

The Common Path to Uncommon Success

What's in it for me? Turn your big idea into a lucrative business.

For too long, you've been led to believe that success is attainable – but only for a select few. After all, not every up-and-coming entrepreneur becomes a millionaire overnight. But here's the truth: the key to uncommon success doesn't have to remain top secret, held behind high-priced paywalls by self-appointed gatekeepers. The path to success is, in fact, a common one. And there are practical steps you can take to follow this common path all the way to achieving uncommon success. In these blinks, you'll find out exactly how to harness the power of these techniques to attain financial freedom and personal fulfillment. It all starts with one big idea. So what's yours? In these blinks, you'll learn

how to find the perfect mentor; the benefits of creating a fictional ideal customer; and why all bug problems aren't the same.

Identify your big idea by matching your passions with your skills.

At some point, you've probably had an idea and thought, Maybe I could turn this into a profitable business. But there are some common pitfalls when it comes to identifying the big ideas that are really worth pursuing. The first involves only choosing something you're passionate about. Sure, you might love muffins – but that doesn't necessarily mean that you have the knowledge and experience required to open a muffin bakery. The second mistake occurs when you believe your big idea needs to be something you're good at, even if it's not a true passion. For example, if you're good at coding, you might decide your big idea is to build websites. But if that doesn't really excite you, you'll probably lose steam further down the road. So how can you figure out which ideas really have a bright future? The key message here is: Identify your big idea by matching your passions with your skills. To get started on identifying your best ideas, consider your top skills and decide which of them excites you the most. The best idea combines something you care about and have experience in. Once you find that, you enter what the author calls your zone of fire. Some people spend months, or even years, trying to pinpoint this sweet spot between enthusiasm and proficiency. But locating your zone of fire should only take a few minutes of your time – and all you need is a pen and paper. Here's how to do it. Draw a vertical line through the center of the page. Write the word “passion” at the top of the left column and “expertise” above the right-hand column. Set a timer for five minutes, and press start. Write down everything you're passionate about – including activities or causes that enthused you as a kid or young adult. If you had nothing scheduled for tomorrow, and no responsibilities, how would you spend your day? Reset the timer, and use the next five minutes to write down everything you're an expert in. What are you really good at? The last step is to look at your passions and areas of expertise, and consider which from the first column combine well with competencies from the second. The author discovered that he was passionate about chatting with successful entrepreneurs. And his time in the US Army and subsequent stint in corporate finance had taught him valuable public-speaking skills. Once he put these things together, it clicked: he'd create a podcast and interview entrepreneurs who'd cracked the code to success.

Find a niche problem, and adjust your big idea to solve it.

Now that you have your big idea, you need to make sure it provides value to other people. Your big idea should offer a real, in-demand solution to a specific problem in the world. Otherwise, potential customers won't have a reason to put it on their radar. Just take one inventor who developed a spray for every kind of bug in the world. Did you have a termite problem? Check. What about ants or cockroaches? The same product would do the trick. On the packaging, bright lettering proclaimed that this single spray could "kill every bug in your household." But when it finally hit the shelves, all you could hear were crickets; not one customer purchased it. The inventor was stumped. His mistake? Assuming everyone with a bug problem had the same bug problem. The key message here is: Find a niche problem, and adjust your big idea to solve it. Bewildered at the lack of sales, the inventor hired someone to monitor what was happening in the bug spray aisle. The responses were all the same. One customer was after something made specially to kill ants – she only needed ant spray. Another customer's apartment had been overrun with cockroaches. He didn't have a general bug problem – he had a cockroach problem. This research proved invaluable. The inventor modified his marketing strategy and created separate labels for each purpose. Now, one bottle promised to kill cockroaches, while another guaranteed it could kill ants. The packaging remained honest, but by speaking to individual niches, each product was primed to engage with the conversation already taking place in the customer's head. After that simple change, sales boomed. This is a common stumbling block entrepreneurs face when trying to establish their big idea. If you cast too wide a net, you risk catching nothing at all. Just like our bug-spray tycoon, you should mold your big idea to address an underserved niche. Or, as the author puts it, "niche down till it hurts." In 2012, when the author was designing his podcast to interview successful entrepreneurs, he knew that many such programs already existed. But they left him wanting more. He realized that none of them – however inspiring they were – released an episode every single day. And there he had it: a big idea in his zone of fire with a niche target audience.

Create your ideal customer.

Not everyone can be your customer. In fact, of the billions of people in the world, the vast majority will never use your service or consume your content. And that's a good thing. The author's exclusive podcasting community, Podcasters' Paradise, has only had about six thousand people join in its eight years of existence. And yet it's brought in over \$5 million in revenue by catering expressly to their requirements. Entrepreneurs who claim that everyone is their ideal client are doomed to fail. So instead of pursuing people from all walks of life, your time is better spent courting just one person – your perfect customer, or avatar. The key message here is: Create your ideal customer. Your avatar is a made-up person. But while she may be fictional, her problems and interests are very real. By knowing the ins and outs of your avatar's biography, you can craft your product to speak directly to her needs, as well as to the needs of potential clients like her. Think of your avatar as your North Star – a beacon that guides your decisions as you develop and improve on your big idea. Whenever you're unsure of what to do, you can simply ask what's best for your avatar. Here's how to make your avatar come to life. First, decide on an age, gender, and marital status. Then, ask some basic questions. For

instance, what's her job – and does she enjoy it? Does she commute to work – if so, how long is the trip? What are her passions, hobbies, and skills? What about her greatest struggle? And, finally, what solution is she trying to find? When the author created his avatar, Jimmy, he imagined the perfect listener of his podcast, *Entrepreneurs on Fire*. Jimmy's in his mid-forties and has a wife and two young kids. Most of his day is taken up by activities he doesn't enjoy. When he gets home from his unfulfilling job each evening, he plays with his kids for a few minutes and catches up with his wife before going to sleep. Jimmy needs a change. The author decided that the length of each podcast episode had to match that of Jimmy's commute; it needed to be under 25 minutes. *Entrepreneurs on Fire* also had to provide Jimmy with consistent value day after day. By listening every day, Jimmy would be equipped with the tools to eventually launch his own entrepreneurial endeavor. Soon enough, his financial freedom would allow him to pursue his passions and spend more time with his family.

Select the platform that best serves your avatar's lifestyle.

Think of your favorite online content. Is it in the form of an e-newsletter, a podcast, or a YouTube channel? Perhaps you'd still read, listen, or watch that same content if it changed to a different medium. But chances are you enjoy that content partly because it's easy for you to fit into your current lifestyle. With your own big idea, you'll also have to pick the most effective medium to reach your target audience. To best share your message, choose between the three most popular platforms: audio, video, or written text. Each comes with its own advantages, which we'll take a closer look at in just a moment. As for which one to choose, it really depends on how your avatar will want to consume your content. On the path to uncommon success, it's your responsibility to make your message as easy as possible to access. The key message here is: Select the platform that best serves your avatar's lifestyle. The significance of choosing the right medium for your avatar cannot be overstated. For example, let's say your avatar – just like Jimmy – drives to work every day. For road safety reasons, it doesn't make sense to come out with a written newsletter or a video series, which is why the author decided to make a podcast. But let's begin by examining the oldest of the three media: the written word. Written language has existed for millennia, and it isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Over the past 30 years, online newspapers and blogs have grown in popularity – as have social media platforms like Reddit and Facebook. It's easy for users to share written content, and it often takes less time to produce and edit than audio or video. However, as we've seen, writing's not suitable for every situation. Some people don't like reading, or they can't find a safe way to do it while driving or exercising. That's partly why audio has become so well liked. With audio content – podcasting, in particular – your avatar can combine listening with other activities. It's portable, on demand, and free. Of course, there are those who don't like audio content. Some topics also benefit from visual representations. That's where video content really shines. Video is also a gift that keeps on giving: you can create a 15-minute clip about intermittent fasting, edit a shorter trailer for Instagram and Facebook, and even generate a written transcript to use in a blog post. Whichever medium you go with, just make sure you have your avatar's best interests in mind.

Find a mentor, and start or join a

mastermind group.

You've made it this far on the path to uncommon success, and now you're almost ready to get started creating content for your avatar. You're bound to encounter hurdles along the way, and for the occasional question or crisis you might be inclined to lean on friends or family for help. But, in the long run, it's more effective to have dedicated people you go to for advice and constructive criticism. That's where masterminds and mentors come in. The key message here is: Find a mentor, and start or join a mastermind group. A mentor has been through these early phases and faced similar challenges, so she can help you avoid some of the common pitfalls. To find the perfect mentor, you don't need to go after famous business gurus like Richard Branson or Barbara Corcoran. Instead, just look for someone who is currently where you want to be a year from now. To narrow this down to a few concrete criteria, you can map out what your day-to-day projects entail, what audience you're serving, and how much monthly revenue you're generating. Then, look for entrepreneurs in your industry who've achieved those aims. In 2012, when the author decided to become a podcast host, he needed professional guidance. So he looked ahead to his one-year goals and sought out entrepreneurs who fit the bill; five made his short list. The author spent days consuming their content and following their social media pages. Then he reached out to his top choice, Jaime Masters, and asked if she'd be his mentor. To his surprise, she said yes! Masters, who has a successful business podcast of her own, held the author accountable for deadlines and goals. She also connected him with other entrepreneurs. An equally valuable tool is a peer-to-peer mastermind – a group of people who meet for an hour each week to share advice. A mastermind should have three or four people at similar stages in their journey, as well as a strict attendance policy. Every meeting starts with each person taking five minutes to relate their biggest success of the past week along with something they've learned. For the next 30 minutes, one member is in the hot seat – it rotates each week – and talks about his biggest struggle that week. The other members ask follow-up questions and discuss possible solutions. For the final ten minutes, members wrap up the meeting by stating one big goal for the upcoming week.

Plan out your content production strategy.

Now it's time to get into the finer details of making your big idea a reality. And here's the thing: essentially, all you need to do is stick to the plan. But what if you don't have a plan yet? It may seem daunting to have to decide things like how often and how far in advance you'll create content – or which day of the month you'll devote to evaluating your production plan. Just remember, every decision you make should take your avatar's interests into account. And to consistently meet their needs, you need a structured plan. The key message here is: Plan out your content production strategy. Chances are, you have a million ideas you're dying to test out. But consider this: you can either go a mile wide and an inch deep by testing all of your ideas at a superficial level, or you can do the opposite with a single idea. By focusing on just one idea in depth, you can really gain traction and proof of concept for your business. With that in mind, let's tackle a few of your mentor's most pressing questions. Before scheduling anything, ask yourself what calendar system you plan to use. Calendars keep you on top of your deadlines and obligations. Check out the features offered by services like Google Calendar or Schedule Once, and pick one that meets your needs. Next up: How frequently will you

release new content? For *Entrepreneurs on Fire*, the author set the goal of releasing a new episode every day. But, thanks to his scheduling system, he wasn't scrambling to record, edit, and upload a show each morning for his avatar's commute. Instead, he built up a buffer of around 45 episodes. If he got sick or had a string of cancellations, he'd have some flexibility – and his listeners would still have plenty of content. He set aside every Monday to prepare for interviews, and he recorded all of the week's episodes on Tuesday. This strategy has served him well for over 3,000 episodes. Last, schedule time to evaluate your plan. None of this is set in stone. If, after a month or a year, you find that something's not working, change it!

Start creating your content, and then launch!

Many entrepreneurs get through the exciting stages of brainstorming ideas, announcing their dreams of financial freedom, and even scheduling content production to a T. Then the majority go on to fail within their first year. But why? Well, all of your planning and preparation won't matter if you don't sit down and actually do the work. Creating a steady flow of valuable, free content is difficult. And, at first, you might make some mistakes – but that's expected. One of the upsides of gearing your content toward a hyper-specific niche is that you'll be both the best and worst at speaking to your specific audience. That's why it's so important to keep going – the more times you repeat the process, the more you'll notice what works and what doesn't. This will make your content better and better over time. The key message here is: Start creating your content, and then launch! One frequent misconception results from conflating busyness with productivity. The two are not the same. The author defines productivity as creating content that suits your avatar. Everything else is just busyness. When you're doing the work to produce your content, make sure it's the right kind of productivity. Novice entrepreneurs also tend to struggle with focus. They try to do a little bit of everything, and none of it ends up gaining any traction. You can combat this proclivity for distractions by devising a short-term plan of action – and then following it. For example, if you have trouble staying on course during the mornings, commit to making a plan the night before. No matter how sleepy or absentminded you are, you'll have a solid plan to follow till your coffee kicks in. Once you've created your content, it's time to launch. The author postponed his launch nearly three times because he was worried that this or that might go wrong. Each time, the night before his scheduled release, nightmares about the reality of the launch hit him. Ultimately, his mentor rejected his third excuse and threatened to fire him as a mentee if he didn't launch that day. You, too, might get cold feet in the name of perfectionism. More often than not, however, perfectionism is just a word people use to avoid confronting rejection or failure. Your first launch isn't going to be perfect. But you'll learn from your mistakes and receive helpful feedback. Not every entrepreneur is as lucky as the author; many don't get that kind of ultimatum. When in doubt, just launch.

Generate additional income by building sales funnels.

While running *Entrepreneurs on Fire*, the author learned a lot about both podcasting and entrepreneurship. And his podcast became so successful that many listeners asked

for more guidance on creating their own podcasts. The result? Podcasters' Paradise – an elite community of aspiring podcasters. Members paid a fee to access a premium course in podcasting, and to attend exclusive events and webinars hosted by the author. By 2014, the community had brought in over \$100,000 in sales. But as sales began to abate, the author realized he needed to generate more leads to keep it profitable. So he got to work creating a sales funnel in the form of a free, high-quality podcasting course. The key message here is: Generate additional income by building sales funnels. This course aimed to attract more paying subscribers from the author's main source of leads: his podcast. By building this free step to fill the gap between his popular podcast and exclusive paid community, he could pull in more members who weren't quite ready to make the leap to the premium course. Remember the author's avatar, Jimmy? Let's say Jimmy has been listening to Entrepreneurs on Fire every day. He's been consuming consistent, free content, and it's provided tremendous value to him. Jimmy's thinking about starting his own podcast, but he's not prepared to shell out the thousand-dollar annual membership fee to Podcasters' Paradise just yet – especially if he's not sure he'll follow through with it. So instead, he adds the author's free course to his daily playlist. Jimmy gets through the whole course in a week, and he's even more motivated to keep learning. Voilà! The author's free course has just generated a new lead. Not everyone who signed up for the free podcast course became a paying member. But this did become a passive way to entice more leads without any additional advertising costs. It was a win-win. Entrepreneurs on Fire operates several funnels at the same time, but this particular one has been responsible for millions in extra revenue. At this point, you've tailored your big idea to serve a distinct niche and are using your platform to attract new paying customers. Now you can focus on diversifying your revenue stream and forming affiliate partnerships with other businesses to generate even more passive income on your path to uncommon success.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks is that: Uncommon success is attainable, and the path to achieving it is available to everyone. By identifying your big idea and adapting it to provide a real solution to a niche audience, you can start creating valuable content. Mentors and mastermind groups will guide you through the inevitable obstacles. If your content production is consistent and you design worthwhile paid content, you'll reap the benefits of sales funnels and affiliate marketing – and achieve financial freedom. And here's some more actionable advice: Don't confuse your cheerleaders with your buyers. When testing out a new idea, stay away from cheerleaders – people who say it's a fantastic plan but don't sign up after launch. Instead, only pursue customers who vote with their wallet. If someone has invested in the past, he's more likely to be a buyer in the future. Send him an email with your proof of concept, and offer an early bird discount for those who pay before launch. That way, you can be sure your hard work won't be for nothing. Got feedback? We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to with The Common Path to Uncommon Success as the subject line and share your thoughts!