

Be a Champion Main Text

Hello, this is AJ, welcome to the next lesson. Here we go. This one is called “Be a Champion.”

Now champion has a couple different meanings. One meaning of champion is winner, a winner. So a champion is someone who wins a game or wins a fight or is number one, number one. So we talk about a champion team, so they’re the number one team. But we’re not using that meaning in this lesson; we’re using a different meaning.

Another meaning of champion is somebody that fights for a good cause; someone who fights for something good, someone who defends something good. And that’s what we’re talking about here, be a champion. Be somebody that fights for good things, that’s not afraid, that you will fight for what is right, you will fight for what is good. That’s the idea here, be a champion.

And I’m going to read a small section from a book called *Free Prize Inside* and it’s by Seth Godin. Seth Godin is an Internet Marketing expert. He was a member of Yahoo, the Internet Company. Back in the beginning, when Yahoo was first starting, he helped their marketing. And then, later, he sold his own company, he made a lot of money and now he just writes about Internet Marketing and he’s got a lot of great books about business.

But, you know he also talks about just life in general. A lot of his advice about careers, about business, is just good advice, in general. It’s good advice for life, in general. And this is one of the nicest sections of his book, where he talks about being a champion in your career, in your job.

And what he means is that in your job you should fight for what is right, what is good, what is interesting, what will help the company most and, usually, you have to break rules to do that. Usually you have to be different. Usually you have to be kind of strong to do that. You can’t just be the same as everybody else.

So let me read this section and then we’ll talk about it more. Here we go, be a champion.

“Go ahead, do something great! Champion an innovation, I dare you! Because the choice is between following the rules or doing the right thing. Everyone’s got great ideas. You have great ideas. The difference between success and failure, most definitely, is not about a shortage of ideas that are good. Instead, success is about overcoming the status quo and inertia and working within your organization to make things happen.

“The good news is that this is exactly what your company wants you to do, it’s fun, it’s rewarding and once you learn how to do it you are guaranteed a good job for the rest of your life. The bad news is that it’s difficult and it’s sometimes lonely.

“Whoever you wish to be you have to make a choice, a conscious decision to be that person. Will you be a champion? Will you be remarkable? Will you be outstanding in your career, in your life or will you be careful and normal and mediocre? Choose. And by embracing this choice, by announcing your choice to yourself and, eventually, to other people, you will make this process far more likely to succeed.”

Okay, interesting, interesting. Nice section from Seth Godin. I really like him. And, of course, again, this advice is great for all of your life, not just your career, but he specifically writes about business and career.

So here’s what he’s saying, he says you have a choice. You have two choices, really, in your career. You can decide to be normal, follow the rules, be mediocre, do the same thing that everyone else is doing or you can decide to be a champion, to fight for new things, to fight for innovations, to fight for improvement, to fight for what is right, to fight for creative, interesting projects, to go against what is normal and boring. That’s your choice.

And he’s right; it’s scary in the beginning because we all went through normal schools. And in normal schools, in almost every country in the world, you’re taught to be normal, average, follow the rules. That’s what you learned in school. Follow the rules. Do what you are told.

That is great advice for succeeding in school. It’s terrible advice for succeeding in your career or life. Seth Godin is correct, the people with the best careers, with the best jobs, with the most money, are champions. They don’t just follow the rules, they do new interesting things. They innovate in their companies. They find new ideas that will benefit the company. If they find something that’s wrong they fix it. They don’t wait to ask permission. These are the people who have the best careers.

Now I went through this process myself. So, you know, I’m not yelling at you because I also, one time in the past, I was just, ah, following the rules, doing what everyone else was doing as a teacher.

So in my first few jobs I just did the same thing as every other teacher. I used the textbooks that the school required and I used the same drills, the same activities. And I thought, well, this is the smart way to improve my career. Right? Follow the rules. Do what you're told to do, what everyone else is doing.

It didn't work. I continued to get paid very badly, made very little money...ha-ha...and I didn't enjoy my job. And the worse thing, for me, was that my students didn't improve and this bothered me a lot. And, in fact, I focused a lot more on my students and the more I focused on my students the less I cared about my boss or my school.

And I became a champion for my students. I decided I'm going to fight for my students. I will do anything and everything to help them. I will break the rules. I will use different methods. I will throw away the textbooks. I don't care. My job is to be a champion for my students, my customers, my real customers, right?

And so that's what I did. I stopped using the normal textbooks. I started to find different methods. I went back to school and got a Masters Degree and I learned a lot of incredibly cool, interesting teaching methods and I began to use those. And every job I got I was always a champion for my students.

As a result, I became more and more popular with my students, with the real customers. They really started to like my class. I got more attention. I started to get more money and better positions. My career improved.

Now sometimes I got in trouble because I broke the rules, right? I was a champion, not a rule follower. I got fired from one job because I didn't use the required textbooks and I didn't follow the required procedures and rules and I refused to use the same grading system that every other teacher used, so I got fired. And many people think, "Oh, that's terrible. It was terrible." I was not terrible! It was fantastic! Because the next job I got was even better.

And as a result of getting fired I began to think about starting my own company. I began to realize if I really want to be a champion and do what is right then I need to be in control. I need to be the boss. Because I'm always going to have problems if I am just fighting against traditional schools all the time.

And so I started my own company and my company has grown and I'm making more money than I ever did as a teacher and I'm happier than I ever was as an employee. And so my career has gotten better and better and better because I have been a champion for my customers, for my students.

By focusing on being a champion I have made much, much more money, I have improved my position, I am now the owner of my own company, everything is better. I'm a better teacher, my students are even happier, everything improved because of that. That has been the key.

Even if I decided to close my business and just look for jobs I could get a job very fast, very easily. Why? Because now I am a much, much, much better teacher. I'm very confident. I have a lot of experience now as the owner of my own business.

So as Seth Godin says, "You're guaranteed a good job for the rest of your life if you learn how to be a champion." Because there are always companies who are looking for champions, even when the economy is bad, even when times are tough, there's always a job for a true champion.

The people who lose their jobs are the people who are normal and average. They can be replaced easily. You can cut their job and hire a new person and pay them less or just cut their job because they're not doing anything interesting or new or different, they're replaceable. Normal people are replaceable. People who follow the rules are replaceable. They're easy to cut.

Champions are unique. Champions are special. They're remarkable, they're outstanding. Companies don't usually cut them. And if you do get fired, if you do get cut, another company will hire you very quickly.

When I got fired from my job in Thailand I easily found a job in San Francisco. I could have gotten another job in Thailand very easily, no problem, because at that point I was a champion. I had a passion. I had a mission. I had my own unique methods. I was not the same as every other teacher. I made myself a champion. I made myself different, special and because of that it was very easy for me to get another job, very, very, easy.

It's the same with you in your career. It doesn't matter what you do in life, if you become a champion, if you fight for what is good, what is interesting, what is new, if you're always trying to innovate, you're going to have a much better career than if you just follow the rules and do what everyone else does.

So that's my mission to you, be a champion. Try new things. Fight for new ideas. Fight for creative, cool, interesting projects at your job and in your life. Do this, you're guaranteed to always have a good job, with your same company or with a new company.

All right, well I will see you next time.