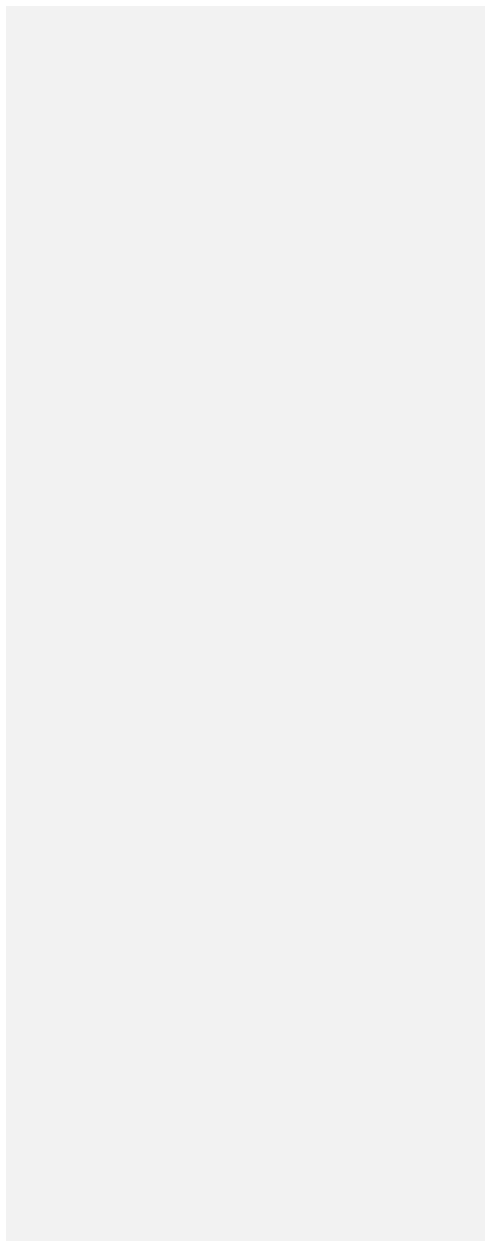


Building
your
BRAND



For Jorja, Caden, Evan, and Jamaal who are my A-Team;
you are the purpose behind my everything.

Building
your
BRAND



Make Business Happen
in a Global Economy

Building Your Brand: Make Business Happen in a Global Economy

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Also by Allison K. Summers

Books

*Connect to Influence: How to Leverage Relationships
for a Lifetime of Career Success*

*Voices of the 21st Century: Bold, Brave, and Brilliant Women
Who Make a Difference* (contributor)

Podcast

Disruptive CEO Nation



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INTRODUCTION

I love a good business story. Place me in the middle of a room with amazing, interesting people and I will savor every exchange as if someone has given me a gift greater than gold. My curiosity drives me to know the details behind their personal journey, the barriers, the success points, and the insider secrets. I am like a honeybee collecting pollen so I can fly away home and turn the new information into something beautiful and valuable.

Early in life, I learned to respect the knowledge that other people have, and I figured out that if I applied their tactics in even the least bit, it would add to my own success.

I have been so blessed in my career because I have encountered rather extraordinary individuals in many unique ways. I have met past presidents and prime ministers of South Africa, New Zealand, and the UK; conversed with a mayor of Beijing and princes in Africa; sat with government ministers in India, Egypt, and Argentina; and worked with inspiring individuals who have founded their own companies in countless countries. Through those conversations I have heard fantastic stories and gained remarkable insights.

Looking back, I do not know if I would have appreciated all those experiences if I was not still completely surprised where life has taken me. After all, there was no roadmap designed for me with a big 'success' star at the destination. Growing up, my parents were not college educated. In fact they stretched every

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

dollar while waiting on the next paycheck. There was an example of struggle not abundance. But they did do something right; they encouraged my sister and me to go to college. I went off to be a teacher because at the time it seemed the only other option for me was nursing. But while I started a career as a shy young woman teaching six-year-olds how to read and do math, by a twist of fate I moved, and when I could not get a new teaching job, I ‘fell’ into business.

My first business role was a temporary position doing data entry at an auto show and event marketing company outside Detroit, Michigan. It was not glamorous (truth be told most days involved a lot of Wite-Out, photocopies, and loud union guys) but to me it became magical as I discovered I was good at catching on quickly and building relationships. This short-term stint turned into a full-time role and for once I had a taste of a decent paycheck. After that I was on a quest to figure out how to make more money and get an office with a window. In my early career years, I worked for that company in three different states, and racked up incredible branding, marketing, operations, and new business development skills that led the way for even greater things to come. I became the perfect intrapreneur, growing companies, launching product lines, and eventually leading from the top.

I am still completely astonished that I managed to turn a temporary job into a springboard for a fantastic business journey that has connected me to clients in 90 countries and allowed me to work heels on the ground in over 30.

My story is why I believe that with the right energy and focus, *all individuals* who are hungry can become undeniably successful at whatever they set their mind to with the right insight and support. It is also why I believe **better business**

INTRODUCTION

knowledge drives better business results, and even at this stage in my life, I am still trying to learn new business strategies every day.

In 2018, I began the *Disruptive CEO Nation* podcast project to combine two things I hold in high regard: 1) the personal stories of company founders and thought leaders who are driving business today and 2) global conversations that demonstrate just how small the world has become.

This book, *Building Your Brand: Make Business Happen in a Global Economy*, is a culmination of my experiences and connections to truly incredible business minds who are driving disruption, innovation, and technology. Those who understand that the expectations and voice of the customer change the landscape almost daily, and that brands must be on point and transparent from the ‘front door to the back door’ of their operations. That a brand can no longer be a one-dimensional face because what happens on the inside matters just as much as the engineered marketing you want the world to see.

What I hope to provide for you is a way to structure your thinking about your business – the one you are starting, the one you are working in, or the one that you hope to launch in the future.

We know businesses commonly fail for two reasons:

- The first is simple. The potential customer simply does not want what you are selling.
- The second is that the leader is tripped up by a blind spot they cannot recover from.
-

Use this book to help you think about your brand promise, your business ecosystem, and how to cover your blind spots.

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

I hope someday we can meet, and I can learn from your own amazing business story. Please find me on LinkedIn so we can follow and support each other's journeys.

Cheers to your success!



1

Entry Point

Every business has a founder, but not all founders are suited to navigate their way to success. So what separates the entrepreneurs who can move their companies forward from the ones whose companies fade away? What does it take to build an engaging and enduring brand?

This book offers a study of what success has looked like for individuals building companies across a variety of industries, from tech to manufacturing and from fashion to being entertained by drag queens. The companies featured in these pages have been developed by people who invested their savings and massive energy to achieve amazing results through incredible innovation and determination.

And you can do it too.

Building Your Brand is not filled with complex terms or statistical data. What I have poured into these pages is over 30 years of learned practical business advice matched with great business stories from people who have made their dreams happen.

My goal is that the words here will help you think ahead and develop strategy as you build your own unique brand story and navigate your way to success as you have defined it.

Business building is not for the weak

BUILDING YOUR BRAND

The reality of how you achieve business prosperity is not all that sexy. In fact, after interviewing more than 100 company founders and thought leaders through the *Disruptive CEO Nation* podcast project, I am convinced that building a sustainable, profitable business anywhere in the world is a natural outcome of three things: fundamentals, focus, and follow through.

Through applying balanced business practices, exercising determination, and keeping your eye on the cashflow and desired outcomes, you will move the dial forward on the long-term health of your company. However, an amazing founder also knows when to take calculated risk and parlay it into opportunity.

Consider the story of Jillian who at 28 years old sold everything she owned and maxed out credit cards to open her first gym with a partner. She turned to clients to be angel investors, promising to pay back investments in personal training if the business went under. But confident that she had done her diligence of acquiring fitness and nutrition certifications, building a loyal customer base, and learning the business ins and out at other facilities; she jumped into the deep end of business ownership.

Looking back, Jillian has shared that it may have been a terrible idea to take on that level of debt and risk, but she had been willing to put it all on the line in pursuit of her amazing. That first business was Sky Sport and Spa. Jillian was able to apply the fundamentals of focus and follow-through to develop a powerful business ecosystem that would serve her well. This first gym was only the beginning, as she kept on with her determination and business building to become a recognized global brand in her right.

ENTRY POINT

This is the story of Jillian Michaels, owner and co-founder of Empowered Media, LLC (USA) whose fitness methods have permeated their way into millions of homes through DVDs, best-selling books, apps, streaming services, and more. But I ask you to consider this: While it is easy to look at Jillian today and recognize all that she has achieved, she too had to start somewhere and navigate her way through hard lessons and tough financial truths. She was not an overnight success. Her business empire was built piece by piece where she made adjustments and realignments along the way with a primary goal to give her customers visible and tangible results that would earn her peer-to-peer endorsements. She once said to me, “If you deliver on this promise, not only do you have a repeat customer, you have a ‘before and after’ - a living, breathing, walking, talking review.”

The start of amazing begins with many questions

All concepts and products start off as an idea. Sometimes the idea grows softly, rolling around in a person’s mind, crossing back and forth between doubt and possibility. Sometimes the idea springs forth loudly and demands urgent attention to become a reality.

All business creators move through the same initial questions no matter their pace:

- How will I get it off the ground?
- What do I need to know about legal structure, taxes, and trademarks?
- What will the start-up costs be?
- Do I bootstrap and move slow or need investors to accelerate fast?
- Where do I turn to secure the technology?

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