

START FOR SUCCESS



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Start For Success by Jan Cavelle

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CHAPTER ONE

Burning Whys

The last decade or so has seen a massive growth of the burning “why” entrepreneurs. These are people on a mission to improve the planet or the lives of those who live on it. These people become so passionate about what they want to change, that their only option is to start a business.

You cannot invent or adopt these sorts of “whys”. They have to come from deep within you, and powered by a force and a determination that is unarguable. Not all of us has a why like this, and there are many other good reasons to start and grow a business, but the burning wouldn’t-be-doing-it-otherwise sort of whys are unique.

Sometimes, these entrepreneurs create businesses to solve a problem directly, creating companies that work on changing the problem itself. Others create a different business but through the way it is run, make changes to lives and the planet. We see more and more people dedicating themselves to make the world a better place.

These burning whys can move mountains and I am sharing a couple of stories here to show you what is possible.

Two Daft Laddies

By his own description, Jeremie Warner and his original co-founder were just, “a couple of daft laddies from Glasgow”. As part of his training to be an architect, Jeremie worked on a building job in Singapore. They were creating houses for multi-millionaires, yet Jeremie could see that the people working on the site had no shoes. The contrast sickened him.

Jeremie returned to Glasgow and changed the Master’s he was studying to a social one, choosing to do a dissertation in Senegal. Jeremie spent some time there, studying what impacted people’s lives the most. He found out for himself how hard life was in Senegal, following a tribal dinner and some dubious tripe that led to him being taken to the health centre on a drip, on the back of a donkey cart.

The villages had no electricity. It was a 40 km round trip to power up Jeremie’s laptop and the lack of electricity had a more significant impact: there was no light once the sun had gone down. Jeremie realized that when his child cried at night in Glasgow, he could put on a light, yet this was a luxury none of these parents had. Schooling and homework were restricted, impacting long-term education and having knock-on effects that lasted for the rest of their lives.

Jeremie’s solution was to start a mobile phone accessories company called Power a Life. With every product they sell, they give a free solar light to a child in a developing country. For every child they empower, family members also benefit from solar lighting. While they had to reduce their targets during the pandemic, they still aim to have empowered 10,000 children by 2022.

It is still a phenomenal impact from one single entrepreneur. Yet Jeremie was not qualified in business, and his journey has been fraught with problems. At the start, their first investment

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deal collapsed, and they had to close the company. His original co-founder dropped out, but Jeremie kept going solo, maintaining an income by driving a pizza van till he could revive his dream. There are easier ways to make money, but it was never about that. His burning “why” kept him going.

A story of tragedy, hope, and a dream

Canadian entrepreneur Harold Punnett DMD describes the origins of his business as “a story of tragedy, a hope, and a dream, and one for which the end is yet to be written.”

In March 2016, his daughter-in-law, Codi, suffered a tragic fall and became a complete T-11 paraplegic. At only 29 years old, she had lost all movement and sensation below her belly button. It was a devastating time for her and her husband, Ian, and their three young children. They were all in a state of shock, and Harold says that he would find himself wandering the house at 3 a.m.

In a moment of clarity, he spoke what he was thinking aloud,

“I have to fix this, I have to help Codi.” He knew it was crazy, but he felt compelled to try.

Despite the hour of the night, he went to his computer and typed “spinal cord injury” into the search engine. Harold has a medical background that made accessing the science easier and he deep-dived, contacting scientists all over the world. He knew that potential investors would not be interested in anything without a short-term return. Harold had, therefore, set criteria to find revolutionary solutions that were only years, not decades away. Results were profoundly discouraging.

After extensive searching, Harold found the technology in the research of Dr. Jerry Silver of Case Western Reserve University. He had discovered what they now know to be the prime inhibitor of nerve repair after injury and how to turn that inhibitor off. Harold quickly realized this discovery’s potential to

help with neurodegenerative diseases and injuries such as SCI, MS, strokes, traumatic brain injury and peripheral nerve injury, Alzheimer's, and more. **24**

Within four years, Harold founded a start-up, NervGen Pharma, raised the investment, and NervGen's lead product soon went into clinical trials. Harold says that during the last five years, he has learned that the impossible is not in fact impossible and dreams can become reality. He has discovered that it is possible to inspire others to see your vision, and together, perhaps change the future of millions of people.

Whys that make the Impossible Possible

These are two very different people and two very different stories. Jeremie created a product from which he could fund solutions to the problem. Harold set out to tackle his problem directly. Both leapt into fields they knew little or nothing about, but neither of them stopped – not even for an instant. Their determination to change lives was so strong that they set out to achieve the impossible without a second thought. They were not deterred when setbacks hit; their goals were so important that they did not waiver.

Even if you are an entrepreneur with a mission that is that important to you, obstacles are not necessarily easy to overcome – but your perseverance and determination to succeed are what gives you the strength to do just that. They give you that belief.

While every little bit helps, the more you succeed with your business, the more positive impact you will have on others and the planet, and the greater good you can achieve.

