

Title:

Smith Could "C" the Future

Word Count:

825

Summary:

Frederick W. Smith attended Yale University and wrote a paper on the concept of overnight package delivery. Smith's professor did not agree with his futuristic possibility and only gave Smith a C for the paper.

How many times have we let someone's opinion dissuade us from doing what we want to do? How many times have we given our power away by letting one person's opinion stop us from achieving our goals? Smith did not let his college professor stop him. After he was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, Smith implemented his overnight package delivery service in 1971. The name of his business was Federal Express.

Keywords:

Persistence, Motivation, Inspiration, Patience, Goal Setting, Careers, Entrepreneur

Article Body:

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How many times have we let someone's opinion dissuade us from doing what we want to do? How many times have we given our power away by letting one person's opinion stop us from achieving our goals? Smith did not let his college professor stop him. After he was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, Smith implemented his overnight package delivery service in 1971. The name of his business was Federal Express.

1. Smith never gave up on his passion for his concept for an unmet need

During Fed Ex's first two years, the business lost \$27 million and almost went bankrupt. Smith came close to losing \$80 million that he raised from investors, including personal money from his brothers and sisters. Smith was able to renegotiate some loans.

Many of us have financial challenges. Smith was about to lose tens of millions

of dollars that he raised to implement his passion for an unmet need: overnight package delivery. Smith knew he was able to answer the classical marketing question: what is the unmet need? Smith answered the question very well and persevered.

2. "Naivete was also a big part. I didn't know that I couldn't do this."

Smith was quoted as saying in a 1998 interview. How many of us put so many demands on ourselves and are always thinking that the worst will happen? Is it the fear of the unknown? Are we that much attached to our comfort zone? Also in a 1998 interview, Smith said that "...the currency of exchange in Fed Ex was just money, it wasn't people's arms and legs, or lives." This quote was in reference to Smith's experience in the Marine Corps in Vietnam. Apparently, Smith's philosophy was that losing money was not like losing lives. How many of us deal with situations in which lives are at stake? Medical professionals can experience situations in which they need to save lives. Can losing money ever compare to losing lives?

3. Smith never lost his confidence

Smith did not want to let down people who signed up with him to make Fed Ex happen. His philosophy went back to his Marine Corps days. He had said, "I knew I had put this thing together properly and that it was going to be all right." Have you graduated from college? If so, you put together a plan and succeeded. Smith was confident about his passion and stuck to his plan. He did not let the threat of losing tens of millions of dollars and going bankrupt stop him from losing his confidence. Have any of us faced as much financial difficulty as Smith did? Smith also did not let a grade of C on his paper at Yale deter his confidence.

4. Smith took advantage of his learning resources and had great mentors

Frederick Smith said "The Marine Corps is the best when it comes to teaching people how to lead other folks." Smith made the most out of his military training, which was a foundation for his ultimate success at forming and maintaining Fed Ex. What have we learned from our experiences and how can we better utilize them? Who are some of the people that have greatly influenced us? Staff Sergeant Jack Jackson and Father Vince Capodanno were two people who had a big influence on Smith. Sergeant Jackson was Smith's platoon sergeant in the Corps. When Smith first met Sergeant Jackson, he had grown a mustache and smoked cigars. Smith wanted to look older than 22 years old. Sergeant Jackson told Smith, "Well, the first thing, shave off that ridiculous mustache, and quite smoking the cigars -- because you look absurd -- and be yourself." Sergeant

Jackson told Smith the he "looked like a smooth-faced kid trying to be something that (he) wasn't." Smith said what Sergeant Jackson said stuck with him to this day.

Father Capodanno was Smith's battalion chaplain, who received the Congressional Medal of Honor. In 1966, Father Capodanno was assigned to Vietnam, with the Third Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment. On September 4, 1967 he was killed in action, in Que Son Valley. He was giving last rites to wounded and dying Americans in the heat of battle. Father Capodanno showed the utmost in self-sacrifice. Most people, including Smith, though it was an honor to have known such a great man.

Smith suggested that young people take advantage of the tremendous access to information that we have, especially the Internet. Support from others can help us in our quest to accomplish our goals. Support from others can help us overcome barriers, much like the "C" that Smith received on his paper for his Federal Express idea. Many of you possess so many great ideas. Don't let naysayers discourage you.