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Introduction: No Pain, No Gain?

“Once we know that life is difficult – once we truly understand and accept it – then life is no longer difficult”

—M. Scott Peck, “The Road Less Traveled”

Freedom

Malibu, California, November 2012 – I gaze over the Pacific from the deck of one of Malibu's favorite seafood restaurants, *Geoffrey's*. The restaurant has been frequented by billionaires, celebrities, and entrepreneurs for years on end. It's a beautiful place, and I should feel like I belong here —I've sat in beautiful places just like this all over the world. But for some reason it feels different this time. Suddenly, I understood something that should have seemed obvious —I was eating alone, and I was bored. Of course, I knew I was by myself when I went into the restaurant, but it was only at this moment that I realized I was lonely. And what I realized at that moment was that ever since I had started my first company in 2007, what I had been pursuing deep down was freedom; but now that I had achieved my goal by making more time and more money for myself, I didn't know what I was meant to do with it all. I

realized that I genuinely had no idea what freedom really meant to me.

Knockout

Baker Street, London, February 2007 – I see my boss coming over to my desk and I know something is up. “Let's go to the pub,” he says, and I immediately know that I'm either getting promoted or fired, and I think *oh boy*. Working in brand consulting was my dream job, it was what I'd prepared myself for doing at university. The second thought that goes through my head is that if I get fired I have no idea how I'm going to pay the rent next month and my partner at the time was not going to like that very much.

We sit down with a pint each, and he looks me deeply in the eyes and I already know what's coming. “Erlend, this isn't really working out. I don't think you're really made for this kind of work —you should either go and be an egghead at a university, or you should be an entrepreneur. In all honesty, I think you were born for the second of those options.” I just look at him. I've never been fired before, and I don't really know what to say. I thank him for the opportunity and leave feeling like I've just gone ten rounds with Mike Tyson. A bottle of whiskey later, I wake up and I know that I need to do some real soul searching. I first started making my own money when I was aged 14, so I guess that maybe I was born to be an entrepreneur —but how do you start

becoming an *actual* entrepreneur? I'd never really thought of 'entrepreneur' as a viable career path —it's not exactly something the careers advisor tells you about in school. What do you actually *do* to be an entrepreneur? Well, I was about to find out.

Humble Beginnings

Uxbridge, London, Four Days Later – James opens the door to our new office. There's a heap of garbage in the middle of the floor, and a wall missing. It's cold, damp and dirty —this old building in an Uxbridge industrial estate has certainly seen better days. We spend the next few days building a wall and putting in a door (the wrong way around) so we can actually lock our new 360° photography studio that is going to change the world. We worked hard, and within a year there were nine people working for the company; but the books were deep in the red. We paid our employees on the last Friday of every month, and one Friday James walks in carrying a big box. At this point I've worked with him long enough to know that I should check our bank account —and sure enough, there's £10,000 less than there was the day before, and we're even further in the red on the day the staff need to be paid. “No problem,” he says, patting the top of the box, “this is going to be the solution”. I've heard this several times before, and I know that it means he's invested our salary money in expensive, non-essential equipment again. I knew it was time

to leave.

I pack up my life in London and move back to Norway, where I invested everything I owned in a carbon copy of the business James and I had been running in the UK. I convinced myself that, however much of a failure the original business had been, I was not a quitter and that I would never ever *ever* give up, because the only way to fail is to give up, without learning from your mistakes in the process. It also helped that I knew how to run a photography business at this point, so it seemed like the best way to make a large amount of money in a short amount of time — and at that point in my life, making copious amounts of money was pretty much my only goal in life. Still I had a product that was unique and that my former customers in the UK had loved; I had a business model that was cheap to run and turned a good profit; and I had experience of running a company. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, on the business side of things, not a lot — my new business started to make a bit of money, and was gaining an increasingly large number of clients as the months went on. But, as the sole operator of the business, I was getting increasingly stressed out and working long hours just to get everything done. Sure, I was making money, but I had no time for anything but work, and the stress of employees, accounting, marketing, and wondering if I could pay our

bills next month was making my life more and more difficult. I was in physical and emotional pain, and I started drinking quite a lot —it started with a shot of Jack Daniels before bed, just to help me get to sleep; then moved up to two; and before I knew it I needed a huge amount of alcohol just to calm me down enough to sleep through the night. On the inside those were dark and painful days —but on the surface, everything looked good, and if I could just pull through I'd come out the other side with a profitable business and everything would be fine, right?

Memento Mori

ExCel Centre, London, October 2010 — I'm in a conference hall in central London, attending an event with a name that suggests I have it all — the National Achievers Congress. That's what I am, an achiever — I own businesses, I make money, I attend conferences for people that want to become rich and wealthy like this one. That's what achievers do. But something's not quite right. I have a strange feeling in my chest, like someone's sitting on me and stopping me from breathing properly. It must just be some fresh air that I need, I've been inside this building all day, chatting to people, sending emails on my smartphone, I just need to relax a little bit, have a rest for a few minutes.

So I head outside and lie down on the grass next to the conference center for a little while. I try to zone out, concentrate on something else other than this weird feeling that won't go away. I try to focus on other things. I try to focus on nothing. I look at the sky. I look at the grass. Nothing works, all I can think about is this pain. I don't feel well at all, I should go home, take the rest of the day off, hopefully it'll pass over within a few hours and I can get back to work tomorrow. I crawl to my feet and shuffle off to the nearest tube station, feeling like crap.

I haven't timed this very well. It's rush hour, on the tube, in central London. Standing room only. Barely even room to turn around. And this numbness and dizziness, whatever it is, is getting worse. I look down, and my hands look really...strange. Pale, a sort of white color, tinged with blue. I look back up and everything spins a little —I won't be looking down again, it's made me really dizzy. My heart is pounding —I can't think straight enough to count right now, but it feels like two hundred beats a minute. That can't be right. That's not how hearts are supposed to work, even in a rush hour tube. Everything's still spinning, stay still, stay still —I start to wobble, and fall, and I grab the arm of the person next to me, and manage to plead, gasping for breath, “get me out of here”.

God bless that man, because he took the time out of his own life to get me to a hospital, which it turned out was a very important place for me to go, because I was having a major panic attack. As we sat in the ambulance on the way to Accident & Emergency, however, I thought it was even worse than that —I thought I was going to die. I rang my partner up, and with what I thought were my last breaths, I gave her instructions —the passwords to my various business email accounts, the details of who should be in charge of everything when I'm gone, who should inherit these various business systems that I'd built up over the years. I spent the rest of the day attached to various monitors while the doctors ensured I was ok, and I was put under strict orders to relax and not to work on my businesses for the next few weeks.

Let's skip in time again, to the present day. I'm happy and healthy. I make \$20,000 from 20-40 hours of work every month on my three businesses, which I operate primarily through outsourcing and licensing. I have the free time to travel around the world, keep myself fit, and eat well. I split my time between London, Oslo, San Francisco, and Davao City in the Philippines. Most importantly, I'm completely changed from that stressed out, panicked man who lay on the grass outside a conference center in London a few short years ago. Importantly, I'm also changed from that bored man who sat alone in a beachside restaurant in Malibu.

What happened? At the time of my panic attack, I thought I was going to die. After that, as I recovered, I realized that I was right —I am going to die, one day, and there's no way to predict what day it will be. It could be tomorrow, it could be fifty years from now. In the moment when I thought it was all going to end I was left with a feeling that I had not completed my mission, my quest, my purpose; and if I lived, I would first figure out what my purpose was, and then I would commit to living it. I realized that time is the only commodity that we all start out with equal amounts of, and the only commodity that you can't get anymore of. You can't go to a shop and buy more time. So I knew at that point that I needed to ensure my life, my limited amount of time on this earth, wasn't wasted.

So I stopped wasting my time and I focused wholeheartedly on my businesses, coming up with more and more ideas for making money. It wasn't until Malibu that I realized I still hadn't got the balance right. I had been so focused on money and business that I had forgotten to actually live my purpose. My panic attack had given me the gift of time, by making me understand how little of it I had left, but I was still misusing that time to focus single-mindedly on work, rather than on the experiences and the people I loved. I had not been liberated from working —I had simply become more efficient at it.

I had thought that by focusing on business and money I was making myself free, but I didn't understand that freedom requires more balance than that. At that point I knew that if I was going to truly be free, if I was really going to never work again, I needed to focus on ways to reduce the amount of time I spent maintaining my business, and to increase the amount of time I had to focus on what I should really be doing with my life. I knew then that freedom is not just going towards what you think will give you the most lavish lifestyle —freedom is doing and going towards what you love.

And that's what I want to talk to you about.

You Will Never Work Again

Welcome to a very different kind of business book. The title of this book is *You Will Never Work Again*, and in many ways that's exactly what it's about — how you can run a business that ensures you never end up feeling like I did on that tube train a few years ago. A business that makes you money without taking up every spare second of your time, every last morsel of your thought and energy, every last ounce of your soul. A business that gives you the time to work on your own passions in life, and doesn't feel like a chore every time you're required to give your attention to it. In short, a business that allows you to work less while earning more.

But, at the same time as providing practical guidance —taken from my own experience —on setting up such a business, this book will also encourage you to explore some more philosophical questions. The kind of questions I think need to be addressed if you are going to live a life of freedom. In particular, what does freedom mean to you? People, and especially those opportunity-seeking entrepreneurs, often think about freedom purely in terms of money, and I'm going to be encouraging you to take a different approach from now on —to think about freedom in less material terms, to think about money as merely a necessary mechanism for allowing you to follow your true passions, and to define clearly what those passions are so that you can live out your purpose.

Ultimately, the aim of this book is to help you become a successful entrepreneur —to share in the benefits of the knowledge I've amassed over years of trial and error; and to avoid the pitfalls that I faced in my early years, of working too hard and stressing too much. Having overcome those problems, I now have a passion for helping other people who might end up in the same boat as me —budding entrepreneurs such as yourself —and that's what led me to writing this book.

The things I'm going to teach you in this book are the things that you don't learn in school. School doesn't prepare you for the life of being an entrepreneur, it doesn't give you the skills and the mindset you need. School teaches you to be an employee, to follow orders, to work for someone else. Being an entrepreneur is the absolute opposite of this —you're in charge and you need to take advantage of the opportunities presented to you. Usually, this means a lot of trial and error —but if you're reading this book you'll be getting a headstart on everyone else because I'll be sharing what I already know about the process. Essentially, I've already made the painful mistakes, so you don't have to.

Who Is This Book For?

There are four levels of entrepreneurship, and if you're in any of the first three levels, this book can be a big help to you. On the first level we have 'wantrepreneurs' —these are the people that want to start their own business, but they haven't gotten around to it yet. I have two key pieces of advice for these people before we even begin —firstly, you need to decide if you really want to be an entrepreneur or whether you just *think* you want to be an entrepreneur. I got my first job at the age of 14, because the idea of making my own money was so appealing to me even then; and as I've described above, my boss in the brand consultancy could see I was clearly not meant to be an

employee. Some people, however, while they fantasize about being a Richard Branson-style entrepreneur, are not really cut out for it —they might try it out, but they pretty quickly realize that they prefer the security and the routine of a regular job. That's fine, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that —although it's not for me —but you need to give a bit of thought to whether you're really an entrepreneur at heart. Maybe read some more of the book, and as I talk more about what entrepreneurship involves, you'll know whether it's for you.

The second piece of advice I want to give to wantpreneurs right now is — just do it! The sooner you start, the sooner you'll start learning about the ins and outs of running your own business, and the sooner you'll get to the point where you never need to work again. So read through the book, where you'll find a lot of ideas for potential business models and techniques that you can apply to cut down your working time, and then get going —by the time you reach the end of the book, you'll be ready for action.

The second level of entrepreneurship is what I call 'solopreneurs'. These people have already started their own business, but they're currently the only person working for it — they're basically self-employed. They tend to be taking on literally every role in a business, no matter how suited they are for it

— marketing, networking, accounting, admin, and so on. The key for solopreneurs is delegating and outsourcing, letting other people take the strain for them, and becoming more efficient and more profitable in the process. This is what I call leveraging other people's time —it's what successful business owners do, and it's what I'm going to teach you to do in order to reduce your own working time to a minimum. The second action a solopreneur needs to take is to start selling a product, instead of a service. That doesn't necessarily mean making a product from scratch or having to invent something, but products are far easier to scale and sell than services.

On the third level we have operators. Operators own a bigger business than a solopreneur —they have employees and offices and are usually fairly well-established. But they have no free time whatsoever, because even though they have other people doing the little tasks for them, they always need to be around to make sure everything goes smoothly. If they take a week off, the business starts falling apart —and if the operator doesn't get back to work soon, the business will die. The big problem they have is a lack of automation and systems thinking —their business requires them to be around all the time in order to make sure things are working, and this means that they end up with a business that owns them, rather than the other way round. We'll be discussing a lot more about automation in chapter six.

The Four Levels Of Entrepreneurs

What kind of entrepreneur are you?



Level One - Wantrepreneur

Always got lots of ideas, but never takes action. Never gets anything off the ground, but that's ok because they have a new and better idea lined up. We are all entrepreneurs at heart, but school teaches us not to be. This is where most people end their entrepreneurial thoughts.



Level Two - Solopreneur

Invests in their education, registers a business and starts taking some form of action, but they don't get any sales and get talked out of their business by their friends and family. They own a JOB and do everything. Doctors, dentists and lawyers are mostly placed in this category.



Level Three - Operator

Has an idea, goes and gets educated, invests in himself and starts generating money. Sales and business are going well, but suddenly you realize that you are stuck in your business and the business owns you not the other way around.



Level Four - Owner

Highest level of entrepreneurship and this is where you need to be if you want freedom from your business. You are allowed to focus on the parts of your business that you love and the freedom that comes with this kind of lifestyle.

Source: *The Four Levels of Entrepreneurs* (Bakke, 2013)

My aim is to try and get all of you —whichever of those three levels you're on —to the fourth level, which is being a business owner. What's the difference between being a business operator and a business owner? An operator needs to be constantly involved in order to make sure things are, well, operating. A

business owner owns a system, but he doesn't operate it on a daily basis —he has other people to do that, and he knows that his business system is set up in a way that will allow it to carry on even if he is not around. He makes himself an inessential part of the system, while still owning it and therefore making the most profit out of it —and in doing so, he gives himself a huge amount of free time in comparison to the other three levels. That's what I do —I own businesses, they don't own me. I work around twenty hours a month —that's roughly one hour of work a day —and I make \$20,000. And that's because I *own* a system that doesn't need me to be present to *operate* it. And if I can do it, you can do it.

More generally, this book is aimed at anyone who is interested in business but also interested in living a good life, a life of freedom, a life where you have both the time and money to follow your heart and live your purpose. That's the meaning of *You Will Never Work Again* —not to achieve a life of vegging out in front of the television or working on your tan on a yacht in the Mediterranean (not that there's anything wrong with that, *per se*), but to create massive value in the world in finding your quest and living out its purpose, and to follow your passions, interests, and desires.

The Layout of This Book

This book is split roughly into four parts. In the first part we explore what freedom really means, and the idea of living your life in freedom rather than being a slave to your business. Using examples from literature, religion, psychology, and my own life, we'll discuss the fact that death is inevitable, and why realizing and understanding that fact should spur you to make changes in your life (I know, exactly what you expected from a business book, right?). We'll look at the social programming that conditions us all from birth to be greedy, lazy, and constantly chasing after money —you might think chasing after money is the sign of a good businessman, but I'll explain that this is not always true, and that true success follows very different principles. Most importantly, though, this first section will look at the idea that everyone has a “true path” in life which needs to be followed —a set of passions or desires, often obscured by social programming, which for entrepreneurs is usually related to greed, sloth, and pride. We'll look at some ways in which you can start to identify that true path, giving you the first step on the way to freedom and happiness in business. This first part of the book is ideal for anyone who feels trapped by their life or their business, and wants to consider some of the big issues that lie behind that unhappiness and some of the ways of alleviating it. Why am I starting the book with this philosophical inquiry? Because I think it's important that we start at our end point —if you want to achieve freedom,

you need to understand what freedom is before you set off towards it, rather than spending thousands of hours pursuing something you don't really understand. As Stephen Covey said in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, you need to “start with the end in mind”.

The second part of the book is aimed at people who are just starting out in entrepreneurship —you're full of ideas, energy, and enthusiasm, but you don't have a concrete, functioning business yet. This section provides a number of no money down, outsourceable blueprints for some of the business models that I have found to be most successful in my own life —business models that, once they are set up and refined to ensure they are running well, will allow you to take the free time you need to explore your true path and your deeper desires without constantly being bogged down by must-do “work stuff”. These models allow you to outsource and automate much of the hard or boring labor, allowing you to retain your sanity and free time, and to focus on high-level thinking, income generating activities, and building relationships with friends, family and business contacts.

The third part of the book is aimed at entrepreneurs who already have their business set up, but who feel trapped by it. We'll explore some of the ways in which you can refine your business systems, primarily through two

techniques — automation and outsourcing. Automation is the creation of a system that runs like clockwork, even —and this is very important —when you remove yourself from it. Having a business system that requires you to constantly be present to ensure it doesn't fall apart is enslavement; owning a business system that continues to operate while you're doing other things is your duty as an entrepreneur —because you want to make sure that the value you're creating in the world lives on after you're gone.

The other major technique we'll discuss is outsourcing —hiring people from countries other than your own to work in your business. I'll explain the advantages of outsourcing, the particular jobs that can be outsourced, and provide you with examples of the specific details of organizing an outsourced business. Outsourcing has often received bad press in recent years, with various large corporations being accused of exploiting workers in developing countries. That's not the kind of outsourcing we're talking about in this book though —while one of the great advantages of outsourcing is that you'll be paying your employees less than if you hired in the US or western Europe, you must always treat others as you'd want to be treated yourself, and pay a fair and equitable wage. If done right, with humanity and genuine care for your employees, outsourcing can be a vital way of transferring value —in terms of money, security and long-term knowledge skills —to countries that

need it more than our own. I'm going to suggest outsourcing much of your work to the Philippines, where you'll find that your employees are friendlier, more polite, more punctual, and more appreciative of the work than many workers in the western world.

The final part of the book acts as a conclusion, drawing together everything we have discussed in the other three parts, and discussing how the lessons learned in this book can be applied in your own life and can help you in your quest for freedom and your efforts to walk along and stay on your own true path.

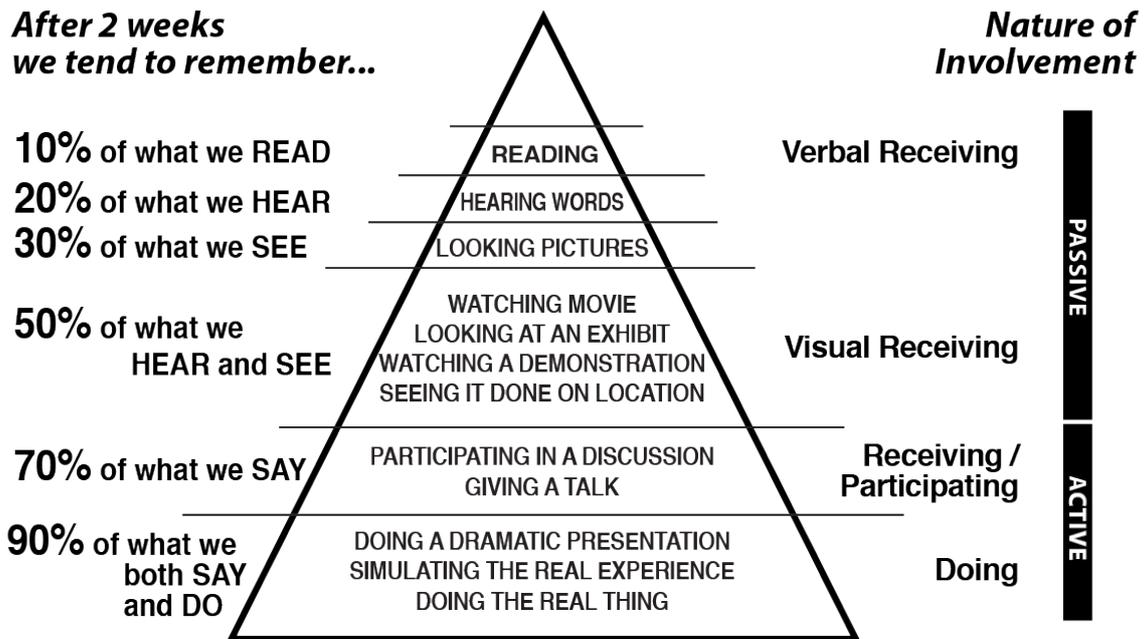
How to Use This Book

There are a number of different ways in which you can use this book. Some people will choose to simply read it right the way through, from beginning to end, and that's fine —if you're relatively new to being an entrepreneur, I'd even say that it's the ideal way to read this book, and you'll hopefully pick up some of the philosophies, techniques and ideas and use them in your business. Others who are more experienced or who already know that they have an interest in a particular topic or technique might want to be more selective with how they read the book, focusing on the chapters on automation and outsourcing, or on finding your own true path, for example.

Throughout the book there are a number of exercises designed to make you experience and understand some of the things we're talking about —these are, of course, optional, but I know from my own experiences that learning by doing is best way to really understand something new, so I would encourage you to at least give them a go, they could be just the thing you need to help you really see your true path.

Some of you will be reading this book as part of my real-life course *Work Less, Earn More*, and we'll be working on these exercises throughout that course — but feel free to take the time to familiarize yourself with them beforehand if you'd like. I want to emphasize how important it is to actually take action in order to learn. According to the 'learning cone' developed by Edgar Dale, we only take action on about 10% of what we read. Bearing in mind that statistically only 3% of the people reading this book will take any action, the chances for success just through reading are very slim. It's only through doing the exercises and taking the actions that true learning comes and you will grow to your potential.

Cone of Learning (Edgar Dale)



Source: Edgar Dale, *Audio-Visual Methods in Technology*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

And with all of that said, it's time to get started on finding your path, freeing your life, and never working again.

www.youwillneverworkagain.com