**<https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/e/2PACX-1vSOLvZkajohpo7h8xI1AuORhJNQ0VnK2jxXtRhOGQY8R50hDxAXZnkW_qWW5UCcjAuJCAI3sxyPMBxV/pub>**

**A** **very long story about a very long bumpy road to a very happy ending.**

There’s so much content and popularity with trading right now, but like most things online, people usually only share the good stuff. Most traders blow up. Most trades fail. Something like 1% actually make a living who try and way less who are as good as what we all hope to be when we start out.

**I have a unique story and I decided to share** it because I’ve had tremendous obstacles in my life, and I was not a “just jump back on the horse” kind of guy. So I wanted to give an honest portrayal of my journey to consistent profitability and maybe provide some insight **for people who are on the fence about giving up**, **or just need a little dosh darn guidance** – because **it is so hard to know who to trust**. I also think a lot of traders have very little concept of how little they know (starting with me). And I hope this provides some incentive to at least someone to keep learning. This is not easy to share. **I intended to write a tweet to my followers this morning** after breakfast. They had asked to know a bit about my trading journey. **8 hours later** (and some time at the pool), it ended up being about 5x as long as I anticipated to just touch on my trading, but I felt the journey was significant to the outcome. And **it just came out this way** so thank you for listening.

*This probably won’t appeal to people who don’t take their trading seriously.*

**I dropped out of high school** at the age of 16 to start college early. I was not exceptional, but I had missed so much high school because of some emerging health problems that it was just easier to get my GED, take a remedial math coarse (**yes I flunked math, dropped out of high school and college and I am a profitable trader and computer programmer**), and then start college early with a schedule I could set. At the same time, with the help of my parents, I started my first web design company. The internet was a different place in 1997. All business, no pleasure (well yes pleasure, but not anything you wanted your mom to see). I found work very easily as there was huge demand for a “web presence” in this new “world wide web”. After about 18 months of work I opened my first trading account with the $10k I had saved up, and I’ve been trading ever since.

Now 41, I wish I could say I spent the last 20 years **mastering trading,** but I decided to go on with my business longer. I found more opportunity and started other companies, some good , some not – but mostly what I spent my life doing was figuring out how to be as self-sustaining, self-motivated and as efficient and effective as possible in all things I do.

**I had to give all of that up** about five years ago when I went into **liver failure** and **spent a year in the ICU at Mayo Clinic**. I was on a feeding tube, my weight declined from 150 to 97 pounds. The only good thing about being that sick is you pretty much don’t remember any of it. It might have been the IV Dilaudid.

**I have had tremendous health challenges, since birth.** The time I have with good health where I can focus on important things can be very slim at times so I have really dedicated my life to not wasting any of it. I’m not perfect, oh far from it. But I try as hard as I can to the best me I can be and every day I try to be better than the day before. That may sound corny, but I assure you this is contrary to my natural laid back and pessimistic nature that **I struggle** with constantly. **I’ve had to give up almost everything I’ve worked for along the way,** which left me not wanting to start new things up again, even though I had enjoyed a lot of success. The hard work being wiped away with each more frequent health crisis was just too much to want to take on anymore. I had a bumpy few years in between, having drive and ambition but also having the reality that it was always a matter of time before **I lost everything again**.

I wish I could say it was my first incident like that, but between my similarly-health-challenged-brother and I, that was about the 20th time. Like how I didn’t mention after starting college at 16, I had to drop out at 17 because I was misdiagnosed with lymphoma **cancer** for a month, only finding out after I met with all my professors to say “goodbye, I have cancer” (but hey, I got a tuition refund. Fake Cancer: 0, Me: 1).

You can see how that can put a wet cloth on the **fire in your soul** after so many years of hard work and events of failure. There are no stop losses in life, I am afraid. But the birth of my niece 10 years ago broke the **downtrend** of my life but it was the **near death catalyst** that propelled me to a new all-time high and my only goal in life now is to provide for her the best I can for as long as I can.

Though I did have to give up business and accomplishments, I was fortunate enough to have been raised by very financially responsible parents who taught me to **save, save, save**. So after leaving the hospital and coming back to a nice nest egg while I was away (thanks Trump), I decided to take my years of Warren-Buffet-Style long term investing to a more technical approach and **lose all my money**, like a real day trader. And so I did. **Four times**.

I had two decades of **computer programming** under my belt and lived in the world of tech my whole professional career, so I was convinced that if I applied myself I would have a really big advantage over others in my ability to really tackle coding my own indicators and the programming side of complex *scanning* and dynamic *watch lists*. Of course I didn’t even know what a *candlestick* was until several years ago. And I do feel fortunate for my background but It also presents challenges because of bad habits that are not conducive to trading.

Like most traders, I blew up more than once. **The more I learned the worst it seemed I go**t. I had all of this knowledge but was just losing money. I actually dropped below PDT and put money on a credit card to get back above. I decided that desperation was not something I would revisit. I promised myself that if I fell below PDT again, I would stop trying to learn technical trading. So of course I did it three more times.

When **I fell below PDT multiple times**, I had about a month of choppiness. I was constantly violating and having to **call my broker**. Here, a nearly 40 year old who’s had an account with my broker for 20 years calling like a Robin Hood trader begging to let me trade again. Three times. “Oh. Looks like someone had a bad day, hmm? Pay us.”

During this time I was still at my screens all day and watching price action. Being able to essentially trade mentally and see how they worked out was the “paper trading” I think I skipped my whole life. I just watched charts all day during live trading and applying what I had learned and finally it started to become clearer. My broker told me on my last phone call, it would be **my last chance**. And it was. **I have been profitable ever since**.

I wish I could say I found some magic indicator, coded some secret scanner, or learned a trick, but it’s the boring stuff you hear from every trader – **risk management**. Most trades fail. **If you do not** account for that with stop losses and proper positioning for risk **you simply cannot succeed** at this long term. **Period**.

**Twitter**. This may be shocking, but while I opened my account in 2011, I did not tweet until about a year ago. I just had no interest in social media. But wow, has it changed my trading. The reason I tweet, I’m sorry to say, is entirely **100% selfish**. I do it because it makes me accountable to others and not just myself. Now while I would never want anyone to take a trade just because I tweet it (see “Most Trades Fail”), the good traders I know can take what I give them and use proper trading because I gave them an idea and they can do with it what they choose. But I know people follow me because they find some value in what I give them so that puts a greatly-**valued added burden** on me to produce good content. So the more I tweet and get positive feedback, from a silly little like or a message saying someone made a profit with something I gave them an idea for, then it makes me know what’s working, what isn’t and makes me a better trader. So **everyone wins and everyone gets better**. How great is that?

For **my trading education**. I went full on course-based-learning and approached this like I was going to college for short term trading. My **introduction to trading** was through a paid course of trading fundamentals. I think I literally just googled “how to stop losing at trading” and found a video from a man who was showing a stochastic divergence. I thought he was a prophet. I took the beginner, then advanced, then masterclass courses. They are three month courses and I finished them in three weeks. I just could not get enough. It was a wonderful education but highly technical (which I loved). It was there that I learned how to count waves and cycles, how to track momentum waves, micro and macro divergence patterns, Fibonacci *extensions*, *retracements*, et. Al. I followed those core courses up with supplemental advanced training in *Stochastics*, *MACD*, *Price and candlestick Patterns*, *support and resistance*, *moving averages*, *fractal timing* with three timeframes, *tick charts*, *volatility*, *OBV* and *volume*. And finally, just a wealth of knowledge of emotional control, risk management, how to research sectors rotations and relative strength and so much more. I really credit this first course with giving me the foundation that now give me so much **confidence** in my trading today.

I had a couple **profitable setups** now. Mostly reversion to the mean scalps and divergence trend reversals. While I could trade profitably I found it very hard to find any stocks to trade. I wasted a lot of time on learning to program in Thinkorswim and Ninjatrader primarily and tried to program my way to profits with indicators etc. I started trading things that were not what I was taught. I had all this knowledge and too much confidence but lacked practical experience. **Imagine doing surgery after reading a book on how to do surgery. Takes a little more practice.**

I know now that my error was not applying myself to my initial education and became frustrated and moving on to new things before properly applying myself. Your basic **FOMO**, **revenge trading**. I started **losing money** in my trades again – more than I was comfortable with. **One thing I know I did was blame everyone but myself for this.**

I decided I just did not have enough **actionable setups** (wrong) and to try to get a few more under my belt. I ended up buying an indicator from a gentleman that used something called a **Harmonic Pattern** and it looked awesome to me. Naturally I bought it having no idea what it was. It would take me over a year before I revisited it and finally learned how to trade it. Through the next couple months I found my way to a harmonics master. He runs a little group where he basically gives away his indicator, morning telecom meetings, and constantly puts out free content, for next to nothing. He even gives away copies of his massive book (which I have read more than once) for free after like 6 months of it being for sale on amazon. Incredible guy.

Naturally, I traded harmonics entirely wrong for a long time never applying myself to really learn it. It is also very technical and requires some dedication and **I was not putting forth the effort necessary to grasp anything before I moved on**. It wasn’t until I started hearing about this thing called **#thestrat** (not Vegas, baby) and started studying Price Discovery that **everything coalesced for me**. I never knew which way to trade a harmonic pattern and then once I realized the participant groups you can see how price reaches one level, then retests another level, then the next level and it expands until it fails and then it starts over. Finally after so much trial and error and so many two steps back for each step forward I finally was starting to have consistent gains. I was able to find my own stocks through research and scanning, I was able to read and plot my own charts, I was able to find good entry points and detect reversals vs. retests and see trendlines and channels and higher highs and lower lows and I knew how to limit my losses and let my winners run. Finally. After nearly 40 years on this earth, 20 years trading, 5 of it spent sick or in the hospital, losing business and friendships and money and dreams. I saw it. I credit the simple hours I’ve put into study and charting (they say if you want to get good at anything you just have to do it enough times) and then finding a synergy between all the disciplines I learned. I finally had a way to take all the original education, new techniques, price discovery and elements of #thestrat and harmonic patterns and I could find converging price levels with enough consistency, coupled with proper risk management

I read a book called *12 Rules for Life* about the same time **I was at my lowest low health and emotionally after leaving the hospital**. I credit that with a great deal on really helping me drill my needs down to the level of an infant, basically. Once I left the hospital I was sick at home for a long time. I just did not know how I was going to get out of it. **I had given up**. I was on **painkillers** and in bed most days **in agony**. But Jordan Peterson, the author of the book, taught me how to literally start improving my life by just making my bed in the morning. I really wake up and make my bed every morning as soon as I get up because of that book, and that started my recovery of my life, health, soul and now my trading.

**I am healthier now than I have been since I was 20 years old. I am more profitable than ever. And I am so much happier and self-confident and proud of myself – something I have not been able to say for over 10 years.**

**Things just took so much longer than I anticipated**. I thought I just had to “learn to trade” not “there is no trading manual.” Just a library, with 1 million YouTube videos, paid courses from questionable people, tons of people trying to take desperate people’s money with indicators and “trade signals”, soul crushing **Stocktwits** pump and dumpers, twitter feeds and discord people trying to play bulls vs. bears poker of who can pump what robin hood stock the most with the SSR on but pre-purchased shares to short so they all lose their life’s savings while pump and dump masters on **#fintwit** with **250,000 followers** who have no idea **they are the biggest sheep in the world’s biggest slaughterhouse** – making them a cool **$100k every morning**, while a college student **just killed himself** because it was his turn to blow up.

**If I had it over to do again, I would tell myself this:**

* **Pay for a good course** that will teach progressive education so you can keep getting better, not just some basic stuff you can learn on youtube. Paid courses with **real mentors** offer more that you could imagine. You should approach this like you are going to **graduate school** with **clear goals** of things you want to learn. There’s been so many times I would never have survived if I did not have at least a basic understand of how trends work so that I could swing trade my way back. Sometimes it took a VERY long time, but I usually did it.
* **Slow down. You WILL lose all of your money**, probably more than once. So for crying out loud, lose 5k instead of 25k. Then you can try 5 times. Or whatever – just don’t get 25k margin account, watch a few youtube videos and think you are **Bobby Axelrod** (can he even read a chart?)
* **Knowing nothing about trading is by far the best thing you can have going for you**. Most of us spend our lives trying to counter bad habits we learned early on and we struggle our whole lives to counteract it.
* **Paper trading is for kids**. You need emotional cost to learn anything. Paper trading is for learning your platform. When you are ready to trade you buy 1 or 10 shares. Not a thousand. Invest just enough to get emotional about it, but not enough to care if you lose every penny.
* **Use a default OCO order**. Put your stop loss 1% below your entry and you stop limit to sell at 2% above. Deliberately out of range. Then drag those to stop up to where you want it. It does not have to be tight but anyone who says "oh I don't use stops because the computers take them out" doesn't know how to place stops properly. Are you really going to hold a stock till it goes to 0? Then put in a stop loss somewhere, for crying out loud. If you don’t know your stop or profit target, why not learn how to figure that out? The information is available (not in a chatroom or forum). Why are re you choosing not to learn it?
* **Never ask someone how much money they make.** Aside from just, manners, if you care how rich someone is, you need to adjust your mindset. You want to associate with people who are profitable. How the size in, or whether they quit when they make 50 bucks for the day or 5k is up to them. I’ve learned more from 100 a day scalper videos on YouTube as an absurdly expensive membership I wish I never bought.
* **Any time you make money or lose money**, stop. Take a beat and wait until you can **reconcile your new balance**. You are not up or down. You do not have money to lose or money you need to win back. **This is not poker**. Your balance is whatever it says it is. Now you can trade.
* **Indicators will not make you money. Education will.** Buy indicators when you know exactly what they are and how they will make you a better trader. Don’t buy one thinking it will make you go from losing money to making money. And to beat a dead horse - There is no “green arrow to buy and red to sell” magic indicator for any amount of money. Trading is far more complicated than that.
* On the same note (annoying second person narrative over)– no one who trades for a living (people who make a living by investing their own money) gets “**trade signals**” from people. Not in a **chatroom**, a **tweet** or a **text message**. No one tells them what to buy and when. Many of us are informed by other people. We get “tips”.

**STOCK TIPS**

**Probably the biggest misunderstood thing in investing.** I put out dozens of tweets a day of charts.

**“Tips” to “educated traders” means**: look up the financials or pull up a chart, Look at price action, draw trend lines, load up twitter and see what people are saying about, check the short float and market cap on Finviz. Check the Nasdaq SEC filings to see when their last offering was, what is their debt to cash, what are their risk statements. What are analysts PT, what is the performance of this stock versus its industry and where is that industry’s rotation currently with the overall market? What are the motivations of the personal giving me this tip?

So **if you buy a stock because you read it from someone they’ve never met**, or on a golf cart ride on the back nine - when “educated traders” do some or all of the stuff I just mentioned – **that’s on you.**

There are endless things to blow your money on with trading. There are a lot of very **good** ones **and** a lot of very **bad** ones. You can tell which is which because the bad ones make you **pay to find out what is in them**. The good ones will **happily send you a course outline** and then you know exactly what you are paying for. I don’t believe most people can be life long traders without doing extensive education with at least one mentored and properly structures educational program. You might have a great run for years. But I know plenty of **people** much **more experienced than me**, who **blew up for good in March** after surviving the .com bubble and much more. If there is education out there to become a better trader and you are not constantly trying to improve, I just can’t understand why you would want to risk your life savings on trading. **More education = more profits**, constantly, for a long time. More trading with no educational progress= You will blow up some day. Stuff changes to. **Price patterns and moving averages are out #thestrat and anchored VWAPS are in.** You have to stay up to date.

*I decided not to mention some names of specific courses I took etc. for concern of seeming to promote someone. Obviously if I am publicly naming them, I had a positive experience. But I think a lot of traders can find it convenient to blame anyone but themselves for their inability to be profitable. They buy memberships or indicators or courses when they are desperate and just keep trading with bad habits and are then surprised it doesn’t work. Spend money when you make money as a reward. Not the other way around.*

**You are the only one who can make you money, and you should be the only one who can lose your money**, Get off “bad” Twitter, (there’s tons of good people, just don’t be a sheep), **get out of chat rooms**. Discord etc. are nothing but people exactly like you. You should want to get better and to do that you need to follow people better than you. I was taught in one of my first lessons by a psychologist for traders: Keep your chatroom if you want. Just next time someone calls out a stock to buy, watch price action, It is pretty amazing herd mentality and you can learn a great deal from it. But after that, leave. Go find some really good people on twitter or a forum who post quality information, who’s motives are pure, that empowers you to become a profitable trader. DO NOT get married to someone who you will be dependent on to make money (trade signals, call out discords) because they will leave you one day and then what? I probably make less money than people who rely on twitter call outs or paid discord chats. But I get to start my day with my TV off, cell phone muted and no outside news unless I choose to get it. And I can sit down at my computer and make money all by myself. I’d take a pay cut for that freedom any day.

I learned early on from a mentor: You should really figure out if you need to trade or want to trade. If you need to trade **you are gambling, not investing**. (I use to gamble a lot so I have to keep it in check constantly). I fear that most traders are simply gambling. They don’t intend to, they just don’t know any better. In the words of yet someone else, “hope and think” are not investment strategies. The majority of traders know 1% of what there is to know about trading and they think they have it mastered. Then they learn 5% and they are certain they have it mastered. I know **I have it mastered**, so I probably know about 10%.

In closing…….**trading is personal**. I can’t think of any job, aside from maybe acting, where you have to have a total **mastery of your mind, your emotions, and your physical wellness** all at the same time and with such force. It’s nearly impossible to replicate someone else’s trading. I recommend you try to put yourself at the center of everything. When you want information go get it, don’t idle or wait for it to come to you. You shouldn’t always be trading but you should try to be proactive and productive about it whether it’s a book on tape or a weekly youtube video. If I mentioned something in this diatribe, look it up, maybe it will make you a better trader. Small consistent gains and limiting losses are the key to longevity. You will never reach some “mastery” level where you just sit down and trade without much effort and make tons of money. That’s in the movies. Watch videos from real technical pro’s who are nice enough to tell you when they have losers and see how often they get stopped out. Every. Single. Day. When you watch a video or you take a course let it inform you. **Make it your own** and add it to your own **personal trading toolkit**. Don't try to copy someone else's. And work hard. Work harder than you've worked before. Read books, watch lectures, attend webinars, fill your mind! **What is more important to you than financial freedom and security for you and the people you love in your life and generations to follow?**

During an parabolic high when my business was booming and I was young enough to party all night and sleep when I died, I ran a **professional RTS FPS gaming tournament company** in the late nineties for over 5 years. I had thousands of members, I got sent pallets of free computers flew all over the country to give away free stuff and money at tournament that I got paid to run. **Even on my very worst trading day, this is so much more fun**. But it is by far, the hardest thing I have ever tried to do. I’ve cried from happiness and self pity more than once. I had the four highest grossing days of my life this year but I also had my two worst.

**Every day is a challenge.**

**I choose to rise to it.**

**What are you going to do?**