

## Chapter 1:

### ***The First Pillar:*** **Be Careful Who You Listen To**

*“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”*

- Plutarch

Applying the four pillars of success will ignite a fire within your heart and soul. Let it burn bright! That fire will warm your mind and light your way - you need only open ears and an accessible mind to be on your way.

Often, those around you act as elevators. Getting on the right elevator, or surrounding yourself with the right people, will raise your spirits, your motivation level, and your desire to do your best. Paying attention to negative opinions from pessimistic people, you'll quickly find yourself on the elevator that takes you directly to the basement. We all start on the ground floor, but what we do prior to stepping foot on that elevator often dictates which direction we'll take.

#### **Always Seek Facts over Mere Opinions**

*“The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.”*

- John F. Kennedy

Beginning my journey, I didn't know what I didn't know. Simply put, life has a lot to teach us and the learning curve is steep. Understanding that we all begin as vessels, and that it takes time to fill these vessels, is the first step toward a prosperous journey through life.

Let's be honest: have you ever found yourself in a conversation nodding along in agreement simply because you felt alone in being out of the loop? There is no shame in not knowing! There is even less shame in acknowledging that we lack experience. Why? Because identifying what you need to develop *is*, in fact, a development. Understand that you have questions to ask and you are not the first, nor the last, to wonder about the same topic. Remember: there are endless opportunities waiting once you accept that you don't know it all. From there, you will be on your way to knowing more than you know.

The search for facts is where it all begins. Everyone has opinions. Just walk down the street and people will offer you plenty of opinions, whether you asked for them or not! But facts are harder to find. They hide from you. They are the fruits of the

journey, the bounty from the adventure. The ability to create requires knowledge, and the number one reason people don't achieve their dreams (or even go after their dreams) is that they *listen to the wrong people*. Opinions are a dime a dozen, let's focus on knowing when to listen and when to put on your proverbial earmuffs. Knowledge is power, and gaining accurate knowledge will get you to your goals much faster.

As you set sail on the voyage toward your goals, focus on your destination and keep your eyes open along the way. Catching the wrong wind will force you to alter your course or risk ending up at an unexpected destination. Misinformation is everywhere, be able to discern it. Sometimes the difference between a fact and an opinion may seem small, but the distinction in your results can be substantial. Classify facts into important and relevant vs. non-important and irrelevant to ensure you reach your main objectives. Within these small clarifications, greatness is born.

### **Listen to Yourself First**

Many times I have been asked, "Who do you listen to?" My answer is always the same: "You must first learn to listen to your gut instinct, then find people who align with that direction and listen to them."

This is a skill you'll understand and agree with rather quickly but as with any skill, it requires practice and persistence to get better at it. As you gain confidence, you'll find yourself better able to listen to yourself first. When confidence is built, it can withstand many challenges that you have yet to face. However, when they do occur, you will be armed with a powerful skill to solve them quickly. *No one in this world cares for you more than you do. No one knows you better than you do. No one understands what you need and how you need it better than you do.* So why would you listen to anyone else before listening to yourself?

So often we allow the mere opinions of others to impact and completely sway our own beliefs. We allow the noise around us to affect how we view ourselves. Even when the facts support a different conclusion, we remain affected by opinions rarely based in truth. It is natural, *but it is harmful*. Because we take much of our self-worth from the thoughts and feelings of others, we position ourselves to be at the mercy of others.

Take a moment and look around. Consider those people around you and understand that these people, and their morals, opinions, and interactions with you, have an integral effect on your life. But only if you allow them to. Listen to yourself first, and then let everyone else support what you already believe.

Be prudent enough to surround yourself with people who *have what you want and have been where you are*. These two statements are crucial to the development of your success. When you align yourself with qualified mentors, you'll begin to see

significant shifts in your life. Mentoring is critical for the attainment of success, as no one has ever reached any significant success without the aid of others.

Having mentors will help you see your blind spots, guide you in the right direction, and ultimately provide you with honest information to drive you toward your aspirations. Mentorship can come in so many different ways; you may have someone at your company you look up to and can meet with regularly or you may want to emulate an international business mogul so you subscribe to their YouTube channel and read all their books. You only need to figure out which method works best for you. Pick the mentors and methods that best fit your lifestyle best and run with them!

*Audio:* This was the mentorship medium I used early on in my career; being young and not yet financially sound made listening to CDs (now MP3s) very economical. Podcasts are the modern equivalent and many are free to download and stream.

*Books:* This method is the most popular and the easiest to access. You also have the chance to review the content again and again and make personal notes to yourself.

*One-on-One Mentoring:* This method is very powerful and is usually done in person or via the telephone.

*Seminars:* This is an incredibly effective way to access exclusive information and see your mentor up close and personal. Most seminar attendees, regardless of topic or speaker, will walk away more energized, positive and confident about the direction they are heading.

No matter the medium, make it a point to *listen carefully and take notes*, so you always have the opportunity to return to that moment in time by reviewing your material.

Emulating people you admire gives you proof of the potential success you can accomplish. The fact that these mentors accomplished their goals and attained their desires is proof that nurturing and growing your own beliefs will yield the same results. But who you surround yourself with, and who you listen to, can wholly determine whether you succeed or not – so don't listen to the wrong people! Once you choose your preferred medium, write down exactly what you want to learn from your mentors and keep this in a place you can go back and refer to frequently.

### **Facts Drive Success, Opinions Kill Dreams**

Once you choose to *whom* you'll listen, focus on *how* you'll listen. My advice is to always listen twice: once to the *information* being provided, and then to *who* is providing the information. As an entrepreneur, I have found this instrumental in guiding my success and avoiding missteps. Call it a double-filtration system to ensure the information you receive is clear and transparent.

Will you be challenged along this path? Absolutely, but you will overcome it. I have shared my dreams and goals with negative people whose only response was pessimism. When launching my first business, I was told I would be happier and safer in an environment that was stable and recession proof. I didn't listen and forged ahead. I researched and found mentors in my field of interest. Within two years, my new business venture had generated millions of dollars and I easily surpassed my previous financial package. If I had just stayed put, allowing the negative talkers to influence my decision, I would have missed out on the happiness, opportunity and financial success of my new venture.

When you find yourself in this situation, and you will, ask yourself if the person before you is providing constructive criticism or just saying no to your ideas. Stay firm in your beliefs and acknowledge that this damaging feedback holds no power over you. Negativity will kill your dreams and stifle your goals. Opinions are always going to be there, but you must learn to filter them effectively.

Playing it safe doesn't do you any favors; it doesn't push you to be better personally or professionally, it celebrates mediocrity. And you are not mediocre. We are all capable of achieving more, so engage your mentor and be careful whom you listen to. Having the right mentors will give you direction, but you'll want a strong support system to help you execute your directives.

### **Turning Down the Noise: Building Your Dream Team**

Surrounding yourself with a dream team of like-minded individuals that support and encourage you is crucial to your success; no matter what path you want to take. But how exactly do you build a dream team? Who do you choose? What do you do first?

Google changed the world as we know it, and it all started with a small dream team, a powerful mastermind created between Larry Page and Sergey Brin in the mid-nineties. *Google* is an odd name, it has no meaning, yet that word has become synonymous with surfing the web. "Google" has become a verb and before 1996 it didn't even exist. Both Larry and Sergey met at Stanford University while pursuing PhDs in computer science. Larry was already working on a research paper for a project called "backrub," and Sergey joined his mastermind to author a research paper focusing on a large-scale search engine that would eventually become the PageRank algorithm. Having two minds converge on the idea broke down the complexity and scale of the project, and together both Larry and Sergey made history.

What Larry and Sergey may not have realized at the time is that they had just entered into one of the most powerful masterminds ever created. This harmonious blending of two minds created a third mind, the culmination of their own, which

went on to discover and create one of technology's most powerful tools. Unwittingly, they created one of the greatest dream teams in the history of the world.

Google is just one example of a dream team, but there are many more. Virgin Group owes its success to founder Sir Richard Branson and his partnership with Nik Powell, who formed an alliance with Branson in 1972. When Virgin Records was sold to EMI Music, in a very lucrative deal, it gave Branson and Powell the freedom to focus their creative energies on more innovative projects. Virgin Group's offerings went from music publishing to space travel, opening everyone's minds to the infinite possibilities available to those of us who believe we can.

It is documented throughout history that the use of a dream team, or mastermind, is the way to exponentially multiply your potential outcome. One of my silent mentors, Peter Diamandis, points out the concept of a dream team in a recent blog post about his new book *Bold: How to Go Big, Create Wealth and Impact the World*. Peter says:

*"Small teams, authority and autonomy, trust between all players, a simple plan with high flexibility to make changes on the fly, isolation from the outside, and early testing."*

This is how to create a powerful mastermind.

Peter goes on to quote psychologist Garry Latham, *"You have to believe in what you're doing. Big goals work best when there's an alignment between an individual's values and the desired outcome of the goal. When everything lines up, we're totally committed—meaning we're paying even more attention, are even more resilient, and are way more productive as a result."*

When I decided to leave my comfortable job and go out on my own, I partnered with three other people. Armed with a common goal, our minds harmonized on the outcome we desired and we not only met our goals, we exceeded them. This was my first meaningful mastermind and creation of a dream team. Since those days I have created dream teams for everything I endeavor on. They may be in the form of silent mentors, imaginary council (we will explore this topic later in the book), or real-life people. Regardless, this essential support positioned me to achieve so much more than I could have on my own.

As you develop and grow, the noise around you will often get louder. It just comes with the territory. You, and only you, get to decide exactly who and what you want to listen to. Develop the crucial skills to filter out those who offer little and exchange them for those who can offer lots: lots of support, lots of experience, lots of feedback, and lots of positivity.

Listen to yourself and do your own thinking. It is your gut, your mind, your heart, and your soul that will always act as the guiding light for your success and your goals.

### **Playbook Exercise 1:**

*Who will you choose as mentors? What would you like to learn from them? What method will you employ to gain that knowledge? What does your dream team look like?* Take a moment to answer these integral questions and write down the answers in a journal. This will be the first step in acknowledging your goals and setting clear parameters about how you'll achieve them.

**[CLICK HERE](#) to gain access to your Success Playbook Meditation System!**