

An Entrepreneur's Advice to College Graduates

Thursday, 24 May 2012

Entrepreneurs are an ambitious bunch.

To be able to take chances and not let anyone get in the way of your dreams says a lot about a person's character. These are the kind of people that don't let rejection interfere with the path to success.

Don't let rejection get in the way of dreams and success: Even Michael Jordan was once cut from his high school basketball team. He used failure as a motivation for success.

What do you think of when you hear the word entrepreneur?

Self-starter, self-made ' people who took things into their own hands and took control of their lives.

You need to take this proactive approach upon graduating from college. Not saying you need to start your own business here, but make things happen, take chances (like an entrepreneur would), embrace vulnerability, and think outside the box when it comes to landing that desired position/job.

Successful entrepreneurs are looked up to because they took big risks, overcame obstacles, and succeeded when it wasn't supposed to happen. They showed the ability to adapt and change and had the strength within themselves to overcome market obstacles and turn it into success.

We look up to and draw inspiration from successful entrepreneurs and find their advice highly motivational. This list of motivational graduation speeches is full of successful entrepreneurs offering their advice.

One of the more well-known graduation speeches from that list is a very inspirational speech given by Steve Jobs at the 2005 Stanford commencement. He basically says the key to success and your career is to find your passion.

"You've got to find what you love." - Steve Jobs

Video: Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Speech

But that's not enough according to another successful entrepreneur, Reid Hoffman, founder of career networking site LinkedIn.

He suggests finding a match between your passions and the market realities.

Video: Advice for College Graduates

Video: Reid Hoffman: roadmap to your success

After College and Beyond

According to Hoffman, you have to approach your career like an entrepreneur.

Meaning: Invest in yourself, build assets/skills, always be learning and evolving.

These are the ideas presented in his recent book, *The Start-Up of You*.

In order to conquer the job market, you need to “anticipate the change in the world, as well as the change in yourself.”

What does this mean?

- Adapt and build yourself for the future through improvement, continuous learning, and adding assets that give you a competitive advantage over others in the job market.
- Be able to evolve and be flexible with your career plans as market conditions change, and as you experience changes in yourself.

“You are not a finished product. If you don't keep evolving, you start dying.”

Take intelligent risks

Win or lose, taking small gambles improve you and your career. In taking risks, you have to be comfortable with not succeeding. Sometimes it's disappointing, sometimes it's embarrassing, and that's OK, it becomes a learning experience. So go ahead, make yourself vulnerable and take a chance.

"Behind every flinch is a fear or an anxiety - sometimes rational, sometimes not. Without the fear, there is no flinch. But wiping out the fear isn't what's important - facing it is."

- Julien Smith, The Flinch

*It's important to note that many successful entrepreneurs stepped out of their element and took risks to get where they are today. If something doesn't work, keep trying.

Look at the story of Colonel Sanders.

Colonel Sanders didn't give up, even with his age. Here was a man in his mid-60s who spent two years driving across America in an old, beat-up car, sleeping in the back seat in his white suit, getting up each day armed with his secret spice mixture in search of business partners.

Knowing he had a great tasting chicken recipe, he withstood over 1,000 rejections before finally finding a restaurant that was willing to work with him.

He went on to sell the business (KFC) and make millions.

Per•se•ver•ance: continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.

Say Yes to New Opportunities

Say yes to opportunities that can be a breakout for you. This can lead to changes in yourself that you will only learn through the discoveries of going down the unknown path. Take risks that can lead to new (career) opportunities, provide new experiences, expose you to new environments, and can differentiate yourself from the crowd.

"All growth is a leap in the dark, a spontaneous, unpremeditated act without benefit of experience."

- Henry Miller

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

- Mark Twain

Find your competitive advantage

You have to give yourself a competitive advantage over your peers. You have to invest in yourself by continuously adding new skills that sets you apart from the competition.

Examples

This can be:

- Taking a public speaking class.
- Learning how to type faster.
- Learning how to speed read.
- Creating a top-notch professional looking resume that really sells you.
- Getting added experience over your peers through internships.

Adapt to the Future

Ask yourself the following questions regarding your career path:

- What can you do to build soft assets?
- What skills or relationships can you improve that will be beneficial to your career?
- What are some things you can do to step out of your comfort zone and take intelligent risks that could lead to a breakout (experience) for you?

Be Bold

Try Something New and Innovative

“Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.” - Steve Jobs

Do something no one else has ever done or tried before. Whether it works or not, it will be a learning experience.

Two great examples:

- The Job Shadowing Project: 60 Jobs in 60 Days

In an effort to decide on a career path, Michael Warshafsky of Queen’s University, completed a project where he job shadowed 60 people in 60 days. The experience helped him find his passion: he really enjoyed job shadowing for both an optometrist and a dentist. “I could definitely see myself doing either of those careers and I probably wouldn't have

known that without doing 60 jobs in 60 days.”

The project was a learning experience. Not only did it give him a deep understanding of what many professionals do every day, he came out with some great business contacts. Talking and meeting with these professionals enhanced his interview skills and got him comfortable with the practice thanks to the project.

Another valuable tip he learned: people will want to help you if you take the time to reach out in an honest way. Meaning if you know someone working in your intended career field, feel free to reach out, ask questions, and get advice.

- The Google Job Experiment

In an innovative way to score job interviews, Alec Brownstein placed Google ads for the names of top creative directors at major marketing and advertising agencies in NYC. When these top creative directors Googled themselves, they received a personalized ad from Alec asking them for a job. He ran ad campaigns on five directors, received interviews with four of them, and received two job offers. After a mere \$6 investment, he is now employed at one of the top agencies in New York.

Brownstein's advice for others:

“Don't be afraid to put yourself out there in an interesting way.”

Show your Focus

Many students enjoy the social aspects of going to college, although many are too consumed with finding the next party, get together, or whatever it may be so long that it involves some type of alcoholic drink. While a little R&R is good every now and then, if one simply showed this kind of focus, attention, and detail to their future career, amazing things would happen.

Ask:

- When is the next career fair?
- Where can I go for more help in perfecting my resume?
- What can I do to get my foot in the door at _____ company?
- Who in my prospective career field can I go to for advice on my future prospects?
- What can I do to separate myself from the thousands of other peers who hold the same degree and are fighting for the same jobs I am?

Limit Distractions to Gain Clarity

You have access to a lot of information and resources on the web, so don't waste your precious time by checking email and facebook 100 times a day.

It is easier than you think to find a career in something you love - set your mind to it - take some time to think and self-reflect. It's amazing what the mind can accomplish when you're actually able to listen to it - Get away from the distraction of TV, Internet and facebook and take time to think of something that could work for you. Try it! And if you fail, try again.

"There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure."

- Paulo Coelho

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." - Albert Einstein

Don't lose touch with yourself

Embrace your uniqueness and who you are as a person. America is too consumed with the crowd factor; don't be a follower, be the one that goes down the new path. Be different, be yourself, don't be afraid to let your personality shine through - People who are different are talked about. Being who you are, rather than adapting to a fake persona or the crowd mentality is going to be what gets you ahead. Forget the status quo.

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

- Steve Jobs

Think and stay positive

It is important to stay positive during the job search process. At times it can be frustrating - Turn that frustration into deeper motivation that lights a fire under your ass. Stay focused and keep your eye on the prize. Don't lash out with the fact that your future is unknown. Don't forget who your true friends are. Don't forget who loves you. Realize what you have, rather than what you don't have. Keeping this positive mental attitude is what helps you advance forth during these times.

"A man is but the product of his thoughts what he thinks, he becomes." - Gandhi

"The only place where your dream becomes impossible is in your own thinking."

- Robert Schuller

In General/Conclusion:

- Hustle, try and keep trying (don't give up regardless of how many times you fail), take risks, show no fear, and Say Yes.

- Do what you want to do and don't let anyone get in the way of your dreams.
- Keep on improving - Always be learning.
- Embrace the unexpected (vulnerability/be vulnerable).
- Don't be ashamed of being an unemployed/underemployed graduate...your time is coming (with a little hustle, hard work, luck, and saying yes to new opportunities).
- Embrace your individuality. Never lose touch with yourself. Stay true to your morals.
- Stay positive. Think positive. Keep in control. Be friendly. Be a good person.

Quotes for Inspiration

"Playing to win is one of the finest things you can do. It enables you to fulfill your potential. It enables you to improve the world and, conveniently, develop high expectations for everyone else too. And what if you lose? Just make sure you lose while trying something grand. The unexamined life may not be worth living, but the un-lived life is not worth examining. Make sure your life is worth examining."

- Guy Kawasaki

"Always go with the choice that scares you the most, because that's the one that is going to require the most from you."

- Caroline Myss

"We would accomplish many more things if we did not think of them as impossible."

- Vince Lombardi

"The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours – it is an amazing journey – and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins."

- Bob Moawad

"It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."

- Teddy Roosevelt

"It is never too late to be what you might have been." - George Eliot

"Don't wait. The time will never be just right." - Napoleon Hill

"Before success comes in any man's life, he's sure to meet with much temporary defeat and, perhaps some failures. When defeat overtakes a man, the easiest and the most logical thing to do is to quit. That's exactly what the majority of men do."

- Napoleon Hill

"Whether you think you can or you can't, you are right." - Henry Ford

"Everything you want should be yours: the type of work you want; the relationships you need; the social, mental, and aesthetic stimulation that will make you happy and fulfilled; the money you require for the lifestyle that is appropriate to you; and any requirement that you may (or may not) have for achievement or service to others. If you don't aim for it all, you'll never get it all. To aim for it requires that you know what you want."

- Richard Koch

Quotes from Steve Jobs' 2005 commencement speech

[Full transcript here](#)

"You have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

"You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle."

"When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right." It made an impression on me, and since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" And whenever the answer has been "No" for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something."

"Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish." - Steve Jobs

Recommended Reading

- Think and Grow Rich

- The Education of Millionaires

Recommended Links

- 8 Steps to Getting What You Want Without Formal Credentials
- 5 Ways to Get Me to Hire You
- Graduation Resources

TED Talks

- The Power of Vulnerability
- Try Something New for 30 Days