



A book by Product Hunt

How to Build a Career in Tech

The best advice from founders, investors, and world-changing leaders.



Product Hunt: The Ultimate Career Guide

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In addition, we'd like to highlight the contributions of a few individuals who, over the last few months, helped us go through hundreds of Product Hunt LIVE Chats, taking notes and gathering key insights. There is a lot more to come from their contributions, this is just the beginning.

Thank you to this group for their time and valuable input. They are the makers of this project along with the Product Hunt team.

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Three members of this group have gone above and beyond what was expected, and deserve special recognition. A special thank you to Pavan, Jason, and Hyder for constant feedback and effort you've put into this. 🙏

Introduction

What am I supposed to do with my life?

How do I find my purpose?

Is going to college or getting a post-graduate degree worth it?

How do I find a great job when I don't have experience yet?

Do I have what it takes to start a company?

What do I do if I want to change careers, but don't know how?

How do I pay the bills and pursue my passions at the same time?

These are some of the big questions we ask ourselves when carving our career paths—whether we're still in college and want to break into an industry, or we want to switch careers after being in the workforce.

It's hard to find the right advice because everyone's career path is so different. Some of us will choose to build our careers at large companies; others will start their own companies right out of school. Some of us will pursue higher education; others will drop out of high school or college early. Some of us will know what we want to do right away; and for most of us, a career path will look directionless for awhile, with many twists and turns along the way.

At Product Hunt, we're big believers in learning from the successes, failures, and stories of others. When it comes to a topic as complex and impactful as choosing—or changing—a career, standing on the shoulders of giants is particularly important. This book is meant to serve as a resource of inspiration and knowledge from leaders in tech.

Over the past few years, we've interviewed hundreds of the best entrepreneurs, creatives, and thought leaders around the world. We sifted through thousands of thoughtful questions and answers, with the Product Hunt community's help, to put together the ultimate guide to help you navigate your career—whether you're fresh out of school, looking to make a career shift, building a network in a new city, working on a side hustle, or creating a company from the ground up. In this book, you'll find wisdom from dozens of people about:

- How to choose your career path when starting out
- How to break into a new industry
- Overcoming professional fears and challenges
- Choosing the right education experience for yourself
- How to become a successful entrepreneur
- Becoming a great leader and building a stellar team
- The best (and worst) career advice ever received

...and so much more from entrepreneurs, celebrities, investors, and thought leaders such as:

- **Aileen Lee**, Founder of Cowboy Ventures
- **Ben Horowitz**, Co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz
- **Brad Feld**, Managing Director of Foundry Group, Author of Venture Deals

- **Chelsa Crowley**, Co-founder of Stowaway Cosmetics
- **Carly Zakin**, Co-founder of theSkimm
- **Dennis Crowley**, Co-founder of Foursquare
- **Deray McKesson**, Civil Rights Activist, Host of Pod Save the People
- **Dustin Moskovitz**, Co-founder of Asana and Facebook
- **Gary Vaynerchuk**, CEO of VaynerMedia and Future Owner of the NY Jets
- **Jack Dorsey**, Co-founder of Twitter and Square
- **Jeff Atwood**, Co-founder of StackExchange and Discourse
- **Jessica Lessin**, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of The Information
- **John Lilly**, Partner at Greylock, former CEO at Mozilla
- **Julie Zhuo**, Product Design Director at Facebook
- **Kara Swisher**, Co-founder and Executive Editor of Recode
- **Kathryn Minshew**, Founder of The Muse
- **Matt Mullenweg**, Co-founder of WordPress
- **Molly Graham**, VP of Operations at the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- **Naval Ravikant**, Co-founder of AngelList
- **Robert Greene**, Author of The 48 Laws of Power and Mastery
- **Susan Cain**, Author of Quiet, TED Speaker
- **Tim Ferriss**, Author of The 4-Hour Workweek and Tools of Titans
- **Troy Carter**, Investor, Global Head of Creator Services at Spotify

This book is a treasure trove of hard-earned wisdom and honest advice. We hope you find the career guidance you're searching for as you browse through these pages.



What Should You Do With Your Life?

At some point, just about all of us ask this question: What should I do with my life? Many of the most successful people you can think of asked themselves the very same thing—and they now have great advice on the topic after having carved their own unique path to where they are today.





Photo by Hollis Johnson, Business Insider

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Find the thing you're most passionate about:

I find we do our best work when it's something we're personally passionate about.

So, I'd say to follow that and you'll find your focus.

KEVIN ROSE

Investor, Co-founder of Digg

Don't be afraid to close one chapter and start another:

I think we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to have every next opportunity be objectively “better” than the next, whether it's to impress our friends, family or ourselves. Instead, I've started thinking, “What do I want to work on for the next 5 years?” After VC [at Collaborative Fund], I thought about which project I wanted to work on next, like an artist would. Thinking of it as a project and not a “career move” took a lot of the pressure off and forced me to focus on what I was actually passionate about. Projects have a beginning and an end, and they don't each have to be tied to each other. I love what I'm doing right now, but when I've said what I wanted to say here [at GitHub], I'll close this chapter and start another.

NADIA EGHBAL

Community Programs at GitHub

Early on in your career, experiment and try different things:

There is a difference between someone who is always dissatisfied and looking for an excuse to change careers just because you are perpetually bored, and someone who is in a bad fit. It's something you should feel in your gut. You first have to decide if your wanderlust is real before you can figure out what exactly you should be doing. Until you're thirty I would experiment a little and try different things.

ROBERT GREENE

Author of *The 48 Laws of Power and Mastery*



“Projects have a beginning and an end, and they don't each have to be tied to each other.”

NADIA EGHBAL

Follow your intellectual curiosities:

Following your genuine intellectual curiosity is a better foundation for a career than following whatever is making money right now.

NAVAL RAVIKANT

Co-founder of AngelList

Do something new while you're young:

Go abroad when you are young. In college it was always the odd class—Islamic Law, for example, was one of my favorites that I took—that wasn't really part of my major, but taught me the most. You always have time to go deep and specialize later. In fact, your career will likely demand it. So if you are still young, go do something new. The worst thing that will happen is that you hate it and don't do it again. I think that most people are afraid that other people will judge them for trying new things. But, most people don't care about you, and there's freedom in that. We don't really matter to that many people, so we can operate with impunity. Go abroad and fail big. Then when you have a mortgage, you can tell interesting stories to your boring friends. That's my plan, at least.

ALEX WILHELM

Editor in Chief at Crunchbase



Photo courtesy of Jake Paul

Choose where you want to channel your energy and effort:

The best thing you can do is find out what you want to do. You are most likely already doing it; you just aren't thinking of it as a business. Do you have a hobby? If so, learn more about how to build a business around it. This is extremely important because you already love doing it, you know a lot about it, and that's when you can change the world.

JAKE PAUL

YouTuber, Actor

Think about what you were interested in from a young age:

There's never that "one thing" that you are supposed to be doing. Don't forget: the average multi-millionaire (and this is from tax data) has seven different sources of income, at least. But one start is to think about all of the things you were interested in from the ages of 6-18. How do those interests translate into the modern day today? If you loved writing, maybe self-publish a book. If you loved stocks, think about a career in finance. If you loved computers, think about coding, and so on. We find our passions at the age of 10, and they tend to age gracefully with us, but we often forget them in law school.

JAMES ALTUCHER

Entrepreneur, Podcaster, Author

When it comes to figuring out what to do with your life, there is no one right—or permanent—answer:

When it comes to the question "What should I do with my life?", you often hear three different common pieces of advice. Some say, "Play to your strengths." In other words, figure out what you're good at, and go do that. Some say, "Follow your passion." In other words, figure out what you like to do, and build a life around it. And then others say, "Figure out what the market needs and go do that." This is the "tiger mom" approach (i.e. There's a nursing shortage in California? Go become a nurse.).

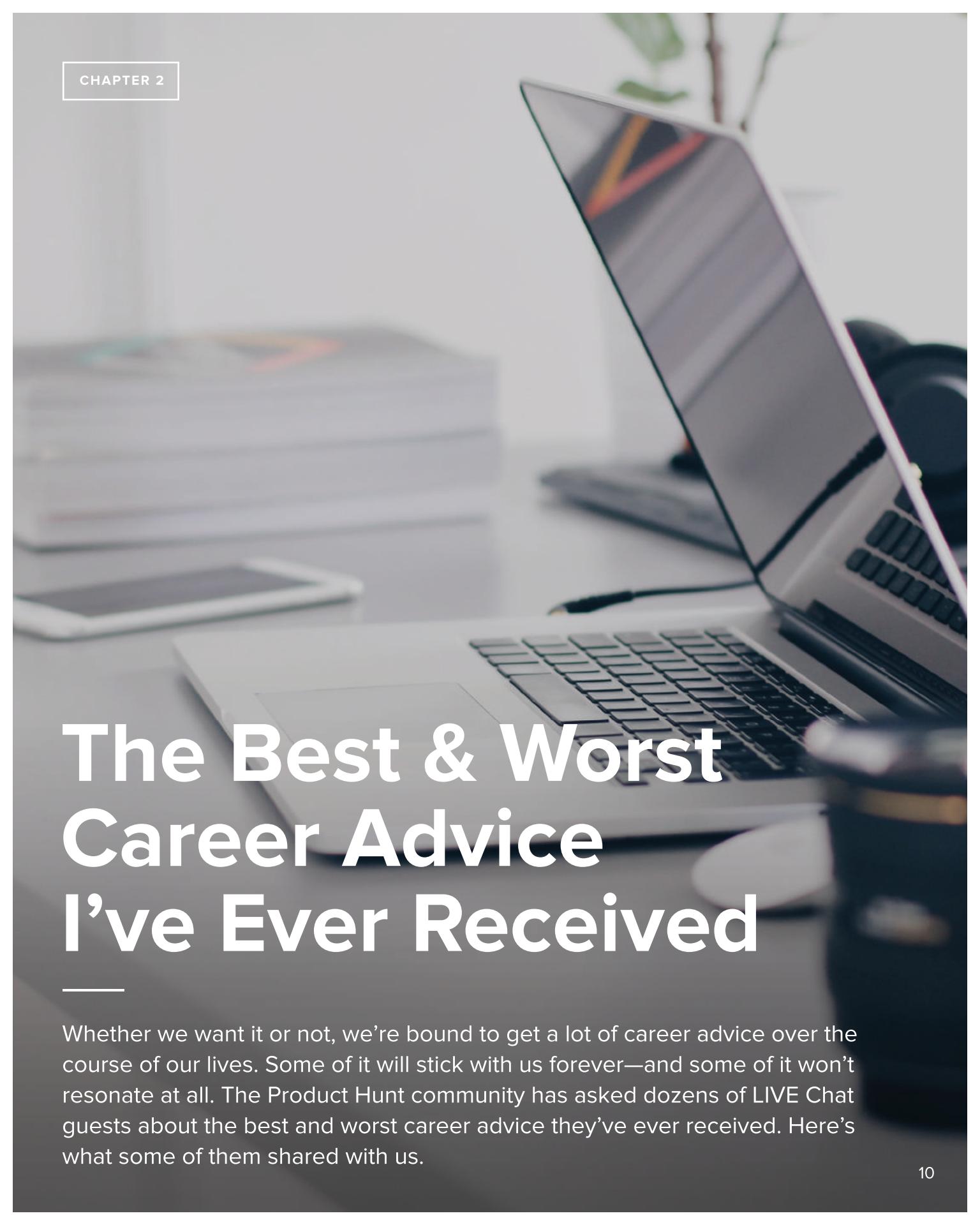
What's problematic is that each of these common pieces of advice, when taken on their own, is insufficient. What if your passion is playing the violin or something else that's awfully hard to monetize? Or what if you're not passionate about what you're good at? And if you just pursue a career based on what the market needs, you may not be able to do it for very long because you may not enjoy it.

You have to develop a competitive advantage by intersecting all three considerations: your assets (strengths), aspirations (values, passions, etc.), and the market realities. Fit those three puzzle pieces together to arrive at a smart "Plan A" for your career. How can you leverage your strengths to achieve some of your aspirations while navigating the realities around you? You'll necessarily have to trade off on some things along the way.

Finally, the answers to any of these questions will change. Your assets change. Your aspirations change. The market changes. You always have to iterate on your plans to account for these changes. There's no one right, permanent answer to the question.

BEN CASNOCHA

Author of *The Alliance*



The Best & Worst Career Advice I've Ever Received

Whether we want it or not, we're bound to get a lot of career advice over the course of our lives. Some of it will stick with us forever—and some of it won't resonate at all. The Product Hunt community has asked dozens of LIVE Chat guests about the best and worst career advice they've ever received. Here's what some of them shared with us.

A professional portrait of Tim Ferriss, a bald man with a light beard, wearing a dark blue V-neck t-shirt. He is seated with his arms crossed, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a solid, muted teal color.

Photo by Robert Maxwell

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Form habits around a few strengths:

You are the average of the five people you associate with most. Also, you don't need to get much right to be and feel successful. Just form habits around one or two strengths.

TIM FERRISS

Author, Entrepreneur, Podcaster

The Best Career Advice I've Ever Received

Write your future resume:

Jonathan Rosenberg, former SVP of Product at Google, used to ask all the PMs on his team to write their resume in 10 years. Where do you want to be? I was skeptical until I did it. I realized pretty quickly that my resume in 10 years didn't say "CEO." I didn't want to be a CEO. But I hadn't explicitly stated that, and in many ways the PM career path defaults to the CEO career path. Knowing I wanted something different helped me be more deliberate about my career decisions and communicating my goals to others.

KEN NORTON

Partner at Google Ventures

Cultivate your intuition:

The best piece of advice I've ever gotten was in the form of a question and it's relatively simple: "What do you really want?" That's fundamentally where folks end up stuck in their careers (or life more generally); when they don't have an intuitive, explicable sense of what they really want. As a result, people end up doing whatever they think is expected of them in life. They move on to the next rung of the ladder they are already on, whether that's grad school or the next engineering management position or whatever. But at some point, you have to honestly assess whether the next step is really what you want—and when you can't answer that, it's pretty terrifying. So it comes down to cultivating an intuition (rather than cold, hard logical explanation) of what you feel is right for you.

JASON GOLDMAN

White House Chief Digital Officer for the Obama Administration

Know your strengths:

My dad has consistently told me: "just do your best"—which actually is quite a challenging piece of advice because I always feel like I can be doing better! I have also received a lot of advice to focus on my strengths, and try to find a path that enables me to express them. For me, VC has been a better "fit" than anything I've done to date—and I think it was my focus on finding a role where I could put myself to my "best use" that helped me find this career path.

MICHELLE TANDLER

Former VC at Trinity Ventures

Know your weaknesses, too:

The best advice (and I now give it often to others) has been to know what you are bad at—it's half that battle, in my opinion. Knowing what you're good at is easy but taking that step and admitting that you are bad at something will push you so much further in your career. Also, who cares if you're bad at something in particular? You can always hire around it. :)

CHELSA CROWLEY

Co-founder of Stowaway Cosmetics



“Write your resume in 10 years. Where do you want to be?”

KEN NORTON

Cultivate timeless skills:

Write every day. Even if you're not a writer, I find this practice to be clarifying for many things. Though ideally, that form of writing is not email.

MG SIEGLER

Partner at Google Ventures

Don't worry about setting yourself up for the next job:

Early on, someone told me to just do the thing I wanted to do at that moment and not worry about “setting myself up for the next job.” That advice has served me really well and led to some unexpected choices. Other than that, I think the hardest part of building a career is learning when to follow advice and when not to. Having great mentors is great, but it's important to know when to trust your own intuition and make contrarian, risky decisions rather than just follow the “conventional” wisdom. All of the best founders have to ignore more advice than they take.

ETHAN KURZWEIL

Partner at Bessemer Venture Partners

To be world class at something, work on it every day for years:

Learn to be T-shaped: be good at a bunch of stuff, but then have a clear superpower where you're world class. To be world class at something, you'll have to work on a single thing night and day for years. Spend time writing and reflecting—more than reading, and more than reading tweets. It's good to blend your work and your hobbies; that says you enjoy your work enough to do it all the time.

ANDREW CHEN

Head of Rider Growth at Uber



Photo by Thrive Global

What you don't do is just as important as what you do:

One of my favorite pieces of advice isn't about what to do but what NOT to do. I did a major "life audit" when I turned forty, and I realized how many projects I had committed to in my head—such as learning German, becoming a good skier, and learning to cook. Most remained unfinished, and many were not even started. Yet these countless incomplete projects drained my energy and diffused my attention. As soon as the file was opened, each one took a little bit of me away. It was very liberating to realize that I could "complete" a project by simply dropping it—by eliminating it from my to-do list. Why carry around this unnecessary baggage?

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Co-founder of The Huffington Post, Author

Do more of what scares you:

“What would you do if you weren’t afraid?” This is a poster we’ve hung on the walls across campus. It really resonates with me.

JULIE ZHUO

Product Design Director at Facebook

Be comfortable being uncomfortable:

Be comfortable being uncomfortable. That has become a defining focus of mine.

DAVID PAKMAN

Partner at Venrock



“What would you do if you weren’t afraid?”

JULIE ZHUO

Time is your most valuable asset:

One thing that stuck with me is “Only agree to new commitments when both your head and your heart say yes.” It’s a quote from Richard Evans that I originally read on Marc Andreessen’s blog. I think it makes sense on a literal level—there’s so much going on in the world, so commitments are really expensive because if you follow through, you are missing out on other opportunities. At the end of the day, the main thing you have to contribute is your time so you should be pretty careful with how you use it.

The even more important piece of this quote is the bit about your head and your heart being in agreement. I think it’s a good idea to do that for most big decisions—especially in startups where there is so much change and uncertainty. If you are hiring or firing people, or choosing which job to do next, or deciding what to work on, try as hard as you can to make sure your head and your heart agree. And one more thing: make sure you get enough sleep!

CHARLIE CHEEVER

Co-founder of Quora and Expo

Pay attention when people tell you not to follow in their footsteps:

The most impressive piece of advice I got was from my thesis supervisor. He told me not to get a PhD. He said I would do fine, but not brilliantly—and I'd do much better and have more fun out on the world. This was the one guy saying, “Don't be like me. Do something else.” I took his advice.

TIM HARFORD

The Undercover Economist at Financial Times

Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are:

Stand next to people smarter than you are. Basically, this describes all the co-founders I've worked with.

JUSTIN KAN

CEO of Atrium LTS, Angel Investor



“It's important to know when to trust your own intuition and make contrarian, risky decisions rather than just follow the “conventional” wisdom.”

ETHAN KURZWEIL

Live your truth—and don't take yourself too seriously:

1. *Don't take yourself too seriously*
2. *Live your truth (be yourself and live authentically)*
3. *Appreciate that 99% of this is pure luck and it could be some other schmuck who got lucky*
4. *Do the right thing even when it's the hard or unpopular thing*
5. *See #1*

CHAMATH PALIHAPITIYA

CEO of Social Capital, Owner of Golden State Warriors

You don't have to listen to all of the advice you get:

*The best piece of advice I got was from Hiten Shah. He told me that as a founder, a lot of people will try to give you advice and you don't have to listen to them. You're starting a company because *you* have something you want to share with the world. Nobody else can do that for you, and their advice will always be skewed by their own experiences. If you don't trust in yourself and your intuition, then why are you even here?*

NADIA EGHBAL

Community Programs at GitHub



Photo by Getty Images

Have a relentless belief in yourself:

Believe in yourself no matter what. When you have a dream, there's only one person who can achieve it—you. Make it happen with your effort, determination, and focus. When you combine all of that, things will start to fall into place.

HARRISON BARNES

NBA Player for the Dallas Mavericks

The riskiest thing you can do is not take risks:

The riskiest thing one can do career-wise is to take no risk, because the world is constantly changing.

GEOFF LEWIS

Partner at Founders Fund

“No” is just a starting point:

The best piece of advice I ever received was that “No” is often just the starting point, and most careers worth having involve a fair amount of determination, grit, and just general “try, try again”-ing. That's been true ten times over at The Muse, and I'm so glad I learned the lesson early.

KATHRYN MINSHEW

Founder of The Muse

Work harder than everyone else:

1. Aim to become not the best at what you do but "the only one" who does what you do, and figure out how to define that;
2. Work harder than everyone you compete with, even if you are smarter/talented.
3. Strong bonds trump weaker, many bonds in a network.

KEITH RABOIS

Partner at Khosla Ventures

Listen to advice that endures:

I think most advice tends to be outdated. Advice about management is enduring. But advice about products, technology, and markets fades fast. The learner's mind and eyes are key.

JON STEINBERG

Co-founder of Cheddar

The Worst Career Advice I've Ever Received

Of course, not all advice is good advice. In addition to sharing the best advice they've ever received, a number of Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests also told us about advice they've received that hasn't quite worked out for them. As important as it is to seek advice from others, it is equally important to realize what advice not to take.

The advice you get can be (very) wrong:

At my first programming job out of college, I got excited about the web (this was 1994-1995). I couldn't get our management excited about the internet and eventually decided to move on. The worst advice came from my boss at that job, who said the internet reminded him of CB radio. "Years ago, truckers used CB radio, then it became a fad and everybody had a CB radio. Know who has a CB radio now? Truckers. The internet is a fad." I didn't listen to him. :-)

KEN NORTON

Partner at Google Ventures

You choose what you want to get used to:

Early on when I was about to take the job at McKinsey, someone I respected very much told me not to take it because I'd get "too used to the lifestyle" and never be able to do anything risky or non-traditional afterwards. With all due respect, I disagree. I think getting "used" to anything is a choice you make, not something inevitable. I'm really glad I worked in consulting for two years—but also so glad that I didn't let myself get "used" to the lifestyle, and was totally comfortable jumping into something completely different afterwards (like startups, and working in East Africa).

KATHRYN MINSHEW

Founder of The Muse

Patience isn't always a good thing:

People kept telling me to be patient and good things would happen—that's just bullshit. Don't wait, make it happen.

JASON CALACANIS

Angel Investor, Entrepreneur, Author

Good things come to those who work:

The worst advice I've ever gotten is that good things come to those who wait...Wrong! Good things come to those who work.

HANNAH CRANSTON

Host and Executive Producer of ThinkTank

Everyone is making it up as they go along:

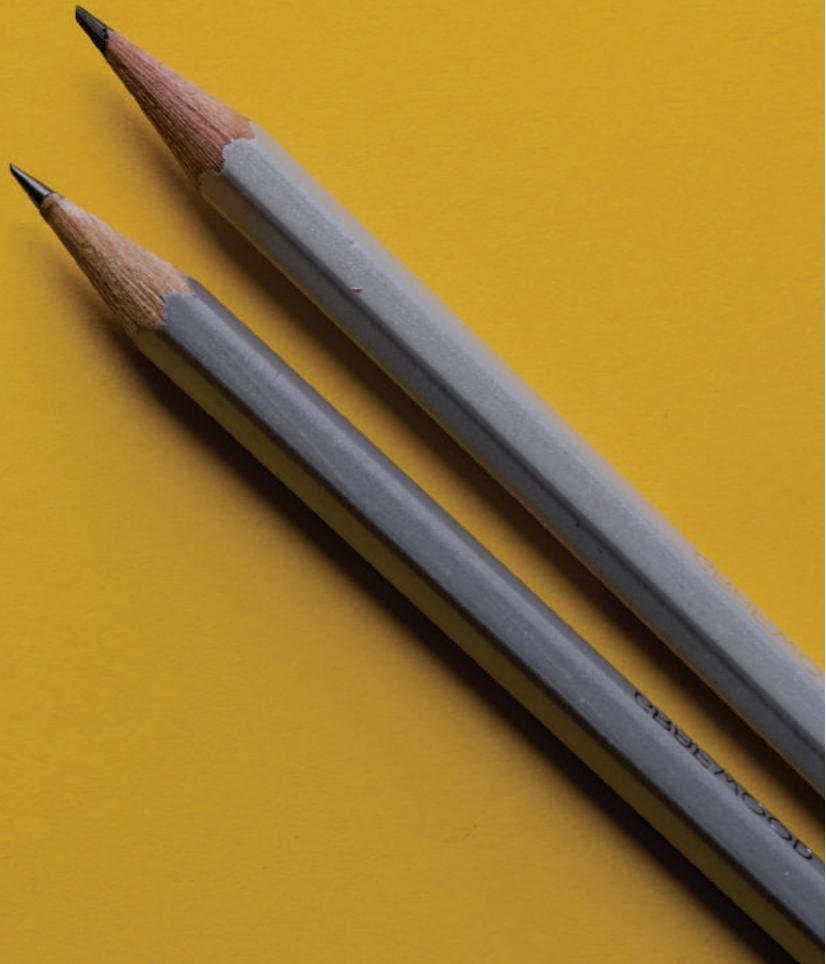
There is one important caveat about advice: don't get too caught up in getting advice or validation from people you consider to be successful. In the end, the most important thing you can do for your career, and life, is come to know yourself well—and make decisions accordingly. Naval Ravikant said it best: "You don't need to find me, you need to find you."



Humans are hardwired to listen to authority. We're tribal / hierarchical primates. Julian James makes the arguments that the first Gods were actually dead kings whose authority we still craved. And it's the nature of society that the people on top, either politicians or business leaders, want hero worship since it gives them power. I think it just helps to be very aware that fundamentally, there are no adults. Everyone is making it up as they go along. You have to find your own path, picking, choosing, taking and discarding as you see fit. I choose mostly to learn from books—those are my "authority figures," but even there I try to be very selective.

NAVAL RAVIKANT

Co-founder of AngelList



Education (or Lack Thereof)

There is much debate about the importance of higher education—particularly if you want to become an entrepreneur. While some argue that college and graduate work has been a critical part of their career success, others say that there's no education better than actually taking the entrepreneurial leap themselves. When it comes to education, no one path is right for everyone—and that's highlighted in the varied advice throughout this next section.



Photo by Eric Risberg, Associated Press

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For entrepreneurs, consider joining a startup instead of getting a masters degree:

If your goal is to become an entrepreneur, my advice is to join an existing company that is already providing great value to the world to learn how it is done. Whether or not you need an advanced degree really depends on the way you want to specialize. (I don't even have a bachelor's degree, so certainly a master's is not required in general for being an entrepreneur.)

DUSTIN MOSKOVITZ

Co-founder of Asana and Facebook

There's value in learning how to learn:

The value of a college degree depends a ton on what one's background is, and which field one is going into. Not having a formal college education certainly was a weakness in terms of both my discipline around learning (the whole "learning how to learn" thing that a lot of people get from college), as well as in developing a professional social network or industry contacts. Living in NYC, I often encounter people who casually, matter-of-factly talk about how they partnered with, or got support from, people they met through college (often at Ivy League schools or other "big name" universities) and it's striking to me what a leg up that provides, particularly for people from underrepresented backgrounds.

ANIL DASH

CEO of Fog Creek

Thoughts on higher education from a professor:

I'm a fan of education. Of course, I'm a university professor, which means that I have a conflict of interest. I think about education as a gamble with a high expected payoff. Many of the startups I visit have lots of interesting ideas, but they seem to have never discovered the library, which means that they start everything as if they are the first people to have an idea. Now, it's not really their fault because they are busy with other things, but I think that too much of the effort in the tech sector is focused on rediscovering things that we know already. From that perspective, I think that studying can provide you with a base of knowledge from which you could evaluate if a direction is worthwhile or not and what other literature you might want to look at. Is it always going to have a positive payoff? Of course not. But I suspect it often does. One other thing: if you are educated, it is not always easy for you to attribute what you know to a particular class, which is why I think that many people don't sufficiently appreciate their education.

DAN ARIELY

Author of *Predictably Irrational*

Thoughts on higher education from a college dropout:

I think it's a very personal answer for each person. I don't think formal education is a bad thing, but it's about what structure and environment leads to the best personal growth and learning for you. For me, school wasn't it. I found myself much more engaged and excited about learning once I was self-directed and working within startups. I think the most important thing is to be thirsty for new knowledge, and knowledge that challenges the things you innately believe. I read way more now than I ever did in school and find myself constantly searching for new people to learn from.

RYAN SARVER

Partner at Redpoint Ventures

Degrees are becoming less and less relevant:

I'd learn to code, to sell, and I'd read a lot. I'd be into technology, since all economic growth fundamentally derives from technology development. But I'd be a free agent and keep an open mind. Degrees are the markers that the last generation needed. They're getting less and less relevant with every passing day. I thank the universe that I didn't follow through on an early and ill-conceived plan to get a JD. If you are going to get a degree, get one in physics, math, or computer science. The mental models that you develop will help you in many aspects of life.

NAVAL RAVIKANT

Co-founder of AngelList



"I think the most important thing is to be thirsty for new knowledge that challenges the things you innately believe."

RYAN SARVER

Advice for college dropouts:

I would identify some people you admire who are a notch or two ahead of you in their career, and reach out and offer to add value for free. Do free work. Start showing you can add value as a side project volunteer. Try to break in that way.

BEN CASNOCHA

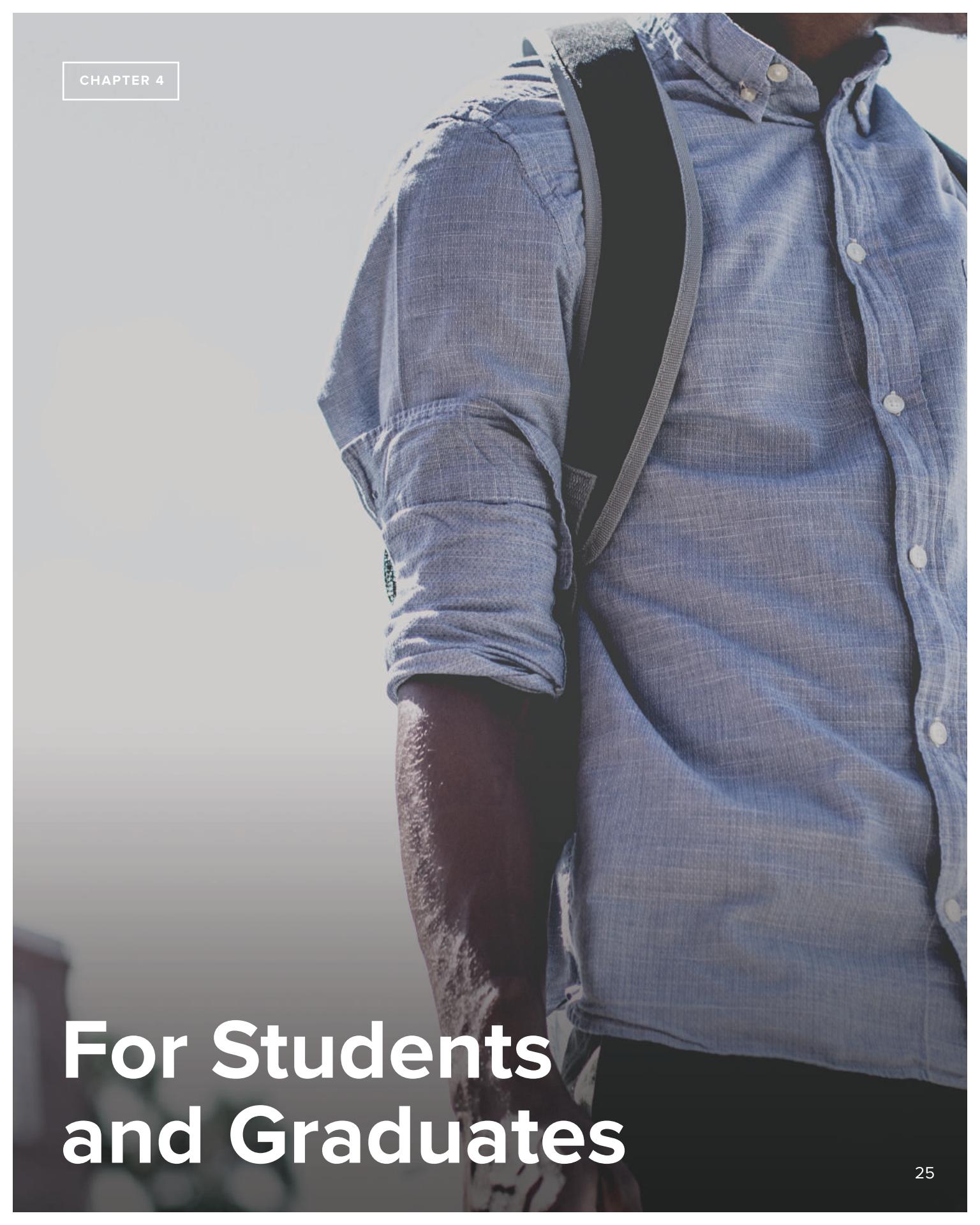
Author of *The Alliance*

You can always go back to school:

Through a mix of bad grades and boredom, I knew I wasn't a great fit for the college environment—so dropping out was relatively easy for me (minus missing my friends). And the risk of not having a degree if Box didn't work out was mitigated, as I was technically on a leave of absence, so I could always go back. Always protect the downside, but don't drive your decisions based on it.

AARON LEVIE

Co-founder of Box



For Students and Graduates



Photo by Andre Chung, The Washington Post/Getty Images

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For college students:

I became a reader in college. I was exposed to so many new ideas and ways of thinking about the world that have fundamentally changed the way that I live. So, I'd encourage you to expose yourself to as many ideas as possible. The way we think about the world informs the way that we show up in the world.

—

DERAY MCKESSON

Civil Rights Activist, Host of Pod Save the People

What Should I Focus on While in School?

For students fresh out of college:

Give up your life. Grow some thick skin. Don't give a shit, and be ready to do whatever it takes at all costs. Do what you love and figure out how to make a difference for the things you care about. Weave that into whatever business or product you are building.

AMANDA KAHLOW

Founder of 6Sense

Be patient. I've met many young grads who are expecting immediate success, and become dissatisfied when they don't achieve their goals right away. Take your time, think long-term, and learn.

KEN NORTON

Partner at Google Ventures

Pursue side hustles. If you've got things you want to build, just build them for the sake of learning a new thing. Don't obsess over starting a full on company right now. And surround yourself with people who challenge and motivate you.

ALEXIS OHANIAN

Co-founder of Reddit

For students aspiring to be tech entrepreneurs:

*Firstly, think about how you can actually help the world (not build some trivial app). Secondly, study hard sciences/math/IT (do *not* do an MBA). Thirdly, check that your idea is 100x better (lower cost, etc) than anything similar out there.*

WILL MARSHALL

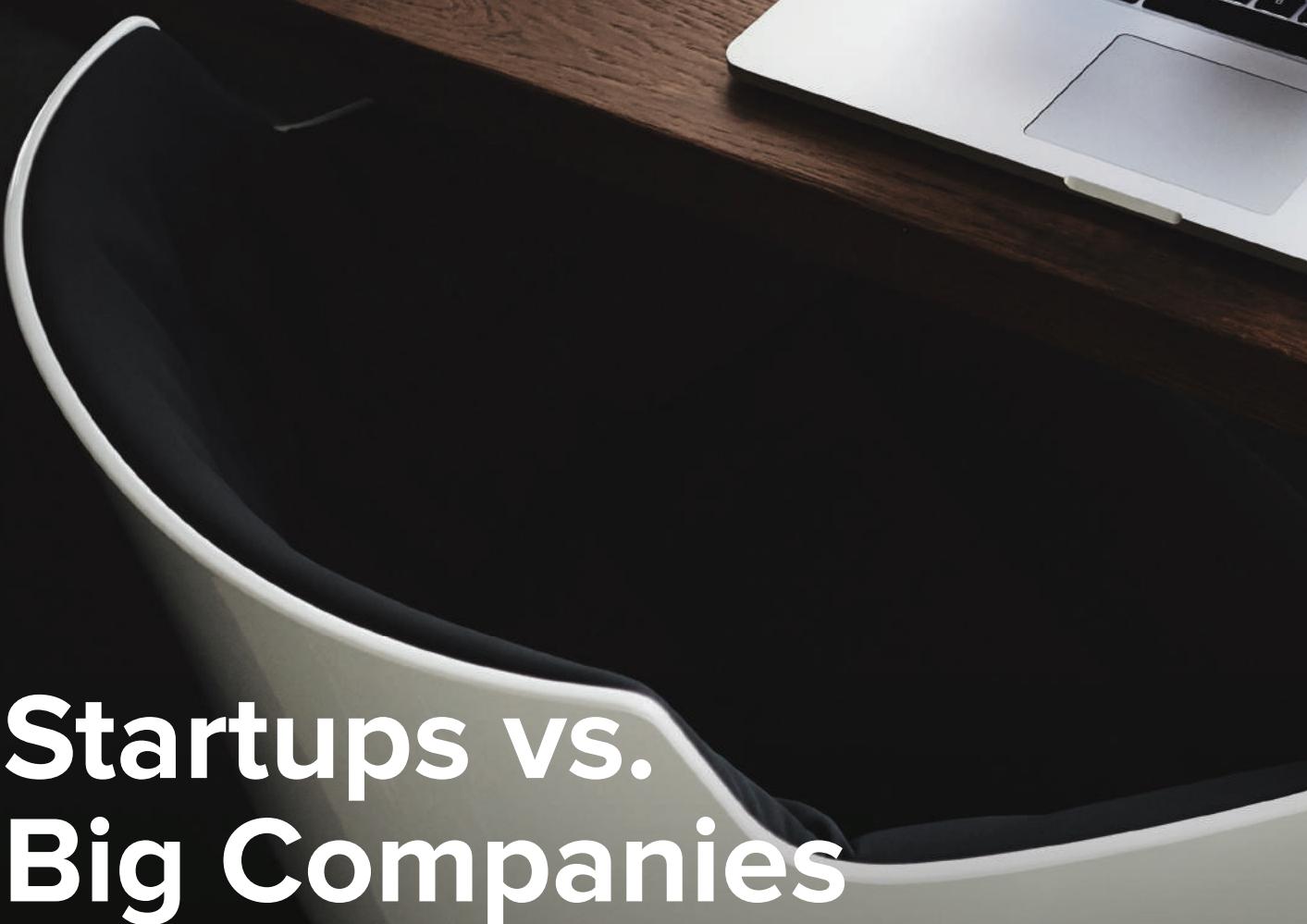
Co-founder of Planet Labs

For MBA students:

Focus (entrepreneurially) on what you feel like you'd be the best person in the world to do. Focus (academically) on those things that will make you a more effective leader.

TRISTAN WALKER

Founder of Walker & Company



Startups vs. Big Companies

If you're considering joining or building a startup, how do you know when it's the right time? Is it better to kick off your career at a big technology company, or should you dive right into entrepreneurship? There are so many viable paths you can take to launch your career. Here's some advice from several Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests based on their experiences at both big companies and startups at an early stage.



A close-up portrait of Tobias van Schneider. He has long, light brown hair styled back and a very full, bushy beard. He is wearing dark sunglasses and a white collared shirt. The background is blurred green foliage.

Photo by Noah Kalina

“

Tobias van Schneider was the former Lead Product Designer at Spotify. Here's why he decided to leave:

Leaving was a really hard decision because it was a dream company to work with. Essentially, I wasn't growing anymore personally so I had to make a decision. I wanted to do something new where I didn't know exactly what was going to happen. Spotify at the time evolved into a huge company and while there were a lot of challenges and problems to solve, they weren't the kinds of challenges I was looking [forward to]. I wanted to grow my craft, become better at solving specific design problems, and become better at building things out of nothing.

TOBIAS VAN SCHNEIDER

Founder of Semplice

Hunter Walk on the benefit of working at a large tech company early in your career:

If you have the chance to work at one or two “transformative” large tech companies, the best thing you get is exposure to lots of other smart people. Over the course of a career in tech, these folks will also go on to do great stuff and hopefully become your friends, employees, managers, investors, etc. I also think being at a rocketship-like company gives you an appreciation for what can go right. There are lots of post-mortems about how many things can go wrong at companies—but if you've seen things go right, you build some muscle memory for that, too.

HUNTER WALK

Partner at Homebrew



“I optimize aggressively for how much I will get to learn in a given role or project.”

MOLLY GRAHAM

Byron Deeter says it's worth joining a startup right after college:

There are very few jobs that offer the same learning experience that startups do. This is true especially at a smaller startup, where you will be encouraged to lead and explore a number of different roles, build processes, and make judgments with limited information. But, make sure you have done your homework on the market and the product—and most importantly, the team you'll be working with. You will spend many many hours with these people, so make sure you get along! I would strongly counsel you to join a high quality company with a great manager, and focus on that above role and title. It's important that your early jobs help you build mental models of success. If you don't feel like you'll be with great people, then go where you will. Join a larger tech company for a few years, or even a consulting firm (I sincerely had a great experience at McKinsey for two years as an analyst and it really helped me understand the basics of business). Early jobs are important to build a high quality network, and to learn how to build companies and products in the right ways.

BYRON DEETER

Partner at Bessemer Ventures

Ken Norton on the value of recent graduates joining high-growth businesses:

My advice to new grads is to look for high growth businesses. If you get exposure to massive growth early in your career, you'll learn a ton of lessons that will benefit you later. You'll also come away with a brand name on your resume and a network that will be incredibly valuable.

KEN NORTON

Partner at Google Ventures

Brad Feld's thoughts on joining a big company or building a startup right out of college:

Some people will get huge benefit from working at a tech company as their first job. Others won't. Some people will be well tuned to just starting something, especially if they have developed or are surrounded by a powerful support network. Others won't. I think it is very dependent on the person, the company, and the desire.

BRAD FELD

Managing Director at Foundry Group



“New managers shouldn't assume they can learn the relevant skills in the same way they have acquired technical skills.”

DUSTIN MOSKOVITZ

Geoff Lewis shares his thoughts on joining a startup right after graduation:

If you join the wrong startup, you'll learn the wrong lessons and your career will start off on the wrong track. If you join the right startup, it's by far the best move and biggest career arbitrage play coming out of college. Generally, I recommend that anyone who joins a startup straight out of college should make sure the company has product-market fit and at least 2 years of runway in the bank.

GEOFF LEWIS

Partner at Founders Fund

To be world class at something, work on it every day for years:

I've met people who joined Google when it was 1,000 to 5,000 employees, and they learned so much as it grew. There's so much happening, and so much that you'll learn, so I don't know if there's ever a "too late." You want to make sure you're positioned in a part of the company that's still growing quickly. When you get into a role, you're going to have growth opportunities moving up in that role, but moving around becomes harder. So picking the right part of the organization becomes more important.

SARAH TAVEL

Partner at Benchmark



What you don't do is just as important as what you do:

The most surprising thing that I learned from my time at Google is how un-nostalgic it is as a company. Basically, Google rewrites itself (i.e. its internal code) every two years. Now, of course that's not absolute, but what it means is that it's a company that's constantly moving forward and doesn't stop to rest on its laurels or successes. There's always a way to do things better, faster, cheaper, or more powerfully, and the company's relentless pursuit of bettering itself was inspirational. Even working on Google+ gave me insights into this process, and to this day, even as it rewrites large portions of the work that we did over a four-year period, you can see how it folds in and integrates lessons from that time without getting bogged down with a sense of "failure" that the original premise of the network didn't pan out.

CHRIS MESSINA

Product Designer

Molly Graham talks about her career transitions (HR at Facebook → Director of Mobile at Facebook → COO at Quip → VP of Operations at Chan Zuckerberg Initiative):

All of those transitions were 50% luck based on being in the right place at the right time, and 50% saying yes to a big opportunity when it was offered to me even if it was vague, or seemed stupid or crazy. I optimize aggressively for how much I will get to learn in a given role or project and NOT for whether something is a good “career decision.

MOLLY GRAHAM

VP of Operations at the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative



“Join a high quality company with a great manager, and focus on that above role and title.”

BYRON DEETER

Molly also shared her defining career moments at companies big and small:

Deciding to leave Google and go to Facebook was very definitive for me. I had a number of options at Google that sounded very impressive, and at the time, Facebook was very much not a sure bet. In 2008, most people thought Facebook was just a site for college kids or that it was going to be bought by Microsoft (funny now, but real). Even I didn't fully understand what Facebook was doing in the world when I was offered a job there, and I was confused about the decision for many reasons. Someone said to me, “You have the answer inside you, you just have to listen for it.” My gut just said, “I want to go work with Elliot Schrage and Sheryl Sandberg at Facebook.” (Elliot was my manager at Google and Sheryl was a mentor.) The answer was suddenly very clear and 100% about the people. That advice—to wait for the moment when your gut or your heart makes itself very clear—about hard decisions has served me very well through every single complicated, emotional decision I have made since. It taught me that you should always follow wonderful people that you want to learn from.

MOLLY GRAHAM

VP of Operations at the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

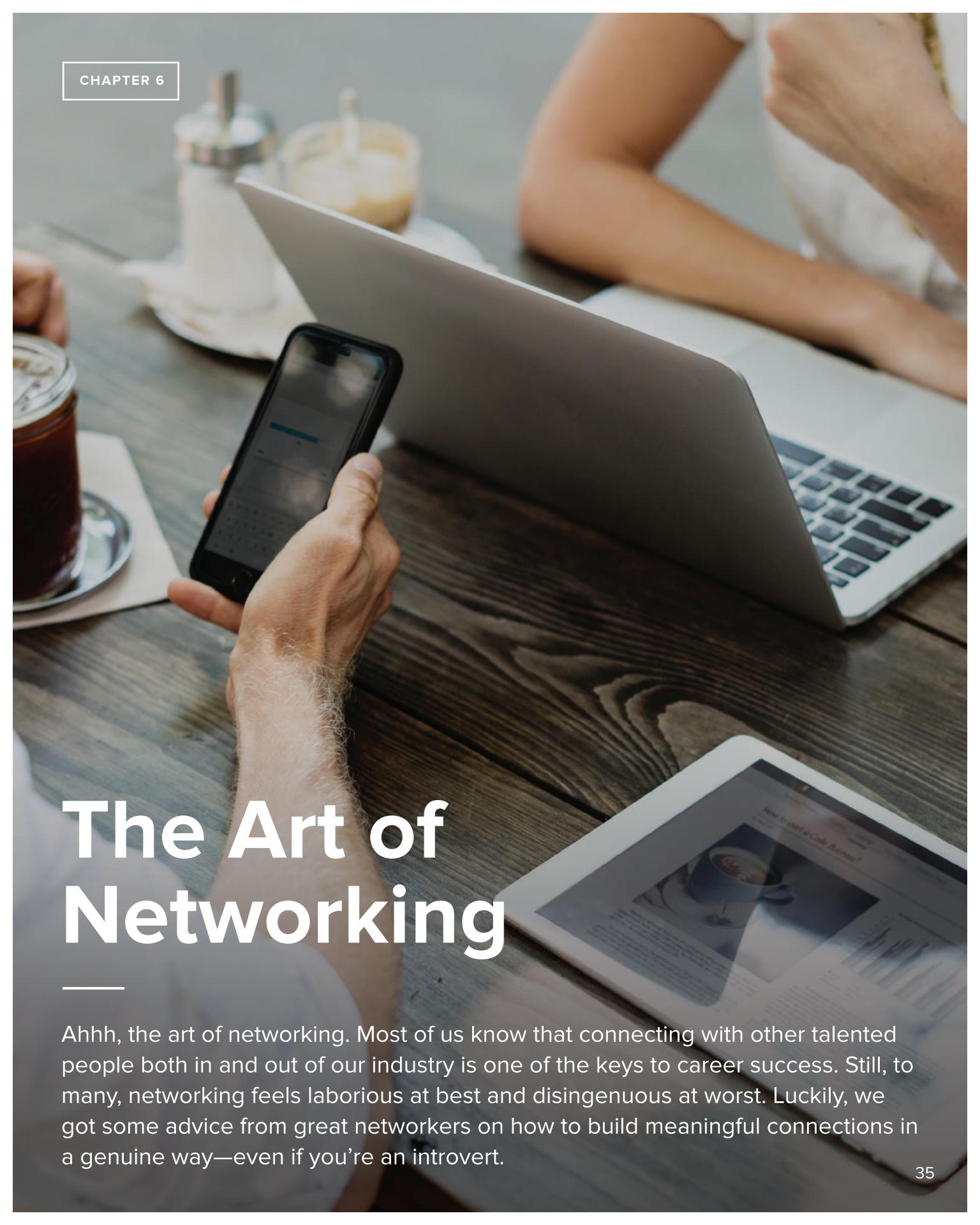
Dustin Moskovitz on how he personally grew at Facebook in the early days:

I knew more or less nothing at the beginning. Though I was generally proficient with computers, I wasn't really a programmer and literally took intro to computer science (CS50) the semester before we started Facebook. Mostly I learned by reading Mark's code, trial and error, and by searching for answers to questions that were coming up for me. I also learned from the more experienced people who joined Facebook in the early days, especially Matt Cohler and Jeff Rothschild, as well as from direct experience over time. I often say that new managers shouldn't assume they can learn the relevant skills in the same way they have acquired technical skills (e.g. by reading and training). It really takes experience.

DUSTIN MOSKOVITZ

Co-founder of Asana and Facebook





The Art of Networking

Ahhh, the art of networking. Most of us know that connecting with other talented people both in and out of our industry is one of the keys to career success. Still, to many, networking feels laborious at best and disingenuous at worst. Luckily, we got some advice from great networkers on how to build meaningful connections in a genuine way—even if you’re an introvert.



Photo by Getty Images

“

How to build a network as a founder:

The best way to effectively build a network is to have a product that is at least somewhat interesting. To use Brian Chesky's example, he didn't have runaway growth, but he had actually built a product and had a few users which was enough for some people to be willing to meet with and help him. Most people looking to “network” have just an idea, so this alone will make you stand out.

SAM ALTMAN

President of Y Combinator

How to build a network at your company if you're an introvert:

First off, I would look for ways to showcase your expertise—whether through internal company blogs, small speaking roles at a company conference, etc. Second, if you have expertise that your colleagues could benefit from, share it! Send them emails with information they can learn from or use. And finally, I would suggest making a list of some of your accomplishments to date. Even if you never share the list with anyone, it will help center you emotionally around the value you bring. Once you've done that, though, it actually will be easier to share this information with others. For example, you might ask for a sit down meeting with a boss or mentor to discuss your career goals, to share your accomplishments to date, and to ask for their advice on how to reach your goals.

SUSAN CAIN

Author of *Quiet*, TED Speaker

For some, building a network may not be that important:

I think the value of a network, while important, is decreasing every year. At the same time, the value of being excellent at what you do has grown. In today's world, if you know something really compelling, you will be sought out...and sought out directly. If I was to advise someone, I would tell them to spend less time developing their professional network.

AUREN HOFFMAN

CEO of SafeGraph



"The best way to effectively build a network is to have a product that is at least somewhat interesting."

SAM ALTMAN

Finding Great Mentors

We've found that successful entrepreneurs and thought leaders tend to have great mentors. The big question is: How do you find a mentor in the first place? And how do you surround yourself with great people that you can learn from as you grow? Below you'll find a few tidbits of advice on mentorship from several of the Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests.

Prayer
P.S. (10:44) “Our power such is the position belonging to God among all creatures, that human beings are able to pray. We are told that Jesus Christ means us our salvation so that we, though wretched sinners, can boldly approach God's throne and cry out for mercy to him [Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25]. We are also told that God himself continues to intercede through the Spirit [Rom. 8:9–11] and helps us to pray [Rom. 8:26–27] so that even now by faith we may gaze and contemplate the glory of Christ [1 Cor. 3:17–18]. Thus the Bible gives us theological support for both communions connected and琅琅上口 present.”

A little reflection will show us that those two kinds of prayer are instant approaches more severe categories. Adoring God is done through supplication. To **praise God or say “Amen” before his name** weakens those who would be able to do that if it would become less as **Adoration**. Both make an adequate assistance supplication, as seeing God's kingdom must include **praises to Jesus and himself**. The West African Yoruba Christians tell us that our purpose is to “**glorify God and honor him forever**”. In this famous sentence we see reflected both religious piety and communion prayer. These two things—**glorification and communion**—do not always coincide in this life, but in the end they mean the same thing. We must pray for the coming of God's kingdom, but if we don't enjoy God supremely with all our being, we are not truly honoring him as Lord.

Finally, when we consult many of the greatest church writers

on prayer—such as Augustine, Martin Luther, etc.—they do not tell us either ignorant Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, balance to the mystical, common sense against torturing itself too much, **“our own needs to self-control**, **guarding and keeping the New me**”

Intercession

Through Duties

Where, then, does this leave us? We seek personal communion with God's kingdom in heart and in the way that communion will not be just one hand, and one petition will not be “**“fix our weary world”** (Matt. 6:10).

This book will show that prayer with God. These two concepts work for deepening our prayer adoration, confession, thanksgiving, as well as profound contemplation, the intimacy of his help, all of which can lead to

Prayer, then, is both an art and a science. Every time we pray, we are learning the course of a life, and can

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“

How to process career advice:

Be very aware of an advice giver's biases. Even if they're super smart and super successful, what might be motivating them to say what they're saying to you? Of course, the most common bias is they lack motivation or empathy to understand you, and so they end up giving advice to a younger version of themselves. Also, I'd generally avoid asking for advice directly. Instead, watch people's actions. Read between the lines of what they say on related topics.

BEN CASNOCHA

Author of *The Alliance*

You don't have to give your mentors a formal title:

The best mentors I have ever had didn't even know they were my mentors! I was simply guided by seeing their behavior that made me think, "That's how I should be acting."

ANDY WEISSMAN

Partner at Union Square Ventures

Have a personal “board of directors”:

I don't have one specific mentor, but rather, a group of people that I know I can go to with questions and ask for advice depending on what's going on in my life. Some people call it a “personal board of directors,” and I think everyone should have one.

ADAM BESVINICK

VC at Anchorage Capital Group



“Avoid asking for advice directly. Instead, watch people’s actions.”

BEN CASNOCHA

Find mentors with distinct perspectives:

Having mentors with distinct perspectives has been really helpful. Matt Cohler was an amazing mentor for us as we scaled the company, since he brought the perspective of seeing multiple companies go through hypergrowth. On engineering, I was fortunate to have worked for some great engineering leaders like Elaine Wherry at Meebo and Dave Loftesness at Xmarks, who taught me how to balance building the right thing, with building things the "right" way.

MIKE KRIEGER

Co-founder of Instagram



Photo courtesy of Ramit Sethi

Learn from anyone—and be thoughtful about who you surround yourself with:

My belief is you can learn from anyone. This is why I still buy books and courses from people whose businesses are a fraction of the size of ours, as well as learning from books in different areas (e.g. reading a book by Michael Jordan's former trainer). But, I do think people at the top of their game can teach you things that others cannot. Sometimes, it's a random phrase they'll say—"Watch out for X"—which turns out to have a million-dollar impact on your business. That's happened to me with one of my mentors.

I also think more of us should learn from uncomfortable sources. I've heard people say, "Oh my gosh, you read that site?" Whether it's Fox News, Jezebel, whatever...if you allow yourself to only exist in an echo chamber, how can you be the best?

Finally, in terms of [the people I surround myself with], I think a few things:

- In business, I'm very careful about who I hang out with. I think this is critical: If you hang out with people who are happy to create substandard products, that will rub off. Just as if you live in NYC or SF or New Orleans, certain values will rub off on you. Acknowledge it, and plan for it.*
- The more successful you get, the more doors open up. When I started, I wanted to know who the world's best copywriters were. Their names weren't even public. Now that I've grown my business, I've learned more about the people and lessons that aren't shared publicly. But that takes time. And there is always another level—don't let it drive you crazy. There's nothing worse than a social climber!*

So, overall: I believe we can learn from everyone. I try to open my learning circle. But I'm also very careful of who I surround myself with because values—consciously or unconsciously—rub off.

RAMIT SETHI

Author of *I Will Teach You to Be Rich*

On Getting Hired

No matter what stage you're at professionally—whether fresh out of college, or a seasoned professional looking to progress in an industry or pursue a different career—figuring out how to find your next big opportunity is often a challenge. Over the past few years, a number of entrepreneurs, leaders, and managers have shared their thoughts with the Product Hunt community about breaking into a new industry and getting hired for a dream job. Here are some of the most illuminating responses:



Photo by Frances F. Denny

“

Break the cycle of needing experience to get a job, and needing a job to gain experience:

In terms of gaining experience, one of the best things you can do is find a startup or nonprofit to work for part-time in your area of desired expertise. This helps you gain a foothold and gives you something to talk about to future employers. For example, a friend of mine did social media for a startup for three months on nights and weekends when she was trying to make a jump into a full-time social media role. She was recruited for her dream position shortly thereafter.

KATHRYN MINSHEW

Founder of The Muse

Follow your interests and help every good person you meet:

If you're breaking into a new industry, just follow your interests and help every good person you meet. And I don't just mean follow-up and help—I mean go above and beyond what they would have expected. That requires diligence, listening, doing what you say you're going to do, etc. It also takes time. A lot of people come up to me at events and ask "how" to break into a new industry, and I usually retort with, "Put your head down for five years and then look up.

SEMIL SHAH

Partner at Haystack

Don't rely on your resume alone to get you in the door:

Tech hiring is built around relationships and networking. For a candidate, it's important to build relationships with people at the companies you're looking to work for. Go to networking events, and take part in online groups. Don't rely on your resume alone to get you in the door.

MELINDA EPLER

Founder of Change Catalyst



"Follow your interests and help every good person you meet."

SEMIL SHAH

Don't wait for someone else to make your career happen:

Two thoughts: 1) Find a way to get exposure to those in the industry, and 2) have something to offer. Getting exposure could mean showing up to meet-ups, getting introduced by friends and family, or even contributing to open source projects that are visible. Then, offer something valuable. You can get code up on GitHub if you're a coder, maintain an active social media account or blog if you're interested in marketing, etc. Above all else, be passionate and don't wait for someone else to make your career happen. Those days, if they ever existed, are long gone now.

BLAKE IRVING

CEO of GoDaddy

Play where other people aren't:

Play where other people aren't, whether as a company or as an individual. When we see an opportunity fully scoped out, we want to go for it. It seems more certain to us. But the better opportunity is the one that involves playing where people don't want to play or haven't thought of playing. The choice may provide less certainty, but it is ultimately less risky.

WHITNEY JOHNSON

Author of *Disrupt Yourself*



“Above all else, be passionate and don’t wait for someone else to make your career happen.”

BLAKE IRVING

Do something remarkable and different to get an employer's attention:

Do something awesome—something remarkable—and send it to us. This will get our attention, and it shows passion and commitment. For Coinbase, it could be an open source project, a bug bounty submission, a song, whatever—be creative. One candidate submitted a cover letter in the theme of Satoshi’s original bitcoin paper; it included citations, and a consensus mechanism for employees and managers working together.

BRIAN ARMSTRONG

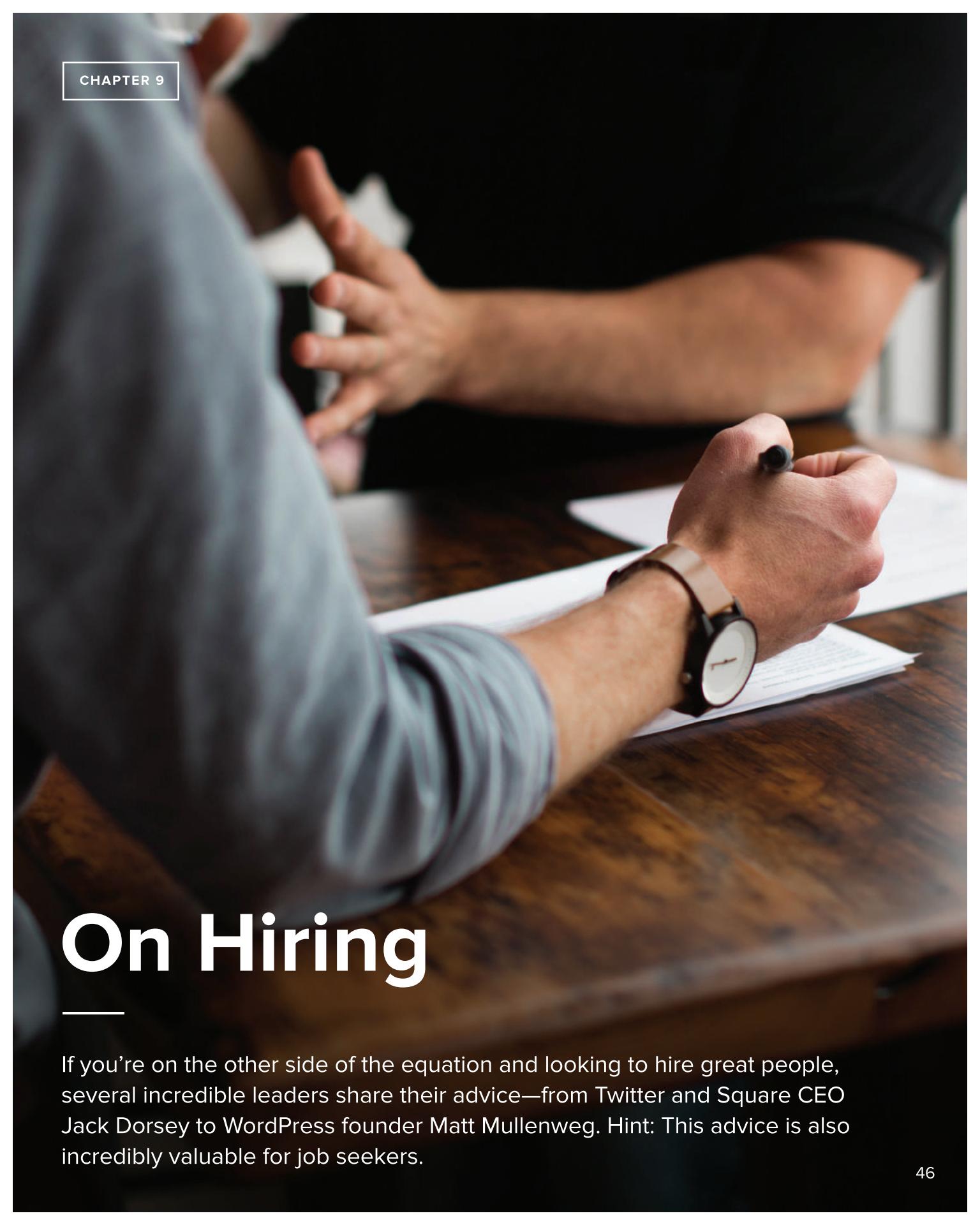
Co-founder of Coinbase

Attend tech conferences and industry events:

Find those who have a similar passion and purpose and start following and studying what they do to be successful. At the same time, it's important to invest in your personal brand by telling your story and being consistent across all social channels. There is also a massive amount of value in attending events like Disrupt, SXSW, CES, and AWS Relevant with a strategic networking and learning approach. So many connections you make early on will be of great value as your career grows. Most of the clients and speaking opportunities that I have today come from people I built relationships with 4-7 years ago while working at a help desk and then as a training manager.

BRIAN FANZO

Founder of iSocialFanz

A photograph showing a person from the side, wearing a light blue shirt, sitting at a wooden table and writing in a notebook with a black pen. Another person's arm and hand are visible in the background, holding a white coffee cup. The scene suggests a professional or collaborative environment like a coffee shop or office. The lighting is warm and focused on the hands and the notebook.

On Hiring

If you're on the other side of the equation and looking to hire great people, several incredible leaders share their advice—from Twitter and Square CEO Jack Dorsey to WordPress founder Matt Mullenweg. Hint: This advice is also incredibly valuable for job seekers.



Photo by Dan Monick, Corbis Outline

“

The most important things to look for in potential hires:

I look for passion. It's the only thing that can't be taught. Why Square? Why Twitter? If I hear passion for the purpose in the answer, then I look for leadership and skill. Passion and purpose and principles first, though!

JACK DORSEY

Co-founder of Twitter and Square

The Most Important Things to Look for in Potential Hires:

It really depends on the job. But the research on this suggests a few attributes:

1. Conscientiousness
2. General cognitive skills (i.e. basic smarts)
3. Cultural fit. Some people might do great at IBM but terribly at Facebook; others could be the exact opposite.

DANIEL PINK

Author of *Drive* and *A Whole New Mind*



I'm a sucker for competence. It's not the only thing that matters, but working with someone who's really good at what they do is invigorating. Next best thing is to have an aptitude for learning. The only form of teaching that I really enjoy is the kind where I have to say things only once, or at the most, a few times. People who are great listeners and eager to learn can be (almost) as rewarding to work with. Bottom line: Be good at what you do or be good at becoming good at what you do.

DAVID HEINEMEIER-HANSSON

Creator of Ruby on Rails, Co-founder of Basecamp

First, do interesting things and learn a lot. It doesn't matter where you went to school (or didn't), or if you've been in the same job for a decade—but what have you done above and beyond that? Personal projects, community service, volunteer work, education—highlight things that demonstrate your passion, creativity, attention to detail, and work ethic.

Second, does your job application tell that story? Think about how it stands out, and how you can demonstrate all of the above not just in what you share about yourself, but also how you apply for the job. I primarily look for is the four qualities you can't teach: work ethic, taste, integrity, and curiosity.

MATT MULLENWEG

Co-founder of WordPress



"I look for passion. It's the only thing that can't be taught."

JACK DORSEY



Changing Career Paths



So, you've got some work experience under your belt... but you're realizing that it's time to change career paths. A lot of people get stuck here. How do you make the leap into something new without starting all over again? How can you get your foot in the door in a completely different industry? Do you have what it takes to succeed at something totally new? If you've ever considered shifting your career, you are certainly not alone. Here are some thoughts on how you can navigate your way into a new and exciting professional path:



Photo by Júlia Soler

“

Are side projects a good idea?

Like most frustrating answers, I'll say: It depends. In an ideal world, “work” is always rounding out your interests/fascinations and the things you wish to learn and practice.

When your job is doing all these things, immerse yourself completely. If your work is doing some of these things, take the initiative to round out your education and experience with relevant side projects. Ultimately, doing so is great for your employer (you'll stick around), and great for you (you continue to develop your interests and experience in things that fascinate you).

But always be honest with yourself. What is your capacity to compartmentalize and multi-task? Most people thrive on a single track. Be sure to proceed cautiously because if you're not performing at the top of your game, doors close quickly.

SCOTT BELSKY

Founder of Behance, Investor

How do you stay creative while working a routine office job?

It's important to have an escape plan. Literally think of it as if you were planning to escape from prison. Give yourself a year or two, maximum. Knowing this will lift your spirits. Decide where your next move will be, more or less. In the evening, if you are not too burnt out, you have to spend some time researching new avenues, and developing some other skills. Perhaps go back to school in the evening. Or if you have a startup idea, devote one hour an evening to it.

ROBERT GREENE

Author of *The 48 Laws of Power and Mastery*

What should a generalist do to advance his or her career?

If you're not comfortable with the idea of choosing a single thing to excel at, consider instead selecting a unique collection of skills that are rare in combination and have some high value areas of application.

CAL NEWPORT

Author of *Deep Work* and *So Good They Can't Ignore You*



"It's important to have an escape plan. Give yourself a year or two, maximum."

ROBERT GREENE

How would you determine whether you're on the right or wrong career path?

I know this doesn't sound helpful, but this is the advice Tim Cook gave Apple interns when I was there: the bigger the decision, the more you have to trust your gut. You know if you're on the right or wrong path for reasons not even you understand.

BEN THOMPSON

Founder of Stratechery

What advice would you give to a college graduate who took a job he or she didn't actually want?

It happens to all of us. You're not stuck, there's a way out. That process is:

1. Showcase
2. Target
3. Audit
4. Gift
5. Execute
6. Sell

*Show what you can do in an online portfolio. Target one company you want to work for. Do an audit of their business to assess areas where you can help. Give them a gift (whether it's free work or something tangible that can help them). When you're hired, do the job—get sh*t done! Then finally, sell: transition to a paid role.*

CHARLIE HOEHN

Author of *Play It Away*



“The bigger the decision, the more you have to trust your gut.”

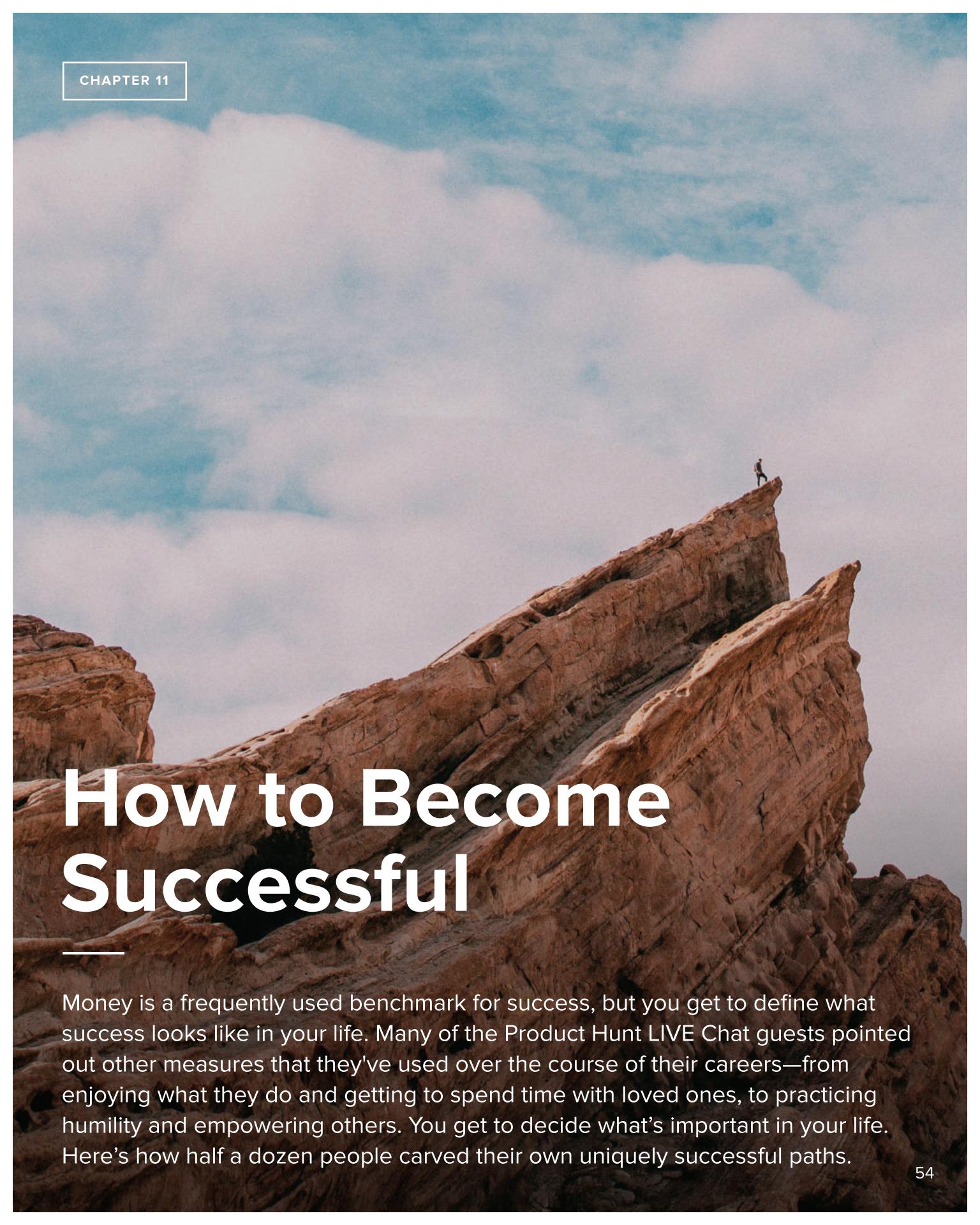
BEN THOMPSON

What advice would you give to those deciding what to do next in their careers?

Whenever I have thought about where I work and where else I could work, I've always asked myself, "What product do I love today that I think should be much much bigger and used by many more people in the world?" If the product I was working on wasn't in the top 5, I'd think about trying to go work on a product that did fit into that list for me. It's really important to choose something you legitimately love and believe can be a lot bigger and more important in the world. If you convince yourself to work somewhere because you think it can pay you a lot of money, you won't be as happy working on it, and you won't go to sleep or wake up thinking about how you can make the product better nearly as often.

JOSH ELMAN

Partner at Greylock

A photograph of a person standing on the edge of a massive, light-brown rock formation with distinct horizontal layers. The person is small in comparison to the scale of the rock. The sky above is filled with soft, white and grey clouds.

How to Become Successful

Money is a frequently used benchmark for success, but you get to define what success looks like in your life. Many of the Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests pointed out other measures that they've used over the course of their careers—from enjoying what they do and getting to spend time with loved ones, to practicing humility and empowering others. You get to decide what's important in your life. Here's how half a dozen people carved their own uniquely successful paths.

A close-up portrait of Gary Vaynerchuk, a middle-aged man with dark hair and a beard, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue hoodie. The background is a neutral, light gray.

Photo courtesy of Gary Vaynerchuk

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Understand that 99% of things don't matter:

Focus on big picture things: patience, empowering others, understanding that 99% of things don't matter, developing business development chops to create leverage.

GARY VAYNERCHUK

CEO of VaynerMedia, Investor, Author

Figure out what you're good at and give it away for free:

Figure out what you're good at and start helping other people with it—give it away. Pay it forward. Karma works because people are very consistent. On a long enough timescale, you will attract what you project. But don't measure; your patience will run out if you are counting.

NAVAL RAVIKANT

Co-founder of AngelList

Have fun doing your work:

Success for me is being able to have fun at my job, and making content that people enjoy. If I encouraged another woman to make her career in tech or media, I'd be happy.

VERONICA BELMONT

Product Manager at Growbot



“Understand that 99% of things don't matter.”

GARY VAYNERCHUK

Live and breathe your industry:

I truly believe that to excel in a specific industry if you are a creative, you need to live and breathe the industry. For example, the best food photographers spend a lot of their time interacting with and making friends in the food industry. I spent years in tech building my network and having a genuine interest in people, and I still spend a considerable amount of time interacting with people in the tech industry today. Relationships are just as important to my business as the photos themselves.

HELENA PRICE

Photographer

Play to your distinctive strengths:

It's a human imperative to move forward. Once you master your current learning curve, you need to jump again. You move through your learning curve more quickly when you take the right risks, play to your distinctive strengths, embrace constraints, battle entitlement, and are driven by discovery.

WHITNEY JOHNSON

Author of *Disrupt Yourself*

Make those who believe in you look brilliant:

First, my definition of success: "Success is making those who believed in you look brilliant." So based on that, I'd say that the #1 most common trait among those who are successful is humility.

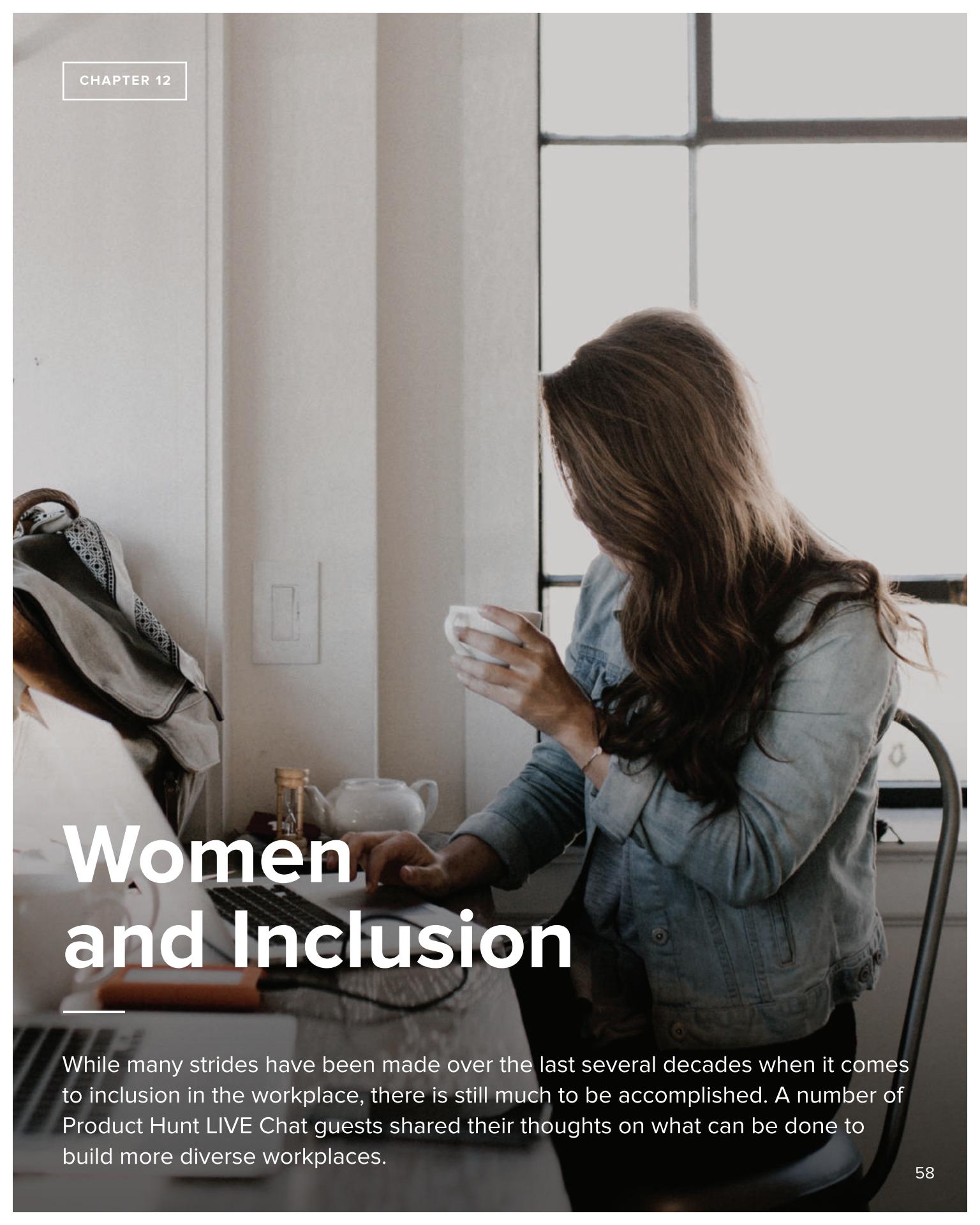
DHARMESH SHAH

Co-founder of HubSpot



"Figure out what you're good at and start helping other people with it—give it away."

NAVAL RAVIKANT

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, seen from the side and back, sitting at a desk in a home office. She is wearing a denim jacket over a light-colored top. She is holding a white mug in her right hand and reaching for something on the desk with her left hand. On the desk, there is a keyboard, a small potted plant, and a teapot. To the left, a chair with a patterned cushion is visible. A window with a grid frame is behind her, letting in natural light.

Women and Inclusion

While many strides have been made over the last several decades when it comes to inclusion in the workplace, there is still much to be accomplished. A number of Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests shared their thoughts on what can be done to build more diverse workplaces.



Photo by Aaron Wojack

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What do you think is this biggest misconception about diversity in tech?

That achieving diversity in tech isn't about lowering the bar. It's about identifying and unlocking talent, even when it doesn't pattern match well against our woefully non-diverse industry right now.what they say on related topics.

TRACY CHOU

Early Pinterest Engineer, Co-founder of Project Include

What have been some of the greatest challenges you've overcome as a woman in tech?

I hope this question will soon be no longer relevant because there will be so many smart, driven, totally badass women in tech that the idea of people discriminating against them would be shocking. That said, I've definitely dealt with some un-fun stuff. Interestingly, the instances I've encountered of totally overt and awful sexism (e.g someone making wildly inappropriate and repeated physical advances at a work meeting) somehow weren't as frustrating/demoralizing as the little things, like people always assuming I'm non-technical and asking, "Who are you here with?" There are also instances at events for CEOs where people will assume I'm someone else's assistant. For now, I've found my best response to be:

1. Understanding it happens with a lot of people and it's about them, not about me
2. Talking about it with all the fantastic men I know, who are often surprised this happens
3. Having a cohort of badass women around me to vent about the worst stuff—and then move on.

Kicking ass is ultimately the best revenge, though it doesn't mean I won't talk about what needs to change along the way.

KATHRYN MINSHEW

Founder of The Muse



"Achieving diversity in tech isn't about lowering the bar. It's about identifying and unlocking talent."

TRACY CHOU

How do you feel the fight for racial equality and diversity is going in the tech industry?

We are trying hard to move the needle on racial and gender equality at Y Combinator. 10% of the founders in the Spring 2016 batch were Black or Latino, and 10% were women. These numbers need to improve. We are hoping that our outreach programs like YC Open Office Hours and YC College Tour encourage more underrepresented founders to apply. We also believe that our underrepresented alumni are great role models and examples of how Y Combinator can help all founders succeed.

MICHAEL SEIBEL

CEO of Y Combinator

What advice would you give to someone trying to break into the tech industry but are off put by the lack of diversity?

My advice is to do the research and find companies that do care about diversity and inclusion, and have diverse teams. For entrepreneurs, I'd also say do your research and learn which investors are investing in diverse companies.

MELINDA EPLER

Founder of Change Catalyst



What do you see as the main barrier for women in tech?

I can only speak as a tech-industry outsider who has interviewed and is friends with a lot of women within it. Speaking broadly, women are really interested in technology and in tech jobs. All the research on women in STEM professions across the board says that they are. What turns them off is the environment once they get there. The so-called pipeline problem is, in reality, a dropout problem. And so, while I definitely support programs that enable more women and girls to brush up their coding skills, I see culture as the main barrier. It can be tricky to explain, but I found this article pretty helpful. Nothing is going to change until tech companies value “soft” roles as equally as engineering roles, and until they let go of the ridiculous belief that they are purely meritocratic.

ANN FRIEDMAN

Freelance Writer, Podcaster

What should tech companies change to address the issues of new moms dropping out?

A big problem is when tech companies align “culture” with performance. Many tech companies expect you to be in the office at all hours (even when you can do the work just as well from home), go out for company drinks, go on company trips, and engage in other culture-related events that can exclude pregnant and nursing women, parents, and others who just don’t prefer those activities. The more tech companies can separate participating in all of the “cultural” activities from actual work performance, the more parents will stay in tech and the more companies will benefit by rewarding tangible work performance.

SARA MAUSKOPF

Co-founder of Winnie



“Kicking ass is ultimately the best revenge, though it doesn't mean I won't talk about what needs to change along the way.”

KATHRYN MINSHEW

What advice would you give to entrepreneurs of color?

One of the things not frequently acknowledged in the tech world is how important networks and personal relations are to things like raising investment (which, for almost any tech venture, is a necessary condition for success). This often puts people of color in a disadvantaged position—not out of intent, but because people of color are less likely to have access to these networks (although circumstances obviously vary by person). So the suggestion I have is to invest significant time reaching out to individual people—in particular, entrepreneurs—to establish the relationships and networks that are crucial for things like fundraising. This certainly isn't a panacea; there are systemic problems like unconscious bias that the industry needs to do more to address. But, I think it's a valuable start.

CHARLIE CHEEVER

Co-founder of Quora and Expo

What advice do you have for recruiting talented people from underrepresented backgrounds?

I would summarize it as:

1. Start early.
2. Look for diversity in every role - investors, board, executives, etc.
3. Re-emphasize it when thinking about recruiting and bake it into your recruiting practices.
4. Think about how diverse employees may thrive. What programs can support a broad range of people at your company?

ELAD GIL

Angel Investor, Co-founder of Color Genomics

What advice would you give to someone who is afraid they might be marginalized due to their sex, race, skin color, or background?

I loved how my Project Include teammate Erica Joy said it yesterday: “I would say that this culture may seem daunting but you can come here, and you can succeed, and you can achieve anything that anyone in this industry can. You’re probably better at it because you had to work harder to prove yourself. Come into this, don’t be shy about it, speak up for yourself and take what’s yours.

ELLEN PAO

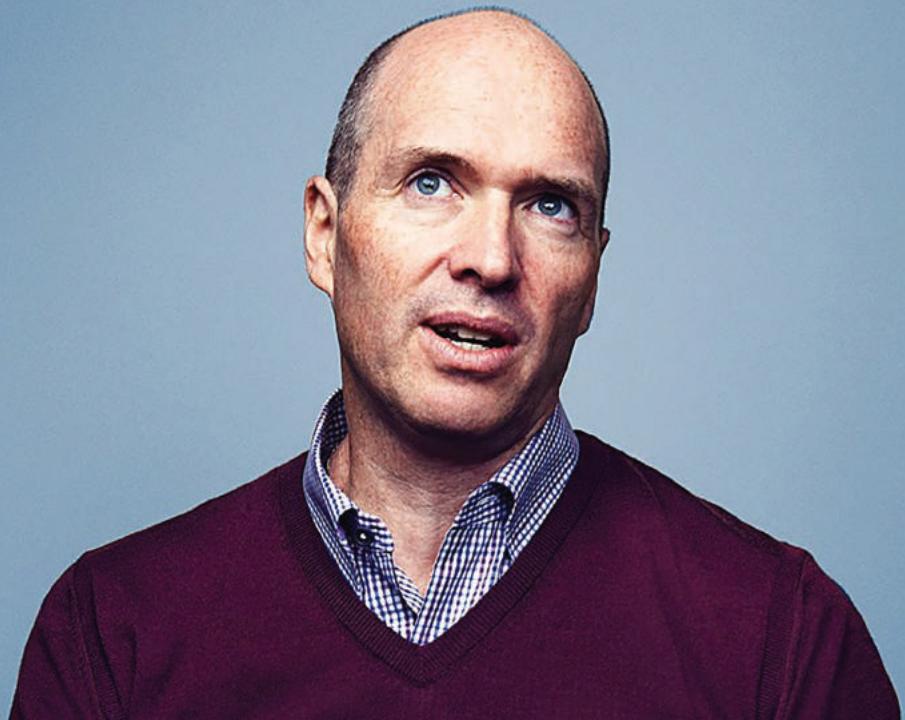
Co-founder of Project Include





Becoming an Entrepreneur

If you're an entrepreneur (or considering becoming one in the future) there is a treasure trove of great advice you can learn from those who have been there in the past. Learning from your mistakes is an essential part of the journey, but you can't afford to make every possible one. Let the successes and failures of others serve as a guide to your own entrepreneurial path. Here's what 20 entrepreneurs had to say about the critical lessons they've learned.



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Be completely vulnerable—and think for yourself:

To be an entrepreneur, you have to be willing to be completely vulnerable and think entirely for yourself. I imagine that can be learned, but I am not sure.

...And be ready to be ridiculed along the way:

Nobody who ever built a great company wasn't ridiculed along the way. If you are driven by social signals, you shouldn't be an entrepreneur. That's not say that you shouldn't ever listen to input, but you have to decide for yourself.

BEN HOROWITZ

Co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz

Surround yourself with the right people:

Ensuring you surround yourself with the right people makes the difference. Surround yourself with people who intrigue you, challenge you, and share a sincere concern for your success and happiness. Anything less than that is no good when you're trying to grow.

JACK DORSEY

Co-founder of Twitter and Square

Be optimistic and believe anything is possible:

You have to be optimistic and believe anything is possible. You can't let that go. But, you also have to be pragmatic. When something doesn't feel right, ask yourself, "Is this the most worthwhile use of my time and my team's time—or are there things we could do that would have more impact?" If the answer is no, stay on course.

JOSH ELMAN

Partner at Greylock

Advice for extroverts when working with introverted co-founders:

1. *Recognize their need for quiet time to really focus and get into a state of flow in their work.*
2. *Give people advance notice of what you want to talk about before holding a meeting.*
3. *Have an open discussion about your differing temperaments—how you like to work, what your respective strengths and challenges are, and how to make sure that you've divided your workload so you're playing to those strengths and assigning the challenges to those who can best meet them.*

BLAKE IRVING

CEO of GoDaddy



"You have to be optimistic and believe anything is possible. But, you also have to be pragmatic."

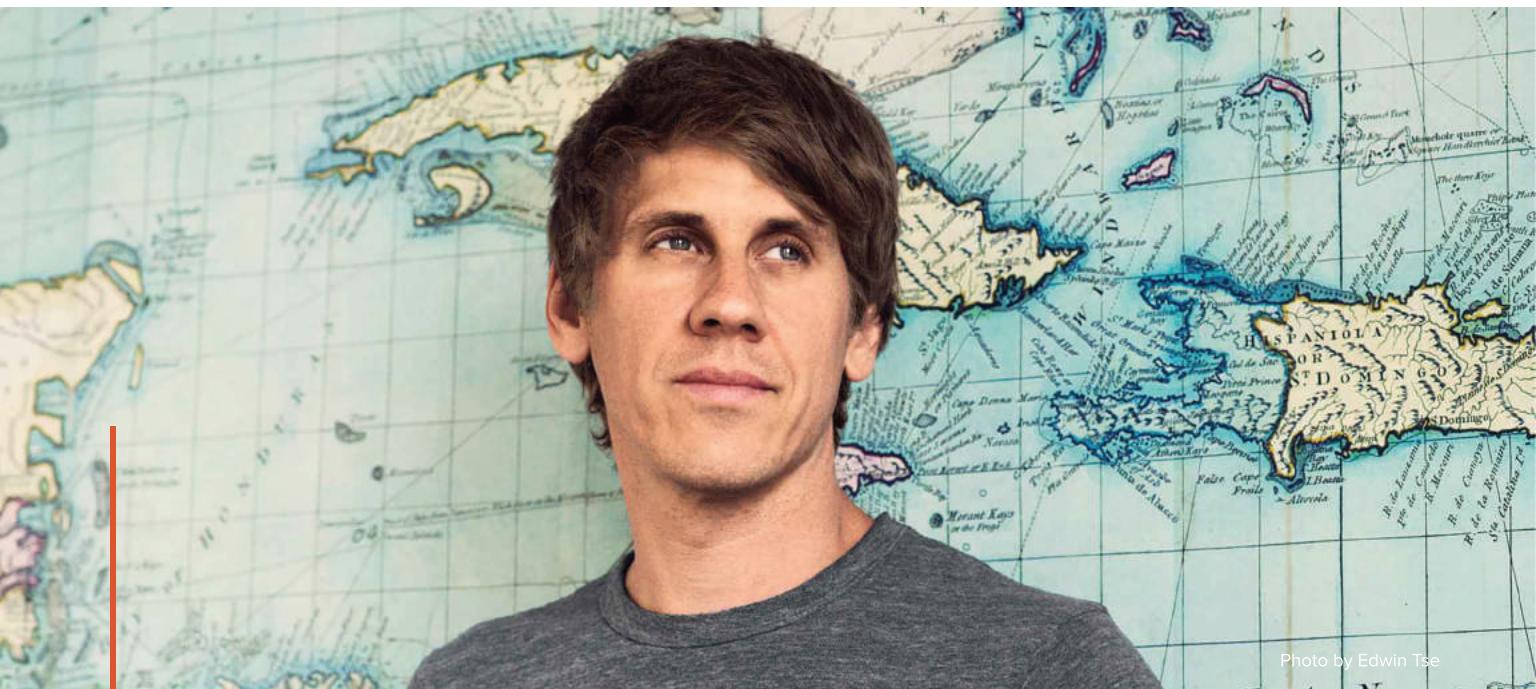
JOSH ELMAN

You won't be ready until you jump in—and it's best not to jump in alone:

Don't give up. Entrepreneurship is a bumpy ride, and I waited three years before taking the jump. Even after waiting three years, I wasn't ready—but I don't believe you can be ready until you jump in. I also tell everyone that you can't do it alone. I thought "soloprenuer" meant doing all the work yourself, but that doesn't allow you to scale or have a life. It makes the lows very low, and doesn't give you room to celebrate the wins.

BRIAN FANZO

Founder of iSocialFanz



Build the product you wish already existed in the world:

I think the best products and companies have grown from the idea: "I want this thing to exist, so I guess I'll be the one who goes out and makes it." It's also worth noting that my dad was an entrepreneur, too; he owned an electrical contracting company in Boston. I worked for his company in the summer. I had the understanding that I could be my own boss because I saw my dad do it, and I guess that made starting a company seem more accessible.

DENNIS CROWLEY

Co-founder of Foursquare

Start sooner rather than later:

I regret not starting earlier. Everyone has talent, but it takes courage to follow it to the dark places where it leads.

DAVID BYTOW

Co-founder of Secret

If you are worried about launching something because you fear you may have to maintain a product indefinitely:

This is a particular type of fear, where you are already planning to be so successful that you can't even get started! Lots of engineers will say something like this: "I don't want to launch this thing because I'll get so many customer service emails." If you're getting tons of customer service emails, that's a good thing. You can throw money at the problem and hire it away. Your biggest concern should be building something that people actually care about. You should be so lucky that your product requires ongoing maintenance. Here are two other things to think about:

- 1. "Don't try to be 40 before you're 40." So many people focus on all these advanced problems, like A/B testing time intervals, before they even have a product. Know that you'll learn as you go, and you will be more equipped to handle challenges as you get bigger and encounter new problems.*
- 2. You're in control. If you decide you don't want to produce content, you can hire it out. Or change your business model. Or shut it down! You are in control.*

RAMIT SETHI

Author of *I Will Teach You to Be Rich*

What do if your startup fails:

First, you've got to be incredibly honest with yourself about why your startup failed. Tons of successful founders have a failed company in their past; the difference in most cases is whether they genuinely understand why it failed. As much as possible, examine every piece: Where could you have done better? Where did you do all you could, but somehow it wasn't enough? Where did you actually kick ass and take names? Pat yourself on the back for the latter. Then think about, if you want to start again, how can you minimize the former. In my case, my biggest mistake was trusting the wrong people (which sucks but is learnable). I also realized I knew jack-shit about fundraising, so I worked on those two when we started over.

KATHRYN MINSHEW

Founder of The Muse

On what to work on:

Build what you want to see and use.

JACK DORSEY

Co-founder of Twitter and Square



“Your biggest concern should be building something that people actually care about.”

RAMIT SETHI

How to build a startup and still pay the bills:

When I started Buffer, I was working full-time for several clients and building Buffer on the side. Here are a few key things I did:

- 1. I originally worked on Buffer in the evenings. Over time, I found that to be ineffective because I was often tired at the end of the day. So, I switched to sleeping early, rising early, and then working on Buffer for several hours before doing client work. That schedule was much, much better—and I think it might have been one of the keys that helped me actually get Buffer off the ground.*
- 2. When I was a freelancer, I had many friends who were also freelancers or had their own agencies. I saw that path could work for me. The hard part is, when you're doing a startup, you don't see progress as fast as you do with a service business. There's a period of learning and trying and failing. That period was tough for me, but I decided I wanted to make a startup work. I sought out freelance opportunities that would make it easy for me to drop freelancing once I finally did make something work—without disappointing clients. A key part of that was doing work for other agencies when they had too much work on their plate.*
- 3. I was lucky enough to have a setup where, as Buffer started to grow, I could gradually slow down my freelance work and transition over.*

JOEL GASCOIGNE

Co-founder of Buffer

Find committed and trustworthy investors, co-founders, mentors, and advisors:

1. **Surround yourself with advisors and mentors**, and then use them liberally for advice. Few problems or challenges are “new,” and talking to someone who has seen what did and didn’t work before is invaluable.
2. **Have a co-founder that you trust completely**. Be equal partners in economics, but also be clear about decision making (e.g. two CEOs doesn’t work). Having someone in the struggle who can lock arms with you day to day is critical.
3. **Find an experienced and committed investor to partner with**. I think one negative consequence of less concentrated seed rounds has been that investors aren’t as close to the company. Some of my best investments were Series A/Seeds where DFJ did the whole round and was the only outside BOD member for the first year.
4. **Pick a vision which inspires people beyond making money**. Startups are hard, and it helps if you, your employees, and their family/friends care about what you’re doing on a personal level. Elon Musk is the master of this: Tesla is about saving the world from fossil fuels, SpaceX is about going to Mars. Those missions inspire people to put in their best, day after day. It also inspires investors.
5. **Listen to everyone**. But after you’ve heard lots of input, trust your gut and don’t be afraid to think differently. It’s the only way to upend and disrupt an industry. Younger founders often do better because they don’t know all the reasons why something can’t be done.

JOSH STEIN

Partner at DFJ Venture Capital

The three things every entrepreneur should be thinking about daily:

1. Their legacy
2. Their lack of time
3. The enormous amount of time they have—and applying patience to every decision and execution. I am aware that the second and third points are contradictions.

GARY VAYNERCHUK

CEO of VaynerMedia, Investor, Author

Build with your customers in mind:

Listen to your customers. As a founder, you can get caught up in building and can make things overly complicated. It's important to listen to feedback from your users and make sure that you address their needs.

JASON STEIN

Co-founder of Imoji

Make sure you want to be an entrepreneur for the right reasons:

If people approach me and say they'd like to become an entrepreneur, I ask them, "Is this an itch, or is it burning?" The answer is basically going to tell me how badly you want it, and how long you're going to stick with it when things get tough. How much fuel do you have in the tank when things inevitably get hard? How resourceful are you going to be to overcome the challenges that will inevitably come your way?

BRYAN JOHNSON

Founder of Braintree



"Younger founders often do better because they don't know all the reasons why something can't be done."

JOSH STEIN

Network, network, network:

Network. Learn how to do it. There is no better skill you can have. Take a vacation before you start your startup, and hold on to those memories.

CARLY ZAKIN

Co-founder of The Skimm

Become a voracious reader:

Reading is the thing I've done more in my life than anything else. Just getting into the habit of reading morning, noon, and night helped prepare me for everything that came after. And by reading, I mean books specifically. I have a theory that any idea that can be explained in a tweet or a blog post is not one worth thinking about. Ideas need space to breathe and be considered.

YANCEY STRICKLER

Co-founder of Kickstarter

Exploring Different Roles and Industries

Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests have come from many different industries. Some are long-time startup investors or best-in-class product managers, while others are incredibly talented writers, photographers, journalists, and athletes. For those of you who are interested in pursuing a career in a particular industry, you'll find advice in this section geared specifically toward your interests.

A close-up portrait of Kayvon Beykpour, a young man with dark hair and a light beard, looking slightly to his right. The lighting is dramatic, with strong blue and red highlights on his face.

Photo by Ian Allen

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Young developers should focus on build as much stuff as possible:

Build stuff! A lot of stuff! Helpful tools for yourself, apps for friends, wild ideas you want to try. Just build a ton of shit and make it better. You'll learn a ton every time. Get a job someplace where you can be a sponge and learn a ton—from smart people around you, from a boss you look up to, and for a company that you think is doing something important.

KAYVON BEYKPOUR

Co-founder of Periscope

Investing

One of the most common questions investors get from the Product Hunt community is, “How can I do what you do?” More than a dozen investors chimed in with their thoughts—from initially breaking into the industry to excelling at what they do.

Tim Ferriss’ advice for landing a VC job:

I would read Venture Deals by Brad Feld and Jason Mendelson. Then, I would spend a day on AngelList looking at various jobs, and read the “Jobs” pages of top VC firms like Sequoia, Benchmark, and Andreessen Horowitz. Next, I’d look at the B-tier firms and take a shot at pitching a few. Things might be easier if you move to the Bay Area, or are willing to. Last but not least, start in the mail room if you have to. You can always work your way up and just need a foot in the door.

TIM FERRISS

Author, Entrepreneur, Podcaster

Josh Kopelman says the best investors help entrepreneurs win:

I think that entrepreneurs want to work with investors who they believe will help them win. I think a good investor needs to have experience, patience, connectivity, humility, and empathy.

JOSH KOPELMAN

Partner at First Round Capital

How Sarah Tavel landed her first VC job at Bessemer:

I think I convinced them by showing them I was fucking persistent. I was going to get on the phone, I was going to email consistently—I was going to do anything to meet great founders. I think that's what you look for when you're hiring for that role. Also, I was just a smart learner. I was going to do whatever I needed to do to learn technology, even though it wasn't actually a part of any of my previous experiences.

SARAH TAVEL

Partner at Benchmark

Ryan Sarver suggests learning from VCs who are already great at what they do:

I personally focus on learning from people who are already great at it and see what I can apply to my own personal style. I spend a lot of time talking to more experienced investors and entrepreneurs. VC has such a long horizon that I think it's really hard to know if you're any good at it for a long time. So hopefully, my strategy works out.

RYAN SARVER

Partner at Redpoint Ventures



“Entrepreneurs want to work with investors who they believe will help them win.”

JOSH KOPELMAN

Geoff Lewis on the most important skills for investors at Founders Fund:

The most important thing at Founders Fund is being proactive. Proactively doing things and taking initiative without direction, as well as having confidence and high conviction, is critical. Another important attribute is not needing a lot of validation from others. Some people do need this and it's totally fine, but that's not our culture at Founders Fund. The validation we get is doing awesome work, not pats on the back.

GEOFF LEWIS

Partner at Founders Fund

Ben Horowitz suggests joining or founding a startup before becoming an investor:

Start a company or join a start up and learn what the process of building a company feels like. It's almost impossible to learn any other way.

BEN HOROWITZ

Co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz

Michelle Tandler on the value of working at a startup before becoming an investor:

Working at Yammer gave me a lot of empathy for how hard it is to build a product. I spent two years, every day, with teammates who were engineers, designers, support and sales people, etc. We could spend weeks working on a product no one used, or something that would ultimately not work properly. I dealt with the wrath and love of customers and users on a daily basis, which led to a lot of highs and lows. I'll never forget the feeling of launching something you've poured so many hours into. As an investor, I try to never forget how hard it is to build something.

MICHELLE TANDLER

Former VC at Trinity Ventures

Dave Pell suggests going to pitches with good investors:

Make friends with a good angel investor and try to go to pitches with them. Everything I know about investing I've learned from Bob Zipp of Amicus Capital. Without him, I'd be solely a humanities major.

DAVE PELL

Founder of NextDraft

Bobby Goodlatte suggests gaining operational experience before becoming a VC:

It's difficult (read: nearly impossible) to make significant inroads in VC without deep operational experience. I was a CS major in college. I did a ton of freelance design work, including some pro bono charity projects.- Those side projects were how I joined Facebook. I put my work online and it was discovered by another designer from FB. I got to work with some of the smartest engineers and designers in the world. The lessons I learned from working with those people have served as a foundation in my career—as both an investor and a founder. Many of the investors I look up to started out 100% focused on building great things. Work on fun projects, maybe start a company or join a startup — but mostly, just build. Through building you learn what to look for as an investor, and you hopefully get to work with great people (who you can later invest in).

BOBBY GOODLATTE

Angel Investor

Craig Shapiro on his transition from the media industry to VC:

*I think anyone can be a great venture capitalist. In fact, having a diverse set of interests and experiences is a key advantage. Initial discussions with LPs (investors) were challenging—but much like a startup, you only need a few people to believe in you and are willing to make a bet. Then, it is up to you to execute and make sh*t happen!*

CRAIG SHAPIRO

Founder of Collaborative Fund

Andy Weissman on the challenges of being a VC:

I have always thought that one of the wildest things about this business is its lack of institutional memory. That is, a willingness to try things even when history would suggest doing something else, which can obviously can be frustrating. That being said, I know the times when I learned the most (or, had the steepest learning curve) was when I had no idea what I was doing.

ANDY WEISSMAN

Partner at Union Square Ventures

Engineering

If you're passionate about becoming a developer or designer, this section is for you. Here are some of the pieces of advice from others in the industry on kick-starting your career—whether you're just learning how to code, or ready to find your first job in tech.

Inspiring girls and women to code:

A lot of girls and women are inspired by helping people and creating positive social impact. Right now it's not always clear that coding is a means to that kind of an end. It's more obvious how being a doctor, or a teacher, or even a firefighter, helps people. It's critical that we build that link between coding and what software can do. I think of familiarity with coding as a new kind of literacy. Not everyone is a professional writer, but virtually everyone can read and write. Not everyone needs to write code for a living, but understanding how software works is important for having a mental model for the world, because so much of the world is driven by software.

TRACY CHOU

Early Pinterest Engineer, Co-founder of Project Include

If you're learning how to code, start with Python:

In today's world, I'd start with Python. I'd learn by doing. Give yourself an escalating series of concrete projects, then working backwards using Google and a book to learn enough coding to complete each of them. Once you're comfortable with something like Python, you'll be ready to learn some more serious computer science (algorithms; more serious languages; etc). Online courses are helpful.

CAL NEWPORT

Author of *Deep Work* and *So Good They Can't Ignore You*



"Not everyone needs to write code for a living, but understanding how software works is important because so much of the world is driven by software."

TRACY CHOU

What a young designer should do to get hired by a great company:

Work hard. And keep working. Doesn't matter if you're in a full-time job, studying, taking your time off, or just freelancing. If you have no paying projects to work on, do pro bono work. If you can't find any, build something of your own. As a designer, you have the option to build a lot of things you can show off in your portfolio. Design an icon set, create a WordPress theme, make a UI kit. If you don't want to sell, give it away. If you can't do that, pick any badly designed product and think of ways you can make them better. If it's something you can design, do it. Hard work shows. Keep working, keep learning, keep pushing.

ARUN PATTNAIK

Product Designer

Advice for teens who want to become great developers:

When I was in high school, I was coding all the time and I worked in a comic shop. I figured out how to fuse my love of coding and work by building their e-commerce site in PHP/MySQL. Later, when I joined The Collective (a video game company), I found a mentor in my manager Nathan Hunt, who taught me so much over the course of five years. Never stop practicing—the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

DAVID BYTOW

Co-founder of Secret



“Keep working, keep learning, keep pushing.”

ARUN PATTNAIK

Or maybe JavaScript is the way to start:

If I were learning to code from scratch, I would definitely learn JavaScript to start. You can use it in the browser, on the server (with Node), in mobile apps, etc. So you can do a lot only knowing that one language. The act of typing out someone else's code is weirdly helpful. It makes you pay attention to each line and think about it a tiny bit. Once you've typed out examples, it's easy to change them. Eventually, you can get comfortable writing your own stuff from scratch. A completely different path would be to get good at math first. Every math major I knew in college was immediately a good programmer the moment they tried it for the first time.

CHARLIE CHEEVER

Co-founder of Quora and Expo

Product Management

Product management is becoming an increasingly popular career path. Whether you're just starting out in your career as a project manager, or you're looking to make a transition from a different position, here's some invaluable advice on how to thrive in this critical product role.

Get to know key stakeholders first:

PM is very contextual, so I always say first get to know your boss, your engineering manager, your design manager, and your QA manager. Only then can you figure out what you should do as a PM.

STEVEN SINOFSKY

Board Partner at Andreessen Horowitz

The best PMs have a firm understanding of shared humanity:

The next generation of PMs need to have a firm understanding of humanity first. The best PMs I have learned from are the most well read, well traveled, empathetic human beings out there. They have held a gamut of grueling, interesting, and unglamorous jobs. The next generation of PMs will be able to understand what users want through both science and gut instinct. To make a quantum leap as a PM, you need to have had enough shitty experiences to make you relatable to anyone from all walks of life because the products you build are for the rest of the world.

BO REN

Product Lead at Tumblr

Excellent PMs can both build what they know and forget about what they know:

An excellent product manager has to have a few contradictory personality traits:

- 1. A passion for trying to model how other people think. Some people say you should build what you know, which implies building for how you think. However, my primary strategy for modeling how other people think is to imagine myself in their shoes. Therefore, “what I know” not only includes how I think, but also how I think other people think and behave.*
- 2. Building that model requires talking and listening to lots of different kinds of people. Listening to them requires that you shut down your model of how other people think (because that will create biases and stereotypes based on your current model and not let contradictory or new information in as easily). So you have to be able to turn these two thoughts on and off: “build what you know” and “forget what you know”.*
- 3. A great PM needs to have the confidence to act and take responsibility for actions even with limited information, lack of the appropriate skills and resources, etc. That confidence can't be shaken by criticism and poor results. It needs to help you adjust to results, learn, and continue improving your strategy until criticism and poor results improve.*

BUSTER BENSON

Platform Product Lead at Slack



“You need to have had enough shitty experiences to make you relatable to anyone from all walks of life because the products you build are for the rest of the world.”

BO REN

PMs help the right product decisions get made:

Too many PMs early in their careers tend to think their job is to make product decisions. Good PMs quickly realize their job is to help the right decisions get made.

AVICHAL GARG

Product Manager at Facebook



"You have to be able to turn two thoughts on and off: "build what you know" and "forget what you know."

BUSTER BENSON

If you want to be a strong PM, it helps to code professionally for a few years:

A strong PM is someone who gets the team to build consensus and own the problems together. It's important that everyone on the team gets a chance to contribute to finding the best potential ideas to solve the problems they want to. For aspiring PMs, I encourage as many as I can who have engineering backgrounds to code professionally for at least a year, maybe two. You go through the entire cycle of building something, changing features along the way, shipping it, learning what worked and didn't, staying up late to fix the bugs, and building v2 on top of what you built. With at least one turn through the cycle, you'll have a totally different perspective when you are in a meeting. You'll be able to say, "Can't we just do this instead?"—and you'll know how a different decision impacts your team. Without that empathy, it's hard to be a great PM.

JOSH ELMAN

Partner at Greylock

Media, Art, and Entertainment

The media, art, entertainment industries are notoriously difficult to break into and thrive within. Luckily, we got some great advice from editors, journalists, filmmakers, poets, photographers, and managers about surviving—and succeeding—in their chosen fields. Read on for more of their insights.

If you want a top job in journalism, develop subject matter expertise:

The secret to getting a good job in journalism is to develop subject matter expertise—there are lots of people out there who can write, but not so many who know what to write about. I landed my first job because I was a computer nerd; I knew all about tech, so I got hired by an information technology magazine. Working there, I learned about the companies that make tech, and that got me a job at Forbes. I worked there for nine years before I published my book. Now I write for lots of different outlets, including Forbes, and I'm also working on new book projects.

DAVID EWALT

Author of *Of Dice and Men*

The best way to get into the media and communications business:

Go to the technical side of the business right away and learn as much as you can since the technical structure needs to be understood in order to develop new businesses or market existing ones in a crowded, changing marketplace. In other words, you need to be as tech savvy as possible before you break into subsets like marketing, sales, etc.

BOB WRIGHT

Co-founder of Autism Speaks

The beauty and insanity of being a writer:

There is a rush, a real deep thrill, when you reach readers who like the work, get the story, or even argue with you. It is like nothing else. But to get to that point, you may spend a few years all alone, wondering if what you are doing is crazy.

DAVID HOFFMAN

Author of *The Billion Dollar Spy*

If you want to get into the music business, understand industry data:

If I was an 18-year-old kid entering into the music business today, I'd be looking at how data is applicable to music. It's the most untapped area with lots of potential to build new businesses and revenue streams for artists. It's the first time in history we know exactly who the fans are, where they live, who else they're listening to, and most importantly, what their lifetime value is.

TROY CARTER

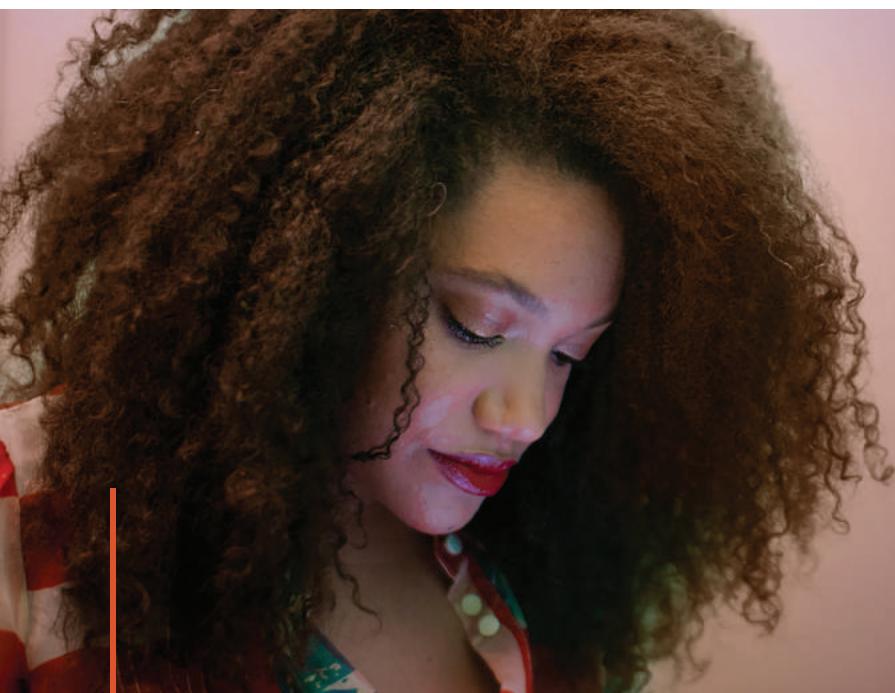
Investor, Global Head of Creator Services at Spotify

To be a good journalist, critical thinking is a must:

The most important thing about being a good journalist is the ability to think critically. Too many journalists just parrot what they're told, and that kind of reporting is useless, even when it's beautifully written. A good journalist asks the right questions, finds the truth in a story, and tells the reader what matters. As an editor, I can teach someone to be a good writer; I can compose a catchy headline for them; I can punch up their copy until it sings. I can't turn someone with a lazy mind into a critical thinker.

DAVID EWALT

Author of *Of Dice and Men*



A treasure trove of advice for budding performing artists:

1. *Regard your audience. See them, challenge them, and care for them. It's my job [as a poet] to curate a space for empathy, investigation, and transparency.*
2. *Don't be afraid to be seen even as you are trying to see others.*
3. *Perform your poems as if you've never heard them before. Try to create within yourself the experience you hope to create within the audience.*
4. *Allow moments for grace. You are going to fuck up, forget a line, fumble, etc. Allow the audience to experience that kind of intimacy with you. It's a moment for them to see you as human.*
5. *Take time for self care. Don't just relive trauma over and over for the sake of the poem.*

ALYSIA HARRIS

Creative Consultant, Poet, Christian

As a writer, don't wait for inspiration to strike:

If you wait for inspiration, you'll never get anything done. Most of the time it's a slog. But here's the thing: Sometimes you're inspired and crank out words and other times you have to fight for every sentence. If you look back at that writing a week later, you can't tell the difference between when you were inspired and when you weren't. The point is: Your quality of writing isn't actually affected by your level of inspiration. Sometimes you have to just gut it out, but still create quality work. Just press through.

ANDY WEIR

Author of *The Martian*



"There are lots of people out there who can write, but not so many who know what to write about."

DAVID EWALT

If you want to get into the sports business, figure out how you're going to be different:

How do you get into the business of sports and make enough money to make it a career? Be so passionate about your mission and about your dream that you don't sleep until you figure out how you are going to be different—how you are going to provide added value to a team, an agency, etc. Given the number of people who want to work in sports, half the battle is jamming your foot in the door. Never forget that. Getting that foot in the door is just as important as having the goods to show when you get in.

DARREN ROVELL

ESPN Sports Business Reporter

Young actors should make things they want to be in:

Make the things you want to be in! Don't wait around. Waiting for the phone to ring will get you nothing. If you don't know how to make stuff, learn. You should be your #1 fan.

BRIAN SACCA

Actor, Producer, Comedian

Incredible journalists are acute observers, clear thinkers, and patient storytellers:

You must be an acute observer, in both the physical world and the less tangible. You must have endless patience, be able to wait until a moment reveals itself, and be able to sit for hours without closing your notebook. You must be able to think clearly, use logic, and sometimes exercise skepticism so you can ask, “What is really going on here?” You have to be able to express yourself in words that are evocative and compelling (which is hard!). And finally, it helps to have a good imagination.

DAVID HOFFMAN

Author of *The Billion Dollar Spy*

What separates great photographers from average photographers:

To excel in the industry, you have to be at top of your game technically, but you also need to be at the top of your game at everything else that is potentially important to your clients. Get the best tools for the photos you want to make. Get to know your camera and lights like the back of your hand. Learn to make technically sound photos in any situation. Work fast, and be nimble. Sell yourself and go out of your way to explain your value even with the job inquiries that are inbound. Submit work well before deadlines. Show genuine interest in the people who are hiring you and make friends with them. Treat everyone on your set like a king, including your assistants. Be fun to be around. Be kind to everyone. Constantly build and nurture relationships, care about people, do favors without expecting anything immediately in return. If you want to be the best in the industry, you can't half-ass anything. You have to exceed expectations on every front or you are potentially replaceable.

HELENA PRICE

Photographer

If you want to be a filmmaker, get on set as soon as possible:

Get yourself onto a professional filmmaking set as soon as possible. There is no substitute for the inspiration and education that comes from watching people who are really good at what they do working quickly and effectively, and doing what they love.

ADAM LISAGOR

Founder of Sandwich Video

Overcoming Career Challenges

No matter what career path you choose, you will inevitably face your share of professional challenges along the way. In this section, ten Product Hunt LIVE Chat guests share how they overcame their own fears and challenges—and how you can do the same on your own journey.



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Avoid taking a job just because you need the money:

Early on in my career, I took a job because I needed the money. It cost me dearly.

CASEY NEISTAT

Director, Producer, YouTuber

Challenges are only scary until you tackle them:

There have been so many scary challenges. If I were to retrace my steps, it was scary to come out to the west coast where I knew no one. Then, it was scary to stick to computer science at Stanford despite it being really hard and me feeling impostor syndrome constantly. Then, it was scary to do something totally different and off the beaten track and get a humanities graduate degree at Oxford. Most recently, quitting my secure job at Salesforce.com in the midst of a recession to found a company was pretty scary, too. The thing is, once you take on a scary challenge, you realize it's not so scary after all, and that emboldens you to take on an even scarier challenge.

CLARA SHIH

Founder of Hearsay Systems

Position perceived weaknesses as strengths:

I always like to share that you can take some of what are perceived to be your biggest weaknesses and pull a jedi-mind trick, turning them into your biggest strengths. Age, for instance, can be perceived as a weakness, but it can also be a strength; people expect you to be innovative, energetic, and often underestimate you entirely. You can take a lot of people by surprise. You're also digitally native, so you see ideas based on consumer behavior trends and habits that others may miss.

BRIAN WONG

Founder of Kiip



“Once you take on a scary challenge, you realize it's not so scary after all, and that emboldens you to take on an even scarier challenge.”

CLARA SHIH

Don't beat yourself up about your mistakes:

I made every possible career mistake you could make. Beating myself up about it is what I wish I had not done. It's a waste of time and energy.

JON STEINBERG

Co-founder of Cheddar

On the challenges of raising capital:

When we went out to raise money for Twilio in the summer of 2008, our plan was to raise a seed round and then launch, but we couldn't raise a dime. Partially, it was due to the financial meltdown—but a lot of investors also didn't understand our developer-first approach. The founders had a very serious conversation where we asked each other whether we should throw in the towel—whether this was a bad idea. But customers were saying we were on the right track, and our conviction said we were building the company that we wanted to build. So, we persisted, but that was a tough decision. We were almost 12 months in with no salaries and investors saying we were “doing it wrong.”

One of the people I spoke with in that early seed round was Mitch Kapor. He declined to invest, and advised me to get somebody who could help with our go-to-market strategy. At the time, I didn't know what that even meant, so I asked him who I should get. He said: Dave McClure. I went out, recruited Dave as an advisor, then got him to actually invest. Six months later, I marched back into Mitch's office, brought Dave with me, and said, “I did what you suggested. Here's Dave. Will you invest now?” He did. That felt good.

JEFF LAWSON

Co-founder of Twilio

You have to constantly take risks to remain relevant:

Silicon Valley is interesting in that it operates in 5-7 year “relevance” cycles. In other words, the people relevant in one cycle (excluding the Larry Pages of the world) tend to lose relevance in the next cycle. The hard part is to ask how you can stay relevant over the arc of a 20, 30, 40 year career in the Bay Area. Similarly, as people gain wealth, they tend to lose hunger. So they slow down and stop trying to be relevant. As such, people need to take risks every 5-7 years to remain relevant, which means switching industries, trying new roles, or going for something big.

ELAD GIL

Angel Investor, Co-founder of Color Genomics



“Over time, you'll develop wisdom around which rejection moments to brush off, and which to listen to.”

JEFF LAWSON

Do your best to maintain a healthy work-life balance:

I regret not having more balance in my life for the first five years of Rock Health. I was working tirelessly to improve healthcare, but was neglecting my own mental and physical health. I wasn't spending enough time with friends and family, or just taking time for myself. I thought about work every waking moment, and dreamt about it nearly every night. When my dad had a heart attack, I had a bunch of meetings in SF so I didn't go home to Ohio to see him. That was when I woke up and realized that I wasn't being the person I wanted to be. I moved to the east coast to be with my husband and started really working on work-life balance. So far, I feel a lot better about things.

HALLE TECCO

Founder of Rock Health, Angel Investor



Photo by Affirm

If you're an entrepreneur, laying people off will be one of the toughest things you do:

Most challenging moment: There are too many to pick one. A really close collaborator died very suddenly when we were both very young, during PayPal. Having to do a layoff at Slide [was also hard]—looking people in the eyes, and admitting that I, as the CEO, screwed up. You overcome by being honest—no matter how much it hurts—with yourself, setting a course, and executing.

MAX LEVCHIN

Co-founder of PayPal and Affirm

We should stop telling one another that failure is good:

Someone recently said to me, “It’s okay, failure is good!” And I said to that person, “No, failure is not good. Failure is bad. Failure is death, dependency, prison, loneliness.” Overcoming failure is good. Overcoming failure is fabulous. But overcoming failure is one of the components of success. So I think that the gospel of failure is a mistaken gospel. And I think for the people who fail the most—who fail systematically, who disproportionately fail—saying failure is good isn’t all that helpful. Saying to them, “You will eventually succeed,” is critical. It allows people to overcome when they fail. Giving people the confidence to overcome failure is what I’m most passionate about.

KANYI MAQUBELA

Formerly VC at Collaborative Fund

Finding an emotional support network is key:

There was a period of time where I desperately wanted to quit the tech industry and stop being a software engineer—not because I didn’t love engineering, but because I was frustrated and depressed about being a female engineer and not belonging—not feeling like I’d ever be successful in such a male-dominated industry. I cried myself to sleep every night. I eventually made it through because I reached out and found wonderfully supportive women who shared their experiences with me and helped me to get through it all. That emotional support network has been absolutely key.

TRACY CHOU

Early Pinterest Engineer, Co-founder of Project Include

Overcoming rejection:

Rejection is tough, but it’s something you get accustomed to as an entrepreneur. Just don’t take it personally. Be open to seeing trends—for instance, if many customers don’t want your product, or if many employees have concerns about your leadership style, you should listen to that. Over time, you’ll develop wisdom around which rejection moments to brush off, and which to listen to.

JEFF LAWSON

Co-founder of Twilio

What Advice Would You Give Your Younger Self

One of the most common questions Product Hunt Live guests get asked is what advice they would tell their younger selves. What would Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh wish he had known at age 20? What would Kara Swisher tell her younger self? Would a 25 year-old Om Malik act any differently than he does today? Here's how some of our guests responded to when faced with the question:



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I hate to say this, but I am not that different [than I was when I was younger]. I have thought every day about living my life every day as if it would be my last, and I still do. I think I would probably worry a lot less about achievement and more about result.

KARA SWISHER

Co-founder & Executive Editor of Recode

Be unapologetically true to yourself (both in business and in life), and if you are constantly broadcasting who you are—the real you, the inner you—to the world, over time your people will find you.

TONY HSIEH

CEO of Zappos

Read as much, do as much, and experience as much as possible. It's your job to do things that make you uncomfortable. That is how you gain wisdom. It is your job to use everything you do as a learning opportunity, and to see how things are connected. That is how you build creativity. It is your job to learn and to study as much about the world as possible—life only gets busier and you always default to your most basic level of training. Seek out opportunities that expire both professionally and personally.

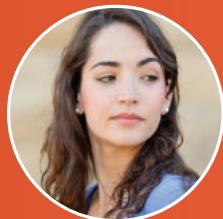
MARCELA SAPONE

Co-founder of Hello Alfred

I would tell a younger me to ask for help more often. I've been lucky to be surrounded with amazingly talented designers and builders, and I could have learned so much more from them earlier in my career if I hadn't been afraid to ask.

JULIE ZHUO

Director of Product Design at Facebook



"It's your job to do things that make you uncomfortable. That is how you gain wisdom."

MARCELA SAPONE

I think that what just about every 22-year-old needs is more confidence. It's easy to look at people who are older and think they're smarter, when the truth is they've just had more time to learn than you—and more importantly, more time to gain confidence, which always makes you seem smarter than you are.

CHRISTOPHER MIMS

Tech Columnist at the Wall Street Journal

Spend more time with the people who matter to you, because they won't be around forever. Spend less time worrying about whether things will work out, because they will.

AVICHAL GARG

Product Manager at Facebook

Whatever you want to do, start yesterday. Start earlier. Start NOW. The sooner you start, the sooner you can reap the benefits, or figure out that it isn't going to work. And you won't need to wonder "what if" because you did it already.

JEFF ATWOOD

Co-founder of StackExchange and Discourse

Stop overvaluing the fact that you're a smart young guy. There a ton of smart young guys, and on average, they're not very thoughtful and don't listen well. Stop being That Guy.

ANIL DASH

CEO of Fog Creek



"Spend less time worrying about whether things will work out, because they will."

AVICHAL GARG

Be okay with things building up over time. Something I didn't appreciate until recently is that there are many productive decades ahead with which to build the things that I feel need to exist in the world. One of the best things I did then was avoid any press or capitalization on my age (to the extent I could) because youth is an ephemeral asset and just a novelty in business. I'd also tell my younger self to slow down and think about health more.

MATT MULLENWEG

Co-founder of WordPress

Respect those with experience, ask more questions, and be more open to learn from them.

OM MALIK

Partner at True Ventures, Founder of Gigaom

Keep working hard, but to be intentional about the time you're spending on work versus play, as well as who you're spending time with. Someone recently gave me a useful framework that may help you consider the people you interact with: 1s are people you love being with, that give you energy, that make you excited about life. 3s are people that just take and never give; they drain you. 2s are in between. Only spend time with 1s.

TRACY CHOU

Early Pinterest Engineer, Co-founder of Project Include

Do whatever you'll wish you'd done when looking back in a decade. This applies both to major decisions and in how you act yourself and how you treat others. Bonus: Be nice. Niceness, in my opinion, is underrated (probably because it's hard to measure), but has highly compounding benefits.

PATRICK COLLISON

Co-founder of Stripe



“Start yesterday. Start earlier. Start NOW. The sooner you start, the sooner you can reap the benefits.”

JEFF ATWOOD

If I could go back in time, I'd introduce my 20-year-old self to a quotation by the writer Brian Andreas: “Everything changed the day she figured out there was exactly enough time for the important things in her life.” If only I had learned this lesson sooner! But I hope that by sharing it here, I can make a difference in someone else’s life, and save them from the perpetually harried, stressed-out existence I experienced for so long.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Co-founder of The Huffington Post, Author

1. **Find your tribe**—the people you want to build your life and career with—and treat them incredibly well.
2. **Do things that make your soul sing**—find the things that give you real joy because that will push you through the harder times.
3. **Make more things**—making is a very very special gift & privilege. Do it as long as you can.

JOHN LILLY

Partner at Greylock





Photo courtesy of Tony Robbins

A community chat with **Tony Robbins**

*Tony Robbins is unquestionably one of the most prolific and successful motivational speakers and life performance coaches of the past century. He's authored four bestselling books, including his most recent tome, *MONEY Master the Game*.*

Robbins is probably most known for his motivational seminars, where he can talk on stage for dozens of hours (we're parched just thinking about it) about the transformational power of one's thoughts. With all of his experience and passion for conveying his message via public speaking, it's no surprise he's given one of the most-watched TED talks on "Why we do what we do," viewed over 15.5 million times.

What are your top two public speaking tips?

BEN DEBAYLE

My #1 speaking tip for anyone is stop thinking about yourself. Most people experience enormous stress or even fear when they are about to speak to an audience of any size. The reason for this is that they're focused on how they are doing and how they're going to come across. If instead, you can put all of your focus into your audience and be present with them, focusing completely on their needs, desires, and concerns, then you will be guided to spontaneously shift your speaking conversation in a way that truly meets the needs of your audience. More importantly, you will be focused on serving them and not on yourself, and so you'll have no fear.

My second tip is to over prepare by truly studying your audience in advance of your speech. Do your homework to discover their deepest desires and biggest concerns. And then formulate a plan for how to serve them better than anyone else has before. I believe that life is found in the dance between what we desire most and what we fear most. Help people with those two things and you will succeed with any group.



“My #1 speaking tip for anyone is stop thinking about yourself.”

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

ALEX FINKIELSZTEIN

That's a tough question because my life is constantly about getting advice from the best in the world. But if I had to narrow it down, I would say two pieces of advice. #1 [comes from] my original mentor, Jim Rohn. He taught me that the secret to life is to find a way to do more for others than anyone else is doing. If you want to be extraordinary as a friend or business person, as a father or a lover, find a way to add more value—especially to those you love the most. I'm obsessed by this focus, and I really believe it's the secret to not only wealth, but real lasting happiness. In my soul I believe the secret to living is giving.

The second piece of advice came from a man who at the time was the richest man in Canada—a brilliant businessman, billionaire, and entrepreneur. He taught me that proximity is power. He told me at the time that if I wanted to make a movie, it would be easy because I had so many clients who were producers, actors, and heads of studios; I'm around them all the time. In fact, they put me in a dozen movies at that time, without my even asking, because I was in their proximity. He said, “If you wanted to make a deal at IBM, you

could probably make it work, but it would be a lot harder because you're not in proximity." In order to get my financial goals, he taught me to get in proximity with investment bankers. Two years later, I made a deal that was worth \$400 million to me, taking a company public! Proximity is power—remember it, apply it. It will change your life.



"The secret to life is to find a way to do more for others than anyone else is doing."

What does your daily routine look like? How do you get the day started right and still hold positive sustainability to the end of day?

MARIA GOSUR

I start every day by jumping in freezing cold water! :) In all of my homes, I either have a cold plunge that I keep at 56 degrees, or here in Sun Valley where I am now, I have the river, which I jump in even in the winter! I do this as a daily practice, as a discipline to make my mind know that when I say I'm going to do something, I do it now! No matter how difficult it may seem. It also has amazing physical value for the body. Every cell, nerve, muscle in your body, pumps like crazy when you make that radical of a temperature change. It moves your lymph and makes you ready for anything. Completely invigorating.

What are some exercises to help you work on introspection?

DAVID MCGRAW

After I'm done with my early morning cold plunge, I immediately sit down for 20 minutes of what I call "Prime Time." I don't hope that I'm going to have a great perspective on the day; I prime my nervous system: I prepare it, and I train it, for the perspective I want. I do this by sitting down and doing an intense breathing pattern that changes my state even more. Fundamentally, it's raising my arms up to the sky as I take a deep breath in through my nose, and then exploding my arms and legs down, forcing all the air from my stomach through the back of my spine and through my nose with intensity. I do three sets of ten of these types of breath. Then, I pause and experience the change in my body and mind, and feel the sense of peace. I continue these three sets of ten with pauses three times.

I then take a minimum of ten minutes—usually twenty and sometimes as long as 35–40 minutes—and do these three things: I take three minutes to focus on three things I’m deeply grateful for and I deeply associate to the feeling of gratitude for those people or experiences in my life. I take three minutes and I ask for a blessing that everything that needs to be solved is solved and then I ask for a blessing for all those that I know and love, from my family and friends to my clients, that they experience the same blessing. Finally, I take three minutes and focus on my “Three to Thrive.” I focus on three things I want to accomplish; I see them as done and I feel grateful for them. This sets me up for the day and provides a perspective to deal with any challenge, as well as a state of fulfillment in all that I experience.



“Life is found in the dance between what we desire most and what we fear most.”

I have \$100,000 in cash a very good credit score with no debt where do you suggest I put it?

MIKE

Please read my book! There is no one place you should put this money. If you do, that’s the biggest mistake of your life. I talked to Ray Dalio, the man many called the Leonardo da Vinci or Steve Jobs of investors; he has the largest hedge fund in the world (a big one might have \$15B in assets; Ray Dalio’s has \$165B—ten times the size!). He told me what he’s learned is that no matter how smart you think you are, markets are always changing.

So how has he produced a 21% return prior to fees over the last two and a half decades? He’s figured out a strategy to understand how to make money in any season, any environment. He’s famous for what’s known as the “All Weather” strategy, and he’s never revealed the exact percentages of that diversification strategy before. In fact, you had to have a \$5B net worth and give him \$100M just to start ten years ago. But today, no matter how rich you are, he won’t manage money for you. His fund is closed to outsiders.

I persuaded him to share with me the actual numbers of this strategy and it’s in the book. It’s worth a chapter’s read! When back tested over the last 75 years, it’s made money 85% of the time and the largest loss was only -3.95%. Its average return has been just under 10%. I wouldn’t put all your money in anything, including this strategy, but the book shows you all the choices you have in how to protect yourself as well as maximize your potential returns. None of the book is my opinion. It’s all driven by the answers of the 50 most

brilliant financial minds in the world.

Finally, be sure to read how to protect yourself from destructive fees. Most people have no idea that the average mutual fund, when you dig into the fine print, has up to 17 fees which according to Forbes magazine average 3.12%. By contrast, if you have two people who start at 35 years old with \$100,000 and they compound a 7% return, the person who's paying 1% in fees will have \$760,000 vs. the person paying 3% in fees amounting to \$430,000 at age 65. They had the same rate of return; the only difference was fees. My goal with this book was simple: to convert you from the chess piece to the chess player!



“Success if not a destination, but an ongoing process of constant and never ending improvement.”

What book are you reading / listening to right now?

IRINA JORDAN

One of my favorite books of all time is *The 100: A Ranking Of The Most Influential Persons In History* by Michael Hart. It takes a provocative look at who has influenced history the most. And I find that even a short biography of the greats of history to be incredibly inspiring. I also recommend to everyone that they read a classic: *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. After reading it, no matter how big your challenge, you’ll realize you have no problems! And you’ll remember the unwavering power of the human spirit that lives within you.

In your quest to feed millions every year and coordinate thousands of other programs to help people, what is a pain point that you are experiencing, and how can we help?

TROY SHU

I'm touched by your question. The answer is simple: I hate suffering. I hate to see people suffer because I feel their suffering. And I love to light people up. I love to see people transform. I love to see the light in someone's eyes when they become a giver instead of a taker.

Your question is astute. Most of us find our passions in things that were either denied or were taken from

us...that's often where some of our desires come from. I grew up in a family that today we call "food insecure"—there were days with no meals. So I'm very passionate about feeding people. I was 11-years-old one Thanksgiving and we had no money for food. A stranger delivered a Thanksgiving meal to our home; it changed me forever. It was more than food—it made me believe that strangers care. And it made me care about strangers.

I promised myself that someday, I would do well enough to take care of others and provide the same gifts. At 17, I fed two families for the first time at Thanksgiving. It was so enormously fulfilling that I wanted to double it each year. Within a few years, I was feeding a couple hundred people. Then I got people involved in my early stage companies—my employees, my friends. Quickly, it grew to 1 million people, then 2 million. In the last seven years, my wife and I have matched our foundation's two million meals, with two million meals of our own for a total of four million.

These last few years, as I wrote Money: Master the Game, I couldn't help be struck by the radical contrast between those with enormous wealth and those who are still living like how I grew up. In fact, Congress cut what we used to know as food stamps a few years ago by billions of dollars, functionally eliminating one meal a week for all people currently using government assistance. I decided to do something. I've fed 42 million people over the course of my lifetime, since I was 17. I decided I wanted to feed more people in one year than I had in my entire life.

So I partnered with Feeding America, the nation's #1 hunger relief organization. I asked them how many people could I feed if I donated all the profits of my book in advance. It was a sizable amount—they told me I could feed 10 million people! I committed on the spot to do that, but then decided to raise that number to include an additional gift. I'm proud to say that I've personally donated 50 million meals this year alone.



"In my soul, I believe the secret to living is giving."

How would you define success? For yourself, for clients, for companies, for “scenes”, for industries?

ANDREAS KLINGER

I believe success is not a destination, but an ongoing process of constant and never ending improvement. Our success in life comes in two forms. First is our ability to take our vision and make it real, whether that be in our professional or personal lives. Secondly, and equally as important, is our ability to contribute to others in a way that creates a sense of true meaning and fulfillment.

A sad example (someone who was successful by most people's measures) would be the great loss we experienced last year in Robin Williams. He wanted to be a great comedian—to make people laugh around the world—and he accomplished it. He wanted to be a great actor and win an Academy Award; he succeeded there, too. He wanted a beautiful family, and people around the world who loved him. He accomplished all of this. But he took his own life because success without fulfillment is the ultimate failure. My wish for you is to find a meaningful mission that will ignite you every day.



“I love to see the light in someones eyes when they become a giver instead of a taker.”

