

Effortless English

Effortless Success Chapter 5

Hello, and welcome to fifth and final chapter of my e-book Effortless Success. Now in this final chapter I want to talk about the spirit of entrepreneurship, or an entrepreneurial spirit because that's really what this whole program is about, this success mini-album, the lessons, the e-books, all of it is really about having a spirit, an entrepreneurial spirit, thinking like an entrepreneur and this is powerful even if you're not an entrepreneur, even if you're an employee working in a large corporation. The point is whether you are in a big company in a career, in a small company working for a small company, or starting your own business, the point is to think like an entrepreneur, not like an employee. I really hate the word employee to be honest. I hate the word, I hate the idea of it because for me the connotation, the feeling I get when I hear the word employee means something like slave. Pretty negative, right?

But that's been my experience working many, many, many years, decades, both myself and observing of course fellow employees in various jobs. Most employees are kind of slaves who are paid and who get to go home. But there's kind of a slave mentality and what do I mean by that? I mean a mentality of obedience, a mentality of avoiding risk, a mentality of playing it safe, doing what you're told, following the rules. A mentality of being boring, of being just like everybody else. That's the common employee mentality unfortunately. It's also the mentality of most managers and well, most managers are employees. If your goal is just to have a safe little job doing the same thing for the rest of your life, well then I guess that's a good way to be. I guess don't change; if that's your goal, don't change.

But if your goal is to have more, if you have bigger dreams, now those dreams might include rising up in your company or in your career we should say, really your career because you might switch companies, but if your goal is to continue to be an employee but you want to be an employee at a higher and higher and higher level, if you value the security of being an employee, perceived security really, but anyway, it's not always secure, but anyway there's a perceived security to being an employee and if you value that, but you want to move up the ladder is the phrase we use, it means you get promotions, promotions, you get higher levels, higher levels, higher titles, higher titles. It's what a lot of people do. If that's your goal, you can't think like a normal employee.

Why? Well normal employees don't go up and up and up. Normal employees stay at the same level forever or they might go up a little tiny bit. If you're normal, if you're average, well guess what? You'll be down there at the bottom with all the other normal average people. That's what happens to normal average people, ok. If you don't mind that fine, but if you want something more, then you've got to be different. If you have your own business or you want to have your own business, maybe a small one, maybe a big one, maybe part-time, maybe freelance, whatever, if you have this dream or goal of having your own business then you absolutely must think like an entrepreneur because if you don't you're probably going to fail, possibly losing, hopefully not losing too much money, but possibly losing a good amount of money. You've got to think this way. So this way of thinking, this entrepreneurial spirit is really the key to going up in your career or to building a successful business yourself.

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Let's review now, what are the key elements of an entrepreneurial spirit or mentality or focus.

Well first of all take risks. We talked about playing it safe versus being remarkable. Those are the two big choices that's really at the root of this spirit is a very deep profound philosophical choice, "Am I going to play it safe and be normal, be like everyone else, or am I going to be remarkable, take risks, be different?" That's the very first choice. If you choose to play it safe, fine, but you're going to be normal like everyone else. Your career is going to be average like everyone else. If you have a business you're probably going to fail. You might succeed a little bit. So clearly if you want to be an entrepreneur or have an entrepreneurial spirit, you've got to choose the second choice, you've got to choose this fundamental philosophy of being remarkable and taking risks, being remarkable. So that's the first part of having an entrepreneurial spirit, deciding I'm going to be remarkable in some way and there's an infinite number of ways to be remarkable, to be extremely something. You choose that something based on your personality, your strengths, your passions, what you love to do.

Ok then the second aspect of having an entrepreneurial spirit, focus, mentality, is to focus on solving problems. Don't focus on doing a job and this is especially true if you really want to go up in your career. You're working in a big company, well everybody else is focused on what they have to do, right? They're focused on the tasks that the boss gives them; every week you must do this, this, and this. They're very task oriented, task focused. Of course there are probably tasks that you need to do, but you have to shift your mentality. You've decided you're going to be remarkable so that's great and the next thing you have to do is start shifting your mentality; start noticing what are the major problems in my department.

Now in a big company you might not have external customers. In other words you might not have contact with people who buy the products or services of the big company you work for. That's possible. But you have internal customers. Let's say you're an accountant in a large corporation. You're doing accounting for somebody. You're doing accounting for other departments, other projects within the company. Well those are your customers, the people working on those other projects, the people in those other departments, people in the sales department or marketing or whatever it is. So you do have internal customers. You have customers within your big company. Those are the people that you're helping. Those are the people whose problems you are solving.

Alright, so you look at your customers if you're an employee in a big company, you look at the internal customers, the other people in the company whose problems you are solving. If you're a business owner or a freelancer you look at your direct customers, external customers. What are their problems? What are you solving, how are you solving their problems? Alright so you have a problem solving mentality. You stop thinking about just tasks, this is what I must do today. Instead you shift your focus to what problems am I going to solve today for my customers and then to make it a little more fine tuned, a little more specific and specialized, you pick one, two, maybe three problems, common problems, and you specialize in those problems.

You become remarkable at solving those specific problems. If you're working at a company you might have to still solve other problems, other people, your boss or somebody, might make you but just do the minimum amount of work for that stuff and then give most of your energy to just a few specialized problems that you are interested in, that you're most passionate about, that you're most skilled at solving, that you think are most important, whatever. You can choose them for many differ-

ent reasons but choose them. Choose a couple and become better and better and better and better at solving just those few problems. You can do this within a job or as an entrepreneur.

So you've got this idea of being remarkable. You've chosen, ok I'm going to be remarkable at something. Next you've looked at your career, at your specific job and your customers, either within your company or your actual direct customers if you have a business. You've found, you've identified a couple, a few special problems that you are going to solve. They are your focus, they are your specialization and you become an expert at those problems. You keep improving every day. You start reading more and more and more about those problems. You start learning new skills to solve those problems. You start experimenting and trying different ways to solve those problems. You find other experts who are great at solving those problems and you learn all their best ideas.

Ok so now you've got the foundation. That's really the foundation. That's the base mentality that you need to have if you're going to be successful in business, either in a career or as an entrepreneur. But you're not done. You've changed your mind. You've changed your mentality. You're every day growing your skills and getting better and better and better at solving this kind of problem, every day you're becoming more and more and more remarkable, every day you're taking more risks, more risks, more risks in the specific area with these specific problems only. Next comes the very practical stage and that is to create a demo. Can you do this as an employee? Absolutely. But don't ask the boss first, don't ask for permission.

This is another thing you've got to really change your mentality. Don't be a freakin' child. I don't want to say freakin', I'm going to speak like a real adult here, don't be a fucking child at your job. You are an adult, an intelligent capable adult. Do not let a boss treat you like a child. Do not act like a child with your boss. They are not your parent, ok. They are there to provide some structure and leadership and vision, hopefully. But as we all know in many companies, I'd say most, managers do not provide much leadership or vision. In fact what they do is they act like teachers in an elementary school or they act like parents and they just worry about following the rules and controlling people. Well it doesn't matter. That's not you anymore. You're not going to be a child at work anymore. You're going to be a capable adult and you're going to make decisions and you're going to do what you think is right and best and you're not going to always ask permission like you're a child asking your parents, "Can I please do this?"

There's a great slang saying in English which you need to memorize and use and that is, "It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission." It means don't ask if you can do something first; just do it. If your boss is unhappy after, then you ask for forgiveness, "Oh I'm so sorry, please forgive me, I didn't now, I made a mistake." Ask for forgiveness if you need to later but just do it. Make decisions. You've got to decide that you're an adult not a child and take those risks. So you create demos. This is what you're going to do. You're going to create demos. Now as a business person it's pretty easy, if you're an entrepreneur it's pretty easy but even within a company you can create demos. What would a demo be in your department in your large company? Well maybe it's a new system for doing your job. But don't ask permission, just do it, try it. If it works great, then later do to your boss, "Look at this cool thing I did," or go to your boss' boss, I don't know. If it doesn't work, oh well, try something else. Point is though, you follow the same process within your job at a big company as you do if you were an entrepreneur, as you would if you were an entrepreneur.

So create demos, create products even, why not? Even if you work in a giant company you can cre-

ate a little blog and little rogue demo product or service, offer it to your internal customers, people within your company. You could even charge them for it; not personally, you wouldn't take money personally but you would take money and put it into the budget for your department for example. If it worked well then you share it with everybody. So that's how you do demos. You can do demos as an employee.

Now I did this. I'll give you an example. I mostly know myself and my own experience so most of my examples are going to come from my career. So for example, as a teacher every class I had I created my own curriculum. I basically would throw away the school's textbook. I'd put it in a text and never look at it again and I created my own curriculum for my classes and I created that curriculum to fit the students I had in my class and the goals of the class and the goals of the students. So I did not follow the rules and procedures. I created my own curriculum. I found my own materials, never used textbooks, or almost never. I had my own teaching methods. I did not follow the school's recommended system. I used my own and I was constantly testing my own so I would try something in class, a different kind of curriculum, a different kind of method, and if it worked really well, I got a great response, I got great results with my students then I would keep that and I would try something else and keep improving it, build on it.

Now a lot of times it didn't work so well. I had many lessons, even sometimes several classes in a row that went very badly, didn't work. Well I still learned something. I learned that that didn't work; at least it didn't work for me or didn't work for that situation. So I got rid of it, I didn't do it again, I tried something else and over time I built a better and better and better system. Over time, my students were happier and happier and happier in my class, more and more and more excited with my class. They got better and better and better results. So even before I started my own business, my career started going up, up, up. My bosses, most of my bosses actually were quite happy. Now if I had told them in the beginning, if I asked permission, "Can I please use a different method and can I please create my own curriculum and is it ok if I don't use the textbook?" If I had done that in the beginning they would have said, "No, no, no." They would have been very unhappy, criticized me, and then I would have been very unhappy as a teacher. Nothing would have changed. I did not ask permission, I just did it. I never asked, "Can I do this?"

I just did it and after the fact, because it was working so well, more and more and more students were coming to the school because they're happy with my class and then also my class was usually the largest class in the school, had the most students and students were always talking about my class, "I want to go to AJ's class," they started going to my boss, "Can I go to AJ's class," and he would say, "Well no actually it's not the right level," and they'd say, "Oh please, please can I go to AJ's class?" Well because of all of that my boss was quite happy with me. You think he's happy that more and more students, new students are coming to the school and paying more and more money and his business is growing and I'm helping that? Of course he was very happy then. But if I'd ask for permission like a child in the beginning, none of it would have happened and I would have still continued at the same level. Instead my career got better. He started paying me more, I got more hours, more responsibility. He actually later asked me to be a teacher manager and I said no because I was starting my own business, but anyway, even as an employee in a career this method, this approach, this entrepreneurial spirit helped me a lot.

So you've got to take the risk and do it and you have to understand, don't get upset if sometimes you do get a bad boss or a bad situation and you know, you do get criticized, possibly fired. I was

fired from one job in Thailand because I used my own curriculum, my own teaching methods, my own way of grading tests, my own way of giving grades. I pretty much did my own thing completely and they weren't too happy. It was a big bureaucracy, a large huge company with lots and lots of rules for school actually. But you know what? That's ok because I still learned a great deal. I became a much, much better teacher because I took risks and tried new things. I became a much more remarkable teacher and while ultimately my bosses weren't happy, the students in my classes were very, very happy and because I had learned so much as a teacher I very easily got another job here in San Francisco and my career continued to go up, up, up. So if you're willing to take the risk it will pay off.

Finally let's talk about another one of our entrepreneurial tasks or mentalities or things to do and that is this idea of creating communities and then getting feedback and improving constantly. This idea of constant improvement, the Japanese call it kaizen. It's a word that's sometimes used in English now and it's this idea of constantly and neverendingly improving, small improvements, little tiny improvements. It means you're always trying to improve some little thing again and again and again. You're constantly trying something a little bit different that you think might be an improvement. Every day you make a tiny improvement, a tiny improvement, and all those little tiny improvements eventually add up and get this kind of synergetic power. It's a kind of synergy that they add up and it creates this amazing huge improvement. But the best way to kind of get that kaizen, to get that constant improvement, is to get lots of feedback from a community of customers. You can figure out a lot of improvements by yourself but you figure out even more if you have a community of customers that you communicate with frequently. So you create a community of customers.

Now again, we've talked about this already if you're an entrepreneur, business owner, we've talked about how to do that. what if you're just in a career? You're in a big company again, you're an employee. You can still do this and it doesn't have to be so formal. You can do it informally and seem casual, but it still works, right. So you find again who are your internal customers. If you're working in a marketing department, maybe the sales department is one of your customers, the people there are your internal customers, right, because your job as a marketing person is to help make their job easier, make it easier for sales to happen. Or maybe you also have some internal customers in the product, or product development departments. Again, you're working with them on how to sell what they made. I don't know, every situation is different, but the point is find who your internal customers are. Who are your customers? Do you have direct contact with people who buy the company's product?

Well easy, make a community of those people. You could create forums, you could have a blog, tell them about it. Say, "Hey, read my blog and give me some feedback about what we're doing at our company." Create forums; it could just be some little private forums. It doesn't have to have the name of the company on it. it could be your forum and you could say, "Hey these are my forums but I just want to get feedback from our customers and it's informal. This is not official for the company but it will still help me do my job better." Tell your customers that. If they're internal customers, other employees in the company, maybe different departments, maybe even the same department, it's ok; get them on the forums also. Start getting feedback and them making improvements. You do these things, just these things that we just talked about, you are going to be so remarkably different than 99.9% of the other employees in your company, just by thinking this way and doing these few simple things we've just discussed, demos, making a community of your customers, constantly trying to improve, focusing on solving a few problems very well, just doing these things, it makes you

remarkable right away because everybody else is trying to fit in, everybody else is playing it safe, everybody else is following the rules, everybody else is asking permission.

Just by doing this you are going to be remarkable, your career is going to get better and better and better and even if for some reason you got fired from a job you're going to be able to get another job at another company, probably a much better situation. You're going to be able to do it quickly because you're going to have a great reputation and you're also going to do very well in job interviews. Most people go to a job interview, they have to kind of bullshit and lie about stuff and give kind of normal standard answers. You can talk about the demos you did. You can talk about the improvements you made. You can talk about the problems that you are an expert at solving and you can give specific real examples from your last job, even if you were fired from your last job. So that's why I had such an easy time getting a new job in San Francisco because I just started talking about all the interesting things I had tried and was doing in my last job and in the interview the guy was like, "Wow." He hired me immediately, didn't have to come back for a second interview, immediately offered me a job and that'll happen to you too because this is such a powerful way to be remarkable even as an employee.

So there you go. This chapter was really focused on helping employees, people who are career minded, take the same ideas and use them in their jobs. So these same principles apply to both employees in a company who want to improve their career and also of course to business owners and freelancers, people who are truly entrepreneurs. I hope you enjoyed this program. I hope you remember and use these few basic but very powerful principles and I hope that you'll go to the forums, our forums, our Effortless English community and write your success stories. We have a forum there that says "Success Stories". Write your success stories. Write your English success stories about how your English is improving and you can also write your business and career success stories. We also have a forum, a specific category, just for business and just for these lessons and you can write about your ideas, your experiences, your questions regarding business and career and other members will share theirs as well. So we have a nice community there. I hope you'll join us at the forums. Ok, I hope you've enjoyed this. Good luck with your career or with your business. Take care, bye-bye. I wish you great, amazing, fantastic success. I hope that you reach and achieve all of your biggest dreams.