Four Things No One Tells You About Becoming and Entrepreneur

We're living in a day and age when being an entrepreneur is cool.

Back in the late 90s when I graduated from Columbia, everyone either went to work on Wall Street, went to law school, became a consultant, or went on to med school. But that's all changed.

With shows like "Silicon Valley" and stories of Unicorn startups in the media, the entrepreneurial life has become a bit glorified.

However, it's more complex than it may seem on TV. Randi Zuckerberg famously said, "Work, sleep, family, fitness, or friends: pick 3," and she's totally right.

I think more people are beginning to understand that the entrepreneurial path is filled with potholes and detours, but here are four things that I think most people still miss.

1. It could take a decade to succeed!

When I first decided I wanted to become an entrepreneur in 2002, I had no idea how it would take shape and got involved in numerous startups. I looked at each as an opportunity to learn and to help me create a larger, more ambitious vision. It took me ten years to find that vision with mindbodygreen, but I never would have found it if I'd been stuck on discovering my dream business on day one.

Ask yourself: What's your motivation for doing what you're doing in the first place? Odds are, if you're looking to start a business, then you want to solve a problem for people, and at the same time you desire creative or financial freedom. If it's just the status and title alone that you want, then you're in it for the wrong reasons.

2. Don’t get stuck trying to jam a square peg into a round hole.

Some of the most successful careers and businesses came as the result of pivoting. Did you know that Instagram began as Burbn, a check-in app that had a gaming element? It didn't perform well, so the founders regrouped and got rid of all the features except photo sharing. Then they re-launched it as Instagram, and the rest is history. This is a great example of why it's not good to get stuck on a particular idea.

3. Just because you're working hard doesn’t mean you're working smart.

We live in a culture where working 16 hours a day or pulling an all-nighter is a badge of honor. Working hard is important, but working smart is even more important. When you combine working smart with working hard, you'll be well on your way to achieving your professional goals. But if you're just grinding away for the sake of grinding away, you'll just be on your way to burning out.

4. Goals and deadlines are important, but... sometimes you have to say, "I don't know when. I don't know how. But I know it's gonna happen."

We type-As are so good at breaking down doors, kicking ass, and taking names, but sometimes we need to let go and let the universe or God or whatever it is we believe in take over.

"Good Morning America" anchor and bestselling author Dan Harris tells a great story about David Axelrod when he was running President Obama's reelection campaign. So many global factors — such as the European debt crisis, al-Qaeda, and issues in Israel and Iran — were out of the administration's control.

When Axelrod was pressed about all these seemingly never-ending challenges, he responded, "All we can do is everything we can do." To that response, I'd add: And then we need to let go.

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