



EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER 1:

MY STORY AND YOURS



My story is simple. As I rose through the ranks of corporate America, my responsibilities grew, I made more money, and garnered additional recognition. Yet my disaffection and unhappiness grew.

I was unsatisfied and unfulfilled. I was not present for my family.

I was worn out and tired. I was frustrated.

I was not enjoying myself.

I was fundamentally unhappy with the career I worked so hard to build.

The hours away from my family, the lack of independence, and the general corporate malaise took a toll. A new job or organization was not going to change that. **I was crystal clear that the corporate world could not meet my needs, but I had no alternative path.** I was stuck at the intersection of professional success and personal melancholy.

I was raised in New Jersey by wonderful parents. My folks provided everything a parent should to a child: love, confidence, and necessities. They imbued me with a strong sense of self, individuality, and a drive to succeed. I imagine that I can do anything in the world that I want to do.

My parents both worked for large organizations. My father was a research scientist at a pharmaceutical company, and my mother was an educator in a local school system. They worked hard for their salaries, benefits, and pensions. Neither of them owned a business nor, as far as I know, ever thought about opening one. My model was clear: be an employee.

Armed with an undergraduate degree from Penn State University and a law degree from The Ohio State University, I entered the professional world—with a thud. **I worked briefly as an attorney before quickly moving into the financial services industry.** When I decided to leave the practice of law mere weeks after passing two bar exams, my mom asked, “What am I going to tell my friends?”



That was not my mom's finest moment and is something we laugh about to this day. And it is instructive of three key points.

First, I grew up thinking that you got a job and you kept it, whether or not you were happy or satisfied.

Indeed, my dad worked at the same pharmaceutical company from the day he graduated college until the day he retired. My mom worked for the same school system for her entire career. I was taught that exchanging happiness or satisfaction for a paycheck was okay.

The second lesson is that Mark has thick skin. The truth is I do, and that is what helped me rise in the corporate world and eventually earn a high six-figure income. But that was part of the problem. My thick skin masked my unhappiness.

The third lesson is that I have an unshakable confidence. When I left the practice of law, I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. (While it worked out, I do not recommend this course of action!) But I knew it would work out.

After my ever so brief foray into the law, I worked as a financial consultant with Morgan Stanley. I achieved success, was ranked second out of 135 in my training class, and won several awards for performance. While passionate about guiding people to the financial futures that they envisioned, this was not the right long-term fit for me because I did not enjoy following the financial markets.

I quickly transitioned into their management training program. The focus of the program was training the firm's next generation of financial consultants. **I fell in love with training and the idea of helping people achieve their professional goals.** I felt a sense of purpose.

As my career progressed, I rose up the corporate ladder, leading training, human resources, and sales teams in financial services and real estate. I made a great living, yet something was missing. Perspective has taught me that when you are climbing a ladder, you focus on the next rung.

Yet regardless of any level of success I achieved, there was always something missing. I wanted freedom and autonomy, but I did not have the guts to venture out on my own. I felt stuck working for others. That was a terribly uncomfortable place for me.





I sought happiness and achievement outside of my primary career.

I filled the void by launching my career coaching business, teaching at the university level, and authoring career-oriented articles for newspapers.

I needed fulfillment and to stretch and test myself.

I started running trail ultramarathons. I wanted to see what I was made of, how hard I could push myself, and what the limits of my capabilities were. I think, to a large extent, this helped me realize that I was only limited by my imagination.

Running was the antithesis of working for others. It was liberating, enjoyable, and challenging. In contrast to the corporate world and all its restrictions, running provided me with a spiritual freedom and motivated me to find it in my professional life.

Eventually, I was better able to run the business I was working at than the owners of my company, and the results I generated validated that. I approached them and asked to be their partner. It was not about money; I wanted—I needed—to be in control and not work for others.

They agreed to make me a partner, and the negotiations began. They offered me partnership but not the control I coveted. As discussions dragged on, the message was clear: They would not give up control.

After years of trading my personal happiness, family time, and control for a guaranteed income, I needed a change. I told them I was leaving the organization. When the risk of me leaving became real, they made promises I knew they never intended to keep.

Up until this point, I thought I needed the security of a paycheck to provide for my family. That false belief was replaced by new truths. First, I could generate income with my own business. Second, I was sacrificing more by staying in the corporate world than I was gaining. Finally, while I was providing for my family financially, I was unhappy and not as good a husband, father, son, or friend as I wanted to be.

I wanted to be a better person. I wanted to be a happier person. I wanted to live a more meaningful life. Another corporate job would not help me achieve that.

I went cold turkey and left a high six-figure income to find my path. Friends, families, and colleagues alternated between telling me I was crazy or had a lot of courage. Neither was true. **This was the most rational decision I ever made. I believed in myself and wanted more out of life.**

And I found it.

Franchising enabled me to overcome the excuses such as fear, inertia, and lack of a compelling idea that kept me from starting my own business on a full-time basis. Investing in a proven business system that provided the marketing, technology, service, and systems that I could not develop on my own made all the difference.

Now I own several successful businesses (all in the franchise space) and have never been happier. The fulfillment I get from being my own boss and helping others is profound. The impact on my life is myriad:

I am a better husband, father, son, and friend.

I am happier in all aspects of my life. I never knew how unhappy I was until I realized how happy I could be.

I no longer have a long commute.

I no longer must engage in inane strategy discussions and meetings.

I make quick decisions and execute.

I am proud of what I do.

My schedule is flexible.

I help people.

For me, being my own boss is the best professional decision I ever made. My only regret is I did not transition sooner!



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