

MSP SUCCESS

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*Shark
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Jeremy Valverde, Owner, Affinity Tech Solutions, LLC

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Is Success Obvious?



“Action speaks louder than words,” said Mark Twain. “But not nearly as often.”

Twain was a brilliant writer about the *obvious*. “Clothes make the man. Naked people have very little influence on society.” Also, “The secret of getting ahead is getting started.” Brilliant, but *obvious*.

The concept of “secrets to success” has been around for ages, with countless books, seminars, videos, movies and articles written on the subject. Yet, many in our society feel that real success is shrouded in mystery for the benefit and profit of wizards or only those with a special “success” ingredient they don’t possess: luck, a willingness to take advantage of others, a skill or talent you were born with.

Truth be told, this is all nonsense. It’s a lame excuse people use for their failure to achieve and get ahead in whatever their chosen endeavor is. Over and over again as I interact with, interview and study successful people, like this month’s cover story on Magic Johnson, I’m again reminded how mundane, ordinary and **OBVIOUS** the path to success in anything truly is.

Of course some people have advantages in certain ways. It certainly helps that Magic Johnson was TALL, but that in and of itself doesn’t guarantee he would be the stellar basketball player, athlete and entrepreneur that he became. In the same way it helps that I like to write, but it doesn’t guarantee I’d build a multi-million-dollar business and media company from scratch, having the ability to write sales materials (campaigns) that have produced millions.

One of the most unpopular ideas in our society to utter is that some people deserve the miserable conditions they get. They refuse to work hard, study, read and apply themselves. No, not everyone has what it takes to be a Magic Johnson, but everyone certainly can do things to make their life, health, relationships and finances better – but do they?



I’ve been in the “success” industry for over 30 years, 20 in the specific endeavor of helping MSPs with marketing, and here’s what I can tell you. My biggest challenge is coming up with new ways, new “wrappers” or ways of discussing, presenting and teaching OLD core principles of success. Truth is, there aren’t that many “new” ways to succeed. New businesses? Yes. New innovations? Of course. But the core principles of marketing, selling, time management, leading a team, providing service and value are all the SAME. This is why so many people jump from guru to guru, success book to success book, seeking **THE** path, but simply end up jumping around like a grasshopper with hemorrhoids getting nowhere fast.

If you want to achieve more in any area, have a look in the mirror. If you’re jealous of other’s success because you feel it was undeserved or that life has been unfair and held you back, be ashamed. Stop looking for a hack, a trick or an easy path – get to WORK on **YOU** doing the fundamentals and you’ll be shocked at what’s possible. ■

Sincerely,

Founder & CEO
Technology Marketing Toolkit, Inc

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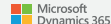
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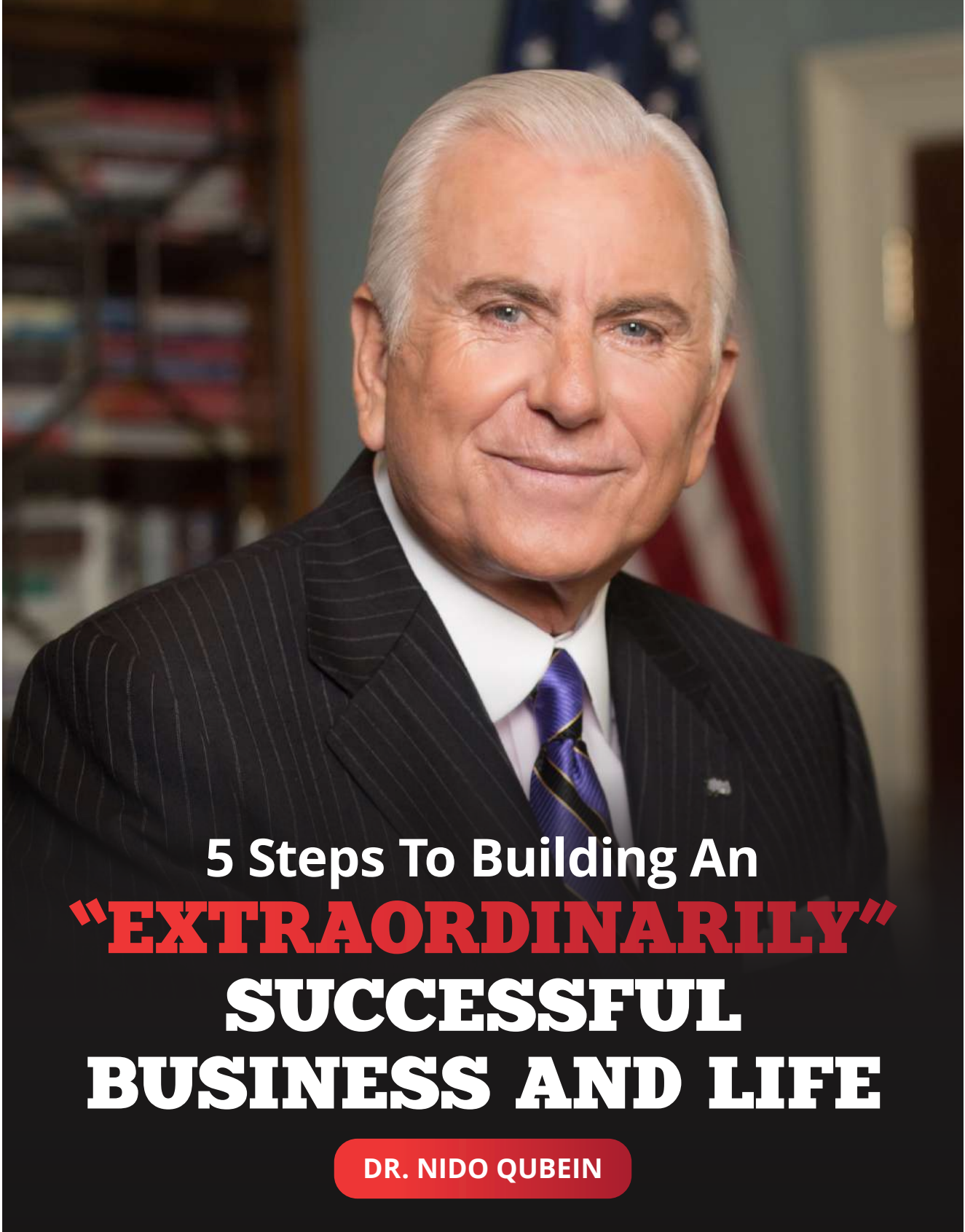
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5 Steps To Building An
“EXTRAORDINARILY”
SUCCESSFUL
BUSINESS AND LIFE

DR. NIDO QUBEIN



98% OF AMERICA WOULD RATHER BE COMFORTABLE THAN BE EXCELLENT. ISN'T THAT SAD?

Dr. Nido Qubein

Amongst a sea of sameness and ordinary, Dr. Nido Qubein, President of High Point University (HPU), gives the call to action: “*Choose to be extraordinary.*” Advocating this guiding principle to students and entrepreneurs, Dr. Qubein believes whether you have an ordinary life or an extraordinary one is a choice *you* make each day.

Dr. Qubein exemplifies what it means to transcend the ordinary. He transformed HPU from a small mediocre college into an explosively growing, vibrant university leading the pack in academic excellence, innovation, and creativity. No obstacle holds him back. During the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009, HPU experienced tremendous growth. Philanthropic investors generously and eagerly provided funding and resources, with gifts of over \$300 million. This wasn't a stroke of luck either. In 2020, while navigating the pandemic amid one of the worst economic disruptions in history (college enrollment was down double digits nationwide), HPU had their largest enrollment ever and was up 6%.

Being extraordinary isn't just something Dr. Qubein preaches to others. It's a decision he makes for himself every single day. And what an extraordinary life he's led. After his father died when he was six, he was raised by his single mother who had a fourth-grade education and “a degree in common sense.” When he was 17 years old, he came to the United States from Lebanon with \$50 in his pocket and little command of the English language. He supported himself with numerous entrepreneurial endeavors while attending college. His business ventures include growing a bank and Fortune 500 companies, serving as chairman of an international consulting firm, and serving on and chairing boards of national companies. He's authored a dozen books and delivered

more than 6,000 speeches. A philanthropist, he's served as a director or chairman of many organizations. His awards, accolades, and accomplishments are far too many to list.

But he doesn't strive for excellence and to be extraordinary for recognition or to impress anyone. “I want to be best in class, not because I want to prove anything, but because I want to lay my head on the pillow that day feeling I gave it my very best,” Dr. Qubein said.

Here Are Five Ways To Strive For Excellence And Choose To Be Extraordinary:



THINK VERTICALLY.

“Don't you dare think horizontally,” Dr. Qubein says. “If you want to strive for excellence, at a minimum, you've got to think vertically.”

With horizontal thinking, the way average people think, people don't think about why something is the way it is. While touring the HPU campus, a horizontal thinker will observe, “Wow, that's so cool they play classical music on the promenade.” Vertical thinkers demonstrate curiosity about why things exist. A vertical thinker would say, “I wonder *why* they play classical music?” Vertical thinking forces you to think beyond the surface, to dig deeper, and helps you improve.

To take it a step further, with diagonal thinking you connect the dots in such a way that you truly *understand* why something works or is successful. Diagonal thinkers “know so

much in-depth stuff that it makes this perfect jigsaw puzzle,” Dr. Qubein said. “That makes it hard for someone to imitate what you do.”



DON'T SEEK IDEAS, SEEK WISDOM.

The biggest mistake anyone can make in today's environment is to focus on gaining more knowledge. “If all you have is information, people will use you and *discard* you,” Dr. Qubein said. “If all you have is knowledge, people will only call upon you when they *need* you. But if you have wisdom, they will always respect you. And if they respect you, they'll always do business with you.”

At HPU, Dr. Qubein heavily promotes that every student has a success coach and a four-year Development of Life Skills. “Knowledge does not equal understanding,” Dr. Qubein said. “The reason we all need to be coached, the reason we need heroes, role models, and mentors is because we have to take knowledge, that is sometimes raw data, and turn it into understanding.”

Whereas you gain knowledge and skills from a book, a speaker, or a bootcamp, using a system such as a mastermind helps you to gain wisdom. “What you don't get today, you get tomorrow,” Dr. Qubein explained. “It's a continuum. It begins to penetrate your soul.”



ALWAYS BE BETTER THAN YOU WERE LAST YEAR.

If today the thing you are selling is the latest, the finest, the best, tomorrow it may not be because things are continually changing. Aiming to be the best in technology, Dr. Qubein spent \$90 million on technology for the HPU campus. To stay ahead of other universities, he invests in new technology every year. “It's a continuum,” Dr. Qubein explained. “I know I have to spend \$5 million to \$10 million every year, just to stay even. If you are just as good today as you were a year ago, you're worse off. You must be better than you were a year ago, just to stay even. That's the way the world really works.”



ASK YOURSELF EVERY DAY, “WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT ME AND MY COMPANY?”

Prompted by the fact that there are a million people in the world who can do your job, Dr. Qubein asks himself every day how he can be more extraordinary, more inspiring, more caring in each area of his life (i.e., “What's so special about HPU?”).

“What's so special about you?” he asks. You must constantly ask the question and constantly be changing. “If you don't do it fast enough, you become old,” Dr. Qubein said. “You start making excuses. You stop taking risks.”



DEVELOP A GROWTH MIND-SET.

Part of the HPU mission is that every student graduate with a growth and entrepreneurial mind-set so they will have the confidence to overcome any obstacle and be willing to adapt. When schools started shutting down during the pandemic, HPU figured out how to overcome this challenge. Knowing students are educated best in the classroom with real live faculty, HPU didn't merely shut down and go online. They adapted by booking hotel rooms and changing the way their food operation worked to keep students safe. They prepared to quarantine and isolate students if they became sick. They built a new health services area and had separate insurance for people that thought they might be sick with COVID. There were challenges, but they persevered. Families responded positively and loved it. “This is a time for us to inform our clients, to involve our clients, to inspire our clients,” Dr. Qubein said. “But mostly it's a time to be agile, flexible, and resilient.”

Extraordinary doesn't just happen. You must be vigilant. Obsessed. And accept no excuses. You must relentlessly focus on being better and striving for excellence every day. You can't think horizontally and expect to get the best the world has to offer. You must decide to think vertically, adapt, and continually seek to understand. You must control your mind-set despite the obstacles in your way. Dr. Qubein says, “You must raise the standards and choose to be extraordinary.” ■



**DR. NIDO QUBEIN
ON STAGE AT A
TECHNOLOGY
MARKETING
TOOLKIT ANNUAL
BOOT CAMP EVENT**



18 Laws Of Success From *Shark Tank's* Robert Herjavec

Serial entrepreneur, investor, television personality, and Ferrari race car celebrity Robert Herjavec has lived the classic rags to riches story. Today he is one of North America's most recognizable business leaders. But if you look at how the self-made multi-millionaire started off in life, you never would have imagined he'd end up where he is today.

Born in Eastern Europe, he arrived in Canada on a boat with his parents after escaping Communism in the former Yugoslavia. "My dad escaped from jail in a communist country and grabbed my mom and me, and we came to Halifax when I was 8 years old," he said. Arriving with one suitcase between the three of them and \$20, they took a train to Toronto and lived in a friend's basement for 18 months.

In his new country, he experienced a difference in economic classes and discovered for the first time that compared to everyone else, they were extremely poor. He spoke no English and was often bullied for his accent and unstylish clothing. To earn money, he delivered newspapers and waited tables in the 1990s. From those early jobs, he discovered that the relationship with your customer is the most important relationship.

He credits Warren Avis, founder of Avis Rent-A-Car for showing him his potential as an entrepreneur and for helping him realize that he couldn't be successful without help from others. "He was the first person to tell me that I was way (and I mean WAY) off base in my approach to sales, and I've never forgotten the lesson," Robert wrote on LinkedIn. "At the time, he took me to the window in our office and asked me to look at the hot dog vendor selling at the edge of our parking lot. He told me that I was acting like the vendor—pushing product and doing all the work to make a living. He followed that statement with, 'You need to be the guy supplying the dogs to all the vendors if you ever want to scale.'" When Robert left Avis at 25 years old, he received a \$60,000 payout. The biggest check he'd ever seen, at the time he thought it was the most money he'd ever make.

He got his start in technology after applying for a job selling IBM mainframes for a start-up company. Although he had

zero qualifications, he convinced the founder to hire him by offering to work for free for six months. He eventually rose to become the general manager of the company. But when he was fired shortly after, he used that as his motivation to start his first technology company, BRAK Systems, out of his basement. BRAK quickly became the largest Internet Security firm in Canada which he then sold to AT&T Canada (now Allstream Inc.) for \$30.2 million in 2000. After selling BRAK, he became vice president of sales for RAMP Network where he helped facilitate the sale of RAMP to Nokia for \$225 million. Receiving options for his help, he became a stay-at-home dad for three years before founding the Herjavec Group in 2003.

Today the Herjavec Group is recognized as a global cybersecurity operations leader specializing in managed security services, compliance, identity services, and incident response for governments and enterprises. A \$200-million company, his goal is to build it into a billion-dollar company.

Every book he's written—*Driven*, *The Will to Win*, and *You Don't Have to Be a Shark: Creating Your Own Success*—has appeared on best-seller lists. Millions seek his business advice as seen on TV, in print, on the radio, and in digital media—including as a LinkedIn Influencer. He shares his business expertise with other entrepreneurs as a leading Shark on ABC's Emmy Award-winning hit show *Shark Tank*. He also invested in *Dragon's Den*—a Canadian reality show where entrepreneurs pitch their ideas to investors in an effort to make them business partners—and participated in the show for six seasons prior to becoming an investor on *Shark Tank* in 2009.

From a poor kid with broken English with nothing more than \$20 in his pocket who didn't even know he could own a

**“TODAY WE DO WHAT OTHERS
WON’T SO THAT TOMORROW
WE CAN ACCOMPLISH WHAT
OTHERS CAN’T.”**

—Robert Herjavec

business to starting up technology companies worth hundreds of millions of dollars and bankrolling entrepreneurs’ inventions, his drive to achieve has led him to the fulfillment of a better life for himself and his family.

We sat down with Robert to get his advice on how he did it and how you can too. Here are Robert’s tips on how to create your own rags to riches story.

✔ 1. USE YOUR FAILURES TO PAVE THE WAY TO SUCCESS.

Robert attributes his success to learning from his own personal failures and being resilient, saying, “I’m a big believer in falling down 7 times, but getting up 8.” He also believes that you create your own success and that the only thing the world owes you is opportunity. “People always think success comes easy, but if you are an entrepreneur, you know how much hard work goes into your business,” Robert said. “Being an entrepreneur always comes at a price. The key is to use every challenge that comes your way as a source of motivation.”

✔ 2. LEARN TO SELL.

The difference between really big companies that grow and really small companies that stay the same size is sales. “My biggest challenge when I started out was that I was a very geeky technical guy, and I knew nothing about sales,” Robert said. “And I thought that as long as I was great at what I did, the world would beat a path to my door.” But that didn’t happen. Fortunately, when Robert was 23, his friend, Ross Marsden, who at the time was a global VP of sales for HP, took him aside and told him that despite knowing the technical side extremely well, if he didn’t learn sales, he’d never be successful. “That was a wake-up call for me,” Robert said.

✔ 3. LOVE WHAT YOU DO.

Building a business requires a lot of time and hard work. If you don’t love what you do, you’ll put off what needs to be done. Robert enjoys his work so much there’s almost nothing he’d rather spend time doing. “Fundamentally, I owe my success in business to the fact that I really love what I do,” he said.

✔ 4. SHOW UP.

While investing in yourself through coaching, attending events, and so on takes time, Robert says you must make the effort.

“The key to success is to show up,” Robert said.

“If you don’t show up, you can’t win.”



➔ **5. PUT A SALES SYSTEM IN PLACE.**

Business owners who don't have a sales system in place will not be able to scale their business and are at risk of going out of business. When looking to invest in a company, Robert takes the business owner out to dinner and asks them questions to see how good their business is. "One of the questions I always ask is, How do you guys get customers? How do you guys find new business?" Robert said. "And if the answer is anything along the line of word of mouth, I'm like, yeah, these guys aren't going anywhere. Because, you know who uses word of mouth or thinks that's how sales are done? It's people that don't know sales. Word of mouth is very difficult to scale and it's not in your control. Sales is not a foreign object that controls you. Sales is an extension of what you do."

6. REJECT MEDIOCRITY.

To make a lasting impact in your field, the most important decision you can make, according to Robert, is to reject mediocrity. Robert says "the road of mediocrity leads to failure," and "In the long run, 'good enough' is never good enough, whether in our personal lives or in our careers."

7. OUTSOURCE WHAT YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT.

If you're not good at making phone calls, outsource someone to do that. If you're not good at follow up, outsource it. Do the things you are good at and outsource the rest.

8. GET SALES COACHING.

As the owner or CEO of the company, you must understand sales so you don't get taken advantage of by someone. The way to get better at sales is by getting a coach. "I used to race cars, and I was an okay race car driver, but I never won a race," Robert said. "I noticed that everybody who was winning races had a coach. How can you get somewhere if you don't know what 'good' looks like? As soon as I got a coach, he got in the car with me and he said, 'Don't do that. That's bad.' And I'm like, 'But it feels good.' And he said, 'Well, do you want to feel good? Or do you want to win races? My job is not to make you comfortable. My job is to coach you.' And I started winning races. You've got to have a coach. You must get better at it. You can never outsource the knowledge of sales. You can outsource salespeople, you can outsource calling or campaigns, but you've got to know it to the degree that somebody can't con you."

9. STAY HUNGRY.

As you become more successful, it's easy to fall into the trap of feeling comfortable and becoming complacent. Always remember that there is another company looking to take business away from you. "One of the hardest things about becoming more successful is success," Robert said. "Because you know what happens when you have a little bit of success? You're not that hungry young person looking to take on the world. You get to a point where you look around, and say, 'I love my Tesla. I love

my house. My significant other loves me most of the time. Life is really good.' **Don't forget, there is somebody out there like you were many years ago that wants to take it away from you . . . The bigger you are, the bigger bullseye is on your back.**"

To remind him to stay hungry, Robert has a granite sign in his office that he sees every day which reads "Every day, somebody wakes up with the sole intention of kicking your ass."

10. ALWAYS BE SELLING.

One of the best ways to avoid becoming complacent is to make it a goal to sell something every day. "You can have the best accounting system," Robert said. "You can have the best CRM. You can have the best tools, but nothing happens until you sell something . . . so if one of your top three tasks every day isn't to sell something, you're going to fail. You may not fail tomorrow. You may not fail next year. But inevitably, you will."

11. CREATE A SALES CULTURE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.

While quality and customer service are important, too much emphasis on these and not enough emphasis on sales can be a problem. Robert tells his entire company that every employee is a salesperson and continually repeats this message to keep it top of mind. "We seem to have permeated this culture where as long as we do a great job for our customers, it is just going to work out," Robert said. "And I'm like, WHOA, it's all about sales. Everybody in this room is a salesperson."

12. WHEN STARTING OUT, PUT ALL YOUR ENERGY INTO SALES.

When Robert started his company, he made the rookie mistake of thinking his reputation would bring in business. If he were starting out today, his approach would be to make selling his #1 priority. "Our first year forecast was \$5 million in sales," Robert said. "And that was because I had sold the biggest security company in Canada and was a big guy in the security business. My head was this big. I figured I'll put a shingle on the door and people will beat a path to us. We won't have to sell because people know who I am. It will be easy. We sold \$400,000 our first year. It took us five years to get to \$6.2 million. In the next five years, we got to \$100 million. In the next three years, we got to \$200 million. If I was starting out today from zero, I would put all my energy on sales. I would try to really differentiate what I am, how I go to market. And I would have the confidence that once I got the customer, I'll take care of them."

13. LET BAD EXPERIENCES BE YOUR INSPIRATION, NOT AN EXCUSE.

It's not uncommon for people to shy away from something after having a bad experience. For example, some people say they hate sales or dislike selling because of a bad experience with

salespeople. But Robert encourages you to use these experiences as your motivation rather than an excuse for why you don't have a sales system in place or why sales isn't a high priority. "I had a very negative experience when I was 12 years old when this door-to-door salesman sold my mom a vacuum cleaner," Robert said. "She didn't speak any English. She couldn't read English. So, she signed a contract for five years—a layaway plan. The layaway plan was more than our rent. It was really devastating for us." Robert vowed that he would never let his family be in the position to be taken advantage of again. Today, realizing that you'll be extremely limited on how successful you can be without a sales mind-set, he uses it as a lesson about how people expect you to sell them something when you call on them. "One of the things we're trying to teach our people is when you call somebody, they know you're there to sell them something," he said. "It's on a subconscious level, but that's why you're calling them."

✔ 14. DON'T LOSE MOMENTUM.

You must keep moving the ball forward and driving revenue. "Only the road to success leads to greater success," Robert said. "And you cannot go down that road without sales." On the days when he is struggling with a lot to do and none of the things on his list are sales, he has a mantra to motivate himself. "One of the mantras I always say to myself is 'Constant forward momentum, constant forward momentum, constant forward momentum,'" Robert said. "The only momentum in a company is sales . . . There are multiple ways to drive revenue. For example, with existing customers, you can go wider, but it's all in the bucket of sales."

✔ 15. STOP WORRYING ABOUT SELLING TOO MUCH.

If whether you have enough bandwidth to fulfill the sales you make is holding you back, motivate your technical people with a pep talk to let them know that you can't stay the same and hold off on sales—unless they want to keep working at the same salary without any benefits or bonuses. "Technical people go to our sales kickoffs and say, 'But what if we sell more? What will happen then? We're struggling servicing the customers we have now; what if we sell more?' My answer to them is: 'Would you like a raise one day? Would you like to make more money? Would you like more opportunity? Would you like more opportunity for your family, for your kids, for you? How are we going to do that unless we grow the company?'"

✔ 16. DON'T WAIT TO START SELLING.

Many IT people believe that their product or service must be perfect before they start selling it. But Robert says this is a huge fallacy. "Engineers want to make it perfect before they sell it," Robert said. "True entrepreneurs jump out of the airplane and have the confidence that they'll figure out the parachute on the way to the bottom."

✔ 17. LEARN HOW TO SELL YOURSELF FIRST.

More important than your product or service, he says, is selling yourself. "*On Shark Tank*, entrepreneurs have to sell themselves just as much as their business because we invest in them . . . If whomever you're selling to doesn't like you, they're not going to listen to you . . . be the salesperson you'd buy something from."

✔ 18. STAY LASER FOCUSED.

For several years, Robert competed as Ferrari #007 for Herjavec Group Racing in the Ferrari Challenge North America Series. He achieved multiple podiums and even won Rookie of the Year in 2011. To Robert, building a successful business is a lot like racing cars. "You have to stay laser focused when driving a car over 200 miles an hour," he said. "And the same approach is required when growing a business in today's world of rapidly changing technology."

Robert's principles are valuable in today's competitive IT environment. His story demonstrates that anyone can succeed if they are willing to take control of their own future. Of course, from our conversation with Robert, it's obvious that getting good at sales played a key role in his rags to riches story. The good news is that anyone can get better at sales. Just like Robert, who admits he knew nothing about sales when he started out, you can become an expert too. In fact, he says there is no such thing as a "natural-born salesperson." In his book *You Don't Have to Be a Shark*, Robert makes the case that "great salespeople are made, not born, and no one in life achieves success without knowing how to sell." Remember to sell yourself first, listen more than you talk, know who the right person is to sell to, understand what motivates your prospect, and keep it simple. And if you're struggling with sales, get coaching and follow Robert's sage advice to get out there and sell something. Your business growth depends on it! ■



ROBERT AT A
TECHNOLOGY
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Small Business Values, Big Time Results: How Jeremy Valverde Created Affinity Tech Solutions To Give Back To The Community That Helped Shape Him Into The Entrepreneur He Is Today



Some people search for years to find their passion in life, while for others, it seemingly falls into their lap. For Jeremy Valverde, he not only enjoyed figuring out how things worked but grew up surrounded by entrepreneurs who loved to service their local community, meaning he knew from a young age that he wanted to own his own business. And thanks to this vision, today, Affinity Tech Solutions is a foremost provider of trusted computer support for businesses throughout Florida.

TRANSFIXED BY TECHNOLOGY

Jeremy has been taking things apart and putting them back together for nearly as long as he's been alive. "My mom likes to tell a story about a clock radio we had when I was growing up. I broke it when I was 3 years old and put it back together when I was 4. So, I've always had this love of experimentation and figuring out how things work," explains Jeremy. But it wasn't until his school years that Jeremy became interested in technology further. "The summer after eighth grade, I was getting ready to attend a career program high school

that had an IT magnet," Jeremy recalls. "I was extremely interested in this program, so I spent that summer buying every computer I could find at Goodwill, putting them together, and getting them to work." From then on, Jeremy enrolled in any class offered within the technology and IT realm, and thanks to these courses, in conjunction with his own experimentation, he was always a bit ahead of the curve.

Furthermore, Jeremy has been exposed to entrepreneurship all his life. "My dad has owned his flooring company for over 40 years, and I worked with him from a very young age. There's good money in it—that's actually how I bought all my computers—so I had always thought about opening my own company, but I didn't like taking risks back then," recalls Jeremy. "However, the feeling of completing a job and getting positive feedback from our customers and community always stuck with me, and this dedication and attention to detail is something I try to emulate for my clients today." As a result, upon graduating high school in 2004 and marrying his wife the following year, Jeremy decided to start his own flooring company. He did this until

2008 when the economy crashed, at which point he figured it was a good time to get back into IT.

After returning to school to get certified, he launched his career in enterprise IT, starting off as a contractor for Disney. The desktop refreshes and print service management at Disney led to him teaching himself programming and mobile development, which allowed him to follow a new opportunity—building healthcare apps for a healthcare consulting company. He spent five years doing this before shifting to a role as an International Technical Instructor, a position he held for four years. “I enjoyed the position for what it was, but I missed being home with my wife and three young children at the time. Plus, when you work for big companies, it’s very easy to feel like a number, so I decided to put in my notice in January of 2015,” says Jeremy. After going back to work with his dad for a few months, he realized (with a little extra nudge from his father) that now was the right time to embark on his entrepreneurial journey, and thus, Affinity Tech Solutions was born.

CREATING AFFINITY TECH SOLUTIONS

Going into business for himself just made sense for Jeremy’s situation. “Personally, I feel like we’ve lost sight of our neighbors and the people in our community. At least, this is definitely how I felt working for the larger corporations,” notes Jeremy. “So that’s why I wanted to create Affinity, because I could build the lifestyle I wanted while fulfilling a technology need for these companies and giving back to the community that raised me.” Since its inception, Affinity has been working primarily in the private healthcare market with small to medium-sized medical groups. “One thing that’s important to us is working with growth-minded companies who see us as a true partner in their business,” says Jeremy. “For example, if you look at our largest client, they’ve grown from 49 to 650 employees over the past five years, and when it was time for them to hire a Director of IT, I was involved in that hiring process. That’s a true partnership right there.”

Something else that’s been integral to Jeremy as Affinity grows is ensuring that no matter how large his company gets, it’s still based on small business values. “Everything is very hands-on for us at Affinity. Excellence is one of our core values, meaning we strive to go above and beyond standard expectations in every interaction. But beyond our commitment to delivering more value than what’s expected, we’re also extremely client orientated. So, every decision we make is always in our client’s best interest, which has really set us apart over the years,” explains Jeremy. He continues: “To me, maintaining positive relationships is more important than a short-term return. And this goes for our employees as well. We’ve developed a culture in the office where everybody is very in tune with each other and pays attention to how everyone else is doing so they can lend a hand when needed.”

"Everything is very hands-on for us at Affinity. Excellence is one of our core values, meaning we strive to go above and beyond standard expectations in every interaction. But beyond our commitment to delivering more value than what’s expected, we’re also extremely client orientated. So, every decision we make is always in our client’s best interest, which has really set us apart over the years."

And even outside the office, this positive attitude of support and giving back can be seen in every interaction that Affinity puts its name to. For example, one of the initiatives they’re spearheading this year is an electronics recycling program for the community. They’ve also partnered with their local tech school to provide job shadowing and career opportunities for students. “We’ve actually had two direct hires out of this program and one with a year of experience before she joined our team,” Jeremy states proudly. “I like helping people, and one way to do that while solving problems is to give back like we do.”

Looking forward, Jeremy is excited about what the future holds for Affinity. Currently sitting at 16 employees, he hopes to grow to the point where he can implement a management team so he can eventually be hands-off with the day-to-day operations and enjoy some vacation time with his wife. “We have goals of expanding through acquisition, but we also never want to lose sight of those small business values that have built us into what we are today,” emphasizes Jeremy. So, if you’re searching for a customer-centric, growth-minded IT firm that prioritizes supporting local communities throughout Florida and providing unparalleled service, look no further than Affinity Tech Solutions!

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12 "Magic" Strategies

Used To Go From Basketball Star To Billionaire Businessman

WITH MAGIC JOHNSON

Former National Basketball Association (NBA) player Earvin "Magic" Johnson Jr. is known for his strong work ethic.

When he was a kid growing up in Lansing, Michigan, he would shovel the snow off the basketball court just so he could play basketball every day. "Everybody in the neighborhood thought I was crazy," Magic said.

But the two-time Hall-of-Famer, five-time NBA Champion, three-time NBA MVP, Olympic Gold Medalist, and Founder and CEO of Magic Johnson Enterprises wasn't *born* with a strong work ethic.

Magic watched his father, Earvin Johnson, Sr., work two jobs his whole life to feed his ten kids. One job was on the assembly line for General Motors, and the second job was picking up trash. Magic and his siblings went along to help pick up people's trash on the weekends and when they weren't in school.

"It was a cold Saturday," Magic recalled. "My job was to break the ice and get the trash out of the ice and then throw it on the truck. It was maybe seven below in Michigan and was just freezing. I went and got half the trash out of the ice and jumped in the cabin of the truck and shut the door. By the time I shut the door, my father had opened the door back up. He grabbed me by the neck and dragged me all the way back to the trash that was still stuck in the ice and said, 'Son, if you do this job halfway, you're going to practice basketball halfway. Everything you do in life, you'll do halfway. You have to do things right. At that moment in time, I became a perfectionist. Not just in basketball but also in life and in business. I'm so happy my father taught me that lesson early, because it's helped me not just to achieve my goals and dreams in basketball, but also my goals and dreams in business as well.'"

Here Are 12 Strategies Magic Used To Build His Business Empire That Will Help You Achieve Your Goals And Dreams In Your MSP.



#1 BELIEVE AND ACHIEVE.

As a young man, Magic didn't just dream of playing in the NBA, he dreamed about being a businessman. "I didn't know people of color could own buildings and car dealerships,"

Magic said. "There were two gentlemen back in Lansing, Greg Eaton and Joe Ferguson, who were African American and owned businesses. I got a chance to meet them, and they showed me their businesses. So, my dreams changed. Now I was saying, 'I want to be a basketball player playing in the NBA, but I also want to be a businessman one day.'" They gave Magic his first job, cleaning all seven floors of their building. A big believer of "If you dream it, you can become it," Magic vividly envisions what he wants. When cleaning the CEO's office on the 7th floor, Magic would kick his feet up on the CEO's desk, hit the intercom button, and pretend he was the CEO asking his assistant to bring him donuts, coffee, and the paper. "I was sitting there dreaming I was CEO at 16 years old, and now here I am 63, and I'm the CEO and own my own business. I think those moments helped shape who I am today."



#2 SEEK OUT MENTORSHIP.

When Magic started in the NBA, there was an unwritten rule that "players just played, and owners owned." Unfamiliar with this

rule, Magic started a conversation with Lakers owner, Dr. Jerry Buss, which led to a lifelong mentorship. "I had never been away from my family my entire life," Magic said. "Dr. Jerry Buss picked me up and we instantly hit it off. He knew I was out in Los Angeles by myself, so he used to pick me up every weekend and we used to sit and just talk and talk."

When Dr. Buss asked Magic what his dreams were after basketball, Magic told him he wanted to be a businessman. "He didn't say anything, but a week later he brought me all these books he wanted me to read," Magic said. "And then he said, 'I'm going to help you accomplish your goal. I'm going to open up the Laker books to you to teach you business,' and he did. I learned so much, and he became my first mentor."

After five years of mentoring, Magic asked Dr. Buss if he would give him the names and phone numbers of all the season ticket holders. Magic wanted to cold call all the CEOs and presidents that were season ticket holders to invite them to lunch so he could pick their brains. "I wanted to find out how they became successful and what I should look out for," Magic said. He called all 50 names and all of them said yes. One of those 50 turned out to be Peter Guber, who was running Sony at the time and later became one of Magic's business partners.

Many of Magic's mentors and business partners came out of those lunches and are still his mentors today. "If I were to tell anybody anything, mentors are very important, especially when you have goals and dreams but don't know how to get there. They can tell you their journey and you can grab from that and incorporate it into your own goals and dreams. I have mentors today, and I became a mentor to a lot of people as well."



#3 REFUSE TO LOSE.

When Magic left basketball and started in business, people thought he had it easy, but he struggled, made mistakes, and even failed.

There was a lot of pain and frustration. People wanted his autograph, so they'd take a meeting but didn't take him seriously. "I could get the meetings," Magic said. "Magic Johnson got me that part, but Magic Johnson also played a role against me getting deals too . . . I used my own money in the beginning, but then I wanted growth and sustainability. I wanted to go for bigger deals, and I needed other people's money to accomplish that, but they all turned me down."

It took him three years before he was *finally* able to get a loan. He made wise investments with that money, which took him to a whole other level in business that he is at today. And all those banks that turned him down? They all want to do business with him, and HE is the one turning them down. →

→ "It's not about name recognition," Magic said. "It's not about anything other than you having a solid business strategy. Show them how they're going to get a return on their investment and also how you're going to drive ROI."



#4 PLAY OUTSIDE THE LINES AND DEVELOP A SOLID BUSINESS PLAN.

At the time Magic was trying to get a loan, investing in urban development was not an obvious choice. Magic's forward-thinking plan and unwavering belief that growth was in urban America is what drove him to keep trying despite being turned down over and over. "I didn't *think*, I **KNEW** my business plan and my business strategy was sound," Magic said.

Magic illustrated that minorities would spend money with the \$1.5 trillion in spending power of African Americans and another \$1.5 trillion in spending power from Latinos. Magic told potential bank investors, "Nobody is going after their disposable income," and "I've got a plan that can make you guys a lot of money." His plan was to build businesses in urban America. He emphasized this was a good plan by also talking about how everyone was going after the money in suburban America, which made it a much more competitive market.

Once he demonstrated to the bank that there was incredible spending power in targeting minorities, that there was much less competition for their money, and how he could get a return on their investment, he got a "Yes." This loan is what kicked off the Magic Johnson Theaters and Starbucks.



#5 GET YOUR AUDIENCE TO BUY IN.

Magic went to the urban communities he wanted to

develop first. He talked to the people living there and told them what he wanted to do. He told them about the quality retailers he wanted to bring to their community and that he would hire people of color to work inside those businesses and give them training to do their jobs. He also got buy-in from the business community. "This was thinking outside the box, so I had to have a CEO who had the ability to think outside the box," Magic explained.

Magic asked Mike Norris, the CEO of Loews Cineplex (later AMC theatres), to look at the data. "The data shows that if African Americans like a movie, they go see it three times," Magic said. "They don't go just one time. And we were the number one group of people at that time going to the movies because we were priced out of professional sports . . . so we go to one of the most affordable things which is going to the movies."

Next, Magic bet him that his theater concession stand sales would be among the highest grossing in the country, showing Mike the data to back up his claim. "When I showed him that information, he said, 'I get it. Let's start building Magic Johnson Theaters,'" Magic said.




#6 DO YOUR HOMEWORK FIRST.

The first Magic Johnson Theater was built in Los Angeles and, as predicted, the concession sales landed it in the top ten highest grossing theaters in the nation.

Magic knew his audience's likes and dislikes and catered to them. He removed everything from the concession stands that minorities didn't like and replaced it with the items they did like, whether it was sodas or candies and so on. He understood their buying behaviors. For example, he knew that minorities don't go to dinner and a show—they eat dinner at





**"IT TAKES
THE SAME
AMOUNT OF
TIME TO DO
A MILLION-
DOLLAR DEAL
AS A BILLION-
DOLLAR
DEAL"**

the show. The number of hot dogs he sold in one night took suburban theaters an entire month to sell. "Understanding your customer, knowing your customer, overdelivering to your customer brought me back the returns that I was looking for and that Loews Theaters was looking for," Magic said.

When the first theater came in the top ten highest-grossing theaters in the nation, it was easy for Magic to get others to buy in and build more theaters after that. (Magic and his partner Ken Lombard sold Magic Johnson Theaters to Loews Cineplex Entertainment in 2004.)

He repeated the same strategies when he started building Starbucks. Replacing scones with desserts minorities enjoyed and playing music that minorities liked, revenue skyrocketed. He built 125 Starbucks before selling his share in the company.



#7 LET YOUR PLAYING DO THE TALKING.

Magic Johnson brought Howard Schultz to urban America to get the deal with Starbucks.

Howard showed up on the day that Whitney Houston's movie *Waiting To Exhale* came out. People were lined up around the block. The lobby was loud, not quiet and reserved. Every show was sold out, and 5,000 women were waiting to see the show. "Twenty minutes into the movie, every woman in there thought they were Whitney Houston personally," Magic said. "They're talking to the screen, 'Girl, why are you still with him?'"

Howard nudged Magic and asked him to step outside and said, "I've never had a movie-going experience quite like this. You know what, Earvin? You got the deal. I've seen everything I need to see. I see they embrace your business, they support your business, and they spend money in your business, and I can see the same thing happening at Starbucks."



#8 CHAMPIONS LEARN FROM FAILURE.

There were business failures too. A TV show called *The Magic Hour* was canceled after only two months due to low ratings. When he opened Magic 32 Retail Chain, he sold nothing for three or four months and lost \$200,000 because he tried to be the buyer and pick out the merchandise to sell himself. Although he didn't get the results he was looking for, it inspired him to be successful.

Plus, he learned lessons that he says made him a better CEO. For example, he learned "to stick to what you know and what

you can do best," "to hire the best people," and that he was "too much of a control freak and trying to make all the decisions." He also reflected on what went wrong, asking himself, "Why did I fail?" and figured out what he could do better the next time. "I looked myself in the mirror," Magic said. "Self-evaluation is hard . . . but I'm going to stay motivated and move that motivation, passion, and love into another area where I will hopefully excel, because I didn't excel at late-night hosting."



#9 RIVALS MAKE YOU BETTER.

Magic Johnson and Larry Bird's heated rivalry is famous and well documented and added fuel to the long-standing feud between the Celtics and the Lakers. "I disliked the Celtics and Larry because you have to in order to beat them," Magic said. "But your competitor can make you better. I knew Larry Bird was taking 1,000 shots a day, so I had to make 1,000 shots a day. I knew he was working on a new move, so I had to work on a new move. I knew he was going to come back better, so I knew I had to come back better. So, I owe Larry Bird a lot because he made me better. And it's the same in business. Your competitor can make you better. You're going to work harder. They'll keep you up at night sometimes because you wonder what they are going to do next."

Later, the two became great friends after shooting a Converse TV commercial together at Larry Bird's house in Indiana. "Larry's mom made lunch, and he invited me up to the house for lunch," Magic said. "She brings out all the food and they aren't talking, and Larry's mom says, 'Did you tell him yet?' to which Larry says, 'No, you tell him, mom.' And Larry Bird's mom says, 'Magic, you are my favorite basketball player.' That broke the ice, and we found out we had so much in common."



#10 ELEVATE YOUR GAME.

"It takes the same amount of time to do a million-dollar deal as a billion-dollar deal," Magic said.

His point is that you must have guidelines on what deal fits within your brand, within your system, and within your company. "I've given everybody the guidelines on what I'm looking for in a deal," Magic said. "And if you can check only five of the ten boxes, then we shouldn't be doing a deal."

For Magic, when the brands are aligned, the core values are aligned, and the revenue that they both want is aligned, along with a component to give back, then that is an indication that a deal will work out.



#11 DON'T LET GOOD ENOUGH BE ENOUGH.

Whenever he starts a business or buys one, he does a SWOT analysis right away. (A SWOT Analysis

is a framework for identifying your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.) This helps him improve and grow. When he bought a health care business in Florida, he did a SWOT and discovered it had growth potential, but the management team was weak. From this, he knew he needed to move in a new management team to grow the business. He bought the company with 17,000 members for \$20 million and grew it to 300,000 members and sold for \$900 million two years later.

Not only does he do a SWOT on his executive team to see if his companies are headed in the right direction but he also does a SWOT on himself. "I run a personal SWOT on myself because I want to be a better man, a better husband, a better father, a better grandfather, and a better CEO," Magic said.

As he looks to the future, post-pandemic, he says the question he is asking is, "Can this team take me where I want to go tomorrow?" "I'm asking myself that because I want to make sure when we get back to normal, I can get where I want to go," Magic said.



#12 HAVE AN EXIT PLAN IN MIND WHEN YOU START.

No matter what the business, Magic always builds in an exit strategy from the beginning. "You

don't have to use it," Magic said. "But it puts you in the position to sell it if you ever want to."

He reevaluates the business to see if he likes the business well enough to keep it or WHY is he going to keep it. For example, he has businesses he is keeping for his kids because they are interested in them.

It doesn't take athletic ability or name recognition to hustle. Using these strategies, you can follow in Earvin "Magic" Johnson's entrepreneurial footsteps and be a true champion in your industry. Remember, don't do things halfway. Keep your head up, a positive attitude, and always striving to do better, and you'll come out ahead. ■

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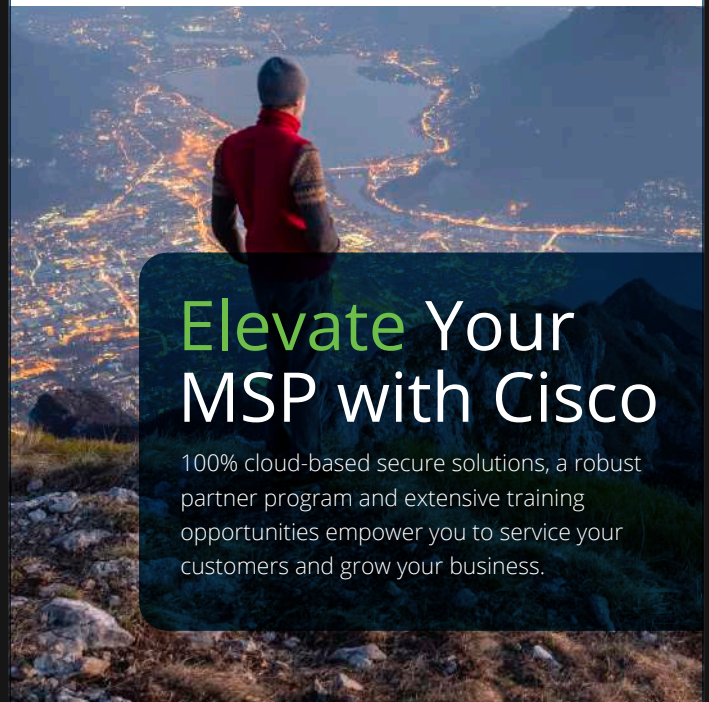
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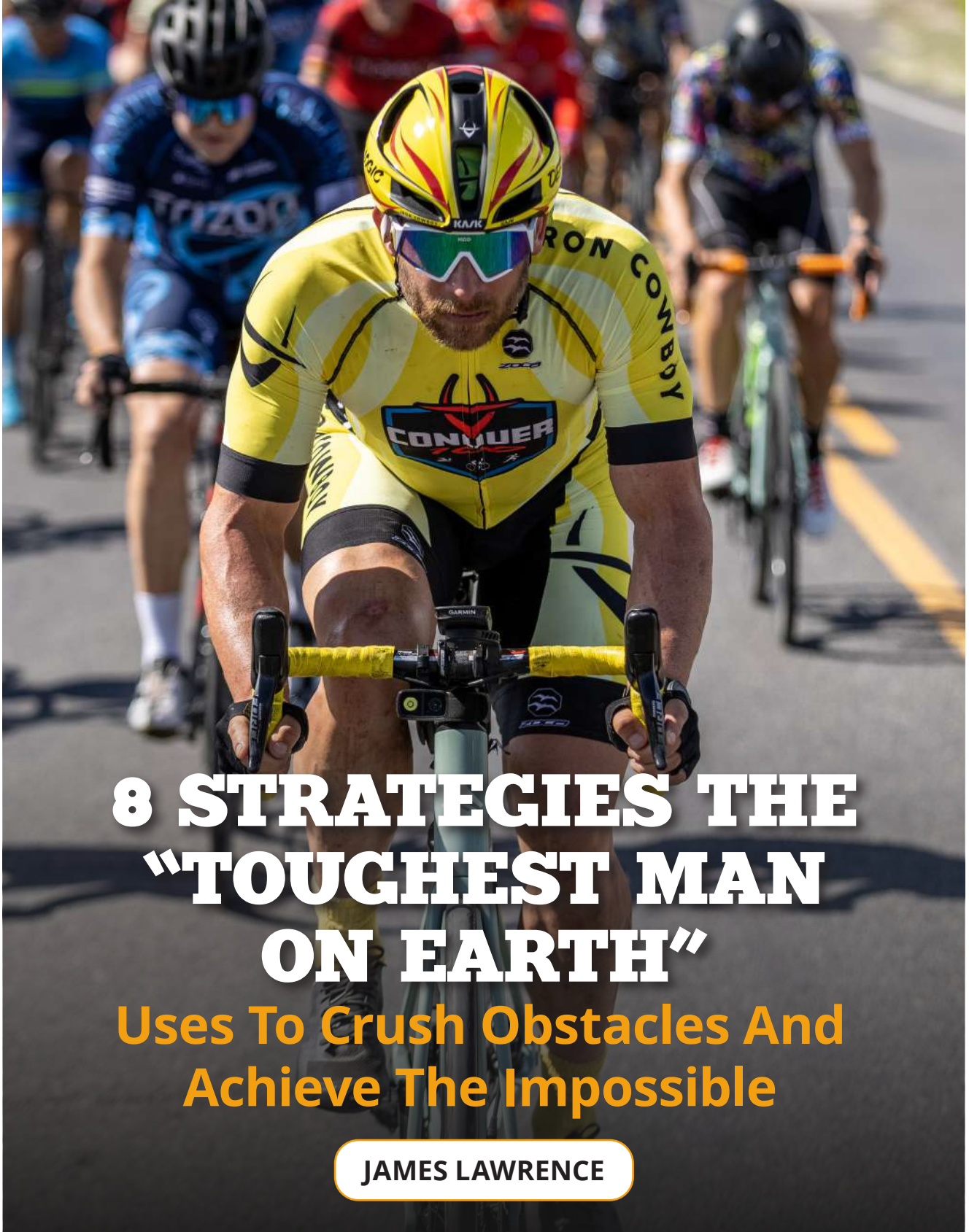
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8 STRATEGIES THE “TOUGHEST MAN ON EARTH”

Uses To Crush Obstacles And
Achieve The Impossible

JAMES LAWRENCE

On June 8, James Lawrence, the triathlete known as the Iron Cowboy, did the impossible . . . He finished his 100th consecutive Ironman®-distance race in 100 days.

For one quarter of 2021, his daily regimen consisted of starting his day at 5:30 a.m., swimming 2.4 miles, cycling 112 miles, and running a 26.2-mile marathon, the equivalent of a full-distance triathlon, which he calls an Iron Cowboy distance Tri.

Named the toughest man on earth, Lawrence titled his personal experiment in human endurance and pain tolerance Conquer 100. The challenge was about inspiring people to go beyond their limits to show the capabilities of the human body and mind. “I’ll show you the example by being the example,” he said.

This wasn’t his first time accomplishing the impossible. In 2015, he completed 50 Ironman races, in 50 consecutive days, through all 50 US states, breaking multiple *Guinness Book* records. But there were many unknowns, logistics was a nightmare, and he was sleep-deprived. “It was chaos upon chaos,” he said during the private Technology Marketing Toolkit Producers Club meeting in July 2021, his first live appearance after completing Conquer 100.

With Conquer 100, he tried to remove the unknowns. He did it at home in Utah. Completed the same course every day. Controlled his food. Had his team around him. And slept in his own bed each night.

Standing in front of a room of MSPs, Lawrence was raw and emotional. “This was like war for me,” he explained. “When I came up with the 100, I wanted to showcase what it would be like if you train really hard, put a team and systems in place, and removed chaos . . . It was harder than we thought.”

In the first weeks, Lawrence struggled. He faced freezing temperatures, icy roads, howling wind, snow, and freezing rain. By day five, an ankle injury turned into shin splints and a fracture, forcing him to speed walk the marathon portion. Enduring excruciating pain, it took him seven hours to walk each day and he blacked out while walking from the pain. “Every step I thought I was going to break my leg,” he said.

By day 59, due to help from carbon-plated leg braces which allowed his shins to heal, he felt almost normal. But then a bike crash caused his hands to swell and led to pain in his hip. By June, the temperatures soared above 90. The wind, heat, and dry air caused his lips to blister and scab.

During those 100 days, Lawrence faced his demons. He struggled, felt broken, and endured unimaginable pain. Here are nine ways Lawrence pushed through and how you can develop your mental toughness.



1. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH A GREAT TEAM.

Everyone struggles. Surround yourself with unbelievable people who are more elevated than you, who will push you, call you out, and encourage you to reach your potential. Lawrence has wingmen that never leave his side. One rides the bike portion with him every day, another runs with him every day. His wife, Sunny, ran the entire campaign. Community is also a big driving force. People came out and swam, rode, and walked with him. A core group of cyclists supported him every day, showing up the most on the coldest, wettest days. “Nothing great is ever accomplished on our own,” Lawrence said.



2. BE OKAY WITH ASKING FOR HELP.

Be in touch with your inner circle so they can help you evaluate, make sure you are conscious of everything around you, and bolster you up when you need it. On day 15, in the peak of pain from his shin, he wanted to quit. “As humans, when we are at the peak of struggle, our instant reaction is ‘I’m out’ and ‘This isn’t worth it,’” Lawrence said. Communicating with Sunny, she knew what he needed. She said, “You’ve done the work, you’re done for the day, let’s reset and look at tomorrow.”



3. RECALL WHEN YOU DID SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT YOU COULDN’T DO.

After finishing the 100, he celebrated, went home, and slept. But then the next day he did one more full-length triathlon by himself. “I promise you when you’re broken and think you’re beaten, you can do one more,” he said. “Sometimes when you get up, it’s going to be by yourself. But if you keep fighting, you’ll find your team and you’ll make your own history.” To get your mind-set right, remember the feeling you had when you decided to get up one more time when you thought you couldn’t or didn’t have to.



4. SHIFT THE NARRATIVE AS FAST AS YOU CAN.

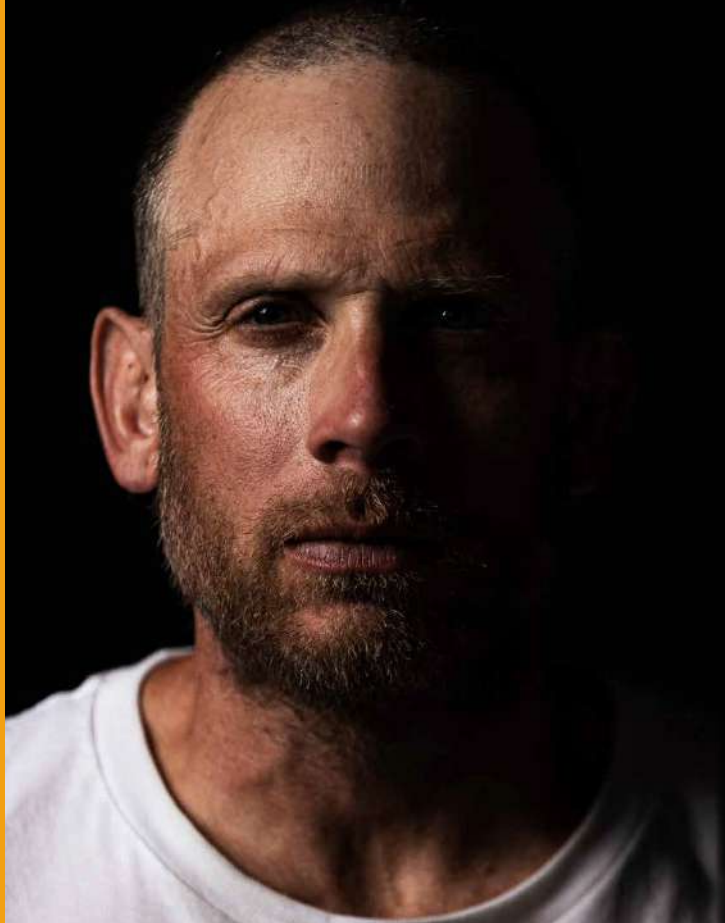
Games and mental tricks make a hard journey more palatable. Hearing he had 16 days left mentally destroyed Lawrence, so he changed phrases and words to trick his mind. “Instead of 16 to go, the team would say we only have 9 to go to 7 to go,” Lawrence said. “Words and self-talk are important.” When choosing words, get something so concrete that “you don’t just say it, you don’t just visualize it, you FEEL it.”



5. IDENTIFY YOUR WHY.

Lawrence had millions of reasons to quit. He recalled losing his concentration, falling asleep, and falling off his bike when





MY STORY ISN'T ABOUT TRIATHLONS. IT'S ABOUT MIND-SET AND WHAT'S BETWEEN OUR EARS.

James Lawrence, The Iron Cowboy

he did the 50 campaign. He didn't know how he was going to keep going until he remembered his daughter was waiting for him to run the marathon with him. Says Lawrence, "He who has their 'why' to live for can bear almost any 'how.'"



6. JUST DO ONE MINUTE.

When he doesn't know how to keep going, he focuses on that one moment in front of him until he gets past the overwhelmingness and anxiety. "Motion creates emotion," Lawrence said. "When in desperation, you must figure out how to be perfect just for one second. Build on that second until you perform a perfect minute."



7. GET EXPERIENCE IN ISOLATING, TACKLING, AND OVERCOMING YOUR FEARS.

When he started running, he struggled to complete a 4K fun run. At that point, he never could have imagined doing one Iron Cowboy distance Tri, let alone 100. But after experiencing 50 in a row, he believed he could do 100 because he had the experience of having and winning those conversations in his head about

doubt, fear, and wanting to quit. "It's through your experiences that you become mentally tough," Lawrence said. "To grow, to adapt, and evolve, we need to become uncomfortable intentionally. Only then will we meet the best version of ourselves and honestly find out what we can accomplish."



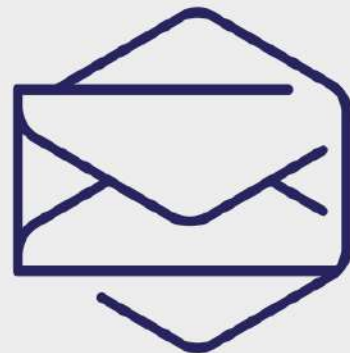
8. JUST START.

"You're never going to feel 100% ready," Lawrence said. Everybody's "hard" is different. When he did his first triathlon, he didn't know how to swim. You're never going to be an expert when you start.

Lawrence's ultimate reason to keep showing up and pushing is about inspiring hope. "Your word should be your bond, and every time you commit to something, you should finish it," he said. "It's not for you. It's for other people. As we choose to show up in our lives each day, we truly have no idea who is watching, and we truly have no idea the impact that we can have on the people around us. If you go through life and say, 'How can I live my life in a way that enhances someone else's life?', that's what should drive you." ■



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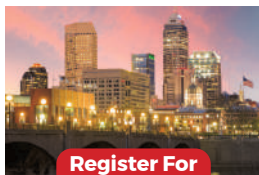
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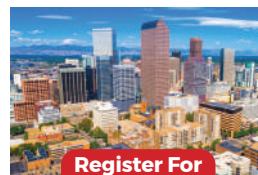
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