

Introduction

The world is changing. But you already knew that.

You have likely spent countless hours reading and discussing how the world is changing. It is debated at the highest level in politics and played out on our screens during the 6 pm news hour. We are all obsessed with how the world is becoming vastly different to the world we used to know. But it is not the 'how' part that you need to be preoccupied with. It is the *why* part of this shift that is particularly important to you. Why do so many diverse and distinct worldly events seem to have reached breaking point? Climate change, sexual harassment, gender and race inequality, global pandemics and democracy all seem to have arrived at a critical crossroad.

If the situation seems precarious, it is. And whilst momentum is beginning to drive a semblance of change, the reality is that it takes a new type of leadership to create the transformation to a better world we all long for.

Technology and social media have skewed our ability to clearly identify leadership for both better and for worse. We now

see the flaws in leaders due to greater transparency in the media. We are disenchanted with the leaders we used to rely upon for inspiration. We are in desperate need for new leadership, new hope. And as our attention has shifted to our smartphones, so too has our search – inevitably leading us to our addictive social media feeds. However, the Insta-famous rise of influence has eroded our understanding of success and indeed true influence.

But you cannot deny the power of meaningful connections. For all the faults that lie with social media and digital technology, there are significant benefits when using these platforms for new voices to be heard. It is this ability, these new voices, which are sparking positive change in the future of work.

As new leaders emerge in both work and life in general, one clear commonality they all have is that they broke all the rules. Rather than give in to the inertia of life confined by old playbooks, they have relied on instinct instead of sage advice to achieve the unachievable. Whilst this may seem daunting, the truth is that by taking a slightly rebellious attitude towards everything you have grown to know about leadership it can be relatively easy to achieve the unachievable – but you must be willing to shift your mindset and do your homework. What will drive true change for the future is inspiration. And as everyone has the ability to inspire, this should instil hope in all of us during an era in which we have reached the tipping point on so many major movements.

It has become crystal clear that it is no longer acceptable to sit on the side-lines.

Therefore, the *why* part of this book is fundamental. To understand how to create a better future for yourself you need to understand why the previous rules of progress were created, and why they are no longer valid and need to be broken. You will learn that old rules propped up the few, whilst new rules prop up the many. Most importantly you will learn that being an inspirational leader in today's new world is inherent within each

of us, provided you are equipped with the tools and a bit of confidence to break the rules.

Although there are many books that discuss rebelliousness as a route to success, they tend to imply that rebelliousness is an outlier concept amongst the masses of society. Branded a disruptor my whole life (the title of my *Forbes* profile in 2015 read 'Jackie Fast had to break the mould to make it'), I want to kill any notion that rule breaking is for the few. Instead I believe this new wave of rebelliousness is the beginning of what leadership will become. It will guide the next revolution of positive change in both the world and in business and set the foundation for our future. Ultimately, I am asking you to be part of building that foundation.

This book is a culmination of personal experiences and curated case studies across diverse sectors to clearly illustrate how breaking all the rules is now fundamental to success in the future of work. We will review the quick rise of Kylie Cosmetics against the backlash of Amazon climate change walkouts and understand the failures of collaboration with Fyre Festival compared to the enormous success of Beats by Dre.

Having achieved significant success early on by going against the grain, I know first-hand the barriers to overcome. Fortunately, the tools needed are within everyone's grasp. I hope that by outlining this turning point and providing practical guidance to tap into your inner rebel, you too will be able to grasp them. These tools will enable you to become an exceptional leader in the future of work and inspire the world in the process – hopefully helping us all change our world for the better.

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PART ONE

The Past

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Business unusual

Becoming a leader

The green plastic seat was cold despite the bustle of the stamp collection exhibition going on around us. This specific event was my favourite amongst the hundreds of other exhibitions held in the commercial building in which our office was located in Central London. Although the 'Best of Italy' showcase was a treat with free food samples given out to attendees and office dwellers, there was something about the hum of hundreds of silver-haired hushed negotiators that resonated with me.

It was on this day, 11 February 2011, that I sat across from Mark Mylam. His experience laid out between us on the pale orange Formica table which kept tilting when I put my elbows on it. I noted that the pieces of paper that contained his work experience were in pristine condition, surprising considering it had made the journey during the peak-hour jostle on the crowded London Underground. I had spent the previous evening wrapped

up in my pyjamas in my bedroom pouring over Google searches in anticipation, ensuring I would ask the right questions. The trick it seemed was to ask situational questions: ‘Tell me about a time you had to choose something else over doing a good job’ and ‘Tell me about a time you had to collaborate with a co-worker who was hard to please’. Finding out Mark’s previous full-time job was working as a ski instructor in Switzerland within the first few minutes of sitting down in the cafeteria amongst retirees and their packed lunches quickly killed any hope of utilizing these questions effectively.

Not that I would have known a good answer from a bad one. This was the first time I had ever held an interview. Being only 26 years old, I had never hired or managed a single person in my entire short career. I desperately hoped Mark could not tell.

Mark was all smiles and genuinely seemed interested in the opportunity to come and work for me. He had an ease and friendliness about him that went beyond his 22 years of age and his excitement for wanting to work with me was infectious.

My business, Slingshot Sponsorship, was initially launched as a marketing consultancy, a way for me to pay the rent after I quit my job at the Direct Marketing Association. It was set up without much ambition, just a run-of-the-mill one-man-band service that would help organizations and events find and secure new sponsors to add revenue to their bottom line. Having found moderate success in this area for my previous employer, which ran 52 annual events ranging from e-mail marketing breakfasts to summer socials, I took the chance to set off on my own with very little clue about how to actually do so. But being my own boss sounded enticing. Much of what I gathered about starting a business I took directly from information online, largely from the UK government’s website. It seemed relatively straightforward: get a business bank account and register your business. Two things that I managed to complete in less than four hours one evening after working at my day job. And just like that, I was a business owner.

Considering the initial launch of my business took just a brief four hours of work, I was propelled into action with confidence. Unsurprisingly, it turned out that making money from a business is considerably harder than setting one up. I would have loved to have hired an employee at launch, but without an office, even I understood that no self-respecting intern would be willing to work from home. After all, this was pre-pandemic and the value trade-off for internships was a chance to learn and gain experience which cannot be gleaned in isolation.

Looking back on that first year I recall much of it spent working in my pyjamas. I chased any potential opportunity and begged clients to work for them. It slowly started to pay off and eventually I had enough of what looked like an agency that I felt I could convince someone to join my ridiculously small team of one. Hiring an employee was a goal that I had put in my original business plan as attainable after the first year. By my own estimation I was on schedule.

But the pressure of hiring my first employee was enormous. Having previously bounced around multiple jobs in both Canada and the United Kingdom, I had spent much of my formative career being wildly disappointed with both the actual work I was doing and the people I reported to. My combined lack of patience and outspoken nature meant I often did not last long. I had always vowed to never make the same mistakes if I ever became a leader myself.

I launched my agency Slingshot Sponsorship in May 2010 in my rented room on an ex-council estate in London. Having been in the United Kingdom for a handful of years on an extraordinarily minimal salary, the furnishings were sparse and my only source of entertainment was a tiny television with terrestrial TV. I spent most of those early months stressed about paying my rent. My social life was non-existent. Instead my waking hours were spent hunched over my laptop propped up by pillows desperately searching online to try and utilize every marketing tactic to round up clients and generate revenue for my fledgling

business. Every single invoice I raised, mostly for project-based sponsorship sales work, went into saving for my first employee. It gradually accumulated in my business bank account until I had just enough to pay for one full-time salesperson's salary for a year.

Fully grasping how important generating clients was to be able to pay my rent, and the fact that much of the work involved pitching creative ideas to brands, hiring a full-time salesperson was the obvious next step. Unfortunately managing sales is tricky and hiring salespeople even more so. Unlike customer service, management, human resources and almost every other department in a business, finding out whether a salesperson is good or bad at their job when they are starting out on their career is an impossible task. Salespeople need time to understand the product or service and cultivate leads. They then need even more time to close a deal. Being a salesperson myself I understood that if I was going to hire one, I needed to give them time to prove value to my business. I also understood that if I hired the wrong one that I would see my entire savings wiped out waiting for results. A bad hiring choice would leave me broke and forced to go back into full-time employment in the corporate world. Or worse still, move back home with my parents in Canada.

Not only would this hurt financially, it would prove that I could not hack it as an entrepreneur – which would hurt my ego the most. I had invested a full year of my life doing everything I possibly could to make my business a success. Failure at this point was not an option. At that moment in time, it felt as if my whole future was riding on this one single hire.

Amongst HR professionals there is an ongoing debate between hiring on instinct or hiring on algorithms, with equation-based hiring being 25 per cent more effective.¹ However, in 2010 my access to algorithms was non-existent as was my previous hiring experience. Google only went so far, and I did not have anyone

to ask. So, I went with the only thing at my immediate disposal, my gut instinct.

Amongst the crowd of Old Spice and Zimmer frames at the stamp collection convention, I hired Mark that afternoon. He accepted on the spot. And just like that, I became a leader for the first time in my life.

A new world needs new leadership

Our world is changing at a dramatic rate. As a society we are aware of this changing context because we see it during our everyday lives. We can curate our experiences through Netflix, have our groceries delivered to our door, and gain business advice from mentors across the globe in real time. However, much of what has been written about leadership remains embedded within old corporate structures of top-down management aimed to increase output through the assembly of people. Although work has moved on from the industrial revolution of factories, what remains is leadership and management tactics built on hierarchy and nepotism. Leaders who have created success on corporate structures that no longer exist in the same way. Leaders who go on to write best-selling how-to books designed to help you achieve their success by following the same guidelines. I am not saying these people are not great leaders; far from it. But great leaders of their time. Successful based on a different set of criteria from that which we are living through today.

This book looks at how great leaders come to be in *our time*. A time when selfies can build billion-dollar beauty brands and when a car company's valuation exceeds that of a legacy automotive brand without having one physical dealership or car salesman. These are extraordinary times. We are in a new world with no boundaries. What has not been possible historically is

now possible. But it needs new leadership. New leaders who have vision.

The first part of this book will outline the framework of change, crucially identifying a shift in global consciousness driven by technological advances. Over time, businesses are increasingly becoming less monopolistic, driven by advancements including streamlined processes, data organization and ease of communication. But what our common understanding of these business advancements rarely considers is how these achievements are underpinned by base human nature. This is compounded by numbers. There are more people who want their shot at the top and they are becoming increasingly more creative in achieving that reality.

It took 200,000 years for the world's population to reach one billion. The second billion was achieved just 130 years later in 1930, the third billion 30 years later in 1960, the fourth billion 14 years later in 1974 and the fifth billion in 1987. In 1970 alone (a year in which most of the leaders writing leadership books today started their careers), there were roughly half as many people in the world as there are now.² As with sport, business competition drives advancement.

As this advancement continues, furthering life expectancy and quality of life, the fight for the top is compounded by those flooding the bottom. This will continue to accelerate, fundamentally changing how new leaders think and act.

Learning through patterns

As humans we curate our world through repetition and patterns. What has gone before is therefore likely to come after – a theory dating back to the time of hunters and gatherers. Which berries can be eaten without the risk of death? Who should go out hunting and where is there likely to be easy prey? How can you trust another person or tribe? The ability to sort and classify complex information is inherent in our DNA. We rely on this instinct as

we try to achieve our goals – gathering the right information to lead us to the pathway to success. Often when success is not achieved, we believe that the fault lies in the information we have gathered. When we become stuck it is often at the blame of not originally sorting information correctly. These failures are what props up the billion-dollar industry of shifting your mindset.

If you are willing to part with \$945 you too can ‘Stop settling for less... to become a stronger, more resourceful and more powerful person’ by attending Tony Robbins’ Unleash the Power Within seminar.³ The foundation of Robbins’ techniques are based on neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) claiming there is a connection between neurological processes, language and behavioural patterns learned through experience. By changing your existing patterns through dramatic exercises such as walking on fire, Robbins hopes to significantly change your mindset to help you achieve your goals.

And changing your mindset is not just for the neophyte. Robbins’ seminars are believed to have helped some of the most ambitious and successful people achieve greater. Famous actor Gerard Butler, known for action movies and stunts, is said to use Robbins’ tactics in his everyday life to overcome fear – a state we’d expect Butler to not even be worried about. ‘Fear is a huge issue for me,’ he has said. ‘This technique Tony has is a really smart way to literally set those fears aside.’⁴

But what if what used to be hardwired is already being rewired? Not consciously through firewalks, but unconsciously – cultivated by the vast changes in information we now receive.

In the Stone Age, to prosper in a tribe, human beings needed to make judicious alliances. Whom to share food with, whom to hunt with and who could be trusted to return the favour. The ability to classify people in categories based on repetitions of patterns allowed individuals to make decisions faster on who could and could not be trusted, what leaders would bring you food and which would not. The faster you could make these

decisions and identify these patterns, the more likely you were to survive.

Over time the information we gather has evolved the classifications we make decisions with. With so much information to sort in the Information Age, our classifications are becoming disjointed as we struggle to consciously identify the common patterns. Worse yet, the patterns that do emerge are often not reflections of the truth. This skewed viewpoint is caused in part by social media. Instead of recognizing patterns through our own experiences we now rely on other people's experiences shown through their social media feeds. Rightly or wrongly we use this to create our expectations. Therein lies the problem. The information we receive has become highly curated based on our appetite for consumption. Now more than ever are we familiar with overnight success and exceptions to the rule. By just clicking on content that outlines how a high-school drop-out made their millions you become primed to be served more content of this type. A pattern then begins to emerge which leads you to believe that dropping out of high school might not be the end of the world, but indeed the making of you. But this is far from the truth.

For example, the most popular occupation sought after in grade school is a career in professional sports; however, just 0.03 per cent of those individuals who play basketball in high school ever go pro. Despite the bleak statistics, millions of kids a year choose to focus on landing three pointers over doing their English literature homework, thinking they too are the exception to the rule. And it is this expectation to become the exception that is driving many of us to dig into our pockets for books, seminars and even firewalks to achieve overnight success.

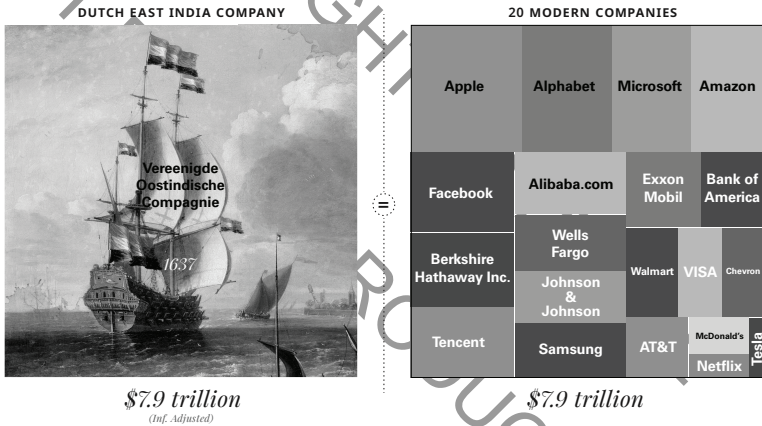
The evolution of business structures towards innovation

Compounding the shift in work caused by our own hardwired classification patterns which are fraught with misinformation is

the evolution of business structures. So, let us start at the beginning.

The beginning of corporate culture is said to have started in 1602 when the Dutch East India Company laid the foundation of how businesses operate today.⁵ As the first company to ever list shares, it revolutionized business ownership, company valuations, speculative bubbles and stakeholder business drivers. At the height of Tulip Mania in 1637, the Dutch East India Company was worth \$7.9 trillion, which is the equivalent of more than 20 times the value of the world's most important companies today.

FIGURE 11 The most valuable companies of all time



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With a 21-year monopoly by the Dutch government for the spice trade in Asia, the Dutch East India Company had what everyone at the time sought after. This enabled them to push boundaries for profit, sending almost a million people to Asia, more than the rest of Europe combined. Commanding over 5,000 ships, many ships returned a profit to investors of 400 per cent and in the drive to increase profitability, many more ships were lost at sea. Not only did the Dutch East India Company transform the

world, but it also transformed the financial markets and its impact can still be felt to this day.

Innovations on the Amsterdam Stock Exchange such as futures contracts, options, short selling, and even the first bear raid (a stock market strategy where a trader attempts to force down the price of the stock by spreading negative rumours) were all driven by shareholders of the Dutch East India Company.⁶ And the drive towards valuation for things we desire has not stopped for over 400 years, with the most recent initial public offering (IPO) of crude oil company Saudi Aramco reaching \$2 trillion – officially emerging as the most valuable publicly traded company at its time of listing on 11 December 2019. With oil being the source of more than a third of the world's energy, it is unsurprising that Saudi Aramco's shares surged with a 10 per cent increase in share price on the first day of trading, even in the wake of Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg's impassioned speeches. Even the deadly coronavirus did little to impact the share price which briefly dipped in March 2020 as investors worried about global demand.

And while much has been debated regarding these monopolies, a disproportionate amount has been written about their leaders. This is common amongst some of the world's most impactful businesses and further outlines the skewed nature of leadership information we aim to assimilate.

Take Johan van Oldenbarnevelt who launched the Dutch East India Company. Not only did he single-handedly initiate and broker the deal amalgamating half a dozen companies that traded in the Far East into the Dutch East India Company in 1602, but a decade later he also created the model for joint stock ownership by shareholders. By most accounts these are two extraordinary achievements in a lifetime, and yet historical reports refer to his life through a political lens rather than highlight any entrepreneurial savviness. What has been written of his business achievements links Oldenbarnevelt to the single idea, rather than the execution of putting it into action. However,

it is the *execution* over many years which later led to greater advancements for business that made his initial idea so successful.

Having a great idea is indeed what made great men and is often utilized today to create an 'us and them' mentality within business recognition. Classifying good ideas is often easier to identify with, a pattern that humans can spot as they understand what has come before and what will come afterwards. As most people are not privy to each individual business strategy, our understanding of what makes a business great, and therefore its leader great, is singular in nature.

It is therefore easy to compartmentalize entrepreneurial greatness as exceptional, as good ideas are exceedingly difficult to find; great ideas almost impossible; and true innovation seemingly unreachable. Therefore, we stack our bed-side tables with business books helping us discover the next big idea. We continually search for tools that promise increased effectiveness. We obsess in communicating our ambitions and personal goals. It is why films about entrepreneurship became some of the most profitable films in the decade between 2006 to 2016 with *Pursuit of Happiness* (2006) bringing in \$307.1 million (budget of \$55 million), *The Social Network* (2010) bringing in \$224.9 million (budget of \$40 million) and my personal favourite *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) bringing in a whopping \$392 million (budget of \$100 million). There is clearly a big appetite for those seeking opportunities to find greatness.

And the link to becoming great through one big idea is constantly driven into our mindset throughout our lives – even if we are not interested in becoming the next Steve Jobs. In business schools most educators stress the importance of launching a new business one of two ways: either with a brand new idea or a better solution to an old problem. Yet very few ideas are truly original. Many of today's leaders are not revolutionizing industries but are the result of marginal gains over a longer period. These incremental gains are what take industries beyond

their historically identified and self-proclaimed boundaries, often small steps over a long period of time.

And it is not just businesses where small steps can create radical success. Much has been written about Dave Brailsford and his extraordinary achievements with British Cycling using this approach to marginal gains. Brailsford states: ‘The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improve it by 1 per cent, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together.’⁷ His innovations were small adjustments, areas you would suspect would be common practice amongst professional cycling teams. They looked at the minute details from testing different massage gels on recovery, to redesigning the bike seats to make them more comfortable.⁸ These seemingly small improvements radically changed the fate of the team and during the 10-year span from 2007 to 2017, British cyclists won 178 world championships and 66 Olympic or Paralympic gold medals – making them the team with the most successful run in cycling history.⁹

This approach is often underutilized in business, although its pattern emerges throughout history and can be seen with some of the most seemingly innovative companies and rebellious leaders of our time.

Hailing from the Netherlands and at the age of 35, Alfred Peet arrived in San Francisco, California in 1955 with big dreams. Having spent a lifetime enjoying exceptional hot drinks, beginning in childhood with a coffee roaster for a father, to his early career working as an apprentice at Twinings coffee and tea company in London, it was not lost on him that although the weather might be better in California, the coffee certainly was not. He opened his first shop Peet’s Coffee & Tea in Berkeley, California on 1 April 1966.

In love with the craft of creating that perfect cup, Peet jumped at the opportunity to share his history and love of roasting with three university kids, Zev Siegel, Gordon Bowker and Jerry

Baldwin who were intrigued at what made Peet's Coffee so different. Three friends who later went on to launch the first Starbucks in 1971. But today, it is the Shultz name that has become synonymous with Starbucks. Ironically, New Yorker Howard Schultz did not first set foot in a Starbucks coffee shop until 1981, 10 years after it originally launched. He joined the company just one year later.

Shultz spent the first five years of his employment developing and executing the marketing strategy, but he struggled to gain internal buy-in with the three founders for his personal vision to turn Starbucks into a more Italian-feeling café experience. Through a twist of fate, the frustrated Shultz eventually acquired the six Starbucks stores in 1987. By 2020, Starbucks had over 23,000 storefronts in 75 countries and was on the list of the 100 most recognized brands in the world.

Although this is a significant achievement, it is important to recognize that Schultz, now president and CEO of Starbucks, did not reinvent the wheel. He did not even reinvent coffee. Instead he copied an idea older than the Dutch East India Company itself and created a coffee culture around espresso rather than the traditional filtered cups of coffee. A coffee experience that originated in the 16th century when Venice become one of the first European ports to import coffee beans.

Schultz is often the first to admit that Starbucks' success does not lie in their coffee, but in the fact that he was able to create an experience. He defines his business as 'the business of human connection and humanity, creating communities in a third place between home and work.' It is the little things that add into what makes an experience great, not necessarily the big idea to do so. After all, don't we all want great experiences?

Often cited as one of the world's leading rebel entrepreneurs, another big idea creator famous for innovation is Sir Richard Branson. But like Shultz, when you scratch beneath the surface the aforementioned innovation could just be understood as common sense. Let us look at Virgin Atlantic, known in the

airline industry as an innovator. Launched in 1984, their innovations included injecting fun. Differing from their competitors, they utilized bright red uniforms and cheeky attitudes including advertisements with catchy slogans such as ‘British Airways doesn’t give a shiatsu’.

At their launch, innovation was driven through inspiration, and on an experience level they aimed to provide a different way to fly from what was currently on offer. Over time Virgin Atlantic continued to innovate with flight amenities most of us now take for granted including wifi on planes, power under seats and flat beds. By anyone’s stretch of the imagination, these things are not going to set the world alight. However, they certainly are reasons why the airline regularly features high on global industry award lists and is often cited as ‘innovative’ by the general population.¹⁰

Over the coming pages we will review the evolution of business progress and uncover why the old rules of business need to be broken. We will review the outliers in business – making the case that these rebels are no longer outsiders, but trailblazers of what leadership looks like in the future of work. As much of our world has been overturned by the technology we now take for granted, we will discover how the beginnings of Silicon Valley and its friction of doing well and doing good has laid the unstable foundation of what defines success. We are in a hotbed of change. We see this in the values people share around the world as well as our future leadership. It is redefining the next C-suite, which has been accelerated as people work through the global impact of 2020.

The subject of leadership is a murky one to discuss these days. Historically it was easy. Leaders were self-defined, projected across news features and included people in positions of power such as the President of the United States. But much like the shift away from bought to earned media, leaders as we are coming to know them are no longer placed on propped and purchased

pedestals. Instead they are emerging organically, visibly identified by the real following and direct influence they have on others. It is murky because a leader is no longer a leader because they say so; a leader is now created by the people.

This book is as much about what qualities people identify with, as it is on how to amass and emulate them. It is about how to become a true leader in today's radically changing business times, not necessarily defined by your role within the company or self-published books stating as much. You are a leader not because you say so, but because *they* say so.

So, what are people looking for? Where do people look for leadership now? How is a leader defined if no longer self-defined?

These are the questions that we will uncover and unpick throughout the book, looking at how every single person can start executing leadership traits that resonate in today's business landscape. This book will argue that the democratization of leadership is now accessible to everyone looking to create real and impactful change in the world. The ability to access that is to first understand today's world better in the context of what has happened before. We will then outline a framework for you to tap into your own individual strength as a leader. By redefining leadership, we will be able to pave the future and recognize the emerging patterns that will define your success and achievement.

A rebellious leader is within us all

As a child I was never one to break the rules. Instead I spent much of my time trying to fit in. Being mixed race Chinese-Canadian from divorced parents in a small suburb in Canada, my clothing choices were led by what the popular girls in my school wore. At no point in my formative years do I ever recall thinking independently or differently from anyone else, and nor

did I want to. I was perfectly happy reading *The Babysitter Club* books in my bedroom and wishing my parents would buy me a pony.

As I grew up, this trend continued. I never had big ambitions to become an entrepreneur. In fact, when asked by my first-grade teacher whom I would want to work for I told her my aspiration was to be employed at the nearby Dairy Queen – a fast-food joint that specialized in soft-serve ice cream. I was not aiming high.

I spent much of my university years going through the motions and taking on whatever jobs were easy at the time. The inspiration to be my own boss was limited. The only person I knew that owned their own business was my dentist and I certainly did not want to spend a lifetime with my hands in someone else's mouth. So to say that waking up at 30 years old with countless entrepreneur awards under my belt and the sale of my first business for \$5 million was a surprise, would be a colossal understatement.

My journey has surprised even me. It is with this lens that I have constantly analysed my own launch as a rebel leader and over the years I noticed a pattern emerge. It turns out that my lack of knowledge and base-level naivety in business has allowed me to work in unrestricted ways. My lack of experience managing people has provided me an opportunity to lead in a way that works for me, driven by my purpose. My lack of network in Britain where I launched my first business forced me to rely on making business decisions based on instincts rather than sage advice from mentors. In truth, I believe that my bold approach along with my lack of experience is what has made me successful.

The world today is a vastly different place than it was before the internet, which was not that long ago. It may surprise you to find out that the internet only became publicly available in 1991, Google in 1998, and Facebook only launched in a university dorm room in 2004. We now take these things for granted. They have become ubiquitous in our way of life, influencing personal

ideologies, democracy and the world's value system. With so much change, it should therefore come as no surprise that we need to redefine our world – and the rules that go along with it.

The day-to-day workings of my first business

Upon accepting the role on the spot, Mark got straight to work. The first stop was showing him where he was going to work and so we trekked the hundred yards down the narrow corridors into our shoe-box of an office. Not only was the description apt because of its size, which could only fit two desks side by side, it was also the storage room of a wedding shoe designer. With extraordinarily little revenue and zero savings, I was fortunate to have even found the space. It was the only office set-up that fitted my budget and so I put up with working alongside walls of pale pink shoe boxes and stylist intrusions looking for the right shoe size. If Mark was concerned about the size of the office or the fact he had to work amongst high heels, he did not show it.

Despite our small closet of an office, we worked well together. With computers side by side I was prone to micromanaging the tiniest of details I could see from his laptop. This drove him crazy. I had developed my attention to detail in a previous role in Canada raising funds for hospitals through hospital home lotteries. These lotteries allowed people to pay substantially more for a ticket (\$100) but had a very real chance of winning a home, boat or a car. The funds (less the agency's commission) went to the hospital at the end of each lottery.

As the new girl on the team I was mostly given menial tasks such as photocopying and faxing, but the one time I was given a proofing job for a brochure I sent it to print with countless spelling mistakes. Granted no one had ever explained proofing at the time, but that one mistake has carried me throughout my career. I learned the hard way that attention to detail was not just something someone had, it was something you had to build. Mark was very much like me, a big picture thinker. So, me constantly

scrutinizing font size changes was likely not his ideal working situation, but he persisted and never complained.

Over time Mark grew into the role, and the agency grew enough that we could move to a bigger office. We hired more staff and Mark became our most senior employee. Although it took nine months to secure my first full-time client, after proving my model was successful, it was not long after that when we started winning clients, including the artist formally known as Prince and global brands like Red Bull.

At no point did I ever think we were doing a great job – I always felt things could be done better. We could have always secured more or done more. I felt that my job was never over and in that sense our agency culture became relentless in our efforts to do the best job every second of every day. This type of commitment became evident in everything we did and over time I started to become recognized for the work we did – winning industry awards including the covered *Media Week's* 30 Under 30 award in 2012, a mere two years after launching my business.

In 2014, a challenging four years after launching, we were finally making enough money so that I no longer felt the strain of paying rent or the panic of paying monthly salaries. I still was not making close to enough money that meant I could afford a down payment on an apartment in Central London, but with enough clients I could focus on the business's growth. I continued to run my agency by investing every penny we made back into the business to hire staff and keep those staff happy. Although we tended to pay less than our competitors in basic salaries, we heavily invested in training and experience – ensuring that even new graduate hires had the opportunity to travel abroad and sit in on senior sales meetings. I also ensured that we created opportunities for both individuals and teams – I would be the first to write an awards entry for an aspiring individual and the beer fridge was always well stocked on Friday to celebrate the week's achievements.

Attending and entering industry awards was something I did every chance I had, a marketing tactic learned from my early days working on the Direct Marketing Association Awards, the flagship event at my last corporate job. I knew early on that most industry award shows were done for public relations purposes. This is not to say they are fixed, but that typically awards are won by those people who put themselves forward for them, rather than by people and organizations chosen by independent jurors. Even if you do not win, it becomes a night to network amongst your peers and hopefully sweep up new clients along the way. If you do happen to win, then it became a great selling hook for new business.

One of the most notable award events in the United Kingdom, the Great British Entrepreneur Awards, was a highlight for me as it was known for recognizing the country's most enterprising minds. Prior to my attendance at the Great British Entrepreneur Awards in 2014 I had been keeping my head down working tirelessly at the agency. Although I had entered a category, with fierce competition I did not expect I would be carrying any trophies home. It was on that cold winter's evening when I felt things started to change. Looking back, it became a pivotal point where I became aware that the industry I was working in was finally recognizing what we were doing. And not just the work and partnerships we built, but the fact that *we did things differently*.

Although I lost in my entered category, a surprise announcement was made that there were newly developed categories from the esteemed judges and I was jolted into action as a spotlight shone on our table and my name was called out. I had won the award for Media Disruptor of the Year.

It was not until my morning walk into the office with my buttery croissant in hand that I had a chance to reflect on what had happened. Rather than winning in a category that was reduced in numbers due to age (the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award was given to those entrepreneurs under 30 years of

age), I had won an actual award that represented the entire industry. What was more, they had created this new award just for me. What they saw in what we were doing is that we were not afraid of breaking the rules. I became known as a rebel.

This small trophy, which sits on my shelf today, has become a reminder that leaders are not always created because they want to lead, but rather because they have a vision. In a time where passion and inspiration can truly make change in the world, never has a vision been more important or more valid.

But what about you?

I believe that anything is possible. I also believe that if I can do it, so can anyone else. I did not grow up dreaming of becoming a rebel leader. In truth, I am still flattered when anyone asks my business opinion or is interested in my way of doing things. It is this lack of self-belief that has allowed me to reflect on my path and find similar patterns in other leading entrepreneurs. It is my curiosity in understanding our current environment that has enabled me to develop a framework for a new type of leadership that is vastly different to what has come previously. In the coming pages, I hope to not only share my discovery, but also to inspire a future generation that they can make change happen.

Disruption as part of innovation is not a new term. Much has been written about these unique characteristics and how we might come to tap into them for success. In 2018 social entrepreneur Sam Conniff Allende drew comparisons between Golden Age pirates and challenging the status quo. His aptly titled book *Be More Pirate or How to Take on the World and Win* challenges our thinking to look at pirates as positive role models for change. In his chapter 'Pirates vs Civilization Match Report' Allende outlines how fair pay, non-hierarchical structures, voting rights for women, on-the-job injury payouts, and the creation of cocktails, all launched by pirates, were hundreds

of years ahead of their time. It seems we should have paid more attention to these rebel pirates at the time.

The slight challenge comes when trying to identify oneself as a pirate. It can be an extraordinary stretch for many. Furthermore, we often associate pirates with negativity, which makes it that much more challenging for us to then tap into their piratical characteristics. Perhaps if we recognized the achievements of these rebels as achievements and not radical one-offs, we might be further along. Perhaps if we saw a bit of ourselves in these pirates, we would not be so quick to dismiss their ways. The problem therein lies not with the actions of those rebels that have gone before, but our inability to translate their methods into our everyday lives. Rebelliousness and leadership present similar challenges whereby the achievements of such labels seem too great for any one individual to achieve; therefore, quickly dismissed.

But that is changing.

We now have the ability to witness leadership inspiration beyond our own boardrooms enabling us to pick and choose leadership qualities and characteristics across multiple people, rather than having them embodied in one individual. We can witness activism and bravery beyond our own streets and participate in real-time mass movements that are happening thousands of miles away. Because of this, millions of rebel leaders are popping up everywhere, we are just not used to recognizing them or indeed naming them as leaders. However, in the following pages we will come to celebrate these rebellious traits and ultimately identify how you can replicate them.

You do not need to wait until you get that big promotion or until you have 50 staff to manage. New leadership starts with just one person. All you need is a framework to identify your purpose and a bit of rebelliousness to execute it. The rest, as they say, will follow.

This book encourages you to break all the rules and take an ideological leap of faith on radical potential. In yourself, in the

world, in the future. We are now in an era where anything is possible and our ability to tap into that is no longer reserved for the elite. By understanding this new framework in the future of work, you will be able to lead its future with more possibility than ever before.

This is an exciting time for us all.

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