

# Start with Desire

## Becoming an Entrepreneur

I have founded and started numerous businesses over the past 30 years. Each of these startups were classified as small business – those will under 500 employees and less than \$7.5 million in revenue. The largest company 1DB.com – which is a financial services company – started from scratch and grew to \$20 million in sales at its peak and was technically classified as a mid-size company. Presently, I remain actively working in each of the businesses today. 1DB was founded in 1995 and 22<sup>nd</sup> Century, a private investment partnership has been in business since 1997.

The question I'm asked most frequently is "What does it take to build a successful company?" Success is different things to different people. For me, the definition of success is working the field you enjoy and turning a profit. In the mid-90s, I flew to Dallas to attend a weekend business intensive at the SMU Cox School of Business. The session was held by Professor Jerry White. Professor White shared many insights during that three day event that I still value today. One of his quotes was, "Profit is a survival criteria." I was 33 years old at the time and was hungry for knowledge, know-how and experience. I was open to learning anything that could benefit me, anything that might gain me an edge. Profit as a survival criteria made absolute sense to me. Instinctively, I understood that without profit failure was imminent.

Professor White took me aside at one point, because I was the youngest attendee at the event and he felt compelled to share with me some advice. He said to me, "Entrepreneurs are an entirely different cat!" I asked the Professor what he meant by that analogy? Considering the fact that we was from Texas and quite the story teller I gathered the meaning, but wondered if there was more to it. He said that entrepreneurs are not like everyone else, that there is something inside that pushes them. It is an eternal drive that is part of their biological DNA – like a cat. I contemplated the words Jerry shared with me. His message was a double entendre in that creating your own company to work was enticing, yet the endeavor could very well be perilous. I left that weekend high from the vast amount of information I'd learned, but low from the uncertainty of going into business for myself.

Attending quality events is a way to get jump-started. After returning from Dallas, I went back to work full-force picking up where I'd left off. I had a game plan each day. I had to make X number of calls. Speak with X number of customers and make X amount of money each week to turn a profit. The hours were long. I arrived at work at 8 a.m. and left each evening after 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and worked a half-day on Saturday. To me, profit was a numbers game. The more I worked the numbers the greater my chance of closing a sale, i.e. turning a profit.

Looking back on those early days and reflecting on the ventures ahead – I believe that the number one attribute to success is "Desire." Napoleon Hill, author of *Think and Grow Rich* describes it as 'Definiteness of Purpose.' By clearly understanding the importance of an undertaking, the benefits, joys, opportunities and trials is the initial step. Building a successful business is a bi-product of one's learning agility. It requires the ability to remain flexible and adaptive. But, it is "Desire" that sets it all in motion and sees it through to completion.

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