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Special Thanks to "MJ" – a truly inspirational "I-ntreprenuer"

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**Intrepeneur** (*intrupru'nur*, n. ) One who organises an Internet Venture and assumes the risks for it ; risk-taking businessperson : someone who sets up and finances new Internet enterprises to make a profit

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The banner features a blue background with a globe on the right and a stylized circuit board on the left. The text "the 'must have' secrets of an internet entrepreneur" is at the top left, and "Intrepeneurs Notebook" is in the center in a white, serif font.

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How would you like to "look over the shoulder" of someone who's been setting up Internet ventures for the last five years?

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## **Introduction**

This is a truly inspirational story.

The story of **MJ** : a man who was determined to make it as an entrepreneur . . . the trials, the tribulations, the setbacks . . . and finally - the glory!

The first time I read it I was captivated - there were so many similarities with my own life (we're even the same age!) that I was amazed.

But **this is more than just a story**, as you will see.

It highlights important lessons for succeeding online - and it will open up new ways of thinking. The first time I read it, I had difficulty sleeping that night - my mind was just buzzing with the new possibilities.

Note: Although MJ has "bared his soul", he is a private man. Therefore we have protected his identity by calling him MJ.

## **How to use this**

At suitable points in the story, we've interjected to highlight something important : a key success trait or maybe a way of thinking.

At other points, we've highlighted key tools & resources you can use to 'accelerate' your journey to becoming an Intreprenneur.

## **MJ's Story**

I graduated from a major University with 2 business degrees. College was a trip -- I made me sick because all the teachers and professionals "groomed" you for corporate America. The common saying, "when you work for corporate America, they will want this, that, etc."

I was so tired of hearing it. I knew I never wanted to work for anyone. Upon graduating, all my peers were bragging about the great "safe secure jobs" they were hired for. "I work for Motorola", "I work for Northwestern Insurance" blah blah ... everyone interviewed like crazy. I didn't. I left college jobless with the goal of starting a business. This was in 1992. I was 22.

The next 5 years was a mess. I lived at home in Chicago with mommy for most of it. I struggled from venture to venture with no real success. I tried all sorts of things, and while trying all of these things, I worked "odd jobs" to pay bills and to pay student loans.

Amway, Vitamin MLM's, various other MLM's, Car Audio. Direct Marketing, Jewelry, etc. **All business attempts and all failures.**

The jobs I held to pay bills while pursuing my business dream: Pizza-delivery boy, Flower-delivery boy, Dispatcher, Day Laborer in the ghetto of Chicago, Bus-Boy at Chinese Restaurant. . . all while I was a multi-degreed, educated person who graduated in the top 10% of his class.

At 26 years old I was at the end of my rope.

### **Desperation. Frustration.**

To make matters worse, my girlfriend of 5 years gave up on me. She said I "had no resolve". She worked for Enterprise Rent-A-Car and had a "safe secure job"-- we'd argue because she worked 55 hour weeks for peanuts ... \$28K/yr maybe. She'd fight back and say "you don't have a job, you make no money, and none of your businesses are working".

I told her that an Entrepreneur's income generation is different than someone that worked at a job. Income generation for a person working was LINEAR . Entrepreneur income generation is EXPONENTIAL. Basically, very very slow to begin, then as time progresses, explosive.

Ever see a straight ascending line juxtaposed with an exponential line? The exponential line eventually catches up and ultimately, blows by the linear line.

**Key point:** As an Intreprenuer, you will find yourself doing a lot of initial "groundwork" before you earn any real money. However, (if you're doing everything right) everything will eventually fall into place - and your profits should "explode".

I tried explaining this but to no avail to anyone.

My own mother: "Why don't you get a job?" To this day, when we speak I tease her by yelling "GET A JOB BABY!"

My mom would periodically say "The grocery store is hiring a deli manager, why don't you go down there and check it out"

NEVER. I'd rather die than manage a bunch of meat cutters. Is that my life purpose? To top it off, I wouldn't even get the job probably because I lacked "retail experience". Gee thanks for nothing.

This 'frustration' continued when I did reach the end of my rope and was often suicidal ... the worst is seeing all your old college friends all buying their new Acura Integra's and new Mustang GT's (they had "safe" secure jobs) and all I had to show was a rusty Buick ghetto car with a bad transmission.

I also lived at home. Pretty sad for a 26 year old college grad. To make matters worse I couldn't stand living in Chicago. I truly felt that my environment was holding me back ... my friends, my family, and the climate that existed in Chicago (I was seasonal depressed; not seeing the sun made me LAZY)

In 1996 while working in the hell-rotted Chicago summer in the ghetto, my eyes were opened and a light went on.

### **I then would make a decision that would change my life forever . . .**

As I moved thru my mid 20's, from odd-job to odd-job, from business failure to business failure, one thing stayed consistent: I was always learning. I was always reading books.

Even though I was failing, the failures increased my skill level and competency in many areas. A book which really helped me: My "bible" which would get me through the hard times was Tony Robbins "AWAKEN THE GIANT WITHIN". The book always seem to help me as I would return to many highlighted portions which I made prior.

Many distinctions which helped me endure: **"Your focus is your reality"** and **"if you want to keep on getting what your getting, keep on doing what your doing."**

**Key point:** A successful Intreprenuer is always learning - the education never stops.

Everything that you read, everything that you see and hear - every tiny morsel - is stored away in your subconscious. And when enough information is collated - Viola! A profitable idea pops up.

Tony's book inspired me to keep a journal to air out my frustrations.

I dug out my journal tonight; its been about 2 years since I made an entry. Its also been 2 years since I really re-read it -- it amazes me some of the things I wrote; the frustrations and the angst I felt. I pulled out 2 excerpts which I will share here -- you will see how down I was.

### **July 30th,1995**

*What's wrong? What can't I be happy? I have no money. I owe tons. My business is nickeling and diming me. I am so unhappy with myself. I've seem to lost control. I have no motivation anymore. Lazy. Don't want to work. Lazy. I hate myself. My mind seems so negative and destructive. I hate life right now. I hope something changes soon. I must change. What's happening. Why does nothing go right? What can't I be happy? Why can't I even make a piddly thousand dollars a month? Why? Loser. Loser. Loser. Loser. Loser. F\*\*king Loser.*

**Sept 8th, 1995**

*I am almost 25 years old, have two business degrees, and what am I doing? Sitting at a f\*cking flea market trying to sell ugly f\*cking pictures. Another stupid venture of mine that don't make a dime.*

This spiral of negativity and business failures continued, while I continued to read a variety of different books. Many times I was reading to stay sane and to combat the negativity my failures were creating.

In 1996 I learned HTML programming and thought it would be a "cool" thing to create a website. I had a business idea. I researched the idea and discovered two companies already on the internet doing something similar. I was not sure if the venture would be smart to entertain considering it was being done already.

I remember vividly asking my girlfriend (a new one) at the time **"what do you think i should do?"** -- she said, **"f\*ck, competitors are everywhere -- do it, and do a better job"**. (She was a blunt chick that swore a lot). So I did. I created a simple HTML website based on my idea.

For the next 6 or 8 months or so I continued to work odd jobs while I continually perfected and improved my website. The website wasn't making much money; maybe \$150 a month or so. I was still miserable.

Chicago, and everything about it, was killing me. My girlfriend was starting to be annoyed with me -- I was constantly negative and angry at the world. I was only happy when the sun was shining and in Chicago, it doesn't show to often.

Finally fed up, my girlfriend at the time - who to this day I consider one of the person's who put me on the right track - said, **"f\*ck, if you're so damn unhappy here, get the hell out. No one's keeping you in Chicago and you're a free person with free choice"**

Then it hit me. I was free. **I can pursue my dreams ANYWHERE.**

I thought to myself, if I could live ANYWHERE in the USA, where would I live? The sun makes me happy and motivated, so it would need to be sunny.

Two months later, I picked up what little I had, towed my rusty Buick on a hitch, and took residence in a tiny studio apartment in Central Phoenix AZ. . . a place that is sunny 330 out of 365 days a year.

They say "where you are in life is a product of your decisions". **At this exact moment, as you sit in your chair reading this, in your house or in your apartment, in your city, in your state of mind, in your financial state -- ALL OF IT -- is a product of your decisions.**

ONE decision can forever shape and change your destiny. From a simple decision to ordering steak instead of fish, or from wanting to drag race a foolish teen in his Honda -- **YOUR LIFE AT THIS VERY MOMENT IS A PRODUCT OF YOUR CHOICES AND DECISIONS.**

If you are unhappy, MAKE BETTER DECISIONS.

**Key Point : This is very, very important.**

I have seen friends and family make huge messes of their lives, blaming others, claiming they are unlucky - but you can really trace it all back to a few poor quality decisions.

**You have free will.** At any point you can make a decision and go off in a different direction. This is a powerful tool that we, as humans, possess.

To make better quality decisions, you must:

- Have all the relevant information - do your research - poor decisions are often the result of being poorly informed.
- Make decisions free of stress (if you are suffering from stress or anxiety, [click here](#) for a superb tool that will help you be more calm, centred & focused)

The awakening I had was that I could pursue my dreams ANYWHERE in the country. For 26 years, I never realized that I could pick up and leave my hometown of Chicago. The decision enabled me to aggressively pursue my goals: I left the baggage of peers, ex-girlfriends, business failures, and family who didn't believe in me and started fresh.

It would be the decision that would forever change my life.

It also would put me further into debt as moving cross-country isn't a cheap endeavor .....

**However, I was solar powered - with 330 days of sun to back me up, nothing was going to stop me from getting what I wanted ....**

**Key Point:** Do you think MJ is gonna fail to reach his goals? Hell, no!

He's now a laser guided missile, locked on to it's target. He's removed what was a major negative factor for him personally - the Chicago climate - and he's now so focused he's gonna burn a hole in the sidewalk!

I arrived in Phoenix with \$900, a rusty Buick 'ghetto car' with no 3rd gear, a website business that was making about \$150/mo and a whole new outlook. I transformed my studio apartment into a "nerve center" - the entire place was an office. I had no bedroom set; just a mattress which was partially laid in the kitchen. There were always crumbs on my mattress - which tends to happen when you put a mattress on the kitchen floor!

The next several weeks I sent out dozens of resumes to Phoenix corporations. Yes, I was biting the bullet and thought getting a respectable JOB would be the best way to start. I still had my goals; but I was tired of washing dishes and delivering pizzas.

I also continued to improve and market my website as the weeks went by.

Dozens of resumes and months later, I had NO interviews. I was getting pissed and a bit insulted. I know I am marketable. I know I would be an asset to a company. No calls. No interviews. Rent was coming due. My \$900 was dwindling fast and I was tired of eating Ramen Pride noodles (bulk, cardboard noodles you can buy for like 15 cents a meal). I had to do something.

I increased my marketing activities on my website by learning search engine optimization and by sending out small, targeted email campaigns. I frequented the downtown Phoenix library and continued to read about programming languages; mainly at the time HTML and Javascript.

Then one day it happened: I got a call from a company in New York who said they loved our website service and was wondering if "we" could design a website for them. I obliged with a price of \$400. They thought the price was a steal and 24 hours later, the company in NY had a website which I designed for them.

I was ecstatic. In 24 hours, I had 95% of the rent payment (rent was only \$475). Then ironically, not 24 hours later, I received another call from a company in Wichita Kansas asking for the same thing... a website. I designed theirs for \$600 and it took me 2 days to complete. I had another rent payment! I also was able to save some money!

This was turning point #1. I said to myself, "f\*ck these companies; if they don't want to give me a job, ill make my own jobs". I continued to market my website and started to become a "known player" in my marketspace. I continued to pour my efforts into my website service's success, its improvement, and its notoriety.

Subsequently, I would continue to design website for companies who also were in my marketspace as this (Currently) was paying the bills.

My first 3 or 4 months in Phoenix I was able to make it on my own for the first time in my life; no odd-ball jobs. No flower boy. No bus boy. No pizza delivery. I was purely self employed for the first time in my life.

I did realize however, that most of my income was being generated from website design, not my website (my website was a business service) - I did not want to have my income "tied" to a laboring activity (which was website design.) Little did I know, years later, Robert Kiyosaki\* would pen this activity an "S-QUADRANT" activity - I knew I didn't want to be there, even though it was paying the bills.

\*Robert Kiyosaki - co-author of "Rich Dad, Poor Dad: What the Rich Teach Their Kids About Money - That the Poor and Middle Class Do Not!"

In the winter I had a friend visit from Chicago. I showed him my business concept and he was amazed at all the HITS I was receiving. Inquiries to use my service would come EVERY MINUTE. (We'd see the inquiries by email -- my email box would have 450 emails, we'd talk for 10 minutes, click the refresh button, and then I'd have 483 emails.)

He was amazed and gave me the idea that would put me toward TURNING POINT #2. He said, "Dude, you gotta turn those emails into \$\$ somehow".

He was right, but how? He left me with this question and I was intent on figuring it out. A few days later, I believe I found the solution and I was ready to move with it. The problem was, moving to this type of "revenue model" was dangerous and it would kill my revenue generation, at least in the short term.

I remember the day I switched and the days prior. I told my friend at the time, "I'm going to be living on tuna for the next 2 months as this revenue model will take time to work, if it does even work".

The first month I generated \$473  
(I know this because it is logged in my journal! Luckily I had website design jobs to pay the bills!)

2nd month: \$694

3rd month \$970

4th month: \$1832

5th month: \$2314

6th month: \$3733

**It was working.** Revenue generation was increasing. As my site continued to grow, I continued to educate myself on programming. I was constantly improving the website.

95% of the improvements came from customers -- their suggestions. Within days, sometimes hours, we would implement customer suggestions. My business's success was much predicated on LISTENING to what customers are asking for, and implementing it.

**Key Point :** MJ's business was DEMAND driven. He listened to customers and gave them what they wanted - rather than trying to sell them something he thought they wanted.

I continued for many months on this principle: Listening to customers, improving my skills from programming to search engine optimization. I worked LONG AND HARD ... 40 hours was a vacation week -- typical work weeks were 60 hours long.

The beauty of it was this: I didn't feel like I was working. I enjoyed most of it. There is a gratification of seeing your work being used and benefited from. Hundreds, thousands, were benefiting from my service as I was really, truly filling a need.

That was when I discovered the error of my past business failings, including my ventures in MLM. Are you truly filling an need with this business, and if so, are you doing it the best? Every business I ventured into was predicated on "**how can I make money?**" theory.

Sadly, I see much of this mentality - "how can I make money" , "what business will make me money?".

**WRONG WRONG WRONG.** It starts with **NEEDS**. Solve problems. Fill needs. Make things easier for people. Streamline systems better than your competitors. With this foundation, success is only steps away.

In 2000, my business telephone starting ringing with a different type of call. Technology companies started to call to see if I was interested in "selling my business". In 2000, all you heard about was "Dot-Com Millionaires" and how they became instant millionaires by selling their tech companies. Mark Cuban became an instant billionaire by selling "Broadcast.com"

**Was I interested in selling my company? HELL YEA!!!!**

After it was all said and done I was offered by 3 different companies, 3 different offers. At the time, my business was generating \$17 000/mo in revenue -- I was clearing about \$6000 monthly.

**Offer 1:** \$250,000

**Offer 2:** \$550,000

**Offer 3:** \$1.2 million

I took offer 3 and became a millionaire. The company which bought me out also had a good chance of going IPO as well and the stock options they gave me could be worth millions. I couldn't believe it, but I did it! NO MORE RAMEN PRIDE AND TUNA!

Then came the DOT-COM BUST. I continued to work on the side (from a consultancy standpoint) for the company that purchased my business.

### **I watched them bury the business into the ground.**

I watched them piss money out the window like it was water. I watched them struggle and make business decisions like they were fixated in semi-dry concrete. I couldn't believe my eyes as I watched "these people" (Silicon Valley folks that had \$12 million in venture funding) destroy my creation.

It seemed they only cared about "REVENUE REVENUE REVENUE" - how can we make more money? I was familiar with this mindset and how it doesn't really improve business systems. I kept telling them, "No! How do we ADD VALUE to our customers so they will be willing to pay more"

A few months later, this company was 2 months from bankruptcy. They had opted to "shut-down" my business (even though it was still generating decent revenues and net income). They could not liquidate the company because buyers dried up -- stocks were in the TANK and no tech companies were BUYING - they were ALL LIQUIDATING.

I wasn't willing to watch my creation be sent to the toilet. In addition, thousands of customer's would be left standing and upset. I proposed to "repurchase" my company back from the Silicon Valley vultures. I negotiated a "bargain-basement" offer - a "fire-sale" price - and it was accepted.

### **Now I had my company back and a fire to "show them people".**

The next 18 months or so I was revitalized to take my service(s) to the next level. In conjunction, I created other services to further multiply my income growth. I also was motivated to show the clowns in Silicon Valley "THIS IS HOW ITS DONE".

I continued to become a book monger. I was always reading. Received a doctorate from Toilet University. Continued to improve my website; integrate new technologies and listen to customers.

Here I am today with several websites and one current project ongoing. The goal is to sell one, or all of the properties once valuations which the \$5million range.

My business growth has been explosive, to say the least. My biggest month \$\$\$ wise (NET, not gross) has been \$132,000. \$132K in one month! I think that is more than most NFL football and/or hockey players make. The last 6 months I've socked-away, on average, over \$100K/month. My goal set last year was to make more than 100K in one month. That was done. Now, it is \$200K net, in one month. Let me tell you, the tax consequences on making this kind of \$\$ is sickening; so much, that Las Vegas is calling.

Now, when you generate this kind of income, its very easy to become a millionaire and a multi-millionaire. I become a multi -millionaire in late June of this year. I am 33. I celebrated with my girlfriend by having a cigar and a Corona; heavy on the lime.

I also would have gotten there QUICKER if I DID NOT sell my business back in 2000. However, in hindsight, when you are eating Cardboard Noodles and someone throws a \$1.2

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