

Chapter 1: The Vail Experience

It was on the final ski run of the day on that cold and crisp January afternoon in Vail Colorado that it happened. I had spent the previous 8 hours with my business partner Rob, skiing and sharing a business idea with a hopeful investor I had met for the first time 9 hours earlier.

As the 3 of us reached the bottom of the run, we removed our skis and my nerves were on edge as I tried to determine how to close our discussion. I decided to face my fears and I asked a scary question, “so what is the next step”.

The investor looked at me for a moment or so and asked if I could have a detailed business plan put together. He wanted me to come back in just 3 short days with my completed plan and we would ski and talk again.

I had never felt so empowered, excited, energized, and blindingly scared in my entire life. The tired and achy muscles that had slowed me during the last run on Golden Peak suddenly disappeared.

I didn't have a clue if I could pull this all off, but in this moment I had won.

As I drove home I was in wonder of how far I had come. I grew up a poor kid, a happy kid, but poor. I lived in a single-wide trailer in a rural Washington state. I had grown up on staples of government cheese and food donations from the church and by the time I was grown, I had eaten enough macaroni and cheese to cover three childhoods.

It was all my mom could afford. She milked cows for \$2.35 an hour. She raised me on her own with no college or high school education. She did eventually get her GED and I was so proud of her.

She didn't come from much either. Her brother had committed suicide when I was young and many of her siblings struggled with addictions. Several were in and out of prison and her dad; my grandpa was a guarded man. We knew that he had spent some time living as a hobo, but much of his past he was very private about.

I was not what someone would picture when they envisioned a successful person.

This is where I came from. The odds were not in my favor for massive success. It was rarely the case where anything had been given to me. But my childhood made me strong. I had learned that I would need to earn everything I would get.

One learns to be brave beyond what should seem normal when you are used to being the underdog.

In all of this I was proud of where I came from, and I am proud of who I became.

So back to Colorado, over the next couple days I poured my heart and soul into an expanded business plan; outlining how we would build and launch the App. I researched data, pricing, the market and everything I could get my hands on. After a couple sleepless nights, I printed 3 copies of the plan, and drove back up to Vail.

As I crossed the continental divide and saw the beautiful peaks of the Rockies, I could sense that everything was changing, that I was doing something amazing today.

When I arrived at the investor's, the nerves and adrenaline started taking over again. I was struggling a little to fake a calm demeanor. The investor, on the other hand, was quite relaxed.

He offered my business partner and me an espresso before we headed to the peaks and although caffeine was the last thing my amped nerves needed, I knew never to refuse an Italian offering espresso.

We started our ski day without much conversation. In fact, we completed a couple of runs before he started asking any questions. As he started his inquiry it became obvious that something in the idea had caught his attention or his curiosity at the very least. I was excited.

This investor was an incredibly accomplished resort owner and his investments in the Caribbean and Mexico were wildly successful. He knew how to be successful, but success in Technology was a new concept. As we spoke and as I answered his questions, his curiosity and passion for the plan seemed to grow.

In fact, our conversation overflowed from the ski runs to his condo. He cooked us dinner and I went over the fine details of the business plan. I explained every detail from the plan itself to the market that supported it. I told him about the differentiator, plan for development, operating structure and then the investment.

He asked lots of questions but made no commitments. The evening ended and I headed home. My business partner stayed behind as they were going to ski the next day as well.

I drove across the Rockies through a light snow wondering if I had made the right impression. Had I shared enough

to build his interest? Then, thirty minutes into the drive, my business partner called. I could sense in the way he said “hey Peter” that the investor had come to a decision.

I asked, “did he give an answer” with the anticipation a kid has on Christmas morning. After a short pause, “He is in” came across the phone. “He wants us to send him the banking information and he will wire the money”.

I paused, my stomach jumped and I yelled out the most satisfying “YES!” I have ever spoken.

We shared our excitement and joy and then hung up. I drove the final 40 miles home and the joy overwhelmed me. I had just convinced someone to give me, Peter Lynch, a person that had nothing from my childhood that would lead anyone to believe this would become my story, a six-figure sum of investment dollars.

It was in that moment that I recognized how powerful what was happening truly was. I had accomplished all this with a full time job and a family. I wasn’t a young guy with tons of time on my hands. I didn’t have a pedigree, didn’t go to an Ivy League school, didn’t attend Stanford or know anyone in the Tech Sector.

I was 38 and lived in Suburbia.

I was a corporate employee and I had a wife and 3 kids. I attended church on Sundays, practices during the week, games on the weekends, birthday parties, board game nights, story times and on and on.

How did I found the time? How did I get to this point? How did I become an entrepreneur?

I recognized in that moment that it was a pattern of lessons I had learned over the years. Most of them from my children! And the most powerful of them during the previous 8 years in the cul-de-sac.

I had many failures and many successes before this one, but this time felt different.

It was the culmination of a journey filled with lessons that led me to a philosophy about how anyone can build a startup. How the next great influx of startups will not come from Silicon Valley, but from Suburbia.

It will come from people that currently don't think they have the time or the money or the connections or the knowledge to make it happen.

In the past I had built a small consulting business, I had helped broker a NASCAR deal and imported a product

from overseas; but this was the first time I felt like I put it all together.

This was a real startup, it was a cul-de-sac startup.

If you are someone like me that has a deep vision to build something of your own. If you have a passion to create something then this book is for you.

I will outline how this worked for me, how it has worked for others and how some simple principles from the cul-de-sac will give you the tools to build something of your own.

While millions of people talk about their ideas and dream about a startup, you are actually taking a step.

This book is about less talk and more do.

Talk is overrated, ideas are worthless and dreams are shallow. It is about turning your talk into technology, your ideas into inventions and your dreams into dollars.

This is just your first step. The old Chinese proverb says that “the journey of a 1,000 miles starts with a single step”. It’s so true. So today, take just 1 step. Not 1,000 steps, but 1...and take it right now.

What is the 1 step to take? Simple, read the next chapter... and read it now.

You could stop and get 10-15 minutes of extra sleep or leave the bookstore and forget it, or watch TV or do something else. Instead take 1 step...start that 1,000 mile journey today.

You won't regret it, and you just may begin a journey that leads to something beyond what you ever thought possible for yourself.

Make today your own personal Vail Experience!