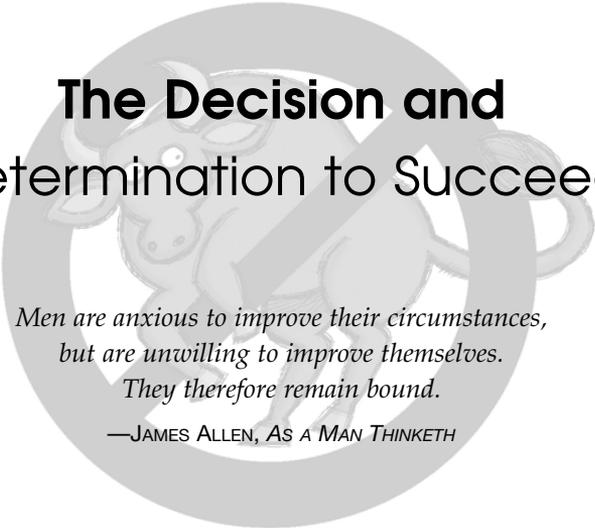


The Decision and Determination to Succeed



*Men are anxious to improve their circumstances,
but are unwilling to improve themselves.
They therefore remain bound.*

—JAMES ALLEN, *AS A MAN THINKETH*

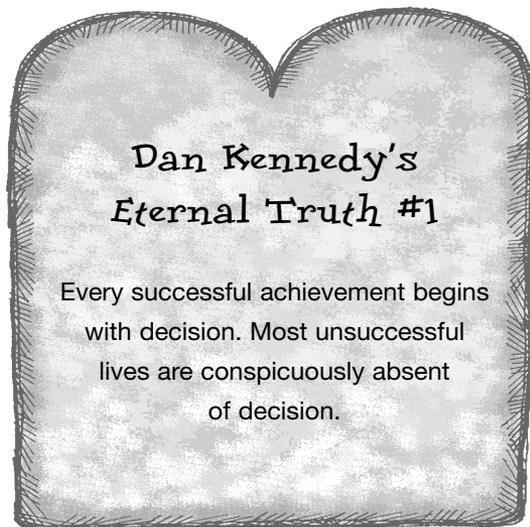
Contrary to a great many textbook assertions, having the best product, the better mousetrap, a whiz-bang new idea, the top location, the best market, the smartest accountant, the neatest bookkeeping system, a ton of capital—or all of them together—does not ensure success. On the other hand, having the worst product, a mediocre mousetrap, a silly idea, a bad location, a weak market, an accountant who can't count, a shoe box and paper bag bookkeeping system, or no money—or all of these things together—does not ensure failure.

I have seen people succeed under the most improbable conditions. I've also seen people who have everything going for

them still manage to screw it up. In all of these cases, it's the person making the difference. That's why there really are no business successes or failures; there are people successes and people failures.

Entrepreneurial Success Is Mostly a Matter of Decision

A partnership, friendship, intimate relationship, or marriage that succeeds or fails, a book that gets written or remains a jumble of notes in a drawer, the garage that gets cleaned out Saturday or put off until next week—these are all the result of decision and determination to make the decision right. Making the *right decisions* is often a lot less important than determining to make your *decisions right*. Only by making a decision and acting on it can you get into action and move forward. By waiting to make only



the perfect decisions, you remain inert and cannot move forward at all. To quote my friend, legendary ad man Gary Halbert, “Motion beats meditation.”

Most people go through life making decisions by default, choosing only from narrow options dictated by others or by evolving circumstances. One millionaire friend of mine grew up in a very small town where, as he put it, there were two career options: working at the factory or raising pigs and chickens. With only a few exceptions, everybody he went to school and graduated with chose one of those two options.

I am often amused when I’m traveling and get asked what I do; when I describe my job as best I can, I often get the envious sigh, the gee-I-wish-I-could-do-that, and then the laundry list of complaints and dissatisfactions from my fellow traveler about present career or business or life. I’m amused because he apparently does not know he can change those circumstances by decision. Similarly, when I told fellow travelers that I lived in “sunny Phoenix” (where I lived for more than ten years), I’d often hear the envious sigh, the gee-I-wish-I-lived-there-instead-of-in-X, then the litany of unpleasant things about their home city. This amuses me because apparently they haven’t noticed the highway signs in their town pointing the way out.

Successful entrepreneurs learn to be much more assertive, proactive, and creative in making decisions to change things as they prefer, to make things happen. If you are to succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to break free of your old reacting and responding mode and switch to the assertive, proactive mode. *You have to reject the entire idea of limited choices.*

As an entrepreneur, you need to reject every single piece of programming you’ve ever received about limited options or prerequisites for exercising certain options.



It's amazing how people spend their lives in prisons entirely of their own making, the key dangling right there in the lock, no jailer in sight.

I find it very hard to work up much sympathy for most of these “sad sacks.” I remember listening to a 40-or-so-year-old guy working behind the counter at a neighborhood convenience store where I sometimes stop for coffee complaining loudly—even poetically—about his miserable job, low income, and lousy lot in life. I asked where he lived and which way he drove to work. After he answered, I asked if he'd noticed that every day, twice a day, he drove past the public library, a gigantic repository of free help for changing your career, your finances, your life. As you might guess, I might as well have been speaking Martian. If pressed, I assure you, he'd tell you he was too busy or too tired to read, or didn't like to read, or had bad eyesight when he was in school, or some other pitiful excuse. Pfu.

Just for example, you probably believe that certain options exist only for people with particular educations, licenses, or certifications. Sure, you can't just up and declare yourself a heart surgeon or airplane pilot. But you can certainly be a CEO, and you can certainly make as much money as you choose.

Here's a little jolt: one of the highest-paid marketing consultants and coaches working with Realtors, a man who is paid

millions of dollars a year from real estate agents for his advice, has never been in real estate and does not have a real estate license. His name is Craig Forte, and he is a longtime client of mine. For four years, I had the largest business training company serving dentists and chiropractors, working with more than 10,000 doctors, but I am neither a DC nor DDS. I give you this one example as food for thought.

Warning: Your Entry Point to Entrepreneurship May Be a Handicap to Overcome

For many people, the decision to pursue the entrepreneurial lifestyle is the byproduct of an evolving dislike for their jobs, frustration with their bosses, or a sudden loss of employment. They may be downsized, Enroned, forced into early retirement, or just fed up enough one day to tell the boss to “take this job and shove it.” The employees-turned-entrepreneurs out of default or disgust lug a lot of mental and emotional baggage with them. The habits, attitudes, and behaviors that work fine for the employee in the corporate bureaucratic environment do not work well at all in the entrepreneurial environment and must be left behind. The reason why so many new businesses fail is that the owners are unable to leave their old attitudes behind.

Personally, I’ve only held one job in my entire life, for one year, immediately out of high school. I secured a territory sales position with a national book publishing company, a job that was supposed to be for a college graduate with sales experience. I got it through a combination of bluster, white lies, and agreeing to work on “free trial” for three months—no pay, no company car. Although I excelled at the work itself, by year’s end, I and my

sales manager both agreed I was fundamentally unemployable. Thus, I became entrepreneurial.

However, I'd always intended to be my own boss, and I was very fortunate to have some preparation for it in youth as my parents had been self-employed my entire life. Like other kids, I read comic books and filched my father's *Playboys*, but I was also reading *Think and Grow Rich*, listening to Earl Nightingale tapes, working in the business, riding with my grandmother on job deliveries to clients, and writing up my list of life goals. This is not a mandatory prerequisite to later success. I know plenty of wildly successful entrepreneurs who came from much less helpful backgrounds. But I did have the edge of clear intent from the start of my adult life and little time to acquire the bad habits of thought and behavior that most longtime employees of other people have to shed when switching to entrepreneurship.

I think that to succeed you must not only make a firm and committed decision to do just that but you must also decide to quickly, even eagerly, give up long-held attitudes and behaviors that fit fine in your previous environment but do not work well in entrepreneurial life. Although I don't swim, I imagine it'd be tough to swim across a good-sized lake while clinging to a boat anchor. Letting go of anchors from your former life as you dive into entrepreneurial waters is essential.

Why Trying Doesn't Work

Some people think and talk in terms of "trying" a business or "trying" out the entrepreneurial experience. Before achieving major success in business myself, I went through considerable agony, corporate and personal bankruptcy, stress, embarrassment,

humiliation, and near-starvation. If I'd been just "trying," just taking a test-drive, I'd have quit. And make no mistake about it; my experience is the norm among ultimately successful entrepreneurs.

Rich DeVos plunked down millions to buy the rights to an NBA franchise, the Orlando Magic, apparently to indulge himself. Every year for as long as I can recall, Rich and his lifelong partner Jay VanAndel have appeared on the annual *Forbes* magazine list of the 400 richest men in America. Certainly many envy DeVos as the wealthy, powerful co-founder of Amway Corporation, who is able to buy a basketball team!

But I wonder how many envied Rich and Jay when they were barely surviving in business, bottling a liquid cleanser in a decrepit gas station, delivering drums of the gunk cross-country to their few distributors in their own pickup truck, being laughed at by friends and family.

My student, client, and friend Jeff Paul most certainly thought about quitting and giving up on his vision of a successful mail-order business when he was awash in credit card debt, living with his family in his sister-in-law's basement. But he wasn't trying out the idea. He was committed and determined. He is wealthy today not because he tried, but because he *did*.

Another client of mine, who asked not to be named in this story, started in business immediately after going through a bankruptcy and was struggling. His wife even got their minister to try convincing him to "stop the foolishness, stop punishing his family and get a job." His business today makes millions of dollars a year. Fortunately for everybody concerned, including the doubting wife and skeptical minister, my client wasn't just trying out an idea.

My occasional client and one of my best friends, Lee Milteer, is universally respected and sometimes envied by her colleagues. Her career as a professional speaker and coach is thriving. As a speaker, she routinely commands \$5,000.00 to \$7,000.00 per speech. But when I met Lee, her speaking career was floundering, she was over \$35,000.00 in the hole, pawning jewelry to print brochures, and taking more calls from bill collectors than from clients. In the asset column of her balance sheet, she had little more than a burning desire and determination to succeed in this unusual business.

Although Lee has developed into a great speaker, I frankly know a number of others, more naturally gifted, more professionally talented, and more skilled than she is who failed in their attempts at the business. They “tried” it, couldn’t make it work, and went back to work in other jobs. Lee’s good-humored determination made all the difference in the world.

Making and Keeping Faith with Your Commitments

Succeeding as an entrepreneur requires decision and determination—total, unwavering commitment. To keep faith with this commitment, you have to develop and embrace attitudes, habits, and behaviors that are markedly different from most of the people you’ve known. You have to cut down on time spent with people who are not supportive of your entrepreneurial ambitions. Time spent hanging around fearful people, doubtful people, skeptical people can impair your ability to succeed.

You mean I have to change my friends?

Probably. And the books you read. And the television programs you watch. And a whole lot more. We cannot help being

and becoming a product of the ideas we associate with most—of the books and magazines we read, the tapes we listen to, the TV we watch, and the people we spend time with.

As thick-skinned as I believe I am and as much of an independent thinker as I pride myself in being, I admit that my performance and determination vary in relationship to what I'm reading, what I'm listening to, and who I'm hanging around with. Earl Nightingale brilliantly summarized all this, "We become what we think about most." If you are going to become an exceptionally successful entrepreneur, that is what you must think about most.

Another way to look at this is in terms of passion. The most successful entrepreneurs I know are passionately involved with entrepreneurship in general and their businesses in particular. They're in love with being entrepreneurs, excited about their products or services, "on fire" with enthusiasm—and that passion gives them superhuman powers.

This is one very good argument for belonging to entrepreneur groups, coaching programs, and peer advisory groups: you need regular contact and chances to share ideas and information with like-minded entrepreneurs who validate, support, and encourage you. My friend Joe Mancuso, a top expert in family business issues, presides over the national network of CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Clubs, which meet in dozens of cities and bring owners and presidents of midsized companies together. There's also YPO, Young Presidents Organization; YEO, Young Entrepreneurs Organization; Dan Sullivan's Strategic Coach groups; and, in many industries, specialized peer advisory groups, such as the one run by my client and friend Joe Polish in the carpet cleaning industry or Ron Ipach's group for auto repair shop owners. My own Kennedy Inner Circle Gold/VIP

mastermind groups, limited to 18 members per group, meet three times a year and have tele-coaching sessions other months. In these groups, entrepreneurs from diverse businesses—dentists, lawyers, painting company owners, manufacturers, generalists, pest control company owners and so on—come together to coach each other, and the results are amazing. I encourage every entrepreneur to seek out a coaching program or a mastermind group to participate in. Or, if you can't find one, start one.

You can greatly accelerate your entrepreneurial success and decrease your isolation-related stress by associating with other progressive entrepreneurs.

You cannot immunize yourself against the influences of the ideas of the people you associate with. There is no vaccination to protect you from negative, antibusiness thinking. For this reason, you must immerse yourself in associations that are in harmony with your goals and aspirations.

This doesn't mean you must socialize only with other entrepreneurs. I have friends who are college professors, corporate executives, actors, athletes, office workers, and so on, but I choose them carefully. They do not have negative attitudes about businesspeople; they do have interesting ambitions within their careers or are tied to other outside interests that are stimulating.

Unfortunately, you are going to discover that the majority of people, nonentrepreneurs, have a number of set-in-cement biases and frustrations with you, the entrepreneur. Let's talk about some of the big ones you'll run up against.

Accusation: You're a Workaholic

Most entrepreneurs I know experience great conflicts between their commitment to business and other aspects of their lives:

marriage, family, civic activities, and so on. Having two failed marriages in my background, I'm hypersensitive to this conflict, and I'm always working on ways to handle it more effectively. The fact—and it is fact—that the line between “work” and “play” is thoroughly blurred for the true entrepreneur and the corollary fact that the entrepreneur's business life is often, frankly, bluntly, more important to him than his personal and social life are a huge source of befuddlement, annoyance, and tension for those around him.

It's convenient and easy for others to label the determined, passionate entrepreneur as a workaholic—a diseased, neurotic addict guilty of neglecting nonwork responsibilities, of not loving his or her spouse or family, of being a self-absorbed ass. It's convenient and easy, but overly simplistic and certainly not very helpful.

In reality, the constantly working entrepreneur may be saner and happier than the critics. Most people detest their jobs, yet they continue going to them day after day, month after month, year after year. They spend the lion's share of their lives doing things they find boring and unfulfilling, but lack the guts to do anything about it. They live for the weekend. By contrast, entrepreneurs manage to stay involved in work so enjoyable and fulfilling that they no longer think of it as work.

The lovers, friends, parents, and others who throw around the workaholic label secretly resent their own “stuckedness” and try to make themselves feel better by attacking you, by making you feel guilty.

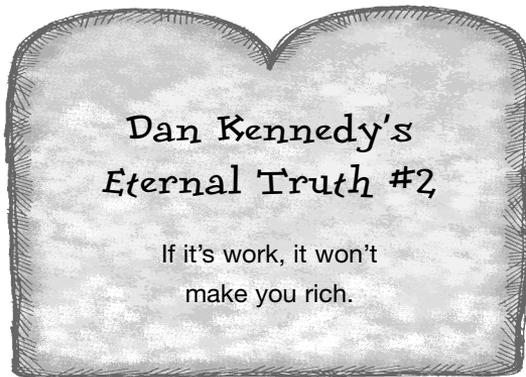
We could dismiss the critics as jealous, resentful, and unreasonable just as easily as they label us as workaholics. However, no one wants to go through life married only to a business. We need mates, family, and close friends. And they won't all be

involved in our businesses or even in business. We don't get to choose our families and, besides, diversity in social life is healthy and necessary. So, better understanding of ourselves and others, recognition of the special problem we present to others, and creative efforts at preserving balances are all very important.

The problem also, ironically, reveals the greatest of all secrets to entrepreneurial success.

One study done some years back by *Venture* magazine and *Control Data* surveyed and analyzed more than 700 entrepreneurs, all of whom had operated their own businesses for at least four years and had annual incomes of at least \$90,000.00. The researchers found that "the lines between work and play are obscured for most successful entrepreneurs." Not a surprising result. No survey needed. If you observe any successful entrepreneur, you'll find, for them, work is play.

One of the ultimate object lessons in this is Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Airlines and all the other Virgin companies and brands. He told *Fortune* magazine: "I don't think of work as work and play as play. It's all living."



This attitude is so foreign to someone raised and conditioned in or living the 9-to-5, thank-God-it's-Friday reality, you could borrow the book title and say entrepreneurs are from Mars, others from Venus.

Typical entrepreneurs are constantly initiating new projects, even new businesses, to justify the long day, to keep the game alive. They are not just motivated by desirable end results; they're equally motivated by the enjoyment and thrill they derive from the whole process of business. They love the "action." If this is workaholism, I'm guilty.

But, also, thanks to divorces, aging, long conversations with wiser people, and many other factors, I'm developing an appreciation for balancing that passion with other passions, so that I'm less guilty. And I've discovered a very odd secret. A difficult one for everybody raised on "work ethic" like me, but here it is: outworking everybody else on the planet is NOT the best path to success as an entrepreneur. As a matter of fact, figuring out how to work less is far more useful. Over the past ten years, I've been systematically shedding businesses and responsibilities, cutting back on involvements, each year warning my CPA and tax advisor to anticipate a significant drop in my earnings. But the opposite has occurred.

My Platinum Inner Circle Member and client Ron LeGrand has this saying:

The Less I Do, The More I Make

Ron is a hugely successful real estate investor and entrepreneur, juggling literally hundreds of projects.

You have to be very careful about how you interpret this particular adage. You can't take it literally, cut your work hours in half, sleep in a hammock, and expect your income to leap up. But there are many applications of this idea that work brilliantly. For

example, the less you do that others could do—the more you do that only you can do—the more you make. Or, the less you do that feels too much like uninteresting, unfulfilling work and the more you do that feels like fun, the more you make.

Succeeding in business is a real magic trick. Succeeding in business and having a balanced life is an even greater, more challenging, more worthwhile trick. Because anything and everything is possible for the determined person, why not set your sights on the very best?

Some entrepreneurs manage to involve those close to them in their work-absorbed behavior. Tom Monaghan, the founder of Domino's Pizza, gratefully tells of his wife's patience when he would always choose a pizza joint to check out whenever they were traveling or on vacation. Some fortunate couples share the same entrepreneurial passion and have that work for them.

But what if you're making the big transition from employee to entrepreneur with a spouse who is happy with your old behavior? Or what if you're involved with someone who cannot survive in a relationship dominated by your entrepreneurial passion?

Some of these relationships end. If yours is to survive, you need to be very aware of the strain that your new entrepreneurial personality, passion, and lifestyle is going to create and take proactive, preventive steps to make up for it. Then hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst.

Perception: You're a Wild-Eyed Risk Taker, a Riverboat Gambler. Have You Lost Your Mind?

One of the things that frightens many people and their loved ones about choosing the entrepreneurial lifestyle is the risk. It's

interesting that our society chooses the cautious “be careful” as a means of saying goodbye to a friend. We don’t say “be successful” or “be happy;” we say, “be careful.”

The true entrepreneur prefers to be adventurous and “fail forward” all the time. Running a business *is* a risk, but it needn’t be foolhardy. I rarely make a decision without considering everything from the best-case scenario to the worst-case scenario. I try to expect the best and insure against the worst.

Most people see things as black or white: someone is either the meek and mild Clark Kent or the strong and daring Superman. They try to see themselves instantly turning from Kent to Superman and have understandable difficulty conceiving and believing in such a miraculous transition.

Such dramatic overnight makeovers rarely occur. People grow into and with their new roles. You *can* start from where you are and grow to where you want to be. Anxiety about the risks inherent in business is natural. But the real objective of the entrepreneur is to *manage* risk, not to *take* risk.

Everybody manages risk every day. For example, statistics indicate that the risk of having a home fire during a lifetime is very high. Some people sensibly manage this risk by installing smoke and heat detectors, checking the batteries periodically, keeping an escape ladder in the hall closet, devising and rehearsing an escape plan with the kids, having surge protectors for major appliances, and so on. This is thorough risk management.

Other people just install a smoke detector and forget about it. They are managing the risk to a lesser degree.

Still others do nothing at all. They *take* the risk.

The successful entrepreneur deals with carefully calculated, measured risk. He demands accurate, complete information from



As an aside, let me give you an important observation about how entrepreneurs get into trouble more often than not: they fail to gather readily available information before making decisions and commitments. As a consultant, I can usually stump most clients with just three questions about the history of their planned business ventures. Very few people bother to do any homework. They merely have an idea and act on it, like a child grabbing candy from a grocery store shelf on impulse.

I'm unceasingly amazed at the people who start businesses without even studying the history of the industry they've chosen to enter. Far too many entrepreneurs fritter away far too much time needlessly inventing and experimenting when they could be implementing because they don't know much about anything that happened before yesterday!

Information gathering is a very important task for the entrepreneur. I realize it sounds dull, feels slow, but nevertheless, the quality of information you amass and consider will have a great deal of impact on the outcome of your decisions. At www.nobsbooks.com/free, I've posted a *Guide to Research Sources for Entrepreneurs*, which you can download free of charge. It's on the Internet so we can periodically update it.

associates and advisors and welcomes input and ideas from credible sources. But he also knows when to stop and avoid the paralysis of never-ending analysis.

There's a balance between too little and too much caution. In J. R. R. Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*, the wizard Gandalf offers Bilbo Baggins an opportunity to go on a great adventure with the potential of acquiring great riches at the end. Bilbo responds with his perspective on adventures: "Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner."

Somewhere between the extremes of unbridled risk and Bilbo's total aversion to adventure, you will find your balance as an entrepreneur. As you gradually develop that sense of balance as a risk manager and decision maker, you'll find that you can function without much stress or anxiety.

Big Lie: The Price of Entrepreneurial Success Is Just Too Much to Pay

For some, that's a true statement, but for others, it's a big lie. There are some people who really will be happier and more productive in nonentrepreneurial roles. But there's also great misunderstanding about the price of success.

Every lifestyle, every choice has its price. The person who follows the old model of staying in a good job with a good company for 40 years may pay the price in boredom, frustration, and quiet desperation of unfulfilled, untested potential.

Today, people who try to stay with that model often pay an even higher price when a merger, acquisition, downsizing, bankruptcy, or even disappearance of an entire industry put long-time employees out on the street. They must tackle a dynamic, tough job market with outdated skills and face the

future without the financial security they believed was guaranteed to them for their loyalty and longevity. Entrusting your success to others in corporate bureaucracies is increasingly risky business.

Then there are the legions of “gray people.” I don’t mean aging; I mean pallid, pasty, near-dead looking. Every morning they march off to a job they have no interest in doing well and derive nothing from but an unsatisfactory paycheck. Every night they come home bored and boring. The price they pay is huge, but it is a slow, almost invisible dying. If you look close, though, you can see it in their eyes.

Yes, entrepreneurial life exacts a high price—often in ways everyone around you dislikes intensely. As chief cook and bottle washer, you’ve got nobody to call in sick to. While the employee leaves at 5:00 P.M. whether work is done or not, you can’t. If there’s a deadline looming, you must meet it, even if that means skipping dinner, your kid’s school recital, sleep.

In one interview, the daughter of Dave Thomas, founder and developer of the Wendy’s fast food chain, was asked if her father came to her school events. She said she doubted if he even knew where her school was! Yes, the entrepreneur’s family pays a price too.

However, I know plenty of fathers who are physically home every night and every weekend but mentally and emotionally elsewhere. Or who constantly concoct excuses to get away from their families—like golf, a game that clearly would never have been invented if marriage hadn’t been invented first.

The reality is this: you don’t get to choose a life without a price. There are options, but each has a different price.

There are two sides to the price of entrepreneurship. As an example, consider illness or death in the family. My father was ill

in his later years, and there was some real risk he might be suddenly rushed to the hospital and die without much warning. I knew, if I was en route to a speaking engagement or in a distant city honoring a speaking commitment, I would not be able to “stiff” the seminar promoter. My father would wait, and I would honor my contractual commitment. That never happened. When the time came and he was rushed to the hospital, I was able to drop what I was doing, buy a ticket without blinking, and fly across country for a good, lengthy, final visit. I also supported him financially, entirely, for more than ten years.

The person in a “normal job” gets family leave. The entrepreneur does not. The employee has one boss, the entrepreneur many. In many ways, the employee has it easier in doing the things in family life generally regarded by most people as correct and appropriate, but it is quite often the “odd man out” entrepreneur in the family everyone else turns to, to get out the checkbook and pay the bills the others can’t. His willingness to pay the price for entrepreneurial success is what makes it possible for him to pay the tab in a family crisis or tragedy.

The upshot is that you the entrepreneur must be prepared for, and rather thick-skinned toward, the criticism of the nonentrepreneurs in your life about the price they perceive you pay for your success.

The Decision of Autonomy

When you depend on others, you collect and store up excuses for failure like Harry does. Harry doesn’t like his too-small, in-repair house. He doesn’t like his five-year-old, mechanically ailing car. He doesn’t like the pile of bills in the kitchen drawer. He hates his job. He doesn’t respect his boss. But wait, the one thing

he does have going for him is a book of excuses. He opens it up and sighs with relief: *This sorry state of affairs isn't my fault. My mother liked my brother more and that gave me an inferiority complex. We grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. My family couldn't afford to send me to college.* And on and on and on.

This is called burying yourself in B.S. If you really want to be a success in business, you need to be *emotionally* independent before you can ever become *financially* independent.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, you must set aside your neediness for acceptance from others. Immunity to criticism is a "secret" shared by all the highly successful entrepreneurs that I know.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to set aside your "Book of Excuses" once and for all. Making money as an entrepreneur and making excuses are mutually exclusive, wholly incompatible.

The sooner you arrive at accepting 100% responsibility for everything, the more successful you'll be. Go take a look in the mirror. There's the man or woman—the *only* man or woman—who can make you happy, thin, rich, famous, or whatever it is that you aspire to. Dr. Phil can't *make* you thin, McDonald's doesn't *make* you fat.

The power you need and can have as an entrepreneur comes from eschewing all excuses never blaming the economy, the government, the competition, the timing, your parents, your school, or anything or anyone else for anything. Ultimate power comes from accepting total responsibility. When you believe as I do that circumstances control other people but not me, then circumstances won't control you either.

A very common occurrence in America in recent years has been Wal-Mart coming into a town and lots of little mom-'n-pop



I feel fortunate to have discovered a lot about this very early in life.

If I ever got an allowance, it stopped when I was still a little kid. I don't remember it. I do remember earning my spending money very early on. I picked strawberries and packaged tomatoes at the greenhouses behind our community, cleaned stalls at a nearby stable, and washed and waxed cars. I soon figured out that selling was easier than manual labor, so I spent my teen years selling. I sold business printing and advertising specialties, Stuart McGuire shoes, and a new plasticized, reusable carbon paper; and I became involved in a multilevel marketing company.

In my early experiences in direct and multilevel sales, I quickly found out that most of my distributors (even though they were 5 to 25 years older and more "mature" than I was) could not be relied on even to have the appropriate literature, samples, and other materials with them at presentations! If I wanted prospects handled properly, I had to take steps to make up for the others' lack of organization, discipline, and reliability; I had to have extra supplies on hand. This sales experience taught me the importance of self-reliance and the futility of relying on others.

businesses rolling over and dying. Their owners blame Wal-Mart. There have been protest marches. Books written. Much handwringing about behemoth Wal-Mart destroying small businesses left and right. All utter and total B.S. And here's the proof: there are small businesses who have thrived when Wal-Mart came to their towns. Why? Because they didn't embrace the



My Platinum Member and publisher of my *No B.S. Marketing Letter*, Bill Glazer, is case in point. In downtown Baltimore there once were 14 competing menswear stores, each independently owned. As giant national chains entered the market, 13 of those stores closed. The last store standing, one of two thriving stores owned by Bill, has most recently ably withstood heavy, direct competition from the giant discounter, Mens Wearhouse. In fact, his stores have enjoyed double-digit annual growth while his industry has been flat, and they generate per square foot profits 250 percent higher than the industry average. How can this be?

For one thing, Bill is an ingenious, aggressive marketer. But possibly of greater significance is his *attitude* about the competition, his conviction that he can always reposition his own business and outmaneuver the big behemoths.

excuse for failure. They re-engineered their businesses to do what the giant won't, to compete in a different way.

Entrepreneurial success requires a very, very strong sense of autonomy. The definition from my dictionary of *autonomy* is *self-governing*. Simple. Good. It says a lot.

For example, it says you make your own rules. You feel free to ignore or violate or at the very least, challenge and test all established norms of your industry. To ignore competitive pricing and, instead, devise a marketing system that has you selling in a competitive vacuum—which happens to be my “specialty” as a marketing strategist and consultant. You decide to do business on your terms, to fit your preferences, which I talk a lot about in this book's companion volume, *No B.S. Time Management*.

It also means you govern your own thoughts and emotions and do not let others dictate how you should think or what you should believe.

The truly legendary mega-entrepreneurs I admire and have studied exhaustively were or are intensely self-governing.

Walt Disney, for example, violated the established, universal, ironclad amusement park industry “rule” of multiple entrances and exits. Against all expert advice, he designed Disneyland with but one entrance and egress. Although he did not do so for purely mercenary reasons, it's impossible to estimate the enormous volume of souvenir merchandise sales that occur precisely because everyone must “walk the plank” past the stores and merchandise carts to get out of the park.

Disney resisted profit-based temptation and the urging of his own executives and bankers, stubbornly refusing to permit the sale of any alcoholic beverages on the park's grounds, instead

preserving the wholesome family atmosphere that is at the very core of the Disney appeal.

Walt was one of the great “Unreasonable Men”—a description that fits most terrific entrepreneurs. My friend and speaking colleague, Mike Vance, who worked closely with Walt for many years, tells the true story of Walt being told by a waitress that “something didn’t seem right” about the new Pirates of the Caribbean restaurant next to the ride. Disney then abruptly shut the entire thing down, shooed away all but a few of the customers, sacrificed revenue and created havoc, then conducted an impromptu focus group to get to the bottom of what “didn’t seem right.” It turned out to be the absence of fireflies, which Walt demanded be fixed by importing fireflies. Time and time again, Walt drove his bean-counter brother crazy, demanding things be done—often expensive and difficult things—to achieve the exceptional authenticity the parks are famous for.

Walt put Disneyland in a location no one thought could possibly work.

The cliché “he walks to the beat of his own drum” applied magnificently to Walt. As it does to Trump.

Donald Trump is so famous he needs only one name, Trump. Like Cher. Most established experts in commercial real estate development avoid branding their properties with their name, as traditional industry belief has been that doing so made it difficult to attract top tenants or to later sell the property. Trump has been sharply criticized and ridiculed for slapping his own name on every building he develops. However, he says that as soon as the Trump name goes up on one, its value pops up by 10% to 15%.

Men like these *are* self-governing. They break rules, rewrite rules with impunity, daring, and, often, arrogance.

Being self-governing is, in a way, a state of mind acted out through entrepreneurship.

I have a client, Stephen Snyder, author of the bestselling book *Credit after Bankruptcy*, who typifies or demonstrates the profound need for emotional autonomy.

Snyder painfully recovered from his own bankruptcy by wrestling with predatory lenders and gradually discovering how to manage credit scores, credit reports, and credit bureaus in order to buy a car or a home and get credit cards at low interest rates. He then determined there was a business opportunity in teaching his secrets to other recently bankrupt individuals. His wife loathed the risks of entrepreneurship, doubted the viability of his ideas, and argued relentlessly against his fledgling business venture. Virtually any and every business expert asked for advice reacted the same way: how nutty can you be to try and develop an entire business dealing only with *bankrupt* people?

Today, Stephen Snyder's company puts on more than 100 seminars a year throughout the United States, with 400 to 700 recently bankrupt individuals attending each one. The firm is responsible for bestselling books for this target market and even publishes a magazine exclusively for the recently bankrupt. His firm also organizes and provides home buying, mortgage, automobile buying and financing, and other credit-oriented services; individual coaching via telephone and the Internet; and even legal services for the recently bankrupt. His company is a huge success.

As of this writing, I am working with Stephen to produce and air his first TV infomercial. It may or may not succeed; it is an unproven category for the infomercial medium. But, as a good entrepreneur would tell you, nothing ventured, nothing gained!

Mental Toughness Required

The autonomy you develop will stand you in good stead when your business hits some of the rough roads. Which it will.

One sad truth about business is that you never finish with the same people you start with. Partners, friends, key employees, and others will fall by the wayside for one reason or another as you go along. You will outgrow some. Others will become jealous and resentful of you. I can assure you that, at some point, you will have to make a decision that will be very unpopular with everybody around you. Then you will ultimately decide that the only indispensable person in your business is you.

Recently, a Member of one of my coaching groups, a top DUI and criminal trial attorney in a major southwestern city, came to grips with his need to get rid of a soured employee. He procrastinated for more than a year, tolerating her bad attitude, sabotage of his authority with other employees, and almost constant criticism of his ideas. He argued with me that she was indispensable. She'd been with him for 13 years, knew his business inside and out. She managed the office, interacted with clients, even accompanied him to court. He had erred in letting this one person become so apparently indispensable, but it ultimately turned out she wasn't quite as indispensable as she or he thought. In the two months immediately following her departure, the number of new cases increased, revenues increased, other employees stepped up to the plate.

I once had to end a five-year relationship with a business partner who had been my closest, best friend. At another time, an 11-year working relationship with a lawyer who had become a friend and who had gone through many battles with me also had to be ended. I've had to fire long-time employees I personally liked. And I've had to put my foot down, have a confrontation, and endure temporary anger and tension in the work environment.

But, ultimately, business cannot be run by committee or consensus. You're it.

Being *it* is not always fun. But always necessary.

Hey, That's Not Fair!

A lot of people respond to their various handicaps, problems, and disappointments with the complaint, "It's just not fair." And it sure isn't. For starters, we don't get to pick our parents. There's a flaw in the system right there! Next, most of us aren't movie-star gorgeous. But all this pales in comparison to the biggest injustice and mystery of all, the frequency with which bad things happen to good people.

A young man, Donald R., an honor student, considerate, courteous, and athletically talented, had an accident on the high school trampoline, landed on his back across the frame, and wound up paralyzed in both legs and in both arms for life. He had to make a choice. He could have retreated into isolation, devoted his life to self-pity and bitterness, and lived as a helpless invalid. Instead, Donald R. learned to focus the entire force of his personality through his voice so he could use the telephone, the only tool that lets him travel anywhere in the world while in a wheelchair, to become an enormously successful businessman.

Dialing with a pencil clenched in his teeth, he became one of the most proficient telemarketers in his chosen industry. He supported himself with dignity. He made the money to have a beautiful home custom built with every imaginable convenience and gadget to help him function as if he weren't handicapped. He became an inspiration to others in his field and to other handicapped people. He was influential in his community,

generous to good causes, completely productive, and proud. He enjoyed an active social life and a happy marriage.

There is no argument that Donald got dealt a lousy hand. Bad things *do* happen to good people, and sometimes we have little or no control over such things. However, we *can* control our reactions to the cards we are dealt. After Donald had his accident, he dumped a few cards, drew a few new cards, and changed his hand by choice.

I knew Donald R. personally many years ago, when I was in direct sales. More recently, I've appeared on a number of seminar events where Christopher Reeve was another of the speakers. Imagine suddenly being dealt his hand. Going from a physically imposing, athletic, dynamic actor known to many as "Superman," to someone completely immobilized, wheelchair captive, totally dependent. He has still chosen to pursue a multifaceted career as a professional speaker, author, actor, and producer, even though the very act of getting out of bed is a Herculean project. He is even forcing the medical establishment to very reluctantly reconsider its position that certain spinal cord injuries are irreversible.

That's why there are always people who pull themselves out of the worst ghettos in America to become successful, prominent businesspeople, top athletes, and good family men and women. Oprah Winfrey is just one example of someone who proves this point. She emerged from the horror of child abuse to become the top female talk show host in America, a talented actress, and a savvy entrepreneur.

We choose our reactions. We decide what happens next. Complaining, whining, and proclaiming the unfairness of the situation does nothing to improve it.

I'm sort of an unjustified success. I'm woefully unqualified for just about everything I do.

As I recall, I got a C in high school speech class and probably deserved worse. I had a rather severe stuttering problem three different speech therapists failed to cure. If you had seen me stuttering and stammering as a kid, you wouldn't have wagered a nickel on my future as a professional speaker. Incredibly, I rose to success and prominence, including nine consecutive years on the biggest, most-envied-by-other-speakers seminar tour in America. The tour included dozens of cities each year with audiences as large as 35,000; I appeared with former U.S. presidents, world leaders, Hollywood celebrities, famous athletes, and other top speakers. By any reasonable appraisal, I didn't belong there. I chose to be there.

The fact that I earn a large income as a writer would be a heart attack-sized surprise to my English and journalism teachers. In total, I've had nine books published. My first business book, *The Ultimate Sales Letter*, has become something of a "bible" for advertising copywriters and has been continuously available in bookstores since 1991. That kind of longevity is rare. My books have been translated into five languages and published in 20 countries.

Over the years I've talked to a lot of people *thinking about* writing a book. Many hold back because they feel they aren't qualified. That's a double whammy—a self-image deficiency and an inaccurate appraisal of the way the marketplace works. Others have written books but not done what is necessary to market them. Generally, everybody's waiting for somebody else to discover them, certify them, anoint them, invest in them, instead of deciding to make happen what they want to happen.

I'm also responsible for the sale of tens of millions of dollars of merchandise each year through the advertising that I create, but I have no formal training in that field.

I could go on with other resume items, all the result of decision, not of qualification.

Personally, I prefer being an unjustified success rather than a justified failure.

One corner of my office is graced by a huge, stuffed Yogi Bear. He's there to remind me of his favorite saying: "I'm smarter than the average bear." That's me: smarter than the average bear. I'm not necessarily better educated, or better qualified, or better capitalized, or better connected. But I'm "street-smarter." Go ahead, I say, run your best at me. I'll keep figuring out new ways to win faster than anybody else can manufacture new obstacles! *That* is the attitude of the entrepreneur who makes it big.

Some cynic once said, "There is no justice. Only power." As an entrepreneur, you have tremendous opportunity to acquire the power of control over all aspects of your life. I'm not talking about the kind of power you lord over everybody—bullying power, brute power. I mean the power to arrange your life as you desire it to be, to associate with people you really enjoy and benefit from being with, to earn an income truly commensurate with your contributions, to live where you most want to live, and to travel or stay home. Your finances are not controlled by some corporate bureaucracy or the whim of a boss. You write your own paycheck.

I have, for example, arranged my business affairs so that I can take many minivacations, linked to business travel, as well as extended vacations without worry. I can work at home and let my office run itself. I never have to sit in rush-hour traffic. I get to pick and choose clients and projects.

You get power by deciding to have power.