

There is nothing more fun than handing someone a check for 1mm dollars and watching that person fall over on the floor and not be able to stand up. Have them try to get up, gain their composure, and then fall right back down again...

On the flipside, I haven't had many jobs tougher than eliminating people who are closer than they will ever be to that much money. They obviously weren't happy about it I wasn't either. It was far harder to do than I ever imagined.

The show is, and was designed to be, far more Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory than any reality show on air to date. I guess I thought I would be Gene Wilder and stand by and watch the golden ticket holders eliminate themselves one by one. As it turns out, the one thing I couldn't do was stand by and watch. I kept notes during the shooting and thought it would be fun to consolidate and share some of them here.

Before I selected the final 16, I spent a lot of time with the producers going through the thousands and thousand of applications. Each had to pass all kinds of psychological and legal screening. (don't want to put an axe murderer in the house). Each went through multiple levels of interviews. By the time I had picked the final 16, I thought I had a good feel as to who each person was, and what I could expect from them in the house...

Its one thing to think you know someone from watching tapes, or 30 minute interviews, its completely different when they walked through the door of the house and I realized that the game was on, and within about a month, one of their lives was going to change forever. 15 would head back to work after the game. One would have the choice of not having to work...

The 16 contestants quickly went from taped talking heads telling an interviewer what was important to them, and how my game could change their future, to my responsibility. My responsibility to make sure I gave the money to the right person. But first I had to decide how to pick the right person.

In the real world, no one really keeps score. When you apply for a job, there isn't a scoreboard in that interview room and you look to see where you stand. It's up to you to convince the interviewer to move you forward or not. Even after you got or lost the job, you never really know how close it was with the competition.

None of usever know when our next challenge or opportunity is coming or how it will present itself. There isn't a schedule that tells us wereally should pursue that idea we have, or that now is that time to step out of our comfort zone and go for our dreams. As much as we would like to believe its true, we never really get the chance to select our future from a menu. We cant just choose "Millionaire artist, living on a beautiful ranch by the age of 25". We can only dream it, then compete with ourselves and others to try to make it happen.

The game I designed works the same way. The 16 contestants never know exactly when they are being tested or how. The challenges I throw at them are open ended to make sure that rather than all doing the same thing, they all have to think on their feet and shine on their own.

It's not easy for them. It's not easy for me.

The first day, everyone feels like they have what it takes to walk away with the million dollars. Then the tests and challenges come. They start to realize that the game is always on. They have to be on. They have to compete. They have to recognize who their competitors are and how they are going to stand out. For some, it's also the recognition that its not going to be easy, and may not even be possible to shine purely on merit. But with the odds of winning 1mm dollars improving by the day, it doesn't take long for some contestantsto set aside shining and push forward with what I politely called "gamesmanship".

Fortunately, I have cameras on all of them all the time, and can hear all the conversations. The first cut wasn't too hard, the 2nd was. It was too soon to kick someone else out, but there were elements of the game that incorporated luck. Good luck for someone always means bad luck for someone else.

Next blog entry I will start to talk about some of the challenges.