school, business, and working with more seasoned business people. From my GPA in high school to entering film festivals and competitions as a young adult, I wanted to be the best at everything I did. I always say, if you decide to do something, might as well be the best at it.

So how does one embrace their competitive fervor? It is all about having a “Must be better” mindset. Franchise players are always looking to get better; they follow the Japanese business philosophy of Kaizen, which states, “do it better, make it better, improve it even if it isn't broken, because if we don't, we can't compete with those who do.” Franchise players follow Gladwell's theory of working 10,000 hours and then they work some more. It is a never-ending journey to bettering success. Former NFL player and celebrity actor Terry Crews echoed Kaizen principals when he said, “You should be happy and dissatisfied...because the attempt to get more makes you into something better.” If the message was not clear even after I used the word better six times in a one-hundred-word paragraph, then here it is one more time. In everything that you do, work to do it better; not only better than your competitors but more importantly, better than your last rep.

So, what steps can you take to get better? As business people, students, and skilled employees our brains are our primary mechanism for production. Just like a professional athlete must train his/her body for top level competition, we must train our brain and mind to perform at a high level. My key advice for helping the brain grow and getting better mentally is through self-learning and reading. Reading has become a lost art-form for young adults in our fast-paced digital media driven society; many jewels for business success and personal growth are locked away between the covers of books. We live in the information age and any book of our choosing is just an Amazon click away, yet many young people do not take advantage of this golden opportunity (Amazon Prime will literally deliver you the book the very next day). According to a Huffington Post poll of over 1,000 adults, 42% had not read a non-fiction book in the last year – I bet they used social media in the last year; probably the last hour, but I digress. My advice to you would be to start reading one non-fiction book per month. Now some may say they do not like reading or do not have the time. Well both are easy fixes. The first excuse is I do not have the time; of course, you do not have the time because you are a hardworking individual with a busy personal and social life. But it is not about “having time” it's about making time – know the difference and you can get better at anything you focus on. If you truly want to get better personally, then you will make the time for the personal investment that comes from reading. The next excuse is I do not like reading, well

neither did I until I understood that there are so many genres and types of books to learn from. With the number of genres available to us there is bound to be something you can associate with and grow from. What's great about non-fiction reading is that it really does not matter the topic; it could be business, health, self-help, finances, or a successful person's autobiography. The idea is simply to get something in front of you that can make you better. It is all about what we mentally digest; the junk in junk out metaphor (which we will cover in more detail in a later chapter). By reading, our vernacular improves, we learn tips and hacks for productivity, it increases our creativity, and it can even help ease depression. If you want to be more competitive in any sector and get better personally, start reading now and engage in self-learning now. (Oh, look you already are!)

So how does competitiveness help young adults close the gap with more seasoned generations? Glad you asked; the answer is simple. Competitiveness is very visible. Managers, employers, and coaches will all take notice to your passion and desire to be better. They will notice the franchise player taking the big shots, out working the competition, and striving to get better.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, being a Franchise player is all about leading others and being a leader of oneself. To be an awesome Franchise Player we must stop complaining and learn to deal with adversity more constructively. My advice for dealing with adversity is the 3,3,3 rule which states we should deal with problems differently depending on their severity. We must learn to overcome and grow from adversity as oppose to always complaining and being a victim. Being a Franchise Player also means being ultra-prepared, because winning at life is hard and it will take preparation. Remember that a blow you are prepared for hurts a lot less than one that you are unprepared for. Being coachable is another key aspect of growing into a great Franchise Player. Contrary to our belief, young people do not know everything about everything. We must be willing to subdue our pride and learn from wiser elder people. Even though young people are technologically sound and have access to tons of information, we are still infants in our development as business professionals. Being coachable will surely aid in the maturation of our professional and personal development. Franchise players are also big shot takers. Young people must learn to become initiators with great confidence. Just like basketball, life has a fleeting shot clock. So, if young people want to start a business or just find a new job, we must embrace the Nike slogan and "Just Do It." As stated earlier, I always say, "If you decide to do something you might as well be the best at it." My favorite part about being a Franchise Player is the competitive fervor. To really be the best business professional or the best at bridging the gap, Generation Y and Z must embrace Kaizen principal and develop a "must be better" mindset. As business professionals, our brains and minds are our primary mechanisms for production, so we must train them to be better. My key exercise for mind development is reading. Us young people must work to read more. Being Franchise Players will certainly help young people bridge the gap and find success in business. So, let's start leading ourselves and implementing the "I" in win.

THE OLDER SIBLING EFFECT

“Try never to be the smartest person in the room...” – Michael Dell

The old cliché of “We are who we associate with” still holds true. I know it has been said thousands of times and thousands of different ways; however, I believe hearing these wise sayings over and over again will help us to put them into practice. Repetition is learning. The ending of the Michael Dell quote from above states, “... And if you are, I suggest you invite smarter people ... or find a different room.” No offense to our friends and peers for I am sure they have valuable insight to offer; however, I would highly advise all young business professionals to find rooms with older and wiser business people. If we want to close the generational gap with more seasoned business professionals, we as young millennials must learn their culture, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Not to mention, associating with wise and successful business professionals will greatly aid in your own development and growth as a successful professional. It is simple; if young millennials want to obtain professional success, we must observe and mimic those who have acquired success before us.

FINDING A MENTOR

A mentor can be described as an experienced and trusted adviser. Podcast host and Keynote speaker Julian Palcino once stated at a presentation, “Having mentors is the key element to success.” According to MicroMentor.org, author Lisa Quast states, “Employees who received mentoring were promoted FIVE times more often than people who didn’t have mentors.” MiroMentor also noted that in the case of entrepreneurs, “Those who received mentoring increased their revenue by an average of \$47,000, or 106%,” and, those who did not receive mentoring only increased their revenue by an average of \$6,600, or 14%.”

Now, the stats speak for themselves, but why else is having a mentor important to professional success and closing generational gaps? They have already done what you are going/trying to do – both good and bad. I like to think of it as the “older sibling effect.” When growing up I saw my older siblings get bad grades, go to functions without permission, and disrespect elders. I quickly noticed the punishments for these acts were not something I wanted to be a part of so I chose to steer clear of them. Mentoring works the same way! Mentors will help you circumvent failures and shortcomings they have personally experienced while also aiding you in finding more success than they ever achieved. The truth is people are self-absorbent, most individuals love to give advice and mentor younger generations. They are helping themselves by helping and mentoring you. Young millennials just must seek out that valuable advice.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OF RAPPORT AND VALUE

So how does one find mentors? 2 things. Cultivate relationships and offer value. No matter if they hire you or not. No matter if they do business with you or not. And no matter if they can benefit you or not, always work to build a rapport with individuals you come across in the business world – or any world for that matter. In the workforce, long lasting relationships will go exponentially further than simple monetary gains, so do not be blinded by the money. For example, I have one business associate that has never directly hired me for a project nor has he ever put money directly in my pocket. However, he has led me to multiple paying clients, put me in rooms with individuals higher on the totem pole, and has mentored me on various occasions about multiple business topics. I believe he was willing to offer these opportunities and advice not because I was a service provider he could pay for but because I was a friend and mentee he had a relationship with.

So, remember whether it is an employer, client, or just someone you met in passing at a networking event; always work to build a rapport. Send emails to people you received business cards from to initiate contact – do it as soon as possible while you're still fresh on their minds and use where you all met as the subject line. Also send follow up emails simply to check in with people, it will go a long way in building a relationship. In small talk, be interested in the other person – once again people are self-absorbed. Recall small stories about people and their families. For example, if boss John went on a weekend fishing trip and told you about it, be sure to ask him about it once he is back in the office. It is the little things that matter most.

Make a note of 7 individuals who are older and wiser business people. Send them a follow up email simply to check in on them. These individuals could be clients, bosses, colleagues, former elder classmates, or past instructors. Keep the email short and do not ask for and/or sale them anything!

From there many of the people you reached out to will be “battered up” and appreciative of you reaching out to them. Take this opportunity to set up a meeting or continue the conversation through the email thread. From there you are much closer to building a better rapport and gaining valuable insight from those you follow-up with. This would be the perfect time to ask a question if you had one because again, people are self-absorbed; since you have showed initial interest in them often times than not they will reciprocate the interest by helping you. And maybe even become a mentor.

WHAT'S YOUR VALUE?

Contrary to popular belief, a successful mentorship is a mutually beneficial relationship. So, my question to you is, what do you have to offer? What do you have that can benefit a wiser elder business professional? Is it a service, product, or skill? For me, my video production competencies are of value to mentors in and out of the video production sector. For example, I have one mentor who runs a very similar business as I; however, he is 7 years older and has about 5 more years of business experience. His mentoring and sage advice on topics both professional and personal are invaluable because he is literally positioned where I will plan to be in the very near future. I bring value to him by subcontracting on gigs and offering production skills he may lack. I am literally generating revenue for his business. Nevertheless, it is a win-win situation because I can sponge up any knowledge he has to offer while also subcontracting – and not to mention contracting comes with a nice paycheck.

Offering value to those outside of your sector can be even more beneficial to the mentor for you may possess knowledge or skills they lack completely. So once again, what do you have of value to offer? Not sure yet? Well, young millennials are products of the information and digital media age, so I am 100% positive you possess some type of technological skill that can be beneficial to more seasoned generation professionals. Maybe it's social media management, software development, or just knowing tendencies of the millennial demographic; I know you have some skill that is of value in the marketplace. Now go out and use it! If you still don't know what that skill is, no worries, we will talk about marketable skills in the next chapter.

I firmly believe, that many of my clients willingly offer me mentoring advice, without my asking, because I have built a rapport with them and I possess a skill that has value. My video production skills give my clients great marketing materials that are sure to improve their ROI (Return on Investment.) Therefore, some are taking the initiative to be a mentor because they understand that the mentorship will be mutually beneficial. Many elder professionals also notice my drive for success and want to aid me on my journey. I am sure you will find elder mentors who will want to aid you as well.

EMBRACE THE DIFFERENCES

Generation Y and Z millennials are just different. Different from Generation X. Different from Baby Boomers. Even different from older Millennials. We were raised differently and in a different

time where information was at our fingertips with a Google search. Our beliefs and morals are different than more seasoned generations, as well as our way of completing tasks. With that said, Generation Y and Z should still embrace the differences and the odd combination of ideologies that comes along with working with older professionals. We may have the energy, willpower, and new ideas; however, older generations may have the wise counsel and guidance. Yes, most millennials can fix their problems with a Google search or a few YouTube videos. However, we should also embrace the processes and solutions our older colleagues and superiors will have. In any relationship, it is all about meeting the other at their needs; instead of always looking for what can be done for us, we should look at what we can do for others—and sometimes that is just being open-minded and flexible. Making a generational gap relationship work is all about compromise and subduing one's pride. There is not only "one right way" to do any one thing. I repeat, there is not only "one right way" to do any one thing. When we subdue our pride, we learn to be more open to the ways and processes of older generations. And if using the ways and processes of more seasoned generations helps the results and you too are benefited, then it was well worth subduing your pride. As author Lee Caraher said in her book *Millennials and Management*, "Catering to is not caving in if it works for everyone and improves the outcome." So, embrace the differences between generations and look out for improved outcomes!

AN OLD SOUL

I contribute much of my success academically and professionally to being a young man with an old soul. When the phrase "old soul" is Google searched, the following description is found, "old souls have little time and interest for the short-lived things in life, as they bring little meaning or long-lasting fulfillment for them." While in college and through the first part of my young adult years, I have found little to no enjoyment in the short-lived activities my peers partake in. The lack of distractions has allowed me to have laser focus professionally and has afforded me opportunities that I would not have had otherwise. I do not contribute this trait to genetics, or culture, or gender. I do directly correlate it to my association with older individuals. Being the youngest of three children, other than at school, I was always the youngest person in the room. When I was younger I tagged along with my brother and sister's older friends and now that has now turned into me "tagging along" with more-seasoned wiser adults. By always associating with older people, my thinking habits were always 5+ years ahead of my peers. For example, while in high school my peers were focused exploring the opposite gender, getting quick service food jobs, and making cool prom invitations; I was focusing on monetizing my passion and getting credit to graduate college early. While in college, my peers were focused on joining organizations, going to class, and trying new drugs; I was starting a business and already paying back my student loans. And

now my peers are focusing on securing their first real-world job, while I am scaling a business, writing books, and investing profusely to acquire financial freedom by 30! I am not attempting to look like the golden child or tell you not to party in college – I’m not and I did. I am telling you that by associating with older individuals you will start to pick up on their line of thinking which will better prepare you for early success—professionally, financially, and mentally.

Very similar to a mentorship, associating with older individuals is beneficial because they have been where you want to go and they can tell you where to avoid. Their experiential knowledge is invaluable to someone who wants to take the same or similar path. For example, would it not be logical for a high school student to associate with more college students, or an engaged person to spend time with married couples, or a soon to-be business owner to hang out with some entrepreneurs. Simply put, young millennials should not only associate with other young millennials. It is the blind leading the blind. Instead young millennials should ingratiate themselves with older individuals who can help them level up via experiential knowledge and wisdom. Once I started my business, a large majority of my clients were older entrepreneurs. Every meeting, text, phone call, lunch outing, and work days, I could takeaway information by spending time with these more seasoned business owners. Of course, not everyone offered or had time to personally mentor me; however, just by association I was able to sponge up so much valuable knowledge. Jim Rohn famously said something to the effect of, “We are the average of the five people we most associate with.” Mr. Rohn, was referring solely to income; however, I believe the quote holds true to the way we think, the sector knowledge we possess, the way we conduct ourselves and our income. Now I may be wrong, but compared to a young millennial, what type of people have a higher average level of business knowledge and income? Oh yea, older people. No matter if it is clients, employers, instructors, relatives, or family friends, Gen Y and Z millennials should work to associate with older individuals. It will help to close the generational gap in the work place as well as improve the millennials’ level of business knowledge, ways of thinking, and income.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, we are who we associate with, therefore; if we want to close the generational gap and gain success while doing so, we must learn to associate with older wiser business people. These relationships with older wiser business people will not spontaneously appear, we must seek out their wise council. So how do we seek council and mentoring? It is all about building relationships and offering value. Be genuinely interested in older individuals and always follow up. Slowly pursue their advice, always stay connected and once again follow up. We must also learn our marketable skill set and offer value to older people and potential mentors because contrary to popular belief mentorship is mutually beneficial. So once again, what do you have of value to offer?

Yes, young millennials are different from our older generational counter parts, but we must learn to appreciate the differences between generations. No matter if it is work, mentorship, or just casual conversation, be open minded and sponge as much information as possible. Also, we as young people must learn to be flexible and meet older individuals at their needs. Indeed, we may have our own way of doing things, but it may not always be the best way. Lastly, I know not

everyone will embrace the idea of being an old soul, but the least young people can do is associate with older wiser people to simply pick up on their ways of thinking. These older individuals do not always have to be willing to mentor us younger people, we can gain so much insight simply by association. So, let's get out there and cultivate relationships and start learning from older and wiser people.

RESIDENCY YEARS

Google defines a medical residency as a stage of graduate medical training completed in three to seven years depending on medical specialty. For medical students, residency is a time in their career development full of toiling, commitment, patience, and sacrifice. Not to mention this laboring residency takes place during the prime of medical student's mid-twenties. I find it astonishing how Gen Y and Z millennials are constantly ridiculed for our laziness, need for instant gratification, lack of basic professional skills, and other shortcomings, yet there are many Gen Y and Z medical students who squash those stereotypes every day during their medical residency. So, are they the exception or the rule? Many would say these highly educated medical students are the exception. However, I beg to differ. I firmly believe your average young person possesses the same toil, commitment, patience, and sacrifice of an educated medical student. We just need to learn how to treat our passion as a residency. But before we can treat our passion as a residency; we must first find our passion.

FINDING YOUR PASSION

Film director Spike Lee once stated, "I didn't find film, film found me." I believe this quote exemplifies how one should look at discovering his or her passion. Let it happen naturally or organically, or dare I said accidentally. I know for me, finding passions and paths in life have always been kind of an accident. Let's look at how I discovered my core competency of video production. All throughout my pre-pubescent and teenage years I wanted to be some type of engineer. Not because that was my passion or that I was good at math or science. I wanted to become an engineer because I thought it was a surefire way to make \$100k right out of college – sound like someone you know? Well, I did not become an engineer, I did not make \$100k right out of college, and I definitely was not the best at both math and science.

So, how did video production find me? My older brother has been an aspiring musician for as long as I can remember. Around my 10th grade year, my brother and his friend purchased a camera to start filming their own music videos. It was not very long before little brother was asked, okay forced, to tag along and help film the videos (That's the hanging out with older people at work again). I quickly noticed how fun it was and even more importantly, I saw that my brother's friends as well as other musicians needed music videos too. The light bulb went off and 10th grade me realized I was developing a skill I could monetize or making money from. I was not very good at first nor did I have a clue of what I was doing, but after a little practice and some self-teaching on YouTube, I had found a passion that I could potentially make a living on.

I will be the first to admit I was lucky to have stumbled across my passion at 16 years old. However, the important part is not that I found my passion early, rather, the important parts to take away are that my passion actually found me, I became good at it, and it was “monetizeable” (I’ll add “able” to almost any word; it’s the video editor in me). If I had one piece of advice for a millennial struggling to find their passion, it would be to not force it. Not to sound cliché, but the idea of trying different things to see what fits you best is true. Work to become self-aware and take notice to the things you like. Step out of your comfort zone and try many different things as you look to find your passion. Once again, step out of your comfort zone! For me, my passion for video production was always there, I just never took notice to it. When I was much younger I would make home videos and try to edit sports highlights on windows movie maker all the time. I just knew I enjoyed doing those things, I never saw it as my passion until it finally slapped me in the face my tenth-grade year. So, wait for your passion to find you, in the meantime find what you’re good at and monetize it. You never know, that may just be your passion in hiding.

Scott Trench, author of *Set for Life* stated in his book, “Develop a skill or career in a well-paying field that works for the time being. I’ll give you a hint – you’ll learn to love almost any career that you become good at and for which you are rewarded handsomely.” Scott Trench hits the nail right on the head when he says one will start to love a skill or job once he or she is good at it and monetizes it. I am sure you may have heard the quote “Chase your passion not a paycheck.” The quote may sound honorable and dignified; however, dignified and honorable will not pay your student loans or get you noticed in the corporate world – a marketable skill will. For those who say do not chase the money but focus instead on following your passion, I say why not do both! Make your passion your paycheck. And if you do not know what your passion is yet, become good at something, monetize it, and then search for your passion on the side.

WE CAN'T BE PICKY

Young people tend to have an idealistic outlook on life when it comes to things like marriage, college, and careers. I am not the Grinch who is here to take away your joy and ideas of perfection in life, I am simply here to promote realism over idealism. When it comes to our passions and marketable skills we must be realist about how we get our feet wet in the industry of our choosing. When I first started in video production, I was filming music videos for scraps. I filmed my first solo music video in 2011 with a contract for \$75. I brought a friend to help out and then the rap group shorted me on the measly \$75 –it was 5 people in the group, and they seriously could not come up with \$15 apiece. So, after getting only \$60 from the rap group and paying my friend \$20

for being there for “moral support” (he had no idea how to work a camera), I ended up with \$40 to film and edit a four-minute music video. I was balling, right? Not so much. This is only one of many stories of how my start with video production was not always ideal. I then started to film music videos for \$150 and \$300, but I cannot begin to tell you how many videos I filmed for FREE! No matter if it was for a friend or a “bigger name” in the local market, I did countless projects for free to gain experience and exposure as a local music video director. When young people are first starting to follow their passion, or monetize their marketable skill, we must learn to get in the door any way we can. We can’t be picky! I currently have an established video production LLC, limited liability corporation, and we still find ourselves doing work for “sweat equity,” a better way to say for free, in hopes of leveling up to higher clientele. So, whether it is an unpaid internship or unpaid freelance gigs, do as much work as possible for scraps now, while you work your way up to the table for the real “bread”—pun intended. Young people must understand our ideal careers and desired wages will not be reached overnight. However, there is good news, according to a 2017 Bloomberg study, median wage workers from 16-24 are seeing wage growth at 7.5%, which is higher than any other age demographic. Now these finding may be skewed due to retirements for baby boomers and job changes for millennials; nevertheless, the wage growth shows that young people are advancing in work and are getting compensated while doing so. Remember to not be picky when starting out and put in work anywhere you can. More seasoned generations will take notice and respect your hustle and dedication. Also, your willingness to do what it takes to get “in the door” will lay a good foundation for your future professional success.

10,000 HOURS

Now that you have a passion and/or a marketable skill along with somewhere to apply it, it is now time to #grind, #hustle, #dowork, or whatever motivational hashtag you want to use – just get stuff done. If you put your head down and work for the next 3 years as if you were a medical resident, I promise you will enjoy the benefits of your labor on the other side. The old saying “You reap what you sow” is very true. There are three steps to treating your passion as a residency:

1. Resist lackadaisical efforts
2. Sacrifice
3. Commitment with a side of Patience

In a medical residency, it is hard to give your passion lackadaisical efforts, you literally have the health and well-being of patients in your hands. Medical students tend to be diligent and hyper-attentive to their patient care and notes. Now, these characteristics are contrary to how more seasoned generations view millennials. They see us as lazy, apathetic, and unmotivated. However,

I believe young people have the ability and wherewithal to perform like a hyper-attentive passionate medical resident. Whether you are in finance, logistics, computer science, or a digital creative like myself, we have to resist lackadaisical efforts while laboring to be great! It will help one grow and succeed exponentially while also bridging the gap with more seasoned generations. Now, there is not a secret Krabby Patty formula to putting in work and resisting lackadaisical efforts. We have to understand that nothing comes easy, we must put in the work to receive the benefits; and not just any type of work, it must be a medical residency level of work. Once again, we must parent ourselves and make ourselves do the things we do not want to do; this time with a valiant effort.

Next is sacrifice. Just like medical residents, millennials must learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, and be willing to give up some things to become successful in the business world. I once read that, success usually comes down to choosing the pain of discipline over the ease of distraction. A medical resident's capacity to sacrifice can be summed up in the idea of delayed gratification. Delayed gratification is the ability to resist the temptation for immediate satisfaction in wake of receiving a greater reward later. For a medical resident, the greater reward to come is very clear; being a doctor, having a nice six figure paycheck, and healing people in their community. So, sacrificing a little sleep, partying, social media, and comfortability is a no brainer. For the rest of us, the vision of our future may be a little blurry, yet we must develop the internal fortitude to sacrifice some momentary distractions to benefit what we will accomplish later. Whether you want to drive a certain type of car one day, or graduate college on time, or become a professional athlete, or have the title doctor in front of your name; each of these "far-out" goals will require a level of self-discipline and delayed gratification. For me, I have sacrificed playing video games to have more time for reading and self-learning, I have sacrificed holidays with the family to film events for clients, and I have sacrificed eating out and new shoes for frugal living in the quest for financial freedom. Disclaimer, I will be the first to say ENJOY LIFE IN THE PRESENT in lieu of your sacrifices for future success, do not sacrifice your happiness today simply in hopes of a happier tomorrow. We must have balance for the present and the future. Nonetheless, we must remember that happiness is not something you should strive for, it is a by-product of success, productivity, relations, and growth. Now, to properly use self-discipline and delayed gratification we must understand the negative items that are stunting our growth to success. My negative activities included excess video gaming, the unhealthy attachment to the pursuit of a certain woman, too much social media browsing, and buying \$300 pairs of sneakers. I encourage you to write down five momentary distractions that may be negatively influencing your work, academics, or mental health

Yes, it will be beneficial to simply cut these negative items out completely, however, I have found it even more productive to exchange your momentary distractions for habits that may accelerate and enhance your delayed gratification goals. As I mentioned earlier, I cut back on social media and video games to develop a habit for non-fictional reading, and I replaced poor spending habits with frugal living. I challenge you to do the same by taking your five current fleeting distractions and replacing them with constructive life-long habits. Developing the ideologies of delayed gratification and self-discipline will not be easy. However, they are some of the most important characteristics for success in health, work, and life.

Lastly is commitment with a side of patience. We live in a day and age where young people expect instant gratification for their efforts. Our “microwave” society has brain washed us into believing that we can get what we want as soon as we want it. And when we do not get what we want when we want it, we are ready to quit that task and move on to an easier one. These instant gratification characteristics are not conducive to being successful in any area of life and lead to an ever-widening gap between younger generations and more seasoned ones. Instead of searching for instant gratitude for their minimal efforts, young people can learn from medical residents across the country. As stated previously, the average medical residency last three years while more specialized surgical residencies can last up to seven years. The commitment and patience shown by medical students to give up three to seven years of their twenties to perfect their craft is an admirable trait that other millennials should learn from. No matter if you are starting an entry level corporate job, starting a business, or beginning your teaching career, remember to begin those professional endeavors with the commitment and patience of a medical resident. The Great Wall was not built in one day so do not expect your career to be built that fast either. Embrace where you are starting from. Embrace being the youngster in the corporate office, embrace the badness of your first business, embrace the mishaps of teaching your first set of students. Those shortcomings will help one grow and mature, and older generations will take notice to one’s commitment and determination. Millennials cannot quit and run at the first signs of adversity or if they are not getting promoted quickly enough. Just like the medical resident toiling for three to seven years, it will also take time for your career to manifest. If you stay committed, have patience, resist haphazard efforts, and sacrifice momentary distractions; I promise your goals will come to fruition in due time. #grind #hustle #dowork

SCHOOL CAN'T BE YOUR ONLY TEACHER

“No amount of classroom instruction can ever match the experience you’ll get from actually performing a job” – Charlamagne Tha God

If you are looking to perfect your passion or further develop your marketable skill, college is a great place to do it. I understand that many will protest that a college education is overrated, overpriced, and underutilized. I agree with all those statements; however, from my personal experience I believe college is still a great avenue to learn about oneself, cultivate relationships, and create life-long learning skills. I would encourage a collegiate education to any young person looking to be successful in the business world.

With that being said, I would also caution young people to not solely rely on college or any other formal education to teach and prepare them for their chosen field of study. If you are going to school to become a medical doctor or lawyer or any other highly specialized profession, it may be difficult to gain experiential knowledge outside of the classroom; however, for the rest of us, I

believe it is imperative to our future success that we seek experiential learning outside of the classroom as soon as possible. As a media arts student, I was shocked to see my fellow filmmaking peers only creating film content when there was a project due for class. Do not fall into this trap, I repeat, do not fall into this trap. Schooling and class projects alone will not give you the hands-on experience needed to be competitive in the workplace. A semester is only 18 weeks with only a few class hours per week, it is simply not enough time to become a master at your craft; not to mention the other slightly less useful materials you will study. A millennial must take the initiative and seek out opportunities for experiential knowledge. For me, seeking out opportunities for experiential knowledge came in the form of starting my own business as a sophomore in college. I was able to film way more videos than I ever could with just class projects. I was also able to learn about client relations and develop basic business skills like email etiquette, marketing, management, and selling. I know it may not be feasible for everyone to be an entrepreneur or start their own business to gain hands on experience. Nevertheless, there are a variety of ways one can get experiential knowledge. Everything from self-teaching videos on YouTube; to just doing projects in your field of study for fun. Seek out internships that you can actually learn from or find a job with characteristics relative to your field. And when all else fails, just go do stuff! If you're a programmer go code stuff, if you're in public relations (aka PR) go to events and blog stuff, if you want to be a teacher go tutor people on stuff, or if you want to be a filmmaker go film stuff. The point is stuff and doing it that stuff. Remember to not rely solely on school to prepare you for your field of work, you must take the initiative and seek out experiential knowledge on your own.

ACCEPTING WHAT YOU ARE GOOD AT

Every individual has varying capabilities for various activities. Simply put, some people are good at some things while other people are good at other things. I know so far in this book we have discussed the characteristics young people lack; however, there are many more things that young people have strengths in. We should be grateful for our strengths and God given talents. We should embrace them and focus on making them better, and to be even more effective, we should also use our strengths to aid our short comings. For me, my short comings include being shy and introverted. I lack great interpersonal skills and I am not an initiator of social contact. These short comings have hurt me in both the women department and in business – I've made improvements in business, but still working in the women department. Nonetheless, I do have a nice sounding voice, I can project my voice well, and I am pretty decent with my syntax (Aka, I'm a good speaker). I used my physical speaking ability to help aid my psychological short comings with interpersonal communication. I have deemed myself as the "Introverted Public Speaker." The confidence I have in my ability to simply speak influentially has helped me gain the self-

confidence to start conversations with others and be a bit more sociable. I am by no means cured in the interpersonal skills department, but I have grown tremendously simply by using a trait I am good at. Whether you are really creative, super organized, a great planner, funny, or just a good speaker, use those gifts to help compensate for the skills you may lack for business success.

THE MOST IMPORTANT YEARS OF YOUR LIFE

In my opinion, the “residency years” for young people are from ages 17 to 24 – basically your first SAT test to potentially graduating graduate school and everything in between. As a 23-year-old at the time of this writing I may be slightly bias (okay, very bias), but I believe the “residency years” of 17 to 24 are the most important years of an individual’s life. Those years are full of so many first, tons of growth—or lack thereof – and learning. I believe these are the most important years of an individual’s life, because those years are full of major decisions that affect you for the rest of your life. The decision to finish high school, to go to college (I mean to actually go to class while in college), to have children, to get on one knee to the girl you met in college, to leave home, or taking that entry job, will all have a major impact on who you become. During these years, young people are extremely malleable, yet we are making major decisions that will change the forecast of our lives forever. I am positive if you ask any seasoned generation professional, what do they contribute to their successes in life; I can guarantee you they will conjure up decisions, opportunities, growth, and lifestyle choices of their 17 to 24 “residency years.” These years will have a great impact on all areas of your life, cerebrally, spiritually, financially, and professionally. For now, let’s just focus on how the “residency years” impact the last two. As stated earlier, 17 to 24 are the years in which most individuals choose to attend college or not. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 2015, on average, a college graduate was roughly 15% more likely to find employment and earned 55% more weekly income than a non-college graduate. Those numbers speak for themselves but let’s continue by taking a look at having a child during those “residency years.” I am no parental or financial expert, but one thing is for sure, having a child at a young age has a huge financial impact. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average lifetime cost of raising a child exceeds \$245,000, and to a middle-class family a child adds an additional \$14,000 to annual expenses. I am not suggesting if one should or should not have a child during his or her “residency years”; I’m sure there are pros and cons for both. I am simply pointing how that a decision to have a child during your residency years will have a huge impact on your financial trajectory.

Most Gen Y and Z millennials are malleable and are simply looking to enjoy life during the ages of 17 to 24. There is nothing wrong with having a little fun here and there, but we must

understand the decisions that we make during this time are the foundation for our adulthood going forward. Every action and decision a young person makes has a direct reaction and consequence that will affect the next set of actions and decisions that follow. Therefore, each decision a young person makes is amplified in importance because it does not stand alone, it has a bearing on all future decisions and actions going forward. For example, a young man chooses not to study for the SAT; this is the first decision. The first decision leads to him doing poorly on the exam. Which leads to him choosing to go to a college he did not want to go to because his first choice did not accept him due to the low SAT score. This leads to him being unmotivated in his first semester. His lack of motivation leads to poor grades. Poor grades lead to academic probation. And academic probation leads to him dropping out completely. After he drops out completely, he gets comfortable and complacent while continuing to live with his parents and finds a labor-intensive job making nominal wages. At the labor-intensive job, he has no desire or time to develop a marketable skill or his passion. His lack of passion and motivation may continue to lead to depression, complacency, and under achievement. Now, this is an extreme example full of assumptions and stereotypes; however, this is a dreadful cycle many young people face every day due to a few poor choices that have had a colossal snowball effect. However, if he made the decision to study and retake the exam after his first attempt and did well, the reactions and consequences to follow may be very different than the scenario outlined above. The choice is yours. Do not allow poor decisions to lead you into vicious cycle of underachievement.

Author T. Harve Ecker explains the chain of process on how we achieve the results; a parental blueprint causes feelings, feelings cause actions and actions causes results. Many individuals believe in this chain of process; they also believe that to change end results, for example the young man dropping out of college for low paying work, a person must change their actions. It is true, to change results we must change our actions; however, the course to changing actions goes a bit deeper. For me, the course to changing action starts with the gap between feelings and actions. Many times, feelings are triggered by external stimuli, those feelings lead to the internal decision to act. There is a gap between your feelings and your decision to act. To change our actions, we must fill the gap with knowledgeable materials, like this book and other readings, that encourage self-awareness and taking responsibility for one's actions. When you fill the gap with knowledge, before every action, you will have those little voices in your head giving you advice from the materials you read, heard, studied, etc. Simply put, we must be proactive instead of reactive. Reactive is letting emotions get the best of you and dictating your situation. While proactive is being self-aware and deliberate about every action you take – big or small. Life is a land mine, we must intentionally place each step in front of the other to navigate life successfully. Our residency years of 17-24 will be full of decisions where we need to be proactive instead of reactive. It is cliché but very true. If we fill the gap between feelings and actions with knowledge and deliberate decisions to act, our results in academics, work, business, relationships with seasoned generations, and life in general will improve dramatically.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, treating your passion like a medical residency starts with finding your passion or developing a marketable skill. My top advice for finding one's passion is allowing the passion to find you. Work to become self-aware and take notice to the activities you enjoy doing. Step out of your comfort zone and try different activities. Once you find your passion or marketable skill, work to become great at it and learn ways to monetize; make your passion your paycheck. When we first start to follow our passion, young people cannot be picky on how we get in the door. We must do whatever is necessary, even if that includes putting in some sweat equity. Once young people have somewhere to apply their passion we must put in the 10,000 hours and work like medical residents to perfect our craft. Embracing medical residency characteristics include resisting lackadaisical efforts, sacrificing, and commitment with a side of patience. Young people must remember to be hyper-attentive with our work, follow delayed gratification principles, and be persistent while embracing the rough starts. While developing our passions through medical residency style work ethic, young people must seek out experiential knowledge opportunities because school alone is not enough. Young people should go out and just do STUFF! Lastly, the residency years from 17 to 24 are so important because the decisions we make during this time will have a major impact on who we become. These decisions will be the foundation for our adulthood. For young people to make better decisions to springboard our adulthood, we must change and improve the information sitting in the gap between feelings and decisions. We can only change our results if we change our actions and our actions are directly correlated to how we control our feelings and decisions.

CUTTING YOURSELF OFF

Independence for young millennials is one of the greatest teachers for helping us transition from the dorm life to work life, building better relationships with older generations, and finding early success in business. I've read time and time again that leaving the nest and becoming independent is a major key to the shift into adulthood. Generation Y and Z is without a doubt a product of overparenting. Our parents intervened at school when things went south. Parents interfered when we were benched on sports teams. Parents intruded in our early romantic relationships. And most parents of young millennials gave/are giving more financial bailouts than the U.S. government did after 2008. All in all, overparenting and staying in the "nest" has stunted the growth to adulthood and independence for young people. The consequence resulting from this lack of "adulthood" and independence is business immaturity. This business immaturity has hindered our success and performance, as well as strained relationships with older business people.

How can we fix it?

We must wean ourselves from our parents. We must leave the nest. We must cut the umbilical cord. We must cut ourselves off.

MY STORY

My journey to adulthood and independence started with the decision to leave home for college. By going away to college, I quickly learned to fend for myself – sort of. My finances were still being taken care of by my mother and grandmother; however, everything else was kind of on me. It is a strange feeling to be alone on a college campus hours away from home, but it felt empowering; I'm sure many of you know that feeling. Some millennials let this time get the best of them which led to them succumbing to the lack of structure and oversight. Others excelled and took the first steps to productive "adulthood" by learning regular adult skills like laundry, grocery shopping, and bill paying. This time away from my mother allowed me to develop my own lifestyle and my own way of doing things – which I believe is a huge step in "adulthood" and business. I was becoming less of an extension of my parents and more of an independent adult. A small example is making the bed in the morning. All the years growing up in my mother's house, making the bed in the morning was not a priority or a tradition. So, I just never did it, because to an extent we are heavily influenced by our parents' beliefs and ideologies. In my dorm room however, I noticed that I liked it better when my bed was made. My belief started to change and I have made my bed every morning from the second semester of college all the way till now. This change in me

happened because I was independent and began to think for myself without parental guidance. I know this a very trivial example, but I believe this type of ideological change occurs with finances, religion, and business as well.

The next step on my journey to adulthood was moving out of my dorm and into an apartment. Up until this point the majority of my expenses were covered by my mother and grandmother; food, gas, housing, car, groceries, cell phone, and even clothes! The only thing I was spending my money on, the little that I had, was \$200 dollar sneakers and NBA 2K13 (man, I'm getting old). While I was living the high life in my new apartment with all my financial needs taken care of, my mother decided to retire from her Job of 20+ years. Instead of solely worrying about class, I started to also consider how will my rent get paid this month. My mother has not had the greatest financial success, and her retirement further magnified that problem. There was not a cushy retirement pot to fall back on plus there were still bills and rent on her end along with the bills and rent of a second-year college student. Nevertheless, I cannot fault my mother for her retirement, after 20+ years on the graveyard shift to support 3 children independently, she deserved it!

Indeed, I had financial aid and a few scholarships; however, the amount was not even close to covering all of my tuition, books, and living expenses. So, from the mid part of my sophomore year to start of my junior year my grandmother helped support me financially. But the support was less than when I had backing by both my mother and grandmother. Rent started to be late, I even had to pitch in a few times (spoiled 20-year-old me was so distraught), and overall financial support was becoming scarce. I was doing a few freelance gigs here and there to bring home a few hundred bucks a month but it was not enough to support me entirely. But, the entrepreneur in me would not allow me to get a quick service job or anything of that sort, so I was figuring out ways to make the freelance thing work.

Half way through the first semester of my junior year, my grandmother retired from work as well. She worked till she was 79 years old and definitely deserved it – shout out to my grandmother, she's a hustler. However, this left me without any financial support and I went into complete survival mode. I knew I needed to learn to provide for myself from then on. I also knew, I never wanted to go back to being financially dependent on anyone or go back to asking my parents for money every month. Lastly, I knew I never wanted to pay a bill late. So, I started saying to myself I just need to make about 600 bucks a month to make rent, food, and lights. From there, I went into full fledged entrepreneurial mode and started my first business with two partners, AUME Motion Arts, LLC. It was tough at first to make ends meet but those survival skills mixed with learning business and selling, led to some success. We started by wanting to make \$1000 a month then \$3000 then \$6000, and the rest is history.

The important take away is not how I was cut off, but the fact that I was cut off. Having expenses and responsibilities heightens your awareness and accountability. I will say that again! Having expenses and responsibilities heightens your awareness and accountability. I am not saying you have to go out there and rack up credit card debt and the expense of a new car to have awareness. I am saying for Gen Y and Z to take responsibility for our own financial needs. The awareness and responsibility that comes along from taking on our own personal financial needs, builds the accountability and survival skills needed to survive in the business world.

SINK OR SWIM

According to The Wall Street Journal, the average American family dishes out over \$6,800 to their post college graduate adults every year as financial support. If your family does not have those means to support you, great, you can springboard your own financial management skills. If your family does have those means, also great, but be wary that over reliance on parental support financially can possibly lead to delayed financial maturity. Maddy Dychtwald of The Wall Street Journal notes, “It’s true that financial help might make his transition to adult life easier in the short run. But this is a critical time to build confidence in a variety of parts of life, including around money management. Having to live off of what you earn and live within your means may be one of the best lessons in life a parent can offer an adult child...” I know money isn’t everything, but it is an important thing, and learning to manage it is a life-long skill worth acquiring early. Whether you are starting your own business or working sells for a fortune 100 company, success with each entity is predicated on making money. An overwhelming majority of businesses you start or work for are there to make and keep their money; therefore, learning to make and manage your own finances seems like an obvious predecessor to being successful in the business world. Cutting yourself off may seem tough initially. It may seem like you are going to drown in the pool of adult life full of expenses and responsibilities. However, I assure you that the fight to stay afloat will leave you better off in the long run. By fighting to stay afloat I learned frugally, self-discipline, money management, self-reliance and culpability. All of which significantly aided in helping my business proposer. I know it will do the same for you.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, I believe the lack of adulting and poor personal financial management can be correlated to our immaturity and ineptitude in business. To be a successful employee or business owner we must first learn how to manage ourselves and how to hold ourselves accountable for our own wellbeing. Cutting yourself off allows you to do just that. As stated previously, taking ownership of our own expenses and responsibilities heightens our awareness and accountability. Again, the theme of this book is for Gen Y and Z to become aware of the areas we need to work on and then use accountability and self-discipline to improve the situation.

Tangent alert! I hear young people all the time complaining about their lack of financial savvy or their poor spending habits. Both financial literacy and spending habits can be improved by, you guessed it, self-awareness and self-discipline. To gain awareness and financial know-how we must seek self-learning and information that can elevate our knowledge on the topic – sorry folks, the

schools don't teach this stuff. We can also hangout with older people who are financially wiser and sponge up their knowledge and suggestions. I know this is not a finance book, so I will not elaborate fully but once again I believe to correct our spending habits we must become aware of what we spend our money on. We cannot fix a problem we do not track or make ourselves aware of. Therefore, correcting our spending habits starts by tracking every expense we make. Take a blank sheet of paper and for the next month write down every expense you have. Use this new-found awareness to learn where exactly you're dishing your money out to every month. From there you can use self-discipline to spend less in the areas that may be causing you financial hardship.

WE'RE DISTRACTED

From video games, to reality tv, to Worldstar hip hop, to Buzz Feed, to pornography, to Snap Chat, to Twitter, and much more, it is safe to say Generation Y and Z are the most distracted generations thus far. Believe it or not, the zombie apocalypse has occurred. But instead of half dead monsters strolling around, we are half-brained humans strolling around while mesmerized by the screens in the palm of our hands. Now, I do not want to sound like the grumpy old guy bashing young people for using technology – I am as guilty as the next half-brained zombie with a cell phone as an extremity. I simply want to point out how these technological distractions have worsened our relationships with older generations as well as how this phenomenon has affected our ability to learn and succeed. Once again, the formula for change is the same. If we want to become detached from the distractions of technology, we must first become aware of the problem. Once we are aware that there is a problem, we must develop the internal desire to change. “The starting point of all achievement is desire” – Ryan Stewman. And lastly, once the internal desire is there, we need self-discipline to use tips and hacks to practically enhance our efforts toward success. I am not going to point out the piles of statistical evidence that says social media and other technological distractions have a negative effect on one’s personal and mental health—I think we know that by now. Nor will I tell someone to stop using technology – that’s probably some type of cardinal law in today’s society. But it is important for us as young millennials to understand what steps we can take to lessen the negative impact of digital media distractions. It is also imperative to understand how Generation Y and Z can close the gap with more seasoned generations despite belief differences regarding new media.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media and other technologies are designed to keep us distracted for as long as possible and keep us coming back as often as possible. And they are really good at achieving both of those results. Our goal is to understand that these distractions have impeded our ability to learn, work, concentrate, and build relationships. According to a Microsoft study conducted in 2016, the average humans’ attention span has drop from 12 seconds in 2012 to just 8 seconds in 2016. Our ability to focus on task and people is decreasing at an alarming rate, and this decrease is directly correlated to the distraction of technology. I do not believe a few hacks here and there will change the course of human behavior from totally becoming distracted; however, I believe a few helpful tips will help you work and learn better as well as bridge the gap with more seasoned generations. Below I have rambled off several strategies that I find helpful when overcoming the distractions of cell phones and social media.

1. Take breaks to check your social media or cell phone every once in a while, when working; it relieves the anxiety of not knowing.

In a monologue regarding Millennials in the workplace, author Simon Sinek explains how Dopamine – a chemical released in the brain associated with addiction – is secreted when Millennials are using social media and cell phones. This means we are literally addicted to the random rewards from social media, email, and text messaging. Knowing that we are addicted to the distractions of technology, we can navigate more successfully our detachment. Going “cold turkey” will most likely not work, however, weaning oneself from social media and cell phone usage during critical concentration times will be more affective. For many individuals, working alone is the most productive way to work. However, countless young people have now crowded this alone time with social media and other technological distractions. As mentioned a sentence ago, going “cold turkey” most likely will not work. But allowing oneself to check in with social media periodically to relieve the anxiety of “missing out,” will help one work more productively between social media check-ins. Just remember to keep the social media check-ins brief and return to productive work as soon as possible. Keep social media check-ins down to twice an hour instead of once every 6 minutes—which is the national average.

On a side note, if you are constantly checking social media for a very specific reason, whether it's to check on a crush, an ex, or the score of the football game, just directly check that item and get it over with. Do not waste precious productivity time scrolling through your timeline amidst non-sense you are not really interested in. And lastly, regarding the social media stalking of crushes and exes, don't waste time checking on those who are not checking on you; just food for thought.

2. Do not check phones while class or during meetings, wait for the reward afterwards.

This is a tough one, but it can easily boost attentiveness and help close the gap with more seasoned generations. It seems so simple yet so many of us neglect to put away our phones during class, work, meetings, religious ceremonies, and even social gatherings. In classrooms and in the work place meetings alike, more seasoned generation leaders like everyone's full attention—and rightfully so. By remembering to put your phone on silent and out of sight, not face down on the table for you to check every six minutes, you will gain more respect and admiration from older professors and workplace leaders. Not to mention you will gain more information and perform better because you were actually more attentive during the lecture or meeting. There are no tips or hacks for this one. It is simple self-discipline to put and keep your phone away. Trust me, you will be happy you did. And Lastly, as young Millennials in the workplace we must learn to play by “Their Rules” – their being the more seasoned generations. If the policy is no cell phones, then it would be best to take heed to that advice despite our disagreement. It is hard for young Millennials to protest change until we gain the respect of our older superiors, and gaining respect starts by following the rules.

On another side note, we constantly check our Twitter, Instagram, and Snap Chat feed looking for the next post to peak our interest. There are nearly three billion snapchats posted daily and more than likely a similar number of tweets and IG post, however, as mentioned earlier, of those three billion we are only truly interested in a select few. So instead of constantly scrolling your feed while in meetings or class, just let an hour or so pass and focus on the meeting or class in front of you. Those select post we are genuinely interested in are not going to pop continually.

Nevertheless, if you have an hour or two where you are focused solely on paying attention to what is in front of you; you will probably be rewarded with the post you were anticipating once you open the app up after the class or the meeting.

3. Set times on when you can check it

For me scrolling social media was a major time waster, and I am currently still looking to find new ways to cut back. One hack I found to be successful was giving myself times of when I could check social media for the first time during the day. I am a morning person, so I wanted to declutter that precious time of the day to make myself more productive. The first hack was to not check Facebook until noon. By having this “start time” I built more self-discipline by following it, and I was 10x more productive by not allowing Facebook to distract me during my most productive work hours. My next challenge was Instagram. I have two rules for myself, I cannot check Instagram until after I have been up for an hour, and I am only allowed to scroll through my entire feed twice a day – this was working well to keep me off the app but then they made IG stories and I got readdicted all over again; trust me when I say these companies are really good at distracting us! Anyhow, the hour after one wakes up is known to be the most productive part of the day for most people. That is why I do not allow myself to check Instagram, or any platform, for the first hour after I wake up. This allows my brain to think clearly and not be distracted by the malarkey social media brings. I actually wrote 90% of this book during the first hour after I woke up. So, if you wake up at 6:30, do not go straight to your phone or computer to check your timeline or even emails, find productive task to partake in for an hour and then reward yourself with a little Instagram browsing afterwards. Mel Robins, Ryan Stewman, Shaan Patel, and many more successful entrepreneurs have all prophesized about the potential productiveness of the early morning hours. If all these successful and intelligent people believe in it, then there must be some truth to it. And you and I would be wise to follow it. My next Instagram hack is to only scroll through my entire feed twice a day. This stops me from having the urge to constantly check my timeline to see what I missed. Instead, I now look forward to the time in the evening when I sit down and scroll through my entire timeline for that day – not to mention the data you save!

Give yourself times where you are not allowed to check certain platforms. For example, from the time I wake up till noon is my anti-Facebook time. Write down your three most used platforms and give each a time where you’re not allowed to use them. These times should correlate with times you are most productive. If you are a morning person like myself, then make the times when you first wake up. If you are a night owl, like my business partner, make your times for after dinner until you sleep.

For me, these hacks have proven to be successful in helping productivity and in gaining the respect of more seasoned generations in business. These social media hacks used to limit the distractions of technology are rooted in the first principle of this book. To reduce media browsing when working alone, to not use technology during meetings, and to set start times when social media browsing is allowed sound a whole lot like parenting. Oh, wait it is! Parenting yourself! Technology and social media are positive aspects in our society, however, like anything in life, they must be used in moderation. Bestselling author Grant Cardone said something to the effect of, it’s nearly impossible for someone to be successful in our society with so much media excess.

We as millennials must use the art of parenting ourselves to limit the distractions that come with the ever-increasing presence of technology.

THE 5 LLY'S (LEES)

Unfortunately, social media is only one type of distraction amongst a pool of distractions that Millennials must navigate through on their quest for success in the business world. Video games, reality TV shows, TV in general, Netflix, binge watching, Worldstar hip hop, Buzz Feed, pornography, peer pressure, drugs, and partying are all distractions that can stunt one's professional growth and widen the gap with older professionals. These activities and more were acceptable to partake in during high school and college, sometimes in excess, because the demand on one's capacity to perform were way lower. Not to mention what was at stake then vs. what is at stake now are much different. Going to class hung over or unmotivated or just skipping because the new Madden video game came out the day before were normal and semi-acceptable in college; however, the business world works quite differently than the classroom. There's no arbitrary letter grades to reward your performance, or lack thereof, in the business world. Instead your performance is linked to monetary compensation which is used to support your way of life, your family, and yourself. Distractions as a business professional are more critical because that directly affect your ability to sustain oneself and family. Now I know you are thinking there are plenty of salary employees that have work ethics worse than hung over college students; and you are right. There are plenty of them out there. However, those people are not working to be successful or striving to level up, and neither will you if that is your attitude. Many may have failed to make the transition from dorm life to work life and are now distracted by Netflix, pornography, and fantasy football while they sit at their cubicle from Monday to Friday. That is not the way to business success for Gen Y and Z! That is why I encourage young Millennials to block out as many distractions as possible and look to level up as often as possible. (If you're a millennial entrepreneur don't even remotely think about having the work ethic and partaking in the distractions of an average salary employee. You will quickly fall flat on your face and be out of business in no time. Because as an entrepreneur our success and monetary compensation is directly correlated to the work we put in. Which is why I freaking love it!)

My 5 lly's of life are Spiritually, Cerebrally, Professionally, Financially, and Physically. I have learned to block out wastefulness by not partaking – or partaking less – in any event, activity, or distraction that does not affect me positively in one or more of the 5 lly's. If you are debating whether to participate in an activity, just think to yourself, “Will this activity help me level up Spiritually, Cerebrally, Professionally, Financially, or Physically.” If the answer is no, then do not waste your time on the activity. This is not simply advice to bridge the gap with older people in business. This is not just advice to be more successful in transitioning from dorm life to work life. This is just advice for life. No matter who you are or where you are, partaking in more things that will help you grow will exponentially cultivate your potential for future success.

I will be the first person to admit that this is indeed a selfish way of thinking and slightly Hedonistic. However, I will also be the first to proclaim that if you hinder yourself in one of the lly's at the expense of helping someone improve their condition then it will be well worth it. Ralph

Waldo Emerson once stated, “It is one of the beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” On the contrary, if you involve yourself with an activity that is a detriment to your lly’s without helping anyone, anything, or yourself level up, then there is no real justification for your actions.

The first lly is Spiritually. This is a more abstract concept but I believe your spirituality encompasses your faith, soul, religion, romantic relationships, and family. Activities that may enhance you spiritually are religious services, meditation, deep thinking, spending time with love ones, and feeding your soul with positive content. Now, I know some may argue that family and romantic relationships are not spiritual. I would beg to differ. Ask any married couple who has stood the test of time whether their relationship is purely physical or something more. I would bet 10 out of 10 times the couple will profess it is something more – that is spirituality.

The second lly is Cerebrally. This is also an abstract concept. Cerebral refers to the brain and one’s intellect. Activities that may enhance you cerebrally are continuing one’s education, reading, workshops, studying other great people, and challenging oneself to always learn more. I believe the second part of enhancing oneself cerebrally is managing mental health. That includes positive relationships, positive thinking of oneself, positive self-talk, and controlling one’s response to their environment.

The third lly is what this book is all about, leveling up Professionally. You can enhance your professional career by learning to bridge the gap with older generations, treating your passion like a residency, hanging out with older more successful people, and parenting oneself. Sound familiar?

The forth lly is Financially. Enhancing one’s financial position is not just making more money. It is about understanding money and understanding the way YOU think about money. Growing up as lower middle-class minority, I always felt there was a weird negative connotation associated with talking about money. As I have grown older and associated with older more successful professionals, I have learned that to level up my financial position, I need to learn and talk about money. To enhance yourself financially, you should learn how you think about money, learn to meticulously track your income, learn and track spending habits, buy assets, donate, invest, and save. I am not a finance expert but there are plenty of great books to learn from like Set for Life and Rich Dad Poor Dad.

The last lly is Physically (the area I personally struggle the most with; we all have our strengths and weaknesses). Your physical wellbeing is taking care of the current body you are in. To enhance one’s physical position you should eat healthy, work out, DRINK WATER, sleep an adequate number of hours, and eat breakfast. I know the last one is a weird addition, but I once read that three keys to healthy living is sleeping well, drinking tons of water, and eating a good breakfast.

Hopefully these 5 lly’s will help improve your life like it did mine; not only in your career but overall. Notice that when describing the 5 lly’s I did not tell you what NOT to do, instead I focused on what to do. I am sure you can think of a million distractions that will be of detriment to the lly’s, so let’s focus on the positives, block out distractions, and look to start leveling up.

On an aside, there are actually 6 lly's, the last and final lly' is Socially – I am sure some readers were looking for it. I struggled to add socially in because I felt that the justifications we can use to say certain activities benefited use socially are sometimes outlandish. Saying you leveled up socially by getting wasted on a Thursday night simply because it was your friend's birthday are the types of outlandish justifications I am referring to. Yes, in your mind you may have benefited socially but when you are puking your guts out or going to work on Friday with a hangover, how did "socially leveling up" affect your other lly's. Indeed, there are many positive aspects involved with interpersonal interactions and being socially hyperactive. But once again we must learn to become self-aware; decipher the positive influences versus the negative influences and use self-discipline to stir clear of social situations that may be to our detriment.

JUNK IN JUNK OUT

I am sure we have all heard the old adage of "You are what you eat." It does not take a functional medicine health coach to understand that the food we eat has a major impact on our physical bodies. I like to apply this same philosophy to our mental wellbeing also. What we mentally digest has a major impact on us cerebrally and spiritually. I always say, "We are what we contemplate." Simply put, the thoughts that roam around in our head all day are extremely powerful and ultimately shape who we become. I will say it again for those who were checking their phone while reading this, the thoughts that we allow to roam around in our head all day are extremely powerful and ultimately shape who you become. What is so dangerous for Generation Y and Z is that our minds are now bombarded by media excess that is full of absurdity. According to Entrepreneur.com, "Individuals ages 18 to 36 spend an average of 17.8 hours a day with different types of media." Not only is this media distracting us from performing work related task, but media is also taking us away from positive and nutritious thinking. I know this book is about business success and closing the gap with more seasoned generations; however, I believe both closing the gap and professional success starts with personal development. And in my opinion, there is no other way to best enhance one's personal development than taking control over one's thoughts. This idea is embodied in the Ernest Holmes quote, "Change your thinking, change your life." We all have 24 hours a day and 168 hours a week, we have to spend those hours doing something; that "something" will have a large impact on how we think. For me, my thinking did not change until I made a concerted effort to change the media I was digesting. I started giving less time to Worldstar hip hop, the "thirst traps" on Instagram, sneaker websites, Family Guy, and TV in general. By shifting my intake of media to items that promoted self-development and

spiritual attunement, my thinking changed from fight compilations, cute girls, and sneakers to more positive content. I went from following Instagram models to following Instagram motivational speakers. To be honest, I how many people will ever read this book, but the time I put into the writing and research helped fill my thoughts with constructive ideas about life, business, and helping my peers succeed – not to mention I learned a few things here and there and improved my writing skills. The constructive time I spent writing this book took place of the deconstructive time I would have spent giving likes to Instagram models I'll never meet or watching fight compilations. I like to compare the junk in junk out metaphor to video editing. No matter how good of an editor you may be, if the raw footage you have to work with is awful, more than likely the edited video will be awful as well. Our minds work the same way, it puts out what we put in. We cannot do better until we know better. Once again, we are what we think, so if all we do is think about sports, weed, sex, and social media all day, then that's what we will limit ourselves too. If young people want to grow and be successful professionally, we must change the way we think, and to change the way we think we must change what we mentally digest.

ACTION RECAP

In conclusion, the Zombie Apocalypse has finally occurred, and technology has taken over our life. Indeed, technology is beneficial and has a place in our society; nevertheless, we must learn to decrease the distraction of its ever pervasiveness. We must become aware of our poor media habits and develop the internal motivation coupled with self-discipline to evoke change. Remember the social media hacks laid out above regarding taking breaks, putting away devices, and setting platform browsing times. These hacks can be highly useful but each will take some parenting of oneself. Next, we have the 5 lly's; Spiritually, Cerebrally, Professionally, Financially, and Physically. If we learn to block out distractions and focus on leveling up the 5 lly's, our potential for success will increase abundantly. Lastly, young people must understand that allowing ourselves to be constantly distracted as adults can have catastrophic effects as oppose to when we were in high school or college. There is a lot more at stake for us now and the power for success or failure lies in our own hands.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this book is a curation and re-explanation of knowledge I have gained through experience and reading over the last several years. Hopefully you have obtained some insight or motivation that will aid in bridging the gap and finding success in the business world. If you enjoyed this book and found it helpful, please pass the information on to others. Giving the book away, posting on social media, or just by giving advice via word of mouth, I need your help in helping more young people succeed and bridge the gap.

As stated in the opening, my goal is to help young people, and I believe the best way to help Generation Y and Z is through the teaching of self-awareness, self-discipline, and self-development. Success with others – bridging the gap – and personal achievement – success in business – all start with “Self.” None of us are perfect and we will never be, but we should always strive to be the best version of ourselves each day. Happiness, success, achievements, and positive relationships with others are all by products of our personal development.

Young people are constantly scrutinized for our short comings in “basic skills,” work ethic, use of technology, laziness, and much more. I am not saying that the criticism is justified nor, will I say young people do not struggle in these areas, nor will I prophesize the reasoning for these short comings. I will however state that to overcome them, young people should learn to grow and mature. Growth and maturity are the bases for self-development, and to achieve growth and development young people must enact self-awareness and self-discipline. That is what this entire book is about. The cycle of awareness and discipline to increase growth and development which will lead to more success and a smaller gap between the younger and older generations.

Once again, I hope what I had to offer was of benefit to your business life and I thank you for your time spent.

~MA