

Bonus Chapter: You Can Only Connect Dots When You Look Back

The Trust Fall Into Your Future

Page 1: When Everything Falls Apart

"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future." — Steve Jobs

It was 3 AM, and I was staring at the ceiling again.

My business was hemorrhaging money. My business partner wanted out. The investors were asking hard questions I didn't have good answers for. And I was lying there, wide awake, wondering how the hell I'd gotten so far off track.

Everything I'd worked for over the past three years felt like it was collapsing. The "successful entrepreneur" identity I'd built was crumbling, and underneath it was just... emptiness.

That's when I remembered Steve Jobs' Stanford speech.

I'd watched it dozens of times before, but that night, something different hit me. Not the part about following your passion—that felt too distant, too optimistic for where I was. It was something quieter, more fundamental:

"You have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future."

Trust.

When everything you've built is falling apart, when the path forward is completely unclear, when you can't see how any of this mess could possibly lead to something good—you have to trust.

I'd always thought trust was for people who had it figured out. Successful people who could see three moves ahead, who had backup plans for their backup plans.

But Jobs was talking about a different kind of trust. The kind you need when you can't see the path at all. When dropping out of college seems insane. When getting fired from your own company feels like the end of the world. When every logical voice is screaming at you to stop, to give up, to take the safe route.

That night, lying in bed with my business crashing around me, I realized I was at one of those moments. A dot that made no sense in the moment but would only reveal its meaning later.

The question wasn't whether I could figure out the next ten moves. The question was whether I could trust that this chaos, this failure, this complete uncertainty might somehow be leading me exactly where I needed to go.

Page 2: The Art of Strategic Surrendering

"It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made." — Steve Jobs

Three months after that sleepless night, I did something that terrified me more than any business risk I'd ever taken.

I stopped fighting.

Not in a defeated way. In a strategic way.

I packaged up everything—the business documents, the investor presentations, the five-year plans that now felt like fiction—and submitted it all to one final potential buyer. Then I did something I'd never done in my adult life:

I disappeared.

For 100 days, I went completely offline. No emails. No calls. No social media. No business anything.

To the outside world, it probably looked like I was giving up. In reality, I was learning to trust.

Jobs talked about dropping out of Reed College and how it freed him to "drop in" on classes that actually interested him. The calligraphy class that seemed completely useless at the time but ended up revolutionizing how computers displayed text.

My 100-day retreat felt like that. A completely impractical detour that made no business sense whatsoever.

But here's what I learned about connecting dots: they don't connect through strategy. They connect through surrender.

When you're gripping so tightly to your plan that you can't see anything else, you miss the calligraphy classes. You miss the unexpected conversations. You miss the quiet revelations that only come when you stop trying to force the next dot into place.

During those 100 days, I wasn't networking or optimizing or building anything. I was just... being. Meditating. Reading. Walking. Having conversations with strangers who had no idea what I "did for a living" because I wasn't sure anymore either.

And slowly, something began to shift.

Not my circumstances—those were still a mess. But my relationship with uncertainty. My relationship with not knowing.

I began to see that my desperation to control the next dot was actually preventing me from trusting the process. I was so busy trying to connect the dots forward that I couldn't see the ones that were already there, waiting to be discovered.

Page 3: The Wisdom of Hindsight

"Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later." — Steve Jobs

Here's what I couldn't see during those dark months: every single thing that was falling apart needed to fall apart.

The business partnership that was dissolving? We were fundamentally misaligned on values, and staying together would have destroyed both of us.

The investors who were getting nervous? They were focused on quick returns while I was becoming more interested in sustainable impact.

The financial pressure that was keeping me awake at night? It was forcing me to question whether I was building something I actually believed in or just chasing the next win.

My "failure" wasn't a deviation from my path. It was the path.

But I couldn't see that in real time. In real time, it just felt like everything was breaking.

This is the cruel irony of dots: they only make sense in retrospect. While you're living them, they feel random, chaotic, often painful. It's only when you turn around and look back that you see the perfect logic of it all.

I think about my client Sarah, a designer who spent two years in a job she hated before finally quitting to freelance. She used to beat herself up about those "wasted" years. But when she started her own studio, everything she'd learned about corporate bureaucracy, difficult clients, and workplace politics became her competitive advantage. She could navigate situations that crushed other freelancers because she'd been battle-tested in the corporate world.

The dots connected. But only looking back.

Or Marcus, the startup founder from the Jordan Syndrome chapter. His public "failure" when his first company went under led to the humility and wisdom that made his second company wildly successful. The investors who rejected him the first time came back because they could see he'd learned something deeper than just business tactics.

The failure was the education. The detour was the destination.

But you can't plan for that. You can only trust it.

Page 4: Learning to Trust Forward

"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." — Steve Jobs

The hardest part about trusting the dots isn't the trust itself. It's learning what to trust.

Jobs mentions gut, destiny, life, karma—basically anything except your analytical mind trying to figure it all out.

For someone like me, who'd built a career on strategy and optimization, this was revolutionary. And terrifying.

During my retreat, I started practicing what I call "Trust Forward" exercises:

Following Curiosity Over Logic: Instead of asking "How will this make money?" I started asking "What makes me curious?" The meditation practice that seemed like a waste of time. The conversations with people outside my industry. The books that had nothing to do with business.

Saying Yes to Invitations: When opportunities showed up that didn't fit my five-year plan, instead of automatically saying no, I started saying yes. A speaking gig at a conference I'd never heard of. Coffee with someone whose work intrigued me. A trip that made no strategic sense.

Listening to Energy Over Economics: I began paying attention to what gave me energy versus what drained it, regardless of the financial implications. Some high-paying clients left me feeling hollow. Some low-paying projects filled me with excitement.

Here's what I discovered: trusting forward isn't about having blind faith. It's about having faith in different metrics.

Instead of trusting only what you can measure, you start trusting what you can feel. Instead of trusting only what you can control, you start trusting what you can contribute. Instead of trusting only what makes sense today, you start trusting what calls to you.

The results weren't immediate. Trust forward is a practice, not a strategy. But slowly, new dots began appearing. Opportunities I never would have seen from inside my old framework. People I never would have met if I'd stayed on my original path. Ideas that emerged from the intersection of all these seemingly unrelated experiences.

Page 5: The Practice of Retrospective Wisdom

"Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well-worn path." — Steve Jobs

Six months after coming back from my retreat, I was building something completely different from what I'd originally planned. Not a scaled startup, but a coaching practice. Not focused on rapid growth, but on sustainable transformation. Not optimizing for the biggest exit, but for the deepest impact.

None of it would have made sense if you'd told me three years earlier. All of it made perfect sense looking back.

The business failure taught me humility. The retreat taught me presence. The financial pressure taught me what I actually valued. The uncertainty taught me to trust.

Every dot connected. But only in hindsight.

Here's the practice that emerged from all of this:

The Dots Review Exercise

Every Sunday, spend 15 minutes looking backwards:

1. **Identify three "dots" from the past week** - decisions, encounters, opportunities, even setbacks
2. **Ask: "How might this be serving my bigger path?"** Not forcing meaning, just being curious
3. **Notice any patterns or themes** emerging across multiple weeks
4. **Write down one way you'll "trust forward"** in the coming week

The Trust Forward Journal

Every time you feel lost or uncertain, write:

- What I can control vs. what I need to trust
- What my analytical mind says vs. what my intuition whispers
- How this uncertainty might be serving my growth

The 10-Year Letter Practice

Once a quarter, write a letter to yourself 10 years in the future, explaining your current struggles and asking: "How did this uncertainty lead to my next breakthrough?"

Then write back from your future self, connecting the dots you can't see yet.

The point isn't to predict the future. It's to practice trusting that your current confusion is part of a larger design.

Jobs ended his speech with "Stay hungry. Stay foolish." But I think the deeper message is simpler:
Stay trusting.

Trust that your detours are directions. Trust that your failures are foundations. Trust that the dots you're creating today will reveal their purpose when you look back tomorrow.

You can't see the line while you're drawing it. You can only see it when you step back and realize you've been creating something beautiful all along.

"Sometimes life hits you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith." — Steve Jobs

Your current struggle, your uncertainty, your feeling of being completely off track—these aren't bugs in your system. They're features.

They're the dots that will make perfect sense when you look back.

But only if you trust them now.

So trust the confusion. Trust the detour. Trust that where you are is exactly where you need to be to get to where you're going.

Even if you have no idea where that is yet.

Especially then.