

The Make Your Life Epic Success Institute proudly presents:  
**From the Dorm Room to the Boardroom**  
*An Entrepreneur's Guidebook on How You Can Build a Successful  
Small Business*  
(With a Relatively Small Brain)



This Photo Has Been "Slightly" Modified.  
Clay's head has been greatly reduced in size.

Disclaimer: This book has been written in the entrepreneur's spirit of "ready, fire, aim." Please excuse any grammatical errors. I'm sure version 2.0 of this book will have less errors when it comes out.



# **Make Your Life Epic**

**By**

**Clay Clark**



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## About Clay

Clay Clark is the husband of the beautiful Vanessa Lynn Clark, and the father of Angelina-Lynn Leuba Clark, Aubrey Napoleon-Hill Clark, and Havana Ann Clark. He is the founder of DJ Connection Tulsa, Inc., one of America's largest disk jockey and mobile entertainment companies. Clay is the cofounder of Tulsa Bridal Association, the cofounder of the Tulsa Bridal Association Wedding Show, the founder of Cherished Traditions videography, the founder of Thompson Photography, the cofounder of Fears & Clark Realty Group, the founder of the Make Your Life Epic Institute and numerous other small-to-medium-sized businesses. Clay serves as the active president of the Tulsa Bridal Association, and he is a member of various chambers of commerce. Always hyper-competitive, Clay believes that his home church (Christian Chapel in Tulsa, Oklahoma) is the best church on the planet. When Clay isn't managing his business ventures, he serves as a volunteer with Junior Achievement<sup>TM</sup>, an organization dedicated to educating and inspiring young people by bringing business people to the public-school classroom.

Clay has been honored as Oklahoma's Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. He has also received recognition from the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year. *Oklahoma* magazine has called Clay one of Oklahoma's "Forty Under 40" for being one of Oklahoma's top forty business people under the age of forty years old.

DJ Connection has been described in *Modern Bride* magazine as being one of the 150 hottest bands and DJs in the nation and "Tulsa's number-one disk jockeys." DJ Connection has also been named

nationally as the “Best of the Best” by WeddingMBA.com. Clay helped found one of Oklahoma’s largest wedding shows, and he has been featured numerous times on *Good Morning, Oklahoma* for the active role he plays in the Tulsa Bridal Association. At age twenty, Clay was featured on the front page of the *Tulsa World* business section for his early business successes. Although Clay did not graduate from Oral Roberts University, he does take pride in his co-creation of the infamous “ORU Slim Shady” parody song which led to his dismissal from the college that Richard Roberts himself later was (allegedly) dismissed from.

A serial entrepreneur since high school, Clay has created and/or run several successful (and unsuccessful) businesses including:

- A consulting business
- A chocolate fountain business
- An event rentals company
- A landscaping business
- A t-shirt and graphic design business
- A mobile entertainment and disk jockey empire
- A professional photography business
- A professional videography business
- (Although not business related, in 2007, Clay also founded a C-League basketball dream team called the DJ Connection Redbulls. This team managed to astoundingly lose every game before the league went belly up.)

Born to Thomas and Mary Clark at St. Francis hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1980, amidst the Ronald Reagan election. He went on to attend school in the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, public-school system until the age of twelve. The Clark family migrated north to Minnesota in 1992. It was in Minnesota at the age of sixteen that Clay’s “DJ Clayvis” persona was born. “DJ Clayvicle” graduated from Dassel-Cokato high school with honors and received the prestigious Brown Book award for his excellence in the communication arts, along with a multitude of other scholarships.

At the age of twenty-eight, Clay has now become a much-sought-after motivational speaker where he showcases his ability to combine education and entertainment. Clay's passion is empowering entrepreneurs and writing rap parody songs that have been written about in the *New York Times*. Clay attributes much of his success to his never-ending pursuit of knowledge, the willingness of mentors to share their knowledge (through their books), and his unrelenting optimism. Listed below is a short list of influences on his young business career up to this point. Without their books, their teachings, and their examples, he would certainly not have been named "Entrepreneur of the Year" twice:

Andrew Carnegie, Bill O'Reilly, Bishop Carlton Pearson, Brian Tracy, Chester & Chet Cadieux, Clynt Taylor, Clifton Taulbert, Dave Letterman, Glenn Beck, Henry Ford, Herb Kelleher, Jack Welch, Jay Conrad Levinson, Jim Collins, John D. Rockefeller, John Tune, Karl Malone, Lori Montag, Luther Vandross, Michael Gerber, Michael Jackson, John Maxwell, Napoleon Hill, Robert T. Kiyosaki, Russell Simmons, Rush Limbaugh, Sam Walton, Shane Harwell, Steve Martin, Thomas Edison, Thomas J. Stanley, Ph.D., William D. Danko, Ph.D., and William "Bill" Cosby.





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## Acknowledgments

**B**efore I begin writing this EPIC entrepreneur's guidebook, I want to personally and excessively thank the following individuals and organizations that made this book possible:

- Vanessa “Bird” Clark – Thanks for believing in me and supporting me through the ups and the downs; your intellect, love, and parenting skills are truly profound. Thanks for working numerous jobs and walking to college so that I could drive the DJ van to shows. Thanks for always being there. If you had not married me, I know that I would have not been able to achieve so much success so quickly. You set high standards for yourself and for me, and I love that because naturally I would have settled for a hillbilly existence. Your encouragement has gotten me through the countless anxiety attacks, employee abominations, frustrations, and obstacles that I have faced as an entrepreneur and father. I love living life with you. Being married to YOU is as good as it gets.
- Thom & Mary Clark – I want to thank my parents for constantly bailing me out and helping me achieve my success. Most dads probably would not have stayed up all night with their seventeen-year-old son, making t-shirts in a Minnesota basement, all to fulfill his son's over-zealous, over-ambitious, and over-extended attempts to become

Dassel's and Cokato's largest t-shirt company while still in high school.

- Napoleon Hill – What can I say? Your book *Think and Grow Rich* changed my life. Thank you for devoting your life to studying and teaching the success principles of the wealthy.
- Mark DePetris – Mark D., you were my G.I. Joe playmate when we were kids, you were my best friend and baseball buddy growing up, you were my roommate and fellow spiritual explorer in college, and you were the guy who convinced me to propose to that “hot cheerleader girl with the curly hair off of E.K.G.” I am sorry that your life ended early, but you live on in my heart.
- Clifton Taulbert – “Cliff-notes” thank you for being candid with me all the time.
- Havana Ann Clark – My “Bean,” vivacious daughter, and precious princess girl gift from above, you are my angel, my queen, my pride, and my joy. You make coming home every day a holiday! You are destined for greatness, baby girl!
- Aubrey Napoleon-Hill Clark – Son, you were born blind, but now you can see. Although you can only speak about twenty words at this point, the restoration of your vision by God's hand has communicated His love for me like nothing I have ever witnessed before. When I see you, I see God's love (and other broken stuff that you have left in your path). Son, you are destined for greatness. Go out there and become the small-government, capitalistic, R&B-loving, basketball-playing, conservative Christian that you were called to be!
- Angelina-Lynn Leuba Clark – My youngest daughter, your sweetness is my weakness. Keep smiling, baby.



- Jason Bailey (co-owner of DJ Connection) – When I hired you, you were pretty entrenched in Locust Grove-speak, such as “I seen it the other night” and various other backwoods-sounding syntax. And this was unfortunate because it masked your character, your talent, your passion, and your integrity. Jason, you are now a true leader of men, and I truly believe that if you will continue growing and learning at a 30 percent growth rate, DJ Connection will too.
- Special thanks to all the contractors that have worked with me over the years – Coops, Rich, McKenna, Willi, Jayvis, Rabu, Derek, Albert, Clarence, Dad, Garrett, Andy, Roger, Keith, A-Train, Taco, Huguers, Marquess, Joel Reyes, Josh Smith, Atkinson, and everybody else who over-delivered each week to make those wedding receptions memorable and profound. I do appreciate all that you did when you did it. Sorry that I have not been a better leader. Sorry that I didn’t fire chronic underperformers faster. Sorry for not being more candid with you (I am working on it). However, if I charged you a dollar for every time I made you laugh, I would be much wealthier than I am today. Thus, for that you are welcome, and I will go ahead and accept your gratitude (in advance).
- Southwest<sup>TM</sup> airlines, QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> convenience stores, and the respective employees – Thank you for setting a great example of how great customer-service-focused companies should be run.



## Why I Wrote This Book

**M**y name is Clay Clark, although around the state of Oklahoma most people know me **synonymously** with my vocation of choice as DJ Clay. My hopes my dreams were born into a family of modest means where my ambition had to be tempered and decreased to fit within my family's "LACK OF CAPITAL" BOX. Over time, and as early as age twelve, I began to realize that the plans I had for my life required more capital and earning potential than the "LACK OF CAPITAL" BOX would allow. And so from a college dorm room, I built an award-winning mobile entertainment service using nothing more than my ambition, rented sound gear, CDs I secured through BMG™ Buy-1-And-Get-14-CDs-Free programs, a backpack stuffed with flyers, and a tenacious passion fueled by my refusal to be poor anymore.

As the awards and monetary success have poured in over the years, I have had increasing opportunities to speak with countless high school, college, and professional audiences around the country about the benefits of entrepreneurship. With each talk, I have become increasingly aware of the blatant lack of satisfaction expressed by most people in the area of their own personal achievement.

I have found that many people have college degrees, but amidst the sea of textbooks and bachelor degrees, most college students are graduating without any clear direction as to where they want to go with their careers and how they might be able to pursue their passions in the workplace. I have noticed that today's college graduates are missing a step-by-step entrepreneur's guidebook that has the power, relatability, and practicality to teach them how to go from the genesis

stage of their idea, to starting a business, to the full fruition of owning and operating an award-winning and successful small business. Hence, my book *From the Dorm Room to the Boardroom* offers a clear (yet hilarious) message of how you can truly go from the dorm room to the boardroom without the benefit of a small business loan, a large cash gift, or a wealthy family member backing your dreams.

## **Preface**

### **Fun with Prefacing and Outlining: The Overall Purpose and Definite Chief Aim of This Book**

**T**his book has been written to be an activator and idea-stimulator for the aspiring entrepreneur. This example-rich entrepreneur's guidebook was written to provide you with a step-by-step guide on how you can mold your future to be ideal in every way. Legally, I am pretty sure that at this point in time in our fabulously politically correct American history, I should probably require every person who reads this book to sign a release form and put on a helmet to make sure that no one is offended or hurt by the candor and content of this book. This book was written to teach you how to start a business, not to be politically correct.

Legalese aside, the reason that I am writing this book is because I have a burning desire to empower entrepreneurs with the success principles that made it happen for me. It is true: I have won numerous business awards; however, unfortunately the U.S. Small Business Administration does not give away awards for starting landscaping companies that cannot find legal employees willing to mow lawns. Because if they did, I would be in sole possession of this award. Unfortunately, *Oklahoma* magazine does not give away awards for hiring the wrong people. Because if they did, I would have that award as well. The point that I am getting at is that “temporary failures are a prerequisite to success” (Napoleon Hill). However, to save you the

heartache, I feel called to share my story with you so that you will be educated and inspired by someone slightly less capable than yourself. If I can do it, you definitely can do it.

As my team has achieved success, it has not made me selfish; but it has truly opened my heart to the importance of showing how one can align his or her passions in a way that can and will produce a profitable business vehicle to take you to the destination of your dreams. I know that the wisdom I've gained through various successful and prolifically unsuccessful entrepreneurial endeavors that I have attempted since the age of twelve will be educational, inspirational, and entertaining to you as the reader (and if they're not, then I will have to come out with version 2.0 soon).

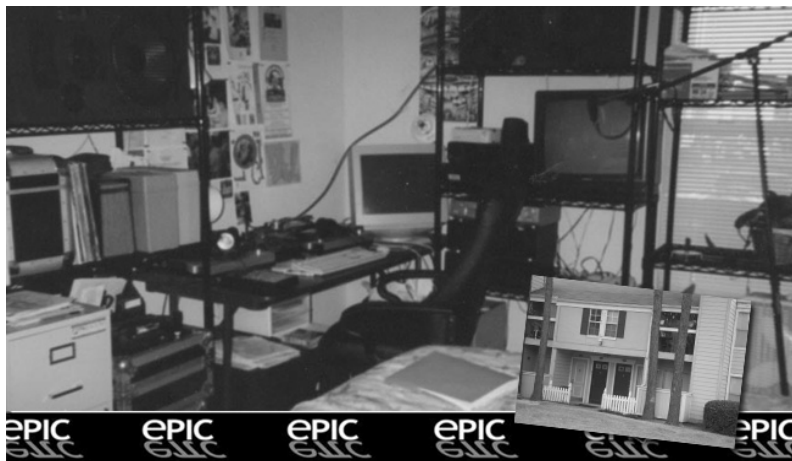
Imagine being unable to sleep, as if you were in an I-Don't-Want-To-Miss-Santa-Clause kind of way because your mind is always thinking of fun, new ideas and concepts that you could implement at your job the next day. As Def Jam™ founder and entrepreneur Russell Simmons has written, "The goal is to be able to live your life the way Michael Jordan played basketball or Marvin Gaye sang a song. To be able to feel the way you feel when you laugh at a joke but to feel that way all the time." Imagine what it would be like to never worry about money (because the people with the most money worry about money the least). Imagine what it would be like to actually get paid to pursue your passions. Imagine for a moment . . . but keep reading.

However, with all of that being said, it is of SUPREME importance that I hammer home a barrage of disclaimers and clarifications to prevent myself from hypothetically getting hit with a lawsuit from any of you reading this book who might be a disgruntled ex-employee, a person adverse to risk, a former school teacher of mine, a former acquaintance, a person adverse to risk, an angry competitor, a socialist, a lottery-ticket-buying, hopeless individual, an atheist, a Michael Bolton fan, or a person adverse to risk.

As you read this book, you will experience what I have experienced and how I have CHOSEN TO REACT to the great joy, sorrow, and adventures that life has already thrown my way. You will be there as I wake up at 4:30 A.M. each Minnesota morning to work in the concrete business in order to generate enough cash to buy my first

DJ system. You will be there when I suddenly lose my best friend in a fatal car crash. You will be there when my wife and I get married at the fabulously young age of twenty. You will be there as I work two jobs while attending college to get my dreams off of the runway and flying. You will be there when I drop out of college. You will be there as I pound out call after call: telemarketing, cold-calling, and feverishly trying to generate business. You will be there while I work in an Amazon-type 95 degree, one-bedroom apartment I called “my office” which I could not afford to cool because I had a quarter-inch Yellow Pages™ ad to pay for. You will be there as I eat a 96-cent Budget Gourmet™ chicken panini for every meal because they were cheap, and the cost of starting up a business from scratch was not. You will be there as I fire my first employee. Bottom line, my friend, you will be there as I experience life.

It is my hope that through the stories found in the pages of this middle-class epic, you will find some mental traction. As I experience life, you will be there; and for the readers who possess a positive mental attitude, you will find the “seed of an equivalent benefit” to be found behind each one of the temporary setbacks that I encounter throughout the pages of this book.



(pictured above is my first home/office/apartment/studio)

It is my intention that this book will help you see that the successes I have achieved up to this point are not “amazing” or the direct result of one single “great” event or decision. My early successes have all resulted from my personal application of the universal success principles that are available to all of us. By studying and applying the success principles I found within the life stories of Sam Walton, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Russell Simmons, and others who are far more successful than I am, DJ Connection has grown within a time span of less than eight years from a dorm-room-based business employing the triumvirate of me, myself, and I to the quasi-large corporation of today that now contracts 50-plus entertainers.

The practical education I needed to change and renew my mind is available to anyone reading this book. As President Abraham Lincoln once put it, “You must practically educate yourself, regardless of your accessibility to formal education” (this coming from a guy who attended approximately eighteen months of formal schooling en route to becoming president). However, the knowledge found in this book is meaningless and worthless if not applied IMMEDIATELY once it has been gained. So as you read this book, make sure you have a pen by your side so that you can write down the action steps and ideas that come to your mind as you read this book. Write in the margins. Circle valuable new ideas. You own the book. So you might as well make it your. MARK IN IT. Throughout this book, you will discover the importance of the little catchphrases that I live by and how these catchphrases actually represent the overall success philosophies that I now follow daily.

- ☐ “Begin with the end in mind.”
- ☐ “Practice daily relentlessness.”
- ☐ “Procrastination kills motivation.”
- ☐ “Over deliver.”
- ☐ “*I probably will* means that *I definitely won’t*.”
- ☐ “We’re all going to die anyway, so we might as well die trying.”
- ☐ “Shunda!”



- ☐ “Dial and Smile!”
- ☐ “Think and grow rich.”
- ☐ “Propose solutions not general criticisms.”
- ☐ “Good wood.”
- ☐ “Congratulations, you have been promoted to the WEAK-SAUCE boss.”
- ☐ “I can hear us getting poor.”
- ☐ “They can’t compete because they need some sleep!”
- ☐ And many more . . .

And yes, many of these phrases are not original, but I am not writing to score originality points or to win an award for the compelling autobiography of the year. I am writing to teach practical, usable success principles through the vehicle of an autobiographical and a company history/odyssey. If you would rather spend eight years and hundreds of hours learning what I have learned, I respect that; but reading this book is a much more efficient and pragmatic way for you to learn these success principles in a memorable way (i.e. It’s less painful for you to read about the mistakes I have already made). I know that these stories will relate to you in a way that will shine some insight on your journey through life up to this point, possibly illuminating your history from a different perspective to reveal the vast world of optimism and opportunity that exists in America and in your life today. As your mind latches on to the success and failure principles found within my life, it is my hope that you will use these ideas as a mental GPS (Global Positioning System) to help you navigate through the challenges that life presents in a positive way.

This book is designed to make you re-evaluate your core beliefs, those same core beliefs that have allowed approximately 3 percent of Americans to control over 75 percent of our country’s wealth. If you have found yourself ever complaining about “the rich,” now is your chance to become “the rich.” This book is designed to make you *think*. As Henry Ford stated, “Thinking is the hardest work there is. That is why so few people engage in it.”

When you finish reading the last page of this book, I will have succeeded if you have *thought*, even if you completely disagree with

me on all points that I have made. In America today, many people do not think. Many people turn their 174-channel satellite and/or cable television on and let others think for them. With the prevalence of the Internet, we all have access to virtually limitless amounts of information, yet most of us do so little with this readily available information. We listen intently to tips and words of wisdom from every person with an opinion (which usually includes some guy at work who is currently tapping into his fifth multi-level business because of the “unbelievable opportunity” that this secret-herbal-100 percent-organic-crushed-rare-Amazon-berry-juice represents). Many of us rack up huge personal debts pursuing highly theoretical bachelor degrees that we will never use. Many of us get upside down in home loans (owing more for them than they are worth) because we are told that they are a good investment despite the fact that the first three years of a mortgage are nearly all interest, and yet the average American does not live in their home for more than three years.

However, amidst our studies of the Byzantine Empire, our trips to college football games, and our nearly interest-only mortgage payments, we are not told that the majority of the world’s wealthiest people do not have college degrees and would not get one even if they had the time because they are too busy inventing, innovating, and producing profit. We are not told that most American employees spend well over 50 percent of their income on taxes (income tax, payroll tax, car tags, fishing permits, government fees, airport taxes, luxury taxes, cell phone usage taxes, etc.) We are not taught that success is a choice and that the road map to success has already been laid out for us by those who have already achieved success. We are not taught practical education; sadly, most of us are only taught impractical education. Thus, I felt compelled to write this practical education book.

This book is intended TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS AND DREAMS by allowing you to learn from my past experiences, failures, and successes. Through my brief life history, you will discover the epic-ness of your own existence. Through my errors, you will discover what the great author Napoleon Hill called “the seed of an equivalent benefit” revealed through each adversity that I have encountered—the “seed of an equivalent benefit” that is only viewable

to those armed with a positive mental attitude. The POSITIVE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS reading this book WILL FIND THE “SEED OF AN EQUIVALENT BENEFIT” through each story. Through every success I experience, you the POSITIVE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS will find yourself getting excited as you become aware that the small successes I have achieved are VERY MUCH attainable to you as well (and I have a small brain). You might find yourself thinking, *I have much more talent than this guy. How in the world did the guy make his money DJ-ing?* And then it will hit you. (I apologize in advance for any whiplash that you experience as you become aware that my successes are the direct result of the day-by-day mundane, success-oriented decisions I make on a daily basis.)

As you read this book, you will come to see my *why* for doing business. You will come to see (as every successful entrepreneur has discovered) that my *why* defines me, it motivates me, and makes me accomplish things that average humans living without passion and a DEFINITE CHIEF AIM cannot. You will come to see that my *why* makes me get up at 4:00 A.M. when needed, my *why* makes me take care of my customers to the best of my ability, my *why* makes me strive to be the best husband that I can be, and my *why* will ultimately allow me to continue living the life of my dreams.

Over the past several years, as DJ Connection’s overall success has grown exponentially more and more, people have taken an interest in our band of merry men and the company we represent. As I have continued speaking to high school students, college students, peer groups, seminars, corporations, and motivational conferences, the question continues to be asked of me, “So, DJ Clay, how did you get started DJ-ing, doing chocolate fountains, motivationally speaking, and doing graphic design work?”

At the point when the question is asked, I usually clarify to see if they really want to hear the saga and epic tale of how this super-humble empire began. If they verify that they do indeed want to hear the epic tale, then I proceed to bombard them (as I like to do) for one and a half uninterrupted hours about *Think and Grow Rich*, the power of thought, the power of the mastermind, over-delivery, the slight-edge philosophy, the necessity of mutually beneficial relationships,

determination, innovation, etc. However, since I cannot physically get together with all of America's entrepreneurs, I have decided to now record the oral history of DJ Connection and Clay Clark in a more formal written form.

### **Additional and Fun Disclaimers**

- 1) The times and dates in this book may be incorrect, but the concepts ring true.
- 2) The characters I describe in this book are real people whose names I have changed in most cases because legally I am supposed to.
- 3) If you are offended by the contents of this book, then something positive is happening in your brain. Unscientifically speaking, your brain is like a muscle. If it is not used or stretched over time through the repeated processes of learning and thinking and applying knowledge, it will begin to atrophy.

So although this book will make you mad at points, it will at least keep your mind from atrophying as it competes in the virtual mental Olympics and stretches while you read this excessively humble tale o' DJ Clay. As you read the saga of passion and profits, you will laugh and, at times, you might cry . . . from laughing so much. As your mind marinates on the manifestation of what has become DJ Connection, you will witness many of the universal success principles being applied by me. You will also witness many of the universal "not" success principles being applied by me . . . but either way, my reader friend, you can rest assured that even if the worst-case scenario comes to fruition, your mind will not become the DMV of minds . . . because you will be forced to compete with me in the arena of opinion and ideas, and I am very competitive. As you re-evaluate your own beliefs and ideas in your attempt to win the silent mental debate you are having with me, you will

soon discover the principles by which you live if you do not know them already.

- 4) If you are a currently functioning in society with the mental disorder I call the “entitlement disease,” then I believe that this book is the cure.
- 5) “This is our life, and if we eat right, sleep right, have great genetics, detox our bodies, drink eight glasses of water per day, refrain from eating egg yolks and sugar, experience no stress, and live in a bubble, we might live to experience a hundred years on earth. We must make the most out of these times. Every day we have is a gift (to paraphrase the late, great, success author Napoleon Hill). Dreams are the captains of souls, and we must let the captains steer our ships. If we hit rocks along the way, if we lose our way, and God-forbid . . . if we die before reaching your destination, at least we lived, at least we set sail.

Growing up as Americans we have an easy go of it . . . starting a business, a family, and overcoming poverty in America is easy in comparison to attempting to accomplish these same goals in Cuba. Try starting a DJ company there; try getting a business loan there; try getting Castro motivated to believe in your dreams . . . as Americans we live in a land of unbelievable opportunity. Merely existing in a quasi-depressed, pharmaceutical-drug-enhanced daze for eighty-five years is a pathetic way to go through our lives. We must reconnect with our dreams and begin to formulate a plan to realize them. We only have one life to live, and it is better to have tried and failed than to have gone through life as Mr. or Mrs. Mediocre.” - DJ CLAYVIS

So without any further ado, it is my pleasure to present to you the story and living history of my life and the DJ Connection crew . . .





## Chapter 1

### The Move “Up North” and the Countdown to Moving “Down South” Again

*Life Lesson: Nothing changes until something moves.*



And so there I was, in all my seventh-grade glory, sitting in the back of my parent’s red minivan waving goodbye to the only town that I had ever called home (Tulsa, Oklahoma) and the only people that I had ever known as friends. I understood, financially speaking, that my parents simply had to pursue the opportunities graciously presented by my Aunt Carolyn and my Uncle Jerry’s rural Minnesota-based software company. Even though I was only in seventh grade, I understood that we were financially struggling. I understood that our cupboards were always stocked with the yellow “guaranteed value” generic brands because we did not have money

(and not just because my mom preferred the color yellow). I had overheard their late night conversations about “only having \$100 left in the bank account.” I had sipped on some government-issued powdered milk, and I knew that my quickly growing body was posing tough financial difficulties as they struggled to keep my brother and I in clothes.

At the time we moved, I was almost 6 feet tall. I was a giant amongst normal people. I was the center on the basketball team. I was the big guy in middle school, and oddly enough, I am still almost 6 feet tall (I stand about 6-foot-1 naked . . . but I prefer not to stand without my clothes on).

When we arrived in Minnesota, I immediately went into culture shock. Because my grandpa Clayton and grandma Dot died (within a few months of each other . . . they could not live apart) from unexpected medical issues almost immediately after we moved north, my brother and I were forced to live with our Aunt Carolyn and Uncle Jerry while my parents returned to Waco, Texas, to sell my late grandparents’ home. It was a traumatic time. My dad was having a hard time holding down a job because of a chronic hernia and back issues; his parents had both just died (he was an only child); our family was struggling financially; and now my brother and I who had grown up entrenched in suburbia were being forced to live in Dassel, Minnesota, (population less than 3,000 people at the time) in an eighty year-old farmhouse located on a hobby farm operated by my aunt (who did not have kids) and my spooky Uncle Jerry whom I vaguely knew. Their farm had spitting llamas, Arabian horses, chickens, solar panels, and tons of cats. Their town was located near countless bodies of water, outdoorsmen, farmland, wild turkeys, 10 billion blood-sucking mosquitoes, the “World’s Largest Ball of Twine,” Lutherans, Finnish families with twelve kids each, and enough Skoal™ brand chew to keep all their kids buzzed.

Back in Tulsa, it seemed that everyone we knew played sports; in Dassel everyone hunted. In Oklahoma the people we knew were friendly, outgoing, right-wing charismatic, conservative Christians; in rural Minnesota, many people were hard-to-meet, guarded, reserved, left-leaning, subsidy-dependent, democrat loyalists. It was weird. The



people my brother and I were meeting at school had last names like Rauschendorfer, Kusler, and Sorenson; and they had first names like Bjorn and Leif. Every time I met someone and repeated their name, I felt like I was introducing the starting lineups for a National Hockey League game.

I will never forget boarding the school bus on the first day of school and thinking to myself, *What are these people wearing?* I remember looking out the window and thinking that we were never going to reach our destination. I quickly learned that rural towns built on dirt roads and inhabited by hard-working farmers meant that a forty-five minute bus ride to school was not uncommon. My brother and I were not embracing our new surroundings for the same reason that people don't like it when you move their stapler at work. Change requires new ways of thinking, and I am pretty sure that up to this point in my coddled life I had not ever done much thinking. Thus, I did not like this new environment, but I had no choice. So every night at dinner I just sat down at the dinner table with Uncle Jerry and ate his venison stew ("deer meat stew"). Every once in a while I would let him know that the "well water" we used in the house smelled weird and that I was not down with deer meat (Bambi meat), but then I would quickly back off when Jerry's face began to display his frustration with my whining.

After a few weeks, my brother and I started to get settled in at school. I became friends with Aaron Rauschendorfer, Katie, and Joe Casey. My brother met some young friends, and we started to adjust; however, I never really grew fond of Minnesota. I personally thought that many of the people were great, but I did not like the culture filled with hunting, snowmobiling, thermal underwear, German food eating, constant boating on the lakes, mosquito-slapping, and farming. I did like Kirby Puckett, Kevin Garnett, Kevin McCale, and a couple of songs by Prince. Basically I determined that I would endure Minnesota, but I would never call it *home* (because I was a difficult dude and unwilling to change).

To pass the time after school, I spent most of my time upstairs in Carolyn and Jerry's guestroom lifting weights. Endless amounts of curls and shoulder raises are what I did. As I grew stronger, I became

more and more frustrated that I was living in rural America. Suburban living was now out of the picture, and I was in a group of quasi-new friends who liked to say, “You betcha” and “Ay” after nearly every phrase—almost using these phrases like a period to end their sentences. Looking back, I have no idea what my brother did to pass the time, and I feel bad that I was such an absent and self-centered brother. I sincerely never took time for him partly because he was five years younger, partly because I was so focused on getting the heck out of Minnesota, and partly because I was a jerk at the time. (Sorry, Carson.)

I am not sure when it happened or how it came about, but at some point I got to talking on a “long-distance” phone call (which was a big deal then) with my friend Chris Montag in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Chris was one of my best friends, and he was a guy best known for unquestioned integrity and unquestioned lack of height. He or his mother, Lori, suggested that I fly back to Tulsa for a month after the school year to visit them. I don’t remember who came up with the idea, but I do remember feeling alive again when I heard this idea. I can also remember not even taking two seconds to think about how this might have made my brother feel for leaving him alone for the summer. I just remember thinking, *Yes, I can get the crap out of this farm town!* And I was willing to do almost anything to get back home . . . but how?

My parents certainly could not afford a plane ticket, and I did not personally have the needed funds saved up to this point. Sure I had brought in some cash in elementary by making bootlegged Garfield™ bubble-paint t-shirts (the year was 1989). I had also made some money by making illegal copies of audio cassettes that I later sold at school. I had even made some coinage tossing newspapers on a paper route for the *Broken Arrow Ledger*. So I did the thing that any young kid who wants something would do . . . I started telling my uncle, aunt, mom, dad, friends, and even the cows on the hobby farm what I wanted to do. I told anyone who would listen that I was going to go back home for the summer, and that is when Uncle Jerry first showed me his sage-like qualities.

To fully comprehend the character of Uncle Jerry, one must know that he was a farmer-esc looking man. He seldom did anything with his salt and pepper colored hair. He looked scary when he forgot to shave for more than three hours. His eyes were kind of sunken and dark like Abraham Lincoln or a raccoon. He had huge strong arms that were built from years growing up on a farm and the current position he held as a retired hobby farmer. He had made his money working his butt off, and he was not very sympathetic to the whining and lack of tenacity that I displayed. He had been the head of a computer service center for the state of Minnesota, and he was well read. Once I got to know him, I realized that he sort of fancied himself as a rural hobby farm philosopher doing his part to right the wrongs of the world through each animal that he cared for. I think eventually Jerry just got tired of me talking about my empty dream at about the same time he grew tired of me not wanting to help out at all around his farm. So he made me a proposition.

He said, "Clayton, I will pay you six dollars per hour to haul hay, kill weeds, install shingles on the barn, and generally do any handy work that I have a need for. Now, you are going to have to work, but if you do, you will be able to buy your ticket back to Tulsa."

Oh man, I was pumped! I didn't care how many hours it took; I was ready to work immediately (so I said), thus Jerry put me right to work. My specialty at the time was spackling (because I had consistently shown myself to be dangerous with a hammer and suspicious with a screwdriver). So he started me out on a spackling project, then I was promoted to ditch digging. Eventually I became the head of the weed eradication department of his hobby farm, which gave me some self-managerial experience (since I only managed myself for extended periods of time as I faced down his taunting to-do lists). Eradicating weeds using a huge pickaxe was an invigorating career opportunity for about an hour, and then the next 140 hours or so spent eradicating weeds were pretty grueling. Eventually, I graduated up to painting and shingle hanging. And much to Jerry's dismay, I was equally bad and unskilled at all the tasks he asked me to do. I had never done manual labor, and I was weaker than Shawn Bradley's post moves (the NBA's tallest and weakest basketball player ever).

Jerry would say encouraging phrases such as, “Don’t try to scare the nail. For Christ’s sake, hit the nail!” He would ask me, “What, are you tired already?” I needed to hear his candor. At the time I did not like to hear his criticisms, but he was correct. Today, I would have fired myself, but he stuck with me and taught me what it meant to work. Jerry was the first person who said, “If you want to accomplish your goals, you have to do these actions to get there.” He was the first one who imparted to me that all goals can be achieved through hard work.

Looking back, I am glad that he was gruff and that he made me work. I am glad that he always challenged my religious beliefs, and I am glad that he made me eat the wild tasting deer meat stew. I think if it weren’t for Jerry, I would have grown up to be a metrosexual wuss. Today, as an employer, I have the privilege of interviewing men who have grown up without candor, hard work, and toughness. And with each encounter, I find myself wanting to call Uncle Jerry to thank him for whipping me into shape.

As that first school year in Minnesota wound down to a close, I saved up the \$600 to fly back “home” to Tulsa. I was ecstatic to visit my friends of old. When the time finally came and I boarded the plane, it never occurred to me how much I had changed in the four months that I had been gone. I was still a city slicker, but I was now becoming an ambitious and hard-working city slicker. I had tasted the sweet success that can only happen when one has achieved a goal through hard work and determination. And although I was too dumb to know it, I was changing for the better because of our move up north. Every day my new friends were forcing me to evaluate who I was and why I was the way that I was with their confidence-reducing questions like, “Hey, why do you always wear your hair that way? Why do you always wear your clothes so baggy? Why do you say ‘y’all instead of you all?” My uncle was constantly asking me to explain my religious faith to him, which he knew would ultimately result in my explaining my religious faith to myself. For the first time in my life, I had to explain to the world why I was the way I was, and in the process, I was figuring out who I was for myself.

When the plane touched down in Tulsa, my therapy and life-coaching session began almost immediately. That summer in Tulsa provided me much-needed time with my friends, and it also provided my first real exposure to the world of serial entrepreneur—Lori Montag. Lori was my best friend Chris's mom, and she showed me the light. During this summer, it was Lori that first showed me that no financial hurdle was too great in life. Lori preached to us all summer that we could have anything that we wanted in life if we were simply willing to work hard to earn the money. Lori constantly said, "The world of business is just a big game, and money is simply how you keep score."

Growing up, my mom was always self-employed or worked as a contractor, but I had never heard anybody talk about these success and entrepreneurial principles with such clarity and openness. All summer as Lori drove Chris and I to the movies, to the mall, to the video rental store, and back, she taught us about her beliefs on luck and how she found that she had more luck when she outworked the competition. It was Lori who taught me how to formulate a plan to earn what I wanted in life. And it was Lori who first showed me what it was like to be a real American self-made entrepreneur. Lori drove a beat up, old, red minivan because she wanted to reinvest in herself and her future photography business more than she wanted a new car. The Montags had a nice house because they wanted a nice house, and they were willing to put in the work to build this house with their own hands, using the money that they had earned through their various entrepreneurial endeavors.

During those summer days, Chris and I would spend most of our downtime damming up the creek in the woods behind their house and watching endless movies that we rented. During the evenings I would spend hours interrogating Chris's mom and asking her all sorts of business and life questions. During these talks, Lori told me about how Francine's Photography was growing and the various stories about crazy customer service issues that happened most days. Lori would explain to me about her new marketing ideas. She mesmerized me with her creative ideas she had for new photo backdrops. As I listened to Lori's humorous stories, always told in an epic fashion, I started to

subconsciously realize that she was what I wanted to be. I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I wanted to have crazy stories to tell. I wanted to earn my own money based on the quality of my ideas. I wanted to be self-employed and in control of my own financial destiny. I wanted to be like her. I wanted to possess a hope that the future held limitless possibilities if I was just willing to go out there and work diligently to turn my dreams in to a reality.

Sometimes, like most entrepreneurs do, Lori would bottom out. Sometimes she would work herself into exhaustion. But she always had HOPE backed by her faith in her abilities and a tireless work ethic. Lori always held high hopes for a better studio and for more pay. Lori always knew that she could and would make improvements as needed to create a better product to serve her customers, which would in turn pay her more. Lori believed that she could improve her life and her kids' lives if she was just willing to financially, mentally, and physically invest her time in improving her business for her paying customers.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please, help me make sure that this chapter does not become as irrelevant to you as the weather report for a city halfway across the globe by answering the following self-analyzing questions:**

1. In your life, what changes do you want to see physically, mentally, spiritually, and financially?
2. What changes will you have to make to make those changes a reality?
3. Are you willing to make those changes?
4. Are you going to have to read more?
5. Are you going to have to take more risks?
6. Starting today, what action steps do you have to make to steer your life toward your dream destination and toward your ideal reality?

7. Will you have to wake up earlier each day to achieve your goals?



## Chapter 2

### S.A.D.D. Dances = Optimistic Opportunities

*Life Lesson: Areas of poor service = business opportunities*



And we're back. Only now, I am in the eighth grade, and everything has changed. My mom and dad have finally sold my deceased grandparents' home in Waco, Texas, and they have moved back to be with my brother and I to begin their new life in Minnesota. Having them gone for awhile made me really appreciate them, in the same way that the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> forced liberals and conservatives to love on each other for a few months and to actually reach across the aisle to get things done. And much like the liberals and the conservatives, after a few months of working together, we started disagreeing with each other again as the love festival came to a close.



With some of the money that was left from selling our house in Tulsa and our grandparents' home in Waco (birthplace of my dad, Dr. Pepper™, and Baylor university), my parents were able to move us into a HUGE BRIGHT GREEN HOUSE in Cokato. When I say *HUGE*, I mean 3,500 square feet or more in size. By my standards at the time, it was like moving into the Taj Mahal (minus the Indian culture). The house that my parents purchased was a vintage, stereotypical, Minnesota-style construction home. It was split-level, meaning that half of the house was quasi-underground and half of the house started at about six feet above ground; my parents called dibs on the upstairs, so my brother and I were given full reign over the basement. We had a pool table in the game room area, an area for my dad's drum set, and I had my own room. As a move to appease my brother and I, my mom allowed us to go overkill with the decoration of our rooms and the entire downstairs. I drew cartoons on my walls; I had my friends sign my wall; I had wall-to-wall posters; and I had pictures of friends from Tulsa on my ceiling as tribute to my buddies that I missed so much. My brother went ape on his room, too, only he had a theme. His room was anything and everything Kirby Puckett or Michael Jordan. It was awesome. We even had our own man-law bathroom (that we shared together). The home's exterior was covered 100 percent by lime-green siding, and it was located on the corner of the block at 155 Lakeview Drive in Cokato, Minnesota; a town that had a booming and bustling population of 2,038 people at the time we moved in. This housing upgrade afforded us a huge yard, a large garden for my mom, and a wonderful home to grow up in. Our town had one stoplight and approximately one crime per year because everyone knew everything about everybody which seemed like the biggest deterrent for a would-be criminal. In all sincerity, it was always a little unnerving those first few years when a woman that I did not know would be checking us out the grocery store or bagging our groceries and would say something in a Sarah Palin-esc voice like, "Hey, Clarks, how's the move going, ay?" I would always leave local banks, restaurants, and grocery stores wondering, *How do these people know my name?*

However, looking back, this farm town of Cokato was one of the best places on the planet to raise a family. Our town had a Taco Bell™ in the Marketplace™ (the Marketplace™ was our local grocery store). It had a Tom Thumb™ gas station, a Dairy Queen™, a community basketball court, and everything that my brother and I could have needed. At the time, I was mad that the town did not offer a mall or a movie theatre; but now I never go to malls, and I don't think kids should be going to movie theatres. It's hilarious to me how my worldview has completely changed since I got married, started a business, and had kids. It seems as though the longer I live, the more conservative I get.

So amidst this farm mecca, I entered the eighth grade at Dassel-Cokato Middle School, and I also went through a name change. Growing up, my family and friends had always called me *Clayton*; but for some reason, when eighth grade began, everyone started calling me *Clay*. My appearance was changing by the day, and fondness for females was definitely increasing exponentially; thus, I spent virtually all of my time chasing after and hunting down ladies. First I hunted after Katie, then Maria, and then Nicole. I was never sure what I was going to do with these beautiful ladies once I caught them, but I enjoyed the pursuit.

At this time, I also found myself becoming increasingly fascinated with music. While still in Tulsa, I had signed up for the BMG™ mail-order CD service a few times, and I did it again a few more times in Minnesota. Unlike most things that seem too good to be true, this was actually good and true. I paid something like \$15.99 for one CD in order to receive twelve CDs FREE. For the twelve FREE CDs, I was only charged shipping and handling at a cost of \$2.99 per CD. Being that I was always selling gum, t-shirts, or working for my Uncle Jerry, I was able to fuel this new passion for music with my earned cash. And since I could buy "1 CD at regular price" and pay shipping and handling of only \$2.99, I just kept on signing up for those promotional offers over and over and over and over again . . . It was my "eureka!" At one point, I had actually signed up under my mom's name, my dad's name, my dog's name, and my name twice. Eventually BMG™ increased their promotional offer to "BUY 1 GET 15 FREE" or

something like that, so I just kept on ordering. When they eventually ran their special to buy 1 CD for regular price and get UNLIMITED CDs for \$2.99, I hopped on that thing like a bunny in heat. It was amazing how many CDs I collected. There I was in eighth grade, and I had somewhere around 300 CDs of R&B and dance/club hits; hence the early beginnings of the name that most people call me today, DJ Clay.

As eighth grade went on, I just kept acquiring CDs, playing basketball, and chasing girls . . . and I began to notice that the girls always flocked to those incredible middle school dances. If for some reason you are reading this and you did not have the pleasure of attending school dances in middle school, let me tell you this from experience . . . they are hilarious.

Here is the scene: every dance would start at around 7:00 P.M. and would go until around 10:00 P.M.; however, everyone who was not a tool would tell their parents to drop them off at 8:00 P.M. I am being serious about this. You never wanted your mother to drop you off early to the school dance, or you were a nerd.

Once your MOTHER dropped you off at the dance, you wanted to distance yourself from her as soon as possible so as to not associate yourself with the FREAK who gave birth to you and who was raising you. The name of game was to look and act as though you had been beamed to the dance miraculously one-hour late. Most of the dances cost around five dollars per person to get in, so most parents would send their kids to the dance with a 10-spot (\$10). The goal of the dance sponsors was to find innovative ways to get all ten dollars out of your eighth-grade pocket and into the concession stand cash drawer and ultimately into the PTA budget. Now, assuming that you got dropped off at the dance by your parents without chicks (young, attractive females) or your homies (young, rebellious, acne-faced, male friends) seeing them, it was all good (it was okay) because from that point on, the top priority was to look and act cool at all times.

The girls would always attempt to dress as sexy as possible (for eighth graders), and the dudes always tried to dress as cool as possible. But this is where it got weird.

Everyone would be talking and waiting in line to pay his or her five bucks, and they would be checking each other out. Soon little observational comments could be heard like, “Man, that lady is looking hot tonight!” or “Hey, Maria, that dude, actually cleans up well.”

And that was pretty much the extent of the interaction with the opposite sex until 9:45 P.M. because as soon as you paid the cover charge, the girls and the guys would almost always completely part ways with each other. The girls would go into some dark corner of the gym and give each other back massages and talk about how hot some dude was, or they would say things like, “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe he likes her. I mean he doesn’t even know her!” and deep thoughts like that. Meanwhile, the dudes would be eating as much pizza as they could afford, or they would be engaging in extremely mature contests to see who could drink the most cans of Mt. Dew™ in ten minutes. Meanwhile, behind the DJ booth, the disk jockeys hired to work the dances would not use the microphones to engage with the students, so they were basically human-iPods™ before there were iPods™.

Around 9:00 P.M. a handful of ladies would start dancing on the floor, and Aaron “Ottie” Otteson would be out there working the crowd. For some reason in eighth grade, only he and Jake Linder felt confident enough to fast dance out on the dance floor with the girls. As those two would dance with the ladies, my group of dudes and I would attempt to dunk volleyballs in the dark gymnasium as our odd way to try and woo and wow our fabulous female friends with our primal jumping abilities because we all know ladies love dudes that can jump high enough to dunk a volleyball (ha!).

And then, like magic, right around 9:40 or 9:45 it happened. Time was running out, and the social tension of not having talked with the ladies all night reached a fever pitch. Oh yes, my reader friends, at every dance around 9:40 or 9:45 P.M., the guys would ask the girls to dance. And we would all do it at this designated time only. Jake would ask Kelly to dance; I would ask Katie to dance; Cody would ask Katie or Maria; and we would all dance for 600 seconds of goodness. All of the guys would attempt to tastefully feel up as much of the woman as possible, and the ladies would all try to figure out, “Do I like him?” or

“Does he like her?” Basically as long as he-didn’t-like-him, anybody had the potential to like everybody (as there were less than 100 females in my entire graduating class, of which over 15 got pregnant . . . and it was not caused by a lack of abstinence education).

And then just before one of the awkward dancing couples could get too ambitious with our slow dancing and immature romancing, a huge hum created by the turning on of the overhead lights would sound; and within seconds, the lights were fully on, and the dance was over. When the lights came on, some of us who had been dancing for a total of ten minutes or less were now “a couple” because we had asked something profound such as, “Katie, will you go out with me?”

Ah, those times were great! And, oh, were they confusing!

I remember on multiple occasions leaving a dance thinking, *I cannot believe that I am going out with Nicole? She is so hot. But where are we going to go and who is going to take us there? I wish I had her number.*

Oh, my friends, this eighth-grade school dance dynamic is where it all began. I loved the ladies; thus, I loved the dances. I also was smart enough to realize that the ladies loved it when Ottie and Jake danced with them at 9:00, so I knew that I had to improve my game. I can’t remember how many dances per year we had; I can only remember that I looked forward to them like politicians look forward to delivering speeches. There was that nervousness that preceded each dance; but once it got going, I was all about it, and I never wanted it to end.

Anyway, at some point during my eighth-grade year, I had a class with Ms. Sage (her name has been changed for protection, but I know who she is). I think that class was home economics or something. It was definitely one of those easy classes where you cook food as part of class, but I can’t remember exactly what the class was called. I can also vividly remember, like it was yesterday, our class seating arrangement that left me sitting next to Jeff Schultz—a fellow basketball player with red hair, rosy red cheeks, a tall body, and a never-ending stream of sexually referenced humor. Normally this would not be a problem, but Ms. Sage was gorgeous. At the time, all the guys thought she looked just like the Lois character from the

Superman™ TV show of the 1990s featuring Terri Hatcher. And for whatever reason, Ms. Sage always dressed provocatively in comparison to all the other teachers.

Ms. Sage was also head of Students Against Drunk Driving (S.A.D.D.) or some organization dedicated to giving eighth graders a laundry list of new drug ideas that we had not yet thought up so as to “educate” us about the dangers of drugs. Her class was unintentionally hysterical. To Jeff and I, the subject matter of the class was always filled with innuendos and potentials for one-liners, which we were fond of blurting out to get a good laugh (or a bad laugh, we weren’t picky). We always got in trouble; however, because Jeff and I were somewhat leaders of the eighth-grade boys, she always tried to get us involved in making a positive impact. I do believe that Ms. Sage was smarter than we gave her credit for because she was able to get troublemakers (such as Jeff and I) involved in a positive way.

As the year went on, Jeff and I kept serving on various bogus committees with S.A.D.D. and various other anti-drug-use committee meetings that allowed us to get out of class on a regular basis with a pass from Ms. Sage. During one such meeting, it was proposed that we should have a S.A.D.D. dance to raise money for some ineffective anti-drug campaign—all I can remember is that I was pumped to be on the committee in charge of hiring the DJ. The rest of the details are sort of fuzzy, but the end result was that I got asked to DJ the dance because the local radio station DJs charged a lot, but they never got anyone dancing until the final fifteen minutes. I (and most of the students) thought that these DJs were weaker than my left hand throwing a baseball; thus, getting a “good DJ” was definitely the right job for me.

From the first day I was appointed to this new position, I started making flyers promoting the dance, I told everyone I knew about it, and I dreamt up the perfect playlist based on my experience attending dances and witnessing which songs went over well and which songs bombed. I knew that “Jump Around” by House of Pain was great; I knew that “This Is How We Do It” by Montel Jordan was the jam; however, I also knew that this song had tons of alcohol references in it. I knew that the crowd liked “Shout”; I knew that the rock songs that

the FM DJs played were good songs, but that they were not good to dance to. So I went to work creating the perfect playlist. Man, did I work on that list.

Without exaggerating, I bet that I spent over \$300 on music and 50 hours preparing for that dance. I remember like it was yesterday the excitement I felt as I anticipated making this dance epic. I remember the stress I felt as I attempted with no previous experience to round up all the appropriate sound gear from the band director. I was determined to gain the practical knowledge I needed, regardless of my accessibility to musical equipment up to that point. I remember being unable to sleep for the first time in my life because I was fueled by passion. I remember feeling as though I was going to throw up as the first students arrived, and I can remember feeling like the weight of the world was on top of me as I struggled to figure out how to make the lights and the sound system work together. As I recall, I had a 5-disc Sony™ CD changer (carousel style) that I owned, a 6-disc changer (manual loading) that the school owned, two guitar amps to pump up the sound, a guitar preamp to mix my sound, some Pioneer™ headphones that my parents had owned since they got married, and a blue plastic tub filled with my CDs prearranged in order based on the playlist and routine I had made for the night. My friends all knew that I had been promoting this dance like my life depended on it, but none of them knew I was getting paid \$75 from Ms. Sage to DJ. (Never mind the fact that I had already spent \$300 preparing for the dance.) I treated this dance as though I was getting paid \$10,000 because I simply could not fail in front of my friends.

One by one the audience trickled in like every other school dance, and just like every other school dance DJ, I just sat back there and played the songs (as though that was hard to do).

Then something happened. I don't know what it was exactly, but I sincerely do feel as though God spoke to me. I was hit with this inner energy, and this inner voice that said, "You have got to get up on that microphone and rock their faces. You have got to get this crowd hyped!" And although I had never seen a good DJ, I knew what I always wanted our previous DJs to do, so I just did it. I stood up to the

mic and said, “Alright LADIES AND GENTLEMEN HOW ARE YOU DOING?!”

The crowd responded with some applause, and then I said something to the effect of, “Ladies and Gentlemen, IF YOU ARE IN THE PLACE TO BE, MAKE SOME NOISE IF YOU ARE DOWN WITH ME!” and the crowd screamed.

All of the sudden I got it; I instantly overcame my fear of public speaking; I was cured. I was nervous, but I didn’t care. I was feeling it, and I was in the zone like Michael Jordan must have felt when he was scoring 50-plus points on somebody. I was hyping the crowd, and I loved it because they loved it! As the night went on, it transpired just like it had in my mind during the previous nights I spent creating the perfect playlist—only it was better. When I played, “Let Me Clear My Throat” by DJ Kool, everyone was rocking. When I played “Apache” by Sugar Hill Gang, everyone’s hips were swinging. I could not believe it. Everyone was dancing the entire night, and they were loving it. DJ Clay was officially born.

That night as the dance came to a conclusion, I hopped on the mic and spoke to the ultra-sweaty and hormonally charged crowd with as much conviction as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (only I had about a hundredth of the purpose),

“Ladies and Gentlemen, MAKE SOME NOISE! Now, via request, we have ONE MORE SONG FOR YOU TONIGHT. HOW MANY PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR ONE MORE SONG?” and the crowd screamed.

So I repeated it because they needed it, “How many people want to hear one more song? . . . HOW MANY PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR ONE MORE SONG?” Then I played “Jump Around” by House of Pain, and the sea of students jammed out right in front of me. I could not believe it. As they were dancing, I kept thinking, *This is what I want to do with my life!*

As everyone filed out, and after Ms. Sage had paid me; the gym was oddly quiet as we broke down the decorations . . . my ears were still ringing, but the room was quiet. I remember wondering to myself if I was that good, or if the other disk jockeys from the radio stations were just that bad. Just about that time, Ms. Sage entered the gym one



more time to supervise the takedown process. She said something to the effect of, “Clay, that was the most fun dance I have ever seen!” and that was all I needed to hear.

The following days were filled with pats on the back and high-fives from people echoing Ms. Sage’s comments. I felt good. I felt great, and it was not about the money (because I lost \$225.00 on the deal); however, I could not stop thinking about the money and other horrible non-interactive disk jockeys that every other school was using. I kept thinking, *If they are all that bad, I really do have a huge opportunity here!* Hence the life lesson I learned:

**S.A.D.D. Dances = Optimistic Opportunities**  
**Areas of Poor Service = Business Opportunities**

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**  
**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please prevent this chapter from becoming void of purpose like the average rap album by answering this question sincerely:**

1. What areas of poor service have you witnessed in your daily life?
2. What areas of poor service have you experienced at your job?
3. What opportunities exist for you as an entrepreneur because of these blatant areas of poor service?
4. What business ideas and opportunities can you think of to serve this area of poor service in a profitable way?



## Chapter 3

### **High School: Years Spent Passionately Going Nowhere Quickly (In My Custom, Hand-Painted 1989 Ford Escort)**

*Life Lesson: Those who know where they are going  
tend to get there faster.*



Now, having discovered my passion for DJ-ing, I hastily chased after this hobby all the way through the remainder of high school. I never lost my passion for the ladies, and I also gained a passion for weightlifting; but DJ-ing was definitely my thing. Like most high school students, I did pursue other hobbies and interests, but I sincerely believe that those who knew me best back in high school

would have described me as “focused” or “driven” or “always joking” and “artistic.”

Around the ninth grade (it might have been the tenth grade . . . so we will call it grade 9.5), I started dating this beautiful girl by the name of Katie . Katie had gorgeous blonde hair and blue eyes (I assume, but I am not a detail guy, and I never notice details like that). Katie was involved in Fellowship of Christian Athletes™, student council, the student paper, the debate team, and anything else that involved using your brain and displaying publicly that you had a soul. Meanwhile, my buddies and I were busy attempting to do things like hi-jack our choir teacher’s piano before his class so that we could insert a dead fish into it and wait for a few days until the smell would arrive (Mr. Anderson, I am sorry). If we weren’t doing this, we were toilet-papering people’s houses and using spray paint to write, “BRETT FAVRE SUCKS” in the lawn of Green Bay Packer fans’ lawns. Essentially, like most young high school men, we were rebels without a cause and humans living without a purpose; but when I met Katie, that all changed.

By and large Katie seemed to have a purpose for everything. She wore certain things because they matched. She joined certain clubs because they would help her get a scholarship. She was respectful of teachers because God wanted her to be. She did not do dumb things on a consistent basis because she did not want to get in trouble with her teachers. Katie essentially viewed her time in high school as a prerequisite to college and her time on earth as a prerequisite to heaven. And this got my attention (plus the fact that she was cute).

As I dated Katie, I started noticing that her force field was sucking me into her world of respect, conformity, and purpose. I started to focus during class, and I started to not carry myself like Tom Green (the expert in pranks and practical jokes). I started to actually apply myself to my studies, and I noticed that my teachers started to like me as well. You see, up to this point, I was always getting in trouble for trivial and random acts of insubordinations. For a time there, the uninformed observer might have thought I was interning at the principal’s office. I was not the kind of guy who would smoke in the bathroom or pull the fire bell, but I was the kind of dude who would

organize all the guys to engage in non-stop coughing fits at 2:25 p.m. on the dot. I was the kind of guy who would convince all of my buddies that the purpose of school was to mess with teachers. But after I began dating Katie, this all went away. Katie was one of the first people my age that seemed to really grasp the concept that what she did today affected the potential of her opportunities in the future. Where I was attempting to eat an entire pizza in one sitting to set some sort of personal record, Katie would eat one piece of pizza because it was the healthy thing to do.

As my relationship with Katie grew, I really did change dramatically as a person. For the first time in my life, I actually made some long-term goals and daily plans to begin achieving them. The workouts that I had always engaged in with my best friend Joe were now approached with never-before-seen ferocity and tenacity. My diet almost completely changed overnight to accommodate my vigorous workouts. I started attending church on a regular basis to get my head on straight. In my classes at school, getting a 4.0 was now my new goal whereas I pretty much just showed up and gave a half-ass effort before. I felt good about life. I was getting up at 6:00 a.m. to hit the weight room, which was upstairs in our high school varsity basketball gymnasium. After working out, I always drank four milks each morning to meet my rigorous protein requirements. I joined choir because I liked singing. I stayed after class to get help from teachers when I sincerely did not understand something that they were saying. During class I actually contributed to the discussion and to the teaching process with more than just my one-liners that I still enjoyed delivering so much. I started noticing that my teachers were beginning to respect me because I was respecting myself. I walked to class with a purpose, and I got my assignments done with renewed passion.

I really do believe that the only class my new focus could not overcome was Algebra. Ms. Tonya Gau (pronounced like cow) was my teacher, and she was fresh out of college from St. Cloud State (so she was the favorite teacher of every high school male who enjoyed the company of attractive females). Algebra had my number, man. No matter what I did, I could not overcome the demons and the spiritual hurdles that algebra class presented. I hated those Texas Instrument<sup>TM</sup>

graphing calculators about as much as Rosie O'Donnell hates conservatives. I just could not make myself care about the Pythagorean theorem. I tried, but I did not care. I had not yet read Thomas Edison's quote that "knowledge without application is meaningless," but I unintentionally embraced it in advance. I hated those word problems; they were so bogus. I remember routinely reading those word problems and thinking to myself, *If Sally has thirty books, and she acquired them equally over a six-week period, how many books did Sally acquire per week? . . . The answer is five, and the person who wrote this question obviously does not know high school students because we don't buy books in bulk and none of us are named Sally. Holy crap!*

I would routinely go on misguided and angry humorous rants about the complete idiocy of algebra. I always pondered aloud what scenarios could ever possibly arrive that would make that crap relevant. Even today as an adult, I believe that we learn by doing; thus, learning a concept that we are not directly applying is weak at best because we don't see the relevance of what we are doing. Everyone who has ever spent time working on a project where the boss fails to communicate the importance of the task has felt what I felt then—the feeling of communistic anti-resourcefulness, the feeling that what you are doing has no meaning. I thought graphing a sloping plane and plotting points were demonic in the way that Benny Hinn thinks cancer is demonic. I hated that class, and so as part of God's odd plan for my life, I had to take the class three frickin' times; and I still do not understand truth tables. Holy crap, I hated the class. I can distinctly remember watching Ms. Gau talk. I remember watching her mouth move as I attempted to pay attention. I remember doing this for the entire length of the lecture before it would occur to me that I had been watching Ms. Gau speak, but I had never actually listened to one word she said. Then that sinking feeling would hit me, *Oh man, I have no idea what she just said.*

This happened every day. To make a long story less long, I ended up testing my pride and hiring an eighth grader to tutor me while I was a junior in high school. He was a young, athletic-looking, blonde-haired dude who stood about 5 foot 7 and went by the name of Leif

Czeplusky (pronounced Shuh-Plusky . . . and I am probably spelling it wrong). Leif attended the middle school dances that I DJ-ed; thus, he had a rather high opinion of my skills and me. So when I told him that he could DJ with me if he helped me learn algebra, he thought this was a great deal. I have always had a high opinion of myself, but in this compartment of my life, I felt like an idiot. If you are reading this and you are bad at math, have faith you can succeed in life—even if an eighth grader has to be your mathematical guru, savior, and teacher.

Eventually as we neared the conclusion of our high school careers our relationship came to an end as we realized the unsustainability of our high school romance. She thought I wasn't the right kind of dude for her, and so I wanted to prove to her that she was 100% wrong. Thus, I pressed on with a reinvigorated and untempered passion to achieve greatness in the world so that someday I could prove to her that she was wrong about me.

Anyway back to the story . . . now that I was super focused on achieving greatness, I began to see high school as a boring and weak place populated by people who had no idea where they were going, what they should eat, what they believed in, or why they were alive. I began viewing socializing on weekends as a waste of time, and I began generally not caring about what anyone thought. I just kept hitting the weights, drawing my cartoons, and DJ-ing events. This focus reached a crescendo when I decided to attend St. Cloud State University early as a high school senior, rather than to stick around and wait until after graduation as part of Minnesota's post-secondary program. This program allowed high school seniors to enroll early in college if they had the grades and enough of their prerequisite college courses out of the way. Once I learned that I was eligible for this program, I never looked back. I never felt like I was missing out on the end of high school, and I still think people are morons who state pessimistically that college or high school are the best years of their life. I hold true to the success philosophy that "the best is yet to come." I believed it then, and I believe it now.

After I enrolled at St. Cloud State, it became apparent that I would need a car to commute. My parents teamed up with me to help pay cash for a 1989 Ford Escort™ hatchback. At the time, I was working as

a home health aid for a boy by the name of Chris Nelson who is now deceased. (Chris, I can't wait to see you in heaven.) Chris was born with cerebral palsy, so he needed a personal care attendant. For a two or three year window of time, I was that guy. Basically, every day I would get up at 6:00 a.m. to work out, and then I would drive forty minutes to attend the ultra-morally-relative and completely non-practical education-filled classes at St. Cloud State University. After listening to some of these professors (former hippies who I felt would not be able to hack it in the world of commerce) pontificate to our class about their socialistic views, their complete disregard for morals, and their firm belief that knowledge was the only thing worth pursuing, I would then drive forty-five minutes back to Dassel, Minnesota, to Chris's small farmhouse to help assist him with his needs.

Virtually every day his mom would make hamburger meat and various potato creations for dinner. The food was good, and I always enjoyed plundering their supply of homemade applesauce. During the course of the time that I spent with Chris, I would always leave feeling so grateful for what I had and so inspired by how much God had given me. I also felt completely unworthy of the blessings bestowed upon me, and I felt guilty for my perfect health in comparison to the painful and grueling existence that Chris endured on a daily basis.

Chris yearned to be "normal"—just like everybody else—as I was passionately fighting to be different from everyone else. He longed to be centric while I strived for being positively eccentric. Chris always referred to me as *Clark Man*. He talked in the same cadence that Ernie talks to Bert on Sesame Street™ when he would say, "Hey, Bert."

On one particular day, our dialogue went something like this:

Chris said in his mumbled, cerebral palsy-impaired way, "Hey, Clark Man."

I responded enthusiastically, "What it is, player."

He said, "Hey, come here," so I leaned over the table to hear what he was saying. "Clark Man, come here," he whispered, so I leaned over the table some more so that he could talk right into my ear, and then he said eerily, but sincerely, "Clark Man, I want to die."

I instantly flipped to default Dr. Phil-style talk to encourage him that it was going to be okay, and someday it would get better. However, the more I tried to encourage him, the more the reality of his situation sunk into my soul like the finality of the loss of a loved one on the day of the funeral. As I talked to Chris, I realized that he was not going to get better; he was going to get worse. And I pathetically tried to empathize with him. I felt that I would want to off myself as well if I were in his condition.

Sometimes feelings of guilt, empathy, and sympathy I felt for Chris while spending an evening with him nearly overwhelmed me emotionally. At those times I would begin to question my faith in God and His role in my life, which often compounded to my acceptance of what my atheist professors at college were teaching as the “truth.” Despite the fact that many of these professors were divorced, pessimistic, socialism-advancing, and morally relevant behavior justifiers, their lectures now began to resonate with me as I actively looked for reasons to not believe in the religion passed down to me by my parents.

My time spent at St. Cloud State taught me that nearly every student on the campus was obsessed with the pursuit of beer. My time there taught me some incredibly innovative ways that students could use their parents’ money to finance five years of major switching and slacking. I was truly impressed by how many of my classmates viewed college as an indefinite time of self-discovery at their parents’ expense. I love St. Cloud State for helping show me with laser-like, precision focus what I did not want to become. And the more time I spent at college, the more I felt this strange urge to continually overextend myself.

I felt as though there was a small part of me that always wanted to be overextended (I had not yet discovered Warren Buffet’s belief of always taking something away when something is added to your life). For some reason, no one had yet taught me Andrew Carnegie’s belief that you should, “Put all of your eggs in one basket, and see to it that no one kicks over your basket.” I am confident that if I had learned and embraced that life philosophy, I would have been on a full



scholarship to college for sports, athletics, or academics; instead, I was “well rounded” (which, I believe, is code for “not great at anything”).

Thus, with a mindset completely lacking in a singular purpose, I decided to go out for the high school varsity football team—not minding the fact that I had never played high school football, and that I was still attending college forty-five minutes away from the high school practice facility. I was in tiptop physical shape, and I was confident in my abilities. I felt as though I could make an immediate impact on the football field. This was not at all true. In fact, it is safe to say that I made no discernable impact on the football team at all, other than the occasional outbursts of humor and resulting laughter I brought to the practice and playing field. As the gladiators got ready to do battle, I could not help but see the humor in the opposing linemen who growled and barked at me when we lined up at the line of scrimmage. To me football was a comical game, and I played it from a detached, observation-only view (from a distance, never allowing myself to become engaged in the game, the strategy, or the drama).

Our team was awful, and I was awful in the way Carl Lewis is awful when he sings the national anthem at sporting events (check it out on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com); it will make you laugh or cry). We had some great players: the super-fast Ryan Bowman, Ben Meyer—the hard-hitting Ivan Drago impersonator, the ultra athletic and super handsome lady magnet Jake Linder (Jake was so naturally toned that he had veins popping out of his calves), and the hard-hitting Rudyesc Dallas Danielson; but overall we were horrible. I found that I did not enjoy getting hit or hitting, which is pretty much the cornerstone of football. Also, around this time, I was commissioned to paint the high school weight room by Mr. Benson our athletic director. So I could usually be found lifting weights, driving to St. Cloud, working with Chris Nelson, painting the weight room, DJ-ing, making t-shirts (with the new t-shirt business I had set up), and not socializing. This was my life. I liked it this way. Every minute of my day was spent moving toward my goals in a militaristic sort of way. This regimen allowed me to accomplish tremendous amounts of things and to feel 100 percent in control of my life.

The weight room painting project was daunting, and my workload was massive, but I felt deep down inside that I was climbing a mountain, and each day was just one more step up the mountain. The problem was that I was unsure of why I was climbing the mountain or which mountain I was climbing (neither of which did I discover until later on during my time spent at Oral Roberts University). And when not engaged in painting, football, weight lifting, studying, commuting, or working as a home health aid, I was tirelessly self promoting “C & G: DJ Service” (my DJ company) to anyone who would listen, slowly but surely sharpening my sales skills.

As graduation neared, I increased my focus on selling t-shirts and DJ-ing for anyone and everyone who would let me. As I dreamed up idea after idea, it was my dad who was always there to give me practical advice such as “Hey, you might want to give your clients an invoice,” or “Hey, you might not want to get in an argument with the principal of your only school dance account.” In all sincerity, without my dad’s advice, I would not have been able to stay in school. Because I was growing impatient to achieve my dreams, I seriously think I would have dropped out or have been kicked out of school for converting my classrooms and school schedule into a full-time sales arena had it not been for my dad.

My dad has always been entrepreneurial-minded, but for whatever reason he has not ever applied his knowledge and love for entrepreneurship into an actual full-blown entrepreneurial endeavor. I think that in the frontal lobe of his brain he has always craved safety and financial security for his family, although, in the back of his mind, he has always wanted to be the next Wade Cook (a Christian, self-made millionaire of mail-order fame). During this time of my life, I grew hyper judgmental of my dad and his lack of follow through on his entrepreneurial dreams. I almost completely overlooked his kind heart, his unquestioned integrity, and the sacrifices he made to keep our family fed by working the night shift to make extra needed income. To me, it was always frustrating knowing that he could do anything that I was doing and more if he had only not played it so safe. I was always bitter that my dad did not pursue his career passions. My dad pitched in the Little League World Series, was a heck of a high

school athlete in basketball and baseball, was a super-smart college student, and has a degree; but for whatever reason, he just never seemed to make pursuing his passions at the workplace a big priority.

Dad, I am sure if you are reading this, I cannot convey to you how glad that I am that you moved down to Tulsa to help me restore some order and stability to the DJ Connection force. I realize, in this instance, you did pursue your passion (for your kids) when you decided to join the fellowship of the DJ Connection brethren. Maybe someday we can work together to rule the galaxy. But until then, I want you to know that your integrity, ethics, and love for your kids set the standard for me.

In high school I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to start my own business and to work in music, art, and video editing. I wanted to custom design t-shirts and to sell them at a profit. I wanted to DJ and to entertain the masses; according to my guidance counselor, that career did not exist. So after graduation from high school, I set off on a mission that was put in my brain by God. My mission took me to Oral Roberts University. So, after receiving several local scholarships for my numerous and never-ending over-extensions of myself, my endless application for all available scholarships, and my time, I headed off to ORU, the home of great people, great roommates, my future wife, the death of my best friend, and the liberal spending and now disgraced former school president Richard Roberts.

The final months before I actually moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, were great. That summer of 1999 was filled with many jobs in my preparation to make the move “down south.” I worked as a home health aid and as a fun director/room-cleaner/do-everything guy for an assisted living facility (not a nursing home). I also continued working with C & G: DJ Service, and I worked for Aunt Carolyn and Uncle Jerry. As I worked hard, I learned many things about myself. I learned that I hated cleaning gymnasiums. I learned that I had no skills that could command more than a minimum wage. I learned that I didn’t want to work for hourly wages again. And I learned I wanted out of Minnesota more than anything.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Mark Haugen  
(Clay's first DJ partner and former youth pastor at Good Shepherd  
Church in Cokato, Minnesota)**

*Clay Clark bleeds instant rapport. He has a way with people. And right away I was hooked. We met in the summer of 1996. I found out that Clay and I shared a mutual love of basketball and the NBA. I vividly remember the awesome pickup games we used to play.*

*He was always determined to beat both me and any other competition he faced. He worked hard, boxed out, and made his free throws. He did all the little things well. It wouldn't be long before we realized there were other things we loved even more—music . . . 70s and 80s music . . . anything you could dance to. As a youth pastor, it was my “job” to be a positive influence on the youth of my community. What's ironic is that, Clay might not have realized it, but he may have had more influence on me. Through this shared passion of music, I began to fall in love with producing and creating mixes for parties and events. He was in high school. I was in college. I was the student. He was my mentor. I have been a professional DJ ever since. To make a long story short, I owe a debt of gratitude to this great man. No doubt, Clay demonstrated an innate ability and creativity with people and music. But he flat out blew me away with his discipline and willingness to do the dirty work when no one (except occasionally I) was looking. It was an absolute thrill to have him in my youth group back then. I'm blessed beyond measure to see the man he's become! Thanks Clay!*

My tolerance for the slow pace of life found in Cokato, Minnesota, (approximate population 2,038) had reached its threshold. I worked nights cleaning the assisted living home kitchen while eating instant maple sugar and peaches-and-cream-flavored oatmeal as I listened 1999's finest fresh jams, including, but not limited to, TQ, Tyrese, Da Brat, Sisco, Blackstreet, Montell Jordan, and other artists of the late '90s R&B persuasion. As I worked day and night, I kept thinking about what I was going to do when I got out of Minne-snow-ta and back to my home of Tulsa.

Finally, as the long, work-filled summer came to a close, I made the final over-the-phone arrangements for my enrollment at Oral Roberts University with my longtime neighbor and good friend Adam Guthmann. He had always been like a brother to me, so I trusted him when he recommended that I come to ORU and apply to live on campus in the dormitory named EMR—fourth floor, north wing, called Covenant.

Eventually, after I had finally completed all the applications and was eventually accepted to ORU, my closest Minnesotan friend Joe and I promptly drew up some legendary plans to make one final road trip. I really looked forward to this trip because any trip with Joe was always fun. These trips were always great because they involved man-law logic such as not stopping to ask for directions, singing along loudly with all songs, and a general excitement and eagerness for the unexpected. In fact, our trip itinerary bound together our strict adherence to various unwritten but universally understood man laws. We never used a map, and we were never allowed to take any time out from driving to allow for sightseeing until we had reached our destination of choice. Joe “the traveler” and I had determined that we would be traveling to Tulsa via the scenic route through Milwaukee, Chicago, and St. Louis. And so off we went in the Ford Escort.

When we got to Tulsa, I was fired up when I discovered that I would definitely be rooming with my lifelong friend Mark DePetrus. Mark and I had been best friends since around age two, so I cannot really explain how excited I was to be rooming with my lifelong friend. We had started out being G.I. Joe™ and Star Wars™ buddies. However, over time, we had advanced to become baseball and church buddies. And now at the highly sophisticated age of eighteen, we had finally reached the level of college, self-discovery, and roommate buddies. Mark stood about 5-foot-8, he had brown hair, a contagious smile, and he was one of the best conversationalists out there. He was hyperactive; thus, he always paced back and forth like a super-aggressive lawyer might do as he passionately pleads his case to the jury. Mark had genuine sincerity to encourage others, and he loved to laugh. He was by far the most compassionate people person that I have ever met at the time. In contrast, I was always so busy and self-

absorbed that I was generally oblivious to many people and events around me. He told me on more than one occasion, “Clay, the meaning of life is relationships.” Mark was also really witty, so rooming with him was always humorous. For instance, the average human might say, “John and Karen had sex.” But, no, that would be too simple for Mark. He would say, “John and Karen got parallel.” He was hilarious.

As I moved into the dormitory rooms, I quickly became aware that I would be spending the next four years on a floor where personality was king. Most Oral Roberts University students come from all over the world to attend college there, so on a floor with thirty guys, there is always bound to be some level of excitement as our various cultures and life experiences were forced to coexist in a college dorm environment. I believe that ORU required all non-commuting freshmen and sophomores to live in the dorms, so the culture was pretty much established that the dorms were not just a place to stay, they were a place to live. The floor I stayed on (Covenant) was bound together by our pursuit of intramural athletic glory. Our teams routinely dominated campus sporting events. Outside of Full Armor, Youngblood, and Lifeguard floors, we pretty much ruled the campus in this regard. But what made the ORU dorm life so incredible to me was the people. We all shared moral values (and communal shower-spread foot fungus) although we all had different life ambitions. But for the first time in my life, I was only surrounded by people that had ambition. On our floor we really only had 1 or 2 out of 30 guys who were without ambition and consistent beer-drinking partygoers. Most of the guys on our floor had goals and a life plan, and they were at college to work that plan while having as much fun as possible. Although my memory is going to forget a few key people, here were some of the more memorable personalities that made up the Covenant floor and so much of my college experience:

- Josh Guthmann – He was my neighbor until the age of twelve, and he lived in the dorms with me. He was older than the rest of us because he played division-one soccer at Wofford College previous to transferring to ORU. Josh was super athletic, ultra fast on the football field (like 4.5 – 40 yard dash-

type speed . . . think of a white Deion Sanders). Josh was very philosophical and always thought with a depth that was beyond that of most college students. He broke the ORU honor code (because it did not violate his own personal honor code) and bought me a \$20 cigar for my birthday. Josh was studying Information Technology while attending ORU. He was funny at times, and his brown hair had to always be just perfect before he would go outside. He dressed like a stereotypical Oxford graduate student and was a guy who I should have been studying when it came to dressing for success. I love Josh like a brother, and he was always there for me when I needed something. He was the sage of Covenant. Josh looked almost exactly like Russell Crowe's character in *Gladiator*.

- Adam Guthmann – Adam is Josh's younger brother, but he was his own man. His facial structure could be likened to that of your average Spartan warrior from the movie *300*. Adam loved playing video games with Dave and Meeker, and he had this running joke that lasted four years where he would talk like a gay guy who had been inhaling helium. For some reason, this joke never got old, and he loved to call Dave and Tedder "idiots." While in college, Adam dated a girl (whom he is now married to) while she was still in high school; thus, we gave him hell about it whenever possible. Adam's moral clarity in all situations was Dr. Laura-esc; and, at times, it was much needed on our dorm floor. Adam was the Ray Lewis of intramural flag football (he was the motivator, the player/coach, and the hard-hitter). He was the drum beat behind our obsessive quest to win "All-School" for scoring the most total combined intramural points of any dormitory floor at ORU. I love Adam like a brother, and he is a good dude who should be playing some type of professional sport today. The dude was like the Bo Jackson of intramural college sports; he could do it all.

- Ryan Tedder – Ryan was one of the most hilarious people that I have ever been around. His gay Cuban impersonation was hilarious, and the helium-influenced “gay” conversations that he, Adam, and Dave would jokingly have with each other were hilarious. Ryan was always joking about getting with Dave’s mom or Adam’s mom, and this line of humor continued during his entire time at ORU. Ryan dressed like a pop-music star, and he was ambitious. Ryan was kind of the intelligent “Kramer” of our floor. He would always bound into our dorm room with some new random commentary. Although Ryan was athletic and physically very strong, the guys liked to give him a hard time about being gay because of his preferences in dress and music. Ryan spent most of his free time roaming up and down the halls singing and playing his guitar. Although many people learned to play the guitar during their time at ORU, Ryan was the only one I ever heard who could really PLAY THE GUITAR. He could play the guitar with passion, soul, and humor. As Ryan’s college career came to a close, he was featured on MTV as part of former N’ Sync member’s Lance Bass’s contest called “Free Lance.” Ryan’s song “The Look” gained huge popularity over the Internet. Ryan wanted to become a huge songwriter, and he wasn’t going to stop until he became one. He interned in Nashville, Tennessee, and he was always telling us stories about his run-ins with celebrities and his attempts to get signed. Although everyone messed with Ryan for his passionate desire to make it in the business, I sincerely believe it was this undeniable passion that finally connected Ryan and his band mates to Timbaland™. Since that time, Ryan has written songs for Beyonce, Kelly Clarkson, his group One Republic, Leonna Lewis, and numerous other pop stars. Ryan is a huge megastar now, but his ambition back then was inspirational and motivational to me. His success now is again an inspiration to me. So, if you know what is good for you, go online right now to his website [www.onerepublic.net](http://www.onerepublic.net). Buy his CDs and prepare to be wowed. Congrats, Ryan, you earned it.



- Jacob Odom – This dude was one of the most sincere and honorable people that I had the opportunity to meet during my time at ORU. Jake was my resident adviser during my freshman year; thus, we had a few minor run-ins because I have a tendency to push the envelope and test the boundaries of all leaders put in a position above me. Jake stood at a tall-and-slender looking 6-foot-3, and he had dark hair. I like Jake because he would let me debate religion and life with him, while refraining from getting mad when he did not agree. I realize, looking back on it, what a moron I was at times; but in high school, no one really debates. In high school, the big guy who talks the loudest just states his beliefs and everyone agrees, or if you were an idiot, you would get a close-up perspective of the big guy's fist. Thank you, Jake, for letting me debate with you.
- Jason White – Jason White was black, which was always funny when we were at the bottom of the barrel looking for a source of good humor. Jason White actually came up with the name *DJ Connection* during one of our late-night brainstorming sessions, and it was Jason who was our star intramural football athlete. When Jason ran with the football, he looked more like a skier doing moguls than a running back running the ball. We called Jason *J-Rock*, which he was not fond of, but this nickname really fit his psyche well. The dude was super muscular and had no fat on his body. Jason and I lived on the same street before we moved to Minnesota, so we both had the West Memphis Street connection. My favorite memories with Jason are the late nights we spent recording horrible rap songs which you can now listen to on the DJ Connection website ([djconnectiontulsa.com](http://djconnectiontulsa.com)).
- Ryan & Trevor Thuston – I put these two together because on the floor we never referred to them individually; it was always, "Hey, let's see if the Thustons want to go," or "Let's see if the Thustons want to play ball." Both Ryan and Trevor were super

smart, which irritated me and my scholastic troubles to no end. The Thustons could start a research paper at midnight and have it ready to go for the following morning's class. Then they would both score an *A* on the paper. Contrast that to my three-week grind-it-out style of paper writing, and I was a little frustrated to say the least. I would spend hours studying and writing and then revising, and those dudes wouldn't even start the paper until the night before. Ryan had the body of a Greek god and could jump like nobody else. He was an excellent basketball player and a class act in the way he handled himself on the floor. Trevor was a great soccer player (although I refuse to recognize soccer as a viable sport), a great point guard on the basketball court, and a person who truly owned his well thought-out opinions. He never just blurted out a belief or opinion. His opinion was always grounded in thought. The Thustons were mulatto, so their skin coloring looked more Native American than anything else. Ryan looked more Barack-Obama-esc in his appearance, and Trevor looked like he was from India.

- Mike Hirtzel – Mike was from Oregon and was close friends with my roommate in college. He had an obsession to coach college football, and he looked like Tom Cruise. Mike was always trying to use his guitar and his charm to score with the ladies, and he would never share with us whether he scored or not unless he had consumed some alcohol.
- Marty Irwin – Whenever I think of Marty, I always visualize him naked because on our floor, he was always naked. Marty liked to walk into your dorm room naked. He then would proceed to sit down and have a casual conversation with you. He thought that this was hysterical, and this was really the only form of humor that I ever saw him engage in. Marty was a great basketball player with a phenomenal singing voice that he used to praise the Lord at our ORU chapels. Marty came from

a rough background, but he was a great guy. Today he is a pastor somewhere, but I still think of him naked.

- Chad – I don't know what Chad's last name is, but he was from Texas, and he sounded like George Bush's brother. He was huge as well. He was 6-foot-4 or so and probably weighed an athletic, lineman-looking 230 pounds. Chad was fun to have on the floor and was always an encourager. He was balding, which we all found to be funny because he was only around twenty-one.
- Jake Aldridge – This guy was hilarious. He invited Vanessa (my wife) to go on the "Get Your Roommate a Date" with me since Mark (my roommate) refused to go because he was still dating a girl from high school. I am forever indebted to Jake. Jake was very loud and confident when he talked, and he loved to mess around with everyone. He was also fond of nudity, and he liked to walk around naked most of the time. He was super muscular, and I think he enjoyed admiring his body. Jake cut the hair of everyone on the floor, and he is the reason that I currently use Jake's "tuft system" to cut my hair—basically, I shave all of my head and leave just a little hair in the front for styling purposes. This haircut was Jake's patented style.
- The Piatts – The Piatts were the dudes who roomed next to me (if you two are reading this, I am sorry). Many nights I would stay up all night recording my songs and parodies, and they would always knock on my door nicely and kindly ask me to stop, which always made me feel guilty. They were from Texas, and they were really in to video editing. They roomed together, and I think that they both thought that our floor was a little crazy most of the time. They were good dudes.
- Aaron "Meeker" – Aaron was always referred to as *Meeker*. He was skinny, had unforgettable red hair, and had very memorable facial features. Meeker worked at Southern Hills and was always getting lucrative tips that he used to furnish his

dorm room with a big-screen TV and leather furniture. Meeker was the floor's bookie for all betting activities. Meeker also viewed himself as the floor's general manager, and he conducted himself as such. He was always making our rosters and schedules for intramurals. Aaron always had strong opinions and was quick to share them.

- Dave McIntosh – I never really sat down and ever had a heart-to-heart talk with Dave, but Adam Guthmann liked him, and that was good enough for me. Dave had freckles, reddish brown hair, and was much more athletic than he looked. Whenever I think of Dave, I think of him mockingly yelling, “Yeah, Meeker!”
- Dave McGlellan – Super Dave, lived across the hall from me and was a talented singer and very intelligent person. He was handsome, athletic, and a caring person. I never spent a ton of time with Dave, but whenever I did, I always left the conversation feeling like I should have spent more time with him. Dave sang on the ORU praise and worship team.
- Clinton Clark – Clinton was my roommate during my sophomore year at ORU for about three days. Although my name was Clayton Clark and his name was Clinton Clark, we could have not been more different. He liked Vegemite™ (a salty-tasting Australian peanut butter), golf, and being low key. I like hip-hop, being loud, and only basketball, football, and baseball. My notorious history for pulling all-nighters at ORU preceded me, and Clinton looked for a way to become my former roommate as soon as we moved in with each other. Clinton was a good dude and a smart man for choosing not to room with me.
- Pat – I never spent much time with Pat, but I remember that Pat was very big Italian, and he was Meeker's personal assistant

for all things intramural. For some reason, Pat did not play on most of our intramural teams; he preferred to ref.

- Chris Hannah – I never talked with Chris more than once or twice. I am sure that he was a quality dude. I just don't think that we had a lot in common. He was a sincere Christian, and I was sincerely not a Christian at the time. I loved hip-hop, and I think that he thought it was demonic. I think he thought I was a demon's assistant because of my love for secular R&B music. Chris, if you are reading this, I really do not like Satan.
- Walt Green – Walt was the chaplain for Covenant during my freshman year. Honestly, at first I liked Walter, and then I did not like him, and then I started to like him again. Walter was a tall and super-thin Randy Moss-esc looking Black guy. He was athletic, but he was very thin. He was good with the num chucks; thus, we considered him to be our ninja chaplain. He was a legal eagle at heart, so it made being our Chaplain tough I am sure. I know that Walt felt it was his civic duty to report all wrongdoings to the campus hall director, but he also wanted to fit in with the guys and be accepted. This was tough, but Walt did a great job. Walt participated in a couple of the all-nighter recording sessions, and he did an incredible Flava Flav impersonation.
- Eugene Willis (non-wing mate) – Eugene Willis was one of my good friends during my time at ORU. He was physically huge and had a 35-year-old Shaq O'Neal look to himself. Come to think of it, he could have been Shaq's 6-foot-3 body double. Eugene and I met during lunch one day when I introduced myself to him and essentially started harassing him with humor and probing questions, which is pretty much how I meet everyone. Quickly he and I started arguing about Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire. He felt Sammy wasn't getting as many quality pitches to hit because of racism in baseball. I felt that no pitcher would serve up pitches to Mark McGuire just to help

the White race along. We debated until we almost fought, and then it occurred to me that he was much larger than me, so I invited him to work out with me. From that point on, we were almost inseparable. In the gym, on the basketball court, and working together side-by-side at a call center where we made outbound calls convincing people to sign up for *Newport News*.

- Adam Bagwell (non-wing mate) – Adam was the funkiest white kid I have ever met. We teamed up to record the “ORU SLIM SHADY” together, which got me kicked out of college. Adam was rail thin and an incredible rapper. We had good times promoting dance parties and recording music together. Adam had an insatiable hunger, and it was always entertaining to watch him eat hot wings. Adam drove a new Acura™ sports car in college, and it was the nicest vehicle that I had ever ridden in. It was inspirational to me because it gave me something to shoot for.
- Vanessa Clark (non-wing mate but soon-to-be-life mate) – Vanessa was (and still is) a beautiful brunette Oral Roberts University official cheerleader (you know, the ones that attempt to do double flips over hard surfaces without wearing helmets). She has strikingly gorgeous eyebrows and eyes, and she has this odd sage-like quality about her (in fact, she introduced me to the word *sage*). This walking Dr. Laura-encyclopedia was level headed and the most determined woman that I had ever met. She insisted on eating gerbil-sized meals comprised of non-meat-type foods. She has “guns” (muscular biceps), and is the perfect combination of beauty and power for a man like me. I liked Vanessa’s tail.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Jacob Odom**  
**(resident advisor during my first year at ORU)**

***Clayvis . . . author, motivational speaker, business consultant***

*DJ Clayvis . . . the owner of the largest DJ company in the United States*

*DJ Clay . . . a really funny charismatic guy who dropped out of college just to start his own company while supporting a family. Clayton Clark . . . a random name on my hall sheet in the fall of 1999.*

*A few memories . . .*

*I think Clay's car was the first giveaway. He pulled up in a white junker that was hand painted with action signs from an old Batman movie: "POW!" and various other phrases adorned his vehicle. I have never known anyone before or since who thought of using his car as a canvas, much less turning it in to a comic-book ride that couldn't go anywhere without turning heads. Clay was the only chance the car ever had for fame.*

*When Clay moved onto the hall, he moved in less and more than anyone else. On the less side, he brought no bed sheets or other amenities that make a room a home. On the more side, he brought a ton of sound equipment and a personality that brought a steady stream of people at all hours of the night.*

*A memory that stands out in my mind is a vision of Mark DePetris, his roommate, curled up on a bare mattress in a fully-lit room at three in the morning with Clay and a group of guys mixing Clay's latest song. If I were Mark, I would have killed him; but Mark seemed to enjoy the arrangement.*

*Clay decided what he wanted to do, and he did it fully. A good example was Clay deciding to stay in shape. The standard meal for him was a plate stacked with three inches of deli turkey—nothing but protein for a healthy diet. Workout time lasted hours every day, and he did not skip days. Marriage seemed to fall into that category too. Clay met Vanessa, made his decision, and locked it down shortly thereafter. Of all the decisions he made in that time, I suspect she was the best.*

*I'm still a little awestruck at the turn of events, and based on history, I expect to be even more surprised by what's to come.*

Essentially my college experience was shaped by the guys listed above and the relationship that I developed with Vanessa Moore who is now my wife.

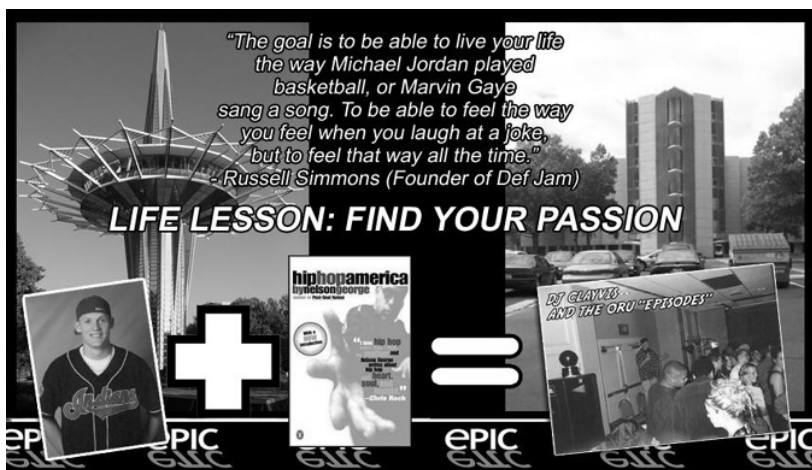
**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't let this chapter be worth less than your Social Security contributions in 30 years when adjusted for inflation. (Fun factoid: If you had contributed \$50,000 into Social Security starting in 1978, you would need \$168,864 as of 2008 to have the same buying power. Essentially if you did not triple the value of your money during that time period, you lost money.)**

1. Where are you going with your life?
2. Make a list of the ten things that you would do this year if you only had one year to live. What things would you want to get done before you passed away?
3. Of those ten things, circle the three that are the most important to you.
4. What are some areas of your life that you could cut back to regain focus and accomplish and achieve those three DEFINITE CHIEF AIMS and YOUR DEFINITE GOALS?
5. What practical steps could you take tomorrow, this week, this month, and this year to help you gain focus on where you truly want to go?





(The picture above features me, the ORU Prayer Tower, a picture of one of my early dances, and the college dormitory that I lived in.)

## Chapter 4

### Oral Roberts University, Russell Simmons, and Learning to Read

*Life Lesson: "If I have seen farther, it is because I have been able to stand on the shoulders of giants." - SIR ISAAC NEWTON*



Many of the classes that I was required to take at ORU were good; however, when I left ORU and once I was out of college altogether, there was one course and classroom experience that helped shaped my life. For the life of me, I cannot remember the name of the professor of this course. The professor was an English teacher, and I seriously have no idea what her name was because I am a jerk.

But for my sake, we will call her Ms. Amanda because that sounds correct to me. I remember that Ms. Amanda had these glasses that made her look studious, and she was younger than most other professors that I had during my time at ORU. I can also remember how upset I was that I even had to take her class. Her class was a basic English class, and English was the one subject that I dominated in high school. I always scored well in English courses in high school, and I even took college-level courses while in high school. However, my ACT scores were horrible, thus I had to take this class on the fundamentals of English. I was so pissed that I had to take this class. I remember sitting in class every day as she talked about MLA format and thinking to myself that at any moment I was going to staple my own forehead if I completely lost it. She was up there talking about diagramming sentences to a classroom full of eighteen year olds who had not figured out how to write coherently up to that point, and it really made me mad to be there because of my lousy ACT scores. It might also be worth mentioning that I had to take the ACT test multiple times just to score a 24 or something weak like that.

Every time I took the ACT, I got flustered and angry and was unable to concentrate due to my exponentially growing frustration. Today, many people would call that a learning disability, and they would put me on some sort of medication to slow my mind down so that I could focus; but I am glad they did not because both Albert Einstein and I were bad test takers.

Anyway . . . back to the story. So she is up there talking about English principles that I learned back in sixth grade day after day. And then one day out of the blue she taught me one thing that I had never really learned to do. She taught me how to read.

I know that most reading this might find this laughable, but for some unknown reason, Ms. Amanda felt compelled to teach us how to “read, comprehend, retain, and apply.” She explained to the class in great detail how most people read, and some can even read fast, but very few people can read a book and find the “nuggets” in them that can be directly applied to improve their lives. And even fewer people can actually comprehend what the “nuggets” mean, which makes it impossible for them to retain and ever apply the principles to their

lives. I took this to mean, “Clayvis, if you want to succeed in business, you have to be able to read autobiographies about great business people in a way that will allow you to take their ideas, beliefs, and experiences and implement them into your business so that you can make a hell of a lot of money.” I sincerely felt like this was what she was saying.

She talked about the importance of highlighting as you read so that you can easily find good material and key points later. She talked about how dog-earring a page was okay since we were the ones buying the books in college. She hammered home the importance of really “owning” the book by writing notes on how the information applies to your life in the margins, highlighting the key points, and ripping out a page or two on occasion to post on your mirror or somewhere important if the notion should strike you. Ms. Amanda preached that if our books were re-sellable at the end of the semester, then we had not really used them. She talked about how we needed to save a ton of money by buying our books online at [www.half.com](http://www.half.com) so that we would not feel upset about writing in an overpriced \$60 bookstore-priced textbook. Her class was awesome!

As I reflect back on it, it is crazy to me how God puts certain people in our lives. If I had been given a choice, I never would have taken this class. And now here I was taking basic English when I was an English whiz kid back in high school. Back in high school I had won the prestigious Brown Book award for “Excellence In Communication Arts,” and yet here I was taking this fundamental English class. I know that if I had not been in this class, being taught by this particular professor, on this particular day, I would not be nearly as successful as I am today. All I do now is read books about great companies and business people. Then I take their best ideas, and I apply them directly to my life and business. The lessons that I learned about reading are definitely worth the \$17,000 per year I spent to attend ORU. Although, if any of my money was spent by Richard Roberts, it makes me mad (that guy is hoser—a term we use in Minnesota for people that routinely take advantage of other people. I have no idea what this has to do with a hose).

As Ms. Amanda's class came to an end, I could feel my excitement levels almost boiling uncontrollably. She had done what no other teacher had done. She had gotten me excited about reading. This is how I get. I start to feel as though this voice inside of me starts out softly saying, "Hey, you should do this." And then by the end of the day, I can almost physically hear that small voice yelling at me saying, "Hey, get out of bed! I put this idea in your brain for a reason. Go do it. This is not your idea. This idea was implanted in your brain by God; get up and do it!" And then I get up and work all night. And, yes, I literally do mean *all night*. In this case, I felt like I had just learned a revolutionary idea of "reading and applying," so I felt as though I had to start learning immediately. I hopped in my hatchback 1989 Ford Escort that was hand painted (to attract the ladies), and I drove to Barnes & Noble<sup>TM</sup>. Once I got inside, I bought myself a copy of *Hip Hop America* by Nelson George. At the time, I still dressed like I was in the Wu-Tang Clan, so I just knew that this book would have some great stories that I could directly apply to my life immediately, and my assumption was correct.

As I got back to my dorm room, I remember sitting down on the couch/foldout bed that we slept on. I opened my backpack, I got out the book, and I just starting reading and highlighting. I kept on reading and highlighting until around four in the morning when I stumbled across something Russell Simmons said about why he got started in the music business. Russell is now the famous founder of Def Jam<sup>TM</sup>, Phat Farm<sup>TM</sup> clothing, and many other brands; but the part of the book that I was reading told the story about when he was a young man in his late teens, and he was out on the streets selling drugs. The book explained that he viewed selling drugs as a means to an end, and he found his "end" in hip-hop music promotion. He said, "The goal is to be able to live your life the way Michael Jordan played basketball, or Marvin Gaye sang a song. To be able to feel the way you feel when you laugh at a joke, but to feel that way all the time."

For some reason, his description of the meaning of life (or the goal of life) really jumped off the page at me. It set me on fire, and I am still overflowing with the heat I gained from Russell's passion candle. It never occurred to me that the "goal was to be able to live your life

the way . . . Marvin Gaye sang a song.” I could not believe it. The more that I read, the more my passion for life kept increasing. This masterwork by Nelson George explains how a Howard University dropout by the name of Sean Combs went to work as an intern for a record label. The book explains how Sean then went out on the town finding such artists at Mary J. Blige, Jodeci, and Notorious B.I.G. It then went on to explain how Sean promoted huge concerts using nothing but his passion, his ambition, his eye for talent, a good time, and flyers. This book explains how Sean Combs became P. Diddy promoting huge concert events for Howard University students.

I started to see myself doing what Sean and Russell did. I started seeing myself promoting and entertaining major college events as a way to start a business, as a way to pay my way through college, and as a way to pursue my creative passions. My plan was made that very night. I was going to begin promoting college dances for ORU students for \$5 per head. I was going to try to get 500 people per night, and it was going to be awesome! Russell and P. Diddy showed me the light that very night, and they did it all without being in my room or talking with me. They did it all through the pages of *Hip Hop America* and the words of Nelson George. Through their lives and actions they had become the mentors that I had never met

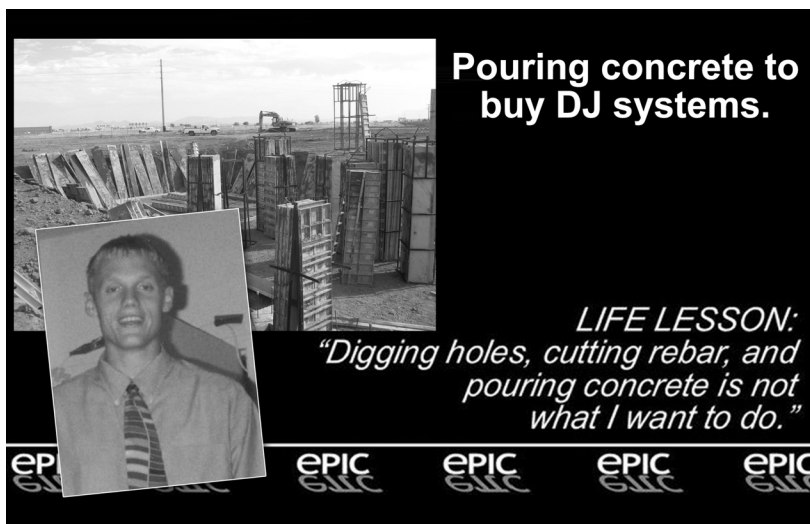
However, the only reason that I was able to find and act on these principles is because my English professor took the time to teach her class of college freshmen the fundamentals of how to read. And just to kick your pants about the importance of learning, Brian Tracy, the motivational speaker and success author, has found that nearly all multi-millionaires are avid readers. I have found from my life experience that anyone I have ever met who is successful is a reader; however, only one-third of all recent high school graduates will ever read another book in their lifetimes, and only 57 percent of the US population read a book during last year according to [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov).

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this incredible chapter from your favorite book to be wasted like “that one guy” on prom night. Answer the following questions in MLA format . . . just kidding:**

1. When I read, do I retain what I read?
2. When I read, do I apply what I read?
3. When I read, do I highlight while I read?
4. When I read, do I write what the material means in the margins of the book?
5. When I read, do I think in terms of how I can apply this information to help me reach my goals?
6. What was the name of the teacher that taught you the most?  
(You might want to mail him or her a thank you; they may have changed your life.)



(This illustration features a picture of nineteen-year-old me and those glorious aluminum forms I had the opportunity to use all summer while pouring concrete.)

## Chapter 5

### Big Dudes, Heavy Lifting, and Poured Concrete

*Life Lesson: Digging holes, cutting rebar, and pouring concrete is not what I want to do. Translation: Where there is a lack of capital, there is always an abundance of manual labor opportunities available.*



This chapter takes me to the end of my freshman year. The year had been great. I had recorded a bunch of horrible rap songs; I had met a bunch of great friends. I had earned a lot of money throwing my Russell Simmons and P. Diddy inspired dance parties that I called “episodes.” My floor, Covenant, had just won the “All-School” title,

and I had been dating this incredibly gorgeous woman with both an incredible mind and an incredible rear end for nearly half the school year. This woman with the incredible mind and rear end was named Vanessa Moore. Jake Aldridge, the guy on my floor who was fond of his own personal nudity and cutting my hair with the patented “tuft system,” had invited Vanessa to go out on a “Get Your Roommate a Date” with me; and since that time, I had been pursuing her with a passion. When I say that I was initially attracted to her because of her body and that was it, I really mean it. I did not know her, and she never really gave me much to work with during our early conversations.

During our first date at Uno’s Italian restaurant, she did not talk much. I figured it was because she did not like me, so I kept pursuing her. After I found out that she was already “officially” dating another dude, this did not faze me and only motivated me more (as Greg had brutally taught me with Katie, “Any lady without a ring on her finger is fair game”). Over time, I compensated for my lack of intelligence with my stellar sense of humor and comedic wit. I would always talk with her on the way to classes, and I made sure to mess with her at all times. She was gorgeous, and I was not going to be denied.



(Pictured from left to right is me in my dorm room at age eighteen standing up on the chair hyping the crowd, then Ryan Tedder, Jason White, Hannah Crockett, and a crowd of dancers at the “Triple-Phat Halloween Dance” during my freshman year at ORU).



Vanessa was studying Broadcast Journalism, which was in the same department as the multi-media program that I was a part of, so I saw her often. Over time, I won her over, and we began to go out on fancy dates and various quick trips to Walmart™ to get “fruit on the bottom” yogurts or the 96-cent frozen chicken panini. The more I talked with her, the more I grew to like her for reasons not related to her incredibly attractive and super-fit body. Vanessa was a cheerleader for ORU, and her dad (Rick) had always worked the night shift growing up. My dad had always worked the night shift as well. Her mom (Annie) had a small role in the 80s smash-hit movie *Top Gun*, and my mom was not in *Top Gun*. Her parents had some financial problems growing up, and my parents did too. She had one brother; I had one brother. She was ambitious (and hot), and I was ambitious (and attracted to hotness). She was innocent, sweet, and accommodating; and I was abrasive, comedic, and opinionated. She was a peacemaker, and I was a believer in war. Basically, the more time we spent together, the more we discovered how much we had, and did not have, in common. With Vanessa playing the part of the “Beauty” and I being the “Beast,” I began to fall in love with her.

And being that I was inspired through some heavy doses of “sex transmutation,” (see Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich* book, or type “sex transmutation Napoleon Hill” in Google™), Russell Simmons, and P. Diddy, I felt as though I had to spend the summer apart from her so that I could go back up to Minnesota to earn the cash that I needed to start my DJ empire and to be able to provide for her after I convinced her to marry me. In preparation for our time spent apart, I got Vanessa one of the first medieval webcams for her birthday. I thought that we could talk over the Internet all summer to keep the flame stoked.

Before I went home, I talked to my parents and let them know that I was coming home to work. My mom did some searching for me, and she found a job that I could do working for Lund Poured Walls—essentially building, forming, and pouring huge concrete basements for Minnesota homes and apartment complexes. I liked the notion of working in construction because it would give me the number of hours that I needed to raise the \$12,000 that I felt I needed to start my DJ

empire. This job also sounded great because it started each day at 5:00 A.M. and went until 7:00 P.M., which would limit my free time to spend the money. Basically I would always be working.

This job was sweet because it provided me with nearly limitless hours. This job was not sweet because it was physically grueling, and it required me to get to the truck load-up site at 5:00 A.M. Basically, each morning at 5:00 A.M. a bunch of hard-living vagabonds would all hop into diesel-powered, five-passenger, silver, pick-up trucks and head to the worksite. Because Cokato (the town in which the concrete company was based) was located forty-five minutes west of Minneapolis/St. Paul (the thriving metropolis areas in Minnesota), we all got used to driving one to two hours each way per day to the worksite. The drive was always filled with ample examples of the futility of attempting to sleep when surrounded by fellow construction workers. To set the mental picture here, we were all dressed alike and looked like (slightly less brightly colored) characters pulled right off the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie set. Our captain was Peter “The Foreman.” Nearly everyone on our crew wore bandanas, sported jeans with huge holes in them, chewed Skoal™, swore constantly (I still am trying to kick this habit), smoked all the time, was super tan, was super strong, and believed that their god was money. Everyone was there for money, and no one really cared about anything other than the earning of money, which meant they did not enjoy being around the “new guy,” and they enjoyed even less teaching the “new guy.” There seemed to be a general consensus (which I will not disagree with) that I was the greenest new guy they had ever seen. They were mad that I did not swear, smoke, or chew; they did not like that I was going to a Christian school; and it annoyed them to no end that I was horrible with all tools nor was I handy in any way. I was an outsider, and I was physically weak compared to everyone else despite the fact that I was in good shape from lifting weights. These dudes were pirate men, and I was merely a “fairy boy” in their minds.

Each day I hopped in the work truck and prepared for the long day of work; I also had to emotionally prepare myself for a day of harsh criticisms and negative talk. Over time, I learned to not even listen to it and to occasionally dish it out, but I never got used to working with

Tracy. Tracy was this dude who looked like the Marlboro™ man. He was a chain smoker with cracked lips and creases all over his face. He was super tan and used curse words as nouns and verbs. He overplayed his tough-guy character to the point that it was comical. I later found out that Tracy was thirty; however, he looked like he was fifty because of his years spent drinking, using drugs, working construction, and smoking. This dude burnt the candle at both ends and in the middle.

Our crew had recently added another foreign-born human to our team; however, this particular person was from Finland, and he could not communicate with the rest of the crew at all. So I guess that is why they started him out in charge of the heavy metal-cutting saw that we used to cut rebar in to correct sizes. We used the rebar to make tension rods that helped give our concrete structures additional strength. I am not sure how it worked, but it just worked. However, putting the non-English speaking Finnish guy in charge of the metal-cutting saw did not work. When he was first given the command to cut the rebar, he seemed to understand and did a fine job; however, he didn't pay attention to what he was spraying behind him. That first time he propelled metallic shrapnel and sparks into a large group of guys who were attempting to form up some walls, Tracy took exception to this and threw a hammer at him. The hammer missed, but apparently even foreigners understand hammer throwing to mean *cut it out*.

Later on, Mr. Finland 2,000 attempted to replace a dull saw blade. He got the original blade off without assistance (which I certainly could not do); however, when he put the new blade back on the metal-cutting saw, he did not bolt it down properly. Thus, when he turned on the blade, it went flying off with unbelievable velocity and narrowly missed hitting another group of guys who were working. Working around that guy was seriously scary; however, working in the "hole" (what we called each construction site) was scary in general.

Anyway my basic job was to be a "grunt." And as a grunt, it was my job to lift heavy things and to take orders from large people who were not happy with their lives. Usually the orders came in the following fashion, "Hey, shithead, get going. Christ! You are taking all damn day. What the hell is wrong with you? Move those forms, and shut the hell up!"

Oh, how I do not miss those days. Now, if I ever need to motivate myself to do anything, I always ask myself rhetorically if I would rather be doing heavy lifting/construction or the task at hand. The task at hand always wins out.

Each day that I came to work I was thankful that I was making \$10.00 per hour up to 40 hours, and time and one-half for each hour after 40 hours. I was happy that I was working 60 hours per week, and I was happy to have spent the time I physically worked mentally conjuring up ways that I could kill Tracy without anyone noticing. Honestly, the work was horrible, but I was thankful to have it because it provided me the capital I needed in exchange for the labor that I delivered. I essentially could work as much as I wanted which was a plus; however, each day also brought near-death experiences to my young life. There was one day in particular that was especially exciting.

Much of our job involved putting together a series of seven-foot aluminum molds for a giant concrete structure. Whenever we got to a jobsite, the footings were already in place, but that was about it. Thus, we had to drill holes in the footings to insert the weight-reinforcing tension rods. We had to assemble everything, and then we had to wait for the cement truck to arrive. Once it arrived, Peter would yell out orders for everyone to get out of the hole. Since the giant 7-foot (or 9-foot) high forms were all held together by a series of pins and wedges that we hammered into place, we always ran the risk that someone did not properly hammer home a pin or wedge. If this did not happen correctly, then the weight of the concrete flowing in between the giant forms (that made up the huge molds) could cause a “blowout,” and a blowout was a bad thing. A small blowout could be fixed in a half hour and might only cost our crew \$1,000 or more in additional labor and cement. A huge blowout could result in the structure falling down; thus, if you were on or near the structure, you would get crushed. However, Peter was a good foreman, and we never really dealt with too many blowouts, but I did get crushed by some forms one glorious day.

Each aluminum form that we moved weighed about 70 pounds and was about 7 feet tall and 3 feet wide. The forms were held in large containers that were dropped into the worksite by a large crane. Because each form container could hold up to ten forms or more per

side, there was a potential 700 pounds waiting to fall on someone at any time if the safety chain was not properly put into place. And on this fine wet and super muddy day the chain was not properly secured. Thus, as I walked by the form container in my super-muddy steel-toe boots and my ventilation-enhanced, hole-ridden blue jeans, it all came tumbling down on me. The impact of the forms hitting me literally drove me into the ground. The initial hit was awesome. It felt like Jabba the Hutt (the 2,000-pound beast from *Star Wars*) had hit me, and honestly I should be dead, but since it was a muddy day, the forms just drove me into the mud. I could not get out of the mud however. Thus, I was lying facedown in the mud and yelling for help under 700 pounds of unforgiving aluminum forms. Ricky Dalen, my redheaded co-worker and high school friend came to my aid. One by one he lifted them off me, and I survived. In fact I still have a nice scar on my back as a souvenir to commemorate this moment.

Week by week this sort of thing kept happening. If the forms were not falling on me, they were falling on someone else; but when the forms were not falling and emergencies were not happening, this physically exhausting and small-minded job gave me many mental breaks that I used to think about big ideas and plans.

When I say I had time to think, I don't mean, I had time to engage in mindless small talk or to contemplate how tired I was. I mean I had some really quality thinking time available to me because the work required 80 percent of my physical capacity and about 2 percent of my mental capacity. Since I was the new guy, I was always being asked to do the insane and undesirable tasks. It was not uncommon for me to hear things like,

"Clay! Hey, here is the deal. We are going to hold you upside down by your ankles over that hole (a 10-foot deep and 3-foot round hole used for pouring and forming the concrete piers used to make secure Minnesota foundations) so that you can reach down and pull out all the trash that fell in there. So shut the hell up and get over here."

Generally, however, I would hear statements directed at me like, "Hey, greeny! Get over there and cut all that rebar (400 pieces of rebar) into 8-foot sections, and then put them into those vertical holes

in the footings. Let's go, Clark!" And so, like any good soldier, I would begin cutting that rebar or hopping into that hole while completely mentally disengaging from the tasks at hand thus giving me tons of time to think. It was amazing. As I hammered home one pin and wedge after another, I had all sorts of downtime to ponder my potential future marriage to Vanessa, corporate structures, tax strategies, the character traits that are universally found within the ultra successful, the character traits that were causing nearly our entire crew to be phenomenally unsuccessful (addiction to gambling, alcoholism, promiscuous sexual activity, dressing like a pirate), and the future of this crazy journey that I was embarking on to start a mobile entertainment empire without any savings other than what I was going to earn that summer from hammering those god-forsaken pins and wedges all day.

The time that I spent thinking allowed me to almost completely design my future DJ company in my head, and all this before I had spent a dime on equipment. As I walked up and down the rows hammering and grunting, I would think about my former DJ boss whom I had been contracting for in Tulsa. It allowed me quality uninterrupted time to think about how much capital I would need to raise. It also allowed me to think about how many systems I could afford to buy. It allowed me think about what Rob Biggins (my former DJ boss) did well and what I thought I could do better. It allowed me to think about marketing and how I would do it. It allowed me to think about the skills I needed to learn and whether I was going to be able to learn them by earning a college degree. This work gave me a paycheck, but it also gave me lots of time to think.

As I mentally marinated on the reasons why I was working to begin with, my mind kept taking me back to the same three things over and over again.

- 1) I wanted to start the DJ business so I never had to work at a place like this again.
- 2) I wanted to marry Vanessa now.
- 3) My boss, Peter, was the man. He was dyslexic, and he was making bank. He did not have a college degree, yet he

could mentally do the math needed to order huge sums of concrete with unbelievable accuracy. I was amazed with Peter, his focus, and his determination. He always told me that he was going to work until he was thirty-five, and then he was going to retire. I admired that. The guy knew what he was doing, and he knew that he wanted to do something else with his life, but he had the maturity to view this job as the vehicle he needed to financially get him to where he wanted to go.

As the summer wound down, I spent more and more time talking with Vanessa and her family on the webcam after each horrible day spent working in the hole. Week by week the work became less physically painful, and it started to become just routine, which made it more and more bearable. Over that same summer, I spent many hours on the phone with Mark discussing his views on college, his desire to coach baseball, my love for Vanessa, and the DJ empire in general. Mark kept encouraging me to ask Vanessa to marry me ASAP. He felt as though she was the hottest and the nicest woman that I was ever going to find. He felt as though I would be “marrying up” if I was able to land her, and he was more confident than I was in my ability to support her financially with the DJ empire. He just kept saying, “Clay, you are awesome! Oh yeah, buddy. You are the best damn DJ in Tulsa. Your business is going to blow up; you are going to make a ton of money; and you need to marry Vanessa.”

Being that Mark was the only non-pirate from which I sought advice and that I really talked to on a consistent basis, he pretty much sold me on the concept of proposing to Vanessa after the summer. I was only nineteen and Vanessa was only nineteen, but Mark had pumped me up to the point that I knew I could do it. I was riding an emotional high from my good friend’s encouragement; all I had to do was tell my parents (never mind telling her parents—I would not see them until five months before the wedding because they lived in Louisville, Kentucky).

So, right after I put the phone down from talking long distance with Mark, I marched upstairs to give my parents the news.

“Hey, Mom, where’s Dad?”

She replied, “Hey, Clayton, he’s in the restroom.” Being that my dad and I have been known to take epic trips to the “porcelain palace,” I started to get nervous knowing that I had to wait to tell him. Anyway . . . a while later he came out, and I said,

“Guys, I need to tell you something,” (which was a weak opening statement). “Here is the deal, I have been thinking about it, and I am going to ask Vanessa to marry me; and if she says *yes*, I want to get married next spring.”

They then proceeded to ask me questions, and surprisingly, I had most of the answers to their questions readily available. At that point in time, I had already decided to drop out of college at some point, but I did not tell them that part. After reading about Russell Simmons, and P. Diddy, and after working with Peter (my foreman), I knew that my career did not require a degree. It required experience, creativity, and a tough work ethic. I knew that my life was going to be “odd,” but my journey was going to be epic.

We talked for the better part of an hour, and then my mom told me that my dad’s mom, Grandma Dot, had given her wedding ring to them before she died. She had told them that she wanted me to give it to my wife when we got married. So that took care of that; therefore, I also had more money to start the DJ empire. I know that sounds weak, horrible, and pragmatic; but honestly, I was going to be spending every dime that I had on new DJ gear: a maroon Madza™ MPV minivan (with over 150,000 miles on it), ultra-small advertisements in phonebooks, (non-glossy) business cards, and various office supplies. I knew what it was going to cost down to the penny, and I did not have a wedding ring in the budget. Thank you, Grandma Dot and Grandpa Clayton, for helping me out even after you both passed away. I miss you and your dominoes.



**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't make this chapter as meaningless as ordering two Big Macs™, a large fry, and a Diet Coke™ (to cut back on the calories) by answering these self-examining questions to shine some light on your current situation and opportunities:**

1. What mental changes do you have to make to begin viewing your current job as a means to an end?
2. What jobs and what hours are you willing to work in order to turn your American dream in to a reality? (e.g. I worked sixty-plus hours per week doing construction to start a DJ business; and Chuck Norris has been willing to fight thousands of ninjas during his career to become the icon for toughness that he now enjoys today).
3. List the expenses and bad habits that you are willing to get rid of permanently in order to free up the extra cash flow you need to transform your dreams into reality (e.g. Going out to eat every night, smoking like a chimney, drinking large quantities of high-markup adult beverages at your local saloon, buying lottery tickets, paying a dumb tax, etc.).
4. What part of your day can you use to set aside and think about your future and create a plan for it?
5. If your current job is not a vehicle to help you get where you want to go financially, make a list of ten part-time jobs that you could pick up to earn some extra money on the weekends (e.g. DJ-ing on the weekends, delivering papers, or working at a local restaurant).

**\*\*\*Note: Remember, each day on this earth you either get closer or further away from your goals and dreams. Decide now to make every day of your life a positive step in the right direction.**



(The illustration above features a tribute to the late Mark DePetris, a picture of my glorious wife Vanessa while we were dating, and Adam Bagwell and I on the cover of our self-made *ORU Slim Shady* CD cover.)

## Chapter 6

### My Best Friend Was Killed, I Got Married and Kicked Out of College All in One Year

*Life Lesson: "Our time will never be just right.*

*We must act now."* - NAPOLEON HILL,  
author of bestselling self-help book *Think and Grow Rich*



As the summer was winding down, my plan was going well. I had saved up almost \$13,000, and I knew how I was going to spend every last dime of it. I don't remember the exact totals of what

everything cost, but I do remember writing them all down in a red spiral notebook. I wrote something to the effect of:

- American DJ Mixer = \$300.00
- American DJ Light Trussing = \$75.00
- Amp = \$600.00
- Denon™ CD player = \$450.00
- Light Bin = \$10.00
- (etc.)

Once I added it all together, it appeared as though I would need a little over \$10,000 to transform my DJ Connection dream in to a reality. I was getting so close to creating my dream job that I could taste it. I could see myself in possession of all the equipment. I could visualize Vanessa saying *yes*, and there was nothing that was going to stop me.

I arranged for Vanessa to fly into Minneapolis's airport so that she could meet up with my family, and so that she and I could drive back to ORU together in my new incredibly gorgeous maroon MPV minivan. My dad had secured a call-forwarding service through a company called AnswerPhone™ (these guys are great) to serve as the voicemail for my new DJ service (since I was going to be in class when 80 percent of the calls were coming in), and the number they gave me was (918) 481-2010.

I was pumped! I had a number. I was in the phonebook. I was somebody! (Sorry, Steve Martin, for shamelessly stealing your movie lines). And so I did the most sensible thing that any young entrepreneur without money to advertise would do. I painted this new number all over the exterior of my maroon MPV.

Yes, that is right, my friend; I hand painted the words *DJ Connection* and its phone number right on the side of my minivan in big bright letters and numbers. Oh, it was sweet. Plus, because I earned a little more money than I had expected from working as a home health aid/bingo-caller/bellboy for a retirement community on Saturdays and Sundays—the two days that I wasn't working construction—I treated myself to the purchase of a new stereo system

for my van. I had an amplifier and a subwoofer installed, and they sounded great. When Vanessa flew in to Minneapolis, I felt like a million bucks.

Over the years, I have discovered that there is a certain emotional high that follows the completion and successful achievement of audacious goals. It seems as though achieving small goals builds your faith in your ability to achieve larger goals. Thus, a positive cycle of achievement was being created quickly because I was really getting after it. I was experiencing a near-euphoric emotional high, and I could not wait to propose to Vanessa. BECAUSE I HAD THE CONFIDENCE FROM THAT POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT, I HAD NO DOUBT THAT SHE WOULD SAY YES.

After her plane arrived, it taxied into position, and I remember having to really focus on not drooling in anticipation of being with her again. As I gazed out the large airport terminal windows looking intently to catch a glimpse of my dream woman, my heart (I think it was my heart) pounded hard with anxiety/love/pre-proposal jitters. My dad and brother were waiting with me when I first caught a glimpse of her exiting the plane (pre-9/11-aviation-rule allowed us to wait for her in the actual terminal).

As she walked down the walkway exiting the plane, she looked so tan, so exotic, so beautiful, so happy, and so incredible in her blue denim skirt and red top. She wore silver earrings and a silver bracelet that the family she had been a nanny for over the summer had given her. I wanted to just find a judge and marry her right there, but I had some patience, but not enough to propose to her in the way I had planned.

After we picked up Vanessa, my dad (Thom) took my brother (Carson), Vanessa, and I all out to eat at the Olive Garden<sup>TM</sup>. The whole time we sat there, I kept wanting to propose, and if I had had the ring with me, I would have. Then that night when my mom and Vanessa were talking in the kitchen, I again wanted to propose. I had an elaborate engagement proposal plan, like most guys do, but I determined that this plan had to go the wayside. I was in to the results-approach. So that night as Vanessa got ready for bed, I knocked on the door of the guest room (my brother's room), and I proposed to her.

She took forever to answer, and I almost wet myself in anticipation, but eventually she said yes. Each second I waited seemed like an eternity.

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Vanessa Clark  
(my wife, my leader and the “Big Bird”)***

***When Clay and I decided to get married, I remember Clay’s mom, Mary, telling me something to the effect of, “If you marry Clayton, you will never have a normal life.” I think that reinforced my decision.***

So when my new fiancé, Vanessa, and I finally hopped into the custom, hand-painted MPV van, drove one hour east to Minneapolis through the endless barrage of small towns, and then embarked on the twelve-hour drive to Tulsa, I remember thinking, *This is my life. This is great! I am going to change to world! My fiancé is hot. Holy cow, I am about to spend a lot of money on DJ gear . . . Wow!*

That particular series of events, might have been the most exciting time of my life up to that point—just knowing that we were literally driving into the future together, and that I was about to make my dreams a reality with the purchase of the DJ gear. When Vanessa and I finally arrived at Guitar Center, my excitement could almost not be contained. I walked into that store with confidence, knowing that I was going to walk out with nearly \$8,000.00 of pre-negotiated DJ gear, and that a business would be born that day. Long story short . . . we spent several hours having the Guitar Center folks round up all the gear as I conversed with Joey “Shake” our sales representative.

When it was finally time to load the van with all the new gear, it occurred to me that we were definitely not going to have enough room. After much Tetris™-esc repositioning of the gear, Vanessa finally had to scrunch up in a ball to fit into the van because the gig rig that housed all of the rack-mounted gear was taking up the passenger-seat area. That was one of the first times that I had ever asked Vanessa to do something crazy on behalf of the DJ business, but it would not be the last. I could barely change gears because of all the protruding gear surrounding us. It was man law, and it was awesome. Imagine being

surrounded by Christmas presents and the significant other of your dreams all at the same time—this is what I felt like.

Down the road we went. We drove and drove and drove and drove some more for good measure. Finally after completing the thirteen-hour job from Oklahoma to Minnesota, we arrived at the mini-storage that would be the home of DJ Connection for some time. From this storage unit, we would load and unload disk jockeys every weekend for a four-year period. Terry, the lady running the storage facility, met us that day. She kindly escorted us to storage number 708. This unit was as small as an average bedroom closet, and so was my budget, so it was a good fit. After unloading, we were off to the dorm rooms to unload our domestic supplies. Because I always had lots of stuff, this was never a pleasant process. I was always acquiring new DJ apparatuses and various pieces of gear, so I had the most technologically geeked-out room on the ORU campus. If my resident advisers had allowed it, I would have also started side-businesses enriching uranium, activating carbon, or exploring for gas within my dorm room as well.

I might be mixing up the sequence of events here, but I believe at this time I was assigned a new roommate by the name of Clinton Clark because Mark D. was taking a semester off. Clinton and I did not hit it off right away. It's not that I did not like him. We were basically just a match not made in heaven. I think he did not enjoy my company, and I, in turn, did not enjoy his company either. And despite the oddness of sharing similar names (Clayton Clark and Clinton Clark) we lasted as roommates for a period of a few days because of my odd habit of taking up 90 percent of the usable space with turntables, speakers, condenser mics, gig rigs, lights needing repairs, and forty professional sports team jerseys. I think that this might have been tolerable, but I am pretty sure that the 3:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. recording sessions got to him after a while. Or maybe it was the oddness of my work-twelve-hours/sleep-four-hours philosophy. Anyway, Clinton, if you get around to reading this, I am sorry that I frustrated you, but I would not change it if I could.

When it was all said and done, Clinton moved out and into a room with Dave McGlohon across the hall, and since Mark did not enroll

that semester, I ended up having my own room to myself. And with a room to myself, I got to work. I honestly would work eighteen hours per day when not in class, and ten hours per day if I was in class. I made banners, signs, flyers, t-shirts, wing-videos, recordings . . . and anything else that could turn in to a profit. It was during this time that I developed some of the very concepts and phrases that we still use today at DJ Connection. The concept for the logo was designed during this time, my ability to record and produce music was refined, and my belief in working with an intense sense of haste was developed. Every day was like a sprint for me during this time. I would wake up at 6:00 A.M. to meet Eugene to lift weights. I would start classes at 7:50 A.M., and then I would have class straight until 2:00 P.M. At 3:30 P.M. I would head to work at the call center where I worked. During my shift, I would check my voicemail every few hours to make sure that no customers had called from my Yellow Pages™ ad.

My room became known as, “The room where that DJ guy can record you.” Everyone knew I was the “DJ connection.” Everyone knew what room I was in, and everyone wanted to see it. RA’s warned me about theft and risk. Over the years, if I had a dollar for every time someone tried to warn me about my liability, fire hazard, and theft risks during my DJ career, then I should have certainly had enough money to buy all of the capital-sucking insurance that was recommended by the fear-mongering-negative-Nancy types.

I loved the atmosphere of my dorm room. I loved the chi of the room, and the overall aura that it had. I loved that my walls were covered in posters and motivational sayings; I loved the artwork I cut out of magazines; I loved that room. And I have actually re-created that creative environment in every office in which I have worked since. Praise be to God for this. I cannot think in a vacuum . . . at least what I create in a vacuum is usually very non-creative.

As the school year progressed and my income began to soar like an eagle due to all of the recording time I was logging at \$35.00 per hour, the harder it became for me to take college seriously anymore. I got in to heated debates with Dr. Swails (history professor), as well as my Old Testament professors and teacher’s assistants out of frustration and impatience with the lack of practicality in 90 percent of the subject

matter I was learning. But I also was amazed by other professors like Mr. Westcott (who went on to become a city counselor) who devoted their class time to only teaching practical knowledge. I began questioning the whole concept of college and the concept of studying things that have no practical application in my life. I started realizing that education, motivation, and reputation are determined by the level of compensation, not general inapplicable knowledge.

I read *The New Imperialists* and quickly discovered that Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and other top-level business people relentlessly pursued continual learning and skill training. However, I also learned that Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Russell Simmons, and many of the other business leaders (whom I admired) never earned a college degree. I started openly debating, questioning, and wondering why we had to become Microsoft™-certified if the man who invented Microsoft™ was not Microsoft™ certified.

In between my debates about the validity of college and studying, I also spent much time recording, hanging out with Vanessa, marketing my personal DJ services, commissioning myself to produce the Covenant wing year-in-review video, working out each morning with my partner Eugene Willis, eating yogurt, eating frozen Budget Gourmet™-brand 96-cent chicken panini dinners, going to Walmart™, eating ungodly amounts of chicken at the ORU cafeteria, reading *Newsweek* magazine, crudely soundproofing my room using the mattresses found in my dorm room, recording my own rap parodies, recording other rappers, drawing, attending chapel at ORU, and debating with anyone who would listen about the fraudulent messages of Eastman Curtis and Richard Roberts and the insincerity of many televangelists, and then . . . I had the opportunity to meet ADAM BAGWELL.





(Pictured above left is Adam Bagwell; pictured above right is me.)

Recording Adam Bagwell . . . oh yes . . . recording Adam Bagwell . . . nothing was more fun to me at the time than recording Adam Bagwell. Now that I am married, nothing is more fun than attempting to create babies, but at the time, this was where it was. Adam Bagwell was this extremely skinny white kid from Golden, Colorado, who could rap like he was born doing it. Up until then, I had heard people rap and always thought, *I could do that better; that was okay; or that requires no talent*. But with Adam, I did not have those thoughts. He was great. He could change the emphasis on nearly any word or phrase to make it rhyme—when he rapped, he had a synonym for nearly every word readily available to make the rhyme phrase work without compromising the meaning.

I will never forget the first time I met Adam. Since everybody at school knew I rapped, recorded, and DJ-ed; and everyone on Kingsmen's dorm floor knew Adam's rapping skills were incredible, it was just a matter of time before Adam and I found each other. I kept hearing people say, "When are you and Adam going to hook up and record something?" I did not know who he was, but I was kind of beginning to look forward to meeting him. And with a *knock, knock* on my room 2416 metal door, the funkiest white kid I had ever met, Adam Bagwell, entered my life.

As both of us went through school at Oral Roberts University, we found an oasis of creativity behind the microphone and in recording. It was almost as though the microphone represented a secret pathway

into the “Narnia” of recording. Adam and I recorded jams for the ORU Battle of the Bands and for others just because. We found that we worked well together and that we never creatively limited each other. I recorded the “Ford Escort Song” (available for download on the [www.djconnectiontulsa.com](http://www.djconnectiontulsa.com)) a sexual tribute to my late 1989 Ford Escort and my first DJ ride. Adam recorded Christian and positive-minded rap songs. I recorded off-the-wall love songs for my fiancé. And then late one night (all night) we recorded it; we recorded “ORU SLIM SHADY.”

This parody was and still is the ultimate ORU campus song. This song brought excessive amounts of heat upon us because it brought the broadly (but quietly) held beliefs that Lindsay and Richard Roberts were allegedly corrupt into campus conversations among the students. To be fair, the song was caustic, and to be fair, it was funny; but it did get me in a lot of trouble.

Because people liked the song, and because we were attending college during the year 2000, the song spread quickly via the Napster™ file-sharing program. And thus this song began to grow at a viral pace after a few of our friends “borrowed it” and put it online. I will probably never know who put the song on Napster™ or who put the song on every student’s campus voicemail, but I do know that this song made me instantaneously infamous at ORU and made me forever synonymous with the “ORU SLIM SHADY.”

Before this audio sensation made its way across campus via CD, the school’s voicemail system, and e-mail, Adam was long gone. When he transferred to Colorado Christian University, the song’s popularity reached its peak. Around the time of the song’s 10,000<sup>th</sup> download off of Napster™, I was the only one left at ORU to answer for the song’s content . . . which I actually enjoyed doing. For whatever reason, I actually get a big thrill out of having confrontations with people when I know that I am right. The only part of the song that I did not agree with was the comment about Danny Daniels. Danny was a person that Adam had some disagreements with (thus he voiced them on the song. \*\*Note: Danny, if you’re reading this, we love you, man.)

At the end of the day, this little audio gem worked tirelessly spreading its way around campus until eventually I would be asked to leave the school by the dean of men, Dean B.

Sometime before the song reached its absolute pinnacle in popularity, my life changed. It was late in the evening, maybe around midnight. It might have been later, but I remember it being after one of my DJ shows. And just like any other night when returning to ORU past curfew, I signed in at the front desk with Dan the bulky night security guy). I again risked my life by hopping on the old-school elevator located within our dormitory. I hit the 4 button to take me up to Covenant. As I rode up, nothing felt different, and I looked forward to a night of good sleep since I was exhausted. When the elevator doors opened, I stepped out of the old-school, linoleum-style “retro-vator,” and I turned right to round the corner on the way down to my dorm room. As I rounded the corner, I finally felt something different in the air, and I noticed that nearly every man on our wing was sitting in the hall. Some guys were crying, some guys were silent, others tried to encourage each other. I figured at this point that possibly the wing had been disbanded, which it seemed was always a constant threat from the deans who did not appreciate our attention to detail when planning wing-initiation ceremonies, nude dorm marches, or rival \_\_\_\_\_ mascot stealing nights. As I walked passed twenty-five of the greatest guys on earth and went to room 2416, my lifelong buddy and the Spartan-looking Adam Guthmann grabbed my shoulder in a fatherly manner and asked if he could come into my room. He said,

“I don’t know how to tell you this, so I am just going to tell you. Mark is dead. He was killed in a car accident. We didn’t know how to reach you so . . . .”

At that point I quit listening. I am pretty sure that somebody suggested that we ought to pray. I’m not positive, but I think someone did. I do recall not wanting to pray. I was never really one who wanted to pray about anything good or bad. I don’t know why that was. I guess I just believed that God ultimately did what He wanted to do, and we really didn’t have much say in His ultimate game plan. Thus I figured that I should just do the best I could do, and if He stopped or

helped me along the way, that's just fine. Even if it weren't fine, there wouldn't be much of a point arguing with God.

The more Adam talked, the more I lost touch with reality. My mind frantically bounced around with a mixture of memories, sorrow, thoughts, doubts, ideas, memories, hope, and could-have's. All of the negative thoughts soon vanished, and my short-term mission occurred to me. I felt a need to do something, so without hesitation, I grabbed my keys and hopped into the hand-painted maroon MPV and headed over to Mark's parents' house. I never stopped to think that it was after midnight and that Mark would not be there regardless of how fast I drove to his parents' house.

When I pulled in the driveway of Rich and Pam DePetris's house in Sand Springs, my emotions finally got the best of me. I burst into tears, losing complete control to the point that I could not drive. I just sat there in the driveway, hitting my steering wheel, and crying. There I sat mourning and hoping that God would somehow do a New-Testament-style miracle and bring my best friend back to life.

It's funny how even now years later, I still oftentimes pray for that same miracle. I always pray that God would restore him like in the story of Lazarus. I am sure that if He did, someone would call Him a demon, but I now know that God has that kind of power. After all, He created the Earth. For some odd reason, God has not answered this prayer. I think it's probably because of some sin in my life. Actually I don't think of any of that. Spiritually, I just no longer think about it because thinking of Mark's death is too painful. I just trust that Mark is where he is supposed to be for a reason.

I don't remember when I told Vanessa (my fiancé at the time) about Mark's death. I don't remember how she reacted to it. But I do know that I felt tremendous emptiness in my heart, and that Mark, my friend who had encouraged me to get married so young and the man who was going to be the best man in our wedding, was gone. (Just to clarify, Joe Casey made a fine best man, and he would have been the best man had it not been for Mark's relationship with me.) Had I had listened to other people, I would not have been getting married at all. Mark was my encourager; Mark was one of the sparks that lit the DJ Connection passion flame.

In the following days leading up to and after Mark's funeral, I changed. Mark's parents changed. Many people's worlds changed. Mark's funeral bore witness to his character and his life's impact as over 500 people who he had somehow touched attended his funeral. It was incredible to see the outpouring of love displayed. It's sad to me that Mark never got a chance to see this overwhelming impact and love until after he died (he saw it from an aerial perspective). The entire wing of Covenant came to support the DePetris family. And for that, I will always be grateful. As I gave the eulogy for my best friend before Mark's peers and family, the men of Covenant seemed to nudge me along with their prayers and presence. It is amazing how at this time, for the first time, I was completely unafraid of the audience whom I was speaking to while in a public-speaking situation. I was unafraid of their reactions because I knew what I was saying was divinely inspired glimpses into the life of a great man . . . Mark DePetris. I remember almost losing it once because I simply could not hold back my tears any longer. I had tried to make his eulogy uplifting and humorous, but I just could not fight back the tears. At that point, I looked up to the back of that Baptist church in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, and there I caught a glimpse of my friend and wing mate Adam Guthmann. He made eye contact with me in way that said so much. With his eyes he said, "You can do it, Clayton." With his eyes he said, "I love you as a brother. And you can do this. You will do this. Now, quit crying and do it!" I will always remember Adam being there and looking me in the eye to guide me through the closing remarks of the hardest public-speaking gig that I have ever had.

From that point on, I never battled uncontrollable stage fright again. Growing up, I used to severely struggle with stuttering. Every time I would misspeak or get stuck on a word, this overwhelming feeling of anxiety would take over. Thus, whenever I was asked to speak as part of a church play or any public event, those overwhelming feelings of anxiety would return; and then I would simply refuse to speak publicly even if it meant getting in to trouble with my teachers. However, after giving Mark's eulogy, I have no longer been overtaken with those feelings of anxiety when speaking publically. Like everyone else, I do get nervous with anticipation. The adrenaline still

gets pumping, but I no longer fear with the life and death intensity that I once did speaking in front of an audience. I do sincerely value the opinions of people who have experience in the particular areas that I work in, and I do value the opinions of those people whom I consider to be authorities on their areas of experience. But the random opinions of most people no longer affect me anymore; they have no traction with my mind or soul. Albert Einstein said it best when he said, “Great minds have often encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.”

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Thom Clark  
(my dad)***

*Clayton has always displayed a large vocabulary but lacked the ability to express it. Having had a severe stammer for which he was teased mercilessly, Clayton had a tendency to shy away from any event in which he would have to be in front of people. Our church had an annual Christmas program in which the younger children sang. Clayton would go to all the practices. He even appeared to enjoy practicing with his friends.*

*But . . . on the day of the program, he would yell, scream, cry, roll on the floor; anything to not go on stage. This didn’t happen once. It was an annual occurrence guaranteed to happen just as the children were walking through the door to go onto the stage. Getting on stage was a fate akin to death for him, even if he didn’t have a speaking role. Fast-forward twelve years. Clayton had a boom box, a set of CDs, and a borrowed microphone plugged in to the middle school gymnasium sound system. There were a couple hundred kids following his lead as he got them to dance and have a good time. One parent said, “Your son really has a gift for entertaining. You must really be proud of him.”*

*Who? I thought.*

*“He looks like my son. He sounds like my son. But after having seen my son at Christmas programs, I think he has been kidnapped by aliens and replaced with an android that looks like him.”*

***The truth is that I am proud of him. But I am also amazed, if not just down-right shocked.***

I have never been one to value the mindless opinions of most people to begin with, but after Mark's death, I no longer spend any of my time trying to please anyone who I do not sincerely care for or whose favor I do not seek. It was through Mark's death that I was taught how to live life. Thank you, Mark. Without Mark, I know that I would have been successful, but I would not have begun to scratch the surface of my potential at a young age, and I would not seize each day with the same level of passion for life that I currently now do. I now view life as gift and each day that I get access to as a true blessing.

After Mark passed, I awoke each day even more impatient for what life had in store for me, for I knew that I was definitely not guaranteed anything. Thus, it was with this new attitude that I really started to pursue my passions, my goals, and my plans to achieve them. And off to class at ORU I went. Each day as I sat in Humanities, Government, and Quantitative Literacy listening to my professors, I became more and more sure that I and most of the students in these classes were wasting our time studying and memorizing general pieces of knowledge when what we really needed to get was practical and applicable knowledge.

During one particular class (Humanities), the class lecture grew so theoretical that I remember jotting down notes resembling the following thought process: *If I sit here for 4 years of my life, and I will probably only live to be 82 or so, I have just spent 4.8% of my life here doing nothing. Whereas if I spent even 3 months studying and marketing myself as a DJ, I could become successful using only about .05% of my life. And if I were to spend my time studying only things that I cared about, I would be much more interested in them, and then I would not be listening to professors talk about the Justinian empire and how to plot a sloping line (no offense to the Justinian empire or those who enjoy graphing a sloping line).*

And it was thoughts like these that made it harder and harder to endure lectures about business from professors who had never owned a business. I wanted to hear lectures, but I wanted to hear them from

business owners. Armed with thoughts like these, I mowed through tests, aced Government and other courses that mattered, while theoretical classes that involved truth tables started to become unbearable to the point that I started to feel the need to debate the validity of these classes with my professors. They always responded in upset irritate tones as they attempted to defend their reasons for doing a job in which they were not passionate. I grew more and more anxious to get on with my life. I became so frustrated with the slow pace of college that I debated simply dropping out of college altogether.

I was ready to leave the college yesterday when the deans called me into their dark-wood-paneled offices of discipline and reprimand to answer for the “*ORU SLIM SHADY*” content. As the deans asked me questions, I did everything that I could to verbally and physically communicate that I was thoroughly unapologetic about the song’s content, and I was defiant to the end.

What made the situation extra fun was that they knew the songs lyrics, untactful but accurate, spoke about the feelings many students had toward the administration. The school was operating with a blatant double standard. Athletes and students of privilege were not forced to adhere to the Honor Code (the Honor Code was ORU’s agreement that every student had to sign stating the rules of the school and the moral conduct that is expected of all students choosing to enroll in the college) while other students were forced to follow it. Richard Roberts had his own jet and lived a lavish lifestyle financed by university debt, while average families and students were expected to give everything they could to the ministry for the “good of the kingdom.”

The deans talked about how they valued this Honor Code so much, but it was apparent to me that these men honored that code the way that rednecks that honor the Confederate flag honor their country. They did not really “honor” the code; they just referenced the code when it was convenient to support their way of thinking and their various inconsistent rulings on student-life issues. However, when the code was not convenient, they simply chose not to reference it (for the record, if you have a Confederate flag flying on your flagpole, we need to talk).



In my opinion, the deans were apologists for the Lindsay and Richard Roberts personal expense foundation (as witnessed in the 2008 lawsuit launched by former ORU professors against Lindsay and Richard). The deans definitely did not like that this song exposed their bosses for being the “alleged” fraudulent lying plunderers of the ministry that they were. Later, all of America witnessed the fraud of Richard before “God told Richard to resign” (which is Richard’s code language for: my lawyers have pointed out to me that there is no way in hell that I have even the smallest chance of beating these lawsuits. Holy crap, I am definitely seeing my misdeeds hitting the fan. I think I will resign if the school promises to drop all charges).

The 2008 lawsuits ultimately lead to Richard’s resignation (“*Ding dong, the witch is dead*” – *Wizard of Oz*). During my 2000 fallout with the administration, these deans never seemed to have any problem with Lindsay and Richard’s “alleged” strong-arming of the university to give scholarships to students whom they liked who had only scored a twelve on their ACTs. They did not seem to have any issues with Richard using his students’ required chapel time as his chance to fleece the entire student body for yet another monetary “seed faith gift” to their ministry, so they could “allegedly” fire up their personal jet one more time en route to the Atlantis resorts in the Bahamas.

These deans never seemed too concerned that Lindsay would title her sermons with such catchy phrases as, “Get the Hell Out of Your Life.” These deans never seemed to notice they were promoting hypocrisy by endorsing Lindsay and Richard Roberts and by standing behind them no matter how out of control they allegedly got.

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Thom Clark  
(my dad and an ORU graduate)***

***As of this date (1/23/09), if anyone asked me if I would encourage my child to attend ORU, I would give an emphatic YES. My best friends and deepest relationships are all a result of attending ORU. I now feel a deep affection for my alma mater.***

***If asked the same question between 1993 and 2007, I would have answered an equally emphatic NO. Clayton attended ORU during***

***the 1993-2007 timeframe. I am even more proud of him for learning from adversity and standing up for his principles, even when those in leadership did not.***

***\*\*Note-To-Self: Do not write truth-exposing parodies about corrupt people if you are trying to befriend them.***

***\*\*HUGE Disclaimer: I have HUGE AMOUNTS OF RESPECT for most of the faculty and teachers at ORU. I am now super happy with the direction that the school is headed since the resignation of Richard and the takeover by the Hobby Lobby team. Now that King Richard is gone, we can all feel good about sending our kids there.***

Anyway . . . long story short . . . they kicked me out of ORU for “selling and distributing a song” on campus. I actually recorded my exit interview with the deans without them knowing, and I sometimes will listen to it when I need some extra motivation (as if being taunted for stuttering and losing my best friend were not motivation enough). Being kicked out of college forced me to mature really quickly. And I did. With my back against the wall, I moved into the Fountain Crest apartments with help from my mom and dad who had to co-sign for me. I cannot thank my parents enough for helping me out and believing in me. It would have killed my spirit to move back “up north” to Minne-snow-ta to live in a land where the mosquito is the state bird, where the winter is dangerously cold, and where basketball, baseball, and football come in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth in popularity behind hunting, fishing, and casino gaming.

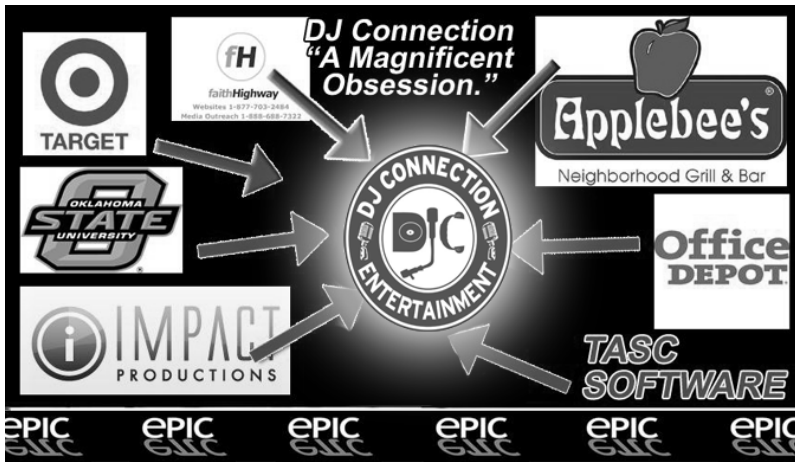
And with the help of my fiancé, Vanessa, I sustained myself by eating bagels from the ORU cafeteria. Vanessa and I got married later that spring on a Sunday in May (so that many of our college friends and family would still be able to attend before they flew back home to their respective places of origin for the summer). Our wedding was beautiful, and our future was bright.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't let this chapter have less lasting meaning to the overall outcome of your life as those super-intense people who scream at you as they pass your car while they drive by yelling and pleading for you to close your gas tank (because you accidentally left it open). Thus, fill out the following form before moving on to the next chapter. You just might learn something:**

1. Write down and describe the biggest setback that you have dealt with in your life up to this point (examples: death of a loved one, stuttering, getting kicked out of college, being unable to find matching socks, etc.)
2. What life lesson did you learn from this setback?
3. Who is your best friend and why?
4. Call your best friend and let them know why you appreciate them so much (while they're still alive).



## Chapter 7

### DJ Connection: A Magnificent Obsession

*Life Lesson: "Put all of your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket."*

- ANDREW CARNEGIE, one of America's richest men who earned tremendous amounts of wealth and then methodically gave it all away



The dust finally settled, and after spending two frantic, non-stop days moving all of my belongings out of my dorm room, the reality finally occurred to me: I WAS NO LONGER IN COLLEGE. I WAS NO LONGER REALLY EMPLOYED BY ANYBODY (other than my internship with an accounting software company), I HAD NO STRUCTURE. I HAD NO COMMITMENTS. I HAD NO

CUSTOMERS. I HAD NO MONEY. Oh yes, it finally hit me. And if you are reading this book, and you are ever ambitious and crazy enough to start a business from scratch, this feeling will hit you at some point as well. Being your own boss is great. You get to choose whatever eighty hours per week to work that you want. And when the going gets rough, you get to lay yourself off.

And so, alone (with help from Vanessa's daily visits) my "magnificent obsession," as Napoleon Hill calls it, began. Basically, everything I did during this time revolved around DJ Connection. I stayed up late at night creating invoices and customer lead sheets using the incredibly sophisticated Microsoft Windows™ accessory program known as Paint. Yep, I used Paint to database my customers. I went to Kinkos™ to have my very own business cards made, and I carried them around in the backpack that I wore in college so that I could always be ready to pass out my cards to anyone who came within a foot or more of me. For the record, I still pass out a card to every person I meet.

Because I was only getting 3 to 5 calls per month from my Yellow Pages™ advertisement, I was really hustling. I don't know if I am quite conveying with words the amount of hustling that I was doing, so I will give you an analogy. Every day a gazelle wakes up in Africa knowing that if it does not outrun and escape the hunting attempts of the lion, it will die and be eaten in a painful death. Every day in Africa, the lion wakes up and knows that if it does not catch the gazelle, it will starve to death. Every day I woke up in my one-bedroom Fountain Crest apartment knowing that if I didn't get a booking, I could not afford to make my Yellow Pages™ payment, my storage payment, or my rent payment. So, my friends, when I say that I was hustling, I was HUSTLING!

Because I was hustling with previously unseen speed, passion, and hidden-desperation, I was meeting all types of people and working all types of jobs to pay the bills. I worked at Target™ in the electronics section where I was reprimanded daily by my rather large boss who was always on me about working at an "unrealistically fast pace." I will never forget being laid off from the Target™ at 71<sup>st</sup> Street and Memorial in Tulsa after being a seasonal worker. (For anyone

planning a vacation to visit this tourist attraction, that Target has moved and is now occupied by some other large retailer . . . sorry to disappoint you). I was actually pumped up that I got laid off. It set me free. But, I did not get laid off before I ran in to a guy by the name of Todd Starke.

Todd came into Target™ to buy a video camera for his wife (I believe her name is Allison). When he came up to the counter, he had this look on his face as though he was overwhelmed. Don't get me wrong, Todd is a wonderful guy, but he did not look very excited about being at Target™; thus I made my move. I said, "Hello, sir, how are you doing? Is there anything that I can help YOU WITH?"

Todd replied, almost shocked that a employee in the electronics section actually greeted a bewildered customer with enthusiasm, "Yeah, um . . . I am looking for a video camera for my wife. Do you know anything about these things?"

That was just the kind of open-ended question that I was waiting for. I proceeded to build rapport with Todd by asking him what he was looking for in a camera, what features he needed, and what he was not looking for. After talking with Todd, I determined that he needed a high-quality camera that was about 30 percent less than the one he was originally planning on buying to meet his needs. Todd was sincerely appreciative that I had saved him some money, and so he asked, "So, Clay, what do you do here?" (my name was on my nametag).

I responded with even more passion, "Basically, I work here in the electronics section; however, it is my job to make sure that all the ladies' underwear, deodorant, batteries, car accessories, and assorted whatnots don't migrate into the electronics section. And I go to ORU (I hadn't been officially de-enrolled yet). What do you do?"

Todd went on to explain to me how he worked at a place called T.A.S.C. that specialized in selling and servicing tax and accounting software (oddly enough) for accountants and professional bookkeepers throughout the country. He told me that the guy who started T.A.S.C. was an ORU graduate, and that they were currently hiring interns. If my schedule would allow for it, he said that I should come on by for an interview. So, I asked for his card. I put his card in my wallet and was overwhelmed with joy to know that I would be getting the heck

out of Target™ as soon as my interview with T.A.S.C. was done. I knew that I was going to get the job if I could just get an interview.

I did get an interview, and I rolled up to T.A.S.C. looking and smelling like a million bucks in my nineteen-year-old way. I drove my Mazda™ DJ van (although no ladies have ever told me that they found this old van attractive, I choose to believe they ALL DID) up to the CitiPlex towers located at 81<sup>st</sup> and Lewis in Tulsa, and I thought to myself, *I am going to get this job. I don't know what I am going to do, but I am going to get this job.*

I wore tan corduroy dress pants, a blue shirt, and a yellow tie. I was feeling good about life when they finally called me from the lobby to the interview room. I was interviewed by Steve Heck (a former professional baseball player and San Francisco Giant) and another lady with dark hair and beautiful, yet untrusting and interrogative, eyes. Her job was to break me down (I think she would have used water boarding if it was available) and ask me the tough character-revealing questions.

The interview started out well. They threw me some soft questions like, “Tell us about yourself,” and “So, what was the most difficult situation that you have been in, and how did you overcome this situation to get the job done.” I could answer questions like those all day.

Then they started asking the tough questions, “So, Clay, how long have you been attending ORU?” and “When do you plan on graduating?”

They kept going asking me stuff like, “So, what made you interested in ORU’s accounting internship program?”

And I knew that I had to totally b.s. each and every answer or I was going to be screwed with a passion, like your average screw would be by Bob Villa after he has just got himself some new Sears™ power tools. Oh man, I was screwed! So I went for it.

I said something to the effect of, “You know, actually I met Todd Starke when he was shopping at Target™, where I head up the electronics department. And honestly, I don’t really see myself wanting to work with Target for the rest of my life. The more that I talked with Todd, the more your company sounded like a great place

to work for after college. I am just really looking for a company that will appreciate an employee who is an ultra-hard worker and who is ultra passionate about getting things done. I have a small mobile entertainment business that I have been using to pay my way through college, and I think that this internship opportunity would look better on my resume than having to say that that I interned for myself. Ha, Ha."

I had hit a homerun, but I kept going when I said, "So, Steve, I understand that you played for the San Francisco Giants. Did you ever play with Will Clark or Matt Williams? That must have been great!"

Steve responded with a few baseball stories, and I just had to keep playing that card hard, "Man, that is awesome! So what brought you to T.A.S.C.? What do you most like about it here?"

Oh, it was going awesome. My strategy of interviewing the interviewer was working. As the interview was winding down, I gave them my resume (knowing that if they called ORU to verify that I was "actively" enrolled there as a student I was screwed), but I just gave it to them with confidence knowing that they were hiring many interns and that most people do not call references. When you dress up nice, I have found that most businesses do not call references. And if you are referred by someone else who will personally vouch for you, they will like you. And Todd did vouch for me. Thank you, Todd!

And so, getting laid off from Target<sup>TM</sup> was incredible, and I was honestly happy to get the news when Tara (the big boss and manager) "had to let me go."

After I worked at T.A.S.C. for a while, rumors started flying that T.A.S.C.. was going to be purchased by INTUIT<sup>TM</sup>. Being that I did not know why that mattered, I did not see this as a bad thing. I was just fired up to be making \$10 per hour. I was fired up that they served Subway<sup>TM</sup> sandwiches. I was fired up to be working in an office, and I loved that Scancard<sup>TM</sup> keychain thing that they gave us all to get into the building. Life was sweet.

Then unexpectedly one day I got called into the office by a guy named Randy who said that we "needed to talk." And I don't care if your mom says it, your wife says it, your principal says it, or anyone says it; the phrase "we need to talk" is never good. So I got nervous,



but I knew that I was working hard and doing a good job on the phones, so I knew that it could not have been work-related. And I knew that I couldn't really get fired for personal-related stuff outside of work, and thus I felt nervous but good.

When I sat down in Randy's office, the dark-haired lady from my initial interview who had distrusting, interrogating eyes was there too. Oh crap, I knew it. She called ORU didn't she? That rat! How could she? They proceeded to tell me in serious talk that they heard I was being kicked out of ORU for recording the infamous, "ORU SLIM SHADY." They were both ORU alumni, and they wanted to know what was going on and if it was, in fact, 100 percent true that I recorded the song.

I told them the story with conviction and passion. I explained to them how Adam and I spent twelve hours recording it to vent our personal frustrations with the school's hypocrisy. I explained how our friends had put it online without our permission. I explained to them how I got kicked out, etc. . . . and then they cracked a smile. They could not believe it. They had to know more.

When I left that meeting, something had changed. The dynamic that I shared with them and the rest of my coworkers was now different. Everyone loved me. Belinda (this Hispanic lady) started talking to me. Todd started saying, "What's up, DJ?" in the hall. Other employees started telling their personal ORU stories. A former ORU basketball player told me how ORU paid for his SUV to get him to attend college there. Everyone at work started telling me more and more dirt on ORU. I felt like I had enough info and inside scoop on the squirrely Richard Roberts to write ten songs, but I did not.

I kept working at T.A.S.C.<sup>TM</sup> until the INTUIT<sup>TM</sup> rumors came true, and they started laying people off—one-by-one, cubical-by-cubical, until they got to me. However, at the time that they laid me off, I had saved up some considerable coinage (as I lived off of the DJ income), and my meals only cost me 96 cents for those incredible chicken panini dinners. So I was on top of the world!

I do not quite remember the exact series of events, but I ended up going to work for Applebee's<sup>TM</sup>. Plus, Todd gave me the number for an evangelistic outreach with ORU connections that he had heard was

hiring. I lasted about two weeks working at that Applebee's™ and its homosexually overcharged environment. I have always been of the belief that whether you are gay or straight, I do not want to know about it. But these coworkers were all gay or bisexual, and they insisted that everyone should know about it. They wore their promiscuity like a military person would wear a badge of honor. My manager there was gay, one Native American waiter guy was a cross-dressing bisexual, and the rest of the staff was comprised of skanks. I think I remember one non-skanky and non-promiscuous person working there, but he quit during my first two weeks, which also were my last two weeks.

I also landed a job working at West Telecommunications to pay the bills. Working in a traditional call center was brutal, but my manager, Lex, was cool, and my weight-lifting buddy, Eugene Willis, had gotten a job there as well. Eugene and I turned every day we worked there into a personal competition to see who could get the most sales and who would be able to push the most subscriptions to *Newport News*. Once someone had subscribed to *Newport News*, they received \$100 OF INCREDIBLE GAS REBATES. I still didn't even know what the heck *Newport News* is, and I do know for a fact that those gas rebates were redeemable upon the arrival of the next cold day in hell. To redeem them, you had to first buy the gas. Second, you had to keep your proof of purchase and mail that to the redemption center where your purchase would be verified. And then after you had submitted this funk and after you had spent over \$100 in the catalog, you would get your gas rebates. It was bogus. However, after a few months spent on the phone "dialing and smiling," I felt as though I had reached the pinnacle of my game as a telemarketer. And in all sincerity, I did learn a ton about telephone sales at this job. I learned the importance of documenting all customer service interactions made over the phone, and the power of the phone as an inexpensive marketing tool. It was amazing to me that millions of dollars could be made just by "dialing and smiling." When I retired from West Telecommunications, I was ready to leave, but I had learned a lot.

And so with my retirement from West behind me, I pressed on in the pursuit of fueling my magnificent DJ Connection obsession. My

pursuit of additional fuel (cash) for my passion rocket (DJ Connection) led me to Impact Ministries and Productions/Faith Highway—the business that Todd Starke had mentioned to me while I was getting laid off from T.A.S.C.<sup>TM</sup>.

Before inquiring about the position available at Impact Ministries and Productions/Faith Highway (henceforth, I am going to refer to Impact Ministries and Productions/Faith Highway as *Impact*), I did a moderate amount of pre-interview interrogations of people who knew people who had allegedly worked there so I could get a vibe for the company. Through doing this, I learned that Impact was actually a ministry and not actually a company built to produce profits. The owners of Impact sincerely believed that they were still an outreach to the “lost”; however, they were striving to make a profit while doing so. This dynamic made it, from my perspective, *interesting* to say the least.

Before I applied at Impact, I discovered that the ministry was a result of the financial windfall that followed the production and performance of Tom Newman’s *A Toymaker’s Dream*. *Toymaker* was a traveling evangelism production that successfully helped win an estimated 10,000-plus people to Christ. As *A Toymaker’s Dream* performances started winding down, the idea was tossed out to turn Impact’s infrastructure into a multimedia-marketing machine for churches. Essentially Impact was established to offer churches a professional way to market their church and to promote the message of the Gospel through television. The average church that Impact was marketing to could not have afforded to create a professional-looking commercial, but Impact could. Thus, they created some really incredible and emotionally moving thirty-second commercials designed to provoke the thoughts of an unbeliever in a compelling and unique way. At the end of each commercial spot, the final few seconds were used to custom tag the commercial with a message from the purchasing church reading something to the effect of:

Come out and see us this Sunday at Flux Capacitor Baptist Church.

Services start at 10:00 A.M.

Call (972) 408-6580 for more information.  
[www.fluxcapacitor.com](http://www.fluxcapacitor.com)

The commercials were produced on high quality, 35mm film; and pastors, churches, and viewers loved them. At one point, they even won the prestigious ADDY<sup>TM</sup> award for their quality work and creativity. What we at Impact sold all day was the exclusive rights for one local church to show the *Got Jesus?* commercial or the *What If It Were True?* commercial series in their designated market area. The church that purchased the commercials could then show the commercial as often as they desired in their local market area over the next two years. If the church wished to renew their rights to show the commercials, they could; and once they had reserved the rights for the commercials, no other church in their designated market area (DMA) could run them. This provided us a time-pressure variable when selling to churches. Since that time, I have discovered that selling products over the phone, via cold calling, generally only produces results when there is a time-pressure variable.

This company really was an anomaly, and the only thing like it in the nation (not to say that Saudi Arabia didn't have an amazing televangelist commercial campaign company; I just might not have known about it). Through the creative vision of Shane Harwell, our super-intense and highly motivational sales manager; our visionary and founder, Tom Newman; and the sales guru/marketing-mogul, Kyle Thompson; Impact successfully sold the crap out of those commercials in nearly every DMA in the United States. Eventually the company sold such a high volume of commercials that we had to create our own media buying department to help assist pastors with purchasing their media/TV airtime. Essentially, and just like anything, the more you buy, the better deal you could negotiate. We were selling commercials to individual small churches, yet we were selling to thousands of them; so we were able to negotiate sweet deals and lower prices for the average local church. And, if we negotiated a really good deal, we could earn some extra revenue based on the "savings" that the pastors were receiving. At the peak of the company's success, Impact was producing and selling commercials, buying and selling media, pre-

selling movie tickets for faith-based movies such as *The Passion of the Christ*, producing a children's television series, and designing quality websites for churches.

When I called Impact to see if I could get the job, I remember walking in and seeing this creative wonderland and thinking that I had arrived in heaven. I remember thinking that I was finally going to hook up with a company with a vision, a company with creativity, a company that could handle the "Clay Funk" that I was capable of bringing. I really did think that I would be able to contribute creatively to this company.

As I sat impatiently in the lobby of this super-creative, quasi-ministry/business, I kept thinking that this was going to be my first real job. This was going to be it. As I looked around the room at the ultra-modern décor, the futuristic glass desks, the secretary rocking a headset apparatus, the chrome finish everywhere, and the pastel colors that adorned this trendy production company/ministry to the people, I was excited.

So when Mary, (the gray-haired, everybody's grandma, secretary, and a legend of consistency) handed me the application, I filled it out with all of my might. Today, I will not touch applications or forms of any kind, including at the doctor's office: Vanessa does that to cover for my disorder. Seriously, I do not know what the problem is, but I get panic attacks whenever I have to fill out tedious forms with elaborate government-looking instructions. This might have to do with the problems that I experienced in algebra and on my ACT, but the point is, it is a problem. Thankfully, now my wife gets me through it every time (she's an angel). On this application, I wrote why I was the man for the job; I wrote about my creative vision; and then I mentally spiked it like Deion Sanders would do after he scored one of his patented interception-turned-touchdown-end-zone-dances. I handed the application to Mary with authority, and then I left because she told me that they would call me.

Waiting for that call seemed like forever, and it was not cool. When I got back to my apartment, I quickly checked the DJ Connection voicemail like I always did upon returning to the "Shire of Inspire" (the name I gave my one-bedroom apartment decorated with

only a coffee table, crazy amounts of DJ gear, a futon, and a mattress laid on the floor that I slept on). On the voicemail I found a beautiful voice message that I would have framed if audio were mountable. The voicemail was from Jennifer Harbour of Impact instructing me to call them back to setup a follow-up interview. I was pumped like a steroid-enhanced Russian male gymnast! I just knew this was job was going to be mine, and that it was custom-tailored for my creativity and me.

As I walked in, I was confident that I was the most qualified person for the job. I was again greeted by the secretary Mary, a lady in her late 40s or early 50s and still rocking the headset phone that I had seen her wearing during my previous visit. Amidst the sea of calls that she was answering, she carved out ten seconds to tell me, “You can be seated, and Jeremy will be with you in just a second.”

A few moments later, Jeremy escorted me back into one of the glassed-in-ultra-futuristic-interrogation-looking conference rooms. At Impact everything was designed to look super clean, super modern, and super futuristic. Thus, surrounded by “the future,” I sat down to be interrogated about my past and why I wanted to work with this company. The interview was unique to say the least. Basically there were two people quizzing me simultaneously about my religious beliefs, my goals, my skills, and my passion for reaching “the lost.” Looking back on it, this was hysterical because I was not passionate about reaching “the lost.” I could have cared less about “the lost.” I was 100 percent focused on fueling my DJ business, but I could not tell them that. Oh no, that was going to be my little secret. Thus, when I referred to “the lost,” I just mentally agreed with myself to assume that they were referring to “the lost DJ that no one knows about” when they said “the lost.”

Hey, I had gone to college, so I learned how to justify things. The longer the interview went, the more I felt like I had to justify my very being, and that made me mad. When Jennifer kept pressing with religious questions and goal-orientated questions, I started feeling smaller and smaller by the minute. I honestly did not know why I felt a certain way about something, or what I believed was the number-one purpose of my life as a Christian. I had never thought about it, and I was a little angered that someone would ask me those questions to

begin with. Thus, I walked out feeling VERY CONFIDENT that I was NOT going to get the job.

And then they called me back, and I sincerely could not believe it. Oh yeah, baby! I was back in business! Seriously, I had left the interview feeling like Barack Obama does every time people ask if he was aware that he had attended a radical church for twenty years; I felt odd. And now I had been redeemed. The people had voted for change. And on that first day of work at Impact, I realized that this job was not what I had signed up for. When I walked into the room at 6:45 A.M., I remember thinking how odd it was to have all of the employees at work at that time of day. I remember thinking how odd it was that we were doing “outreach,” yet we were working in small cubicles with scripts posted up everywhere that we were to memorize, internalize, and ultimately use to bring in revenue.

As Jennifer (my first manager at Impact) introduced me to my dream team of coworkers consisting of Garreth, Jeremy, Joe, and the phone; I felt very much in the wrong place. Garreth looked and acted just like a slightly younger Jack Black (a musical Chris Farley-esc, large, combustible, energetic, fun-loving comedian). Jeremy was very cerebral—very talented and a good resource to learn from but too spiritual for me and where I was at that time in my life. Joe was a larger balding guy with an extensive background running sound for churches. He seemed like, and we treated him like, he was everyone’s father. Joe was a good dude.

When Jennifer then instructed us to “go ahead and get started with your daily devotions,” I definitely knew that I was in the wrong place. Don’t get me wrong, I am not an atheist, but I had never seen the importance of God in business until my son Aubrey was healed of blindness (see [www.djconnectiontulsa.com](http://www.djconnectiontulsa.com) for more information about this incredible and true story of God’s healing power).

As awful as this may sound, I just looked down at the Bible and pretended to read it. I had mentally decided that I was not ever going to read the Bible at work. I thought the Bible was filled with out-of-date and irrelevant stories about dudes named Hezekiah, Jebediah, and Barabbas. I was definitely not going to fill my brain and my work day with Old Testament stories and religious whatnot. I came to work to

get paid, and that was it. I was going to sleep; I was going to plan; or I was going to draw; but that “devotion time” was brutal for me.

Then magically at 8:00 A.M. (I am probably mixing up the times a little bit here, but the point is, before 9:00 A.M.) our team leader would talk to us in a real youth-camp kind of way. They would ask things such as, “How are you today? How was your weekend? What great things is God doing in your life? Who should we pray for? Have you read the new *Prayer of Jabez* book?” I seriously hated this time more than I can possibly articulate using my limited vocabulary. I felt like I was out of place, like I feel every year during the holidays when I go into Victoria’s Secret™ to buy my wife some quality undergarments. I know I need to be there, but it just feels odd. I have never been to a gay bar, but I have a feeling I would feel that same way there as I felt at Impact.

Moving on, around 8:30 A.M. the energy would begin to be created at the center of the room by the Zeus of the sales floor, “The Shane.” Right at 8:30 A.M. things would start happening. Within seconds, Shane (the room leader) would get us all moving and motivated using positivity, humor, intimidation, and every other motivational lighting bolt he had in his tool box to energize the room. Shane would have us all spin around in our chairs to face him. He was always located in the middle of room, and he would preach to us about the Gospel, the importance of reaching the lost, the dangers of designated market overlap, and various super-powerful sales techniques. At the time, I was not down with anything other than his sales techniques, but Shane really did know what he was talking about. He would start off each morning talking about what great things God was doing at Impact and how we were all destined for greatness. He would read testimonies from churches that were using our products. He would then proceed to encourage us to make a hundred calls per day. Then Shane would tell funny stories with unbelievable charisma and presence. Watching him every day was like attending a high-quality motivational speaking conference; it was epic. Shane’s passion was teaching, and it always came through in his trainings. After Shane made a few key people do a few role-playing sessions acting out the pastor and sales representative



phone conversation, he would dismiss us to hit the coffeemaker and cappuccino machines.

And man did we hit the caffeine. In the life of a telemarketer, caffeine is a life force and fuel. We had to gear ourselves up mentally for incredible amounts of rejection. We all knew that we were going to get hung up on at least twenty times that day. We all knew that we were going to be called *heathens* by various pastors, and we all knew that if we could endure all that punishment, we had an opportunity to make some cash while we were at it. Thus, whenever possible, we would make this caffeine-binge in to a thirty-minute trip. Then about the time our team leader was starting to get angry at the amount of time it was taking to grab a “quick cup of coffee,” all twenty sales reps would begin making their way back into the salesroom in a way that was reminiscent of a bunch of penguins trying to walk quickly. Within minutes, all twenty of us would appear in the room smiling with some alibi about how long the line was (never mind that many of us went through the line three times).

But once we started working . . . BOOM! It was like a symphony of commerce. I loved the aura that the call center created. It was beautiful. Faxes, phones, laughter, anger, joy, high-fives, arguments, and sales were all going on simultaneously. Super-short-haired-and-cute-middle-aged Tamara was always near tears because of something “some mean pastor” had said to her. The room sometimes had the same amount of energy that you often find at college football games. The buzz of human interaction was incredible. I made notes in my “man book” (the book I carry around to write notes in) that I wanted to recreate this atmosphere at DJ Connection someday (minus the selling of evangelism commercials). I sincerely love the atmosphere and the magic of a buzzing all center.

On the sales floor and in the call center at any given time there were twenty-plus reps selling, pleading, and encouraging pastors to buy these “tools to reach the lost.” And it was here amidst the hysteria and frantic pace of this highly competitive sales room that I realized what it meant to really sell something versus just taking an order like I had always done at my previous jobs. Here we were breaking the sales process down to five scientific and choreographed steps. We would: 1)

Establish and build rapport 2) Discover the needs 3) Provide benefits and solutions 4) Shamelessly name-drop 5) Call to action.

I learned about the “deal wheel,” the process of taking a “hard no” and turning it in to a “yes” by playing the “wounded-dog trick” and acting as though I was emotionally scarred before sheepishly asking what their main need was before I again pounced right back on the “benefits and solutions.” Then back on track to the next step—the shameless name-drop, and finally the call to action. I learned how to drop the “EOL” card—estimation of loss. Essentially, letting the buyer know that if they did not act today, the commercials might not be available tomorrow. I learned about matching expectations to the actual product, and the dangers of buyer’s remorse. I learned how “buying emotion” is the number-one reason people buy or do not buy. I learned the importance of not ever ruining a relationship with a customer over a small dollar amount so as not to crap on your own campground. In this office, I learned how benefits sell. I learned the importance of always finding the “hot button.” I learned the ancient art of the name-drop and how to bring passion to the phone. I learned that most purchases are motivated by emotion and not price—I learned how to sell and not just take orders.

I learned how to fail. I learned how to succeed. I learned what making a big deal felt like, and I learned the importance of allowing excessive celebrations of relief to all of those working in a phone sales environment. I learned how to speak using “power words.” I learned about the importance of mental toughness. I learned about financial and business goal setting. I learned about alacrity, vivaciousness, passion-trumping skill, how to create your own momentum. I learned all of this and more from Ron “Super-Intense” Hood, Heath “Mike Myers’s Twin Brother From Another Mother” Dean, Jennifer “The Intimidator and Winner of Lost Souls” Harbour, Jeremy “Mr. Talent” Thorn, Jeremy “I am Also a Ninja” McAstlen, Mike “The Former Marine,” Paul “The Aspiring Pastor and Avid Quoter of Scripture,” Garreth “Jack Black Impersonator” Krueger, Joe “The Impact Father Figure to All,” Stacy “Gets It Done” Thorn, Randee “I’m Single but Virtuous, But Single” Ferguson, Mary “Everyone’s Grandma,” Tom “The Visionary” Newman, Dennis “The President and the Guy Who

We Are Unsure of What He Does” Dautel, Ms. C. “I’m Attractive, But Don’t Talk To Me,” The Pepins “The Spartan-Looking Warrior Guys,” Chris “Eagles Fan” Orth in accounting, and the sales guru himself, “THE SHANE.”

At Impact I learned that I was previously a sales wuss; however, I learned to become a sales Jedi. Before working there, I would have never had the tenacity to call through an entire bridal list of 200 names in one day. Before working there, I would never have been able to have handled the rejection that I now routinely encounter when I attempt to market to a new high-end venue or an aggressive customer. Now, I can honestly say that I do not give a crap who hangs up on me or what names people might call me for my persistent telemarketing. When they yell at me now, all I hear them say is, “Hey, I don’t quite understand what you do, and you didn’t quite connect with me on this call. Do a better job building rapport, finding my needs, explaining your benefits and solutions, name-dropping, and calling me to action next time; and I won’t be so mean.”

Looking back I honestly think that there could not have been a better training course on the subject of sales and customer service than my time spent at Impact. I used to think that crazy Shane was insane for demanding to we make 100 calls per day, but today I do the same thing. I used to think that it really did not matter how much energy, enthusiasm, and sincere joy I brought on the phone; but my time spent with Shane taught me that when all things are equal; energy, enthusiasm, and a sincere passion about your product really do make the difference that separates you from the competition.

My first day on the job was pretty much focused on learning how to leave a group message to broadcast your new sell to the entire team and how to operate a Plantronics™ headset. Much time was spent reviewing how to read a sales script without sounding like you were reading a sales script. They were trying to teach me how to read a script the way Martin Luther King Jr. read a speech. They wanted me to read with passion, conviction, enthusiasm, and energy. They wanted me to learn how to read a script like JFK and Barack Obama read their campaign speeches, and I just kept on reading them back like President George W. Bush read the teleprompters. I was pretty brutal at first, but

I had so much enthusiasm, and Jennifer was such a good “closer” of my deals that from the beginning, I sold a huge volume of commercials.

With Jennifer as the team leader, I would work hard to drum up new leads by cold calling, and she would “phone feed” me to the close when I stumbled. Basically Jennifer would listen in to my calls and would tell me what to say to the pastor’s questions via the technique known as “phone feeding.” She told me what to say, and I repeated it. If this sounds very boiler room-esc to you, then you would be correct. Each day my sales just kept rolling in. I would sell commercials, and then I would leave a group message for the media outreach department just like I was supposed to. At Impact, whenever you sold something, you were supposed to bang on this old-school-looking lion’s head doorknocker that everyone called *Shauma* to signify to the room that you had collected money on a deal. You were allowed to knock the doorknocker once for each commercial you sold. This was done to encourage the rest of the room that a sale could in fact be made, and to allow you as a sales representative to have the emotional release that you needed after a day of rejection. This helped fire everyone up, and then you were supposed to go around the room high-fiving everyone telling them what “the Lord has done” to celebrate your recent booking. However, because Jesus was on our team, we were supposed to be humble while celebrating. As America’s most humble person, this did not work for me.

When I closed a deal, I would leave hilarious voicemails for the group praising myself and/or my team. I would leave voicemails like: “Attention media outreach: Team Harbour, and no other team, just closed on an eight-spot commercial deal in Boise, Idaho. It hurts me to say this, but we are awesome, and I am tremendous. DJ Clayvis out!”

These voicemails were not appreciated by the guy that Shane hired to be the enforcer in the call center—Larry McClardy. He made sure that stuff got done, and Larry really was the right guy for the job. His glasses seemed to be one-inch thick, he had black and quickly graying hair, and he loved to wear very masculine clothes and a sports jacket. It was not uncommon to hear Larry yell out in his masculine drill

sergeant voice to everyone and no one in particular, “Get on the phones! I can hear us getting poor.”

Needless to say, Larry did not like my style. I don’t think he liked life, but that is just me. Larry would usually respond to my group voicemails with a comment like, “Clay, be serious. Get serious, brother! You have got to get focused. Praise the Lord.”

Occasionally he would say even more uplifting commentary like, “You sounded weak on that call, brother. Praise the Lord!” Oh, Larry loved to call everyone *brother*, but to this day I still call everyone I meet “Brother” because of him. And he loved to say, “Praise the Lord.” I think he used the phrase “Praise the Lord” like most people us a period at the end of a sentence.

As time went on, however, Larry and the daily devotions began to wear me out. I started growing tired of working in an environment that was so spiritually focused. I grew weary of hearing phrases like, “Hey, brother, how are you?” and then the canned reply,

“By Jesus’ name, I am too blessed to be stressed.”

Each week. I started getting exponentially worse at selling instead of exponentially better. Jennifer helped me (and herself) by using her Jedi-sales techniques; but the more she helped, the more I grew dependent on her and her phone feed. Jennifer always quoted Scripture with conviction like it was going out of style, and because of this, pastors listened. She was sincere in her belief that if pastors did not buy these commercials, some people may not have been reached with the Gospel.

I, however, did not really believe in the Gospel at the time; and I was growing tired of talking to pastors whose average church size was 100 people and whose churches never grew from year to year. It killed me to talk to these guys week after week. If you are a businessperson and your business is not growing each year, then you are going out of business; but these pastors were completely down with the concept of their churches just staying the same size year after year. I did not understand apathetic and non-growth-focused organizations then, and I do not understand them now.

Jennifer also had no moral problems with applying pressure to sell the products that she sincerely believed would “reach the lost.” I

would call her a confrontational Christian. Jennifer believed that Christianity is right: therefore, all of those who believed in all other faiths were 100 percent wrong. Jennifer was a great woman, but she brought the fire. She would tell a pastor from a phone in Tulsa what he should be doing at his church 1,000 miles away on Sundays. Man, she had the power to influence. There were many times that I felt uncomfortable with what she said on the phone because I was not down with reaching the lost via media, but at the end of the day, Jennifer was getting paid, I was getting paid, and churches were mailing in testimonials stating how much growth they had experienced from the un-churched community as a result of airing those commercials.

Bottom line, over time I lost my zeal for selling these evangelism commercials because I felt like I was pressuring people to buy a product that I would not buy myself. And now I am a firm believer that every salesperson must be sincerely passionate about the product that he is selling if he is to generate sustainable success. Over time I also discovered how much I did not like working with pastors and their boards. I am a firm believer in former GE<sup>TM</sup> CEO Jack Welch's philosophy that committees are not effective. I found it very hard to deal with the reality that most of these churches of 120 people or less could not make a simple decision in sixty days or less. Yes or no, they did not know, and they would always have to "pray about it." Oh, it frustrated me. Plus, some of the pastors I talked to were living a quasi-luxurious lifestyle financed by their congregations, and this made me mad. I was always under the impression that pastors were supposed to reach the lost and not be concerned with how many rounds of golf they got to play. However, after working at Impact, I realized that this was not always the case.

Looking back on it, it was just frustrating knowing that someone working thirty hours or less per week could be complaining about how their church never grew. From my experience in business, I have since discovered that nothing good happens in the first forty hours of the week; it's what happens after forty hours (and after your competition has gone to bed) that makes the difference. You have to outwork and out-plan the competition. In this regard, the competition for the church

is the secular world (MTV, bars, clubs, etc.) and the devil. You can't beat any competition if you are not willing to outwork them.

From my time working at the highway o' faith, I also quickly discovered that the Church of Christ denomination believes as though they are God's one TRUE denomination; thus, they believe that only they will go to heaven. I discovered that most Protestants believe strongly that the Catholics are going to hell. I learned that many denominations do not like other denominations, and that very few churches feel like the other churches in their community are on their team. It was amazing to me that many of these pastors were honestly upset with the other denominations in their towns for being too dogmatic, too postmodern, or too biblical and not relevant enough. Dealing with all of these new exposures was not easy for me, and when I finally did leave, I left spiritually confused.

Dealing with the frustrating pastors, my supervisor Larry, excessive workplace spirituality, and my declining sales totals became nearly unbearable when my manager, Jennifer, and her husband, Scott, left Impact to become self-employed fulltime. Jennifer was the only reason that my sales totals remained high, and when she left, I felt emotionally sunk. And in sales, once your emotions sink, you might as well install the screen doors on the submarine because you are going to the bottom. And that is what I did. Then, once I hit the bottom, I stayed there without buoying for a long time. I was like the Impact carp bottom feeding on the sales floor.

Every day at work began to feel like I was strapped to a missile leading me to purgatory. My new team leader, Jeremy Thorn, and I connected on a personal level, and we teamed up to draw some great cartoons and to have some incredible laughs and great conversations; but, man, did our sales' totals stink. Jeremy was never high and he was never low, but he was consistent. And for the record, Jeremy is one of the most talented people that I have ever been around. The guy can play the piano like he was born playing one; he can play the guitar like it is an extension of his body; and he can draw cartoons like none other (which makes me mad because I have spent years drawing, and I still think his cartoons are better than mine). Jeremy was very personable, very analytical, and very encouraging; but at that time in my life I

needed someone to kick my ass every once in awhile. I needed someone to come through the phone with a kung-fu grip and to show me how badly we were doing and then show me the way. I needed a *Ra, Ra!* coach, an intense Mike Ditka-esc coach/drill sergeant, and I was convinced that the coach I needed was Impact's top sales guy. I knew that the short bald guy whose skin was constantly red with passion (or anger) was going to be my mentor, and his name is Ron Hood.

In the Impact salesroom, a huge room filled with sales representatives surrounding the perimeter, Hood worked in the corner. We all just called him *Hood*, and he worked at a MOMENTUM-GENERATING-AND-PROCRASTINATION-KILLING-PACE all the time. He would pound out numbers on his phone, and he would do everything with a sense of urgency. He left voicemails with a passion, and he pretty much set the pace for how Impact salespeople should work. Because he was so good, he often intimidated people. And because he was 100-percent focused on his job, people often thought that he was not a nice guy. But the reality of the situation was that he came to work to do work, and that was his only reason for being there. He did not come to work to have in-depth discussions with all of his coworkers about the weather, the economy, or various collegiate sports teams.

RON ALWAYS FOCUSED ON WHAT HE COULD CONTROL, AND HE CREATED HIS OWN DAILY MOMENTUM. He was a sale institution in and of himself. He simply outworked everyone in the room. To him, cold calling was just a numbers game, and he knew that the more people he called, the more deals he would make—plain and simple. He did not care if that meant he would be hung up on more often. He was a cold-calling machine. He worked through breaks (at least I don't recall him ever taking a break); so nowadays I don't ever take lunch breaks at work, which is in large part from the habits I developed watching Hood. He was hungry for sales, and I think he was also literally hungry. Maybe there was no correlation between his physical hunger and his figurative hunger for deals, but it works for me. I operate the best when I am hungry.



Ron thrived on competition, and he was fueled by an ardor and drive to succeed. He brought the alacrity (cheerful readiness) to the phone. The conviction behind his words was incredible. At Impact, not many people knew too much about Hood because he never spoke with anyone other than pastors. Literally this guy would roll into work right on time, and he would immediately fire up the phone.

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

He was not affected by their responses. He knew we had an incredible product, and he just wanted to find out who the buyers were. If you weren't a buyer, he wanted you off his phone; if you were a buyer, he wanted to find your hot button—something you were passionate about—so he could quickly find the right commercial package to communicate the church's message to their community. Ron would bring the fire to every call, and he would adapt his presentation over time to accommodate the unique dialects, personalities, and conversational styles of each customer. Just listening to him speak fired me up. Just thinking about the passion behind his cold calls and the way he left compelling voicemails makes me want to go make some cold calls right now. Because of Ron, I now love cold calls. I sincerely do.

I remember when I first tried speaking to Ron. He always acted as though he did not know I was standing in his area, or as if he was unable to take any time away from the phone to talk to me. Actually, I don't think he was acting. Finally, over time and almost out of desperation, I started being more assertive about trying to have a conversation with the samurai warrior of sales, yet he would quickly brush me to the side by saying, “I'm on the phone.” He was always on the phone. Finally after working on getting him to help me for several weeks, I gave up and another manager by the name of Heath Dean presented himself as a viable sales mentor option to me. Heath was our second-best salesperson. He looked just like a young Wayne's-World-era Mike Myers, and since he was willing to help, I quickly accepted his offer.

Heath was a Louisiana boy who attended ORU (I believe) and had a great presence about him. He was charming, good-looking, and almost metro-sexual. He had the modern, late-1990s, praise-and-worship-leader look going for him. He was quasi-muscular, and he wore his hair all messed up and spiked up in front (courtesy of some fabulously trendy J. Crew™ sculpting balm). Whenever Heath got on the phone, he was a deal machine. He had this unique gift of being able to connect and build rapport with nearly every pastor on a personal level while still being professional and humorous within the first thirty seconds of a phone conversation. I could listen to that dude sell all day. The way he did it was almost romantic and poetic. Each sales call sounded like he was reading lines from a Hugh Grant-esc romantic comedy: it was very loving, very personable, very sincere, and very funny. I remember him saying stuff like, “You know, pastor, I just really believe these commercials will work for you. Now, I’m from a town in Louisiana that was so small that the people in our town put squirrel on most restaurant menus, and we felt okay with it. To us, this was a viable option. This was where we were at; however, now that the Lord has brought me to Impact, I’ve started to see God work in miraculous ways through the power of television. Did you know that last year alone, Pastor Rob Rotola (one of his favorite testimonies) said that he had over 200 new visitors to his church as a direct result of his television commercial outreach program? All Pastor Rob did was step out in faith to present the Gospel to the un-churched in a relevant way. Now let me ask you this, if you had these commercials out there running for you at First Baptist church, what do you see as being the main benefit of airing these commercials in your area?”

After working with Heath for a while, my numbers rebounded. I was in heaven; I was making a base pay of \$1,200 per month plus an additional \$800 to \$1,000 of commission. Add to that my stellar DJ income of \$500 per month and my wife’s wonderful \$100 per week that she received from working at Office Depot, plus the occasional recording sessions I booked for \$25 per hour, and the educational Pell Grant Vanessa received; I could actually oftentimes clear \$800 to \$1,500 per month of savings after expenses. And this, my friends, is

what I used to fund to fund the cash-consuming beast—and my magnificent obsession now known as DJ Connection.

**Our monthly budget looked something like this:**

- \$500 per month for our apartment at the Fountain Crest apartments (a one-bedroom palace that we furnished with hand-painted shelves, a folding card table, old-school and garage-sale variety chairs, a ton of DJ gear, a futon provided by my aunt and uncle Hanscome) located at 71<sup>st</sup> and Lewis directly behind the Marriott hotel where so many of my legendary ORU parties took place. I imagine that I felt the same way about living behind this DJ shrine (the Marriott) as Chicago Cubs fans would feel about living behind Wrigley field.
- \$35 phone service
- \$40 DJ cell phone service (which allowed me to book deals during lunch breaks)
- \$200 food (Four-for-one-dollar yogurt specials can go a long way)
- \$10 entertainment (You can see a bunch of \$1.00 movies at 71<sup>st</sup> and Memorial for \$10.)
- \$125 DJ Connection Yellow Page™ ad (The ad was small, the bill was intimidating, but it provided me with those first early customers to wow . . . Sally Lewis, thank you for selling me that ad.)
- \$100 car insurance (When you drive a car with 200,000-plus miles, you only need liability coverage.)
- \$0 for AC/heat (we never used it regardless of the climate . . . to save money.)
- \$30 business cards, flyers, etc . . . (I always had more propaganda on me than the marketing director for a Joseph Stalin pep rally.)
- \$50 electricity
- \$??? DJ gear (Whatever we had leftover we used to buy DJ gear.)

- \$0 love and love making (It was free, so we did a lot of that.)



***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Jeremy Thorn  
(my manager and interviewer at Impact)***

*I had the good fortune of meeting Clay Clark and becoming friends with him at a pivotal time in his life. Through a series of circumstances and thoughtful decisions, I watched him literally transform from an impulsive free spirit with no clear sense of direction in to a determined, focused, and successful young man. His business accomplishments and leadership speak for themselves, and I consider him an authority in the fields of personal growth and small business. However, when I first met Clay when he came into my office to interview for a sales position, he was dressed in ill-fitting business attire and, like most young people with limited work experience, he tried to maximize the few highlights on his short resume. My boss at the time (Jennifer Harbour) who was co-interviewing with me put Clay through a battery of questions that ranged from sales knowledge to details of his personal interests and character. Clay's answers were sometimes awkward and, when asked questions that applied directly to the sales position, he often struggled to come up with a response that proved his qualifications for the job.*

***However, after spending some time in the interview with Clay, a few things became apparent to me. He is a very intelligent and observant person. He is a quick learner and always thirsty for more knowledge.***

***He also has an innate sense of confidence and a great sense of humor when he interacts with people. Clay radiated a positive energy around him, and he and I quickly developed a good rapport that turned in to a friendship. Because of these and other character traits, we hired him that day.***

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't allow this chapter to become more meaningless than memorizing the entire scientific periodic table; instead, answer the following self-exploratory questions:**

1. What is it that keeps you up late and what motivates you to wake you up early? What is your “magnificent obsession?”
2. How much capital (fuel) do you need to raise in order to get your passion rocket (business) off the ground?
3. How many hours per week are you willing to work to fuel your “magnificent obsession”?
4. What can you learn about your future job (occupation or business) from where you are now?
5. Write down the ten most likely reasons that you might not be able to pursue your “magnificent obsession.”
6. Determine today that you will not allow any of the ten reasons (written above) to develop in to your reason for not succeeding.



(A “Hood” and the late great Napoleon Hill are pictured above.)

## Chapter 8

### Clay Meets Napoleon and the “Hood.”

*Life Lesson: Success is a choice. Study the lives of successful people who are doing what you want to do, and then do what they did to become successful.*



Under the guidance of Heath Dean, I felt like I was on fire! I was a sales machine. Sure I was only making \$3,000 per month (tops) at the time, but to me it seemed like a huge amount of money. And it seemed like a huge amount of money to me because Vanessa and I were living below our means. Let me repeat this for added impact, IT SEEMED LIKE A HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY TO ME BECAUSE VANESSA AND I WERE LIVING BELOW OUR

MEANS. This might strike most people reading this as odd because we live in a never-before-seen time of nearly limitless access to “cheap” borrowed money, but at the time that I am writing this (2008), I still am driving a 1984 brown conversion van that I bought for \$1,000. I bought it for \$1,000 because it generates huge tax write-offs (over 50 cents per mile), and because I could pay cash for it.

Each week when I go out to work, I go out to work for myself, and I put that money in my account. I don’t go out to work for the bank so I can pay interest on borrowed money/debt. And this simple act of living below my means from the very beginning has allowed Vanessa and me to weather some tough financial times. Living below our means has also given us HOPE. Since Vanessa and I started out our newly married lives by saving together, we have also been able to grow our financial wealth together; and we’ve always aspired to build and grow ourselves to the next level because we have HOPE.

Historically whenever a civilization has lived without HOPE, violence and anarchy erupted. In America, those living without financial HOPE because they are completely leveraged with debt develop ulcers, depression, and a lack of motivation. I am dwelling on this because I care. Do not abort your financial future by refusing to live below your means. Don’t spend your whole life treading water amidst a sea of financial obligations. Live below your means and create a nest egg for yourself. Rockefeller endorsed the habit of saving 20 percent of all of his gross income. Dave Ramsey (the talk radio financial guru) encourages his audiences to save 20 percent of all of their earnings. Warren Buffet calls this savings the “snowball,” and his life is a prime example of how much financial power one person can accumulate to fund their dreams by living below their means.

Anyway . . . back to the story. So there we were living below our means, and then my sales started sagging again (this up and down motion is not uncommon to average salespeople). Only this time, those sales totally bottomed out, and they stayed at the bottom. About this time (late 2001), Jeremy Thorn (my team leader) informed our team that we had to read *Think and Grow Rich*, a 1928 self-help classic written by Napoleon Hill. I was not down with this “required reading.” I did not have the mental capacity at the time to understand that THE

MORE YOUR LEARN = THE MORE YOU EARN. I had not yet observed that rich people have big libraries while poor people have big TVs. I seriously was still an idiot at this point in my life. I made excuses for myself by saying things like, “Oh, I don’t have time to read this.”

I should have made the time. I should have pulled my head out of my butt and looked around. I should have realized that the world’s wealthiest people have all earned their fortunes through the organization and the reorganization of existing ideas. I was not smart, and I want to now apologize to anyone that I knew then for my overall aura and lack of knowledge. But since my sales were bombing, I needed something. I needed anything. I needed steroids; I needed Redbull™ (this had not been invented yet); I needed Yoda. I was sounding terrible on the phone. I had lost my soul. I had lost my mojo. And I had lost my “fevuh” and “I needed more cowbell, babies” (this is a reference to a *Saturday Night Live* skit). Even the losers at work were starting to laugh at my crappy sales and my downward spiraling attitude.

At the end of each month, I would look up and I would see Paul, Ron Hood, Heath Dean, Mike Matthews, and everyone all putting up big sales totals on the board. Some of them even earned a car paid for by the company for their high sales totals. I, however, should have been awarded a tricycle for being at the bottom.

And the worst thing about being a bad salesperson was that you never got any relief at the end of each month. The top salespeople all waited until the end of the month to win their awards, to get their bonuses, and to talk their trash; but we bottom feeders waited until the end of the month to feel really bad about our lack of performance. Hood would have ten times more sales (\$30,000 - \$40,000) than almost everyone else, and then I would be there with \$2,000 in total sales. It was awesome in a non-good way. It was awesome in the way that seeing a dog get punted by a semi on the interstate highway is awesome: *BOOM!* and the dog goes flying 300 yards. Not good to look at, and not something you want to see. Basically I was the dog getting punted by the semi at the end of each month. Something drastic



had to be done. I was going to get through to Ron Hood, or I was going to castrate myself using a butter knife.

After harassing Ron for the better part of a week, and whenever I deemed it to be the most APPROPRIATE, he finally gave in to my cries for help. He agreed to meet me at Grady's. Apparently Ron used to work there as a waiter, so I was inspired just by seeing him come in the door of his old workplace. I could not believe how far he had come. As we sat down to talk, I remember that he skipped the normal small talk thing that most people do when they sit down to discuss something important. He just jumped right into chastising me with his no-excuses mentality, and I took note. He educated me by attempting to purge me of my "stinkin' thinkin'" as he put it. He told me, "Clay, you've got to get serious man." He kept asking me, "What are you doing with your life, man? When are you going to quit making excuses?"

But for some reason, I kind of enjoyed having someone tell me with candor what I was doing wrong. And I think that this might have been one of the first times in my life where I actually was receptive to intense criticism. I wanted to hear what he had to say. I was broken and bitter; I was prepared to grovel. I listened to his every word because I was weak, and he was strong. And then it happened. Ron AGREED to train me but only if I would work hard and would agree to make 100 calls per day without complaining. He wanted me to commit to working hard and not wasting his time. In my experience, I have found that almost all successful people WILL NOT LET ANYONE WASTE THEIR TIME. They aren't mean, THEY JUST WON'T LET PEOPLE WASTE THEIR TIME.

**"Time is your most important asset."**

**- ROBERT KIYOSAKI, author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad***

THINK ABOUT IT, RICH PEOPLE DO NOT USE LAUNDROMATS OR WAIT FOR BUSES. THEY REALIZE THAT TIME IS THEIR MOST IMPORTANT ASSET.

At this point my life, I was not concerned with the conditions under which Ron was agreeing to teach me. I would have paid Ron \$100 per week. I would have mowed his lawn. His knowledge had real value to me. I was going to be taught by the “Hood.” After meeting with Ron, I drove back to our apartment in the MPV DJ van (hand painted with a subwoofer in the back) thinking, *I am going to do this thing. I can do it now; I am hooking up with a legend.*

And thus, that is what happened. I did not realize at the time that I was learning how to put my FAITH to action and that I was going to learn the SKILL THAT SEPARATES SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE FROM UNSUCCESSFUL PEOPLE. I WAS GOING TO LEARN HOW TO SELL AND HOW TO GENERATE MY OWN MOMENTUM. I had more FAITH in Ron Hood than I had in myself, and being taught by him made me stronger.

The first workday after we talked, I immediately started rocking.

DIAL! RING! ANSWER! NO!

DIAL! RING! ANSWER! NO!

DIAL! RING! ANSWER! Yes! . . . and then YES! . . . and then another YES! Pastors were saying yes! They were buying! Within the end of the week, my boat was overflowing with fish, and Ron kept on me to keep casting my fishing pole. Each month my sales improved, and I was just getting going. Every day flew by as I “dialed and smiled.” I was finally working with a sense of urgency. Ron gave me a flute that he had picked up in Africa as a tribute to my super sales. I loved that flute. It was an orange hand-painted African flute. I would like to believe that it was painted by someone really important like Dikembe Mutombo (the former seven-foot NBA star). Every time I would book something, I would play my flute and sing out some parody rendition of some pop song that I knew. What made it awesome was that I could not play the flute; so every time I played it, I played the same dull sounding note. But I sang the words to the song in tune and with the passion that Meatloaf normally reserves for his crazy-sweaty operatic concert performances. My songs were always deep in meaning.

For extra fun, here is an example: (to the tune of Eddie Money’s “Take Me Home Tonight”)

*Take me home tonight  
I just booked the crap out of a ten-spot  
and I'm feeling alright.*

Oh man, I miss those times (sometimes, but not often). Okay, I would never go back, EVER, but it was a good time (at the time). Meanwhile . . . at night and during our pre-work devotions, I kept reading this crazy *Think and Grow Rich* that Jeremy was making me read, and slowly but surely I gnawed my way through the book's bland exterior and into its meat. This 1928 crown jewel of self-help was beginning to change my life. As I turned from one page to the next, I could feel an inner energy swelling up inside of me, like when I used to play Super Mario™ and I would encounter a magical mushroom or something that would allow Mario to throw fire and become invincible for thirty seconds. Because of this book's inspiration, I almost immediately decided to enroll in the OSU Institute of Technology at Okmulgee to get the "practical knowledge" that Andrew Carnegie spoke so highly about in the pages of this epic book.

To greatly abbreviate my tenure at OSU-Okmulgee, it was a great experience in terms of providing me with hands-on experience, and Dr. Welch (who was the director of the program) was a solid dude. My graphic design teacher was also a solid dude. Greg Graham and Lindsey Stout got me through each day with their friendship, and I met interesting male humans who were really in to tagging (spray painting) any public building that they could. And, as well intentioned as the school was, it focused too much time on theoretical useless information for my brain. I realize that since it was a university setting, they had to make me memorize vocabulary terms like "chiaroscuro" (the artistic term for shading a sphere), but I honestly did not, and do not, give a crap about the theory behind shading a sphere. I wanted to know who pays for graphic design, whom they paid, and why they paid whom they paid. Then I wanted to learn to do what the people getting paid could do so that I could get paid. Today, I am pretty much the same way. Shading circles might be an important thing for people in the art circles, but for me it was square (horrible attempt at humor). After I had shaded around ten spheres, I was mentally done with

school altogether. Due to the grace shown to me from Jeremy Thorn, I was driving to school every day while still working part-time at Impact and working my DJ leads at night. While driving the hour and a half round trip to Okmulgee and back every day, I would make my DJ bookings (man, was I making bookings). All of those cards and flyers that I had been putting out were starting to generate calls. Former ORU students or ORU graduates were getting married, and they remembered me when they were looking for a DJ. I was finally starting to bring in some money. I was only booking six shows or so a month at \$300 or less, but I was bringing in some cheddar after having spent years nearly bringing in nothing with my new DJ gear.

And then one day, while listening to Mr. Combs (one of my OSU art professors) talk about chiaroscuro and other mindless modern-art terminologies and theories, a plane hit the World Trade Center in New York City. As soon as news spread to our classroom, one of our professors headed out of the room with a look of panic on his face (we found out later that his son worked at the World Trade Center and lived in New York City). When one professor left, I think Mr. Combs assumed that this signified that our class was done, so he dismissed us and told us to “be safe.” I headed to the cafeteria to graze on some bagels and to drink some chocolate milk while reading *Think and Grow Rich* in between classes

As I was reading the book (the mother of all books), I paused for a moment to look up at the non-stop CNN<sup>TM</sup> coverage that was being televised on the huge-screen TV in the campus cafeteria and then *BOOM*—another plane hit the towers. It was like WWII was happening right in front of me. Then reports came out that the Pentagon got hit, and then another plane crashed. It was insane. I called Vanessa at ORU, and she told me that they were watching the footage there as well. All the while my mind began thinking of all the useless knowledge that I was currently spending my life to obtain. I could not get my mind off this topic. Here I was reading a book about Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, Roy Firestone, J.P. Morgan, and Thomas Edison that was continually hammering home the importance of gaining “practical education,” and yet I was paying vast sums of money to hear long-winded lectures about chiaroscuro.

As America sorted through its thoughts and fears during this incredibly horrible time in American history, and as the workers at Impact talked about it later that afternoon, I was mentally stuck on one reality. I WAS WASTING MY LIFE STUDYING NEBULOUS-IMPRACTICAL-THEORETICAL-TIME-CONSUMING NON-SENSE. I wasn't planning on being on Jeopardy™ anytime soon (which is the only place where their nebulous-impractical-time-consuming nonsense has merit), and so I was now convinced by this terrible terrorist act, the words of Napoleon Hill, and the death of my best friend Mark that I needed to start creating my ideal life now. THE TIME TO ACT WAS NOW.

**“Act now. The time will never be just right.”  
—NAPOLEON HILL**

A few days after 9/11 occurred, and approximately around the time that I was finishing reading *Think and Grow Rich*, I started to lose the vision in my right eye. This is my bad eye anyway (I have 20/100 vision in his eye), but after seeing a doctor (which I never do), it was determined that my vision loss was stress-related which was almost funny to hear because I was well aware of my crazy schedule (I guess I was just waiting for affirmation from the medical community). Just to give you an insight in to my schedule, here is what it looked like back then (and, yes, I did actually write down a schedule like this because I had heard Brian Tracy (the motivational speaker and success guru) say that successful people make a plan and then work their plan.

**6:00 A.M. Wake up and work out**  
**8:00 A.M. – 12 P.M. Work at Impact**  
**12:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. School at OSU-Okmulgee (while traveling I was booking shows via cell phone)**  
**3:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M. Impact**  
**5:30 P.M. - 10:00 P.M. Work on DJ Connection**  
**10:00 P.M. - 10:30 P.M. Husband/Wife time**

**\*\*Every 30 minutes throughout the day I would also frantically check my voicemail to make sure I did not miss any big DJ bookings.**

Now that I had medical evidence to support Vanessa's theory that I was overworking myself, it was determined by my wife and I that something had to give. The world's wealthiest investor Warren Buffet says, "Whenever something new comes in to my life, I take something old out," but for me this was hard because I was not very intelligent at this time in my life. But reluctantly, I called up Jeremy and set up a time to talk. I talked to Jeremy, but I was a wuss and did not take action to alleviate this job from my life. Thus, I did not put in my two-week notice.

And then one my first big breaks happened. I can't remember who called, but somebody told me that the *Tulsa World* wanted to talk to me about my nomination for the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award presented by the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce (of which I was a member). And through a crazy series of events and nominations from my peers in the wedding industry, WE WON!

The *Tulsa World* then interviewed us. When Debbie Blossom (the business section writer for the *Tulsa World*) and her photographer arrived in our apartment, I don't think that they were ready for what they saw. I know that they were not ready for what they witnessed. At the ripe old age of twenty, Vanessa and I were operating the largest mobile entertainment service in the city out of our one-bedroom apartment. We had turned our bedroom into a recording studio, so we had a mattress that sat in the living room that we were sleeping on. Our furniture was obviously of the Walmarttm variety, and everything about the operation except for our results and our end product/service was amateur. The more Debbie interviewed me, the more she grew to understand that I was a highly motivated person that had started with nothing, and I was willing to financially, physically, and mentally sacrifice to achieve my goals. I think Debbie left thinking that my wife was a saint, and that I was odd yet highly motivated. After Debbie had concluded the interview, I recall thinking, *Oh man, I wonder how this story will turn out? I wonder if they will even print it.*

A few days later some of my old college buddies called me and told me that we were on the front cover of the *Tulsa World's* business section! We made the cover of the business section! The headline read, "LIFE OF THE PARTY: SURGE IN BOOKINGS HAS DJ SERVICE SPINNING."



Things were happening now, so I wore a tie to work (which I then started doing every day, and which I should have already been doing every day up until that point). The tie was originally in preparation for the Tulsa Metro Chamber awards ceremony that was set to be held that night. My newfound professional appearance compelled one of my co-workers named Andrecia to say "Uh oh! You know what to do! Go ahead, DJ!" People at Impact started drinking the DJ Connection kool-aid. People who had always known me as *DJ Clay* started respecting me as actually being a credible entertainer. My phone started ringing too. I started walking and communicating with an unyielding faith in the validity of my business. I felt a renewed sense of energy entering into my soul as a direct result of knowing that all the work that I had been doing up to that point had now been stamped with a Young Entrepreneur of the Year award/seal of approval. I was now professionally on the map. My vision in my right eye had returned, and any doubts and fears that I had were now eliminated. I was not

sleeping much, but I was fueled by passion. And now I was actually able to exchange my passion for paychecks.

During this whirlwind of events, I recruited DJ Rich D. (my deceased friend Mark DePetrus's dad), DJ Shawn Rubidoux, DJ Josh Atkinson, DJ Josh Gamble, DJ Steve Smith (from KBEZ), DJ Doug Decker, DJ Andy Mathurin, DJ Ezekiel Etuk, DJ Luke Spencer-Gardner, and DJ Chris Hettick. Oh, the business was expanding! Two to four events per week were now the norm. Our time to move had come, and so that is what we did.

We bought our first condo for \$43,000, and we painfully paid around \$7,000 in closing costs. My parents again came to the rescue (first to cosign for my apartment and then to help us get the money together to pay the closing costs of which we have since been paid back). Thank you, Mom and Dad! We got raped on our closing costs. It was almost criminal. Fifteen percent closing costs! Looking back at it, I would have to say the whole sales process was scam-like. We were totally taken advantage of as first-time buyers. If we had not been making so much money at the time, I really would have unloaded my full rage, fury, and wrath on the realtor, the lenders, and myself for being so naïve (read *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki to keep this fate from happening to you). If you are reading this . . . DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU. Call me before you buy your first place; let's talk.

**\*\* (918) 481-2010 – DJ Connection – [www.djconnectiontulsa.com](http://www.djconnectiontulsa.com).**

When we moved in to our new (but still old-school looking) gated condo community, I was pumped. 6714 S. Lewis #504 became our new place, and man, was it great. I could record in one room and sleep in another. I never thought I would have a 5,300 square-foot home back then. I thought this two-bedroom, old-school condo was our little slice of heaven. My wife decorated it based on what we could afford (eight dollars, I think), and then we moved in without furniture (other than the futon) and six-foot wooden banquet tables that we used to DJ with.





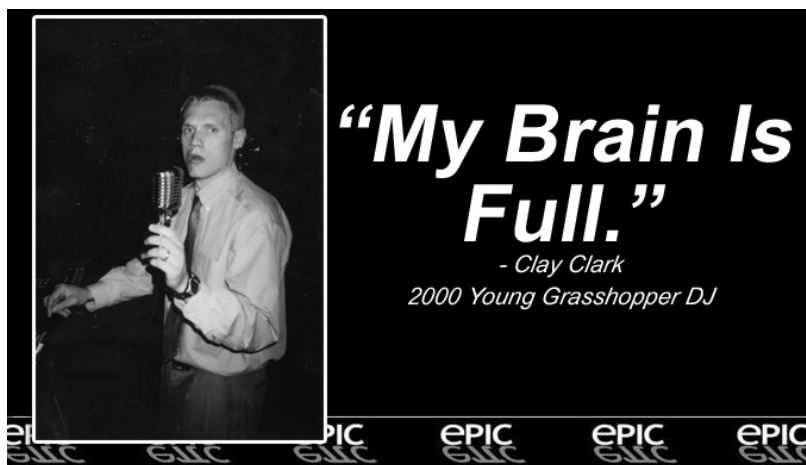
(Pictured above is our #504 condo . . . what it lacked in overall grandeur, we made up for in our pride of ownership . . . it was our first “real home.”)

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Help me to help you by helping us not let this chapter become less meaningful than the government’s comprehensive plan to wean America off of foreign oil—just answer the following introspective questions about your life.**

1. What can you do this week to begin pursuing your passion to the fullest extent?
2. If you knew that reading one book could double or triple your lifetime income (at least) would you read that book?
3. Read *Think and Grow Rich*. It will double, triple, or exponentially increase your lifetime-earning capacity. Andrew Carnegie said it best when he said, “Reputation + Education = Compensation.”
4. When do you plan on reading *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill?



(The picture above features my small, yet full brain.)

## Chapter 9

### **Quitting School to Pursue Learning Full Time, and Working Alone With a Little Help From Tony Bruno, Mark Weddell, and the “Money Line”**

*Life Lesson: One definite chief aim, no office space, no budget: no problem.*



And so it was from this tiny condo (that I once considered to be a luxury resort) that we started rocking. I worked every holiday. I flew home early from Thanksgiving to put out some DJ fires. I trained all of my DJs from here, and I brought the equipment upstairs and taught the recruits how to become a great DJ from within our living

room. It was during our time living at this condominium that we bought “the DJ trailer.” At that point and time, we really needed a trailer; and for some reason, I got caught up in the romantic and fairytale idea of buying the trailer while we were visiting Vanessa’s parents on our family vacation to Kentucky. This idea soon mutated in to a crazy plan to buy the trailer from Amish aluminum-trailer builders that lived in Nappanee, Indiana, which is located within a few hours of my wife’s parents. Looking back on it, I would never ever buy a new trailer (unless it was in foreclosure or something) again. I spent way too much money on this beautiful trailer that quickly got dented and banged. Then I overpaid for artist friends of one of our best DJs to paint the trailer and to turn it in to a viable moving billboard. To make sure that there could be absolutely no miscommunications, I even drew up a full-color 3-D rendering of the van and trailer so that painters would know exactly how the vans were supposed to look when they returned them to me.

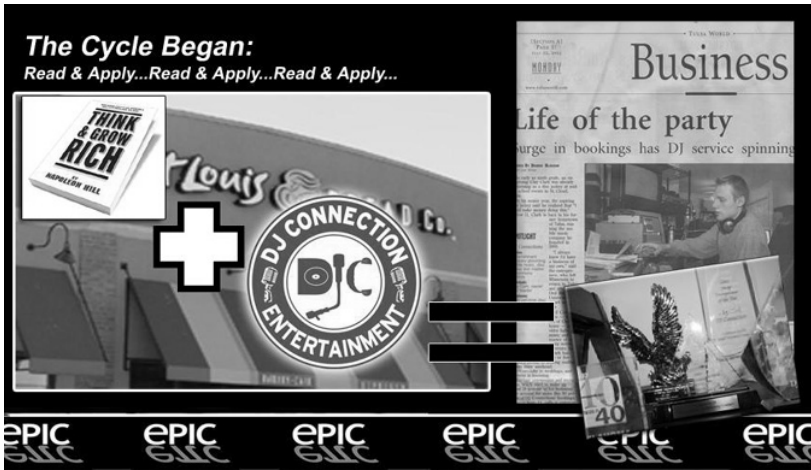


However, after having already paid them the majority of the money up front (which was a stupid thing to do on my part), what they returned to me (two days later than they promised) was a ghetto-riffic-looking trailer and a puke-green-dark-colored-mobile piece-of-urban-half-ass-graffiti-art-that-screamed-figuratively, “DO NOT BOOK ME BECAUSE I AM A HOMELESS DRUG-ADDICTED-DJ.” This van

and trailer combo was not commercially viable in any way. It was horrible at best, and it was nauseating to say the least. That trailer looked artistically gross and commercially out of place. Oh man, thinking about the \$7,000 I spent on that trailer to buy it new and have it painted makes me want to throw up in my mouth while I type this, so I will move on. I really need to get over this before the inner hate that I feel every time I think about this turns me in to Darth Vader.

But it gets better. They also painted my beautiful 1998 Astro van with more of this Yoda-graffiti inspired artwork funk. I seriously felt like I was driving around a piece of Compton's culture every time I drove the vehicle anywhere. Every time people saw it, they would say, "Holy crap, what happened to your van, Clayvis?" Anyway . . . moving on . . . during our time living at this condo, I was forced to stay up almost two days in a row to move my DJ equipment into a new storage because my hired help did not show up. It was from this condo that Vanessa, the DJ team, and I broke through the \$100,000 gross sales mark.

It was during this incredible time of growth that I met every client at Panera Bread (formerly St. Louis Bread Company) on 71<sup>st</sup> and Lewis. Shelly was the manager of this beautiful restaurant, and Fareed Hussein was the Panera Bread employee that always went out of his way to make me feel appreciated. He was great to me. He always said, "Hey, Clayvis, what is going on? How's business?" and the whole Panera staff went out of their way to treat me with respect. I seriously was there six out of seven nights per week every week for three years. I always bought something so that our relationship would always be a mutually beneficial one, and I always had a good reason for meeting customers there as opposed to meeting at "our office."



(Pictured above is the St. Louis Bread Co. where I met with every customer day after day.)

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY: Fareed Hussein  
(a former employee of Panera Bread):**

*I was a dishwasher and would see the same guy come in every day around the same time and sit at the same spot. He always had the same suit on, and he would get the same thing to eat every day: a cinnamon roll and chocolate milk. I started to become friends with Clay and would have his spot saved and his food ready.*

*He would meet potential clients who wanted to get married, and he offered his DJ service. He drove this old white spray-painted van that had "DJ Connection" on the side of it. You could see him coming a mile away with this spray painted van, then you would see this nice-looking guy in a suit jump out (oxymoron). Clay did not care what anyone thought; he was on a mission to become a successful DJ. Panera Bread was the stomping ground for Clay Clark. Most of the staff liked Clay, except for my manager. She thought he was annoying and hated how I would have Clay's whole setup ready for him when he came in at night (everybody has to have a "Darth-Hater"). I have known Clay since 2002. I saw someone who believed he could do anything and never let anyone tell him differently.*

Obviously the real reason that I didn't want to meet people at my office was because I did not have one. I was trying to save up to afford one, but I just went with the code language, "We are in the process of creating new office space." And finally, it was during this time that I first met Josh Smith and Willi Kopp. DJ Willi heard of me as a result of the Debbie-Blossom-written *Tulsa World* article, and Josh heard of me through our mutual friend Chris Montag. More than any material acquisition or material gain that we realized during this time, meeting and training DJ Josh Smith and DJ Willi was the best thing that we did. As I began interviewing more and more people and booking more and more shows from there, my FAITH in the "DJ Connection Magnificent Obsession" and my abilities continued to soar. And I became emboldened, so I finally told Jeremy Thorn that I really needed to talk to him. This time I determined that I was not going to be weak about it. I was going to tell him that I was going to leave Impact, and I was going to drop out of school immediately or as soon as possible. I told Thorn that I had to do this DJ thing based on what I was reading in *Think and Grow Rich*, which ironically he had required me to read.

When I finally met with Thorn upstairs at Impact on one of the production couches, Thorn was super supportive and sincerely interested in me and my success. I could not believe it; he really wanted me to do well whether I was at Faith Highway or not. And after much talking on those green production couches, I had his blessing to leave Faith Highway. HIS BLESSING AND SUPPORT MEANT MORE TO ME THAN I THINK HE KNEW AT THE TIME, and we are still friends today. I remember returning home to my wife, Vanessa, after quitting school and after having put in my two-week notice at Impact, lying on our futon and looking up at ceiling of the condo thinking, *YES! I have arrived! I'm no longer in school! I no longer work for anyone else! Holy crap, I am scared.*

As odd as it sounds, I quit school to begin learning at an accelerated rate. Napoleon Hill preaches on the importance of ongoing and never-ending pursuit of knowledge; however, I was no longer going to be patient enough to learn a skill over a four-year period. Now I would teach myself how to edit videos in twenty hours; I would

learn how use Adobe™ Photoshop functionally through a series of all-nighter learning sessions. I no longer was going to sit around and wait for the next class session to learn new material. Now my books were my professors, and the customers were going to be the ones grading me. If I scored high, I would get paid well. If I scored low, I would not get paid. In my mind I had graduated to a new and better understanding of learning. I had graduated from studying the theoretical, and I was now ready to study practical things only.

The syllabus that I made for myself focused primarily on STUDYING THE RICH, AND THEN DOING WHAT THEY DID, and AN ENDLESS CYCLE OF READING AND VIGOROUSLY APPLYING ANY NEW KNOWLEDGE. I soon found that this form of learning was meant for me. I felt as though I had arrived intellectually . . . I was now an “entrepreneur.”

During my first years enrolled in the school of “Study the rich, and do what they do. Then read, learn, and apply,” I learned much from my book-form professors: Napoleon Hill, Robert Kiyosaki, Thomas J. Stanley, PhD., William D. Danko, PhD., Jay Conrad Levinson, the late John Rockefeller, Herb Kelleher, Chester Cadieux, Bill O’Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, Sam Walton, and countless other entrepreneurs. I have never quit reading, but these early books really did shape my thinking, ambition, and daily motivation.

**My curriculum during my first few years of entrepreneurship consisted of reading:**

***The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* – JOHN C. MAXWELL**  
***In the Words of Great Business Leaders* – JULIE M. FENSTER**  
***Guerilla Marketing* – JAY CONRAD LEVINSON**  
***Hip Hop America* – NELSON GEORGE**  
***How to Win Friends and Influence People* – DALE CARNEGIE**  
***Sam Walton: Made in America* – SAM WALTON WITH JOHN HUEY**  
***The No Spin Zone* – BILL O’REILLY**  
***Rich Dad, Poor Dad* – ROBERT KIYOSAKI**  
***Rich Dad’s Guide to Investing* – ROBERT KIYOSAKI**

***The Greatest Salesman in the World* – OG MADINO**

***The \$100,000 Club: How to Make a Six-Figure Income* – D.A. BENTON**

***The Creature from Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve* – G. EDWARD GRIFFIN**

***The Law of Success in Sixteen Lessons* – NAPOLEON HILL**

***The Millionaire Next Door* – THOMAS J. STANLEY, PH.D. AND WILLIAM D. DANKO, PH.D.**

***Think and Grow Rich* – NAPOLEON HILL**

Throughout my super-intense, self-directed entrepreneurship education course, I have failed time and time again, and I am still standing. However, it must be stated that my rate of learning never exponentially increased until began working for myself

If you are an entrepreneur reading this, and you feel like you should apprentice for someone who can teach you the skills you need, I strongly encourage you to do it! If you know what you want to do, go and do it starting now. Now, obviously, if your goal is to be a doctor, you will need formal education. But I am telling you this, if you have a backup plan, you will spend your whole life unintentionally implementing your backup plan (while your major goals and dreams begin to wilt away).

According to Napoleon Hill, 95 percent of us will never find our life's passion because we are told from a young age to pursue the path of least resistance. This path is filled with the lure of guaranteed benefits and a struggle-free work environment. And so if you take this path, you will end up where 95 percent end up (on a path that does not allow you to follow your dreams). When you were a kid, you dreamed about being a singer, a fireman, a baseball player, an army guy, a \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank). Very few of us grew up dreaming about working at a job that offered guaranteed benefits. Could you imagine the first-grade conversations if you did?

“Hey Larry, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

Larry responds, “Well, when I grow up, I want to make around the national average, and I would like to have a car payment that I won’t be able to pay off before my car dies. I would like to live in an average



house, and I would love to have a job that I am not passionate about because it pays benefits! Oh, and I am really excited about exchanging the majority of my waking hours (five-sevenths of each week) for a paycheck. I think that this sounds like the job for me.”

My friends, resistance builds strength. Resistance training with weights builds big muscles. Resistance training in business builds tenacity, focus, and great business plans. You must decide today that you will not pursue the path of least resistance; you must pursue your passions. Thank you, Napoleon Hill, for teaching me this.

From the time I made the commitment to become self-employed, it has been a wild roller coaster ride, but I have learned a lot and earned a lot. Sure, I have had my share of upset clients, near-death and near-financial-death moments, stress, and enormous amounts of frustration. But I have felt the thrill of achievement on more than one occasion. I remember waking up those first few days of full-time self-employment at 7:00 A.M. and thinking, *This is the best.*

I also remember going to bed thinking, *I wish the days were longer because I have so much I want to do. I am excited about life and the unbelievable opportunities that our existence on Earth and in the country of the United States of America presents us with.*

Each morning that I woke up, I would put on my blue shirt (anyone who knows me, knows that I always wear blue shirts), a tie, and some khaki pants in preparation to assume the “dial and smile” position. I would then spend the better part of the pre-work day frantically updating training manuals, typing confirmations from the previous night’s bookings (using the Microsoft™ Paint program as my database software of choice . . . I know it sounds disturbing, but it was cheap and effective); and then I would do the office work. Precisely at 10:00 A.M. I would hop on the phone. Now in those days, it was a little odd because hopping on the phone meant calling people who had no reason to want to hear from me. I pretty much cold-called as many people as I could every day to pay the bills, frantically searching for my next paycheck. Man, I loved it and hated it. The stress and the thrill combined to make a fabulous blend, like ordering a sugar-free drink at Starbuck’s™ and then adding a creamy topping to it with chocolate syrup and chocolate chunks.

Honestly, my friend, during this time I would call everybody. My philosophy was that “IT’S JUST A NUMBERS GAME.” I HAD A GREAT SERVICE, AND I JUST NEEDED TO CONNECT WITH THE RIGHT PERSON. EVERY *NO* I RECEIVED WAS JUST GETTING ME CLOSER TO THAT ONE *YES*. If there was a bridal tradeshow opportunity, I was in it; and if there was a company in the phone book, I called them. I actually called every single apartment complex in Tulsa because I knew that one of them was going to need some entertainment for their next resident-appreciation event. And sure enough, I landed a deal with the Wimbledon apartments to DJ for \$225—this came after I heard at least fifty direct *no*’s.

I put Napoleon Hill’s philosophy of “over delivery” to the test every day. If you called me, YOU WERE IN FOR AN EXPERIENCE. If making the DJ Connection viable meant making my voice hoarse in the process, I would have done it, and on many occasions, I did lose my voice after a day of calling. I would bring so much alacrity and power to the phone that many people couldn’t resist booking me. Seriously, I was bringing the fire during each phone call like T.D. Jakes does on Sunday mornings. Every day I focused on STAYING ACTIVE and MAKING 100 CALLS. Over the years I have seen many businesses fail because their owner was not willing to hit the phones, pound the pavement, and hit the streets to get the word out. My entrepreneurial friends, the cruel reality a young entrepreneur faces is that no one cares whether you succeed other than you. Thus, I brought the HUMOR, the PASSION, and the DETERMINATION to the phone on every call. It was the “Passion of the Clay” on that phone. I called that phone the “money line” because every time it rang, it brought me money and new clients.

At this time, DJ Connection offered three different packages: the Solid Gold, the Platinum, and the Double Platinum package. Each package had a masculine name although I was selling my products to women. I gave my products a masculine name because I was not smart enough to market my products to my customers who were nearly all women; I was designing products that could be marketed to myself. If I could have, I would have named my package the Light Saber package because I was a dude, and that is what I was into. Looking

back on it, I realize that this is so ridiculous, but it is so true. That is why most disk jockeys that compete with us are dressed like morons and have tattoos on their forearms. They are marketing themselves to appeal to themselves, not to the consumer.

What if Michael Jordan would have had this philosophy? Think about this for a second. Is NBA legend Michael Jordan more marketable or less marketable than Allen Iverson and his thirty tattoos, cornrows, bling, sagging pants, inarticulate speech, baseless opinions, and bad attitude? Of course, Michael Jordan is more marketable. **If you are an entrepreneur, you must not dress and act like an idiot because people judge you based on your appearance.** So why would you want to discriminate against yourself? People watch and judge in business just like guys and girls watch and judge people at the mall. Right or wrong, people judge you based on the image that you present. So for all that is good and holy, don't name your packages marketed to women after metals and things that guys like. Mentally marinate on this while asking yourself this hard question. Do I portray the right level of professionalism that I want to communicate to the world through my appearance, my website, my language, my packaging etc.?

And so I went on marketing myself without ever taking the time to think about what I was communicating. I woke up at 7:00 A.M., did my paperwork until 10:00 A.M., then I made my calls until I got enough bookings to feed myself while the Tony Bruno and Mark Weddell sports talk radio programs played in the background. And then it occurred to me like a vision: I needed to go and meet with Lori Montag. She started and owns one of the most successful wedding businesses in town, and she will know what I need to know in order to grow my business.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.” –  
THOMAS EDISON**

**Help give this chapter more meaning than political debates by answering the following self-spelunking (self-exploring) questions:**

1. Most self-employed people start out working alone. Are you okay with the idea of working alone until you can build your team?
2. Are you afraid of cold calling? (If you are, get over it; people can't kill you through the phone.)
3. Write down the daily activities that you can begin doing tomorrow to create your own life momentum. (If you cannot, you must learn how starting today. Learn to encourage yourself.)
4. Create a regimented schedule that will get you closer to achieving your goals each day, and then force yourself to adhere to it.



(Pictured above are my beautiful wife (on the first *Tulsa Bridal Association* magazine cover), the Montag Photography logo, and various pictures of me “dialing and smiling.”)

## Chapter 10

### Montag the Mentor, the Tulsa Bridal Association, and the Power of the Mastermind

*Life Lesson: “Ally yourself with a group of as many people as you need for the creation and carrying out of your plan or plans for the accumulation of money.”*

- NAPOLEON HILL, author of best-selling self-help book *Think and Grow Rich*



I honestly don’t remember what day I went to meet with Lori, and I don’t even remember the approximate season. I just remember

having a meeting with Lori Montag at her 71<sup>st</sup> and Mingo (Tulsa-based) Montag Photography studio that changed my life. Lori had always been my mentor since that first summer I stayed with her after we moved to Minnesota, but I had never truly tapped in to her huge knowledge storehouse. I had listened to her, I had talked with her, and I had been inspired by her; but I had never asked her detailed information about how to market to ladies and how to create a service that is profitable, memorable, and the best in town (like her photography service is).

When I sat down to meet with Lori, I informed her of my new full-time status as the owner of DJ Connection, and then I just started bombarding her with questions. And, man, did I get answers. Lori explained to me the ins and outs of the wedding industry. She explained to me that I was not marketing to men. She told me, “Ninety percent of the people booking weddings are women.” She explained to me the importance of price-point flexibility. She told me how to build rapport with clients before selling. She brought the knowledge to me, and I was listening. I honestly believe that this meeting with her was one of the turning points in my business career. Before meeting with her, my packages sounded like the offerings of a wholesale precious metals’ dealer. After meeting with her, the DJ packages sounded like they were made for the brides-to-be who were looking to schedule a quality entertainer to make their night special.

When I met with Lori, I knew that although I was making some positive progress in the industry, my opinion was not valid because my closing percentage was weak. I was only closing 50 percent of my inbound calls, and Lori was closing 80 to 90 percent of her inbound calls. As a reader, I am not sure if this means much to you, but look at it this way: every time we go in to Walmart<sup>TM</sup>, most of us leave with a product in our hands. We might spend only two or three dollars, but we spend something. In my opinion, this is the same thing that should be happening with each and every person that you talk to about your current or future business (especially when customers ARE CALLING YOU). Potential customers are screaming, “I HAVE A NEED! CAN YOU FILL IT?” And sadly, many businesses answer,

“Well, you know, we really don’t have what you are looking for, but if you want to go down the street, our competitor has what you are looking for.”

As a service provider, you are paying for the infrastructure and the phone bill every time a customer walks in the door or calls you on your phone. Thus, I am a firm believer that your target closing percentage should be 100 percent. I have never bought in to the philosophy of, “Oh, they just aren’t our type of customers.”

As Lori gave me tip after tip, I was taking notes in my man book at a feverish pace. I honestly had to ask her to slow down because I could not write and take in everything that she was saying. To Lori, these sales concepts on marketing to brides were common sense, but to me they were profound thoughts from a guru. I was receptive to Lori’s ideas and criticisms because I knew that she knew what she was talking about.

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Lori Montag  
(founder of Montag Photography, my mentor, and my mom during  
my high school summers spent in Oklahoma)***

***One of the things I tried to teach Clay when he was starting out in business is that every challenge creates an opportunity if you will only look for it. It was fun to watch him experience it firsthand. As a newcomer to the bridal industry, Clay wanted very much to be in what was then the biggest bridal show in Oklahoma. He was told he could not participate because there were too many DJs already in the show and that it could be years before one dropped out. He was quite upset, so I told him “Let’s just think of a way around it.”***

***We decided to host our own wedding show (and the Tulsa Bridal Association was basically created right there at that moment). We worked so hard because we knew we were up against a long-standing show. We selected the beautiful new Renaissance hotel and immediately started promoting the show like we were experts. When it was all said and done, we had the largest attendance of any bridal show in Tulsa. They even had to call out the fire department because the crowd was so tremendous. I remember when the show was over***

***that night, we both looked at one another and said, “Well, we did it.” I have since seen that same lesson played out several times in Clay’s business. I hope he always looks at every challenge that same way and always finds the hidden opportunity in it.***

Albert Einstein said, “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.” And in this case I was the “mediocre mind,” and she was the “great spirit.” I believe that this is one of my best strengths actually. I generally recognize that I have a mediocre mind when I am in the presence of greatness, so I generally shut my face and listen to the great minds when they speak; however, I usually don’t spend any time listening to the baseless opinions of people who have no credibility. You know like when your broke uncle or your seventh-year undergraduate-degree-pursuing neighbor, or that random jobless guy at the church coffee bar says, “You know, I don’t think that is a good idea. I think that you should focus your investment dollars on mutual funds to diversify yourself from the risk posed by your business.” I tune them out completely, and I rebuke the negative doubting waves that their brains emit into the ether.

However, as a business owner, the customer’s opinion is always valid (99 percent of the time, unless the customer is an idiot, which most are not). And thus, you have to view your market share as if you were running for political office and as if your customers’ dollars stood for votes. If you are not getting a lot of votes, it is because the customer is not voting for you; it is nothing personal; they just don’t like your product and the way that you are marketing it.

As an owner of a new business, you have to be humble enough to ask the people saying *no* to you why they are saying *no*. You have to be ambitious enough to be humble when listening to criticism coming from customers who are turning you down. You have to be crazy enough to seek tirelessly to be perfect because the reality of it is this: customers are not going to tell you that you did a poor job unless you did a horrible job, in which case they will call and complain.

Most customers would rather just not use your service again than to have that potential confrontation with you. Potential buyers will just tell you, “Well, we decided that we just didn’t have the money to



afford you,” or “I’ll have to get back to you” because they don’t have a vested interest in your business. They aren’t going to tell you what you need to hear. They aren’t going to say, “You know, you guys always called me back late. You were difficult as hell to work with, and I really just don’t like your website or your overall presentation.” People will not be candid with you unless you sincerely let it be known that you are striving for perfection, and you must know what you can improve upon. I honestly feel as though DJ Connection is the best DJ service out there, but we are not perfect; and we aren’t even in the same league as QuikTrip™ or Southwest™ airlines in terms of the quality and quantity of service rendered. But we can be if we just keep seeking criticism from our customers in a sincere way. And although we enjoy tremendous success today, the moment we stop learning from customers and attempting to improve our product is the moment that we are no longer relevant. Think about Kmart™; those fools used to dominate the “big box” retailer industry; now those dudes are just relics of a profitable business that once was.

Back to the DJ story . . . when I left Montag Photography that day, I was a changed marketing man. I was on fire, and I was feeling it. I knew what I had to do. I knew that changes that had to be made, and I was prepared to make them that day. I was going to implement this laundry list of improvements immediately because I have always been a big believer that PROCRASTINATION KILLS MOTIVATION AND WILL LEAD TO PERPETUAL FRUSTRATION. When I returned home I immediately began drastically changing my marketing materials, my company image, the clothes I was wearing, and everything that I was doing that was communicating a message to the customer that I was not trying to send. Being that I naturally think like a cheap hillbilly, I am always making myself aware of what my marketing materials are indirectly saying.

After implementing these changes, my sales went through the roof, and I started consistently booking nearly all of the inbound calls that I was receiving. I honestly did not get turned down on an inbound sales call for months at a time. Through the endless marketing and cultivating of the image of DJ Connection, and the calling, and the calling, and more calling I began to develop relationships with the

local Tulsa wedding vendors for the first time. I was now on the warpath to develop what Napoleon Hill refers to as the “mastermind group.”

To do this, I would call wedding vendors up, go speak with them, and then I would work tirelessly to refer them as much business as I could. I knew that mutually beneficial relationships are the only sustainable ones. This was not always easy to do because I only had a very limited client base from which to refer, and it was never easy to do because many wedding vendors are about as professional as a typical carny (a carnival worker). It was so frustrating. I can remember spending countless hours attempting to call bridal lists for the sole purpose of referring vendors only to hear the bride call me back within two hours to say that all of the vendors I had referred would not answer the phone or would not return her call.

Having spent nearly ten years owning and operating wedding-related businesses (a disk jockey and mobile entertainment service, a wedding videography service, a wedding photography service, a party rental company, and a chocolate fountain company), I have come to the conclusion that the wedding industry is one of the most unregulated and un-standardized industries that there is. It is truly unbelievable the supreme lengths to which some high-quality wedding vendors have taken their wedding businesses. Conversely, however, I am truly astonished at the extreme levels of depravity that exist from the carp of the wedding industry. During the planning of a wedding, you might find the ideal wedding dress is only available at a huge wedding chain store like a David’s Bridal (one of the only nationally standardized wedding-related businesses). You might also discover that the best gourmet raspberry-filled wedding cake can only be found in Midtown at a small hole-in-wall bakery that only keeps regular business hours Tuesdays and Wednesdays from noon to 5:00 P.M. And although their gourmet raspberry-filled wedding cake is to die for, you may find yourself a little hesitant and shocked when you discover that this locally famous wedding cake shop keeps track of all of their reservations using Post-It™ notes tacked on a cork board that occasionally gets knocked down resulting in them routinely missing weddings.

With all that being said, I have also discovered some incredible wedding vendors over the years who were happy to answer their phones, happy to book clients, and happy to reciprocate referring business to me as well.

It was during this time of my endless referring that I became friends with Lori and I-Ning at Montag Photography; Jill and Sarah at Bridal Warehouse (now closed down, sorry, ladies); Rochelle, Juanita, and Nanette at the Holiday Inn Select; and a handful of other businesses in town. The more I referred them; the more they referred me. It was boomerang referral mania, baby! We still enjoy the fellowship and friendship of many of those early contacts, and I can honestly say it is because I have worked to ALWAYS take care of our customers and to take care of the relationships with vendors.

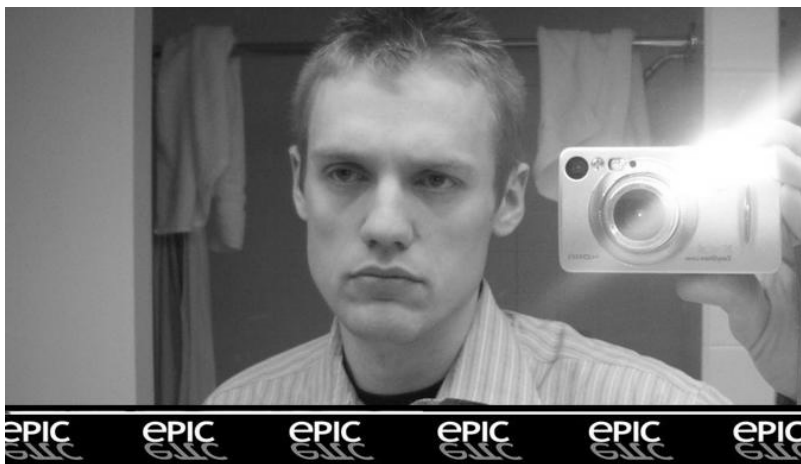
Have I messed up and not checked my voicemail until the end of the day resulting in a frustrated customer? Yes. But have I since invested in the building of a huge customer-service center designed to nearly eliminate voicemails, on-hold time, and any waiting for our potential customers? Yes.

I am sure that some people who read this book will disagree with me on the point above. But I have lived it, and I know that at DJ Connection we have always worked to book things with integrity and sincere enthusiasm. The following chapter will describe what a normal day was like in my life during 2001 and 2002. It was intense.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.” -  
THOMAS EDISON**

**Help ensure that this chapter will not be as empty as Ms. America’s stated plan to “heal the world” by answering the following self-exploring questions:**

1. Who is a guru that you know and must interview to gain their business insight today?
2. When will you call this guru today and set up an appointment to meet with him or her?
3. Make a list today of ten customers, or extremely candid friends, whom you can consult with to determine ways that your product or service can be improved to better meet the needs of your customers.



(This picture features me after having not slept in literally two days to accommodate all of the demands that were on my schedule at the time . . . notice how healthy my skin looks . . . I credit Arbonne™, and exfoliating for my overwhelming beauty.)

## Chapter 11

### **The Typical Day of an American Entrepreneur: Waking Up Each Day With the Odd Sensation That Your Hair Is on Fire**

*Life Lesson: You can earn more money, but you can't earn more time.  
Work fast. We only live once.*



**D**uring these days I would typically wake up each day at 7:00 A.M. with a very clear picture in my mind of what my mission was for the upcoming day based on the self-help books that I read the night

before. I always made my daily to-do list for the following day after I finished my nightly reading. Thus when I woke up, I could not wait to get started on the climb up entrepreneurship mountain.

However, it must be said that I was always more than a little paranoid about potential looming dangers posed by the men that I contracted and employed. Would they call in sick? If they did, I did not have any backups. Would they show up late? If they did, I could not clone myself to be two places at once. But with my cell phone on me at all times and with my wife having saved the day on more than one occasion (by actually serving as a backup DJ) was barely able to manage my paranoia.

Each day after I downed some high-protein (low fat) yogurt, I would then rush to the shower with a sense of urgency. Once I got into the shower, I began preparing to get out of the shower two minutes later because I had things to do. And then once I got out of the shower, it was off to the races.

I would literally run to the gym because we lived within a block of it and because we generally only had one functional car available at any given time. There I worked out like I was being chased by fire ants (in a hurry).

And so, after forty-five minutes of high-impact, non-stop weightlifting, I then sprinted back to the office.

Just before 8:00 A.M., I would bound into the shower again for daily shower number two. Each one of my showers took three minutes or less, and I only used shampoo over all of my body, so no soap, no conditioner, no exfoliator, no high-maintenance-sounding products, just shampoo. If I could have brushed my teeth with shampoo, then I would have done it as well. I would then put on a yellow tie, one of my eight blue shirts, some khakis, and my brown shoes . . . and then boom! It was business time!

Each morning I would hop into my newly purchased Office Depot™ black genuine imitation leather chair and began to feel the opportunity of the moment coming upon me. I knew that each day was my day, and that I was going to kick butt on the phones. Bottom line, I knew I was destined for greatness.

To dissolve the tension in the room that I always felt existed in the presence of absolute silence, I turned on AM 740 and listened to John Erling who was neutral about every political issue possible. As I passively listened, I typed client confirmations one after the other rushing against the clock to get all of the confirmations typed before I checking the voicemails for the first time at 10:00 A.M. (according to my daily productivity-maximizing agenda that I made for myself). The morning was the perfect time for me to type and work out because both needed to be done, and both were things that I found I should not be doing during the my work day.

Just moments before 10:00 A.M., I would finish sending the final e-mail confirmations, and then I would pick up the phone to check my voicemail. At this time, we (DJ Connection) did not have a live phone number that customers could use to reach us, thus whenever I checked the voicemail, I always found a stack of messages. Had we had a live phone line, I could not have answered it anyway (because I was always in appointments or on the phone).

With ferocity I would check those voicemails, listening attentively for some “good wood” (my term for anything positive) trying to cut through the clutter of a barrage of voicemails from salespeople, family members, prospective customers, former customers, and DJs. Each morning I would say a little prayer as I checked the voicemails. I would plead with God for an inbound potential new booking to be on that voicemail. I needed it. I had to have it, and yet only on 1 out of every 8 days would I find an inbound potential new booking voicemail.

I only advertised with a very small Yellow Page™ ad in the SBC Yellow Pages™, a website that no one could find (I hadn’t begun teaching web-optimization seminars at that time), Kinko’s™-printed business cards, one-on-one networking, referrals, and the Tulsa Metro Chamber membership that I had risked my life savings to purchase. And so like a samurai and with a sense of urgency that bordered on being outwardly desperate, I ferociously returned the calls I received on my voicemail. If I didn’t get someone live on the phone, I left a voicemail, and then I called the next person.

Dial! Call! Yes!

No!

Dial!

All day, every day, it was a fun game of “dial and smile.”

The results of this intense, outbound phone-calling methodology were never in question (by me) because I had seen Ron Hood hit ridiculously high sales totals with nothing more than his passionate sales presentation, a phone, and a list of local pastors in a designated market area.

It was my goal to work at a procrastination-and-fear-killing pace similar to those who prefer to jump into a cold lake all at once as opposed to gradually adjusting their body to the frigid temperatures supplied by the body of water. I worked with haste then, and I still work with haste now. I just wanted to get things done. I would fly through those callbacks until I eventually reached someone who would say, “Hey, I see that I have eight missed calls from you! What is the deal?”

I would replay (acting hurt) with, “Oh, were you not in need of a DJ? I show I have a voicemail from you, and I didn’t want you to think that I was not trying to reach you because you are definitely our top priority. I just must have been on the phone when you first called. So tell me, what date were looking at?”

As I talked with these customers, I made sure to follow Brian Tracy’s and Napoleon Hill’s sales methods by writing my own laughter-causing and sales-generating phone script. I took great care at establishing the initial rapport. Then I would give them the benefits of our incredibly humble DJ service while interspersing a non-stop barrage of quasi-jokes, random observations, and various other attempts at humor.

My sales aura consisted of two parts sincere factoids and serious discussion of their needs, and one part hilarity, humor, wit, candor, irony, asides, anecdotes, fun, and randomness. As I would near the end of my benefits list, I would then transition directly into shameless name-dropping of large companies and clients that we were fortunate enough to count as customers. And then with the speed of a cheetah, I would quote the price once the value level of our service had been built up to its apex.

Then like Ron, Heath, Jennifer, Shane, Brian Tracy, Napoleon Hill, and every other successful salesperson had ever instructed me to



do, I would assume the close by setting up an appointment to meet with the customer within 24 to 48 hours of the time that we had originally talked. By setting appointments this way, our customers never felt pressured to book over the phone, yet we were always moving forward to the close at a fast pace. And in those days, if I booked one event a day, it gave me great reason to celebrate, and so I did . . . by making more cold calls all day.

As each day flew by, I would then prepare myself for my rigid 12:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M. appointment schedule at St. Louis Bread. St. Louis Bread was the perfect place for me to meet with brides, grooms, corporate clients, and anyone else because they offered high-quality food at a quasi-affordable price (I was always buying); they were centrally located in semi-south Tulsa; and I lived within two blocks of it. So I met my customers there every day for over two years.

My two-block drive to Panera Bread was always short and loud. I would always bump some R&B through my sweet sound system, and I would sing along to get myself into the party DJ persona that each and every customer was expecting to witness. Over the years I have heard many of my former employees and consulting clients say, “I am just not a very outgoing person,” or “I just don’t have a personality like yours.”

In the great play of life, the salesman is just another role that we all have to play if want to ever become successful. Were there many days that I did not feel like bringing the energy and the quick-witted humor to the appointments? Yes. But did I ever not bring the quick-witted humor to the appointments? No. Why? Because I could not afford to not bring it every time. You can’t afford to not bring it every time.

If you are in sales and you have not yet cultivated a pleasing sales persona/sales character that consistently generates business, then you need to start getting in to character right now by using the following checklist:

- 1) What does the trusted, successful salesman wear to work every day?**
- 2) How does the trusted, successful salesman groom his hair?**

- 3) **How often does the trusted, successful salesman shave his face?**
- 4) **How prompt is the trusted, successful salesman?**
- 5) **How knowledgeable is the trusted, successful salesman?**
- 6) **How attentive and energetic is the trusted, successful salesman?**
- 7) **What kind of briefcase does the trusted, successful salesman use?**
- 8) **What areas of your sales persona do you have to begin working on, starting today, to cultivate a winning personality that closes deals?**

Before I would ever meet with a customer, I made sure that I was well prepared for their initial face-to-face consultation. I made sure that I knew their names. I made sure that I had all of my package information neatly organized. I made sure that I was mentally geared up to deliver thirty minutes of unsustainable entertainment and deal closing momentum. I always knew that I only had one shot to make a first impression, and thus I always focused on making our initial face-to-face meeting the best it could be.

During this phase of the DJ business, it was pretty easy to gather up all the tangible sales information that was needed because I always carried all of last year's bookings, the sales information, and everything of importance related to my business in one big, blue, three-inch binder. That binder contained sleeves in each side where I sorted the appointments by the day and time. I made sure to carefully and neatly print the appointment time on the top left corner of each sales lead sheet. I kept the leads that I was working in the far right sleeve. It was all there, baby, and if I had ever lost that binder, I would have been out of business, missing events, and missing appointments left and right. I clung to that binder with a kung-fu death grip at all times. I actually still have part of that binder today which our office team affectionately now calls *the arm*.

*The arm* refers to the left side of the binder that eventually tore away from the three-ring portion over two years of use. Today, we still actually call the metallic storage bin that we now use to sort the

upcoming appointments *the arm* out of reverence for this glorious fallen folder.

Each day I was always greeted at Panera by Shelly and Fareed. Every day I would always insist upon sitting in the same spot. I wanted to get there before the clients did to subtly wow them with my promptness, and because I wanted to be seated in an area where the customer could easily see me as they walked in the often-crowded restaurant. I also wanted to be seated in an area where my clients could not be distracted.

The process of meeting people that I had only talked to over the phone was always fun, and many times it was downright funny to see their reactions. Some clients thought I would be older (I was only twenty-one at the time). Some clients thought that I would be taller. And most clients were looking to spot the stereotypical DJ sporting a mullet, long hair, tattoos, and various piercings. I hope that all of my early customers were always pleasantly surprised.

Each night I always ordered an obligatory item off the menu. I always bought something, but I would have never gone there to eat if it weren't for those meetings. Regardless of how much money I have made over the years, I have never really understood the logic of paying six dollars for something to eat. I always hated to order that food, but what do you do, so I ordered an organic \$2 (holy crap, that was expensive) chocolate milk.

As I would wait for my customers to arrive, I never really grew nervous, but I did grow intense and passionate with anticipation. I viewed these appointments as \$100-merit-based-pay performances. If I wowed them with accurate notes, professionalism, humor, organization, quick wit, and well-articulate presentations, they would pay me \$100. If I did not wow them, they would reject me; and I would leave the restaurant with less money that I came in with. It was a gamble, but I was betting on me, so I always liked the odds.

My whole presentation was a choreographed routine filled with rapport building, pre-written and tested humor, and a call to action. My goal was to always make the sales presentation look easy because it was so well planned. My customers could always tell that I was proud of my sales book, and they would sometimes tease me about it. I always

shrugged off this teasing by assuring them, “I only live, sleep, and eat with this friend/folder. It is really of no sentimental value to me.”

I was focused on making each page of the presentation book come alive with my vivid and passionate descriptions of the “1955 classic-chrome-plated Elvis-style mic” and the “multi-colored lights that moved to the beat to work as rhythm therapy for those people that could never quite learn how to clap on beat, like my uncles.”

I would quickly and passionately describe the packages, the sound, and the lights. As I described each package with comedic levels of wit, energy, and descriptive narrative, most of the customers would laugh (because this was a comedy routine tailored for them, and the presentation was designed to make them laugh). Generally, customers would respond to my routine with a few pointed questions, which I generally responded to with direct, sincere, and non-threatening replies followed up by a seemingly random humorous anecdote to demonstrate the merits of our DJ service to them. Around this time, rapport was usually reaching its climax. Once I had this sales presentation refined, it truly was a thing of beauty.

After giving the customer my presentation and answering some of their questions, I would then begin interrogating the customer in a fun (yet productive) way to build the value of my expertise and to help choreograph the best upcoming party of reception possible. This process would generally take about twenty minutes. I would then ask them if they had any final questions, and then I would proceed to unload nearly every bit of shameless and highly biased propaganda that I had at my disposal as I ramped to go for the close. And then finally, once I sensed their interest and the value of our service was at an all-time high, I would go for the close. During my first few years in business, going for the close was always the toughest thing for me to do. But the poorer I got, the less I feared going for and assuming the close in a way that gave the customer a non-confrontational exit strategy if needed (which happened less than five times during my two years of appointments at St. Louis Bread). Although I have found that going for the close is always somewhat uncomfortable, not being able to afford anything to eat is slightly less comfortable than the discomfort experienced from asking a customer if they want to use my services or not. Over the years

I have also discovered that, “Hey, we’ll look this over, and then can we get back with you?” is code talk for, “Hey dude, your sales presentation was not good enough to earn our money.”

Without hesitation, most of my early customers would respond enthusiastically to my close attempts with an emphatic comment by the bride-to-be such as, “Yes! Dad, I want to use this guy!” We would then sign the contracts, and they would pay their retainer/non-refundable deposit. I would then promise them that they would be receiving e-mail confirmations from me by the following afternoon. After shaking their hands, I would then stand up to tell them *thank you* (which signified the end of our time together).

As each customer left, I knew that I was \$100 richer, and they were now ensured that their upcoming party was going to be epic because I was going to personally train their DJ, or I was going to personally DJ their event myself. Oh, life was simple and good back then. I had spent less than three dollars on my chocolate milk (payment for my office space), and yet this chocolate-milk investment had yielded me a positive return of 97-plus dollars; however, I knew that I was going to need to eventually start getting six of those deposits per day if I was going to have any shot of ever reaching my financial goals.

Once the customers left the appointment, I would always immediately finish writing down all of the notes from our conversation because THE PAPER NEVER FORGETS WHAT IS WRITTEN, and my mind always tends to forget everything (as I write this, I honestly and disturbingly do not know my own home address). I would then file the check, their information, my notes, and the contract all into a single plastic sheet protector before checking my day timer and voicemails to see what my schedule had in store for me next.

In between appointments and calls, I always made sure to pass out at least ten business cards per day to humans whom I came in contact with, and generally, around 8:00 P.M., I would discover that my last appointment had concluded and that all of the day’s callers had been reached thus signifying to me that it was time to get over to Office Depot<sup>TM</sup> to buy the daily business supplies that were needed to keep the business running.

After shopping at Office Depot™ and unloading the vans, I would then generally return back to my office where I would work until 10:00 P.M. I would use this time to prepare the customized agendas, songs, and files needed to ensure that the week's upcoming weddings would go off without a hitch. And after the final item was crossed off of that day's agenda, I would go hang out with Vanessa for a half hour or so knowing that I had successfully spent another day climbing up entrepreneur mountain.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.” -  
THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't allow this chapter's message to fall on more deaf ears than a motivational speaker speaking verbally to a hearing-impaired audience by answering the following self-examining questions and by completing the following action steps.**

1. Create a customized, duplicable, face-to-face sales presentation for your daily interaction with customers. Make sure to include: rapport building, need determination, benefit giving, and a closing.
2. Write down the maximum number of hours per week that you are willing to work to transform your dreams to a reality.
3. Create a highly optimized daily schedule for you and your business that will allow you to do the right things at the right time (i.e. making sales calls at 8:00 P.M. or 8:00 A.M is not a good idea, or doing paperwork during from 12:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. (when most customers call) is not a good idea either).
4. Describe why you think that most small businesses fail?
5. Describe in detail why your small business will not fail for any of the above reasons.



(pictured above beginning bottom left and working around the DJ van: DJ Rich DePetrìs, DJ Jeremy Thorn, DJ Derek Leggett, me, DJ Doug Decker, DJ Jay Bittle, DJ Josh Atkinson, DJ Joel Reyes, DJ Josh Smith, DJ Karl Werner, DJ Non-DJ Garrett Overstreet, DJ Ezekiel Etuk)

## Chapter 12

### Building My “Dream Team” One Inexperienced DJ at a Time

*Life Lesson: Learn to go from “me” to “we.”*



Around this time, things were starting to get busy, maybe a little too busy. I was the salesman, the bookkeeper, the trainer, the maintenance guy, the marketing director, the trainer, the song editor, the HR person, a husband, and a business owner. Everything revolved around me.

**“One of the penalties of leadership is the necessity of willingness upon the part of the leader to do more than he requires of his followers.”**

**—NAPOLEON HILL, *Think and Grow Rich***

Hall of fame basketball player and successful entrepreneur Magic Johnson has said that to ever truly become a leader or to build a great organization, “You have to go from ‘me’ to ‘we.’” I agreed with him on that; however, I was just now bringing in \$100,000 of gross revenue for the first time, and because I was trying to pattern my life after Sam Walton, I was reinvesting every dime back into my business. I knew that I couldn’t keep doing that forever and that I would have to eventually delegate and invest in training and hiring some people, but “HOLY COW, BATMAN,” was that tough for me.

Here was my problem: I do not understand the need for taking breaks (other than to visit the restroom) during a workday. During my time spent working construction, I learned that you don’t stop to take breaks until the job is done, and being that the job was never done, I never took breaks. Today, I don’t take lunch breaks, and I don’t take time off for “personal reasons.” No matter what job I have ever had, I have never taken days off for “personal reasons.” Since the death of my friend Mark, I view life as fleeting; so I do not have much time for employees who mess around and choose not to focus. As you can probably guess, this made it hard to hire someone.

I finally determined that I could hire someone else on a commission-only pay structure that would pay them \$50 per booking when they booked the show and 33 percent of the total package price when they DJ-ed. Plus the guys could keep their tips. I approached one of our first disk jockeys by the name of Josh Atkinson with this opportunity, and he liked the idea but he had questions. We set up a time to meet at his apartment located two miles from our condo and a half mile away from the ORU campus to discuss the opportunity with his fiancé.

Josh was an ORU basketball player, and Kristin was, too; however, they decided to take a year off of school to get married. Like many newlyweds, Josh was highly motivated to make some good money to



support his new bride. Historically, I have almost always found that people who are working to support their families work at least 50 percent harder than those who have no one dependent on them. There have been rare cases where this has not always proven true, but I would generally recommend to anyone out there looking to hire, select people that have families to feed. They will work hard.

When I arrived at their apartment, I knocked on the door and was quickly greeted by Kristin who was cooking some spaghetti and sporting some ORU basketball shorts. Josh came in a second later and invited me to sit down. I discussed everything with him and laid out the pay arrangements.

My concept was that I would set up the appointments and Josh would meet with the clients so I would have more time to set up more appointments. When the customer paid the deposit, he would get paid. If the customer did not pay the deposit, he would not get paid. And for every show that he worked as a DJ, he would make 33 percent of an on average \$525 event. After discussing the numbers for awhile, eventually we agreed that Josh would get paid 10 percent of the total sales price for each package. Thus, if he booked bigger packages, he would make more money. Josh came up with the idea, and it felt right. So we shook hands and the business started booming almost immediately by at least 15 to 20 percent because Josh and I both were driven and motivated to succeed. Josh was one of those odd people who actually believed that he would book every deal. And he was driven by an inner motivational to succeed that an employer cannot teach (great job, Josh)!

Every day I would rarely leave the condo other than to work out. I would feverishly “dial and smile” all day. Josh would arrive at the condo / office about one-half hour before his first scheduled appointments at St. Louis Bread to grab his schedule. Things were flowing smoothly on this front. Now in terms of hiring and training disk jockeys, that was a different story.

Because, I wanted to build a great team of disk jockeys, my search first took me to the local radio stations where I figured that the quality talent would appreciate some consistent extra income in a field in which they were already trained. I could not have been more wrong.

Nearly every one of the FM disk jockeys that I met with, interviewed, trained, or hired, thought that they had invented the concept of the DJ and that they were God's gift to the ears of every audience. They actually believed that they were some sort of underpaid celebrity who was gracing the audience with their presence. They were not interested in trying to take care of the bride and meeting her unique needs. They were, however, interested in talking as much as possible on the mic in their ridiculous FM-radio voices so that the audience could "enjoy" their "celebrity" talents. They were in love with themselves, and one of these geniuses actually told me that it would be okay with him if we printed his name on all of our business cards to gain more of a following. Although these fools were making \$19,000 per year working the midnight shift on a local radio station playing pre-mixed and syndicated music, they were convinced that they were already the best and that I was somehow lucky to be consistently filling up our schedule with brides and grooms who had seen our work. Long story short, after about six months of trying to work with these "celebrities" (*celebrity* in the way that Kevin Federline is a celebrity), egomaniac, FM disk jockeys, I determined that there had to be a better way to find quality disk jockeys.

I was tired of looking at their odd ear and nasal piercings, their flowing and bleached blonde hair, and then having to explain to grown men (who were generally ten years older than I was at the time) **that they cannot dress like idiots and expect to be paid like professionals** (please feel free to use that line at your office). I literally had to explain to one of these self-proclaimed "legends of radio" that it was not alright to take smoke breaks during someone's wedding reception.

Picture it. The bride and groom are cutting their cake, and then they go over to listen to their toasts. Then the music awkwardly stops completely, and everyone begins to look for the DJ. And then after a few seconds of scanning the room with their eyes, the audience spots him through a beautiful glass window. Oh yeah, there he is. He is out there, in all his glory, taking a few quick puffs from his cancer stick before he returns to his post behind the DJ booth. Holy crap! I could have punched these guys! I should have punched these guys. For some

reason, even now I am finding myself wanting to tickle their larynxes with my fabulous fist.

Nearly all of these FM “masters of the mic” and “voices of choice” (as they often called themselves) thought I was crazy ruthless for not allowing them to smoke during shows, and for insisting that they arrived on time for each and every event they worked. They could not fathom that I actually had a penalty system for those who preferred to arrive late for someone’s special day. When I introduced a \$40 late fee for those who showed up even one-minute late for their setup, I think that is when I really pissed them off. They apparently thought it was okay to be a little late to someone’s wedding, and they could not believe that I would actually charge them for being late (these charges were then mailed to couples as partial refunds).

Some nights after training these morons, I would just lie there in bed thinking about how horrible these guys were. It seemed like I would never find quality experienced disk jockeys. And then it hit me; I was never going to ***find quality experienced disk jockeys***. I can’t remember what I was reading when it hit me, but I remember I was reading a book that had a quote from John D. Rockefeller (the oil tycoon) where he said, “I would rather hire a man with enthusiasm than a man who knows everything.”

This quote was all the affirmation I needed. I didn’t need to spend my precious time (time is our biggest asset) herding cats and negotiating with self-proclaimed celebrity wedding terrorists. I needed to spend my time looking for enthusiastic people. I needed to spend my time looking for quality humans whom I could train to become quality disk jockeys who could learn new skills that they could use to wow customers. I did not need to become another one of those companies that does not hire people unless they have previous experience. I needed DJ Connection to become one of those rare companies like QuikTrip™ (the best-run convenience store in the country) where top people are developed over a period of time because the company is willing to hire great people regardless of their previous experience. I was beginning to realize that you can train great people with new skills, but you can’t train very skilled people to be great. I needed DJ Connection to become a vehicle that quality people could

use to pursue their own passions through earning a great paycheck by delivering great service to wonderful clients. The only problem was that I was not entirely sure what good people looked like, or where I could find them. So I went with the shotgun approach.

Once I discovered that I was after *quality people*, everything began to change. I started seeing great potential disk jockeys everywhere. I sincerely began to feel passionate that working for DJ Connection was the best job in the world and that it was one of the best financial vehicles out there for a young guy to earn a lot of money in a short period of time. At DJ Connection, enthusiastic, honest, and hardworking people would learn the art of public speaking. They would learn the skill of working as a professional master of ceremonies and disk jockey, and they would earn \$25 to \$40 per hour for nearly every event they worked (and with bonuses they could earn up to \$50 per hour). I felt strongly that a job at DJ Connection was the best thing out there, and so it was easy for me to sincerely and passionately try to recruit nearly any quality human that I saw.

When I was out to eat with Vanessa, I would offer every great waiter a job. When I was at the bank making deposits, I would try to recruit the bank tellers who worked quickly and who seemed to be doing a coherent job. At this point, I was telling nearly everyone that had a pulse about the job. I was excited about the opportunity, and I believe that many people were attracted to the business because of the excitement that I had for it and for their lives. After a few months, new recruits just started pouring in. Everyone knew that I didn't care if they knew anything about sound or music, so my new recruits were not limited to those people who were obsessed with music (basically I was not just hiring Guitar Center's staff). The new recruits knew that I was passionate about helping them achieve their goals, and they knew that I was passionate about achieving my goals.

As I began recruiting more and more quality humans, I started to see some patterns emerging in those that turned in to great DJs and those that turned out to be needy, whiny, weak, frequently late, and otherwise useless DJs. The new guys that had goals and saw DJ Connection as just a means to their end always did great. The guys that did not have goals and who just saw DJ Connection as another

paycheck were always worthless. Black, white, Asian, rich, or poor, it did not matter. The guys who knew where they were going in life always worked out the best. Thus, my encouragement to anyone looking to hire new employees is this: look for enthusiastic and honest people who are passionate about achieving their dreams, and hire them. During your interviews ask potential new hires what their five-year goals are. If they do not know, probe deep to see if they really do know what their dreams are. If you can't find a dream pulse somewhere, let them go. Do not hire them because you will spend nearly 80 percent of your time reprimanding them for showing up late and life-coaching them on various issues such as hygiene and why they have to wear a tie to work (to a wedding, in my case). My reader friends, beware of bottom feeders. I can honestly say that every great DJ that we have ever had has been passionate about their personal success, and that nearly all 150 people that I have had to fire were people just drifting through life unaware of where they were going or of where they wanted to go. DJ Jason Bailey, DJ Josh Smith, DJ Willi, DJ Jay Bittle, DJ Marquess, DJ Eric, DJ Derek Leggett, DJ Josh Atkinson, and the other great disc jockeys were all great for a season because they were passionate about their goals and about using DJ Connection in a mutually beneficial way to help them get there.

The more time I have spent with the people who work for me, the more I have discovered that you cannot just have their respect because you are their boss. You have to earn it. I have found that as the boss, you always have to be learning so that you can stay fresh, interesting, and inspiring to your employees. I have found that you always have to arrive at work early if you expect your team to arrive on time. I have found that you must over-deliver and follow through on all your commitments if you expect your team to deliver on half of their commitments. I have found you have to be willing to work overtime if you want your team to put in their time. I have found that you have to be willing to accept that with leadership comes much responsibility. What I have found is that Napoleon Hill was correct when he wrote, "One of the penalties of leadership is the necessity of willingness upon the part of the leader to do more than he requires of his followers."

Thus, my hiring philosophy is this: FIND PASSIONATE, TRAINABLE, ENERGETIC, ORGANIZED, DEPENDABLE, AND HONEST PEOPLE; AND TRAIN THEM TO DO THE TASKS REQUIRED AT THEIR SPECIFIC JOBS BECAUSE YOU CAN TEACH A GREAT PERSON TO DJ, BUT YOU CAN'T TEACH A DJ TO BECOME A GREAT PERSON (at least I cannot).

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY - Joey Odom  
(former DJ and a friend from ORU)***

*One time I asked DJ Clay what separates him from his competition, and he gave me one of the greatest answers I have ever heard. He said, "The reason they can't keep up with me is that they require sleep, and I don't." DJ Clay's work ethic always shined through at DJ Connection. A great example is from the very first wedding that I worked by myself. We had gone through the training, and I was ready to go.*

*As I was setting up all of the equipment, I had a terrifying moment when I realized that somehow the previous DJ had not loaded the CD players with the rest of the equipment. So there I was, totally by myself, with an hour until the reception started without the ability to play music. I called Clay who was all the way across town working at another wedding (one of the thirty we had going that night), and he calmly said that he would take care of it. No more than thirty minutes later, DJ Clay walked in with two CD players that he had just purchased from Walmart<sup>TM</sup>. These were quite sub-standard to the kind of equipment that he typically used, but he set them up and walked me through how to use them and how to adjust my approach that night. After making sure I was ready to go, he went back to the wedding he was coordinating. Three hours later, I was finishing up a perfectly coordinated reception with a happy bride and a happy groom—that was typical, resourceful, hard-working DJ Clay.*

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Help this chapter have slightly more meaning than Paris Hilton’s opinions on anything by answering the following self-examining questions:**

1. Are you prepared to go from “me” to “we” in your business in order to build a business team?
2. Describe the character traits of the best employee or coworker that you have ever had the privilege to work alongside with.
3. Write down the character traits that you feel must be present in a “quality person.”
4. Are you a “quality person?”
5. Do you “dress to impress” or do you “dress to regress”? (\*\*Note\*\* You must dress for the role in life that you want to play.)
6. Work daily to become the best owner and best employee that anyone has ever had the privilege to work for (or with).



## Chapter 13

### **“Honey, We Can Afford to Build a House, so We’re Going to Build One.”**

*Life Lesson: “Live like no one else so that you can live like no else later.”*

- DAVE RAMSEY, talk show host and best-selling author



Despite the super-tough time I was having learning to become a manager and not just a highly skilled DJ and salesperson, and after crunching some numbers on my fabulous big-button calculator, I determined that we could afford a new house. I will never forget driving along Riverside when I announced to my beautiful wife that we could now practically afford a real house, and if she was willing to



custom build it to fit the DJ needs, we could do it. When I turned to Vanessa and announced this newest development, she was overtaken by a joyous, euphoric, and questioning blend of emotions. At first she said, “Are you serious?” And then she said, “Are you serious?” And then she said, “You are serious, aren’t you? You are!” Oh this was a beautiful moment of happiness and vindication for the both of us. As a self-employed DJ without a college degree, we were able to buy a quality home in a quality area. And when we decided to build, we did not mess around. We did it right.

I believe at this time, DJ Connection was grossing around \$80,000 total, so I knew roughly what we could afford. We had heard from our friends and my former boss at Impact, Jeremy and Stacy Thorn, about a new house they had just built, and so we thought it might be a good idea to at least check out the friendly confines of their new neighborhood Silver Wood when looking to build. When Vanessa and Sharita (her good friend) finally went out to 111<sup>th</sup> and Memorial to see the neighborhood, they were sold. Man, were they sold.

Vanessa loved the idea of having sidewalks, a community pool, living in south Tulsa, quality construction, etc. After spending several Sundays driving around and walking through open houses, we found one that was being built by Rob Brewer with Spartan Construction that my wife fell in love with. We talked with Rob and made an arrangement to meet and discuss building a home with him.

We counted down the days until we were to meet with Rob, I frantically worked to get pre-approved for a loan and to expand the business to accommodate our new growth. In a nutshell, this is how I get stuff done: I very rarely expand my business slowly, and I very rarely move slowly. At DJ Connection we were literally growing and doubling in size to the point that it was becoming mind-boggling. We needed more room for expansion, more room for a full-time sales and marketing guy, and more room for baby making. (In reality, you don’t actually need a lot of room for baby making, but you do need a lot of room for the babies once they do arrive from the hospital.)

When the day came to meet Rob, I was stoked. We met with him; I did a terrible job of negotiating the terms; and he and I shook hands and agreed on the building project. I wrote him a check for

\$5,000 (an earnest deposit) . . . and we were off. The next few months were a whirlwind of meetings with contractors, Sundays spent driving out to see the construction, and excitement from looking forward to moving into our new place. As Vanessa spent her time looking at new fixtures and paint colors, I looked for a new full-timer.

To give you an idea . . . at this time our DJ line-up consisted of DJ Josh Atkinson (occasionally), DJ Rich DePetrus, DJ Bobby O'Dell, DJ Karl, DJ Edwin Pagan, DJ Tim Siegel, DJ Willi Kopp, DJ Josh Smith, and me. With this line-up, we were rocking shows all over Tulsa. Our pre-booking sales presentation and event planning consultation was incredible, and the DJs all had great attitudes and were super serious about everyone having a great time. But we were in need of another all-star marketer. We needed someone who could go out and meet with the vendors on a consistent basis to establish and maintain rapport.

And I like a gift from above I found him through a connection from one of my previous jobs. For this book to protect his privacy, we'll call him Jerry Jones. This former web-sales guy was bi-lingual, super clean, and very good at networking. Without much contemplating, I agreed to meet with Jerry Jones to talk about the position, and we agreed on the terms. I was assembling the DJ dream team while Vanessa was assembling the twenty-two year old version of her dream house.

Construction on the home was completed right after Vanessa graduated from ORU. We built it in the Silver Wood neighborhood, and it was great. It really was. The house featured archways over every door, smooth khaki-colored walls, several bedrooms, three baths, a full dining room, a very open atmosphere, beautiful granite countertops, a nice walk-in closet in the master bedroom, crown molding throughout the home. As a gift for my wife, I installed a dark-stained wood floor that cost a truckload of cash, **and it was worth it because my wife loved it.** As part of the design, we built a wonderful presentation office to the right of the front door to meet with clients, a nice-sized game room upstairs, a bedroom, and a bunch of other high to semi-high-end amenities to make it nice. However, the most important feature that this home offered to me and the growing business was the three-car

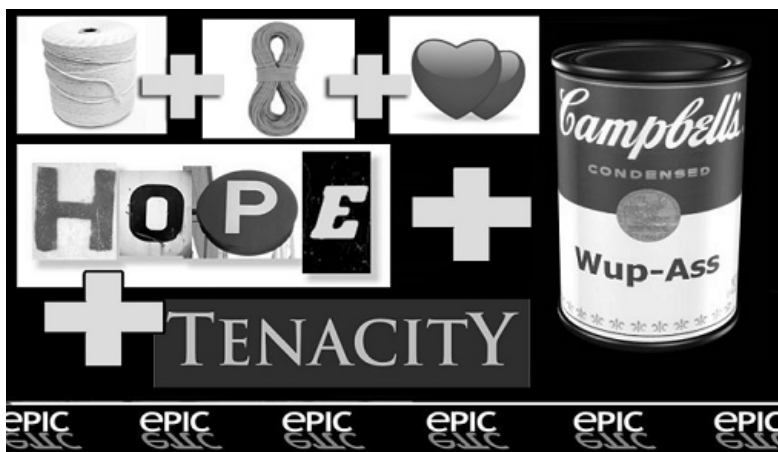
garage that provided us with the technological breakthroughs needed to no longer require a storage facility.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this chapter to be more meaningless than time spent watching TMZ™, by answering the following two questions.**

1. How much would your income have to increase before you could afford to build the house of your dreams?
2. List three action steps that you are currently taking everyday so that you will be able to afford your dream house tomorrow.



## Chapter 14

### Shelves Held Together Using Twine, Mini-Rope, Hope, a Half-Gallon Of “Wup-Ass,” Tenacity, and Love

*Life Lesson: Every successful entrepreneur is MacGyver's brother from another mother. (\*\*Note\*\* MacGyver was a 1980s-era TV show about an ultra-resourceful character who could fix a car engine with duct tape and a stick of gum.)*



This “garage” was important not only because it allowed us to have more DJ systems and to load in and out faster because we were closer to everything, but it allowed me to get more work done between load-ups. Up to this point, the garage was still located at the storage center headed up by that wonderful woman named Terry. And it was Terry who sold me my first storage facility #708 back in the summer of 1999 when I had moved to Tulsa to attend ORU. The storage was

great in that it provided the three amenities you would expect to find in a concrete-jungle garage center. It was dry, secure, and dry. These three features were important to the early success of DJ Connection, but storing equipment here made my life difficult (but doable) much of the time. The shelves that were used to hold all the equipment up and keep everything in place were purchased from a fixture company located in far north Tulsa near Flava Tees (who I believe was in business about four days). I went ahead with the shelving purchase after I first saw them and fell in love . . . WITH THE PRICE TAG! They were cheap, and being that booking eight shows per month was considered impossible at this time, these fixtures were right up my alley. Man, I loved those shelves. I still have many of those shelves . . . and I tied up the shelves using twine, mini-rope, hope, love, a half-gallon of “wup ass,” tenacity, and some more love. In all sincerity, I was always worried that those shelves would fall on someone, or that I would return to the storage only to find that all the shelves had collapsed from the weight, but they never did (a tribute to my tremendous ghetto-rigging abilities).

Practically speaking, an additional complication posed by the storage facility was that it provided no place to urinate. If mean, I suppose, I could have gone anywhere; however, with the concrete, I did fear splashing. However, I did not go just anywhere (when anyone was around). I went to the restroom located in the GIT ‘n’ GO (gas station) more often than not, and this was not a good idea. The old-school GIT ‘n’ GO ‘s made you put up your driver’s license as collateral for the restroom key . . . it really didn’t matter whether I had to put up collateral or not; it was the principle of the matter. The very fact that I had to carry around a license plate attached by a chain to a key just to use an outdoor restroom made me angry.

During one of these bathroom trips to GIT ‘n’ GO, it occurred to me that QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> convenience stores and gas stations were devastating GIT ‘n’ GO in the convenience store and gas station market . . . QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> was succeeding because they chose to be successful and to produce a superior product at a better price. QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> was not taking time out of its busy schedule to whine about market conditions and economy because they were too busy

improving their product for their customers. And as their products improved, their customers grew more loyal. Over time, I began to realize that capitalism has no favorites, and if I wanted to win in this DJ game, it was going to require work. I had to outwork, over deliver, and over satisfy my customers. At the end of the day that is what capitalism is: it's a great big competition.

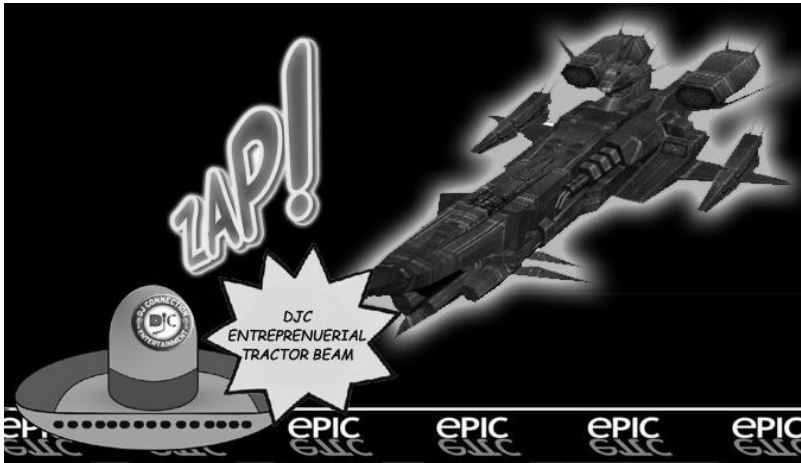
I began to truly realize that if I was not competitive, this economic system was going to rough me up. This motivated me like never before. I realized that I could compete and win this game if I just followed the game plan for success outlined in *Think and Grow Rich*. However, as I developed this mindset more and more over time, I started to view weak-sauce and unmotivated individuals as social leeches. I started to view those who chose not to work as the enemy. Each day I worked, I started to become more and more aware of what I was paying in taxes, and it shocked me. I started realizing how despicable and ridiculous it was that the government took so much from those who produced to give those who did not produce.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this chapter to be more meaningless than the lyrics of a P. Diddy song by answering the following questions:**

1. Explain why you have the competitive mindset needed to succeed.
2. Describe in detail ten things that make Southwest<sup>TM</sup> airlines more successful than most other major airlines.



(This picture depicts Jerry Jones being sucked into the DJ Connection mother ship via our entrepreneurial tractor beam.)

## Chapter 15

### **Jerry Jones Boards the DJC Mother Ship and Discovering Innovative Ways to Irritate the Homeowners' Association**

*Life Lesson: If you're not out of your comfort zone, then you are not growing; but if you grow out of your wife's comfort zone, then you are in the danger zone.*



Once we completed the move into our new home, things started happening fast. Jerry Jones and I agreed that he would be paid 10 percent of everything that he booked, with a \$150 bonus for every fifteenth booking that he got. We designed what we now call the

“marketing route,” and we identified ways in which we could more directly reach the bride and groom. Jerry Jones was money. I seriously loved the guy. He was a Mexican “Book-in-a-tor.” Seriously, he could and would book everything. He was motivated by money and by building relationships. As I later found out when we started really growing fast . . . he was not excited about being an actual DJ. For Jerry Jones, being a DJ was not the coolest thing in the world, but getting paid well was. Because of Jerry Jones’s hard work, we just kept on growing and doubling really quickly! The DJ Connection machine was now running full throttle; however, we needed more guys to fuel the DJC Mother Ship. And thus we had to do some unconventional recruiting techniques. Most of these ideas did not work well; however, we did have one recruiting method that worked like DJ magic.

Here was the concept: we would go to the campus of Oral Roberts University with flyers to promote DJ TRYOUT NIGHT for college students. The winners of the tryout would receive a spot on the DJ Connection roster and an amazing college job that actually would pay them \$20-plus an hour once they began working. After we made up the flyers, Josh and I went to nearly every men’s dorm room on the ORU campus (and, no, we did not have approval . . . I have found that it is better to ask for forgiveness than for permission in most cases). We talked up the DJ Connection opportunity, and we worked tirelessly throughout the night to get the word out.

So when twenty-plus potential DJs began arriving at our 11006 home/office, we were not surprised, but we were slightly overwhelmed. Josh and I agreed that he would do the first interviews, and then I would do second interviews with the most promising candidates. From the cattle call, we found David Reese (a great find from West Telecommunications) and Nate Moseley (a highly motivated entrepreneur from ORU). Both of these guys turned out to be great long-term finds; unfortunately, nearly all of the rest of the recruits had to be fired at some point due to lack of performance. (Apparently, making people show up on time for work is unreasonable for many people.)

As we approached terminal velocity in our new digs, we did everything we could to accommodate the growth. And after a few



months spent operating at our new location, we had so many DJ vans pulling in to 11006 (the first house on the left in Silver Wood) that when DJs arrived to load up equipment for their shows, they actually had to begin utilizing the huge concrete slab that we had poured on the south side of our house to prevent the neighbors from seeing the wheels of commerce in motion. It was fun (for me but not my wife) to see our small company growing so fast. The DJs would drive in to load up, we would open the privacy fence, and then they would drive their vans around to the side of the house (in a one-fourth acre residential-lot-style neighborhood). When the DJs pulled their gear up to the load-up place, I would frantically load them up before reviewing their show itineraries with them. I would then give them a quick pep talk and send them out with an enthusiastic high-five as a parting gift.

We had a very real sense of urgency when loading up the DJs at the 11006 because we only had room for one van in the backyard (on the slab), and we all knew that the neighbors would go nuts if they saw four DJ vans loading up at the same time. Thus, every guy was given a ten-minute window of time to show up, load up, and get out.

Over time, this concept started to wear on our FORMER KGB-ESC neighbors who, in turn, complained to the homeowners' association (I am sure that they were normal neighbors, but at the time I viewed them as anti-entrepreneurial, socialist, hatemongers). As the neighbors logged more and more complaints with the HOA, I was forced to build a ten-foot high privacy fence behind our house to squelch their rebellion. And thanks to the labor of one of our newest DJs, DJ Jay Bittle, we were able to put up a nice quality stained fence without spending too much money. However, that only stopped the complaints from rolling in for a short period of time.

As new complaints came in, I frantically called up a landscaping company and had them plant a mini forest behind the fence that was designed to completely conceal my DJ activities from nosy neighbors. I think at one point we were actually able to keep four vans hidden away behind our privacy fence in our backyard because of that ten-foot privacy fence and those glorious trees. At the peak of our DJ Silver Wood dynasty, we had actually planted seven trees, built a ten-foot privacy fence, constructed a large swinging privacy fence gate,

and poured a large concrete slab all in the name of concealing our small business practices from our neighbors. Additionally, I joined the homeowners' association as an officer, which allowed me to buy some more time by fending off complaints while we remained in this temporary neighborhood home of DJ Connection.

Jerry Jones and I would set up appointments, and DJ Josh would meet with them. Josh got paid \$40 (I believe it was \$40) every time someone booked, and then Jerry Jones got paid 10 percent every time one of his leads booked an event. I would train DJs, envision growth, set appointments, meet with potential clients, load out DJs to shows, load in DJs from their shows, and do everything else that needed to get done. DJ Josh would take care of an incredible number of appointments, and when he wasn't doing that, he was fixing DJ vans, which was a very important reason as to why we succeeded in those very lean years (previous to hiring Josh, one van repair could wipe out nearly one month's worth of profit for our small business).

Because of how we uniquely had designed our house, clients could walk up to the front door, ring the doorbell, and I would let them in using our side door that went directly into the office. This prevented most clients from entering our house, so everything went on smoothly . . . until we started booking more events. As we started booking more and more events, a need for a waiting room began to arise to accommodate that perpetually late or early client since appointments were always scheduled back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to . . . thus we improvised, and our living room became the waiting room. Basically, my wife lost her personal space to capitalism.

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Vanessa Clark  
(my wife, my sage-like leader, the MVP of the DJC)***

***I arrived home from coaching the Memorial High School cheerleaders, and I was annoyed, but not surprised, to see four cars I did not recognize parked in the driveway. This either meant that there were multiple parties in the two consultation rooms that our home was equipped to handle (one in the office immediately to the left of the home's entryway and one in the dining room directly***

*across from it that had been converted to an office), or there truly were four different clients in our home. Being that we only had two meeting offices, this meant the remaining two clients would be camped in the living room, or if unruly, may have been wandering our home unattended. I hoped the two meetings were just very full, but as business was continually growing, I suspected that more likely there would be overflow in our home.*

*As I entered, I saw what I feared to be true: two sets of couples were waiting patiently on the couches in our family room, while two other meetings were in progress. I had our one-year old daughter, Havana, with me, and courteously yet awkwardly, I greeted the strangers. Not wanting to engage in small talk, I headed upstairs to hang out with my daughter in her room where we could be quiet enough so as not to interrupt the ongoing meetings. The business was officially taking over, yet Clay and I couldn't agree as to what our next move would be. He continued to believe a typical office situation to be out of the question, and I continued to tell him this was getting too crazy!*

After we had invaded all of Vanessa's personal space, the bookings just kept on coming. At DJ Connection when the "Booking Machine" gets rolling, you just can't stop it. It was on to the point that Josh and I had to drive down to Lowe's (i.e. to get some lumber, sawhorses, saws, and various other items to build shelves lining the third garage). We would literally spend every night in that garage building shelves. Because Josh is a precision builder, it took a while, but they were very nice . . . in my mind they were too nice. We just kept booking, building shelves, buying systems, and training more guys. It was awesome! I love growth, and I loved that season of my life.

I recall one pleasant and especially festive evening when Josh and I built "the arc." And when I say, *Josh and I*, I am referring to just him. I pretty much moved stuff and held stuff in place. He was on fire. He built the ultimate shelving system; again it was too nice, but it worked. As we built that night, we had a great chance to tell "your mama" jokes and talk about the future, and I sincerely believe it was

during many of these moments that the real team concept started to develop.

I mean when you think about it, here we were, two twenty-two year olds—owner and contractor—working hand-in-hand building shelves to make it happen. This is what capitalism is all about. And I will say with pride that I never contacted the city before building to get a permit from those slow-moving, committee-forming, paper-pushing bureaucrats. Anyway . . . back to story of love . . . just as our business was outgrowing its confines, we found out that our family was growing as well. Vanessa was pregnant.

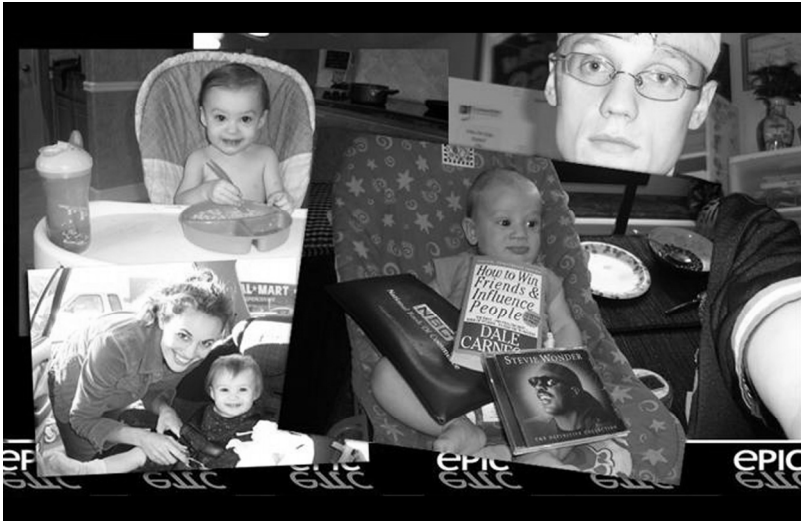
When Vanessa selected the floor plan of the house, she selected an open plan with granite countertops, a vaulted ceiling in the kitchen, and a very open feel. We had beautiful, khaki, smooth walls, and luxurious-feeling cabinets. This house was very nice . . . and because I am so wonderful and humble, I surprised her with brand new wood floors before moving in; thus, our house had a very clean and comfortable look. It felt open for our customers, but it started to feel small and confined for my newly pregnant wife.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

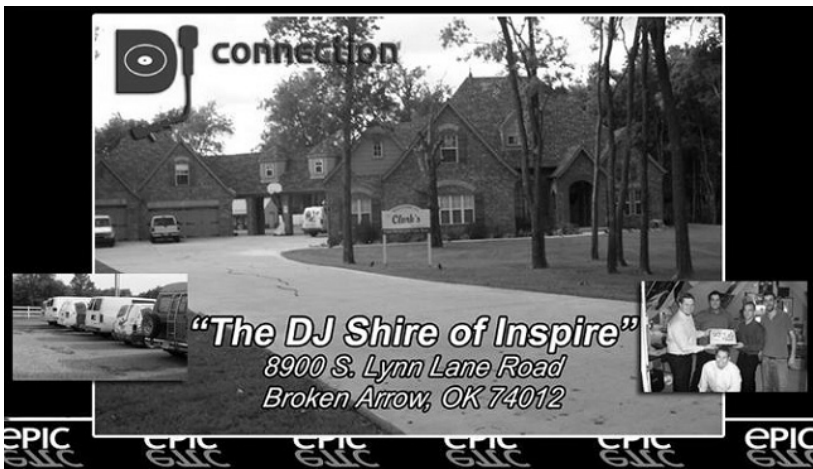
**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this chapter to be emptier than a John Edward’s apology by answering the following questions listed below:**

1. What are three things that you can begin doing starting today to get out of your comfort zone and into the growth zone?
2. How many hours per week you are willing to work at your business and personal growth?
3. What specific times each day will you begin setting aside to work on your personal and business growth (physically, mentally, financially, and spiritually)?



(Pictured above from left to right is my beautiful family including Vanessa (“Bird”), Havana (“Bean”), Havana (“Bean”), Aubrey Napoleon-Hill (the “Bird Man” who was blind at the time), and me in the home office.)



(The five-acre, 5,000 square foot, DJ Connection office/home (80 percent office) is pictured above; the DJ vans are pictured left (all six of them were worth a combined \$10,000); and going left to right are DJ Jason, DJ Aaron Smith, DJ Andy Simmons, Non-DJ Garrett Overstreet (in green), and DJ Curtis Graham (in the metrosexual pink shirt.)

## Chapter 16

### **Moving Quickly When Purchasing Real Estate and Other Outstanding Tips I've Discovered (Firsthand) to Making Prolifically Terrible Investment Decisions**

*Life Lesson: Don't be an investment idiot.*



Oh yes, Vanessa had become pregnant **as a direct result of my “hard work.”** And with this new news, our family’s needs began to change even though I was completely oblivious to it. When I found out that the “Bird” boss was pregnant, I could not believe it. Here we were, twenty-two years old just back from a fantastic cruise to Belize and Honduras on Norwegian Cruise Lines, and now we discovered that we were going to have a baby. Man, I was pumped! I wanted to spike something! I wanted to do an end-zone dance! It was incredible. And that is when Vanessa hit me with a truth missile right to my small 100-percent, entrepreneurial-focused, one-track brain. Basically, Vanessa said something to the effect of,

“We are living in a nice house, with five DJ vans hidden behind a concrete wall and seven trees planted to conceal a growing business from our homeowners’ association. We have a guy named Garrett who works upstairs at all hours of the day. And I have young couples whom I do not know physically sitting in our living room (which you call the “waiting room”). I have zero personal space, and Jerry Jones and Josh are currently in an appointment. I have to live on eggshells here! Something has got to change!”

Immediately I thought that we could get an apartment that we could live in so that we could use the house 100 percent for business

(that was one of the worst domestic ideas that I have ever proposed). Vanessa did not like this idea. I was really struggling at this point to come up with any new solutions other than potentially becoming president of our homeowners' association to silence the rebellion (I ended up becoming vice president). I just wanted to take out the HOA gestapo. I wanted to punish them for making my life difficult, and that was my plan. Vanessa did not like this plan either. She reminds me to this day that she proposed this "crazy idea" of getting actual office space, but that idea was too bizarre for me. Thus, it was determined that we needed to move into a bigger house, less than one year after building our "dream house." Vanessa "Bird" will debate with me on the validity of whether that house was in fact our "dream home," but I am stuck on the belief that the Silver Wood house was my dream house, and I sincerely wish that I would have just leased some office space at the time.

And so, confident that a dream house would sell super quickly, I put the house on the market (Vanessa pretty much did all the work related to putting the house on the market). And, as many people find out when they put their house on the market, selling a house is not a quick nor fun process, especially when attempting to run a business out of the house. People would want to come by and view the home, and we would be in the middle of a meeting with a client. Then our clients would ask us if we were going out of business. Then a realtor would pop his head in to ask me various questions about the property while I was conducting a sales call. I think if I were to sit down with a therapist to explain why I disliked selling the 11006 house, I could probably rack up a pretty sizable bill. But for the sake of you as the reader, it was just not a pleasant experience.

Every day you have to keep your house super clean. I mean, you couldn't use the bathroom, you couldn't brush your teeth, and you couldn't eat anything without running the risk of dragging down the potential resale value of your home. All the realtors would continually say little things like, "Mr. Clark, running a business out of your home is making it rather difficult to truly showcase your home's amenities and features," which was code language for, "Mr. Clark, you have five dudes and four clients in your house at all times. Your backyard has

five fifteen-year-old DJ vans parked in it, and your upstairs looks like a television news station or the film set for a NASA movie. For the love of all that is good and holy, would you please get your guys out of the house and your crap out of the way so that we can sell this house and make our 3-percent commission?”

Bottom line, no matter what I did, I determined that I couldn't win if I actually intended on running a business out of my house up until the point that I sold it unless I was going to sell it to another DJ, which would be tough because most DJs (who did not work for DJ Connection) were making \$19,000 per year working the late shift for an FM radio station when they weren't out getting tattoos and new piercings.

It seemed like potential buyers only wanted to stop by when potential DJ customers were arriving for an appointment (usually after work hours or on weekends) which would always discourage them from wanting to “intrude” on our business, thus resulting in a no sell.

The whole process was horrible, but it was not as bad as algebra class (from my perspective). In all sincerity, I am pretty sure that I would rather attend another mind-numbing, memorization-heavy Old Testament class at ORU rather than to try and sell another house again. Yet for some reason, I have this real knack for growing our businesses at a pace that creates the need for Vanessa and I to move nearly every twelve months.

Anyway . . . the point is that this process took forever; eventually I broke down and sold the house to (former DJ) Josh and Kristin Atkinson who were successfully running the professional videography company that we sold to them two years earlier. Since purchasing the video business, Josh and Kristin made it very successful. As odd as this sounds, they were actually the same people who had bought our condo from us at 6714 S. Lewis #504. And now they were buying the 11006 house as well. Selling homes is always tough anyway, but I sincerely believe that selling a house or any major purchase to a friend or family member is extremely tough. And here is where it got exciting.

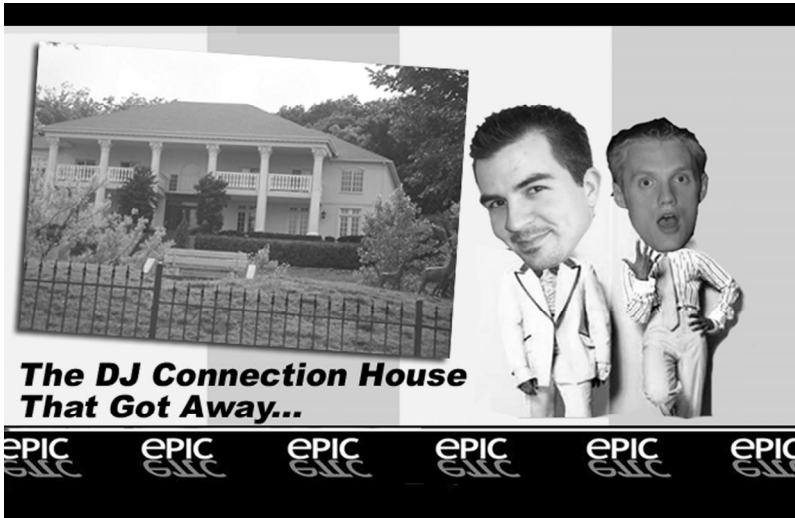
As we were trying to sell our house, Vanessa was simultaneously looking for the perfect new house. The new house had to be large



enough for our family and large enough for our business. It had to be located close enough to the heart of Tulsa to be convenient for our customers, yet outside the confines of a neighborhood so as not to be bothered by a homeowners' association. The house had to offer a unique floor plan that would allow our home and office to be completely separate while still on the same property. And thus, our search for the new home took Vanessa and various realtors everywhere.

While on her travels, Vanessa had a hard time finding a home that met the criteria that we could actually afford. We found that homes not located in neighborhood, yet still in the city were nearly all located on large pieces of land and were priced at over a million dollars. Vanessa got attached to one of the homes early on, as it seemed as though she had located the “perfect” home. The home was beautiful, regal, and it almost looked like the White House. The house was perfectly located in south Tulsa on three-plus acres of land. The property featured a geyser-style fountain in front, a huge balcony, a veranda, a swimming pool, a work shed, a huge garage, a dance studio room, and about 6,000 square feet. This house sat between 81<sup>st</sup> and 91<sup>st</sup> on Sheridan in Tulsa. We knew it would be the perfect place for a wedding DJ to office out of. And so there we went (and by *we*, I mean Josh and I).

When Josh and I arrived at the house to tour it, it was still sitting vacant (as it was going into foreclosure), thus I felt as though I had to see inside the house before I could know whether I would like to bid on it or not. And because it was all locked up, Josh and I crawled through the doggy door to view this urban castle.



(Pictured above is the home located between 81<sup>st</sup> & 91<sup>st</sup> on Sheridan in Tulsa that we “almost” purchased.)

Once I entered the home, I fell in love. It was huge. It had an area that would work great as an office. There was lots of garage space. It was for sale, and that was all I needed to know (at the time my real-estate IQ was very low). I had NO PATIENCE then, and I have grown to have a little patience now (which is an improvement . . . this is also why DJ Connection moves so fast; however, this is not a good trait in any way when dealing with real estate as I already witnessed in our first two home-buying experiences). On our way to buying the first condo/home, we paid around \$7,000 in closing costs and countless other unfair fees because I was not willing to shop around. In building our next home, (luckily) we had an honest builder (Rob Brewer “the Man”), but again I jumped the gun at every opportunity in my attempt to get the place built fast. For anyone who has seen me eat, you know I am all about moving fast. I equate speed with quality. When I am out to eat with people, I will always be the first one done, which is not good. I attack every item of food served as if it is something on a to-do list that needs to be knocked out as soon as possible and with as much haste as possible. I eat the entire corn super quickly. Then I eat the bread really quickly. Then I eat the steak super quickly. Then I look up

and begin to interact with others. It is odd, and I always have to fight this urge to speed when I am not eating alone (which I prefer to do).

Back to the story . . . somehow I had hooked up with a realtor, a sweet, older lady, who informed us that the property was being listed by Darryl Baskin; we thus we went on an official tour (one that did not involved the use of doggy doors).

As pregnant Bird and I drove in our 1991 green Eddie Bauer edition Ford Explorer (that I had purchased for \$2,000) to see the house, we talked about how excited we were about the baby and the inevitability of us buying a new house. Then we talked about herbal versus non-herbal, and organic versus non-organic; we talked about cheerleading (as Vanessa was still coaching cheerleading at the time), and then like a vision from heaven, the house appeared on the horizon on the top of the hill. There it was our dream house! Our place of love and hope. Our new DJ shire. Our place of prominence in the wedding market. Our epic center of worldwide DJ takeover. A place that we do not own.

When we pulled up the private driveway to the gated entrance, we both shook in awe of this great modern marvel of home construction. As we were celebrating internally, they pulled up. Daryl drove up in his custom, future-of-real-estate Chrysler (the Dick-Tracy-looking car), and our realtor drove up in her SUV of some sort. And there we were in a 1991 Ford Explorer, a married couple each only twenty-two years old, looking to buy this mega house.

During the tour, the realtors talked about amenities, marble staircases, and quality craftsmanship; however, my mind was thinking, *As a bride and a groom walking up the huge flight of stairs to the massive columns and dramatic entrance, are you or are you not sold on the DJ company that has offices there?* Mentally I kept telling myself, *If sales is all about presentation, and if this is our presentation, then we are in the money!* So I turned to Vanessa and mentally transmitted my thoughts to her, *Honey, let's buy this thing now.* Vanessa did not receive my transmitted thoughts. Apparently she heard, "Hey let's think and talk this over for awhile before we rush into making a decision.

When the tour concluded, it was determined that the house would most likely short-sell for about \$690,000 (which was the outstanding balance on the current loan). The home needed a lot of work, but I didn't care. I was down to buy this thing as soon as I saw it from the road. Darryl spoke with conviction about the home being underpriced because of its poor maintenance perception and its foreclosure status; however, he could have said, "You know, this house is overpriced, and I don't think you should buy it," and I still would have wanted to buy that house because I knew that the grandeur of the home's location and exterior was a deal closer for prospective brides and grooms.

As we drove home from the meeting with the realtor crew, I was working my cell phone like a telemarketer trying to get this deal done, and somewhere along the line, my calling lead me to a wonderful, virtuous, and Christian mortgage broker by the name of Sarah Hadrava. It was Sarah who really got the ball rolling. Sarah owned a company called Mortgage Broker Network Group and she is about as aggressive about lending as I am with the running the DJ business. Sarah knew that our cash flow was good, and she knew that I was a committed businessperson. Sarah also knew that the 3-percent to 6-percent closing costs that we would have to pay on our \$650,000 home loan would pay her around \$22,500, and thus she was one motivated broker. Sarah simply would not take *no* for an answer, and she worked hard to get us approved for the home/office financing. I really appreciate this; and to this day, I still hold Sarah in high regard.

***\*\*A DOSE OF REALITY – Shawn Reiss***

***(DJ Connection DJ at around the time that we moved into the Lynn Lane home office)***

***When I first started as a DJ, I went to a show with Clay to observe before I could run my own show. It was an apartment complex in Tulsa that was hosting a holiday party for its tenants. It was in December, and while we were giving them the show of a lifetime, the weather outside took a turn for the worse; and the rain turned to sleet and snow. Not only did we have to load the equipment into the van with the parking lot all slick and iced over, but we didn't have a***

***scraper for the DJ mobile's windows, and the defrost wasn't cutting it. Clay, being the guy who never gives up, just rolled down the driver-side window, hung his head out so he could see, and drove us all the way back to DJ headquarters! It was the funniest/craziest thing I'd seen him do, and that's saying a lot for this guy! I knew then that my time with DJ Connection would be one of memories and inspiration! Thanks, Clay!***

I know that Sarah made a nice commission on our deal, and she has become wealthy in her own right because of working many deals like ours, but it does not negate the fact that she was the bulldog who pushed us through on the way to approval. The bureaucracy involved in getting a loan done can be immense. For anyone who has ever tried to qualify for a large home loan, you know how painfully slow the lending process can be (which is good up to a point). Sarah kept Vanessa informed on a daily basis about the status of our loan, our credit, and the pros and cons of the various lending options at our disposal.

If I had to do it all over again, I definitely would have spent more time studying Robert Kiyosaki's *Cashflow Quadrant* book, and I definitely would have read more books on Warren Buffett's investing strategies. However, at the time I had not yet read *The E-Myth* by Michael Gerber, and thus I considered myself to be a guru on every financial subject under the sun merely because I was an incredible DJ. Basically, I was an investing moron who had been wildly successful in the DJ world. But to save you the time that you would have to invest in reading most of Robert Kiyosaki's books (as I now have) and Warren Buffett's official biography entitled *The Snowball* by Alice Schroeder, I have put together the following list of ***Don't Do As I Did Real Estate Tips***:

- 1) **Don't ever get an ARM loan (unless you are super old and super sure that you will die before the interest rates change on you).** Trust me. If you have an ARM loan, you will not want to be alive when the rate increases and your payments nearly double.

2) **Don't trust REALTORS; trust trustworthy people.**

Because I am fairly transparent, I tend to expect all people to operate the same way, and thus I am sometimes not always a good judge of character. Thus, I have been royally screwed twice by realtors who did care at all about my personal well-being because they were so focused on making as large of a commission as possible. Realtors usually make a 3-6 percent commission on every house that they sell. Thus, they want you to buy every house at the maximum asking price. Essentially, every realtor represents the seller at all times, unless they are one of the rare humans out there that is willing to make less of a short-term commission because they are trying to establish a lifelong relationship. However, this is rare because most realtors are not in the real estate business long enough to develop a reputation. Many realtors act like you and I after New Year's. We are all fired up about losing weight, and then we lose our motivation about six hours in to our new life-changing diet program at the first sight of some leftover holiday cookies. Many realtors are fired up about being realtors all the way up until they actually get their license and begin to make those first calls. And then after a few dejecting and non-positive reinforcing sales calls, they are done with being a realtor. Meanwhile, people like you and I are still attempting to close on the house that we are buying from them. (To the few good realtors out there who are not always trying to sell every property for the highest possible price, I apologize.)

3) **Don't trust anyone unless you are positive that they have your best interests at heart.**

I am telling you this because I care, and because I have been screwed and de-threaded by over screwing. My friends, watch out for inspectors, lenders, realtors, sellers, timeshare salespeople, and that notorious square-jawed, over-zealous fitness gym membership sales guy. Many people are out there working

on commission (which is just fine when their commission-based pay structure is balanced by strong values and a sincere desire to help their customers), and they will tell you whatever you need to hear to get the deal done regardless of whether it is factual or not. Unfortunately, I trusted everyone, and I ended up feeling like a piñata who had been beaten half to death by swings from the half-truth-and-lie bat by the time we finally went to closing on our new office.

- 4) **When it comes to investing, “Simply attempt to be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy when others are fearful.” – Warren Buffet.** Although this tip sounds simple, this very tip alone is worth the price of this book. Had I had known this simple investing principle which has been faithfully used by Warren Buffet to create his billions, I would definitely be further ahead. **DO NOT EVER BUY A HOUSE OR AN INVESTMENT PROPERTY AT THE PEAK OF ITS APPRAISED VALUE. LOOK FOR PROPERTIES THAT ARE OWNED BY “DISTRESSED OWNERS” LOOKING TO “GET RID” OF THEIR PROPERTY QUICKLY, AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF IN A WONDERFUL FINANCIAL SITUATION.** Once again and, unfortunately, I was greedy when the market was greedy because I was a mental midget in the game of real estate.
- 5) **Don’t get emotionally attached to any piece of property.** Realtors are salespeople, and once they sense that you are emotionally attached to a property, they start saying things like, “Well, I wouldn’t offer any less than \$300,000 because anything less than that would be insulting to the buyer,” or “You know, I would just take that deal if I were you.” What the heck does that mean? And who cares if your offer “insults the buyer”? I personally think that I would sleep just fine knowing that I had saved myself

\$50,000 by simply offering a lower amount that ran the risk of “insulting the buyer.” And if I couldn’t sleep, I would use some of the \$50,000 to invest in a huge oversized stereo system and some of those “calming nighttime ocean sound” CDs and some Ambien™ to put me to sleep on my wee pillow. Unfortunately, at the time I was a real estate moron, and I listened to this crappy realtor advice about not “insulting the buyer.”

- 6) **Don’t ever get a mortgage for any term longer than fifteen years (unless you want to pay for the property 2.5 times).** At the time, I did not know this, but today I am well aware of the how the mortgage amortization system works, and basically it goes like this: if you buy a \$200,000 home at 6-percent interest over 30 years, you will pay a little over \$430,000 for this home. Think about it, and imagine that you are out home shopping, and your realtor says, “Well, Mr. Smith, this house has been greatly reduced in price to the low low price of \$430,000. Now I realize that the sign in the front lawn and the flyer say that the house is selling for \$200,000, but really you will be paying the LOW LOW price of \$430,000.” Holy crap, I hope that this alarms you as much as it alarmed me when I discovered this financial nugget. However, if you bought this same house at the same interest rate, and you paid for it over a 15-year term, you would pay the LOW, LOW price of a little over \$300,000! Now I realize that we all still paid nearly \$100,000 of interest to the bank, but it beats the heck out of the paying \$230,000 of interest to the bank, and our monthly payments would only go up by around 20 percent per month. Thus, my friends, NEVER get a 30-year mortgage . . . and yet again, unfortunately, I did not know what they heck I was doing, and thus I did secure a 30-year mortgage on our new house (because I was mentally weak in the financial education department).



Back to the epic story that was captivating you . . . After several weeks of hysteria, we finally got the word from Sarah Hadrava that we were now “pre-approved,” and again we was off! We were going to buy that thing, baby! We actually paid an earnest deposit and made our offer on this DJ-bridal-booking palace. Josh, Jerry Jones, and I were dancing in the office; it was like a Michael Jackson concert . . . people were weeping with excitement, and that became our driving force. Jerry Jones was going to get his own office; Josh was going to be able meet with 6 million brides per year and would have a place to maintain the vehicles; Garrett would have a place to work his computer and production magic; and all was well with the world (except for in Israel where everyone was still fighting). We were going to have so much room for load ins and load outs! Oh, it was eureka (minus the carny and flea-market atmosphere of Eureka Springs, Arkansas).

Then due to some last minute BS (which stands for bull scrapings) from the bank who owned the property due to foreclosure, we got denied . . . and instead of turning to narcotics, heroine, therapists, elicit sex, drugs, weed, beer, or excessive amounts of sleep when pressed to find our new DJ world headquarters, we just did some more house hunting. At the time we were really feeling like the market could handle our expansion into Dubai or Latvia. Meanwhile at the Atkinson camp, they were selling their condo, and they had already made preparations to assume occupancy of the first DJ castle at 11006. Essentially, we had to find a new home as soon as possible because they were moving in to our existing home regardless of whether we found a new office or not.

The train wreck kept piling up as we were getting closer to the closing deadlines on our 11006 house. Vanessa kept frantically searching all around Tulsa for our new DJ home. We finally found a hopeful property featuring five acres of land with an existing 1970s “pimp house” located in the heart of Tulsa. The interior of the house looked like someone from the 70s had spent as much money as possible on converting every aspect of the house to scream, “This was renovated in the 70s!” The home had orange carpeting, dark wood paneling, and as much orange and brown color patterns as possible. The price was astronomical, and even now as I am writing this book,

the property is probably still for sale. And then Vanessa found the house. She found the Lynn Lane DJ home. The house was perfect for our needs. This property featured five acres of land, two potential presentation offices for our clients, an underground safe room, travertine marble floors, the six bathrooms and the look of grandeur that would wow potential DJ clients that I was looking for. And that is why I agreed over the phone with Vanessa to buy it if the house checked out clean on the inspections. Again, I was an idiot in that I was not “being fearful when the market was greedy” as Warren Buffett says to do. I was buying a beautiful and expensive house at the peak of its appraised value during the peak of the real-estate boom of early 2004-2005. I was an idiot.

Within a month of seeing the house, we were moving in to the place and rocking and rolling. We moved gear in every day, built shelves, renovated the dining room as we converted it into a new sales presentation office, bought computer equipment and furniture that Josh and Jerry Jones would need in their new presentation offices. And although I enjoyed the excitement of moving in to the new place, it was a crazy-stressful time filled with me saying, “shunda!” all the time. (\*\*Note\*\* Bishop Carlton Pearson used to say “shunda” all the time as part of his charismatic Christian prayer language while singing and praying at his church services, and I picked it up. I began using it as an exclamation point to conclude some of my more profound statements and in place of various curse words that I found myself wanting to say whenever a DJ would wreck a DJ van, or whenever an unexpected major expense would be presented to me).

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – CURTIS GRAHAM  
(former DJ Connection salesman, DJ, and maintenance man . . . this  
guy can fix anything except for global warming (although he has  
been e-mailing Al Gore some of his early quick-fix ideas)***

***I first heard about DJC (DJ Connection) during my last year of college at Oklahoma State University. Josh Smith, a buddy of mine and a DJC DJ was asked to help us throw a party for my fiancé, and he obliged. He came up early and walked me through the ropes of***

*the equipment and how the whole operation worked at DJC. Once I got back to Tulsa, I was chomping at the bit looking for the first opportunity to make a decent living and to make a start for my fiancé and me. I hit up a few dead-end jobs along the way until I ran into Josh while out one night. We hung out that night, and he told me that I should come by and talk to the owner of DJC, Clay Clark. Josh said that they had just moved locations to new house in Broken Arrow, my old stomping grounds.*

*I took off early that day and went to talk to the man himself, or should I say the “young man” himself. I got to the interview only to find this David-Letterman-looking, overzealous, Redbull™-driven dude my age, running a great company with about three office guys and eleven DJs.*

*Fast forward one year. It is the middle of wedding season, we have a wedding show the next afternoon, 34 shows that night, 12 shows Saturday, and 7 Sunday, a chocolate-fountain company to run, 5 yards to mow, and 2 weddings to videotape. And that was just the start of it. Our lives were mayhem because Clay had harnessed every opportunity to expose us as a company, and grasped every investment opportunity that knocked on the door. At the time, my fiancé and I were skeptical, that was until I asked her to marry me.*

*At the time I was rolling in a check averaging \$1200 a week, and things were looking pretty good. Clay Clark had established quite a rapport with all of his employees, including my wife and me.*

*The long and short of the experience is that still today, I think of Clay and the whole DJC office. I hear all the time from my wife that I am a different person from working with Clay. If you ask her why, she will tell you that my drive, determination, ambition, communication, and ability to succeed and conquer any situation is out of this world; and you will never encounter a person who has graduated from “Clay’s DJC University” who does not blow your mind with enthusiasm and love for their career. I have since moved on to a career in fire protection, design, and installation, which is what I initially set out to do.*

*I can say now with much conviction that I would have never had the courage to take on the world or be so well set up financially had I*

***never taken a risk on the DJ business with Clay and his wife Vanessa. Thanks Clay Clark, for changing my outlook on business, work, and life in general. I will never stop until I succeed!!!! Thank you, Clay, for the experience.***

Logistically, the move was a nightmare. We had to move an entire home and office only during nighttime hours so that our customers would not experience a decrease in customer service as we were experiencing a drastic increase in our overhead. I know that it might sound simple as you read this today, but imagine trying to have your phone service disconnected by one company and then reconnected by another company all on the same day. It was nearly impossible, but we pulled it off and literally I was literally only sleeping around three hours per night during the week of the move to oversee this transition.

Looking back on it, I think that it might be safe to say that buying our new house less than one month after seeing it might have attributed to the fact that we got completely raped by bogus disclosure statements and dishonesty on the part of the sellers. The information that they provided to us during the buying process proved to be grossly inaccurate at the least, and intentionally dishonest in all likelihood. Essentially, we bought a home that looked beautiful on the outside but that was crumbling from the inside with massive foundation problems that would later make the property unsellable. And although I have just recently emotionally forgiven the sellers for not disclosing the issues that the house had, I might never forgive myself for being so trusting, so uneducated (in real estate), and so naive. The sellers screwed us, but I unintentionally helped them with my ignorance.

However (on a positive note), I am pretty sure that moving in so fast contributed to the incredible momentum we were generating. We rocked as never before in 2004. You see, to be a successful entrepreneur, you have to make a big five-year plan and a big one-year plan. Then you have to break that one-year plan into daily plans; then you just work your plan like you are being chased by wolves and the unforgiving Mr. Capitalism. And when you do this, you create your own life momentum. And once your life momentum has been created, “You have to strike while the iron is hot” because if you wait too long,

your iron will cool and your opportunities will disappear. I honestly enjoy acting quickly and abruptly; it is how I roll. I like dreaming up puns and goals and then taking action with reckless abandon as I gradually temper and refine my passion or course of action as time moves along. I am all about action because of Napoleon Hill's teachings. I whole-heartedly believe that he was correct when he wrote, "Act now. The time will never be right." Napoleon Hill spent the majority of his writing career studying successful people, and he came to the conclusion that nearly all successful people reach decisions quickly and in a spirit of haste after they have carefully analyzed as much pertinent information as possible. Organizations paralyzed by committees and bureaucracies lose their meaning and their momentum.

Just look at the United Nations and how many people died in Rwanda because their committees could not reach a quick decision on whether they should intervene with military force to stop the genocide. My friends, do not run your business like the United Nations. Or just think about your last dealings with your local city government. Most of these groups are as slow and bloated as Jabba the Hut, and they are always checking with their manager to make up for their lack of competence. Move fast, think accurately, and make things happen!

Just to backtrack here a little bit . . . we sold our 11006 house to Josh and Kristin, bought the Lynn Lane house, and then we moved. Boom! It was a bang-bang play! That weekend in 2004 when all of our DJs rolled out for their shows, we made sure they returned their gear to our new location to save us the moving time. And we moved in with unmatched speed. As a small business, every day is important, and we could not afford to wait around or to draw up an elaborate chart. We had to make a game plan that was 80 percent accurate then we had to improvise on the fly. Nate Moseley provided a flatbed trailer; I rented a U-Haul™, and a sea of DJs helped us move. A few key people conveniently scheduled themselves to be off for this momentous move, but the majority of our team helped out to make this move happen (if you helped us move, THANK YOU!) Sure some things got broken, and some things were set up awkwardly; but at the end of the

weekend, we were moved in and we were ready to resume our hostile takeover of the DJ marketplace.

During the move, a few guys asked me, “When do you think we will be done moving in?” and I just kept replying with delirious passion, “When EVERYTHING HAS BEEN MOVED.” Wow, that was insane. DJ Derek Legget, DJ Josh, and I feverishly attempted to take down all of the shelves at the 11006 house and to rebuild them across town at the Lynn Lane house during the six hours that all the DJs were gone and out at their shows. We were hustling. And I made the rule that no one could use a level because it took too much time. Just use screws and reinforce everything!

We had to rip apart DJ Josh’s precious “DJ shelf and ark” to fit it on DJ Nate Moseley’s flatbed trailer. Then we had to put it all back together again once we arrived at the Lynn Lane house. Most of the guys were literally running. We hustled like a football team in mini-camp. We worked until 3:00 A.M. two days in a row, and we started at 9:00 A.M. each day; but everyone was excited about the new move, and we were riding the tide of our own self-created momentum. I know that DJ Josh Smith was ready to move. His current office was in a half-finished attic during the peak of an Oklahoma summer without AC.

***\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – NATE MOSELEY  
(former manager of the DJ Connection sales team, nicknamed  
“Juiced” as a tribute to Barry Bonds and his “alleged” steroid use)***

***Every week brought a new type of drama, a new breakthrough, and a new lesson to be learned. Most companies struggle to figure out how to fill an hour of time every week with a meeting of recapping and goal setting, but I can’t think of a single week where that was the case. There are so many factors that go into an employee’s sense of value. I think the overall environment of DJ Connection was to have as much fun as possible and to work harder than you ever have. This mentality gave us all a good sense of pride that everyone could share. I remember when we used to work out of the Lynn Lane location, and we had around five cell phones for outbound calls and one landline (a.k.a. “the money line”) for inbound calls. The biggest***

*issue we always ran into was we usually had seven people trying to sell with only five phones. So not only did we share those five cell phones, but we only had one “money line” to share among seven type-A personalities, and we had to figure out how to make money even when we didn’t have a phone to call from.*

*I specifically remember one Monday afternoon when it was surprisingly not that busy, and someone came up with this brilliant idea to drink the old beer that I am pretty sure came with the house when Clay bought it. Before I knew it, each person was hooked up with an expired beer and an afternoon of glorious selling. I have never drunk mud, but the beer tasted like a combination of mud coupled with cashews and a hint of sour cream. Most of the people ended up taking a few courtesy sips and then setting it aside, but for some reason Aaron and I thought it was cool to drink liquid dirt. So by the end of the day, we had polished off a few expired beers which caused us to feel like we had just ate a raw calf, which surprisingly had a positive effect on our sales for that day.*

*I guess that was an epic day for me because it was when I realized how cool it was to work for a company that you could share such a stupid memory with. There were countless all-nighters, usually because of some last-minute change, but most of the nights ended with crazy stories and new lessons to be learned. I would definitely have to say that the ten most stressful moments in my life had to have all been derived from the few years I worked at DJ Connection.*

*I am not going to go into detail about each event because my psychologist advised me that it might send me into seizures again. Just kidding, but seriously.*

DJ Albert moved stuff with a passion, DJ Josh moved (when he was not sleeping) moved with a passion, and non-DJ Garrett moved with incredible energy. This guy was on fire. He was the last guy moving stuff with me on the final night of the move. Thank you, Garrett. It was hilarious and depressing (at 5:00 A.M.) when Garrett and I realized the ridiculousness of our situation. It was 5:00 A.M., we hadn’t been to sleep yet, our computers were not functional, our network was not up, our phones had not been tested, and yet we were

going to be starting our first work day at our new place within less than four hours time. I don't know if we laughed at our situation only to prevent ourselves from crying, or whether it was that funny, but we laughed.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY– Albert Bertini**  
*(early DJ Connection DJ, dedicated devil's advocate debater . . .  
every good company needs one of those)*

*It's true. I was driving back after a late-night event and suddenly a white toaster oven leapt out of the darkness at my vehicle. Well, you might ask, "Why didn't you stop and pick up this hitchhiking appliance?" Well, the answer is simple; delirium begins to set in sometime after 2:00 A.M., and I was already punchy enough for brunch. Not to mention I had already passed up a refrigerator and microwave . . . I just really wanted to get home.*

*I finally got back at an hour when even the living dead have been fast asleep for some time. You must imagine it; you have been driving alone through the dark, and you see the DJ offices aglow like a lighthouse – or possibly a bug zapper – and suddenly you find yourself swirling with a surge of energy from other returning DJs . It is in this oasis of light, away from the ticking of time, that many comrade-building conversations ensue.*

*Granted, religion and politics will forever remain the centerpiece of conversations you may only bring out when Grandma comes to town, but after 4:00 A.M., these are the domain for DJs. We had already discussed politics, law, and religion; so naturally we moved on to the meaning of life. Add to this mix a DJ whose father had recently passed away, another who was struggling with post-traumatic stress having served in the military, and a Michael Jackson concert providing the ambiance in the background.*

*On Clay's behalf, I remember him listening intently and studying what was being said and occasionally moderating with his own brand of humor. I recall this event because I think it highlights one of Clay's strengths, and, concordantly, one of his strengths in business. Clay listens carefully to others, even if he disagrees; I have*



*watched him listening to other people, reading books, and asking challenging questions to both understand others and to learn from their strengths.*

*I think if I had to choose one quality that I see winding its way through, it would have to be his gleaning from every situation what nugget of wisdom and insight may be available. While Clay embodies a passion for what he does, I see him learning insatiably; and I believe this is why he sizes up challenges the way he does and what helps invigorate confidence.*

*Well, the conversation that night didn't wind down until near six or seven in the morning as we gathered to watch the grand finale of the Michael Jackson concert, and we did come damn close to solving all the world's troubles.*

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this chapter to be less meaningful than your local weatherman's weather predictions. Thus, please answer the following self-examining questions:**

1. Are you willing to fix your financial future by reading Robert T. Kiyosaki's *Cashflow Quadrant*?
2. How does Warren's phrase, **“Simply attempt to be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy when others are fearful”** apply to your investment future?
3. Make a list of the dumb real-estate buying decisions that I made during this chapter (I will give you plenty of space to write . . . go ahead and pile them on), and vow not to repeat them in your life.

*I, \_\_\_\_\_, vow to not make the same stupid real-estate buying mistakes that Clay made when I purchase my house.*

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(Sign your name here)



## Chapter 17

### Growth, the “Law of the Lid,” and Various Other Reasons I Found Myself Herding Cats

*Life Lesson: “The lower an individual’s ability to lead, the lower the lid on his potential.” - JOHN MAXWELL*



Once we moved in to our new place, life began to change immediately. Almost instantly we started to notice a lot of respect being issued to us from peers (in the wedding industry) who had previously written our team off as a bunch of happy-go-lucky, glass-half-full DJ jokesters (which we were). And in addition to the love fest that we were receiving in the way of congratulatory cards, encouraging e-mails, and voicemails from our past clients, vendor friends, and

business associates; we also started to receive yet another round of animosity steered toward us from our DJ competition (who competed with us in the way that the Kansas City Royals compete with the New York Yankees). It was hilarious. We would run in to bitter DJs at bridal shows, and they would just look at us with hatred in their DJ eyes. Our DJs would come back from shows saying, “Such-and-such really hates us. Man, what did we do to those guys?” or

“Yeah, I ran into DJ So-and-So at church, and that guy is really pissed at us.” It seemed like virtually every disgruntled band member and struggling DJ service felt the need to blame us for their lack of success, which I was okay with. My theory was that as long as they blamed us, they would never fix their systems that were producing crappy results. And thus, I sort of liked being viewed as the Yankees of the DJ industry because as long as the customers loved us, the world was well. Every once in a while I would run into a hotel director, a photographer, or a previous client who would comment something to the effect of,

“Man, you all have really grown. I wish I would have gotten into DJ-ing!”

These kind comments and attitudes just kept rolling in. Amidst the praise from our peers and the hate from our competition, I started to notice that that something else was changing dramatically as well. All of the relationships that Jerry Jones, Josh, and I and all of the DJ Connection DJs had been developing over the years were now growing to fruition. Almost as if the purchase of this DJ megaplex had stamped us with a big approval sticker that read, “YEP FOLKS, THESE GUYS ARE REAL!”

Bank of America, Bank of Commerce, Arkansas Valley Bank, Bama Pie, Grand Bank, Nordam, Broken Arrow (one of the largest high schools in the country), Bixby Schools, St. Pius, the Vintage on Yale™ luxury apartments, the Holiday Inn Select™, and QuikTrip™ were all booking or rebooking us with conviction for all of their events. Josh and Jerry Jones were now giving more confident sales presentations. It seemed as though this positive pressure that we had created for ourselves by building a foundation based on a solid reputation now backed us.

Many people in Tulsa were finally starting to talk about DJ Connection as if we were something nearing a legitimate, real-deal company. This recognition meant that we were now a company to be taken seriously. DJ Connection was no longer just a dream on a piece of paper and a statement of faith on my five-year goal. It was a reality.

During this time, we received recognition in *Modern Bride* magazine as “Tulsa’s number-one disk jockey service,” and from the American Wedding Association as “Tulsa’s best wedding vendor.” The point was being hammered home to our potential customers: DJ Connection was the real deal. Our hard work was finally paying off, and more and more quality people were hearing about us and wanting to become part of our team or use us for their upcoming event. Finally after five years of toiling in the never-ending sea of mediocrity, we were rising to the top; and we were now being pushed by our own momentum. To quote the entertainment mogul and entrepreneur P. Diddy (Sean Combs), “We won’t stop. Because we can’t stop.” With momentum, a business can do anything, except overcome a lack of quality leadership.

My old micromanagement philosophy of if-you-want-something-done-right-you-have-to-do-it-yourself was now proving to be ineffective when tested against the might of thirty disorganized DJs. Up to this point in time, I would assign a list of tasks for our guys to do on a daily basis, and then I would relentlessly follow-up on them to make sure that they were done. Upon discovering that it had been done 80 percent of the way, I would then put the remaining 20 percent of their work on my plate, and I would do it myself.

For example, I would tell our guys to call through the entire bridal list by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, and on Tuesday at 5:00 p.m., I would discover that they would only be 80 percent of the way through the list; then I would begin making cold calls from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. by myself, neglecting my wife and compensating for a lack of others’ performances with my own efforts. I would ask a certain DJ to take out the trash, and he would take out 40 percent of it, and then at night after I had finished making my cold calls until 9:00 p.m., I would then take out all the office trash until 10:30 p.m. I would ask the DJs to arrive at 12:00 p.m. for the 12:30 Sunday appointment, and when I would

return from church at 12:30 to discover that no one had shown up to cover the appointment, I would do it myself and so on. I pretty much did 20 percent of everyone's job, in addition to my own (already overwhelming) responsibilities while paying them as if they had actually completed 100 percent of the work on their own. Each week I was becoming more and more familiar with the employee code-talk phrases and their translations, such as:

- **“Hey, I will probably be there right at 9:00 A.M.”** = (Translation Into Employee Code Talk): “I will definitely not be there on time tomorrow, but I do not want to be confrontational or honest by telling you in advance.”
- **“Man, I had a family emergency come up, so I can’t make it in today” (cough, cough into the phone)** = “Honey, I just talked to Clay to let him know about the last-minute birthday party we’ve been invited to. And he said that it is okay if I have someone else DJ the wedding for me.”
- **“Clayvis, I feel like I am just not working out in this position because it is too stressful.”** = “I really think that although I cannot manage myself personally, I feel as though I could do a good job working in the role of a manager.”

I was completely unaware of the importance of creating a system that rewards positive behavior through quality pay, and one that penalizes lack of performance by withholding pay. Thus, those first few months in our new place were a little interesting. And I am convinced that the time we spent at the Lynn Lane house would have resulted in my premature stress-induced death if it was not for the insight that I gained from reading and applying the principles found within the pages of John Maxwell's *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* while on our second sea cruise vacation.

The irony about my reading this book was that I would have never stopped to read a book on leadership had my attempt to go on a one-

week vacation not so blatantly exposed my lack of leadership skills. Havana was around one-month old, and Vanessa and I were in desperate need of some quality one-on-one time. I was working seven days a week, and I literally was working until 9:00 P.M. every night; and then I was going to bed at 10:30 P.M. and waking up to work again at 4:00 A.M. or 5:00 A.M. each day. I had no time to work out. Vanessa and I had no time to talk about anything. I was DJ-ing every Sunday, so I wasn't going to church (which didn't bother me too much since at the time I wasn't too sure how I felt about God anyway). I never had downtime to see my daughter, and I had no time to sit and plan our business's future.

So after I bought the tickets from Karen Wheelock (our Tulsa travel planner of choice), I found it to be nearly impossible to carve out the seven-day window of time needed to even go on vacation. Thus, I was resorting to giving each member of our team a huge laundry list of things to do that I knew in the back of my mind they were not going to get done. I knew that they would show up to work every day at 10:00 A.M. or 11:00 A.M. while I was gone, and I knew that they were not going to return voicemails promptly. I just knew that they were going to crash the DJ mother ship into the side of a bridal mountain while I was gone, and thus I even booked our cruise during the smallest projected wedding weekend of the year to limit the potential for disaster.

As we finished packing our bags and loading Havana into her car seat for the long journey down to the Port of Houston where our cruise was set to depart, I was having a panic attack. Thus I just kept calling the office guys telling them things like, "Hey, there is one more thing that I need you to do!" or "Seriously, if you do not remember anything else, make sure that you check the voicemails!" or "Josh, brother . . . I am trusting you with the Millennium Falcon here, don't wreck it, baby. I trust you. But, I don't trust you. Please tell me you won't crash the mother ship. Josh are you there?"

Meanwhile, my wife was coming to the conclusion that I was going to be running the office remotely via my cell phone during the entirety of our vacation. As we boarded the cruise ship, I am sure that she was delighted when I was informed by one of the crew members

that it was only possible to contact land in case of an emergency via the ship's satellite phone at an astronomical fee; thus my cheapness would prevent me from calling the office once the ship departed.

And once the ship departed, I was forced to come to grips with the fact that I was not going to be able to call home again, and thus I attempted to have a good time in a distracted mentally-not-present kind of way (for the first day or so). Somewhere around day three of our seven-day cruise, I started to calm down a little to the point where I was no longer focused on what apocalyptic scenarios might be unfolding at the DJ Connection office, and then I allowed myself to have a good time.

During the evenings after Vanessa and Havana had gone to bed, I would religiously go out on the deck to listen to the sound of the ocean, to consume a large \$8 raspberry-flavored adult beverage, and to take in the fresh smells of the sea as I read John Maxwell's leadership bible. As I read his book, I started seeing myself through the perspective of the various leadership examples, which his book so richly provided. I started realizing his theory on the "law of the lid" directly applied to me.

His law states, "Leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness. The lower an individual's ability to lead; the lower the lid of his or her potential; the higher the leadership, the greater the effectiveness. To give you an example, if your leadership rate is at an *eight*, then your effectiveness can never be greater than a *seven*. If your leadership is only a *four*, then your effectiveness will be no higher than a *three*. Your leadership ability, for better or worse, always determines your effectiveness and the potential impact of your organization. To reach the highest level of effectiveness, you have to raise the lid of leadership ability."

Essentially, John Maxwell's leadership book called me out and said, "Hey Clayvis, you have a leadership rating of *three*. You can inspire people, but you can't provide continued direction without having to micromanage them, and you are only attracting people that like to be micromanaged because you are a micromanager." Oh this truth was tough to take from my lawn chair amidst the princess cruise boat, but because I was half-drunk, I think I was able to take the harsh

criticism that this moment of self-analysis was forcing me to endure. And thus, I encourage you to do the same thing right now. Ask yourself, “Self, how high is my leadership ability? Honestly, how would I rate myself? Would I enjoy working for me? What is my leadership number? With *10* being Abraham Lincoln or Vince Lombardi, and a *1* being that dude who can’t manage his own snow-cone stand, where do I stand? What is my leadership number?”

Long story short, our sea cruise vacation was everything it was supposed to be and more. Our cruise director was awesome. The entertainment was great. The food was legendary, I learned leadership while out at sea. Thus, I returned home re-energized, fired up, and with a renewed focus on the next important step that DJ Connection had to take if it was going to grow to the next level. This step involved a need for dramatically improved leadership (from me).

Listed below is list of the leadership qualities that I determined to develop within myself and our team as a direct result of reading John Maxwell’s *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* and revisiting Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich* while on the cruise. Review this list of leadership qualities, and then candidly grade yourself on how well your leadership style exemplifies these leadership qualities:

### 1) Unwavering Courage

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - ---

What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
- 

### 2) Self-Control

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - ---

What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
-



**3) A Keen Sense of Justice**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4) Definiteness of Decision**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5) Definiteness of Plans**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6) The Habit of Doing More Than What's Paid For**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7) A Pleasing Personality**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**8) Sympathy and Understanding**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
- 

**9) Mastery of Detail**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
- 

**10) Willingness to Assume Full Responsibility**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
- 

**11) Cooperation**

- Self-Assessment Letter Grade (from A – F):
  - \_\_\_\_\_  
What will you do today to begin practically improving your leadership abilities in this area?
- 

When I returned home, I discovered that non-DJ Garrett was now working in the office nearly fifteen hours per day to compensate for the fact that several key people did virtually nothing while I was gone. Forty percent of the guys who were supposed to chip in to do the office work bailed out. I found out that Curtis was a workhorse and that Josh did a much better job than I thought he would do. I returned home to find a sort of organized chaos although Garrett was super mad because he felt that he had been carrying DJ Connection on his ill-

equipped shoulders for the entire week while I was gone. Around this time, Jerry Jones was also discovering that he had ambitions and dreams that did not parallel themselves with DJ Connection's anymore, and thus he was looking to move on.

After I returned, my mind was still racing with the stories about how Winston Churchill had boldly stood up against the Nazi regime in a final stand for the free world against brutal dictatorship. I was inspired from reading how Coach John Wooden had turned UCLA into a legendary basketball powerhouse. And with this new inspiration fueling my passion, I was determined to turn DJ Connection into the most dominant wedding entertainment company in Tulsa. I was inspired like never before, and I was determined to ride out this wave of inspiration while I was still feeling the positive passion chi.

As part of my new leadership initiative, I immediately set up a required Monday-morning meeting to build a sense of candor, coherency, and planning for our young organization. I began writing and posting tangible, ambitious (yet attainable), company goals everywhere that our employees worked. I was now working ninety hours per week (and I am not exaggerating here), but we were becoming very profitable. Oh, this two-year stretch at the Lynn Lane property was stressful, but it also came with moments of extreme joy like a good epic movie (only our movie never seemed to end).

During the next two years, as we continued to relentlessly implement John Maxwell's proven leadership principles, we started to realize unprecedented growth, and the secret was that we had successfully grown the organization from "'me' to 'we'" as Magic Johnson was reported to say in Maxwell's book. WE were waging war on mediocrity, and WE were beginning to see victory in our sights. During this time, we set records for overselling by booking 31 events in the same day and DJ-ing over 75 events on the same weekend.

We tripled the number of DJ systems we had from 11 to over 35 all during this time period. DJ Curtis came and went, and DJ Jason Bailey successfully found us. We were assembling our dream team, and I was beginning to realize that the only limit on our company's growth potential and our speed of growth was our ability to find good quality humans who were looking to be a part of a dream team. We DJ-ed for

Aaron and Tina Smith's wedding, and through the process, Aaron decided to join the team. We DJ-ed for Andy Simmons's sister at the mysterious Scottish Right building, and he was inspired to join the DJ nation after seeing DJ Jerry Jones perform and entertain at the wedding (and after his mom told him over the phone how fun our company sounded). We just kept finding more and more quality people. And as we added new people, each individual added a new skill and a new passion to the company. We were like a bunch of batteries that when connected to each other actually doubled each other's combined output. This time of expansion was fun; however, at the same time this exponential growth posed new problems



(Pictured above is the office team that experienced the leadership transformation and the subsequent exponential growth that followed as a result.)

With eight guys (working out of our house) we were again finding ourselves surrounded by DJs whose expansion was unintentionally encroaching upon our personal space. With so many people to manage, I was finding that perpetual lateness was becoming the norm. With eight type-A personalities all working in close proximity, I was finding that NHL-style fights were beginning to break out on occasion, and I

was also beginning to notice that everyone was starting to gang up with their combined dislike for DJ Achilles.

Personally, I liked Achilles a lot when he first came on board. He professed to attend Rhema church, and he always wore a suit. He looked like a young Orlando Bloom, and he was a quick learner and hard worker in the sales department. However, from the other guys' perspectives, he was a lead hog. He was divisive. He was argumentative. He was unapproachable, and above all he was insincere. He was superficially religious. He was a suck-up, and he was stealing commissions through his less-than-ethical sales techniques. Because I had not yet read former GE CEO Jack Welch and Suzie Welch's management book called *Winning*, I had no idea how to manage various personalities that could not coexist without extreme management skill. And so to fix the problems caused by the personality clashes as well as simple work-related problems, I (right or wrong) did the following:

- 1) **I implemented a \$20 late fee.** If you were late to work by one minute, I got your late fee. Over time, this rule had to be further clarified with disclaimers stating that if you were not in the office on time, you were late (dudes liked to say that, they were "around the corner.") Later I had to again clarify with the disclaimer that, "If you are stopped by a cop or if you are sick, you are still late." It was unbelievable.
- 2) **I implemented an inbound phone time-sharing policy.** Basically everyone got equal time on inbound sales calls so that no one could be accused of hogging the phone by making no outbound calls and always lingering around waiting for those easy inbound sales calls.
- 3) **I implemented the "shut the hell up and get back to work" policy,** which consisted of me yelling, "Shut the hell up and get back to work" numerous times per day. When I spotted DJs interacting with each other via instant messaging and myspace.com instead of working, I would simply yell, "Shut the hell up and get back to work!"

- 4) **I implemented the “Stop being WEAK SAUCE” policy.** This policy officially classified anyone who ever called in sick for any reason as WEAK SAUCE. Thus they were openly out of my favor.
- 5) **I had our guys build dividers and cubicles everywhere so that people wouldn’t intrude on each other’s conversations.**
- 6) **I arranged for weekly one-on-one meetings with the guys** (this was a horrible idea). I have since determined that everything must always be out in the open all the time.
- 7) **I implemented the “no pot heads are allowed in the office” policy.** This resulted in the replacement of a few key people, and took care of claims that I was only enforcing this policy on people that I wanted to get rid of. However, the truth be known, I did not want to know who was smoking pot. I sincerely felt as though about 80 percent of our staff was smoking pot, and I later found my suspicions to be correct.
- 8) **I implemented the “no pellet guns in the office” policy.** I kid you not, the guys actually brought pellet guns to work.
- 9) **I implemented the “no personal e-mails” policy.** At this point, I was starting to feel like I was becoming yet another corporate-America-style business that I used to detest.

And so with these new policies in place, we marched forward over the occasional background noise created by Eric, Aaron, Jason N., Andy, Achilles, Nate Mosely, Garrett, Shawn, Josh Smith, Jason Bailey, and Raj Mahal duking it out. Eventually the “yelling on the bus” got too loud, and I had to replace multiple people for things ranging from theft to pot smoking to drinking on the job to driving on a suspended license to using the DJ Connection business credit cards to fuel their personal boats, to guys just being jerks on a consistent basis.

Eventually, Keith, DJ Hugo Chavez, and DJ Mike E. were brought on to replace certain people. And then more people were brought on to replace more people. And the more serious I got about quality, the more people I had to replace. Essentially I discovered firsthand that Sam Walton was correct when he once famously said, “There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everyone from the CEO on down.”

I was learning that allowing mediocre people to exist in my organization was de-motivating our top performers, killing our profits, and killing off our loyal customers. Thus on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 2005, I fired about ten weak sauce DJs as their Happy New Year’s gift. I had started out wanting to fire about two of them, but once I got the firing flamethrower out, it just seemed appropriate to go ahead and kill the remaining discontented underperformers. And while the embers were still smoldering, our top performers began rejoicing. Jason Bailey was scared out of his mind because he later said that he thought that I was going to fire everyone (because I had that *Back-To-The-Future*-Doc-Brown-crazy-look in my eyes). Eventually, he came around to see that the removal of the negative people was freeing up more energy and resources to invest in our quality people.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Jared Hogue  
(former DJ and current owner of Shine On A Dime auto-  
detailing service)**

*Every week we had our Monday morning meeting. It would typically last about an hour or two. This one meeting was going a little rough, but we made it through. As soon as the meeting was over, we hopped on the phones; however, we weren’t getting anywhere. Making no progress. That coupled with the rough meeting made for a real crappy morning. Morale was low, so Clay hollers and makes everyone get up out of their chairs to do a trust fall. All of us lined up, almost like a soul train line, and one at a time got up on a chair and fell backward into the arms of our peers. Morale shot up quickly. We hopped back on the phones, and sales were quickly on the climb.*

***Clay is a mover, which is a good thing. He gets things done. He doesn't like to wait. He moves very quickly. It is a good thing and a bad thing all in one. When he got excited about something, there was no stopping him—even when it meant waking your employees up in the middle of the night to fill them in on a new idea that could have waited until morning. To his credit, he didn't build a DJ empire by doing nothing.***

During those two years, we had our struggles, but the attitude and culture of the office generally remained constant. It was always high-energy, fast-paced, work-with-haste, dial-and-smile DJ phantasmagoria. After we experienced our New Year's firing spree, everyone seemed to understand that I was serious about quality and I was serious about DJ Connection. During this time of rapid expansion, we painted DJ vans and trailers. (This was a horrible idea). When people see our company vehicles, they think, *Hey, I could sue these guys*. We purchased six unlimited-calling-plan Cricket™ cell phones, we installed three landlines, and we experienced DJ Derek's ability to overheat and destroy the engines of two old-school vans in a period of less than one month. He drove them as though he was racing these 150,000-plus mile vans on the NASCAR circuit.

We turned the garage into Havana's playroom because the DJs had moved in to our living room to accommodate our non-stop expansion. We threw a ridiculously large Super Bowl party of epic proportions (that my wife made sure she was conveniently out of town for) in appreciation of our customers. This event lead to numerous visits by the City of Broken Arrow who was appalled by my blatant disregard for the zoning laws governing our five-acre DJ house.

DJ Hugo Chavez dumped trash into someone's storage units that they thought were dumpsters. This act of idiocy resulted in thousands of dollars of damage being done to the new carpet that had been stored in these units and was supposed to be installed in a local apartment complex. The carpet was apparently ruined by the Skoal™ brand chew spit that spewed out of our trash containers.



**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Eric Cooper  
(Top 2 DJ Connection DJ, and Mr. I-Will-Get-It-Done)**

*When you have eight men of early adulthood semi-living and working out of a residential area such as the Clark estate, you accumulate a lot of trash. To dispose of four-foot bags of trash a day, we had to load up a few of these bags in a company van and take them to the nearest dumpster.*

*One spring day, we had created about six trash bags full of Redbull™ cans, soda cans, bottles full of Skoal™ residue, and other whatnot. Normally the lowest man on the totem poll would have to be the trash man till they made it up the ladder or a newer dude came into the company. Well this fine day, a fellow DJ Hugo Chavez decided to combine the task of trash duty and lunch retrieval into one. DJ Hugo made his way to a certain area and threw the trash into a “receptacle.”*

*A FEW HOURS LATER, with no more trash and lunch in tow, DJ Hugo had completed his task. I remember sitting next to the man, Keith Banks, who fielded the call. Apparently a construction owner at a hotel in the area was mad because he went into his “receptacle” to field what was not trash but brand new rolls of carpet and other equipment to finish his work. When he opened the storage container, he found bags of trash leaking soda and dip spit on to his very expensive rolls of unused carpet. To say the least, he was not happy when he opened the bag to investigate who had done this and found DJ Connection cards, envelopes sent to DJC, and other DJC items. He called the company and was enraged at our stupidity. We sent Keith out to investigate the damage, and he took footage of the unit which not even Helen Keller could have mistaken for a dumpster. To say the least, Clay paid nearly \$1000 in damages. Fast-forward two years into the future and while reminiscing about stories such as these, Clay became enraged when we unveiled the video of where DJ Hugo Chavez dumped the trash. I would even say he was angrier when he saw the video than he was when it originally happened.*

We have witnessed countless crimes against humanity from DJs who have bailed out on shows one hour before someone's wedding (which we were narrowly able to cover). I have fired more people than many shooting squads due to the complete lack of decency that many American workers now seem to have. It has always amazed me that people get intense and nearly violently angry because you fire them for drinking on the job. They can't seem to understand why they would be fired for smoking pot. They always say exciting things like, "Hey, that was never in the company manual." To compensate for DJs oversleeping and for DJs forgetting to write down their show dates. Andy, Jason, Josh, Eric, Keith, and Nate all had to pull extensive "all-nightuhs" where they would literally DJ a wedding that went until 3:00 A.M. only to discover when they arrived to unload their equipment that they had to fill in for a DJ who called in sick, and their show had a 6:00 A.M. setup schedule. Without Redbull™ I don't think that we would have made it.

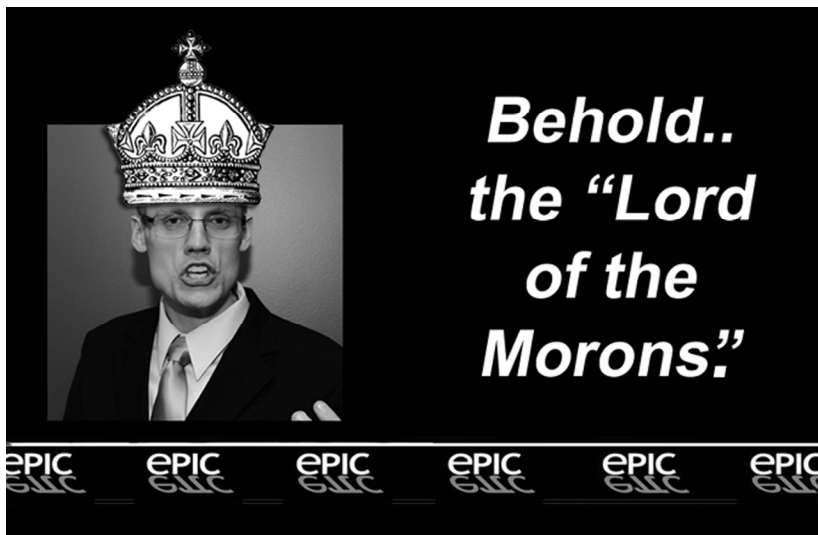
**"Knowledge without application is meaningless."**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please do not allow this chapter to be less meaningful and useful to your daily life than that incredibly expensive set of knives you bought after watching some super-compelling infomercial on how those stainless steel babies could cut through your shoes and a hammer. Thus, ask yourself the following self-exploring questions:**

1. How would I rate my overall leadership abilities on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest)?
2. What are my strengths and weaknesses?
3. What can I do to improve my weaknesses?
4. Can I deal with the reality that business growth will force me to become everyone's boss, and not everyone's friend?
5. Do I have it in me to fire people that will not perform according to the standards promised to our customers, even if they are my friends?

6. Treat yourself to extra \$1,000,000 of lifetime income and go out and buy John Maxwell's *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* book. Apply the principles found in his book, and watch your team grow.



## Chapter 18

### Enabling Morons Through My Own Weak Management

*Life Lesson: “Control your own destiny or someone else will.” –*  
JACK WELCH, former CEO of GE™



And so, powered by Redbull™ and the creativity spawned by Thomas-Edison-esc levels of sleep deprivation, we headed into the 2006 year. (\*\*Fun note – The great inventor Thomas Edison was famous for pulling all-nighters in his never-ending quest to invent things that would greatly impact the lives of consumers. Apparently, he felt that the peak levels of creativity could only be reached once one was under the influence of sleep deprivation). At the time, our office team consisted of BJ Blocker, Andy Simmons, Aaron Smith, Nate

Moseley, Keith Banks, DJ Hugo Chavez, Eric Cooper, Roger Thompson, Jason Bailey, Josh Smith, Achilles, and one or two other dudes who I am unintentionally forgetting and who will definitely be offended once it is called to their attention that I forgot their names in this segment.

Each Monday morning this group of “always fun” and “60-percent productive” DJs would arrive at work for the 8:00 A.M. Monday morning meeting with an anticipation or a fear for what the upcoming week had for them. Each Monday, after all the late fees had been assessed (and around 30 percent of the guys paid late fees every Monday), our meeting agenda would consist of:

- 1) The Good Wood – This part of the Monday morning meeting was spent discussing any positive things that were happening at DJ Connection at the time, and what practical steps we needed to seize the opportunities presented to us. (Example: DJ Josh would say, “This weekend I worked with Kitty over at the Golf Club of Oklahoma, and she told me that she loves us. She also told me that they are having a membership appreciation party in the spring, and we need to jump on that thing like ‘Apache’” (the Sugar Hill Gang song).
- 2) The Abominations – This part of the Monday morning meeting was devoted to an in-depth exploration into what went wrong during the previous week, who was to blame for it, and how we could fix it with practical, applicable steps. This part of our meeting was nearly always devoted to chastising the same people for being late each week and to chewing out the production department for screwing up yet again. Much of this portion of our agenda was also spent exploring who stole someone else’s leads and what we could do to fix it. Generic and weak general comments like, “Hey, I am not wanting to call anyone out here, but someone has been taking my leads” were always available

in abundance at these meetings. Then someone would inevitably respond with the,

“I will kick your ass! Don’t accuse me of stealing leads, you bastard.” At this point in time, I was completely oblivious to the fact that the key to reducing this portion of our weekly agenda had nothing to do with increasing my intensity or increasing the volume at which I chastised people who were perpetually late. The key to reducing our weekly abominations was only going to come through reducing the number of underperforming-excuse-giving-morons that we had present at each meeting.

- 3) The Motivational Topic – Each week, I would spend hours and hours reading motivational and business-related management books in an attempt to motivate our underperformers. And each week the “motivational topic” would always inspire one underperformer for about a week before they would be up to their underperforming ways again. It was frustrating as hell for me to see grown men desperately searching and yearning for something to inspire and motivate them each week. I read a quote from Zig Ziglar, “People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well, neither does bathing... that’s why we recommend it daily,” and thus I prepared my weekly motivational topics with a sense of religious duty. I felt then, and I still feel now, that a leader’s number-one job is to set the vision and to relentlessly make sure that the organization is always working toward the goals associated with that vision. Essentially, working each week to make sure that the organization was getting closer to the goal instead of further away.

At the time, DJ Connection was averaging around \$17,000 to \$21,000 per week in sales (which was good); however, this \$21,000 per week in sales was divided by Aaron Smith, Nate Moseley, Josh

Smith, Achilles, Jason Bailey, Keith Banks, and myself (which was not good). To put this in perspective, each sales guy was averaging a super-weak sauce \$3,000 per week in sales. Thus, they were each averaging merely \$300 per week in commission payouts. Basically, they were coming to work to have fun, but they were not coming to work to get paid; and because one half of the sales team was making an additional \$600.00 per week just DJ-ing on the weekends, some of them were actually content with their underperformance. At the time, the only three guys who were consistently performing at a high level were Nate Moseley, Achilles, and Josh Smith. In my attempt to improve our sales totals and to compensate for everyone else's lack of performance, I just kept hiring additional quasi-competent people instead of just rewarding the top people and removing all of the bottom people. And with each new hire I brought on, I further de-motivated the top performers because their pie of inbound sales calls was being continually cut into smaller and smaller pieces.

I had not yet read Jack Welch's philosophy on differentiation. The concept of only hiring "A-player" and "B-player" employees was completely foreign to me at the time, so I just kept trying to fill the gaping holes left by mediocre employees by bringing on additional mediocre employees. It was horrible, but to save you the headache, let me briefly explain the belief system behind Jack Welch and his system of differentiation:

- Step 1: Review your employees and determine your TOP 20 percent, YOUR MIDDLE 70 percent, and YOUR BOTTOM 10 percent IN TERMS OF THEIR ACTUAL JOB PERFORMANCE.
- Step 2: REWARD YOUR TOP 20 percent by publically praising your "A-players" with bonuses, love, and various other rewards.
- Step 3: Manage your middle 70 percent with extreme caution and care as you will quickly find that most of your organization is comprised of this middle 70 percent which Jack calls the "B-players." Work tirelessly to be candid with

your “B-players” about where they stand in your company and what steps they must take to become an “A-player.”

- Step 4: (The hard part) YOU MUST REMOVE THE BOTTOM 10 percent OF YOUR STAFF (YOUR “C-PLAYERS”) annually, if not every six months. Essentially this system will allow you to reward your top people and to remove your bottom people, and it works great as long as you are candid with people about where they stand in your company (and that is the hard part). Nobody likes firing anyone (unless you are real sick freak). However, you owe it to yourself, to your organization, and to your customers to mercilessly remove the bottom 10 percent of your team who consistently and knowingly underperforms. But, if it is any consolation to you, if you decide that you simply do not have it in you to fire anyone, just wait a few months and your customers will fire you (thus making it easier on you).

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF REASON – Dave Reece  
(former DJ Connection DJ)**

*Ingenuity. Clay is (and has always been) quick to create solutions where no solution is apparent. If a necessary piece of equipment were missing from his setup at a wedding reception, he would never, even for a moment, be heard saying that the show must be delayed or downscaled. He would fashion a light-trussing rod with his bare hands using only a roll of aluminum foil and a stick of spearmint chewing gum (and he probably has) if that was required to keep the party rocking! I've been in the passenger seat of the great painted Chevy Astro™ to witness Clay drive seven hours from Tulsa to Texas to host an Arbonne™ International Mercedes presentation. Afterward, we drove nonstop back to Tulsa overnight on a strict diet of bananas, strawberry yogurt, and KC and JoJo. Three hours later, he was arriving at a bridal fair to “wow” the brides-to-be for another eight hours straight. That's how I remember him: a whirlwind of incredible, unmatched, unyielding, unbridled determination. Self-motivation. Ingenuity. Funk.”*



As I look back on it, I think that this time of growth at DJ Connection was the most frustrating for me. I got so tired of dealing with the same weak-alibi-generating-mamma's-boy-over-coddled-I-need-a-day-off-because-today's-my-birthday excuses and the same bearers of these alibis each week. It pissed me off knowing that certain people would show up late every day (literally every day) with a new excuse for lateness, while certain people would show up fifteen minutes early every day because it was the right thing to do. It pissed me off that certain people (with biblical-sounding names and self-proclaimed biblical beliefs) thought that there was nothing wrong with smoking pot on a consistent basis. And it really pissed me off that only Eric, Jason and 5 or 6 other people ever showed any signs of productivity. Here I had worked tirelessly for eight years to build a large DJ company, and now that our company was at the peak of its power, its profitability, and its size, I was finding myself hating my job.

Each week I grew more and more jaded by the abominations of the underperformers. And if I weren't such a management novice at the time, I would have been firing people left and right. Instead I was just growing more and more frustrated while carefully and diligently developing more idiots. Eventually, when the accumulative incompetence had reached an intolerable level, I would generally go off on the worst offender. I would usually list their abominations in a caustic way before firing them. I was known to say things like, "Hey, John, I appreciate you showing up late for the ninth consecutive day. I appreciate you being a slacker, and I appreciate you ruining someone's event because you were too lazy to do your job. But hey, CONGRATULATIONS! You have been promoted to the weak-sauce boss. So get the hell out of here!"

### **All in less than six-months time:**

- Our family vehicle (a green Ford Explorer) had been completely destroyed by a moron with the last name of North who was fond of breaking the handles to both the driver's side and the passenger-side doors when he was not

ripping knobs off of the radio, breaking the windshield, stealing coworkers' jackets or taking my credit cards.

- I had to fine one employee \$20 per day (due to his lateness) for 60 percent of his scheduled work days.
- Our new riding lawn mowers that we had purchased to mow our five-acre property had been ruined by DJs who we hired to mow our lawn who apparently “were not aware that the mowers could not run over tree stumps.”
- DJ Connection began routinely averaging over sixty events per week.
- My brother-in-law's referral and former roommate, Lloyd, had entirely destroyed my relationship with five wedding vendors because he used my reputation and his association with me to start a web-development company that he used to con deposits out of unsuspecting business people. Once he had taken their deposits, he would not deliver the products or services all while continually telling them that he was “just running a little behind” and that “he was good for it.” And because I was a super moron, I allowed him to use DJ Connection's credit card machine to process some of his early fees for a credit-card-processing fee paid to DJ Connection. I had no idea that he was a con artist, and I certainly was unaware that he would skip town and move down to Dallas to avoid the collections calls, the upset vendors, and the ruined relationships. This guy always went to church, my brother-in-law knew him, he went to Oral Roberts University, and thus I thought that he was a good dude. Oh, was I wrong. And thus five wedding vendors assumed that it was I who was charging their cards and not delivering on my promises to them. Long story short . . . I had to pay a ton of money out to wedding vendors whom I never agreed to work with in the first place to repair the relationships, to avoid the appearance of scamming people, and to avoid getting sued.

- We had a large and manatee-esc female customer fall down in our house while picking up some CDs, and she attempted to threaten us with a lawsuit if we did not pay her some money “for her injuries.”
- I discovered that yet another one of my brother-in-laws referrals and one of our DJs (who had kids and another full-time job) was a full-time drug dealer as well. Firing him was exciting.
- I was named as “Oklahoma’s Young Entrepreneur of the Year” by the United States Small Business Administration.
- We had one of our former DJs attempt to break in to our DJ office and family home; thus I went to the DJ gun store, bought myself a DJ handgun, and enrolled in a gun class to protect myself from exciting individuals such as this guy.
- The aerobic septic system that kept the crap out of our drinking water stopped functioning. Thus, I had the privilege of spending thousands of dollars repairing it.
- The daily dramas in the office related to DJs oversleeping, over-drinking, over-pot-smoking, and just being overly moronic grew to Jerry Springer-esc proportions.
- I was named by *Oklahoma* magazine as one of their “Top 40 Under 40.”

As the awards kept rolling in and as the frustrations mounted, Vanessa was now outwardly stating that she, “hated many of the DJs,” and that she couldn’t stand to see them taking their smoke breaks outside of our house anymore. She was tired of their constant dip spitting, their constant lateness, and my constant need to compensate for their lack of effort with additional effort on my part. Vanessa knew that a leader was supposed to always do more than he expected from his people, yet she also knew that a leader had to be tough and willing to fire those that knowingly and consistently unperformed without hesitation. Vanessa was frustrated with the DJs, but I think inside she

was honestly more frustrated with me because I was too much of a weak boss to reward our top people and to remove our bottom people with ruthless pragmatics. In fact, I am ashamed to say that I did not literally even know what being pragmatic meant at the time. All I knew was that I was working every night of the week, during every anniversary, during nearly every holiday except for Christmas day, and that my life was being held hostage by a bunch of twenty-year-old men who desperately needed a drill sergeant boss instead of a boss who was overly concerned with “not wanting to offend anyone.” I was seriously one of the weakest bosses in the world. Guys would call in sick, guys would show up late, and I would just try to “talk to them about it.”

Thus, to solve the problems associated with the underperformers I launched us full force into Operation Krispy Kreme™. My logic behind undertaking this big hairy audacious goal was to keep our guys occupied in a campaign that would bring them increased revenue (they were now nearly all making a little over \$1,000 per week at the average age of twenty-four-years old). Basically the plan called for our top people to bring donuts to the offices of all of our major referral sources and all of our major clients in an attempt to kick our company sales growth level into a steroid-enhanced mode. And it worked. Each day DJ Connection would spend nearly \$50 on donuts, and the bookings just kept pouring in. And the faster the calls came in, the more our systems or lack of systems was tested.

You see, at this point, every call that came in on our (918) 481-2010 number came in on one landline that we called the “money line.” And thus when the money line rang, we knew bookings were awaiting us. During this time, the money line never quit ringing, which kept our DJs engaged, and thus temporarily improved the overall morale and level of productivity from our salespeople. The only problem with this system was that every booking and every appointment that was set had to be manually entered into a day timer (by me for quality control purposes). And after every deposit was paid (now 15-20 every night), every commission check and every email confirmation had to be entered into the system by me.

Thus, I was now starting work at 4:00 A.M. every day and ending work at 7:00 P.M. every day. I was literally killing myself through poor

eating habits and sleep deprivation while simultaneously working tirelessly at killing my marriage through neglect (luckily Vanessa is the most tolerant and supportive wife ever). DJ Connection was now at a breaking point because I was at my breaking point. We needed systems that worked without my direct supervision. We needed to break down the DJ Connection workflow into easily duplicable processes that were designed to render an incredible customer service and DJ entertainment experience every time. The only problem was that I did not know what a workflow was, and I did not know that I needed one.

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

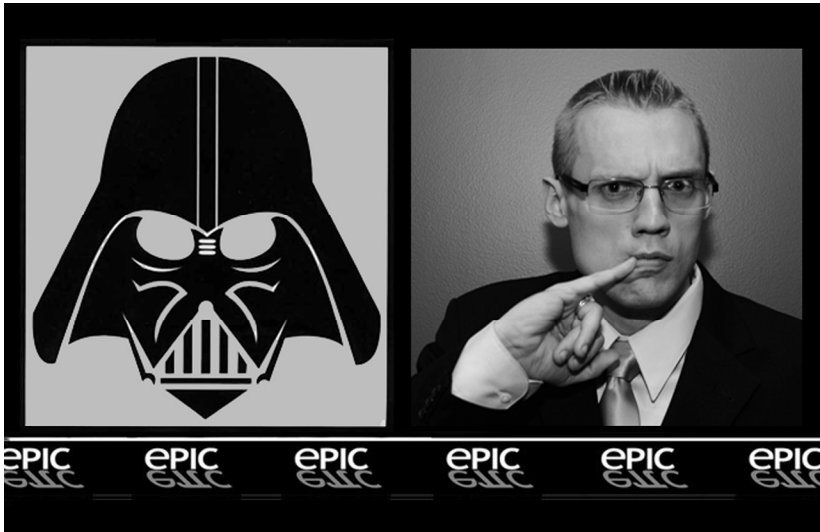
**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Don't allow this chapter to become more meaningless and empty than any parenting advice offered by Britney Spears. Thus answer the following self-analyzing questions to make good use out of this chapter.**

1. Who is the weakest manager that you worked for or witnessed?
2. What makes this manager so weak?
3. Who is the strongest manager you have ever worked for?
4. What makes this manager such a strong manager?
5. Are you a weak manager or leader? (I was.)
6. Make a list of the A, B, and C-players in your organization, class, business, or family (whatever is the most applicable):
  - a. Top 20 percent performers:
  - b. Middle 70 percent performers
  - c. Bottom 10 percent performers:
7. Are you willing to reward your top people and to get rid of your bottom people to improve your organization?
8. If you were going to implement the “differentiation” system of management tomorrow, what would be your first step?

9. Do you have the product or service that you offer (or that you will offer in the future) reduced down to a system of EASILY duplicable processes?

*\*\*Tip: "Eat the biggest frog first." – BRIAN TRACY (motivational speaker) – Essentially, do the toughest task first; it cuts down on anxiety and limits procrastination.*



## Chapter 19

### Meeting With Darth Brent and Seeing His Moron Destroyer

*Life Lesson: “The entrepreneur builds an enterprise; the technician builds a job.”*

- MICHAEL GERBER, author of *The E-Myth Revisited*



And so yet again, I found myself having a nervous breakdown. Josh was showing up late nearly every day. Achilles and Aaron were on the verge of killing each other. Lloyd was running around Tulsa ripping people off and telling them that I was working with him. Andy’s “chew-spitters” (a.k.a. cups) were being spilt in our home.

Blake nearly blew up our mower when he decided to bevel off our concrete patio while mowing, and money was coming in and out of DJ Connection at record levels. And then something non-specific and probably trivial happened that sent me into a nervous breakdown that left me literally lying alone in the dark with a pounding migraine headache in our walk-in closet completely unable to deal with the pressures associated with running a medium-sized business without duplicable processes in place.

I was going crazy, and I was ready to quit. I was ready to sell DJ Connection to the lowest bidder, and I was willing to put my head in a blender if it had the potential to kill me. In all sincerity, I have never been suicidal, and I never would commit suicide because I think that it is weak sauce, but I felt like Michael Douglas's character in *Falling Down*: I felt as though at any moment I might just involuntarily haul off and punch the culprit of the biggest current abomination. The next guy who I found smoking weed was going to find a speaker stand jammed up his ass; I was going crazy.

Anyway . . . after spending literally twelve hours alone in our dark closet (thank you, Andy, for filling in for me that day), I emerged well-rested. I was able to come to grips with the fact that something had to be done. And so I scheduled an appointment with Brent Lollis, a highly successful entrepreneur who started a web development company called [www.triadims.com](http://www.triadims.com) that had developed the DJ Connection website. I determined that I was going to talk to Brent about selling my business and to get his feedback on the whole thing.

When I arrived at Brent's office, I had no idea that I would leave with yet another book that would change my business life. I went into that meeting in the same way that Luke Skywalker went into his first encounter with Yoda. I was eager to meet the little green dude, but I was kind of freaked out by his Jedi power. I knew that Brent had the full use of "the force" and I wanted to get some good nuggets from him.

After Brent and I talked, and after I had unloaded my trail of tears on him, he surprisingly gave me *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber. The book seemed simple and pretty readable because it was so small, so I was excited to read it later that night. As I read the book, I



immediately related to the main character. The main character in the book is a cake maker who makes great cakes, and thus she feels as though she will also be able to make a great company (which is the “entrepreneur’s myth”). Over time, she develops a loyal following and a business that controls her. SHE MERELY CREATES A JOB THAT KNOW ONE ELSE WOULD WANT—A JOB THAT IS NOT DUPLICABLE.

Because of her unique talents, she creates a job for herself that is 100 percent dependent upon her own efforts, and thus she does not create a business or an enterprise; she just creates a horrible life for herself where she gets the pleasure of working for a brutally demanding boss (herself). The more her business grows, the more she begins to break down mentally and physically due to the workload. She has employees, but no one can help her because they do not know what to do or how to help her. Michael, the book’s author, goes on to teach her how to make standardized and duplicable systems that will allow her to exponentially grow her business while exponentially decreasing the hours that she has to personally spend working at the business. Michael shows her how to tap into her knowledge base to create these systems. He shows her how to work on the systems found within her business rather than actually working in her business making and delivering cakes all day.

This book freaked me out, fired me up, and set me straight. Reading this book really questioned the way I thought about business. This book asked me why I had started the business to begin with. This book asked me what my exit strategy was for my business. This book made me realize that the DJ Connection business was just my vehicle to help me achieve my life goals; it was not my life goal (unless I wanted to die early and alone after my wife and kids left me).

As you could imagine, reading a book like this produced quite a to-do list for an action-orientated, type-A personality such as myself. And to help save you the time that you would normally spend reading this book and various other books about workflows, I have put together a checklist and questionnaire that reading the book spawned in my mind at the time. If you take the time to sincerely answer the questions listed

below, I know that your organization will greatly benefit from your application of the insights that you gain:

- 1. What is the purpose of your business?**
- 2. Is your business merely in business to make a lot of money?**
- 3. What is the purpose of accumulating large amounts of money?**
- 4. Why are you willing to exchange 40 to 60 of your best waking hours per week in the pursuit of money?**
- 5. With a precision focus and intensity, write down the purpose of why you are earning money, and make sure that your business never deviates from this purpose.**

**Example of what not to do: When I started DJ Connection, I started it because I wanted to become a millionaire by age thirty with everything else being damned. I was willing to exchange my time, my money, my health, my relationships, and everything for \$1,000,000. But after I thought about it (five years-plus in to the process), I determined that the reason why I wanted to earn \$1,000,000 is so that I would not be poor, and so that I could enjoy life to the fullest with my wife, my friends, and my family. As DJ Connection kept growing and growing, I kept realizing that I was having less and less free time to spend with my wife, my kids, and the people I cared about. As the business grew, and as the resulting awards and accolades kept rolling in, I began noticing that I hadn't had the time to celebrate New Year's Eve with friends or to attend anyone's birthday (other than my kids and a couple of their friends) in eight years. I began noticing that I hadn't looked up to notice a full moon since 1999 until my three year-old daughter Havana pointed up at the sky and told me that her imaginary friend Moonie was out**

tonight. It took me six years of super-intense business operations to understand that my purpose for running a business was not to create fifty jobs for local Tulsans. My purpose for running a business was to enjoy a standard of living with the people I love that I could have not afforded as a kid. And thus I consider myself to be a prime example of what not to do.

6. What does your business (or potential business) do in a great way? (What industry or line of business can your business become the top 10 percent of?)

**\*\*If you can't be the best at what your business is doing, I recommend not doing it. Nothing stinks more than finishing fourth place at every basketball tournament and eighteenth place in your industry every year.**

7. Where do your current customers and your target customers live (what part of your town, country, or city)?

**\*\*If your customers live in a particular area of town, it does not make sense to buy Yellow Page™ ads and television commercials that charge you to broadcast your message in a shotgun-style approach all over your town. Look in to doing direct mailers, door hangers, or flyers.**

8. What forms of literature do your customers read?

**\*\*If you are marketing to an affluent crowd who is fond of reading only *Wall Street Journal* and *Investor's Business Daily*-type literature, then all the advertising that you are spending on bottom-tier local newspapers is wasted money. Thus, I would highly encourage you to only advertise in the forms of literature that your**

**customers read, regardless of what propaganda and information the local magazine sales force shows and tells you.**

**9. What television programs do your customers watch?**

**\*\* When you know what your customers watch, you begin to fully understand them. And if you can fully understand them, you can know what shows that you should potentially advertise your product on in the future and what pop-culture references, styles, and products that your customers relate to. To be successful in business, you have to understand your customers' perceived needs, and your product must meet them. If you are out there trying to invent a product that you will then have to convince the world to use (such as the iPod<sup>TM</sup>), then you are a sick freak with much more patience and ambition than I have. My recommendation to anyone reading this is to look for a need and to fill it with a product or service that you are passionate about. Because you are passionate about it, your new service will exceed your customers' expectations.**

**10. Where do your customers shop?**

**\*\*If your customers do not shop in the hood, get the hell out of the hood. If your customers do not shop in the woods, get the hell out of the woods. Get where your customers are. Make your life easy. It's all about location, location, location. Do not use a run-down, "affordable" building located in the middle of the woods near some former nuclear-testing site.**

**11. Where do customers go to look for your products and services? (Get there quickly if not sooner.)**

- 12. Create a system for tracking where your business comes from, and use it on every customer every time.**

**\*\*Just to clarify here. If you only ask your customers how they heard about you 10 percent of the time (or only when you remember), then you do not have a systematic approach in place or in mind. You must ask every customer how he or she heard about you EVERY TIME. This gives you power over your marketing dollars and will allow you to increase your spending on the advertising that works, while cutting the advertising that drains money from you like that one guy at work who is always trying to borrow a “5-spot” to pay for his lunch.**

- 13. Create a system documenting how your employees are supposed to answer the business phone.**

**\*\*If your employees are answering your business restaurant phone by saying, “Yo Greg, what up? Oh, this isn’t Greg . . . uh, sorry. Yeah, thank you for calling Steve’s Subs. What up?” this is not a good situation. And I am telling you from personal experience, if you leave anything up for interpretation, it will come back to haunt you. At DJ Connection (before I implemented the standardization of everything), we had dudes answering the phone with less conviction and sincerity than an O.J. Simpson apology. It scared customers away. Do not allow your frontline people to kill your prospective customers just because their ideas of how to answer the phone is not congruent with the goals and levels of professionalism found in the other areas of your business. When your people answer the phone, you must literally have all the words written down that you expect your people to say every time. Common sense is not common. Write down**

**your expectations and do not accept anything less from your staff and your people. Remember as my former pastor Carlton Pearson used to say, “You must inspect because you can’t expect.”**

- 14. When someone calls to ask the proverbial, “How much do you charge for your service?” You must develop a systematic and custom-tailored presentation outline that will turn every one of those calls into a closed deal or a tightly set appointment for one of your specialists (who will close the deal).**

**\*\*You must create and give your employees a duplicable sales outline that you expect them to follow every time. Do not be one of those super-weak, excuse-providing, disgruntled, small business people that I run into at networking events who always says, “Well, the reason why I can’t grow my business is that I can’t find good salespeople.” This is weak. You must create an easily duplicable process and sales script for your people to follow each time that they answer a call. Broadway actors have to memorize their lines. Disney™ requires that all of their entertainers know their lines and roles for each one of their legendary performances. You must operate your business in the same manner if you are going to be successful. If you allow your people to find what works best for them, you will quickly find your salespeople getting frustrated or burnt out. If you do not transform your personal sales skills into easy-to-follow duplicable processes, you will not ever grow your company.**

- 15. After you have written the original script; add anecdotes, descriptions, HUMOR, and nuances to your sales presentation to add value to every call. Trust me on this. I have done it the wrong way and the right way.**

**And the right way is much less stressful and more profitable.**

**\*\*In Steve Martin's legendary autobiography entitled *Born Standing Up*, he explains in great detail how he took the better part of a decade to create a comedy routine that was consistently funny each time he delivered it. He then goes on to explain how he would ad-lib little nuances to adjust to the unique crowd and atmosphere of each venue. The point is he never deviated from his core routine because he was disciplined enough to track people's reactions to its delivery early on in his career. This built his confidence in the overall quality and the humor of his final refined masterpiece comedy routine. My friends, the reality is that your people will never be more committed to your business than you are. And thus, you are going to deal with more rejections to your initial presentations than they ever will. So take the time now to create a sales presentation that you have tested on your customers so that your salespeople can deliver your presentation with faith and conviction knowing that it works every time because you've tested it.**

- 16. After you have revised your presentation again, add a "call to action" to the end of your sales presentation because you can't deposit the phrase, "Hey, I will get back with you once I make a decision" at the bank.**

**\*\*If you are like most entrepreneurs and self-employed people, you will find yourself going for the close more often than your people because you do not want to starve and because you probably have more at risk than your people. For some reason, most people who have their financial futures on the line with each and every call tend to be slightly more proactive about**

**closing the deal than the sales guy you just hired on Thursday. Thus, you must make sure that your super-refined sales script factors in the following:**

**Initial rapport-building questions with your client.**

**Initial establishment of your client's unique needs, wants, and desires.**

**An accurate, compelling, humorous, and emotionally moving description of your products and service benefits meets your customers' needs.**

**A credibility establishing description of your company and what sets you apart.**

**A "call to action" that will result in your salesperson setting up "tight appointments" within forty-eight hours of the initial conversation or phone call.**

**If your people are not setting up tight appointments, they might as well ask your customers, "Would you like to just go ahead and hang up on me to save us some time?" as an initial rapport-building question to help you reduce your phone bill.**

## **17. Create and implement quality on-hold music.**

**\*\*Most people hate being put on hold. You hate being put on hold. I hate being put on hold. So for the love of all that is holy, if you put someone on hold, at least get some high-quality, interesting, sales-generating, humorous, informative, and enjoyable on-hold music to make the on-hold time bearable.**

## **18. Systematically create a daily checklist that will ensure that your office smells good, looks good, feels good, sounds good, and creates the overall first impression that you want your customers to experience when they first encounter your business on the Internet, via the fax, through your mailers, through your business cards, over the phone, or in person. A checklist ensures that**



**anyone can obtain the needed results, not just you! That is the beauty of building systems.**

**\*\*I will never forget the moment in 2005 when I came back from a refreshing one-week vacation with Bird (my wife) and Havana (my daughter) only to discover that one of our DJs had spilled his spitter”(which is code language for a plastic McDonald’s cup filled with chewing tobacco spit) on our super-plush, super-nice, upstairs, office carpeting. Oh, this pissed me off. And thus I went to clean it up, which is a lot like trying to brush a grown man’s teeth while he is currently chewing. As I proceeded to go to the trashcan to grab a trash bag, I opened the trash container only to discover that a swarm of fruit flies was waiting for me. As soon as I opened the container, they came out with reckless abandon like a biblical plague of locusts. They were furiously buzzing everywhere. Oh, I was super pissed. So I went down to the garage to get all the cleaning supplies I needed.**

**And once I entered the garage, I found that the trash had not been taken out for an entire week, and that it was filled with fast-food containers, chewing-tobacco spit, half-eaten fruit, and funk. MAN, I WAS IRATE! I would have killed one of those dirty, trash-creating DJ bastards if it were not illegal. But luckily, I chose instead to use a new calming method (cursing and yelling at no one in particular) to calm myself down. After I finished the one-hour process of cleaning up their funk, I hopped in the DJ van only to discover that the van was being used as a mobile trash container and that it was littered with Redbull™ cans, beer cans, fast food containers, spitters, magazines, wrappers, napkins, and a small landfill of crap. Just writing this is pissing me off! But the point was, everything was dirty all the time because I had never taken the time to write down a**

daily checklist of what my expectations were and who was supposed to make these expectations a reality.

I just thought that out of a basic sense of decency, they would take out the trash once during the entire week I was gone. I just figured that with eight guys, one of them would take the initiative to take the trash out, but when I asked them about it, everyone just said, “Oh, we weren’t sure who was supposed to do it.” And although I was mad, I have since determined that most employees (in good economic times) will only do what they have to do. Thus you cannot expect your people to do anything. You have to clearly outline what they have to do, and YOU or their manager must INSPECT everything they do. The very concept of having managers to begin with proves my point that if everyone did what they were supposed to do without a need for inspection, there would not be any managers.

19. Sit down and create pre-written e-mails to deal with every conceivable customer-service-related and sales-related scenario possible.

**\*\*Doing this will save your sales team, your business, and your brain countless amounts of time and frustration. I am telling you, you have to do this now if not sooner. To improve the accuracy of the information that you are sending out about your products or services, and to save your salespeople countless hours of time, this must be a priority to you. Your e-mail scenarios should include (but not be limited to the following): directions to your office, a customer expectation list, a customer-service guarantee, a review of your products’ benefits and unique qualities, a follow-up, a receipt, a frequently asked questions e-mail, etc.**

- 20. You must think like Walgreens™ by creating receipts and contracts that incentivize and encourage your customers to revisit your store and to reuse your products and services in the future at a discounted rate or as part of some promotion offer. Next time you go into Walgreens™, really look at the receipt they give you. That baby screams, “Come back and buy more stuff and save 25 percent off your next purchase!”**

**\*\*Ask yourself, “What would Walgreen’s™ do? What would Victoria’s Secret™ do here? What would Bed Bath & Beyond™ do here?” These companies are geniuses with generating repeat customers and referral business. Mentally marinate on what you can do today to drive repeat business via the vehicle of sales receipts and contracts.**

- 21. Create a DATABASE SOFTWARE that your salespeople and office staff use to keep track every time of your customers’ information, needs, and history.**

**\*\*If you are like most small business owners, you know all of your customers personally. You are the “lord of your sales dominion,” and you take pride in knowing everything about every one of your customers. And this is not cool because if you get hit by a bus and you go into a coma for a week, nobody knows who your repeat customers are, what they need, and what unique pricing structures they all have. And if you ever wanted to sell your business in the future, the next owner is not going to be too excited about having to rehire you full time because you are the only one who knows anything about your customers. If you are like most semi-successful small business owners, you probably have a salesperson that is really good and whom you depend on (too much) to generate your company’s sales. Basically,**

**if this dude leaves, your sales are going to really hit the fan. And if this dude decides to take your customers with him when he leaves for that next “career opportunity,” you are really screwed. This is not cool either. And finally, if you are like most small business owners, many of your loyal customers will grow increasingly frustrated with you and your service the larger that you get. The more customers that you add to your repeat customer list, the more your old loyal customers will get frustrated. This continues to be uncool. However, this does not have to become your reality.**

**If you use a unified sales and lead database for all of your customers, these issues will almost all go away. I highly recommend that you use the sales program called ACT! by Sage<sup>TM</sup>. This program, and other ones like it, will allow you to keep track of your customers, their phone numbers, e-mail addresses, physical addresses, occupations, desires, account history, buying tendencies, feedback, and all of the information that your company needs to know about every customer in order for you to offer that custom-tailored customer service and product delivery that everyone loves. And thus if you do hit your head on the toilet seat while you are attempting to create the flux capacitor, your company and your company’s sales and your livelihood will still be intact (as long as your wife can point you to the ACT! software). And if your top salesperson decides to become an egotistical, type-A, terrorist-style employee (as one of our top sales guys did), you can fire him like a cub scout’s bonfire. Your customers (and your company balance sheet) will not notice the difference.**

- 22. Create a service and product delivery checklist to ensure high quality every time.**

**\*\*You basically have to create a checklist that documents everything that you expect your people to deliver to your customer every time and how it is to be delivered with very specific detail. If you do not document your expectations for your product and service delivery, your people will only be able to hit this ambiguous and murky target occasionally, and you will find yourself making previous customers disloyal through the randomness of your inconsistency. People on family vacations generally do not pull off of the interstate to experiment with their lunch dollars at some oddball and shabby-looking diner. They generally pull off the interstate to eat at a brand of restaurant they know and trust such as Subway™ or McDonalds™. Although Subway™ and McDonalds™ might not offer the best food ever, they do offer the most consistent food ever. Thus, people are buying lunch based on the predictability of the good-tasting food, not the great-tasting food. Your delivery system must build your reputation with each customer you service. Your company must strive to get it right every time, not 50 percent of the time.**

- 23. Create a merit-based pay structure, and relentlessly pay all your people based on the quality of their job performance and not based on the number of hours they work. Tie your merit-based pay structure to a mystery-shopper program or to a quality-control survey completed by your customers.**

**When it comes to quality control, I have found that all the pep talks, charts, and illustrations do not mean anything unless you praise and punish your employees**

in their wallet (where it counts). With a properly implemented merit-based pay structure, your top employees will feel appreciated through higher wages, and your poor performers will either feel as though they need to improve or quit. Either way, with a merit-based pay structure in place, your company will never be stagnant; and you will create the “intentional turnover” of the bottom one-third of employees that all great companies need.

I will never forget the reactions on the faces of our disk jockeys when I finished reading *The Service Profit Chain* and *Built To Last*; and then I announced our dramatic and immediate move to a merit-based pay structure. Under the old structure, every DJ made a 33 percent commission on all their shows (with \$575 being the average price tag). However, under this new system, our average price tag was going to move up to \$675 (larger and higher-end events), and each DJ would make a guaranteed 25 percent commission on all DJ shows while he stood to benefit by about 10 percent for each favorable customer-service survey he received. Under this new system, every DJ would be meticulously reviewed and rated by his past performance. Disk jockeys who were found to be in the top 10 percent of our staff would be paid a guaranteed 35 percent (as opposed to the guaranteed 25 percent the other 90 percent earned) with an ability to earn a 10 percent bonus based on their reviews. Essentially, the disk jockeys who were not performing to our standards would be paying for the bonus checks of our top people. It was Robin Hood in reverse. The underachieving DJs were going to be paying for the increased bonuses of our top people. This system really irritated some plankton-eating, bottom-feeding carp disk jockeys, which I was glad to see.

**24. Create mechanisms, rewards, and penalties to incentivize every aspect of every job in your business.**

**In order for this system to work, you must mercilessly penalize lateness and religiously praise promptness. You must celebrate quality like it's the best thing in the world, and you have to make dramatic examples out of those who intentionally and consistently deliver poor performances. Telling people they should try harder because it is the right thing to do is about as bogus as telling a sophomore in high school that they have to sit in the timeout chair if they don't behave. If you want your team to see what you value, reward and penalize all behaviors financially. I believe that one third, if not more, of all pay should be merit-based. If your bookkeeper is saving your company thousands, show him appreciation by offering to pay him a percent of all the additional money that he saves your company. If your HR guy is phenomenal, you need to reward him (or her) with bonuses for each new recruit. However, if your HR guy is underperforming and consistently not delivering, you have to show him that it matters by setting up financial penalties for lack of performance. Pay everyone with performance-based pay scales, and your company will always be profitable. If you start guaranteeing everyone hourly wages (except for yourself), you are going to find yourself yelling at and pleading with lifelong underperformers. Praise your top people, and fire your bottom people . . . repeat as needed with a sense of urgency. Warning: your bottom feeders will get mad (which is good).**

**25. Build an operations manual for every aspect of your business.**

**If there is any aspect of your business that only you know how to do, you must make an operations manual to document how you do what you do and how others need to do this process as well. Build an operations manual detailing how to hire, how to fire, how to train, how to recruit, how to market, how to sell, how to deliver your product, and how to do your favorite sexual move (leave the operations manual on how to do your favorite sexual move at home, and only use it in the context of marriage).**

**26. Create a linear workflow chart that clearly shows from beginning to end the way that you want your customers to be treated from your first attempts to market to them until you have your final interaction with the customer.**

**Over the years at DJ Connection, it became blatantly obvious to me that it was impossible to fight invisible and ambiguous quality meltdowns. However, once I had taken the time (after years spent fighting invisible ghosts in the dark) to make a linear workflow chart, I found that everything became manageable and easy to fix. Whenever something great happened, I could point to where in the system we went right, and if something ever went poorly, I could point to where the problem was stemming from. It always frustrated me when I would hear a bride say, “You guys just aren’t what I am looking for,” when they did not give me any specifics on what we could have done better to earn their business. However, now with the workflow in place, we have choreographed nearly every aspect of our interaction with them to the point where our whole**



**team now knows where we went wrong (which we rarely do now).**

- 27. Once you have completed your linear chart, relentlessly ask yourself, “Does my workflow chart systematically exceed my customers expectations?”**

**If it does, you are on the right track. If it does not, you need to keep tweaking your workflow until (in theory), it systematically exceeds your customer’s expectations every time.**

- 28. Build a system that is designed to hold everyone accountable for his or her actions and deeds.**

**For an incredible example of what not to do, we can look at the DJ Connection 2004 version. During this time, the sales guys were allowed to tally up their own commission totals in a way that was designed for each guy to hold himself accountable without any checks or balances. President Ronald Reagan was famous for encouraging America to “trust but verify” when dealing with people; and I would recommend a similar course of action when dealing with your employees. Do not ever allow your people to be put in a situation where there is zero accountability. Do not ever allow yourself to get in to a position where there is zero accountability. Accountability prevents good people from turning to the dark side. There are enough Darth Vaders out there as it is; we don’t need to be out there enabling and creating them by leaving your light saber closet unlocked every night (I think I took that analogy too far).**

- 29. Build a hierarchy chart that clearly outlines who is in charge of who and what their responsibilities are.**

For me, writing this hierarchy chart seemed a little tedious and ridiculous at first. We only had fifty DJs at the time, and I kept wondering what the point of building a management chart was in a small organization. But as I went through it, I noticed that there was no system in place; and through default, everyone felt as though they needed to report directly to me. This was frustrating, but as I was making the chart, I started realizing that it would frustrate me if I worked for me. Without someone to report back to, how were my people supposed to know if they were doing a good job or not?

- 30. Make a place for everything (including the scissors).**

In 2006, there was one day in particular when I felt a meltdown coming. Maintenance had not finished on time fixing all the karaoke systems from the previous week's repair list, and thus 4 of our 8 karaoke systems malfunctioned on the same weekend. Customers were calling in to complain and to "talk to the owner," which was not fun. One by one they were ripping me a new one, and I knew it was 100 percent my fault because I was not being hard enough on our underperforming maintenance guy. After being chewed out verbally by four consecutive customers and finding out my e-mail was not working properly either, as luck would have it, the last straw was . . . I couldn't find my scissors! I don't remember why I needed scissors (probably to kill myself), but I do remember that I could not find them, and thus I was super pissed. I started yelling out (I wish I had a more descriptive vocabulary at the time):

**“Holy shit! What the hell is going on with those karaoke systems? What the hell is so DAMN HARD about repairing a F&\*Sing karaoke system? Are those guys idiots? And where the F%\$& are my scissors?”**

**For some reason, as soon as I went nuts about not being able to find my scissors, it occurred to me that there was not a place for everything. That night I stayed up ALL NIGHT reorganizing and labeling everything. I was riding a wave of anger and frustration, and I did not want to miss out on this ambition surge. The next morning when everyone arrived at work, they found a neatly organized office and a delirious, yet oddly cheerful, eccentric boss waiting for them with the good news that “everything is now organized.” My friend, your time to label and organize everything is now. Go get some RedBull™ and start tonight.**

### **31. Make a company culture checklist.**

**You must have mechanisms in place to keep the continuity of your office culture in place as you transition from one employee to the next. Over time, your people will change, but the consistency of your product and service cannot if you want to maintain viability. At DJ Connection, our number-one export is sincere “humorous enthusiasm, adaptability, and over-deliverance.” That is what we are known for, and that is what people want. If Mr. Somber wants to come to work for us because he hears that our pay is good, that is ok; but he must change because we will not. Your people must know your company mission statement, and they must live it every day. I doesn’t matter whether they know the slogan or not; it matters whether they live it or not. At DJ Connection, we make fun of each other and with each other; we crack jokes; we do not take lunch breaks; and we get stuff done**

**quickly. At your company, you must figure out who you are, and you must relentlessly talk about it, celebrate it, and encourage it every day in every way. If your current culture is falling short of your mission statement and your ideals, you must work tirelessly to force your reality to conform to your ideal.**

- 32. Make a previous-customer follow-up system, and stick with it every time.**

**Although it might be a blow to most of our egos (as entrepreneurs), the reality is that most people are bombarded with mailers, calls, flyers, and e-mails; and they don't always read what you send them. Thus, your company must develop a way to cut through in a real, memorable, and sincere way the sensory overload caused by mass marketing. How? I do not know what will work best for you, but you must stay in touch with your former and currently satisfied customers. And if you ever make a customer mad (and you will at some point), then you must rush to recovery so that you can take the blame, make it right, and find out what you can do to make sure that this type of mess up does not ever happen to someone in the future. For the record, if you show me a businessperson who has never accidentally upset a customer, I will show you a businessperson too afraid to ever earn new customers. Boo!**

- 33. Make you marketing calendar based on the seasonal aspects of your business and the American culture.**

**If you are in lawn care, don't do a huge marketing push in the dead of winter for your spring clean-up services. However if you are a landscaper, you might want to market your Christmas-light installment services on the week before Thanksgiving every year. The point is, as an entrepreneur, you must analyze your**

market and determine what the best marketing programs are and when the best time to implement them is. Don't be an idiot like I was and mail a ton of schools about your prom packages are while all the teachers are on break. Don't be a moron like I was and spend all of your marketing dollars airing radio commercials throughout the summer to book weddings (when very few people are getting engaged during this time). Sit down, brainstorm, and get specific about what products and services you should be marketing in which months. Poor returns on marketing campaigns are an "idiot tax" on people like me who did not take the time to think before spending those marketing dollars. Almost all business owners and entrepreneurs quickly find out what promotions and types of advertisements work and at what times of the year they work best.

Thus, it is time to take the randomness out of the equation by taking the time to make a marketing calendar that can be used every year to maximize your marketing efforts.

34. Make an "Armageddon checklist." If you get hit by a bus, who is in charge? If you get hit by a bus, how will your spouse or significant other pay the bills without you (life insurance, business plan, etc.)?

**\*\*I realize that this is not a fun topic, but we've got to get over it and get to working on it. Think through all the what-ifs, and make a plan for everything. If your building is on fire, who grabs what and how are your information and your systems backed up?**

35. Make an employee review calendar.

**\*\*If you are going to be implementing a merit-based pay system with your employees, and if you are going to be serious about rewarding your top people and**

removing your bottom people, you must set up a calendar for those infamous employee reviews so that everyone will always know where they stand, how they got there, and what is needed to improve. Those who are willing to improve will love the candor and the sincere feedback; and those not wanting to improve will love arguing with you one last time for old time's sake. If you would like great additional reading on the subject of employee management, I HIGHLY recommend Jack Welch's autobiography entitled *Jack: Straight from the Gut*.

**36. Create a web-optimization and web-presence calendar.**

It is simply not good enough to only work on your website and Internet image every three years when you think about. You must have a system in place that will keep your Internet presence on top of your competition and in front of your customers. We work on our website every Monday morning at

6:00 A.M. What time will you choose?

**37. Create a company budget (and stick to it).**

Individuals and businesses that operate on a budget spend less bottom line. Take the time to determine your annual company budget, and cut as needed (unlike the federal government who is fond of simply printing more money whenever they exceed their budget constraints). Big shout-out's to nearly all former presidents, Congress, and the Senate in reference to your incredible deficit-spending habits. Someday you will have to explain to me how my wife and I can spend five times what we bring in while still remaining economically viable by secretly imposing inflation on all my neighbors to make up for our love of spending more than we have.

38. Create a “customer differentiation” program and operations manual that details how your company will differentiate between *apostle*, *loyalist*, *mercenary*, *hostage*, and *terrorist-style Jihadist* customers.

**\*\*Anyone who has ever worked a day of their life in a service or retail industry will tell you that there are some great customers, and there are some horrible customers. However, very few businesspeople and companies take the time to systematically sort their customers into groups. And why would you want to sort them into groups? We all need to sort our customers into groups because our TOP 20 percent of customers (apostles) are the ones that usually bring in 80 percent of our business revenue, while the bottom 20 percent of our customers are usually the ones who haggle with us for half of an hour about price, express no loyalty, and tend to frustrate all of our employees.**

**Thus, if you have too many bottom-20-percent (terrorist) customers, you will quickly find yourself without any profits (as these people always haggle and want refunds) and without any quality employees (as quality employees only have a limited tolerance for companies that market to and cater to mediocre customers). Taking the time to differentiate your customers will allow you to spend your marketing dollars on retaining your top customers, instead of spending your hard-earned money constantly marketing to new ones. To save you the time, just remember this, every dollar that you spend on keeping your current customers happy will usually net your business two dollars of profit. Ask yourself today, “How will I systematically differentiate my loyal customers from my terrorist customers? Will I enter all my loyal customers in a database after I deliver my product and service to them?”**

**39. Create a “Family Time and Family Vacation” calendar.**

**As a small businessperson, you can oftentimes find yourself working all the time, which is great for business, but bad for “business time” with your significant other and “family time” with your family and loved ones. Take the time to write out (with great detail) when you will work and when you will not. Take time to schedule times for nothing to be on your schedule. Your family will love knowing when the next family vacation will be and when daddy or mommy is coming home. Havana, Aubrey, Angelina, and Bird” I apologize for not having discovered this earlier in my working career.**

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Help keep this chapter from becoming as meaningless as three-fourths of the content found in pop rap songs by seriously and thoughtfully completing the 37-point assignment listed above.**





(Pictured above are Satan and I discussing the idea of partnering together to create synergy and profits.)

## Chapter 20

### Partnering With Satan and Temporarily Losing My Shirt

*Life Lesson: "Temporary defeat is a prerequisite to success."*

-NAPOLEON HILL



A hhhhhhh . . . (insert sigh of non-relief, but a sigh signifying that I finally knew what to do) . . . and so onward with this new concept of standardization I went. And as with almost any entrepreneurial idea, this idea sounded like a lot of fun until I actually had to begin creating the workflows accurately and with precision focus. But as I worked all day (and through many nights), I quickly discovered that the workflows and the operations manuals that I was building created an

immediate and long-term value that far outweighed the value I previously produced myself. Before, I insisted that I had to handle nearly every aspect of the workflow/business. But I began to realize that if I died, the business would die; if I got sick, the business would act sick. Essentially, I began realizing with increasing intensity that if I created workflows and duplicable processes, I could create an enterprise, not just a crazy, high-stress, labor-intensive job. Oh, it took me awhile (eight-plus years), but I was finally getting it. So off to the races I went.

I began building a checklist for everything. I began putting copies of the sales scripts in each guy's cubicle. I began creating detailed organizational charts, pay structures, and workflows that clearly documented each person's job and how they were to do it. This did not sit well with many of the older dudes, but I was inspired to create a great enterprise, not a business uniquely catered to the odd needs of fifty individuals who each insisted on doing everything their own way. DJ Connection was going to become super standardized in every way, even if that meant we had to replace a few people. And with these new systems in place, replacing people would be easier than ever before because now I could just teach a new guy how to follow his flow chart and his sales script, and he was off and running.

In the past, a guy would have to shadow me for six months just to figure out where we kept our staplers and what the entire DJ lingo commonly used around the office actually meant. DJ Connection was going to become standardized, franchise-able, duplicable, and SELLABLE, even if it meant replacing an entire office staff of non-conformers.

And so after church one Sunday with *standardization* stuck on my mind, I approached Bishop Carlton Pearson after the service to arrange a time to meet with him about building a huge organization. Brother Pearson (the now former pastor of Higher Dimensions church) had founded a multi-denominational mega-church and a huge praise and worship conference called *Azusa*, which was held annually in Tulsa. Thus I figured he would know a thing or two about growing and managing an organization.

When we met for lunch over at Souper Salad, I was excited to meet Carlton in a one-on-one format. As usual, he looked fresh and clean, sporting his neatly ironed jeans, his brown sport coat, and his Carlton funk-soul-brutha aura. If you have not seen Carlton Pearson before, he dresses like a Christian version of Prince. Although I found myself disagreeing with him religiously from time to time, I always enjoyed his praise and worship service, his passion, his conviction, his singing talent, his speaking ability, and his ability to preach. He had the total package when it came to pastoring a church, and I knew he would be able to relate to my frustrations. Sure enough, he gave me the golden nugget of personal management when he said, “Clay, when it comes to managing people, **YOU CANNOT EXPECT; YOU MUST INSPECT.**” I almost wet my pants.

His advice rhymed, it was profound, and it was simple. Oh, I was fired up, so I boldly marched into the DJ office to tell the guys about my meeting with my mentor from afar. I think they were probably slightly disturbed by his advice because it meant that their pellet-guns, lateness, excuses, under-performance, and their weakness were going to be things of the past. For Eric Cooper, Jason Bailey, and for DJ Josh, I think they were inspired by his advice because they realized that I was no longer going to tolerate the moron brigade.

Henceforth, each day I fought the mini-battles to win the major cultural war that was taking place at DJ Connection. Each time someone showed up late, they got fined mercilessly. Each time someone failed to return an item, they got charged for it, and every time they did not deliver on their promises to a customer, they were fired, fined, or chewed out. Within twelve months, we had succeeded in replacing nearly all of the morons and underachievers. I loved the lack of stress and the positivity that emerged all from “inspecting instead of expecting” as brother Carlton had advised. And as a direct result, DJ Connection began prospering like never before. Bookings were at an all-time high, and our growth was nearing 30 percent annually. It was awesome, which is probably why I was being approached by nearly everyone I knew who was looking to start a business or be an “angel investor.”

Overall, I did a pretty good job of saying *no* to the shameless attempts by everyone to tap into the DJ Connection fund. I had one guy who asked me to invest in a racehorse. I had a teacher who wanted me to invest in flipping houses. I had every multi-level person in Oklahoma hit me up to buy and sell their energy drinks, creams, health supplements, and skin care products; and it was always pretty easy to say *no*. However, when I was approached by a self-proclaimed disciple of Napoleon Hill, my ears perked up. And to keep myself from getting sued, from here on, I am just going to refer to this guy as *Dick Bonaparte* henceforth.

Dick talked the talk. Dick had the proverbial plaque on his wall stating, “As for our family, we will serve the Lord.” He had the pretty Christian wife. He had the nice house. He had the high net worth real estate portfolio. He had the expensive suits, and he knew the financial language that I needed to hear (at the time) to impress me. We got together and brainstormed. Next thing I knew, we had decided to build a full-service wedding chapel called the Palazzo that was going to serve two financial purposes.

- 1) DJ Connection was going to be able to office out of this place, which would mean that we were not going to have to office the business out of my house anymore, and yet we would still be building equity in commercial real estate. Basically we were turning our biggest liability (my home mortgage used for office space) into an asset that would be paid for by customers’ weddings.
- 2) The new chapel was going to utilize our existing sales force, sales skills, and infrastructure to generate the HUGE profits that well-managed facilities like this have historically shown to be able to create with sound management.

On paper, everything that Dick talked about sounded good. His financial statements were impressive, and his moral soundness was appealing. Unfortunately, Dick never disclosed that he was Satan. And thus, I didn’t discover his snake-like tendencies until after we

partnered and after I had committed my life savings to a partnership with a procrastinating, double-talking, fake-wealth creating, Lucifer-stunt-double. To make this short, here is a short list of the party fouls that this demon-amongst-men committed in our one-year history from hell:

- 1) He groped one of our disk jockey's fiancé.
- 2) He challenged one of our employees to have sex with an unknown girl while on a business trip.
- 3) He showed up late to most meetings.
- 4) He did not follow through on commitments.
- 5) He did not fully research the party rental business that we purchased to provide table linens and other rental items to the Palazzo. Thus, we bought a business that was losing money when we thought we were buying an asset.
- 6) He did not return calls.
- 7) He once got so drunk that he was unable to train our team the following morning.
- 8) He consistently withheld payment from vendors simply because he did not "get around to it" all the time. One vendor was owed several thousand dollars.
- 9) He eroded the trust of every DJ and staff person we had who worked in the office.
- 10) He made my wife cry consistently due to his refusal to pay back investors, sign documents in a timely manner, and return calls.
- 11) He refused to pay back his share of the \$100,000-plus in losses that our partnership incurred . . . I could go on for hours, but that would not help you any.

The point is, I went through stress, anxiety, and business turmoil because of him; and I will never forgive myself for not researching

him more thoroughly before investing my money and the investment dollars of my close friends and family with him. Eventually, I was able to pay all of the investors back and was able to get the party-rental company that was losing money up to a level of sustainable profitability, but I went to hell and back with that demon. Thus I would not wish that experience on my biggest enemy (unless cloning humans was possible, then I think he should have to partner with himself).

During this time of stress and anxiety, I was virtually unable to sleep, and my humor and the support of my wife was all that got me through this time. My belief that you can find a great learning opportunity behind every failure was being tested big time. I just kept looking for that monumental benefit. Then it hit me like one of Mike Tyson's punches as he abused Michael Sphinx to win the heavyweight boxing championship in less than a minute:

DJ CONNECTION'S SYSTEMS HAD BEEN TESTED. DJ CONNECTION WAS FORCED TO RUN WITHOUT ME, AND IT DID. DJ JASON BAILEY HAD MATURED INTO A GREAT MANAGER, AND DJ ERIC COOPER HAD BECOME A LEADER. DJ JASON'S DATABASE SOFTWARE WAS NOW BEING FULLY IMPLEMENTED, AND IT WAS WORKING. IT WAS WORKING SO WELL IN FACT THAT I WAS ABLE TO LOSE OVER \$100,000 (spent on personally paying back all the investors since Dick did not see any reason to pay back his half of the funds lost by the partnership) IN A SINGLE YEAR; AND YET I WAS NOT HOMELESS. THE SYSTEMS WERE WORKING, AND NEARLY ALL OF THE FORMER MUCK-RAKING-TROUBLE-CAUSING-UNDERPERFORMERS WERE GONE AS THEY SIMPLY COULD NOT SURVIVE IN A STANDARDIZED ENVIRONMENT THAT REQUIRED THEM TO NOT DEVIATE FROM OUR PLAN.

The moral of the story is this: do not partner with Satan. If you do partner with someone, make sure that they contribute more cash (or as much cash as you do), and pay for a lawyer to set up everything legally before you begin anything. I am telling you, had I been smart enough to have worked with a lawyer, I would have sued the crap out of that guy. And finally to close this chapter, here is a little advice

from John D. Rockefeller on friendships and their role in business: “A *friendship* founded on business is better than a business founded on *friendship*.”

Mentally marinate on that for a moment. What does that quote mean to you? How does this quote practically apply to your life, and how have you seen it hold true?

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Help prevent this chapter from having less meaning than average congressmen’s campaign promises by answering the following self-evaluating questions:**

1. How would you do a better job of *inspecting* instead of *expecting*?
2. I will not partner with Satan’s spawn (sign here)  
X \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Are you prepared to part ways with non-conformists in the name of delivering on your promises to customers?
4. Are you willing to consistently go out of your way to praise those that go over and above for your organization?
5. Make a list of your top performers and your bottom performers, and then arrange a meeting or “little talk” with all of them because everyone deserves to know where they stand.



## Chapter 21

### **Exodus, the Stress on Us, Disclosure Statements, My Son Goes Blind, and Fun Times With Employees Who Have Biblical Names**

*Life Lesson: When it rains, it pours, and then a huge chasm in the Earth might just open up and swallow you whole; but God is in control.*



To say that 2007 was a tough year would be similar to someone saying that Roseanne Barr and Rosie O'Donnell are slightly obnoxious. The year was horrible. As we rolled into 2007, I was still legally tied to Dick Bonaparte; and thus every day seemed to bring another profit-eating incident. Whether it was the party company's van blowing up because the manager of the company did not check the



van's oil for 11,000 miles, or the evil former partner's refusal to get the tags on the vans registered (which sent me to court). Something bad was always happening. Difficulty also ensued because Jason Bailey had now been promoted to manager (zookeeper) of DJC without being given the ability to discipline the meanest monkeys. This was a dumb move on my part, which ultimately resulted in me disciplining his people from afar.

Somehow my partnership with DICK had forced me to become the lethal enforcer of all of our policies at DJ Connection. Because I always had to leave for meetings, I never got a chance to celebrate the successes that the guys were having in the office. Jason became the good cop, and I became the bad cop. Meanwhile, our son Aubrey was diagnosed with blindness (which we will get into in a moment), and our top sales guy went from acting like the "choir boy" we thought he was when we hired him to being the most difficult employee I have ever had to manage.

This guy who used to wear a suit every day (although our dress code only required everyone to wear a tie), and who used to show up to work early to get a head start was now showing up late all the time. He was smoking pot. He was crying at work. He was having people pull guns on him at his house. He was fighting with employees. He was accidentally knocking over his coworkers' beverages and then yelling at them for putting their drinks on their own desks. He was meeting girls on MySpace™, proposing to them, and flying out to New Mexico to spend three days "evaluating their sexual compatibility." Then he spent his first three days back at the office de-motivating, uninspiring, and distracting his fellow coworkers with his stories of sexual excess. He was accusing everyone of stealing his leads; he was causing Jason all sorts of grief; and he needed to be fired, which would again test our system's strength.

Meanwhile, the "choir boy" was busy transforming into a demon. The photography brand I created with Dick was generating considerable amounts of revenue and bookings, however; it was headed for a full-speed collision course with disaster because of the lack of leadership provided by Dick Bonaparte, my former satanic LLC partner. The photography sales team was fired up, and they were selling the heck out

of wedding packages; however, they did not have the skills needed to successfully deliver on the promises that they were making. Dick was an experienced photographer who had promised to create a “revolutionary training system and workflow” as part of his contribution to the LLC. Apparently, this “revolutionary training system and workflow” involved groping, fondling, division-causing, shirking from all personal responsibility and wagering on the likelihood of sexual encounters taking place. If this type of behavior is what he meant when he said “revolutionary training,” it was certainly an understatement. Every day I learned of another party foul that he committed or of another commitment to train, photograph, pay, or lead that he had broken. His promises were breaking with the intensity of a New Orleans levy and at the pace of Evander Holyfield’s family growth.

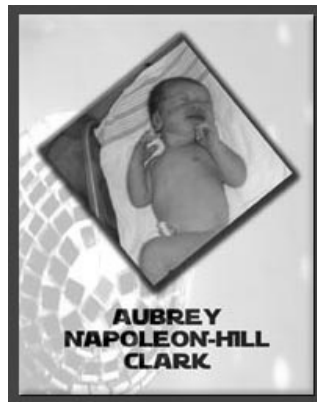
My brain was on the verge of exploding before I found out that our three-and-a-half-month old son was diagnosed as completely blind. At a certain point, it started to get comical. I felt like the character from the movie *Pure Luck* who has this incredible knack for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and yet onward I marched (because I was up to my eyeballs in obligations, and quitting was not an option. Jason, Cooper, Andy, and Josh were the lone bright spots of this seemingly bleak future. The harder things got, the more those three were developing into solid people. Physically I was getting fat, emotionally I was losing my faith in humanity, mentally I was strained, financially I was making tremendous amounts of money, but I was hemorrhaging cash (to pay for the partnership’s ongoing losses), and spiritually I was completely empty.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Jason Bailey**  
(vice president of DJ Connection, author of DJ Connection’s software programs, and player of various musical instruments)

*I was taking my family to the zoo on my day off, and I needed to go into the office to get some things from my desk; so I headed that way. When I arrived, I saw Clay on the phone (which wasn’t anything new because he was always on the phone), only this time he had a different tone with the person on the other end.*

***It turns out that he was talking to our phone service agent about our bill! They were supposed to turn on the phone system the day we moved, but they didn't get it on until two weeks after (so we couldn't receive phone calls from customers for two weeks)! Then when we got the bill, they had billed us for the month before we even moved in! So, when I walk in, I hear Clayvis yelling "I'm going to come over there and beat your ass in the parking lot unless you get this fixed!" I don't know how effective it was, but they did get it all worked out (with a renewed sense of urgency). However, I'm pretty sure that Clay can't get closer than 500 feet to any of the phone service's customer-service offices!***

As most people who know me can attest, I have never been a religious person. In fact I would not have ever gone to church if it were not for my sensational wife, Vanessa. Oh, sure, I have gone to church physically, but mentally and spiritually I had never gone to church up to this point . . .



(Aubrey at birth pictured above)

Our son Aubrey Napoleon-Hill Clark was born on April 23, 2007. The logic that went into his name is as follows. We named him *Aubrey* after my wife's wonderful and inspirational step-grandfather who is a wonderful human; and we chose *Napoleon-Hill* after the author that changed the course of my life with his practical and applicable book

entitled *Think and Grow Rich*. I was really pushing to name him Marvelous Aubrey Napoleon-Hill Clark, but my wife wouldn't let me get away with it for the same reasons she has not let me decorate our home.

When we brought Aubrey home from the hospital, Vanessa and I were immediately excited about this new addition (and we still are). I (as his dad) was very excited about his potential as a professional athlete. After thoroughly inspecting his small man-body, I was convinced that he would definitely be playing in the NFL or the NBA within the next twenty years, so I was pumped!

When Aubrey was about three months old, the choir-boy-employee-turned-spawn-of-Satan started calling Aubrey *Scanner*. He called him *Scanner* because his eyes would dart back and forth quickly as if scanning a room without ever stopping to focus on anything in particular. He had always checked out perfectly at the doctor, and we just assumed he was looking at everything. Around the time that Aubrey was four months old; Vanessa, Havana, and Aubrey flew to Utah to attend a family wedding for her brother Adam who was marrying a fun-loving-blond lady named Sarah. This event was yet another wedding that I could not attend because of my previous commitment to do a wedding for another couple in Dallas at the Castle Hills Country Club. So I was actually in the middle of entertaining a hardy crowd of reception goers and kicking it solo (like Hans) when Vanessa called me on the DJ emergency line.

Just like I answer any other call (ultra pragmatically and enthusiastically), I said, "Bird, what is going on?"

She said, "Honey, something is wrong with Aubrey's eyes."

I glanced down at the counter on my CD player to verify how much time I had until I had to switch songs, and then I repeated the question thinking that I had misunderstood what she said (which I normally do), "What, Bird? What did you say?"

Vanessa repeated tearfully and urgently, "Aunt Kathryn (who is a pediatrician) says there is something wrong with Aubrey's eyes. She says they shouldn't be moving so much. We need to take him to the doctor right away when I get back."

I don't remember what I said next, but I remember thinking, *Holy crap. This is not good. Oh man, I am going to cry. Yep, I am starting to cry. What song am I going to play next?*

I frantically told Bird, "Bird, I know that this is super important, but I will call you right back; I just have to play this next song. I will call you right back."

Aubrey could not see, and Aunt Kathryn knew it. My wife was attending a wedding in Utah with two kids and without me. Meanwhile, I was supposed to be helping this couple celebrate the biggest day of their lives. I was missing my brother-in-law's wedding and time with my wife. I had to make this show epic, and I had to quit crying. I had to get my crap together and get on the microphone to get those people jamming. And I knew that if we jammed just hard enough, I would be able to forget about my son's potential problems for two more hours. And thus, I got on that microphone and got those people on the floor with unparalleled conviction and enthusiasm . . . and yet I still cried between songs. But at DJ Connection, "The Show Must Go On!"



(Young and blind, Aubrey is pictured above with his Grandma Annie at the ripe old age of two months.)

And so after telling my wife I would have to call her back, and I proceeded to DJ the hell out of that wedding reception! Jam after jam I kept thinking, *What could be wrong? What song am I going to play next? How come none of the doctors have noticed anything?* And then I would step to the mic and say,

“Ladies and Gentlemen, let’s get ridiculous!”

*Can he see?*

“Let’s get this conga line going!”

*My son may be blind . . . I can’t have a blind son . . . what about the NFL? Does the NBA have any blind players? Maybe blind coaches? No, there are definitely no blind coaches in the NBA.*

“Folks, we’ve got some Stevie Wonder via request!”

*If my son is blind, will he be the next Stevie Wonder?*

Long story short . . . I won over the crowd, kept people dancing, and the audience loved on the newly married couple. After taking down, I drove home to Tulsa with the long-haired, former pothead DJ-in-training Chris in his Chevy, old-school, blue Tahoe all the while averaging twelve miles per gallon, which allowed us to appreciate the true splendor of \$3-per-gallon gas. I apologize to anyone whose ice cap melted as a direct result of the poor gas mileage we were averaging.

When my wife returned from Utah, we immediately hit the doctor circuit. First she took Aubrey to see his pediatrician, who was stumped, and he referred us to a pediatric ophthalmologist. We were then referred to the Dean McGee Eye Institute. Both doctors pragmatically said, “Your son is blind.” One doctor in South Tulsa just kept repeating, “Baby is not seeing” as Vanessa and I wept as he said it.

I had known in the back of my mind this might happen, but this was the last response Vanessa had expected. We had never discussed the possibility of him being unable to see permanently. Vanessa later told me she thought he was just having trouble with the movement of his eyes; she was completely taken off guard. I personally could not get my crap together at this point. Hearing that your son will never see is pretty devastating, and at the time I was operating pretty close to the edge emotionally anyway.

The doctors said, “But there are a lot of great programs for blind kids . . . in fact, Sooner Start has a great program.” Despite the appeal

of working closely with the government bureaucrats on a daily basis, we enrolled in the SOONER START program, and then we cried. When I finished crying, she started again; we made sure to rotate so that at least one of us was crying at all times. In all sincerity, crying is what we did.

Then I had to return to the office emotionally beaten down. When Eric asked me what was going on, I told him; and then I collapsed on my hands and knees in my dad's accounting office. I could not get my crap together. I cried during the day, and then I would coach myself out of crying before I began crying again. My wife cried at home while I cried at work. Bawling is what we did. We did more bawling than I have ever done before. For added measure, during one breakdown, I cried so well, that I even got my somewhat stoic father to cry.

Because my life was pretty stressful at the time, I started to develop a sense of urgency about getting things done and about eliminating sources of my repeated frustration immediately simply because I no longer had that buffer of patience to keep me from taking the action steps that I should have been man enough to have done months earlier. I told my dad and Jason that they had to fire DJ-choir-boy-turned-satanic-demon-boy-with-a-biblical-sounding-name. I also let my feelings be known 100 percent candidly to the manager who was fond of creating innovative reasons to enjoy three to four days off per week. I called DICK BONAPARTE AND ENCOURAGED HIM TO GO TO HELL.

And then the "religious" people started calling saying the usual religious things,

"Clay, God has a purpose."

"We will pray for you."

"Our thoughts are with you."

"You can make it through this."

And my doubt mounted with each call. I have always felt that someone saying they will pray for you is about the equivalent of me saying, "You know, Dan, when I go out to eat tomorrow at this high-dollar steakhouse, I am going to be thinking about you." Essentially I felt like people's promises to pray for me were empty and bogus promises from people who did not have the power to really help.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – My Wife Vanessa Clark  
(my wife, my boss, and a wonderful mom to our children)**

*Looking back on the time that Aubrey was diagnosed as blind is surreal. I never quite accepted the diagnosis; somehow I think that relates to his healing, but I'm not quite sure how. I know there is power in words. I would never say, "The doctor says he is blind"; I chose to say, "They said he is having trouble seeing." I spoke constantly to Clay about Aubrey being healed, as my husband didn't believe in healings, I think he thought I was crazy, but we were both so upset, he chose not to battle me on my beliefs. I know that I needed that hope; I could not live with the current circumstances; and I refused to. So instead, I went on day to day taking care of the kids and randomly breaking down, at which point I would have candid conversations with God about healing Aubrey. I constantly proclaimed God's promises of healing over my son. I read in the Bible when Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Why was this man born blind?"*  
*and*

*Jesus answered,*

*"He was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him" (John 9:6-7). Jesus then proceeded to heal the man. I reminded God what He had said and done and that He was no respecter of persons. What he had done for that man, he would do for my son. I continued to build my faith that it would happen. Now it was just a matter of time.*

The more they prayed, the more insincere their prayers felt. The more positive e-mails I got, the more "Go to hell" e-mails I wanted to send in reply. And then DJ Nate "Rod Stewart" Moseley emailed me from his honeymoon the following message:

**"YOUR SON WILL SEE."**

That made me look up! Who was he to e-mail me that? What a JACKASS! Was he going to surgically repair my son's eyes despite the doctors' irrefutable evidence that nothing could be done? Was he going to use some Christian ninja Jedi moves to heal my little former NBA prospect? No! Nate was not going to heal my son, and I knew



God was not going to heal Aubrey either. If everyone could just leave me alone, I could get on to getting bitter.

Because my wife is a genius, Vanessa had an undying belief that Aubrey would see; maybe she was too upset to deal with what I thought was “reality,” but she was always talking about how great it was going to be when Aubrey started seeing and what he would think to just start seeing out of the blue one day. Initially, I had not told her about the e-mail I had received from Nate because it was so offensive to me; however, one day, spurred on from listening to my wife talk about Aubrey’s future vision, I told her about Nate’s e-mail. She was on fire. Vanessa immediately grilled me on everything related to the e-mail.

“When did he send it?”

“How does he know?”

Unable to answer any of the questions, I simply told her to call Nate. She did, and this is what she found out. Nate was on his honeymoon, a cruise with his wife; and he had been sleeping in every day until on Thursday. He awoke at 7:00 A.M. and felt that he needed to “pray in tongues.” When he finished, he felt that Aubrey was going to be healed and that he was supposed to e-mail and tell me. Nate was unable to go back to sleep until he sent the e-mail.

My wife was ecstatic. I, on the other hand, was in a state of despair. So I decided that it was time for a stress-free vacation. But before we could go on our road trip to Florida, we had to go to Sam’s Club for some “food therapy.”

As most Sam’s Club members can attest, the best day to go to Sam’s for some inexpensive food therapy is Sunday (a.k.a. “sample day”). Thus, on Sunday we went. Like most Sam’s Club members do, we walked up and down the aisles scoping for samples.

“Honey, look! CREPES! Oh yeah, I love CREPES. I’ve never had one, but let’s sample three of them. Oh look! Macaroni and lil’ smokies! Let’s sample that too!”

And as we continued sampling, I continued self-medicating with food therapy. In between sampling, I stumbled across a book that yelled out to me, “Buy me!” However, there was a problem. This book was a Christian book, and I disliked Christian books. I attended ORU, so I had seen irrefutable evidence that Richard Roberts and Lindsay

Roberts are insincere, prayer-towel hawking, hope-selling, phony bastards. Thus, I disliked Christian books more than I can adequately describe now using mere words because I figured that since I thought Lindsay and Richard were phony, all Christian leaders must be phony.

The book that caught my eye was George Foreman's autobiography entitled *God In My Corner*. I stopped for a second and said cautiously and suspiciously, "Bird, wait a minute. I want to look at this book." Then I placed the book back down and kept walking. Almost immediately, George Foreman's book taunted me some more. It was now almost screaming at me, "Buy me, sucka, or I will punch you in the face!" And so I bought the book.

Needless to say, the book was compelling to me. I knew about George's extremely rough early childhood and his life history of being a mean, talented, and intense boxer. Because I am a sports fan, I knew that George Foreman had previously been considered to be one of the meanest fighters on Earth, and then once he became a Christian, his reputation changed to the lovable endorsement character that we all associate with his "lean, mean grill machine." I knew this much about his story, but I had no idea that he was an outspoken Christian.

A few days later, as my wife, Havana, Aubrey, and I drove eastbound in our Silver Jeep en route to Florida; I had Vanessa read George's book aloud to me. And, man, did it speak to me. I was astounded to hear about how George's miraculous encounters with God had changed his life. I was amazed to learn that George had a nephew that had a serious medical condition that had left him in a prolonged coma before he was miraculously healed by God after George had prayed for him. I was completely wowed when I learned that George had quit cold turkey living his self-admitted "terrible" lifestyle after God revealed Himself to him minutes after he lost a major boxing match. And I almost swerved into on-coming traffic with astonishment when I learned that George is now an active pastor of his own church called The Church of Lord Jesus Christ in Houston, Texas. Who knew? The king of the grill machine was a pastor to a hundred impoverished, inner-city people in Houston: who knew that the two-time heavyweight champion of the world is an outspoken Christian who is willing to pray for, witness to, and love on the poorest

people among us without a single video camera or media outlet there to praise him for it? I certainly did not. And with some newfound faith, I decided to pray for lil' Aubrey.

Shortly after we arrived In Destin, Florida, I started to see what my wife was seeing. The little dude was seeing. Little Aubrey was seeing! I could not believe it. I doubted, but my wife, the silent warrior, believed. I was convinced that God would never heal my son, and I wanted to be that guy who goes to church for the coffee. I wanted to be that guy who goes to church not believing in God. I wanted to be like many of the people that go to church for the routine of it. I wanted to be like the people I always despised growing up. I wanted to be a hypocrite, and if God were to heal my son, that would just be too weird. If Aubrey were healed, I would have to believe. I would have to quit pretending to believe in God and His miraculous powers of healing. If Aubrey were healed, I would have to acknowledge that Richard and Lindsay Roberts were corrupt, but that God is not.

Once we returned home, Vanessa called me after meeting with the doctor who had previously declared that our son was blind. I was sure that he would say that we were just drinking too much Christian kool-aid. I knew he would tell us that we were ultimately wanting Aubrey to see so much that we now were now willing to make up stories about his returning vision. I knew that the doctor was going to tell us politely that we were both making up a bunch of crap that we were backing up with coincidentally convenient evidence. And that is exactly what the doctor did not say.

The doctor validated what my wife had believed all along. Our son Aubrey had been healed without medical intervention . . . a.k.a. we had just benefited from the hand of God . . . a.k.a. we had experienced A MIRACLE. Ladies and gentleman, customers, friends, neighbor, readers, family, and good-natured people of importance, OUR SON HAD BEEN UNMISTAKABLY HEALED BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN A DOCTOR. God did what medicine could not. And I no longer have a blind son. Our son can see!

For me, his seeing equaled my believing! And I began seeing that all of the tough situations that I was going through were really not that tough when compared with the circumstances being faced by those

fathers living in Africa who could not work enough hours in the day to feed their families. I began to realize that the stresses I was dealing with associated with weak employees, corrupt partners, dishonest salespeople, and potential financial ruin were not even challenging for a God capable of healing my son from a life of blindness.

I was going to begin living my best life now. On the very second that I first noticed Aubrey could see, I went from impatient and disgruntled to thankful and content. It took my son going blind for me to see God for what He is and what He is capable of.

As I write this, I can tell you that my current life and the earlier chapters are filled with countless examples of what a Christian should not do, but all I can tell you is that God is real. Aubrey's healing is real. And both of these revelations have changed my entire outlook on life; although I believe Richard and Lindsay Roberts are still slightly less sincere and more bogus than a John Edwards or an Adam "Pac Man" Jones apology speech.



Aubrey Napoleon-Hill Clark was born blind. We were told that there was nothing “medically” that could be done. As you can imagine, this news devastated my wife and I; however, amidst our frustration, I started to realize that many people have had it and do have it much worse off than we did. Aubrey’s temporary blindness was the punch in the gut that I needed to truly understand the word *empathy*.

In my life, I have prayed for a lot of things that have not come to fruition. I had never seen a miracle up until then. When my best friend Mark DePetris was killed in a car accident, I sincerely prayed for his resurrection in a Lazarus-kind-of-way . . . however, unfortunately, Mark did not rise from the grave. When I lived in Minnesota, I prayed for the ability to pass Algebra tests after I had spent three years taking the same class over and over due to my lack of natural math-test-taking ability; and for whatever reason, my prayers were not met with the results and responses that I wanted. But, my son was healed. And thus, I feel the need to bless you with this story. Our son began seeing in September of 2007, but I did not want to tell anyone until I had medical confirmation that he was indeed seeing.

The healing of our son had me feeling euphoric, vivacious, and humbled. And now the healing of Aubrey has me feeling beveled emotionally, 15 percent more empathetic, sincere in my belief in God, full of faith, and grateful for every day of good health that my family and I are blessed with. You can take away our nice house (which our failed partnership did). You can screw me over (like countless people I have trusted have done). You can curse me out on the phone and call me unjust (when I fire you for smoking pot and for being an overall thorn in the side), but you can’t make me question my faith in Jesus Christ and His amazing healing power. God is still in the miracle business, and He changed our son and me.



Lil' Aubrey is still seeing now, and I am still believing. Each weekday morning when he wakes up and looks up at me with his incredible seeing eyes, my faith is again renewed. I need that daily confirmation because I am a person of weak faith, but it is compounding with stunning consistency and unrelenting vigor (like our national debt).

I don't know why God chose to heal "Aubrey 3000" (the name I call him most often) after so many of my earlier prayer requests have not been granted. I don't know why God chose not to restore my best friend Mark when he was killed in a car accident, but I do know that Aubrey was healed. And I do know that am not smart enough to fully grasp the concept of infinity, so I am trying to not get caught up in Jack-Handy-style deep thoughts about my theology at this point. I am just grateful. I am grateful that God healed my son. I am grateful that George Foreman shared his testimony with me through his book. I am grateful that Nate Moseley took a risk, went out on a limb, and shared his faith with me. I am grateful that my wife is smarter than me and has more faith than I have, and I am just thankful.



On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving 2007, Vanessa and I went to George's church in Houston to thank him for the faith-building testimony he boldly and unapologetically wrote in his book. We were hoping that we might just get lucky enough to spend 10 seconds with the king of the grill machine to express our gratitude; however, after navigating for close to an hour to his hard-to-find, inner-city, neighborhood church, we received much more than that.

When we pulled in to the parking lot of The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ about a **half-hour** late for service, it was raining with monsoon-like ferocity, and thus when I opened the driver-side door of the Jeep to exit, I promptly stepped into four inches of water thus completely soaking my dress shoe, sock, and right foot; however, armed with my divinely inspired sense of tenacity (ha!) I somehow was not upset by this debacle, and Vanessa was not fazed by the weather-influenced hairstyle she was now rocking on her dome. As we walked up the church stairs, I think both of us were thinking the same thing, *We're terrible: we're a half hour late to meet with the George. It's probably not going to happen.*

However, when we walked in to his small sanctuary, we were amazed. There he was . . . George Foreman, the guy who is on TV almost as much as Seinfeld reruns, was there preaching from the pulpit

to twenty people in an inner-city Houston neighborhood without any fanfare. It was so humbling that I almost felt guilty about my life in comparison. It was incredible! As he shared his faith with the congregation, his incredible humbleness was obvious. I sincerely could not believe it. He was literally walking in between the pews and from person to person asking individuals if they had any prayer requests. And then, one by one, he prayed for them without any TV cameras, glitzy lights, or glamorous staging. He was not praying for these people so he could make himself look good, and he was not making large corporate donation a part of some sponsorship opportunity. He was praying for people who were in need of a friend, of hope, and of encouragement. In my opinion, watching him preach was almost more inspiring than his book. I just could not comprehend how non-full-of-himself he was. I wish I could describe it better, but I can't, so I am moving on with the story.

As Big George asked if anyone else had any prayer requests, my always-bold wife put her hand up, and George said, "Well, hello, what can we pray for?" (or something similar to that).

Vanessa told him (while fighting back a few grateful tears of joy) about the story of Aubrey and how he was healed of blindness. And then Big George asked if he could hold Aubrey as he prayed for him. He then anointed Aubrey with oil and began to pray for him with sincerity. Again, it's worth repeating here. He prayed for him with SINCERITY. He prayed for him with ENTHUSIASM, and he PRAYED a simple prayer WITH CONVICTION.

As he held Aubrey, I kept thinking, *This dude is HUGE. HIS HANDS ARE HUGE. Thus, I am glad that I agree with what he is praying, or he might dislocate my head.*

When George finished praying, he thanked us for attending his church and smiled with the most contagious smile the world has ever known. I was wowed. We had connected with God and a sports legend at the same time.

After George concluded the service, he introduced us to Natalie, Monk, Red, and his nephew whom he wrote about in the book who had been miraculously healed from a coma. Just meeting the real-life "characters" from his book really solidified the book's meaning to me.



I likened meeting George's family to meeting Mr. Spock at Walmart™ in the electronics section. You know:

Me: "Hey, Mr. Spock, how are you doing? Are you picking up some batteries?"

Mr. Spock: "Yeah, I'm picking up some batteries; they were running a special, you know. No big deal. Live long and prosper, holmes."

And I am sure for Natalie, Red, Monk, the nephew, and for George, it wasn't that big of a deal; but for me it was worth writing about. George taking fifteen minutes for me has really taken my Christian kool-aid intake level to an all-time high. George shared with us how the story of Aubrey's healing was encouraging to him, and that made my Wednesday EPIC. Thank you George, and thank you Foreman family.

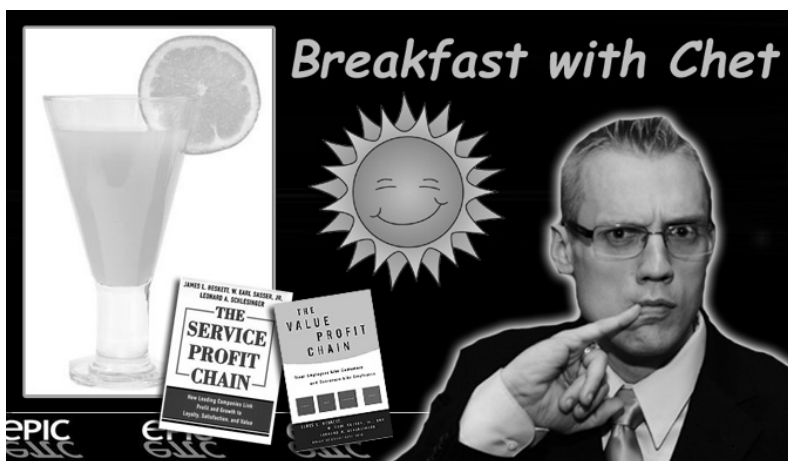
**"Knowledge without application is meaningless."**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Please help support the DON'T MAKE READING THIS CHAPTER LESS MEANINGLESS THAN THE PLOT OF BEN STILLER'S *TROPIC THUNDER* by answering the following self-examining questions:**

1. How many times are you willing to deal with temporary defeat, problems, and stress en route to achieving your business goals?
2. If you knew that you were going to die one year from now, what changes would you make in your work schedule to allow you more time to pursue your goals?
3. Determine and write down a date that you are willing to make those changes (listed above).
4. What are your beliefs on God, and how do they impact your daily life?
5. What actions steps could you take tomorrow and every day after that to better demonstrate God's love in your life as it pertains to dealing with people?

6. Do you have any FORMER-CHOIR-BOYS-TURNED-SPAWNS-OF-SATAN currently working in your office today?
7. Why have you not fired the person who is making you not like the business or entrepreneurial endeavor that you have created?
8. Describe how you would deal with a bleak financial outlook and failed partnership.
9. Describe what you can preemptively do to keep yourself out of a failed financial partnership.
10. Go tell your significant other that you love them and visit [www.biggeorge.com](http://www.biggeorge.com).



## Chapter 22

### Adding Value by Eating Breakfast With Chet

*Life Lesson: Thirty minutes spent learning from a guru is more important than eight years spent listening to the random opinions of everybody else.*



And so just like that 2007 came to a conclusion; unfortunately the year went by so fast due to the drama, the financial stress, the failed partnership, and our need to fire the under-performing, stress-causing employees that I was really unable to fully appreciate the tremendous levels of success that we were experiencing. Jason Bailey was now pretty much running the Tulsa office (the inbound customer service center) of DJ Connection without much supervision. The very Irish and fiery Eric Cooper was now running the DJ Connection

production department. T.O. (the name we used to reference the ex-employee with the biblical sounding name) had been fired, so the stress was nearly all gone from the office. The photography component of the failed partnership had been sold. Aubrey could see. My mom and dad had moved to Oklahoma from Minnesota to be closer to Vanessa and I (and the grandkids, which is really the main reason). My dad had completely standardized our payroll and accounting processes. Vanessa was able to stay home full time with the kids (because my dad was now running the accounting portion of the DJ Connection office). We had just been named as a member of Oklahoma Magazine's "40 Under 40" club. We had been named by the Better Business Bureau<sup>TM</sup> as an accredited member, meaning that we had had no formal complaints in five years. Wedding Decisions<sup>TM</sup> had named us "Tulsa's Wedding Vendor of the Year." Our sales were now approaching \$1,200,000 per year, which is a long way from when we worked in the one-bedroom apartment. The office had been moved out of our house and into the 5800 E. Skelly building. And the United States Small Business Administration had named me as "Oklahoma's Young Entrepreneur of the Year." We had a lot to be thankful for, but the speed at which life had been moving made it nearly impossible for us to take in the full magnitude of what was happening. Basically we were going through life with our pedal to the medal, and I was not taking any time out to smell the roses, to gaze at the moon, or to mentally marinate on any of our recent successes.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Eric Cooper  
(one of DJ Connection's best DJs of all time, HR  
Director/Production Director/Sales Guy, and DJ Connection  
"Utility Player" . . . he did it all)**

*In the business world there are several phrases that may come up when a difficult task is at hand: get it done, make it happen, and all-nighters. The definition of an "all-nighter" is the act of staying up all night to study or finish a task.*  
*In 2007, we moved in to the much-awaited corporate place building from the once luxurious Clark Estate, once too big but now too*

*crowded. When moving to a new location, any normal business would close shop for one or two days and hire movers to take all of the supplies and equipment to the new destination. However, if you know Clay Clark, you would say hiring movers is ridiculous. Closing DJ Connection on a normal business day would never and will never happen.*

*We did not close the time Clay was covered in third-degree burns from his vacation, we did not close when 50 percent of the city was victim to the largest ice storm on record, we didn't even close when the machines we built turned on us during judgment day ... sorry, a little Terminator flashback. Anyway, we as a company started moving office equipment out of the Estate at 5:01 P.M. on a Tuesday. We all were moving except for Josh Smith who at this point was doing phone appointments (I told you we don't skip a beat). To make the story even better, while driving to our new offices, it started snowing in March, so then Clay had a tangible reason to make us work harder and faster.*

*Around 2:00 A.M. that morning, when all the equipment was moved in and our end was in sight, Clay asked us to get the office ready for work the next day. So for the next four hours, Jason and I sat in our IT room carving CAT 5 cable. If you have no idea what this means, then I would say it would be similar to sewing 8 buttons on 30 different shirts after a 20-hour work day. After all was said and done, we made the move overnight, and the only loss we had was Clay's orange credit card wallet, which we found on top of our soda machine four months later.*

At this point, DJ Connection had truly grown from “‘me’ to ‘we’” as Magic Johnson had encouraged me to do through his story in John Maxwell's *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. And because we had built a great team who was truly committed to offering a quality product, I felt a renewed sense of urgency about improving our service to distance ourselves from the competition, and I knew just how we were going to do it. Here was my plan:

I knew that QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> was the best gas station chain in the country, and I knew that Southwest<sup>TM</sup> airlines was the best air travel

service in the country. Thus, I believed that if I studied these two companies with tenacity and intensity, I could mine their histories and best-practice processes for applicable action steps and ideas that could be immediately used at DJ Connection to improve our product and service. I had long revered QuikTrip™ and Southwest™ with the kind of devotion that most adult men only reserve for their favorite college team. My friends, I am obsessed with the quality and customer service of Southwest™ airlines and QuikTrip™. I love those two companies. And so I went out and purchased *Nuts!: Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success* by Kevin and Jackie Freiberg.

When I read this book, I had just finished reading, *Jack: Straight From the Gut* by Jack Welch, which details Jack Welch's ultra-intense journey to the top of the GE™ mountain and the amazing successes that were achieved by GE™ as a result of his management and leadership. So I was mentally prepared to grind out the reading of yet another business CASE-STUDY-STYLE BOOK. As I read *Nuts!*, I could not help but be inspired by the stories found on the pages of the book. Many businesspeople have told me that a book or conference is worth reading or attending if they get just one good “nugget of knowledge” from it. Well, if this is the case, then *Nuts!* was worth millions to me.

As I read from page to page, I could not help but feel as though God had divinely put this book in front of me to read at that very moment. I read how Southwest™ airlines only flew 737 Boeing airplanes to maximize efficiency versus American Airlines™ who was losing massive amounts of money because of their refusal to find a profitable niche. I immediately saw how that related to DJ Connection. Over the years as I was growing this business at a lightning speed to keep up with the size of my ambition, I never took time out to think about our niche. As we continually bought hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment, I never took time out to think if the gear we were buying fit our niche or not. I never stopped to think about whether the people I was hiring fit our niche or not. I had never even taken the time to define our niche, and so for the first time I did.

I determined that DJ Connection was going to specialize in providing entertainment for weddings of 300 people or less. I determined that we were not going to grow into a huge concert sound and lighting company as we had been dabbling in. I then wrote down what standardized gear we were going to buy for each system, and I came to the realization that only sincere people with a good sense of humor and ambition could work for us and be truly successful.

After defining our niche for the first time, I pressed on to discover Southwest's™ incredible philosophy of only promoting from within as detailed in *Nuts!* This reaffirmed my belief in not bringing in outside talent to manage company insiders and long-time people. I was fired-up to know that Southwest™ airlines believed as I did in the importance of starting everyone at the bottom so that they can grow with the company and motivate those around them who witness firsthand the work they had to do to get to the top.

The portion of the book where the founder of Southwest™ recounted its beginning by stating that the company began as an idea to do lots of flights for a small amount of money per ticket instead of charging a ton of money for a few flights like the others airlines were doing at the time inspired me even more. I started realizing that unintentionally DJ Connection had clawed its way into the market by charging very little; therefore, we had actually created a niche for ourselves as being the Southwest™ airlines of the DJ industry. While our competition was holding out for the high-dollar shows, we were profiting while charging nearly half as much, plus our customers loved it (and our competition hated it). Many airlines still hate Southwest™ because they ruined the industry with their low fares. However, customers love being able to afford flights for business, vacation, and to see family. DJ Connection customers loved the affordability that we provided, and our competition hated us too. In fact, most of them still hate us, which is good because I really wouldn't want to hang out with the mullet-toting, how-big-of-an-amp-do-you-have, cummerbund-wearing, chain-smoking, I-have-the-biggest-music-catalog-in-Tulsa crowd anyway.

As I powered through the Southwest™ book; highlighting, notating, and questioning everything that DJ Connection was doing in

light of what Southwest<sup>TM</sup> was doing, I also stumbled across this little Southwest<sup>TM</sup> belief that employees are the company's most important assets. Southwest<sup>TM</sup> doesn't avoid firing underperformers, but they try to avoid hiring underperformers using their rigorous employee-interviewing process. Southwest<sup>TM</sup> believes that you can essentially train almost anyone with a skill, but you can never train someone to have character. Once someone with a great attitude actually gets through the screening and exhaustive training process, they are then welcomed into a company that systematically shares its profits with its employees and celebrates the business successes and individual achievements of its people like they just won the Super Bowl<sup>TM</sup>. Reading this book inspired me to take DJ Connection to a whole new level. I preached to our guys about the continuing need to hire the best people. Studying Southwest<sup>TM</sup> changed my brain and reaffirmed a few core beliefs that I believed but that I had been reluctant to implement with the full faith that comes with knowing that these ideas have actually worked somewhere else previously.

And as luck would have it, after we implemented the nuggets found within the Southwest<sup>TM</sup> airlines book to fullest capacity of our abilities, I got a response from QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup>. For years I had mailed them letters requesting a moment or two with the founders to pick their brains and to learn from the founding fathers of the QuikTrip<sup>TM</sup> convenience store juggernaut. Finally, they had responded with an invitation for me to meet with the founder's son and the current president of QuikTrip, Chet Cadieux.

To say that I was excited about meeting Chet was an understatement. I felt like an early 1990s teenage girl getting a chance to meet the members of N'Sync backstage before their Madison Square Garden concert. And like any good Star Wars<sup>TM</sup> nut would do when going to view a Star Wars<sup>TM</sup> film (I am a huge Star Wars<sup>TM</sup> fan), I showed up early. In fact, I showed up crazy early. I showed up like two hours early. And I was so excited about meeting with him that my brain could probably have been audibly heard humming with the electric energy being generated as my mind was building with anticipation. As I sat in my 1984 Chevy (Stalker class) brown van (that I bought for \$1,000), I wrote down questions I would ask him. I knew



that he was the explorer who had found gold. He had found the lost city of “Business Atlantis,” and I knew he knew how I could get there too. I just had to get the information out of him without coming across like a spy for his competition or some stalker who drives a 1984 Chevy Brown van (strike one).

Anyway, eventually at 7:45 A.M., I approached the front of QuikTrip™ world headquarters. The place was everything that I dreamed it would be. It was like the church of capitalism. It had vaulted ceilings, high-quality QuikTrip™ logos, nice furniture (but not unprofitably nice), a receptionist desk that was being manned by an incredibly friendly lady who encouraged me to sign in because, “Chet will be right with you.” Holy crap! I was going to get to meet the Obi-Won Kenobi of convenience store capitalism. As he approached me, I couldn’t help not recognizing him at first.

He walked briskly and was wearing the standard QuikTrip™ polo shirt that all of his store employees are expected to wear. I expected him to wear a suit or to come in on a solid-gold hovercraft, but he just briskly walked in dressed like every other employee, and that was my first sign that this dude was not like most other CEOs. You see, at QuikTrip™, they also hire for personality and attitude, and they train for skill. Like Southwest™, they always promote from within, and thus Chet (the president), the son of the founder, has actually worked in QuikTrip™ gas stations himself. He actually worked the night shifts like everyone else. He worked on holidays like everyone else, and because of that, he had earned the respect of those working underneath him like no one else. As Chet talked, I tried my best not to ask for an autograph, and I interrogated him with as much tact as possible while I feverishly took notes. Here is a copy of the notes that I took that day:

Chet Cadieux Meeting Notes  
Title: President of QuikTrip™

**Notes:**

- Chet works hard at achieving balance. He reads three books per week, and he always reads “really cheesy crap.”

- He sleeps 6 hours per night on average. He's an "insomniac."
- He is very accessible to his staff.
- To free up his time to work on business growth projects, Chet "empowers people by making it okay to make a mistake" as long as people show that they are learning from their mistakes.
- Chet says, "Don't ask for something if you already know the answer." If you need someone to partner with you so that you are confident that you are making the right decision, that is okay.
- He says, "Get the best people you can. Spend money on people and not marketing. YOUR PEOPLE MUST DELIVER! Get solid people. Your people are "MARKETING."
- Don't care about what people think. "Make right vs. wrong decisions based on whether you would be proud to tell your mother." He went on to explain that you can't base your decisions on whether your father would be proud because fathers can justify things that your mother will not. Mothers are the moral authority.
- Love on your people, and they will love on the customer.

### **Business Growth Tips:**

- QT employees can buy "B stock" in the company. They can continue to own it after they leave QT, but they can only buy it if they work there.
- The company is 15-20 percent owned by employees.

### **Investing Tips:**

- Invest in your people.
- Reinvest in your own company.
- Own one-half of your land and lease the other one-half.

### **Fun Factoids:**

- Every year QuikTrip™ has an employee-focused New Year's party that celebrates their year's end, not the actual year's end.
- QuikTrip™ benchmarks itself against Southwest™ airlines.

### **Recommended Books\*\*\***

- *The One Minute Manager* by Kenneth Blanchard, Ph.D. & Spencer Johnson, M.D.
- *The Service Profit Chain* by James L. Heskett, W. Earl Sasser, & Leonard A. Schlesinger
- *The Value Profit Chain* by James L. Heskett, W. Earl Sasser, & Leonard A. Schlesinger

\*\*\*To be read in that order

### **Retirement Plan:**

- Chet will retire when he finds someone better at doing his job, and he owns ton of QT “B stock.”

### **Employee Ownership Is Key.**

As you can probably imagine by now, meeting with Chet sent me on another three-month tangent to improve DJ Connection with each and every business tip that he gave me. When we parted ways, I wanted to hug him because meeting with him was everything that I had built it up to be and everything that I needed it to be. So often, I have built up characters and heroes to be something more than they are. I base my opinions of them as people on their business successes. Thus, when I meet them, I always leave disappointed. When I left my meeting with Chet, I left inspired because he was the real deal, and he was more than I thought that he would be. When he sent me home with an employee copy of their *40 Year Anniversary*, I was pumped. I had my memorabilia. I could now hop in to my 1984 brown Chevy (Stalker class) van feeling satisfied and content.

When I got back to the office, I immediately ordered the books he recommended. I told the office dudes about how cool he was, and

again I think that Jason, Eric, and Josh were inspired: and everyone else was pissed knowing that we were going to become great, which meant that they, too, were going to have to become great through the process (because achieving greatness requires a lot of hard work). I then immediately ordered the books Chet recommended.

When the books arrived, I read them as quickly and with as much focus as I could possibly muster. I got so many “good nuggets” out of the books that I felt as though I had doubled my intelligence when I finished reading them. Without exaggeration, reading these books made the employee management issues that I used to deal with seem easy if I was just willing to follow the steps outlined in the books.

The books were case studies of Outback™, UPS™, GEICO™, and various other industry leaders. With each case study, I felt like I was gaining more knowledge than I had learned in my first ten years of experience running DJ Connection. As I read *The Service Profit Chain* and *The Value Profit Chain*, I almost began to feel overwhelmed by the excitement and the ambition that these two books I bought for \$10 (used) off of Amazon.com™ were causing to stir within me.

For the first time in my business career, I felt as though every small detail of my business “to deliver” was laid out in front of me with amazing clarity. I could now gaze into the future and see what DJ Connection was going to become, where we were going, and how we were going to get there. These books were so rich with knowledge and actual practical business case studies that they had an example that I could relate to for just about everything.

How do I market my business with precision? They had a case study and an example for it. How do I build a customer database that adds value for our customers? They had a case study and actual example for it. These books really helped expand upon and perfect the systems that Brent and the *The E-Myth* had encouraged me to build. These three books recommended by Chet instructed me on how I was going to build a workflow that would allow me to not work ninety hours per week. These books had action steps, charts, and statistics designed to show me how others had done it, and how I could do it too. How was I going to develop team loyalty and systematically nurture employee relationships? They had a case study and

quantifiable examples that documented precisely how to do it. These books truly pushed my belief in the phrase *"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants."* - Sir Isaac Newton to a whole other level and extreme. As I finished reading the books, I determined that I was never ever going to go out on a limb to create something new or risky again. I was now content to just read the case studies of those who had gone to hell and back to discover their business principles, and then I was going to implement their ideas with unrelenting tenacity.



(Various members of the DJ Connection 2008 team are pictured above . . . reading from left to right (with Keith and Alex in the background) DJ Josh congratulates DJ Keith; DJ Jason speaks at one of the annual DJ galas (for some reason people were not taking him very seriously that night . . . maybe it was the Viking hat he was wearing?); DJ Jason; me; DJ Marquess; and DJ Eric Cooper.)

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Daniel McKenna  
(DJ Connection production manager, HR director,  
and quality human)**

***Going anywhere on the road with two or more DJs almost always  
guaranteed something strange happening, or at least, something***

*hilarious. Every year there are a certain amount of bridal shows that happened in the Dallas Fort Worth area (4-5 hours away) that required group travel, and because we wanted to be as profitable as possible, group sleeping arrangements—as in the cheapest hotel to be found in the area would be booked, usually with a two-person limit, and we would regularly fit four to six people in the hotel room, with multiple people in the same bed, on the couch, on the reclining chair, on the floor, in the bathtub, etc. a la Sam Walton during the early Walmart™ years. One such situation found me sleeping in the same bed as Clay, and at one point in the night while sleeping, I got punched in the ear. When I awoke to see what was going on, Clay had taken my pillow. I was so tired that I thought I was slightly delusional, and I just lay back down and went to sleep.*

*Another time in Dallas, during a two-day bridal fair, Clay got violently sick, and Eric Cooper, Sean “Taco,” and I were busy talking to brides-to-be, so for the first hour or so, Clay just lay on the concrete floor behind our table in our booth, masked only by our equipment sitting on the table. I was giving sales presentations less than a foot away from a semi-conscious Clay lying on the floor, and brides never knew he was there, which I found pretty funny. At the end of the event, Clay was too sick to travel, and Sean and I decided to stay back for support. Clay was stiff and his muscles were so achy that he was just writhing in one of the hotel beds while Sean and I watched television.*

*He kept asking for someone to rub his neck and head because of how bad it was killing him, but neither Sean nor I would do it, for fear of the whole thing being a way to make fun of us later for a “gay” moment. Apparently he was not faking anything because later that night, we rushed him to an emergency room; and during the highlight of the night, he had to get a spinal tap, but fainted first when he saw the needle.*

**BUSINESS MORAL: NOT SURE . . . BUT I FIGURED THIS STORY SHOULD BE TOLD)**

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Thus, to keep this chapter from having about as much practical application as the old wives’ tale that eating chocolate causes acne, get down to business and answer these questions:**

1. Most millionaires spend one hour per day reading information related to their industry, business, or service (Brian Tracy). Why aren’t you reading one hour per day?  
\*\*If you wrote that you were too busy, don’t ever watch TV again until you can find a way to carve out one hour per day to double your income.
2. How long will it take you to order the *Service Profit Chain* and *The Value Profit Chain* books?
3. What is your current business’s (or your future business’s) niche? (Describe this business niche in great detail making sure to document what related items and services that your company will provide that does not fall into your business niche.)
4. Write down three action steps for how you will recruit employees who will be able to fit successfully in your business’s niche.
5. Write out two detailed examples of great people whom your company has hired for their personality and their attitude rather than just their skills.



## Chapter 23

### “A-Team Only, Please.”

*Life Lesson: “The team with the best players wins.”*

- JACK WELCH, former legendary CEO of GE™



As I relentlessly followed up on the implementation and the application of all the action steps found within *The Service Profit Chain* and *The Value Profit Chain*, I found this outraged our mediocre employees. They were upset that I demanded excellence and that I had systems in place that allowed our management team to inspect every aspect of job performance. The mediocre men got upset that we were going to have drug tests, that we were going to pay people based off of the merits of their work. They were frustrated to learn that slothfulness was not going to be tolerated ever again because *The Service Profit*



*Chain* and *The Value Profit Chain* books had resulted in the creation of a DJ Connection software dashboard that allowed us to keep tabs on all customer service notes, customer buying patterns, closing percentages, good behavior, bad behavior, employment history, promptness, accuracy, honesty, and integrity in a precise and quantifiable way. Jason Bailey (with his computer programming background) was feverishly working daily on the creation of this DJ Connection software and dashboard. Every day he slaved away at its creation knowing that once it was complete, he would receive 3 percent of all gross sales henceforth regardless of how large DJ Connection grew.

I am sure that Jason's wife hated me, and I am sure that Jason hated me; but he always remained positive when talking to me as I mercilessly harassed him with questions like, "Dude, when is this software going to be done? Armageddon is just around the corner."

Finally after six months of programming and countless changes in the requests everyone was making for the program's functionality, the new Gandalf program was complete. This program was a beast. It had "Windows run time errors" constantly, which was a direct result of the endless maze of variables I had demanded Jason factor in. And yet, every time there was an error, Jason would dutifully go home that night and fix it. This process was repeated every night for over a month. And then when we finally thought the program was done, all of the guys and I got together at the office at midnight to enter in all the old customer data and files. It was brutal, but hopped up on Redbull™, we typed on while jamming out to ultra-loud rap music, and then it happened. The program crashed, and we lost all of the data! We lost it all. The all-nighter was now cut abruptly short, the music stopped, and we were all let down like a hot air balloon that had just been shot with a rifle. Boom! We crashed hard!

After the dust settled and after the frustration and yelling had subsided, Jason was back at it again; it was beautiful; he was beautiful as he dutifully began looking for the cause of the computer crash; and I finally noticed that he was definitely committed to the vision of expanding DJ Connection to become a nationwide franchise-able company.

Over the next few months, the stress reduction that the systematic approach we now took to everything resulted in the firing (or quitting) of about 60 percent of the DJ staff. Essentially only the “A Players” survived the cut, which was awesome. A few of our guys left to start businesses that quickly fizzled or failed completely (which was unfortunate to see). Some of the guys that would not conform but who would always do just enough to get by got mad and quit, but DJ Eric Cooper, DJ Marquess Dennis, DJ Thom Clark (my dad), DJ Daniel McKenna, DJ Sean Elliott, DJ Josh Smith, DJ Jason Bailey, and I survived.



(The picture above is my personal desk area and workstation during 2008. And to quote the fire marshal’s initial reaction and comment when witnessing my workspace and our overall office during his annual inspection, “Mother of God!”)

**AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Curtis Tucker  
(former DJ Connection DJ, Mr. Personality, and  
occasional office antagonist)**

*It was the great (Tulsa) ice storm of early 2008. The entire building was shut down due to power outages when I showed up to work, and while folks from other offices were standing around wondering what to do with their newfound day off, Clayvis saw this as a great time to persevere. Within two hours, I think we had three gas-powered*

***generators outside with extension cords running up two flights of stairs that broke off to 8 to 12 others. It was a glorious mess. We still “put numbers on the board” (made sales) . . .***

***Clay was working 24-hour shifts on the regular. I would come in to work, and he would still be at his computer sporting the same clothes he had worn the previous day and those red eyes. He would enthusiastically offer a greeting something like, “What up, dude? I’ll be back in a second. I’m gonna go take a shower!”***

DJ former-choir-boy-turned-demon-spawn teamed up with another former employee, started a company to compete with us when he wasn’t hooking up with underage girls, so Dick Bonaparte had finally exited the picture. Vanessa and I had now personally paid back all the investors, and yet we were still standing, and our customers were still loving us. In the election of capitalism that was taking place every day, we were winning as the customers were voting for DJ Connection with their dollars (and their trust). The year was 2008, and we had now created a multi-million dollar entertainment business so we had some serious work to do in order to insure that each and every one of our customers was wowed with our “systematic excellence.” If something was not working the way it should have been, and if we ever irritated a customer, we would simply locate the area in our system that was in need of an improvement and draw attention to it during the following week’s Monday morning meeting like Southwest™ and QuikTrip™.

DJ Connection had now become the best wedding entertainment company in the country. DJ Connection had now had become the vehicle I needed to help me reach my personal and financial goals. I now owned DJ Connection, and it no longer owned me. DJ Connection had now become another American business success story.

**\*\*AN UNBIASED VOICE OF SANITY – Daniel McKenna  
(2008 – Production Manager, HR Director of DJ Connection, and  
a NBADL-Quality-Basketball Player)**

***The biggest obstacle to growth and to completely taking over the mobile entertainment map was finding enough talented, charismatic,***

*and (occasionally) ethical people that had the personality to really fit the mold of what we were trying to do as far as being funny and having fun, but also being serious enough to follow through with all of the action steps necessary on a show-to-show basis, while realizing that it was indeed still a job.*

*One such DJ had done a great job for a long time, and out of nowhere went rogue destroyer for no real reason whatsoever. He showed up to one show and never said a word on the mic, just because he didn't feel like it. While feedback was getting back to the powers that be (and this process at the time, depending on how strong the customer felt, could take a day, two days, a week, or more) this DJ had another show that he completely bailed on all together. Just never showed up. Which led to people scrambling, covering the show, and so forth, but it was certainly game over for this DJ.*

*The following Monday, after letting him know about his lack of a continuing vocation and that he would not be paid for his previous show (which was our policy for any DJ choosing to bail out on a show without putting in his two-weeks' notice), this set off a ticking time bomb of fury. Not from the DJ, mind you, but from his grandmother (who thought that it was unethical that we would not pay him for his previous show, even though the DJ was aware of our policy before deciding not to show up).*

*Later in the day, his grandmother called asking to speak to Clay about the situation. What started as a simple disagreement soon turned into a heated discussion, which then turned into a shouting match. Important to add to the story is the fact that we have a very open office; most people's desks are within feet of everyone else's desk, and there are no cubicle-esc walls that block the view or sound of anyone else in the office, which, of course, made this moment all the more interesting, especially since I had only been working in the office for two or three weeks.*

*While the tone of the call was gradually moving toward less-than-family-friendly, the rest of the employees in the office, myself included, also gradually slowed our work to a stop, looking at our computer screens blankly, listening to every word of the phone call. The turning point in the conversation from professional to personal*

*was when the grandmother challenged the way Clay was running the company, stating that she owned her own small business, and she would never treat her employees in the way we had apparently wrongly treated her grandson. The dialog went something like: “You are completely wrong. I can’t believe you would treat your employees like that. I run my own business, and I would never treat my employees like that,” said Grandma. “What kind of business do you run?” retorted Clayvis, “A brothel?” From this point in the conversation, the dialogue went from a G or PG rating toward a more R-rated feature, which of course, made the conversation more entertaining, but at the same time, slightly more frightening. Eventually, when a less derogatory statement was made, the phone was slammed down, and a complete silence fell over what was normally a pretty noisy office. A full 15-20 seconds later (which in dead-air time is forever), I remember turning back to my computer, typing random words into the processor, most of them not even spelled correctly, acting like I was working as normal. Soon after, Clay stormed out of the office, and when we were pretty sure he was far enough out of the room, we broke out in laughter.*

**“Knowledge without application is meaningless.”**

**- THOMAS EDISON**

**Help this chapter to be slightly more meaningful than the toast of a half-drunken best man by answering the following introspective and self-examining questions:**

1. What are the ten best reasons you can come up with for why you might not succeed in accomplishing your business goals?
2. Determine today, that you will not be defeated by any of these ten reasons.
3. Who are the five best people you know?
4. Work like hell to get these five people to work in your organization.

5. Explain why being an enemy of mediocrity is so important for a business owner.
6. List five reasons why you are 100 percent sure that my brain is smaller than yours.

**“If I can do it with a small to medium-sized brain, you can do it too (assuming that you are willing to outwork your competition).”**

**- CLAY CLARK**



(Pictured above is “The Mark” one of my best friends, my college roommate, and my close friend since I was three years old. These pictures were taken during 1999 and 2000—his last two years on the planet.)

## Bonus Chapter 1.21

### Why Karl Malone Was Better Than Chris Webber

*Life Lesson: We don't know how much time we have with each other, but “this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).*



Dear Mark,

I realize that you are in heaven right now, so you are a captive audience. And because of the “ANGEL RULES” that you are under, it is my understanding that you are not allowed to reply verbally to my arguments on this Karl Malone vs. Chris Webber debate; so much like

the Pakistani men's Olympic basketball team going up against the U.S. men's basketball team, you don't stand a chance.

**100% Correct Point #1** – Karl Malone is tougher than Chris Webber. I know that you say Chris has the heart of a champion and that he is a “gamer,” but the dude seriously showed less hustle than Vince Carter playing defense in an NBA ALL-STAR GAME. Karl is mad buff, he is crazy strong, and he is definitely a superior player.

**100% Correct Point #2** – Karl Malone is a “man's man” with “man hands” and “man muscles,” while Chris Webber is a smooth, city slicker with a weak powerless game. Now, I am not saying that Chris Webber is without strength, but all the country dudes that I have ever met are all much stronger than city slickers like me. Country people have “man hands” and are unaware that lotion exists. Chris Webber probably owns stock in Bed, Bath and Beyond<sup>TM</sup> and might be America's number-one user of loofahs and pumice.

**100% Correct Point #3** – Karl Malone was teamed up with a bunch of white dudes and a crazy short (but aggressive) point guard, while Chris Webber has always played alongside great athletes, and yet Karl has a much better career winning percentage.

Mark, my friend, and brother-from-another-mother, if you are not going to speak up from heaven with some divine insight, then the argument has been settled. Karl Malone is superior to Chris Webber in every way.

Mark, I miss you, and we can argue about this when I get up there with you—in sixty years or so.

Sincerely,

Clayvis





## Chapter 1925

### A Word For the Bird

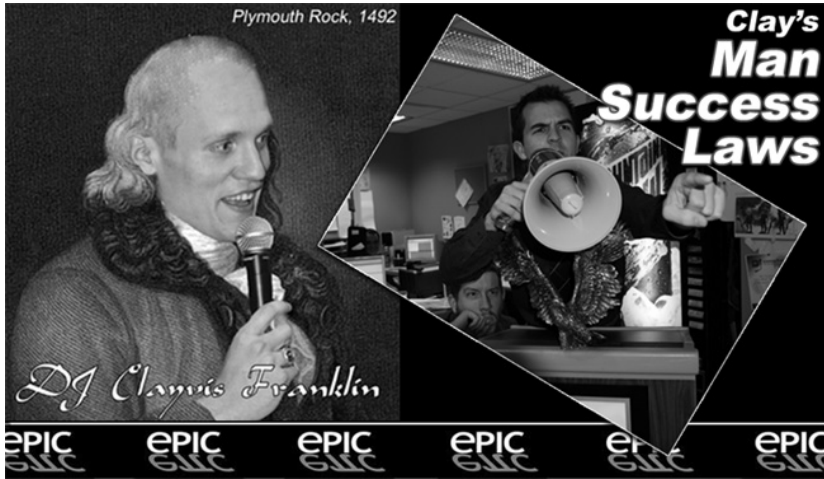
*Life Lesson: If it weren't for women, kids would not be raised, men wouldn't go to church, and every country would be engulfed in war.*



Dear Bird,

Thank you. Thank you for working at Office Depot™ to help support us. Thank you for filing all the paperwork and for working on our taxes. Thank you for listening to me complain about weak employees when you knew deep down that if I would just be strong enough to fire them then I wouldn't always be talking about them. Thank you for convincing me not to literally kill T.O., K-Terrorist, Dick Bonaparte,

and the various other partners/employees who have taken advantage of us over the years. Thank you for praying for me and for supporting me, and thank you for believing in my dreams and my talent. I know that if I were raising our kids alone, we would not be going to church, they would not be sweet, I would be in jail for murdering those that have screwed us over the years, and I would be one very disgruntled dude. You mean everything to me. And, this just in . . . I'm coming home for real this time.



*(Pictured above is DJ Clayvis Franklin and DJ Josh orating “man laws” at a DJ meeting.)*

## Chapter 1492

### Clay’s Success “Man Laws”

*Life Lesson: Practically apply these success laws into your life and business, and you will be successful.*



**L**aw #1: Dream Up Big Hairy Audacious Goals That You Are Passionate About And Pursue Them Relentlessly – You have to begin with the end goal in mind knowing that a goal is a dream with a deadline. You must believe and understand that if you do not impose the deadline for your dreams on yourself, your dreams will be dead because they will never be accomplished.

**Law #2: Learn To Sell** – If you can't sell your product, it goes from being an asset to a liability. Learn to sell, partner with someone who can sell, or learn to be poor.

**Law #3: Over Deliver** – Over deliver on promises and deadlines. Show up early, deliver your product early, and deliver more than you promised. Over deliver now, and in the future you will be overpaid.

**Law #4: Integrity** – Always deliver on your promises, even when it's not fun, easy, or conveniently affordable. Build your foundation based on your reputation so that you can exponentially grow your level of compensation.

**Law #5: Standardize Everything** – Common sense is not common; thus, you must create duplicable processes for every facet of your business. Think like GE<sup>TM</sup>, Southwest<sup>TM</sup>, and QuickTrip<sup>TM</sup>, and not like Al's Garage and Bait Shop because when Al leaves Al's Garage and Bait Shop, things fall apart.

**Law #6: Pursue Learning With A Passion** – Becoming successful is not complicated. Passionately study successful people who have similar goals and dreams in mind. Then relentlessly and diligently do what the successful people did to become successful starting today.

**Law #7: Develop Mutually Beneficial Relationships** – Only engage in mutually beneficial relationships with everyone. If you screw somebody today, you screw yourself in the long run. If you develop sincere, mutually beneficial relationships with your customers based on trust and the consistent over deliverance of your product and service, you will exponentially grow your customer base.

**Law #8: Differentiate** – Get the right people on the bus and then get the bus moving toward your goal. As you progress forward, reward your top people and remove your bottom people systematically. If you don't fire your worst employees, then your best customers will fire you, your best employees, and your worst employees.

**Law #9: Be Candid With Your Staff** (unless someone asks you how they look) – You must tell your people where they stand if you ever expect them to progress and move forward. If your great employees do not know how much you love them, then they will leave. If your bad employees don't know they are bad, they will get worse, or they will resent you when you finally are forced to fire them by your irate customers.

**Law #10: “Propose solutions, not general criticisms.” – BILL O'REILLY, political commentator, author, reporter** – If you are running a successful enterprise, you do not have time to just sit around and complain about things that you cannot control (like most of us humans are prone to do). To get things done and to accomplish your goals, you are going to have to be efficient. And one of the best ways to drastically improve efficiency is to adhere to the simple rule that you and your office staff will simply not tolerate general criticisms unless they are followed up with a proposal for specific, problem-solving solutions. Be a part of solving problems, not just talking about them.

**Law #11: Celebrate Your Team's Successes And Learn Quickly From Your Failures** – When you fail, don't cry about it. Look for the seed of an equivalent benefit hidden beneath the disappointment of the temporary setback, and then pick yourself up off the ground and get back to work today. You are playing the game to win, but occasionally we all have to lose.

**Law #12: Save 20 Percent Of Your Income** – Money is required to transform your dreams into a reality. The only way that you can create life momentum and to fund your passions is to save your money. Be like Rockefeller, Edison, and Sam Walton. Save now so that you can afford to invest in yourself and your dreams tomorrow.

**Law #13: Buy Gold** – Governments like to artificially stimulate the economy kool-aid by printing watered-down money thus making your kool-aid money watered down through inflation. The only way to protect you and to preserve your wealth from this hidden “inflation”

tax is to buy gold. Remember, your gold will never go up in actual value; your dollars will just lose their value.

**Law #14: “Be greedy when the market is fearful, and be fearful when the market is greedy.” – WARREN BUFFET** – When the US population sees the sky falling and they are wanting to liquidate their assets, that is when you want to buy. I have personally purchased a house valued at well over \$130,000 for less than \$70,000 from a panicked seller. My friends, each dollar you earn is a gift, and we cannot afford to lose them quickly by buying things at full price.

- *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* - JOHN C. MAXWELL
- *Born Standing Up* - STEVE MARTIN
- *Built To Last* - JIM COLLINS AND JERRY I. PORRAS
- *In the Words of Great Business Leaders* - JULIE M. FENSTER
- *Eight Habits of the Heart* - CLIFTON L. TAULBERT
- *Good To Great* - JIM COLLINS
- *Guerrilla Marketing* - JAY CONRAD LEVINSON
- *How To Win Friends and Influence People* - DALE CARNEGIE
- *Sam Walton: Made in America* - SAM WALTON WITH JOHN HUEY
- *More Than a Hobby: How A \$600 Startup Became America's Home and Craft Superstore* - DAVID GREEN WITH DAVID MERRILL
- *The No Spin Zone* - BILL O'REILLY
- *Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time* - HOWARD SCHULTZ AND DORI JONES YANG
- *The \$100,000 Club: How to Make a Six-Figure Income* - D.A. BENTON
- *Cashflow Quadrant* - ROBERT T. KIYOSAKI
- *The Creature from Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve* - G. EDWARD GRIFFIN

- *The Education of an Accidental CEO* - DAVID NOVAK WITH JOHN BOSWELL
- *The Laws of Success in Sixteen Lessons* - NAPOLEON HILL
- *The Millionaire Next Door* - THOMAS J. STANLEY, PH.D. & WILLIAM D. DANKO, PH.D.
- *The New Imperialists* - MARK LEIBOVICH
- *The Service Profit Chain* - JAMES L. HESKETT, W. EARL SASSER, JR., AND LEONARD A. SCHLESINGER
- *The Slight Edge: Secret to a Successful Life* - JEFF OLSON
- *Think and Grow Rich* - NAPOLEON HILL
- *Radical Marketing* - SAM HILL AND GLENN RIFKIN
- *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* - ROBERT T. KIYOSAKI
- *Titan* - RON CHERNOW
- *The Value Profit Chain* - JAMES L. HESKETT, W. EARL SASSER, JR., AND LEONARD A. SCHLESINGER
- *Winning* - JACK WELCH WITH SUZY WELCH
- *Rules of Engagement* (for DJ Connection employees only)

